

MUSEUM BRIEFS, No. 15

RIVERINE MAYA

Lawrence H. Feldman



RIVERINE MAYA
THE TORQUEGUA
AND
OTHER CHOLS
OF
THE LOWER MOTAGUA VALLEY
BY
LAWRENCE H. FELDMAN

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Preface

Riverine Maya is the first of what is hoped will be a subseries, within the Museum Brief series, of papers on inhabitants of the southern Mayan lowlands and adjacent areas. The aim is not comparative studies as such, but rather the synthesis of new unpublished data on little known sites, communities or peoples in papers too long for an article but too short for a book. The editor hopes that Riverine Maya will serve as an example, and act as a stimulus, to those working with the old documents (or artifacts) of the area and would like to take this opportunity to invite contributions from prospective authors.

Papers being submitted for publication should be sent to:

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Table of Contents

Historical Background and Ethnography	1
Population Dimensions	4
Surnames and Their Cultural Significance	8
Appendix A. Polochic Choloids	13
Appendix B. Personal Names of the Torquegua and Chorti	15
References Cited	20

List of Figures

Frontpiece. The Motagua Delta (based in part upon Fuentes y Guzman 1933)	
1. The Torquegua and Their Neighbors	2
2. The Southern Maya Lowlands in the Sixteenth Century	12

List of Tables

1. Torquegua Marriage Age Difference	5
2. Torquegua Age/Sex Listing (April 1604)	6
3. San Antonio de las Bodegas Age/Sex Listing (1700)	7
4. Calendric Correlations	9
5. Mayan and Nahua Surname Percentages in the Southern Lowlands	10
6. Cacique Lineages Among the Torquegua	11

Historical Background and Ethnography*

One of the major rivers of Guatemala is that of the Motagua. Connecting the Caribbean coast with the Guatemalan highlands, it was a means of bringing goods into the Spanish colony (Feldman 1971), and its drainage was the seat of impressive Classic Mayan centers (i.e. Quirigua and Copan). Therefore it is all the more surprising to note how scarce are the records for the area in the early colonial period.

