

AN ETHNOHISTORICAL STUDY OF THE SOUTHERN MAYA LOWLANDS
IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

A RESEARCH DESIGN OTLINE

by

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Abstract

16th-17th century Spanish relaciones found during 1969-1971 contain new ethnographic and historical information unavailable to previous writers on the Southern Maya Lowlands. Unused in Spanish and Guatemalan archives these valuable manuscripts contain descriptions of sizeable populations throughout lowland Chiapas, El Petén, Verapaz and Izabal. eyewitness observers describe in vivid detail population, settlement pattern, and architecture of residential and ceremonial buildings, religious rites, political organization, trade, and other aspects of contact period Maya life. Numerous newly found censuses contain birth, marriage, family and death facts plus other information needed for thorough comparative demographic studies. This information will necessitate revisions of current models for supposed lowland Maya behavior and will provide factual data with which archaeologists can propose more reliable reconstructions of the Classic Maya way of life through ethnographic analogy.

1. BACKGROUND FOR THIS RESEARCH

In a recent review of the last decade of Maya studies, R.E.W. ADAMS cited the pressing need for more ethnohistoric research on the Maya (1969 17). In all of the articles on the Maya which have appeared recently in American Antiquity or American Anthropologist the weakest part of their documentation was author's unbalanced reliance on the old traditional sources (i.e. Landa 1941), and the lack of any fresh facts (despite impressive new theoretical arguments and elaborate models, c.f. Rathje 1971; Lange 1971). Forgotten and used, in European and Guatemalan archives, are thousands of pages of first hand Spanish descriptions of 16th-17th century Maya life in lowland Chiapas, Tabasco, Petén, and adjacent highland Verapaz.

The need for these new data is manifested by recent studies that demonstrate conclusively that there were substantial native populations in the supposedly deserted Southern Maya Lowlands when the Spanish first penetrated the

region (Thompson 1938; 1966; 1970; Saint-lu 1968; Hellmuth 1969; 1970a; 1970b; 1971a ~ 1971b; 1972 ; Estrada 1970a; 1970b; 1970c).

There had certainly been a drastic population loss coincident with the "collapse" of the Classic Maya civilization -- probably an 80% drop in population. It is evident that most of the old ceremonial centers were eventually left completely abandoned; but, during searches in Guatemalan and Spanish archives (1969-1971), Feldman, Hellmuth and Estrada have found a considerable number of early Spanish relaciones which completely substantiate Thompson's once lone voice in pointing out that sizeable Maya population existed in the 16th-17th centuries, irregularly distributed through the Southern Lowlands and bordering Central Highlands. From all these unpublished manuscript reports, it is now clear that the lack of population in the Petén, which so stuck Maudslay and Maler, and the depopulation still evident today was a result of Spanish introduced disease; a prolonged and bloody Spanish conquest and disruptive occupation; forced labor which sent thousands of lowland Maya to their death as overloaded human pack animals on supply trains; and forced resettlements of whole population of lowland Maya in the surroundings highland fringes (where they usually died). Now that we have located these new documents, it is important to microfilm, transcribe and edit them. We need to map out which, regions were and which were not populated, and clarify what were the political and linguistic subdivisions, subsistence economies, and other cultural attributes of these important Maya populations.

Ethnographic analogies for Classic Maya culture would be greatly helped if there was available a more complete record of the diversity of pre-Hispanic Maya life. Anthropologists could at least see the varying ways in which the many different Maya peoples of the area (the Verapaz Chol, Cholti-Lacandón, Teuegua, Keckchi, Quejache, etc.) lived, instead of having to make do with complete data on Northern Yucatan from the traditional sources, such as Landa. It is necessary that someone goes through the archives and extracts the ethnographic kernel from the unwieldy mass of Spanish administrative and religious verbiage.

An example of the variety and fullness of the ethnographic information locked in the archives can be seen from the new data now available for one

sample town. In Sevilla and Guatemalan archives Hellmuth has already located over 2,000 folios (4,000 pages) of descriptions of the conquest and daily life of the Choltil-Lacandón inhabitants of the town of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Lacandón, 1694-1714. Added to the published data already available, this means that anthropologists now have for comparative studies: over 500 previously unknown Choltil Mayan personal names; population data, occasionally per house; a detailed description of the architecture and furnishings of private houses, religious structures and shrines, and community buildings; a several thousand word dictionary written in the town; descriptions not only for the complete clothing of males and of females, but also reports on how cloth was woven and dyed; names of deities, accounts of religious dances, rites, paraphernalia, priests, adoratories and idols; names in Mayan and in Spanish of every plant, animal, bird, or fish raised, hunted, gathered, or eaten; comments on methods of farming, gathering, hunting and fishing; kinship terms and information on marriage ceremonies and the domestic group cycle; lists of trade items, routes and medium of exchange; explanations of the civil and religious hierarchy and inter-village politics; a detailed day by day account of the initial conquest and pacification (Valenzuela 1695); a description of every settlement in the 1,600 square miles around Los Dolores; and records of the eventual removal of all Choltil-Lacandón to the highlands around Huehuetenango after 1712 and their subsequent death in the new physical and cultural climate (Hellmuth 1970b; 1971b; in press; Estrada 1970a; 1970b; 1970c).

For the Manche Chol of Verapaz and for a majority of other lowland and adjacent highland groups Feldman, Hellmuth and Estrada have now located most of the original 16th-17th century baptismal books, padrons, and matriculas. Such name lists are full of linguistic, demographic, kinship, marriage and settlement pattern information. Often the lists are arranged so as to give the number and kinship relationship of everyone who lived in a single house. These censuses provide valuable figures with which to propose possible populations for Classic Maya house-mounds.

