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**GENDER AND CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT IN MEXICO:
THE NAHUAS OF PAJAPAN, VERACRUZ**

by

Verónica Vázquez García

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
August 8, 1995

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**GENDER AND CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT IN MEXICO:
THE NAHUAS OF PAJAPAN, VERACRUZ**

submitted by

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Thesis Supervisor

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the changes in women's work and status resulting from the introduction of the cattle industry in Pajapan, a Nahuatl community in southern Veracruz, Mexico. Previous research on the region has shown that the expansion of the cattle industry resulted in the decline of subsistence production, the deterioration of the environment, the monetarization of the local economy, class differentiation, and changes in native forms of government and family structures. This dissertation contributes to the literature on the Nahuas of Pajapan in three major ways. First, it illuminates the gender dimension of capitalist development by looking at women's changing relationship to land and the diversification of their work in the context of capitalist accumulation. Second, it explores emerging divisions among women by analyzing the ways in which different women articulate class and gender experiences. Third, it highlights women's responses to capitalist development by examining the strategies used by some of them to receive land during land distribution processes as well as their negotiation of gender roles in everyday life.

The dissertation combines two approaches dealing with the concept of the household: feminist anthropology and feminist political economy. Following the first approach, the dissertation explores the ways in which the household composition and organization in Pajapan shape men's and women's status and access to land, labor and income. It shows that men's direct relation to property and ability to call on household labor led to capitalist accumulation in male hands. Using some analytical tools of feminist political economy, the dissertation also examines the impact of wider socioeconomic processes on the sexual division of labor at home and

women's position within the household. While some women limit their income generating activities to their own homes and draw on "appropriate" gender roles in order to ensure their access to household resources, others challenge traditional gender roles by reconciling their roles as mothers with those as workers outside their households.

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CHAPTER I
SETTING THE SCENE:
THE NAHUAS OF PAJAPAN, VERACRUZ

Two decades of research on women in the Third World have shown us that the incorporation of subsistence economies into "modern" market economies has produced major changes in women's work and status, the sexual division of labor, patriarchal forms of control and women's access to resources. Not surprisingly, there is considerable debate on the exact nature of the effects of these processes on women's lives. While Leacock (1972; 1977; 1978) argues that capitalist relations of production have undermined women's autonomy and decision-making power, other scholars (Huntingdon, 1975; Afonja, 1981) have suggested that women's degree of independence in pre-capitalist societies should not be overestimated. As pointed out by Moore (1988:32), ethnographies contain "many references to male-female relations which are hard to fit in with this picture of autonomous complementarity."

Evidence shows, however, that the penetration of capitalism into subsistence economies has generally had a negative impact on women. For example, the introduction of technology in rural areas discriminated against women. The commercialization of agriculture coupled with changes in land tenure systems and migrant labor have also worked against the interests of women. Thus, some authors believe that capitalist transformation has led to the feminization of subsistence agriculture. Simply put, this thesis maintains that the burden of providing for family consumption has fallen on women. This has prevented them from engaging in cash crop production or leaving a particular area in search of paid work.

Hence, women are responsible for supporting the family but have neither access nor control over income (Moore, 1988).

Although the feminization of subsistence agriculture is true for some parts of Africa and Latin America, it is incorrect to generalize this phenomenon for the whole Third World. In regions where female seclusion is practiced, women's contribution to agricultural labor in the fields is still small compared to men's (Longhurst, 1982; Hill, 1969). Some authors have also suggested that the commercialization of agriculture has led to the impoverishment of the peasant agricultural sector as a whole, and that men's labor burden has increased as well (Deere and León de Leal, 1979; 1981). Others have emphasized the fact that preexisting patterns of accumulation and relations of subordination influence the form that capitalist intervention takes, and that women should not be viewed as passive victims of capitalist transformation (Wilson, 1985; Benería and Roldán, 1987). As pointed out by Moore (1988:79), the portrayal of men as winners and women as losers obscures their responses to processes of change and reproduces the categories of men and women as homogeneous groups. In so doing, this approach overlooks important differences in economic and political power among women.

Scholarship on Latin American women has undergone a similar trend. While the literature of the 1970's viewed women as "marginalized" from development and pushed into the domestic sphere (Arizpe, 1989:127-135), studies published during the 1980's focused on women's employment in commercial agriculture, agro-industries and other kind of industries¹

¹ See Arizpe and Aranda (1989) for women's work in agro-industries, Fernández-Kelly (1983) for women's work in *maquiladoras* and Benería and Roldán (1987) for industrial piecework performed by

(Brydon and Chant, 1989; Blumberg, 1990; Tinker, 1990; Guzmán and Vargas, 1991). Historical research has shown that women have been industrial workers and have been represented in the informal sector for at least a century.² Current structural adjustment programs have resulted in the intensification of women's paid and unpaid work. During the eighties, married women in early years of child bearing joined single women in the formal labor force. This is true not only for working-class women but also for middle-class women (González de la Rocha, 1989; De Oliveira and García, 1990; Pacheco Gómez Muñoz, 1992). Women's participation in the informal economy (particularly food stands in the streets) has also increased since the early eighties (Judisman, 1989).

Thus, it is well-known that women's contribution to the domestic economy is significant. However, few studies have explored whether women's income has increased their decision-making power at home or changed their self-perceptions and the value that they place on their activities. Studies have tended to reproduce the image of women as passive victims of economic change and have ignored the role of preexisting social relations

women in Mexico City.

² Between 1895 and 1910, women comprised one third of all workers employed in manufacturing in Mexico. They worked in dressmaking, shoe manufacturing, food and beverage processing, pottery and glass making, but the greatest numbers were employed in the textile and tobacco industries. In 1902, at least 17 per cent of the textile workers were women (Macías, 1982:31; Soto, 1990:13). Women were also represented in the informal sector of the Mexican economy. In 1905, 22 per cent of Mexico City's 15 to 30 year-old women (nearly one in every four) were prostitutes, a proportion ten times greater than in Paris. By 1895 there were more than 275,000 domestic workers in Mexico City, most of them women (Soto, 1990:8). Mexican rural women sold animals, fruits, vegetables and flowers in town markets, food at railroad stations and on the streets, or worked as peons, depending on the region (Macías, 1982:31-32; González Montes, 1987:123).

in shaping women's everyday lives (Wilson, 1985; Benería and Roldán, 1987:7; González Montes, 1993:25-27).

A good example of this problem is women's changing relationship to land in rural Mexico. Most studies do not critically examine the relation between patterns of marriage, residence and land access rights. While some scholars assume that all members of the household have equal right to the "family patrimony", others discuss marriage and residence practices in an ahistorical fashion and do not address the ways in which these practices have conditioned women's access to land in a context of capitalist development and have in turn been shaped by new relations of production. Rural women's negotiation of gender roles, labor obligations and property rights have also been overlooked in the literature (González Montes, 1987; 1994c).

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the changes in women's work and status resulting from the introduction of capitalist development in Pajapan, a Nahuatl community in southern Veracruz, Mexico. Previous research on the region (García de León, 1976; Stuart, 1978; Martínez Morales et al., 1978, 1982; Martínez Morales, 1983; González Cruz et al., 1983; Sedeño and Becerril, 1985; Nahmad, 1989; Caouette, 1989; Chevalier and Buckles, in press) has shown that the expansion of the cattle industry resulted in the decline of subsistence production, the deterioration of the environment, the monetarization of the local economy, class differentiation, and changes in native forms of government and family structures. This dissertation will place emphasis on women's changing relationship to land, the diversification of their work and their negotiation of gender roles in a class-stratified community.

The present chapter sets the scene for the dissertation. The first section informs the reader about geographical and environmental conditions, population levels and major economic activities in the region. The second section reviews previous ethnographies on the Gulf Nahuas and establishes the objectives and scope of the present study.

1. The Setting: The Sierra de los Tuxtlas

More than half a million people live in the Sierra de los Tuxtlas, southern Veracruz. The region is divided into two zones, the northern one comprised of the municipalities of San Andrés Tuxtla, Santiago Tuxtla and Catemaco, and the southern area comprised of the municipalities of Soteapan, Mecayapan and Pajapan. The total population of the southern area was 52,970 in 1990, half of whom speak Popoluca and the other half Nahuatl (30,000 approximately). The three largest Nahuatl-speaking communities in the region are Pajapan, Tatahuicapan and Mecayapan. Pajapan has a population of approximately 5,000 inhabitants and is the municipal seat of numerous villages³ (see Map 1).

Narrow paths travelled by foot and horseback connect Pajapan to other villages of the region, which are joined to regional urban centers by a paved road built in 1994. From Pajapan, Minatitlán can be reached by buses which run every hour, and Coatzacoalcos can be reached by boat and bus. People from Pajapan make frequent trips to these cities for medical appointments, to get provisions, sell produce or get temporary employment.

³ San Juan Volador, Minzapan, Coxcapa, José María Morelos, Benito Juárez, Lázaro Cárdenas, San Miguel Temoloapan, Ursulo Galván, Lorenzo Azúa Torres, El Mangal, Batajapan, Jicacal, Palma Real, El Pescador and Tecolapa (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:3).

Map 1. Southern Veracruz

Source: Chevalier and Buckles, in press: 5

The rainforest of the Sierra de los Tuxtlas is a very old community of flora and fauna. It survived the cool-dry climatic periods of the last ice age due to the moderating influence of the Gulf of Mexico. When temperatures and rainfall increased with the beginning of the modern geological era, this and other rainforests fanned out to create what is currently tropical Mexico (Proyecto Sierra de Santa Marta [henceforth to be referred as SSM Project], 1990:2).

The Sierra is dominated by the 1,100 meter San Martín volcano which slopes down to the ocean shore. Numerous small streams drain off the heavy seasonal rainfall. The average yearly temperature is approximately 25° Celsius. The temperature in the coldest month is above 18° Celsius, while in April and May the daytime highs are between 36 and 39° Celsius. May is the warmest month and the beginning of the rainy season, which runs until October.

Beyond the Sierra lie the cities of Coatzacoalcos, Minatitlán and Jaltipan which have a total population of about one million. These cities have experienced a dramatic population increase during the past thirty years as a result of their strategic position between the oil-producing southeast and the economic center of the country in the Valley of Mexico. The pipelines and shipping facilities of the region handle about 90 per cent of Mexico's oil and gas production. These two commodities represent 60 per cent of Mexico's total exports. Approximately 70 per cent of Mexico's petro-chemical industries are concentrated there and other industries such as ammonia, sulphur, cement and fertilizers have major operations in the region. The port of Coatzacoalcos receives more oil tankers than any other port in the country and handles the greatest

portion of general freight (Buckles, 1987:3). A good number of the economically active regional population are men with unskilled jobs servicing the oil "enclave." Women have found employment as domestic workers, sex traders and petty traders in these urban areas.

The other major industry in the region is cattle raising. It is centered in the small city of Acayucan, west of the oil complex. Since the 1950's, the demand for beef in national and international markets has promoted the expansion of cattle production into what were previously agricultural areas and virgin forest. A few powerful cattle ranchers now control large areas of pasture land around Acayucan and an important part of the national beef market. Extensive grazing requiring few laborers is characteristic of the type of cattle production of the region. Thousands of people have been pushed out of agriculture and into poverty-stricken sectors of the rural and urban economy. Vast areas have been deforested and exposed to the detrimental effects of erosion. In short, the cattle industry has resulted in ecological destruction, unemployment and rural-urban migration (Buckles, 1987:4).

In 1967, the Sierra comprised 82,000 hectares of rainforest. The number had been reduced to 26,000 hectares by 1993 (Ramírez and Velázquez, 1993:1). The semi-tropical vegetation of the region is now limited to the upper-reaches of the San Martín volcano, which is too steep for cultivation or for grazing animals. The rest of the area consists of open fields of grassland, cultivated plots and fallow land covered with secondary growth of broad-leaved plants and small trees.

The Sierra houses close to 3,000 different types of plants, 748 of which are used for local medicinal, food, ornamental and ritual purposes.

The Sierra is also inhabited by four hundred bird species, which make up 40 per cent of the total number of birds found in Mexico; and by hundreds of species of mammals, reptiles and fish. One hundred and two of these species are in danger of extinction (Ramírez and Velázquez, 1993:2).

