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ZINACANTECO WOMEN: PREDICTION FOR CHANGE  
IN A MEXICAN VILLAGE\*

by

Joanne Hogan and Marta Tienda\*\*

\*Paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Rural Sociological Society, San Francisco, California, August 31-September 3, 1978.

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## **Zinacanteco Women: Prediction for Change in a Mexican Village\***

by

**Joanne Hogan and Marta Tienda\*\***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Studies of modernization have attempted to understand causes of social change, scrutinize potential consequences, and isolate factors that propel or inhibit similar developments in varied contexts (Portes, 1974). One relatively recent genre of modernization studies concerns the changing role of women, or, more specifically, how modernization influences women's traditional activity domains and social behavior. There are certainly numerous ways to examine how women's social roles and positions are altered by modernization, but our concern is to identify conditions that permit changes in traditional female roles and, subsequently, to evaluate local responses in terms of old and new social arrangements.

The Zinacantecos,<sup>1</sup> Tzotzil-speaking descendants of the Maya who reside in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, provide an interesting case study to examine the influence of modernization on women's roles. Over the past three decades, many social scientists, but anthropologists in particular, have studied Zinacantan quite extensively (Vogt, 1969, 1970; Collier, 1975; Colby, 1966; Cancian, 1965, 1972). These studies have illustrated that in spite of

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1. The information for the description of the Zinacanteco culture is mainly based on Evon Z. Vogt's books, Zinacantan (1969) and The Zinacantecos of Mexico (1970).

increasing contact with the ladino world,<sup>2</sup> the Zinacantecos have managed to preserve their traditional life style and culture within the boundaries of the municipio.<sup>3</sup> It has been pointed out, for example, that the expansion of communication and transportation networks has led to changes in the material culture, as reflected in housing construction, dress styles, increased incidence of bilingualism, and new patterns of work. Also, Zinacanteco income has increased considerably because of farming and wage labor activities outside the municipio.

However, in social and religious areanas much less change has occurred in spite of continued and increasing contact with the non-Indian world. Vogt (1969:613) explains that religious and civil institutional arrangements help mitigate the disruptive influences of modernization and therefore the ceremonial aspects of the native culture have been elaborated as wealth has increased. In light of these responses to modern influences, the major destabilizing influence for the Zinacantecos is the continued and rapid population increase due to the steady improvement in health care and modern medical practices. Although the importance of this factor has been acknowledged, its specific implications for women's social roles have not been systematically considered.

Our case is that the ability of the Zinacantecos to mitigate the potentially destabilizing forces of modernization rests partly on the extent to which women have been excluded from public life, particularly from wage employment and more prestigious social positions. We develop this argument first by considering "traditional" social and institutional arrangements that inhibit women's social participation. Subsequently, we discuss how the ecological imbalances stemming from population growth could undermine the

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2. Ladinos are Spanish speakers of Spanish-Indian descent. They represent the national culture of Mexico for the Zinacantecos and provide a linkage to: (1) the wage labor sector of the economy; (2) external markets for agricultural production; and (3) access to additional land. The ladino world is also represented in Zinacantan by the position of Secretary, an administrative post filled by a ladino appointed by the Mexican government. This person is responsible for recording demographic data and tax information, but does not have much influence on decisions affecting Zinacanteco life.

3. The municipio of Zinacantan covers 117 square kilometers with a population of about 11,500 in 1970 living in 15 hamlets and a ceremonial center, Zinacantan.

ability of the Zinacantecos to maintain their traditional culture and ethnic identity.

### SEX ROLES AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In Zinacantan, as in most peasant societies, social relationships are deeply rooted in systems of production which are reflected in both the land tenure arrangements and the division of labor by sex. Institutional aspects of social ranking also structure sex role differentiation and its persistence over time. Therefore, the potential for change in the social roles of the Zinacantecos depends upon how the influence of modernization is diffused within the population. In this section, we outline how existing social arrangements are likely to impede changes in the social roles of Zinacanteco women.

#### Land Tenure Arrangements

Productive and social activities center around subsistence agriculture; therefore, land use is important in defining and maintaining the social structure. Not only do land use patterns define most of the Zinacanteco relationships with the outside world, but they also shape the social organization of the group through inheritance patterns (Collier, 1975:xiii). Zinacantecos practice patrilineal descent reckoning and virolocal residency. This means that newly married couples reside with the husband's family of orientation before establishing a separate household within the house compound area. Ideally, the compound consists of the home of the parents and unmarried children and the households of the adult sons. This residence pattern facilitates the sharing of labor and land. Descent is traced through the male line and land surrounding the house compound is cultivated jointly by the male members.