The Verapaz Chol are of interest because they are about the only Southern Maya lowland people who (at first) seem to fit the archaeologist's and

ethnographic analogist's favorite hypothetical settlement pattern (vacant town ceremonial center with the main population widely dispersed in hamlets and maize fields). Actually, unpublished manuscript reports provide new evidence that the Cholti-Lacandón, Toquegua, Quejache, etc. all did not happen to live as they are supposed to have, but resided full time in semi-permanent, quite compact villages. We can now show that the dispersed settlement pattern of the Lacandón of today and most of the 16th-17th century lowlanders was a native adaptation to the disruptive Spanish presence. They dispersed to best avoid Spanish harassment and proselytism.

One of the most interesting discoveries in Sevilla was of over 300 folios on the little known Toquegua Indians of the Golfo Dulce and Golfo de Honduras coasts (Hellmuth 1971a:4-50). Newly found manuscripts reveal that in addition to being seafaring, generally water oriented, and warlike, the Toquegua were neither Mexican nor Chorti as some had thought (Scholes & Roys 1948:18) but were of Chol linguistic affiliation. From fascinating early 17th century relaciones and censuses, Hellmuth found that in 33% of the marriages the husband was from 13 to 30 years older than his wife, and in 13% of the marriages the woman was from 6 to 20 years older than her husband. The horrified Spanish observed that "the Indians that want to be married with them receive them for their wives since they are born and raise them and name them..." (AGI, Guatemala 129, folio 65). The existence of these fishing Maya substantiates Lange's observations (1971) that fish were an important item of Maya diet.

This information is but a tiny fraction of what Feldman, Hellmuth and Estrada have already located in the archives in preliminary reconnaissance during parts of 1969-1971, but which they have been unable to microfilm, transcribe or process because of a lack of funds. In addition to these newly studied manuscripts from the well-known archives, many treasures await he who can delve into the church and order archives. The lucky few anthropologists who have been allowed in to restricted church archive rooms have not always had complete freedom to xerox or transcribe every-thing they wanted. The church archives, not the government's, are where most of the dictionaries and religious tracts in Mayan and the baptismal books full of Mayan

names and demographic data are stored. Recently the archivist has somewhat reorganized these early manuscripts.

The proposed project will include Lic, Agustin Estrada M., the archivist of the Archbishop of Guatemala. In addition to this key church connections, Estrada is also a professor of paleography and of church history at the Universidad Rafael Landívar in Guatemala City. Estrada has already found several thousand folios of unpublished accounts of mission activity among the Chol. Nicholas Hellmuth already has secured a letter of introduction from a Cardinal, which has facilitated his research. The project numbers already know of unpublished dictionaries and will get into all relevant church archives, religious order archives (Dominican, Franciscan and Mecedarian), and private library collections of early Spanish history.

We feel that Mesoamericanists need a complete range of fresh ethnographic accounts, so that they can determine how much regional diversity there was among the many distinct Southern Lowland peoples. Therefore, we will not narrowly restrict our research coverage to a single people. Of particular interest will be the several different Chol peoples (Cholti-Lacandón, Verapaz Chol and Toquegua Chol) and their neighbors, the Kekchi highlanders in surprisingly many aspects of culture. Although holistic in scope we will focus on significant villages and topics, in particular: settlement patterns and demography (especially looking for figures on the number of people inhabitant single houses), subsistence, trade, the interaction between highlanders and lowlanders, and linguistic studies.

PROJECT GOALS

The project as proposed hopes to contribute to knowledge of the Maya way of life by making available new information about the still functioning 16th-17th century Southern Lowland Maya and their Central Highland neighbors. We aim to present edited transcripts of the new relaciones we have already found quickly, so that the fresh facts may be used for better-informed ethno-graphic analogies, for bases for studying acculturation, and for understanding the successful adaptation of diverse Maya peoples to a tropical forest environment.

Feldman, Hellmuth and Estrada already have gathered together a great deal of the information mentioned. This information is only available so far in mimeographed preliminary reports or in unprocessed transcriptions or notes. So, in the two sections, which follow, we will present some of the types of ethnographic information, which we could have, ready for publication within the next 3 years.

2.1 Settlement Pattern Studies

Current archaeological estimates of Post Classic population are consistently in error. Traditional site survey techniques, which rely on finding stone steels or monumental architecture, are not adequate to locate 16th-17th century villages, which had no masonry building platforms and no masonry superstructures. Many 16th century villages simply left no mounds. Occupational debris is buried under humus, vegetation or windblown soil accumulation. Rands never found any 16th century Maya artifacts in an area around Palenque (1969:personal communication) in an area which Hellmuth suspects had numerous villages up to 1793 (Hellmuth 1970b:25). Frans Blom was never able to find the 103 house Choltilacandan village of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de Lacandón (1694-1714), although he knew the Lacandón region well and even after he made several trips especially in search of this village (Blom 1956a, Blom & Duby 1955-57, II:214). In Sevilla in 1971 Hellmuth found not only a map showing the location of Los Dolores de Lacandón, but also several hundred pages of the instructions of the Spanish captain to the mule drivers on what paths to take to get their mule trains from the highlands to Los Dolores de Lacandón. Now the site could be located and excavated in the future.