The economy of Pajapan has been shaped by both the oil and cattle industries. As noted by Chevalier and Buckles (in press: 129-138), expansion of the cattle industry in the village was initiated under the direction of absentee *mestizo* cattle ranchers from Coatzacoalcos and Jaltipan during the 1950's. Local intermediaries were used by the *mestizos* to legitimate access to grazing land within the municipality. Some of these local ranchers began to develop their own cattle operations and by the late 1960's they had virtually replaced their *mestizo* mentors. By the late 1970's, there were approximately 9,000 animals in Pajapan. Sixty one per cent of households were landless while three per cent controlled almost half of the arable land.

As Chevalier and Buckles (in press:85) point out, some landless peasants found sources of income in the cities of the oil boom. However, the expansion of the local cattle industry came to a halt in 1979 when PEMEX, the state-owned oil company, expropriated one fourth of Pajapan's communal lands (5,153 of 19,158 hectares) for a massive petro-chemical complex. The project included a port facility, industrial park and urban area for a population of two million. The interests of local ranchers were no longer compatible with the growth of the oil company. Landless peasants took advantage of this situation and called for the distribution of the remaining land, while ranchers pushed for compensation for their land losses.

The non-expropriated part of Pajapan's communal property was distributed in 1981. The land was divided into 905 plots of 12 hectares each. The parcelling of communal land resulted in a net loss of and controlled by ranchers, a reversion to peasant production and a reduced polarization of local class relations. However, by the late 1980's, 40 per cent of village households were still without land titles, and ranchers continued to control the best available land in the non-expropriated zone (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:131).

The industrial port project was cancelled in 1984. Lower revenues from the oil industry and the massive debt of the Mexican government threw the national economy into its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression; cuts had to be made and the project was suspended. Some years later the expropriated land was returned to the community and a new *ejido* was created in 1992. As a result, the percentage of landless households in Pajapan declined to 23.7 per cent. However, the agricultural sector was also hard-hit by the crisis and the government was forced to reduce price supports for basic crops. In addition, recent amendments to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution allowing the sale and rental of *ejido* lands to outsiders and opening up the possibility for joint ventures between *ejidos* and private groups indicate that the most profitable branches of agro-industries will develop at the expense of subsistence production economies. As Goldring (1995:4) suggests, these changes are already eroding communal forms of organization and group entitlements to *ejido* lands. Differences among *ejido* members based on individual status and personal relations with state agencies and other lending institutions are increasingly determining peasants' access to credit and technical support.

2. Previous Ethnographies on the Gulf Nahuas

A number of ethnographies have been written on the Nahuas of southern Veracruz. Each of these studies illuminates particular aspects of social life in the region. Antonio García de León (1976) focuses on the distinguishing features of Pajapan's Nahuatl and provides information on the history and present activities of Pajapeños. He points out that men are involved in agriculture, cattle raising, fishing, hunting and gathering while women "look after the house and clean it, prepare meals, occasionally help in the cultivation of corn and beans and also fetch herbs required for food preparation" (1978:130; my translation). García de León observes that the *solar* (backyard) is "one of the most important elements of the household economy" because Pajapeños sell domestic animals "almost every day" in Coatzacoalcos (1978:130; my translation). Yet he fails to note that the *solar* is a female domain and that it is women who are responsible for raising and selling these animals. In so doing, García de León obscures women's contribution to the household economy.

Stuart (1978) makes a similar omission. His study explores the major elements of the subsistence system of the Gulf Nahuas (agriculture, hunting, fishing, gathering and animal husbandry). It contains important information on the methods and instruments used in cultivation, hunting, fishing and food preparation; on the kind and amounts of produce grown in the fields and the quality of the local diet; and on the carrying capacity of the regional subsistence system. However, he tends to emphasize male activities to the detriment of female activities. For example, he discusses in detail the process of cultivation, from choosing the *milpa* site (working fields) to harvesting and carrying produce to the household.

He points out that the work is carried out by males although women participate in weeding, harvesting and carrying (Stuart, 1978:155;352). Yet when it comes to other female productive activities (e.g. raising domestic animals) he fails to point out that it is women who carry them out. This is particularly striking if we consider that most of the households under his scrutiny (25 of 32) sold domestic animals to buy corn (1978:212). Thus, we are left with the impression that women are mainly in charge of domestic work and occasionally participate in agricultural work, when in fact his own data indicate that women's income generating activities contribute to household maintenance in times of corn shortage in very substantial ways.

The various books written by native anthropologists working with Culturas Populares (González Cruz, G. et al., 1983; Martínez Morales, E., 1983; Martínez Morales E. et al., 1978; 1982) contain meaningful information on changing cultural traditions, political structures, economic activities and communication systems. However the authors do not discuss the changes in the sexual division of labor. They write:

Fifty years ago the town of Pajapan had fewer inhabitants. They were monolingual, they only spoke Nahuatl, their mother tongue, which is still spoken. They were all peasants and hunters. They grew maize, beans, sugar cane, banana, squash, papaya and pineapple. They hunted wild animals such as deer, armadillo, etc. (Martínez et al., 1982:23; my translation).

According to the authors, the expansion of the cattle industry in the village resulted in differentiation into three social classes: upper, middle and lower. Although they describe the activities performed by members of each class, the authors do not discuss the sexual division of labor within each. For example, members of the upper class own cattle and businesses, while members of the lower class are involved in subsistence

agriculture and generate income as peons, fisher helpers or petty traders (1982:9-13). We are not told who does what and whether women have any control over cattle, businesses or other sources of income.

Sedeño and Becerril (1985) explore the problems of male violence and alcohol dependency in Mecayapan and Tatahuicapan, the other two major Nahua communities of the region besides Pajapan. From an ethno-psychoanalytical perspective, the authors argue that "the relationship between a boy⁴ and his parents contains traumatic messages" which later lead to aggression against women and alcohol abuse (1985:226; my translation). These messages have to do with the father's right to decide when and for how long a boy should be breast-fed by his mother. According to the authors, the father arbitrarily breaks "the fundamental alliance between a boy and his mother" and in so doing, he destroys the basis for "love, trust, gratefulness and hope" in the boy's future relationships as an adult (1985: 227). Even if the father does not intervene in the breast-feeding process, a boy is always exposed to "the violence of the father's law, the irrationality of the father's relationship with his wife, her submission and fear, and the boy's own powerlessness to defend his ties with his mother" (1985:228; my translation). Men develop a "narcissistic deficiency" which makes them feel deprived and insecure. Since the problem centers on the mother's breast, men also have an oral fixation which translates into alcohol abuse. These problems are exacerbated by the subjection of the local population to broader systems of domination which

⁴ In Spanish, *niño* can mean child or boy. The authors do not clarify gender differences when they use the word. From their discussion I gather that what they are really describing is the formation of the male "personality structure" and they are referring to male infants only.

undermine the customary mechanisms of social control and result in an inferiority complex vis-à-vis the outside world.

The analysis is based on extensive fieldwork. The book contains significant data on the local meaning of marriage, polygyny, pregnancy and the construction of gender roles through socialization. The authors make important points about the ways in which men view women's sexuality- as insatiable, voracious, dangerous and threatening to male identity. They also illuminate the relationship between food and sexuality which will be further explored in this dissertation. However, the book has one major problem: it assumes rather than explains women's acceptance of the rule of the father/husband. Throughout the book, women are portrayed as passive victims of male violence and desire. The authors do not even contemplate the possibility that women may resist domination and attempt to break the pattern.

Thus, the book has serious gaps when it comes to female identity. Although the authors point out that their goal is to explore the "Nahua personality structure", in fact they are only explaining male behavior towards women. Although never clarified, the infant who sees his father as a rival is male. What are the dynamics between a female infant and her parents? The process of female identity formation remains unexplored.

Daniel Nahmad (1989) wrote his B.A. Honors thesis on the development of social classes and political factions in Pajapan during the cattle raising period (1950-1982). His thesis sheds light on the processes of economic and political differentiation among Pajapeños. Yet the author neglects the gender dimension of such processes by failing to address changes in women's productive and reproductive roles. Nahmad limits

women's activities to "housework" (1989:24) and does not discuss the fact that women participate in agricultural work and are responsible for gathering, fishing in rivers and raising domestic animals. He describes life in Pajapan prior to the introduction of the cattle industry as follows:

The organization of work was closely linked to kinship relations. The family was the basic unit of production and labor was divided by age and sex. Women did the housework while men worked the fields. Children participated in activities corresponding to their sex until they were old enough for marriage and ready to form a new domestic unit... The most important activity was agriculture, complemented by hunting, fishing, sporadic gathering and animal raising (1989:24; my translation).

Furthermore, Nahmad neglects an issue which is central to gender analysis in Pajapan: men's direct control over land and access to women's and children's labor. Nahmad believes that before the introduction of cattle raising "there were no relations of domination between individuals." Equality existed because "people participated in an equal manner in social life" (1989:26; my translation). This assumption prevents him from analyzing the role of preexisting social relations in limiting women's access to land and cattle in the context of capitalist development. Nahmad fails to explain why, as this dissertation will show, women were alienated from cattle raising operations, and capital accumulated in male hands.

Nahmad also neglects particular patterns of female rural-urban migration. The only migrants discussed in his study are (male) workers in the construction sector. Women's migration to urban areas in search of employment (mainly as domestic workers) and the creation of a steady group of rural-urban female petty traders are not part of his analysis. By

ignoring women's participation in income generating activities, Nahmad fails to explore the gender dimension of capitalist development and its different impact on women and men.

Dominique Caouette's M. A. thesis (1989) on the politics of land in Pajapan during the cattle raising period also neglects gender issues. Caouette does a most detailed analysis of the political dynamics which led to the land distribution of 1981. However, he does not discuss the impact of cattle politics on women's status and decision-making power in the community. His study does not examine women's changing relationship to land nor does it problematize women's exclusion from local politics and land distribution processes.

Finally, Jacques Chevalier and Daniel Buckles (in press) explore the impact of state and capital expansion on the environment, the local subsistence economy, native forms of government and family structures. Their first three chapters explore municipal politics and the concentration of wealth in land and cattle. Drawing on Caouette's and their own research, the authors reconstruct the history of land struggle from pre-hispanic to contemporary Pajapan. Their next two chapters (Four and Five) focus on issues of agricultural economics and rain forest ecology in the context of cattle ranching. Their remaining two chapters (Six and Seven) examine the dynamics of the Gulf Nahua kinship system and the relations between humans and the universe conveyed through local narrative practices -- the myth of the Corn God.

The authors discuss gender inequality in the last two chapters. Chapter Six focuses on what they refer to as "practical aspects of the domestic economy" (which include household composition, authority

structure, the sexual division of labor, the rule of inheritance, changing patterns of residence and the institution of marriage) (in press:215-216). The dynamics of the Gulf Nahua kinship system are seen "against the background of wider forces affecting local forms of household organization based on descent and marriage, gender and age." Hence, this chapter also discusses "changes in population structure and kin relations caused by the growth of the cattle and oil industries in southern Veracruz" (in press: 216). Finally, Chapter Seven analyzes the ways in which "native myths... wrestle with problems of authority, subsistence and reproduction affecting men and women, the old and the young" (in press:255).

Although the authors discuss important elements of gender inequality in these two chapters (for example, women's loss of access to property at the time of marriage; the monetarization of brideprice; the meaning of marriage and the differences in ceremonies between first and second wives of polygamous men; the poverty of landless female heads of households engaged in petty trade), the fact that they confine their discussion of gender issues to the kinship system and changes in population structure reproduces the notion that women operate only within the domestic sphere, while men alone operate in the public/political domain. This tends to obscure the many important activities and relationships which women are engaged in. Three examples will be given to illustrate this point.

The first is women's participation in local politics and land distribution processes. The authors do a most thorough analysis of the struggle between contesting forms of land tenure and the role of the post-revolutionary state in distributing resources between the wealthy and the poor. However, former versions of their book failed to address the same

issue when it comes to women and men. The authors' discussion of the mechanisms which exclude women from local politics and land distribution processes (incorporated in the final version of their book) is based on the findings of this dissertation.