Distribution of highland property through inheritance, marriage, and land sale is the important parameter defining the patrilineage, including its religious and political dimensions (Collier, 1975:47 and 52-53). Although inheritance rules require that land be inherited patrilineally, these are not strictly adhered to. An unmarried daughter may be given a parcel of land for a house or tillage. If she marries, this land passes out of the patrilineage because it will be inherited by her children and will remain in the husband's lineage. Therefore, instances of female inheritance are typically rare and, according to Collier (1975:68, 88-89), usually involve marginal land. Generally there

is little transfer of tillable land from the patrilineage except for sales to meet burial expenses. Usually, small portions of tillable land are distributed among adult sons for housing sites. Occasionally a favorite son may inherit a major portion of the farm upon the death of the head of the house compound.

While land tenure arrangements in the highlands are very important for the maintenance of the patrilineal descent system, cultivation of highland areas generates about 20 percent of the Zinacanteco income. To supplement highland tillage, swidden agriculture is practiced on lowland parcels rented from ladinos. Many of these fields are more productive than those located closer to the municipio, and the longer distances may be reduced by better roads and improved transportation. Expansion of the economic base through exploitation of resources outside the municipio enhances the material well-being of the population and increases the numbers that can be sustained. However, there appear to be limits to the expansion of lowland farming, in terms of both land availability and surplus labor resources. Vogt (1969:613) predicts that excess labor will find its way into ladino enterprises in San Cristóbal, but that most Zinacantecos will remain in their hamlets and commute to work. This will allow them to maintain their ethnic identity while working in the ladino world, thus contributing to the stability of the system.

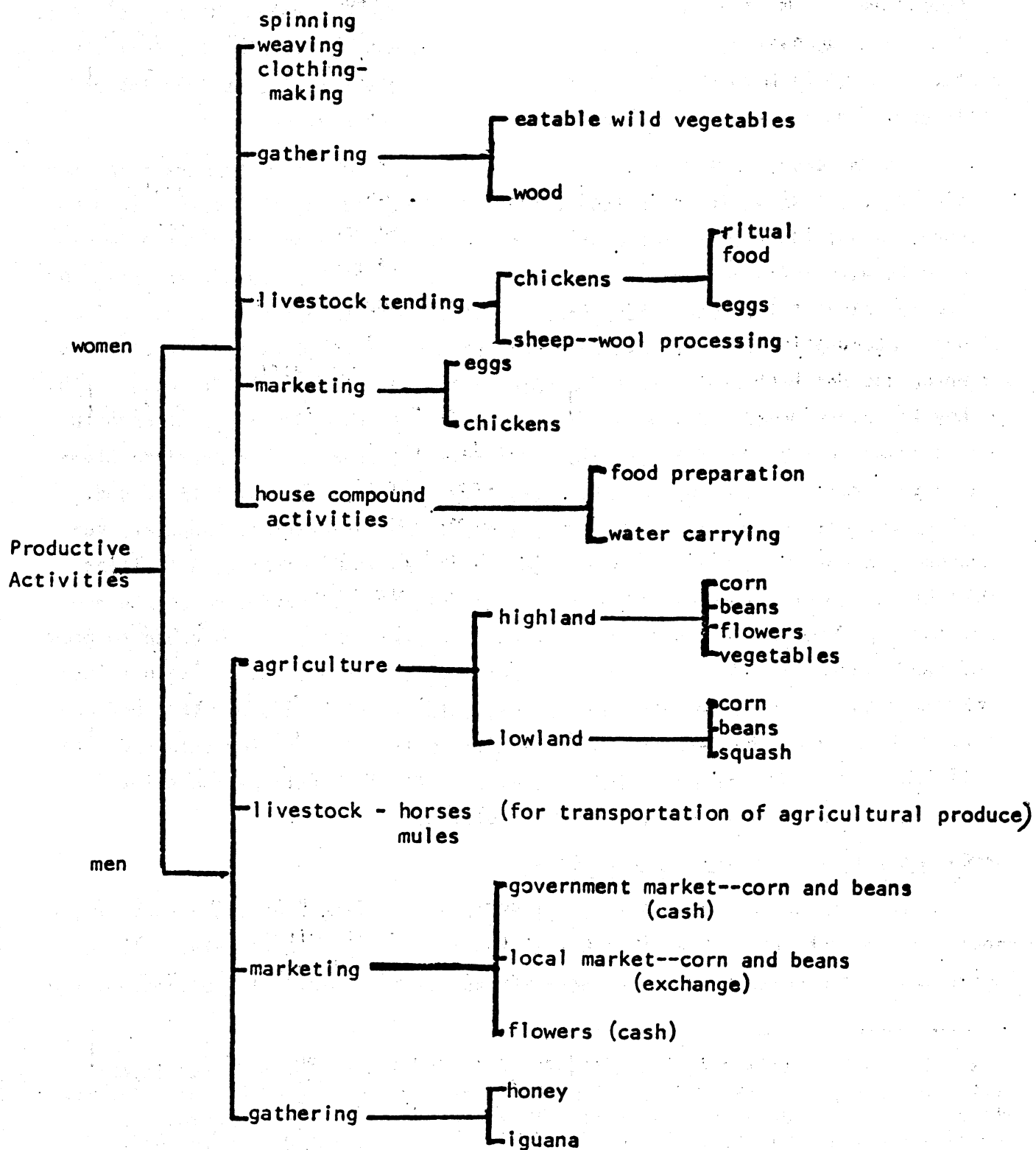
It is noteworthy that men are more likely to move into wage labor since they are also more likely to have attended school, learned Spanish, and adopted ladino dress. Another advantage shared by men is that almost one-half acquire wage labor experience during adolescence by working for ladino families in San Cristóbal. Very few women have similar experiences (Colby, 1966:45) because of the way their roles are confined to the private, domestic spheres of life, or more generally, the social division of labor by sex.

