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Santa María Ixcateca
por Tecomanabaca, Oax.

Ixcateca

Esther Elliott

MSS FILE

1944/86

I. Town

A. Situation- In a valley about 300 feet deep, ~~Adome~~ dome shaped, nearly all the soil is limestone except along the arroya where they could plant if there was more water.

B. Form of town- A square 4 blocks wide, good, neat plaza. Beautiful church with tile domes, iron gates which seem to be locked except when a service is being held.

Small kiosk (band stand)

Long, neat municipal building with the school rooms and a private room for the teacher. *There are 2 men teachers. One, a Mexican, from Oaxaca. One - a Chukon Indian.* The municipal has a typewriter which the teacher used. There are electric lights for the stores and the streets, which run from about 6:30 to somewhere between 8:30 and 9:00

C. There are about 300 houses.

D. There are about 1000 people.

E. Altitude, climate- As much as we could judge it could have been above 7,000. The climate was varied, but on the whole it was cold in the mornings and very cold at nights. It was cold in the shade in the daytime but the sun was very bright and gave one a headache if no hat was worn. The limestone being white made the sun glare and was hard on the eyes. There was fog for days at a time and frost in the mornings. Often there was a strong wind.

F. There was communal pasture, as the people did very, very little farming and needed no special ground divided.

G. Government of town depended on the municipio which consisted of a president and other officers. They kept the papers tacked neatly on the wall. The head town is Teotitlan.

H. Traffic, trade, relationship with other tribes, market day. They made some mecate of green palm which they twisted in two twists.

The main trade was hats of palm. They are all the same pattern, which is a small round hat with a turned up brim. They are for children and are called charritos. They are made of bleached palm which is dried in the sun for 5 days then stored inside. Many men go out for their own for the family use, but much is bought from others. They buy dye, but do their own dying with water, hanging the palm on lines to dry. They use two colors to a hat. They use either green or red or purple. They make 4 spiral stripes down the hats. The whole family works on hats. They either sit in caves which they all have made in their patios or they visit in each others houses or caves or walk around town always working on the hats. They make at least 3 a day. The children learn by at least the age of 7. They use a bone of either deer or turkey with a sharp ^{edge} and a groove with which to finish the hats, but if they don't have the bone with them, they bend back the strand of palm and tuck it back in, then cut it off. They pay 15 cent for the palm of one hat. It takes 4 palm branches for a hat. They are paid 35 cents in the stores for the finished hat. They often trade the hat at the store for food.

A very few people from other places bring in fruit and vegetables about once a week. They have no market other than this. These things are sold in the streets in front of the small stores. There are 4 general stores.

IXCATECA (Popoloca)

I.H.(con't.)

Other tribes bring in beans, corn, and wheat as very little planting is done here. On the store owners go out for it.

II. Characteristics of the Indians

A. Physical appearance-Many are light, ^{complexioned} of a medium build, healthy appearance, not even resembling Indians. They often have dimpled cheeks. But some few have a very Mongolian appearance.

B. Common diseases- none that we found. They have many nivas, and small sicknesses, but on the whole seem to be healthy.

C. Effects of alcohol on race- Don't seem to drink as much as some tribes do. Drink at special occasions. If drunks are too noisy or troublesome they are put in the jail. Pulque is used for bread and they use it while it is still good, so that it does not give the taste to the bread that I have often noted in bread made with pulque. The women didn't seem to do much drinking. At New Year's some of the old women seemed to drink more than the young ones.

D. Mancha Mongolia- as many babies as I saw without clothes, had it. I didn't find out any superstitions concerning hair lip etc.

E. Yes, the race is intelligent and industrious. They even have public molinos as their time is valuable for making the hats.

III. Culture

A. A. Type of family. Monogamous.

B. Custom of getting a bride. The fellow asks the girl.

C. Where they live. Alone.

D. Customs of work. The whole family works on the hats. The women make the tortillas etc for eating. The men carry water and gather palm. If there is no man the women or boys carry water.

E. As far as I could learn ~~as far as I~~ the orphans always live with a relative, usually an aunt.

F. Houses are of different kinds. They often have both a house of limestone and a house of thatch in which they cook and work in the daytime. They sleep in the limestone houses.

The limestone houses are made of bricks cut from the ground. They are about 1 foot by 1½ by 6 inches. They are cut with a crowbar. They are piled up with cement or nescal between. They have either flat roofs of tiles or steep roofs of tiles or of thatch. The ones with thatch have palm for walling for about 2 feet under the roof. Some of the stone houses have round ovens built on behind. They used to make much more bread than they do now. This was because wheat was cheaper.

Corn- They keep the corn in large sacks of petate just rested on boards. There is loss from rats, but not from mildew. They have a few cribs in the places where corn is sold. They are made of logs with steep roofs of tin. They don't use tapancos.

They have separate kitchens.

They use comals about 1½ feet which are imported. They use ollas which are also imported.

They eat tortillas, habas, chicharos (dried) and some meat; both dried and fresh, some deer, which they shoot in the mountains, pan and postoli, and other typical Mexican foods.

They use wood in fires on the floors, or a few had "built stoves." They carry their water mostly in two gas cans, but the few women that carry it, use cantaros. The water is in a spring about half a mile from the town. They have a stone wall with cement, in the well. They also have a cement trough for the animals. There is another river much farther away where many do their washing.

III.F (con't)

Esther Elliott

Dress- some of the older women wear very long full skirts, but the rest of the women and girls wear ordinary Mexican dress, with dark blue rebosos and go barefooted unless they are richer.

Beds- Mostly wooden beds with woolen blankets. Some metal beds with springs and mattresses.

G. The religion is Catholic. I just found one woman who seemed to believe in the evil eye and she didn't do much about it. She borrowed a handkerchief to wipe the spirits away from her baby who was sick, but the next day she brought the baby back. She also washed the baby with egg and oil near the "mouth of the stomach". All the other women would even offer you their baby to hold, and there didn't seem to be much superstition.

We never heard of witch doctors.

H. Type of language. It is tonal with 4 tones. It contains glottal stops and some umlauts. This village is the only place where it is understood and the people here are very bi-lingual. In fact we heard far more Spanish spoken than we did Ixcateca.

IV. Industrial

A. The chief industry is sombreros.

B. Not agriculturists as there is no water.

C. No fishing.

D. They hunt with guns. There are deer and some lions.

E. They have very little carbon. It was just used for fiesta where they had food and no other fire to keep it hot. They don't make it.

F. No pottery or work in madera.

We found no bees.

H. They make rope of palm which is called mecate.

I. They make many cohetes and very large ones. They use them for fiestas, which seem to be held often. I don't know the process nor sale of them.

J. The weaving is entirely hats and some baskets for tortillas, which they use themselves or sell among themselves, but don't sell many outside of the town.

V. Music. They have a regular band that they use for fiestas, funerals, parades. It plays Mexican music.

VI. History. The town seems to be very old, but I couldn't find much of the history.

Different families seem to take turns having big fiestas which the others are invited to attend. Such as one family has the fiesta for Guadalupe and another has the one for Buena Noche. They have many fiestas for their saints. They had one day when the men had a game of torrito, where they had the band play but we couldn't get close enough to tell what they did.

VII. Transportation. Burros, mules, horses.

They have a postal service where mail comes and goes twice a week. A mozo carries the mail, and the mailman does not go out for it. They have no seguro service. There is no telephone.