

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ALTERNATIVES
IN A
NORTHERN MEXICAN COMMUNITY

THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF Ph. D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
JON L. OLSON

1972

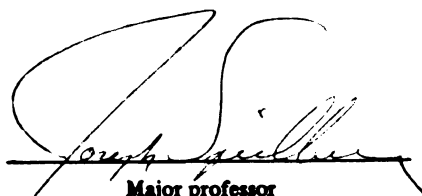


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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ALTERNATIVES
IN A
NORTHERN MEXICAN COMMUNITY

presented by
Jon L. Olson

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of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in Anthropology

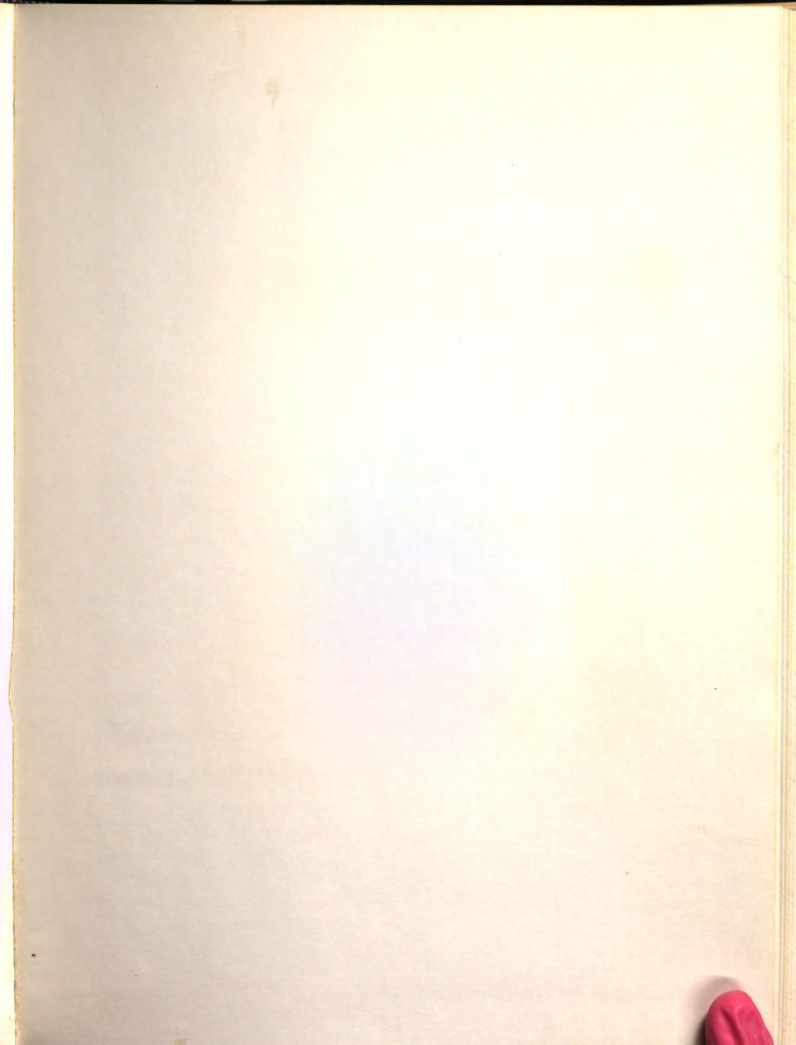

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ABSTRACT

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ALTERNATIVES IN A NORTHERN MEXICAN COMMUNITY

By

Jon L. Olson

The site of the investigation was Mina, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, a small rural community in the desert zone 33 miles northwest of Monterrey. The purpose is to describe the socio-cultural life of the town, especially political and economic institutions, and to investigate the modes of decision-making involved. Three areas of decision-making were specifically analyzed: choosing subsistence activities, choosing to become an entrepreneur, and choosing a curing method.

The life of the town is dominated by four storeowning families who derive their power from their control of local economic exchanges via stores, cantinas, and the local office of a federal natural resources agency, Forestal. They dispense jobs through the institutions of compadrazgo (ritual godparenthood) and patrón-client relations. They receive from their employees labor, information, and political support. This support is particularly important in the inter-family competition that has developed since the mid-1950's. The competition has crystallized about the past two campaigns for the office of presidente municipal (mayor). Presently local ejiditarios also are starting to compete with the store-owning factions.

The resulting social structure is a three-class system:

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the four storeowning families (upper class), their primary compadre-clients plus other small businessmen (middle class), and peasant-laborers (lower class). This system affects the perception and choice of economic alternatives. A majority of peasants practice combinations of the low-return, low-risk alternatives of field cultivation, goat herding, and ixtle fiber gathering. There are few independent small businesses because of lack of capital, and because of the high risk of competing with the dominant storeowners for the limited money in the local economy.

An important independent social segment is the Niño Fidencia curing cult, a group of families bonded by a common belief in the healing power of a folk healer who lived in the municipio 40 years ago. Part of their obligation to the system is a promise to be "good", "traditional", and to avoid "modern" evils such as employment with the storeowners. The cult offers a low-cost, low-risk alternative to the doctor-hospital complex for treatment of illness. Obligation to the Niño through a promesa (promise) is incurred only after a cure is received.

Three primary conclusions emerge:

1. The socio-cultural life of Mina is partly a function of external forces: the harsh ecology, the Revolution of 1910, the Forestal program, relations with state and federal government officers and programs. The community has become adapted to these forces through the traditional institutions of kinship, compadrazgo, and patrón-client relations.

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2. The decisions in the face of these conditions incorporate various strategies which maximize life chances of the individual. This does not imply simple "maximizing of satisfactions". Avoidance of risk seems to be a primary concern. Peasants often settle for low returns in order to minimize risk and might be called "minimizers" or "satisficers". Small businessmen minimize risk by avoiding storeowner competition. Sick people reduce uncertainty by incorporating as many curing alternatives as possible. Simplistic "maximizing" concepts are not sufficient, but must be refined and amplified.

3. Modern-traditional life styles are geared to political-economic participation in Mina. But upper class "modernity" is based upon claiming ever greater shares of the relatively constant local economic pie. In Mina economic improvement programs such as Forestal have led to a reduction of total economic and social alternatives because of its control by the upper class. Thus, "modernization" is a viable concept only if it is based on expansion of total economic improvement.

Michael Olson's study
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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1972

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This research was made possible through Training Fellowship 2F1 MH 33893-03 and Field Research Training Grant 1 T01 - MH11747-01 from the National Institute of Mental Health. I wish to thank Professor Bela C. Maday for his personal help and cooperation in providing the funding for my research.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my committee members who patiently and thoroughly guided me through all phases of my studies which led to this dissertation: Professor Scott Cook, who suggested some of the basic approaches to the data; Professor Bernard Gallin, who succinctly criticized the manuscript; Professor Iwao Ishino, who all along was not only concerned with the content, but with the readability and organization of the work; to Professor Joseph Spielberg, who had the greatest hand in the entire effort as my committee chairman. I especially thank Profs. Ishino and Spielberg for guiding me, challenging me, teaching me and sometimes prodding me through my entire graduate experience at Michigan State University.

Finally, I want to thank in printing my wife Natalie for sharing the experiences of my (our) graduate career. I thank her for her encouragement and humor, for her continuous labor, and especially for her perpetual patience, warmth and good cheer.

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CHAPTER 1

Ecological Setting, History, Society

During the Revolution one day the federal troops came to Mina. Two men climbed the loma de la cruz to look out over the valley. But it was cold and the men wanted to make a fire. One wanted to tear down the cross, which was made of wood, in those days, to make a fire. But the other said "no, that would offend God". But the first bad guy cut the cross and made a fire. Well, God saw this, and clouds came and lightning struck the hilltop. The first soldier was killed and the other ran down the hill, very afraid (asustado). Well, that showed what God thought of the soldiers!

- -

The only way one can better himself is to become rich and be a patrón yourself. These storeowners are even worse than the (pre-revolutionary) hacendados. At least they did something for their peones.

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The purpose of this thesis is twofold: 1) to present an ethnographic description of life in a Northern Mexican town, and 2) to investigate decision-making factors and behavior in the community. The study will focus upon the factors of perception of the decision-makers, of their various alternatives, the various strategies employed to choose among the recognized alternatives, and the results of the decision in terms of individual benefits and, more importantly, social and cultural effects. I will present more of the theoretical bases and methodology later; basically this work describes a Mestizo-Mexican town in Northeast Mexico, then attempts to

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say something about the situational factors leading to decisions in the critical areas of work activities, opportunities for a better "more modern" life, and health care.

The investigation was carried out in the Northern Mexican town of Mina, Nuevo Leon. The recognized anthropological techniques of the "participant observer" were employed. I lived in the town from August 1968, until July 1969, during which time interviews were held, various social occasions were attended, and general observations were made. This data was supplemented by library research in the archives of the Instituto Tecnológico and the Estado de Nuevo Leon in Monterrey; by interviews with various Mexican state and federal officials; by gathering original tape recorded and photographic data; and by the use of specific questionnaires discussed along with the presentation of associated data. The data was supplemented by a two week visit to Mina in October 1971.

Before proceeding to the ethnographic description and analysis, a few minor points should be advanced. First, the term "peasant" must be explained with respect to the people of Mina. To this author, "peasant" implies an intimate relation between the people and agricultural production primarily for subsistence. Although the Mina population does depend somewhat upon subsistence agriculture, there are other important economic alternatives (fiber gathering, goat herding, wage labor, etc.) that are primary to the Mina economy, and in fact are important factors of this study. The subsistence agriculture connotation of "peasant" is misleading in this

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case. They are perhaps better described as "generalized rural laborers". According to Adams: "Latin American rural populations are somewhat generalized, with their subsistence coming from at least two major sources, wage labor and individual farming." (Adams 1964:51) Throughout the thesis the people will be described by different terms: "peasant", "rural poor", "lower class" (when speaking of the community economic structure), and "campesino" (resident of the countryside). The qualification of Mina people as "peasants" is best understood by using Wolf's three criteria: First, peasants are agricultural producers even though not every one in the village is involved in agricultural production. It is still an important contribution to the subsistence of the town. Secondly, peasants maintain effective control over the land, as opposed to tenants whose control is subject to outside authority. Third, the peasant aims at subsistence, not reinvestment. (Wolf 1967:503-505) This is true in general in Mina, but some important modifications brought about by modern alternatives will be considered.

The unit of analysis of the study is not the Mina community per se. Mina is rather the ethnographic setting which provides the data for first, the ethnographic account of the life of the people, and second, an analysis of decision-making behavior. With this in mind, Mina as a community was chosen as the setting for this study, not necessarily for its "representativeness" of northern Mexican culture (although this was certainly a factor), but because it is the locus of

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much decision-making, especially with respect to the "modern-traditional" choices of economic activity and life style. In modern jargon, it is "where the action is" - where local population can buy, sell, seek work, enjoy entertainment, seek a cure, engage in political dealings, participate in organized religious activity, etc. There are more "modern" towns in neighboring municipios and more "traditional" settlements in the more outlying areas. I chose Mina partly because of its interaction qualities as it is physically and conceptually located on a crossroads connecting these modern and traditional areas. It is very important that the "external" factors not be treated as boundary conditions for the "internal" social activity in Mina, but that external forces in terms of ideas and alternatives be considered important aspects in community life. I will now present the reader with a general description of the ecological, historical, and socio-cultural factors in Mina to aid in understanding the more detailed data and analyses following this chapter.

The location for the study was the town of Mina in the state of Nuevo Leon, Mexico. Mina is situated at the eastern edge of the Northern Mexican desert area on the northeastern slopes of the Sierra Madre Oriental (Eastern Sierra Madre mountains). The town is in a position about 33 miles northwest of Monterrey, directly on the highway connecting Monterrey, Nuevo Leon and Monclova, Coahuila (see Figure 1). Mina is at the northwest mouth of the Salinas canyon, so named after the Salinas river which runs in a northwest-southeast direction through the area. The other end of the canyon opens

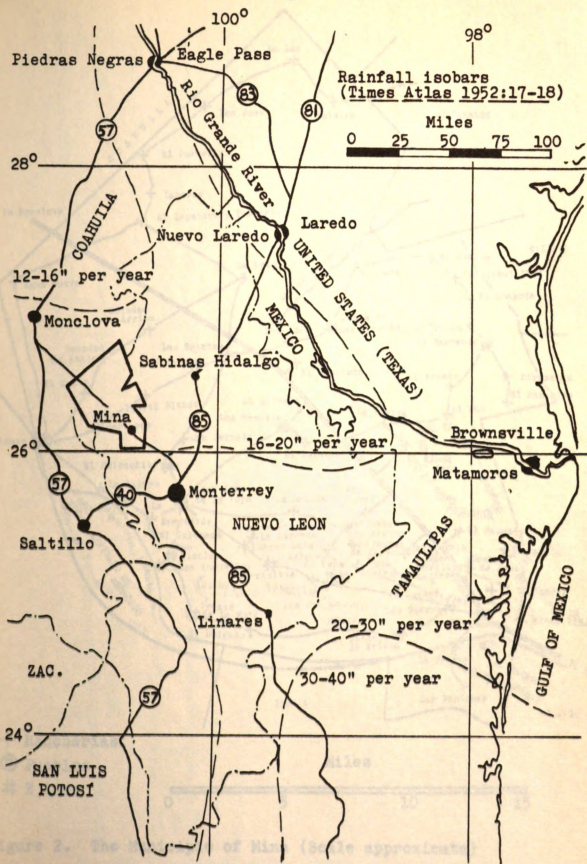


Figure 1. Location of the Municipio of Mina



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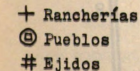


Figure 2. The Municipio of Mina (Scale approximate)

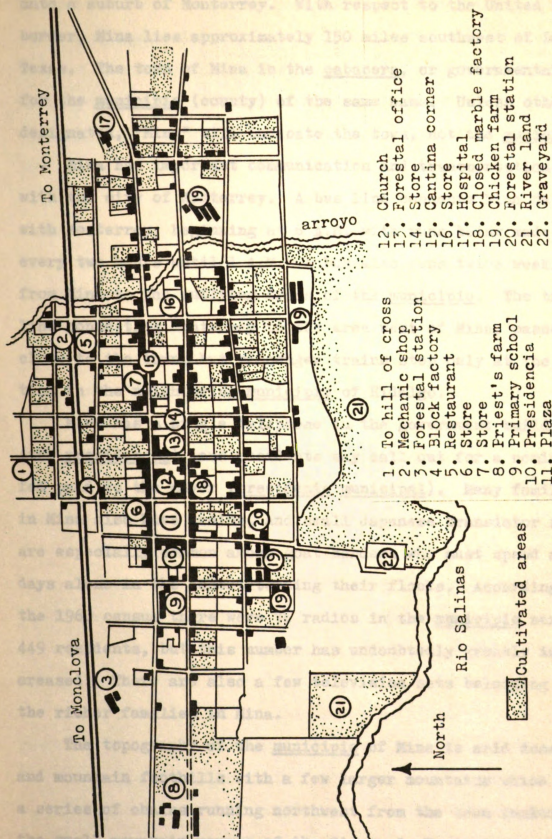


Figure 3. Map of Mina, Nuevo Leon, Mexico

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onto a suburb of Monterrey. With respect to the United States border, Mina lies approximately 150 miles southwest of Laredo, Texas. The town of Mina is the cabecera, or governmental seat for the municipio (county) of the same name. Unless otherwise designated, "Mina" will indicate the town, not the municipio.

Mina has important communication and transportation links with the city of Monterrey. A bus line connects Mina daily with Monterrey, beginning at 6 A.M. with runs being made every two hours until 1 A.M. A bus also runs twice weekly from Mina to the outlying areas of the municipio. The train line connecting Monterrey to the area west of Mina, passes close to the town, but passenger trains stop only at the station in the neighboring municipio of Hidalgo.

Mina has a single telephone in the government building (the presidencia), and residents may call out for a nominal fee paid to the mayor (presidente municipal). Many families in Mina also have radios, and small Japanese transistor radios are especially common among goat herders who must spend many days alone in the desert tending their flocks. According to the 1960 census there were 76 radios in the municipio serving 449 residents, but this number has undoubtedly greatly increased. There are also a few television sets belonging to the richer families in Mina.

The topography of the municipio of Mina is arid desert and mountain foothills with a few larger mountains which form a series of chains running northwest from the town including the small mountain ranges of the Sierra de Espinazo de Ambrosio, the Sierra del Muerto, Sierra de Minas Viejas, and Sierra

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de Gomas. This topography contrasts with the topography of those municipios lying directly to the east, which are much flatter, lower and contain more vegetation due to the greater amount of rainfall they receive. The eastern edge of the municipio of Mina demarks an ecological boundary line indicated by a slight rise in the canyon floor to Mina's elevation of 1,860 feet above sea level. The rise in elevation is marked by a distinct change in vegetation type. Below about 1,800 feet non-irrigated agricultural plots are abundant, and large groves of fruit trees are common. On the land above 1,800 feet, which includes the entire municipio of Mina, non-irrigated agriculture is marginal to impossible.

The soil is alluvial of different shades of grey and brown. The stone and gravel content varies from 30 to 40 percent. The proportions of sand and limestone vary from 30 to 50 percent, and 10 to 20 percent respectively. The pH varies between 7.4 and 8.4. Organic content ranges from 2.5 to 8.9 percent and total nitrogen content runs from 0.20 to 0.40 percent. (Marroquin 1965:115) Throughout the municipio, corn plots are found only where they can be watered by irrigation systems based on river water, natural wells, or where water can be hand carried from small cisterns.

The difficulty of agricultural production is seen in the patterns of annual rainfall. There are no rainfall figures for the municipio of Mina, but some idea can be obtained from climatological data from Monterrey, 33 miles to the southeast, and Monclova, 84 miles to the northwest. The monthly rainfall-temperature plots for Monclova and Monterrey are given in

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Figure 4. It is immediately apparent from the data the the annual rainfall decreases rapidly along a line from roughly southeast to northwest as the land rises to the beginning of the Central Mexican plateau. Monterrey is about 100 miles from Monclova, yet the total annual rainfall varies from 28.1 inches to about 11.0 inches respectively. This rapidly diminishing rate of annual precipitation is depicted by the rainfall isobars in Figure 1. Monterrey lies in the area of 20 to 30 inches of rainfall per year, Monclova in the 12 to 16 inches of rainfall per year zone, and Mina in the 16 to 20 inches of precipitation per year area. To give a further indication of the rate of decrease of rainfall to the westward, the annual rainfall rate decreases along the 26th parallel from 20 to 30 inches on the coast at Brownsville, Texas, to 16 to 20 inches in Mina, to 4 to 8 inches in Torreon, a total distance of about 360 miles. The rainfall differential was observed several times, particularly in the September and October rainy season when the tropical storms from the Gulf area would bring rain to Monterrey, but no rain would fall in Mina. The storm would appear to "funnel" down the valley from the Monterrey area, and disperse where the valley opens to the northwest about eight miles from Mina. It is at the mouth of this valley where non-irrigated fields stop and the desert begins. The rainfall pattern is one of dry winters (November through April). Toward the end of May and the first part of June, the spring rains come, but these rains are not dependable and have been slight over the past few years. Occasional showers occur during July and August, but the most

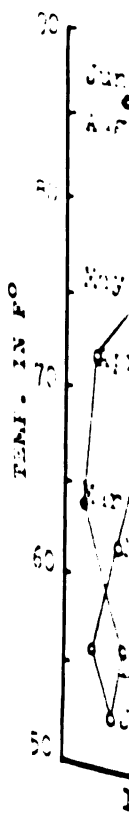
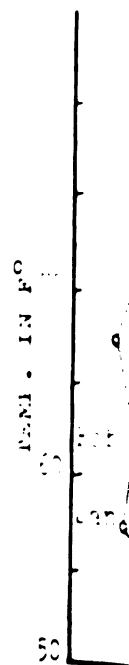


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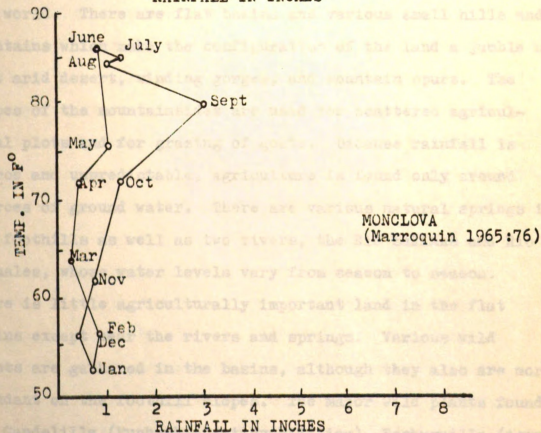
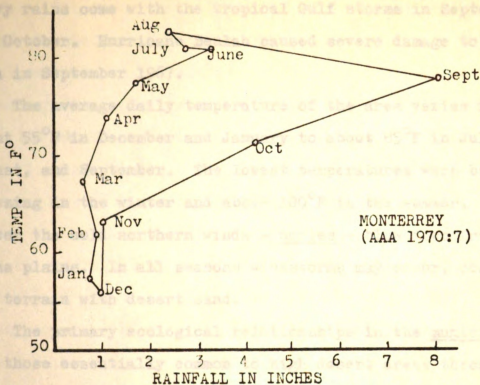


Figure 4. Rainfall and Temperature Curves for Monterrey and Monclova

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heavy rains come with the tropical Gulf storms in September and October. Hurricane Beulah caused severe damage to the area in September 1967.

The average daily temperature of the area varies from about 55°F in December and January to about 85°F in July, August, and September. The lowest temperatures were below freezing in the winter and above 100°F in the summer. In the winter the cold northern winds - nortes - blow down from the Texas plains. In all seasons windstorms may occur, obscuring the terrain with desert sand.

The primary ecological relationships in the municipio are those essentially common to high desert areas throughout the world. There are flat basins and various small hills and mountains which make the configuration of the land a jumble of flat arid desert, winding gorges, and mountain spurs. The slopes of the mountainsides are used for scattered agricultural plots and for grazing of goats. Because rainfall is sparse and unpredictable, agriculture is found only around sources of ground water. There are various natural springs in the foothills as well as two rivers, the Rio Salinas and Rio Cuanales, whose water levels vary from season to season. There is little agriculturally important land in the flat basins except near the rivers and springs. Various wild plants are gathered in the basins, although they also are more abundant on the foothill slopes. The major wild plants found are Candelilla (*Euphorbia Antisyphilitica*), Lechuguilla (*Agave Lechuguilla*), Palma Ixtlera (*Yucca Carnerosana*), Guayule (*Parthenium Argentatum*), Gobernadora (*Larrea Tridentata*), Nopales

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(Opuntia Streptacantha and Opuntia Leucotricha), Ojasé (Flourensia Cernua), and Mesquite (Prosopio Juliflora). A more complete list of wild plants and their folk-medicinal uses appears in the appendix.

The animal life in the municipio is desert fauna. The largest animal in the lower desert is the coyote. There are many species of venomous fauna including tarantulas, scorpions, black widow spiders, centipedes, and rattlesnakes. Life in the desert is particularly dangerous in the early spring when the various fauna emerge from their underground winter lairs. The first few weeks in April are known as "snake days" (días de la vibora) because it is then that snakes emerge from underground and are commonly found even in the towns. Deer and a few small bear are found in the higher mountain zones. Rabbits and rodents are numerous, and agricultural plots are commonly protected from them by cane fences.

The settlement pattern in the municipio is an adjustment to the desert conditions. The population density, averaged over the entire municipio averages about two persons per square mile, compared to 41 people per square mile in the neighboring municipio directly to the east where ecological conditions permit more abundant agriculture. The map of the municipio (Figure 2) will aid the reader in understanding the basic settlement patterns. The only true "towns", in the sense of a compact residential and commercial center, are Mina and Espinazo, a railroad maintenance station. According to a household survey taken, 867 people declare Mina their residence. However, because many of the men work in the

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countryside, the town population is probably 500 to 600 people at any given time.

The town is divided into definite neighborhoods or barrios. The bases of the divisions are various. One neighborhood, La Torre (The Tower), is so recognized because of its position on a small hill. Similarly El Barrial (The Clay Spot) is aptly named because of its nearness to some muddy patches in an arroyo. This barrio is also recognized as a discrete social entity because it is populated by a group of families who arrived from the South during the Revolution, and who are considered outsiders. A third barrio, El Obispado (The Bishop's Palace), is a direct take-off of a famous historical landmark in Monterrey, and is so named because it is the site of the farm of the local priest, and the residence of the family who works the farm.

The 1960 census figures indicate that of the total 3,055 residents of the municipio of Mina, 648 live in the town and 1,038 live on the ten ejidos. One hundred forty people live in the ejido of Los Guerra, about one kilometer from Mina; 156 live in Presa de las Mulas, one of the few areas where a river irrigation system is possible; 153 live on Los Remotos and 121 live in San Nicolas, two remote ranchería-ejidos. These are the largest ejidos. There are about 350 people in the railroad station town of Espinazo. Approximately 1,000 people live on about 70 ranchería settlements. Although these figures are from 1960, the presidente municipal indicated that these are probably about the same populations for 1968 as well. The towns, ejidos and larger rancherías are indicated in

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Figure 2. There are also two haciendas but they are very small; 32 people live on haciendas.

The settlement pattern consists of two basic types: the two towns versus a second ranchería pattern which includes the actual rancherías, the ejidos, and the haciendas. The town pattern of Mina is common in all parts of Spanish colonial America: a central plaza with a church on one side and government buildings on the opposite side; the remainder of the town a jumble of rectangular blocks containing residences and agricultural plots. The town of Espinazo is similarly arranged around the railroad station and sheds, and a central complex of buildings which is a shrine for a local curing cult which will be discussed later.

The common pattern in the rest of the municipio is smaller settlements surrounded by desert land: the rancherías. The more familiar configuration of small peasant communities surrounded by outlying fields is absent because the desert conditions will not support this style of agriculture. Instead, the small rancherías are "stations" for goat herding and gathering of plant fibers.

The settlements consist of scattered wattle and daub and adobe buildings interspersed with goat pens and small garden plots. The center of the ranchería may be a well or a spring. The size of the rancherías ranges from a few buildings in which a single family lives to settlements of many families with a dozen or so buildings laid out roughly in "streets". One ejido-ranchería settlement consists of a section of roofed-over dry gulches. The average population of the rancherías is

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13.3 people. The ejidos average 103.8 persons each, but this figure is misleading because all of the ejidos except the one closest to Mina consist of complexes of smaller ranchería settlements.

The non-ejido rancherías are on comunidad land - land which was declared free for anyone's use by President Cardenas in the 1930's. The ejidos are settlements on land that was specifically allocated for use by the community members during the same period of land reform. The haciendas are privately-owned agricultural settlements.

Some general population trends of the municipio of Mina can be noted. First, of the total 3,055 residents, 286 (9.5%) were born outside the municipio. This is due primarily to two factors. Five extended-family-households moved to the Mina area during the Revolution, and now these households represent about 100 people. The rest are accounted for by a few families who have since moved to this area, and by spouses who married into families in the municipio. Most of the people in the municipio (90%) were born there.

Secondly, the municipio shows a definite population decrease over the past 40 years or so as shown by the Mexican National Census. From 1930 to 1940, the municipal population increased from 3,997 to 4,633 (15.7%). From 1940 the trend has reversed. The population decreased from 4,633 in 1940 to 4,541 in 1950 (-2%), and from 4,541 in 1950 to 3,055 in 1960 (-33%). This decrease is due to a multiplicity of inter-related factors to be discussed in the body of the dissertation. In general the population decline is a result of

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depreciating agricultural productivity because of disappearance of ground water; of a better road allowing outmigration to Monterrey; of the declining lechuguilla fiber industry and subsequent federalization and price-fixing; and of the solidification of political and economic power in the community by a handful of families.

The small amount of agriculture that does take place on the rancherías is limited to a few locations on foothill slopes, and within the communities themselves on the land immediately surrounding the adobe huts. All of these agricultural plots must be irrigated, in most cases by hand carrying water from a natural spring or well. According to the 1960 census there are only 400 hectares of irrigated land in the municipio of 3,808 square kilometers, or about 0.1% of the available land is irrigated for agriculture. The impression one receives of the area is that of a vast desert populated by many very small "oasis" communities built around natural springs or wells. In the desert basins the only signs of human occupation are the sparse ranchería groups of two or three buildings, dusty trails connecting the various rancherías, and occasional goat herds with their herders.

Along with ecological factors, historical events are important in understanding the present configuration of Mina. One of the dominant themes in the history of this part of Mexico has been that of the "frontier", and a prevailing feature in the history of this frontier region has been violence. In preconquest times, this area was inhabited by Chichimecs, those diverse groups which continuously impinged upon the

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northern extensions of the various civilizations of the Central Mexican plateau and the Huastec regions along the Northern Mexican Gulf coast. Occasionally these "barbarian" groups penetrated into the more advanced areas, but more often the central groups had to repulse periodic southern migrations of these groups. The present northeastern states of Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosi, and Coahuila were occupied by Chichimec groups, and were the northern frontier states of the Aztec empire. The central civilizations allegedly sent various military detachments to this area, and although the relationship with the Chichimec "barbarians" was a central concern for the Central Mexican civilizations (Kirchoff 1966), the area was never brought under Central Mexican influence. After Spanish conquest of Central Mexico, small military detachments of Tlaxcalan allies were assigned to forts in Monterrey and Saltillo, Coahuila, which was the first time that military and political control was successfully extended from Central Mexico. (Hernandez 1969:57) It was during conquest times that the valley of Mina was a no-man's land between Spanish colonial Monterrey and the Indians to the north and west. The Salinas canyon, which is the mouth of the valley and wherein Mina is located, forms a natural "highway" or duct through which many indian groups passed on their way to and from Texas, the Southwest United States, and Northern Mexico. Nowadays the valley is littered with remnants of these passages: extensive pictographs and rock paintings, firesites, and arrowpoints. Skirmishes with marauding bands of indians continued until the late nineteenth

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century. Residents talk of the attack on Rancho San Antonio de Arista in the municipio when all the families on the ranchos were killed in one raid. Speaking of Spanish settlements in Northern Mexico and the Southwestern United States, McWilliams states, "The fifth century Europeans felt no greater fear of the Huns of Attila than the fear which the Apaches inspired in the Spaniards and the Pueblo Indians." (McWilliams 1948:29) In Northeast Mexico and Texas, a partial list of resisting indian groups includes the following: Coahuiltecas, Janambres, Molinas, Moralinos, Zapateros, Pintos, Comecrudos, Tamaulipecos, Malincheros, Tejones, Mescleros, Garzas, Venados, Pames, Olives - all of which were subgroups of Pueblos, Apaches, Comanches, Utes, and Navahos. (Solis 1971:59)

Mina was first settled in conjunction with the general exploration and settlement of the Northeastern Mexican territory around Monterrey. Don Diego Montemayor and a group of soldiers and colonists founded the Monterrey settlement on September 20, 1596. The area around Monterrey including the Valle de San Francisco de las Cañas (which was later renamed as the Valle de Mina) was settled by small ranchers who grazed cattle, sheep, and goats in the desert, foothills, and in the more fertile areas directly surrounding Monterrey. Captain don Alvino Villegas Alconedo was given jurisdiction over the land in 1761. He arrived with his company of settlers and soldiers to take possession of the land for His Majesty and to bring the already-existing ranchos under the protection of his troops. The written testimony of this

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possession was placed in the "permanent archives of the valley" by Villegas, and now remains in the presidencia (government building) in the town of Mina. In 1796 Don Antonio Gutierrez Maldonado obtained permission from Carlos IV of Spain to create settlements in the valley, and to bring existing ranches under his jurisdiction. This edict was primarily for the purpose of organizing the settlers to more effectively fight off the indians who continued to destroy crops and run off the animals from the ranches. Because of the plight of the people living in the valley, Carlos IV ordered in a Royal Command to the governor (Don Juan Manuel Muñoz de Villacensillo) of the state of Nuevo Reino de Leon (later changed to Nuevo Leon) to pacify the area.

During colonial times there was allegedly little social mixing or intermarriage among Spanish and indians because of the continuous warfare. There was little interaction with the local indians, and those who did come under Spanish jurisdiction became essentially slaves who worked the fields and mines of the area. (Hernandez 1969:57) This contrasts with the settlement patterns in Central Mexico where the Spanish and indians mixed immediately to form the present Mestizo Mexican physical characteristics. Although no physical anthropological data was taken, a subjective impression of the Mina population is that many people in Mina, especially the families that can be traced to the founders, are more "white" (blancos) compared to mestizo families, many of which have migrated into the area since 1900.

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constructed on a common plan: a central plaza with a church on one side, a government building on the other, and houses of the more "important" people along the adjacent sides. The rest of the town was laid out in square blocks containing adobe houses that present only doors and barred windows to the street, but that open onto pleasant interior patios.

After Mina was established, more small ranches were settled around the town. Around Monterrey the original colonial settlers' economy as indicated by Saldaña (1965:2) was based on goats, sheep, cattle, maguey (tequila), small-scale agriculture, and crafts. Much of this pattern persists in Mina, modified by the disappearance of sheep and commercial maguey, and the influence of industrial jobs and modern markets in Monterrey.

Although no informants discussed it, the time of the Texas Revolution and Republic (1836-1846) saw many skirmishes, murders, and raids along the border area between the Republic of Texas and the Mexican border states of Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas. Initially, competition for Texas land was the cause, but the conflict soon generalized into "Anglos" versus Mexicans. The slaughters of Anglo-Americans at the Alamo and Goliad as well as the inability to agree on boundaries added to the problem.

"Throughout the decade of the Texas Republic, the shooting war continued...Murder was matched by murder; raids by Texans were countered by raids from Mexico." (McWilliams 1948:101) Border strife continued throughout the Mexican-American War (1846), and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo,

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which ceded approximately half of Mexico's territory to the United States, only aggravated local Anglo-Mexican animosities. Also the treaty did little to terminate the violence in this area.

"Taking advantage of the confusion which prevailed, the indians launched fierce raids on both Anglo and Hispano settlements, conducted marauding expeditions deep into Mexican territory, and cunningly exploited the hatred that had been engendered between Anglo and Hispano." (McWilliams 1948: 104) The mountain valleys and passes in the municipio of Mina are filled with old firesites containing flint chippage to testify to these times.

The Anglos blamed the raids on Mexican instigation, and vice versa; the result was a melange of skirmishing groups: the Indians, Texas-Anglos, Mexican Nationals, Mexicans in Texas, various groups of gold-seekers, adventurers and outlaws. Cattle raiding in both directions across the border in the 1870's further complicated matters. "The raids were so frequent that the whole territory was entirely in the possession of cattle-raiders and bandits...The raids culminated in March 1875, when a band of 150 Mexicans crossed the border near Eagle Pass and raided as far East as Corpus Christi." (McWilliams 1948:109) As far as is known, Mina was not directly raided during these times, but it is important to realize the violent climate of the times in this area.

During the Independence period (1851-1910) the town-ranch settlement and economic patterns persisted. During this period the town was renamed in honor of Francisco Xavier

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Mina, a hero in the Mexican Independence movement. By the end of the nineteenth century three large agricultural and stock-raising estates (haciendas) were formed which employed many of the local people in semi-servile occupations. The growth of large landed estates is to a large part due to the favorable policies and laws of the presidential regime of Porfirio Díaz from 1876 to 1910. (Tannenbaum 1968:192)

The establishment of these large estates in the latter 19th century was especially significant in the northern states. Between 1877 and 1910 the number of agricultural haciendas more than doubled in five Mexican states: Tabasco and Chiapas in the South, and Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Sonora in the North. The increase in cattle ranches was much more spectacular. Seventeen of the thirty one Mexican states more than doubled in number of ranchos. The leader was Baja California: from 35 in 1877 to 1,093 in 1910, an increase of about 3,000%! Nuevo Leon increased from 952 to 1,799. (Tello 1968:Cuadro 1) By 1910, 60% of the rural population of Nuevo Leon was located on large ranchos and haciendas. (Tannenbaum 1968:192) It is not known exactly what percentage of the local population worked as peones for the haciendas, but according to the accounts of older informants it was quite high. The wages paid to the people ranged from 50 centavos to one peso per worker per day, but as one old informant stated, "a family could live very well on a peso in those days." Often the wage was paid in food and clothing. Credit was extended by the hacendados and many of the workers were in permanent debt-peonage. The haciendas seem to have

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From 1908 to 1925 the border saw increased violence now because of Mexican revolutionary activities and Texas-United States reactions. It has been estimated that from 500 to 5,000 Mexican civilians were killed in the border area. (McWilliams 1948:111) Again, from Brownsville to Calixico, raiders crossed and recrossed the border, taking advantage of the confusion of the Revolution.

With the coming of the Revolution, the large-scale haciendas were abandoned, and their ruins are quite dramatic features of the landscape. There are presently a few haciendas in the municipio, but they are nowhere near the reported scale of the earlier ones, and are similar to poor ranchería communities in the area.

The Revolution of 1910 saw much action in and around the municipio. Various raids and battles by various revolutionary and government groups took place locally. Various members of the community participated in revolutionary activities, and there was one minor skirmish fought in the town. One elderly man told the author of wrangling horses for General Pershing when he entered Mexico on the punitive expedition in 1917, but had to stay in the United States for ten years because he was afraid to return to the reaction of the villagers to his having served the yanquis.

Since various military groups passed through Mina on the way to and from Monterrey on revolutionary missions, many townspeople felt that the only way to survive was to remain

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neutral enough to avoid the wrath of any particular faction. Whenever this topic was discussed, informants told the story of "El Muerto" (The Dead), a small abandoned ranchería near Mina. The legend-story has it that one day Pancho Villa's band rode in and forced the men at gunpoint to ride with him. The very next day a Federalist patrol, noting the absence of men, were told by the women that they had all ridden with Villa. In reprisal, the troops killed the remaining women, children and aged. When the men returned a few weeks later, the bodies hadn't even been buried, so they placed the remains in a large common grave and abandoned the ranchería, which supposedly hasn't been visited since.

The political bases of the Revolution such as the orderly succession of elected presidents, land reform, and the creation of constitutional government did not seem to be clearly understood by the local people. One informant stated "Many men went to ride with Pancho Villa. They didn't know why. They just wanted to be part of it." Señor P, an elderly man who had worked on one of the local haciendas before the revolution said, "They didn't understand the revolution. They didn't know what they were doing. They knew that there was a war and they rode off." That the Northerners were unclear about the forces in the Revolution is also noted by Womack. "More a force of nature than of politics, the Villista party was commotion rampant. These northern drifters could give their populism no real point. Cowboys, muleskinners, bandits, railroad laborers, peddlers, refugee peons, the Villistas had no definite class interests or local

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Some families of Mina outmigrated to the United States to avoid the conflict, to return only after the fighting had died down. Another elderly man worked in the mines in Arizona from 1911 to 1920: "...to get myself out of the war. There were many crazy people around in those times."

It was at this time many local men crossed into the United States to escape the local upheavals and to find work. The mines in Arizona and the farms in Texas were the greatest attractions. There they experienced the often violent discrimination against Mexicans. Local residents account fights and beatings administered by Anglo-Texans, often abetted by local police. There was a fear of the Texas Rangers, "Rinches", based on many tales of murder and violence carried out against Mexicans. This is documented by McWilliams. "Much of the lawlessness against Mexicans in Texas had an official or semi-official status, for the Texas Rangers had become a kind of 'black-and-tan' constabulary bent on terrorizing the Mexican population." (McWilliams 1948:113) These times live on in stories and in the folk-song corridos and décimas, such as the corrido of Gregorio Cortez who fled the Texas posses after killing a sheriff in defending his family. (Paredes 1958) These songs are especially prevalent in the northern border area where the tradition of Texas-Mexican animosity and violence persists. (Paredes and Foss 1966:91; Paredes 1966: 157)

The post-revolutionary period brought changes to Mina common throughout Mexico. (Tannenbaum 1968:198-224) The

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large haciendas were disbanded; ten small ejidos were established in the municipio. The ejidos, exhibiting the basic ranchería settlement pattern, consist of small groups of buildings scattered throughout the desert. Small-scale irrigated agriculture, fiber gathering, and goat herding on common land are the primary economic activities on the ejidos. The former hacienda grazing land was declared "community" land and is now used for stock grazing both for the ejidos and for the population in general. Various federal programs including a workers' union, a peasant woman's club, and a station of the federal natural resources organization, Forestal, have been implemented in the community. Naturally irrigated agriculture, supported by artesian wells (since dried up) was a widespread mode of production in the foothill areas after the Revolution.

During the period directly following the violence of the Revolution (from about 1920 onward) a series of events occurred that greatly influenced the present social, political, and economic character of the town. With the disruption of the haciendas and the general social flux brought about by the violence of the national upheaval, a small group of families in Mina started to solidify their own social and economic position in the town. One family had amassed a large amount of ex-hacienda land and was employing local people as laborers before the land reform activities of the 1930's. Another former peón family had allegedly been involved in black market activity, and amassed enough money to start a local store. With land reform, the desert land was made

public, but the arable land near the river remained in private hands (see Figure 3). The pattern that started to emerge in the 1940's and 1950's was a group of local families who began to dominate the economic and political life of the town. The means to domination were economic: storeowning and ownership of the agricultural areas to the south of the town.

During this time others improved their economic position, one by rebuilding and repairing used jukeboxes imported from the United States - and moved away, mostly to Monterrey. The families who remained however, continued to coalesce their local power. They employed other locals on their large farms and in their stores. The presidentes from 1940 to the present have been members of only three families.

This pattern was amplified in the ten years from 1955 to 1965 for essentially two reasons: construction of wells for the Monterrey water supply, and in 1964 the installation of Forestal. Six large wells were built near Mina during the years 1955-1961. After operation was initiated the local artesian wells stopped flowing, and many of the local shallow wells and natural springs dried up, probably a consequence of a lowered water table. The result was the almost-complete disappearance of local agriculture which had depended on these water sources. The only agriculture that remains is those plots that can be irrigated by hand from small cisterns, and a few fields of poor quality to the south of the town which get their water from the ground water near the river. Much land became useless for agriculture, and hence not only

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The unemployment for the workers, partially alleviated by a small mining company which operated a marble processing plant in Mina in 1962-1963, has remained high. The plant was not successful and closed after only two years of production.

The second factor was the installation of a Forestal station in Mina. This was part of a federal program to help the communities in the arid states of Northern Mexico. The basic program was to regulate the exploitation of natural plant material in the arid zones. The primary regulations pertained to the production of Candelilla (wax), Lechuguilla (fiber), Palma Samandora (fiber), and Nopal (fodder for animals). In Mina, the program affected mostly the production of Lechuguilla. Candelilla and Nopal production was affected secondarily. The program as instituted assured the gatherers of these wild plants a fixed price for their production to protect them from market fluctuations. This was particularly important for Lechuguilla fiber (ixtle) whose market value was allegedly becoming zero in the early 1960's. The program also stipulated that the plants could only be gathered by hand-held tools to prevent large-scale mechanized production. The reasoning was two-fold: to provide jobs and to protect the natural resources. (Marroquin 1965)

Forestal stations were established throughout the northern states. Here the products were received and packed, and the individual either received cash or credit slips for his produce. In some areas, storeowners obtained federal

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The result in Mina was that two of the storeowning families became the administrators of the local Forestal agency. Alleged graft in both the administration of the agency and in the exchange of credit slips at their store enabled them to rapidly improve their economic position in the town. They bought land: not the outlying worthless land, but the land and houses within the town. They dispensed jobs on their land, in their stores, and in the agency as favors for loyalty to them. Many peasant producers were indebted to their store. This will be discussed later in the thesis, but the total result is that four families basically control the economic and political life of the town; they are referred to as the "new patrones" by many of the people of the town.

Although they will be considered in more detail later, two socio-cultural principles are presented here so that the structure of political-economic life in Mina can be understood. The first is the formation of compadres, or the institution of compadrazgo. The most important compadre relations are formed at the baptismal ceremony of a child, when the parents select godparents to be ritual sponsors of the child. The parents and godparents become compadres, a relationship which entails mutual respect, trust, and sometimes aid. The second institution is that of patronismo, the relationship between a patron (patrón) and a client. Patrón-client relations are essentially superiority in relationship: the patrón may be the ritual sponsor, an employer, an influential person,

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etc. The client, conversely, is the parent requesting ritual sponsorship, the employee, the person under the protective beneficence of the influential. Compadrazgo and patrón-client relations are particularly important in the relationship among work groups, and among employers and employees in Mina.

The basic facts of social organization in Mina are the domination of the town by the powerful families who are connected to the rest of the town through ties of kinship, compadrazgo, and patrón-client. Virtually all wage labor positions are controlled by these families who allocate the few jobs available. These families control Forestal, own the stores, cantinas, and most of the land, and have held the important political offices for the past 30 years. The five powerful families are surrounded by a group of loyal employee-compadre-clients who not only supply the labor base of their economic power, but are politically loyal.

The resulting social class system is three dimensional: the "upper" class are the immediate members of the powerful families; the "middle" class are those tangential relatives to the powerful families plus a small number of independent families who run small businesses or have larger goat herds. These two social segments represent approximately one-fourth of the population. The remaining three-fourths are the poor "lower" class. They are by and large gatherers of ixtle fiber, small-scale agriculturalists and goat herders and miners.

The pyramidal social structure is reinforced by the upper class' ties with political and business powers in Monterrey with whom they have been able to control the office of

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presidente municipal (mayor) and Forestal. Until the mid-1950's control lay in two closely-knit families. However, events since then have led to schism and competition among the upper class families: another family became rich and influential via a jukebox repair business; another allegedly discovered buried treasure and used it to build a competing store; a disagreement over the directorship in Forestal split the two originally powerful families; another family has started a store, a cantina, and a restaurant, and has started to align itself with the increasingly vocal ejiditarios. A significant change occurred as a result of the elections of 1969. The state organization of PRI, the dominant political party in Mexico, bypassed the candidates submitted by the various competing upper-class factions for the office of presidente municipal. Instead, PRI endorsed the candidate of the ejiditarios, a female school teacher, allegedly as a slap in the faces of competing factions. In general, the past 20 years have seen continuous competition and sometimes intrigue in the upper class, with accompanying flux in the compadre and patrón-client ties relating the upper to the middle classes.