#### The Division of Labor in Zinacantan

The division of labor in Zinacantan provides insight about the sex bases of social stratification. As shown in Figure 1, women's economic activities are centered around the production of goods and services for the home. Seldom does their labor generate income because they neither control the main resources used in extradomestic exchange nor engage in activities which place them in contact with the ladino culture. Women own chickens which are used

Figure 1

Division of Labor by Sex: Zinacantan



for ritual and as a means to supplement family income through the sale of eggs. They are also responsible for keeping sheep and making clothing for family members, but their main task is the preparation of the corn. This is a labor-intensive activity that requires several hours each day.

Men's resources and activities are oriented toward a wider market and social system. In addition to land cultivation activities, they market surplus corn, beans, and flowers for cash income. Men also own and care for animals used in harvesting and distribution. An important difference between male and female activities is that the former result in both exchange with the ladino world and accumulation of resources needed to participate in those activities which are accorded high prestige within the community. This difference is the key for understanding why women are less likely to take advantage of opportunities offered by the ladino world. For example, when the Pan-American highway that runs through the municipio was improved, tourist travel increased. This, in turn, opened new opportunities for income generation. However, because the traditional division of labor by sex confines women to activities within the house compound, men were better able to take advantage of the new income opportunities afforded by increased tourist traffic. Men began to grow flowers which were marketed along the road by young boys. Rather than illustrating the innate conservatism of women, this example shows how the confinement of women to the domestic sphere limits their potential for expanded participation in the economy. Similar limits to female participation exist in the ritual and institutional social activities.

#### Ceremonies, Institutions, and Cosmology

The Zinacanteco have a highly ritualized life which entails several major ceremonies throughout the year in addition to daily public rituals. All ceremonies are conducted by cargoholders who are always male.<sup>4</sup> The all-male cargo

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4. The cargo position is held for one year, and the cargoholder is expected to spend large amounts of money on food, liquor, candles, and fireworks which are needed for the ceremonies. Providing for cargo ceremonies serves a leveling function within the community because accumulated private wealth is rapidly dissipated in public ceremony with prestige accorded to the spender.

The cargo hierarchy is a pyramidal structure with many entry level positions and fewer positions as one moves to the top. Most men only serve entry level cargos; only heads of large lineages are able to pass through the cargo hierarchy.



system is "the key feature of the social structure" that "defines the limits of community membership, reinforces commitment to common values, reduces potential conflict, and supports traditional kinship patterns" (Vogt, 1970:19; 1969:269). High prestige rather than economic compensation is the main reward for cargoholders. However, the exclusion of women from direct participation in the cargo system effectively limits their ability to directly acquire prestige and, thus, social status except indirectly through their husbands.

Cargo positions are not inherited, but rather based on accumulated resources and strong kinship relationships. The cargo system rewards achievement in accordance with two Mayan values: productive agricultural work and community service (Cancian, 1965:137). To pass successfully through the cargo system, a man must not only have many compadres whom he will call upon for help in completing his cargo, but also be a good maize farmer to accumulate substantial amounts of money for the cargo. When a man thinks he has accumulated sufficient resources and established strong relationships among extended kin, he will sign up for a cargo.

Besides the cargos, two other positions command power, prestige, and high status in Zinacantan: religious posts and civil office. Together, these three groups of positions form the top of the authority structure and their occupants make most of the important decisions concerning the internal and external interactions of the municipio. Civil officeholders are required to settle disputes, serve as liaisons between the municipio and the Mexican government, and carry out some of the religious activities such as hosting Year Renewal Ceremonies.<sup>5</sup> Like cargo positions, civil offices are filled by males (by either selection or election) and are generally held for three years. Again, prestige rather than monetary compensation is what makes these positions attractive to Zinacanteco males.

Incumbents of religious posts (shamans), unlike those of cargos or civil positions, can be either male or female. Male shamans treat illness, communicate with the gods to insure good crops, and propitiate the gods living in the

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5. Year Renewal Ceremonies are a series of major ceremonies held in the ceremonial center during the Christmas-New Year period to celebrate the ending of the year and to petition the gods for a prosperous coming year.

sacred mountains so that all will be well with the group. It is noteworthy that women are more constrained in the types of activities they perform as shamans: female shamans perform only private curing ceremonies, whereas their male counterparts act as religious leaders and perform all public ceremonies.

