



## Language and Culture Archives

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## The Trique Tribe

### I Geography

The Trique Indians occupy five towns, viz. San Andres Chicahuaxtla, Santo Domingo Chicahuaxtla, San Miguel Chicahuaxtla, San Juan Chicahuaxtla, and Copala - all in the extreme west-central part of the state of Oaxaca, México. The town from which the following data was taken, San Andres Chicahuaxtla, is situated on the camino real halfway between Tlaxiaco and Putla, Oax., and is approximately seven hours walking distance from each of these towns. It is located at longitude 97 50' and latitude 17 10' at an altitude of approximately ten thousand feet. The central part of the village is situated on a small plateau, which is in reality nothing more than a ridge, and the rest of the town is spread over the sides of the surrounding slopes. The town is sheltered on the west by a higher mountain ridge. On clear days one can see the Pacific Ocean, roughly 75 miles distant.

The camino real, in passing through the village, forms the main street and center of town. Along this street are located the post-office, a town hall, two mesones, and several dwelling houses. The street is partially paved with stones and, although there is no real plaza, it bulges slightly at its center, which is where the tri-weekly market is held.

Due to its high altitude and lack of natural shelter, Chicahuaxtla suffers from a relatively cold climate and, frequently, experiences high winds and extreme cold at the same time. On a normal day during the early part of the dry season<sup>1</sup> the sun shines from dawn

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(1) Observations made over a period of one month; from Nov. 6, 1941 to Dec. 2, 1942

until approximately 1:30 P.M. when heavy clouds blow in from the south and south-west, thus blanketing the village and surrounding mountains with a cold, almost impenetrable fog. The fog remains until after nightfall. The nights are always very cold.

San Andres is a part of the district of Putla, Oax., and is itself the political and doubtless also the commercial center for the four other Trique villages previously mentioned in paragraph one. There are approximately 200 - 250 houses in the town. I would estimate to population to be 300 - 400.

## II Anthropology

### A. Physical

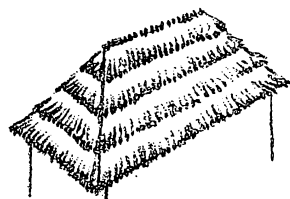
The Trique Indians have the usual mongoloid features and especially wide, flat noses. Their hair is black and straight. The skin color seems to be lighter than that of the average Mexican Indian. The males are short - about five feet tall - and the females are, as a rule, slightly shorter than the men.

### B. Cultural

#### 1. Material Culture.

The Trique house may be one of two types. If of the first type, the house is either circular or square. Its walls are made of upright poles from one and one-half to two and one-half inches in diameter laced together with vines and chinked up with mud. The roof of this house is in the shape of a cone or a pyramid, depending on the shape of the house walls (i.e. cone-shaped roof with circular house; pyramid-shaped roof with square house), and covered with thatch. The more common type

of house is square (or rectangular) and constructed of heavy logs in the style of the "log-cabin". In the better made houses these logs are squared so as to make them fit snugly against each other. The roof for this type of house is similar to a four-sided pyramid except that, instead of meeting at one point, the four sides slope upward to meet the ridge pole. (see illustration) This roof may be covered with board shingles or with thatch. The majority of the roofs in San Andres are thatched. Deviations from these two types of houses are the school-house, the church building, and several other unoccupied houses near these two. Most of the families have separate kitchens located next to their houses.



The cooking utensils are a comal, or griddle used for toasting the tortillas, and a few pottery jars. Besides these pottery utensils they use a gourd cup as a container for lime, salt, eggs, etc., and as a drinking cup for water. Water is obtained from any one of several springs located on the mountain sides and near to the village. The women usually carry the water from these springs in their gourds. Only a wood fire is used in cooking. The principal food is the tortilla.

The dress of the man does not vary from the usual pajama-like costume which is used in Mexico among the peons. The men are almost always seen wrapped in their blankets, wearing their straw or black felt hats, and, in spite of the cold climate, wearing their pants rolled up ~~just below~~ to a point just above the knees. This custom of keeping one's pants rolled is universal among the Triques of San Andres and Santo Domingo Chicahuaxtla and is probably so throughout the remainder of the Trique villages. The women wear short, knee-length

skirts. These are dark grey as contrasted with the dark brown skirts which are worn by the women of the surrounding Mixteco tribe. The Trique women also wear a light, loose-fitting embroidered shirt, or "huipil". This may be worn full-length, in which case it reached to the ankles, or it may be worn hitched up around the waist.

The women carry their children slung on their backs in their blankets.

For their beds, the Triques use petates, or straw mats, laid on the dirt floor of their houses.

The only occupation of the Trique Indians is agriculture. The principal crop is corn, from which they make their principal food, the tortilla. Wheat is a minor crop. The men work in the fields except on fiesta days. A few of the Indians keep a few chickens. The eggs they get from these chickens are not sold but bartered on market days.

For their cohetes and other fireworks used at fiestas, the Triques hire a cohetero from a neighboring Mixteco town. They buy what little pottery they use from Mixtecos from Cuquila, Oax.

## 2.2. Social Culture.

The Trique family is monogamous and patrilineal. When a young man gets married it is the custom to pay twenty pesos for the bride.

Pulque and liquor play a great part in the social life of the Indians, probably because of the extreme cold coupled with the poverty of the people. Since they lack adequate clothing for such a climate they use alcoholic beverages to keep them warm.

### 3. Spiritual Culture.

The Trique indians pay allegiance to the Catholic church.

However, it was told me in Tlaxiaco that these indians have, in San Andres Chicahuaxtla, a cave in which they keep idols which they worship. I have never seen the cave or heard anyone in San Andres speak of it.

The band of San Andres is made up of nine young boys with an average age of ten years. They play for fiestas, services in the church, and for funerals.

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San Miguel el Grande, Oax.  
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