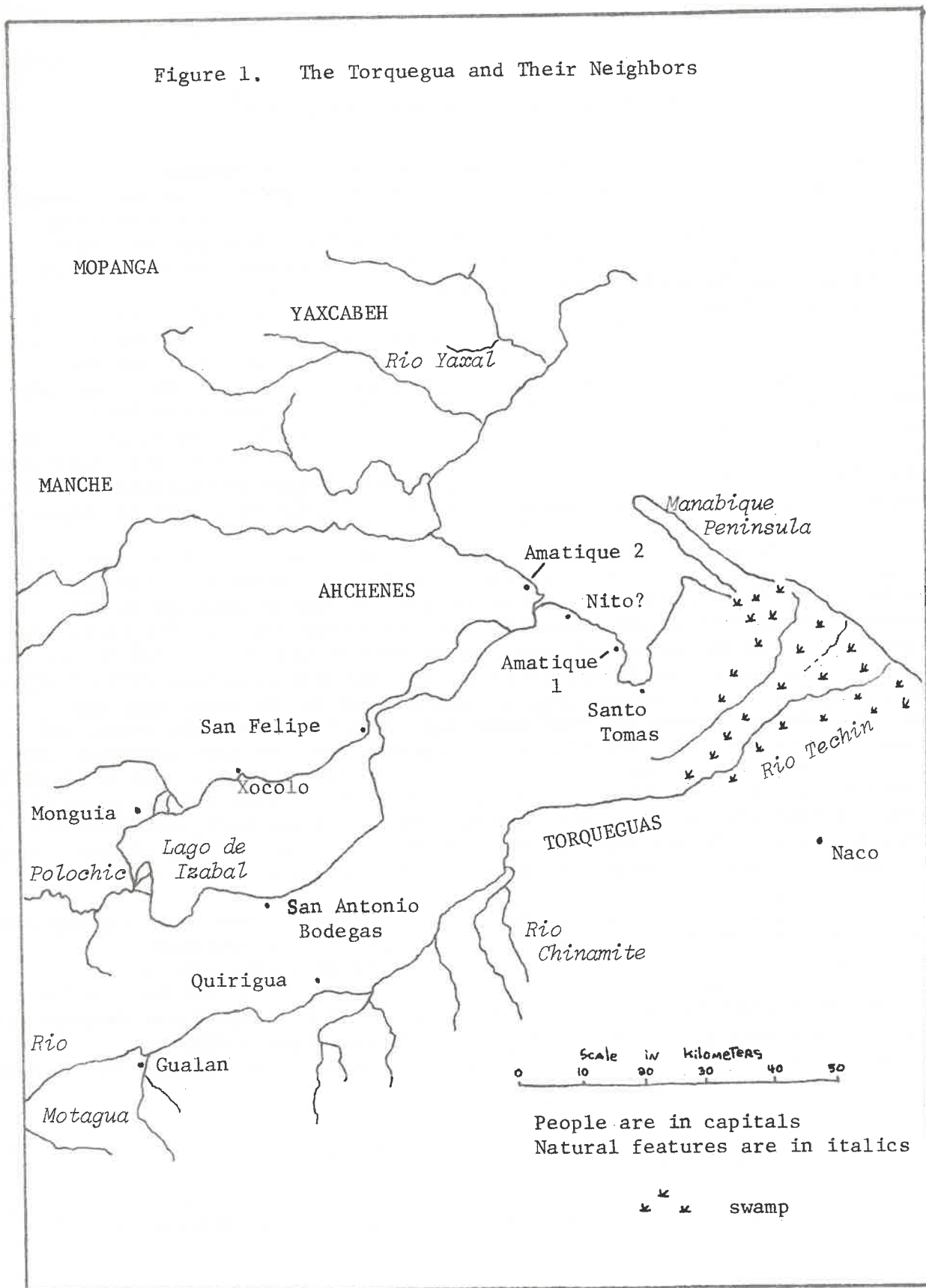
Fuentes y Guzman (1932-34) refers to the Spanish conquest of the Chorti Maya of Copan and seventeenth century records shed some light on the origins of the Acasaguastlan towns of the middle Motagua (Feldman n.d.), but the portion of the Motagua below Quirigua has remained a mystery. With the 1974 discovery of new manuscripts by Feldman in the Archivo General de Centro America and earlier work of Hellmuth (1971) at the Archivo General de las Indias, it is possible for the first time to learn something about the late prehispanic inhabitants. Note should also be made of Alfonso Criado de Castilla, who was responsible for the official discovery of the Torquegua Maya. It all began with a road.

In 1598 "a new and energetic governor", Don Alfonso Criado de Castilla, arrived to take control of the Captaincy-General of Guatemala. Very soon he was deluged with complaints about the old port of Puerto Caballos on the Honduras coast; that it was unhealthy, the harbor was shallow, the local seas notorious for marine parasites, and finally that it was unsafe, for it had been thoroughly sacked by two pirate raids in 1591 and 1596 (MacLeod 1973:155-157). Addressing himself to the problem, he sent a pilot to the coast near the Lago de Izabal to survey it, take soundings, look for defensible areas, and report back to him. The engineer duly suggested that the most favorable spot was in the Bay of Amatique, just outside of the Lago de Izabal, and proposed the placement of a new port there. "After obtaining the necessary royal permission, Criado de Castilla set about the construction of his new port, named Santo Tomas de Castilla in his honor", (MacLeod 1973:157). A road was ordered prepared to connect the new port with the capital (today Antigua), in the Guatemalan highlands.

Surveying proceeded down the Motagua valley for the new royal highway until a point was reached three leagues below "the site called Quirigua", (Criado de Castilla 1605:fol. 53). There the indian guides came to an old cornfield and declared that they could not go beyond this point because "this area and the land between the Rio Techin /part of the Motagua/ and the bays of Manabique and Amatique belonged to the hostile Torquegua indians", (Criado de Castilla 1605:fol. 54; Figure 1). Further investigation revealed that

* This investigation was supported by a grant from the University of Missouri - Columbia Research Council.

