

**MAGDALENA MILPAS ALTAS:
A STUDY OF SOCIETY IN MINIATURE**

**By
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In conclusion, let me say that I alone am to blame for any errors of fact or interpretation which may occur in the thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

This study presents the findings of a sociological survey which was conducted in the cabecera municipal of the municipio of Magdalena Milpas Altas in the departamento of Sacatepequez, Guatemala.¹ The attention of the study is primarily focused on demographic composition and trends, the relations of the people to the land, and the major social institutions. Levels and standards of living, as well as social stratification, social differentiation, and social mobility are also discussed.

The Value and Use of This Study

The realization is widespread among Guatemalan intellectuals and government officials that intelligently planned and directed human endeavor can lead to the improvement of social conditions in much of Guatemala. The first step in such a process is necessarily the determination of exactly what ends are desired, the second is the development of means for the attainment of such ends, and the third is the application of intelligent human effort to those means.

¹A cabecera municipal is roughly equivalent to a county seat. Despite the similarity of spelling, the Latin American municipio should not be confused with a United States municipality. Instead, it corresponds more closely to a county. A departamento is somewhat equivalent to a state in the United States.

Fundamental to the application of social teleanalysis is a sound knowledge of the existing situation. The following quotation, taken from the study which served as a model for the present work, is just as appropriate here as it was in its original application:

Since the nation is confronted with serious problems arising out of the maldistribution of its population, the flight of people to the cities, the overpopulation of certain areas and the utter lack of inhabitants in others, low standards of living among the campesinos [country dwellers of low, socio-economic status], great confusion and much conflict arising out of its systems of surveying lands and recording the titles to them, extreme social stratification and the relative weakness of the middle class, the inadequate functioning of schools and other social institutions, and the marked debility of local government, the need for objective, tested information on these aspects of social organization is acute.²

Information regarding the existing state of affairs may be gathered in many ways. Anthropologists, economists, political scientists, geographers, novelists, and others have all made contributions to the field of knowledge regarding social conditions among the rural population of Guatemala. However, to the author's knowledge, the present work is the first attempt which has been made to apply the

²T. Lynn Smith, Justo Diaz Rodriguez and Luis Roberto Garcia, Tabio: A Study in Rural Social Organization (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture, 1945), p. 2. This study was the first of its kind which was done in Latin America and as such it has subsequently served as a model for many surveys of a similar nature.

techniques developed by rural sociologists in the United States to a systematic study of a rural Guatemalan social group.

The investigation of small local groups, "of societies in miniature," is one of the best ways of acquiring knowledge about the great society which is ultimately an aggregate of these smaller cells. The practical uses of data gathered in such studies are also numerous. Local, state, national, and international planners must always rely on painstakingly-gathered data if they are to carry out their projects effectively and efficiently. One of the specific objectives of this study was to provide the Instituto de Nutrición de Centro América y Panamá³ with materials to be used in connection with its nutrition programs in Magdalena and similar areas.

Methodology

The village of Magdalena Milpas was selected as the focal point for the study at the request of INCAP. This institute has been conducting research in the locality for some time and had already won the confidence of the local population. The field work was carried out during a period of approximately two months. The author resided in the village during the latter part of July, all of August, and the early days of September of 1959. The first few days in the

³For the sake of brevity this organization will hereafter be designated as INCAP.

field were devoted to a reconnaissance of the locality and in making contact with the village leaders. A schedule, based on the one used in the Tabio study⁴ but adapted to local conditions, was then prepared. The next step was the selection of a representative sample of the households of the village.⁵ Since there was good evidence that the village was divided into two neighborhoods, it was decided that a stratified, random sample should be obtained. From information already possessed by INCAP, a numerical list was made of all the heads of households in the village. A numbered and folded slip of paper for each of the households was then placed in one of two containers. The slips placed in the first container represented the households located in one of the neighborhoods, and those in the second container represented the households of the other neighborhood. After they had been well mixed, one-half of the slips from each container were drawn one at a time. A list of the households selected from each neighborhood was then made according to the order in which they were drawn. Starting at the top of each list and working downward, the investigator attempted to interview as many households as possible. If he was unable to complete a schedule for one of the households, he moved on to the following one. One-third of the households from each

⁴Ibid.

⁵Valuable technical advice concerning the sampling procedure employed was supplied by Dr. Miguel Guzmán, head of the statistical section of INCAP.

neighborhood had been interviewed at the end of the time period available for field work. The remainder of the time spent in the field was dedicated to the completion of the schedules, to the conducting of informal interviews, to trips into the surrounding countryside, and to the taking of photographs. The researcher was particularly fortunate to have the aid of Señorita Bertha Mendizabal during the completion of the schedules. Señorita Mendizabal was well-known and liked by all of the villagers. She was exceptionally successful in establishing rapport with the women of the household and in obtaining that information which could best be supplied by the females. The procedure normally followed was to contact the woman first and through her to set up an interview with the male head of the household. In this manner the writer was enabled to locate the male at work in the field or to return in the evening to complete the schedule. The system gave excellent results. The men seemed to appreciate the courtesy involved in establishing a time for the interview which would be most convenient for them. They were nearly always punctual and very hospitable as well as cooperative in supplying information. In most cases they seemed eager to be very exact in their replies, often discussing the questions with other members of the household and on occasion supplying documentary evidence. The interviewer was directly rebuffed only once, although the head of one of the wealthiest households in the village deliberately (and

successfully) evaded being interviewed. Weekly trips were made to the capital to consult with technicians of INCAP and various other organizations.⁶ When the investigator returned to the University of Florida, the schedules were coded and the pertinent data transferred to International Business Machine cards. Most of the analysis and tabulation of the data was then carried out at the statistical laboratory of the university. The final step in the preparation of the study was the interpretation and presentation of the findings.

⁶Much information was gathered by means of these interviews which helped the researcher to better understand the broader circumstances which served as the setting for the specific situation with which he was dealing. Among the organizations visited were the Banco Nacional Agrario, Dirección General de Asuntos Agrarios, Dirección General de Estadística, Instituto de Fomento Municipal, Instituto Indigenista Nacional, Ministerio de Agricultura, Ministerio de Comunicaciones, Servicio Cooperativo Interamericano de Agricultura, Sociedad de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala, Socio-Educativo Rural.

CHAPTER I

THE VILLAGE: ITS GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Magdalena Milpas Altas, population 1,240 in 1957, is the cabecera municipal of the municipio of the same name and forms a part of the departamento of Sacatepequez. It is located in the mid-western highlands of Guatemala.

Magdalena¹ is situated at the end of a winding, dirt road that drops steeply southward for about three kilometers until it joins the departmental highway. The junction lies about eight kilometers from the city of Antigua to the east and thirty-seven from the national capital to the west.

The Geographical Setting

Magdalena perches on one of the higher points of the mountains that separate the two metropolises mentioned above, and a fine view of Guatemala City can be had from several locations in and around the village. The altitude is 6,137

¹Hereinafter, the name Magdalena Milpas Altas or its abbreviation, Magdalena, will refer to the cabecera unless otherwise stated.

feet above sea level;² and, although the municipio is located at a latitude of approximately 14 degrees (well within the tropics), there prevails an average temperature of 61.9 degrees Fahrenheit. The thermometer starts to drop in November and reaches a low in February when snow has been known to fall.

The cold period is accompanied by bitter winds which generally blow from the north-northeast. They increase from November to February and cause the thin, ill-clad people to feel the lowered temperatures more intensely than an actual thermometer reading might seem to warrant. There is a rainy season which begins toward the last of May and ends during the first fifteen days of October. The heaviest rains are registered during June and September, but there is generally a slacking of precipitation in the months of July and August. The average annual rainfall is 39.4 inches.

Since the location is mountainous, the cloud formation is much affected by varying winds; but cumulus and strato-cumulus are prevalent. Cirrus and medium-altitude clouds are frequent during the warmer periods.

The soil in the Magdalena area is of a type known as alotenango and is only found on fairly steep, volcanic

²There seems to be some disagreement as to the exact altitude, and other sources have mentioned figures which range as high as 11,070 feet; but the author has chosen to use the figure given him by Señor Claudio Urrutia, the director of the Guatemalan National Observatory, who also provided the climatic data presented here.

slopes. It is generally quite free of stones, and the topsoil is dark brown and slightly acidic. According to the Servicio Cooperativo Interamericano de Agricultura, from which these data were obtained, this soil is perhaps better suited to the planting of coffee than for growing the traditional maize.

The vegetational formations of the surrounding area are typical of the ecological zone known as the Zona Montana Baja Tropical Húmeda. The pinus pseudostrobus, a variety of white pine, and several kinds of oak are predominant in the natural growth. Peach, apple, plum, quince, and pear trees are the kinds most cultivated by the residents.

Historical Background

In pre-Columbian times the area surrounding Magdalena was the home of the Cakchiquel Indians, a branch of the linguistic group known as the Maya. They seem to have been a fierce people and were often at war with the strong, neighboring Quiché nation. Nevertheless, the Cakchiquels were, at first, ready to accept the arrival of the Spaniards peacefully and welcome them as friends. Then, in 1523, Don Pedro de Alvarado began his conquest of the region. His cruel actions exasperated the Cakchiquels; and, in 1524, they rose in revolt. By 1528, the revolt had been completely suppressed, and the people had been rounded up by force and established in villages. Many of these villages still exist and Magdalena may be one of them. The earliest record of Magdalena found by the writer consists of marriage registers

that are in the hands of the local priest. These date from the year 1683. Fuentes y Guzmán, writing in 1699, mentions the village as one of "the towns they call the Milpas Altas"³ and describes it briefly. According to this cronista (chronicler), Magdalena contained 170 vecinos who were "rude in spirit and behavior like all Cakchiquels."⁴ There was a fine, well-appointed church in which the services were conducted in the native tongue.

In 1770 another cronista, Cortés y Larraz, found 148 families containing 562 persons in the village.⁵ He lamented the lack of a school and went on to express horror at the drunkenness which accompanied local religious celebrations.

From that point to the present, the thread of Magdalena's development is lost. According to the Dirección

³Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán, Recordación Florida (Guatemala: Sociedad de Geografía e Historia, 1932), Vol. VI, Tomo I, p. 404. Literally translated, the name Milpas Altas means "high cornfields"; although, in general use, milpa refers to any cultivated plot of ground. The word is of Mexican or Nahuatl origin. According to local informants, "milpa" would be phonetically rendered as "abún" in the dialect of Cakchiquel spoken in Magdalena. Place names of Mexican origin are not at all uncommon in this region of Guatemala.

⁴Ibid. The term vecino was used to designate the head of a family who was also a landowner. The total population, therefore, would have been much larger.

⁵Pedro Cortés y Larraz, Descripción Geográfico-Moral de la Diócesis de Goathemala (Guatemala: Sociedad de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala, 1953), Vol. XX, Tomo I, pp.28-29.

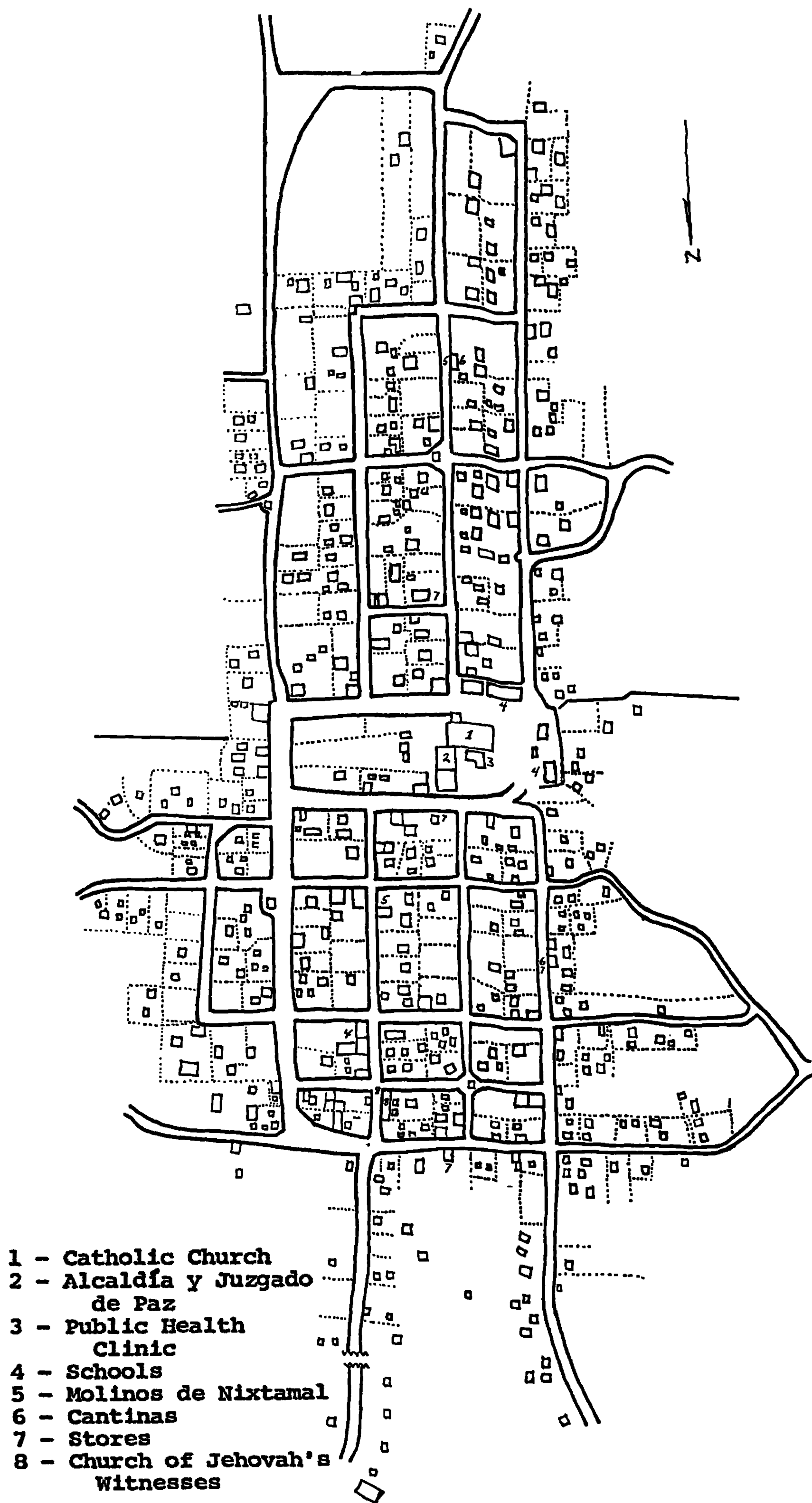


Figure 1.--Map of the village of Magdalena Milpas Altas



Figure 2.--Looking north from the top of the Catholic Church.



Figure 3.--Looking southeast from the top of the Catholic Church. A school is in the foreground. One isolated farmstead can be seen in the upper right hand corner.

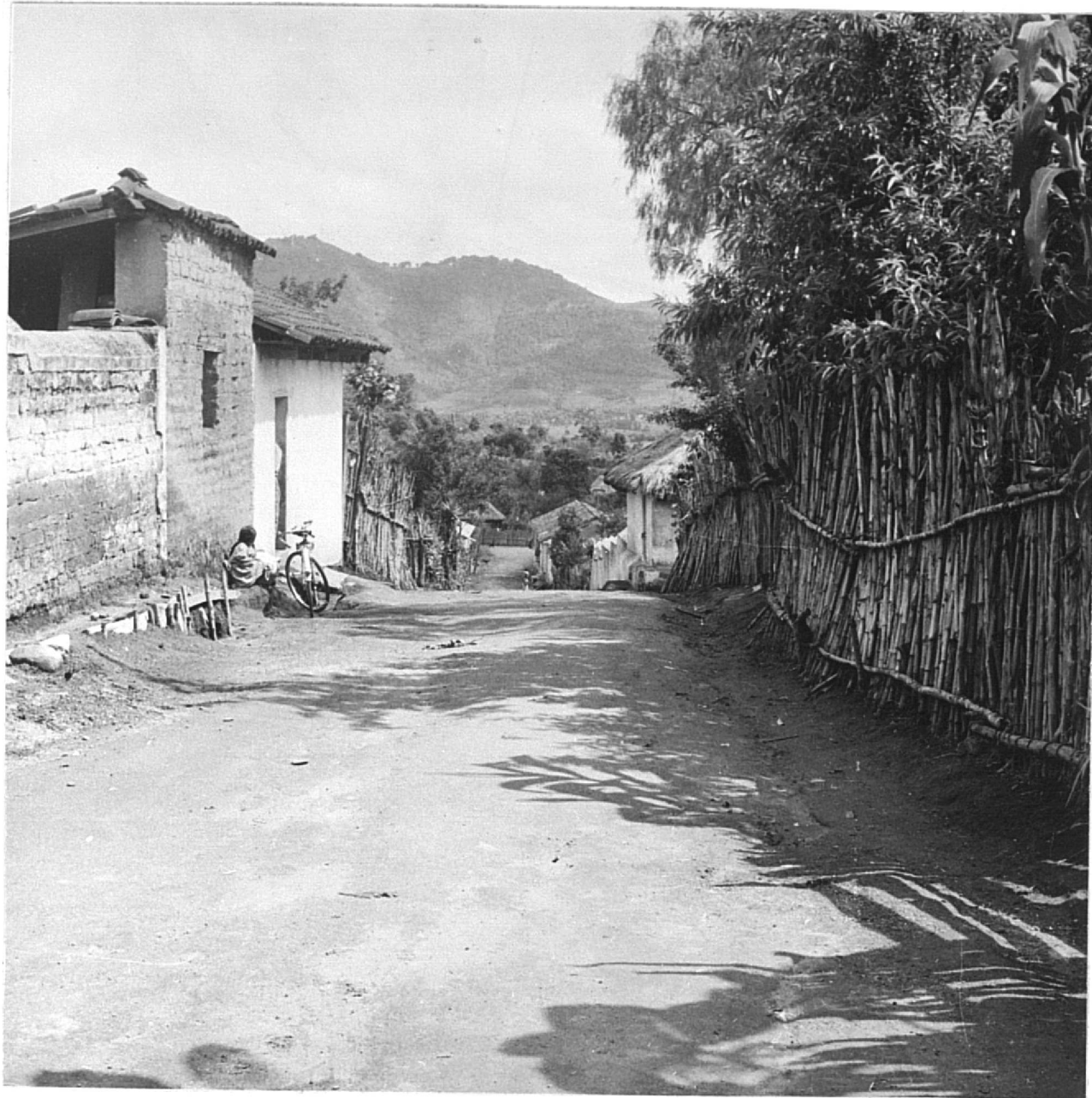


Figure 4.--Looking north along the main thoroughfare of Magdalena.

General de Estadística de Guatemala, even the date of its incorporation as a municipio is unknown.

The General Nature of the Community

Ecological aspects.--Nearly all of the roughly 200 sitios (house lots) lie squeezed between two deep ravines which restrict the width of the village and have caused it to grow into an elongated rectangle. The village slopes from north to south up the side of La Cumbre, a tall hill from the crest of which one may look down the far side to the blue waters of Lake Amatitlán. Most of the homes line four long, straight streets. All of these are steep, unpaved, and gullied. They run the length of the settlement from north to south and are crossed at uneven intervals by shorter ones so as to form irregularly-sized (but mostly rectangular) manzanas⁶ in the central part. The peripheral manzanas are greatly varied in both size and shape.

Religious, political, and social differences have split the larger locality group into two distinct neighborhoods. These small locality groups may be said to be separated by a line which runs along the upper edge of the central plaza. The larger of the two lies lowest on the slope. Another group of several manzanas which jut to the left of the lower portion of the village is known to the local dwellers as San Miguelito, but the reasons for this distinction are not

⁶A group of house lots unseparated by a street.



Figure 5.--The interior of a molino de nixtamal.

clear. The author has followed the lead of Adams in including it with the barrio de abajo⁷ (lower neighborhood).

Various types of social differentiation are well-developed within the community. Nevertheless, there still exists a strong sense of solidarity which can be seen in the manner in which individual members are defended by the group against molestation by outsiders.

Two other locality groups are found in the municipio. They are the aldeas⁸ of Buena Vista and San Miguel. The first of these may be considered as a neighborhood that is rather weakly united to the cabecera by religious, economic, and social ties. The second seems to be united to the cabecera only by the political coincidence of belonging to the same municipio.