For the lower class this time has meant continuing poverty and powerlessness due to the meager resources of the area, and the limited job opportunities controlled by the upper class. It is in this context that the peasant must decide: to try to eke out a marginal existence of fiber gathering, garden agriculture and goats; to try to seek a job in the city; to ask a member of the upper class families to

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be a compadre, hereby ensuring perhaps a job and adequate subsistence, but running the risks inherent in the upper class intrigues and possible shunning by the rest of the lower class families; to try to start a small business complementary to or in competition with the dominant families. These are some of the decisions the peasant-worker faces. Underlying it all is the desire for economic resources to "progress" and to be "modern" versus the basic need for enough to survive in a "humble and traditional" mode of life.

The recent history of Mina is characterized by better transportation and communication links with Monterrey and hence with the rest of Mexico. A highway connecting Monterrey to Monclova via Mina was built in 1964-65. Passenger trains which connect Mina to Monterrey and Monclova were built during the revolutionary years. The Mina station has been discontinued, and passengers must catch the train in the neighboring municipio. Buses connect Mina to Monterrey at two-hour intervals daily.

Electricity was installed in Mina in 1961 as part of the Mexican national program of rural electrification. Various other small communities in the municipio are presently undergoing electrification also. One telephone in the government building serves the entire municipio.

Continuing the pattern set by the colonial settlement, the town of Mina is the cabecera, or governmental seat, of the municipio, and hence is the location of various state and federal offices and services. There is a state supported primary school established in 1956. There is also a small state

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hospital with a visiting doctor and a permanent nurse. Some post-revolution federal programs, the Peasant Woman's League (Liga Feminil Campesina), the National Workers Organization (Syndicato de Obreros), and the Federal Natural Resource Conservation Organization (La Forestal) have been established in the community in the past ten years. The workings of these agencies will be discussed later.

In many ways Mina is representative of the small Northern Mexican peasant towns serving the rancho and ejido system common throughout the northern states, but Mina is distinctive because of its proximity to the large industrial center of Monterrey. The people of Mina are very conscious of the nearness of Monterrey and the modern life style it implies. The landing pattern of jets overlaps a corner of the municipio; Monterrey radio stations come in loudly on the omnipresent transistor radios; the 33 miles to Monterrey is only an hour and a half ride on daily buses. To some residents this all represents an opportunity to enter and imitate a better, "modern" life. To others, it is a force to be resisted. An important point to be emphasized is that the entire economic system is closely dependent upon exchanges with Monterrey. The ixtle fiber is sold via Forestal in Monterrey, goats are consumed in Monterrey restaurants, phosphorite from the mines is shipped to Monterrey, people are employed in Monterrey, and all of the manufactured goods and many consumables are brought to Mina from Monterrey. Although the communication and transportation to Monterrey certainly has improved in the recent past, Mina's reliance on the urban

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center is not a "modern" phenomenon. We read in the statements of the early Spanish settlers in the area around Mina that the economic production of sheep, goats, tequila, and small-scale industry such as mining was largely for shipment to Monterrey. Don Diego de Ayala addressed his rural neighbor in 1666:

To my neighbor - landowner - keeper of cattle and goats, horses and mules, on the outskirts of the city of Monte Rey, and miner in this village, in the first days in February of this year...I built a smelting hacienda to serve the mines and parts of mines in this area. I built it from the first foundations in order to work the said mines at much cost to my finances; I brought to this village a group of carpenters, metal workers, bricklayers, and, for use in the business, I secured 100 mares; 800 work horses, 60 mules; more than 100 head of cattle - 60 cows and 40 bulls; and 200 head of sheep and goats; with 400 bushels of corn and wheat and 20 measures of tobacco; one set of bellows, two sets of cannons, shot and ball; 20 axes and seven steel bars; hammers, nails, saws, pliers, and other necessary hardware; with which, with my industry and good luck, and by order of your mercy, most of the hostile Chichimecs were removed from this area, with all their families of women and children.....and started the smelter and it is working and running. I and Diego Gutierrez went to the hill and saw the caves where they had been working for ten months without finding a productive vein... after returning to work the cave in the first part of November, they found a vein of more than seven kinds of metal. ...We plan to work with these veins and will soon begin to bring our (product) to Monte Rey. (Translated from Cavazos-Garza 1964:31)

In many important aspects, Mina and the North in general are distinct from the rest of Mexico, and various suggestions have been advanced to explain these differences. A primary factor is that life in the area has been influenced by its desert ecology, the proximity to the United States, by its isolation from the social and cultural life of the rest of Mexico, and by its own particular history. The past in

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this part of Mexico has been a continual struggle against the natural elements and the marauding indians. This is in contrast to much of the rest of Mexico which has a long history of adequate agricultural production and relative peace between Spanish and indigents since early contact. In the North there is little or no influence of indigenous cultural traditions except those brought there by indian and mestizo immigrants over the years. This part of Mexico has been isolated since before Conquest from the "civilized" life of Central Mexico. Adams relates Monterrey's industrial growth to this isolation:

The great industrial complex of Monterrey, Mexico, developed in a situation somewhat separated from the general social development of Mexico. Although Monterrey was connected by rail with Mexico City late in the nineteenth century, the general attitude of the development strongly reflected the private-enterprise practices of its northern neighbor...A somewhat similar development occurred in Antioquia, Colombia, where the semi-isolated locals permitted remarkable industrial development, relatively free of the governmental controls so evident in Lima, Mexico City, or Rio de Janeiro. (Adams 1967:120)

A distinctive northern "culture" (La Cultura Norteña), which distinguished residents of the North from the rest of the Mexican population, has arisen partially because of these circumstances. Mestizo Mexicans in general recognize and caricature Norteños as being more independent, aggressive, thrifty (to the extent of stinginess), argumentive, and boastfully self-reliant and proud.

The tradition of violence has allegedly led to certain characteristics of Northern or "Norteño" life Solis describes as tension-ridden, hostile, impulsively aggressive, and

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defensively violent. Although these characteristics are found throughout Mexico, it is especially prevalent in the northern states because of the long tradition of violence. (Solis 1971:79)

These attitudes are summed up in Mina in the much-used phrase "hombre del campo" (man of the countryside) which means that a man is a successful embodiment of the above-mentioned traits, and that his "natural" place is in the challenged-and-beaten desert. The phrase also implies that he will stand for no affronts on his masculinity, and that he can aggressively handle himself in the social world as effectively as he does in the natural one. He must be strong, crafty, independent, self-reliant, and above all, manly. These attitudes result in a "cowboy" impression of the men.

Guns are extremely popular in Mina as they are in the North in general. Men often go about with pistols in holsters or simply tucked into their belts. It is common to see armed men in the small towns throughout the area. Solis tells the legend story of the response of the Norteño who was given the choice of a gun and a horse, or a woman. He chose the gun and horse because, "with a gun and a horse, a woman will follow." (Solis 1971:107)

The "Revolutionary" - especially in the style of Pancho Villa - is a widely emulated style. On two occasions while the observer was in Mina, men used this image to vent their frustrations by getting drunk, arming themselves, mounting a horse, and riding out of town, shooting into the air as they left. This is a common occurrence according to informants,

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and is described by an informant as "the freedom that a man of the countryside needs."

Related to this Hombre del Campo complex is the attitude toward the countryside itself. The two most often mentioned qualities in association with desert life are that it is lonely (solo) and sad (triste). Herding, for example, is described as being "muy solo y triste" (very lonely and sad). The desert land and foothills are described as "la tierra triste" - the sad land. In conversations with Monterrey residents, the author was often asked how he could possibly live in such a "sad" area. In the distinctive Norteño music these are also the common themes. The songs commonly account of an aggressive and masculine Man of the Countryside who is truly sad that he must leave his town girl to seek his life and fortune in the desert and mountains, often with his group of friends and compadres.

A final important cultural aspect of the life in Mina is the belief in the supernatural powers of a charismatic curer, Niño Fidencio, who lived in the municipio during the 1920's and 1930's. The reputation of his miraculous cures grew during his own time, and since his death, the faithful make semi-annual pilgrimages to his tomb in the outlying town of Espinazo. The belief and celebrations are primarily a lower class phenomenon, and have come to be a supernatural justification for the poor, humble, but morally superior life of the traditional Mexican peasant. The cult also offers a curing opportunity alongside the hospitals and doctors of the area. The cult members form no unified group in Mina. There

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are a group of women who regularly attend the Sunday curing sessions given by the local curer, but they are not formally organized nor do they engage in any other activities together. Instead, the Niño Fidencio system offers a mystical curing alternative to the formal, scientific, and sometimes over-worked hospital-doctor system, as well as providing a positive supernatural justification for the poverty engulfing the population of the area.

These then are the important factors in the Mina setting: a harsh, desert ecology; political-economic domination by a few families who have made their fortunes in the years following the 1910 Revolution; the increasing incorporation into the modern world primarily because of proximity to Monterrey; the influence of the magico-religious Niño Fidencio curing cult; and, a long tradition of isolation and frontier violence which has resulted in a distinctive Cultura Nortena, typified by the independent and aggressive "hombre del campo". The rest of the thesis will be a more-detailed consideration of these various dimensions, and kinds of decisions that are made in this context.

CHAPTER 2

Economic Life in Mina

Zapopan sews shirts in a factory in Salinas Victoria, she comes home almost every weekend. Papa, Prisciliano, and Silvestre have been working on Rancho Teposan clearing land and helping build an irrigation system. They have also worked in the United States, in the mines and on the Pemex gas line when it came through Mina. The mines were very dangerous, they don't work there anymore. Alejandro tends goats. Next week my father and brothers will go on the truck to Monclova to work on the highway. Daniella and I help Mama clean and gather firewood and ixtle after school. We help work the ixtle too! Soon we can put up a new tin roof over our kitchen. Maybe I'll get to go to high school in Hidalgo.

Gloria O.

A good place to begin understanding life in Mina is the activities which enable the people to gain a living from the desert environment: the economic production system. There are few villages in Mexico where agriculture is the only production method. Instead, in most villages are found many economic activities. Wage labor particularly is becoming one of the most important.

In Mina there are additional wage labor alternatives because of industrial development in Monterrey, but it seems that economic production in Mina has long been diverse. As previously discussed the diversity stems from two main factors: the nature of the desert ecology and the influence of the Monterrey urban complex.

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The household is the main productive unit. The inner dynamics of the household-production units will be discussed at a later time, but a typical household unit might be illustrative. The father of a particular family works for a local storeowning family on an agricultural plot south of the town. His two sons tend the small family goat herd, and gather and process lechuguilla while they are in the desert with the goats. The mother does the household tasks and cares for a small garden-corn plot to the rear of the house. She also is raising a few pigs and chickens in pens in the garden area. Three small daughters help the mother at home, but one teenage daughter has a job with a clothing factory in a small town near Monterrey. Such is the economic-production diversity in one household, and this is the common pattern throughout Mina: various household members working at various tasks and contributing to the economic survival of the household unit.

The spheres of economic production and distribution activity are divided into four areas:

- 1) Primary production (i.e., wild food gathering, agriculture, ixtle fiber production, and goat raising).
- 2) Wage labor (i.e., private employment in and outside of Mina held by Mina residents).
- 3) Businesses (i.e., stores, cantinas, rental activity and numerous small businesses).
- 4) Government employment (i.e., well workers, Forestal employees, teachers, presidente municipal).

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Primary Production

Gathering of natural desert foods, herbs, and materials for subsistence and sale is important. Goat herding also is widely practiced. The Mina area is also a source of ixtle, a henequen-like fiber extracted from Lechuguilla (Agave Lechuguilla), a natural desert plant. Candelilla (Euphorbia Antisyphilitica Zucc.) is also gathered to be used in wax production in Monterrey. The leaves of the Nopal cactus are shipped for cattle feed. Small goats are shipped to Monterrey restaurants for the preparation of cabrito (roast kid), a popular regional dish. Goat cheese is made on a small scale and sold in the Monterrey markets.

The dependence on subsistence agriculture combined with goat herding and naturally occurring food and raw materials leads to an economic system based on different production methods, all related in varying degrees to the Monterrey market. This system, described by Wolf as "type four" peasants, consists of peasants who: "...habitually sell the larger part of their total production in restricted but stable local markets...a relatively stable market may offer a certain guarantee of small returns. Into this category may fit groups relatively ignored by anthropologists, such as many Mexican rancho communities..." (Wolf 1955:469)

Each of the production techniques has its own economic, technological, and organizational aspects. It will be useful to briefly describe the main features of ownership, production, distribution, and consumption of the various production areas.

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The gathering of natural foods and materials from the desert is important in the economy of Mina. During certain periods of the yearly cycle, the women and small children come in from the desert laden with sacks full of plants, fruits, blossoms and roots. The gathering is done in the "community" (comunidad) land surrounding the town. There are many seasonal plants which are important foods, especially during certain festival periods. Cactus blossoms (Flor de Palma), nopal leaves, mesquite, prickley pear (Tuna), worms and snails from the century plant (maguey), flowers of the Izote plant, wild honey, Biznaga cactus, leaves, and bottle gourd (chilacayote) are some of the plants prepared and consumed. The gathering and preparation is done by women and small children to be served to the family. The especially seasonal foods such as cactus blossoms are often prepared and given as gifts to compadres and relatives. The receiving family often returns a prepared dish when the next desert food is ready for harvest. The receiving family may reciprocate with a prepared or cultivated food (other than the staple corn, beans, or chile) such as avocados, honey, or candy. Particularly during Christmas (Navidad) and Easter week (Semana Santa), groups of children scurry about to the houses of their relatives and padrinos to deliver small plates of cookies and candy, kettles of freshly-prepared desert foods, or small baskets of fresh cactus leaves.

One food of special note is Nopal leaves or "nopalitos". During Holy Week before Easter, nopalitos are a popular traditional dish partially due to the religious prohibition

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The desert also supplies the various herbs for medicinal folk remedies which are very numerous (see Appendix for list and uses of herbs). The various herbs are gathered in small quantities by each household for its own use except in the case of one man who gathers large quantities of herbs and sells them to a stall in a market in Monterrey. He makes trips two or three times each week and returns with 30 to 40 pesos (\$2.40-3.20 U.S.). He also transports and sells goat cheese for another family which will be discussed later.

Firewood is gathered by men and boys using burros and axes or machetes. The wood is sold for about three pesos (\$.24 U.S.) a load to local residents. Wood (leña) is the main fuel for cooking and heating. A man working alone can bring in three to four loads per day, all of which is likely to be purchased in the cold winter months. In the summer, firewood collecting tapers off because of the lower consumption.

One hundred and twenty six men and boys, representing 65 households or about half of Mina's 134 households gather ixtle fiber for the major part of their cash income. The fiber is extracted from the lechuguilla plant, and is used for making rope, sacks and mats locally. Most of the fiber, however, is used in Monterrey industries for packing and for stuffing furniture cushions. The fiber is often known in

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The fiber production activity is the largest single source of money input to the local economy via exchanges at the Forestal agency. Ixtle fiber production for the year 1968 was 328,600 kilograms (about 360 tons) or roughly one ton per day. The production resulted in the payment (at the rate of 2.50 pesos per kilogram; \$.20 U.S.) of 821,600 pesos or about \$65,728 U.S. Based upon 3,055 residents in the municipio, this averages to \$21.50 U.S. per person per year, or about \$110 U.S. per household per year.

The gathering and processing is done by the men and boys either singly or in small groups of relatives or compadres. Small groups of men and boys often spend several days to a week camping out on the mountain slopes where the lechuguilla grows more abundantly. Although they travel in a group, it is more for company and safety rather than any cooperative work effort. Each man, or more correctly, the men from each household, work in their own behalf. There is no sharing the final amount of fiber.

A machete-like bar (tallador) of iron about 30 inches long is used to cut the spiney leaves from the heart, or cogollo, of the lechuguilla plant. The spines are removed by hand, and the fibers are extracted by scraping away the hard outer leaf with the same iron tool. The leaves are stripped three to six at a time. Half of the leaves are held against a piece of wood (bolillo) about 6 inches long, and is pulled with one hand, while the other half of the leaves are placed between

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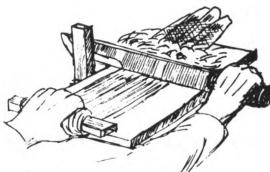
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Figure 5. Steps in Extracting Ixtle Fiber

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another larger board and the knife, and is stripped and cleaned with the other hand. Sometimes the leaves are passed under the tool three or four times before all the husk is removed. (See Figure 5 for a schematic presentation of the fiber extraction process.) After one-half of the leaves are cleaned, the fiber-ends are twisted around the bolillo, and the second half of the leaves are scraped clean. The removal of fiber is done at the site of cutting, or the entire leaves may be brought back to the village or ranch for later processing. If the fiber is brought down from the mountains unprocessed, the smaller children and women usually do the work of extracting the fiber. The fiber is allowed to dry in the sun for two or three days before it is ready for use or shipment to Monterrey. The work is tedious. As Kirby states, "The scraping of the fiber by hand is difficult and unpleasant, and the work is hard. Moreover, the juice of the pulp of the leaves is very strong, and burns the skin of the workers and hurts their eyes." (Kirby 1963:407)

Most of the crude fiber is sold to the Forestal agency. The commercial exploitation of the lechuguilla plant is the economically most important gathering activity in the arid zone of Northern Mexico. In 1960, Mexican ixtle production was 25,850,112 kilos with a value of 52,866,389 pesos. (Marroquín 1965:119-129) The total production has come under the jurisdiction of Forestal under the Subsecretaría Forestal y de la Fauna (Subsecretary of Forestry and Fauna). This organization is under the Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería (Secretary of Agriculture and Livestock). Forestal was a

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result of the investigations and recommendations of the Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Forestales (The National Forestry Research Institute), particularly the natural resources inventory project, the Dirección General de Inventario Nacional Forestal, which carried out an inventory of natural resources between 1961 and 1964. Forestal was established by federal legislation in 1964 to carry out and enforce laws designed to protect Mexican natural resources by regulating their use. (Daniels 1969)

The legislation most pertinent to Mina was that concerning the production of ixtle fiber, and, to a lesser extent, production of nopal for cattle feed. The ixtle fiber can be sold in crude form only to Forestal. The individual producers can sell any products that they make themselves on the open market. Some peasants produce some rope and ore sacks for miners, but most sell their fiber to Forestal at the fixed price of 2.50 pesos (\$.20 U.S.) per kilo. The theory is to maintain a price for the benefit of the ixtleros because the fiber is essentially worthless on the international market. The legislation also provides that lechuguilla can only be hand-gathered and processed, again for benefit of the individual producer, although it has been difficult to develop a machine to harvest and extract the fiber efficiently. (Kirby 1963:408) Forestal maintains two small processing stations in Mina where the crude fiber is combed, sorted, and packed into bales to await shipment by Forestal truck into Monterrey. There it is sold at 6 pesos per kilo to various factories. The greatest use of the fiber is for making furniture

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and car seat-fillings, for scrub brushes, and general insulation and packing.

One extended family has controlled the managerships of the local stations since the inception of the Forestal program. The original manager now tends his other businesses, including a local store, and is semi-retired. Various informants said that the managerships have been political favors given by PRI party officials in Monterrey to local men who have been loyal to them on various occasions. The employees, in turn, are men who have supported the managers in local political dealings, or are relatives or compadres.

The ixtleros receive 2.50 pesos (\$.20 U.S.) per kilogram (2.2 lbs.) of fiber sold to Forestal. Since it takes about 1,000 kilograms of fresh plants to yield 100 kilograms of fiber, 100 kilograms (220 lbs.) of leaves must be harvested for a return of \$20 U.S. A producer may receive the money in cash or in credit slips which he can later convert to cash or exchange for goods at a local store which is also a federal concession run by the same managers. It is a common practice for the ixtleros to make purchases at the concession on credit against their future collection of ixtle fiber. However, the fiber brought in rarely is enough to cancel the debt, so that a "company store" situation is common: many peasants always owe the store.

During the summer when lechuguilla is most abundant, an ixtlero, working a 10-12 hour day, can gather and process about 5-6 kilos of fiber for which he receives 12-14.00 pesos, or about \$1.00 U.S. However, the ixtleros do not work at the

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same rate day by day. He usually rests a few days after a gathering foray to the mountains. Or he may work in his corn patch, or go to work in the mines for days or weeks at a time. The seasonal abundance of lechuguilla affects his work rate. There are times when an ixtlero and his family spend all working time working the fiber; there are other times when they concentrate on other activities. However, there is usually some processing going on at all times in most of the households. Goat herders cut lechuguilla while watching their flocks. Miners process small amounts during off-hours. Children remove spines and extract the fiber as part of their daily chores. From observation of six ixtlero households, and from conversations with members of others, it is established that those who depend on ixtle for all or part of their cash income collect and process the fiber between 150 and 200 days per year, depending upon the need. Thus, about half of the families (65) derive a major part of their cash income from fiber. Other families (except for the few relatively well-off) also work the fiber to some extent. Although the cash return is small in relation to the effort expended, lechuguilla is always available and Forestal will buy all fiber produced at the set price. Cash is directly proportional to effort, so that a family's lechuguilla effort is related to 1) the demand for cash such as during festival periods or during illness, 2) the availability or necessity of other economic activity such as corn plots, goat tending, mining, etc.

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bought and sold only through Forestal. But if the fiber is manufactured into a product, it can then be sold privately. A few households in Mina use the fiber to weave rope, make small scrub brushes, and to weave large mineral sacks. The products are sold locally, but small demand restricts the income of these families almost to that obtained by simply selling the crude fiber to Forestal.

A third alternative is to sell the fiber on the black market to various companies in Monterrey. The Forestal agency pays 2.50 pesos a kilo to the gatherers, but sells the fiber to the various industries for 6 pesos a kilo. The high selling price is to supposedly force the companies to buy synthetic fibers to aid in the growth of the plastic industries. It also supposedly serves to bolster the price of the natural fiber which allegedly is almost worthless on the international fiber market.

Various small companies prefer to pay around 5 pesos per kilo for "black market" fiber directly from the gatherers. Due to the nature of the "business", information about it is difficult to obtain. At least one family buys fiber from relatives or trusted friends, and, by night, carts the fiber to Monterrey in an old truck. The purchase, loading and departure of the truck was observed. Later negotiation with a Monterrey hardware store was also noted. I suspect from conversations with a member of the smuggling family that some of the fiber is unregistered Forestal fiber and that the profits are split by a Forestal official and the smugglers. If stopped by Forestal agents on the highway, a small bribe is paid

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and the "smugglers" (contrabandistas) pass unmolested. The family states that the ixtleros get more money for the fiber and the company pays less so "who loses"? "Only the government." This particular family makes two or three trips per month depending upon the demand of the Monterrey hardware store.

Another natural product, candelilla is processed and sold through Forestal in a similar manner, but the buying price is so low (also 2.50 pesos per kilo) that few residents ever work it. Only during its peak season in the late spring might a small group of men venture to the nearby mountains to collect the waxy plants. Part of the problem is that it is scarcer than lechuguilla, comprising less than 1% of the cover in the Mina area, compared to lechuguilla which comprises 11-30% of the vegetation. (Marroquín 1965:124) Candelilla is a source of wax that has an unusually high melting point (72°C), and thus is used for industrial waxes and polishes, as wax insulation in electronic circuits, and in chewing gum. The process of harvesting is again tedious. The unrefined wax (cerote) is extracted in the countryside by boiling in vats, using the dried branches as fuel. Small camps are formed around the vat fires while a particular locality is exploited. The unrefined wax is taken to the Forestal stations where it is graded and trucked to the central refinery at Saltillo, Coahuila. There it is purchased from Forestal by the Banco Nacional de Comercio Exterior (National Bank of Foreign Commerce), and processed for export. The fundamental problem is that Carnuba, a wax from Brazil, has all the

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properties of candelilla but sells for much less on the international market. For example, the 9 pesos per kilo needed for sulfuric acid to process the wax is only slightly less than the wax sells for at its export point of Tampico. (Mackinnon 1967:91) The most important factor in Mina is that it requires much more work than ixtle for the same return. Candelilla production is restricted to a few of the very poor ejidos in the municipio.

Of the 134 households in Mina, 80 practice agriculture in some form. As mentioned earlier, the harsh desert ecology makes non-irrigated agriculture impossible. The Rio Salinas passes the southern edge of the village, but it is very feeble most of the year. Another drawback is that it lies in a gorge 20-30 feet below the level of the surrounding fields, making it difficult to raise sufficient quantities of water for useful irrigation. Some small plots of corn are planted along the river at various locations. These corn patches receive some sub-soil water, and are also irrigated by hand-carried water from the river. One large plot of 23 hectares lies directly to the south of the town. There are various small natural springs in the hills, and small rancho communities utilize the water for goats and for very limited agriculture.

The sparse natural rainfall begins in the spring and gradually increases to the wettest month of September (see Figure 4). In previous years, before the wells for Monterrey were dug, the natural water table was high enough to provide a few natural springs and shallow wells near the village which permitted quite extensive hand-irrigation in the land

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surrounding the village. By plotting the areas where there is evidence of past agriculture, it is estimated that at one time 200 to 250 hectares were under cultivation near the river to the south of the town (see Figure 3). However, the pumping of large amounts of water to Monterrey, plus an extended natural drought has lowered the water table and dried up all previous sources of water. The village now receives its entire water supply via a small conduit tapped into the main water line to Monterrey. Many of the houses have single water taps connected to this system, but there are a number of clusters of households which use single, centrally-located outdoor water taps. Each household pays 10 pesos per month (\$.80 U.S.) for the use of the water, which is a source of constant irritation because when the wells were dug, the villagers were promised that they would then have much more water - more than they could use - and that they would never have to pay for it. Instead they received a very low pressure water system with a monthly bill. In order to soothe the villagers, the water agency came up with a promotion to name the wells after girls of Mina, and to have extensive press coverage of the event to broadcast to the rest of Mexico. The evening of the event arrived, but the officials did not because they received word that the villagers were ready to lynch them - with national coverage.

The restricted water supply has led to an agricultural system which I shall call the "pila system". The pila is a large water cistern built on the surface of the ground from concrete blocks and fed by a fawcett of the town water

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system. Most pilas measure about six feet long by four feet wide by four feet deep, although there are both smaller and larger variations. Usually the pila and fawcett are a household's only water supply.

As discussed earlier, the town is laid on a Spanish colonial grid plan with square blocks divided into four to eight lots. On most lots, an adobe building faces the street, while the "back yard" was intended, in the Spanish style, as a patio containing a few extra buildings, a well, and some fruit trees. However, with the pila system, the "back yard" becomes an intensely cultivated area. The pila is built on the highest point in the yard, and small irrigation canals are dug from the pila to other points on the plot. Corn, chile, vegetables, herbs, flowers, and fruit trees are planted together in a profusion of growth. The crop is irrigated periodically by turning on the fawcett and letting the pila overflow into the canal system. The plants are meticulously cared for, to the extent of tying back the leaves and stalks of various plants to make room for others. Small "dykes" about the size of dinner plates are often hand built around each corn stalk to preserve all the moisture possible. To give an idea of the intensiveness of the system, whereas temporal or naturally irrigated corn is spaced about 18 inches apart, corn in a pila plot may grow as close as 8 to 10 inches to the next stalk - with other plants interspersed. This system of crowding the food crops within the blocks of the town gives Mina an "oasis-like" appearance in contrast to the more common peasant communities surrounded by fields.

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Figure 3 presents the locations of pila plots. Two crops of corn per year are grown in this manner. The first is planted in March and harvested in June; the second is grown from late June or early July to September. Avocados, beans, chile, and various flowers are grown among the corn stalks. Often, grape vines are grown above a small hog pen or chicken coop, and sometimes directly over the pila. Many plots contain a few maguey and nopal cactii. Many households keep bees for the honey.

As the plots are on house lots, they are privately owned or rented. There are communally-run ejidos in the municipio, but their subsistence is based on public grazing land discussed later. The products are predominantly claimed and consumed by the household living on the particular lot. The only exception is one family that grows corn on an outlying plot especially to use as chicken feed. Most of the food produced is consumed by the household, a small amount being exchanged as gifts. This is especially true for the "luxury" products such as avocados, honey, and grapes. The gifts are of no great value and are exchanged along existing kinship and compadre lines rather than being used to create any new social ties. The only agricultural product sold is nopal leaves which are sold by a few families during Holy Week. The money received is minimal, amounting to only a few pesos a day for one week of the year.

The males of the household ideally work the plot, but in most cases not enough food is produced to feed the family for the entire year. The older sons and father may also gather

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ixtle and firewood, work in the mines, or seek wage labor elsewhere. During these periods of absence, the younger sons and women take over the care of the food plot. Data on task distribution will be presented later. The reader is advised to consult Table 1. Occasionally, when the older males secure relatively stable employment elsewhere (such as in the mines or on a ranch), the women perform all the field tasks as well as the women's chores. The men return on weekends and do any particularly heavy work, but it often results that the corn plot is entirely the women's domain. Women also may weave, sew, gather plants, or cook meals for cash income so that there is an overlap of the division of labor by sex. Conversely, men working in the mines, ranches or on the desert on ixtle forays must do "women's work" such as preparing and cooking food and washing clothes and bedding.

The household supplies the labor to work the food plot, but occasionally outside assistance is required to mend rabbit fences, plow the plot, dig irrigation canals, etc. Compadres or close relatives supply the extra labor. Customarily there is no cash payment for the labor, but the extra help receives meals and beer or mescal, plus the promise that he will be aided when he needs help on his plot. Reciprocal labor obligations are thus established between relatives and compadres without the use of cash. The agricultural labor is exchanged on tasks that have a regular and periodic nature such as plot preparation, planting, and fence mending. One informant stated:

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Those jobs that are non-repetitive such as house construction or clearing a new plot of land are more subject to price negotiation. Compadres, relatives and friends are still enlisted as with repetitive tasks, but the labor is usually paid for at the completion of the task. During spring clearing and planting, various pairs of relatives and compadres were observed aiding each other with the field work. All remarked that they were assisting each other without payment except for two instances. In one case, a small new area of land was being cleared so the planter gave his brother-in-law 20 pesos (\$1.60 U.S.) to help him with the labor. In the second case, a new plot of land was being cleared, and the planter had enlisted the aid of his cousin on the promise that he would help cement an adobe wall on his cousin's house at a later date. The laborers in the large field to the south of town are paid on a wage labor basis.

Non-agricultural employment seems to follow a similar pattern of offering the job to a friend, relative, or compadre. For example, a local storeowner hired a friend at a set rate of 50 centavos a block to build the walls of a restaurant building. Another hired a cousin and a friend to help restore a ruined building with concrete blocks and a new tin roof. Each man received 100 pesos (\$8 U.S.) for the week's work plus noonday meals.

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In summary then, agricultural and non-agricultural labor is exchanged or contracted in Mina depending upon the nature of relationship between the men and the size of the task.

Since colonial days, the municipio was an important commercial producer of mescal, a liquor made from the maguey, or Century Plant. Small plots of maguey were common around all rancho communities. However, a recent increase in the federal tax on the product has destroyed local production. The desert around the town is dotted with ruins of large outdoor hearths where the juice was boiled from the cactus. There is still small-scale "moonshiner" production on some of the outlying ranches. The liquor, euphemistically called "shoes, size ten" (zapatos, tamaño diez), is sold to the local cantinas in quantities sufficient for local consumption. The going price is ten pesos (\$.80 U.S.) per gallon.

Stock production, particularly goats, is a very important economic activity in Mina. Thirty-three families have goat herds that range in size from 10 to 1,500 head. The report of the presidente municipal states that there are 18,500 goats in the municipio, an average of over 6 goats per person. The goats are privately owned, and grazed on the community lands.

The products of the goat herds are milk, cheese and goat meat. A good producer will give two to three liters of milk per day. Part of the milk is consumed by the family, but the greater part is sold to a dealer from the neighboring town of Hidalgo, who makes the rounds of Mina and various rancherías every morning with a pick-up truck. The morning milkman is

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also a main source of transportation from Mina to the outlying rancherías. The milkman delivers the milk to a small cheese factory in Hidalgo which makes goat cheese for sale locally and in Monterrey. He buys about 1,000 liters of milk five days per week at 50 centavos per liter (\$.04 U.S.). This is estimated to be about 10% of the total milk produced. Daily payments to the various producers are 500 pesos (\$40 U.S.). Yearly input to the local economy is about 125,000 pesos (\$10,000 U.S.). There are also a few families who make and sell their own cheese, but their production and sales are small compared to the sale of raw milk. For example, the largest independent producer (a storeowner) makes about 6 kilos of cheese per day which sells for 10 pesos (\$.80 U.S.) per kilo in Monterrey. The yearly total is 20,000 pesos (\$1,600 U.S.) minus 200 pesos (\$16 U.S.) per month the family pays a man to deliver the cheese. The other few independent producers make considerably less than that figure.

Goat meat is very popular in Northern Mexico in cities and countryside alike. Various restaurants in Monterrey specialize in the roasted young kids, known as cabrito. On the rancherías where it is difficult to raise and feed hogs and even chickens are scarce, goat meat is often the only meat in the diet. The meat is prepared in many ways including roasting over coals, various stews, and entrails fried in blood. The goat buyer from Monterrey buys 1,000 to 1,500 young goats per month from the area at about 60-75 pesos (\$4.80-6.00 U.S.) each. He said he averages about 500 goats per month from the municipio of Mina for a yearly expenditure of about 360,000

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pesos (\$28,800 U.S.) per year. The total yearly input from goat products is thus about 515,000 pesos (\$41,200 U.S.).

Goat herders, who are members of the household or hired workers, take the goat herds into the desert in the early morning for grazing. At noon the goats are watered at a natural spring or in a pila in town. The goats are taken out again in the afternoon for grazing, and are returned at dusk for milking. The animals are penned up during the night to protect them from coyotes and goat thieves. Some local goat herders take the goats to better grazing in the foothills and may remain there for a week at a time.

Many goats are not kept in town, but on small rancherías or stations in the desert. Commonly, a single man or nuclear family occupy a single adobe shelter or cave for weeks at a time tending the goats and selling the milk to the milk truck every morning. The herders may come to town only when they require food or other supplies, or may seldom come at all if they have a small corn and vegetable plot.

The goat herders are always men. Whereas women sometimes take over male tasks in agriculture or crafts, women never herd goats. An explanation by various male informants is that women could never survive in the perilous desert, and even though women live in the ranchería communities, they never are entrusted with the care of the goats. This is one of the few strong sexual divisions of labor in the Mina economic system, perhaps based more on territory (the desert is "man's country") than task.

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little livestock besides goats. Burros are common and are used mostly for carrying loads of firewood. Horses are rarer, but are highly valued for riding and for pulling buckboard wagons. Many households have a few pigs for meat for special occasions. One family has a herd of 100 cows which are pastured on an outlying ranch. The crude milk is sold locally after milking time in the morning and early evening.

Most families keep chickens. The eggs are more important in the diet than is the meat. This is especially true on the rancherías, where one of the most common items of diet are huevos rancheros (ranch-style eggs), which are eggs poached with various chiles and served with refried beans and tortillas. A few unmarried or widowed women earn a small cash income by selling chickens and eggs locally.

There are three privately owned commercial chicken farms in Mina which have been built within the last five years. Collectively, the farms contain about 3,600 chickens. During the period of these observations, the farms lost an equal number of chickens to disease and heat. Chicken farming in the desert is considered very risky and many local residents do not think the chicken farms will last.

The feed for the farms is bought in Monterrey, except for one chicken farm which utilizes corn from an outlying plot of land for part of its chickenfeed. The eggs and birds are sold entirely in Monterrey. The few "employees" on the chicken farms are members of the owners' families, who use most of the profits received for investments and purchases in the Monterrey economic sphere. This is an irritation to some

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local residents who observe these moderately successful businesses as completely external to the Mina economy. Two of the three owning families run the business in an isolated fashion - feed is bought in Monterrey, eggs are sold in Monterrey, and little money enters the local economy because employees are relatives who do most of their purchasing in Monterrey. The third chicken farm is owned by a local family who are the most significant holders of economic power in the town. Along with the farm, they own a cement outlet store, a general store (which is the Forestal credit slip concession), a cantina, they recently purchased a large truck with which they do contract work, and they own much land and many rented buildings in the town. They are also part owners of a small hotel in Monterrey. They are past managers of the local Forestal agency which aided their amassing economic power. They employ a family to run the chicken farm, but this is a very small input of cash into the local economy. They grow some of their own feed corn and buy the rest in Monterrey, where they also sell the eggs and chickens.

Even though at first impression the existence of large relatively modern sheet metal chicken houses among the more-common adobe huts would indicate economic importance, the chicken farms are well-insulated from any significant part in local economic transactions.

Wage Labor

Seventy three individuals representing 46 households (34.3%) receive some part of their income from wage labor.

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This does not include government employees who will be considered separately. The wage laborers include 23 miners, 16 with jobs in other towns, 10 block factory employees, and 24 others who are employed locally as cantineros, store employees, goat herders, field hands, truck drivers, and general laborers. The primary employers of the latter 24 are the four more prosperous storeowning families who utilize the labor for their enterprises. The data of wages paid to all 24 workers is not complete. One cantinero is paid 60 pesos (\$4.80 U.S.) for weekend work, as was not noted earlier. A common rate for goat herding is 10-15 pesos per day (\$.80-1.24 U.S.). Informants stated that a usual rate in Mina for a laborer was 10-20 pesos per day (\$.80-1.60 U.S.) depending upon the job and the worker. This was consistent with information from a storeowner-employer. The official state minimum wage of 17.60 pesos per day (\$1.40 U.S.) was not rigorously adhered to. Twenty of these regularly-employed 24 workers are also either relatives or compadres to their employers. The effect of this upon the socio-political life of the community will be considered in detail later. Occasional employees are also often compadres.

The only industry in Mina is a small concrete block factory which, like the restaurant, was started during the research period. The "factory" consists of two electric concrete block machines capable of producing three blocks at a time each. The initial investment for the machines 15,000 pesos (\$1,100 U.S.). The cement is purchased from the cooperative factory in the neighboring municipio. Gravel is

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purchased from the quarries near the cooperative, and water is supplied by the Mina water system.

Approximately 1,200 concrete blocks are produced daily on two eight-hour shifts. The concrete blocks are sold locally, in the rest of the municipio, and as far away as Monclova, a distance of about 100 miles. The blocks are sold for 80 centavos (\$.06.4 U.S.), or 1 peso (\$.08 U.S.) apiece if delivered. A total daily sales amounts to about 1,000 pesos (\$80 U.S.). The block factory works six days a week, producing an output of 7,200 blocks at a sales of \$480 U.S. Ten men are employed at the block factory. This seems to be the only employment in Mina that is not closely tied to kinship or compadre relationship, but rather is based solely on the ability of the workers.

The block factory is owned and managed by two equal partners, one of which lives in Mina, and the other lives in Monterrey. Although 1,200 pesos are inputted into the local economy per week in wages, it is paid to employees representing only eight households of the 134 Mina households, and has a small overall effect on the local economy. Assuming the money enters local circulation, it averages between one and two pesos per capita.

Another important local source of cash for wage labor is mining in the privately-owned phosphorite mines in the hills surrounding Mina. Of Mina's 134 households, 12 receive cash income from mining. Many men in Mina have worked in the mines, and many occasionally mine when other sources of cash are not available. The mines are small, accomodating five to ten

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workers each. Mining techniques are primitive. The mineral is chipped from the cave walls and floor by pick-axe, and carried to the surface in crude sacks on the miner's back. Twenty three miners earn about 30 pesos per day for a five day week. The monthly income per miner (verified by interviews) is about 600 pesos (\$48 U.S.). Total yearly income of all the miners is then about 165,600 pesos (\$13,200 U.S.).

Crude ladders and haphazard shoring make mining a very dangerous activity, and accidents are frequent. During the research period, a cave-in in a mine a few miles from Mina killed six men, one of which was from a Mina family. One informant remarked, "I used to like to work in the mines. I always had work and I made as much then as I do now (he now works on the highway crew). But I am too old now. Mining is for young men who have the energy. It is also very dangerous."

A man seldom goes to mine alone. Usually fathers and sons, brothers, or compadres mine at the same time, perhaps partly for mutual aid in case of accident. All informants recognized mining to be "very dangerous", and all had some accounts of accidents or near disasters. The mine disaster of Barrotean, Coahuila which also occurred during this time was a frequent topic of conversation. Although no informant admitted that he was afraid to mine, one mentioned that it was good to have a relative, friend or compadre with you in the mines "for security" (para seguridad) - someone who would not leave you if you were injured.

Whereas males rarely participate in religious activities

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either in the church or home, the living and working areas of the mines contain many small altars, religious candles, medals, and holy pictures. Men seldom attend the masses in the town, but often pray for luck and protection in the mines. The workers must stay at the mines the entire working week (Monday through Saturday), and when they return on Saturday night it seems that they always become the drunkest.

About 16 individuals have permanent jobs in other municipios, but still reside in Mina. This figure continuously fluctuates as workers seek wage labor elsewhere, leave town, return, work *ixtle* in the area, etc. Most, like the miners, live at their jobs and return on the weekends, but one man has commuted daily by bus to and from Monterrey for seven years. Various families moved to Monterrey to live nearer the jobs, but have returned to Mina. The reasons given for returning are that it cost too much to live in Monterrey, even in the poorer colonias, and that the city life - the noise, traffic, smoke, etc. - is not healthy for a person that is "accustomed to the country life" (acostumbrado al campo).

The type of wage labor most valued by the young men in Mina is truck driving. The most desired type are the large platform trucks that carry cement, lumber, machinery, etc. It seems to be popular not only for its high wage (averaging about 50 pesos - \$4 U.S. a day), but for the appeal to the sense of adventure and masculinity ("muy hombre"). Large trucks in the Monterrey area are commonly decorated with very "macho" grafitti such as "El Arabe" (The Arab), "Conquistador"

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(Conqueror), "Diablo Rojo" (Red Devil), "El Pirata Morgan" (Morgan the Pirate) and "Rey de las Montañas" (King of the Mountains). The themes important to truck drivers in Mexico seem to be religion, masculine adventure, romantic (stressing independent machismo rather than marriage), humor, class consciousness, popular songs and movies, and current United States fads. (Edmonson 1959) There are only a few young men in Mina who ever get the opportunity to drive a large truck either for a local storeowning family or for a Monterrey employer, but truck driving is a central topic of conversation. Pretending to drive a truck is a popular boy's game, and to be a truck driver is a primary ambition of grade school boys.

Various Mina girls are employed as domestic help in the households of the more well-to-do families. There are about six or seven girls that have regular positions, and extra girls and women are brought in to help for special occasions such as 15th birthday parties, and holidays. The girls are expected to clean, cook, wash, and take care of the children for which they each receive a monthly payment of about 150-200 pesos (\$16 U.S.). There is also a small number of women who take in washing and ironing.

Businesses

There are a number of small businesses in Mina. The most numerous are the four small general stores. They are family owned and run enterprises consisting of small rooms which are part of a larger family dwelling. The stores' inventory is bought in Monterrey, and consists of a few shelves

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of canned food, some boxes of fresh fruit and vegetables, some sacks of corn, beans, coffee and flour, cases of beer and soft drinks, candy, and various hardware items such as rope, leather thongs, nails and tools, wire, knives and machetes. There may also be a limited selection of hats, shirts, pants, and materials for sewing. The investment in inventory is low (estimated at a few hundred dollars at most), and only one (owned by the family discussed above with respect to chicken farms) maintains any non-family employees. Customers are local people and families who periodically come in from the rancherías to shop and go to church (the women and children) and to the cantinas (the men).

There is no complete data on total expenditures of money by all inhabitants in local transactions as well as purchases in Monterrey and other locations. An approximate idea of the scale of purchases can be gleaned from three data sources however. First, observations of daily bus usage indicate that small amounts of clothing, special foods such as candy, and toys and gifts are the most common items brought back from trips to Hidalgo and Monterrey. Secondly, many informants indicated that they spent by far the greatest amount of their money for food and goods at the local stores. Thirdly, a storeowner-landlord indicated that his customers spent virtually all their money (roughly 100 to 200 pesos:- \$8-16 U.S.- per household per week) in rent and in purchases at his store. Both peasant informants and the storekeeper indicated that shopping trips outside Mina were special occasions. Some adult peasants said that they had never been to Monterrey.

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The exchanges by individuals in Monterrey are small compared to the purchases of beer, store stocks, produce and hardware that are bought by the storeowners for sale in Mina.

The cantinas (saloons) are operated in conjunction with the stores. There are five in Mina, the four major ones occupying the four corners of the intersection of the main street one block from the plaza. Like the stores, they are single rooms in a larger building. The rooms contain a long bar, a large ice chest, a few old and broken tables and chairs, and usually a battered jukebox. One has a pool table. Windows are boarded up, and the street entrance is through swing doors.

The major drink is beer which is delivered daily by truck from a distributor in the neighboring municipio of Hidalgo. The distributor receives his stock directly from the brewery in Monterrey. The cantinas also usually have on hand untaxed and therefore illegal mescal, the tequila-like drink mentioned earlier. It is customary that for weekend "celebrations" small groups of men pool their money to buy entire gallons of the potent liquid for 10 pesos (\$.80 U.S.). Needless to say, behavior in the cantinas, which are restricted to males, is often boisterous, and the weekends are often punctuated with drunken brawls.

The cantinas are all owned by families who also own stores. Three cantinas are open all week, the other two opening just for the weekends. The bartenders are hired by the owners not only for their skill at serving drinks, but for their ability to maintain order. Three bartenders are

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The cantinas are the main social centers for the working males in Mina. As many work away from town in mines, on ranches, or in other towns during the week, the cantinas are where weekly reunions are made, and the week's news exchanged. It is also where most business negotiating goes on between compadres and potential employees and employers. They are also the main locations of "showdowns", usually because of an insult to someone's masculinity. The fights usually result in only black eyes and broken teeth, although shootings and knifings have occurred.