Even today, Mayaists are still writing about the complete absence of significant population in most of the 16th-18th century southern lowlands (Rathje 1971). For most of the regions there is abundant evidence from many different first hand Spanish observers that there were scattered populations somewhat larger than even Thompson accepts (1970). Feldman, Hellmuth and Estrada have located a number of reliable, unpublished Spanish descriptions of population in lowland Chiapas, El Petén, Alta Verapaz and Izabal that J. Eric Thompson S. did not have available to him.

The members of this project will prepare a series of maps showing, as best as possible, the locations of all Lacandón, Petén, Chol and Kekchi settlements of the 16th-17th centuries. We also ought to be able to determine why the villages were where they were (i.e. because of proximity to water, on defensible hills, on trade routes, etc.). Other maps will display linguistic boundaries (and how these changed through time), different symbiotic regions, differing regional population densities, etc.

For many towns, we hope to be able to present enough information so that archaeologists could use aerial photographs and foot surveys to find the actual physical location of the remains of the settlement. The excavation of a well-documented settlement such as Los Dolores de Lacandón would be a valuable test of the correctness of archaeological inferences from purely artifactual data. Such future archaeological work would also make it possible to determine if 16th century Chol ceramics are derived from Late Classic ceramics of the same region. The project will not itself undertake such excavation but would make its data available to those who would wish to dig conquest period sites.

2.2 Demographic Studies

Haviland has reviewed most of the conflicting Mesoamerican's views about the population of the Southern Maya lowlands (1966). He favors an average figure of 5.6 people per house (Ibid.:35; 1965:19), whereas Sanders and Price favor a more conservative 4 people per house (1968:163). Curiously, these figures are not based on facts for southern Maya, but on 20th century northern lowland Yucatec Maya (Haviland 1965:19; 1966:35).

During the past 3 years, Feldman, Hellmuth and Estrada have found in the archives several dozen long census lists for both southern lowland and adjacent Guatemalan highland peoples, and also for the Yucatec speaking Quejache and Petén Itza. All of these censuses, plus seldom used passages from Villagutierrez's and Ximenez's published histories, show clearly that the normal living arrangement was at least 1 extended family per single structure (Hellmuth 171a:23, 30, 39-40). We plan to have all these census lists transcribed and tabulated so that we could make available to others accurate averages of

the number of real people-per-house. We suspect that the averages will come out around 6 to 8 people per individual structure. Among the Cholti-Lacandón the use of plank beds high up almost in the rafters made the houses effectively 2 storied, allowing a large number of people to live comfortably in a single building.

Not only have we located these more reliable census figures, but also we have available enough information to be able to learn something about the composition of the domestic group--which relatives (and non-relatives) and who lived with the head of the house. But even more important than the raw population figures are the thousand bits of information on birth, death and marriage dates which will enable us to make the first thorough demographic study of the Lacandón, Petén, Cholaid, and Kekchi regions. We will be able to determine the average age of both spouses at marriage, the fertility span of woman, life expectancies of both sexes at different ages, marriage preferences and prescriptions, percentage of incestuous marriages, and other standard demographic observations. It will then be possible to compare the differences in these figures between highlanders and lowlanders, and between 17th and 20th century peoples of the same regions.

The significance of the higher population figures per house (and hence per square kilometer) is that population figures for the Classic Maya could be increased from 10 to 20%. In the following section on subsistence we will outline how new information on agriculture shows that there were ample food resources available to feed such a population.

Also important in our research to aid archaeological interpretation of the mute Classic period remains, will be finding out how long an average house and house site were used before the inhabitants moved on to somewhere else. We also need to make sure that the Spanish "house counts" are per single house structure or per residential compound which might consist of several distinct buildings. All of these questions can be answered from the archival manuscripts, which we have found to date.

2.3. Subsistence Studies

Most current research on subsistence alternative available to the Classicist Maya has depended heavily on inferences made from observation of current, 20th century agricultural practices of acculturated Maya (complete bibliography of such studies is given by Wilken (1971:444-448)). Frequently, observations on agricultural practices of distant Yucatán are projected onto the entirely different environmental situation in the southern lowlands. Most of the better studies (Bronson 1966; Wilken 1971) have regrettably been largely hypothetical, relying on little actual ethnohistoric evidence. Most writers (except Wilken) champion some favorite single major food; staple and poo-poo all alternatives. So far a majority of the articles have been in the realm of hypothesis and speculation. No one has produced a complete list of all the food that any one 16th century Maya people actually raised and really ate, except Feldman (1971:78-124) and Hellmuth (1969:24-28; 1970b:7-8; 1971:24-27).

We have found early Spanish accounts of what the conquering Spanish found actually growing in the fields, stored in Maya kitchens, and cooking in Maya pots. Even several recipes of the Choltil-Lacandón are described. It turns out that the Maya did rely heavily on root crops, and on other vegetables (i.e. tomatoes, peppers), and sometimes on grains (i.e. amaranth). Squash, usually enshrined in the imagined food trinity of "maize-beans- and-squash" was simply not a major staple. Also, the Maya made considerable use of meat from domestic fowl, especially turkey, and from wild game, particularly deer. River and lake shellfish, fish, and reptiles were frequently eaten.

Feldman has found that the platano (not to be confused with the post conquest imported banana) was possibly the major food of certain Pacific Piedmont peoples. Hellmuth has found frequent references to the widespread use of this plant for the Petén, Chiapas and Verapaz lowlands. Several species of zapote fruits, as well as other tropical nuts and fruits, were also important for most of the 16th-17th century Maya. Cacao was widely grown along riverbanks in Chiapas, Petén and Verapaz.