By social definition, the "good" woman must be excluded from participation in socially prestigious activities and relegated to a subordinate position in the private (household) domain. This view is well illustrated by the pervasive sex role stereotypes: the ideal female is "a woman who is 'soft' and submissive--a woman who is diligent in household tasks," whereas the ideal male is "a 'hard' man who is brave and virile--a temperate man, strong enough to resist temptation, [and] who fulfills cargo responsibilities" (Blaffer, 1972:127; Cancian, 1975:73). Sex role ideology further inhibits women's participation in public activities because allegorical forms of social control delimit their activity domains.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, they cannot even travel to the ceremonial center without being accompanied by a male, either a husband or a father (Blaffer, 1972).

Inequality between the sexes is also evident in activities pertaining to the private sphere of life. Although both males and females perform tasks which are necessary for the survival of the family, the division of labor within the household further reinforces sex based inequality in Zinacantan. Men are basically responsible for providing maize and women are responsible for making tortillas and other maize foods served at every meal. However, there are "symbolic" aspects of this relationship that reflect an unequal rank between the sexes. For example, men sit on low chairs inside the house whereas women sit on the floor. Women do the serving and cooking, and while they nibble as they serve the men and boys, they do not finish their meal until the

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6. Female sexuality is considered dangerous and something to be guarded because of its potential to cause illness. Pregnant women are deemed able to cause soul loss and any woman away from the house compound by herself is considered fair target for rape. Women must be especially careful of the mythical demon h'ik'al that attacks those women who are not careful of their sexuality. It is also said that if a young girl is too flirtatious, she will be gang-raped by the young men of the hamlet (although no one reported that this ever happened). More importantly, if a woman acts immodestly, her behavior will reflect badly on her husband and father and can result in the loss of hard earned prestige.

men complete theirs. Women always walk behind men, are often expected to walk behind boys of ten or eleven, and must stop to let men pass on a path (Colby, 1967:423; Colby, 1966:18; Collier, 1973:7; Cancian, 1965:33).

Social ranking is important in Zinacantan, and ranking behavior is also observable in many other activities. In ritual drinking, the oldest male is served first, then other males according to age. It is only after all men are served that women are served, again going from the oldest to the youngest. Despite uneven ranks among individuals, every person is served equal amounts. The symbolic message communicated by ritual drinking activities is that while the Zinacanteco social structure has an underlying hierarchy based on age and sex, this ranking does not result in any individual receiving less of a social, ceremonial, or economic good (Vogt, 1970:16). Sex ranking is never mentioned explicitly, but it is unclear whether this reflects the indifference of the social scientist observers or the Zinacanteco assumptions about women's place in society.

#### MODERNIZATION AND CHANGE IN ZINACANTAN: IMPLICATIONS FOR FEMALE ROLES

Geographical isolation and language barriers have partly sheltered Zinacantan from the influences of growth and modernization experienced in the Mexican nation, but, especially in more recent years, part of the "isolation" may be self-imposed. That is, as contact with ladino societies continues to increase, one might expect a gradual but irreversible erosion of indigenous institutions and behavior patterns. This is not always the case in Zinacantan, particularly in areas of social organization and religious practices. Vogt (1969:605) has suggested that as a counterreaction to the strong influence of ladino culture the social system is undergoing a "revitalistic" phase of development. One manifestation of this is the elaboration of the traditional ceremonial life as wealth increases (Vogt, 1969:613). Similarly, Collier (1975:17) argues that "ethnic behavior is a vital, dynamic response that these groups make to peripheral placement in a larger system." It might be inferred that the Zinacantecos have deliberately strived to preserve their culture in order to isolate and protect themselves from the ladino culture.

As a bounded cultural system based on scarce and limited resources, Zinacantan maintained a fairly adequate balance among four basic ecological elements:

population, environment, technology, and social organization. However, despite efforts to strengthen and preserve their ethnic identity, improvements in the standard of living afforded through better health care and housing, higher incomes, and the cultural importations from the mass society could still undermine the ability of the community to preserve its distinctive indigenous character and particularly the extent to which women are sheltered from modern influences. That is, if the Zinacanteco response to the direct influences of modernization (i.e., cultural and material importations from ladinos) has been a strengthening of the traditional culture, the likely response to the indirect consequences of modernization, especially population growth, is less certain. We maintain that because population growth places pressure on the limited resource base, it can ultimately stimulate changes in social organization. The techniques of Oval Diagramming<sup>7</sup> can be used to help visualize how such effects may operate in destabilizing a social system through circular flows of cause and effect.