Most local monetary exchanges are purchases at the local cantinas, stores, and rents paid for houses and land. With the exception of the small amount of cash spent on trips to Monterrey or given to the church or curing cult, all money earned by the peasant population is spent locally in stores and cantinas, or paid as rent. They are the exclusive loci of purchase exchanges: there are no peasant markets where prices are haggled. Neither are prices for moonshine tequila discussed. The cantina and storeowners set buying and selling prices on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Said one storeowner, "My prices are a little lower than (the other storeowners). But ultimately they have to pay the price we ask. It is difficult for them to shop in Hidalgo (the neighboring town). We really don't make much money because there aren't many people in Mina."

It was not possible because of competition and factioning among the various storeowners to get complete data on the

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scale of exchanges in all stores and cantinas. However, the income and expenditures for one storeowner were recorded. The total sales of his store amount to between 1,600 and 2,000 pesos per week (\$128-160 U.S.). Of this, he spends 800 to 1,000 pesos (\$64-80 U.S.) to replace inventory. The profit is about 1,000 pesos (\$80 U.S.) per week. He carries a number of families on credit so that he does not always turn over that amount for a week. He also opens a cantina on weekends. For ten cases of beer and a variable amount of contraband tequila he receives a profit of about 500 pesos (\$40 U.S.) per weekend. He pays a compadre 60 pesos (\$4.80 U.S.) to mind the cantina on Saturday and Sunday. From renting various properties, including the only restaurant, and for running a minor state office he receives an additional 820 pesos (\$65.60 U.S.) per month, plus a reduction in his electricity rate. His monthly total net income is about 6,400 pesos (\$512 U. S.). His sister also operates a tortilla-making machine, and his father collects rents from juke boxes he rents out in other towns around Monterrey. They are part of the same household, but their contribution to the income is variable. The sister is having trouble getting the tortilla business going, because of mechanical problems with the machine, and because of local resistance because she is a divorcee. His father maintains three juke boxes at a capital investment of about 30,000 pesos (\$2400 U.S.). He declined to indicate how much he receives from their rental. Based on observation, his store is probably second largest in the town. The largest belongs to the family that also has the Forestal

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management concession. From this data, however, the reader can get an idea of the scale of exchange activities at the stores, cantinas, and related businesses.

During the year in which these observations were made, a restaurant was built and opened by the storeowner discussed above. The building was constructed from concrete blocks by local labor, and was placed near the Monterrey-Monclova highway. The total investment for the 12 by 24 foot concrete-block building, fluorescent lighting, plumbing, a gas stove and an ice chest, and tables and chairs was 4,800 pesos - about \$384.00 U.S. Most of the patronage is from the passing traffic; Mina people consider eating at the local restaurant a waste of money.

Instead of hiring a restaurant staff, the owner rents the facilities to a family who have complete control over hours, menu, and prices. The monthly rent is 150 pesos (\$12 U.S.). The hours tend to be erratic because the cook is also the local midwife, and the restaurant closes when a baby is being born. The family is barely making enough money to meet the rent, and the manager-cook is thinking about spending more time at midwifery where the money is better.

Across the highway from the restaurant is a car repair shop run by two compadres. One man lives on the premises with his family. The other compadre-partner is unmarried and lives elsewhere. The signs advertise that all repairs can be made, but in fact, tire repair, oil changes, and minor adjustments are the limit of capability.

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tortilla production is small, and sold locally. One business utilizes a hand-cranked tortilla maker, while the other has a power driven machine for making the dough (masa) and forming the tortillas. In both cases, the tortillas are griddled by hand. Both businesses are run by women. The manually made tortillas are produced by a household headed by a widow, while the mechanized tortilla outlet is run by a divorcee who is a member of a cantina-store household. Based on much local gossip, it is suspected that the more mechanized tortilla outlet was initiated by the household to force the less-efficient producers out of business and so retain economic control, but so far the strategy has not worked. The people continue to buy more tortillas from the widow's household probably because of their general attitude against the divorcee. Having a divorce is a sin in the eyes of most of the women. The divorcee also has a rather unsavory history, and is a member of one of the economically dominant households. The widow, on the other hand, has children to support, is very "humble", and is faithful to church functions - all making her a very "good" woman. Of course the rationale for buying her tortillas is that hers are better, but it is thought that these other factors are more important in the tortilla competition.

There are two small bakeries in Mina run by the same extended family living in two households. Various types of bread and rolls are baked three times weekly for local sale. The wheat-flour bread is baked in large brick ovens which are hand-fired with firewood. Bread is also baked in individual homes, but most of the bread eaten is purchased either from

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It should be noted that all these businesses - the stores, cantinas, and bakeries - are unlicensed, and therefore cannot advertise or hang out a sign. The only licensed business is the restaurant which needs a sign to attract the highway traffic.

There are occasional peddlers who arrive in Mina by bus or truck. These itinerants sell fruit, vegetables, pots, toys, and hardware. When an important event (such as Eisenhower's death) occurs, a peddler may arrive with a bundle of newspapers covering the story. There are also two "ice cream" peddlers in Mina. Both use ice purchased from the beer distributor in the neighboring municipio. One sells "snowcones" consisting of crushed ice dipped in sweet syrup, while the other makes ice cream from a "secret recipe" using a hand-cranked ice cream maker. Both sell their products door-to-door during the hot months.

There is a small amount of "cottage industry" in Mina. As discussed earlier, a few households manufacture items from ixtle fiber, and sell the items locally. Rope, scrub brushes, and miners' sacks are woven by hand and are sold door-to-door or by special order. Sewing, crocheting, embroidery, and quilt-making is a source of income for many women. The sewn objects may be sold locally, or may be taken to Monterrey for sale when a member of the family has occasion to take the bus into the city. One group of widows and unmarried women who live in the same neighborhood, collectively makes quilts and

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divides the profits from their sales. Another household headed by two unmarried sisters has two treadle sewing machines, and has set fees for the manufacture of dresses, skirts, blouses, pants, and shirts.

A small "business" within the community itself is the local raffles (rifas). This activity is exclusively a woman's activity. A woman offers something of value to be raffled and sells numbers throughout the town. During the research period various raffles were held, the prizes ranging from a child's doll to costume jewelry. Tickets for the raffles ranged from 10 to 25 pesos (\$.80-2.00 U.S.). The ticket holders who are able to attend assemble in the home of the raffler for the choosing of the numbers. Refreshments are served, games are played, the women gossip, and the raffle becomes a party, the climax of which is the choosing of the numbers. The occasional raffles are not very important to the overall scale of economic life in Mina, but raffles are the basis for frequent women's social gatherings.

There is a single "professional" midwife who in the past was a hospital aid in maternity cases in Monterrey, but who returned to Mina because she didn't like living in the city. She now is the most called-upon midwife, and sometimes travels by mule buckboard to the inaccessible parts of the municipio to aid in delivery of a child. A common pattern however, is for a woman in terminal stages of pregnancy to move in with a relative in town so that the midwife will be in easy call when the baby arrives. Payment for her service varies from 40 to 100 pesos (\$3.20-8 U.S.) depending on the

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difficulty of the delivery and the ability of the parents to pay. The activities surrounding the birth are a mixture of her "modern" training and skill, and traditional folk beliefs including various herb remedies and practices, such as opening all doors and windows at the moment of birth to provide a clear passage, rubbing the stomach, and sending the men out of the house. It is because of the mixture of the midwife's skill plus her personal familiarity and tolerance of traditional beliefs and practices that she is called upon more often than the people use the local hospital. In conversations with informants concerning the relative desirability of the midwife versus the local hospital, the most commonly used phrase was, "we don't have confidence in the hospital". The midwife, on the other hand elicits more faith because she is "del pueblo" ("from the town").

Government Employment

The six well-workers receive 45 pesos (\$3.60 U.S.) per day for a six day week. The total yearly input to the Mina economy is 81,000 pesos (\$6,480 U.S.). The ten Forestal employees receive 50-60 pesos (\$4-4.80 U.S.) per day each, resulting in a yearly total of 216,000 pesos (\$17,280 U.S.). I was unable to get information on the salaries of the director and secretary of Forestal. Also, the salaries of the four school teachers and the local nurse are not known, although they are most probably paid less than either well-workers or Forestal employees. Neither are the salaries of other government employees known (with the exception of the postal agent

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who earns 3 pesos - \$.24 U.S. - per day): the presidente municipal, his secretary, his assistant, and the comandante. The total income is then more than 297,000 pesos (\$23,760 U.S.).

None of the well workers are from the Mina area. Their families live in Mina, but have little interaction with the other members of the community. The 10 Forestal workers are all local men, and are relatives or compadres of members of two storeowning families. The offices of directors and secretary have also been occupied by members of these two families since the inception of the program in 1964.

It is now necessary to summarize some aspects of economic life in Mina before analyzing the perceptions and choices of economic-production activity. First, an idea of the scale of the economy can be obtained. The following economic activities result in the receipt of money into the Mina area: ixtle fiber production, the sale of goat products, wage labor in the mines and areas other than Mina, sale of blocks and block factory employment, and wages received by government employees.

The total money received into the economy as a result of production activity is the sum of previous figures, albeit they are approximations based upon wage rates and gross production figures in most cases:

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Ixtle fiber production	821,600 pesos
Mining wage labor	165,600
Goat products	515,000
Wage labor elsewhere	180,000
Government employees:	
Wells, Forestal, teachers, and local government po- sitions	297,000
Block factory employment	<u>60,000</u>
Total money input into Mina approximately	2,039,200 pesos (\$163,136 U.S.)

This is about \$53.50 U.S. per capita per year, or about \$272 U.S. per household per year. Of course per capita figures are deceiving. During the year of research, one storeowning family purchased a truck costing 150,000 pesos (\$12,000 U.S.) while cash income for another family of four depended upon the efforts of one member gathering ixtle about 200 days, and averaging about six kilos everytime he gathered. The total income from this effort was 3,000 pesos (\$240 U.S.).

Table 1 is a summary of the economic activity in Mina. Both production and exchange activities are included.

The most obvious characteristic of the production activity in Mina is the diversity. The production activities range from very primitive subsistence gathering to mechanized industrial production. Various population segments depend upon gathering fiber and foodstuff; others upon goat pastoralism; others on subsistence agriculture; while still others on commercial activity and wage labor. The data demonstrates that there is great diversity and, in fact, 107 households (80%) employ more than one alternative to gain a living. The most-depended upon subsistence modes are field cultivation, ixtle gathering, and goat herding. Seventy one

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Table 1. Household Economic Activities in Mina

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households (52.9%) exist entirely on some combination of these three alternatives. The importance of these alternatives is seen in the most frequent alternative combinations for 50% of the working population:

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2. Fiber alone	12
3. Fiber and goats	7
4. Goats and field	7
5. Field and government job	6
6. Field and local private employment	6
7. Fiber, goats, field	4
8. Local private employment	4
9. <u>Patrón</u> households	4
10. Field and small business	4

Of the households that employ only one alternative, the great number are those that are involved in only ixtle production. There are 13 households that depend solely on ixtle production constituting 9.7% of the total households in Mina. There are only two households (if "households" is a proper term in these cases) who depend solely on agriculture. Both cases are individuals; one is an old man who keeps a small plot on the edge of town and is partially supported by sons in Monterrey, while the other, also a single elderly man, has no family in the area, and supplements his small field by begging from the patrones in town.

The data show that a large portion of the community depends on the production activities of ixtle, mining, goats, field cultivation. In addition, small independent businessmen (34 representing 24 households) make up 17.9% of the community. Of these small business households, nine are relatives of large storeowners, have members who work for employers, or have secured government agency positions through

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compadre ties. Fifteen households are independent from such relationships and can be considered "independent". These households plus the previous sector (fiber, fields, and goats) and the miners, make up the "poor sector" of the community - about 100 households or roughly 75% of the total households. This gives some indication of the size of the "rich" and "poor" segments. The 75% of the households depending upon agriculture, ixtle, mining, goat alternatives, and small independent business exist in varying degrees of poverty. The amount of money on hand rarely exceeds that needed for the next few days of food, and the nutritional, shelter, clothing, and health characteristics of these households are at the subsistence level. It is this 75% of the population that is independent of any patrón-oriented wage labor or government positions.

Employees live at a more comfortable economic level in general, but there are no "rich" employees in the eyes of the residents. Incomes are greater and more dependable, and this is reflected in the food, clothing, and shelter habits of employees, and especially in the fact that their children are more apt to remain in primary school and to proceed to the secondary school in the neighboring municipio. Among the independent small businesses, there are no rich or even "comfortable" households. These businesses are small scale, such as hand-made ice cream dealers, quilt makers, and women who sell meals to workers. Not even all storeowners are rich; there are two very small stores run by a set of unmarried sisters and a widowed woman. There are only four families spread

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among nine households that are "rich" to the extent of having a substantial amount of money to invest in economic ventures, that employ full-time help, and that are recognized as rich by the rest of the community. These are the "storeowning families" described throughout this work. The relationship between the "rich" and "poor" social segments are demonstrated by the various modes of exchange activity. First, non-monetary exchange, or "gift-giving", plays an important part in the socio-economic system of Mina.

These gift exchanges are typified by a pattern of reciprocity, or in Mauss' terminology, "prestation". (Mauss 1967) As has been observed in many other societies, there are few purely altruistic "gifts"; that is, goods or services given with no expectation of a return favor. Instead, "prestations are in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, but are in fact obligatory and interested....Although prestations and counter prestations take place under a voluntary guise, they are in essence strictly obligatory, and their sanction is private or open warfare." (Mauss 1967:1-3) The essence of a gift is reciprocity. In Mina, the sanctions for failing to reciprocate are not as severe as "private or open warfare", but are limited to social disapproval mechanisms such as shunning and gossip.

In Mina, prestation exchanges serve to remind and confirm already-existing social and political ties rather than to create new ones. As mentioned previously, exchanges of seasonal foods such as fruits and candies, exchange of seasonal labor in corn plots, and the enlistment of women to aid

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in making large kettles of tamales for birthday parties follows close kinship and compadre lines. A prevalent, though not constant pattern is that these types of "kind-for-kind" prestations take place between individuals of equal social status or equal economic position. These lines are crossed, such as the gifts to the observers as "strangers", but the more common pattern is that of equal, often seasonal, exchange of goods and services between parties of equal social status or economic position.

There is a common pattern of exchange of aid during birth. Often a relative or comadre cares for the pregnant woman for a week or so before and after birth by preparing food, caring for the children, and aiding in the birth of the child. The service is exchanged when the other woman becomes pregnant. This pattern is especially true on the rancherías where the birth aid exchange is common between women on the same or neighboring rancherías.

Special prestation exchanges occur during the ceremonies of baptism, first communion, marriage, and fifteenth birthday celebrations for girls. The prestation exchanges for marriages is similar to the pattern in the United States culture: the bride's family supplies a wedding fiesta, while various friends, relatives, and compadres give gifts to the couple. The couple is obligated to reciprocate when the occasion arises among the families from whom they have received gifts. Similar obligations are incurred during baptism ceremonies during which the most important compadre bonds are formed. This will be discussed in a later section.

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In terms of scale, one of the largest sets of prestation exchanges occur during the fifteenth birthday celebration for girls. This is a rite de passage between adolescence and adulthood, and although the ceremonies and gift exchanges are most elaborate for the socially prominent and economically dominant families, some form of recognition of the event takes place at all socio-economic levels. The exchange mechanism is by the enlistment of twenty-plus padrinos who are assigned responsibility for a particular part of the function. The padrinos are usually friends or relatives in the parents' generation who take on the obligations and titles as follows: church, arrangement of the church, hand bouquet, cushion, bible and rosary, medallion, bracelet, ring, earrings, cake, orchid, gloves, photography, the toast and toasting cup, other cups, knife, guest book, handkerchief, car, invitations, mantilla, crown, and flower girl. The girl must also choose 14 boys and 14 girls, friends her own age to be attendants for the ceremony, and must supply them with dresses, usually made by her relatives. The parents of the girl also pay for a fiesta after the ceremony. For the poor peasant families, the fiesta is community-wide, the girl's parents supplying the beer and a local band for music. The obligations are reciprocal among the participating families who enlist each other's aid as the girls of the various households approach their fifteenth birthday.

According to informants, the few richer families in the hacienda days also proclaimed local holidays and supplied fiestas for the celebration of their girls' fifteenth birthdays,

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but not the better-off families are more exclusive. The few "rich" families invite only families of equivalent economic position to celebrate their festive occasions, fifteenth birthday parties included. Since there are only four "rich" families in the whole municipio, friends and business associates from other areas, especially Monterrey, are invited to participate. Often the celebration is held in Monterrey instead of in the small towns like Mina.

Many people of Mina express resentment of this pattern because of the obligation (they feel) of the rich to share some of the wealth during fiesta occasions, as in the hacienda days. Also, they feel the rich should choose people of "their own town" for the compadre and obligation relationships inherent in the fiestas. Many common people also feel that the prestation relationships that exist between members of "that group" (ese grupo) are based on "purely business" (puro negocios), and lack the qualities of friendship and mutual trust which are the qualities of the ideal relationship. Vicenta E. stated: "They don't give gifts (at Christmas) to friends. They only give to business associates (socios)."

This resentment came out especially during a "farewell to bachelorhood" celebration given by a well-to-do family for a member about to be married. The party was to be held in the central plaza of the town with only a few of the influential people of Mina invited strictly by written invitation. However, the party was held in Monterrey. It was found out later that this was done to avoid possible embarrassing situations threatened by some of the local people.

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In all the non-monetary gift exchanges discussed above, the exchanges have been between equal social and economic positions, and have been exchanges of the same object or services: seasonal labor, aid at birth, gifts and services at ceremonial occasions. A type of gift giving which does not follow the kind-for-kind pattern is the receiving and repaying of curing services from the practitioner of the local curing cult.

The cult will be analyzed in more detail in a later section, but the exchanges will be mentioned here. First, although the local curer does not charge for her curing-religious services, donations are accepted. She maintains an altar on which she keeps a donation bowl. Needy people may take money from the bowl, and this practice was observed on various occasions. Second, if a person decides that he has in fact received a cure from Niño Fidencio, or if he is asking for a cure, he undertakes a promesa - a promise - which is some act of sacrifice in exchange for the supernatural aid. This "exchange" will be discussed more in the context of the Niño Fidencio cult.

After considering the basic production-exchange activity of the town, two basic facts emerge. First, money is inputted to the Mina economy at many points: the individual family production units in articulation with Forestal, mine owners, goat buyers, etc. However, products are brought into Mina (and money flows out to Monterrey) only via a few channels - through the storeowning families. This means that the money which has been received into the various peasant households

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quickly finds its way into the hands of the few storeowning families via purchases at the stores and cantinas. The only times money flows out of the town independent of these controllers are the rare excursions of families to Monterrey by bus for "shopping trips". The purchases are small scale, and include mostly clothing or special items difficult to obtain in the small stores in Mina.

If the total resource "pie" of the community is about \$160,000 U.S. per year, and most of the exchange that takes place is controlled by the business operations of four families, these businesses must be lucrative indeed. This is borne out by the data of the storeowner given previously when his year income was seen to be in excess of \$7,000 U.S. per year. There is no detailed data on the richest family because of difficulty in penetrating family financial secrets, but from the previous figures, it can be inferred that they make substantially more than this single storeowner, particularly because they have more business activities such as land and goats, and because they hold the Forestal concession. It was they who bought the truck mentioned earlier.

Secondly, there are exchanges which, although taking place in the town and municipio of Mina, have little effect on the Mina economy. Examples of this type exchange is the sale of chickens and eggs from the local chicken farms to Monterrey, the sale of meals to travelers in the restaurant, and the service offered by the auto mechanics. In these transactions money is received into Mina, but since the money comes directly to the storeowning families' various agencies and businesses,

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little enters the local internal exchange system. Money is directed toward purchases and investments in Monterrey. Since these families do little purchasing in Mina, and pay few wages locally, little money enters the Mina economic system via these "external" transactions; the locus of these exchanges is Mina, but they have little real effect on the Mina economy.

It is now important to consider the interrelationships of these two basic facts of production and exchange, and some social structural features. First of all, the Mina economy is closely adjusted to survival-level subsistence. The great majority of households produce, or are able to buy barely enough food, clothing, and implements to live. This sounds perhaps like an ethnocentric judgement, but the residents themselves recognize their plight as contrasted to more affluent neighboring settlements in the less-harsh area to the East and around Monterrey. As an adult member of the same family stated to the author, "we are very poor. But it is very hard here in the desert. It is better to live in Hidalgo because they have a cement cooperative. Also, they get more rain."

Although money is introduced into Mina via wage labor, Forestal, and goat product sales, for most families subsistence crops and food gathering is a major factor in survival. The money, after entering the Mina economy, is quickly pooled in the stereowning households via payment of rents and purchases at stores and cantinas. Credit advanced by stores partially alleviates shortage of cash. This is also partially balanced by prestation systems among various peasant

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households, mostly along lines of fictive kinship (compadrazgo) and kinship. It is difficult for a peasant to get far enough ahead financially to be able to invest in improvements or equipment of any scale which might increase his own productive capacity. In short, money is used primarily for subsistence, not for capitalization. The result is the economic control (and political power) is held by these few storeowning families.

An important point to be noted is that this economic power comes not from control over production factors (i.e., land, labor, capital), but from control over exchanges. Production is carried out at many different independent loci - the households, the mines, the block factory, the chicken farms. The money exchanges, other than money received for productive activities, take place only at a few locations: the cantinas and the stores where goods are bought and rents are paid. The people buy at the stores, and drink in the cantinas; they have no other choice. The people need the storeowners, and the storeowners are assured of the people as clients and customers. To repeat again the statement of a local storeowner: "...ultimately the people have to pay the price we ask. It is difficult for them to shop in Hidalgo."

This results also in patrón-client relationships between storeowners and various peasants. That is, if a peasant seeks employment from a storeowner-patrón, he must be prepared not only to contribute his labor for wages, but often he must supply political support in the face of events in the town. In turn, the patrón is expected to make sure that his client

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does not go hungry, helps the family in time of emergency, and in general protects the client and his family. The result is that not only is there a small powerful clique of store-owning families, but that they are further supported by an auxiliary group of peasant families who either are some of the few employees of the storeowners, are in debt from credit purchases, or owe the storeowners for past favors.

In this manner, a set of patrón-client relationships emerges. In fact, a few older people in Mina liken the situation to the days of the large haciendas. The differences however are great between the pre-revolution times and the present. A primary difference is whereas the wealth and power of the hacendados was based on control of production factors (ownership of land and capital) as well as exchange mechanisms, nowadays the power in the storeowning groups is based primarily on the control of local monetary exchanges - the control of sales of products to peasant laborers in exchange for their wages. A second important difference is the hacendados did not have any relatives in the peón or laboring segment of the population. The present patrones, being "recently arrived" have many poorer relatives in the town who continually refer to their humble origins.

This, then, is the economic situation in Mina, and it is in this context that the peasant laborer must use the resources of himself and his family to survive. There are many alternatives available, but each has both advantages and drawbacks; the modes of choice and the underlying perceptions and reasons are the subject of the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 3

Consideration of Economic Alternatives

This chapter will be concerned with the factors in the decisions involved in providing subsistence for a household. However, before considering these specific decisions, I must present the reader with the approach used and the problems encountered. Also, I will make this a general discussion including all of the decision areas (entrepreneurship and curing as well as seeking subsistence) since all the data was collected simultaneously and since the analytical framework was similar for all three decision areas.

The specific objectives are to identify and analyze perceptions of alternatives, decision strategies, and the socio-cultural results of decision-making. There are definite observational difficulties involved. One does not observe "perceptions" or "strategies" as these are conceptual models whose loci are the heads of the participants. Yet the analysis is based upon how the people themselves vocalized their ideas, how they "see" their own opportunities, and how they approach the problems of choice. Although a structuring of these concepts is applied by the author, I tried to use categories that seemed to have a high correlation to those seen by the people themselves. Of course this is a basic problem of cross-cultural research: to communicate the native's-eye view to

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the reader. Perhaps the best way to understand the bases of the analyses is by seeing how the information was gathered and processed.

The data were compiled first from general, directed interviews, and secondly from 41 interviews conducted with the aid of two questionnaires. The first questionnaire focused on three areas. First, what alternatives does one have for a particular task ("A man has to eat to live. What are the things he can do to survive?"). Secondly, what is a person required and/or expected to do to carry out a particular alternative ("If a man chooses to raise goats, how does he go about it?"). Third, which of the alternatives are good, which are not as good, and why ("What are the problems a man will have if he chooses to raise goats?")?

The areas of concern of the first questionnaire were choosing a work task, choosing to live "traditionally" or "modern" (to be explained later), and choosing a curing method. These areas were investigated because they seemed to be areas of importance and concern of the people themselves. Fifteen interviews were conducted using the following extremely open-ended question framework; two with patrones, two with permanent job holders, and 11 with unemployed peasants.

- 1) Name, living site, compadre tie information.
- 2) What are the possible occupations for a person from Mina? What does one have to do to start and maintain himself in each of these occupations? Which of the alternatives are better than the others? Why? Which do you do? Why?
- 3) If one is sick, how can one be cured? What is required

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4) What is the difference between a "modern" and a "traditional" life? What do you have to do to be modern? Traditional? Which is better? Why? What people in Mina do you think are "modern"? Which are traditional?

The questions were not applied to each informant in order. The interviews were directed to include these topics, but were allowed to develop spontaneously to minimize any aversion any informant might have because of a formal questioning session. Because of this, questions were asked in different sequences and with different phrasing, but the information received seemed consistent. On the basis of this initial questioning, a consensus of available alternatives emerged. The responses concerning occupational alternatives were: a job in the United States, employment in Mina, employment in Monterrey, field cultivation, goat herding, moving to an ejido, entering entrepreneurial activities.

The common health care alternatives were: the local hospital, the hospital in the next municipio, the Social Security hospital in Monterrey, a hospital in the United States, a private doctor in the next municipio or in Monterrey, self-cure with folk remedies, cures via local curers, and the Niño Fidencio cult.

The "entrepreneurial" alternatives (which allow the household to be "modern") were: get employment with storeowners, compete with the storeowners (i.e., start a new

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store), start a non-competitive local business, or move to Monterrey and start a business.

The data concerning the basic alternatives became repetitive so that the author decided to make a preliminary analysis of data and construct a more penetrating questionnaire. The loosely-constructed, open-ended approach seemed to be successful so it was thought that a questionnaire (or rather a set of questions in the investigator's head) of greater detail retaining the same interview technique would be advantageous. The alternatives provided by the first interviews formed a list for which additional information would be required. The alternatives seemed to be commonly held by the informants - the behavioral options from which one might choose.

The next step was to create a set of categories to elaborate the factors in each behavioral alternative. The additional information was recorded in the categories of "strategies", "allocations", "risk", and "return". Because information to fill these categories was derived from interview, the results were again perceptive-speculative on the part of the informants. But this is what was desired: are there any commonly-held (or culturally-patterned) perceptions vis a vis the alternatives, and how do these perceptions relate to actual choice behavior? None of these terms - strategy, allocation, risk, return - are direct translations of the terms used by the informants in discussing their alternatives. As such, the author's subjectivity and economic bent certainly affect the sorting and recording of data. However, I argue that these

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categories are in fact approximate to the terms that the informants used, appropriate to the alternatives discussed with the author.

Each alternative is associated with a strategy or strategies. There is not a one-to-one correspondance of alternative to strategy. For example, making a living involves many alternatives: tending goats, wage labor, growing crops, etc. Each alternative may be carried out in many ways: a field may be bought, rented, or sharecropped, and may be planted with various crops using many different techniques. Often there is one primary strategy associated with an alternative, but the alternative is rare that carries only one strategy. For example,

Author: What do you do if you want to plant a field in in town?

Informant: It is very difficult. If you rent your house, you can plant on your own land. But you can rent some unused land someplace else. Then you get someone to help you prepare it and help build rabbit fences. You also have to have a pila. Then you buy some corn or seeds. Of course all of this has to be done at the correct time.

Sometimes an alternative had two strategies:

Author: What do you do if you want to work in Monterrey?

Informant: Well, you can go to Monterrey and try to get work by yourself. But this is very hard. It is better to have a patrón who can help you get work.

Each strategy requires some kind of allocation: time, money, personal obligation, privileged information. The resources are committed at some risk: there is always the possibility that the allocation will result in less than expected and possibly there will be no positive result at all. What will be

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received as a result of an allocation - a return - always involves some degree of uncertainty.

Allocation usually implies money or credit investments in traditional "economic" analyses. However, in a society such as Mina, money is a rare commodity, and allocations are more realistically seen as commitments of other resources, particularly time, personal obligation, and privileged information. In discussing the required allocations for each alternative, the phrases hay que gastar, or hay que comprar - one must spend or one must buy - were often used. The word inversión (investment) was used with respect to starting a business or store. Gastos (expenses) was commonly used. Hay que trabajar todo el día - it is necessary to work all day - to work fiber indicates a time requirement. Allocation seemed an appropriate category.

The concept of risk is essentially two dimensional. For the first dimension, uncertainty, Cancian's definition will be used. "Risk is a characteristic of situations of exchange in which the rate of return on investment of resources is uncertain; the greater the uncertainty, the greater the risk." (Cancian 1967:913) The second dimension, the prospect of penalty, is proposed by Kogan and Wallach.

We should expect to find reference to the uncertainty of achieving desirable goals or outcomes and to the penalties or negative consequences that might ensue from failure to attain the desired goals. These two aspects of decision situations, the lack of certainty and the prospect of loss or failure, lend a risky character to the decision-making process. (Kogan and Wallach 1967:113)

A common attribute of the alternatives was uncertainty.

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Author: Is there much danger in being cured at Espinazo (by a member of the Niño Fidencio cult)?

Informant: No. They (the curers) don't operate on you like he did.

Author: What are the chances of being cured?

Informant: Only Niño Fidencio knows that! They say that if you are a good person, you will receive a cure.

Some alternatives were dangerous (peligroso), or "risky" in the penalty sense of the definition.

Author: What would happen if someone tried to open a new store in Mina tomorrow?

Informant: It would be dangerous. That group wouldn't let him.

Author: Why not?

Informant: I don't know. Don F. did it, but I think it is very difficult.

The final dimension of the analysis of the subjective perception-image is the "return". Again, although a return is usually thought of in terms of money, there are other units of importance such as prestige, power, security, mutual aid, etc.

Informant: One can live very well if he has 100 goats. They will give him enough milk and cheese, and he can sell the meat once in a while.

Or,

Informant: I always know exactly how many bags of herbs I can sell in the market.

Twenty-six interviews were conducted using the questionnaire framework of alternative, strategy, allocation, risk and return. Two of the "upper class" storeowners, twenty worker-peasant men and four women were interviewed. The interviews were conversational; notes were recorded after the sessions, and six were tape recorded. Also, some of the interviews were conducted during two or three separate conversations. After recording the informants' accounts, they were

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evaluated as to the informant's views of the alternatives: whether the particular allocations, risks, and returns were seen as low, moderate, or high. There is the potential error of observer's subjectivity in the evaluations, and about 10% of the responses were not used because of insufficient or contradictory data. Since the data are conversational interviews, they are less statistically comparable than data from a questionnaire of specific, short-answer questions. However, I think that the conversational technique provides more accurate information of subjective perceptions - "images" - than would a restricted questionnaire. The presentation of the data will be a summary of the most common themes in the responses, noting divergences, and including quotations where appropriate.

When this data was ordered, it was compared to data of decisions made. From the comparison, some statements about the nature of the decision-making process in Mina were proposed.

After the methodological digression, we will now focus upon those decisions associated with making a living. The commonly perceived alternatives are: a job in the United States; wage labor employment outside of the municipio of Mina, especially in Monterrey; wage labor employment in Mina; subsistence cultivation; goat herding; wage labor in the mines; gathering ixtle fiber for sale to the Forestal agency; collecting firewood for sale; entering an "entrepreneurial activity" such as storeowning, and production of a saleable product in a small business.

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Availability is an important factor in the perception of production alternatives. Desireability of a work alternative is one factor; availability is another. The production alternatives are not equally opportune. For example, a job in the United States, though highly desireable, is virtually impossible to obtain legally since the cutback of the importation of Mexican farm laborers. Jobs are difficult to find in Monterrey; the poorer neighborhoods are full of jobless men. One Mina resident recently returned with his wife and children after spending two months in Monterrey with very little work. Employment opportunities in Mina are few even with patrón arrangements. The workers in the mechanic shop, the Forestal agency, on the chicken farms, in the fields south of town, and in the cantinas are "regulars". A storeowner-patrón was observed apologizing to his only worker-compadre because he didn't have enough work to keep him steadily employed. The new restaurant and the block factory are the only new opportunities. The restaurant is rented to one family at a set fee, while the block factory jobs are highly prized; one worker is helped by his son to insure that he produces enough blocks to satisfy his boss. In conversation one often hears pleas for another factory (the marble factory had only a two year run) to supply jobs. Wage labor, then, is extremely difficult to obtain, regardless of patrón relationships.

A small plot of land is easy to obtain; houses in town have yards or patio space, and these areas are used to plant gardens. In the desert there also may be a small amount of hand-irrigated land near the ranchería buildings. Obtaining

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land is no problem; obtaining highly productive land is almost impossible. The one area of good land to the south of town is owned by a storeowner. The river irrigated land in the municipio is held by another storeowner, and by ejiditarios whose families have held the land since the late 1930's.

Obtaining goats is no problem if the purchaser has enough money. He can buy kids from virtually any local herd owner. There are arrangements whereby a herder can be paid by a share of the new kids from the flock. One herder on a ranchería herds for his compadre in Mina, for which he receives one half of the milk and female kids for his efforts.

Mining employment opportunity is available every weekend when the mine truck picks up workers in the plaza. Ixtle and firewood is available for the collecting, although ixtle is more sparse in the winter months.

Likewise, ejido membership seems to be available for the registration for local men. The presidente municipal stated that he could not think of any man who was denied permission to ejido land, although very little of the land was any good. From 1969 to 1971, two more ranchería settlements became ejidos as a result of their petitioning.

In short, local wage labor opportunities are rare, even with patrón-relationships. Field cultivation, goat herd ownership, mining wage labor, and ixtle and firewood collection are easily available. Hence, these alternatives should be most frequently "chosen". This is the case: the latter alternatives are practiced more frequently, while some of the former, such as work in the United States, are more desirable.

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Certainly availability affects the perceptions of desirability, and this must be kept in mind.

For each of these production alternatives, the following was asked: What does one have to do (strategy)? What are the costs? Does it require much time? What kind of personal associations are needed (allocation)? Is it sure? Is it dangerous (risk)? What can one expect to make in this activity? Is it sure (return-risk)? Why would one (or wouldn't one) choose this activity? Generally, these questions were "openers" and were followed by other questions pertinent to the particular activity.

The first alternative, a job in the United States, is very highly valued. Many Mina men have worked in the United States during their lifetimes, especially with the Bracero program, and returning to the United States to work for a "good boss" is a popular topic of conversation. A common opinion is that there really is no opportunity to make a good living in this part of Mexico, and that the only real chance for a common campesino to do well is to get an opportunity to work on the otro lado - the other side.

The strategies associated with this alternative are of two kinds: legal and illegal. The most desired is the legal strategy - to contact a potential employer (a U.S. citizen) via a friend or relative now living across the border, and to ask for a job. If the employer is interested, he sends a contract form to the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service requesting the particular individual by name, the length of time required, and the job description. The contract

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allows the individual to obtain a labor certification from the United States Consular Office in Monterrey. With this certification, the Mexican worker can obtain a resident alien visa (category H-2) from United States immigration officials in Monterrey. During the year of the research period, such permission was very difficult to obtain from the United States officials. In fact, during fiscal year 1969, only 229 Mexican agricultural workers were admitted to the United States as H-2 workers. (Samora 1971:161) . The author was approached by about a dozen workers with the hope that he might be able to arrange a work opportunity when back in the United States.

The other strategy is to cross the border on a "tourist card" (Nonresident Mexican Border Crossing Identification Card, Form I-186), or without any papers at all, and to seek work on Texas farms, or to go on to larger cities such as San Antonio or even Chicago and Los Angeles. It is illegal to stay longer than 72 hours or to proceed beyond 25 miles of the border when holding only a tourist permit, and many laborers are picked up and returned to the Mexican side each week according to the local men. In fact, during 1968, there were 1,210 apprehensions and 395 convictions for illegal entry. (Samora 1971:166) There are, however, families who have members who have worked and lived in the United States for many years mojados - literally "wets", the equivalent of the Anglo-American phrase "wetback". Often they use a different name, and many, although they keep in contact with their families on the Mexican side, have no desire to return to Mexico and risk the chance of not returning to the United States. As

Samora says of the wetback:

It is not difficult to comprehend the poverty-induced desperation which will compel a man to endure whatever hardship and humiliation in order to be able to obtain a few pesos for the sheer survival of his family and himself...Most wetbacks understand that they will not be successful. But when one is at the bottom of the social heap there is no place or position below you... Many wetbacks have higher aspirations. Some talk of saving money to buy land back in Mexico. Others hope to establish a small business. (Samora 1971:95)

The allocations required by both these strategies is low in terms of money, but high in time spent away from the home and family. There is a community in a neighboring municipio many of whose men have relatively secure jobs in the United States based on many years' experience of working for the same farm employers. They spend most of the year away from home on their jobs, returning for the cold months of December, January, and February when there is no agricultural labor to be done. For them it is a long time away from the community setting, family and friends. For those who cross illegally, the time away may be even greater. Various families have members who have not returned since their crossing years ago for fear of apprehension by the United States immigration authorities if they attempt to return back into the United States.

The only important allotment seems to be time for those seeking employment in the United States. Employment visas require a minimal fee, and transportation costs must be provided by the employer. The Mexican worker is provided with housing and food during his work stint, or receives enough pay during his work period to provide for himself.

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The risk associated with this alternative is low. Since the American boss is legally responsible for the conduct of his contracted labor during the period of employment, he encourages good, "low risk" behavior - to the extent of restricting the workers to the farm grounds during off hours, or by making transportation to population centers unavailable. Even if the worker crosses illegally, he risks little. As one informant put it, "when they caught me, they gave me a sandwich and a ride to the border. They are hard on some, but they were very amiable to me. Now I don't want to return, but I am not afraid to."

The return for employment in the United States is seen by Mina residents as potentially the highest of all the alternatives available to a campesino. Many Mina people currently have relatives working on the otro lado, and although they are "lower class" by United States societal standards, they are ricos (rich) in the eyes of their Mexican friends and families. The emigrant laborers return sporting various symbols of their affluence even though they are subject to the mordida (literally "the bite" - a bribe) required by the Mexican customs officials for the appliances, clothes, toys, food, and other consumer goods brought from the American side by the laborers. The wage rate in the United States, although minimal by comparison to the general wage structure, is far greater than the 17.50 pesos (\$1.40 U.S.) per day minimum wage in Mina. In general, employment in the United States is a highly desirable alternative only slightly offset by the discrimination against Mexicans by gringo society, and the language

barrier. "My patrón was good to me. But the gringos in town didn't like Mexicans and would always try to start of fight. We just stayed on the farm until it was time to return to Mexico, so we didn't have any trouble."

The next alternatives to be considered my be considered alternatives of "primary production", and include small-scale agriculture, goat herding, gathering of ixtle fiber, and the gathering of firewood for sale. The first of the gathering alternatives is the gathering and sale of ixtle fiber. There are two strategies, both employing frequent forays into the desert to cut the leaves from the lechuguilla cactus from which the fibers are extracted with hand tools.

The allocation required by this activity is a function of time spent in the gathering and processing of the fiber. Ixtle fiber is always available, albeit in different amounts depending on the season. An individual's income from gathering is directly proportional to the time he spends in gathering.

The risk in "working ixtle" (tallando ixtle - from the verb tallar - to chop) is seen as low. The time spent is on a purely voluntary basis with no corresponding social or political obligation to the Forestal agency, the fiber is always available, and can always be sold at a constant price with no negotiating. Anyone can participate - no kinship or other social connections are required. There is the usual danger from snakes, scorpions, etc., as there is in all desert activities.

The return is seen as low for the amount of time invested.

A good worker, by spending ten to twelve hours gathering, can gather up to about eight kilograms of fiber which bring about 20 pesos (\$1.60 U.S.), slightly more than the daily state minimum wage. The work, especially in the summer months, is very demanding physically, and a gatherer rarely devotes more than two or three days consecutively to fiber production. The return for ixtle production is directly proportional to time invested, but no one seems to go "all out" to try to produce enough to earn money beyond what is needed for daily subsistence. A comment is that the money is not worth the effort, but that one works ixtle only enough to provide subsistence when he has no other better-paying alternative available.

One family employs the ixtle strategy of manufacturing products from the fiber and selling them locally. Allocation and risk are equivalent to the Forestal strategy. The return for the extra labor required to make the products is seen by other members of the community as very low. The family makes scrub brushes, rope and miners' sacks, and depends entirely on these products for family income. That the return is low is demonstrated by the local opinion that this is the poorest family in Mina.

Another gathering alternative is the collecting and selling of firewood. The strategy, costs-allocations, and risks are similar to those of the fiber gathering alternative, except that the firewood is sold door-to-door. Also, the return for firewood is somewhat less than that of ixtle fiber; firewood sells for ten pesos (\$.80 U.S.) a burro-load, and although he might gather two loads per day, he can only depend

on its sale in the cold winter months when the firewood is used for heating as well as cooking.

Another aspect of primary-production activities, small scale agriculture, involves the strategy of planting and irrigating rented or owned land with corn, beans, chile, vegetables, and herbs. Planting and irrigating techniques are entirely manual as discussed in the earlier description of "pila" agriculture. The strategy of maintaining a plot is to take some of the pressure off the necessity of providing a money income, not to provide the income itself.

The investment required for a small subsistence plot is moderate to high in terms of money if the land must be purchased or rented. Rents of a house with a small plot of land range from 60 to 200 pesos per month (\$4.80-16 U.S.) depending upon the size and quality of the plot. Little land is bought or rented specifically for agriculture, but rather the land rented or bought is part of the residential plot. There are a few "fields" consisting of quarters of city blocks, but most planting is done in the interior of the "blocks" of the town where access to the main water system is available. The "investment" for a field may therefore be misleading. The field is one part of the investment for the residence unit - house, water tap, animal pens, etc. - rented or bought by the household.

The cost in time for the cultivation of the field plot is considered low depending on what members of the household are available for attendance. Most households keep corn plots because, although they do not yield much compared to other

nearby areas, "they don't need much work." The males prepare the fields by working hard for a weekend breaking up the clods, arranging irrigation routes, and repairing rabbit fences. After planting, the women or younger members take care of the irrigating, weeding and fence maintenance. Although all the labor is done by hand, the time involved seems moderate (an hour or so) in a day because the plots are so small. The perception that the fields do not need much work was confirmed by repeated observations.

According to people with plots, the risk of field cultivation is low as long as the plots are properly attended and irrigated. Since agriculture is supplemental, the failure of a crop is a nuisance, not a desperate hardship. There is always some degree of uncertainty because of the climate and voracious rabbits and other varmants, but in general the risk in terms of the survival of the household is small. A good crop is looked upon somewhat as a luxury, rarely as a necessity.

The return provided by an agricultural plot is quite low, and is seen in most cases as a supplement. About half of the plots are not planted in the staples - corn, beans, chile, vegetables - but are devoted to "extra things" (cosas extras). Grapes, oranges, avocados, bananas, nopal cacti (for nopalitos during Easter Week), flowers, and especially herb gardens occupy many back yard plots, giving the homesteads a decorative touch. Complete dependence on agriculture for subsistence is risky, so that the land is often devoted to items which bring occasional enjoyment to the usually severe

existence of peasant families. For example, even where corn is planted, it is rarely ground for tortillas; day-to-day corn is bought at the store. Instead, the corn from the plot is reserved for elotes - "corn-on-the-cob".

Another primary-production alternative is goat herding. The strategy is to buy local stock and to raise them for meat, milk, and cheese, all of which are consumed and sold.

The cost is high for the average peasant family both in terms of herding time for at least one member of the household, and in money needed for the initial purchase. Goats must be attended during all times during grazing to keep the herd together and to protect them from predators. An average quality young goat cost about 60-70 pesos (\$4.80-5.60 U.S.), while a full-grown milk-producing goat was worth about 300 pesos (\$24 U.S.) during the research period. Some herds ranged between 200-300 goats, representing a sum of about 20,000 to 30,000 pesos (\$1600-2400 U.S.), clearly a very large investment even in terms of the average householder in the United States.

The risk in raising goats is considered low. The greatest risk is leg injuries and resulting infections, which the goats incur from the spiny plants and rocky terrain. Goats are hardy, do well in the desert, and goat products are always saleable. Although the investment in a herd is considerable, it is a very seguro - safe - operation. There is some risks to the herder from the dangers of the desert: the snakes, scorpions, spiders, heat, etc. During the research period a goat herder was killed when he was carried away by a

flash flood in a box canyon, and although such deaths are rare, herding is somewhat risky in terms of personal safety. Herding is seen as being muy solo - very lonely - and as such is not a desirable activity, but is usually assigned to either the youngest or oldest male members of the household of working age.

The return of goat herding activity is moderate. Because of the large initial costs, small herds are most common, and not very profitable for the amount of time required for their care. There are a few families who are above the average wealth level because of their goat herds; there are no "rich" families whose main income is due to goats.

The wage labor alternatives, whether in the town or outside, have a unifying strategy: to ask a storeowner-patrón to provide a job. The only exceptions are the jobs at the newly-established block factory and at the mines. These will be discussed separately.