Second, women's roles in the expansion of the cattle industry are not discussed. In Chapter Six, the authors point out that virilocality places women in a vulnerable position in so far as women lose their land access rights in their original domestic unit when they marry. However, the authors do not explore the implications of this phenomenon for women during the cattle raising period. As this dissertation will show, men's direct control over property and their access to family labor led to capitalist accumulation in male hands. Although women contributed to the growth of the cattle industry through their labor, they were alienated from cattle wealth. In this sense, kin-based power and exchange relations are not only altered by wider forces, as the authors rightly point out, but they also shape the different impact of capitalist development on women and men.

Third, the chapter dealing with the emerging class structure of Pajapan (Chapter Four) does not elaborate on the differences between men's and women's activities. The authors (in press:127-129) divide the households of Pajapan into three classes:

1) **Subsistence and wage working.**— This class includes households which combine subsistence production and wage-work (rural or urban) or depend on just one of the two activities for survival. These households have no assets or savings of their own and possess fewer than five head of cattle.

They sell less than \$40 U.S.⁵ of produce per year and engage in wage labor one to five days per week. They represent 47 per cent of all households in Pajapan.

2) Small scale commodity production.— This class includes households which combine or derive most earnings from either one of these activities: small-scale ranching (they own fewer than 25 heads of cattle); cash crop production (they sell at least \$40 U.S. of produce per year); craft work (carpentry, baking, auto repair); petty trade (they buy and sell fruit, vegetables, bread, fish, seafood, fowl, pigs, beer, clothes and prepared food at least two days a week); and stores with less than \$230 U.S. invested. These households represent 47 per cent of the total number of households of Pajapan.

3) Capital.— This class includes households which have capital invested in cattle and small businesses. They own more than 25 head of cattle and may also own businesses such as stores, taxis, cattle brokerages, restaurants and rooming houses with a minimum worth of \$230 U.S. This class makes up only 6 per cent of all households in Pajapan.

As can be seen, one of the distinguishing features between the first two classes is the amount of money made from selling produce on the market. In Chapter Six the authors point out that, generally, men are responsible for agricultural work while women "sell fruit or other

⁵ The values given by Chevalier and Buckles are based on the exchange rate of 1986 (650 pesos for one U.S. dollar).

foodstuffs on the local or regional market" (in press:219). However, the authors do not discuss whether the sexual division of labor and women's control over income is different in these two classes. Similarly, the authors point out that the poorest households are more likely to raise chickens (in press:153), but they fail to explore the significance of women's income for the domestic economy and women's decision-making power within the household.

The same is true for the class which owns capital. The authors point out that stores are often looked after by a woman (in press:146). However, we do not know who is in charge of cattle transactions, who manages the businesses, and whether women have access to the income earned in these activities. By failing to discuss the gender dynamics of production, sale and consumption within each class, the authors obscure important differences among women.

The gender of wage laborers in the typology is also unclear. From the discussion that follows the typology, it seems that they refer to male wage laborers only. They write:

about 56 per cent of the labor is in agriculture-- men working for either peasants or ranchers... Rural and urban services (shopkeepers, waiters, taxi drivers, municipal employees, etc.) absorb only 15 per cent of the wage labor force... Construction work accounts for another 29 per cent of all paid labor and occurs mostly in the urban centers where workers are employed for an average of five or six days per week (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:158).

It is not clear whether women are being considered under "shopkeepers and waiters", where they are indeed overrepresented. If this is the case, gender differences should be clarified and explained. Moreover, women's wage labor in the city (mainly as domestic workers) is not discussed, even though some households in Pajapan rely on these women's earnings for

survival. Women who make salaries similar to those of municipal employees (mostly males), such as school teachers and nurses, are not mentioned either.

The typology also neglects the gender dimension of trade in Pajapan. The authors show that store and *cantina* (local bars) owners make similar earnings to itinerant traders, though for less work. Store and *cantina* owners also "have more expenditures and wealth invested in merchandise" than itinerant traders (in press:155). Although the authors point out that most itinerant traders are single mothers, they do not discuss the gender dynamics of households which own stores and *cantinas*. In doing so, they obscure important differences between men and women engaged in trading activities. As this dissertation will show, men have access to larger commercial networks and a greater ability to make investments than women.

In their Chapter Six, Chevalier and Buckles examine the relationship between household structure, levels of productivity, occupational strategies and class position. The authors (in press:248) suggest that this relationship "shows partiality against women (especially single mothers), the young and the very old". Only one of every four households headed by a single mother has land rights. Single mothers have the poorest land, produce less corn than the average and are overrepresented in petty trade. By contrast, "virtually all ranchers and owners of businesses have land rights, as do about 86 per cent of the farmers and farmer-wage worker classes" (in press:132). In these two-parent households, the older the couple is (except for the oldest couples), the greater the likelihood the household will have land rights, own cattle and grow larger quantities of wet-season corn (in press:248-250).

Although these data shed light on the relationship between class and household composition, we still do not know what women within each class and kind of household are doing, with the exception of female heads of households (or single mothers) engaged in petty trade. We are not told if the sexual division of labor varies according to household composition, occupational profile or age of household members. Moreover, although the authors discuss polygyny, they do not include male-attached households (households established by polygamous men) in their household classification. Important differences among women are thus obscured.

The authors do not address variations in terms of women's reproductive work either. Although they point out that women are in charge of child bearing, rearing and domestic work, they do not further explore the ways in which women's responsibility for domestic work determines their involvement in other productive activities within each class, and how it shapes their identities as wives and mothers.

Failure to discuss these issues obscures the importance of women's income for the household economy. In Chapter Six the authors point out that "women have been increasingly confined to a domestic and village economy geared to subsistence production, petty trade and family reproductive activities" (in press:235) and that "these days, most cash earnings circulating in Pajapan are in the hands of the male population, leaving women more vulnerable than ever" (in press:232). Although this is true as a general trend, we still have to ask ourselves what women are doing at home, whether they really depend on male earnings or have created alternative sources of income. Again, differences among women should be addressed. Also, the lives of those women who generate regular income and

support households (e.g. petty traders and domestic workers) should be further scrutinized.

This dissertation will contribute to the literature on the Gulf Nahuas in several ways. First, it will illuminate the gender dimension of capitalist development by looking at women's changing relationship to land and the diversification of their work during the cattle raising period. Second, it will investigate existing divisions among women by analyzing the ways in which different women in contemporary Pajapan articulate class and gender experiences. Third, it will highlight women's responses to capitalist development by examining women's strategies to receive land during land distribution processes and their negotiation of gender roles in everyday life. The next chapter will outline the theoretical perspective of this study and the methods which were used to achieve these objectives.

CHAPTER II THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the theoretical perspective as well as the major concepts and research methods of this dissertation. The first section reviews the literature on class, gender and ethnicity in rural Mexico, and outlines the theoretical perspective which guides the present study. Section two discusses various approaches to the notion of the household and shows the relevance of this concept for the present study. Finally, the last section reflects on my attempts at doing feminist research in Pajapan. The section critically examines the research relationship established with women in Pajapan and the methods used to collect information.

1. Class, Gender and Ethnicity in Rural Mexico

Studies on rural Mexico dealing with class, gender and ethnicity are not numerous. Gender has been ignored until very recently, and ethnicity has been reduced to class or vice versa, without looking at the ways in which the two intersect. Early anthropology (produced between the 1920's and 1950's by Americans or Mexicans usually trained in the United States) worked within the acculturation paradigm which defined culture as a set of values organizing social life. These values were passed on intact from one generation to another. Culture was endowed with a dynamic of its own and social change was caused by "cultural contact." This contact typically meant a chance to "progress", and societies were divided into two ideal types: "folk" or traditional, and urban or modern. It was believed that "folk" societies (rural Mexico) would eventually evolve in the linear path

of modernization. These ideas took shape during post-revolutionary Mexico through the *indigenista* discourse which proclaimed the need to integrate the aboriginal population into national society (e.g. Redfield, 1950; Tax *et.al*, 1968; Gamio, 1916; Caso, 1948; Aguirre Beltrán, 1957). They also reflected the widespread view held by development agencies in the post-war period.

A reaction to this view came from Marxist intellectuals writing during the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's. Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara (1984) identifies three schools which draw inspiration from Marxist theory in their analysis of rural Mexico. These are cultural ecology, dependency theory and orthodox Marxism. Cultural ecology was the first paradigm to challenge modernization theory. The concern of cultural ecologists was

not simply how to account for defensive cultural difference in predominantly Indian regions, but how to place all inhabitants of the countryside (Indian or not) in an historically informed, structural relation to the broader socioeconomic and political system of which they necessarily formed part (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1984:70).

Cultural ecology differs from modernization theorists in two major ways. First, cultural ecologists (e.g. Julian Steward, 1963; Eric Wolf, 1955, 1959, 1966, 1967; Angel Palerm, 1972, 1977) believe that the classification of native groups should not be based on the creation of "culture areas", but rather on the kind of adaptation imposed by the material conditions of the environment. Members of a certain language group may exhibit certain similarities of culture, but the requirements of the local environment may contribute to significant differences among them. In this sense, common material arrangements may be dispersed among "culture areas" as well as within them (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1984:73).

Second, cultural ecologists introduced the notion of "the peasantry" arguing that the term "folk" obscured the structural relationship between rural villagers and the wider economy. They maintained that peasant communities were not on their way to being absorbed into a modern urban culture, but rather were already integrated into the wider society through the unequal exchange of agricultural goods; thus, they were unlikely to disappear in the near future. Cultural ecologists called the "domestic mode of production" the particular ways in which peasant households assured their own livelihood and produced the surplus required of them by outsiders. The distinguishing features of such mode of production are "the inseparability of production and consumption units, and of economic and social units, as well as the predominance of motives of production for use over production for profit" (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1984:86).

Dependency theory represents a shift from cultural anthropology in as much as it is concerned not only with the structure of domination within nation-states but also between nation-states themselves. Dependency theorists (e.g. Pablo González Casanova, 1963, 1969; André Gunder Frank, 1967) carried out a more specific examination of the place of underdeveloped nations or territories within the world capitalist system. They argued that mechanisms of political domination, cultural manipulation and unequal market exchange were responsible for the phenomenon of underdevelopment within an earlier context of colonialism. Even after formal independence, these mechanisms continue to channel the benefits of economic growth in Third World countries towards a dependent domestic elite and its foreign sponsors. Mexican society is thus divisible into a "hierarchy of sociogeographical divisions, each containing exploiters and

exploited, and each serving at the same time as satellite of a more powerful entity and as metropolis of a less powerful one". Rural communities are seen as "internal colonies" linked to national metropolis and regional centers through "chains of exploitation" (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1984:105).

Both cultural ecology and dependency theory have in common their challenge to the universal applicability of concepts proposed by Marx to explain the dynamics of social relations in Western industrialized countries. Orthodox Marxists, by contrast, avoid any challenge to the central opposition between the working-class and the bourgeoisie within capitalist society. For example, Roger Bartra (1974, 1975, 1978) argues that the peasantry exists outside capitalism as part of an entirely different pre-capitalist mode of production which is "articulated" with a capitalist mode of production, but moved by a non-capitalist rationale. The point of "articulation" between both modes of production is the market, where peasants exchange their goods for other goods produced in the capitalist economy and capitalists obtain the fruits of peasant labor and derive profit from them. This unequal exchange distorts the allocation of resources in peasant productive units and eventually ensures the extinction of the peasantry, which is a precondition for the socialist revolution (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1984:131-142).

In the middle 1970's it became evident that the articulation model treats rural communities as homogeneous and isolated social entities and reproduces many of the problems of modernization theory. Marxist scholars (e.g. Armando Bartra, 1979; Luisa Paré, 1977; Arturo Warman, 1976, 1980) moved toward the consideration of a single socioeconomic formation where

peasants are exploited as a "semi-proletariat" class. The peasantry is not "outside capitalism" but rather is a reservoir of cheap and captive family labor on which rest the profits and growth of a considerable part of the modern capitalist system. Given the nature of their insertion within capitalism, peasants are forced to ensure their access to land, just as industrial workers fight for the preservation of their sources of employment. To the extent that the demand for land emphasizes the control by producers over the fruits of their labor, the challenge by the peasantry to capitalist domination is as profound as that presented by the industrial proletariat. Thus, both the peasantry and the working-class have an important role to play in the construction of socialism (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1984:146-156).