Figure 2 is a highly aggregated model which illustrates how this process works. First, population growth exerts pressure on the resource base. Adaptive strategies are developed to provide additional resources, but this compensatory reaction in turn provides a stimulus for demographic growth. This system forms a positive loop which implies that the system will continue to expand until some exogeneous force is introduced to alter the sequence or some limit is reached. Obviously, the underlying process is not linear, but instead a complex causal chain whereby an adaptive strategy may feed back to exacerbate the original problem it was intended to solve.

As shown in Table 1, the population of Zinacantan has increased steadily, although not at a uniform rate, since 1930. During the last intercensal period, the population growth rate in the municipio was considerably higher than the national growth rate of 3.5 percent. Although there are no available published data about birth and death rates, it is safe to conclude that the observed increase is almost exclusively due to natural increase stemming from falling death rates in the absence of any significant fertility decline.

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7. For explanation of the Oval Diagramming Technique, see Peter Delp, Arne Thesen, Jugar Motwalla, Neelakantan Seshadri, System Tools for Project Planning (Bloomington, Ind.: International Development Institute, 1977).

**Figure 2**  
**Causal Loop - Population Growth**

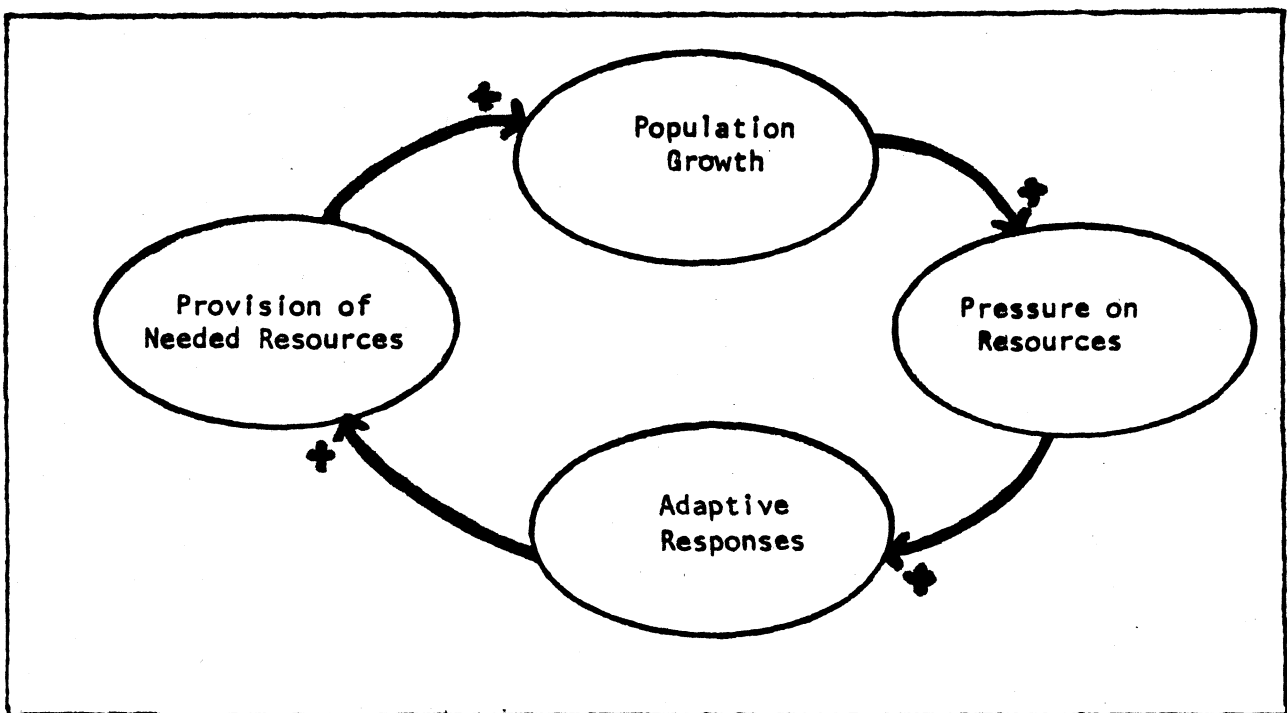


Table 1  
Population Growth: Zinacanteco, 1930-1970

	Year				
	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970
Number of Inhabitants	2129	4509	6312	7650	11426
Absolute Intercensal Change	2380	1803	1338	3776	
Intercensal Percent Change	111.8	40.0	21.2	49.4	
Average Annual <sup>b</sup> Rate of Growth	7.5	3.4	1.9	4.0	

Source: VIII Censo General de Población, Vol. 5 (Chiapas): Cuadro 1, p. 50; 1970 data from Vogt, 1976, p. 195.