Figure 1. The Torquegua and Their Neighbors



the Torquegua had attacked with bows and arrows a canoe of the Amatique indians, killing one and taking the others prisoner. They were brought to a town consisting of four large houses, each with twenty-four adult male warriors, ruled by three lords. The community was located on a dry site surrounded by swamps. Although a larger Torquegua community of 500 people had some domestic fowl and cacao, these hostile indians sustained themselves with forest products, fishing and in the summer, with coastal salt manufacture. Aside from loincloths, all warriors went naked, armed with flint tipped arrows and swords of vizcoyol (a very hard wood), the last also used to prepare their maize fields. The prisoners spent the next four months carrying firewood and guarding Torquegua cornfields from grasshoppers, "of which there were many". One day, being ordered to search the forest for food, the four prisoners fled through the swamps to Manabique peninsula where fishermen from their native village took them home.

Under persuasion by the caciques of Jocolo and Amatique, and Spanish requests, the smaller community of 207 souls allowed itself to be resettled next to the inhabitants of Amatique, in April of 1604. It was thought that local maize fields, groves of plantains and other food resources would be more than enough to sustain this new influx of people. Although Remesal (1932:583) reports their extinction before 1613, these Amatique "Taguegas" were yet being served by Mercedarian friars in 1625, (Anonymous 1625). Fuentes y Guzman (1933:2:302) states that by 1699 a local population of 60 to 80 people lived at Amatique, surrounded by fields of maize; and the Torquegua, because of a high mortality and intermarriage with the natives of Amatique, had lost their separate identity. At this time efforts were underway to establish new settlements of "wild" indians, (Sanchez de Berrospe 1701; Anonymous 1696; Saint-Lu 1968:366).

North of the Lago de Izabal was the land of the Mopanga (Mopan?) and other indians. Witnesses attested that "they have thirty large houses, in some of which live forty or more infidels, and in others twenty five or less", (Sanchez de Berrospe 1701:fol. 43). It was pointed out that the now largely empty lands on the shores of the Lago de Izabal (see appendix A for data on their original inhabitants), had abundant food resources. People could plant crops of maize and beans in September and harvest them in August, meanwhile the lake would provide numerous fish (jureles and mojarras), manatee (Trichechus manatus), turtles and tortoises while the forests had all kinds of fruits and wild cacao, (Sanchez de Berrospe 1701:folios 32 & 43). And so as part of the same series of expeditions that resulted in the conquest of the Peten Itza, new forces were sent out to harry the heathen and dragoon them into Spanish controlled settlements, (cf. Villagutierre y Sotomayer 1933).

Mopanges, Sibalnaes, Ahchenes, Pehechi and Chol from the Amatique forests (more Torquegua?) were rounded-up and herded into the new town of San Antonio de las Bodegas, on the southern shore of the Lago de Izabal, and a refounded San Pedro de Amatique (Anonymous 1702; Sanchez de Berrospe 1701; Anonymous 1696). Appointments to the joint position of Captain of the San Felipe fortress and Mayor of Amatique-San Antonio are noted in 18th century Guatemalan records, (Anonymous 1725; Anonymous 1753).

By the census of October 1776, the inhabitants at San Felipe all were either Spaniards or of mixed origin (mulatos and castros), numbering all told 122 people, (Anonymous 1776). Thus, if one excludes modern reports of trade with possible Choloid natives said to have existed fifty years ago in the more inaccessible forests (Kekchi informants, Ray Freeze personal communication), all trace of the native Chols is lost before the end of the eighteenth century.

Population Dimensions

In a manuscript quoted earlier (Criado de Castilla 1605:65), it is noted that among the Torquegua, husbands received their wives from birth, "raising and naming them". Fortunately the statistical data in the manuscript, giving the age, sex and marital status of 207 individuals, allows us to check this statement. As can be seen in Table 1, 76% of the married men are in fact older than their spouses, however 55.5% are no more than 15 years older than their wives. It seems rather unlikely that 6 year old (or younger) boys were raising newly born infant girls. A more likely explanation is virilocal residence, with the husbands kin group raising the child. Perhaps the 14% of the marriages where the wife is older represents, in part, a counter current of uxorilocal residence tied to political considerations, for the wife of one ruler is older than her husband. Of the total population, 48% were couples without children, 21% with one child, 15% with two children and 7% with three children. No family had more than this number. A remaining remnant of 9% were single unwed adults.