The functions of the community.--Magdalena possesses six small stores, two cantinas, two butcher shops, two molinos de nixtamal (mills for grinding corn), several tailors, various carpenters, and a barber shop. Still, like many another tiny Latin American community, it cannot satisfy all of the economic needs of its members. The major lack is a market for buying and selling. For these activities the inhabitants generally go to either Antigua or Guatemala City.

⁷Richard Adams, "Informe Preliminar Sobre la Organización Social de Magdalena Milpas Altas," Antropología e Historia de Guatemala, Vol. III, No. 2, (Junio, 1951), pp. 10-15.

⁸An aldea is a populated place of 1,000 persons or less which has a school, a government official, and a cemetery.

There is also a small amount of commerce with Amatitlán several miles over the hill to the south.

On the other hand, participation by the villagers in religious, political, and recreational affairs, as well as their use of medical treatment is almost entirely confined to Magdalena. Most of these services are represented by the public buildings grouped around the central plaza. The Alcaldía y Juzgado de Paz,⁹ the Catholic church, two schools, the public health clinic, and a swimming pool are located there. Another school, the church of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the slaughter house, and the football field are scattered about in the lower barrio. The cemetery is located a short distance east of the village.

⁹This building, called the juzgado for short, houses the local government.

CHAPTER II

THE POPULATION

Most of the information in this chapter which pertains to the municipio and its sub-divisions has been drawn from a local census taken in 1957.¹ Comparable data for the nation as a whole in that year are not available. This shortcoming is recompensed by the fact that the data in the regional census are much more detailed than those available by municipio in the general summary of the 1950 census.²

Nevertheless, comparisons of local conditions with those of the nation as a whole are sometimes felt to be essential. In these instances the data for the nation are drawn from the 1950 census or later sources and those for the municipio from the 1957 regional census. Whenever such comparisons are made, it is because the author feels that nothing has occurred during the time interval which would have significantly altered the comparability of the data.

Some supplementary data have been taken from the 81 schedules which were completed during the months of July, August, and September of 1959. All of the households

¹Oficina Permanente del Censo, "Censo Regional" (Guatemala: Dirección General de Estadística, 1957).

²Sexto Censo de Población (Guatemala: Dirección General de Estadística, 1950).

interviewed were located in the cabecera municipal.

Number and Distribution

According to the regional census taken in 1957, the municipio of Magdalena Milpas Altas contained 1,804 persons. The area of the municipio is about 8 square kilometers; therefore, the density of population would have been roughly 225.5 per square kilometer. This is a high population density for a rural area. It should be noted that the alti-plano is the most densely populated portion of Guatemala. The highland departamento of Sacatepequez, of which this municipio is a part, had a population density of 129 in 1950; the national average was only 26.

The inhabitants of the municipio are divided among three distinctly separated centers--the cabecera and two aldeas. In 1957 the cabecera contained 1,240 persons; and the aldeas of San Miguel and Buena Vista had 362 and 202 persons, respectively.

Composition

Residence.--Even Magdalena, the largest of the municipio's population clusters, is distinctly rural. This is true both according to the census definition³ and in the sociological sense. Almost the entire population is completely dependent

³Ibid. In Guatemala a population center must contain 2,000 persons or 1,500 and a water system in order to be classified as urban.

on agriculture for its support, and the area is practically devoid of the services and physical accoutrements to be found in a modern city.

Race, ethnic group, and nativity.---Only the white and Indian races have figured significantly in the racial makeup of the municipio. All evidence indicates that the latter has contributed overwhelmingly to the racial mixture.

Through popular usage the Guatemalan population has become divided into two ethnic groups known as ladinos and indigenas. The Guatemalan census also divides the population into these two ethnological groupings. In very general terms, the ladino may be said to be more attuned to modern western culture, while the indigena is more closely linked to the mixture of indigenous and Spanish cultures of colonial times.

Although race may be one of the distinguishing factors, it is by no means the only one. Such considerations as dress, language, and customs are more important. Since there are no hard and fast criteria which hold true in all parts of the country, census enumerators are instructed to be guided by local opinion.⁴

The 1957 census counted 581 ladinos in the entire municipio of Magdalena Milpas Altas. Of these, 361 resided in

⁴Ibid. For an excellent study of the way in which these criteria may vary from place to place, see Antonio Goubaud Carrera, "El Grupo Etnico Indigena: Criterios para su Definición," Boletín del Instituto Indigenista Nacional, Vols. I-II, (1945-1949), pp. 9-26.

San Miguel, 104 in Buena Vista, and the remaining 96 in Magdalena. This means that the latter village, which is the primary concern of this study, had a population which was about 92% indigena.

Although Magdalenaños who are ladinos automatically belong to the upper class of the village socio-politically, they do not necessarily constitute an economic elite. For the most part they are dependent on agriculture for their living, and there are families of indigenas who are equally as wealthy or wealthier.

Of the 1,240 persons residing in Magdalena in 1957, a total of 1,154, or 93.1% had been born in the village. The other 86 people were born in other municipios of Sacatepequez or in other departamentos. The Guatemalan census employs the de facto basis in its counts of the population. Therefore, some of the 86 migrants were more or less impermanently settled. Among the new arrivals who will probably not spend the rest of their lives in the little village are the owner of a bus line, the secretary of the municipio, the unmarried female school teachers, and the social workers. On the other hand there are several families which have moved to Magdalena, bought land, and give evidence of becoming permanently established.

Age.—An age-sex pyramid for the entire country in 1950 and one for the municipio in 1957 are shown in Figures 6 and 7. Both pyramids reveal an age distribution in line with that

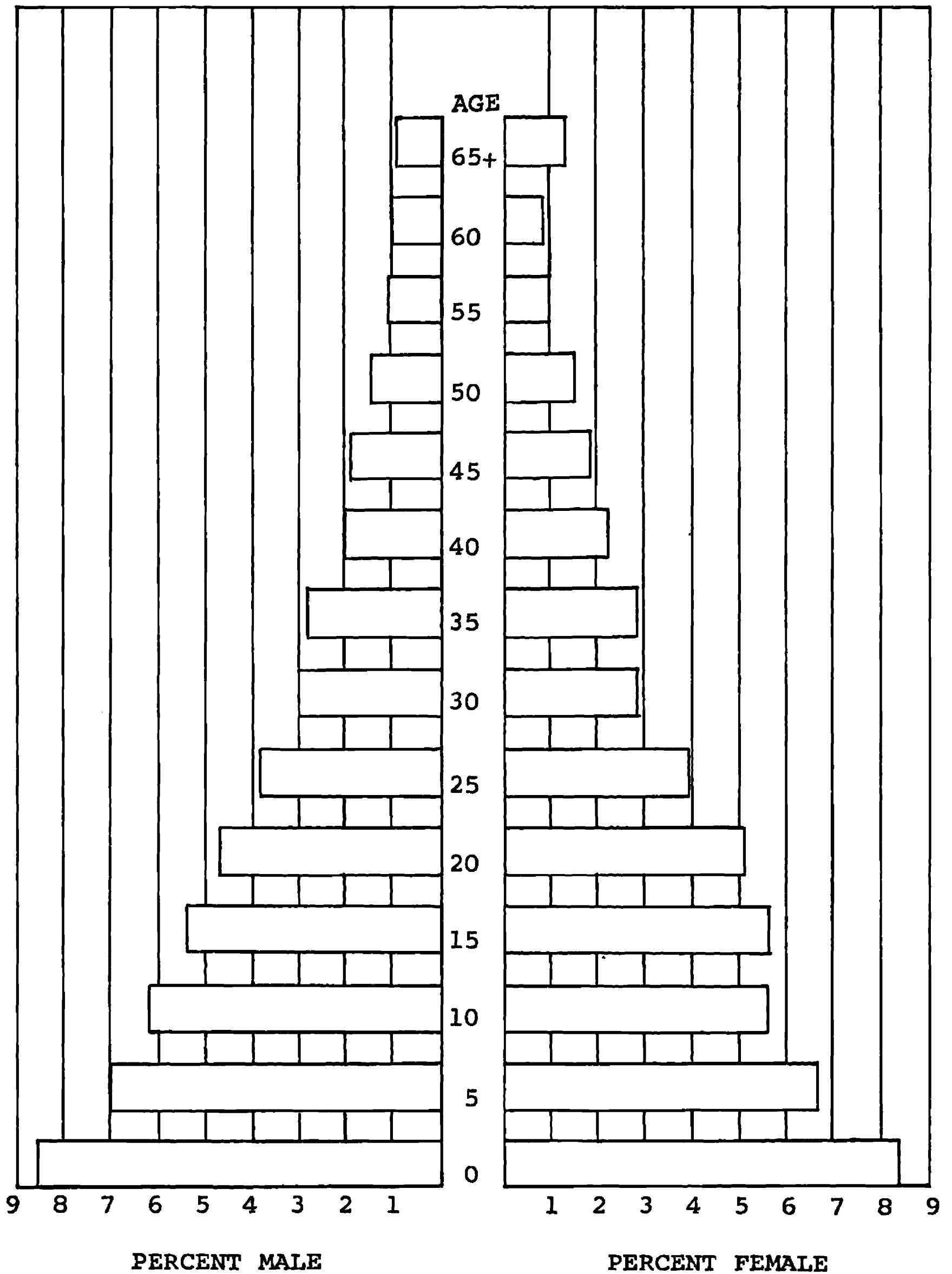


Figure 6.--Age-sex pyramid for Guatemala, 1950

which one would expect to find in populations having a high birth rate and a high death rate.⁵ The population is heavily concentrated in the younger age groups with gradually decreasing percentages in the upper age groups. In 1957, about 40.7% of the population of the municipio was less than 15 years of age, 55.7% was between the ages of 15 and 65, while only 3.6% had passed the age of 65. In 1950, the nation as a whole had a population in which 42.3% of the people were less than 15 years of age, 54.5% were from 15 to 65 years old, and 2.2% had reached or passed their 65th year. Both of these pyramids represent the general type one would expect to find for most Latin American countries and their agricultural areas.

Since the attention of this thesis is primarily focused on the cabecera, it is unfortunate that age data for it cannot be separated from that of the rest of the municipio. Migration, which is one of the factors which influence the age structure of any population, may differ significantly among the three population centers of the municipio.

Sex.--The ratio between the sexes in Magdalena is a subject which would bear further investigation. In 1950, the census

⁵The numerous in and out jogs of the pyramid for Magdalena tempt an explanation, and there are many which could be advanced. This is a temptation which must be resisted because of the small number of cases (1,804) involved. A comparison of the two pyramids can be more profitably considered as an example of how differences which may be due to chance are eliminated when one is working with a larger universe.

reported a total of 800 males and 827 females residing in the entire municipio. This gives a sex ratio of 97 males for every 100 females. Unfortunately, the data is only presented by municipio; so the sex ratio for the cabecera in 1950 cannot be obtained. In 1957, according to figures presented in the regional census, a total of 967 males and 837 females were living in the municipio. These figures give a sex ratio of 116 males per 100 females. It is highly unlikely that the apparent change in the sex ratio between the years 1950 and 1957 would have occurred through the workings of chance. Unfortunately, however, the author knows of no occurrence which would definitely explain the variation.

The data in the 1957 regional census are presented in a manner which allows the making of comparisons between the sex ratios of the three population centers within the borders of the municipio (see Table 1). Within the municipio the pro-

TABLE 1.--Population by sex and populated places within the municipio, 1957

Place	Total	Male	Female	Sex Ratio
Magdalena	1240	666	574	116
San Miguel	362	190	172	110
Buena Vista	202	111	91	121
Total	1804	967	837	116

portion of men to women fluctuated from a high of 121 in the

aldea of Buena Vista, to 116 in Magdalena, and a low of 110 in the aldea of San Miguel. Agricultural areas generally have a higher proportion of males than females, but the ratios cited above are somewhat more unbalanced than one would anticipate. Indeed, they are more in line with what one would expect to find in sparsely populated, frontier regions such as Escuintla, Izabal, and El Petén. In 1950, these departamentos had sex ratios of 122, 114, and 122 respectively. In 1950, the nation as a whole had a sex ratio of 102. In the same year the rural indigenas throughout the nation had a sex ratio of 104. This is noteworthy because the population of Magdalena is entirely rural and 92% indigena. Another interesting circumstance is the fact that the indigenas of Guatemala are one of the few populations in the world among which men have a longer life expectancy in all age groups than do the women.⁶

It is most likely that the imbalance between the sexes is primarily caused by a heavy migration of women from the village. Probably the nearby city of Guatemala (and perhaps Antigua) draws many women in search of domestic employment from Magdalena.

Marital condition.--The Guatemalan census classifies the

⁶Guatemala, Boletín Estadístico, Número 54, Marzo-Abril, 1955.

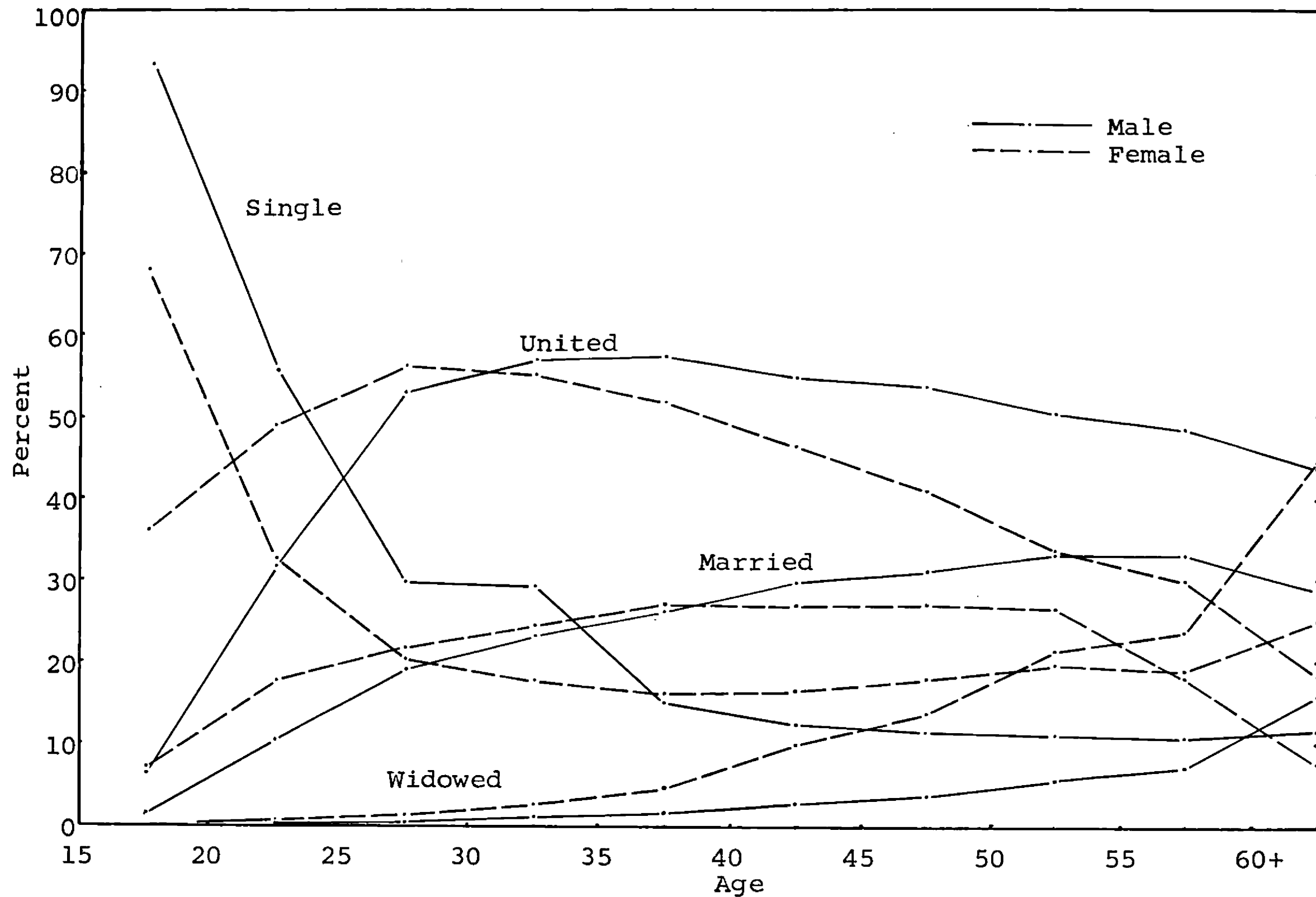
population into those who are single, married,⁷ in common law unions, widowed, and divorced. It also presents the various categories by five-year age groups so that the age factor can be included in the following analysis.

Various marital groups by age are graphically shown for the nation as a whole in 1950 (Figure 8) and the municipio in 1957 (Figure 9). It is felt that the situation in Magdalena is much like that in the municipio as a whole. If the smaller peaks and dips of the curves for the municipio are ascribed to chance variations (as is very likely in a population so small), it will be seen that the general tendencies in both graphs are very similar.

Both in Magdalena and the nation, females begin to leave the single category earlier than males. In both populations, only a small number of persons of both sexes are single during their middle years. There seems to be a resurging of single women in the later ages. This could be due to the fact that women who had been living in common law unions and who had lost their mates now reported themselves as single.

After the age of twenty, large proportions of the population in both political units are living in a "married" state. If church, civil, and common law unions are considered, very few persons pass through the middle years in an

⁷This group includes those who have been married by the church, by civil ceremony, or both.



unwed condition. The common law union is the one which seems most prevalent both in the nation and in Magdalena. In the older ages, larger percentages of males than females are found in the conjugal state.

The number of widowed in the early age groups is negligible for both populations. For the nation as a whole, the number of widows starts to rise at an earlier age than the number of widowers. It does not exceed the number of women in the single category until about the age of fifty. This is due in part to the reported increase in the percentages of single women which begins about the time when widows begin to enter the population in noticeable amounts. This circumstance may be due to the mis-reporting theory advanced in the paragraph dealing with the single. With regard to the municipio, the situation is different enough to invite some comment. In this case it is the male who predominates among the widowed until about the age of fifty. Considering the small size of the population, not much significance can be attached to this fact.⁸

The separated and divorced are not shown on the graphs since they included only one person in the entire municipio. Occupation.--The local census of 1957 classified both males and females into the active and inactive categories. The data are presented for the municipio as a whole. All persons

⁸ Only twenty-five widowers and twenty-six widows were counted in the entire municipio in 1957.

seven years of age or older were questioned as to their occupational status during the month (March, 1957) preceding the taking of the census. The extreme youth of those considered to be potential members of the labor force is worth noting.

In the economically inactive category were 535 housewives, 165 students, 3 invalids, and 1 unemployed person. In addition, there were 425 children under the age of seven. If the figures for the economically inactive are summed, they give a total of 1,129 persons, or 61% of the population. This is a high proportion for the 675 actively engaged persons to support.

Of those in the active category, 541, or 81%, were listed as directly employed in agriculture. Farm operators constituted by far the largest segment (74%) of the agriculturally engaged. They numbered 399 individuals. The next largest group was made up of 75 unpaid members of the operators' families. The remaining 67 individuals were agricultural laborers. Of these, 57 were steadily employed and 10 were day laborers.

The rest of the economically active population was divided as follows: 13 persons in commerce, 7 non-agricultural laborers, 6 school teachers, 5 construction workers, 3 office workers, 3 bakers, 2 social workers, 2 midwives, 2 carpenters, 1 bus driver, 1 butcher, 1 cook, 1 barber, 1 seamstress, and 86 persons for whom data were not available.

Although this list gives the reader a good idea of the type of services to be found in the municipio, it does not present a wholly accurate picture of their availability. In addition, this investigator's observations during his stay in Magdalena lead him to believe that many of those listed as engaged in non-agricultural pursuits are also part-time farmers. Rare indeed is the head of a household who does not have at least one little plot of ground planted with corn.

The most significant points brought out by the census data are the extreme importance of agriculture in the economic life of the municipio and the large number of farm operators present. This investigator classified the 81 heads of households interviewed into the following categories: 71 operators, 5 agricultural laborers, 4 non-agricultural laborers, and 1 economically inactive person. Three of those classified as agricultural laborers had no land at all, while the other two only possessed small plots. All but one of those classified as non-agricultural laborers possessed a fair amount of land but when questioned stated that they were more dependent on the incomes from their other occupations.