$$b_r = \frac{\log \left( \frac{P_n}{P_o} \right)}{n \log e}$$

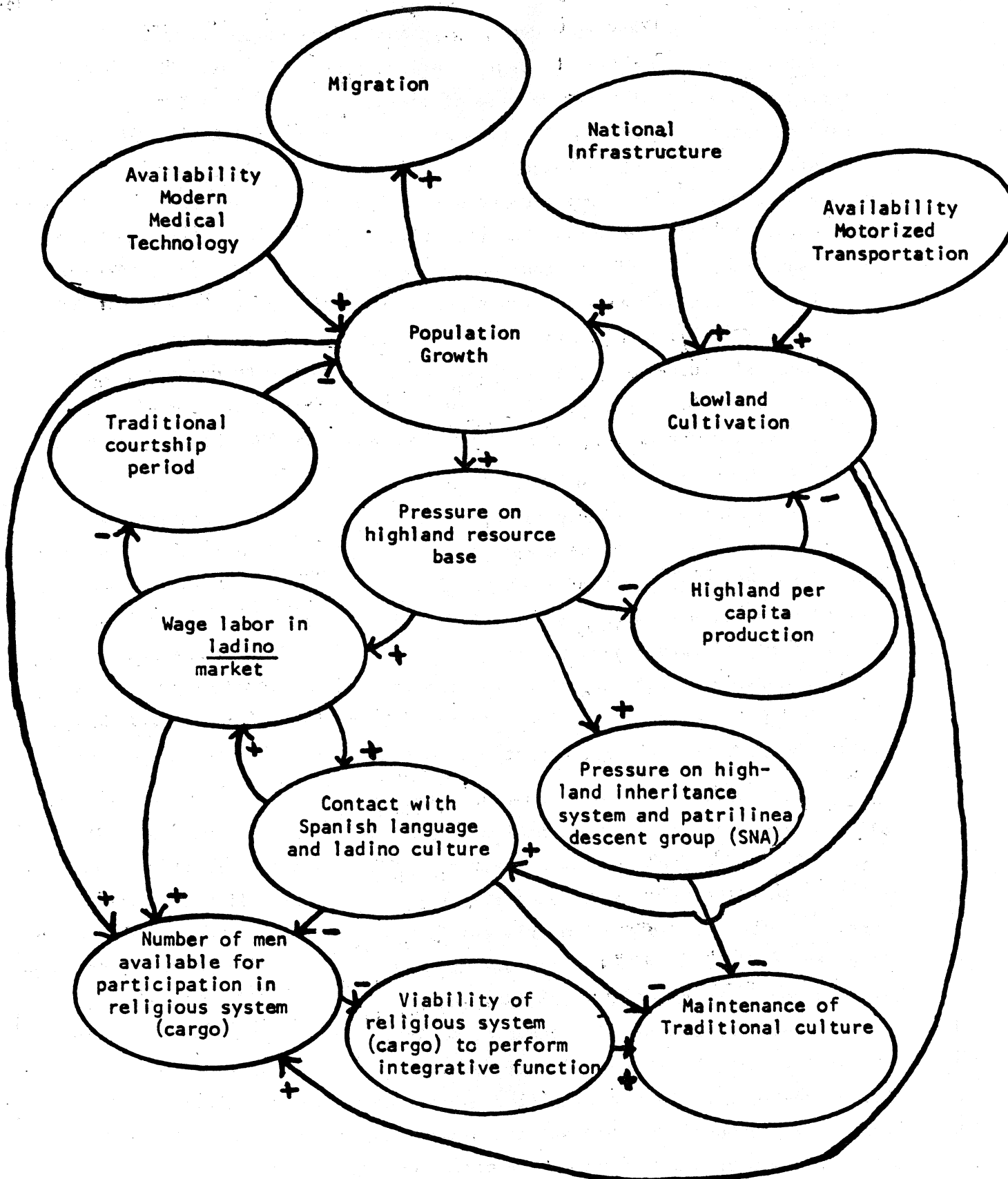
There are, of course, some demographic mechanisms which serve to check population growth. Among these, migration is the most obvious. Out-migration can reduce population size if the rate of migration is sufficient to offset the rate of natural increase. But high rates of out-migration can have stabilizing effects on the social system, particularly if the migration process is a highly selective one involving departure of the youngest and most talented individuals. In this situation, the traditional elements would be strengthened. Vogt (1969:608) reports that while there are no clear data on the actual emigration rates, out-migration siphons off individuals who are considered deviants in their behavior or aspirations. However, this alternative is not equally accessible to males and females. As suggested by recent changes in the sex ratio, men are more likely to have migrated than their womenfolk. Consequently, the sex ratio which had remained near 1.0 for the past three decades declined to 0.87 in 1970.

Figure 3 elaborates the system of social and ecological relationships that center around population increases experienced in Zinacantan. As indicated in the diagram, population growth directly increases pressure on the highland resource base which is reflected as lower per capita production. This, in turn, fosters a need to increase cultivation of lowland areas. Government provision of infrastructure and the increasing use of motorized transportation facilitate this adaptive response. Expanded lowland production permits the support of a larger population, thus the positive loop is complete.