Puleston has proposed that the Maya may have relied on the fruit of the ramon tree (1971). There is considerable evidence in the archives and published early histories to show that the ramon was never a significant item in 16th-17th century southern lowland Maya diet. Where ramon was eaten at all, it was eaten solely during times of famine.

New manuscripts not only show that what the Maya traditionally ate when the Spanish first saw them, they allow us to document the slow changes in agricultural practices and Spanish introduced food preferences. Spanish destruction of orchard and milpas to force Maya into missionary settlements, Spanish agricultural edicts, and other considerations led to the modern Maya dependence largely on maize and beans (and now rice also).

As can be appreciated from the sample transcription the descriptions of the subsistence activities of the Maya are pretty detailed. When the information is all transcribed and processed by the proposed project, all Mesoamericanists would have available a collection of facts on which to base new and more concretely documentable hypothesis for the earlier Classic Maya situation.

2.4 Trade Studies

There is hardly an article, which does not harp on the redundancy of the economic potential of the southern Maya lowlands as opposed to the diverse environments of the highlands (M. Coe 1957; Sanders & Price 1968: 160-1619 and Rathje 1971). The consensus has been that there were not enough regional differences in natural resources to foster interregional trade. Yet the lowlanders obviously had something to trade for their imports of obsidian, manos, seashells, etc. Feldman and Hellmuth now have sufficient new evidence to show that there was a degree of regional specialization in crops, crafts, and natural resources. Feldman has already discussed in detail the trading networks of the highlands adjacent to the lowlands (1971). This coverage will be extended to the regions we propose to cover. We will be able to provide anthropologist now data upon trade routes, rates of exchange in cacao and achiote "currency",

the merchant class, symbiotic regions and other economic matters. We will be particularly interested in the economic interaction between the Chol and the North Pocom and Kekchi.

3. Personal Names of the Verapaz and Southern Maya Lowlands

This monograph will include over 2,000 Mayan personal names from unpublished census materials already located. In addition to complete references and etymologies (when possible) for each name, the work will tabulate the frequencies of distribution of the names per settlement, throughout the southern Maya lowlands and central-east Guatemalan highlands. It will be possible to determine the degree of sharing between any two towns in the two regions. Sharing should reflect cultural relationships at some time in the past. A most significant portion of this monograph will be the analysis of Highland Mayan personal names of villagers deep within the highlands. Other alien names (i.e. Nahuatl, Chiapanec, etc.) will be identified when possible, and a discussion provided of their patterns of distribution.

The Nahuatl names will be of special interest to archaeologists who are interested in prehispanic Talteca or Mexicanoid "foreign" intrusions of the lands inhabited by Mayan speakers. Some 20 to 30% of the Cholti-Lacandón of Chiapas had Nahuatl personal names. It would be interesting to compare these alien names with those used around Chichén Itzá and other Mexioanized parts of Yucatán.

We would also hope to find, in the archives, name lists for Tabasco and Puebla regions from where archaeologists think Tepeu 3 Fine Orange ceramics had their origin. It would be helpful to know if the Nahuatl names in the southern lowlands were coming from the same Tabasco or Puebla locations as the ceramics. Finally, analysis of alien names should reveal many facts about the culture of the name source. Cultigens, artifacts, and calendric deities, to name a few possible categorías, all appear in the terms used to identify people. The systematic study of our very large sample should allow us to make many inferences of the prehispanic culture of otherwise little known peoples.

3.2 Complete Ethnographies of the Cholti-Lacandón, Petén Itzá, Verapaz Chol and Toqueguas Chol.

Complete ethnographies will be prepared on each of these distinct regional cultures. All the traditional ethnographic topics will be covered where possible. These ethnographies will be largely descriptive in the sense that every scrap of information on any given topic will either be quoted or cited. These ethnographies will be comparative in the sense that for each aspect of regional life a statement will be made about whether this practice was restricted to this region, was widespread throughout the lowlands or highlands, etc. Considerable attention will be devoted to the problem of reliability of the Spanish descriptions, biases, errors and lies.

A village focus of the proposed ethnographies will produce in effect a community study which will be more useful in comparing with modern ethnographic community studies than something like Landa's relación which is partially taken from informants from two different regional cultures and partially mixed with hearsay and facts knitted together from observations on many of the 16 different native Yucatan states. The reader should be able to get an idea of the kinds of detail available in these unpublished Spanish relaciones from reading the Appendix.

Contrary to what is stated in most of the modern literature, the late prehispanic Kekchi were lowland as well as a highland people (c.f. Viana et al. 1955). Kekchi settlements at Lanquín, and especially at Cahabón, were important sources of lowland goods (i.e. copal) for the adjacent highlands. We know that the Verapaz Chols were receiving in return highland goods from the Kekchi and North Pokom highlands peoples. The temporal extent of lowland-highland commercial interaction is not known, but the nature of the evidence, both linguistic (i.e. terms of cultigens or artifacts common to Choloid-North Pokom-Kekchi languages but not found elsewhere in the highlands) and archaeological (heavy concentrations of Classic period Maya lowland artifacts near or in the Verapaz Highlands) suggest that the contact was far older than the sixteenth century.

Aside from the movement of goods, the movement of people, the settlement of highlanders in the lowland and vice versa, seems also to be pre-European. We have documentary records of possible fifteenth century migrations of this type (Sapper 1904) and the high percentage of lowland names in Verapaz highland towns (i.e. 17% from San Cristobal Cahcoh) suggest the existence of frequent migrations between Verapaz and adjacent lowlands.