Tabulations and comparisons of age/sex data for the 1604 Torquegua and 1700 San Antonio samples show some curious differences, (Tables 2 and 3). One is the reversal of the sex ratio; the early population has 47% males to 52% females while the more recent shows 60% males to 38% females. People also were living longer in the earlier period, 12% in 1604 as opposed to 2% in 1700 had reached an age greater than 54 years of age. Also the more recent age/sex tabulations indicate a basically younger average age. In 1700 54% of the population was below 20 years of age, 30% between 20 and 34, with only 14% over 34; a pattern strikingly similar to that of the modern Kekchi immigrant community of Chichipate (Carter 1969:12). The 1605 population, with its 31% under 20, 34% between 20 and 34 and 35% over 34 years of age, is of a long settled community. It is true that the people in the 1605 and 1700 populations do not derive from each other, however because they do share a similar genetic inheritance and a common physical environment, differences are probably cultural in origin and as such suggest the nature of population changes among peoples on the peripheries of Spanish political control in the seventeenth century.

Table 1
Torquegua Marriage Age Difference

AGE DIFFERENCE	MALE OLDER		FEMALE OLDER	
	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
41 - 45	1	2		
36 - 40				
31 - 35	1	2		
26 - 30	1	2		
21 - 25				
16 - 20	6	14.5	2	5
11 - 15	6	14.5	3	7
6 - 10	10	24	1	2
0 - 5	7	17		

TOTALS: 32 couples (or 76%) with men older
 6 couples (or 14%) with females older
 4 couples (or 10%) with both adults the same age

42 couples, 84 adults, being the sample size

Table 2
Torquegua Age/Sex Listing (April 1604)

YEARS OF BIRTH	MALES		AGE	FEMALES		TOTAL POPULATION %
	NUMBER	PERCENT		NUMBER	PERCENT	
1525 - 1521	1	1	80 - 84	2	1	2
1530 - 1526			75 - 79			0
1535 - 1531	2	1	70 - 74	1	1	2
1540 - 1536	1	1	65 - 69	1	1	2
1545 - 1541	3	2	60 - 64	6	3	5
1550 - 1546	1	1	55 - 59			1
1555 - 1551	2	1	50 - 54	12	6	7
1560 - 1556	1	1	45 - 49			1
1565 - 1561	7	3	40 - 44	13	6	9
1570 - 1566	5	2	35 - 39	5	2	4
1575 - 1571	17	8	30 - 34	12	6	14
1580 - 1576	9	4	25 - 29	8	4	8
1585 - 1581	12	6	20 - 24	12	6	12
1590 - 1586	1	1	15 - 19	3	2	3
1595 - 1591	4	4	10 - 14	2	1	5
1600 - 1596	10	5	5 - 9	14	7	12
1605 - 1601	11	5	0 - 4	12	6	11
TOTALS:	92 men	46%		115 women	52%	= 207 people

Table 3
San Antonio de Las Bodegas Age/Sex Listing (1700)

YEARS OF BIRTH	MALES		AGE	FEMALES		TOTAL POPULATION %
	NUMBER	PERCENT		NUMBER	PERCENT	
1640 - 1636			60 - 64	1	2	2
1645 - 1641			55 - 59			0
1650 - 1646	1	2	50 - 54			2
1655 - 1651	1	2	45 - 49			2
1660 - 1656	1	2	40 - 44	3	6	8
1665 - 1661			35 - 39			0
1670 - 1666	1	2	30 - 34	2	4	6
1675 - 1671			25 - 29	1	2	2
1680 - 1676	7	14	20 - 24	4	8	22
1685 - 1681	1	2	15 - 19			2
1690 - 1686			10 - 14	7	14	14
1695 - 1691	10	20	5 - 9	1	2	22
1700 - 1696	8	16	0 - 4			16
TOTALS:	30 men	60%		19 women	38%	= 49 people

Table 4 Continued

Citations

References for the Yucatec and Tamactun material is in Landa (1941) and Scholes and Roys (1948) respectively. Zacbalan ("Dolores" and antecedent towns in the same area) sources are Archivo General de Indias manuscripts; it is hoped that a careful study and publication of this data will be possible in the future. A short list of Manche Chol names has been culled out of various volumes, the most important of which is Tovilla (1960). Torquegua names are given in Appendix B. For additional citations, and the deities associated with particular days, one should consult Thompson (1950:75-88).