Religion.--In the sixteenth century the Spanish conquerors brought the Catholic religion to the indigenous peoples in the area surrounding Magdalena. From that time until recently, the little village had been traditionally Catholic.

The Catholic church is by far the most imposing building in the village, and it has been standing there for at least 300 years. Vestiges of the beliefs and ceremonies of the pre-conquest faith are no longer observable. If they survive, it is in the folklore and superstitions of the people.

The religious homogeneity of the village has lately been disturbed, probably within the last thirty-odd years, by the conversion of a significant number of Magdalenaes to the religious sect known as Jehovah's Witnesses. The exact number of these evangelistas is hard to determine. The census provides no data on this point and the villagers are very vague in their estimates. The investigator would calculate that there are about 150 in the cabecera at present. This religious minority is an important element in the social differentiation which exists in the village. This aspect will be treated more fully in another part of the thesis.

Educational status.--The number of literates in the municipio as a whole is presented by age and sex in the 1957 census. These data were used to calculate the percentages of literacy for the various age and sex groupings shown in Table 2.

The municipio as a whole had a literacy rate of 43.4 among the population seven years of age and older. This figure compares very favorably with the literacy rate of 23.1 for the entire nation in 1950. It is also a slight

improvement over the rate for the municipio in 1950, which was 46.3. This last fact is interesting since it is in

TABLE 2.--Percentages of literacy among the population seven years of age and over in the municipio by age and sex, 1957

Age	Both Sexes	Male	Female
7-9	12.5	10.7	13.3
10-14	67.2	71.6	61.7
15-19	64.1	77.7	46.6
20-24	60.5	74.1	43.1
30-39	48.6	67.3	26.8
40-49	43.8	66.7	30.0
50-59	24.6	38.8	4.3
60-69	32.4	40.0	21.4
70-79	26.7	40.0	13.3
80+	28.6	33.2	25.0
Total Population	48.4	60.7	34.5

accord with the general trend illustrated by Table 2. It can be seen that the percentage of those who can read and write tends to decrease as age increases.⁹ This tendency is good evidence that the local schools have been doing an increasingly effective job over the years.

A marked difference in the educational status of males and females is also apparent. The males have higher literacy

⁹The low percentage of literates among those aged seven to nine is probably due to the fact that most of the children included had not been in school long enough to learn to read and write.

rates for all age groupings except the first.

Since the census data are only presented for the municipio as a whole, it is impossible to give specific information for the cabecera. However, the investigator feels that literacy is probably highest in Magdalena since, in his opinion, the best schools are located there. The schools will be discussed further in the part of this thesis which is devoted to the social institutions.

Fertility

The nature of the data which are available makes it possible to employ two indexes in order to estimate the approximate rate at which the local population is reproducing itself.

The crude birth rate.--Data regarding the births and deaths registered in the municipio during the years 1950 to 1957 inclusive were supplied by Ing. Jorge Arias B, Chief of the Department of Studies and Analysis of the Dirección General de Estadística. By using these data in conjunction with the total population figures available for 1950 and 1957, the crude birth rates were computed which are shown in Table 3.¹⁰

¹⁰Population estimates were necessary in order to compute the birth rates for the years 1951 to 1957. The estimated populations were arrived at in the following manner: the number of deaths registered in each year was subtracted from the number of births registered in the same year. This gives the net increase for that year. In order to allow for migration, 47% (see the section on migration) of the natural increase was deducted. This gives a net increase for the year in question. The net increase was then added to the number of persons estimated to have been living in the

One of the disadvantages encountered in the use of the crude birth rate is that complete registration of births is often lacking. This tends to produce apparent birth rates which are unrealistically low. In the present instance, however, the very magnitude of the estimated birth rates gives evidence that registration of births is probably quite complete in the municipio of Magdalena.¹¹

It is instructive to compare the rate of reproduction in Magdalena with that of the nation as a whole as well as its two ethnic divisions. Annual birth rates for the national population and its indigena and ladino sectors are available for the years 1950 through 1957.¹² The estimated

municipio at the end of the previous year. The above procedure was repeated for each of the years shown. The total population (1,627) reported for the municipio in April, 1950, was used as a base for the subsequent estimates. For this reason only three-fourths of the births and deaths registered in 1950 were used to estimate the total population of the municipio at that year's end. As a check, the total population of the municipio estimated for April, 1957, (in this case employing only one-fourth of the births and deaths registered in that year) was compared with that actually reported by the census taken in April, 1957. The two figures tallied exactly. The estimated birth rates for each year were arrived at in the conventional manner, i.e., $\text{Number of births} / \text{Total population} \times 1,000$. Perhaps it should be noted here that the total population at mid-year rather than at year's end is generally employed in calculating the crude birth rate. However, this difference in procedure is of very minor importance.

¹¹The birth of a child must be registered in the alcaldía, under penalty of a fine, within approximately eight days of the occurrence. Nevertheless, it is very possible that a small number of births do not get registered.

¹²Guatemala, *Boletín Estadístico*, Números 3-4, Marzo-Abril, 1958.

birth rates for the municipio during that 8-year period give an average rate of 49. This corresponds very closely to the

TABLE 3.—Annual number of births and deaths registered and crude birth and death rates per 1,000 population, Magdalena Milpas Altas, 1950-1957

Year	Estimated Population of the Municipio at Year's End	Number of Births Registered	Number of Deaths Registered	Crude Birth Rate	Crude Death Rate
1950	1635	76	56	47	34
1951	1665	90	34	54	20
1952	1687	87	46	52	27
1953	1698	76	56	45	33
1954	1735	98	28	57	16
1955	1759	82	37	47	21
1956	1799	102	27	58	15
1957	1810	68	30	38	17
Annual Average	1724	85	39	49	23

average birth rate of the nation as a whole (50) during the same period. On the other hand it is slightly lower than the average birth rate (53) for the indigenas in the nation as a whole and slightly higher than the average rate (48) for the ladino sector of the national population during the same period. The population of the municipio is 47% ladino. If the registration of births had been separated for the cabecera during the period 1950 through 1957, the birth rates they would give would probably correspond very closely to those estimated for the municipio as a whole.

The fertility ratio.--By using the detailed data regarding age and sex in the 1957 regional census, it is possible to compute the fertility ratio for the municipio in that year. The procedure employed may be written as follows: Number of children under 5 years of age/Number of women aged 15 to 49 x 100 = Fertility ratio. By means of this index it was found that in 1947 there were 74 children less than 5 years of age for every 100 women between the ages of 15 to 49. A fertility ratio of this magnitude can be thought of as approximately equal to a crude birth rate of 46.¹³ A fertility ratio computed on the basis of age and sex figures for April, 1957, can be considered an index of the "effective fertility"¹⁴ for the five-year period beginning in April, 1952. Therefore, for purposes of comparison an average crude birth rate of 51 was estimated for the municipio during that period.¹⁵ Such a large difference between the latter rate and the one arrived at by means of the fertility ratio suggests that a large

¹³The transformation may be accomplished by means of the formula $Y = -2.49 + 0.65X$, with X designating the fertility ratio and Y the crude birth rate. Cf. T. Lynn Smith, Fundamentals of Population Study (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1960), pp. 290-297.

¹⁴That is to say that it also takes into consideration the number of deaths among the children born within the five-year period just previous to the date for which it is computed.

¹⁵Average births, April, 1952 to April, 1957/Average population, April, 1952 to April, 1957 x 1,000. Only three-fourths of the total population as well as the births registered in 1952 and one-fourth of the total population and registered births of 1957 were included in the computation.

portion of the children in the municipio die before they reach five years of age.

Both the crude birth rate and the fertility ratio are only rough approximations of the rate at which a population is reproducing itself. Nevertheless, their application to the situation at hand gives ample evidence that the women of both the municipio and the cabecera (as well as the nation as a whole) are giving birth at an extremely rapid rate.

Mortality

The estimated death rates for the municipio which are shown in Table 3 were computed in a manner analogous to that described for the birth rates in the previous section. It is considered that registration of deaths in the municipio is even more complete than that of births. Deaths must be registered, under the penalty of a fine, within twenty-four hours of the occurrence. A certificate thus obtained is required before a burial may take place in one of the local cemeteries.

Although an inspection of the annual crude death rates suggests that the high mortality rates in the municipio may be decreasing, it must be remembered that the apparent trend could be simply due to the large fluctuations one always encounters when working with such a small population. On the other hand the author is inclined to think that they may also be due (at least in small measure) to the beneficial effects of the establishment of a public health clinic and a United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund milk program

in the cabecera in 1953. He is also confident that the establishment of a purified water system in 1956 will eventually have a positive effect on local death rates.

The average crude death rate (23) for the municipio during the years 1950 to 1957 corresponds fairly closely to 22, the average rate for the nation as a whole during that period. On the other hand it is slightly lower than the average rate (25) for the indigenas in the nation as a whole and distinctly higher than the average rate (16) for the ladino sector of the national population during the same period.¹⁶

Infant mortality is considerably lower for the ladino sector of the Guatemalan population than for the indigenas. Nonetheless, both ethnic groups had very high infant mortality rates as late as 1955. In that year 95 out of every 1,000 children born among the ladino population died before they had attained one year of age. In the same year the figure was 107 infant deaths for every 1,000 live births among the indigena population.¹⁷

There is no data available for the municipio which deals specifically with infant mortality. However, some conclusions may be drawn in other ways. In the section on

¹⁶The average rates for the nation as a whole and its indigena and ladino sectors were calculated from data presented in the Boletín Estadístico, op. cit.

¹⁷Cf. Jorge Arias B., "Aspectos Demográficos de la Población Indígena de Guatemala," Boletín Estadístico, Números 1-2, Enero-Febrero, 1959, pp. 18-38.

fertility it was pointed out that the average crude birth rate seemed somewhat inflated by comparison with the fertility ratio computed for the municipio. It was also suggested that this circumstance might be explained by the fact that a large portion of children die before they reach their fifth birthday. Since it is known that the lion's share of such deaths takes place in the first year of life, it may be concluded that infant mortality is probably very high in the municipio. Some information bearing on the subject was gathered in the survey made in the cabecera municipal. The 81 households had lost a total of 155 children altogether, giving an average of 1.9 children per household. Only 31 of the households, or 38%, had not lost any children. By contrast, 34 householders (42%) reported having lost 2 or more children. In one household 12 children were reported to have passed away. These figures must be considered in the light of the fact that many mothers could not remember how many sons or daughters they had lost. It is most likely that in such cases the deaths were under-reported.

A close estimate of infant mortality in Magdalena or the municipio as a whole cannot be made. In the opinion of the author, the actual figure probably lies somewhere between those rates quoted for the ladino and indigena populations of the nation in 1955.

Natural Increase

Between April, 1950 and April, 1957 there were an estimated 609 births registered in the municipio; 278 deaths were estimated to have been reported during the same period. If the number of deaths is subtracted from the number of births, a natural increase of 331 persons is given. This would mean that 42 persons are being added to the population every year through natural increase.

Migration

What the foregoing section indicates is that if births and deaths were the only factor influencing population growth in the municipio the population in 1957 would have been larger by 331 persons than the population in 1950. In fact, however, comparisons of the total number of inhabitants reported by the two censuses (1,627 in 1950 and 1,804 in 1957) show that the municipio's population had only grown by 177 persons. This means that 154 persons, or 47% of the natural increase, were lost through net migration during the 7 intervening years.

Migration from Magdalena.--It would be interesting to know more about the direction and sex composition of the flow of migration from Magdalena. Some information regarding these matters may be gleaned from the schedules completed for 81 households in the cabecera municipal, but this information is clearly inadequate for a thorough analysis of the situation.

Ten households reported children who had taken up permanent residence outside the municipio. The migrants numbered 13 persons in all. Of these, 7 were females, 5 of whom had removed to the national capital to work as domestics. Both of the others had settled in the same city as housewives. One of the male migrants was working as a mechanic and the other as a policeman, both in Guatemala City. The other 4 were soldiers who were stationed in the capital. Although these were said to have left permanently, it is likely that one or more will return one day. The general features of this sample, tiny as it is, are in line with what one would expect to find if the sex composition as well as the destination of all the migrants from the municipio were known. Other investigations have shown that women are more likely to leave rural areas for urban ones than are men. It is also to be expected that the migrants would be primarily attracted to Guatemala City, the largest urban area in the vicinity.

Migration to Magdalena.--The regional census of 1957 contains information regarding the birthplace of the inhabitants of the municipio. Examination of these data suggests that the actual amount of migration to the municipio is in need of clarification. For instance, only 3 of the 202 inhabitants of the aldea named Buena Vista were reported as having been born within the borders of the municipio. Of the remainder, 37 were said to have been born in other municipios of

Sacatepequez and 162 in another departamento altogether. Since Buena Vista is known to have been a part of the municipio for a great many years, these figures appear paradoxical. The most likely solution seems to be that the census data are in error. It is known, however, that a number of new families have taken up residence in that aldea within the past ten or fifteen years. These families were said to have been former employees of a nearby estate which was taken over by the government. Other than this, nothing could be learned about the newcomers. The number of inhabitants of the cabecera who were reported to have been born elsewhere is less surprising. It totals 86 persons. During his stay in the village the investigator became acquainted with 4 families which were newcomers to Magdalena. The heads of 2 of these families were school teachers; the others were agriculturists who had bought land in the vicinity. The members of these families would account for 18 of the 82 outsiders reported.

Growth of Population

Between the years 1950 and 1957 the population of the municipio has been growing by approximately 22 persons per year. This means that it is increasing at an annual rate of 1.4%. Such a rate of growth indicates that the population is not swelling very rapidly as yet. Still, if the levels of mortality estimated for the years 1956 to 1958 continue to

hold or decrease and migration remains about the same, the population pressure already being felt in the tiny municipio could make the local situation truly desperate even by the relatively low standards of living currently in vogue.

CHAPTER III

THE RELATIONS OF THE PEOPLE TO THE LAND

Settlement Patterns

The manner in which the people of the municipio of Magdalena are arranged on the land seems to be representative of a pattern that is found in much of rural Guatemala.¹ It is also similar to the settlement pattern which is thought to have existed in the locality during pre-conquest times. In essence, it consists of one sizeable, compact group of buildings neighbored by areas of more or less dispersed ones.² As is generally the case in the highland municipios of Guatemala, the nucleus of settlement is also the cabecera municipal.

Glancing down from the summit of the Catholic church, the highest point in the cabecera, one can easily discern the residential limits of this village. The sharpness of its boundaries is emphasized by the presence of one isolated farmstead which overlooks the settlement from a nearby slope

¹See Nathan L. Whetten, "Patrones de Población," Integración Social en Guatemala (Guatemala: Seminario de Integración Social Guatemalteca, 1956), pp. 39-61.

²The compact group is represented by Magdalena and the areas of dispersed settlement by the aldeas of San Miguel and Buena Vista. The centers of the latter lie at a distance from Magdalena of about three and one-half and four kilometers, respectively.

(see Figures 2 and 3 in Chapter I). The residents on that farm are migrants to the area and have never tried to become very active as members of the community.

The houses in Magdalena are rarely connected one to the other as is usual in large towns and cities of Latin America. The cultivation of "door step" crops is fairly common. In fact, the first impression one gets is that all the homes are separated by gardens. Closer investigation shows this impression to be false. Only forty-four of the eighty-one families interviewed were cultivating portions of their house lots. Sites located on the edge of the village seem to have the largest gardens (see Figure 10). In some instances these are even large enough to be classified as farm plots. In most cases, however, the farmers must commute to all of their fields. These fields lie scattered around the cluster of buildings and are sometimes located at a considerable distance from the village center. A large number of the fields are accessible only by foot paths. Such trails, particularly those which lead to lands located on the slope above the village, are often very steep and narrow. In some instances this investigator had trouble negotiating them although he was burdened only by a camera.

Each of the seventy-one farm operators interviewed was asked to estimate, in kilometers, how far he must travel to reach each of his fields. His answers were then added to determine the total distance he would have to travel in order

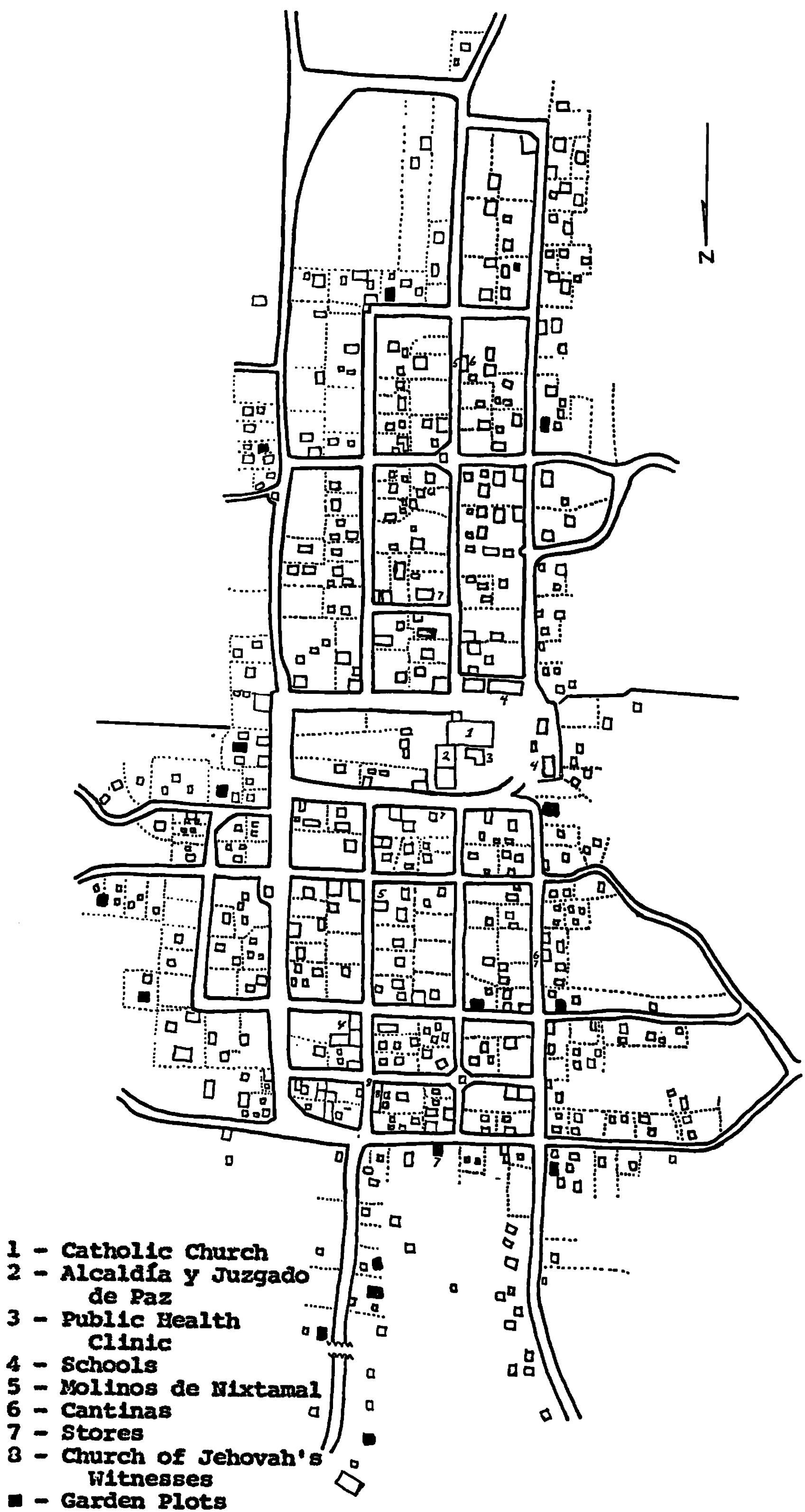


Figure 10.--Sitios having garden plots of one-fourth of a cuerda or larger.

to reach all of his farm plots. The assumption was made that he traveled to each plot separately and departed from his home each time. The data thus collected were tabulated and are presented in Table 4. It can be seen that 16 (23%) of those interviewed would have to travel at least 9 kilometers (5.6 miles) in order to reach all of their farm plots.

Operators who possess parcelas³ automatically fall into this category since all these lands were granted from the national property at Finca Barrcnas and lie at a distance of roughly 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) from the village center. Although 20 (29%) of the respondents could reach all of their fields by traveling less than 3 kilometers (1.9 miles), over one-half of the farmers interviewed would have to journey 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) in order to arrive at all of their fields. Table 5 illustrates the situation in terms of time rather than space. Of those interviewed, 8 (12%) estimated that they required at least 4 hours to travel to all of their fields, and 29 (42%) calculated that they would need at least one and one-half hours to do the same.