The challenge to the modernization paradigm made by Marxist scholars did not take into account the gender dimension of the development process. All three schools refer to the "domestic mode of production" and "family labor" but none of them explores the different impact of economic change on women and men. It was a woman working within the modernization paradigm who first emphasized the importance of women's roles in economic development. Ester Boserup (1970) opened up the discussion of gender issues in agriculture by suggesting that development has an impact on women's position in society and that women should be incorporated into the development process.

Boserup has been praised for her insights into the links between the sexual division of labor, population density, landholding systems and technology. However, she has also been criticized for her assumption that cultural prejudices are to be blamed for women's marginalization from the

modernization process (Beneria and Sen, 1981; Moore, 1988:44). This critique has resulted in a distinct body of literature which has been termed socialist feminism (Jaggar, 1983) or feminist political economy (Stamp, 1989).¹ Two major achievements of this approach are its departure from the neo-classical model which falls short of critically analyzing the dynamics of capitalist accumulation and the negative effects of development, and its emphasis on reproduction and the household sphere. Feminist political economy allows us to explore not only the impact of colonization and neo-colonization on the economies of Third World countries, such as major changes in the social organization of production and the ownership of the means of production, but also the implications of these changes for women by looking at issues such as sexual stratification, changes in women's work and status, the sexual division of labor, patriarchal forms of control and women's access to resources

¹ Stamp prefers this term to Jaggar's term of "socialist feminism" for three reasons. First, because it is difficult to distinguish between Marxist feminist and socialist feminist analyses, and the distinction "can obscure more than it clarifies." Second, because it is hard to find an equivalent to Western liberal feminism in African studies. This is so because Third World scholars "are more inclined to identify and challenge the structures of oppression and inequity than are Western liberal feminists." Even if they work within a WID framework, "the evidence of their own eyes demands that they challenge liberal assumptions." Third, it is also hard to find an equivalent to radical feminism in African studies. These studies do not refer to patriarchy as a ahistorical condition, and the explanation of women's position belies the simplistic sex-class position of radical feminism. Stamp suggests that the term "feminist political economy" encompasses both socialist feminist and critical liberal scholarship (1989). Interestingly, such categories are also hard to find in scholarship on women by Latin American scholars. Most scientists take a "structural dependency approach" (critical to the individualistic perspective of Western liberal thinking) and explain women's position by the prevailing "sociopolitical system", that is, beyond the ahistorical sex-class division of radical feminism (Marysa Navarro, 1979).

(Fernández-Kelly, 1981; Benería and Sen, 1981). Feminist political economy has made it clear that capitalism has different effects on men and women and that women are already integrated into development albeit at the lowest levels (Bandarage, 1983).

Feminist political economy has been challenged on the grounds that race and ethnicity shape gender identity. Scholars (e.g. Amos and Parmar, 1984; Bhavnani and Coulson, 1986; González, 1988; Stasiulis, 1990) have argued that women's relationship to the family, state, production and reproduction is mediated not only by class position but also by racist ideologies. Images of femininity, domesticity and female sexuality have racial/ethnic dimensions. For example, the national census of Mexico has created the image of native women as "existing on the margins of civilization" (Stephen, 1991) and Televisa (the most influential T.V. corporation in the country) has portrayed them as passive, stupid, and unable to speak "proper" Spanish. One of the few native female characters in Mexican history, *la Malinche*, is considered a traitor because she served as translator and became Cortés' mistress during the military defeat of the Aztec Empire. The word *malinchista* today means repudiating the native in favor of the foreign, while Cuauhtémoc, the last male Aztec Emperor, is a symbol of national identity.

Some scholarship on Third World women has been insensitive to the various meanings that sexual difference may have within particular contexts. In fact, cross-cultural research has partly been motivated by white middle-class feminists' interest in finding out whether women's subordination is universal. Third World societies are seen as residues of the past of humanity and hence as an excellent source of information on

the "origins" of male domination. These studies not only apply Western-based concepts without a critical examination of what they might mean in a different context, but they are also ahistorical in that they place Third World societies outside "civilization" rather than within the international economic order, where they have been for a long time. In a way, these studies also hold the traditional/modern dichotomy which reproduces the image of the Third World woman as passive, backward and victimized (Amos and Parmar, 1984; Wilson, 1985; Anadiume, 1987; Moore, 1988; Nash, 1988; Stamp, 1989; Phillips, 1990; Mohanty, 1991; Parpart, n/d).

To say that gender is a social construction implies that sexual difference is given meaning only within a particular social context. Hence, concepts such as reproduction, patriarchy, marriage, the sexual division of labor, the family, the household etc. should be used within the specificity of local and historical situations in order to avoid the uncritical application of Western-based concepts. Analysis of gender relations must focus on the production of women as socioeconomic political groups within particular contexts rather than assume the ahistorical unity between women based on a generalized notion of their subordination (Mohanty, 1991).

This point will be illustrated using the concept of the household as an example. The present study will explore the ways in which the household composition and organization in Pajapan shape women's and men's access to land, labor and income, and create different groups of women and men in the context of capital accumulation.

2. The Households as a Unit of Analysis

Underlying much research on Third World development is the concept of the household. However, it is only recently that scholars of different disciplines have started to debate the different meanings of this concept and its usefulness for gender analysis. In this section I will discuss the major perspectives on the household and its relevance for this dissertation.

2.1. The Household in Neo-Classical Economic Theory

Economists have constructed models of household behavior to explore the ways in which households respond to changes in wage rates and deal with their needs for child care, services and education. In rural economies, scholars have also examined the impact of changes in agricultural products, wage rates and technology on the morphology and activities of households. A model for household decision-making called "New Household Economics" has been developed for this purpose (see Becker, 1981). This model maintains that households function according to "generalizable rules of family/domestic organization which involve household members in corporate activity within clearly defined socioeconomic boundaries" (Evans, 1991:51). The model portrays the household as a small firm maximizing utility and making the most efficient use of labor and capital. Labor time is allocated in response to changes in prices and money incomes in order to minimize the costs of household production and maximize the utility of household consumption (Evans, 1991:52; Wolf, 1992:15; Olson, 1995:2).

Several problems arise from this perspective. First, the household is perceived as a contained unit with clearly defined boundaries, organized independently of other households and actors in the economy. This unit tends to be associated too often with the family. However, evidence shows that households are flexible structures with a great diversity in conjugal and residential arrangements (White, 1981; Clark, 1984; Evans, 1991).

Second, the model assumes that family labor is allocated on the basis of its comparative costs in market and non-market activities. However, research in various parts of the world shows that household labor is differentiated by gender, age and status. This means that labor is not substitutable between tasks within the household or between the household and the market place (Evans, 1991:55).

Third, the NHE model operates on the notion that the consumption and production units are unified, and that choices about production and consumption are made by the same decision-making unit. Empirical evidence shows, however, that production and consumption units are shifting and heterogeneous, and that decisions about what and when to produce and consume are debated by household members and can be a source of conflict (Evans, 1991:55).

Finally, the model presupposes that the interests of all household members are the same and that they coincide with the interests of the household as a whole. In doing so, the model removes the possibility of exploring unequal exchange and exploitation between household members, particularly men and women. In a similar vein, the model maintains that the distribution of goods within the household is characterized by pooling

and sharing. This assumption obscures gender and age inequalities, patterns of property ownership and internal bargaining. In short, the NHE model overshadows the real nature of intra-household relations and precludes the possibility of exploring how these relations actually work (Dweyer and Bruce, 1988:2; Moore, 1988:55; Carney and Watts, 1990:217; Evans, 1991:57; Wolf, 1992:16; Olson, 1995:3).

2.2. The Household in Feminist Political Economy

Political economy perspectives on the household are concerned with the structural problems that households face in the context of capitalist development, for example in combining subsistence production with market-oriented farming or wage labor (Wilk, 1989:24). Scholars have debated whether capitalism dictates the formation of nuclear families (Collier, 1978; Deere, 1978; Wilk, 1991) and have also explored the role that the household plays in the reproduction of the labor force in the capitalist system (Wallerstein, 1984). Earlier Engels (1972) suggested that relations of production in capitalism were replicated within the household through the relationship between household members, especially husbands and wives (Olson, 1995:4-5).

Many of the criticisms of the NHE model can be extended to political economy, which also treats all household members as identical and interchangeable (Elson, 1991:81) and avoids the issue of material inequality within the household (Folbre, 1988:253; Hartmann, 1981). Political economy "homogenizes the broad range and variety of household interactions and misses entirely relations that include power

differentials, conflict and dissent" (Wolf, 1992:17). As Wolf further explains,

feminist economists have pointed out that while women's unremunerated labor may have been recognized, the power differential behind the sexual division of labor has not been explored in various household studies guided by modes and forms of production or world system theories. Instead, the focus has been more on the constraints confronting "the household" as a whole, particularly as it confronts capitalism (Wolf, 1992:16).

Feminist political economists also deal with the structural problems of the household in the context of capitalist development. However they place particular emphasis on women's contribution to the household economy and the relationship between women's position within and outside the household (Wilson, 1991:31). Studies using this approach relate patterns of women's involvement in paid production to household income levels, life-cycles, type of household and the sexual division of labor. They show that migration, for example, is influenced by the sexual division of labor at home and has at the same time a significant impact on household dynamics and women's roles. By illuminating women's paid activities in the home (e.g. industrial homework), these studies also add an important dimension to the debate around the formal/informal sectors of the economy, and challenge the traditional view of proletarianization processes, labor mobility and the transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist forms of production (Benería and Roldán, 1987:4-5).

One problem within this approach however has been "a tendency to portray women as passive victims of patriarchy and particularly of capitalism" (Wolf, 1992:20). Some scholars have dealt with this problem by critically analyzing patterns of money and labor allocation within the household. Studies have examined the asymmetrical exchanges among

household members by looking at the household as a scene of "cooperative conflict"² or by applying a "bargaining model" or "transaction framework" to the analysis of intrahousehold negotiation (Olson, 1995:6; Wolf, 1992:22). These studies view household dynamics as involving the negotiation of implicit or explicit contracts (e.g. conjugal contracts) and make the politics of gender within the household the central object of analysis (see Benería and Roldán, 1987; Phillips, 1989).

These studies have added a new dimension to a body of research that placed little emphasis on the gender dynamics of the household and its connection with wider socio-economic processes. As pointed out by Stichter and Parpart (1990:1), however, we still know very little about the impact of women's participation in the labor force on their "personal lives and their position in the family and household". Moreover, some of these studies have neglected the role of preexisting relations of subordination in shaping the form that capitalist development takes, and they have assumed rather than explained patriarchal relations within the household (Phillips, 1989:295). A feminist anthropological perspective can contribute to illuminate these areas of analysis.

² According to Amartya Sen (1984: 374-375), "there has to be clearer analysis of both cooperative and conflicting elements in family relations... The essence of the problem is that there are many cooperative outcomes (beneficial to all the parties concerned, compared with non-cooperation) but the different parties have strictly conflicting interests in the choice among the set of efficient cooperative arrangements. So the problems is one of 'cooperative conflict'". See also Sen (1990).

2.3. Household, Marriage and Property Relations

Anthropologists have for many years referred to "the domestic domain" as "the sphere of daily activities of production, reproduction and living together" (Roberts, 1991:60). Following Fortes (1969), they have tended to separate the domestic from the politico-jural domain. Although both spheres are viewed as mutually determining, focus has been placed on the ways in which men gain access to resources, including women (for example, through marriage practices). Women are seen as involved in the domestic domain only and are never considered independent social actors (Moore, 1988:60; Roberts, 1991:61).

Feminist anthropology has attempted to deconstruct a number of concepts converging on the idea of the domestic domain. These include the household, the family, the sexual division of labor and the separation between the public and private spheres (Barlett, 1989:4; Olson, 1995:6). Their purpose has been to problematize the assumption that women, due to their biological capacity to bear children, are naturally embedded in the domestic sphere. Research in Europe, Africa and elsewhere shows the social and cultural aspects of motherhood and challenges the universality of the nuclear family as the basis for residential and child-rearing practices (Roberts, 1991:62).