The most common strategy for wage labor positions is to become associated with a patrón who is also a boss and sometimes compadre. The resultant relationship is not simply one of employer-employee, but one which has the social-political obligations of compadre-compadre and patrón-client. The accepted procedure is to seek the position through another friend, relative, or compadre to "feel out" the patrón first before the actual asking. From observation and histories of present employees, it seems more common that the patrón, through another of his client-employees, contacts a particular individual with the offer of a position. Romulo E., who was

working in a butcher shop in Monterrey, was contacted by his second cousin, a local storeowner, to return to Mina and set up a butcher shop adjacent to the store. The shop would sell the meat from the storeowner's son's herd, and Romulo's share would be by commission. The business prospered; two years later the storeowner became godfather of Romulo's son. The relationship was strong until Romulo suffered severe diabetes. His compadre-patrón has since paid the bulk of his medical costs and for his son's high school education. In contrast, Manuel R. asked a member of the same storeowning family to sponsor the baptism of his son. Within a year after the ceremony he had a job driving a truck for the family. However, this offered him many opportunities to travel to Monterrey, where he arranged for his son a job at the Borgward auto plant. He also obtained a job as one of two busdrivers for the Monterrey-based Autobuses Mina, and quit his local job with the storeowning family. Since then he hires a peasant-compadre to tend his small goat herd, and has tried to get himself nominated and endorsed for the office of presidente municipal. He has become the butt of many jokes and malicious gossip, much of it probably instigated by his previous employers and their client families. He is made fun of in the cantinas, and rarely drinks in Mina. His youngest son was severely beaten by the children of a client family of his ex-patrón. He told the author that they are thinking of moving permanently to Monterrey because "there are many bad people (malditos) in Mina." He asked the author to sponsor the baptism of his next child, but since it would not be born until

after the author would have left, the invitation was declined. According to another informant, this was fortunate because he was trying to use the author to "pull himself up" the way he had used the storeowning family.

During the period of investigation, one of the author's best informants was given a job by his occasional patrón; the job was in Monterrey, and was to repair the driveway of a relative's home. From other conversations it was learned that the job was probably given to effectively prevent the individual from supplying any more information to the investigator - information potentially harmful to the patrón. Of course the informant was grateful for the work, but it ended any significant exchange with the author.

The allocations required for the alternative of establishing an employer-patrón is extremely high, both in time required by the patrón and personal commitment to him. The common tasks are field tending, store stocking, goat herding, working at the federal Forestal agency, and occasional construction and repair work. For all, at least a full working day is required, and often the worker-client is required to live on the premises of his job. This is particularly the case for those who tend patrones' fields and goat herds. More than time, however, is the personal obligation required by the compadre and patrón relationships. The employee-client is expected to be appreciative for the opportunity to work for the patrón, and should be loyal to him, support him in his affairs, and, most importantly, supply him with information needed in his political-economic dealings in the community.

For example, Jose M. approached the author and asked if there was anything about the area that he could tell or show us as he had worked for many years on rancherías and in the countryside in and around Mina. He became a valuable informant and took the author to various rancherías and historical sites. It was learned later that he was compadre-client to family A, whose greatest competition was Gumaro D., the author's landlord and informant-friend. Facts of the author's background related to Jose M. were re-related in conversations by the son of Eulogio A., his patrón. Another example of patrón-clientage as an information channel is the ejiditario-compadre of Gumaro D. The author was present as he related details of the ejiditarios' recent trip to visit a state political official in Monterrey. The meeting resulted in a strategy session as to how Gumaro D. could emphasize the same issues when he would visit the same state official with his supporters. It would then appear that he and the ejiditarios would be the most representative, and hence influence the selection of the candidate for presidente municipal. It seems that the greatest utility for this obligatory information network occurs during the manipulations preceding the nomination and endorsement of candidates for the office of presidente municipal. In another instance, the black market ixtle family was observed talking to their compadre-patrón regarding the present demand for black market ixtle in Monterrey. This is an interesting circumstance as the patrón is the present manager of the Forestal agency, part of whose function is to supposedly control the illicit sale of ixtle.

If a campesino moves from Mina without prearranged employment-patrón relationships, the cost can be very high, not only in terms of a long period of possibly little or no income, but also in terms of broken social ties and the possibility of being left along - solo - in the big city. The patrón relationship, exploitative though it may be, is a social link. The person with no patrón is "lost" - perdido. Not only has he broken from the extensive social network in Mina, but he often has no compensating ties in the city. José M. stated, "I don't like to go to the city. I only go when Don Eulogio has work for me and I can stay at his house. I have a cousin in Monterrey, but his wife's parents live with him. It is hard for them to find space for me." If he does have kin in the new place, his dependence upon them is a severe economic strain on them until he can make an economic contribution to the household. All in all, the requirement in time and the exposure to the loneliness of being away from Mina without friends or relatives is a considerable requirement.

In terms of subsistence, the risk of working for a patrón is low; the client is assured of economic support from his patrón as long as he remains in his good graces. The risk for the peasant may be high however in terms of the maintenance of his social position with the rest of the peasant population. Conversations are guarded in his presence because he is a member of ese grupo - "that group" of powerful patrones - and his loyalty is to them. If he should become disassociated with the patrón, his reintegration into the community may be traumatic. An indication has already been

given of the family who had to give up working for their patrón because of illness. The family is again extremely poor, and is the butt of much malicious gossip from other families in the neighborhood in the spirit of "good for them". Gossip and snubbing were the major ways the rest of the peasant community expressed their disapproval of his decision to desert his "own kind" and join the "malditos" - bad guys. The problems of the bus driver who competed with his ex-compadre-patrón were presented earlier.

Various informants stated that working for a patrón could be dangerous because of the tasks sometimes demanded of them. This attitude was demonstrated during the year of research when two stolen cows were found on a remote ranchería. The owner of the cows claimed that they had been stolen by the campesino family living on the ranchería. The accused peasant claimed that the cows had been brought to his ranchería by his patrón who said he had purchased them and wanted to leave them there until he could arrange to have them driven to his herd. The patrón denied having anything to do with the cows. The peasant was then taken to Monterrey by the comandante and the presidente municipal for possible indictment. After the cows were returned to their owner, the charges were dropped on the advice of the presidente. The peasant received a reprimand and was finally permitted to return to his family. Although all the facts never became known, the attitudes of patrón and peasant were clear. One storeowner was convinced that the peasant did in fact steal the cows, and that the story showed a clumsiness and deceit on the part of the peasant. Various

peasant workers, however, took the side of the peasant saying that it was a good example of the kind of trouble you can get into if you work for a patrón. The presidente candidly admitted that he thought the peasant was telling the truth, but that the best way to settle the matter was to return the cows and get the charges dropped so that no one would be harmed.

The risk for the peasant who moves to another area to seek wage labor with neither a job or a patrón is seen as very great indeed. The danger is that such a person will end up living in one of the slums on the outskirts of Monterrey, and will exist on day-to-day small jobs. This type of existence is thought to be much worse than a corresponding poor life in the campo because one is still close to his friends and can always subsist on gathering fiber plus raising a plot of corn and vegetables. There is a general mistrust of the "immoral life" of the city, and there are many tales of how poor peasants are taken advantage of, particularly if they are "solo, sin familia o patrón" ("alone, without family or patrón"). This mistrust is partially a result of various workers who, with their families, have tried the life in the city and have returned.

The return of being involved with a patrón is seen as adequate and secure in terms of subsistence, above that of the rest of the community. According to one resident, "One will never become rich working for a patrón. But neither does one have to worry. If you have a good patrón, he will take care of you and your family." The amount of return in terms of money, goods, and services is the prerogative of the

patrón-boss. The wages are recognized as greater than one could make on one's own efforts of small scale agriculture, fiber gathering, etc. "Wages" are geared to subsistence rather than savings, and sometimes an employee receives rent, food or clothing directly rather than money. For example, one family tends a patrón's fields in exchange for housing and a part of the land that they can plant for their own use. It is a local opinion that the patrones purposely keep wages low to prevent anyone from saving enough to enter into some kind of competitive business. Commonly, a patrón encourages his employee-clients to spend their wages in his store and cantina.

The return seen in a move to a different area is moderate at best, primarily because although one may receive a better wage in the city, the living costs are also greater. Unless one lives in the cardboard shacks of the slums and subsists on tortillas and beans, rent and food costs absorb most of the income. Beyond that are many "temptations" to prevent the worker from accumulating his money. As one storeowner who returned to the Mina area commented, "as soon as we would get a few pesos ahead, we would go to a show and the money would be gone again. I remember one time when I had a few pesos extra, someone sold me some ballpoint pens. What do I need ballpoint pens for?! I just couldn't keep the money I earned." Another city temptation is installment buying which is available to the low wage earner. A local watch store advertises: "Un minuto para comprar, y un laaaaaaargo año para pagar" (one minute to buy, and one loooooong year to pay). One

family had just returned to Mina after spending two months in the city looking for work. They acknowledged that there were some people from the Mina area that were living well, but that they were the exceptions, and that they all had initial help from relatives and/or patrones.

In contrast to the patrón relationships required for most jobs are the jobs available at the newly-established concrete block factory. The positions differ from the others available in Mina in that they require no client-compadre qualification, but are allocated on the basis of ability. One of the two partners of the business confirmed this observation by stating that he was interested in only those men who were good workers, but that they had to select carefully because there are so many lazy men in Mina who don't really want to work. There really is no "strategy" for the potential worker at the block factory except to let the owners know that he is interested in a job. So far all positions have been at the invitation of the owners.

The other local wage labor opportunity is to work in the mines near Mina. There are three large mines that employ up to 25 men each and about a dozen smaller ones in the area. They are all located in a small mountain ridge across the desert within sight of the town. Sunday afternoons a truck picks up the miners in the Mina plaza. Monday mornings the jefe (boss) of the mine signs up the men who are there to work. Their names are simply noted on a pad of paper. As the week's labor progresses, the number of loads of ore carried by each worker is tallied beside his name. Payment is made in

cash on Saturday afternoons, and the miners are returned to Mina by truck. Late Sunday afternoon, the truck leaves for the mines and the cycle begins again. The strategy for this task is straightforward: the worker simply boards the weekly truck bound for the mines. On Sunday afternoons, the workers appear at the plaza with their bedrolls and a few cans of food and bundles of tortillas to sustain them through the week. Seldom does a miner go alone, but usually there are small groups of relatives and compadres headed for the same mines. The truck leaves Sunday evening and returns on Saturday afternoon, the workers remaining at the mines throughout the week and often sleeping directly in the excavations.

The allocation required in mining wage labor is very high in terms of time away from home; the worker returns Saturday afternoon to leave again on Sunday. It is too far for the miners to travel on foot, and they are dependent on the weekly truck. The workers believe that the mine owners could very easily return the workers to town each night, but that they don't to insure a constant number of men to work during the week.

In terms of risk, mining is seen to be extremely dangerous. The work is very tiring, and accidents are very frequent. When a man from Mina was killed in a mining accident, his death was considered as the risk he took when he went off to mine. After the death, another miner, who was working the same mine, noted that:

...death is always possible. It is part of the danger of the work. He was unlucky. But that son-of-a-gun

boss - do you know what he did? When the mine caved in, he right away made us start working in the next mine. We couldn't even tell our families that we were all right!

The mines often become infested with dangerous animals and insects which seem to seek escape from the hot desert sun, particularly in the summer months. One informant told of being bitten six times on the arm by a black widow spider while sleeping in a mine. He staggered five miles across the desert to the Mina hospital where he required four weeks to recover. The expenses were paid by his compadre-patrón.

The return for wage labor in the mines depends on the strength and energy of the individual worker. Miners are paid on the basis of tonnage (30-40 pesos per ton; \$2.40-3.20 U.S.) produced, and the rate often averages per day less than the 17.50 pesos per day minimum wage. However, the mining alternative is always available, and the wage, though low, is dependable. Mining, even though it has a dependable return and no extended patrón-client obligation, is a generally unpopular alternative because of the time allotment required and the severe risks involved. Most Mina laborers have tried mining at one time or another, but now employ other alternatives because of the above reasons.

The author detected a somewhat ambivalent attitude toward the mining alternative. Instances such as these are difficult to describe and verify, but even though mining is low-paying, time-consuming, and dangerous, it still has an appeal. A conversation with an ex-miner and his son perhaps best indicates the ambivalant nature of the perception of this alternative:

Father: I used to work in the mines, but I hurt my back. It is very dangerous and one doesn't earn much.
 Author: (To son) Don't you work in the mines now?
 Son: Yes.
 Author: How do you like it?
 Son: I like it very much.
 Author: Wouldn't you rather get a job back in town?
 Son: No.
 Father: Mining is for a young man. These bravos are too stupid to know the danger! I like the mines when I was young also, but no more.

In conversations such as these I detected certain themes that seem to relate mining to the masculine "man of the countryside" complex syndrome presented earlier. Miners work in the country, in the dangerous mines - an alternative which requires the bravery, self-reliance, independence, quick wits, etc.: qualities of the man of the countryside. Mining perhaps is a challenge much as the desert is, and it also offers the degree of independent action which seems to be valued. The young seem to favor this alternative more than the old, partly because of greater strength and stamina required, but perhaps also because of this identity-value complex. "Personality-identity" data are extremely difficult to ascertain and validate, so this supposed ambivalence vis a vis the mining alternative must be taken in the spirit of speculative insight.

The final wage labor alternative in Mina is short-term "odd jobs" available throughout the year. These range from fixing fireplaces, repairing fences, and fixing buildings, which are tasks distributed within the compadre-compadre and patrón-client relationships, to occasional major construction and maintenance work on the Monterrey wells and nearby

highway. Labor for the latter tasks are arranged through the local office of the Peasant Workers' Syndicate (Sindicato de Obreros Campesinos), and one's relationship to the presidente of the syndicate determines the chance for a job. Also, the syndicate offers no permanent "alternative" for wage labor, but the jobs are sporadic depending upon who might come to Mina seeking laborers. During the period of research, the syndicate was only activated once when a state highway repair unit required laborers.

So far the alternatives have been discussed as they apply to residents of Mina and the immediately surrounding area. However, a number of these alternatives are available to those people living on ejidos in the area, and in fact moving to an ejido may be considered an additional alternative of Mina residents. On the ten ejidos there are 1,338 people and many more have lived on ejidos during some time in their lives.

The occupational alternatives on an ejido are basically the same as in the town: agriculture, goat herding, fiber gathering, etc. Mining is not important because the mines are near the town. There is very little arable land on the ejidos, and the desert common land is important for herding and gathering as it is near the town.

The strategy to enter an ejido is simple - to go to the desired ejido and apply for entrance and be placed on the list of ejiditarios. The risk-return-uncertainty is particular to the occupational mode chosen by the individual and these factors have already been presented. In general, life on the ejidos seems to be more difficult than in town, and one

informant commented that the people who went to ejidos were those very poor who could not afford to rent a house and plot in town and had no other place to go. This informant recalled his own ejido experience: he had a small herd of about a dozen cows that he tried to graze on the common land. But one particularly dry summer the cows died. He tried to support himself by gathering fiber on an ejido, but could not survive that way either. He eventually arranged a minor civil service job through a patrón which he keeps now.

The reputation of local ejidos is that life there is more difficult than in the town seems borne out by observation. On ejido San Nicolas, many families have no houses, but live in small eroded arroyos which have been roofed over with bush, planks, and mud. In general, ejido housing is not basically adobe block as it is in the town, but it is wattle-and-daub with various scrap tin, boards, and tarpaper roofs. Physically, the seven smaller ejido settlements differ little from the 70-plus rancherías in the municipio. Moving to an ejido entails the same hardships as moving to a ranchería: lack of land, water, or economic opportunity; loneliness, heat, danger from desert creatures and flash floods, etc. The ejidos, like the rancherías, are as one informant said, "where one goes when there is no place else for one to go."

There is a final class of economic production and sales alternatives that will be called "entrepreneurial alternatives", and include accumulation of land for rent or production of cash crops, the creation and management of small businesses such as chicken farming, storeowning, cottage-industrial

specialties such as sewing and baking, etc. However, these entrepreneurial activities are closely related to choices associated with "modern" versus "traditional" life styles, and partly a function of existing social, economic, and political realities in the community. The conceptual jump between the "subsistence production" alternatives just presented and the entrepreneurial alternatives is sufficiently great to warrant that they be considered in an alternative set unto themselves.

There are a few individuals who practice subsistence alternatives outside this general scheme, but their activities are not considered as viable alternatives by the rest of the community. For example, there is one man who makes his living by specializing in trading; it is said that he will trade anything for anything and come out ahead. He also gambles and plays both the national lottery and local raffles regularly. He also enjoys the reputation of being a first-class chicken thief; his skill is so great that he will supply a customer with the preselected weight and color. Obviously his life style is not among the mainstream of alternatives available to everyone, but he is instead used by parents as a tragicomical example of how not to try to make a living.

The number of individuals and represented households engaged in the various alternatives has been presented in Table 1. The most commonly employed production activity is field cultivation which is a moderate investment-low-risk-low-return activity (59.9% of households). The next most selected alternative is the collection and processing of ixtle fiber (48.5% of households), which is a moderate investment-low-risk-low

return activity. This is followed by goat herding (24.6% of households), which is a high investment-low-risk-moderate-return alternative. Local wage labor (18.6% of households) is the next most popular alternative, which is a high investment-low risk (qualified by factors of personal loyalty)-moderate return activity. The next most frequent alternative (17.9% of households) is small businesses such as candy-making, tor-tilla-making, small bakery, and fixing meals for working men. This activity is entrepreneurial and will be considered in detail in the next analysis case. The important point here is although it is medium-to-high in cost, and medium in return, the risk is medium-to-high depending upon how much it competes with the business activities of the patrón-storeowners.

A consistency emerges from the choice patterns of these activities. The allocations required for these activities are variant: lowest for ixtle gatherers, medium-low for agriculturalists, medium-high for goat herders. The returns also vary from low for ixtle gathering to moderate for goat herding and wage labor. The only really high-return alternative is a job in the United States, and few have that alternative available. Frequency of choice of alternatives seems to be related most to the factors of risk. The three most frequent alternatives are fields, fiber gathering, and goats, which vary in allocation, risk, and return as shown below (percentages are percents of households):

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Allocation</u>	<u>Risk</u>	<u>Return</u>
Fields (59.9%)	Moderate-high	Low	Low
Fiber (48.5%)	Low	Low	Low
Goats (24.6%)	High	Low	Moderate

Furthermore, 55 households (41.0%) make their livings entirely from combinations of these three low-risk alternatives. The next three most frequent alternatives are:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Allocation</u>	<u>Risk</u>	<u>Return</u>
Local wage labor (18.6%)	High	High (socio-politically) Low (economically)	Moderate-adequate
Small business (17.9%)	Very high	Very high	Uncertain
Government employee (16.4%)	High	Low (economically) High (socio-culturally)	Moderate-adequate

Both the local wage labor and local government positions are controlled by the storeowning families; the creation and maintenance of a small business depends on a non-competitive relationship to the storeowners. These three alternatives thus are liable to the higher-risk-uncertainty inherent in the relationship with patrón-storeowners. Thus, the three most popular activities are all low risk choices. The least practiced activities (except for being a patrón-storeowner) are the mines (only 9.0% of the households) which is the alternative with perhaps the highest perceived risk. In fact, mining is probably the alternative closest to a "worst case" alternative: high allocation, high risk, low return. The desirability of this alternative is perhaps mediated by its appeal to young, adventurous males. The strategies implicit in the most frequent production activities are overwhelmingly those which minimize risk while insuring only a low-to-moderate social and economic return. Such strategies may meet minimum subsistence demands, yet expose the household to as little

risk and drudgery as possible.

The most convincing data for this argument is the behavior of the ixtle gatherers. The money return derived from this activity is directly proportional to time spent in gathering. In this sense it is "perfect piecework" - lechuguilla plants are a "free good", available for the taking. The worker can work entirely at his own rate and earn money at a constant rate if desired. Workers can cut in one day fiber worth 12 to 20 pesos (\$.96-1.60 U.S.), depending on the season. For a six day week, this can total 72 to 120 pesos per week (\$5.76-9.60 U.S.). A household can theoretically multiply this amount by the number of members working the fiber. An outside observer might suppose that ixtle production offers the low-risk opportunity and that local households could organize the labor force to earn enough to provide a regular income for subsistence and perhaps even enough for savings and a few luxury goods. Such is not the case. Ixtle production is not pursued on a regular daily or weekly schedule. Rather, immediate economic need underlies the rate of ixtle production. Gatherers organize into small sorties only when their current supply of cash is getting too low to buy food. Based on direct observation, ixtle gatherers work about 150-200 days per year. When asked why he doesn't save his money or work more regularly to earn more, a gatherer commonly responds that he "doesn't need (emphasis mine) much money", that the ixtle is always there if he needs it, and that after a few days in the desert one needs to rest up. All the responses have some degree of truth to them; the gatherer has a definite idea

about the minimum needed for survival and the amount of work needed to meet that minimum. In fact, during the Christmas and Easter periods, and when there is an impending ceremonial period such as a wedding or baptism, the gatherers will work to gather greater amounts of fiber for the extra money. Gathering is a response to a present economic need, not a means to accumulate wealth through a regular cash income. Gatherers do not work to earn money to save or to "get ahead". Often a gatherer will return from the campo, cash in his fiber, and then spend time in a cantina where he spends a good portion of the money. The remainder of the money buys corn and canned food for the household for a few days. The gatherer returns to the desert when the cash runs out. This seems to be a "minimal" strategy: productive activity is geared to meet needs; when the needs are satisfied to a degree considered adequate, the productive activity tapers off or is discontinued altogether. No attempt is made to "maximize"; that is, to utilize the means of fiber production activity to gain the end of greatest possible income.

The same can be said of the other most commonly selected production activities. Goats and goat products are sold at a rate which provides a minimal income to the household. Field cultivation is not "profitable" in the strict sense of the term, and usually does not even supply the minimum subsistence requirements of the household. Except for a few households who depend on a constant income from mining, laborers mine only when they really need the money, and when the slightly better income derived from mine labor is worth the extra risk

compared to fiber gathering. Laborers who work or have worked in Monterrey respond that they "only want to make enough money to feed their families." Simon recognizes this strategy and names it "satisficing behavior". "That economic man is a satisficing animal whose problem solving is based on search activity to meet certain aspirational levels rather than a maximizing animal whose problem solving involves finding the best alternatives in terms of specific criteria." (Simon 1959:277)

Perhaps another term - "minimizing" (Cook 1970) - might be more suitable than "satisficing" as a descriptor of this behavioral strategy. From Simon's statement, satisficing implies that any alternative which meets the "certain aspirational levels" might be selected. This must be refined by qualification that the alternatives most likely to be selected are those which require a minimum of effort, investment, and obligation, and entail the least risk, yet still fulfill the "aspirational levels". The Mina peasant labors to meet his expenses, not to maximize the total possible return he can get for his time and resources. The limiting factor is the severity and drudgery of the labor required of him - how can he provide his requirements in the most efficient way with the minimum suffering and drudgery. As the soviet economist Chayanov stated in 1925:

Thus, the results of comparing the series lead us to the undoubted conclusion that the energy developed by a worker on a family farm is stimulated by the family consumer demands, and as they increase, the rate of self-exploitation of peasant labor is forced up. On the other hand, energy expenditure is inhibited by the drudgery of the labor itself. The harder the labor is, compared with

its pay, the lower the level of well-being at which the peasant family ceases to work, although frequently to achieve even this reduced level it has to make great exertions. In other words, we can state positively that the degree of self-exploitation of labor is established by some relationship between the measure of demand satisfaction and the measure of the burden of labor. (Chayanov 1966:81)

This appears to be consistent with Wolf's position that the peasant laborer seeks only to make enough income to provide for three funds, the "caloric minimum" (2,000-3,000 calories per person per day), the "replacement fund" (seeds, tools, clothes, housing, etc., required by the family), and the "ceremonial fund" (marriage expenses, fiesta obligations, etc.). These are the goals of production, and the peasant has no need to work beyond these satisfactions. What observers have called "surplus" is not excess production beyond these needs, but rather the part of his production which, when exchanged for money, supplies these needs. The peasant does not try to work beyond these "needs" - not necessarily because of lack of motivation or aspirations, but because both the labor-drudgery and/or the risk in trying new, "improved" methods is too great. Instead, he is "satisfied" to survive minimally, even though an improvement in his economic status would be welcomed, albeit at low risk. (Wolf 1966:4-17)

This is consistent with the Mina case: minimal economic production activity for most, with those venturing to improve their lot subject to the risks of patrón relationship or the unknowns of Monterrey or the United States. There are sets of social sanctions related to this strategy. The peasant laborers readily admit to their poverty, but rationalize their

state by incurring a pride in their "poor and humble" (pobre y humilde) life style. Poverty is seen as the lot of the mass of people, and by being poor one is somehow in the mainstream of Mexican peasant life. Of the laborers who have worked in Monterrey and returned, all give reasons of missing their families and the community. They can make more money in the city, but "it isn't worth anything" (no vale nada) if one has to sacrifice being with his children and his personal activities.

Before this begins to sound like an argument for the Poor, But Happy Peasant, it must be stressed that virtually all informants deplored their poverty, and a constant topic of conversation was what the community needed to raise the standard of living. I was constantly asked if I could possibly arrange that a United States company would build a "factory or something" (fabrica o algo) in Mina to supply jobs to the workers. The people are familiar with the yanqui factories in Monterrey, and in past years a European firm operated a marble processing plant in Mina for a short time. There are enough peasants that seek client-employee relations in Mina and elsewhere to attest to the general desire to have better economic opportunity.

But to be able to improve one's economic lot, there not only must be a better economic alternative available for him, but the individual must forsake his "minimizing" existence to take up other activities associated with other strategies and their corresponding risks and sanctions. For example, to enter the local employee-client system, it is understood that

one enters into something "like a contract" (como un contrato) between the parties; quite different from the minimizing activities of agriculture, gathering, goats, and mining, which are associated with no socio-political strings. The sanctions have been discussed earlier: ruptured ties with the rest of the peasant community manifested in shunning, gossip, suspicion, and occasionally personal violence.

Those who take such obligation upon themselves may do better than average in material subsistence, but their submissive commitment plus their precarious position with the rest of the peasant class is too high a risk for many other peasant-laborers. This is reflected in the comments of one informant to the extent that although one is very poor, at least, "soy libre", "I am free" of the entangling alliances and obligations of working for a patrón. A popular folk tale concerns the coyote's acceptance of the city dog's invitation to join him at his master's house where all his physical needs will be provided for - food, shelter, children to play with, etc. All the coyote must do is wear a collar and be tied up at night. The coyote refuses; his freedom is more valuable to him than the material security. In other words, a comfortable life is forsaken because it entails too many entangling obligations (to the patrones). It is better to be poor, but beyond the direct influences of any "owners" (dueños). This is reflected in the social structural sense of the 75% or so of the households who gain their meager livings by practicing economic alternatives outside of the direct influence of the patrón-storeowners.

Again, the reader must be reminded that the minimizing, anti-patrón attitude and the large segment of poor is due to two factors: a real lack of employment opportunities rationalized by a "poor-but-good" ethos, plus real risks in associating with local employers as they jockey for economic and political power.

The appeal of a local factory may be seen in this light. A factory represents an opportunity for workers to get a better-paying opportunity consistent with the sanction system. The neighboring municipio's cement cooperative is a popular example of a factory where everyone has the opportunity to provide a better living for his family, live at home and partake in the community activities, and yet not be subject to the suffocating social-political obligation system. Labor is exchanged for wages. This impersonal, economic relationship is a desirable alternative to many in the local labor force. The "personalized" client-employee relationship is avoided. When asked what Mina needs to improve the life of the community, the overwhelming response by peasant workers was "a factory". Many quickly qualified their statement with, "but a factory without patrones."

CHAPTER 4

Social Organization

The only way one can get a job is to have a relative or compadre who will be your patrón.

Cayetano P.

I have mentioned the clique of powerful families throughout the thesis so far: how they came into being in the post-revolutionary years; how they control the economic exchanges in Mina; how they are the dispensers of jobs and thus must be approached by a peasant seeking wage labor; how working for them is sometimes a risky business indeed. In this chapter I will investigate the various aspects of social organization to give the reader a better understanding of the various aspects of the basic theme of social life in Mina: the social, political, and economic dominance of the patrón-storeowners.

The best place to begin this understanding is the most basic social and economic unit, the household. It most commonly consists of a nuclear family (father, mother, and children), and also may include unmarried or widowed siblings of the parents plus their children. Although the nuclear family is most frequent, there is a variety of family forms in the community. The family types and frequencies are given in Table 2.

Residence location is tied to occupation. The available

Table 2. Family Types and Frequencies

<u>Type</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
1. Nuclear family plus unmarried siblings of either wife or husband	9	6.7%
2. Nuclear family plus single parent of either wife or husband	10	7.5%
3. Nuclear family (husband, wife, children)	59	44.0%
4. Joint (2 married brothers with wives and children	7	5.2%
5. Unmarried siblings of the same sex	2	1.5%
6. Single bachelor and unmarried sister(s)	5	3.7%
7. Unmarried women - not sisters	6	4.5%
8. Unmarried men - not brothers	6	4.5%
9. Other (old men and women living alone)	3	2.2%
10. Extended: Marriage bonds in two generations	14	10.4%
11. Widower plus children	4	3.0%
12. "Widow" plus children (6 - husbands left; 3 widows)	9	6.7%
	<u>134</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

A more simplified breakdown is presented below:

A. Nuclear family plus parents and/or siblings (Nos. 1, 2, 3)	78	58.2%
B. Extended (10)	14	10.4%
C. Joint (4)	7	5.2%
D. Households with no marriage bonds (bachelors, single women, widowers, old people; 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11)	<u>35</u>	<u>26.0%</u>
	<u>134</u>	<u>99.8%</u>

alternatives are a house or apartment in the city, a house in a town such as Mina, a ranchería complex in the desert, or on an ejido in the municipio. According to the 1960 census, the municipio population is approximately equally divided among ranchería, ejido and town residence. Many families have members living at many locations simultaneously - older children working in Monterrey, the wife and younger children living in the primary dwelling in Mina, younger sons living on a ranchería while they tends goats, and the father living in another town at the location of his job.

There are older laborer-peasants who have lived at most of the locations during their working careers. There are a few old men that started out on a pre-revolutionary hacienda in the area, left to seek work in the United States to escape the local violence of the Revolution, returned after the conflict to an ejido or ranchería in the outlying municipio, and finally moved to the town of Mina where work was more available. While in Mina, many have had occasional jobs in other towns and in Monterrey. The male working population is highly mobile, and there is little sense of being "tied to the land", or to any single location.

A common pattern is for unmarried males to live at their worksites. Goat herders live with their herds in caves or brush shelters, miners live in the mines during the week, ixtle gatherers live in the open desert or on outlying rancherías, ranch laborers live on the ranches. The women and young children remain in town and cultivate the corn and vegetable plot,

while the men and older sons are away working in the countryside. This situation gives the illusion that Mina is overpopulated by women. The initial impression is that there is an inordinately large number of women, especially unmarried women. In fact, the unavailability of eligible men is a common topic of conversation. There is a bench in the plaza dedicated to Las Solteras de Mina (The Single Women of Mina). However, the condition is illusory: the 1960 census indicates that there is actually a surplus of single men in the municipio. The problem seems to be that so many remain in the desert by necessity or by choice that they are effectively removed from the pool of eligible males in the town itself. And, when the men come to town on the weekends, much of their time is spent in the cantinas where women are prohibited.

Most of the people in Mina rent their house and land. First hand data as to the extent of private holdings and rent rates were difficult to obtain because of the secretiveness of the competitive storeowners. A recent (1968) state census states that in the municipio there are a total of 610 dwellings, 136 of which are occupied by their owners, and the remaining 474 by renters and ejiditarios. There is no further breakdown between "renters" and ejiditarios, nor is there a definition of what is a "dwelling". For example, there are herders' bush shelters and caves as well as covered-over arroyos which all are used as permanent "dwellings". Most likely, the category refers only to the adobe, wattle and daub, and concrete block buildings in the area. Rents are paid in money and range between 20 and 100 pesos (\$1.60-8.00 U.S.) per

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month. Some families are given access to dwellings by providing a service to the owner such as tending his goats and fields, or, in the case of a few families, caring for chicken farms. The data is not complete in terms of ownership of all parts of the town and municipio, but it is known that large parts of the town of Mina and many outlying fields are owned by the four dominant families.

The kinship ideal is the patrilineal-patrilocal extended family. In practice, however, patrilocality does not seem to be a dominant principle. Fourteen households (about 10%) are patrilocal-extended. Commonly a man moves into his wife's household if his economic opportunities are better there, or if there are no male sources of support from the household. "Extendedness" does not seem to be closely correlated with income level. Two of the four storeowning families are extended households, but the largest extended family household complex (32 members!) is also probably the poorest family in the community. Two opposing factors seem to be at work. On the one hand, the desired patrilocal extended family requires adequate land or employment to maintain itself. Conversely, for poorer extended families, more members gathering lechuguilla is an economic advantage. Eight of the fourteen extended families are independent households dependent upon fiber, goats, mines, and fields. Four have members in wage labor positions or have small businesses. Two are patrón households. Extended families are sometimes the basis for the formation of various joint family households upon the death of the parents. There are seven joint families consisting of two or more brothers

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and their wives and children, 5.2% of the total households. Four of the joint families were larger patrilocal extended families that became joint families upon the death of the father. This is a pattern related to the family configuration where the father has been in the "business manager" position over a group of sons. In all of the joint families, the brothers work in the same occupation. Three of the joint families live in the same neighborhood and work in the mines. Two joint families are based on brothers who have a common goat herd. Two joint families support themselves by ixtle. In all of these families the members live under the same roof, but each brother and his wife and children have separate rooms. The cooking is done cooperatively. Most probably these families are a function of the males having to work away from home sometimes for a week at a time, leaving their families together for safety, economy, and companionship.

The most common pattern is the nuclear family with hanger-on relatives (58% of the households). It is frequent that old, widowed, or infirm parents are supported by various children and their spouses who live at the old household site. Three extended family households are this case. Ten other households consist of a single aged parent of either the husband or wife resulting in a total of 13 households (8.8%) with parents dependent upon the support of the younger married family. Added to this are five widows and widowers who are living with and are supported by unmarried children. There are thus at least 18 households (13.4%) with elderly parents dependent upon support from their children.

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Kinship bonds serve as links among the various households. The great majority of marriages occur "horizontally"; that is, between members of households of equivalent wealth and social position. There are a few examples of marriages between partners of the upper and lower classes, but they took place before the upper class family had risen to its present position. In one of the inter-class marriages, the wife's brother has since established himself as a storeowning patrón. Although the exact financial arrangement is not known, the wife's brother is now helping his sister and her husband establish a small business of their own.

Although the richer families try to maintain a class exclusivity, their social history is common knowledge, and they are expected to maintain obligations such as kinship recognitions carried over from their earlier, more "humble" period. These richer families respond by employing the poorer relatives, and by supporting their older consanguine and affinal relatives.

The upper group seem to try to insure that the younger members select their marriage partners from families of at least equivalent economic and social position. Marriage partners in general have come from outside the immediate area. In this way the prominent families have established wide-reaching relations with families in a similar position in small towns throughout the area and in Monterrey. As with other festival occasions, the wedding ceremonies and celebrations are exclusively "upper class". For example, of the household heads of the upper class families, only two have married after securing

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a patrón status. Both of the wives are from middle-class families in Monterrey. Of the children of marriageable age, most go to school or have jobs in Monterrey where they will most likely find marriage partners. During the period of research, a son of one of the patrones was engaged and married. The bride was the daughter of a beer distributor in the neighboring municipio with whom the groom's father did regular business. The "farewell to bachelorhood" celebration and the wedding were strictly by invitation and few lower class people attended.

The horizontal kinship links among the lower class are the most important in the day-to-day activities of Mina. Fraternal bonds and the relationship between husband and wife's brother are especially important in the exchanging of seasonal agricultural labor. These relatives, along with compadres who may also be relatives as well, make up the membership of most of the small informal work groups that wander the desert gathering ixtle fiber, and that work together in the mines. The groups that gather near the cantinas on the weekends are also usually interlaced with kinship and compadre bonds.

For the women also, the close consanguinal, affinal, and fictive bonds of the same generation form the main lines of social intercourse. The majority of social visiting is done with sisters, brothers' wives, and comadres. Of course, visits are made to relatives outside of one's own generation, but the most common socializing activities take place among fictive and real relatives of the same generation. Among these activities are birthday (saint's day) parties, religious

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fiesta preparations, and local raffles. Most of the occasions require the preparation of quantities of food, often great kettles of tamales, and it is during the preparation of the food that much women's socializing takes place.

There is no rule or custom concerning endogamy or exogamy. The transient nature of the men's economic activity results in the marriage of many local women with men of other communities, but this is a condition of circumstance rather than custom. Often a girl will join her husband at his job location in the countryside upon marriage, but will return to Mina a few years later so that the children may attend the primary school there. This is often the start of the "visiting husband" pattern. There are common law households, but these are perfectly respectable in the eyes of the townspeople as long as the children are not abandoned.

Weddings are popular occasions, but their popularity lies in the fiesta rather than the ceremony. Weddings in times past were community affairs if the family could afford it, but now they are private by invitation. The ceremony is held in the local church, or, if the family can afford it, in a church in Monterrey. The reception is usually held in the bride's home where food is served and a band provides music for dancing. The festivities are paid for by the bride's family and the padrinos formed by the ceremony, although the groom might also pay.

A second marriage form is elopement or the Robo (robbery). Usually (but not always) pre-arranged with the girl, the prospective bridegroom, aided by his brothers and/or palomilla

"kidnap" the bride and take her usually to some hidden location in the countryside where the "marriage" is consummated before the girl's father and brother can find them. The next day, a member of the kidnapping group approaches the girl's family to make amends. The father and brothers have been humiliated by the robo, but the argument is made that the couple are truly in love, and that the young man, in his manly passion, simply could not resist the appeal of the beautiful girl. After a preliminary truce, arrangements are made for an official marriage ceremony during which time the two fathers shake hands and embrace, signifying that all is forgiven and the couple have the blessing of both sets of parents. No robo marriage took place in Mina during the time of research. This description is based on informants accounts of previous elopements. A storeowner-patrón was of the opinion that the robo was very "low class", and that good families try to insure that their daughters are respectably married.

The location of the newly-married couple is influenced by economic opportunity. These choices are determined not only by potential advantage gained by living with one set of siblings or parents or another, but also by how much the household needs someone in the household to provide support.

The dynamics within the household unit are closely related to economic activities. The head of the household, which in most cases is the father, acts as a "business manager" for the household. The various jobs that the different members of the household perform are most commonly assigned by the father. For example, the sons may be subjected to a solitary life of

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tending goats to provide enough money to train a sister to work in a Monterrey factory or to be a secretary, so that she can bring her higher wages back to the household. This was the pattern found in each of the families who lived on either side of the author during his stay in Mina. On the one side, the boys had tended goats while their sister had studied a secretarial course. She had just taken her first secretarial position in Monterrey, and was beginning to bring her money home. On the other side, the boys had worked odd jobs and in the local stores to help send their sister through college. She now is a teacher at the local primary school. As might be anticipated, a problem often arises concerning the discriminations that invariably exist in such a system. Sons often become disgruntled that they must spend long weeks in uncomfortable desert surroundings tending goats, while their more fortunate sisters are allowed to stay at home and perhaps even continue their schooling. To continue with the goatherding brothers, the occasion of the sister's first paycheck was a source of pride for the parents, but the brothers were somewhat sullen and cold toward the sister, reminding her that it was because of their efforts that she was in her present job.

Nor is the "unfairness" the only source of problems. The members of the household who have the opportunity to work at a factory or secretarial job in another town or in Monterrey often desire to take up a more "modern" life style, even though they still are required to live with their family in Mina. The girls particularly tend to dress more modernly, to use slang ("modismos"), and in general to imitate the more

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outgoing and aggressive behavior of Monterrey working girls. This desire for the material goods and symbols of the more modern life of the urban area induces an ambivalent response from the rest of the household. On the one hand, they may be proud of the member who symbolizes to the rest of the community that a member of the family has broken away from the poverty and hard life in Mina. On the other hand, the family may be offended by the corruption and lack of respect for traditional values shown by the member after a short time in the city. Always mediating any second thoughts or family conflicts is the fact that the Monterrey wage earner is making a significant contribution to the family funds. At this time only five families are in this particular situation, but many are insisting that their children continue their schooling at the high school in the neighboring municipio so that they might someday also enter the Monterrey job market. The trend toward Mina young adults commuting to industrial jobs in Monterrey will probably continue along with the resultant family conflicts at home in Mina. This is particularly true in the numerous cases of resentment by other members of the family who have had to work at menial tasks to give a single member a better opportunity.

Including the five families who have trained children working in Monterrey but who return with their wages to Mina, there are only 11 families (8.2%) who have members (16) working in other towns. Of these, most return only on the weekends except one who is a carpenter in the neighboring municipio, two bus drivers whose schedule sometimes allows them to

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stay in Mina during the week, and members of one family who work in a bus garage in Monterrey but who commute by bus everyday between Mina and the city.

Of course here we are talking about only those individuals who are members of local households though they work elsewhere. There are many families who have members scattered throughout Mexico and the United States who are obviously not household members any longer.

An interesting pattern has developed from the fact that girls often have a better opportunity to find employment in Monterrey than young men do. There are many jobs available for girls as housekeepers, factory workers, office workers, secretaries, and clerks. According to a female factory worker, many employers seem to think that female workers tend to be more regular and dependable. For the girls a job in Monterrey is highly valued because not only does it bring to them more respect as important contributors to the family income, but it also permits them to live during the week in the city, usually with a relative. For the boys, the opportunity does not seem to be valued. Even though there are industrial opportunities for them too, very few city jobs are held in respect. The teenage brothers of the female factory worker mentioned above, stated that they wouldn't care to work in a factory like their sister. Their job preferences, in apparent descending order, were driving a truck, working on the highway, or working in a mine.

The differences of attitude and participation are reflected in behavior and in clothing styles. Girls value

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highly the symbols of the city life; for example, they know the latest popular songs and dances and try to dress in the most modern styles, budget permitting. Young males, on the other hand, enjoy their music in the more traditional "Nor-teño" (Northern) style, and continue to dress in the usual denim pants, work shirt, straw "cowboy hat", and boots or tire-tread sandals. The young men justify their attitude by rejecting a life of being tied to a menial assembly line job, or having to work for a harsh and unjust boss. Again, these are not necessarily rationalizations; some have tried city jobs and returned for these reasons. For example, one pair of upwardly-motivated parents secured a job for their teenage son at the Borgward automobile assembly plant on the outskirts of Monterrey. After a few months on the job, the youth remarked that even though the pay was much better in the factory (50 pesos per day; \$4 U.S.), he likes working outdoors in the desert much better. The author's landlord and family had lived and worked in Monterrey for a while, but returned to Mina and a lower income, but a "better life". In short, these strains in the household family unit are related to the modes of economic activity, and the frictions increase as the younger members become more involved in the industrial-labor market.

There are differences in family patterns in Mina that may be best understood in reference to a socio-economic class system, but first there are two socio-cultural principles that must be discussed. The first is the patrón-client relations and the second is the institution of compadrazgo.

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A patrón is a benevolent boss who, although taking good care of his charges, requires not only their labor, but also their loyalty and obedience. A patrón depends upon the existence of a client - an economic and social inferior. When asked why they called people "patrones", the responses from informants were varied. One cynically remarked, "because they have the pesos." Another said because he was his employer and also the godfather of his child. A shirttail relative of one of the storeowners said that he was thought of as a patrón because he had always helped the relatives. Another remarked that anyone who is a jefe (a chief), who gives you a regular job, is a patrón. He used the example of the Texas rancher who was his patrón during the years of the Bracero program. Informants were consistent in identifying the patrones in Mina: members of the storeowning families plus the retired priest. The patrón is a social superior who dispenses power, jobs, and influence on behalf of his clients, who reciprocate with labor, obedience, and loyalty. There seems to be no corresponding word for client. Instead, the terminology is specific to the relation: "I work for Don Manuel. He is my patrón." Or: "We are compadres. He is my patrón." Again, "I was an obrero (worker) for a patrón in Texas."

This is consistent with Foster's description of a patrón.

With patrón-client contracts one of the two partners is always of significantly higher position, from which stems the power which permits him to be a 'patrón' to the other...A patrón, it is clear, is someone who combines status, power, influence, authority...(Patrones) include politicians, government employees, town and city friends, godparents or compadres of superior status, influence or special abilities, and church personnel, especially the local priest. (Foster 1963:1286)

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The most common way to gain a relationship with a patrón in Mina has already been presented in discussing job strategies. The potential client either asks one of the influential men for a job, or asks him to be godfather to his child. Whatever the order, employment and compadre relations become coincident in Mina. As discussed earlier, approachment is usually through another client or relative of the patrón, and the final asking is rarely a surprise.

Patrón-peón structural relationships reached their greatest development on the pre-revolutionary haciendas. Various older informants recalled the pre-revolutionary days when most of the residents of Mina depended upon employment with the patrones of the local haciendas. One informant, now senile, insisted on calling the author and his wife the "English patrones" (los patrones de Inglaterra) because one of the pre-revolutionary patrones was an Englishman. His behavior toward the author was that of hacienda days; he stood with downcast eyes and hat in hand when talking, and insisted upon kissing the author's hand before each departure.

Although the Revolution destroyed the hacienda system in this area, patrón-client relationships are important structural features. The underlying principle is that the members of the lower class are obliged to work for the upper class, for which they not only receive payment in money, but will be taken care of through the benevolence of their employers.

The Latin American institution of compadrazgo is another important principle of social relations in Mina.

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Compadrazgo...designates the particular complex of relations set up between individuals primarily, though not always, through participation in the ritual of Catholic baptism. This rite involves...three individuals or groups of individuals...an initiate, usually a child; the parents of the initiate;...the ceremonial sponsor or sponsors of the initiate...This relationship is familiar to most Americans as their relation between godfather or godmother and godchild. The third set of relations links the parents of the child to the child's ceremonial sponsors. In Spanish, these call each other Compadres, literally co-parents of the same child. (Mintz and Wolf 1950:341-342)

Compadrazgo is the basis of many important social relations in communities throughout Latin America, and Mina is no exception. Wolf and Mintz's terminology of "vertical" meaning interclass and "horizontal" indicating intraclass compadrazgo relations will be used in this discussion. (Mintz and Wolf 1950:342)

In Mina, compadres are selected at a number of occasions. According to various informants, the most important are the baptism of a child and its confirmation. Of secondary importance are the first communion ceremonies and marriage. The least important are special ceremonies to recognize the accomplishments of the child, such as when the child graduates from secondary school. The relative importances of the various compadres seems to generally hold true, but there are exceptions of close compadres formed at communion ceremonies, graduations, and other "minor" events. In all occasions, the terminologies of the participants are the same, the sponsoring "godparents", usually a married couple, are the padrinos. The sponsored child, the "godchild" is the ahijado (male) or ahijada (female). The parents of the child and the padrinos become compadres (compadre, male and comadre, female). The

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compadres formed at Baptism are the primary compadres, although the relationships formed at the other ceremonies can be important compadre relationships as well. The godparents of the child are supposed to be its alter-parents who care for and aid the child when required. In practice, the compadre bond between the couples is the more important relationship.