Table 4 also indicates that there is a relationship between tenure status and the distance which farm operators in Magdalena must travel to their fields. Among the owners interviewed, 29 (60%) estimated that they traveled less than 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) to reach all of their farm plots. Only

³"Parcels" of ground which were acquired from the government under the present agricultural reform program.

TABLE 4.--Total distance traveled to all farm plots by neighborhood and tenure class

Distance in Kilometers	Upper Barrio							
	Owners		Part Owners		Renters		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Not available	1	4	0	0	0	0	1	3
0-2	8	39	1	20	0	0	9	32
3-4	7	34	0	0	0	0	7	24
5-6	4	19	0	0	0	0	4	14
7-8	0	0	1	20	1	33	2	6
9+	1	4	3	60	2	67	6	21
Total	21	100	5	100	3	100	29	100

TABLE 4.--Continued

Lower Barrio									
Owners		Part Owners		Renters		Total		All Operators	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
8	30	1	11	2	33	11	26	20	29
6	22	0	0	0	0	6	14	13	18
6	22	2	22	3	50	11	26	15	21
3	11	1	11	0	0	4	10	6	8
4	15	5	56	1	17	10	24	16	23
27	100	9	100	6	100	42	100	71	100

TABLE 5.--Total time required to travel to all farm plots by neighborhood and tenure class

Upper Barrio								
Time in Hours	Owners		Part Owners		Renters		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Not available	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Less than 1/2-Hour	5	24	0	0	0	0	0	0
1/2-1	6	28	1	20	0	0	7	25
1-1 1/2	6	28	0	0	0	0	6	22
1 1/2-2	0	0	0	0	1	33	1	3
2-2 1/2	1	5	3	60	0	0	4	14
2 1/2-3	1	5	1	20	1	33	3	10
3-4	1	5	0	0	0	0	1	3
4-5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5+	0	0	0	0	1	33	1	3
Total	21	100	5	100	3	99	29	100

TABLE 5.--Continued

Lower Barrio									
								All Operators	
Owners		Part Owners		Renters		Total			
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
8	30	0	0	2	32	10	23	15	21
5	19	0	0	1	17	6	14	13	19
6	22	1	11	0	0	7	17	13	19
2	6	3	33	1	17	6	14	7	10
1	4	0	0	1	17	2	5	6	9
1	4	1	11	0	0	2	5	5	7
1	4	1	11	0	0	2	5	3	4
3	11	0	0	1	17	4	10	4	6
0	0	3	33	0	0	3	7	4	6
27	100	9	99	6	100	42	100	71	100

2 (14%) of the part owners and 2 (22%) of the renters calculated the same. Most of the plots reported as rented are owned by the municipio. These communal lands lie relatively far (probably about five kilometers) from the village center. Consequently, it seems reasonable to assume that renters of such lands would be disadvantaged with regard to the distance they must travel to reach their fields.

The farm operators of the upper barrio seem to be somewhat advantaged with regard to the distance they must travel to reach their fields. Sixteen of these (55%) would have to travel less than 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) to reach all of their plots, while 17 (40%) of the operators in the lower barrio are in the same situation.⁴

Land Division

When a farmer in Magdalena is asked if he is sure of the exact boundaries of his land, his reaction is one of puzzlement. The farm plots are generally small, and each owner feels that he knows, with certainty, the precise limits of his property. The manner in which the properties are visibly delineated, however, does not obey the three criteria of sound procedure in the marking of boundary lines. That is to say that it is not definite, determinate and

⁴A. χ^2 analysis of the data indicated that this distribution could easily have occurred by chance; $\chi^2=1.86$, $df=1$, $P>.05$.

permanent.⁵ Such pojones (markers) as trees, stones, rows of flowers, stumps, ditches, roadways, ravines, and mounds of earth are frequently employed. Fences are sometimes used, but the primary purpose of these is generally that of keeping livestock out of the crops. Legally, the boundaries of a man's holding are defined by indicating the properties on which it adjoins. The following petition for provisional deeds to several tracts of land illustrates the typical manner in which boundaries are defined:

No. 1192

Señor Juez de la 1a. Instancia

I, Calixto Juárez López, twenty-one years of age, married, agriculturist, native Guatemalan, domiciled in and a citizen of the Municipio of Magdalena Milpas Altas of the departamento of Zacatepequez, having received notification in the professional office of Attorney Manuel Antonio Ferras Castellanes, located at number three, Fifth Street of this city [Antigua] respectfully declare:

That by the present means I desire to initiate voluntary proceedings for the provisional deeds [titulación supletoria] to various real properties located in the Municipio of Magdalena Milpas Altas. They are the following: (a) the tract of land [finca rústica] designated as "La Villa de Salomón" which is composed of 6,149 square meters and is enclosed by the following adjoining properties: to the west and separated by a roadway, that of Eulogio Gómez; to the north, that of Timoteo Juárez López; to the east and separated by a ravine, that of Serapio Martinez; to the south and separated by a roadway, those of Posilio Pérez and Gabino Juárez; I value this property in the sum of twenty quetzales. (b) the tract of land designated as "Los Fosales" which is composed of 6,049 square meters and is enclosed by the following adjoining properties: to the north, that of Ambrosio García; to the east, that of Silverio

⁵Cf., T. Lynn Smith, The Sociology of Rural Life (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), pp. 243-273.

Hernández and Marcela Salazar; to the south, that of Timoteo Juárez López; to the west, those of Basilio García and José García; I value this property in the sum of twenty-five quetzales. (c) the tract of land designated as "Paninaquin" composed of 2,795 square meters and enclosed by the following adjoining properties: to the north, that of Timoteo Juárez López; to the east and separated by a stream [río], that of Virgilio Salazar and Brígida Chanta; to the south, that of Manuela Velasquez; to the west, that of Gregorio Juárez; I value this property in the sum of twenty quetzales. (d) a house lot, unmarred, which has the following extension and is adjoined by the following properties: this lot measures, in total, 833 square meters, 16 centimeters and adjoins to the north (separated by a street) on the property of Silverio Hernández; to the east (separated by a street) on the property of Margarito Ramos; to the south on the property of Julio Rivera; to the west on the property of Timoteo Juárez and I value it in the sum of twenty quetzales. The described lands are free of mortgages, limitations or easements and there is no litigation pending and they are not registered in the registry of real estate [Propiedad Immueble], I have possessed them in a public, pacific and continuous manner in the capacity of owner for more than ten years. In order to fulfill the conditions of the law, permit me to offer the testimony of the witnesses Sebastián Mixtun and Rosendo Bautista.

The Nature of Property Rights in the Land

All privately owned property in Magdalena is held in fee simple--it is heritable, and it is conveyable. Lands (parcelas) which have been conveyed to local persons by the state under the agrarian law of 1957 are subject to certain restrictions for the first twenty-five years from the date of the grant. Although they remain heritable, they may not be encumbered, alienated, nor divided during that period without the written permission of the Dirección General de Asuntos Agrarios. Similar conditions apply to land which

has been donated by private parties under the same law.⁶ Municipal lands may not be encumbered, alienated, nor ceded except by decree of the national government. Neither can they become subject to the current tax on idle lands. They may, however, be expropriated if they are not used in a manner that fulfills their social functions.⁷

Land Tenure

Owner operatorship is the most prevalent type of tenure in Magdalena. Among the operators included in the sample, 48 (69%) were proprietors of all the land they operated. Another 14 (19%) owned part of the land they cultivated (see Table 6).

Fifty-five (78%) of all the operators questioned were working land that they had received through inheritance. Thirty of these had inherited all the land they were operating, but twenty-five were tilling additional lands which had been acquired through purchase or were being rented.⁸ Among the owners and part owners, 14 (19%) were the recipients of parcelas.

⁶Guatemala, Dirección General de Asuntos Agrarios, Estatuto Agrario. Reglamento de Tierras Ociosas, Otras Disposiciones Vigentes, 1957, Primera Parte, Capítulos LX, pp. 21-24.

⁷Ibid., Segunda Parte, Capítulo VI, pp. 62-63.

⁸Since the parcelario must pay the government a nominal sum for his parcela, these grants are counted as purchased in the textual analysis. They were designated separately in Table 6 in order to show the number of operators who had received this type of aid.

TABLE 6.--Tenure class of farm operators by the manner in which their lands were acquired or rented and by barrio of residence

Tenure Class	Upper Barrio		Lower Barrio		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Owners	21	74	27	64	48	69
By inheritance	15	53	15	35	30	43
By purchase	1	3	3	7	4	6
By inheritance and purchase	3	11	4	10	7	10
By inheritance and parcela	2	7	4	10	6	9
By inheritance, purchase, and parcela	0	0	1	2	1	1
Part Owners	5	17	9	21	14	19
By inheritance and rent	4	14	5	12	9	13
By purchase and rent	1	3	2	5	3	4
By inheritance, purchase, and rent	0	0	1	2	1	1
By inheritance, parcela, and rent	0	0	1	2	1	1
Renters	3	9	6	15	9	12
For cash	1	3	0	0	1	1
For labor	1	3	4	10	5	7
For a combination of cash and labor	1	3	2	5	3	4
Total	29	100	42	100	71	100

Of those questioned, 9 farm operators (12%) rented all the land which they were operating. This proportion of renters, in connection with the proportion of part owners, indicates that, with further subdivision of holdings through

inheritance, there may soon be a serious tenancy problem in Magdalena. None of the local properties are very large (see the section on size of holdings). Therefore, the question remains--from whom will future tenants be able to rent land? As yet, no more parcelas are available for distribution in the area; but an attempt is being made to encourage migration to sparsely-inhabited regions of the country.

A cuerda⁹ of community land rents for only 25 centavos a year, while rents on private property range from 1.25 to 2.50 quetzales a year per cuerda.¹⁰ The major part of the lands reported as rented belonged to the community. Such plots have often been worked for more than twenty-five years by the same family. These communal lands are considered to be among the poorest in the village for agricultural purposes.

Of the five persons interviewed who were classified as agricultural laborers, only one also operated land. This man had inherited a plot of 5 cuerdas (1.4 acres). On the other hand, just one of the non-agricultural laborers had no land; and another was only operating a tiny patch of ground which a relative allowed him to use rent free. None of the

⁹The term cuerda is widely used in Guatemala to designate a unit of land measure. The area it represents, however, varies greatly from place to place. A cuerda in Magdalena is equal to 1,600 square varas (1 vara equals 2.7 feet) or .28 acres.

¹⁰Guatemalan currency exchanges at par with United States money in the international market.

TABLE 7.--Distribution of land in Magdalena

Size of Farm in Cuerdas	Farms		Land in Farms	
	No.	%	Area in Cuerdas	Cumulative %
6-10	16	23	121	7.0
10-14	11	16	135	15.0
15-19	11	16	183	25.7
20-24	10	14	228	39.1
25-34	8	11	237	53.0
35-44	5	7	203	64.9
45+	10	14	600	100.0
Total	71	100	1,707	100.0

agricultural laborers was employed by a written contract. Many agricultural laborers in the municipio must take temporary work where they can find it. In Magdalena, as in rural areas everywhere, the agricultural laborer is at the bottom of the social scale.

Several of the operators who were reported as renting land might actually be thought of as working in partnership (the decision as to what crop is to be planted is reached by mutual agreement) under an arrangement known as cuerda por cuerda. Under this system one man always provides the land and the other the labor. In the production of corn it is usual for the landowner to provide all of the seed, but sometimes this responsibility is divided equally.¹¹ In the

¹¹Partnerships similar to these are described in T. Lynn Smith, Justo Diaz Rodriguez and Luis Roberto Garcia, Tabio:

production of verdura (produce) the expenses for seed and fertilizer generally seem to be shared by both parties. In all cases the crop is divided equally. Still another man reported that he rented his land por compromiso. This entailed paying his rent through a stipulated number of days labor for the owner of the land.

Finally, the relationship of tenure status to neighborhood in Magdalena deserves some comment here. An examination of the percentages shown in Table 8 would suggest that the inhabitants of the upper barrio are more favored with regard to the manner in which they hold the land they operate. Among the farmers interviewed who lived in the upper barrio, 74% owned all the land they operated while 26% were either part owners or renters. Of those dwelling in the lower barrio, 64% owned all the land they held, while 36% were either part owners or renters. Nevertheless, a χ^2 analysis of the numerical data given in the table indicated that such a distribution could easily have occurred by chance.¹² It also seems advisable at this point to mention that three of the men classified as agricultural laborers lived in the lower barrio and two resided in the upper barrio. All four of the non-agricultural laborers were living in the lower barrio.

A Study in Rural Social Organization (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture, 1945).

$$\chi^2 = .52, df=1, P > .05.$$

Size of Holdings

The large, landed estate does not exist in the municipio of Magdalena. Indeed, one may say that much of the land within the borders of the tiny municipio is excessively subdivided. Of the eighty-one heads of household interviewed in the cabecera municipal, seventy-one were classified as farm operators. The size of their holdings ranged from 6 cuerdas (1.7 acres) to 83 cuerdas (24.6 acres). The median size of the farms reported is 18.9 cuerdas, or 5.3 acres. From Table 7 it can be observed that of the operators included in the sample, 14% (those with farms of 45 cuerdas or more) operate 35.1% of the land. Viewed from the other extreme, it can be seen that 55% of the farm operators have access to only 25.7% of the land. The figures cited above seem to indicate a certain amount of concentration in ownership and control. Nevertheless, other data collected suggest that a considerable portion of the largest holdings (those containing forty-five cuerdas or more) is made up of woodland or tierra quebrada (land too steep to be legally cultivated). What the foregoing emphasizes is the predominance of holdings that are too small to provide a satisfactory living for the farm family. If all the land (1,707 cuerdas) operated by the 71 families included in the sample were divided so that each farmer received an equal share, that share would only amount to 24 cuerdas, or 6.7 acres.¹³ The problem of

¹³Of the 1,707 cuerdas, 956 (56%) are planted in corn and

minifundia is not unique with Magdalena. Many of Guatemala's social and economic thinkers are concerned with the degree of population pressure to be found in much of the highland area.

One of the points on which this study is attempting to shed some light is the question of socio-economic differences between the two barrios found in Magdalena. For that reason it is considered pertinent to examine the size of holdings in relation to the neighborhood in which their owners reside. A scanning of the percentages shown in the "total" columns for each barrio (Table 8) suggests that the farmers interviewed who were dwelling in the upper barrio may be more favored in the amounts of land that they hold than are their counterparts in the lower barrio. Among the farmers of the upper barrio, 41% were operating holdings of less than 20 cuerdas (5.6 acres), while 62% of those from the lower barrio held a like amount of land. A χ^2 analysis, however, of the numerical data indicated that this difference could have occurred through the workings of chance.¹⁴

Another point of interest to this investigator is the relationship of tenure class to size of holdings. In a manner analogous to the situation described in the previous paragraph, a scanning of the percentages dealing with this

117 (69%) in produce; 534 cuerdas (31.3%) are woodlands, and the cultivation of 100 cuerdas (5.8%) has been prohibited because the slope is greater than 30 degrees. The latter lands have been planted with pine or fruit trees.

¹⁴ $\chi^2=2.87$, $df=1$, $P>.05$.

TABLE 8.--Size of holdings by neighborhood and tenure class

Upper Barrio									
Size in Cuerdas	Owners		Part Owners		Renters		Total		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
6-9	3	14	1	20	2	67	6	21	
10-14	1	5	1	20	1	33	3	10	
15-19	1	5	2	40	0	0	3	10	
20-24	3	14	0	0	0	0	3	10	
25-34	5	24	1	20	0	0	6	21	
35-44	2	10	0	0	0	0	2	7	
45+	6	28	0	0	0	0	6	21	
Total	21	100	5	100	3	100	29	100	

TABLE 3.--Continued

Lower Barrio

**Total
Number
of Farms**

**Owners Part
 Owners Renters Total**

No. % No. % No. % No. % No. %

7 26 2 22 1 17 10 24 16 23

5 19 1 11 2 33 8 19 11 16

5 19 2 22 1 17 8 19 11 16

2 7 3 34 2 33 7 16 10 14

2 7 0 0 0 0 2 5 8 11

2 7 1 11 0 0 3 7 5 7

4 15 0 0 0 0 4 10 10 14

27 100 9 100 6 100 42 100 71 100

factor would indicate that owner operators are in control of a larger proportion of the land than are part owners or renters combined. Table 8 shows that 26, or 54%, of the owners included in the sample possessed farms larger than 20 cuerdas (5.6 acres), while only 30%, or a total of 7 part owners and renters, were operating farms of a comparable size. One again, however, a χ^2 analysis of the numerical data showed that a like distribution could have occurred purely through chance.¹⁵

Fragmentation of Holdings

The excessive fragmentation of holdings is often one of the greatest disadvantages associated with the village form of settlement.¹⁶ A discussion of this feature of man-land relations is, therefore, particularly germane to studies such as this one. Information secured from the 81 schedules completed in the sampling process provided the data for Table 9. Inspection of this table shows that fragmentation of holdings in Magdalena has not been carried to the extremes found in connection with many other agricultural villages. No farm was reported as having more than six plots, and only two

¹⁵ $\chi^2=3.53$, $df=1$, $P>.05$.

¹⁶Fragmentation of holdings is a subject which does not seem to have received much attention from rural sociologists. Anyone interested in learning more about this topic is advised to begin by reading T. Lynn Smith, "Fragmentation of Agricultural Holdings in Spain," *Rural Sociology*, 24, No. 2 (June, 1959), pp. 140-149. A number of references to other sources are given in the footnotes to Professor Smith's article.

**TABLE 9.--Number of
plots utilized in
farms**

Number of Plots Per Farm	Number of Farms	
	No.	%
1	18	25
2	26	37
3	15	21
4	7	10
5	3	4
6	2	3
Total	71	100

holdings were divided into this many parcels. At the other extreme, there were 18 farms, 25% of the total, consisting of one unit of land. Two was the modal number of plots per farm among those included in the sample. Twenty-six holdings fell into this category. In all, 59, or 83%, of the holdings consisted of 3 plots or less. Nevertheless, when one considers the diminutive size of Magdalena's farms, it can be seen that their subdivision into even as few as two parts constitutes a serious obstacle to the development of scientific, mechanized agriculture. In a previous section of this thesis it was pointed out that Magdalena's frequently had to travel inconvenient distances to reach the fields in which they worked. This situation is, of course, often caused by

separation of the farm plots and would be aggravated by further fragmentation.

System of Farming

The vast majority of Magdalenos are totally dependent upon agriculture for their living. It follows then that a discussion of the means by which they wrest their daily "bread"¹⁷ from the soil is exceedingly important in a description of their way of life. Furthermore, the particular system of farming employed by any group of people is one of the best indexes of that group's position on the scale of social evolution.

Magdalena's farmers use fire for the first clearing of a field which they wish to cultivate or to get rid of the overgrowth in a plot which has been lying fallow. However, "fire agriculture"¹⁸ as it is practised in other parts of the world as well as certain areas of Guatemala is unknown in Magdalena. In the locality being studied, there is none of the restless movement and constant clearing of new fields connected with fire agriculture proper. Indeed, the space available would not permit it. In addition, the strictly

¹⁷ Either tortilla or tamal probably would be a more appropriate term since these corn products constitute the staff of life in Magdalena.

¹⁸ This practice is also known by such names as "slash and burn" or "shifting cultivation." In using the term "fire agriculture," the author is following the taxonomy of agricultural systems employed by T. Lynn Smith, The Sociology of Rural Life (3rd ed.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), Chapter 14.



Figure 11.--A local agriculturist and his tools. He has a fumigator, but none were encountered among the farmers interviewed.



Figure 12.--The only plow in the village

enforced conservation laws against the felling of any trees without express permission of the government present a legal barrier to fire agriculture. The general practice of the farmers of Magdalena is to cultivate their fields intensively and rarely to give them any rest unless the fields are almost completely worked out.