From a feminist anthropological perspective, the household appears to be a critical site for the construction and reproduction of gender relations. The analysis of the household not only exemplifies different systems of recruitment, headship and composition, but also illuminates the ways in which distinctive principles of recruitment and residence shape

the activities and access to resources of household members. As Roberts (1991:63) puts it,

what interests anthropologists are the social contracts of recruitment to the household which determine the extent to which resources in land or in people are at the disposition of a notional household head or at the disposition of the individual recruited into the household ... These "contracts" of recruitment to the household differ radically in their social form both between members of households and between different societies.

Thus, the question we need to ask is how membership in a household affects "people's access to resources, obligations to others, and understanding of their options" (Berry quoted in Carney and Watts, 1990:217). The household composition and organization have a direct impact on women's ability to gain access to resources, labor and income, and a woman's control over property must be seen in the light of marriage and labor relations (Moore, 1988:54; Barlett, 1989:4; Wilk, 1989:33-39).

For example, Carney and Watts (1990) suggest that in peasant societies where virilocal residence is the norm (e.g. the Mandika rice growers of central Gambia), women lose their land access rights in their natal residence at the time of marriage. The power of the household's senior male is articulated through his control over property. This allows him to make claims to the labor of other household members:

in regulating family land use, intra-household property allocation and crop rights, the head of the household is empowered to make claims to dependents' labor. These claims, made on behalf of the kin residence group, oblige all able family members to contribute to the group's subsistence, typically by working "communal" (i.e. household) fields (Carney and Watts, 1990:219).

Hence, these households are a particular kind of enterprise in which "production politics (the labor process) and family politics (patriarchy) are inscribed within the same domestic sphere" (Carney and Watts,

1990:210). In other words, the labor process and the social organization of work are inseparable from the empirically diverse social relations (conjugal ties, life cycle, intergenerational and gender responsibilities) of the domestic unit. For example, marriage functions as a relation of production (Carney and Watts: 1990:217). The organization of marriage also shapes dominant notions of gender. It is through claims made in marriage negotiations that cultural conceptions about gender are constructed (Collier and Rosaldo, 1981).

In some societies, particularly in some regions of Africa, men and women retain their private property after marriage and maintain separate income streams during married life (Nettig et al., 1984:xxv; Dwyer and Bruce, 1988:12; see Fapohunda, 1988; Guyer, 1988; Clark, 1989; Saul, 1989). Separate income streams do not necessarily translate into greater equality between the sexes, since women's command over the labor of others may be less than men's. Again, questions of income must be seen in the context of labor utilization and the rights that some individuals have to the labor of others (Moore, 1988: 55-56). For example, in the Kusasi farming community of north-eastern Ghana, the basic constraint on production is access to and control over labor. As in the case of the Gambia, men and women occupy different positions with regard to their ability to command the labor of others. Men have access to the labor of their wives but the only way in which women can use the labor of male household members is by "paying" with food. In other words, women are obliged to work for men, but men work for women only if they receive food (Whitehead, 1981). Women's inability to call on the free labor of others is directly related to their inability to assert property rights:

Conjugal, familial and kinship systems appear often to operate so as to construct women as a subordinate gender, such that by virtue of carrying kinship (or familial or conjugal) status women are less free to act as full subjects in relations to things, and sometimes people (Whitehead, 1984:190).

This dissertation will use the concept of the household as conceived in both feminist anthropology and political economy. First, the concept will illuminate the ways in which preexisting forms of household organization shape women's access to land, labor and income in the context of capitalist development. Second, the concept will also help analyze the impact of wider socioeconomic processes on the sexual division of labor at home and women's position within the household. This dissertation will make gender politics within the household a central part of the analysis by exploring the ways in which different women negotiate gender roles in a class-stratified, changing community.

3. Feminist Methodology

Feminist research has challenged the ways in which scientific problems and hypotheses are defined. Feminist scholars have argued that what is traditionally in need of a scientific explanation has been defined from a male perspective. In this sense, "one distinctive feature of feminist research is that it generates its problematics from the perspective of women's experiences" (Harding, 1987:4).

The purpose of feminist research is to articulate women's experiences and change the social conditions that oppress them. Research thus becomes research for, by, and with women rather than on women (Kirby and McKenna, 1989). Feminist researchers must be sensitive to the needs and interests of women and be critical of the techniques used to collect

information. In short, feminist researchers must critically reflect on the development of the research process.

Two issues are of particular concern for feminist researchers. The first has to do with the relationship between the researcher and the researched, and with the impact of a particular research project on the community where research is conducted. Feminist research has problematized the subject-object relationship and has called for an "interactive methodology" where research "objects" become subjects by participating in the identification of the research question, the selection of the research methods, the interpretation of the data and the use of the results (Kleiber and Light quoted in Stanley and Wise, 1983:19; Acker, 1983:425). Feminist research is emancipatory in that it attempts to provide women with "understandings of how their everyday worlds, their trials and troubles, were and are generated by the larger social structure" (Acker, 1983:424). Research thus must be designed

to provide a vision of the future as well as a structural picture of the present... feminist methodology endorses the assumption that the most thorough kind of knowledge and understanding come through efforts to change social phenomena (Cook and Fonow, 1990:80).

The second issue has to do with the methods used to collect information. Numerous studies have shown that not all research techniques provide adequate information on the complexity of women's lives. For example, censuses in Latin America do not reflect women's participation in the labor force due to the narrow definition of what constitutes economic activity which is used by census collectors. Similarly, conventional data collection methods only categorize fieldwork (e.g. cultivation) as agricultural work and do not take into account other tasks (making and

repairing tools, collecting inputs, cooking for field hands, processing, transporting and storing produce) in which women are more involved (León de Leal, 1984:12). Pelzer White (1984:2) argues that research instruments should be designed to illuminate the areas of women's lives which have been traditionally overlooked and should also serve to mobilize the potential and capacities of women.

The present section reflects on my attempts at doing feminist research in Pajapan. Subsection 3.1 examines the research relationship established with women in Pajapan while subsection 3.2 discusses the research methods used to collect information.

3.1. The Research Relationship

I made my first visit to Pajapan in April and May of 1991 (see Appendix). This first visit was central in identifying the topic of this dissertation. I had informal conversations with female petty traders and landholders, women looking after stores and women belonging to a grassroots religious organization associated with the left wing of the Catholic church³ and the PRD⁴. The reason I approached these women is that they were more accessible to me as a newcomer, and in fact they provided me with a variety of perspectives on women's lives in Pajapan. I also talked with men who were introduced or referred to me by members of the SSM Project, an NGO working in the region.

³ Comunidades Eclesiásticas de Base, henceforth to be referred as CEBES.

⁴ Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Democratic Revolutionary Party), the most important leftist opposition in the country.

In my first visit to Pajapan I developed very good relationships with women of the CEBES group and sympathizers of the PRD due to my own political preferences. Originally I thought it would be a good idea to work with them on the research design and the collection and analysis of data. However, in my second visit (January, February and March of 1993; see Appendix) the group had changed in significant ways. The group facilitator had moved out of town because her husband, running for the PRD, had lost the municipal presidency in very disputed elections. The group had somehow disintegrated and the women were not meeting as often. It was hard for me to develop continuity under such circumstances.

More importantly, I realized that my association with a political-religious group was not only harmful for the purpose of my research, but also dangerous. It was harmful because by showing my commitment to one particular group, I was closing access to other sources of information.⁵ And it was dangerous because Pajapeños are very nice to outsiders as long as they do not get involved in politics or do not open businesses in the community. Thus, in my second visit to the field I decided to develop relationships with women of political and religious affiliations other than PRD and CEBES. This was particularly important since some of the

⁵ Pajapan is divided along economic, religious and political lines. There are various Protestant groups, two Catholic groups and two major political parties. Generally, people of the CEBES belong or vote for the PRD. They hold meetings and read the bible in people's homes. Caciques and PRI voters are more in favor of traditional religious services, e.g. attending mass at the church. They also occupy leadership positions in the yearly peregrinations to Catemaco (held in July). During the years that I conducted my research (1993-1994; see Appendix), the Jesuit priest sympathized with CEBES and did not give mass at the church, but rather in people's homes. In my last visit to Pajapan (August 1994) this priest had been replaced by a more "conciliatory" one. He was starting to give mass at the church.

women who belong or prefer the PRI⁶ have been crucial in defending women's rights during land distribution processes and in generating female support for partisan activities.

The problem of political and religious diversity was further complicated by the large size of the community. Luisa Paré, the Mexican coordinator of the SSM Project, has expressed several times her difficulties working in Pajapan due to the large community size, compared to other villages in the region. Decision-making processes and problems of accountability become more intricate in such communities. Complex working dynamics are required in order to involve a significant number of people in community projects.

Thus, one of the problems that I had to deal with while attempting to do feminist research in Pajapan was the contradiction between my need for information and my own political preferences. I was caught between the purpose of my own research as a doctoral student and the various political agendas coexisting in a large community. This made it impossible to work with one particular group of women throughout the whole research process.

I had other problems to deal with. Most women in Pajapan are illiterate and do not consider the production of knowledge in a written form important. Yet this is the requirement that I have to fulfil in order to obtain my degree. Again, it was hard for me to reconcile my own interests as a graduate student with those of women in Pajapan. I thought it was unfair to ask women to participate in a project which was going to benefit me, but not them, particularly when they are overburdened with

⁶ Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party), in power since the 1920's.

work and family responsibilities. Also, I was constrained by time. A considerable amount of time is required to create the working relationships that feminist research advocates. My extremely restrained budget worked against the possibility to develop them.

My status as a *tesisista* (thesis writer) with the SSM Project also limited my ability to enhance women's knowledge and decision-making power through my research. Even though my stay in Pajapan was partly supported by the SSM Project (I received \$8,000 CDN), I was not considered a full-time member of the research team and therefore had little power to influence decision-making within it. Yet the fact that other team members were conducting action research while I was doing my fieldwork allowed me to develop or participate in some activities.

The first of these activities was a women's chicken farm. A group of ten women belonging to CEBES, all of them married with children, expressed to me their interest in developing income generating activities which would not conflict with their domestic responsibilities. They agreed that a chicken farm would be the best way to do this since all of them had experience raising animals at home. The SSM Project contributed \$300 U.S. The women bought 100 chickens, food and working tools, prepared a space to raise them in one woman's household and agreed on equal working hours for each of them. After three months, they sold their first animals in town, split some of the profit and made a second investment. In my last visit to the village (almost two years later) they still had their farm. They had managed to maintain the number of chickens and make some profit which was always spent on household needs.

The success of the chicken farm, although small in scale, is indicative of the kind of things that women in the region can do. Members of the SSM Project working in other parts of the Sierra (mainly the Popoluca area) have also noted women's interests in chicken farms.⁷ Members of the SSM Project and women of the region can learn from the Pajapan experience and develop the basis for similar undertakings.

I also participated indirectly in another activity by identifying women who could be potential candidates in a vanilla-growing project in Pajapan. I made a list of female landholders and/or of women used to working the land who might be interested in generating extra sources of income. A group of 17 women was formed and they are currently growing vanilla.

Most important, my work in Pajapan is far from over. This dissertation contains systematic information on women's access to land, patterns of female land use, patterns of female income generating activities and cycles of female poverty. These data are a good starting point to further investigate the ways in which women's economic and decision-making power in the Sierra can be enhanced.

3.2. Research Methods

For my second stay in Pajapan (January, February and March of 1993) I constructed a questionnaire of close to 40 questions (see Appendix). This questionnaire had two major purposes. First, I wanted to capture the

⁷ See E. Velázquez, L. Godínez & H. Mateo, "Programa para el consumo: participación de las mujeres" in Informe técnico. Segunda Fase, 1993-1994 of the SSM Project. The authors state that 100 per cent of women in Santa Marta, Ocotal Chico and San Fernando raise chickens and have shown interest in creating chicken farms.

complexity of women's work trajectories and family histories. Previous research on Latin American women has shown that women's participation in the labor force is often associated with changes in their life cycles (marital status, number and age of children) and as such it is discontinuous and fragmented (León de Leal, 1984:12). Therefore, the questionnaire contained questions whose purpose was to illuminate the relationship between women's life cycles and work patterns. Particular care was placed to document women's underrated participation in agricultural production, cattle raising and income generating activities in the region.