Therefore, because the inhabitants of the Verapaz highlands seemed to be so intimately linked with the Choloid speakers of the lands immediately west (Cholti-Lacandón), north (Verapaz Chol) and east (Toquegua Chol), and because already in the archives Feldman has found so much new information touching on this interaction, we feel it will be a contribution to prepare ethnographic sketches of the Kekchi-North Pokom in the period of initial European contact. As the least known and most contiguous to the lowlands, the Kekchi, rather than the North Pokom, will be the focus of these papers. However information will be collated on both of these people.

3.3 Annotated editions of the "Moran" vocabulary of Cholti

Both Fought and Hellmuth have for several years been working independently on the 17th century Spanish-Cholti vocabulary abridged in 1695 at Los Dolores de Lacandón from an earlier vocabulary. This planned published: edition will include in Cholti-Spanish, as well as Spanish-Cholti, all the new Cholti words found during the proposed research, as well as all the Cholti personal names. In appendices to this publication, words of particular ethnographic interest would be arranged under such topics as: terms for food, terms for useful plants, terms for kinship and affinity, etc. s. W. Miles (1957) and Feldman (1971) have shown how much useful ethnographic information can be gathered largely from vocabularies.

3.4 Edited Transcriptions of Manuscripts

It has been known to take from 5 years or longer for the results of research to be made available to interested scholars. The goal of the

proposed project is to make available in preliminary form all transcriptions possible

Where possible, preliminary versions of all the reports and ethnographics would also be made available immediately in this manner. Already Hellmuth has distributed mimeographed copies of his findings to date on the Cholti-Lacandón (1969; 1970b; 1971) and on the Petén- Ytzá, Verapaz Chol, and Toquegua (191a). Additional reports are already typed onto stencils. Likewise, Feldman has already prepared and distributed working papers (1971b; 1971c). We feel it is incumbent upon all staff members to make this basic transcribed information available without discrimination as soon as possible, rather than hoarding it.

4. CONCLUSION

This presentation has stressed the usefulness of at last having great new amounts of descriptive ethnographic and historical information on many thus far poorly documented peoples. We feel that these newly known Maya lifeway can be used to produce models which might help us to understand better certain aspects of the life of the Classic Maya. The data we propose to make available has intrinsic value in itself; however, the greatest value is in making it increasingly clear that many of the 16th century peoples were fundamentally different in subsistence, settlement pattern, population density, etc., from the 18th-20th century survivors in the same regions. At the same time, the 16th century Maya of both the

southern lowlands and central-east highlands are in many ways strikingly different from any of the Classic Maya. We will thus have extracted a record of ways of human life not yet available to the anthropologist.

This report stressed that Feldman, Hellmuth, and Estrada have already located in the archives great quantities of data. By locating it we mean that in quick perusal of the archives we have taken notes that such and such information is contained in this or that document. Up to now, none of us has had any financial backing to enable us to microfilm or transcribe more than a fraction of what we have noticed to be of interest. Even that which we have already transcribed remains in file cabinets unprocessed, again because of the lack of clerical and research assistants.

All three of the staff has now spent sufficient time in the archives to know what will turn up in the as yet untouched church and state archives. The great 500 page historical and ethnographical relation of Valenzuela was thought lost for over a century until Hellmuth rediscovered it in Sevilla in 1971. The church archives in Guatemala are the depositories for the detailed accounts of friars Diego de Rivas, Marjil de Jesús and other prolific writers of the 16th and 17th centuries. Estrada, the only person who has had free access to the church archives (since he is the official archivist of the archbishop), has already found thousands of previously unpublished and unknown documents. He needs a corps of transcribers and typists to help him make this treasure available to anthropologists and historians.

When the typed transcriptions are available in the United States university libraries, both undergraduates and graduate will have a great mass of material to work with on their own. The ways of life of the Choltil-Lacandón, the Verapaz Chol, the Toquequa Chol, the Kekchi and the North Pokom will be available to anthropologist interested in cross-cultural comparisons. We hope that this new information on forgotten peoples will be a contribution to anthropology.

SAMPLE OF THE KIND OF ETHNOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, WHICH IS
AVAILABLE IN THE ARCHIVES. DATA WHICH FOLLOWS IT ON THE
CHOLTI TOWN OF LOS DOLORES DE LACANDON (SAC BALAM) 1695.

"The town of Sac Balam is situated in exposed country stirred by all winds with pleasing plains with abundant good pasture land and closed in by a ridge of hills... The water is heavy for being from some little wells that the Indias have near the town, of such bad quality.. although there is a river that passes by the town about 1 1/2 leagues away, and a creek that is 1/4 league away on the trail to San Mateo Ixtatán,"

"And there are one hundred and three (houses), including the three of community (use). And all are spacious, and of good fabrication, with strong and thick wood which prop up and support the roofs. The roofs are of much straw recently tied down and rising regularly in height, to let the water run off the abundance of straw. The height of the roofs is for resisting the strength of the rains in the winter"

"And all the houses have their fronts open, and the sides an rear built up of stakes covered with clay. And inside those houses of private people, there are rooms in which the Indian women cook and have the implements of eating and drinking. And with these excellent and curious stones, more polished and clean... And in each room there is a bed platform of wood secured on posts strongly driven into the ground, spacious enough for a minimum of 4 persons."