Compadres may be chosen from anyone outside the nuclear family. Compadrazgo can thus be used to form new social ties (as with a patrón) or used to reinforce a kin tie that already exists. Although a preference was expressed to choose compadres from relatives (most commonly the husband's or wife's siblings), the actual tendency was to choose compadres from unrelated families. Of the 81 cases of baptismal compadrazgo collected, 32 (39.7%) were among relatives (19 among maternal relatives and 13 among paternal), while 49 (60.3%) were among unrelated families.

Compadres are chosen both vertically and horizontally by both classes in Mina. The vertical compadre relationships are usually initiated by a lower class member asking an upper class family to sponsor a child's baptism. The benefits of the resulting relationship are two-directional: on the one hand, the lower class family may come to depend on the upper class family for jobs and aid, and to help the child in his later employment and education; on the other hand, the upper class compadre depends on the parents as dependable employees, supporters, and information sources. In this type of relationship there is an inferiority-superiority pattern between the parties: the upper class compadre is "doing a favor" of aiding

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the poorer family for which is expected a return of work, loyalty, and support. The regularly employed workers with jobs in Mina stand in a kinship or compadre relationship with their employers (18 laborers): six are kinsmen, 12 are compadres. As one informant put it, "...to get regular work, one needs a compadre to give you a job; one even needs a compadre to get work once in a while (i.e., repairing buildings, clearing fields, etc.). Don X. is a good patrón because anybody can work at the block factory. You don't have to be his compadre."

This form of vertical compadrazgo is a particular form of patrón-client relationships. For a lower class campesino to enter into one of these relationships, he must first consider such benefits versus the posture, the loyalty, and the support that will be required of him. Again, according to the informant who gave the previous statement:

I've worked for many patrones in my life - good ones and bad ones. But I don't have a patrón here. Do you know why? Because I don't want to be a compadre with a rich man. It is too risky-dangerous (peligroso). Also, I don't like to be a spy (espia) for those 'bad guys' (malditos).

The other possibility is a vertical compadre relationship; an upper class parent asking a lower class family to sponsor a child is extremely rare. Only a few cases in Mina are known: one larger landowner has as compadre a very energetic and conscientious laborer who is an employee of many years. The employee is a bachelor which means he will require no assistance for his family from his patrón-compadre. The peasant was proud of his single compadre tie. It is not known which

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ceremony resulted in the bond, but it probably was not the important baptismal ceremony. In another instance, a storeowner asked one of his childhood friends (now an occasional employee) to be godfather to his child for one of the minor rituals.

Horizontal compadre relationships exist in both the upper and lower classes, and the functions they serve are similar in both cases. According to the peasant-workers of Mina, richer families pick compadres from other well-to-do families as a protection of self interest. Often compadrazgo is co-existent with business agreements. The major seller of beer in Mina is compadre to his distributor in the neighboring municipio.

Compadrazgo for the poorer people is partially a mutual aid institution. As with the more influential families, compadre relationships tie various household groups together. The most common exercise of the compadre relationship is the exchange of seasonal agricultural labor, the formation of informal work groups in the desert and mines, and the recruiting of labor for singly-occurring tasks such as clearing a new plot or fixing a house.

Compadre reciprocity serves also in the case of the Torres and Rivera families. Once residents of Mina and still having family ties there, the Riveras have chosen to live in Espinazo, site of the Niño Fidencio curing cult. When the Torres family attends the ceremonies and fiestas in Espinazo, they bring gifts and are assured of willing hosts. Likewise, when the Riveras come to Mina, they too are assured of hospitality and assistance. In addition, one of the Rivera children lives with the Torres family while attending the high

school near Mina.

Another example is two compadres who both own small goat herds. The father of one of the compadres and the son of the other compadres care for the goats on alternate weeks. Another case is two compadres who decided to put galvanized iron roofs on their separate houses. They helped each other on two consecutive weekends, with no extra payment other than beer and meals. There are few cases of contracted labor in which a compadre or kinship relationship does not play a part.

Among the poorer class, compadres are commonly neighbors, and there are two cases of compadres living together with their families as a single living complex. In these cases each nuclear family maintains a separate dwelling, but the water source, the corn plot, the animals, and the family tasks are shared. The underlying bond of these households (besides compadrazgo) is that the heads of the households, the compadres, all are engaged in the same occupation: mining. Mining is the most dangerous occupation, and two-compadre households are an extension of the dependency required in the work.

The predominant mode of compadre choice is horizontal among social equals (49), while 23 are compadrazgo bonds with patrón-client relationships. It is not known if nine recorded compadre sets are vertical or horizontal as they are with families outside of Mina and nothing is known of their social position. Roughly, half of the recorded compadre bonds (39) are with people outside of the immediate town. This is a result of many Mina families migrating between Mina, Monterrey and surrounding towns, and the desert rancherías. It is not

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known how many compadres were formed when the compadres were living in different locations. The 81 cases are a sample of perhaps 25-50% of the total compadre ties in Mina. As such, the information is probably skewed because the author focused more upon those local vertical bonds among employers and employees.

The result of compadre choices and patrón relationships is that the predominant social relationships are those based on a two-party "contract". There are no important corporate kin units (outside of the storeowning families perhaps) nor influential voluntary organizations. The society derives its integration primarily from sets of interconnected dyads of blood, marriage, compadrazgo, and patrón-client relationships which serve to link up household groups throughout the community. These dyads seem to be more formal than those proposed by Foster in Tzintzuntzan.

Briefly, it is hypothesized that every adult organizes his societal contacts outside the nuclear family by means of a special form of contractual relationship. These contracts are informal, or implicit, since they lack ritual or legal basis. They are not based on any idea of law, and they are unenforceable through authority; they exist only at the pleasure of the contractants. The contracts are dyadic in that they occur only between two individuals; three or more people are not brought together. The contracts are noncorporate, since social units such as villages, barrios, or extended families are never bound. Even nuclear families cannot truly be said to enter contractual relations with other families, although spouses often honor the obligations inherent in each other's contracts. (Foster 1961:1174)

These informal, implicit dyads certainly exist as well in Mina. There are friendship dyads among both male and female segments of the population. A storeowner is a close friend with a representative from a Mina ejido independent from any

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ties of kin, compadrazgo, or employment. However, in the Mina situation, the more formalized dyads - kin, compadre, patrón-client - seem to be the most important in determining the social life of the town.

The patrón-client and compadrazgo dyads are formed on the basis of choice of the parties involved. There are few prescriptions involved in the choice - it is based on friendship, potential economic or political advantage, or any other characteristics important to the chooser. Said one informant: "...One can choose anyone for a compadre. Usually one asks a very close friend. (My compadres)...are men who I grew up with here in Mina. We were all in the same palomilla (informal youth group)."

Secondly, the dyadic relationships, once formed, are long lasting and are important factors of social integration in the community. This is again in contrast to Foster's analysis where the dyads of any basis were not necessarily long lasting. Since the choices are constantly going on (children are baptized, patrones gain clients), the social relationships are continually fluctuating as compadres are formed. The result is that the overall social organization is a pyramidal-like structure, the base of which is formed by the many horizontal, occupationally-linked compadre relationships. These links, although overtly only called into action only a few times a year, are part of the bonds (the other primary factors being kinship and occupation) which tie together large segments of the population to the extent that these segments may come to act as factions on certain occasions which will

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Based on the previous data of family activities and economic levels, and on the workings of the institutions of patronismo and compadrazgo, I propose a three-level socio-economic class structure in Mina: a lower "poor" segment; a "middle" segment; and an upper, or "patrón" segment. The lowest "poor" class is formed by the fiber gatherers, goat herders, subsistence agriculturalists, and miners. Most (about 75%) of the Mina households fall into this category. The characteristics of this group are those common to the poor in general as described by Oscar Lewis. There are a number of traits that cut across rural-urban differences and reflect national and class cultural values. According to census data, 24% of the marriages in the municipio are of the free union type. These free union marriages are predominantly a feature of the poor class; all the upper class marriages are legal, some ceremonies having been performed in Monterrey. Middle segment marriages also seem to be predominantly church sanctioned, although the data is not complete. All of the free union marriages in the town are lower class. There are six households that are headed by "widows" who have been deserted by their mates. The children remain with the mother or her family, a situation which contributes to a pattern of matrifocality in their family life. This pattern is also prevalent in those families where men have to work away from the town. Wives have a great deal of authority and tend to use it particularly if they also make an economic contribution to the household. The "absentee father" pattern is a

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dominant theme of many families, and is a source of conflict when a father returns home and tries to assert his dominant position in the family. The household has been managed during his absence by the wife, and she often resents subordinating her position to his after having directed the family while he was away "on his own". In one incident, a woman and her daughter-in-law cultivated a small garden plot during the absence of their husbands who worked in the desert. Upon return the men went into the garden to irrigate and weed the small crop. The women became angry at the men for tampering in their garden, and the elder woman remarked that they could run the house much better when the men were away working. In general, the mothers are devoted, and home and child oriented. The fathers are more authoritarian, less home and child oriented, and place a high value on individual freedom and solitary self-reliance in facing the problems of survival in the desert.

According to Oscar Lewis, this matrifocal pattern resulting from husbands and free union partners deserting the households periodically or permanently is common throughout Mexico, particularly in the lower class. Lewis attributes much of the abandoning behavior to the emphasis on machismo; the manly pattern of extreme authoritarianism at home and sexual adventurism elsewhere.

The Mexican cultural emphasis upon male dominance and the cult of machismo or masculinity is reflected in at least three of our (5) families in which the husband is clearly the dominant and authoritarian figure. All the husbands except (one) have had extra-marital affairs and illegitimate children and three are supporting a

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mistress or casa chica at the present time. In three of our four families the wives had children with other men before their present free union marriages and were deserted by their 'husbands'...daughters in two of the families are deserted mothers...the children remain with the mother or her family. This practice is widespread in Mexico and contributes to a matrifocality in family life, particularly among the lower class. (Lewis 1959: 29)

In contrast, the matrifocality in Mina seems to derive much more from the exigencies of searching for labor away from the household rather than "machismo" or maintenance of a casa chica. Solis notes the common Northern Mexican pattern of the despadrado, a child who is left fatherless when the head of the household leaves to find work. (Solis 1971:90) No man maintains a mistress in Mina, although it is rumored that various members of storeowning families maintain women in Monterrey. There are, however, numerous cases of sexual alliances most of which are temporary, but others having resulted in free union marriages.

Social and familial relations in this lower class group are often marked by interpersonal violence. Family arguments often end up as violent fights; the local constable is often called in by neighbors to break up particularly dangerous family brawls. One morning two sisters started fighting after one had accused the other of making overtures to the first's husband. When the accused husband tried to break up the fight, the first sister bit a sizeable piece from his forearm and stunned him with a rock. She then sent her children for more stones. Further injury and possible death of the man was averted when she heard that the town constable was coming. She quickly left the scene and had not yet returned to town two

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months later when the author left the area. In another case a woman became violent against her free union mate when he returned to the house to collect a bottle gas stove. He had moved in with another woman in the same area, and his new mate insisted upon the stove. Further violence was averted when the presidente municipal told the first woman she had no legal claim, and threatened to put her in jail for disturbing the peace.

The cantinas on the weekends are the sites of noisy donnybrooks. The causes of the fights are most often real or imaginary attacks on masculinity, which can be answered only by a personal showdown. The fights are settled by spending a night in the local jail followed by a lecture by the presidente municipal and a small fine, usually about 10 pesos (\$.80 U.S.). More serious quarrels have resulted in knifings and shootings, and often fears are openly expressed of truly dangerous men in the town. One local individual was acquitted on a murder charge for lack of evidence during the period of investigation. According to various informants, the local people are afraid to testify against him even though there allegedly were witnesses to the act. In a very real sense, fear of violence is a mechanism of social control, severe though it may be. For example, unscrupulous storekeepers in other municipios supposedly have been shot when their prices were thought too high. Events like these serve to keep the greedy in line, say the people.

The material life of the lower class is common to rural

Mexico in general: adobe and wattle and daub dwellings, sparse furnishings, burro and buckboard transportation. Men dress in denim work pants and shirts, straw sombreros, and tire-tread sandals. Women wear full cotton skirts and blouses, scarves, and sandals.

The next social segment cannot really be called a "middle class" as they are only slightly better-off materially than the "lower class". Perhaps "lower class II" might be a useful term. The primary difference between the two is that this segment contains the households who have members in permanent wage labor positions in Mina or in other areas. This also includes those households who have members working in minor government jobs: the well-workers, the Forestal employees, school teachers, the commandante. The segment also includes the small, independent business families: the bakery, the midwife. In general, the socio-cultural characteristics are similar. Marriage data is not complete, but there seems to be a lower incidence of free union households. There is a slightly better material existence. Some households have gas stoves rather than the traditional fireplace. Clothing is better. More processed and packaged food is eaten. All of these families have radios. Many send their children to high school in the next municipio.

The "upper class" consists of four families living in eight locations: storeowners, chicken farmers, owners of the larger outlying agricultural holdings, and local directors for the federal Forestal agency. The upper class, all members of which have risen to their present position since the Revolution

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of 1910, incorporate as much as possible the behavior and symbols of the urban upper class. Dwellings have been remodeled and furnished with "modern" furniture purchased in Monterrey. Clothing styles are fashionable. One of the most important symbols for the women is the use of a bottled gas stove rather than the traditional open fireplace and firewood. The children of these families are educated and encouraged to seek work in the city. Each of these households contains a television set and record player.

The behavior of the upper class is to a large extent determined by the relations that exist between the latter two groups: the middle segment and the "upper class". The social relations that exist between the two classes are structured in a patrón-client system. The household heads of the upper group are the patrones. Each storeowning family then has its own group of client-employees. Having employment with a patrón enables the employee to be a member of the "middle segment" rather than being "poor-lower class". More will be discussed in consideration of the political life of Mina.

Those with a compadre relationship with a patrón are a distinct minority, although most have compadres of equivalent socio-economic position. It is known that at least 12 local workers and 11 of the government employees have compadre ties with members of the storeowning families. Thirteen have kin ties. This represents roughly 25% of the total households in the community tied through employment-compadrazgo and kinship to the upper class. Those involved with patrones also have kinship and compadre ties with the rest of the community, and

so the influence of the influential families is often felt indirectly by the passage of information into the system of compadre and kinship links.

The nature of "upper class" in Mina is best understood by means of the histories of the families. There are basically five extended families which shall be called A, B, C, D, and E for this accounting. All of the families have local histories which go back into the last century, and all claim to have been poor at the turn of the century.

Eulogio A. lived with his family in Mina and worked with his brothers and father on a local hacienda. He had married, had a son and had formed a compadre relation with Manuel B. when the 1910 Revolution erupted in Mexico. He moved to Monterrey during the years 1912 to 1921 where he and his wife established a small tailoring business. In 1926, he returned to Mina and settled on some land which had belonged to the nearest hacienda. He planted the land and also started goat and cattle herds which his eldest son took care of. He established a small store, and he continued to buy more land and stock. He helped his other two sons and daughter establish a local bakery. After a few years the two sons separated the business into two bakeries because, according to one, "the families just got too big to live together with peace." His eldest son married Pura D., the daughter of another dominant family, but the relationship between the families was strained. The couple remained childless, but raised the illegitimate daughter of her sister, Blanca D. After the death of Pura, there is little interaction among the families, and Eulogio A's

eldest son remains isolated from either his parents, siblings, or in-laws. During the past forty years the father and two of the sons have served as presidente municipal, and have held various minor government posts. For example, the father now receives a small salary as a state agricultural advisor to the area, and for maintaining a newly-installed meteorological station in his yard.

Eulogio A., the father, was the first director of the Forestal agency, and, along with the B. brothers (sons of his compadre) have held the important Forestal positions since its inception. In 1967, Eulogio A. decided to "retire" to the home he maintains in Monterrey. He closed his store and financed the opening of a new store directly across the street for his granddaughter and her husband. He also allegedly financed his nephew for his share in the partnership of the block factory. He returns to Mina every few days to visit his children's families, to supervise the care of the goat herd he maintains, and "because my wife and I still like it better here than in the city." His relationships with the B. brothers and Forestal have become more distant as will be explained.

Family B. was close to family A: the two fathers were compadres. During the early Revolution, Manuel B., the father, died, leaving four sons and one daughter. The family became extremely poor without the hacienda jobs and without the father's leadership. The following information about this family is "common knowledge", but cannot be verified completely. However, the eldest son of Eulogio A. confirmed its essentials, so it will be included as the explanation of the rise of the

B. brothers. During the Revolution, the brothers allegedly attacked a government train that was parked on a siding near Mina. They killed the guards and burned the train to make it appear like an attack of Villistas. They removed the ammunition and supplies from the train; some informants say they carted them to Monterrey and hid them in the clothing warehouse of Eulogio A. They sold the supplies on the black market, and with the money started a small store in Mina. They also bought part interest in a hotel in Monterrey which they still maintain. They opened a cantina, and since the decline of the local tequila industry, are the main local sellers of untaxed mescal.

When Forestal was installed in Mina, they, with Eulogio A., became the officers and managers. They received the store concession where ixtle gatherers could cash in their credit slips for goods. They allegedly cheated on the books and robbed many gatherers of their interest due. Their prices were high, but many indebted gatherers could only exchange credit slips at their store.

They have bought many buildings and own the most fertile plot of local land to the south of the town (see Figure 3). They own one of the chicken ranches, and have a large goat herd. They are the major employers in Mina, giving jobs to all men in the chicken farms, stores, fields, goat herds, and also on their trucks. This is independent of the laborers in Forestal which they supervise. All of the laborers are relatives or compadres of the four brothers. One brother is compadre of the local beer distributor.

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All of the brothers have served as presidentes municipal, and it is they who are responsible for paving the road to the presidencia, putting a sidewalk around the plaza, and installing lights and a watering system in the plaza.

Most recently they installed a cement outlet in Mina to supply the block factory and for local construction purposes. They also maintained on commission a local butcher, until he became ill. The brothers now own two cantinas, as well as selling beer and mescal from their store.

The cooperation of Eulogio A. and his family, plus his dead compadre's sons, the B. brothers, was the economic and political force in Mina from their formation in the late 1920's to the mid-1950's. The close relationship was further cemented by the marriage of Eulogio A's daughter to a B. brother. Elections were dominated by the families, stores and cantinas were exclusively theirs, and the important land and larger herds were theirs also. In the mid-1950's, two other families established stores (which will be considered presently), and in 1964 the Forestal program was installed, both of which lead to a change in the balance.

The first year of the Forestal program, Eulogio A. was local director while three B. brothers acted as secretaries and foremen as well as maintaining the store concession. The second year however, one of the B. brothers was assigned the job of local director and Eulogio A. was made secretary. The actual dynamics are not known from first hand observations, but a Forestal employee said that the change was due to the B. brothers bribing the federal Forestal officials to get the

directorship. Eulogio A. explained it as his getting too old for such a hard job, and that secretary was much easier. According to Eulogio A's daughter, he was "pushed out" by the B. brothers and it was a disgrace after Eulogio A. had done so much for them throughout the years. In any event, relations between Eulogio A. and the B. brothers seemed to the author to be quite formal and reserved compared to the alleged closeness of previous years. The year of observation (1968-1969), Eulogio A. held no Forestal post, and his "retirement" was probably partially due to the Forestal events.

The next family, family C., arose rapidly in the mid-1950's when Raoul C., then in his early 30's, started a juke-box repair business in Mina. This family now lives in Monterrey, and hence cannot be considered the basis of any present "faction", but the family history was part of the events that led to the present family-faction situation. Raoul C. left Mina in his 20's to work for a distant relative who had a radio repair shop in Monterrey. After 10 years of learning radio repair, he returned to Mina to set up shop. He traveled to Texas periodically where he would purchase broken-down, out-of-date juke-boxes (radiolas), speakers, amplifiers, and any other surplus electronic parts. He imported these into Mexico at a low "used machinery" duty rate. He converted an old building in Mina, and from 1956 to 1962, he operated a juke-box repair and rental agency. He restored them, replaced internal parts, and converted their coin boxes to take 20 centavo coins (\$.01.6 U.S.). He rented and sold juke-boxes to many cantinas and refreshment stands in the rural towns and

around Monterrey, and was extremely successful. He bought and restored the best house in town directly on the plaza, and pays a family to maintain it as a summer house. He sent both his children to college, his son to be a lawyer and his daughter to be a teacher. He established a record shop and repair agency in Monterrey, and moved there permanently in 1963. Allegedly, while he was in Mina, he came in conflict with the B. brothers. His son was supposedly beaten by them. His three employees were allegedly threatened and harassed if they would go to the cantinas of the B. brothers. Whether it was because of these local pressures, or by design is not known for certain, but Raoul moved away with his family, and returns primarily during the hot summer months for weekends only.

Perhaps a statement of Raoul C. is most illustrative. Before the author began this study, various other towns were considered also. While in Monterrey, the author was directed to Raoul C. as one who could give an opinion on the advisability of such a study in Mina. He commented:

The people in Mina are very good people. But they are very traditional. Sometimes they don't understand people or ideas from the outside. They don't want to be changed. I wouldn't want you to go there and disturb them so you or they would be sorry for it. It could be very hard on you. I wouldn't go there if I were you.

His lawyer-son later commented that they moved to Monterrey because that's where the opportunities are; that there is nothing in Mina for anyone to do who wants to better himself, and that the B. brothers hold people down and make it very difficult for anyone to do anything which might compete with them in Mina.

The C family is very active in the Mina Club, which periodically sponsors fiestas (kermeses) for the community to raise funds to help the poor. The help during the year of the study, consisted of piñatas and small bags of candy for the children at Christmas.

The D. family also is a local family who spent time in Monterrey. The father, Dámaso D., held a state civil service post and a federal border official post from the late 1930's until his retirement in 1963. His son, Gumaro D., worked with Raoul C. in the Monterrey radio repair shop in the late 1950's, and returned with him to the juke-box business in Mina. He also took a correspondence course in electronics from a United States school.

Dámaso's daughter, Pura, married Eulogio A's eldest son, but the families were never closely cooperative as family A with family B.

In 1963, Gumaro D. took over the juke-box repair business from Raoul C. when he moved to Monterrey. His father returned to Mina on his pension to help with the business, and together they also opened up a store and cantina. Since then they have also been buying up buildings within the town to rent. Gumaro opened a restaurant in Mina in 1968, and the other daughter, Blanca, opened another restaurant in 1969. The family also opened the unsuccessful tortilla mill discussed earlier.

The D family maintains employee-compadre relations. Gumaro is compadre with an ejiditario who repairs the buildings he buys. He is compadre with the man he employs as bartender. He and his dead sister's husband (Eulogio A's eldest son)

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attempted to begin the Goat Herders Association. Neither Dámaso or Gumaro D. have held the office of presidente municipal.

The relationships his father established while in government service helped the D family receive the assignment of the local office of the state treasury. They also collect the electricity payments in Mina which allow a discount in the family electrical bill.

It is this family that is in most direct competition with the family A-family B complex (which itself shows signs of schism because of the Forestal affair). Gossip about the misdeeds of both the A and B families are readily supplied by the other. But gossip does not make a faction. The events that demonstrate the lines of cleavage will be recounted after considering the last "patrón" family.

Family E has risen the most recently to a position of relative power and wealth. In 1962 the father of the family, Cipriano E., allegedly found a can of gold coins while he was working as a laborer in the employment of one of the B. brothers. Most informants said the gold coin story was true, but some said he (or his son) probably stole money in Monterrey. In any event, the family was suddenly wealthy and established a store in Mina. The father bought a herd of goats, and because the son refused to goatherd, hired a man who was a compadre formed during his poorer days.

Relations are strained with this family. First, the B. brothers are openly antagonistic toward them because they claim that if Cipriano did find gold, then it is rightfully

theirs because he was in their employment. Cipriano allegedly hid the gold from his employers until he cashed it in, and now boasts how he took it from under their noses. A second source of conflict is the son, Francisco E., who is a local trouble-maker. It was he who allegedly was acquitted from the murder charge discussed previously.

The family store is located on the east end of town, and so serves that area instead of directly competing in the cantina-store nucleus of town. The store has one employee, so family E's "faction" consists of the father, mother, a daughter, a son "exiled" to the United States, a store employee and goatherder, plus their families. Since the store does serve the poorer end of town, however, there are a group of families who prefer to deal there than with the more-disliked A, B, or D families.

In summary, the richer families are situated as follows: families A and B form the dominant economic and political unit in Mina, still remain so, although there is a schism between them since the competition for positions in Forestal led to the "retirement" of Eulogio A. Family C is now largely absentee except for occasional events of the Mina Club, but they opened up the opportunity for family D. Family D is rapidly expanding its activities via the juke-box business, buying local property, storeowning, and cantinas and restaurants. Family E, although fairly prosperous is shunned by the rest, primarily because of fear of a maverick son. For a diagrammatic presentation of relationships, see Figure 6.

Although the community is split along these lines, the

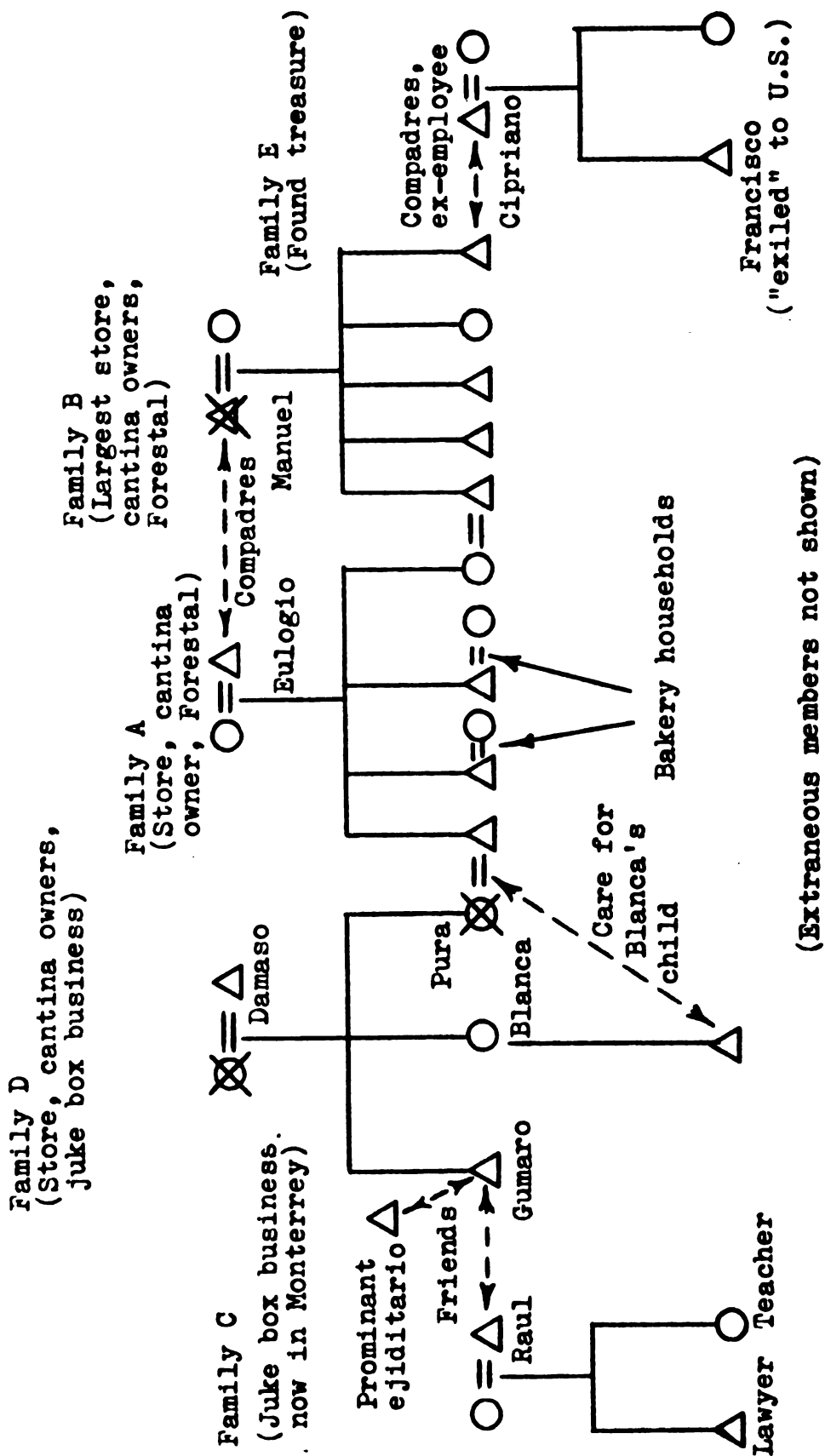


Figure 6. Family Factions and Relations in Mina

most direct competition is among families A, B, and D. For example, family D established the restaurant in mid-1968. In 1970, family A built a new restaurant directly across the highway. Family A started the block factory in 1968; Gumaro D. put a block machine in operation in 1969. Perhaps the most illuminating example of this competition lies in the contests for presidente municipal in 1968 and 1971.

The major official political office is that of presidente municipal. (The other is the head of the rural workers syndicate.) The primary official function is as state government representative in the municipio of Mina. The actual job consists mainly of keeping records, overseeing various state programs in the area, arbitrating any local disputes (mostly weekend fights in the cantinas and family disturbances, and carrying out community improvement projects. The presidentes since the early 1940's have predominantly been members of storeowning families A and B who, by means of control over the nomination procedures and through good relations with the state officials of the official political party (PRI), have received official endorsement.

The nominating procedure begins when the influential family members assemble in the main government building (presidencia) for a closed-door meeting. The group selects a list of candidates for presidente municipal and writes them on an official form endorsed by the current presidente. The presidente then hand-carries the list to a PRI committee in Monterrey, where he allegedly, and unofficially, indicates to the

committee the candidate chosen by the local meeting for succession. The party holds open meetings at this time for anyone to come and present arguments for endorsement of particular candidates either on or off the list. There are also informal calls and visits on behalf of various candidates. According to informants, and according to the list of past presidentes, the local meeting has consistently dictated the new presidente. The past presidentes have included all of the brothers of family B, two cousins, Eulogio A., and two of his sons.

During the nomination procedures for presidente municipal in summer 1969, the slate of candidates agreed upon during the meeting of the influential families was carried to Monterrey by the incumbent presidente for endorsement and approval by the state PRI officials. Gumaro D. decided to challenge the slate as he had a relative who had recently obtained a high position in the state party. The relative had told him that if he could demonstrate strong popular support in Mina, that he might gain the party endorsement. Allegedly, the relative was part of a faction who were trying to gain a better position in PRI in the state by means of installing sympathetic people in the offices of presidente municipal throughout the state. The result was the public nomination fiesta thrown for the townspeople by the renegade storeowner and his local nomination as candidate for presidente municipal. Those in attendance were (as expected) the storeowner's compadre-employees and their families, a large segment of the population who had no compadre and only distant kin relations with the other

storeowners, and a few peasant laborers who were suspected of being "spies" for the other patrones. About 200 people attended. After a meal of roast kid, beans, tortillas and beer, the three candidate's supporters gave nomination speeches. Nomination was by show of hands by those present. The storeowner-patrón won the nomination. A group of his supporters took a list including his name to the nominating committee in Monterrey as an alternative to the list provided by the family A and family B faction.

Neither faction anticipated the outcome of the nomination which was decided in the state committee of PRI. Allegedly, because of competition of individuals in the state party who represented the interests of family A-B and family D, a compromise was sought. The compromisers turned to the ejiditarios who, although not entering into the local Mina conflict, had their own lobbyists in Monterrey. The president of one ejido said that they had gone to Monterrey to protest nomination procedures perpetually dominated by one faction. He had no hope of making any effect on the state party decision, and did not even have a candidate in mind when committee members suddenly asked him for a nominee. After a brief meeting with the ejiditario delegation, a nominee was selected: an ejido school teacher, a woman, who not only taught children, but brought in medicine, taught the women health and child care practices, and sought government information on goat and crop practices. She received the state committee nomination and ultimate election, undercutting both competing factions and becoming one of the very few female presidentes in the history

of Mexican politics. The campaign rhetoric was that she showed that PRI did in fact respect the rights and abilities of women in modern Mexico. Gumaro D. said that after talking with various officials, he believed that the nomination and election of the alcaldeza served many purposes. First, it was an example of equal rights for women that was publicized nationally. Secondly, it was a very poor municipio where her power would be nil until the factional problems could be resolved. Third, it was a slap at these particular competing state level and local politicians that a woman could be nominated over their selection. Fourth, it was a demonstration of increased ejidal voice in the politics of the area. Finally, it was a signal to Mina that they should get their political problems settled more before they bring them to the state committee level. How many of these "reasons" are correct is not known, although this allegedly was the message conveyed to Gumaro D., leader of one of the factions.

The term served by the alcaldeza has been the most progressive in Mina's history according to various residents including Gumaro D. She arranged state funds to build a dormitory where herdsmen, fiber gatherers, and visitors from the countryside can sleep and cook their meals free of charge. She arranged free sulfa drugs for goats. Most importantly, she arranged for Mina's first industry since the closing of the marble factory. A cooperative is to be established in 1972 to make cement street light poles to be used in bringing electricity to the remote northern areas of the state. There will be jobs for 50 men who will sign the cooperative

agreement, and who can prove they are residents of the municipio. Gumaro D. has signed a contract to be secretary-treasurer of the cooperative, the first year to be served without salary. When visited on October 1971, the list of cooperative workers was almost complete, and the steel forms for the poles were being assembled.

Nominations were again due for the election of December 1971. Gumaro D. was lobbying to the state committee on behalf of the cooperative signers, about half of which were ejiditarios. His employee-compadre was now president of the second-largest ejido, and they were pressing for the nomination of the ex-ejido president - who had previously nominated the school teacher.

Families A and B were responding to try to once again get their nominee selected. Their basic argument was two-pointed. First, that the ejiditarios had brought considerable national embarrassment to Mina by electing a woman to be presidente municipal. Secondly, the cooperative project was a hoax: family D would just use the labor of the local workers to fill their own pockets, and the workers would have to work and put up with it. They referred to the incident at the cement cooperative in the neighboring municipio in 1969, when the workers threatened to strike to raise their shares and to end the alleged graft of the top officials. The week before the strike a contingent of soldiers from Monterrey coincidentally held "war games" in the countryside around the factory and into the Municipio of Mina. The strike was cancelled.

In late October 1971, the state party officially endorsed

a candidate - a compadre of one of the B brothers.

This rather lengthy presentation of family histories and political events demonstrates three main points about the factioned upper class segment of society in Mina. First and foremost, the essence of the social organization of Mina is the dominance of the upper class storeowners; the other organizational features - compadrazgo, patronismo, family form and location - are complementary to this basic social fact.

The patrón families are the political and economic power of the town. Part of the power is derived from the vertical ties of kinship, compadrazgo, and patrón-client, but ultimately their influence emanates from the economic control over the town. The monopoly of economic exchanges via storeowning and control of Forestal are the quintessence of their power.

Secondly, since the mid-1950's the upper class has steadily become factioned, culminating in competition for the office of presidente municipal. A decision at the state party level undercut the influence of the factions, and has allowed the ejiditarios a greater voice in local affairs.

Thirdly, Gumaro D., the challenger for the office of presidente, seems to have aligned with the ejiditarios against the "old" faction, families A and B. Now the factions seem to be entrenched storeowners, landowners and government officials versus an increasingly influential ejido group. Since this competition seems to be crystallizing around the office of presidente municipal, the reader should understand some of the functions of this most-important local office, and how it relates to similar local power systems in other parts of Mexico.

The presidente serves primarily as an arbiter of disputes, but he is often caught in a "middle man" position between state and local desires, the interests of the storeowning group, and interests of other local individuals and groups. Often the presidente must refer a dispute to higher authority, but gets blamed for the outcome. During the research period some squatters (paracaidistas - literally "parachutists") built some shacks on land which officially belonged to the state hospital. The staff complained to the presidente, and he went to Monterrey to see if the issue could be resolved without having the squatters removed from the area. The state officials, however, were adamant. The squatters had to go, they reasoned, for if they were allowed it would open up all state land to squatter occupation. The presidente brought this message back to the squatters, but they blamed him for having to move from the land.

The cow stealing incident, previously discussed, brought out some attitudes toward patrones and presidentes. The presidente candidly told the author that he thought the peasant was probably telling the truth, and that he (the presidente) had had problems with the patrón before. As long as the cows were returned and the peasant was not charged, he saw no need to push the issue. One of the local peasants took a different view. He felt the presidente should have spoken up against the patrón, but that he was "paid". Again the facts of the case are not known, save for the fact that the cows were found on the ranchería. The significant attitudes that emerge are the clumsiness and thievery of the peasant (according to the

storeowners) versus the treachery and danger of the patrones as seen by the peasant informant. The presidente kept the peace.

There is a degree of embarrassment to bring a private quarrel into public in front of the presidente. The result is that the presidente often enters into local disputes only when an impasse has been reached by the disputants, or when the fighting has become a public nuisance. The presidente arbitrated numerous family squabbles, some which resulted in violence, but most of which were noisy family arguments. His handling of these matters followed a pattern - he would first remark that there was (usually) no legal issues involved in the fight - except perhaps a possible fine for disturbing the peace. This inevitably would calm the protagonists at which time he would try to soothe the squabble and suggest possible solutions, as in the instance of the gas stove dispute discussed earlier.

A state function he was required to perform was aid and information to state census takers and to a team of federal surveyors who were investigating boundaries and titles in the area. His function was also to record births and deaths and to submit a brief history of important events in Mina during his term of office.

The various presidentes, while in office, seem to have had little real effect upon the community life except in rare occasions of establishment of order. The accomplishments of the various administrations have been public works projects which are readily noticeable, but which have resulted in few

real improvements in the life of the townspeople. Under the direction of past presidentes, electric lights were installed in the plaza, a road was paved from the highway to the government building, a water system to keep the trees in the plaza was installed, and the government building was painted. Involving himself in these kinds of projects, a presidente points to the accomplishments of his administration.

A presidente's primary loyalty is with the storeowners; yet, he must take care that he provides a degree of order and justice to the town. Various slighted groups have been known to play "pranks" which have made various presidentes' lives miserable. The story is told of the election reception for Manuel B., a particularly disliked candidate; a group of peasant women marched on the government building, drove out the reception committee, threw the food out the windows and at the walls, and poked holes in the tires of the visiting state representative's car. No one was prosecuted. As one lady put it, "no presidente wants to be known as one who must jail the women of his town."

Instead of subjecting all local disputes to mediation by the presidente, unofficial social control is the more common mode. Family pressure, local gossip, and intentional embarrassment are the principle mechanisms. There is only one official lawman for the entire municipio, and his primary tasks are controlling weekend drunks, killing snakes or rabid dogs in the town, and to help escort suspected lawbreakers to Monterrey when required. It is commonly felt that the presidente is too much an agent of the influential families to render a

really fair ruling in disputes involving peasants and store-owners.

The presidentes municipales, except for the recent woman, have been candidates chosen by the influential families. Their primary unofficial task seems to be to maintain the system as it exists. Similar to other parts of rural Mexico, the Mina presidente-political system may be seen as a "cacique", although the term was never used in the author's presence. Alcalde or presidente were the common terms for mayor. "Cacique", however, seems to describe the functions of the local presidente: "...a local boss - middleman -...a mediator between the group and the larger political and economic structure...He acts for them when they need to confront the outside...the position of the cacique depends on a delicate balance between satisfying the wants of the people of a community and satisfying the demands of outside powers." (Adams 1967:168) Or again, "Caciquismo can be defined provisionally as a type of local, informal politics in the Hispano-American area that involves partially arbitrary control by a relatively small association of individuals under one leader." (Friedrich 1965:190)

In Friedrich's study of a cacique system in Western Mexico (Friedrich 1965), he notes that the basic political units of the town are a set of factions based upon bilaterally-traced "political families", the formal ties of compadrazgo, and the informal ties of close friendship. The various factions include essentially the entire village population through the networks of influence. The factions vie with each other

primarily for control over the administration of large-scale public works emanating from the state and national governments, and for control of decisions over land distribution and use on the local ejido. In addition, political differences often end in violence among the factions, which in turn nourishes longstanding blood feuds. Friedrich ties together the various social-political aspects of the cacique system - the kin, compadre, and friendship ties; the machinations vis a vis the federal and state governments; the political methods of persuasion, intrigue, and violence; the factions' competition for local supremacy, and the resulting perpetual blood-feud system. The underlying factor in the existence and perpetuation of the system is the competition for control over the basic resource - land.

Homicide has continued and will continue to erupt mainly because of the competition for control over land. This has ranged from revolt against the landlords, to a struggle over repartition, to more recent conflict of claims over some two dozen contested plots. Political violence, in any case, is causally linked to the peasants' ultimate life symbol: la tierra. (Friedrich 1965:206)

Although significant differences exist between the Western Mexican town of Friedrich's study and Mina, yet Mina demonstrates a variant version of a basic cacique system: a relatively small group of competing faction-families (the store-owners) who dominate the political-economic life of the town in their continual competition over resources, in this case the points of economic exchange rather than production.

First, the bonds of the cacique system in Mina are of three basic types: bilateral kinship, compadre, and patrón-

client. The most intimate units of the storeowning factions are the families. In one case, a group of brothers, but in the other factions the primary group is the household-family. The next set of social ties - both horizontal and vertical - are compadre links which serve to relate the storeowners to each other and to higher-positioned people in other communities on the one hand, and to cement the storeowners to their worker-clients on the other. At the peasant worker-level, compadrazgo links equals together in bonds of friendship and mutual aid, and again solidifies the relationship of a few peasant families to their patrones. Finally, the system of patrón-employer and client-employee, coterminous with vertical compadre ties, is the final socio-economic glue which cements the factions together. The coexistence and overlaying of these three short-range relational systems - kin, compadre, and patronage - results in the alignment of the various factions. Control has been semi-permanently manifested in a group of two closely-tied families (families A and B), but their dominance has been jeopardized by three other families since the mid-1950's, and ejiditarios are becoming a competing group.

Unlike Friedrich's case where control of land is important, agricultural production from the land in Mina is minimal. The basis of production is the public land (comunidad) used for fiber collecting and goat grazing, and is out of the realm of control by any local private or government body. Hence, the factional competition is based on desire to control monies paid to peasant producers for products - the exchange system,

in short.

Another feature of caciquismo in Mina is that it is not typified by the politically-motivated violence among factions as was the case in the Western Mexican community. Although fights and gunshot wounds are frequent (six gunshot wounds in the municipio in 1968-1969), the causes are usually family squabbles and disagreements during drinking bouts. No long-standing blood feuds exist in Mina.

Finally, the faction-cacique system does not include all of the townspeople in its web. Members of only about 25% of the total households are permanently employed locally, i.e., have a patrón. Exact figures are not known for the entire community, but known compadre relationships lead to the estimation that perhaps an equal number (roughly 20% of the households) stand in a close kin-compadre relation with storeowning families, occasionally work for patrones, and hence are involved in the factions to greater and lesser degrees. The remaining 50% or so of the households are the "uncommitted" in that they stand in no effect, vertical-alliance relationship with the factions although many stand in kin and compadre relationship with those that do. They hence are not counted as a "faction" component. These families remain outside the political-economic manipulations of the factions, but cannot be called anything like a "poor faction" in that they are not organized in any social framework, nor do they engage in coherent opposition to the storeowning factions.

The two communities are two cultural interpretations of the basic institution of caciquismo. The differences are most

likely due to historical factors such as a de-emphasis of the patrón-client relationship after land reform in the Western Mexican case, and its retention as a basis of organization in Mina. The reason for the contrast seems apparent: the basis of community organization in Friedrich's village is the relationship of the "political family" kin units to the land. In the cases of the individual landowners and the ejiditarios, rights to the land resided in those who cultivated the land. There were tenants but no "employees" corresponding to the historical patrón-peón pattern of the pre-revolutionary haciendas in the area. Hence the factions consist of socially-equal families. The caciques are the family heads (who also are the plot owners or heads of the ejidal family).

In contrast, the patrón-client pattern persists in the employee-employer relationship as there are no equivalent land-owning "family" units as the basis for community organization. Corresponding, the employers become the caciques; the employers plus their employees, the faction.

The explanation for the lack of faction-related violence is perhaps related to this structural difference. Conflicts resulting in deaths are family matters, hence sources of feuds in the Western Mexican case. Conflicts in general are business matters in Mina and rarely arouse such passion for retribution. Thus we have two variations on the theme of family-cacique power, both functions of their particular ecological and political-economic environments.

I will now consider various organizations which are tangential to the basic cacique system. There are two

federally-sponsored government organizations in Mina, the Workers' Syndicate (Sindicato de Obreros) and the Peasant Woman's League (Liga Femenil Campesina). As might be expected, both organizations stand in interaction with the group of storeowning patrones, but neither are very influential.

The worker's syndicate is relatively unimportant because its function as a "union" to advance the cause of local workers is secondary to the worker-patrón system that presently exists.