The plow is almost never employed in the fields of Magdalena. Many farmers claim that the ruggedness of the terrain would not permit its use; but there is certainly a sizeable area, particularly on the gentler slopes below the village, where the plow could be employed with advantage. As far as this investigator could ascertain, there was only one plow in the entire village at the time that the study was made. Interestingly enough, this one example was a metal turning plow rather than one of the wooden types. The farm tools which are employed by Magdalena's agriculturists are listed in Table 10. Not one of the heads of households, whether he belonged to the operator, agricultural laborer, or non-agricultural laborer class, failed to report at least one hoe and one machete. The machete is an all-purpose tool for the Magdaleño. An adult male is so seldom seen without one that it might even be considered an article of masculine wearing apparel.

Almost all of the families owned an ax. The importance of this tool had decreased somewhat since 1956 when the felling of timber and the manufacture of charcoal was prohibited.

TABLE 10.--Number of households possessing specified farm equipment

Type of Equipment	Households	
	No.	%
Number of households reporting	81	100
Hoe	81	100
Machete	81	100
Ax	77	95
File	68	84
Watering can	36	44
Pick	30	37
Small saw	25	31
Sembradora*	22	27
Saw	20	25
Shovel	7	9
Rake	4	5
Plow (metal)	1	1

*Three-pronged dibble used for planting beans.

Some means of sharpening the machete is of course necessary; hence, the large number of files reported. Those farmers not reporting files used a whetstone to put an edge on their cutting tools. A number of other implements locally used in agricultural production are listed in the order of frequency with which they were reported. The absence of the metal-tipped digging stick will probably be noted by the reader who is familiar with similar systems of farming. Digging sticks are sometimes used, especially in the sowing of beans; but since the ground is quite soft, metal tips are not thought



Figure 13.--Breaking ground with the big hoe



Figure 14.--Planting beans with a dibble



Figure 13.--A two-wheeled ox cart in front of a building of adobe repellado with a tin roof.

to be necessary. Generally, hoes with blades that have become quite small through use are utilized for planting, slightly larger ones are used for cultivating around the plants, and the newest and largest hoes are used for breaking the ground. The list terminates with the lone plow in the village. This table clearly demonstrates that Magdalena's farmers are still very much in the hoe stage of agricultural development.

Coupled with the lack of plows is the absence of pack and draft animals. When questioned on this point, the farmers sometimes jokingly replied, "Somos los caballos aqui (we are the horses here)." As a consequence, the mecapal and reda (tump line and net) in combination with the male forehead and back are the main means by which most burdens get transported over the difficult trails to and from the fields. Heavy loads of brushwood for the cooking fires are brought down from the mountain on the heads of the women and girls. The use of the wheel as a means of lightening man's burdens, is not highly developed in Magdalena (see Table 11). A few two-wheeled ox carts are found in the village, but these cannot manage the narrow ways that lead to most of the plots. Wheelbarrows are sometimes utilized to transport loads along the streets of the village or from fields which border on routes passable for wheeled vehicles. None of the native Magdaleños possesses a motor vehicle. Three auto busses do provide daily transportation for goods and passengers to the

TABLE 11.--Types of vehicles owned

Type of Vehicle	Households	
	No.	%
None	64	78
Pushcart	13	16
Two-wheeled cart	2	3
Bicycle	2	3
Total	81	100

markets in Guatemala and Antigua. The driver-owner of one of these busses boards in the village much of the time in order to be close to his work, but he is not a native nor a permanent resident of the village. Bicycles are occasionally owned by the young men in the village, and at least one young fellow puts his to commercial use (see Figure 16).

Few farm animals are to be found in Magdalena. Table 12 lists the types of livestock encountered in the sampling procedure and their distribution by neighborhood and tenure class. From the table it can be seen that three-fourths of the farmers interviewed owned no cattle. One family owned 4 head of cattle, but none of the other households reported more than 2. The overwhelming majority of the cattle were being raised for beef with only 2 reported as milk cows. Two oxen were kept by the mayor to pull his plow and two-wheeled cart. A slightly small proportion (72%) of the households interviewed possessed no pigs or hogs. One family, whose



Figure 16.--This well-dressed boy uses his bicycle to carry milk for sale in Antigua.

**TABLE 12.--Households possessing specified farm animals
by neighborhood and tenure class**

Upper Harrio									
Type of Animal	Owners		Part Owners		Renters		Sub- Total		
	No. %		No. %		No. %		No. %		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Cattle									
None	15	71	4	80	3	100	22	76	
1 or more	6	29	1	20	0	0	7	24	
Total	21	100	5	100	3	100	29	100	
Pigs or hogs									
None	13	62	4	80	3	100	20	69	
1 or more	8	38	1	20	0	0	9	31	
Total	21	100	5	100	3	100	29	100	
Poultry									
None	7	33	1	20	3	100	11	38	
1 or more	14	67	4	80	0	0	18	62	
Total	21	100	5	100	3	100	29	100	

TABLE 12.--Continued

Lower Barrio									
Owners		Part Owners		Renters		Sub-Total		Total	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
21	78	7	78	6	100	34	81	54	76
6	22	2	22	0	0	8	19	17	24
27	100	9	100	6	100	42	100	71	100
18	67	9	100	5	83	32	76	51	72
9	33	0	0	1	17	10	24	20	28
27	100	9	100	6	100	42	100	71	100
7	26	3	33	2	33	12	28	23	32
20	74	6	67	4	67	30	72	48	68
27	100	9	100	6	100	42	100	71	100

breed sow had just littered, owned 8 head of swine; but most of the other families had no more than 2. On the other hand, only 23, or 32%, of the respondents owned no poultry.

Chickens were found to be the most common domestic bird raised in Magdalena; but turkeys, ducks, and doves were kept as well. Two families (not shown in the table) were found to be keeping honeybees. By scanning the percentages in the total columns for each barrio, one can see that a slightly larger proportion of the farmers from the upper barrio reported owning either cattle, pigs, or hogs than did those of the lower barrio. On the other hand, 10% more of the households in the lower barrio said they possessed poultry than did the households dwelling in the upper barrio. The distribution of livestock among the various tenure classes was found to be about what one would expect. Owner-operators were found to be slightly more prone to keep cattle, swine, or poultry than were part owners or renters. Nevertheless, χ^2 analysis of the data once again showed that such distributions could have occurred by chance. If a category for laborers had been included in the table, it would have shown that none of the agricultural laborers had either cattle, pigs, or hogs; although two of them did own a few chickens. All of the non-agricultural laborers had small flocks of chickens, two owned a beef animal, but none owned pigs or hogs.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Domestic Institutions

The family is a basic unit of all known societies. Consequently, no study such as this one would be complete if some space were not devoted to its structure and functions. The present investigator is fortunate to be able to draw upon the work of Richard Adams¹ in order to supplement and corroborate his own findings with regard to the domestic institutions in Magdalena.

Courtship and marriage.--The young people of Magdalena are quite free to choose their own marriage partners. Nevertheless, spouses are almost always chosen from within the village. Indeed, there also seems to be a tendency for the inhabitants of each barrio to select mates from their own neighborhood. When a young Magdaleño is attracted to a girl, he contrives to meet her outside the home so that the acquaintanceship can be developed in privacy. Very often a suitor will accompany the girl of his choice on a trip to market or arrange to encounter her on the trail as she

¹See, especially, Richard M. Adams, "Informe Preliminar Sobre la Organización Social de Magdalena Milpas Altas," Antropología e Historia de Guatemala, III, No. 2 (Junio, 1951), 9-15.

returns from the mountain with a load of firewood. These meetings are continued until the pair decides to "formalize" their relationship. At this point the young man will normally ask his father (or an older male relative if his father has passed away) to go with him on a visit to the parents of his novia (the girl in question). Father and son will always be accompanied on "the call" by a pair of older men whose duty it is to expound on the good qualities of the suitor. If the young lady's father finds her novio to be acceptable, he will invite the entire party to enter his home so that he may set forth his conditions regarding the alliance. These conditions generally include a date for the wedding; the choice of a civil ceremony, a religious one, or both; as well as the details of the celebration which must follow. Such affairs can be costly since large quantities of tamales and liquor must be provided for relatives and guests. Often the expense is felt to be so prohibitive that it is agreed to postpone the actual wedding for a specified period. In such a case the couple will customarily forego the ceremony but set up housekeeping immediately. In these instances the intent to legalize the union is always present and generally complied with. Absolutely no stigma is attached to the unions in which the legal ceremony is still to be performed.² Indeed, they are often thought to be a convenient

²In the course of completing his schedules, the investigator frequently found it necessary to ask a couple (in the

way of establishing the compatibility of the couple before legal ties are entered into.³ More often than not such an arrangement will prove to be just as durable as the officially sanctioned forms of wedlock.

Another method is sometimes employed to avoid an immediate outlay for the wedding party. In this case the novio will "steal" his novia from her parents home and they will spend a night together at his residence. The following day the girl's parents will order the couple to be "captured" by the authorities and a civil ceremony will take place. Under these circumstances an immediate celebration is not considered necessary and it is generally delayed for a period stipulated by the father of the bride.⁴

Age at marriage.--Detailed data regarding marital condition by age are available in the 1957 census. It is, therefore, possible to draw some conclusions concerning the ages at which members of the local population are most likely to marry or form consensual unions. By referring to Figure 9 in Chapter II, it can be seen that fully 97% of the males between the ages of 15 and 19 were reported to be unwed.

presence of their children) whether or not they were married. No resentment or embarrassment was ever displayed even when the reply was in the negative.

³Guatemalan law recognizes either religious or civil ceremonies as legally binding.

⁴It is interesting to note that a similar practice has been reported in a Brazilian village by Charles Wagley, Amazon Town (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953).



Figure 17.--A family of indigenas. The mother is wearing the local style of huipil; the father is a former alcalde. The basket contains maize for the next day's tortillas.

Among the females in the same age group, 83% had not yet left the ranks of the single. On the other hand, large proportions of both the males (46%) and females (65%) between the ages of 20 and 24 had either married or formed consensual unions. Thereafter, the percentages of single males in each 5-year age group continue to decrease until about the age of 50. The percentage of unwed females is lowest in the age group 40 to 44. These figures give evidence that neither the males nor females of the municipio tend to form marital unions at an exceptionally early age. They also indicate that as is true in most parts of the world, the local women are prone to marry earlier than are the men.

Family types.--The overwhelming majority of households in Magdalena seem to be occupied by what might be called "normal" family groupings. Of the 81 households included in the survey, 65 were headed by a man and woman living in a marital state. Eleven other households were headed by widowed persons (5 widowers and 6 widows) who were still raising children. One widow and 2 widowers were found to be living alone. One other household was composed of a pair of elderly spinsters. Only 1 case of separation was encountered; neither the man nor the woman had formed a new matrimonial alliance, but each was heading one of the households included in the survey.

Family names.--It was pointed out in the introduction that the first step in the sampling procedure consisted of the

random selection of one-half of the households residing in each barrio, or 120 in all. Table 13 presents a classification according to family name of male heads of those households for each of the barrios arrayed in descending order of

TABLE 13.—The frequency with which family names are encountered in the upper and lower barrios of Magdalena

Family Name	Total		Lower Barrio		Upper Barrio	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Pérez	13	11	6	9	7	14
Chanta	12	10	1	1	11	22
Hernández	10	8	9	13	1	2
Méndez	10	8	6	9	4	8
López	10	8	4	6	6	12
Bautista	9	7	8	11	1	2
Velasquez	9	7	5	8	4	8
Gómez	7	6	7	10	0	0
Ramos	7	6	5	8	2	4
Carcía	6	5	4	6	2	4
Martínez	5	4	0	0	5	10
Rivera	4	3	4	6	0	0
Lobos	4	3	0	0	4	8
Marroquin	3	3	3	4	0	0
Juárez	2	2	2	3	0	0
Escobar	2	2	0	0	2	4
Salazar	1	1	1	1	0	0
Itzal	1	1	1	1	0	0
Aragon	1	1	1	1	0	0
Lajardo	1	1	1	1	0	0
Godínez	1	1	1	1	0	0
Antonio	1	1	1	1	0	0
Nixtun	1	1	0	0	1	2
Total	120	100	70	100	50	100

frequency. The first point which these data illustrate is the importance of the extended family in the population of the village. Five family names are shared by the heads of 55 households, or a total of 45% of those included in the sample. Over one-half of the family names included in the sample appeared 4 times or more. Such a situation is to be expected in an area where there is little migration of the males from the village.

In view of what has already been said about neighborhood differences, it is also worthwhile to note that there is an obvious clustering of family names by barrio of residence. It can be seen that 9 households headed by a Hernández are located in the lower barrio, and only 1 is to be found in the upper barrio. Similarly, 8 households of Bautistas, 7 of Gómez, and 4 of Piveras are residing in the lower barrio; while only 1 household of the first named, none of those mentioned second, and none of the last named have their residence in the upper barrio. Inspection of the figures in the column for the upper barrio demonstrates that a similar state of affairs exists in that neighborhood. A total of 11 households headed by a Chanta are located in the upper barrio, and only one is to be found in the lower barrio. Similarly, 5 households of Martinez and 4 of Lobos are residing in the upper barrio while none of the first named nor none of the second named have their residence in the lower barrio.

Five family names (Pérez, Hernández, Méndez, Bautista, and Gómez), or 8% of those found in the lower barrio, account for 52% of the households living in that locality group. In a like manner, 4 family names (Pérez, Chanta, López, and Martínez), or 10% of those found in the upper barrio, account for 58% of the households living in this locality group. These figures demonstrate that each barrio, as well as the village as a whole, is quite homogeneous with regard to its familial composition. In some instances, as with the Pérez, Méndez, López, and Velasquez, the families appear to be about equally divided between the two barrios. In these cases it should be remembered that the lower barrio is almost one and one-half times as large as the upper so that the above-mentioned families bulk more largely in the percentages calculated for the latter neighborhood.

Lastly, in connection with what was learned concerning the relationship of ethnic group to neighborhood of residence, it should be mentioned that 3 of the family names which occur only once in the list of those found in the lower barrio belong to ladino migrants to the village.

Size of family.--If the 3 single-person units are included, the average size of the families contained in the sample is 4.5 persons; excluding them, it is 4.6 persons. The modal size of the families investigated is four persons (see Table 14); however, families with three or five members are almost as numerous. The two largest families are each ten persons

TABLE 14.--Classification of households and families by size

Number of Persons	Household (Parents, Children, Relatives, and Others)		Family (Parents and Children Only)	
	No.	%	No.	%
1	3	4	3	4
2	3	10	10	12
3	12	15	15	19
4	16	20	16	20
5	14	17	14	17
6	11	13	9	11
7	5	6	5	6
8	8	10	6	7
9	1	1	1	1
10	2	3	2	3
11	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	0	0
13	1	1	0	0
Total	81	100	81	100

strong. Nonetheless, the family does not seem to be overly large for such a rural area.

The family in comparison with the household.--For the purposes of this study, all the individuals who lived together in one dwelling and who took their meals together were considered to form one household.⁵ As a rule, one of the functions of the rural family is to shelter elderly, incapacitated, or other kinfolk who have no other place to live. Therefore,

⁵A household, by this definition, is the equivalent of a familia central. The latter term is used in the Guatemalan census.

the average household visited when the interviews were being conducted was somewhat larger than the average family. The 81 households contained an average of 4.9 persons (see Table 14). The mean size of the household for the municipio in 1957 was 5.0 persons.

Other persons residing with the family.--Altogether there were 24 persons other than the nuclear family (parents and children) residing in the households which were included in the sample. The distribution of these non-family members as well as their connection with the heads of their respective households was as follows: 11 grandchildren, 0 nueras, 1 yerro,⁶ and 3 grandparents (2 grandmothers and 1 grandfather). Only one household numbered a servant among its inhabitants. It is significant to note that 9 (12%) of the households larger than 1 person had either a nuera or yerro living in its midst. It is likely that an even larger proportion of young couples were residing in a separate dwelling built on the sitio of their "in-laws" and were subsisting on the products of the parental farm. Such a situation might be expected when land is at a premium as it is in Magdalena. The findings presented in the section dealing with the size of the local farms make it evident that in many cases it would not be feasible to further subdivide the family land in order to give a

⁶The terms nuera and yerro as they are used in Magdalena, may be loosely translated as daughter-in-law and son-in-law. They may be applied either to legally married persons or to those living in consensual unions.

newly-married couple a farm of its own. Due to the patrilocal nature of Magdalena's families, the overwhelming majority of the non-family members encountered in the households were women (see the section on line of descent and inheritance).

Line of descent and inheritance.--Families in Magdalena are bi-lineal. That is to say that in keeping with Spanish custom, both the paternal and maternal branches of the family are identified by a composite family surname.⁷ In Magdalena, children who are born of consensual unions generally bear only the apellido of the mother unless the marriage is legalized. When this happens, the child may or may not take the apellido of the father in the customary Spanish fashion.⁸ The right of primogeniture is not recognized in Magdalena. In theory the family patrimony is equally divided among both the male and female heirs. In practice daughters often receive cash in lieu of lands in order to prevent still further sub-division of the already tiny farms. When young persons set up housekeeping, it is generally expected that the family of one of the "newly-weds" (usually that of the "groom") will provide them with a sitio of their own. When this is

⁷The first apellido (surname) of the father generally becomes the first apellido of the child and the first apellido of the mother becomes the second apellido of the child. Example: Juan, the son of Alberto Rodríguez y Sánchez and María Martínez y Ramos, is known as Juan Rodríguez y Martínez.

⁸Adams, op. cit., p. 11.

impossible, the couple will normally take up residence in the sitio of the family of the male either as members of the household or in a separate dwelling.⁹ For this reason it is often the youngest son who, being the last to wed and unable to obtain a sitio of his own, brings his marriage partner back to the family abode. As a consequence the last born son oftentimes inherits the family residence on the death of the parents. The family santos (see the section on religion) go with the residence.

Family roles.--Masculine and feminine roles are clearly defined in the families of the village. The father is the head of the household and the mother and children are expected to obey his wishes. The males are primarily concerned with agricultural tasks or household repairs. This investigator did observe, however, that on occasion the male will lend a hand to desgranar maiz (the process of removing kernels from dried ears of corn) preliminary to the daily preparation of nixtamal from which tortillas are eventually made.¹⁰

The waking hours of the women are well occupied with sundry household tasks. Probably the most time consuming is

⁹Such marriages can be termed "patrilocal" and explain the predominance of nueras over yernos among the households surveyed.

¹⁰Each evening the quantity of maiz (dried corn) deemed necessary for the needs of the next day is boiled in a solution of lime and water for from about forty-five minutes to an hour. The mixture is allowed to soak through the night and in the morning the water is poured off along with the hulls of the by now softened kernels. The result is known

the daily work of preparing the tortillas which are consumed with every meal. Several hours of every day are passed at this task. Doing the family wash fills another large portion of the women's time. A good housekeeper will put her house in order in the morning, and then at midday the women and girls carry a ration of tortillas to their menfolk who are working in distant fields. They take advantage of their trip to gather firewood and bring it down from the mountain in large bundles carried on their heads. The females are generally in charge of making purchases for the family table, although on occasion a man may perform this task. Either the man or the woman may take the farm products to the market for sale.

Socialization of the children.--In their early years, the development of the children is most influenced by the mother, although the father is considered to be the final authority. As the young ones near the productive age which begins quite early in Magdalena, the father undertakes to teach his sons agricultural skills and the mother begins to train the

as nixtamal. Early each morning the nixtamal is taken to one of the two molinos de nixtamal where it is ground into masa (a type of corn meal batter). It is from this batter that tortillas or tamales are made. The advent of the molinos de nixtamal has partially relieved the women of the incredibly burdensome task of grinding the corn by hand on their pidras de roler (hand-operated millstones [see Figure 18]). It is still deemed necessary, however, to put the finishing touches on the masa with the aid of this instrument and the housewife of Magdalena continues to be virtually "chained to a millstone." The ability to make tortillas well is thought of as a prime consideration in the selection of a wife.