"And in some rooms can be seen fabricated at the sides, little shelves of thin, worked and flush little cradles in which the infants are accommodated so that they will not defecate on the main bed platform, nor put themselves in danger of smothering. And in some halls there were 4 stakes about 3 quarters of a vara high driven into the ground and on them wrapped around tree bark so soft, like cotton, and so interwoven like cloth, and some like chamois. And one comes to understand that inside said stakes they put the children... securing them with the cords of said bark, which they have everywhere."

"Cradles for babies were little crates of reed, very clean and well put together, and tied with such carefulness, hung on the hanging platforms at such a height so as to allow the mother, seated in her bed, to nurse the infant."

"And in two of said houses two large nets were found.. with their floats and for weights clay (balls) well sewn on."

"In the house of Izquin there was a curtain of cane of reed grass linked together with such art that he gathered it all up, letting it fall until a very perfect lattice (was formed), because all the cane pieces were sewn from within with some very thin little string of century plant."

"They found all the houses had been left full of provisions of maize, beans, many turkeys, enough chickens, some cotton, pots, flat bowls, well made comales, very curious weaving instruments of the women, many blow guns with the little net bags of pellets and their sockets for molding them made of turkey long bone, axes of stone, chisels and mallets of stone, and other things of rational people.."

"Their little dogs were found to be very skinny. And there were many tame guacamayas. At 5 o'clock in the afternoon, after having flown around, they came to roost on the ridge poles of all the houses, forming a delightfully beautiful landscape of various deep red colored clusters of flowers"

The intimate detail of these descriptions is surpassed by few other contemporary Spanish relaciones. For the Cholti-Lacandón we never have to rely on the word of a single person (such as is the case with Landa). Also, these descriptions of the Cholti are not based on the interrogation of indoctrinated, perhaps fawning informants. All of the above observations on Sac Balam are actual eyewitness descriptions by Spaniards who lived in the village. For any given aspect of Cholti life there are usually from two to three independent versions. One version may be from a military man, another from a civil servant, another by an over zealous friar. It is possible to crosscheck and weed the unreliable statement from the reliable.

SAMPLE SPANISH DESCRIPTIONS OF CHOLTI AGRICULTURE

"There are in the same town fruit trees of platano, zapotes, jocotes, anonas of hot lands, guanaba trees of round gourds, some achiote trees very sweet pineapples; and of all this they also have in their milpas and in some parts lemons. The huts of the milpas, although smaller, are as well built as those of the town. And in the milpas they have mud-daubed granaries of maize"

"And having occupied their houses those (Spaniards) that resided in the town (of Sac Balam) considered (that the Lacandones in fact) lived rationally like human beings because they do not have more than one wife, who each assists and applies herself with care to the work of the milpas and sown places of maize, chile and beans, in which they plant pineapples, platanos, potatoes, jicanas, jocotes, zapote trees and other fruit trees. Being of the hot country they are more industrious than our pacified Indians because for the most part they have very large milpas, and because they are the more industrious because of all the large and small logs them must chop up with a hatchet of dark green colored stone, nicely worked of which one finds some few... The land is humid and spacious and has two harvests. And they change sites for the seeding places with which fruits they maintain themselves... And all raise chickens, and those that are the most abundant are turkeys... of which we found in the village many troops... They kill them by twisting their heads and putting a foot over them pulled (the heads) off the turkey. And later they threw them into a fire to burn off the feathers. Deplumed, they washed them and put (them) to cook. "

"... he wants to go to seed and cultivate his milpas, taking with him his wife that she may make his tortillas. He knows this proposition to be malicious because the milpas are but recently planted without even been harvested, and because for the seeding, labor, and cultivation they do not need to take their wives, because that, which the Indian men are used and accustomed to do to a greater degree is to depart

at daybreak with a supply of tortillas or tamales and return at night. When they take their women to the milpas it is when they are needed to assist in guarding the plants of the fruit so (someone) does not abscond with it."

"... said trail serves for going to the milpa places of said (cacique) Cabnal and of the Indians of his calpul, who make milpa in that territory, especially in summer time, for being humid land, and because of this good for the milpas of said summer, and around the whole circuit of the lake... there are... only milpa places of the Indians of this town of the calpul..."

Also available are many other descriptions of milpas, house side orchards, lists of all crops raised, seasons, yields, tools used in, clearing milpas, methods of hunting and fishing, etc. Not only do we know how food was procured, we now know in what form it was cooked and consumed (most non-meat foods were drunk in a posole-like liquid concoction).

POSITIONING AND FUNCTION OF CEREMONIAL BUILDINGS

This town has one hundred and three buildings, one hundred residential and three communal (the latter) larger than all the others. These (communal buildings) are in the higher part of the town... One of them serves as an adulatory, for in it were found the signs of their sacrifices... The rear and the sides are closed by mud-daubed wattle, and the fronts are completely open. Each (community building) looks out onto the others..."

"In the other two buildings, which both look out on the said adulatory, there are many planks hung up on which it seems that those who guard the adulatory sleep or rest. This other one was at one side of the antecedent and serves for assistance of the Indians when they give their meetings, fiesta and sacrifices."

"And (the third communal building)-, that fronts onto the first, was

destined for the congregation of the Indian women at the said functions for the reason that the males separate themselves from the females."