An alternative strategy to cope with the increasing pressure on the highland resource base entails the seeking of wage employment in the ladino labor market. The introduction of wage labor can precipitate further changes in social relationships as it will eventually threaten the viability of extended courtship patterns, and particularly the function of brideprice and bride services, the practice of living with the husband's parents to repay the amount spent in courtship (Collier, 1968:192), and the dependence on the patrilineage for land and subsistence. For example, in Chamula, a neighboring municipio, increases in wage labor have already fostered a number of changes in the courtship arrangements. Chamulan families whose members are wage laborers are freed from total dependence on land and are growing beyond the size normally supported by subsistence farming. As greater numbers of young men are able to

Figure 3

Dynamic Interactions of Population Growth, Resources and Traditional Culture





pay the brideprice without going into debt, courtships are shortened, age at marriage declines, and fertility subsequently increases (Collier, 1975:121-122). Similar effects are likely to be experienced in Zinacantan. That is, as the flow of wage income into the Zinacanteco economy enables many prospective grooms to accumulate sufficient resources for the brideprice prior to marriage, the traditional courtship period may be shortened and age at marriage lowered. And, it follows that, because women will be exposed to the risk of pregnancy for longer periods, fertility will rise.

The Zinacanteco women may find some benefit to the cash payment of brideprice since newly married couples may not have to live with the husband's family and the bride will not be under the control of her mother-in-law. One disadvantage of allowing young couples to establish separate nuclear households is that the SNA<sup>8</sup> may be weakened. Since extended living arrangements influence participation in the cargo system, the ability of the group to maintain its traditional culture will also be affected. In summary, it is noteworthy that both the increased lowland cultivation and wage labor strategies to cope with population increase form positive loops. This implies that the system will continue to expand, as indeed it has (Table 1).

There are still other influences which bear upon the long-term viability of the cultural system. Economic expansion (wage labor and increased exploitation of lowland farming) and population growth mean that more men will qualify for cargo positions. According to Cancian (1965:140; 169-170), unless the cargo system is able to expand to provide for the needs of a growing population, full participation cannot be maintained and the reinforcement of community values may be severely weakened. "Waiting lists" for cargo positions are filled years into the future, and while the lists allow indirect, postponed participation, they may be insufficient to maintain faith in the system. As shown in Table 2, the growth in cargo positions has not kept pace with demographic increase: whereas the population of Zinacantan increased 436 percent

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8. The SNA is the Tzotzil name for the extended patrilineal group. The land and labor resources that can be mobilized by the lineage head of the SNA determine the ability of the head and other members of the SNA to hold cargo positions.

Table 2

Growth in Cargo Positions: Zinacantan, 1930-1970

Year	Number of Cargo Positions	Growth Per Decade (percentage)
1930	55	
1940	57	3.5
1950	59	3.5
1960	61	3.3
1970	65	6.5
Total Increase	10	18.0

Source: Adapted from Vogt, 1976, Table 3, p. 196.

from 1930 through 1970, the number of cargo positions expanded only 18 percent, from 55 positions in 1930 to 65 in 1970.

One solution for the inability of the cargo system to accommodate the growing number of individuals waiting to fill cargo positions is the division of Zinacantan into two municipios. This would increase the number of cargo positions in the short run (Cancian, 1965:192-194), but may eventually lead to the complete breakdown of the Indian community. In other words, the cargo system would not adequately fill its integrative function if the division of the municipio required the separation of extended kin groups. While it appears that the "split-off" alternative is the only way the cargo system can continue, it also means that group homogeneity cannot be maintained. Witness the differences between the neighboring municipios of Chamula and Zinacantan (Vogt, 1969).

The breakdown of the all-male cargo system has implications for the degree of social cohesion and women's position in society. As more men are able to accumulate enough resources through savings from wage labor, they may pass through the cargo system without resource mobilization assistance from kin. If so, the integrative function achieved through reciprocity and exchange among kin will disappear. Moreover, women's contribution to the household economy, which enhances the ability of their men to fulfill a cargo position, would also be jeopardized. Since their status is subordinated to that of their husband and father, their position may deteriorate even further, unless compensated in other ways. Women could have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, for in the short run, their alternatives are limited--more so than is true for men.