Table 5

Mayan and Nahua Surname Percentages in the Southern Lowlands *

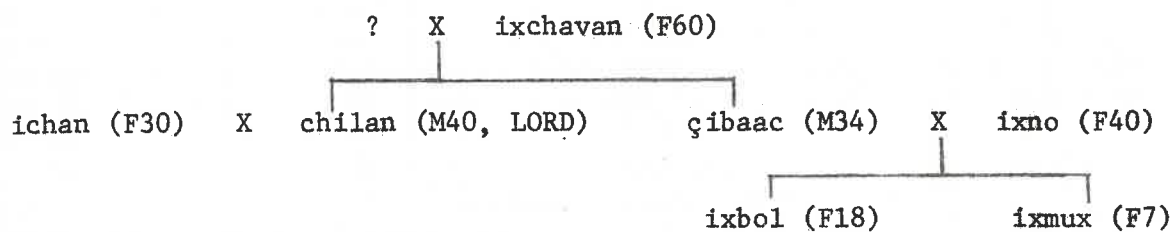
	TAMACTUN	ZACBALAM	MANCHE	TORQUEGUA	
NAHUA	23	23	11	26	
MAYAN & OTHER	77	77	89	74	
	259 names	292 names	56 names	134 names	SAMPLE SIZE (not in %)

*References same as for Table 4. Percentages based upon superficial examination of Tamactun, Zacbalam and Manche listings. Careful analysis will reduce, through combination of male and female names etc., the total number of items in these three listings.