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ADORATORY AND CEREMONIAL PLAZA

The above description of the 3 community buildings suggests that we may be able to learn something about the possible function of Classic Maya groupings of ceremonial buildings from looking carefully at the ethno-historic record. Below is a detailed description of the architecture and interior decoration of the adoratory. In 1695 the Cholti were using stone blocks analogous to the Classic Maya altars. There were upright sacrificial stones with some stela attributes.

"In the center of the said town there are 3 buildings... of 18 varas of length. These are communal structures. The one serves as an adoratory and place of sacrifice, and it is the more elegant and spacious. Its rear and sides consisted of paling of wooden slices daubed with mud... In order to find out that it had a wooden backing and was not a solid (clay) wall one had to scrutinize it carefully. The front of this house (and of the other two also) were left open and these open fronts looked out onto the interior courtyard."

"The place of their idols was a short room joined by a wall to the mud daubed side, made of wooden stakes, also mud daubed of 2 1/2 varas of interior space with its moldings so smoothed and extremities flush that they make a work so perfect that the construction forms a graceful looking work of art. This room is the size of a spacious closet. And in the middle of said little room it had a doorway ample enough for one person, with a curtain of cotton cloth hanging from two stakes."

"Up ahead (inside said room) was a pedestal of one quarter vara of height in the style of a moveable platform made of clay, and on it in the two corners, two round pots also of clay of 1 vara of height, painted of diverse colors, and more than one armspan of thickness, diminishing in size from top to bottom... That they serve as braziers (is

known) because they were found full of hot ash with some remains of copal that had been burnt, and on their rims one found fresh blood of the turkeys. It is said that the Indians are accustomed to sacrifice chickens and turkeys to the idols that they venerate inside said room, of which it was the tabernacle and for incensing. This blood was probably from the turkeys which were found dead and decapitated in the courtyard and in other parts."

"And all along the edge of that pedestal there were other little pots sort of one gema high in the form of the large ones... The large ones were whitened by unslaked lime, and in them, as also on the upper part of that little room, there were two strips of reddish colored over white cloth.

These cloths were found on all the walls where there are signs of idolatry, always two, and in all parts over the limed, of 2 by 4 of width."

"And when they give cult and veneration their priest enters into said adulatory and speaks out. And the certainty is that (the oracle) speaking with the devil was feigned, and when he hears a cry that rends the spirits and prostrates the bodies of those close by."

"And this house being destined for diabolical works it had in it perfuming pots of fine earthenware that in their molds they fabricated figures of alligators, ..., snakes, and other bad, disgusting reptiles."

"(In one of the communal houses) there were many clothes woven of cotton thread of diverse colors, and each one with four cords pendant from each of its corners with tassels, jackets without sleeves, and with little jacket skirts woven with the same bodies half to reddish colors, thread and the other half of black thread. And other clothes in the form of maniples adorned with said tassels and cords, such on) both dolls when they dance. And for these dances they have tepana, quastes, flutes, and other instruments inside of said house."

"In the interior courtyard, which is square, there were found five sort of squarish boxes of 3 quarts in height and one and a half vara of

diameter made of stone blocks or thin flat stones without any mortar holding them together, but well put together and evenly laid. On them they put their pitch pine for lighting... And by the corner of the courtyard there are two pedestals in the same shape, with one large stone each one driven into the middle on which it seems that they decapitate the turkeys that they sacrifice because they find them stained with blood of turkeys and anointed with copal."

SPANISH DESCRIPTIONS OF CHOLTI POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Now that Proskouriakoff has discovered that Classic Maya sites could be ruled by dynasties, it is increasingly important to find out from 16th 17th century sources what were the many different types of political organization in vogue among the lowland Maya. Hellmuth has located in the archives new comments by the Spanish on Cholti political organization, both of individual villages and of whole regions. These fresh facts complements information already available from published (but infrequently cited) sources.

"The caciques or principal men of this town are Cabnal, Tunol, Tustecat, Quim, Bubahau, Sulabna, Chichel, Tzactzi, Chamcut and Polom. And those that have people under their control and order are those said Cabnal, Tuxnol, Tustecat and Quim. And the other principal men have very few followers). And those that are heads and governors of all the principal men or caciques and of the Indians of their following are only those said Cabnal and Tuxnol."

"Regarding the point whether they have a king, they say that they have never known what this office might be; only their caciques are their lords, kings, priests and confessors, without being paid any tribute or other profit. Simply as a token that they are their caciques, they celebrate a particular feast which they call... feast of the cigarettes... each family gives its cacique a small bundle of cigarettes to signify that he is the master..."

"The caciques have no skill in anything except their idolatries, sacrifices, baptisms, marriages, confessions, divining whether they are to die or not, divining whether one work or another should be undertaken, casting lots with red beans or grains of maize, giving notice to the people when it is time to sow and to gather, and when a feast day comes, etc. But they do not punish as justice." (Tozzer 1913:504-505).

DETAILS OF THE DESCRIPTION OF CHOLTI USE OF TOBACCO

There are few Spanish observations of daily life of any Maya, which surpass the most microscopic detail of some of the descriptions. Below is reproduced a miscellaneous account which may not be of great ethnographic significance, but which shows the kind of intimate coverage of the everyday life of the Choltil.

"... the Indian... was occupied with puquietes which are some kind of cigar of more than 3 quartas of length, and about a thumb in thickness, fabricated of leaves of nance, and varnished with clay that looks like ochre, and on it painted or introduced other colores. These are stuffed with tobacco, and the tip, which completes it. It was incorporated with it that begins so that it is not necessary to light it nor waste the tip of another nor even the ash, because with good dexterity and quickness the end is returned lit to the open mouth, and introduced into it, and giving a little tap on the teeth, they swallow (the ashes?). This was then the admiration of all (the Spanish)."