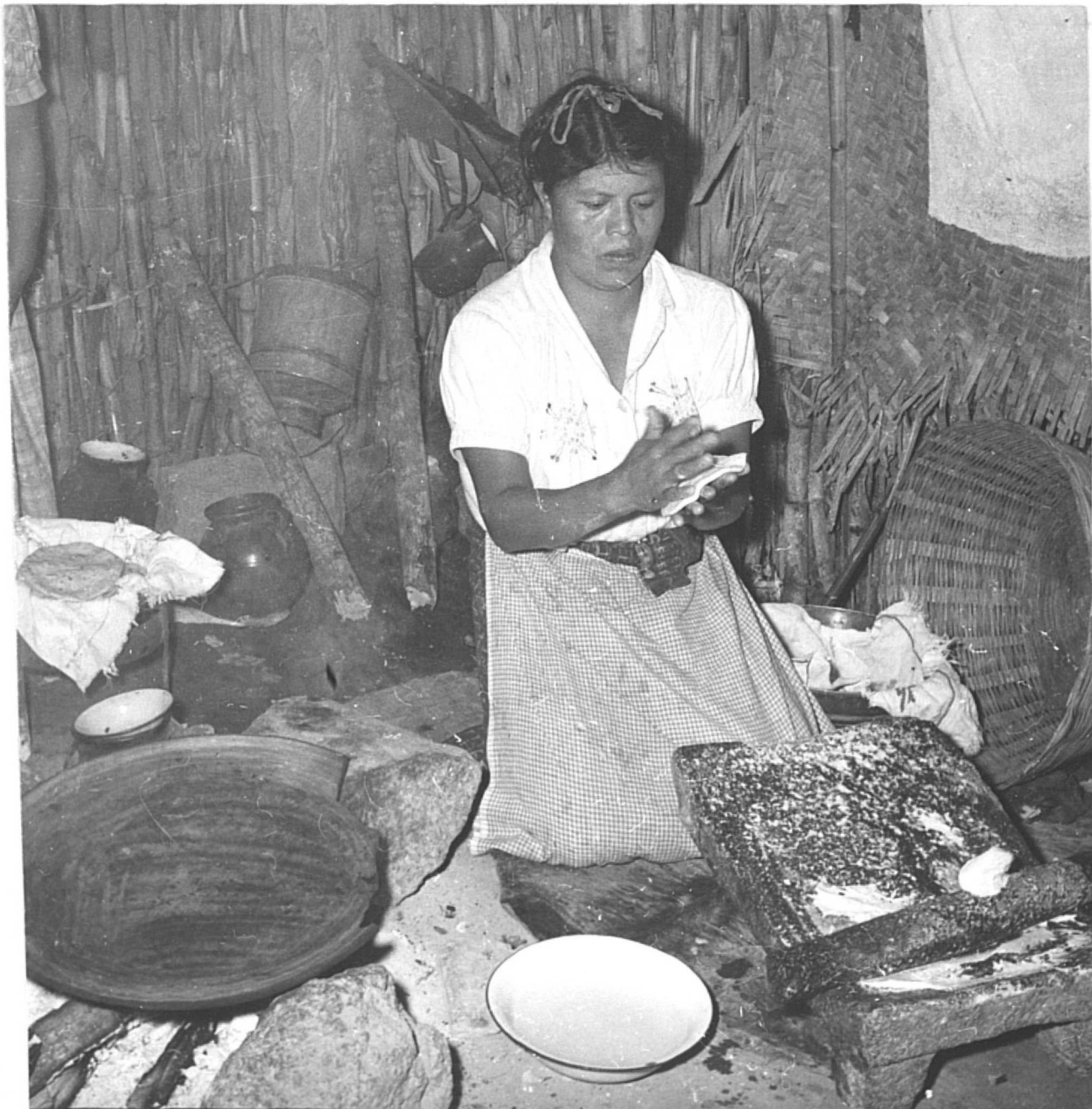


Figure 12.--A housewife making tortillas in one of the poorer homes. The clay platter to the left is a comal; in the right foreground is a piedra de moler with its corresponding aguachibero.



Figure 19.--Doing the wash at the largest public pila.



Figure 20.--Returning from the fields with a load of firewood. In the background is a faucet for the purified drinking water.

daughters in their household tasks. The older children, particularly in the larger families, play an important role in caring for and disciplining the younger ones. Children are expected to be well-behaved and polite to their elders.¹¹

The Posada

It is probable that the posada, which exists today in Lagdalena as a nucleated institution, is an inheritance from the Mayan culture of pre-conquest times.¹² In essence it is a quasi-formal dormitory and recreative organization which young men enter at about the age of puberty. As a rule the individual only breaks off his association with the posada group once he has formed a marital relationship. Nevertheless, all during his period of membership he continues to take his meals at home and in the entire round of his day-time activities he remains completely integrated with his family. By preference most of the members of a posada are drawn from the same barrio. In the evening the group gathers to converse and play, to wander the streets, or to give an occasional serenade. Later they retire to pass the night in

¹¹It is customary for a persona de respeto (respected person) to pat the children on the head. The investigator knew that he was gaining the confidence of the people once the little ones began to trot up to him in the street, remove their hats, and bow their heads to be patted.

¹²The investigator was unable to determine how many posadas are currently found in the village. Adams reported a total of fifteen in 1956. For a more extensive treatment of the subject see Richard Adams, "Sobrevivencia en la Cas

their common sleeping quarters. These usually consist of an unused house donated by an older person. According to Adams,¹³ the friendships formed during this period are not of a very permanent nature and frequently end when the individual gives up his membership in the posada.

Religion and the Church

Information regarding religious organizations and activities in Magdalena was gathered through observation, conversations with local informants, and interviews with clergymen who serve the two congregations of the village. It has already been mentioned in an earlier portion of this thesis that the Catholic solidarity typical of so many Latin American villages no longer exists in Magdalena. About three decades ago a missionary of the Jehovah's Witnesses denomination obtained a few followers in the little village. Although the number of these converts has grown over the years, they are still very much a minority group. On the other hand, they constitute a rather militant minority and have considerably disrupted the erstwhile religious homogeneity of the village.

Catholicism in Magdalena.--The fine, well-appointed church described by Fuentes y Guzmán¹⁴ in 1669 has suffered somewhat

de Solteros en Meso-América," Antropología e Historia de Guatemala, III, No. 2. (Junio, 1956), 53-57.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Fuentes y Guzmán, loc. cit.

with the passage of time and the effects of earthquakes.

Nevertheless, with its new metal roof and firmly buttressed facade, it will undoubtedly remain the most imposing edifice in the municipio for many years to come. This building is

the center of the entirely orthodox, religious activities of the Catholic population. Once a month a priest from Antigua comes to Magdalena to say mass and hear confessions. Every Sunday morning a number of children take pews in the church to be catechized by a visiting nun. On Saturday mornings the children gather on the steps of the church, and a sacristan reads to them from a Sacred History and a Catechism. Part of his duty is to help prepare the youngsters for their first communion. During one week in July when the titular saint of the village is especially venerated, mass is said every day.

A certain amount of religious activity goes on among the Catholics of Magdalena which is not directly sponsored by the church. Most homes contain a little altar for their santo. These consist of pictures or statues of the household saint. It is customary each evening to light a candle to these santos and to pray before the altar. The families also celebrate their saint's days with a novena as well as food, drink, and fireworks. Six lay religious organizations exist in the village.¹⁵ The investigator does not have a clear

¹⁵ These organizations are called brotherhoods, societies, or committees. They include a Hermandad de San Juan Bautista.



Figure 21.--Exterior of the Catholic Church



Figure 22.--The last night of a novena for a deceased person. In the morning the stubs of the candles will be taken to the Catholic Church. It is thought that to keep them in the house would cause bad luck.



Figure 23.--A well-to-do family celebrating its saint's day. The statue has been in the family over one hundred years. Aguardiente, wine, beer, Pepsi-Cola, and other soft drinks are on the table.

idea of the structure and functions of these groups. Apparently they are vestiges of the cofradías which were formerly part of the combined religious and political system which once existed in Magdalena.¹⁶ Each group has its own santos and the celebrations which are held for them are carried out on a somewhat grander scale than those for the family saints.

It is customary among the Catholics to celebrate a novena for persons who are eighteen years of age or older when they pass away. Such persons are considered old enough to have sinned. Novenas are also held for persons who are less than eighteen years old at death if they have been living in a married condition. During nine days the interior of the home of the deceased is decorated with flowers, crepe paper and wreaths. The floor is covered with pine needles, incense is burned, and many candles are lit. Friends and relatives gather each evening to pray for their lost companion. On the evening of the ninth day tamales, coffee, and perhaps liquor are served. Some of the menfolk usually maintain a vigil all that night conversing or playing cards. In the morning the decorations from the altar are taken to the cemetery and placed on the grave.

El Comité de Santa María Magdalena, El Comité de la Inmaculada Concepción de María, La Sociedad de San José, La Sociedad de la Virgen de Dolores, La Sociedad de la Virgen del Rosario.

¹⁶cf. Raymo d G. Amir, "Magdalena Milpas Altas: 1880-1952, Political Changes in Guatemala's Indian Communities, ed. Richard I. Adams (New Orleans: Tulane University Middle American Research Institute, 1957), pp. 9-14.

baptisms are an occasion which call for an elaborate celebration in the home with food, liquor, and fireworks. The actual rites take place in Antigua, and the child is usually brought back in a taxi which enters the village with its horn blaring. Ordinarily it is one of the duties of the godfather to defray the expense of the return trip and to present the child with a new outfit for the ceremony.

The Jehovah's Witnesses.--A number of families, nearly all of whom reside in the barrio de abajo, belong to the religious group known as the Jehovah's Witnesses.¹⁷ The center of activities for this body is a "temple" located on the main street of the lower barrio. It is a sturdy building constructed of adobe repollado (mud bricks finished with plaster), painted a bright yellow, and decorated with quotations from the Bible. At one end of the interior there is a raised platform with a podium and a music stand for one of the members who is a skilled accordionist. Meetings are held in the temple one or more evenings each week. At these gatherings an elder explains a chapter from the Bible calling on members of the congregation to give their interpetations

17. total of 10 of the households interviewed in the lower barrio were inhabited by members of this religious body. Only one of the households surveyed in the upper barrio was listed as being evangelista. Since a one-third sample was drawn from each barrio, it may be estimated that the inhabitants of perhaps 33 households in the entire village are Jehovah's Witnesses. If there is an average of 4.9 persons per household in the village, it may be very roughly estimated that 150 persons in all are members of this non-catholic group.



Figure 24.--Exterior of the church of the Jehovah's Witnesses.



Figure 25.--Interior of the church of the Jehovah's Witnesses. A visiting preacher is speaking.

of various verses. Several hymns are sung and one of the members closes the meeting by leading the others in a prayer.¹⁸ Occasionally on Sundays a student from the missionary school in Guatemala City comes to Magdalena to lead the service.

One of the strongest attractions of this religious group seems to be the fellowship and social activity it inspires. Frequent outdoor meetings are held at the homes of the members; and their voices, raised in song, can often be heard drifting across the thatched roofs of the village. The members themselves cite as temporal benefits the fact that as Jehovah's witnesses they neither smoke nor drink liquor¹⁹ and need not refrain from working on the numerous Catholic holidays.

There is a definite rift between the Catholics and the Jehovah's witnesses in Magdalena, and it is one more of the factors which help to separate the two neighborhoods.

Superstition and Magical Practices

It may be that superstition and magical practices are

¹⁸The investigator attended two of these meetings and enjoyed himself thoroughly by chiming in on the hymns with which he was familiar.

¹⁹In this connection it should be mentioned that the magdaleños in general do not seem to be very addicted to drink.

two of the elements shared by folk villages everywhere.²⁰ It is certain that they exist in Magdalena. Chances, naquales, ghosts, and evil angels are part of the facts of life for magdaleños. These malignant spirits are said to infest the woods and fields surrounding the cluster of homes. The inhabitants feel fairly safe from such malevolent influences as long as they remain within the residential limits of the village. Once in the monte, however, great care must be taken because even the sight of one of these apparitions is liable to cause an affliction known as gusto (fright) that sometimes ends in death.²¹

Mal de ojo (the evil eye) is also greatly feared by magdaleños. Persons who are characterized by superior status, irritable temper or a great desire for children are thought to possess "strong blood" and to be carriers of mal de ojo. Pregnant women also fall into this category. The victims are

²⁰Cf. George F. Hillery, Jr., "A Comparative Analysis of Folk Villages," Abstracts of Papers Delivered at the Fifty-fifth Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Society, August, 1960 (in press).

²¹Chances seem to be especially feared by the villagers. As evil spirits, it is said, quite often appear as tall blond, fair-skinned men who are particularly interested in stealing souls or eating children. The present writer fits the physical description of a chance very well. On more than one occasion he caused serious alarm among local women encountered by chance on the solitary mountain trails. He also became something of a bogey-man for many of the smaller children in the village. Apparently one of the disciplinary measures employed by parents and older children alike was the threat, "If you don't be good, the gringo will come and eat you." As a consequence, the investigator's appearance at some homes was always greeted by the toddlers with a great howling and scrambling for hiding places.

almost always ojeado unintentionally and no rancor against the carrier is ever preserved. Children are particularly susceptible and may become ojeado if a person of strong blood is overly affectionate with them.

Witches are known locally as brujos, zahorines or hecicero. It is not known if there are any practicing witches actually living in the village at present. One informant did advise the investigator that a particularly ancient midwife was also a bruja but refused to supply more details.²²

Education and the School

It is impossible to overestimate the role education must play in the economic, political, and social improvement of areas such as Magdalena. Therefore, a cursory examination of the facilities for formal education to be found in the village is highly relevant.

In the portion of this thesis dealing with the educational status of the population, it was pointed out that over the years, Magdalena's schools appear to have been doing an increasingly better job of educating the young. For this reason it is considered pertinent to attempt a brief sketch of the development of the local schools. Most of the older

²²Readers who are familiar with the Spanish language are referred to Richard M. Adams, Un Análisis de las Ciencias y Prácticas Médicas en un Pueblo Indígena de Guatemala (Guatemala: Editorial del Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1952).

inhabitants can remember a time when only one grade was taught in the village. In those days teaching the children to read and write was one of the duties of the secretario.²³ About the year 1935, two teachers, one for boys and one for girls, were appointed to the village. Roughly a decade later two more teachers were assigned to the school for boys and an equal number was added to the staff of the school for girls. Sometime later it was decided to make the classes coeducational in order to utilize the services of the teachers more efficiently and increase the number of grades being taught.²⁴

At the time of the investigation the first, second, fourth, and fifth grades were coeducational; but the boys and girls of the third grade were being taught separately.²⁵ The classes are taught in three buildings of adobe revellado with tile roofs. Two of these buildings face on the central plaza, and the third is located on the main street of the barrio de abajo.²⁶ The classrooms are adequately (although

²³It should be noted that the secretario has traditionally been a latino skilled in reading and writing.

²⁴This was probably done in accord with a decree issued by the central government on February 16, 1949, which ordered the reorganization of all rural primary schools which only offered three year courses. See World Survey of Education (Paris: UNESCO, 1956), II, p. 491.

²⁵The reason for this is not entirely clear, but it seems that the total enrollment of the third grade was felt to be too large for a single teacher to handle.

²⁶The grade is now located in the building of the lower barrio were formerly housed in one wing of the juzgado. The

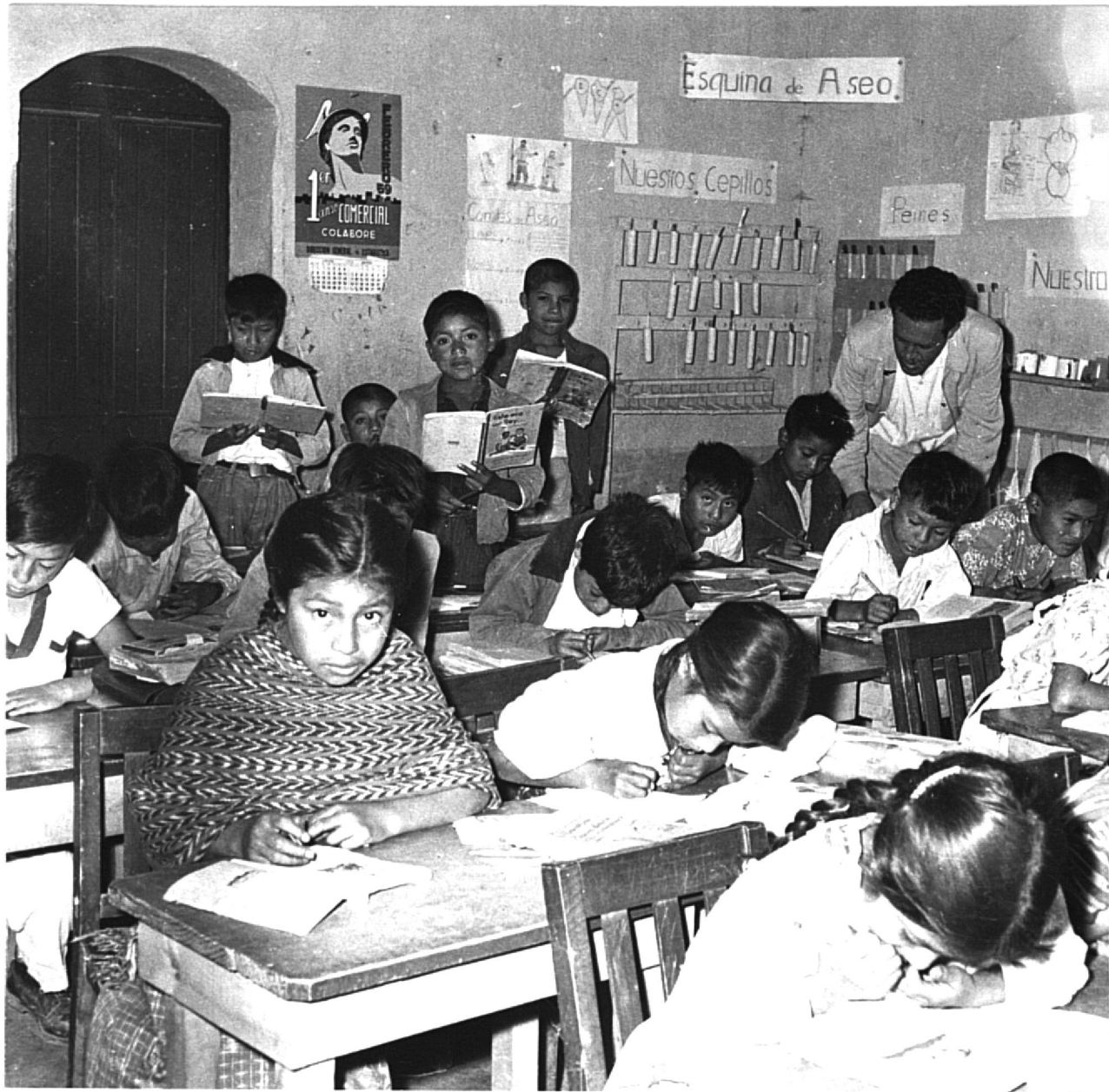


Figure 26.--The interior of a classroom. The schoolmaster is standing in the "cleanliness corner," which has toothbrushes, combs, and cups hanging on the wall.



Figure 27.--Another view of the classroom

not luxuriously) furnished. They contain plain but sturdy desks and chairs; and the walls are hung with maps, drawings, and blackboards. The children are furnished copybooks, pencils, crayons, and readers.

The declared objectives of Guatemala's rural schools are:²⁷

1. To form in the rural person good living habits related to:
 - A. Diet
 - B. Dress
 - C. Dwelling
 - D. Personal health
 - E. Civil, social, and moral practices
2. To make the country dweller a good agriculturist and to teach him the importance of the conservation of the soil and other natural resources.
3. To teach the farmer good practices for raising domesticated animals and to give instruction in the fundamentals of the local cottage industries.
4. To impart the essentials and fundamentals of the basic skills [reading, writing, and arithmetic].
5. To teach the rural dweller to be a good member of his family, his community, and a socially useful citizen.

All of the teachers in Magdalena's schools have a normal school education; and they seem to be alert, intelligent, and dedicated. They appear to be doing their best to fulfill the objectives outlined above. Each schoolroom contains a "hygiene corner" where the students' toothbrushes, combs,

present arrangement is only temporary in order to permit remodeling of the regular classrooms.

²⁷ Ocio-Educativo Rural, 10 Años de Experiencia de Escuela Rural Funcional en Guatemala (Guatemala: Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1958).

washrags, and cups are kept for daily use. Each also has a garden plot where agricultural skills such as terracing and contour hoeing are taught. The classes take turns using the swimming pool. All the subjects are oriented toward agriculture for the boys and market activities and domestic duties for the girls.

Guatemalan law makes school attendance compulsory for children between the ages of seven and fourteen. Unfortunately, the exact number of persons between these ages who should have been attending the schools of the cabecera at the time of the investigation is not known. At that time, however, there was a total of 162 children enrolled. The distribution of the students by age, sex, and grade is given in Table 15.