Second, the questionnaire attempted to determine the economic profile of the household and the organization of work and distribution of resources among household members. Questions dealt with their productive and reproductive activities, formal educational levels, age, kin networks, marital status and participation in religious activities. The questionnaire also contained general questions regarding household facilities (electricity, running water) and access to land, ownership of cattle and other businesses, use of natural resources and number of domestic appliances (see Appendix).

Originally I made a map of the village and chose a sample of households. However, it was difficult for me to interview people who did not know me and I started to make appointments with women who knew me. These included women of the CEBES group, women looking after stores, female petty traders, landholders and school teachers. After a while I had to develop new relationships so I attended a meeting of women who work

with the local DIF⁸ and have relations with PRI officials, talked to some and made appointments to visit them. I also visited several Protestant churches and followed a similar strategy. I sat in the home of the most popular midwife in town for a couple of days and I met a lot of women who agreed to be interviewed. By early March I discussed with my supervisor, Jacques Chevalier, my work in progress. We agreed that 80 interviews should be a sufficient data base to work with.

Not all the women whom I knew met the requirements to be interviewed, since I was interested not only in the women's lives but also in the household economic profile. In the case of single women living with their parents, for example, I interviewed their mothers or both mother and daughter sat through the interview. In the case of multi-generational households, only one adult woman was interviewed per household and I also made sure she could provide enough information about other household members. When this was not the case, I doublechecked with other women living in the same household.

All the interviews were carried out by me, in the houses of the women. In my introductory statement I said that I was interested in finding out and letting other people know the different ways in which women in Pajapan work and raise their families. Most women liked the fact that someone was concerned about their lives and agreed to be interviewed. Most of the interviews were carried out in the morning, when the women's husbands were working in the fields or ranch and children were at school.

⁸ The DIF (Integral Development of the Family) is a government institution which provides services (e.g. embroidery and sewing workshops, family planning programs) and basic products (processed corn, cooking oil, milk) for women. For a discussion of women's participation in DIF activities in Pajapan, see Chapter Six.

However sometimes the interviews had to be interrupted and continued on another day. On some occasions, I helped women with their domestic duties so that they could spend some time with me.

The interviews were carried out in Spanish. Although not their first language, most women could understand it. I wrote down the answers during the interview and wrote notes afterwards. I changed some of the questions as I went along and dropped others that were not working out. This is the case of questions regarding the use of natural resources which were poorly prepared and getting very general answers.

After I completed 80 questionnaires I went to Mexico City and worked on them. I went back to the field in May and June of 1993 and worked with a smaller group of women (40) on areas which could provide information on decision-making practices within the household and the significance of women's income for the domestic economy. These areas had become salient in the first set of interviews and informal conversations with women. They are: 1) sale of domestic animals; 2) purchase of domestic appliances; and 3) reproductive practices. Following Benjamin White (1984), I took a situational approach to decision-making processes. I asked women to describe to me the last time they had sold an animal (type and number of animals and how the money was spent). I asked similar questions regarding the purchase of domestic appliances: who had bought them? why? in what order? Finally, I asked women about their reproductive practices. I asked them to describe to me if, when and how they had reached the decision to limit their number of children, and what methods they had used to do so.

In July and August of 1993 I went back to Pajapan again to research women's land rights in the land distribution of 1981 and the *ejido* created

in 1992. I interviewed 28 lot administrators in Pajapan II (all male) and went through land records with land commissioners (*comisariados*). My purpose was to determine the gender composition of the agrarian community and the *ejido* and the patterns of land use by male and female landholders. In that visit I also photocopied school records in order to compare boys and girls' patterns of school attendance.

In September of 1993 I applied for a leave of absence from Carleton University because I could not continue paying international fees. The same month I applied for landed immigrant status in Canada and took a full-time job in Mexico City. From October of 1993 to June of 1994 I was unable to spend time in Pajapan due to my work responsibilities. It was not until July of 1994 that I went to Pajapan again, this time to collect oral histories. In total I did 28 interviews. Of these, three are with men and 25 with women.

The interview guide for the oral histories was designed after having taken a course on oral history techniques at the Instituto Luis Mora, Mexico City. Ana Lau, who was assigned by the course organizers as my supervisor, assisted me. We selected two kind of informants and designed two kinds of interview guides, depending on the purpose of the interview.

The first interview guide was designed to determine the impact of large socioeconomic processes on Pajapeños' everyday lives. As Stubbs puts it (1984:34), these interviews were seen as a way of constructing "the history of people who never had any". I asked elderly men and women about changes in communication and transportation systems, productive and reproductive activities, forms of government, religious practices and gender relations. In this set of interviews, emphasis was placed on the

social history of the town as opposed to the individual's personal life. For example, I would open with a statement like this: "Tell me what Pajapan looked like when you were young." However, references to the person's own experiences were not discouraged.

In the second set of interviews I wanted to discover the ways in which sexual difference is constructed in Pajapan, and to document the ways in which women perceive and experience social change. Thus, the second interview guide was designed to obtain more specific information on the experiences and gender identities of first and second wives of polygamous men; female heads of households; women who had migrated to urban areas or had been engaged in petty trade; women who had lived with wealthy ranchers during the cattle raising period (1950-1982); and women who participated in the land distribution processes of 1981 and 1992 or were active members of political parties, government institutions or religious organizations. I selected women whose lives could illustrate one or more of these areas of enquiry. Emphasis was placed on their participation in such areas, their perceptions of change in the community and their gender identities.

Most interviews were carried out within a period of one or two days at most. All interviewed people knew me well enough to agree to tell me their story. All interviews but one were recorded and transcribed a month later. They lasted from one to four hours. I also wrote notes afterwards regarding the kind of information contained in the interview, the situation in which it took place, the areas of enquiry which were emphasized, etc.

This dissertation also relies on participant observation. I rented a room at the village and travelled in the area to see the working fields. I ate at people's homes, helped women with their domestic duties, and went with female petty traders to Coatzacoalcos. I attended sweet sixteen parties, weddings, funerals and religious celebrations. I witnessed school events and political campaigns. I gave English classes and a lecture about my research at the local high school, which gave me the opportunity to befriend young people.

Did I do feminist research in Pajapan? Only up to a point. On the one hand, the methods used to collect information did indeed contribute to document women's knowledge, experiences and perceptions of change in their own community. I firmly believe that this study casts light on the numerous contradictions of what it means to be female in Pajapan. Yet the women of Pajapan were not involved in the identification of the research topic, the research design and the data analysis, and I will always wonder whether the analysis would be much different had women participated actively in the whole research process. I hope future scholars have more resources, time and imagination to solve the problems that I was unable to overcome.

4. Organization of the dissertation

The next chapter explores the history of the Gulf Nahua from the pre-hispanic era to the late 19th century. Emphasis is placed on women's changing relationship to land and the emergence of state-defined forms of land tenure regulating women's forms of property. I show that the colonial Spanish state is responsible for the creation of a legal system which

limits women's property rights to their roles as guardians of young children. In spite of radical changes in the country (the independence from Spain in 1821, the Mexican Revolution of 1910) similar laws continued to regulate women's legal forms of property well into the 20th century.

Chapter Four examines the subsistence economy of Pajapan during the first half of the 20th century (1900-1950). Emphasis is placed on the ways in which particular principles of household recruitment, residence and marriage create differences between men and women and among women themselves. I argue that patrivirilocal residence places women in a vulnerable position in terms of their access to land. A woman's move into her husband's household at marriage severs her land access rights in her natal residential unit. Men, by contrast, maintain residential and economic ties. Male heads of households regulate land use and property allocation and make claims to the labor of other household members.

Male heads also exercise control over the marriage process. Marriage in Pajapan can be seen as a formal arrangement of labor recruitment between two patrilineal kin groups in which a woman is transferred from her parents' household to that of her in-laws. Men, particularly the fathers of the groom and bride, are central to the marriage negotiations. A young groom needs the support of his father to endorse his ability to raise a family, while a young bride needs her father to certify that she has been raised under parental supervision and with good morals. A woman without a living or present father is in a precarious situation to negotiate her marriage, and her wedding ceremony is usually reduced or cancelled altogether. The existence of different marriage arrangements creates differences among women regarding their status in the community

and their expectations from the father of their children. The following chapters show that these differences take a new form in the context of capitalist development.

Chapter Five analyzes the changes in the household labor processes during the expansion of the cattle industry in Pajapan (1950-1982). The construction of class and gender relations is viewed in a dynamic fashion. I show that the process of women's insertion in particular spheres of production is linked to their marriage histories. Women living with wealthy, polygamous ranchers contribute to capitalist accumulation through their labor but are alienated from cattle wealth. Women compelled to end their first marriages are increasingly forced to migrate to urban centers where they become domestic workers, while female heads of households become involve in petty trade. Finally, women in monogamous relationships have to face landlessness and a marked decline in their participation in subsistence agriculture. They see themselves increasingly confined to the household sphere and develop ways to generate income from their own homes without neglecting their domestic responsibilities.

Chapter Six explores the struggle for land in Pajapan during the cattle raising period (1950-1982) and up to the present day. Emphasis is placed on the mechanisms which prevented women from receiving land rights in the land distribution of 1981 and the creation of the *ejido* in 1992. I show that in both land distribution processes, women drew on their roles as guardians of young children constructed by the Mexican state in order to receive land.

Chapter Seven discusses the impact of inter-household class differentiation and new patterns of household composition on the sexual

division of labor at home and women's position within the household. Emphasis is placed on the negotiation of the marriage contract by different women. I argue that a woman's work trajectory and marriage history influence her articulation of the marriage contract. On the one hand, first wives of polygamous men and women in monogamous relationships limit their income generating activities to their own homes and draw on "appropriate" gender roles implicit in the marriage contract to ensure their access to household resources. On the other hand, second wives of polygamous men and female heads of households, most of whom are engaged in productive activities outside their homes, portray themselves as hard-working women capable of supporting a family and getting ahead. In so doing, these women challenge traditional gender roles and redefine "proper" motherhood.

CHAPTER III
THE GULF NAHUA
FROM THE PRE-HISPANIC ERA
TO THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

This chapter discusses the history of the Gulf Nahuatl from the pre-hispanic era to the late 19th century. Since the region was of little economic interest for the Spaniards, there are few written primary sources for the pre-hispanic and colonial periods (García de León, 1991:31). When no information is available, relevant case studies of Nahuatl communities in other parts of Mexico are discussed. Emphasis is placed on women's changing relationship to land and the emergence of state-defined forms of land ownership which regulate women's legal access to property.

1. The Gulf Nahuatl before the Spaniards

The first settlers of the Gulf Nahuatl were Mixe-Zoque speakers, descendants of the Olmecs. They lived in the region between 1,200 BC and 300 AD. Nahuatl-speaking peoples migrated from central Mexico following the collapse of the military centers of Teotihuacan and Tula in the 9th century and established military control over the region. Except for a few villages such as Soteapan, most Mixe-Zoque speakers of the region adopted the Nahuatl language (García de León, 1976).

In the early 1500's approximately 50,000 people lived in 76 small villages scattered throughout the Gulf Nahuatl. Each village was governed by a political leader who was under the authority of the ruler of Coatzacoalcos, a larger village located near the mouth of the Coatzacoalcos river. As noted by Chevalier and Buckles (in press:11), political leaders received tribute in the form of labor and goods. There

is evidence that office was passed on to family members and that both men and women could inherit office along with estates.

There is little information available on gender relations in the Gulf Nahua before the arrival of the Spanish. But given the dominance of Nahua linguistic, political and religious traditions, it is possible to assume that social life in the Gulf Nahua was ruled by similar principles as those of Aztec society, also Nahua speakers.

Aztec society was divided into three major groups: the nobility or *pipiltin*, commoners or *macehualtin* and slaves or *tlacohtin*, "dependent laborers." Nobles owned land and held most government positions. Unlike the Gulf Nahua, office and estates of the nobility of Tenochtitlan were transferred from father to son only (de Rojas, 1986:93-97).