"There are in all (the houses) forms for fabricating cigars or puquietes that are some little sticks of wood strong (and) the thickness of a finger, diminishing in dimension from the head below or from one to the other extremity. And in these they fabricate said puquietes with leaves of nance and covered diverse colors and from said forms they pass them to another portion of clay like a sugar mold. And in it they introduce like one hundred in which they place them, and put the cigars in order to dry them. And there were so many there that we found that also I understand (that) they are not only for their use but also for selling like the black powder"

LINGUISTIC AND OTHER CULTURAL INFORMATION FROM PERSONAL NAMES

Much demographic information can come from censuses. There is not enough space to reproduce a whole census. Instead, below in alphabetical orders are listed just the personal names, without the associated ages, spouses, and children given. Even from the bare list of Cholti names below we can tell that the Cholti names are significantly similar to Chontal Maya personal names. Chontal and Cholti together are significantly unique and together differ from all their immediate Mayan neighbors.

Nahua names are marked with an asterisk.

- AHAU or AJAU	AH NIGUAN	AHUNSE	-BIN
AH CANAN AHAU	AH POO	AH XUCHIT*	AY BIN
CANAN AJAU	AH QUE CHUL	AJEB	CAUIL BIN
QUESAL* AHAU	AH QUES	AJUS	CHAN BIN
YSQUIN8 AHAU	AH QUETZAL*POI	ALQUI	PAPA BIN
AH BIN	AH QIN	AMAY	TABIN
AH CAAC	AH QUI	AMAL	TACBIN
AHCALI*	AH QUIN	APO	UX BIN
AH CAUIL AHAU	AH TINUNUN	ASCAGUIL*	BOLAC
AH CAUIL	AH TOL	ASQUIN	BOLOC
AH CAUIL XIX	AH TUNAL* CO(?)O	AYBIN	BIBAAO
AH CUAT*	AH TZIN THUHNOL	AYBUN	BOLON
AH CHAB	AH TZOC	AYYGNAB MANIGODO	BOLON CHAC
		(sic)	
AH HOL	AHTZUM		BOLON CHI
AH ITZ NAB	AH TZUNUN	BAC	-BOLON
AH ITZQUIN*	AH TZUNUN	- BATEB	CAGUIL BOLON
AH ITZQUINNBTI	AH TZUNUN CHO	CANI BATEB	-BUB
AH MAS	AH TZUNUN TUZ	BATZ*	CABIL BUB
AH MEN	AH TZUTZ	BIN BUB	CALI*BUB
AH NAUI*	AH UCH	BIN TUZ	CANAN BUB
	AH UET		CUAT* BUB

-BUB (cont)	CAION	- CANAN	PAX CAUIL
CHAC CHAN BUB	CALI*	JUN CANAN	PAX CO POI
CHUNUN BUB	CALI* BUB	CANIAL IZQUI*	PAX CUATZUZ
		CHICH	
HITZNA BUB	CALI* CHANA	CAQUIL	PAX CUA XUX
ITZQUIN* BUB	CALI* JOT	CATI	PAX CUIL BU
MASA BUB	CALI* MIZ	CAUIL	PAX CHAN CHAN BU
MATZA BUB	CALI* NIS	CAUIL BIN	PAX CHIN
PAX CHAC CHAN	CALI*NU	CAUIL CHEL	PAX LOB
BUB			
QUESAL* BUB	CALI* THU	CAUIL CHICH	
QUETZAL* BUB	CALI* TUHNOL	CAUIL POI	
TZALUT BUB	CALI* XUL	CAUIL TUZ	
TZAQUIN BUB	CAMA		
TZUNUN BUB	CANAN	PAB ZIS	
BUN TAN	CANAN AHAU	PAH COM	
	CANAN BUB	PANUN	
CABAC CHAN	CANAN CHUHTZ	PAN HUN	
CABIL BUB	CANAN CHICH	PAPA BIN	
-CABNAL	CANAN CHICHI*	PAPA CHAC	
QUETZAL* CABNAL	CANAN POI	PAPA QUETZAL POI	
TUNUN CABNAL	CANAN QUETZ*	PAPA TZUNUN BU	
TZUNUN CABNAL	CANAN QUIN	PAP TZEL	
	CANAN SUL	PASEB QUIN	
TZQUIN* CABNAL	CANAN TO	PASUL	
CACAO	CANAN TUHNOL	PAS QUEZ	
CACAU	CANAN TUM		
CACAU CHU	CANAN TUS		
CAGTEI	CANAN TZ		
CAGUIL	CANAN TZI		
CAGUIL CANIJA	CANAN XOL		
CAGUIL CHICH	CANAN XUL		
CAGUIL TZI	CANAN XUXCANAN		
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CAGUIL BOLON			

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Note from year 2024: This 1970's project was sadly not realistic to complete because I had all the Yaxha mapping project each year in the early 1970's. Plus I had a series of appointments over many years as post-graduate research fellow at Yale University. These appointments were for Maya archaeology, art, and iconography (so not ethnohistory). Plus funding for ethnohistory was not widely available. But I gathered

together all my notes and all the printouts from the archives in Spain and in Guatemala and shipped these (during September 2024) to archaeologist and now ethnohistorian Dr. Brent Woodfill. Once he is finished studying this mass of material, we will donate them to a university research library in 2025 or soon after that.