TABLE 15.-- school enrollment in Magdalena by age, sex, and grade

Age and Grade	Boys	Girls	Total
First Grade			
7	7	6	13
8	9	4	13
9	12	7	19
10	7	4	11
11	0	1	1
12	0	2	2
<hr/>			
Sub Total	35	24	59

TABLE 15.--Continued

Age and Grade	Boys	Girls	Total
Second Grade			
9	4	0	4
10	7	2	9
11	2	6	8
12	2	1	3
<hr/>			
Sub Total	15	9	24
Third Grade			
9	0	2	2
10	3	7	10
11	12	6	18
12	4	4	8
<hr/>			
Sub Total	19	19	38
Fourth Grade			
10	2	1	3
11	1	1	2
12	3	4	7
13	6	1	7
14	1	1	2
<hr/>			
Sub Total	13	8	21
Fifth Grade			
11	3	4	7
12	3	1	4
13	5	3	8
14	0	1	1
<hr/>			
Sub Total	11	9	20
Total	93	69	162

The local teachers feel that a certain amount of anti-school feeling still exists among some of the parents. Such parents are afraid that the schools will encourage the children to



Figure 28.--Learning agricultural skills in the garden plot of the school.



Figure 29.--Schoolmasters weighing and measuring two students in the public health clinic. The cups in the foreground are for serving UNICEF milk.

migrate to urban centers. They also resent the fact that the boys are prevented from helping in the fields during the periods of school attendance. The tenor of these reports makes it reasonable to assume that not all of Magdalena's school-age population is actually attending school.

Finally, it is interesting to note that during the last examination period previous to the time of the investigation, over one-half of the students in the first grade were not promoted. The teachers ascribe this situation to the fact that many of the first grade pupils had not learned enough Spanish in the home to be able to handle the required subjects. In the higher grades the proportion of failures was much lower.

Politics and Government

During the nineteenth century, religion and politics were intimately associated in Magdalena.²⁸ Early records provide evidence of the existence of parallel religious and political hierarchies which had many overlapping functions. Amir has diagrammed the religious-political structure of that era as follows:

1 Principal Gobernador

4 Principales

²⁸All of the information in this section dealing with the period prior to 1944 is drawn from Raymond G. Amir, loc. cit.

1 secretary	35 civic officials:	16 mayordomos:	2 sacristans
	1 1st alcalde	8 1st mayordomos	
	1 2nd alcalde	8 2nd mayordomos	
	1 sindaco	(serving 8	
	4 regidores	cofradías)	
	5 auxiliares		
	2 mayores		
	18 ministriles		
	3 "chiquitos"		

Ultimate authority over both branches was vested in the principales who held office for life. When a principal passed away, his companions chose a replacement. Each principal had invariably held many subordinate political and religious offices. The decision-making body of the political system comprised the first and second alcaldes, the sindaco, and the first regidor. These officeholders were selected by the principales, and both groups together chose the lower-ranking civil servants. None of the officials received salaries; and once chosen, they were required to serve under pain of imprisonment. The religious system was headed by sixteen mayordomos who represented eight Catholic sodalities known as cofradías. Each mayordomo was obligated to spend a considerable amount of money for the care and celebration of the patron saints of his particular cofradía. The acceptance of these offices was not legally sanctioned, but social pressure made refusal difficult.

During the period from 1830 to 1935, the religious-political structure underwent several transformations. The power of the principales declined, the cofradías withered, and authority came to be concentrated in the civil branch. In



Figure 30.--The alcalde (seated) and a regidor at work in the Alcaldía y Juzgado de Paz.

1935, a new political structure was instituted in Magdalena. It was composed of one intendente (who was appointed by the political chief of the departamento), one síndico, four régidores, four auxiliares, and twenty-four ministriles. The síndico and régidores were locally elected, and they together with the intendentes constituted a body known as the municipales. The municipales served for two years without pay and were in charge of selecting the lower officials whose term of office was only twelve months. In 1944, the office of alcalde was resubstituted for that of the intendentes, and the position once more became locally elective.

The structure of local government in Magdalena today may be diagrammed as follows:

1 <u>alcalde</u>	
1 secretary-treasurer	33 civic officials:
	1 <u>síndico</u>
	4 <u>régidores</u>
	4 <u>auxiliares</u>
	24 <u>ministriles</u>

The alcalde.--At present the alcalde is elected locally, serves for two years, and receives a small, monthly salary. The same alcalde may not serve two consecutive terms, but there are several men in the village who have held the office more than once. With the passing of the old religious-political system, it is no longer so necessary that a man acquire a great deal of experience in the lower public offices in order to become alcalde; some such experience, however, is still preferred. The alcalde is now primarily

chosen on the basis of his political affiliations as well as personal attributes. As the highest ranking authority, the alcalde has important administrative, ceremonial, and judicial functions. The latter are the most difficult and time consuming. As the local justice of the peace, the alcalde is the judge of all offenses not serious enough to require the attention of state authorities. He is also the arbitrator of a great variety of personal disputes which are constantly being brought to his attention. In his decisions, the alcalde is usually very sensitive to local opinion. If he should offend a sector of the local citizenry, that group would be quick to carry its complaints to the state authorities.²⁹ Nevertheless, the alcalde may, on occasion, be a powerful force in directing civic action.³⁰

The secretary-treasurer.--The secretary has always been a ladino who is appointed by a higher authority than the local government. Technically, he is only an employee of the

²⁹The author was surprised at the amount of political intrigue which lay hidden behind the apparently smoothly-functioning system of local government.

³⁰An example of the alcalde's importance as a village leader occurred shortly after the investigator left the village. At that time INCAP had decided to withdraw its program from the village because of a lack of cooperation in the UNICEF milk program which it was administering. At the suggestion of the local social worker, the alcalde called a town meeting and urged the parents to greater cooperation. Participation in the milk program increased considerably, and it was finally decided not to withdraw the program. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that this gesture would have succeeded had the people not already been convinced of the benefits of the program with its attendant medical services.

municipalidad. Still, his influence is probably second only to that of the alcalde. His influence is derived from the fact that he is skilled in reading and writing as well as the drawing up of official documents and often has useful connections in the state capital. The secretary is entrusted with the collection of fees, bookkeeping, and the office work in general. The present secretary also acts as treasurer. Since both capacities are salaried, the secretary-treasurer is far better paid than is the alcalde.

The síndico.--The office of síndico (syndic) is elective and carries a two-year term without salary. Theoretically, the function of the síndico is to defend the interests of the municipio in its dealings with the state and national governments or with other municipios. In practice, the generally low level of education and lack of sophistication of the village síndico is probably a serious disadvantage.

The regidores.--Four regidores are elected every two years. They serve without pay. The primary duty of the regidores is to direct the auxiliares and ministriles. Like these lesser officials, the regidores alternate in their duties and each serves for one week each month.

The municipales.--The alcalde, síndico, and regidores constitute the town council, known as the municipales. The municipales are the ranking decision-making body of the municipalidad and are charged with the selection of the auxiliares and ministriles.

The ministriles.--These unpaid civil servants occupy the lowest rank in the governmental hierarchy. Like the auxiliars they are appointed for one-year terms. All men in the village become eligible for service in this capacity at the age of eighteen. Thereafter, a man may be called on to serve every three or four years depending on the number of eligible males in the village. The ministril is the factotum of the local government. At least two ministriles are at the town hall at all hours of the day, and all six sleep there at night. These functionaries may be called upon to run errands, repair the water mains, make arrests, ring the bell marking the hour, clean up the town hall, act as town crier, or do whatever else needs doing. At ten o'clock, a ronda (watch) made up of the ministriles makes the rounds to see that all is well. The ministriles are generally younger men who behave with great deference to the higher officials. Every Sunday a unit composed of one regidor, one auxiliar, and six ministriles takes office. This team serves until twelve o'clock of the following Sunday when a new group takes over.

Committees.--There are various citizens' committees in the village. The members of such committees are either volunteers or are appointed by the municipales. Among the most important of these bodies are the Junta Local, which acts as the local school board; a group which supervises public sanitation and the water works; and a Junta Electoral, which supervises local elections.



Figure 31.--A regidor, the alcalde (second and third from the left), and three ministriles. The electric lightbulb is a holdover from a village fiesta for which an electric generator had been imported.



Figure 32.--Exterior of the alcaldía

The *alcaldia municipal y juzgado de paz* (town hall).--The local government operates out of a long, low, adobe building painted red and yellow. In addition to the mayor's office, it includes a storehouse and two jail cells (one for women and the other for men). Posted on the outside are census propaganda and wild life conservation posters. In the interior there are two desks (one for the mayor and one for the secretary-treasurer), a typewriter, filing cases, a telephone, several benches around the wall, and an apparatus for measuring height plus other odds and ends of office equipment. On the wall are hanging the *bastones de respeto* (canes symbolic of office), a picture of Justo Rufino Barrios dying in battle, and a large clock. A tin roof has just been put on and the tiles from the old roof are being crushed and used to mend the streets. Non-governmental persons generally enter the building with a great show of respect. Mail is received daily at the *juzgado*, and a daily paper is delivered there. The offices are used for the ceremonial drinking rituals which accompany village fiestas.

The budget.--Legally, in order to be classified as a *municipio*, a political unit must contain at least 5,000 persons, territory proportionate to the population, and resources sufficient to defray the cost of government.³¹ In practice, these requirements are often ignored.

³¹Congressional Decree No. 226, April 24, 1946, *Ley de Municipali ades*, Art. 17.

An inspection of Magdalena's budget for the fiscal year 1958-1959 (a copy is included as Appendix I) gives evidence that the little municipio is just making ends meet. Such a condition greatly debilitates the effectiveness of the local government. As a result, many of those functions (such as the support of the schools) which might be more profitably performed at the local level are left in the hands of the national government. The largest single source of revenue shown in the budget (Q340.40) is the Contribución de Ornato. The ornato is an annual levy of one quetzal which is imposed on all males between the ages of eighteen to sixty. The introduction of a purified water system not only improved health conditions, it also provided the municipio with a valuable source of income. The Canon de Agua (water tax) and the sale of "straws"³² of water produced a total of Q262.69 in the year for which the budget was reckoned. Fines produced the third largest amount of revenue (Q242.08) for the period in question. A national tax is imposed on all gasoline sold in the republic, and the proceeds are divided among the municipios according to the size of their populations. This subsidy contributed Q195.24 to the municipio's coffers. Most of the remaining income was acquired through the imposition of small local taxes.

³²A paja, or straw, is the unit employed to measure the amount of water which issues from a given faucet.

The salaries of the alcalde and secretary-treasurer accounted for the lion's share (Q720.00) of the proposed expenditures. Public works were allotted another large proportion (Q373.45) of the funds, and a sizable share (Q300.00) was to be used for general expenses. Payments on a loan made by the Instituto de Fomento Municipal were to total Q89.03, and fiestas to celebrate national and local holidays were expected to cost Q68.00.

Suffrage.--The Guatemalan constitution gives all citizens eighteen years of age and older the right to vote. The exercise of this franchise is mandatory for literate persons and optional for the illiterate. Unfortunately, it is not known to what extent the local people put their voting rights to use. On the other hand, there is evidence that elections in recent years have been free of undue pressure from state and national representatives of the party in power.³³ This lack of outside coercion in combination with the secret ballot and the fact that the candidates are well-known to the voters should make for a very democratic electoral procedure. The democratic selection of local leaders is a phenomenon

³³Local elections take place in December of years ending in odd numbers. The investigator has received word from an informant in the village regarding the outcome of the polling in December 1959. In this election the candidates of the strongest national opposition party were elected to the offices of alcalde, síndico, and fourth regidor. The posts of the other three regidores were filled by candidates from the losing slates in accordance with a Guatemalan law which guarantees the representation of minorities.

which is apparently quite new to the municipio. The information presented in the first paragraph of this section makes it clear that until 1944, a democratic choice of the highest officials was not even attempted. Evidence also exists that during much of the period which immediately followed, pressure from the official party made the local elections "rubber stamp" affairs.³⁴

³⁴See Raymond G. Amir, loc. cit., and Richard N. Adams, Magdalena Milpas Altas. 1951-1952, " loc. cit.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION, STRATIFICATION, AND MOBILITY

Social Differentiation

Society in Magdalena may appear to be fairly diversified if it is compared to the social situations which exist in some other Guatemalan villages. Such villages have remained even more isolated, geographically and culturally, from the influence of urban areas. Nevertheless, one of the outstanding characteristics of Magdalena is the high degree of social homogeneity that still exists among its inhabitants.

Race and ethnic group.--It has already been pointed out that only the white and Indian races are represented in Magdalena's population. The local inhabitants are predominantly of American Indian stock; this is particularly true of native Magdalenos. The physical characteristics of some of the migrants to the village, among them several school teachers and the secretary, reflect a mixture of white and Indian blood. However, in these cases it is extremely difficult to assess the relative extent to which the individual is a product of either of the two branches of his racial inheritance. Such considerations as style of haircut, habits of dress, manner of speaking, and the relative absence of the physical effects

of manual, outdoor labor (weather-beaten skin, gnarled hands) are liable to influence the observer's judgment. In any case, it is certain that taken as a whole, the village population as yet contains only a trickle of white blood. Neither does it appear likely that a significant amount of racial mixture will occur in the near future.

Through contact with the nearby cities of Antigua and Guatemala, the inhabitants of Magdalena have acquired some of the traits usually associated with ladinos. All of the men and some of the women prefer western clothing to the traditional native dress, Spanish is widely spoken in the village in preference to the local dialect of Cakchiquel, and the political system is no longer religiously oriented as is still usual in more isolated areas. Such influences as the improved school system, a growing number of radios in the village, and the increasing intrusion of national politics on the local scene are sure to hasten the process of ladinization in forthcoming years. Nevertheless, as the situation now stands, the condition of the villagers is almost as homogeneous ethnically as it is racially. The Guatemalan intellectual would refer to Magdalena as a village of "indigenas," the average urban dweller would consider it to be a village of indios (literally Indians, but used in a deprecatory sense), and the great majority of Magdaleños still think of themselves as naturales (natives) and are proud of their

d scent from the original inhabitants of the area.¹

Religion.--Religious affiliation is one of the aspects in which the local inhabitants are most sharply differentiated. This is a fairly recent innovation. Until about three decades ago only Catholics were to be found in Magdalena. There are now about 150 persons affiliated with Jehovah's Witnesses in the little village. It is not known to what degree the adherents of the two faiths engage in discussion or debate over their religious divergences. On the other hand, it was not unusual for members of either of the two congregations to attack freely the religious beliefs of their opposite numbers while in private conversation with the investigator.

Politics.--The division of the inhabitants of the village into opposing political parties is also a fairly recent innovation. In the past it was general for the local population to endorse passively the platform of the official party on the national level. Recently, however, there seems to have occurred an upsurge of interest in national politics, and the population is now divided into conservative and liberal groups.

¹All of these terms are more or less synonymous, and it should be remembered that none of them are purely racial designations. Instead, they should be considered as counterparts of the ethnic term ladino. See the definitions of indigena and ladino given in the section dealing with race, ethnic group, and nativity.

Occupation.--Economic division of labor and occupational differentiation have made comparatively little progress in Agdalena. By far the largest part of the population continues to be engaged in agriculture, and within agriculture there is very little specialization by tasks and enterprises. Even the commercial transportation activities (buses) are primarily involved in carrying agricultural products to market.

Except for a very small number of landowners in the village, the bulk of the population takes part in all the tasks involved in the planting, cultivating, harvesting, transporting, and marketing of the farm products.

The proprietors of the small commercial enterprises located in the village are generally part-time farmers. Within commerce there is very little specialization. One store differs from another only in the size, not kind, of its stock.

There is some specialization of services represented by those of the barber, a few tailors, the mill owners, carpenters, a few midwives, and so forth; but it is very rudimentary. Almost all of the service personnel are also engaged in agricultural activities.

Education.--With regard to educational status the local population is also very homogeneous. The average Agdaleño has very little occasion to exercise the slight knowledge of reading and writing which he may have acquired during a

short stay in the classroom. Under such conditions the individual very rapidly loses his mastery of these two basic skills. Hence, it can be assumed that with regard to the ability to read and write, the difference between local persons classified as literate and those classified as illiterate is generally very slight.

The schoolteachers and secretary form an educational elite in the village. It is to one of these persons that the average villager must turn when he is faced with a situation that calls for a knowledge of reading and writing.

Locality groups.--A neighborhood is one of the social groups which have definite territorial limits; and, therefore, it can be designated as a "locality group." At the same time it may be thought of as a "primary group."² As such it comprises a number of smaller primary groups (families) which have certain pattern of interaction or other distinctions which set them slightly apart from the rest of the neighborhoods in a given community.

The village of Magdalena is sharply divided into two distinct neighborhoods. The physical division between them

²The latter term is applied to groups in which the relationships of the members are "characterized by intimate face-to-face association and cooperation," cf. Charles H. Cooley, Social Organization (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), pp. 23-26. Primary groups play a fundamental role in shaping the individual member's personality. With reference to Magdalena, two such groups, the family and the posada, have already been discussed in some detail in other portions of this thesis.

is marked by a street which runs east and west along the upper edge of the central plaza. The villagers themselves recognize the distinction and refer to the two neighborhoods as the "upper barrio" and the "lower barrio." In this usage the qualifiers "upper" and "lower" refer to physical location only and do not have any conscious implications as far as social stratification is concerned.

These locality groups serve as focal points for several of the elements of social differentiation which exist in the village. In the section dealing with domestic institutions, it was shown that the neighborhoods tend to divide along family lines. It has also been pointed out that the members of a posada are generally drawn from the same neighborhood. The lower barrio (which is the largest of the two) contains a generous mixture of families of both religious persuasions, but the upper barrio is almost solidly Catholic. Most of the inhabitants of the lower barrio are liberal in their political leanings, while those of the upper barrio are the backbone of the conservative faction. The process of ladinization is further advanced among the inhabitants of the lower barrio. Many of the female residents of that neighborhood have given up the traditional costume in favor of skirts and blouses of more modern design, whereas the húipil (native blouse) and woven skirt still predominate in the wardrobe of the majority of the women of the upper barrio. Spanish is most often heard in the lower barrio, while the local dialect

of Cakchiquel is still frequently employed in the upper barrio, particularly among the women. Furthermore, all of the ladino families have their residence in the lower neighborhood. Each of the neighborhoods contains a molino de nixtamal, a cantina, and two or more stores (see either Figure 1 or Figure 10). It is likely that these enterprises draw most of their trade from among the members of the neighborhoods in which they are located.

The investigator is inclined to believe that there is also some correlation between economic status and residence by neighborhood and that the residents of the upper neighborhood are slightly more advantaged economically. His opinion was formed as a result of direct observation and informal questioning of the villagers as well as an analysis of certain data which were provided by the completed schedules. The survey of eighty-one families provided data concerning the number of livestock owned, size of farm, and tenure status. These data were analyzed with regard to the neighborhood in which the respondents were dwelling. When the results were tabulated and percentages calculated, these indicated that the inhabitants of the upper barrio were slightly favored in each of the three categories. On the other hand, in each case an χ^2 analysis of the numerical data indicated that the observed distributions could have easily occurred by chance (see the appropriate subdivisions of the chapter dealing with man-land relations).

Nevertheless, it is the opinion of the present writer that a relationship does exist between neighborhood and the factors which were treated as dependent variables, even though the range of the differences is so small as to render them insensitive in such a small sample to χ^2 analysis.

Con_lusion.--From the information given above, it can be seen that the people of Magdalena form a highly homogeneous group. The social solidarity which exists among the villagers is mostly of the mechanistic type. The various parts of the social group are bound together by a consciousness of kind and the type of cohesiveness that is derived from a high degree of similarity in fundamental traits and characteristics on the part of the members of the group. The type of solidarity known as organic solidarity, wherein the parts are bound together by the mutual interdependence that comes from specialization and division of labor, is very weakly developed as yet. As time goes on and urban influences are more strongly felt, the latter type of solidarity is sure to increase correspondingly.

Stratification

Social strata exist in Magdalena as they do in societies everywhere. However, the social distance between the upper and lower classes of the village is very small. Under such conditions many of the criteria which determine a family's position on the social scale are liable to be very subtle.

Since the project at hand was not designed as a thorough analysis of social stratification, only a few of the more obvious factors affecting the class structure of Magdalena are briefly discussed below.