A second purpose of the Sindicato is to act as an organizing agency when an employer comes to Mina looking for laborers. The Sindicato maintains an old building in town for a meeting place and to assemble workers when work is available. These occasions are few, and when work is available it goes to those workers who are closest to the local president of the syndicate. Informants stated that they had seldom received work through the syndicate - that the lists of available employees were supposedly rotational, but that the amigos of the syndicate president were always the ones to receive the work. Although the president himself must also be a laborer, he is presently compadre of one of the influential families, and so control over his behavior seems to be exercised. This again maintains the socio-economic situation of the town because it prevents the syndicate from improving the lot of the local workers by changing the economic balance among the influential families and the great body of peasants. There have been occasions when the president of the syndicate has attempted to act in behalf of the laborers by asking for higher wages from

an outside employer, but he was "reminded" of his obligations to the storeowners and quickly ceased his attempts. When a highway contractor allegedly paid below minimum wage to the local laborers and split the difference with a local storeowner, the workers supposedly complained to the syndicate president. He relayed the complaints to his compadre (the storeowner). The storeowner allegedly took the presidente-compadre to his cantina, bought his drinks and convinced him that it was he who had arranged that the contractor would bring his work to Mina, and that the kickback was demanded by the contractor. Therefore, the workers should be grateful to the storeowner for arranging the jobs at all, and that the lower salary was the fault of the contractor. It is not known for sure who in fact instigated the alleged "deal", but the result of the conversation was that the presidente had to try to convince the disgruntled laborers that the storeowner-patrón had actually done them a "favor". Further events in the case illustrate again the basic relationship among patrones, workers, and economic exchange. A work force was assembled for the highway project, but since the project was advancing down the highway about 10 miles away, it appeared as if the workers would have to live on the job because they lacked transportation to and from Mina. The storeowner-patrón offered another favor - daily transportation on his flat-bed truck to and from the job for only one peso (\$.08 U.S.) per man per day. The trips out were rapid and uneventful. However, for the trips back, the storeowner stocked his truck with beer and moonshine mescal for the enjoyment of the workers. The trip was also

much more leisurely so that many highway workers arrived home both intoxicated and relieved of a substantial part of their daily wages. The pattern emerges again: the storeowner had little to do with gaining the wealth, but quickly claimed a share of the income through monopolizing exchange - in this case, liquor sales.

The women's league is not a single organization, but is divided into two factions. The rationale for the separation is that a few years ago the Liga, then a united body, received from the state government six sewing machines. One group of ladies monopolized the machines, and a number of the ladies broke off in anger. Now there is still only one official Liga, but in reality there are two completely separate "Ligas". They are perhaps the only organized example of the opposition between the storeowning upper class and peasant workers. One league which still maintains the machines, is made up of the relatives and wives of the "obligated" peasants; the other is made up of widows, single women, and wives of campesinos who have no ties with the influential families. The Ligas, overtly organized to improve the rural life, are inhibited by the factionalizing and petty feuding both within and between the two organizations. While the author was in Mina, a state representative of the Liga came to propose an overall organization of the sewing production of the women for sale in Monterrey. The state organization was even ready to again supply a limited number of manual sewing machines for the effort. However, the project collapsed because the ladies could not agree upon who would be in charge, and in whose house the machines would

be kept. The old antagonisms which initially separated the factions were revived, and hopes for any functioning "sewing industry" in Mina were dashed. As one lady put it, "no podemos juntar" ("we can't get together"). The primary Liga accomplishments have been a kindergarten program run by the "rich" liga, and the infamous march on the presidencia by the "poor" faction. It was the membership of the poor liga that carried out the raid.

Their resistance is more nuisance than effective. For example, one of their more outspoken members, commonly known as La Generala (The General), continually writes letters to the newspapers and state officials in Monterrey depicting alleged misdealings involving the exploitation of local peasant-workers by the patrón-storeowning group. She neither gets published nor receives responses, but this does not seem to deter her enthusiasm. When asked why, if things are so bad, other people don't join in her cause, she responded, "they (the others) are afraid of that group (the patrón-storeowners). We aren't afraid because we are all widows and single ladies. We have nothing to lose." This analysis seems to be essentially correct: the "poor" Liga Feminil is independent of influence of the set of storeowning factions. Hence, they overtly articulate what perhaps many others might feel but do not express because of their relationships to the cacicazgo system.

The only other formal organization in Mina is the recently-established goat herders association whose purpose is to improve the production techniques and herd quality of their

goats. Their only action so far was to contact the author to try to import better goats from the United States, and to investigate financial assistance programs of the United States and Mexican governments. No success has yet been obtained, and the organization remains relatively unimportant.

A final aspect of the social organization of Mina is the several voluntary organizations. First, there are various unofficial groupings. Youths form informal "street gangs" whose function is solely social. The members of these gangs often become the compadres and drinking partners of later life. The miner group that all live in the same neighborhood were originally palomilla (group) members and now are co-workers and compadres. The gangs form around the plaza in the evening and on the weekends, and usually end up playing baseball, horse-playing, or just talking. As in the case of the miners, adults today are tied by compadrazgo as a result of earlier palomilla experience. It is this group that often functions to steal the bride and hide the couple during a robo marriage.

There is a Mina Club in Monterrey which is made up of men from Mina who have moved into the city to seek employment. Most have relatives still in Mina, and some retain residences in Mina also. For example, the family that first started the juke box repair business, family C, now owns a record store in Monterrey. They maintain one of the nicest homes in Mina directly on the plaza as a "summer home" when the weather is hot in Monterrey, and for fiesta occasions. They pay a local family to care for it the entire year. The function of the club seems to be to supply a limited amount of mutual aid to

newcomers to the city, and to finance an occasional fiesta in Mina. The members state that they want to "do something" for the residents of Mina, so they finance an occasional party in the plaza, and buy piñatas at Christmas time. On these occasions the members of the club return to visit their Mina relatives, and bring them gifts. They usually wear their best clothes and relay their accounts of their success in Monterrey, even though they might be living in the poorer barrios. During the Christmas holidays, members of the Mina Club and their families returned to help with the piñata celebrations. Members of the families by and large had become factory laborers, and one family had bought a car. The teenage girls of the family, dressed very "modishly" sped around the plaza, playing the car radio and singing - not traditional Norteño peasant music, but rock and roll. Even though the club members often indicate a desire to "help", their activities have had little effect on the social and economic conditions of the town. The fiestas seem to be occasions for their own aggrandizement rather than really benefiting any Mina people. The only help observed is from club members to their individual families in Mina (most often the elderly), and occasionally a club member has offered a local relative a job in Monterrey.

In summary, some general comments can be made about the social organization of Mina. The first loyalty and responsibility of the citizens of Mina is to their immediate or extended families which are the major production units as well as the primary kinship units. The father is the central

figure of authority and the commercial manager of the various production activities of the household. The pattern of life of the father and older sons keep them away from the house much of the time tending the goat herds, helping relatives and compadres, and working for wages. The continuity of the household depends upon the mother, whose place is on the homestead, and whose function is to care for the home, bear children and take care of them. Women may also care for the agricultural plots and domestic animals when the men are away.

The sibling relation is a cherished one of affection, companionship, and mutual aid. Cousins, in-laws of the same generation, and compadres share a similar relationship. Brothers, sisters, and cousins and friends learn to take care of each other when young, and this pattern is continued in later life.

Power and authority are exercised by rich patrones on the village level as by fathers on the family level. The patrones are "upper class", richer families who have gained their position since the Revolution of 1910 by participation in various federal programs such as Forestal, and by skillful wheeling and dealing in local affairs. The patrón families own the local stores, and, in conjunction with the direction of the federal fiber program, derive most of their influence by the control of job allocations and other economic exchange activities. This system of a small group of economically and politically powerful family factions who are tied into the community at large by a series of patrón-client, compadre, and kinship links is an example of the institution of

caciquismo as described by Friedrich (1965), although the term "cacique" was never heard used. The powerful group is most often referred to as "los patrones", "ese grupo" (that group), or "las capitalistas". Present patrones are political bosses, dispensing political jobs. Dependence on the patrón's kindness is accompanied by submission to his power, the fear of his ruthlessness, and his unpredictability. It is dangerous to oppose him. As an historical note, this seems to differ qualitatively from the patrón-hacienda system of pre-revolutionary days in Mina (if the accounts of the older informants can be trusted). It is known from informants and from observation of the surrounding desert, that the area was much more agriculturally productive then, and that there were three large haciendas in the immediate area that employed most of the men from Mina. The hacendado-patrones were "good" patrones - they did not pay much (about one peso - \$.08 U.S. - per day), but one's family could live well on one peso per day. Also the patrones helped people who could not work, took care of the sick, and provided fiestas for Christmas, Independence Day, and for weddings in the patrón families. They owned most of the good land, but most workers had a garden and many had large goat herds which they pastured in the mountains. Although the old hacendados were bosses as well, they were "better", partly because they seemed to carry out more obligations to their workers, but also because life in general was better when prices were lower, the land was more fertile, there was more water, and everybody could have work if he wanted it.

The primary mechanism through which current patrón power

is transmitted is the job-compadre relationship. Horizontal compadre bonds solidify both the upper and lower groups, and vertical bonds exist between the two strata along with important employer-employee dependencies which together are the bases of the transmission of influence from patrones to clients.

Political activity is strictly determined by the resultant pyramidal structure which itself is vertically split among the various patrón-coalition groupings. The resultant condition is a flux of influence of the various factions which depend upon intrigue and information at both levels. The only official political officer, the presidente municipal, is a candidate representing the interests of his own patrón group, and so intentionally has little interest in changing the social and economic character of the town.

The few voluntary organizations in Mina are ineffectual because of internal feuding, and because of the influence of the patrón families. There are a number of peasant families who are not dependent on the patrón families, but who are also hence outside the power system. They also are subject to the indirect influence of the patrones because they must sell fiber to the local Forestal agency, and they must buy in the local stores. One faction of the Peasant Women's League is made up by this component, but their power is restricted to a nuisance role.

There is a single other social component that stands in opposition to the overwhelming patrón-client system. It is not formally organized, but is rather united by belief in the

mystical curing powers of a local folk hero who practiced his supposedly miraculous cures in the municipio in the 1920's and 1930's. The healer is known as El Niño Fidencio (The Child Fidencio), and a following section will be concerned with the beliefs, practices, and effects of the curing cult that has grown up in Northern Mexico since his death.

These are the social, economic and political facts of life for a resident of Mina. What kinds of decisions and behavior does this induce from the people? Specifically, what does this mean to someone who is upwardly mobile, who wants to "progress" and better himself? Does he leave? Join a patrón? Start a competitive business and try to become a patrón himself? Try to find a non-competitive business to avoid the risks of patrón-competition? These are the questions I will examine in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Consideration of Entrepreneurial Alternatives

This chapter deals with those decisions having to do with entrepreneurial activity which provides the economic basis for the existence of the powerful patrón families, and of the small businessmen. This case was mentioned briefly as the "entrepreneurial activity" alternative in the overall subsistence production alternative scheme.

Engaging in entrepreneurial activity involves not only the selection of different modes of gaining wealth, but also the practice of a different life style than the traditional "peasantry". The patrón-entrepreneurs tend to display qualities that are more "modern". Clothing styles, living accommodations, consumer goods such as appliances and furniture are more related to urban Monterrey than to the "traditional" peasant style of rural living. The children of patrones are more educated, and many hold jobs in various business activities in Monterrey. One is a lawyer, one a secretary, and three have factory jobs.

The phenomena of "modernization" is a useful concept, for it is in these entrepreneur-patrón families that "modern" qualities are observed: capital accumulation and investment, concern with regional as well as local politics, purchase and use of luxury consumer items, a reliance on professional health

care, a high value placed on education as a means of advancement, and a familiarity with various symbols of the "modern", urban world - refined language, stylish clothing, and ownership of an automobile. Entrepreneurship requires decisions pertaining to life style, social position, and politics, in addition to those of a purely "economic" nature. For this reason this case is considered separately from the previously-discussed alternatives, which, in the sense of this discussion, may be considered alternatives related to the "traditional peasant" life style. In short, entrepreneurships involve not only different economic activities; they involve the decision to be "modern" as well.

The local people see this complex of alternatives as a matter of "progreso" (progress). One either muddles along in the peasant style alone, trying to feed and clothe his family and meet expected social obligations, or one "progresses" or "betters" (mejorar - to better) his position by becoming involved with a patrón or starting his own business.

In a sense there are no entrepreneurial alternatives "available" in Mina; one has to make his own business. There are job opportunities but it is up to the individual to create his own business opportunities. All the major storeowning families capitalized on opportunities outside the Mina area or brought to Mina via government programs. Rise to entrepreneurial positions is closely tied to windfalls or "starts" outside of Mina.

"Availability" is thus perhaps the wrong word, for there are no "entrepreneurial alternatives" waiting to be chosen.

The entrepreneurs made their own businesses, and in the case of the dominant families of Mina, it was done contingent on outside forces and fortune. There is, however, ideas of the ways to start a business, and these will be considered as the "available" entrepreneurial alternatives.

The alternatives in the "entrepreneurial-patrón" activities are to join the storeowner-patrones, to compete with the storeowners by starting one's own business, to start a local business which is non-competitive with the already-existing businesses, and to move to another town or to Monterrey to start a new business. By "business" is meant either a productive activity (e.g., a bakery, making tortillas, ice cream production, quilt-making) or a service (e.g., providing meals for workers). Also implicit in business is the investment in capital goods (flour, quilting material, food for meals, etc.) to the end of turning a profit by providing the goods or services to the community at large. This contrasts to the activities discussed in the last section where the activities were dominantly for subsistence rather than profit.

The first alternative has already been discussed - to join a patrón in a wage-labor clientage relationship. This can be seen as an intermediate strategy between the minimizing-subsistence strategy of most of the peasant-laborer activities, and the more profit-oriented strategies of the patrones and small businessmen. The strategy has already been discussed; information and personal loyalty are exchanged for limited economic advancement. The individual involved does not enter into activities in competition with his patrón, but his patrón



may, in fact, sponsor him in limited entrepreneurial activity. An example is the restaurant that was opened in Mina during the investigation period which sought to capitalize on the truck traffic passing on the highway through the town. The building and business was leased to a client family by a store-owning patrón for a fixed monthly amount; the profit from this business, the only such activity in town, was strictly a function of the efforts of the leasing family. Another case was the local butcher, who (until he became ill) had a shop in his patrón's building where he sold his patrón's meat for a percentage of the sales.

Such cases are rare. More commonly the relationship is based on a fixed wage for services and labor. As discussed earlier, this type of activity requires a high commitment in time and personal obligation. Patrones can be dangerous, and any wavering in loyalty to the patrón brings the worry of not only losing the economic advantages, but the possibility of being stranded to the sanctions of the vengeful community at large with no support from the patrón. This risk implants a permanency to most patrón-employee relationships, especially when cemented by compadre bonds. The return for this mode of activity is moderate; enough for comfortable subsistence plus some extras such as radios, better clothes, and a gas cooking range. The upper limit of advancement is strictly a function of service and loyalty to the patrón by the administration of positions and wages, and by the occasional gifts to the employee-clients. For example, one man, through loyal service, received a post as supervisor in a local Forestal station. He

accumulated enough money to buy a herd of 300 goats which he keeps on an outlying ranchería. He is compadre-patrón to the family that keeps his goats and which receives a share of the milk in return.

Another alternative in this set is to compete directly with the storeowners by initiating a business in the town. As might be expected, this is a rarely chosen alternative. The prospective businessman must accumulate enough capital to finance a small business and enters competitively into the local economic dealings. More realistically, this strategy involves obtaining money (often by devious methods), creating a trust-worthy supporting network of relatives and compadres, and only then initiating a new business. Of the three cases of competitive businesses since the mid-1950's (families C, D, and E), one family has left for Monterrey, the store of family E is in the part of town furthest away from the stores of families A and B, and is hence minimally competitive. Only the activities of family D are directly competitive with those of the A and B family complex.

The investment required to start a competitive business, usually a store, is seen to be extremely high in money and in time. In no case has a store in Mina been started on the basis of capital derived from savings earned from wages. Entrance into such an activity is preceded by some activity other than the traditional subsistence-production alternatives, as shown by the histories of the dominant families.

The risks are great. The risk is seen as the gamble inherent in any new entrepreneurial activity. Lack of business

experience and need to establish a customer clientele are two factors of uncertainty. Said the ice cream seller: "My business is very small. I don't have enough money to make a large business like Gumaro D. But he is also very smart. I don't know enough about big businesses. So I don't have any desire to make my business any larger than it is now." There was common agreement about the possible alienation of the store-owning patrones. The return is seen as high if the business is able to survive. But uncertainty is an important factor here, given the competitive conditions. All of the families that are recognized as "rich" by the rest of the community are storeowning families. The best way of becoming rich is to become a storeowner; other entrepreneurial activity such as cottage crafts or attaining a government position are preliminary steps to establishing a general store.

In marked contrast to the opinions of peasant-laborers and small businessmen were the ideas expressed by two of the storeowners. Their remarks were consistent: new businesses are costly, and the risk in any business is always very great, but if the person has ambition, intelligence, and works hard, there is money to be made anywhere. The reason Mina is so poor is that most of the people are lazy, "they would rather sleep all day than work". One storeowner remarked that even when he gives people jobs, they don't continue, but after a few days they take their money and spend it in the cantina. There are plenty of opportunities available, if people only want to work. One remarked that a factory would never be successful in Mina because there would never be enough steady

workers. This, according to him, was why the marble factory closed down.

Another entrepreneurial alternative is to enter into a business which does not compete with the established economic activities in the town. The strategy is similar to starting a competitive business - capital is obtained and invested in some economic activity accompanied by the formation of a supporting body of friends, relatives, and compadres. The primary difference is that the business is non-competitive with the established economic activities. Recently, for example, some widowed women started a small-scale tortilla business. The nearest other such business is in a town five miles away. Interestingly, soon after the business was initiated, one of the storeowning families also started a similar business using motorized corn meal grinding and tortilla-forming machines. However, the widows' manually produced tortillas were more popular most probably because the manager of the automated business had been involved in a previous scandal and divorce, and therefore held little respect in the community.

There are also a number of small "businesses" such as quilt-making, sewing, ice cream production, etc. However, these are part-time specializations, and the income derived from them are applied to aid subsistence incomes. The notable exception is the local ice cream maker who, being the unmarried son of the local Niño Fidencio curer, gives all of his profits to his mother. The curer uses most (if not all) of the money to aid the people who come to her for aid. The business seems to be one of the best small businesses in town. By

observation, he earns up to 120 pesos (\$9.60 U.S.) per day from the sale of cones, and during the hot months of April through October, he earns about 20,000 pesos (\$1,600 U.S.).

The risks in starting a new kind of economic activity are very high. Starting a new, untested business is risky anywhere - large investments are exposed to a great degree of uncertainty. Money is in very short supply, and any new business based upon extracting rather than supplying cash to the local economy (such as a new store) must compete with other businesses for the limited amount of money. One rather perceptive member of the Liga Feminil remarked:

To bring money into Mina, we have to be able to sell something outside of Mina. And with what are we able to do that? None of us are going to become rich sewing dresses or making purses out of ixtle. Perhaps you (the author's wife) can find someone in the United States that could buy the things we make from ixtle.

In competing for the available money via sales, the new businessman again runs the risk of antagonizing the powerful storeowners. Even if the business is "non-competitive" in that it supplies a new product or service, it still is competitive for the available money. Neither the tortilla-makers, the ice cream producer, nor the various cottage industrialists bring money into the community and expand the cash base. All of these activities compete for the local supply of cash even though they do not directly compete with the patrones' stores. A new business is risky because it may be subject to pressure via the patrón-client network which sometimes prevents segments of the population from spending their limited money in other than "approved" places. An example of such pressure is the

running of the local cantinas. Each cantina is owned by a different patrón. Though the unattached peasant-laborers frequent them on the basis of personal preference, the clienteles are partially based upon a core of peasants loyal to the particular patrón. Since the men rarely drink alone, the company of drinkers often remains at the cantina where one of the members is obligated. In this manner, the patrón-employee system insures loyal customers as well as loyal laborers and informers. Anyone attempting to "break the chain" (romper la cadena) by competing with this system is exposing himself to very great risk indeed.

The return of starting a new business is understandably uncertain. The tortilla mill run by the divorcee mentioned earlier was about to close at the end of the research period. The reason given by the manager was that people just didn't come to buy their tortillas there. Although generally better-off than peasant-laborers, no small business family is "rich".

The final entrepreneurial alternative is to move to Monterrey or some equally distant area and start some commercial activity. The most common such activities are the sale of sewn or woven craft goods, the sale of goat cheese, and the sale of prepared foods, candles and herbs. The investment is usually moderately high in money to buy initial stock, and extremely high in time. If one commutes to Monterrey, an additional cost of commuting time and busfare must be absorbed.

The uncertainty of self-employment in other areas is extremely high. If one tries to become established in another small community similar to Mina, he is exposed to the same

opposing forces as he would in Mina, with the added disadvantage of not having a supporting network of kin and compadres. If he moves to Monterrey, he must compete with thousands of other campesinos who have come to the city for the same reason. In the major markets in Monterrey there are hundreds of similar stalls offering tacos, tamales, nopalitos, candy, and herbs.

The return for this kind of gamble is extremely uncertain. The only successful Mina-ites to move to Monterrey are a few families who were rich storeowners in Mina and used their money to establish large businesses in the city. The example usually cited is Raoul C., who now owns and manages a juke box and record shop in downtown Monterrey. One of the present patrón families are part-owners of a small hotel in one of the market districts. The cases of this type of alternative are very rare. Presently in Mina there are a number of peasants who commute to Monterrey in a wage labor capacity, but there are none who depend upon their own entrepreneurial abilities. One elderly man sells herbs to an herb shop and goat cheese to various Monterrey cantinas. The herbs are his own business, but he sells the cheese on commission for a local family. For both activities, he fills weekly orders and does not attempt to freelance in the street. The frequency of businesses is given in Table 3.

The data shows that the majority of the people in Mina do not in fact engage in entrepreneurial activities. Thirty-five individuals engage in self-owned business activities,

Table 3. Frequency of Business Activities

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Number of individuals</u>	<u>Households</u>
<u>Patrón</u> -storeowners (stores, land, goats, other busi- nesses)	9	4**
<u>Total of "small businesses":</u>	34	24
Sells meat, has refreshment stand on highway	1	1
Sells cheese and herbs	1	1
Make ixtle products	2	1
Make meals for workers, borders	4	2
Small stores	4	2**
Ice cream maker	1	1
Snow-cone maker	1	1
Sews clothing on order	3	2
Quilts	2	2
Sells boxes to stores and contraband ixtle	1*	1**
<u>Tortilla</u> maker (electric mill)	1	1**
<u>Tortilla</u> makers (by hand)	2	1
Bakery	4	2**
Restaurant	1	1**
Auto repair shop	3	2
"Trader"	1	1
Chicken farmers	<u>2</u>	<u>2**</u>
	35	24

* Only one ixtle smuggler known. According to informants there may be two others, but they are unverified.

** Are immediate members of storeowners' families or relatives. The family that sells boxes are compadres with a storeown-
ing family.

representing 24 households, 17.9% of the total households. These are not "storeowning-patrón" households, but are "small business" activities: from making quilts to manufacturing ice cream to selling herbs. In fact, there are only nine households representing four families that could be properly called the dominant "patrón" families. An extremely important point is that all of the small businesses, with the exception of the two small stores, the refreshment stand, and the tortilla maker, are non-competitive to the patrón-storeowners' activities. Of these exceptions, both small stores are run by widows or unmarried sisters, all of whom are relatives of patrón families. Nine small business households are relatives or compadres with the storeowners; 15 are independent. The strategy of the small businessman is clear: no competition with the powerful storeowners.

These families are not "minimizing" in the sense of the subsistence-oriented peasants. Instead, they are entrepreneurs who seek minimum competitive risk. Perhaps their approach is what has been called a "minimax" strategy. The idea of the minimax strategy incorporates both aspects of "maximizing" and "minimizing" by the recognition that there is more to decision making than simply maximizing return. Decisions always include factors of resource allocation and risk, as well as return. The minimax model follows from an assumption that a rational decision-maker would be aware that any choice involves a commitment of resources which might be lost if the desired outcome does not occur. It predicts that decision makers choose the alternative which minimized risk of maximum loss.

(Cove 1971:3) So in this view the actor does not "satisfice"; he still tries to expand his return limited by his calculation of the best way to avoid maximum loss if his decision fails. This seems to be an appropriate description of the small businessman operating within the context of the dominant storeowners.

The four storeowning-patrón families are "modern" or "progressive". These families own cars and trucks, they dress stylishly, watch television, cook on modern bottle-gas ranges, and the children are educated for professional and semi-professional activities. Based on these examples, the townspeople in general accept the possibility that a "humble" person can in fact become rich, influential, and "modern". The way to progress is to enter into some aspect of governmental or commercial activity, most commonly a government agency leading to a store. One stands little chance of progressing from subsistence-productive activity: goat herding, agriculture, gathering, etc., unless one wins the national lottery.

The reasons that so few people enter into these commercial-entrepreneurial activities are primarily the large investments and high risks involved. The perceived risks are those implicit in new business plus the counter-forces applied by the dominant group of storeowning-patrones who seek to maintain their own position. Said the herb gatherer:

There are many in Mina who would like to start a business, but they (the B brothers) won't let them. Raoul C. was a good man, and he tried, and look what they did to him. Cipriano E.'s store won't last many more years. The reason Gumaro D. has a good business is that he is too clever for them.

Some of the money that is accumulated by the storeowners is invested in new businesses, such as the new restaurant, but the businesses tend to be capital intensive rather than labor intensive. The restaurant is run by a widow and her son. Capital takes the form of stock for stores and cantinas, chickens and feed for the few chicken farms, and, in the case of the concrete block factory, expensive production machinery which requires only a few operators. Money is also invested in land and houses which supply rent.

Perhaps a partial reason for the capital intensive nature of business activities on the part of the storeowner-patrones is the animosity they have generated in their economic climbing. They have been allegedly ruthless to the point of murder, and have contributed to a general climate of suspicion, mistrust, and envy. Various peasants say that the storeowners are greedy; that they want to keep all the money to themselves and do not want to help the people. Storeowners, on the other hand, state that the people are ignorant and lazy; that their labor is of poor quality and little value, and that if the laborers were given more money they would just go out and spend it and would not work anymore. The justification of capital accumulation and intensive investment is that by putting the money in the hands of the people who know how to use it, the community can benefit. The peasants who are "good workers" are sought and given positions of familiarity and trust. The peasant response is that the patrones somehow have an obligation to use their money for the benefit of the peasants. Some older peasants said that they should keep up their obligations

like the old hacendados. The pre-revolutionary hacendados were also rich, but they threw fiestas for the entire village and often aided needy families according to the older residents. The present patrones neglect these obligations; they do not use their money to supply jobs for anyone else, and they aid only those with whom they have a compadre-client relationship.

There is a special term used to describe the patrones who extract money from the local people without returning any benefits - they are called capitalistas. The term does not apply to all rich. Raoul C. is a good man because his juke box business provided local jobs, and the wages were generous. Now that he lives in Monterrey, he regularly assists some local families as well as contributing generously to the local church. Because he did not depend on the extraction of local money and because he continues to aid Mina residents he is thought of as a "good man", not a capitalista. The term capitalista is synonymous for ese grupo (that group) or los malditos (the bad guys); those patrones that depend on the exploitation of the local economy while neglecting the expected concomitant social relations.

The appeal to the memory of the "good old days" of the haciendas is probably based on the resentment against the patrones for not sharing more of their wealth, and the envy of those families who started humble but became rich and powerful while the majority of the community remained poor. This implicit obligation of capital is mentioned by Firth. "The ideas about capital and the way in which it should be used and

rewarded are not merely economic concepts; they are also social concepts. They are not rooted in the nature of economic activity itself; they vary from one society to another."

(Firth 1968:83)

The strategies practiced by the patrones seem to be close to the "maximization" concepts common to formal economic analyses. Rational decisions are made which tend to "maximize" the return of the investment in capital goods and machinery. The motivation contrasts with the "minimizing" strategy typifying the peasant production subsistence activity in Mina. Whereas peasant laborers seem to plan their economic activity to meet the ends of subsistence, the "maximizers" attempt to create conditions so that the economic return is greatest, and this in itself is the goal. Entrepreneurial-maximizing activity is justified by the desire to "lift oneself up" and to progress, but the goals are more general and abstract than the immediate survival requirements of the peasant laborers. In fact, the only way to support a "modern" life locally is to be a patrón. The choice involves not simply capital and a successful business activity, but requires a change in life style including changed social relations, values and roles. As stated by one informant, anyone can be a rich patrón if he wants to badly enough; it is a choice between being "humble and poor, but good and rich, modern and bad". Not that the peasants are driven by any great inner moralism, but if an individual attempts the capitalista alternative, he is immediately subject to the competition and pressure of the patrones on the one hand, and the suspicion, envy, mistrust, and corresponding

censure of the peasant community on the other.

This peasant-good, patrón-bad complex has some features of a "sour grapes" rationalization about it. All other things being equal, peasant-laborers (as most people) would rather be rich than poor. Conversations, especially among the young men, frequently center about better ways to make money, and the goods, particularly trucks, that money can buy. However, other things are not equal; the barriers to entering the patrón economic-political activities are prohibitive. The result is the rationalization of their lack of opportunities or the power to make opportunities, and their subjection to social-political domination. The reaction to the political-economic forces of the patrón-entrepreneurs was interestingly stated in conversations about an American film some of the men had seen in Monterrey. It was a film with Clint Eastwood in a role as a violently independent "loner" cowboy who fights the "bad rich politicians". In the film he successfully defeats the town boss and his henchmen and returns control to the oppressed and exploited townspeople. He was described as "muy hombre" - very manly - to have taken on such a noble task. This perhaps points out the tensions between the hombre del campo complex and the realities of the local political-economic circumstances.

The dilemma is particularly acute for the young men who maintain a very strong "man of the campo" image but yet desire a cut of the economic pie. The local opportunities are dominated by the patrones, yet there is continual pressure from the family and community to stay "good". Various families who

have children working in factories in Monterrey expressed their good fortune in their children being able to work away from Mina, even though they did not get to see them as often. The result is that many young men leave the community to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Many parents attempt to have their children finish school so that they can get out of Mina because "there is no future here". The remaining individuals are perhaps more inclined toward lower-risk activities and tend to perpetuate the patrón-entrepreneur domination of the community. This was not examined and must remain speculation.

In summary, entrepreneurial activity is part of the common image of economic alternatives, but it is an infrequent choice because of the scarcity of capital, the competitive pressure of the patrones, and the resultant ethic which relates "modern-rich" as exploitative and humble-poor as morally correct. The current patrones employ what has been called a maximizing strategy to gain their position, but their devious methods have alienated much of the community resulting in a social climate of suspicion and mistrust. Maximization as a strategy has become associated with the accumulation of capital by any means, usually some form of exploitation of the existing resource-production base. Those who maximize using these methods are called capitalistas and are resented. The dilemma of many young laborer-peasants is that they want to improve economically, but they hesitate to participate in the stifling patrón-employee relation, and lack the confidence or resources to compete with the patrones. The result is the employment of the "man of the campo" image: defiant, violent,

and poor but noble. This leads many to leave the community to where the better economic alternatives may not require much personal investment. These are the most likely to become wet-backs in the United States, and largely make up what Adams has called the "mobile rural proletariat". (Adams 1964:61)

An interesting note is that there is often a comparison of present conditions with those during the pre-revolutionary hacienda period. To the older peasants, the present patrones are trying to be hacendados, but whereas the hacendados had some concern for their employees and peones, the patrones have forsaken the general population for their own personal gain. The present patrones fail to meet the expected "obligations" claimed by the people; they contribute nothing themselves to the wealth of the community but depend upon the extraction of money from the peasant laborers. Secondly, they return none of the wealth to the community in the form of community fiestas, emergency aid, etc., except in the cases of their own kin and compadres. Although patrón behavior may in fact be historically related to the hacendado cultural model, the patterns have been modified by the realities of the extractive economic basis. The general expectation of the townspeople of "legitimizing" behavior from the patrones is misplaced.

CHAPTER 6

World View: Symbols and Meanings

Voy a cantar un corrido,
Por favor pido silencio.
Voy cantando agradecido,
Me curó el Nino Fidencio.

(I'm going to sing a ballad,
I ask silence please.
I am singing thankfully,
Nino Fidencio cured me.)

Song by a popular
folk balladeer

This chapter deals with a different kind of phenomena than the thesis has included so far. The previous chapters have been based primarily on the directly-observable factors of ecological conditions, historical events, family sizes, locations, and forms, economic practices, organizations, behavior among various social entities, etc. Those attitudes and perceptions considered so far have had to do with those more pragmatic and observable phenomena.

Now the reader will be presented with the more intangible area of supernatural beliefs, ethical positions, spirits, witches, magico-religious basis of illness, etc. In other words these are the interpretive systems, the realm of symbols and meanings. As Geertz says:

As we are going to deal with meaning, let us begin with a paradigm: viz., that sacred symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos - the tone, character, and

quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood - and their world view - the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order. (Geertz 1972:167)

Much of the beliefs concerning the nature of the supernatural are crystallized around the Niño Fidencio activities. The Niño was a charismatic curer who lived in the municipio about 40 years ago, and whose reputation is the foundation of a present system of meanings and practices encompassing older ideas of God, Jesus, and the Saints. It will be helpful to first consider the matrix of values and beliefs common to Mina and the rest of Mexico and those particular to the Mina area so that the relationship of the cult to the rest of the socio-cultural system can be better understood.

In many respects, Mina is representative of an overlying mestizo Mexican cultural pattern, and a function of the Mexican national society in which it is imbedded. The importance of, and the attitudes connected with the familia (extended family; household) is a common theme throughout Mexico. The institution of compadrazgo, the high value of masculinity (machismo), male-female separation and the resultant attitudes about male superiority are universal mestizo-Mexican cultural features. Patrón-client social relationships, derived from the pre-revolutionary latifundios, are a main determinant of social activity in the Republic, and have a history extending from Spanish contact.

Mina shares with the rest of rural Mexico many ideas concerning health and curing. There is a large pharmacopea of herb knowledge for prevention and cure of various illnesses

(see Appendix). Sickness is related to moral behavior, and supernatural-religious causes. Magical fright, soul loss, and the evil eye (mal de ojo) are common explanations for what perhaps might be diagnosed in our society as fear, anxiety, and depression. Curers (curanderos) are part time specialists who are called in to diagnose and treat disease, and to also help with magical potions to both assist the client in his desires (love potions, fertility teas, etc.) and to aid in his defense against bad luck and sitchcraft. Based upon conversations with the local curer, accidents are "natural" occurrences (though possible punishments for past transgressions), while chronic illness and pregnancy are seen more related to the will of God and the supernatural and are therefore surrounded by intricate systems of belief and taboo. The natural-unnatural dichotomy has been noted by Kelly:

Informants recognize two major categories of illness - 'bad' or 'sorcery-inflicted' ones, and the 'good' or 'God-sent' afflictions. The 'good' illnesses usually come with fever, the 'bad' ones do not. Death from witchcraft or spiritualistic artifice is called a 'sent' or 'instigated' demise, while death from a 'good' disease is a 'natural' death...The 'unnatural' illnesses include those caused by the evil eye or 'fright' as well as sorcery-inspired maladies; all are afflictions whose alleged causes appear to us to be intangible, magical, and/or emotional. (Kelly 1965:22)

In Mina some of the "unnatural" diseases are:

Susto or Espanto: "Magical fright" as described by Gillin (1948). One of the most common folk diseases, the symptoms are loss of appetite, depression, withdrawal, anxiety, loss of weight. The disease may be interpreted as the loss of the soul. One becomes asustado (frightened) by an emotional shock, a traumatic experience, a sudden scare. Two local goat herders

were on a mountain top when an airliner crashed and burned literally in their camp. The two were "scared" and hid for several days before returning to the community. A common treatment for susto is to take two palm fibers that have been used in Holy Week celebrations and hold them in the sign of a cross upon a raw egg. The egg and fibers are then rubbed on parts of the body of the afflicted to "draw out" the fright. Another treatment for susto is to heat a piece of soapstone and place it under the patient's bed before he retires. During the night the fright will be drawn out by the rock, and the source of the fright may be observed in the patterns of cracks that appear on the stone as it cools. One informant recalled being scared by a bull at a bullfight, and, having undergone the treatment, was able to clearly see the head and horns of the bull in the cooled stone.

Mal de Ojo: "Evil eye". Symptoms are loss of weight, other illnesses such as fright, headaches, insomnia. According to the local curer, a disease in children sometimes caused by mal de ojo is Caida de Mollera (fallen fontenal) supposedly resulting in fever and severe dehydration in the child.

Evil eye is especially dangerous for little children who will become sick after having been looked at by one who possesses this characteristic. According to informants, a person does not have to be "evil" to have an "evil eye" - it just happens that some people are born with it. The treatment is for the person with the evil eye to touch the potential victim. For example, after admiring someone's child, one is supposed to touch the child's head to prevent any accidental

illness from evil eye. A common source of illness through this means is in cases of personal envy. For example, a local lady admired the legs of the author's wife, but warned her that she unfortunately had an evil eye. To forestall any misfortune, the peasant lady insisted upon rubbing the legs, partly to ward off her own evil eye, and partly so that some of the bounteousness of the legs would be transferred to her. This unintentional aspect of evil eye seems to be a general characteristic. (Kelly 1965:120) Many people carry metal charms and small packets of herbs, most often purchased at herb stores, to seek protection of God and various saints to ward off witchcraft, evil eye, fright, and general misfortunes.

Caida de Mollera: (Fallen fontenal) Can be caused by evil eye and also other factors such as night air, loud noises, or improper handling.

Brujería: Witchcraft. Symptoms may be fright, anxiety, loss of weight, insomnia, periods of dislocation and fits, and latido (heart palpitations). Witchcraft in general is not a disease itself, but a cause of diseases; witches make people sick.

In general, the unnatural or supernatural diseases are those sent as a punishment from God, those resulting from evil eye or witchcraft, or those resulting from a "fright" such as a sudden shock or seeing a ghost. Natural diseases are those caused by improper diet, fatigue and injuries, common ailments such as rheumatism and colds, and the natural processes of aging. Cancer, tuberculosis, unhealing sores, infections,

diabetes and other common chronic problems are "natural" diseases. Particular to the Mesoamerican culture area and found in Mina are:

Empacho: Chronic indigestion and heartburn. The symptoms, attributed to a ball in the stomach, include swollen abdomen, burping, gas, pain, diarrhea, and sometimes vomiting and fever. It is attributed to bad eating habits.

Bilis: Anger. The symptoms are nervous upset - acute rage which may lead to palpitations, insomnia, nervousness.

Ideas about the "hot" and "cold" aspects of various locations and objects, particularly foods, are held in Mina, but such a conceptual dichotomy does not play a very important part of daily life for most of the people. The concept, when applied, pertains to the innate qualities of items, particularly those of diet. Certain foods are "hot", others are "cold". As a rule "cold" foods can do more harm than "hot" foods. The idea is to balance the hot and the cold items so that an agreeable combination will result. For example, a stew combining beef ("cold") and red pepper ("hot") is a balanced combination. Diseases also have "hot" and "cold" characteristics so that dysentery comes from "hot" foods so that one should eat "cold" foods to cure it. In general, this is similar to Kelly's findings. (Kelly 1965)

This dichotomous scheme seems to be of minor importance in Mina both for the preparation of food or the diagnosis-treatment of illness. Many informants knew such a scheme exists, but could only give a few examples of each category. Many could not recall if a particular item was hot or cold.

The variations of classification of the same item as "hot" by some, yet "cold" by others occurs in the nature and remedies for disease, and this has been noted also by Currier (1966). In general, the older members of the community were more knowledgeable but the conceptual scheme seems to be lost to many members of the community.

There are some distinct northern variations in attitudes and beliefs. For example, there is a belief in the Christian-Catholic concept of God and the saints as is prevalent in the rest of folk Mexico, but there is a variant in the overt behavior based on the belief. The local priest is respected by the men of Mina, not simply because he is a man of God, but because he is a very macho man who stood up in defense of the people to troops of the various sides during the Revolution and became famous in the area because of the very large pistol he always carried.

The Catholic rituals as practiced by the community are not as elaborate as those found in other folk areas of Mexico. There is no town patron saint, nor has there ever been one. Hence, there is no annual procession celebration. The people celebrate the Day of the Cross (May 3), but the practice is very simple: various family groups, mostly women and children, make the climb to the altar on the top of a nearby hill to place flowers there and to pray and say a rosary. This happens throughout the day; there is no organized community procession. The Christmas Posadas likewise are very simple. Women and children organize a small procession around the church. No

visits are made to any of the local households. Many families assemble nativity scenes in their homes and invite compadres and relatives for roasary sessions and evening meals, but the only community celebration is the short processions and a single evening of piñatas (Christmas Eve) in the church yard. The piñatas are not filled with candy and toys as is traditional due to the very dusty church yard in which they are broken. Instead, bags of candy and toys are distributed to the lines of children by some of the storeowning families, and by members of the Mina Club. Residents stated that the celebrations were more elaborate in times past, but in these times there are "many bad people who don't believe." Local baptisms and funerals are not very elaborate with only the families concerned in attendance. Baptismal parties also include the sponsoring godparents who hold the child during the brief naming ceremony and prayer.

The Day of the Dead (November 2), does not entail elaborate rituals. The day before, men and women clean up the gravesites of their relatives. On the Day of the Dead, flowers are arranged on the grave and a picnic meal is consumed at graveside. The occasional highlight of the celebration is to remove a few rocks from an ancient gravesite to see how "well-preserved" its resident is - a gentleman whom no one remembers, but who is the only local person ever to have been embalmed.

Neither is the celebration of the Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, December 12, an elaborate ceremonial. The church congregation, mostly women and children, attends a late afternoon mass in church, after which they form a procession from

the church to the highway - a distance of about six blocks. There the priest (without his vestments) talks to the children about the Virgin while some of the women throw fireworks into the air. The procession then returns to the church for another short sermon, after which the congregation disperses to their respective homes for the evening meal and some for family prayer sessions.

Easter Week, Semana Santa, is somewhat more important, if only in terms of the numbers of people who return to town for the holiday week. The actual church masses during the week, on Good Friday, and on Easter Eve are well attended, probably more a function of the periodic influx of population than of the importance of the rituals. During the week there are many meals and visits among relatives and compadres, at which time the spring time desert foods, especially nopal cactus leaves, are served in lieu of meat. The character of these meals is predominantly social - family reunion - rather than religious or ritualistic. Prayers are said, but they are mostly thankful graces before the meal. The Good Friday mass is well attended and the Easter Eve (Saturday night) midnite mass is the best attended of all. After the midnite mass, the families return home to a late feast, again of dominantly social character. The Easter morning mass is poorly attended, primarily because most of the visitors have left by bus or car to return to their jobs by Monday morning.

The only other celebration of importance is Mother's Day, which, except for a church mass in the morning, is entirely a family-based event. Again, in-migration from through the

Republic and the United States swell the town population, but again the celebration is primarily familial-social rather than religious.

The lack of community ritual is perhaps due to the changing attitudes toward the church during and after the Revolution, especially by the men who do not participate in the formal church activities. At first I thought that perhaps the lack of elaboration in Catholic celebration was a result of the general poverty of the area, combined with an absence of an underlying cultural base of indigenous beliefs and practices. However, this explanation conflicts with the elaborate rituals and practices of members of the Niño Fidencio curing cult, which has been in existence for only about forty years, and which entails elaborate ritual and expensive celebrations. The explanation seems to lie elsewhere.

Solis also notes the lack of religious elaboration in Northern Mestizo Mexican communities, but attributes it to colonial-historical factors. There was less concern by the Catholic Church for the northern areas because the Indians there were not the same kind of subjects for conversion as the sedentary, dense Indian populations of the Central Mexican plateau. The church had their work cut out for them with the dominated natives of Central Mexico; in the North, the nomadic groups could not be brought under the control required to convert them to Catholicism. Another factor was the remoteness of the northern colonial settlements. Often priests were assigned northern posts as reprimands, and they were administratively, as well as physically, distant from the

ecclesiastical centers in Mexico City and Guadalajara. This resulted in a substantially weaker church influence in what is now the United States Southwest and the Northern Mexican states. (Solis 1971:54)

One factor may be the conflict between the aggressiveness and masculinity expected of men as Hombres del Campo and the submissiveness before the Church and its priests demanded by the Catholic doctrine. Perhaps peonage is rejected whether to a local patrón or a priest. Women are the main participants in the Catholic rituals carried out in the homes during Christmas season and Holy Week. Very few men attend church services, and those that do attend do not sit and kneel, but instead stand in the rear near the entrance throughout the mass. A few old men kneel and participate in the prayers; the younger men stand silently with their hats removed. Meanwhile, most men socialize in the plaza and cantinas while their women and children attend the mass. When asked about this aversion to participation in church activities, various informants admitted that it was because the men resented submitting to the posture required by church services; that there are strong memories of had in hand peonage of which the church was an important part. Mina men would never again submit themselves to such degradation. One perhaps more perceptive man stated:

We remember the way it was with the hacendados and the priests. Men have pride. To be humble is for a woman, not for a man. We have faith in God, but we pray to Him and the saints, not to a priest. Father T. (the local retired priest) is a good priest and a very good man, but since he doesn't give masses anymore, the men don't go to church.

It was Father T. who gained a reputation of toughness during

the Revolution by his refusal to be inducted into the army and by the size of the pistolón he carried.

This might seem to imply that men are not strong believers. This is not the case; many observations attest to the dependence of the men on the Catholic God and saints. Religious medallions and medals are carried universally. Men offer prayers at their worksites, particularly if their job is a dangerous one. Men build altars of stone, cement, and concrete blocks outside the entrances to the mines, and decorate them with pictures of the saints, momentos of Niño Fidencio, and offerings of tokens, flowers, and candles. It seems that the men reject not the concept of the Catholic God and the resultant protection, but rather hesitate to assume the submissive posture required to participate in the formal rituals.

There is a common belief in witchcraft (brujería), but due to the prevalence of the Niño Fidencio cult there are supposedly no practicing witches in the area. This is related to the nature of the belief system associated with Niño Fidencio, and will be discussed presently. In Mina, witchcraft beliefs have little to do with particular supernatural powers inherent in particular individuals (brujas). Instead, witches are rather evil herbalists or curers who can be hired to insert a brewed concoction into the victim's food or drink. For example, Toloache (*Datura*), or Jimson weed, is a common concoction slipped into food by "witches". The plant is an extremely powerful and dangerous hallucinogenic which, once ingested, continues to produce derrangement. (Kelly 1965:117) One resident of Mina was supposedly "bewitched" by Toloache twenty

years earlier, and still has occasional periods of disassociation. Mina-area witchcraft is based on pragmatic herbal knowledge rather than psychological or suggestive practices. Malevolent witchcraft involves little magic or personal power; it does require extensive herbal knowledge. There is a fear of being bewitched, but it is primarily the fear of inadvertently swallowing some potion placed there by a witch or a helper. Amulets and charms ward off the "evil eye" and bad luck; witchcraft is avoided by eating and drinking only with safe and trusted people and never eating "in the street".