Macehualtin lived in *calpullis*, a kinship group or clan of individual households. Members of households within each *calpulli* had right to specific tillable plots which were cultivated individually. They also had access to untilled areas such as hunting grounds, timber lands and grasslands used for gathering construction materials. At the time of the Spanish invasion, however, the equivalence between kinship groups and *calpullis* was no longer straightforward. McBride suggests that by that time, some modifications were gradually destroying "whatever equality had formerly existed in the distribution of the land and in the social organization that was based upon it" (quoted in Chevalier and Buckles, in press:12). For example, *calpullis* had access to different amounts of land. Some were fully devoted to agriculture while others were made up of groups of merchants or artisans. Commoners had to pay tribute (mostly agricultural products and craft goods) to the nobility and some cultivated

both their own subsistence plots and the fields of the nobility (de Rojas, 1986:101).

Early colonial evidence shows that residence groups among the commoners of Tenochtitlan were formed by units larger than nuclear family groupings. They were based on a parent-child or, more often, sibling ties. Usually more than one person, typically siblings, received rights to residential sites, as well as other parental property. Brothers and sisters inherited equivalent rights in parental estates. However, men were more likely than women to inherit land and manage landed estates (Kellogg, 1986:105).

Very little information is available on patterns of household headship and organization in Tenochtitlan. Early colonial evidence shows that females tended to change residence at marriage, though males would have this option if there was no space available in their natal households. Of seven marriages examined by Kellogg (1986:117), six were virilocal and one uxorilocal.

Slaves were either war prisoners, bought (one could sell oneself in case of debt or poverty) or convicted for a crime and made slaves. Wives of men who died with debts became slaves; a similar practice regarding the husbands of indebted women who died did not exist. Parents could give away their children but we do not know whether this was a regular practice. We do know that capturing women during war became so common that inheritance claims of children of slave women and royal men had to be regulated by law (Rodríguez, 1991:103-106).¹

¹ The problem became so serious that some concubines of royal men were forced into abortions even though this practice was punished with the death penalty (Rodríguez, 1991). López de

Slaves worked in agriculture, transportation and domestic service (de Rojas, 1986:97-100). Female *tlaqohtin* were employed as domestic servants, spinners, weavers and/or concubines (Villanueva, 1985:20). Slaves of both sexes were used for sacrifice, but male slaves were treated much better than female ones before the sacrifice.² Also, male slaves could become free by marrying a free woman while this was not true for female slaves (Rodríguez, 1991:106-107).

We know little about women's involvement in agricultural work. According to Hellbom (1967:235-236), female slaves and women living in *calpullis* devoted only to agriculture performed all agricultural tasks. Rodríguez (1991:99) also notes that women who did not belong to the nobility participated in agricultural work. Cline (1986:112) observes that "generally in central Mexico, agricultural work seems to have been in the hands of men, although there is some evidence that women were involved in planting and harvesting".

Women were also involved in numerous activities related to subsistence production and home industry. Commoner women spent considerable time raising fruits and vegetables, hunting small animals such as rabbits and lizards, gathering mushrooms and other plants, weaving and spinning for domestic consumption, tribute and the market. They were also responsible for domestic work which involved grinding corn and cacao, making *tortillas*, cooking meals, fetching firewood, keeping the fire going, cleaning, carrying water, washing clothes, etc. (Hellbom, 1967:235-

Gómara (quoted in López Austin, 1982:171) states that at one time, 150 of Moctezuma's pregnant concubines were forced into having abortions.

² See Rodríguez (1991:107-110) for details.

236; Rodríguez, 1987:19-20, 1991:111-115). Noblewomen delegated domestic work to female servants but they wove and spun with a great variety of utensils and the best materials. Noblewomen and female members of the group of artisans (commoners) also knew how to carve, dye fabrics and decorate them with feathers (Hellbom, 1967:141-142; Villanueva, 1985:19).

Cloth production by women in the Aztec empire was quite impressive.

During the last years of Aztec rule, the royal tax collectors, *calpixque* ("house guards"), collected approximately three million pieces of cotton tribute cloth annually, a volume that was not equalled until 1843, when modern industrial production had been introduced... Over and above this tribute cloth, women supplied luxury fabrics for the temples, for local civil ceremonies, and for individual elite households (Villanueva, 1985:20).

Weaving, spinning, and dyeing were considered "honest" occupations for women:

miniature wooden spindles and loom sticks were presented to a newborn girl, and a woman's weaving implements were placed next to her at her funeral... If she married, she was expected to bring well-developed weaving skills into the new household; a promise to provide her family with clothing was included in the marriage vows (Villanueva, 1985:19).

Girls were advised to learn these skills in order to make a living "in an honest way and be surrounded by honest people in case their parents died" (Hellbom, 1967:90; Rodríguez, 1987:18, 1991:92). Although "every aspect of textile production was linked with femininity, from the patron goddesses to the details of the labor process" (Villanueva, 1985:20), there were some men among the weavers, spinners and seamstresses working in the palace and producing clothes for the royal family and the nobility (Hellbom, 1967:141). It seems that men took over a traditionally female occupation when it left the domestic realm and took a more professional form.

A look into the complex organization of commerce in the Aztec Empire also shows that women were involved in trade. Commerce in Tenochtitlan can be divided into two categories, long distance and short distance. Long distance commerce was carried out by a network of merchants protected by the state (by declaring war on anyone who dared attack them on their journeys) and its organizers had a privileged position in Aztec society (some of them belonged to the nobility). By contrast, short distance commerce was carried out by local merchants who bought from producers in town and by the producers themselves, who sold on a much smaller scale (de Rojas, 1986:225-248).

Luxury items usually came from long distance commerce and most of them were taken to the royal palace and houses of the nobility (Hellbom, 1967:130). Some of these items were also sold in the market, although most people could not afford them (de Rojas, 1986:22.). Short distance commerce supplied products for daily needs and was carried out in the local market.

Most women were found in the short distance group. Women are depicted in the Florentine Codex³ selling mantles, skirts, *huipiles* (blouses), feathers and products for daily needs such as corn, beans, *chía* (type of seed), hot pepper, pumpkin seeds, salt, saltpetre, chalk and herbs. The only "luxury item" that women (and men) sold was tobacco (Hellbom, 1967:135-137).

³ Document collected by Bernardino de Sahagún among Nahuatl speakers after the Spanish invasion. The document is divided into two columns, one for the Nahuatl text and the other one for the Spanish text. The Nahuatl text consists of images painted by native informants, mainly elders. The document was completed around 1577 (Angel Ma. Garibay, 1968:12-13).

Cervantes de Salazar states that the majority of people working in the local market were women (quoted in de Rojas, 1986:240). Women who owned the means of production in the cloth industry (belonging to the group of artisans) could sell or barter textiles and other goods on a regular basis. At village markets women sometimes functioned as administrative officials (Villanueva, 1985:21) and held positions in the tribunal of commerce (an organization of merchants in charge of group enterprises), the only administrative structure in which women were represented (Hellbom, 1967:121).

Many other women were marginal to the market. They sold "on the corners" the only thing which could be sold outside the market: prepared food (*tamales*, *tortillas*, *atole*, hot chocolate) (Hellbom, 1967:136-137). Selling prepared food "on the corners" was considered inappropriate for women, according to the advice that fathers gave to their daughters when they reached adulthood (Hellbom, 1967:90; Rodríguez, 1987:18).

Women were restricted to the local market and "the corners" because long distance commerce required long journeys and was linked with war, which was a male domain. Some of the expeditions went to territories which were not even under Aztec control and merchants carried weapons with them in order to defend their caravans. Women did not participate in these journeys because they lacked the warfare training that was offered in the school for boys, and because expeditions conflicted with their domestic responsibilities. Thus, women could not become members of the nobility through a career in commerce. Men, by contrast, could become members of the nobility by successfully leading expeditions; once status was

achieved, participating in expeditions was no longer necessary (de Rojas, 1986:235-236).

Hence, two groups of people were involved in commercial activities in Tenochtitlan: petty traders (engaged in small scale commerce for daily needs) and merchants (engaged in large scale commerce of luxury items). Except for some noblewomen, women were clustered in petty trade activities and had no chance for social mobility through a career in commerce. Although female petty traders were vital in the distribution of products for daily needs, they had no economic or political power.

As stated earlier, noblewomen in Tenochtitlan could not hold or inherit office. However, men's linkages with royal women were important in order to qualify for office. A woman's status as a wife or concubine could affect her son's status as a potential ruler (Cline, 1986:115). Intermarriages among the royalty of different regions were used to consolidate alliances for war and commerce and generally it was the woman who moved to her new husband's residence (Rodríguez, 1987:23). Parental guidance given to daughters of rulers made this explicit: "you know it is customary for a wife to follow her husband and live with him in his house" (Zorita quoted in Cline, 1986:115).

Men of the nobility could have several wives, from either the nobility or commoner groups. It was believed that each woman should play a specific role: the first was to enjoy sex, the second to have children, the third to look after the man's personal needs and the fourth for hard work (weaving, spinning, farming and selling). These men would give their women away as rewards to other men successful in war and use them as bets while gambling. Concubines were subordinated to the first wife and were in

a very precarious situation since they could be easily repudiated. When the husband or master of several women died, his heir would keep some concubines and get rid of others, typically the older ones. Concubines of men with political positions who died had to live in chastity and remain widows (Rodríguez, 1987:23-24; 1991:208-214).

The picture of Tenochtitlan depicted here corresponds to the late 15th century, just before the arrival of the Spaniards. Some scholars have linked the rise of the imperial state to the deterioration of women's status. As Tenochtitlan became the center of an empire, women increasingly lost access to economic and political power. The predominance of war and conquest brought about a state bureaucracy centered on a patriarchal nobility and an ideology of male dominance. Polygamy among the royal dynasty increased and resulted in the weakening of the role of women, since their sons were not guaranteed succession as in the past (Nash, 1978). Noblewomen's status changed from key players in the Tenochtitlan dynasty to luxury objects in palaces (Blanco quoted in Rodríguez, 1991:48). By this time, Aztec women did not participate in warfare like Toltec women had done for centuries (Nash, 1978:353).

The subordination of female deities linked to fertility, nourishment and the agricultural complex was correlated to male dominance in the elite ranks of the military, priesthood, and bureaucracy. Resistance to the emergence of a single god at the apex of a hierarchy of male gods and the eclipse of female deities was practiced in the outer regions of the empire, where people did not perform the cult of Huitzilopochtli (the god of war) but rather took part in other cults of female deities which forbade human sacrifice. The Totonaca region (central Veracruz) became a

refuge for the opponents of the theologians of the center (Nash, 1978:359-360).

Silverplatt (1987) makes a similar argument for the Inca Empire. While local communities at the periphery were characterized by gender parallelism and dual religious organization, the center (Cuzco) was dominated by a hierarchy of goddesses and ranked descent groups. Some women in the conquered regions were chosen as political pawns to make alliances and they were used as emblems of Cuzco's power.

The difference between Tenochtitlan and the Gulf Nahua regarding women's ability to hold office can be attributed to the peripheral location of the Gulf Nahua vis-à-vis Tenochtitlan. The Gulf Nahua was not the center of an empire, so perhaps its leaders were not concerned with protecting political structures and making alliances. Perhaps intermarriage among the Gulf Nahuas was practiced in such a way that royal women had more say in the matter and were allowed to hold office. Be that as it may, noblewomen's ability to hold office in the Gulf Nahua appears to indicate that women were key players in the structure of government, like women in Tenochtitlan had been when the city was established in 1345. Further research on the differences between the center of the Aztec Empire and other regions regarding women's access to economic resources and political power is badly needed.

2. The Colonial Period (1521-1821)

After the invasion, the Spanish authorities established that the management of all lands in New Spain was vested in the Crown, which could in turn grant land rights to individuals or groups of people. Two forms of land tenure were created: *corregimientos* and *encomiendas*. The first were labor and tribute obligations on the aboriginal population controlled by the Spanish Crown, while *encomiendas* were land designations to Spanish soldiers who had aided in the invasion (Chevalier, 1963:310).

The Province of Coatzacoalcos was divided into ten *corregimientos* and many *encomiendas*. San Francisco Minzapan, the ancestral village of Pajapan, became part of an *encomienda*. Important figures in the Spanish invasion received *encomiendas* and established plantations or cattle ranches in the area.

Cortés laid claim to a vast cotton producing area in the Tuxtlas while Captain Luis Marín was appointed the first governor of the Villa Espíritu Santo at the mouth of the Coatzacoalcos River and granted under his *encomienda* Acayucan, Jáltipan, Tequécistepeque and Chacalapa, among other villages (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:13).