Land and social status.--The information presented in the section dealing with size of holdings makes it obvious that no large land-holding elite exists in the village. Nevertheless, the local people attach a great deal of importance to the possession of land. It is apparent that families which own or control relatively large amounts of land enjoy considerable prestige. Conversely, those families which have no land, or only tiny amounts, are likely to be found at the very bottom of the social scale.

Ethnic group and social status.--The ladino residents of the village form a clique which ranks high in social status. This is obvious in many ways. For example, when such persons are referred to or addressed, their names are always prefaced by Don or Dona (titles of respect); when they pass in and out of the alcaldía, they do so with an air of freedom unused by the average indígena; and their arrival at a gathering of indígenas is always met with a solicitous stirring about of those already present.

Socio-politico influence and social status.--Shortly after the investigator's arrival he was provided with a list of the principal men of the village in order that he might initiate his investigations through the most influential contacts. I.e

was not long in learning that all of the men listed as hon-
bre princ pales were indigenas and that some were fairly
 poor by village standards. It is certain, however, that each
 was the possessor of personal qualities which endowed him
 with more than average socio-politico influence. Such per-
 sons are generally to be found at any important gathering,
 and it may be inferred that they rank high on the social
 scale.

Social Mobility

It is almost impossible for a local citizen to pass from
 the ranks of the indigenas to those of the ladinos as long as
 he maintains residence in the village. The investigator is
 well-acquainted with one 'agdalcho who possesses to a high
 degree all of the ladino traits of dress, speech, and customs,
 as well as being relatively wealthy.³ He mixes socially with
 ladinos whom he treats with a great deal of familiarity; yet
 neither these nor the indigenas of the village are able to
 forget that his parents were "naturales," and consequently
 both sectors of the population still think of him as an
 indigena.

³This man is the possessor of a good deal of land, but
 his hands are soft--he leaves the field work to hired labor.
 This may be considered as an almost infallible index of high
 status in any rural society.

CHAPTER VI

LEVELS AND STANDARDS OF LIVING

The use of a budgetary technique for measuring levels and standards of living in Magdalena would be quite impractical. First of all, the Magdalenos themselves produce such a large share of their material needs (food and shelter) that only a small portion of their total expenditure of effort is revealed by their actual cash outlay. Secondly, the local people are unaccustomed to keeping accounts, and it is evident that they are extremely uncertain regarding cash disbursements for a period stretching more than a month into the past.

The investigator included in his schedules questions regarding the amount of money which was spent in certain ways during the month and year previous to the interview. It soon became apparent that the data thus gathered were extremely unreliable. Other questions which were intended to elicit some information as to the amounts of goods and services which the local sellers felt that they deserved (the standard of living) met with the same result. Therefore, the material given below is largely of a descriptive nature, and the data are primarily drawn from the local census of 1957.

The House

Availability dictates the materials which a man may use in the construction of a dwelling place for himself and his family. The style of dwelling generally conforms to the socially inherited values as to what is useful, esthetic, and acceptable to the members of the group. Therefore, the dwelling is an important indicator of both level and standard of living. As indicated above, the local dwellers perform most of the labor which goes into the construction of their own homes. Aid is usually donated by friends and neighbors, but it is frequently necessary to employ a man who is skilled in house building to direct the project.

Houses with only one room are by far the most common type to be found in Tagdalena. The census listed 210 single-room dwellings in the cabecera, while only 34 homes were reported to have 2 or more rooms. The number of persons per room is generally thought to be one of the most significant indexes of housing. When a home contains less than one room per inhabitant, it may be thought of as being overcrowded. From the figures given in the preceding paragraph, it can be seen that the overwhelming majority of Tagdaleños are living in what would normally be considered to be seriously overcrowded conditions.

Dried cornstalks are the materials most frequently used in the construction of walls. Such walls last for approximately 10 years, after which time they must be replaced.

Almost two-thirds (159) of Magdalena's dwellings have walls made of this material. Sixty-seven have walls built of adobe, and eleven others have walls of wattle and daub. Both of the last-named materials are more durable than cornstalks. Adobe walls are both the longest-lasting and the most satisfactory esthetically. A few homes are constructed of rough-hewn, wooden planks. The census does not contain data regarding the materials used in roofing the local dwellings. However, from his observations in the village, the writer feels that he is justified in drawing the conclusions given below. Normally, a home with walls of cornstalks also has a thatched roof. This type of roof is considered to provide the most warmth, but it is not as durable as the others. A home with wattle and daub walls generally is roofed with red tiles, and those of adobe most often have either tile or tin roofs.

Nearly all of the homes in Magdalena have floors of bare dirt. Only a few have floors of cement or rough bricks. Homes with walls of cornstalks do not have windows. Ventilation is provided by the cracks between the stalks. Homes with walls of wattle and daub sometimes have windows, and adobe-walled dwellings nearly always possess them. Glass is not used in the windows; they are fitted with wooden shutters instead. Very few of Magdalena's homes have ceilings. On occasion, however, homes which have roofs of tin will also

hav a ceiling of wood or straw matting. The bare tin roofs are said to cause the home to be very cold.

Facilities and Utilities

The furnishings to be found in the homes of the ladinos and some of the more ladinized indigenas of the village are not elegant. Nevertheless, in general they conform to the pattern encountered in more urban areas. That is to say, they consist of full-sized tables and chairs, clothes-closets, radios, mirrors, large beds with bedclothes, and so forth. The kitchen is generally separated from the living quarters, and the cooking is done on a raised platform. Even in these cases, however, the cooking utensils are generally supported by the traditional three stones, although the writer did see one or two iron grates being used for this purpose. The illumination in such homes is usually provided by Coleman lamps. These dwellings frequently have water taps in the yard as well a private pilas for the family wash. The toilet facilities are enclosed and located at a convenient distance from the house.

By contrast, the homes of the majority of the villagers are furnished in a somewhat more primitive manner. The principal articles of furniture are usually: (1) a low, wooden platform covered with a petate (mat of woven straw) and a blanket or two where the family sleeps huddled together for warmth, (2) a table for the family santos, (3) a wooden chest



Figure 33.--A private pila and a "straw" of water.

for storing wearing apparel and other articles, (4) a few three-legged stools or tiny chairs. A tinaja (large clay water jug) will always be found in one corner, and one or more piedras de moler with their corresponding aguachih ros (rollers) will be tipped neatly against the wall if not in use.¹ In homes of this type the cooking is done on the floor over a fire built between three stones. Sometimes a hole will be left at one of the corners where the roof joins the wall in order to facilitate the exit of the smoke. Nevertheless, most of the smoke escapes out the cracks between the cornstalk walls or the door. A garabate (curved, metal hook or sharpened stick) is usually suspended a few feet over the fire for smoking meat. Illumination is provided by the cooking fire or by tiny kerosene lamps. Some of these homes also have outside water taps and private pilas (a total of fifty-two homes have such water taps). Only twenty-two of the homes in the village have no toilet facilities, but such facilities are generally of a very simple nature.²

¹Along with those mentioned in the text, the most common kitchen utensils are the following: a comal, or large clay platter used as a griddle for making tortillas; a molinillo, or carved wooden stick for stirring food; some cuchirrones, or large wooden spoons; a few ollas, or clay pots; a salero, or container for salt that is generally made from the tecomate gourd; canastos, or little baskets for carrying tortillas; servilletas, or napkins to wrap the tortillas; a fartén, or frying pan made either from clay or metal; jarras, or small water jugs; a colador, or colander; a batidor, or clay coffee pot; plus assorted items of tableware.

²However, it should be remembered that when Magdalena acquired a water system, two flush toilets were installed in a well-ventilated building in the central plaza.

The Diet

Since all of Magdalena's agriculturists are subsistence farmers, the types of foods which are consumed in the home are almost exclusively those raised by the villagers themselves. This does not mean to say that in all cases the farmers produce enough food to satisfy the needs of their families throughout the year. On the contrary, at the time of the investigation most of the households reported that they were buying even the indispensable maize.³ Almost without exception, each household reported weekly purchases of coffee, panela (a brown sugar sold in large balls), meat, onions, tomatoes, salt, beans, and peppers. Other major items in the local diet are drawn from the locally raised produce (beets, cabbage, lettuce, etc.) as well as huicoy (Cucurbita Pepo), guisquil (Cechium edule), and fruit.

Three meals a day are consumed by the typical household in Magdalena. Breakfast is taken between the hours of 6:00 and 7:00 A.M., lunch is eaten around noon, and the evening meal is served between the hours of 6:00 and 8:00 P.M. A very detailed dietary study has been conducted in Magdalena

³This situation is not entirely due to the limited production of the tiny farms. It was learned that many farmers, in order to obtain some ready cash, sold a portion of their corn crop as soon as it was harvested. This is an unfortunate practice since these same farmers are almost invariably faced with the need of purchasing maize for their daily needs long before the next harvest. The price at which they must repurchase this staple exceeds the one they received for the corn they sold during the harvesting season.



Figure 34.--Another step in the preparation of tortillas.



Figure 35.--Buying maize

by investigators connected with INCAP. The results of this investigation indicate that "with the exception of vitamin A and riboflavin the estimated intake levels were satisfactory for all the families when compared to the recommended quantities.⁴ A scarcity of vitamin C was indicated only in the diets of a few families."⁵

⁴These quantities were calculated in accordance with recommendations to be found in Food and Agriculture Organization, Dietary Surveys: Their Techniques and Interpretation (Washington, D.C.: 1949).

⁵Marina Flores and Emma Feh, "Estudios de hábitos dietéticos en poblaciones de Guatemala. I. Magdalena Milpas Altas," Boletín de la Oficina Sanitaria Panamericana (Guatemala: Oficina Sanitaria Panamericana, 1955), Suplemento No. 2, Noviembre.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing pages contain the description of certain aspects of a Guatemalan "society in miniature." This section is devoted to a summarization of the findings and to some general conclusions.

The density with which the group is settled on the land contrasts rather sharply with its otherwise highly rural nature. Racially and ethnically the people are very homogeneous. They are principally indígenas of predominantly Indian stock. The age distribution of the local population is typical of areas where high birth rates and high death rates prevail. There is a concentration of persons in the early years of life with relatively small proportions in the productive years and only a few survivors in the advanced ages. Even considering the rural nature of the society, a surprisingly high ratio of males to females is encountered in Lagdalena. Very few Magdaleños remain single throughout their life. However, the consensual union is more prevalent than that which has been sanctioned by a legal ceremony. The overwhelming majority of the economically active population is engaged in agricultural pursuits. This group was found to be supporting an inordinately large proportion of economically inactive persons. The majority of the local inhabitants profess the Catholic religion, although

a significant number are affiliates of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Illiteracy is still high in Magdalena, but there is evidence that it is gradually decreasing. The local birth and death rates are very high. They seem to be intermediate between the rates for the indigena and ladino sectors of the national population. Despite the fact that the locality is annually losing about one-half of its natural increase of population through migration, the local society was found to be steadily increasing in size.

With regard to its demographic characteristics, the local group is probably very typical of the majority of those which could be encountered in the rural area of the Guatemalan highlands.

The local settlement pattern consists of one compact village, the cabecera municipal, with two adjacent population clusters in which the homes are somewhat more dispersed than in the cabecera but still quite densely grouped. The excessive distances which many of the farmers must daily travel to and from their fields are a definite economic disadvantage. In large measure, this handicap offsets the social advantages which arise from the daily contacts and intimate association encouraged by the village pattern of settlement. Land holdings are delineated by a system of metes and bounds. The indefinite, indeterminate, and impermanent nature of such boundaries is a fertile breeding ground for bickering.

strife, or lawsuits. It also results in an abundance of clouded or "shingled" titles which greatly increases the difficulty of settling such disputes by legal means. The major part of the local farmers are owner-operators, and as yet there do not seem to be overly large proportions of tenants or agricultural laborers in the population. The subdivision of farms has proceeded to a point where the properties are too small to provide a satisfactory level of living according to the standards which prevail in much of the western world. The diminutive size of these farms is also a serious obstacle to the introduction of improved agricultural techniques. Fragmentation of holdings in Magdalena has not been carried to the extremes which sometimes occur in agricultural village communities. Nevertheless, it is prevalent enough to further handicap the introduction of modern, scientific methods of farming. A lavish expenditure of labor characterizes the present system of farming in Magdalena. The use of the plow, the wheel, or draft animals is very slight. Such a situation today inevitably results in a low level of living. The local agriculturalists need to introduce the use of the plow, wherever the slope of the land will permit, as well as other small farm machinery. Animals for transporting the products from the field to the village would greatly increase the efficiency of production.

The family, both extended and nuclear, is the most important social institution of the local society. Despite

the frequent lack of legal ties, most marriages are very stable. The typical family may be thought of as paternal, patrilocal, and bi-lineal. Both the nuclear family and the household are quite small for such a rural area. A type of "bachelor house," known as the posada, is one of the primary groups found in Magdalena. It is probably a survival of early Mayan culture. The religious activities of the local Catholics seem to be mostly centered in the home or in the cofradia. On the other hand, the Jehovah's Witnesses make frequent use of their "temple." Magdalena is probably less homogeneous with regard to religion than are most otherwise comparable Cuatemalan villages. A definite improvement in the schools has taken place during recent years. At present they are much better-housed, equipped, and staffed than those of many other tiny rural villages of Central and South America. Nevertheless, there is much left to do before they can be considered to be adequate to meet the educational needs of a modern society. The local government is democratically organized and seems to be efficiently operated within the limits imposed on it by a lack of sufficient funds. Its effectiveness would be greatly enhanced had it the power to impose a general land tax. It would then be in a much better position to perform those functions, such as the improvement of roads, the support of the local schools, and the introduction of lighting, which are best performed at the local level. The local people seem to be becoming

increasingly aware of political happenings on the national scene.

The Magdaleños are a highly homogeneous group. Nevertheless, certain distinct differences within the group are readily apparent. Two ethnic groups reside side by side in the village as do the members of two distinct religious bodies. At least two political factions are active in the locality, and the village also is sharply divided along neighborhood lines. The social distance between the various classes is very slight. However, social status is definitely linked to possession of land. There also seems to be a relationship between tenure class and economic status. Owner-operators were found to be somewhat more advantaged with regard to the amount of land they possessed, the distance they traveled to reach their farm plots, and the number of cattle and hogs they were raising. Chi-square analysis of the data indicated that the differences observed could have easily occurred by chance, but the author feels that this is due to the fact that the differences are so slight as to render them insensitive to probability analysis in such a small sample. There seems to be a certain amount of social mobility which is associated with the acquisition of land, but it is almost impossible for a local inhabitant to pass from one ethnic group to another as long as he maintains residence in the locality.

The local level of living is woefully low and in many ways the standard of living does not seem to be much higher.

What is needed is genuine education:

. . . which increases the standard of living by creating or by instilling new wants, desires, hopes to which people aspire, and which, at the same time equips them with the additional skills, techniques and general knowledge that are essential for enabling them to secure the additional goods and services which they have learned to want. In other words, real education advances the standard of living and also supplies the technical training which enable the level of living to attain new standards."¹

¹Smith, Rodriguez and Garcia, op. cit., p. 65.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

PROVIDENCIA No. ASUNTO: Municipalidad de Magdalena Milpas Altas, del Departamento de Sacatepéquez, envía su presupuesto para su revisión. Ejercicio 1958/59.

INSTITUTO DE FOMENTO MUNICIPAL, GUATEMALA, siete de Julio de milnovecientos cincuenta y ocho.

Vuelva atentamente a la Municipalidad de Magdalena Milpas Altas, manifestando que este Instituto recomienda la aprobación de presupuesto para el ejercicio 1958/59, siempre que se le introduzcan las siguientes modificaciones:

INCFESOC:

ARBITRIOS "A".

Canon de Agua	Q. 94.88	Q. 94.88
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ARBITRIOS "B".

Balneario Municipal	" 5.76	
Venta de Pajas de Agua	" 167.81	
Destace de ganado mayor y menor	" 71.00	
Reposición Cédulas de Vecindad	" 6.10	
Licencia Zarabandas	" 17.70	
Productos Feria	" 0.97	
Impuesto Q.0.02 aguardiente		
Dto. 1132	" 16.05	
Impuesto extracción de cueros	" 2.67	
Poste Público	" 15.50	
Impuesto de Vehículos	" 8.11	
Derechos de Cementerio	" 11.25	
Multas	" 242.08	
Impuesto tiendas	" 21.68	
Arrendamiento terrenos comunales	" 36.97	
Repastaje de animales	" 29.34	
Arbitrio Molinos de cereales	" 4.60	
Ventas de maíz producto terreno		
communal	<u>" 11.52</u>	669.11

CONTRIBUCION DE OCNATO	" 3.0.40
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SALDOS DE INGRESOS ORDINARIOS:

En Caja al 31 de Marzo 1958	Q. 313.06	
En el Instituto de Fomento Municipal, por imp. aguardiente Q.O. 02 Dto. 1132, al 1o. marzo 1958	" 3.84	Q. 316.90
Sub-Total:		Q. 1,421.29

INGRESOS ESPECIALES:

Impuesto de gasolina Dto. 580 Q. 195.24

SALDOS DE INGRESOS ESPECIALES:

En el Instituto de Fomento Municipal por imp. de gasolina Dto.- 580, al 1o. Marzo de 1958	" 18.95	" 214.19
Total:		<u>Q. 1,635.48</u>

EGRESOS:SUELDOS:

	Quincenal:	Anual:	
1.-Alcalde Municipal	Q. 15.00	Q. 180.00	
2.-Secretario Municipal	" 30.00	" 360.00	
3.-Tesorero Municipal	" 15.00	" 180.00	Q. 720.00

GASTOS DIVERSOS:

4.-Gastos Generales	" 25.00	" 300.00	
5.-Alumbrado Municipal	" 3.50	" 30.00	" 330.00

FIESTAS:

6.-Fiesta Titular	" 25.00	
7.-15 de Septiembre	" 28.00	
8.-Otras fiestas nacionales	" 15.00	" 68.00

Sub-Total: Q. 1,118.00

9.-GASTOS EXTRAORDINARIOS INTERVISTOS: " 55.00

AMORTIZACION PRESTADA:

10.-Instituto de Fomento Municipal, amortizaciones a Capital	" 85.01
11.-Instituto de Fomento Municipal, provisión aproximada para pago de intereses	" 4.02

O PAS MUNICIPALES:

12.-Obras Municipales por realizar el presente año con el excedente del impuesto sobre la gasolina	Q. 125.16
13.-Obras municipales por realizar el presente año con recursos propios	<u>" " 8.79</u>
Total:	<u><u>Q.1,635.48</u></u>

Con las modificaciones anteriores podrá esa Municipalidad poner en vigor su presupuesto sin más trámite, únicamente deberá ser aprobado por el Concejo Municipal, como lo indica el Artículo 115 del Código Municipal.

Lic. Octavio Aguilar,
GERENTE

FCB/rjc.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Harley Upchurch was born March 16, 1929. He attended high school in Ann Arbor, Michigan, before serving in the United States Army from 1949 to 1952. His undergraduate work was done at Southern Methodist University, the University of Madrid, and Mexico City College. After receiving the Bachelor of Arts degree from the latter school in 1953, he was awarded a graduate assistantship in the School of Inter-American Studies at the University of Florida for the academic year 1958-1959. During the academic year 1959-1960 he held a graduate assistantship with the Institute of Gerontology at the University of Florida. He expects to continue his work toward the doctor's degree at Louisiana State University where he has been awarded a graduate assistantship for the academic year 1960-1961.

He is a member of Alpha Kappa Delta, a national sociological honor society, and the Southern Sociological Society.

This thesis was prepared under the direction of the chairman of the candidate's supervisory committee and has been approved by all members of that committee. It was submitted to the Director of the School of Inter-American Studies, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and to the Graduate Council, and was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

June, 1960

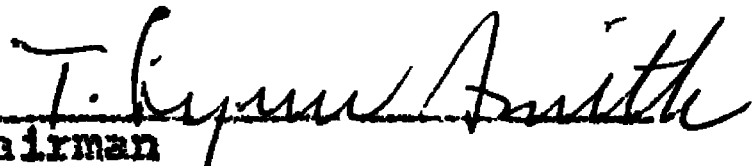


Director, School of
Inter-American Studies

Dean, College of
Arts and Sciences

Dean, Graduate School

Supervisory Committee:



Chairman