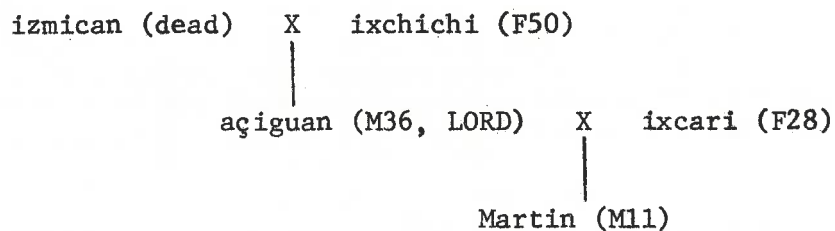
Table 6

Cacique Lineages Among the Torquegua

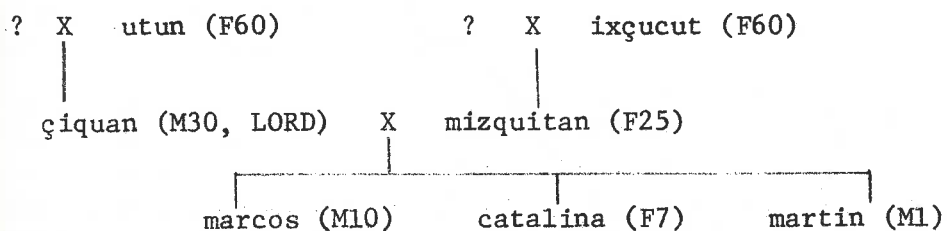
CHILAN LINEAGE

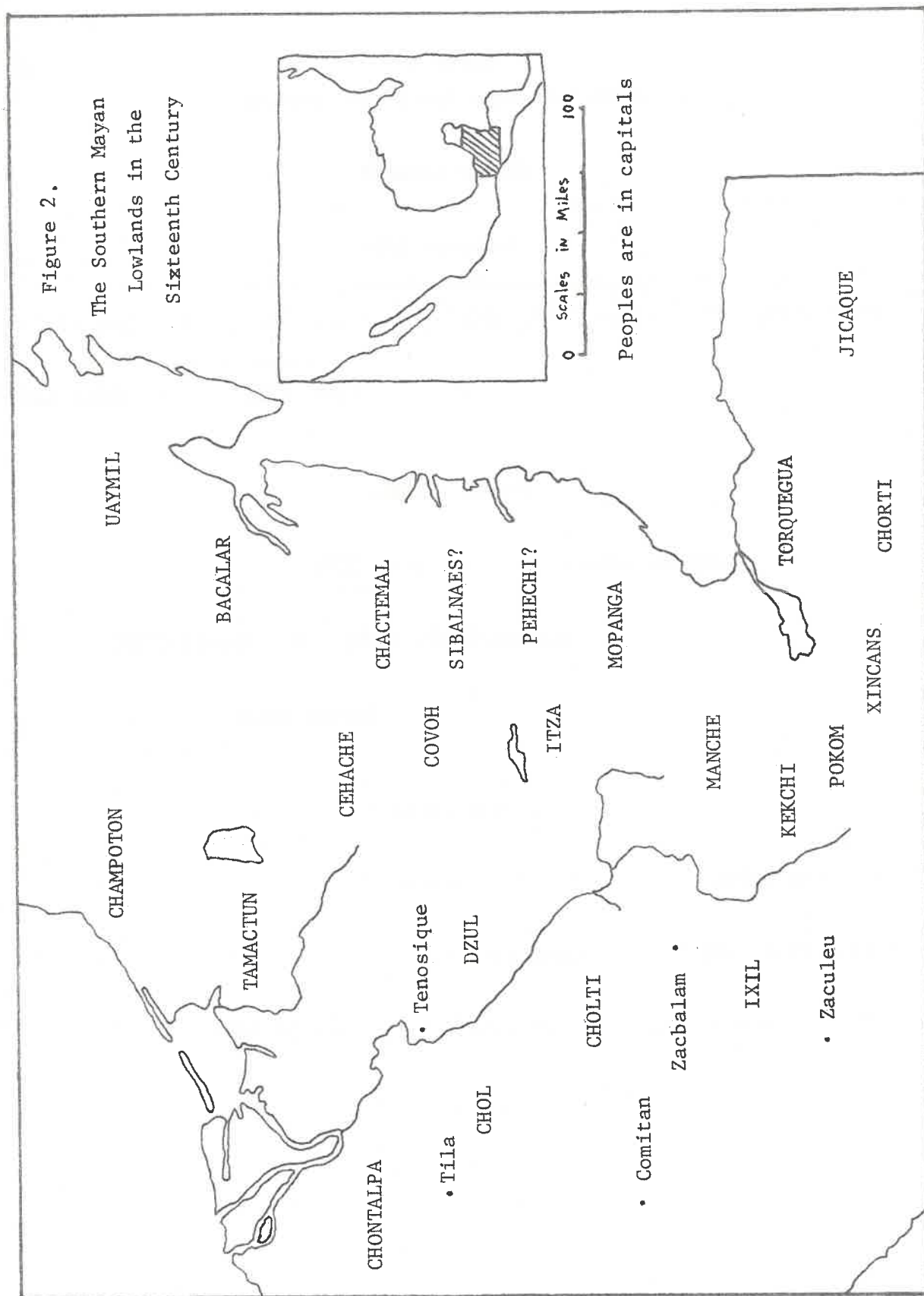


IZMIGAN LINEAGE



ZIQUAN LINEAGE





Appendix A. Polochic Choloids

Several settlements and people north of the Motagua river are frequently cited in discussions of that area (i.e. by Voorhies 1969 and Fuentes y Guzman 1933:2:296). In order to better place the Torquegua in their cultural setting, and to make available a few bits of new data recently found in the archives, it is desirable to summarize what is known about Jocolo, Nito, Chacojal and the Campin Maya. First a few words about prehistoric antecedents.

As described by Voorhies (1969:268) the site of San Felipe, at the outlet of the Lago de Izabal, had two temporally discontinuous occupational periods corresponding to the late Formative (San Felipe phase) and the late Classic (Playa General phase) periods. In the earlier phase, San Felipe was a small village similar in most respects to other small villages of the Maya lowlands, while in the late Classic period San Felipe apparently occupied a marginal social and religious position with its own distinctive plain ware, (Voorhies 1969:272). Animal remains included sharks, crocodiles, turtles, manatee (Trichechus manatus), peccary (Tayassu pecari), white-tailed deer (Odocoileus virginianus) and various fish (i.e. Centropomus sp., Caranx sp., Sparisoma sp.), (Voorhies 1969:286-296).