Alternatively, the breakdown of the cargo system may enhance the women's position by destroying one of the mechanisms by which men maintain their social dominance. This would be particularly true if women begin to use those resources previously employed in the acquisition of male prestige for their own social and economic advancement, but this possibility reflects a long- rather than a short-term outcome. Whether the traditional culture will persist in the absence of the cargo system is yet unclear. Colby (1966:56) does not believe that the cargo system is as vital to maintaining ethnic identity as the preservation of the Tzotzil language, the Zinacanteco style of dress, the swidden agricultural system, and the Zinacanteco system of values and

beliefs. Since women more than men appear to maintain most of those behaviors associated with the ethnic identity of the Zinacantecos (the exception is participation in swidden agriculture, which is a male activity), it is possible that they will strive to protect the traditional culture which shelters them from the uncertainties of the ladino world. However, as cultural contact accelerates and women become more aware of the changing roles experienced by their counterparts in similar ethnic communities, they may become less enamored with the role of maintaining a culture designed to accumulate and transfer resources for the enhancement of men's prestige. In Zinacantan, this type of "demonstration effect" is in its infancy. The reasons are fairly straightforward.

First, it is essential to acknowledge that in the present cultural system, there are limited alternatives for resource accumulation and use, particularly for women. Increases in wealth have not resulted in the substitution of material goods for social prestige, but rather in the elaboration of ceremonial rituals and festivals. Prestige is structured around the cargo hierarchy and individual aspirations are tailored accordingly. Thus, until the bases of social prestige are shifted from nonmaterial to material rewards, it is unlikely that Zinacantecos will strive for material goods for their own sake. Second, the long-term effects of excluding women from wage employment and direct participation in socially prestigious positions as well as providing differential access to education will continue to dampen women's aspirations for some time to come.

For example, women generally lack Spanish language skills because of a strong reluctance to send girls to school. This hesitancy stems from a fear of losing their ethnic identity, as would be the case for women who married ladinos (and thereby had to leave the municipio). Others are apprehensive about not filling normatively sanctioned subservient roles (Colby, 1966:46-47). The proportion of literate women in Zinacantan has not surpassed one-third since 1930 and the gap in differential literacy rates by sex has not narrowed over the last four decades. Whereas the male and female literacy rates were 8 and 5 percent, respectively, in 1930, by 1970 these had changed to 42 and 28 percent, respectively. It would appear that on this social characteristic, the relative positions of the sexes have changed little.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, the effects of population growth and the adaptive strategies shown in Figure 3 have implications for the ability of Zinacantecos to preserve their traditional culture. Both lowland cultivation and wage labor increase contact with the ladino culture and subsequently the need for Spanish language skills. This, coupled with mounting pressure on the inheritance system and patrilineal descent group vis-à-vis pressure on the highland resource base, could weaken the foundation of Zinacantan's social organization. Thus, preservation of the traditional culture is related to the ability of Zinacantecos to maintain the delicate balance between their resource base, their social organization, and their environment in the face of mounting population pressure. This force is more significant than the direct pressures of modernization stemming from greater contact with ladinos. The breakdown of the integrative cargo institution may signal a system overload resulting from an inability to incorporate the number of men who want to participate. As we have shown, a growing population and expanded earning power due to wage labor and lowland cultivation will continue to raise that number at an increasing rate.

Zinacanteco men interact more extensively with the dominant Mexican or ladino culture than do women, and their role as a filter for modernizing influences considerably delimits women's social and economic activity domains. The home remains the bastion of ethnic identity and women are the guardians of that identity. But, as men must balance the influences of the ladino and Indian worlds, they are more inclined to pursue strategies that will enable them to take advantage of changing circumstances. While their comparative advantage resulting from their greater access to the benefits of the ladino world may serve to strengthen their dominance within their own environment, men are also more subject to stress that results from trying to maintain their Indian identity. Consequently, men must pay a psychological cost for taking advantage of new opportunities afforded by economic and social modernization. These costs may be compensated by economic and social rewards. Women, on the other hand, may be presently more secure in their Indian identity, but experience the disadvantages that result from a subordinated social and economic status.

In the future women will also be affected by changes due to increasing contact with the ladino environment, although not nearly to the same extent

or in the same way as men. For some it may eventually mean attending school, learning Spanish, adopting ladino dress, and perhaps even participating in economic and social activities formerly designated for men only. However, for Zinacanteco women to enter the wage labor market, there must come about significant changes in the social definition of the "good" woman as one who tends to the domestic needs of her husband and family. In addition to changes in the ideology of sex, new opportunities which favor female employment must expand. It is unlikely that these will become available in the municipio.

Whether the breakdown of the key cultural institutions occurs gradually under the influence of ladinos as suggested by Collier (1975), or through the collapse of the cargo system as Vogt (1969) claims, women may not reap many benefits in the short run and may even lose security. Over the long term, however, their prospects may be brighter. The dilemma facing Zinacantan continues to be that of maintaining ethnic identity while taking advantage of modern technology and the expansion of the national market economy. Women have been especially disadvantaged in this regard. But, as population growth accelerates, the strategy of maintaining the old culture by isolating women into their traditional roles may be self-defeating because the stress placed on the system will continue to increase in the future. It would appear that a slowdown in the rate of demographic growth is a necessary, albeit insufficient, condition to prevent the system's breakdown, but it is not clear whether these two goals are reconcilable.

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