There is a belief in mischievous spirits and gremlins, most of which live in the desert and mountains. These desert spirits are often called "chanes" or "chines". Two kinds of celebrations often include dancers in indian garb who perform a dance-ritual to symbolically protect the goings-on from mischievous interference from the spirits. The semi-annual Niño Fidencio ceremonies and the local Day of the Holy Cross include dancers. Commonly, all the dancers are dressed as indians and are unmasked except one who is usually in rags and wears a clown-type mask - the chane. The scenario involves the chane darting into the crowd, disrupting conversations, making off-color allusions to the events, tugging at clothing, etc., until the indian dancers surround him, close in on him, and remove him and his mischievous irritations from the crowd. The chane is a playful irritant - to be avoided and contained, but not to be feared to any degree. It is he who turns the milk sour, who hides lost items, who puts the stone where one will stub his toe on it.

There are a series of legends of desert hideouts containing treasure but guarded by the spirits, with parallels to Leprechauns' "pots of gold". The stories concern secret caves which contain vast treasure; the caves are depositories of bandit gold, or are supernaturally guarded by various spirits, God, or the saints. There is a popular legend that there is a cave in some nearby mountains which is closely guarded by chanes, and which opens during Holy Week and will someday give up its treasure to a "good soul". Herders customarily tend their flocks in this area during Holy Week in hopes that the cave will open for them.

Of all the aspects of the belief system, Niño Fidencio is one of the most important, perhaps equivalent to the Virgin of Guadalupe. The municipio of Mina is the location of the Niño Fidencio curing complex. Many campesinos, particularly the very poor, are strong adherents, and their dwellings display medals, pictures, and special prayers pertaining to "El Niño Guadalupeño" (roughly, "The Child of the Virgin of Guadalupe", the patron saint of Mexico. The implication is that Niño Fidencio is related to the Mexican saint in the mystical way that Jesus is related to the Virgin Mary.)

The cult is based on the life of a man, José Fidencio de Jesús Constantino Sántora, who arrived at the small town of Espinazo during the Revolution. Here he began a ten year career of miraculous curings which gained him a reputation throughout Mexico and among the Spanish-speaking residents of the United States. His practice was a combination of magical-religious treatment such as ritual immersion, incantation and

laying-on of hands; an extensive knowledge of herbal remedies; and a crude surgical skill in treating and removing boils, abscessed teeth, infection, tumors and sores. Belief in the validity of his powers is justified by three arguments: 1) His cures worked and curing in his name is still effective, 2) many people from the United States came and still come for his cures, and 3) the president of Mexico himself, General Plutarco Calles (1924-1928), came by special train to Espinazo and was cured by the Niño.¹

After the death of Fidencio in 1938, various curers have continued to work in his name using the same rituals and techniques. His tomb in the town of Espinazo has become a shrine to his memory, and the faithful make regular pilgrimages there, especially on the anniversary dates of his birth and death,

¹The author suspects an underlying political motivation in the visit of President Calles to Espinazo. Previously, Calles was not very popular with Northern Mexican peasantry: he was instrumental in driving Villa's troops (including many peasants and Yaqui Indians of this area) from the northern state of Sonora (Quirk 1960:165); during his presidential administration he passed the dreaded Ley Calles (law of Calles), which impowered the government to fight the Church, and which ultimately led to the closing of all churches in Mexico; he openly fought the Cristero movement which violently sought the re-establishment of priests and the opening of the churches (McHenry 1962:198-9); on November 23, 1927, government troops executed a political prisoner, a Jesuit priest named Father Proa. The event was widely publicized, and further alienated peasant Catholics throughout Mexico. For these reasons, it is theorized that Calles' visit to Espinazo in 1928 was an attempt to soothe the potentially revolutionary peasants in the North. It is always very risky to try to guess motivation, but the participation of Calles in a highly-mystical, folk-Catholic curing cult is highly inconsistent with his previous history. At the time the Niño was at the height of his popularity, and I propose that the visit was to head off any Cristero-like rebellion inherent in such a phenomenon, and to show by his "miraculous cure of an unknown illness" that Calles was in fact sympathetic to the antagonistic northern states. His visit to the "miraculous curer" was accounted by newspapers in the United States. (New York Times, March 1928)

October 17 and March 19 respectively.

The beliefs and curing activities of the cult are closely related to the common folk ideas of health and curing found throughout Mexico. The presence of sickness and ill health is an accepted part of natural life, and minor illness is not considered to be an unusual condition. Very little attention is paid to minor illnesses; children run in the streets with uncared-for running sores, severe coughs, and infection. Neither modern doctors or traditional curers are called until the illness becomes grave. There is a local government hospital, visited daily by a doctor from Monterrey, a larger and better equipped hospital in the neighboring municipio of Hidalgo, and an extensive Social Security hospital system in Monterrey, but there is reluctance to use these health facilities. "I don't want a doctor. If God intends that I die, I will die regardless of where I am. Why should I spend the money on a doctor and a hospital?", stated one informant. "Si Dios quiere" (if God wills) is a peasant attitude important to understanding the behavior concerning health and curing in Mina. Infant mortality is high in Mina. About one-third of the children die during birth and early childhood according to the visiting doctor. Any record better than that is considered a "gift from God".

According to a local herb salesman, there is general acceptance that most people usually have some minor ailments, that these are punishments from God for minor moral transgressions. If one is completely healthy, he is either a good man or is extremely lucky. Such ailments must be borne with

resignation and stoicism. Alleviation will come not strictly from medication, but also from prayer and improvement of moral behavior.

There is a wide variety of herbal remedies for treatment of illness (see Appendix) as well as potions to improve fertility, bring luck, restore masculinity, etc. Most folk medicines are taken as tea, although there are preparations which are dried, ground, and placed in food.

The help of a curer (curandera) may be sought if the illness becomes serious. In Mina the principle curandera is also the primary proponent of the Niño Fidencio cult, and approximately half the area of her house is devoted to an elaborate altar and shrine to the Niño. The curer's skill and herb knowledge is important, but also the personal relationship between the curer and the patient and family is often a factor in choosing the curing method. Many women visit the curer on Sunday afternoons for a purely social occasion. During the Spring and Fall when the weather is particularly nice, the number of visitors approximates the number of people attending mass in the morning. The visitors come from other communities as well as Mina, and these Sunday visits have indeed become large-scale religious curing rituals with as many as 200 in attendance. In addition to reciting rosaries, singing songs to the Niño, burning incense, and being cured-blessed by the curandera, the Sunday sessions are also pleasant gossip-social occasions. The visitors are people who have previously sought the curandera's aid and will probably do so again when they have a health or emotional problem.

Houses are generally kept clean, but this seems to be more a function of custom than preventive medicine. One's health is related to one's moral behavior and relationship with God. Correspondingly, the most popular "preventive medicine" is dependence on prayers, charms, and good luck medals. Various preventive taboos are practiced, especially by pregnant women. Many of these taboos have been described by Kelly (1965), and include making sure that the woman has no knots in her clothing, and opening all the doors and windows during the birth to "make sure that nothing blocks the child's exit."

As might be anticipated, the beliefs associated with the Niño Fidencio curing cult incorporate the traditional ideas of health and curing: disease as a moral-religious phenomenon; the interpersonal aspects of the role of the curer; extensive use of herbal remedies, prayer and incantation; and dependence on amulets, charms, and taboos for prevention. Yet there are aspects of "modern" medicine as well: "hospitals", "operations", "nurses", etc. The original Niño incorporated all these aspects in his work; from accounts of informants who knew him and were cured by him (including his brother), it seems that he brought with him an extensive knowledge of herb cures, he had a better-than-average understanding of the physiology of disease (he refused to try to cure cases that he considered hopeless), and he was an effective folk-psychologist. He also performed surgery, the results of which are preserved in a grotesque display at his tomb; a cabinet of jars of tumors, teeth, infections and other "matter" he removed from his patients. The treatments of the Niño are

referred to as "operations"; he performed crude surgery with broken glass, allegedly boiled beforehand. He maintained a "hospital" for the recovery of his patients. Existing photographs show patients recuperating in clean, white rooms, while being attended by "nurses". A story is told that one patient who was cured by the Niño donated an actual surgical table to the "hospital".

Another example of the folk-modern syncretism, is the observation of the local curer who, after giving money to a local woman to buy food, also gave her some fruit because, "the fruit contains vitamins. This will fight off the baby's sickness." This same curer applies various salves and oils for first aid to cuts and insect bites, but only after thoroughly washing the wound with soap and water. On various occasions the author was called upon to supply medicines "from the other side" which were "to kill the germs".

All in all, the effectiveness and reputations of Niño Fidencio and the succeeding curers are certainly related to mystical aspects, but real medical skill is also probably a factor of success. During the period of his curing, thousands of people would come to Espinazo (present population about 350) to seek his skills. Since his death, his town remains the Mecca for the cult adherents. There are large celebrations on the anniversaries of his birth and death on March 17 and October 19. Four to five thousand people congregate in the small town from all parts of Mexico and the United States for these occasions. During the March celebration, I met a Mexican-American who had brought his child to Espinazo for a



possible cure. To give an indication of the widespread reputation of the Niño, the man worked in the supply office of Michigan State University! They gather to render respect to his memory, to fulfill obligations made for a previous cure, to seek a cure from the many curanderos who cure in his name, and to simply enjoy the fiesta. Since it is almost impossible to reach Espinazo by car, many people take the train which originates in Monterrey. The atmosphere is that of a picnic outing with many of the passengers joining in the singing of the special songs honoring the Niño and his cures.

Espinazo is ostentiously a railroad watering point, but the character of the town is completely determined by its function as the center of the cult. The Niño lies in a marble tomb in his old residence and "hospital". His deathbed is an important relic, and, like the tomb, it is covered with flowers. A room adjoining the tomb room contains literally hundreds of testimonial letters and photographs giving thanks to the Niño for his past curings. This main building holding the tomb, the deathbed, and the testimonials is also the location of the main altar. This altar, devoted to the Niño, is dominated by a mural-sized photograph of the dead curer lying in state. Various prayer candles, flowers, and medallions and other religious symbols are arranged around the altar. Near the altar is the table he used for his operations. The display case containing the remains of some of his operative cures stands to one side of the altar. People form a continuous procession through this building, sometimes referred to as "the temple". Prayers are offered to the Niño at the various

stations, and the artifacts, particularly the marble tomb, are rubbed in hope that some of the "power" will be transmitted.

There are other locations in the town that hold mystical significance for adherents to the cult. One is a pepper tree (pirúl) which was the location of mass curings, and under which the Niño is said to have cried for three days "for the sadness and the misery of his people." Another mystical location is a small mudhole (charco) formed by the run-off from the town. The Niño immersed his patients here in baptismal-like rituals as part of the curing process, and it is here that curers presently effect curations in his name.

During the celebrations at Espinazo, curers wander throughout the area providing cures in the name of Niño Fiden-cio for whomever desires them. Most of the curing rituals take place in or near the mudhole, but the pepper tree and in and around the tomb building are also popular locations. The mud of the charco itself supposedly has mystical curing properties, and a curing session, regardless of location, is usually followed by immersion in the mud.

The actual curing rituals used by the various curers are quite standardized, and are supposedly those used by the Niño himself. There seems to be no great symbolic significance associated with the ritual actions; they are simply "how the Niño did it." The person seeking the cure stands facing the curer and recites the symptoms of his illness, its duration, and the possible moral transgressions and/or bad thoughts possibly contributing to the infirmity. The curer listens in a trance-like state, and begins to massage the affected area of

the patient. A common practice is for the curer to place his hands around the back of the patient's head, and to stroke the back of the neck with short, downward strokes. Often blows are administered with bunches of fresh wild plants, "to draw out the sickness and evil". Next, the curer, still in a trance-like attitude, prescribes the preparation of various herbal remedies. This is followed by an admonition to recite daily Catholic prayers and special prayers to Niño Fidencio, and to promise to remain faithful to the Niño by making periodic pilgrimages to Espinazo and by leading a good and moral life. The session is closed by a short prayer by the curer, or, if in the mudhole, the ritual dunking.

The curers are mostly part-time specialists who operate in their own villages (or in Monterrey) the rest of the year, and who come to Espinazo only for the special ritual occasions. The common terminology, curandero or curandera, is used to describe the curers, but other terms, cajón (male - "big box") and cajita (female - "little box"), are also used. These mystics conduct the curing in and around the mud hole and in other "holy places" in Espinazo. They dress in a cape-like garment of colorful and sometimes expensive materials. Red, white, yellow, and purple predominate. Many wear caps of the same material. The curers have mystical and Christian medals and crucifixes. A common monogram is "J.S.C." - Jesús Síntora Constantino.

There are no formal special training requirements or qualifications to be a curer. According to the local curer, curers are those people who feel that they have received the

gift of curing power from the Niño himself, and are hence under the obligation to practice the rituals started by Niño Fidencio. Fidencio himself supposedly stated that after his death there would follow many "Niños", and that, although they couldn't have the power he did, his spirit would continue curing through them as his agents. This is the explanation given for the similarity in the rituals used by the various curers; that it is actually the same spirit of Niño Fidencio acting through all of them. Often the curers will bring with them small cadres of the faithful who, during the curing sessions, will sing songs to the Niño, will hold various ritual paraphernalia such as a decorative canopy to shield the sun, and will hold up banners which are usually modifications of the Mexican national flag. On such flags, the central eagle-and-serpent-and-cactus design is replaced with mystical letters, a design of the Virgin of Guadalupe, or a likeness of the Niño.

While the organized curing is going on there are many pre- and post-cure patients looking on, various dance and music groups performing. Matachine dancers and traditional Norteño bands provide almost constant music. There are small groups of penitente-like pilgrims undergoing various forms of ritual suffering. These penitentes (penitents) are not organized, but are individuals (along with their families) who submit themselves to various unpleasanties in order to carry out an obligation (promesa) incurred at a past curing session, during private prayers to the Niño, or to petition the Niño for a needed cure or help. The most common form of self-torture is to roll, crawl on knees, or push oneself along on one's

stomach or back a certain number of times between the pepper tree and the tomb-mudhole complex, a distance of some two-hundred yards of hot sand, stones, and prickly cactus.

An important and colorful aspect of these celebrations are the various bands and matachine (or matachane) dancers (mata from matar, to kill; chane, or chine is an indian concept meaning local evil spirits discussed earlier). These dancers who assemble in Espinazo for the celebrations are especially important because it is believed that the mischievous local spirits are instrumental in causing minor illnesses. The dancers' function is to drive out these spirits; the groups always focus on the chane - "devil" dancer whose role is to scare the spectators, play pranks, and "escape" from the rest of the dancers.

The twice-yearly celebrations at Espinazo are clearly the most important festival occasions for much of the folk population of Northern Mexico. No other event displays either the participation or elaboration as the periodic public adoration of the local saint Fidencio.

After the description of the practices of the major festival activity of the Niño Fidencio curing cult, it is now important to understand the beliefs and assumptions of the members, and to see how they relate to everyday life in Northern Mexico and in Mina in particular. Although the major congregation of believers occurs twice-yearly in Espinazo, there are also shrines devoted to the Niño in every small town in the area where the faithful can go for aid and assurance. These local altars are maintained by the local curers, and some have

become famous in their own right. People from Mina have recently traveled to the neighboring state of Coahuila to be treated at the altar of a "new Niño". Although the local Catholic priests do not officially approve of the cult, it seems that they do not care to meddle with such a "holy" issue and take the chance of alienating a large part of the community. The same position is taken by the visiting doctor, who had once thought of closing the mudhole at Espinazo because it is such a health hazard.

A most important aspect of the cult was started by the Niño himself: that no charge can ever be made for a cure carried out in his name. All cures, at Espinazo and at the local shrines, are free. Donations may be accepted, but these donations must be used by the curer strictly in the service of the people, again a precedent set by Niño Fidencio. The rationale behind the practice started with Fidencio's belief that his power was a direct gift from God: he was simply the mechanism of transfer, a "middleman". How could he possibly accept payment for a gift from God? At his death he knew no curing could ever be done in his name (and hence with his supernatural aid) if a fee was required. The argument is the same: as the Niño was a middleman for God, any future curer would be an intermediary between the patient and the spirit of Niño Fidencio. "Payment" is rightly due to the Niño, and not to the local curer. Donations may be accepted if they are used to help those who request aid. The "payment" is that which was required by Niño Fidencio from his early curing days; the receiver of a curation is obligated to be a moral person and to

carry out a promise (promesa) to God and the Niño. For example, the curer in Mina cannot receive payment for her services because that would compromise her status as a curer in the name of Niño Fidencio. There is a small bowl for contributions which are, in fact, given to various needy families who come for aid.

In exchange for the curing services and aid the curer asks only that the person be a good person and have faith: he must remain humble; must be loyal to family and compadres; must keep faith in God, the Virgin of Guadalupe, and Niño Fidencio; and, above all, he must avoid anything "immoral", which may include storeowning households who tend to be more modern-oriented, and "modern" institutions such as doctors, hospitals, or government agencies. In conversation with the local curer and her son, it was stated:

If one is cured by the Niño Fidencio, one must be a good person. One must pray to God and the Niño. One must be humble. One shouldn't work for (the local patrones) because they are bad men. One shouldn't go to the (local) hospital because the doctor is a bad man too. My husband worked for him once and he never got paid for his work.

In this way, the price of a Niño Fidencio cure is an obligation to a way of life. It is proposed that this is a prestatative exchange in the true spirit of Mauss' analysis. The curing is asked for, but is explicitly given as a "gift" without requirement of repayment. The essence of prestation is the obligation to repay, for to accept without repayment degrades the receiver and subjects him to strong social disapproval. (Mauss 1967:3) In a sense, the curer is only an agent; the gift is from the Niño. Repayment must be in his

terms: to be a moral person with the concomitant obligations in the traditional sense and to therefore reject the "immoral" modern world. In this manner the gift-exchange characteristics of the curing cult serve to reinforce the traditional aspects of life in Mina, and serve as a common bond among the members of the cult in opposition to the clique of economically dominant households.

The conscious attempts to carry out the post-cure obligations of moral lives and completions of promesas seem sincere, partly due to pressure from other members of the cult, but also because of the fact of what will happen if the expectations are not met. The Niño allegedly stated that if anyone received a cure in his name and failed to keep the obligations, the original ailment would return at twice the severity, and no one, not even the Niño himself, could do anything about it. Various blood-curdling stories of recurring maladies have followed concerning ungrateful transgressors who suffered horrifying deaths after receiving the Niño's cure.

One who receives a cure is usually quite faithful to the rules of the belief system. For example, throughout the year people who have been cured and their relatives attend the Sunday afternoon prayer sessions held by the local curer in Mina. There are numerous examples of the "cured" who return to Espinazo each year to complete their promise to the Niño. Survival of a serious disease because of a supposed cure by the Niño is a serious matter. Curing involves a large commitment, not of money but of personal obligation, and curing is not taken lightly. Those who have been cured or currently seek a

cure, plus assorted relatives, friends, and compadres thus act to maintain the traditional "moral" way of life in the face of impinging "modern" aspects, many of which are considered immoral. Various informants told the author that although witchcraft is prevalent in this part of Mexico, it is virtually non-existent in Mina because the local area curers, who may also operate as witches, are all members of the cult and are thus committed to do only "good" under threat of dire supernatural punishment. The author doubts that witchcraft has completely disappeared from the area, but the most popular herbalists - the local curer, her son, the local herb salesman, and a few women in Espinazo - are considered to be "good people, not witches".

This is consistent with Rubel's conclusion that each cure by a Mexican folk healer is seen as a vindication of traditional ways. This perhaps is partly a response to rising pressures to change old ways. As the pressure increases, greater symbolic importance is attached by the faithful to these illnesses and their cures. For the more traditional peasants, illness represents a way of demonstrating, through folk curing, that the traditional modes of behavior, obligations to God and the saints, the old values and beliefs, etc., are still valid. (Rubel 1960)

Every larger community has a body of Niño Fidencio adherents who, though not formally organized, are a significant social force bonded by common belief and personal obligation. The households are scattered throughout the town and some are from rancherías close to town.

The altar donation system serves to maintain a mutual aid fund for use of the less-fortunate members. The custom is that a small donation is left after one prays at the local altar. At any time the altar box contains 20 to 50 pesos (\$1.60-4.00 U.S.). The curer and her son also sell homemade ice cream and candy and use the money for the aid fund. Mutual aid through the Niño Fidencio altar donation system is some buffer against starvation and provides inspiration to remain true to the cult obligations. On two occasions, the curer was observed giving money from the altar to needy women who came to pray to the Niño and to ask the curer for money to help feed their families. In both cases the husbands were away from town looking for work, and the women had no other recourse.

The adhering families, though not formally organized, are without exception, poor; most survive on minimal subsistence agriculture and periodic fiber gathering. A moral life is a traditional life. Clothing styles are those common throughout peasant Mexico. The children seldom progress past grade school if that far. Although many peasant-laborer households exhibit Niño Fidencio charms and pictures in their house altars, only about ten households could be called the core of the faithful. It is the women of these households who regularly visit Espinazo and the local shrines. Based on observation of the Sunday afternoon sessions, none of the women attending were from families who had jobs with the local patron-
es, or who had small businesses. Some of the women from the bakery family believed in the Niño, but they did not attend

the sessions.

From a social structural viewpoint, the local members of the Niño Fidencio curing cult in Mina are a group based on common belief which exists almost completely independent from and outside of both the wage labor modern market system represented by Monterrey, and the prevailing patrón socio-political system of Mina.

In general, the members of the cult are powerless: they consume what they produce except for a small amount of gathered fiber that is converted to cash; there is no great participation in exchanges of either labor or cash, either with cult members or non-members; since they have no connection with the dominant families, they have no participation in the decision-making in the town, but conversely decisions effect them minimally. The members of the cult reinforce each other in their poverty and powerlessness.

The cult is a major force for traditionalism and a primary inhibitor of modernization by the acceptance of new ideas and practices by the members. It is instructive to see the cult perhaps as a mechanism which presents an alternative other than industrial-city life, and, more importantly, an alternative to the pervasive and oppressive patrón-client local power system. Cult members have a difficult life, but it offers the advantages of being a moral (hence superior) life. It also enables the cult members to participate in an existence that is not constantly subject to the economic and political tides of the prevalent patrones. Perhaps a parallel

with the "closed corporate communities" more to the South is useful. In the closed peasant community, wealth is marginal for survival and is continuously redistributed by established social mechanisms such as religious obligations. The religious system is pervasive in all aspects of the culture and leads to an overall conservatism with respect to the outside world and change in general. The reason for the conservatism is that: "... (this) kind of peasant community appears to respond to forces which lie within the larger society to which the community belongs rather than within the boundaries of the community itself." (Wolf 1957:7) Whereas this type of community is closed and conservative primarily to maintain a precarious existence in the face of an impinging national economic system, the Niño Fidencio curing cult displays many of the same features - social endogamy; economic leveling mechanisms reinforced by religious custom; resistance to social, political, or economic ties outside the group; and rejection of change, particularly if associated with the "modern" world. The reasons for these patterns in the cult are related to a similar marginal economic adaptation due to resistance against the "external" and dominant patrón-client social system. Again, "resistance" may very well be a rationalization of their poverty resulting from very limited access and opportunity in the "modern" wage labor system.

An illustration of these social structural relationships is the town of Espinazo itself. Although extensive data was not collected because of the limited time spent in Espinazo,

interviews with informants provided a basic view of the social organization. There is a dominant patrón, Don E., who initially employed Niño Fidencio and his family upon their arrival from Guanajuato. Don E. built the shrine building for Niño Fidencio and now maintains it as a "holy tomb". Don E. owns a local store and extensive land around the town. He also claims the donations made to the Niño at the tomb site, which he claims he uses to maintain the tomb and grounds for the faithful. However, others claim that he uses the donations for his elaborate home and to buy farm machinery for his ranch. The resulting disagreements have divided the faithful into two factions - the Fidencistas - those faithful only to the Niño and who hold Don E. in contempt as another of the exploiting patrones. The other faction - smaller in size, but predominantly those who live in Espinazo, support Don E. and his efforts to maintain the site of the miraculous cures. These faithful stand in clientage relationships to Don E. as employees in his store and fields, and in working on the grounds.

Even in the followers of Niño Fidencio, a structural pattern emerges similar to that previously presented. A store-owning family controls the community politically and economically by patronage relationships with a few residents. Those politically and economically not included maintain themselves in relative isolation. Theirs is a life of extreme poverty, yet "morally correct" as seen by the members. In this light, the authenticity of Niño Fidencio's alleged injunction for the

curers not to accept payment and the people to remain unattached "poor, humble, but good" becomes suspect. Perhaps this theme has become a symbolic-supernatural justification for non-access to the pervading system of patrón-clientage in the area. It is the nature of folktales that it will probably never be known what the Niño really said and what has been attributed to him by his followers. It does seem however, that this particular aspect has been amplified as a rationale for independence from the patrones and to resist the temptations of change which might threaten their critically marginal existence.

CHAPTER 7

Consideration of Curing Alternatives

Five years ago I found out that I had a tumor in my throat. I went right away to a specialist in Monterrey. He was very expensive, but I didn't have a Green Card (U.S. tourist permit) or the money to go to San Antonio. He operated on me. It was horrible and I was very frightened. Now the tumor has returned, and I will not go back to Monterrey. We paid all that money, and look - it came back! I will try this time to go to Laredo; they say there is a hospital there that doesn't charge much, although we have no family or friends in Laredo. If I can't do that, I'll go to Espinazo. I was there once when I was a little girl, but laughed when the cajita cured me...it tickled. But it might work...and what have I got to lose?

Vicenta E.

This alternative set involves those modes of curing illness from which the Mina peasant must choose. The topic is concerned mostly with infirmities which persist over a period of time: chronic conditions, lingering infection, tuberculosis, birth defects, cancer, pregnancy, etc. Accidents such as gunshot wounds, snakebites, cuts and bruises, and other forms of injury requiring immediate first aid are most often treated by the nurse and visiting doctor in the local hospital. Informants' accounts, as well as statements from hospital employees and observation are in accord. The doctor stated that most of his local cases were emergencies such as heat stroke and dehydration, various snake and insect bites, and wounds. Many informants gave accounts of being treated for such

emergencies.

Non-accidental illnesses elicit a different response. A woman remained in her house, refusing the doctor, and died (apparently of cancer) because: "...it was what God wants." At various times residents came to the author's house for treatment of infections rather than going to the hospital. They stated that they would go to the hospital "in an emergency". The local doctor estimates that for every baby born in the hospital, three are delivered by the midwife. Many ill children were brought to the local curer rather than to the hospital.

There seem to be two sets of factors that operate to separate treatment of accidents from treatment of lingering illnesses and pregnancy. The first factors have to do with traditional ideas of health and curing, while the second factors are related to the actual options available to an accident victim. I have already noted the distinction between "natural" illnesses and those "unnatural" maladies seen to be a result of witchcraft, envy, immoral behavior, soul-loss, etc. For some people these are not compatible with "modern" hospital-medical techniques where treatments are administered on the basis of the natural, scientific interpretation of diseases. While "natural" accidents are almost always brought to the hospital, treatment of other kinds of diseases - combinations of "natural" and moral-supernatural aspects - may be decided on the basis of various cultural, social and economic factors. For the woman who died of cancer in her home, it was

God's will, while the herb salesman sees things much more "naturally". "When you get (snake)bites, you go to the hospital. When you have stomach trouble, you drink mint tea. If you have cancer, you go to the hospital in Monterrey, and if they can't help you, only God can."

The second set of factors in the treatment of accidental or lingering illness is the options available. The local hospital can sew up wounds, perhaps remove a bullet, inject anti-venom serum, treat heat stroke all immediately. The curer has limited first aid capability although she claims to have successfully treated snakebite. One informant stated that the local curer was good and that he had gone to her for help from Niño Fidencio for a backache. Yet, when this man was bitten repeatedly by a black widow spider, he staggered across miles of desert to the hospital for treatment. The hospital offers the quickest, most effective treatment for emergency. For those diseases where the crisis is not so immediate, other options are considered.

There are various modern medical facilities available: the small local hospital, a larger hospital and private doctors in the neighboring municipio, a very large social security hospital in Monterrey. In the folk sector, there are also various curing possibilities. There is an extensive herb pharmacopoeia, and herb treatments are common knowledge in the community. There are local midwives and curers, and, most importantly, there are the curers of the Niño Fidencio curing cult. These health care alternatives are available to everyone,

although timing might be a problem: the doctor only visits the local hospital. There is usually a wait at the city hospitals and doctors. The Niño Fidencio major ceremonies occur twice yearly, although local curers are readily available. This section will attempt to isolate the dimensions of the choice of curing method from among the various alternatives in somewhat the same method as in the previous two case analyses.

In a sense, this is an "economic" analysis in a different context; the previous cases have been concerned with the more traditional "economic" dimensions of production, allocation of resources, exchange, goods and services, labor, capital investments, etc. The present case, though not emphasizing these particular dimensions, still is related to the "economic" allocations of time and money to effect a cure. The two previous cases were concerned with production and exchange to the end of gaining a living. In contrast, curing is a consumption activity, but the spending of money and the use of time and energy to gain a product or service is also an integral part of any "Economy". "'Consumption' is the direct utilization of a good in the satisfaction of human wants. Consumption is also an (economic) activity." (LeClair 1962:91) However, the analysis of this case is not to be justified by its importance to the economy of Mina. Rather, curing is an example of socio-cultural activities in which selection from a perceived set of alternatives based on certain cultural understandings, is the essence of the activity. The choices are "economic"; they

employ the rational allocation of resources along the lines of some behavioral strategy to some end which is anticipated with varying degrees of risk.

The nature of illness and curing requires another qualification. A cure is an all or nothing situation - one is cured or he isn't. One "return" is to be met: a cure. Put differently, the "return" here is not how much of the ailment a particular curing alternative will alleviate, but what is its associated probability for a complete cure. We might hypothesize then, that given the necessity for a cure, the patient will seek treatment in some combination of low cost and low risk. This would be the most "economical" approach. The cost includes the dimensions of the costs in the previous two analyses: money, time, and personal obligation. The risk in curing includes both elements of the definition. For example, there is the potential penalty of perhaps dying during surgery. There is often the profound uncertainty of life or death, especially when the illness is cancer, leukemia, tuberculosis, diabetes, or other grave illnesses. Often neither modern hospitals nor traditional methods can offer certain cures. It is for this kind of malady the analysis will be oriented.

Since this approach will be taken, a slight modification to the original scheme of decision-making dimensions must be incorporated. The allocation dimension is maintained and is properly included in terms of time, money, and personal commitment. "Risk" is retained. However, instead of "return",

I will consider the two aspects of risk separately: risk-uncertainty and risk-penalty. Risk-uncertainty will be concerned with degrees of certainty of success; risk-penalty will emphasize the potential harm in a particular alternative.

The alternatives available to the population of Mina can be divided into two main sets: hospital-doctor facilities and the traditional folk-curing practices. The modern medical alternatives are the local hospital, a larger hospital in the neighboring municipio, the social security hospital in Monterrey, private doctors in the next municipio and in Monterrey, and the hospitals in the border towns in the United States. Traditional curing alternatives fall into two areas: self-cure by employing folk knowledge and herb remedies; and by curers, particularly those who cure in the name of Niño Fidencio. Rather than analyzing each alternative separately, I will lump them into the "hospital-doctor alternative" and the "folk-curing alternative" because the corresponding strategies, costs, and risks are similar within the two sets.

The strategy for an individual to use the hospital-doctor alternative is straightforward: he can obtain the services of a doctor or nurse at almost any time at the various medical facilities in the area. He is subjected to various medical tests and exams and receives the needed medicines or treatment.

The cost, although nominal in national standards, is seen as relatively high. The local hospital charges 5 pesos (\$.40 U.S.) for a visit. Private doctors charge up to 50 pesos (\$4 U.S.). A daily medication bill of 6 pesos (\$.48 U.S.) is a

minimal prescription, but may absorb a large portion of the daily income of the household. If the disease is serious enough to require hospitalization, it is definitely seen as an economic hardship. If a male, his economic contribution is terminated; even though sick he may still be able to strip the outside of the lechuguilla plants. A hospitalized woman has to be replaced by someone who can prepare meals and care for the children. In any event, any extended time that must be spent away from the household is carefully weighed in selecting a cure. Said one informant, "Last year I got the flu and should have gone to the doctor. But if he would put me in the hospital, who would care for my family?"

Transportation costs to the next municipio or to Monterrey are also a factor, especially if the illness requires regular treatments. The most costly of all is a trip to the border to enter a charity ward of a hospital in a United States border town. The strategy is to take the bus to the border, usually at Nuevo Laredo, and cross on a 72-hour tourist card. The individual then enters himself into the hospital on the pretext that he is a Spanish-speaking illiterate United States citizen. It is possible to cross the border and enter a private hospital legally, but only the rich can afford to pay the costs. The costs required both in terms of time and money needed for the trip is prohibitive for most people. In only one instance was this alternative a serious consideration. This was a woman who had recurring tumors that had previously been treated in the United States.

There seems to be a high level of confidence in the local doctor's treatment of accidents. This is shown by the use of the hospital and by informants' statements. The doctor indicated that he averages about two or three bed patients a week (mostly deliveries) compared to about 10-12 emergency accidents. The doctor now only travels to the remote areas of the municipio for emergency cases. The hospital's overland vehicle is broken down and it is difficult to reach some areas for regular visits. The higher usage for accidents and emergencies is consistent with informants' accounts of going to the local hospital for conditions such as snakebite, sunstroke, gunshot, and auto accident.

For lingering illness, treatment by the hospital-doctor complex seems less certain. The uncertainty-anxiety inherent in the illness itself is compounded by the anxiety of subjecting oneself to the strange examination-treatment process and the manipulations of the outsider-doctor. During the investigation period, numerous families came to the author for treatment for infections, rashes, and other minor problems. They would not go to the hospital because they "didn't like" or did not have "confianza" (confidence) in the doctor. A lady with varicose veins declined to see the doctor because he was not "of the community"; she didn't know him. Another woman refused to take her daughter for treatment of a minor birth defect because she "didn't like hospitals and doctors", and was afraid of what they would do to her child.

The relations between the local doctor and some of the

community members seem to be the source of part of the anxiety. "He isn't simpático (sympathetic, kind)", remarked one woman. Another non-medical factor is that one time the local curer's husband was not paid for grounds work around the hospital, and the curer promptly initiated a gossip campaign against the establishment. A current issue is that a peasant family unwittingly settled on some of the hospital's land allotment, and it is presently in contention as to whether or not they will have to move from the area. Though the medical service may be adequate, it is these social factors which have lessened general confidence. From the doctor's viewpoint, the low attendance is due to the lack of information and understanding on the part of the people. "They don't understand that I can help them more than (the local curer) can. I would like to close the mud hole at Espinazo. With all those sick people in the water, it is a grave health hazard. And they expect a cure!" There are no statistics of the preference of the people for other curing methods, but the local doctor estimated that in the case of child delivery, three babies were born within the town limits for every child delivered in the hospital. This estimate was only for the town and did not include the rest of the municipio.

The certainty of a cure by a private doctor is generally seen as good. The local opinions that private doctors were better than hospitals were frequently expressed. The medical treatment, in fact, is probably better with individual attention than in the overloaded public health alternatives. Said

one informant: "Dr. G. cares about his patients. When you go to him, he listens to what you say. In the (social security) hospital they don't even know who you are. How can one expect to get better there?" A factor which perhaps increases the popularity of individual doctors, particularly those in the neighboring municipio, is that they seem to have more sympathy and understanding of the local ideas and behavior pertaining to sickness and health care. For example, in stead of prescribing expensive patent medicines, a doctor in the neighboring municipio will often recommend that the patient brew one of the local herb remedies which has known medical properties. Insomnia, indigestion, and headaches are some ailments treated by this doctor by traditional herbal prescription.

People expressed a high confidence in doctors and hospitals in the United States, even though only one interviewee had ever had treatment there. The anxiety in seeking a cure in the United States is high because of the long trip to a strange country and possible language problems, but this is balanced by the confidence in the curing ability of the United States doctors. The high confidence level is probably related to the more general perception of the "otro lado" as the ideal life style. Although it requires much money, a cure in the United States is seen as almost a sure thing. As in the case of the informant with the recurring throat tumor, she would not, under any circumstances, submit to local doctors or hospitals again; but if she could get the money, she was confident that a cure would be assured by going to the hospital in Laredo, Texas. In United States doctors she had "confianza".

There is a penalty aspect of risk associated with the hospital-doctor complex. As one informant expressed: "I don't have any confidence in doctors. After they cut you (operate), you are usually worse than before you came to them. A hospital is where one dies." If the patient goes to the social security hospital in Monterrey there is the additional anxiety of the large, impersonal city, and of being subjected to the immense bureaucracy of the Mexican social security medical system. I accompanied an individual through the treatment process at the Monterrey social security hospital for a period of several months, and the frustrations, waiting, and bureaucratic inefficiency is enough to discourage anyone seeking this service. On two occasions we arrived at his doctor's appointment to discover that his doctor had left - once to play golf. The treatment of the staff toward him - an obvious rural man - was extremely disdainful and discourteous. He has become quite discouraged and is considering going to the Niño Fidencio celebrations. The diabetic informant expressed: "I cannot be cured (in the social security system) in Monterrey, I can't afford a doctor, so I might go to Espinazo."

In summary, the hospital-doctor complex is popular for emergency treatment, but is costly and is risky. In addition to the inherent uncertainty of illness, there are the uncertainties of modern medical explanations and procedures. There are also the penalties of some unsympathetic doctors, and an overburdened and bureaucratic public health system.

The basic strategies of the folk-curing practices are the reliance on the folk ideas of health and disease, and the

employment of herbal remedies and magico-religious practices. The specific curing strategies are based on the natural-unnatural categorization of diseases presented earlier. Each disease has its own sub-strategy depending upon the ideas about its "cause", but in general treatment requires not only medicinal preparations, but prayer, personal sacrifice, and improved social behavior. This behavior ranges from drinking herb tea to relieve a headache or stomach upset, to praying to God and Niño Fidencio to relieve rheumatism. Most treatments consist of a combination of herb treatments and prayer.

The approach to treatment of serious illness is sometimes fatalistic, as in the case of the cancer death of the local woman mentioned earlier. Folk treatments are applied and prayers said, but the outcome is what "God wants". Treatment works only with the help of God.

Many people are constantly under self-treatment for minor ailments such as chronic indigestion, rheumatism, arthritis, nervousness, and various boils, tumors, and infections. Teas and potions are drunk regularly, prayers said, and religious and good luck charms are carried. Jitomate, Anis, Cemporal, Epazote, Hoja se, and Yerba Buena (see Appendix) teas are popular digestion aids; Barda and Olmo teas are taken by many for coughs. That ailments persist is attributed to the moral behavior of the sufferer, or that "to suffer is the burden of the humble." Self-treatment for minor ailments is seen as fairly effective; treatment for major illness is incidental to the will of God.

Niño Fidencio is a dominant theme in the folk-curing

practices. The first stage of treatment is to pray to the Niño Fidencio at home while treating yourself with folk remedies. If one is convinced that his alleviation is due to the intervention of Niño Fidencio, he is obligated to behave in the "good" manner discussed in connection with the beliefs associated with the cult. If one attributes his recovery to his own self-curing skill he is under no such obligations.

The second stage of this alternative strategy is to seek out one of the shrines to Niño Fidencio and to enlist the aid of the curer to gain the supernatural aid of the Niño. The same prayers and herbal remedies are used, but it is believed that there will be more "connection" with the Niño if the activity is performed by a curer who is supposed to have a relation with the Niño Fidencio.

If association with a local curer fails to alleviate the patient, the final stage of the strategy is employed; to travel to Niño Fidencio's tomb in Espinazo during the fiesta days especially, but also on Sundays throughout the year. There the ailing pray to the Niño at the holy places, seek out one of the reputed curers, and ultimately seek an immersion cure in the charco. However, the individual seeking a cure does not necessarily follow this sequence. Cases were observed of people first trying the doctor-hospital complex, then going directly to Espinazo, and then to the local curer-shrine. Others engage in all alternatives simultaneously and some, economically limited, are bound to either self-curing or the local curer. The patient's primary goal is to make himself as susceptible as possible for the receipt of the curing power.

Sometimes the sessions are prefaced by hours or even days of prayer, fasting, sleeplessness, and self-inflicted hardship and torture.

The costs required by these variations of folk-curing are minimal in terms of money. Medicinal herbs are available for the gathering, and the aid of the local curer is free, or by voluntary donation to the altar plate. A cure at Espinazo requires only the cost of the transportation, usually by train, to the remote village. Said one regular visitor to Espinazo:

I have never been seriously ill. But I go to Espinazo every year to visit the holy tomb, to get blessed by a cajoncito, and to bathe in the holy charco. I enjoy the fiesta, and I believe this is why I have never been sick. I guard my health and enjoy the fiesta for the price of a train ticket from Hidalgo.

The allocation required is only high after the cure is believed to be effective, for it is only then that one must pay the personal and social obligations to God and the Niño by means of a promesa. If the cure is not effective, nothing is owed. But if cured, the patient, and his family, must be true to the traditional Mexican folk values and be "good" as discussed earlier. The son of the local curer recounted:

The Niño cured my father, and we made a promise to devote our lives to his work. I promised never to marry, and to work hard so we can help people who come to our altar for help. This is what the Niño told us to do.

Cures sought in the folk-curing framework are risky in the sense of uncertainty, but the penalty aspect is low. Most cures are performed in the context of the home by kin, local people, or by the patient himself. Folk-curers require no dangerous behavior or drugs. They induce no particular personal anxiety, the practices are within the conceptual realm of

the peasants, and the personal relationship with the curer seems to dispell much of the anxiety associated with the illness. The curing is within the family-community, and if a patient requires a trip to Espinazo, he is usually accompanied by an entourage of kin and compadres. The dangerous herbs - Toloache, Peyote, Coyotillo, Mala Mujer, Trompeta - are well known and avoided. One does not risk dying from the treatment, as with surgery in hospitals. God or Niño Fidencio doesn't penalize anyone for asking for a cure. Only if one breaks his promesa or is evil will he be punished.

Although the penalty aspect of risk is minimal, there is uncertainty. The probability of success is uncertain because a cure depends not only on the medicines and practices, but on the moral state of the patient and upon his relationship with the supernatural. There is a high confidence level in some of the popular remedies for minor ailments, such as upset stomach. But even these treatments may be bypassed when there are more certain remedies. For example, the elderly man who sells herbs in the Monterrey market came to the author one day complaining of an upset stomach - a common malady in Mina. Seeing the opportunity to discover what herbal remedy was seen to be the most effective - what the herb salesman would prepare for his own use - the author asked if he had taken anything for his ailment. "Yes", he replied, "I bought myself some pills at the store." The more serious chronic conditions such as emotional disturbance, infection, lingering coughs and colds, and cancer are treated with only a slight degree of confidence. For example, the herb salesman's 40 year old son

had a mental-emotional problem of periodically losing knowledge of where and who he was, and crashing about in a violent rage. His rage seemed to be directed at object rather than people, so although people were afraid of him at these times, he had never injured anyone. These fits had gone on for 20 years. When a fit occurred, his father would find him and bring him home, guiding him with blows from a convenient piece of firewood. The father would then force him to drink some Guajillo tea and go to sleep. The father attributed the problem to his son's being bewitched in Monclova 20 years earlier, when someone put Toloache (Jimson weed) in his food. He admitted that even with all his herb knowledge, he could not cure his son, but that the best he could do was give him the tea to make him sleep.

There is a high degree of uncertainty and corresponding anxiety as to whether God and the Niño will respond to a plea. It is a time of self-examination, prayer, and soul-searching, and if the cure is not effective, it brings the anxiety of questioning one's relation with the supernatural. The probability of success is seen as a combination of how strongly the particular individual believes in the validity of the curing cult, and how God and the Niño feel about the person. The stronger the belief, the greater the chance for success. However, just because one believes is no guarantee that one will receive a cure; a cure is related to how one stands in the eyes of God. Even a non-believer in the Niño can receive a cure if he is a good person and believes in God and the saints. Again, according to the curer's son:

Some people get cured even when they don't believe because the Niño wants them to believe in him. But for the majority, you have to believe in the Niño to receive a cure. You should make a promise to show you believe, but the most important thing is to believe.

The skeptical and non-believers see the probability of success as quite low. But then the costs are also low, so the Niño Fidencio alternative is a reasonable gamble. One man who was being treated in Monterrey for throat cancer said: "I never believed in Niño Fidencio. But how do you explain all of the cures? I will pray to him to cure my throat. I don't know how it works, but I will believe in him if I am cured." Though many are suspicious of the belief system surrounding the cult, it is generally accepted that there have been a number of reknown "miraculous" cures. Testimonials on the walls of the tomb building serve to substantiate the faith in the efficacy of the cures. One may not completely understand or accept the supernatural-theoretical basis of the curing process, but there is always the possibility that one may be lucky and receive a cure.

We can now compare the hospital-doctor complex and the folk-curing alternatives in terms of use. All of the modern medical services entail substantial costs of time and money, subject the patient to high degrees of risk-related anxiety, and offer a moderate possibility of cure at best. In contrast, the outcome of a curing session of the Niño Fidencio cult is perceived as a combination of the moral status of the patient and the will of God. The probability of success is still uncertain, but an uncertainty in the hands of God.

Perhaps the most significant differences lie in the costs

and risk. Time and money are minimal to seek help from the Niño; only if one receives a miraculous cure is one obligated, and then the repayment is personal obligation and life style rather than money, goods, or labor.