With the arrival of the European explorers several settlements were found to exist in the area. Except for one village on the Lago de Izabal (that could be Jocolo), where Cortes (1908:292) in 1525 found "a great abundance of green maize", no towns were on the lake shores itself. The inhabitants of the only major community encountered, a town with "a great square where there were mosques and oratories, built in the same manner and surrounded by buildings of the same kind and in the same manner as those of . . . " Tenochtitlan which was called Chacujal. This community, on the Rio Polochic, "spoke a different language from any we had yet heard", (Cortes 1908:296,298-299). On this basis the communities on the Rio Polochic should be considered apart from that on the Lago de Izabal. Information collected on them will be presented elsewhere at another time.

The other major community was Nito, where "a large traffic /was/ carried on . . . by merchants from all parts of the country, (Cortes 1908:280). The merchants of Tamactun lived there "in a quarter of their own", and "had as their chief a brother of Apaspolon, the lord of Acalan", (Cortes 1908:280). The town was on a "tongue of land from which there was no issue, except by water" (Cortes 1908:286), a location somewhere on the Bahia de Amatique.

In 1552 the communities of Yaxal, Canpin and Bolantin were noted as the only coastal settlements between the provinces of Yucatan and Verapaz, (Saint Lu 1968:317). By 1574, the inhabitants of the 50 houses of Yajal and Canpin had fled into the forests (Viana, Gallego and Cadena 1955:29). In 1605 the Canpin indians of the "Land of Bacalar" (somewhere near the Belize-Mexican border?, c.f. Roys 1957:160), were being resettled at Xocolo, (Criado de Castillo 1605:folios 59&60v). Fuentes y Guzman (1933:2:329) wrote of a people who may be identical to those of Canpin. These inhabitants of Inama, although sowing cotton and having much maize, sweet manioc and various fruits, preferred fishing, especially for the manati, whose bones were made into beads and whose meat was eaten.

Aside from the temporary settlements of Nueva Sevilla (on the Rio Polochic, 1547 - 1549) and Monguia (by the Lago de Izabal, fl. 1561), no permanent Spanish controlled community, other than Santa Catarina de Xocolo (or Jocolo, officially founded in 1552), existed in this area, (Saint-Lu 1968:223,314; Chamberlain 1948:253-274). In 1574 Xocolo was a town of 36 citizens whose primary importance was as a way station for travelers in the Verapaz - Caribbean coast route, (Viana, Gallego and Cadena 1955:29). Lands on the banks of the Rio Polochic, where it enters the Lago de Izabal, were used by them for cacao and plantain plantations as well as having many groves of zapote and avocado trees, (Roman 1575). Being abandoned in 1631 (Ximenez 1930:202), the settlement had a new occupation of 40 citizens or 100 inhabitants, thanks to the efforts of Don Pedro Barona de Loayza; the community being well known for its fine gun flints, that were made out of local stone (Fuentes y Guzman 1933:2:296). With this reference at the end of the seventeenth century, the locality disappears from the records. Today these empty lands are being reoccupied by Kekchi migrants from the Alta Verapaz.

Appendix B. Personal Names of the Torquegua and Chorti

In the following list of one hundred and thirty four Torquegua and seven modern Chorti surnames, an attempt has been made to translate, or at least suggest language affiliation, for as many as possible; this job should not be considered as complete. A basic problem is that analysis has been made not directly from the manuscript in question (Criado de Castillo 1605), but from a paleography prepared by someone who was not a linguist, or familiar with possible source languages (other than Spanish). Obviously careful work with the actual manuscript, or photostats thereof, should enable a specialist to determine the meaning of additional surnames. There is also another factor, that some of these names are neither Mayan nor of Nahua origin. Whatever was spoken by the Torquegua in 1604, and judging from manuscript material on related people (Anonymous 1696) it was Chol, other genetically unrelated tongues (Xinca and Jicaque) were not geographically distant. It is not inconceivable that they are the source for some of the undecipherable words that form some 56.71% of the sample, indeed the term Torquegua itself may have such an origin; of the remainder, 26.12% are Nahua and 17.16% derived from a Mayan tongue.

Languages, or dialects, cited below are: Yucatec Mayan (yuc., Swadesh, Alvarez & Bastarrachea 1970), Tamactun Chontal (tam., Scholes & Roys 1948), Zacbalam Cholti (zac., cf. Moran 1935), Chol (Schumann 1973), Itza Maya (Schumann 1971), Manche Chol (man., cf. Tovilla 1960), and Nahua (nah., Molina 1880 and Sahagun 1963). Note is made of masculine (m.) versus feminine (f.) names, most of which are used for only one sex; the ix- prefix frequently designates a feminine form. Otto Schumann (personal communication) has kindly contributed several modern Chorti (cho.) surnames, all but one of these are Nahua in origin. The help of Lyle Campbell in etymologizing some of the Mayan terms, Nicolas Hellmuth in making available copies of the Criado de Castillo manuscript for study, and the staff of the Archivo General de Central America for their assistance in locating manuscripts, is also gratefully acknowledged by the author.

A

azthaan: f. (yuc. itzam: earth crocodile?)
 ayzcoqui: f.
 avin, abincai: m. (tam. habin: dogwood)
 axun: m.
 amus: m. (nah. amoxtili: religious books?)
 aguaçan: m. (yuc. ahau can: lord snake)
 aitiquec: m.

* Other spellings for this term are Toguegas, Taguegas, and Loguegas.

amiztin: m. (nah. amiztli: water lion)
 aluma: m.
 achavan: m. (yuc. chaban)
 acui: m.
 atos: m. (spanish matos?)
 axoqui: f.
 asananbaren: f.
 arix: m.
 açiguan: m. (nah. acihuan: water women)
 açibit: m. (nah.?)

C

cayun: m. (zac. ixcayon)
 caçiqui: f.
 caun: m.
 cuchan, cuchin: m. (chol kojtom: badger, pizote)
 cuyuc: m.
 comiachic: m.

Ç

çibaac: m. (nah. cipactli: crocodile)
 çian, çiancui: m. (yuc. zian: charm)
 çinan, çiman, xinan: f. + m. (yuc. zinaan: scorpion)
 çicac: m.
 çican: m. + f.
 çicun, açicone, cicun: m. (nah. chicunau: nine?)
 çinqueman: f.
 çinachac: f.
 çitigua: m.
 çinati: m.
 çiac: f.
 çiban, açiban: m. + f.
 çulid: m. (nah. ocelotl: jaguar)

CH

chumpi': (cho. duck)
 chinancan: m. (nah. chinamitl: fence?)
 chiki': cho. (nah. chiquitl: basket)
 chuila: m.
 chimal: m. (nah. chimalli: shield)
 chaquic: m. (tam. cha: two)
 chinamite: m. (nah. chinamitl: seto); cho. chinam.

H

vizculu: m. (nah. huitzcolotl: thorn of a thorny tree)
 hiloc: f.
 guaçip: m.

I

isto, iztu: f.
 izma: f.
 iztan, iztin: f.
 quen: m. (nah. itzquintli: dog and/or zac. ahquin)
 icay: f.
 izbeque: m.
 ispan: f. (nah. pantli: flag)
 izcuçan: f.
 iznoche: m.
 iztoz: m. (zac. tuz)
 icui: f.
 icap: f.
 izcapali: f. (nah. ezcapani?)
 izcapay: f.
 izolo: f. (nah. yullotli: heart)
 izmican: f. + m.
 ichacu: f.
 izcoa, izcoatli: f. (nah. itzcoatli: obsidian snake)

IX

ix: f. (yuc.)
 ixmux: f.
 (i)xcismia: f.
 ixon: f.
 ixchama: f. (tam. chamali; yuc. chamal: cigar)
 ixnac: f. (yuc. nak: belly)
 ixpolic: f.
 ixiquec: f.
 ixachat: f. (tam. ixacha)
 ixchavan: f. (yuc. chabin?)
 ixcan or ichan: f. (yuc. can: snake, day name)
 xpoc: f. (yuc. pok: ball; itza yuc. xpok: dwarf chicken)
 ixcacoc: f.
 ixtiliz: f.
 ixmacatin: f. (nah. mazatl: deer)
 ixbol: f.
 ixcata, ixcati, ixcatec: f.
 ixcubi: f.
 ixcuy, ixcuya: f.
 ixçucut: f. (nah. zozoltin: quail)

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