The penalty aspect of risk is also low in the folk-curing system. Much anxiety is allayed by the personalism and the understandable folk-curing assumptions employed within the cult. There is great uncertainty, but it is an uncertainty based on the inability to know the will of God, and different from the uncertainty of the modern curing techniques: unfamiliar people, surroundings, and techniques, and a lack of understanding of the bases of modern medicine. Most simply, often the effectiveness of the modern facilities is not seen as much greater than that of the curing cult, the risk and cost of the cult is much less, the theoretical premises of Niño Fidencio are more understandable. Niño Fidencio is the lowest cost, lowest risk alternative.

Yet if curing choices were typified by a "best alternative" strategy, then one would expect that Niño Fidencio would be the most frequent choice, and that the choices would be more or less exclusive: people choosing hospitals would not choose Niño Fidencio and vice versa. I don't know how many doctor and hospital patients in the entire area have tried folk-curing methods. I do have some idea of the converse: of the fifty-plus cases of people seeking a cure in Espinazo (recorded at the March 1969, and October 1971 ceremonies) all had tried treatment by doctors and hospitals previously, and most were under continuing treatment. The "new Niño" in Coahuila

told the man with throat cancer to continue his Xray treatments. The people, in other words, were seeking help from Niño Fidencio in addition to other sources. They were "maximizing" their chances by including as many alternatives as possible. All the ill people had been to doctors; there were other cases of people with personal problems, financial requests, and various with fertility-childlessness problems who had not sought professional aid.

This "maximizing" is shown by the family whom the author accompanied through the Monterrey social security hospital system. The head of the household was seeking a cure for a serious infection which was a complication of diabetes. He had already lost one leg and was trying to keep infection from taking the other. Both he and his wife stated that they had more faith in modern medicine, but if he continued to worsen, that they might go to Espinazo and seek help from one of the curers of the Niño Fidencio cult. It wouldn't cost as much, and it couldn't be any less effective than their experiences with the social security hospital. Though they did not understand or believe completely in the supernatural basis of the curers, there have been so many testimonials to the miraculous cures that they thought something must be valid about the cult complex. It does not cost much to try.

There is, then, another refinement of choice strategies: The ill person here chooses not on the basis of which single alternative offers the greatest chance for a cure, or for the "best" cure. Rather, he chooses all alternatives possible to maximize the chances that one will work. Perhaps a "shot gun"

strategy is an appropriate term. He minimizes total risk. This may be done by avoiding the penalty risks of hospitals, doctors, and operations, or by employing as many alternatives as financially possible so that he maximizes his chances for a cure. In this sense, he is adding the probabilities (degrees of certainty) of cure: minimizing the uncertainty aspect of risk by maximizing the alternatives used.

This "shot gun" strategy is another variation on the theme of choice, in contrast with the "minimizing" of the subsistence-oriented peasant, and the non-competitive "minimax" approach of the small-scale entrepreneurs presented in the previous analyses of choice. In all of these areas, subsistence, entrepreneurship and curing - minimization of risk seems to be the primary concern.

What are the socio-cultural results of these low risk decisions? First, I have already described the core of peasants who carry out their promesas to the Niño by avoiding social intercourse with the dominant families. The larger part of the population ranges from those who accept the validity of the Niño and pray to him, but who as yet have not had the occasion to seek the curing services, to those who are skeptical about the whole business, but who do not completely discount the possibility of a cult cure.

A corollary of the health-curing alternatives and choice patterns in Mina is the low frequency of use of the local hospital. The visiting doctor complains about the people because of their "ignorance and superstition", while the people voice

their objections to his lack of personal care about the people, and his attitude of superiority toward the patients. For example, the state government has a free milk program administered through the hospital, but the doctor insists on distributing the milk at eleven in the morning. Women see this as an inconvenience greater than the value of the milk because this is at the busiest time for the preparation of the midday meal, and to go to the hospital and stand in line for the milk distribution would interrupt cooking. When milk was administered through the primary school, substantial growth of the children was recorded and people generally realize that milk is good for the children. The complaint about the distribution hour is probably a rationalization - children could be sent to pick up the milk. Rather, the whole affair is most likely a reflection of the general antagonisms between the hospital and the people.

The gossip spread by the local curer and her followers has probably affected hospital attendance. She associates the hospital with the "capitalistas" even though the prominent storeowning families seek virtually all their health services from private doctors in Monterrey. Supposedly, people who were barely ill sought help at the hospital and were "killed". The hospital administration allegedly failed to pay her husband for his labor and sent him packing with harsh words. The staff is "like the patrones"; they are there to take advantage of the peasants, and any self-respecting peasant should avoid this institution. The curer presents it as a choice between the popular, understandable, and "good" curing methods with all

the religious-moral features, and the "evil", modern, impersonal, frightening, exploitative local hospital. However, from the data collected at the curing ceremonies, it seems that few take her admonition to avoid hospitals entirely, but that most utilize a combination of doctors, hospitals, and folk-curing methods. The hospital in Mina is probably avoided singly because of the personality and procedures of the doctor himself.

To summarize, although the curing alternatives are not a strictly "economic" set as the previous two analysis cases were, the decisions are made in a similar manner: people consider carefully the costs, uncertainties, and probable results based upon their perceptions and understandings of the conditions. These various dimensions are not necessarily monetary; effectiveness of cure, time, degree of anxiety, personal obligation, and probable socio-political results are all factors which enter into the decisions. In the case of curing, it seems that the most expeditious combinations of ways of effecting a cure - not "the best" cure - are sought. Since both modern medicinal and traditional mechanisms (especially the Niño Fidencio curing cult) are seen to offer about the same possibility of a cure (usually uncertain), the deciding factor seems to be the resolution of costs and risks. The strategy seems to be to maximize curing opportunities within the limitations of budget. Folk medicine and the Niño Fidencio curing cult are popular because of their low cost and low personal risk. However, they are very frequently chosen in addition to the complex of hospitals and doctors. Those who are convinced

that they have been cured by Niño Fidencio form a social segment typified by poverty, adherence to traditional values, avoidance of "modern" patrones and opportunities, and a continuing set of promesa obligations to the Niño. The gossip generated by this segment seems strong enough to prevent effective utilization of the local hospital, although this is probably partially due to the obstinance of the local doctor.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusions

When Fidencio Constantino died, the faith and fanaticism overflowed into demonstrations of uncontrollable pain. Some faithful arrived to affirm that Fidencio wished that he be stretched out under the "blessed tree", because after three days he would revive, like the Saviour. Two days after the death they accepted that he would be entombed: the putrefaction that invaded the body left them no alternative. (Ortiz 1971:42)

In Mina, the social system is greatly influenced by social institutions that might be called pre-revolutionary. Workers are tied to their bosses through the institutions of compadrazgo and patronismo; the resulting structure has similarities to other cacique systems. All of these institutions are basic to mestizo Mexico, and existed long before the Revolution of 1910. Older informants comment that the present condition has overtones of the hacienda days, except that most of the land is communal, rather than private, pasture land, and that the present patrones do not carry out their social obligations to the community the way the hacendados used to. In other words, there are pre-revolutionary patterns and institutions that have been re-adapted by means of decision processes in the face of pressures of ecology, historical events, and political circumstances.

The "external" factors of national market structures,

overlying social institutions and cultural patterns, and particular political and economic decisions made outside the community have important influences on the alternative-decision patterns in peasant communities such as Mina. The implementation of the Forestal agency and the price regulation of ixtle fiber, the drilling of the wells which dried up much of the already-sparse agriculture, and the political relations between the influential patrones and party officials in Monterrey all have had important effects on life in Mina. These forces have aided the establishment of the dominating store-owning-patrón faction. They derive much of their influence through regulation of the Forestal agency, the disappearance of the water has reduced agricultural alternatives and forced the people to depend more on the aid and jobs of the patrones, and the patrones maintain their local political power and position partly through their relationship with the Monterrey party structure.

Historical-ecological forces are often treated as the "background" or "setting" of studies, but they are important ongoing influences in Mina. The harsh desert environment is a continuous and severe limit to agriculturally productive activity. The Revolution of 1910 demolished the hacienda system in the area and led to the rise of various peasants to the positions of patrones. The initiation of the Forestal agency and subsequent events have molded the choices available to the community. Even members of the Niño Fidencio cult use the supposed cure of President Calles as important legitimization for their present activities.

The community in general and the alternative sets in particular must not be considered as closed systems, but must be seen as being constantly interacting with the natural environment and with economic, political and socio-cultural forces emanating from the larger national structures. Neither is a purely synchronic analysis of the alternative sets the most valid approach because the present configuration is a result of a long series of local and national events. The configuration of alternatives changes in response to variations of internal and external conditions. It is imperative, where possible, to identify and consider these factors in order to gain an understanding of the basis of present alternative sets and the detailed dynamics of the adaptations which have led to the present configuration of the community. Socio-cultural change is (among other things) the changing perceptions and choices of real alternatives.

The phenomenon of "modernization" may be seen as the changing of alternative sets toward production and consumption patterns more closely tied to the national industrial economy, toward perceptions of alternatives more shaped by outside information, and, as a result, cultural understandings and values more consistent with those of the urban-industrial segment of the national society. There is also another dimension. Modernization might also entail the forced removal of some traditional alternatives and the forced "choice" of others. For example, the wells and the lowered water table greatly diminished the agricultural alternatives. The implementation of

the Forestal program forced the people to sell their fiber at one place - the Forestal agency - rather than on the "open market" where the producers could negotiate the price. Of course this was done to stabilize the price in the declining market, but the workers are resentful because of this restriction, and they see too much of a price differential between their selling price and the buying price forced on the industries that use the fiber. The patrón clique, partly a result of post-Revolution government programs, has greatly reduced flexibility of choice by their dominance of the local political and economic alternatives. And the patrones are the most "modern" people in the town. It can be argued that the local alternative sets have been reduced as a result of "modernization", particularly with respect to government programs. Local people have gone to the city to seek work, not necessarily because they are enticed by the lure of a better "modern" life, but because they are forced away by the restrictive nature of local economic and political alternatives. The alternatives simply do not permit them to make a living without a socially-risky, anxiety-ridden association with a local patrón.

The reduction of available alternatives as a community becomes more "modernized" (better outside communication, government programs, the rise of entrepreneurs, etc.) seriously brings into question Apter's contention that "One of the characteristics of the modernization process is that it involves both aspects of choice: the improvement of the conditions of choice, and the selection of the most satisfactory mechanisms of choice." (Apter 1965:11) Modernization in the Mina case

is not necessarily an expansion of alternative sets. The varieties of modern national markets often cause the disappearance of past production activities such as in the case of the ixtle producers in Northern Mexico and of the henequen workers in Yucatán. Newly-impinging political structures often supplant local mechanisms for meeting community problems which, being less bureaucratic and less dependent on outside political forces, perhaps are more flexible in their response.

This reduction of alternative sets because of "modernization" has resulted in the formation of what Nash calls the "landless rural proletariat". (Nash 1966:82) The formation of this proletariat is essentially due to the drying up of traditional economic alternatives and the expansion of commercial large-scale enterprises, particularly in agriculture. These activities have pried the peasant loose from the land and sent him, on a migratory basis, looking for wage labor to make up for the loss.

The progress of modernization in Mina is based on two phenomena: the voluntary accepting of modern cultural items, and the enforced implementation of "modern" alternatives. The voluntary acceptability of modern cultural items is a function of cost, risk, etc., and as such they are incorporated into the pre-existing alternative spectrum when they are demonstrably better. An example is the health treatment alternatives analyzed previously. The result has been a balance between the seeking of modern and traditional medical treatment as a result of cost and risk versus result. When neither folk nor modern medicine is foolproof, both are used. In the cultural

dimension, modern ideas of illness and treatment have become syncretized with the traditional understandings of health and treatment. For example, the local curer prayed to Niño Fidencia on behalf of a sick child, but followed the session with a gift of fruit for the child because "the vitamins will help fight the sickness." The medicinal herb salesman took a pill for his upset stomach because "it's easier than preparing tea."

"I believe that change is best understood as the result of the way in which individuals choose to combine time, effort, and resources in the face of a new opportunity. These factors, and their purposeful combination, underlie the emergence of new social relations and cultural understandings." (Nash 1958: 149)

However, the imposing of new alternatives at the forced expense of the old, such as in the case of Forestal's regulation of the fiber production, often induces dissatisfaction with the new alternatives. Economically, Forestal's implementation may be an effective policy; an unfortunate side effect is the resentment of the federal interference, particularly when positions with Forestal have been a major mechanism in elevating various individuals to positions in influence. Modernization (or any other form of socio-cultural change for that matter) occurs basically in two ways. The first is the replacement of "traditional" alternatives by new alternatives, or by the addition of new alternatives to the traditional alternative system which may be left more or less intact. The legislation requiring fiber to be sold only through Forestal

is a change of the first sort. The addition of modern curing alternatives to the traditional curing system is change of the additive kind. The least disruptive of the two change mechanisms is the incorporation of and adjustment to new alternatives to the already-existing alternative system without the prohibition or forced replacement of the old ways of doing things.

"A program which is highly flexible permitting the members of the society undergoing change to choose freely and discard easily from the alternatives offered them is most likely to be effective." (Nash 1958:150)

As a corollary, the people in Mina make their decisions on the basis of astute and sophisticated understandings of the alternatives available to them. That is, their perceptions are by and large based upon first-hand experience, and the evaluation of the possible courses of action employs a detailed understanding of the dynamics of the local society and the implications of various decisions. Choices are made consistent with "good sense". Traditionalism or cultural conservatism is not applicable in the sense that people are slaves to their cultural traditions and therefore behave in a traditional manner no matter what the advantages of a "newer" alternative might offer them. Alternatives are chosen when it is judged that they offer a better, easier, or more profitable way of doing things than was previously available, or especially when they are less risky. Resistance to "change" - the selection of a new set of alternatives - is not necessarily due to a

lack of information, but is rather a rational choice to maintain the set of experience-tested alternatives. In many cases "traditional" alternatives achieve the desired goal with less risk, cost, etc., than the more "modern" way. This was seen in the choice of traditional income-subsistence methods rather than wage labor with a patrón, and in the case of trying the curing cult along with the expensive and inefficient social security hospital system.

"Uneducated and illiterate people are not simply tradition-bound puppets of their culture. Given adequate opportunity to measure the advantages of a new alternative, they act to maximize their expectations." (Erasmus 1961:33)

After considering the interrelation of impinging forces, decisions, and the recent life of Mina, I think that some patterns in the decisions can be postulated. Strategies involve rational decisions; resources are allocated in a manner such as to most efficiently obtain desired ends. This does not imply that because they are rational, the strategies are therefore "maximizing" strategies: that decisions lead to the maximum return for the allocation of resources. Instead, much of the decision-making behavior in Mina can be described as "minimizing" or "satisficing": after the determination or recognition of certain desired ends, only enough resources are assembled and allocated to satisfy the economic, physical, or socio-cultural need.

A corollary of the minimizing aspect of the strategies is that given the desired end, the decision-maker tends to make low cost, low risk, low return decisions rather than choose

high risk alternatives which could lead to correspondingly high returns. In other words the "return" is the "given": the minimum requirements for survival. Cost and risk are minimized correspondingly. This is certainly economizing - a rational allocation of resources to alternative ends. Chances for survival are "maximized" by avoiding risk and sticking to "minimizing" strategies. "Economizing" then includes a wide range of behavior and strategy, and each decision must be seen in its specific context. We must suspect such generalizations as:

But the idea of maximization cannot be abandoned since any discussion of purposive or goal-oriented behavior, or any analysis of choice, does imply a maximization theory and we may as well make explicit a common notion in the social sciences, and for that matter in all of our everyday thinking. (Burling 1962:817)

Economizing, yes; maximizing, not necessarily.

The prevalence of sufficient-return, low risk decisions is reflected by the frequency distribution of economic production activities: the most prevalent (ixtle fiber gathering, small-scale agriculture and goats) are low risk, and the returns are sufficient to provide a subsistence-level existence. On a household basis, the lowest percentage participation in any alternative (9.0%) is in the area considered to entail the highest risk - mining. Similarly, in the case of "improving" one's economic position by seeking wage labor or even going into business for oneself, the large investment in time, money, and personal obligation, plus the high risk of breaking important social ties and entering into competition, does not warrant effort for most. In terms of the decisions related to curing, the Niño Fidencio curing cult is a popular alternative

because it offers a low-cost, low-risk possibility for a cure. Of course, the mystical-religious dimensions of the cult are the basis of its popularity for some, but many "patients" are skeptics who seem to be more motivated by cost-risk reasons.

The differences in the decision-making in the three areas are significant: peasants satisficing by minimizing risk in their production activities; entrepreneurs maximizing the return of their businesses; sick people "shotgunning" by choosing as many equally uncertain alternatives as feasible to maximize their chances of a cure. All of these choice patterns are related to one basic theme: they are ultimately insuring their chances to survive. Mina minimizers avoid dangerous social relations and insure their physical survival by choosing dependable, albeit low-production methods. The patrones jockey their politics and economics to insure their survival through local domination. When all the curing alternatives are uncertain, the ill utilize as many as they can. All perhaps demonstrate maximization of survival chances, but the details of the decision modes cannot be glibly passed off as maximization.

Like Burling, Herskovitz is too simplistic. "It can also be taken as cross-culturally acceptable that, on the whole, the individual tends to maximize his satisfactions in terms of the choices he makes." (Herskovitz 1968:50) That man economizes is accepted; that he maximizes consistently is rejected. He probably much more commonly minimizes his risks, rather than "maximizes his satisfactions".

Several limitations emerged from this study during data

collection and analysis, and it is appropriate now to consider them and make suggestions for further study in this area. First, there was a problem of data collection within a factioned community. The author tried to remain as uncommitted as possible to any particular group, but it was inevitable that relations were closer to one patrón-storeowning group, to the detriment of getting intimate information from the others. Relations remained cordial with the others, but the information received from them was superficial. Most information came from a single storeowner and his family, his clients and friends. The presidente municipal and his secretary and assistant, and various members of "uncommitted" families also were reliable information sources. A related problem was the handling of information concerning alleged illegal activities by various individuals. The reader must understand that the accounts are meant to be illustrative only and that there was much hesitation before the inclusion of such information. Fictitious names were used to protect all individuals. There is no easy resolution to these limitations: if the investigator is to penetrate the community to any depth, he will be incorporated somewhat into its structure, in this case faction alignment. If important historical events are illegal, they must be presented nevertheless, protecting the privacy of the participants as much as possible.

Another methodological problem concerns the gathering of the decision-making data. No entire decision-making process was observed entirely from inception to decision. People often

think about decisions for days or even years before taking action. The investigator never "sees" the event process, but deals with the informant's information-perceptions before the decision and the results after it has been made. No matter how sincere the informant is before and after, he himself most likely does not fully realize the forces acting upon him during the time of decision. The nearest to an observed decision event was when a storeowner suddenly asked a client-worker to work for him as handyman at his house in Monterrey. The worker told the author of the factors: should he accept the job and move to the dirty, crowded city, or stay in Mina, collect ixtle, and complete his concrete block house? The morning after the offer, he decided to go to Monterrey; he needed the money and he felt obligated and grateful to his patrón. Yet, what had been the considerations during the night? When had the decision been made? Were these the real reasons or rationales for a decision made for other reasons? The author had to work not with real processes of this sort, but with pre- and post-facto reasons - rationales for decision behavior.

Another difficulty was the technique of gathering the data. It was felt that the use of precise, short-answer questionnaires, although most easily comparable, would constrict the responses and hence inhibit the informants from communicating the complexities and ramifications of the factors of decision-making as they saw them. Instead, long, open-ended conversations were held, which, when directed properly, yielded the informant's own account of his view of the important factors. Some of these conversations were tape recorded, but

most were written down after the author had returned to his house. The obvious problem is whereas the data from highly detailed questionnaires are easily comparable and amenable to simple statistical analysis, "native's-eyeview" interviews are varied, personal, and often not directly comparable.

Whereas a rigorous questionnaire would provide responses pre-coded to indicate where a particular strategy is high, medium, or low risk, the loose, open-ended interview could be interpreted only by means of the judgement of the author. There was no statistical "scale" built into the responses by means of a questionnaire. The resulting dilemma: to extrapolate ideas of cost, risk, return, etc., from often rambling considerations of the various alternatives. In many cases the responses were clear, as indicated by the quotes in the body of this work, but about 25% of the responses were considered inconclusive.

The basic problem is basic not only for this work but for any research: to use a concise, comparable, yet potentially restrictive technique of data collection; or use a loose, open-ended technique, which, though more difficult to analyze, provides a greater range and depth of information. The solution is probably to use both; begin with a loose, open-ended questionnaire to establish the boundaries of information to be collected, and follow it with a rigorous, short-response questionnaire to the same informants to provide systematizable data.

A further problem is the general question of how to approach the whole decision-making phenomenon. Rigorous game-

theoretical-mathematical models were avoided because of their poor performance outside of controlled laboratory situations. A cultural-situational approach utilizing the economic concepts of alternative-strategy-cost-risk-return was selected because it seemed close to the informants' view of things, hence amenable to data collection. It also seemed consistent with the anthropological tenant of ethnographic reality. But the problem remains: how valid is the extrapolation into the categories used? Did this really explain decisions? Few decisions were actually observed. The primary data are perceptions-understanding about decisions and the results of decisions.

The response to these questions must be that the informants' accounts must be accepted as close to the reasons as they see them for particular decisions in these areas. Yet how many of the accounts are actually reasons for certain decisions, and how many are justifications for decisions already made or rationalizations for the inability to choose a desired alternative? Do "independent" peasants decline to work for patrones because they choose not to be involved in a high risk situation, or is it because the patrones do not offer work? Or, does the high risk argument, at first a rationalization, ultimately become a reason? How much of the production-job frequency pattern in Mina (Table 3) is due to the decision-making of the laborers and how much is due to the basic availability of work in that socio-economic system?

The response is that these problems do not lie in just this investigation, but in the nature of decision-making in

real situations. It is a system of alternative availability, perception, rational consideration, past experience, etc., and at this point, all this work can do is point out the interaction of factors. In this sense, the question is not so much why people decide a certain way, but how their decisions are explained and justified, and how these decisions interact in a particular socio-economic setting to perpetuate or transform specific social modalities. Perhaps patrón-avoidance is basically a rationalization for general unavailability of jobs, yet for some it seems to be a reason to remain raising goats, chopping ixtle, and planting a corn plot.

Firth's concept of social organization seems to be a framework that encompasses the kind of decision-social action-value system consideration emerging from this work.

(Social organization) can be phrased again as that continuous set of operations in a field of social action which conduces to the control and combination of elements of action into a system by choice and limitation of their relation to any given ends...In speaking of social organization, our aim is to extract the regularities from the social implications of the process of decision-making and allied processes...From different angles then social organization is to be regarded as (a) adjustment of behavior of individuals consequent on the selection they make from among alternative courses of action in reference to their social goals; (b) selection of roles and consequent adjustment in terms of responsibility and co-ordination; (c) arrangement of elements of action into a system by limitation of their social relations in reference to given ends as conceived by the actors...Our task is...to delimit the range of alternatives; to observe the relative frequency of choice for one rather than for another; to explain as far as possible the social factors accounting for such choices; to examine the implications of choice on social behavior. It is sometimes thought that this means trying to explain social action in terms of individual action - to put the hands of the clock back in social theory to the pre-Durkheimian stage. This is not so. But it does emphasize that social action is expressed through individual action, and that this expression allows of alternative procedures. (Firth 1955: 1-3)

The focus, as in this study, is upon the sets of culturally supplied alternatives as seen by the actors, the decisions made, and the effects of the decisions in perpetuating or changing social relations in an ongoing process. Which decisions promote integration? Which produce schism? How do structural principles and value patterns articulate with immediate circumstance? The emphasis of this approach is not upon social structure per se because, as Firth states:

The qualities recognized are primarily those of persistence, continuity, form, and pervasiveness through the social field. But the continuity is essentially one of repetition...A structural principle is one which provides a fixed line of social behavior and represents the order which it manifests...The concept of social organization...recognizes adaptation of behavior in respect of given ends, control of means in varying circumstances, which are set by changes in the external environment or by the necessity to resolve conflict between structural principles. If structure implies order, organization implies a working towards order. (Firth 1955:2)

For example, the structural principle of patrón-client was expressed in the hacienda days by the relationships between hacendado and worker. Now the principle relates ex-peasant storeowners to various employees, and there are many who seem to be choosing not to utilize that structural principle by not seeking a local patrón. In other words, they seem to be avoiding a structural principle rather than using it. The system of social relations based on patrón-clientage is in flux. The changing decision patterns are empirical manifestations of that particular social change. They do not "cause" the change, nor "reflect" the change: they are the change.

A decision-making study then seems to be a useful approach to the study of social organization. The methodological

problems of using the cost-risk-return framework have been presented. Perhaps a detailed presentation of data and in-depth analysis of just a few cases of actual decisions being made would have been a better (or at least complementary) approach. Yet the scarcity of opportunities to actually be in on a complete decision-making process, plus the problems of determining all the pertinent factors was discussed previously. Also, a researcher might pick an obvious decision area such as compadrazgo, and focus entirely upon all compadre selections, past and present, and the reasons for the selections. Though probably providing more immediately comparable data, the basis of social organization in a town such as Mina is not simply compadrazgo. The author was determined to investigate areas which were important in the generation of overall social activity in the town. And job selection, entrepreneurial activities, health care, and related decisions were primary themes from the viewpoint of both residents and the author. Again the problem: to investigate areas methodologically less difficult or to try to gain a more overall understanding by concentration upon those areas deemed to be primary. Of course the options are not mutually exclusive except for the factors of time and effort. Ideally, the study, utilizing a social-organizational frame, would have included in depth case studies of important decisions being made; extensive open-ended questionnaires concerning perception and valuations of alternatives, strategies, etc., of important decision-making areas; complete statistics of all decisions in these areas; rigorous short

answer questionnaires concerning these areas; complete records on all past and present decisions and their reasons in a few other areas such as living-site selection, compadre selection, etc.; plus, the more traditional ethnographic description of the society.

A good example of this kind of work is Keesing's work among the Kwaio, in which he statistically presents the marriage and living site decisions which are major factors in the social life of the village. He concludes that the observed social phenomena are results of many decisions made on the basis of rational evaluations of structural principles of kin obligation, property rights, and other situational phenomena, none of which singly "determines" a decision.

"In fact, descent groups turn out to be a sort of epiphenomenon, the statistical outcome of principles about ancestors and property applied in certain circumstances...progressive changes in statistical pattern can lead to shifts in ideology and in underlying principles of decision-making." (Keesing 1967:14-15) He, as this author, realizes the problems in observing and analyzing appropriate data.

The self-contained and exhaustive analysis of non-trivial segments or domains of a culture is difficult, if not impossible, owing to the pervasive spread and interconnection of cultural principles...But to investigate these relationships systematically, as well as to achieve higher standards of ethnography, we will have to strive to devise decision models of social relations. (Keesing 1967:14-15)

In summary the, there are serious methodological problems inherent in determining and comparing all aspects of a decision process. In this investigation in-depth interviewing

concerning three primary areas was combined with data of some results of decision-making. I recognize that methods other than the cost-risk-return framework used here may be fruitful. Case studies and detailed short-answer interviewing, plus extensive statistics would certainly be valuable. There are limitations however on the investigator's time and ability to gather all required data except in a few delimited domains of decision-making in a society. Professor Firth's concept of social organization does indeed seem to be a compatible conceptual framework for this kind of decision-making approach to social action.

Finally, what can be said about minimizing strategies and society in general? Is the minimizing aspect of strategies particular to Mina alone, is it common to peasant societies in general, or is it a universal feature of decision-making behavior found in all societies to some degree? In the Mina case, minimizing is certainly related to the limited resource base. For most residents it is a full-time task to obtain enough food and cash to maintain a subsistence-level existence. Residents economize in the securing and application of their resources, but maximizing strategies are limited to those whose political and economic positions in the community are relatively secure.

Similar conditions exist in other peasant societies. For example, it has been observed that in "closed corporate communities" mechanisms exist which serve to maintain individual production and consumption levels within socially acceptable

limits, and thereby maintain survival of the community based on limited resources. There are various high-prestige positions in the social structure, but to occupy these positions requires the expenditure of relatively large amounts of resources to the extent that the individual often remains in debt long after his time in the high prestige position. (Foster 1967:194; Vogt 1970) In Tzintzuntzan, Foster noted the "institutionalized envy" and the "image of limited good" which led to social sanctions against any individual who sought to advance his economic position beyond that considered appropriate. (Foster 1967:122) These phenomena are the cultural reflections of the delicate balance between population and resource base common to peasant societies. To maintain a relatively stable relationship between population size and available resources, individuals must satisfy; they must accept the proposition that they have a right only to an amount of resources necessary to their subsistence. "Institutionalized envy" and the "image of limited good" are cultural responses - the understandings underlying the social leveling mechanisms - which serve to maintain the population-resource balance. People may not necessarily "want to" be satisfied with a subsistence-level existence, but socio-cultural constraints force them to minimize. In Tzintzuntzan, institutionalized envy dictated that individuals claimed only what was due to them according to the cultural definition. In Mina, the risk in trying to do otherwise kept most people at the level of minimum subsistence.

The situation might be viewed as a "peasant tightrope"

between subsistence and reprisal, that if one can do the minimum required to meet physical needs and social necessity without incurring negative retaliation from his neighbors, patrones, or "outside" political-economic system, then one has "maximized" his overall chances for survival. Minimizing strategies in Mina allow the residents to maintain a defensive balance in the face of these forces; by doing only that necessary for physical and social survival, the peasants avoid excess risk situations. Therein lies the key to the social stability which permits a society to come to a finely-tuned balance with its resource base.

Adams has noted:

Attitudes toward work reflect the conditions of survival in a given society. An attitude that discourages a worker from exerting himself excessively may be disconcerting to anyone interested in entrepreneurship and economic development, but it is not necessarily inimical to survival. To survive, one requires a wide variety of alternatives and this the rural Latin American laborer seems to have. (Adams 1964:77-78)

Yet, certain individuals "maximize" economically as well as in other areas - prestige, glory, political influence. The storeowners continually strive to maximize their economic base and political power. But perhaps in the "adapted" society we might observe a reciprocity between the few maximizers and many minimizers. Firth recognizes this as the inherent social obligations in capital mentioned earlier, with respect to the patrones' "obligation" to share some of their good fortune with the community. I hypothesize that in such cases the privilege to maximize in these areas carries a "price" to be paid to society in general: gift-giving during potlatch ceremonies,

maintenance of the fiesta cycle as part of the obligations of an office holder in a Mayan civil-religious hierarchy (Vogt 1970), the obligations of the hacendado to his peones in pre-revolutionary Mina. It is as if the minimizers were saying, "All right, you can maximize wealth, power, prestige, or whatever, but you are under the obligation to do something for us in the process." The extreme case might be the individual seeking prestige in the Maya civil-religious hierarchy by severely indebting himself to pay for public fiestas. Conversely, the patrones in Mina fail their supposed obligations to the people, and so are "bad guys" or "capitalists".

Parenthetically, the case of Western Industrial Economy might be considered in this context. If it is true that economic activity in the Industrial Economy is dominated by maximizing strategies, this fact must be reconciled with the mode of adaptation of the society in general to the resource base. It might be proposed that the strategies developed along with the initial growth of industry and commerce - the "industrial revolution" - especially catalyzed by the exploitation of resources in the newly-established colonies. This was especially true in North America where expanding resources were a function of the expanding frontier. The belief-strategy of maximization was compatible with the then-perceived infinite resources of the new world and the colonial territories. Riches were available for everyone for the taking - there were no environmental limitations, and the ethos of free enterprise-maximization accompanied the "development" of western society. Northern Mexico is also a "frontier", but it is not an

expanding frontier, filled with resources waiting to be plucked. The border frontier has historically been a constraint, a violence-ridden buffer between antagonistic social systems.

Implicit in the industrial-capitalist ethos is the assumption that the only healthy economy is an expanding economy - an economy wherein everyone has not only the ability, but the right to maximize in his own self-interest. This issue is tangential to the thesis, but is included for three reasons. First, it would be instructive to investigate decision-making processes, assumptions, and strategies in western industrial society using the framework of this thesis so that the relations between resource bases, social institutions, perceptions and strategies, etc., might be compared cross-culturally. Secondly, the ethos of maximization in western society may influence even the most objective attempts to study human behavior. Third, the ethos of maximizing of self-interest is implicit in an entrepreneurial approach to "modernizing" the underdeveloped countries.

In Mina, the ecological and social conditions do not permit everyone to "maximize", and it is suspected that for most of the people of the world economic decisions are made to "satisfice" or "minimize". Yet, there are individuals who, in the name of modernizing, have sought to maximize their economic and political benefits based on their activities in the community. The reader has perhaps received the impression that because these individuals have sometimes used devious means to gain their positions, that because they depend on an oppressive system of information and obligation from their

employee-clients, and because they are sometimes labeled as exploiting capitalistas, they must therefore be selfish and despicable individuals. This is certainly not the case. The author's landlord, a storeowner and large property owner, stated that the only way he could raise his family from the extreme poverty of Mina was to ignore some traditional obligations and to look for opportunities to make money. He thought the poorer people in general were ignorant and would probably never better their lives, but he did not want to submit his children to a life like theirs. For him, the destruction of traditional social obligations is unfortunate, but necessary if one is to better oneself. He expounded what might be called a "Protestant Ethic" philosophy: one should, by one's own effort, pull oneself up by accumulating money to be used as capital to buy land or start a business, the object being to provide a higher standard of living for the family and to educate the children so that they can escape the poor, rural life.

This small group of similarly-oriented storeowning families are entrepreneurs: motivated, hard-working, resourceful and innovative. The problems arise when these "maximizers" accumulate their capital and start their businesses on the basis of the fixed and limited resource base of the community. The graft involving the funds of the Forestal programs and the resulting rise of land and store owners occurs without increasing the source of resources or improving the means of their exploitation. Thus, more pressure is put on an already precarious resource-population balance.

In Mina, the more "modern" alternatives for consumption - education, health care by hospitals and doctors, consumer articles such as stylish clothes and better furniture and appliances - are items available in a large part only to those households who have managed to escape from the minimizing-subsistence conditions; people who can claim more of the production of the community. Their escaping, however, depends upon their ability to extract the necessary funds from the rest of the population. So long as the resource base and the mechanisms for exploitation of the resources remain unchanged, the phenomenon of "modernization" will occur differentially; those who are able to extract enough wealth will display "modern" traits, while the remainder who are subject to the reduced distribution of wealth and accompanying socio-political conditions will remain "traditional" - not necessarily be desirable, but by the need to reduce the risks to survival. The poor people in Mina have a complete perception of what it requires to be "modern"; as yet they lack a realistic socio-economic alternative which would enable them to act. Perhaps the coming light-pole cooperative will provide that opportunity.

Felstehausen, in his analysis of the resistance to economic improvement programs by Colombian peasants, states: "From the results of these studies we can conclude that the value of economic knowledge in rational decision-making is meaningful only in societies where the decision-maker is free to act on the basis of new information." (Felstehausen 1968:281) New low risk modes of exploitation of the resource base - such as

the installation of the concrete block manufacturing plant and the light-pole cooperative - are means by which money extracted from the larger economy in exchange for local products may enable larger segments of the population to "modernize".

Of course this is the general strategy of development programs: to initiate the utilization of resources in new ways which will lead to the betterment of the general population. (Ayres 1960) This involves the encouragement of small-scale entrepreneurship; a desire for economic improvement on the individual level. In terms of this thesis, this implies the attempt to get more people to "maximize" in their own behalf and break from the more "traditional", i.e., satisficing way of life. However, in situations such as in Mina where the resource base is highly restrictive, an emphasis on entrepreneurial activity can only be disruptive as long as that activity is oriented toward cornering a greater part of the resources that exist rather than increasing the overall production of wealth in the community.

The larger implication of this position is the question whether the world-wide campaign to modernize and develop - to raise the perceptions and expectations of large segments of the world population to the level at which maximizing becomes the dominant strategy - is on a collision course with the world's limited natural resources, general lack of capital to sufficiently develop the resources, and the exponential population growth. In Mina "betterment" is based on claiming a larger share of a fixed resource base. This example might

well serve to guide further investigations of modernization processes in terms of the real alternatives available to people, the strategies employed, and the resultant social, economic, and political effects in the face of the present world tendencies of dwindling resources and mushrooming population growth.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Curing Herbs

The following herbs were collected and photographed in Mina. The primary source was an herb salesman who brought the herbs to the author, identified them, and indicated their use.

Their botanical names were derived from their photographs and from their vulgar names and uses. The ethnobotanics of Kelly (1956), Martinez (1933), and Winter (1968) were the primary sources used.

Agrito: (*Lippia ligustrina* Britt.)

Use: Mixed with bath water for good health; also taken internally for gall-bladder trouble.

Aguacate: Avocado (*Oxalis cosattiana*)

Use: Aphrodisiac; also for diabetes, gout, respiratory problems.

Ajo: Garlic (*Allium Satisvum* L.)

Use: Brewed as tea for kidneys and liver; used for general flavoring.

Alcancer: (*Cynara aequipetala*)

Use: Mixed with water to make paste to reduce swelling.

Amole: (*Stegnosperma halimifolium*)

Use: Body and clothes soap.

Anachua: (*Cordia sebestema*)

Use: Put in bath water to relax; the fruit is eaten.

Anis de Estrella: (*Illium anisatum*)

Use: Brewed as tea for stomach ache, general pain.

Barba Caivato: (*Clematis diorica* L.)

Use: Put in bath water to relieve aches; also to soften corns and to aid healing of sores and wounds.

Barda: (*Fouquieria splendens* engelm)

Use: Brewed as tea for cough.

- Borraja:** (*Borrago officinalis*)
Use: Diuretic; used to break fever.
- Calavazilla:** (*Cucurbita moschata*, Duch.)
Use: Used in bath water as soap.
- Candelilla:** (*Euphorbia antisyphilitica*)
Use: Waxy outside material applied to sores and infestions; particularly used for syphilis.
- Canela:** Cinnamon (*Pulchea odorata* Nat.)
Use: Brewed as a tea for diarrhea, rheumatism, and nervous problems.
- Cascara Armaga:** (*Pieramnia antidesma*)
Use: Used in the treatment of susto (fright); syphilis, to purify the blood.
- Cempoal:** (*Tagetes erecta*)
Use: Leaves and flowers are brewed for stomach upset.
- Cenizo:** (*Leucophyllum zygophyllum*)
Use: Brewed as tea to calm the nerves, for bilis (anger); also a laxative.
- Coyotillo, Hilacoyote:** (*Cucurbita lagenaria*)
Use: A paralyzing drug used by witches.
- Cuasia, Virgin:** (*Caussia amara*)
Use: Taken as tea every day to aid digestion. Also to treat colic and heartburn. Used also to lower fever, alleviate chills.
- Epazote:** (*Chenopodium ambrosio-ides*)
Use: Stops stomach ache; expels worms; used as spice.
- Governadora:** (*Larrea divaricata* Cav.)
Use: Used for footbath; also taken as tea for rheumatism, kidneys, circulation.
- Guajillo:** (*Acacia angustissima* kuntze)
Use: Brewed as tea to reduce nervousness, especially for bilis (anger).
- Guardo Lobo, Gordo lobo:** (*Gnaphalium attenuatum*)
Use: Hung on fences and door jambs to keep evil animals and spirits away; also taken as tea for respiratory problems.
- Hoja se:** (*Flourensia cernua* D.C.)
Use: Brewed as tea for stomach ache, empacho.
- Higuera:** Fig (*Ficus carica* L.)
Use: Oil is extracted from seeds and used as general soothing oil; taken for upset stomach, heart trouble.

Huizache: (*Acacia farnesiana*)

Use: Brew like tea to heal cuts and bruises.

Injerto: (*Psittacanthus calyculatus*)

Use: Brewed as tea for coughs. Also incense is made out of fruit, and the vapor is good for chest congestion.

Istafiate: (*Artemisia Mexicana*)

Use: Brewed as tea for stomach ache.

Jabon: (*Sapindus saponaria* L.)

Use: All of the plant used for soap; fruit used for kidney trouble.

Jarilla: (*Senecio Salignis*)

Use: Drink as tea to become more potent.

Jitomate: (*Lycopersicon esculentum*, L.)

Use: Brewed as tea to aid indigestion.

Junco: (*Aporocactus flagelligormius*)

Use: Brewed as tea for nerves, insomnia, heart palpitations.

Laurel: (*Litsea glaucescens*, H.B.K.)

Use: Brewed as a tea to aid in sleeping; also aids sore throats.

Linasa: (*Linum usitalissimum*)

Use: Applied like a plaster for chest pain.

Mala Mujer: (*Rhus toxicodendion*)

Use: Used by witches to harm people and causes severe illness.

Malua de Costillo: (*Malvastrum coromandelia*, L.)

Use: Mixed with footbath water to treat corns.

Manzanilla: (*Matricaria chamomilla*. *M. Parthenium*. *Anthemis nobilis*)

Use: Brewed as tea for stomach ache.

Maravilla: (*Mirabilis jalapa*, L.)

Use: Mixed with water for cuts, corns, and skin rashes; also taken internally as a laxative.

Mezquite: (*Prosopis jidiflora*, Swartz)

Use: Fruit is eaten; especially good for young children.

Muicle: (*Jacobinia spiciyera*)

Use: Used in bath water; also rubbed on body for health. Also brewed as tea for nerves, heavy menstruation, fevers.

- Naranja Agria: Sour oranges (*Citrus vulgaris*)
 Use: Leaves and fruit for drinks to give energy; also used to flavor and tenderize meat.
- Nogal: (*Juglans Mexicana*)
 Use: To cleanse the blood and make the person stronger.
- Olmo: (*Chaetoptelea Mexicana* Liem)
 Use: The flowers are brewed as tea for cough.
- Oreja Ratón: (*Euphorbia albo-marginata* Torr. and Gray)
 Use: Brewed as a tea for stomach ache and to relieve bilis.
- Organo: (*Origanum vulgaris*, L.; *Majorana hortensis*)
 Use: Diabetes, ulcers, cancer.
- Peyote: (*Echinocactus Williamsii*. *Senecio calophyllus*.)
 Use: Made into paste and applied to forehead and back of neck to relieve headache and tension.
- Raís de Limón: Lemon root (*Andropogon citratus*. Lin.)
 Use: Brewed as tea for cough and general health.
- Raís del Indio: (*Aristolochia foetida*, H.B.K.)
 Use: Brewed as tea for colic.
- Retama: (*Cobaea scandens*. *Spartium junceum*. *Cystisus scoparius*.)
 Use: To use in place of sugar; also for constipation.
- Ruda: (*Ruta graveolens*)
 Use: Mixed with water to treat infections, particularly in the ear.
- Sábila: (F. Liliaceas.)
 Use: Mixed as paste for bruises and cuts. Also to eat and drink for general health.
- Sacasíl: (*Anredera scandens* Mocq.)
 Use: Herb is ground up into a paste. When dry, it is strong enough for a cast for a broken arm or leg.
- Salvia: (*S. blanca*, *S. real*, *S. lencantha*, etc.; *Salvia Officinalis*. *Buddleia scordioides*. *B. perfoliata*. *Lippa chilensis*.)
 Use: There are 200 species: *Salvia blanca* for sleeplessness; *Salvia real* for diabetes.
- San Nicolas: (*Crysanthinia Mexicana*)
 Use: Fertility; if a woman has trouble conceiving, she drinks it (as tea) for nine days.
- Sauz: (*Chilobucus Mexicana*)
 Use: Mixed with bathwater to keep the skin healthy.

- Semilla de Culebra: (*Hibiscus abelmoschus*. *Abelmoschus moschatus*.)
Use: Carried for good luck.
- Semilla de Pirúl: (*Schinus molle*)
Use: Seeds and leaves are rubbed over body of person suffering from susto (fright).
- Suelda: (*Potentilla candicans*, H. el Bon pl.)
Use: Brewed as tea to relieve stomach ache.
- Toloache: Jimson weed (*Datura stramonium*)
Use: Taken in small amounts for headache. Witches use large doses to cause disorientation in victims.
- Toronjil: (*Cedronella Mexicana*)
Use: Brewed like tea for heartburn.
- Trompeta: (*Datura candida*)
Use: Dangerous drug; witches use it to make people ill.
- Trompillo: (*Cordia boissieri* A. D.C.)
Use: Brewed as tea for cough; also used to congeal goats' milk for cheese.
- Venado, Yerba del Venado, Bazo de Venado: (*Passiflora coriacea*, Juss.)
Use: Eye infections of children.
- Yerba Buena: Mint (*Mentha pipenta*)
Use: Brewed as tea to aid digestion, to relieve gas, and to break fever. Also used as soup flavoring.
- Yerba de la Vibora: (*Calophanes linearis*)
Use: Used to make a paste for snakebite.
- Yerba del Cancer: (*Cuphea aequipetala*)
Use: Brewed as tea for treatment of tumors: also made into paste and applied to swellings and wounds.
- Yerba de Peña: (*Selaginella cuspidata*. Link.)
Use: Brewed as tea to relieve aches, particularly backache.
- Yerba Mora: (*Morus nigra*. L.)
Use: Fruit is edible.
- Zapote: (*Casimiroa*)
Use: To prevent palpitations; if used in excess, can produce nightmares.

The following herbs have not been identified:

Arbol Grande:

Use: Bark mixed in bath water for nice smell.

Coma:

Use: For baths, especially for backaches.

Drago:

Use: Fibrous branches are split and used to brush teeth.

Mistor:

Use: Brewed as tea for stomach ache.

Nacagua:

Use: Brewed as tea for cough, especially for children.

Otate:

Use: Brewed as a tea to relax and ease pains.

Pilonilla:

Use: Brewed as tea for colic in small children.

Real de Oro:

Use: Seeds kept in a bag for good luck and protection from witchcraft.

Tarahumara:

Use: Brewed as tea to aid general health and fertility.

Yerba de la Bala:

Use: Put in bathwater to make skin soft.

Yerba del Ormiga:

Use: Taken daily as tea to prevent kidney problems.

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