The Gulf Nahua was one of the most important cotton producing areas both in the pre-hispanic and colonial periods. The region supplied tribute of cotton to the Aztecs and then to the Spaniards (Buckles, 1989:19-20). Spanish merchants asked for a variety of textile articles unfamiliar to native peoples such as bed linen, tablecloths, shirts and blouses. Women had to weave cotton armors, which proved more effective than the bulky Spanish armor; indigenous cloth, which was distributed to mine and construction workers; clothing for the early friars, altar cloths, blankets for the clergy's households, and clothing and bedding for their almshouses and hospitals. Women's unpaid labor "clothed workers, adorned

the houses of the elite, dressed the native authorities in traditional luxury fabrics, supplied the religious institutions, and subsidized the capital accumulation of Spanish entrepreneurs" (Villanueva, 1985:25).

Spanish demands of tributary cloth placed great strain on women and led to changes in the customary labor process. In order to force greater productivity, the Spaniards pressured women to widen the weaving sticks to accommodate more cloth and to replace their intermittent work patterns with a steadier, continuous pace. Women had to work at least 45 days a year spinning and weaving cloth. They were forced to work under supervision rather than at home, and those who failed to meet the standards were physically abused (Villanueva, 1985:27).

Hardship imposed by excessive tributes and epidemic diseases led to the decline in the aboriginal population. Cruz Martínez (1991:46) estimates that the population of Coatzacoalcos declined from 50,000 in 1522 to only 3,000 in 1580. In an attempt to "protect" its new subjects from abuse, the Spanish Crown implemented the *mercedes*, or permanent land grants to Spanish soldiers which did not involve tribute from the resident population. The Crown also called for the concentration of aboriginals in *pueblos*. The *pueblo* was composed of a town site and an *ejido* comprised of individual agricultural plots and a common untilled area of forest and pastures. While the *pueblo* organization paralleled some features of the *calpulli* system, this form of land tenure had more in common with the Spanish villas. The kinship bond which was the basis of the *calpulli* was replaced by a village council similar to the local government of the Spanish villas (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:13-14).

The precipitous drop in the native population during the 16th century opened up landholding not only for Spaniards (who took over vacant native land and even whole villages) but also for native women who survived epidemics and appropriated vacant parcels (Cline, 1986:116;165; Kanter, forthcoming:2). In Culhuacan (central Mexico), the decline of native populations coupled with a temporary abundance of resources increased Nahuatl women's ability to inherit and bequeath property. Cline (1986:165) shows that although patrimonial land (inherited land, "land that comes by right") was owned more frequently by men than women, women could receive all types of property, land, houses, and movable goods from male and female donors and likewise pass it on to heirs of their choice. Noblewomen received "very ample houses and land and other property [*haciendas*], in order that they live and sustain themselves and have ease" (Torquemada quoted in Cline, 1986:116-117). Noblewomen also brought dowry lands into their marriages and continued to acquire property separately or together with their husbands after marriage. Some of these women married Spanish men who were interested in trading on their connections to native elites in order to further their acquisitions of native land (Cline, 1986:117;122).

In early colonial Mexico City (1540-1600), Nahuatl women outlived Nahuatl men. Men bequeathed much more agricultural land than women, but women endowed a much higher proportion of movable property -almost three times as much as men did. While women left land, houses and movable property primarily to their daughters and granddaughters, men left land, houses and movable property to wives, siblings and children in a more balanced manner. The pattern of preference for daughters and

granddaughters by women is not gratuitous; a careful reading of women's wills suggests that women consciously tried to protect their daughters' and granddaughters' property rights (Kellogg, 1986).

The sibling group continued to be the major unit of inheritance in Mexico City and other places inhabited by Nahua speakers such as Cuernavaca. Rights to residential sites in Mexico City during the early colonial period "were rarely inherited by only one person; instead, siblings, cousins, and sometimes other relatives were given such rights to share" (Kellogg, 1986:117).

However, monogamy and the nuclear family were gradually enforced among the aboriginal population through religious indoctrination and legal sanctions. Tribute had to be paid by each (nuclear) family and Spanish officials started to identify and name one male as head per household, despite the fact that often more than one couple shared a household.⁴ In Spanish colonial law, men were considered the formal representatives of their households and only men could be eligible for civil and religious positions (Mathews, 1985:290; Stephen, 1991:159; Rosenbaum, 1993:153). Also, Spanish inheritance stressed lineal ties from parents to children rather than lateral ones to brothers and sisters. Spanish inheritance rules showed a far greater tendency to choose one person, or very small group, particularly the nuclear family, to inherit. Since polygyny continued to be practiced among aboriginal populations, these changes resulted in the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children for inheritance purposes. A weakening of ties between sibling gradually

⁴ Multiple family households with more than one conjugal unit were a majority in Mexico City and other regions during this time. See Carrasco (1964, 1976); Kellogg (1986); Cline (1986).

came about, making it harder for native women to inherit as someone's sister (Cline, 1986:84).

More importantly, Spanish laws are responsible for the creation of women's status as custodial heirs. The colonial legal system particularly benefitted those women (mainly widows) who asserted land claims by making it clear that they had children to support. Women's access to property became increasingly limited to their roles as mothers and grandmothers responsible for young children. Historical evidence shows that native women were familiar with the basic principles of Spanish law and learned to maximize their chances of acquiring land by drawing on their roles as guardians of young children (Kanter, forthcoming:3).⁵

In the 17th and 18th centuries population pressures reasserted themselves and the *hacienda-latifundio*⁶ became the predominant productive unit in rural Mexico. In this context, it became more difficult for native

⁵ See Kellogg (1984) for Nahuatl women in colonial Mexico City and Kanter (1993; forthcoming) for Nahuatl, Otomí and Mazahua women of the Toluca region (central Mexico). Kanter (forthcoming:6) chronicles a well-documented dispute between a native widow and her brothers-in-law. The widow argued that "she did not need the parcel for herself, but for her children." The final decision of the court favored the widow because her four children "were minors and neither they nor their widowed mother have other land nor goods from which to feed themselves, nor to satisfy Royal Tributes and other fees".

⁶ The *hacienda-latifundios* were large estates owned by one family (typically of Spanish origin) where landless peasants had access to a small plot of land to cultivate for self-consumption in exchange for free labor. Native populations living in isolated areas claimed by *hacienda* owners were forced to pay exorbitant rents to farm the land, or face deportation. Native populations were also forced to buy products not grown by themselves at the local store. Those who could not pay with money had to pay with agricultural produce or labor. Since they were constantly in debt with the owners of the *hacienda*, they had to continue working for free and were unable to leave.

women to assert land rights. Kanter notes that native men (Nahua, Othomi and Mazahua) of the Toluca region (central Mexico) held a much greater share of land than native women during this period. Her research reveals fifteen cases of widows who faced dispossession by their late husband's family and village from 1765 to 1821 (Kanter, forthcoming:9-10). In Calimaya and Tepamaxalco, two districts of the region, the number of *milpas* (working fields) and *solares* (house lots) as well as the extension of *milpas* which were bequeathed in wills diminished from 1672 to 1821. Although women (both married and widowed) tended to choose females as heirs (daughters, sisters, nieces and granddaughters), they had to fend off usurpations by male relatives, the village and (if widows) in-laws (Loera y Chávez, 1977). Widows inherited land in their capacity as custodial heirs⁷ and were not considered owners in their own right, but property mediators between a man and his children.

The extent of these transformations in rural Mexico was varied. The growth of the cattle economy in southern Veracruz in the 18th century resulted in the reduction of the land base of some native villages, while others were completely absorbed by *haciendas*. By the end of the 18th century about seven *haciendas* and 37 ranches located within the jurisdiction of Acayucan were providing the cities of Coatzacoalcos and Minatitlán with 4,000 to 5,000 bulls per year. However, the pressure of *haciendas* and the cattle industry on aboriginal land was not as great in

⁷ A widow's rights were usually specified as "use rights" during the course of her lifetime. Wills stated that she should use the inherited property to fulfil her obligations as a parent vis-à-vis her children and that the property should be transferred to them at the time of her death or when her children (gender unclear) reached adulthood (Loera y Chávez, 1977).

southern Veracruz as in other parts of the country. Villa del Espíritu Santo and other Spanish communities along the Gulf coast of Mexico were forced to move inland because of epidemic diseases and frequent attacks by pirates in the late 1700's. In 1765 the native villagers of San Francisco Minzapan purchased four *sitios* of land corresponding to the Hacienda Pajapan thereby achieving legal ownership of land under the seal of King Carlos III (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:16).

The region's relative autonomy leads us to believe that unlike native women in other parts of the country, women in Pajapan maintained customary access to land (to be explained in the next chapter) and did not have to go to court to defend their land rights. Yet the colonial state had already laid the foundations which would regulate women's legal forms of property in the future.

3. The Liberal Reform and the Porfiriato (1821-1910)

The Mexican Independence of 1821 and the governments that followed brought about a further commoditization of land in all parts of the country. Legislation against collective ownership of land was introduced by Liberal governments and continued by President Porfirio Díaz, who ruled the country for about thirty years. They believed that private property and the integration of aboriginal populations into the wider society would result in economic development.

These policies were accompanied by legislation to promote settlement in Mexico's humid tropics and "abandoned" land. The *ley de baldíos* of 1883, for example, declared all lands without title and specific boundaries to be properties of the state. Companies were given the right

to survey and appropriate these "abandoned" lands for resale, on the condition that they promote "colonization". In 1894 President Porfirio Díaz lifted all limits on the amount of land that companies could own and weakened their obligations to colonize the land. As Chevalier and Buckles (in press:19) point out, the results were land speculation, the massive concentration of property in the hands of powerful landowners and the displacement and proletarianization of the rural population.

In this context, land became more attached to families rather than communities. Private ownership of land was legalized in order to collect taxes and eliminate communal ownership. Once personal allotments were legally owned, land acquired a commercial value and could be sold without regard to kin groups or the community. Land and house sites were usually acquired by inheritance, but they could also be purchased or rented. These practices resulted in an erosion of traditional patterns of property acquisition and residence (Olivera, 1976:72).

The laws which allowed for the privatization of communal land by means of individual titles also contributed to strengthen men's position of dominance within the family and made their right to inherit and bequeath land almost unquestionable (Mallon, 1990). Kanter notes for the native (Nahua, Othomí and Mazahua) populations of the Toluca region that "in the late colonial period, women often found their possessions challenged, but female landholders were still common before independence ... A century later, examples of female land tenure hardly existed" (Kanter, forthcoming:11).

The judicial system which protected women's land rights as guardians of young children expired with independence. The liberals had little

interest in protecting "wretches" (*miserables*) such as Indians and women. A study of judicial cases in the Toluca region from 1880 to 1910 shows that land was transferred through the male line and only rarely did women possess land (Kanter, 1993:354). Widows entitled to land had to defend it with weapons and those unable to do so would stand to lose their property (González Montes and Iracheta, 1987:123). As noted by Kanter (forthcoming:10), the difficulties faced by widows in rural villages explain why they, like so many other rural women, migrated to Mexico City (where women formed the majority of the population) and other cities of New Spain.

Women in Pajapan did not face land shortage during the 19th century. Unlike other regions of Mexico, plantations, cattle ranching and forestry in southern Veracruz were limited by low population levels and by the lack of good transportation to central Mexico. Consequently, Pajapeños were not expelled from their land or subjected to direct economic exploitation. Yet they still had to protect their land through a co-ownership system (*condueñazgo*) with a legally recognized title. The system was a communal form of property based on the management of private lots. Communal lands (15,932 hectares) were divided into five lots, of about 3,000 hectares each. The title to each of these lots appeared under the name of a lot administrator representing the interests of a larger group consisting of 55 to 60 *comuneros* (landholders). The divisions were carried out with the assistance of a government engineer and made official by local authorities in 1888 (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:22).

Some informants recall that lot administrators were elected by male household heads. Others suggest that they were designated by the municipal

president. According to Nahmad (quoted in Chevalier and Buckles, in press:23), *mayordomos* and members of brotherhoods formed around a community of saints occupied or selected candidates for administrative positions such as mayor, trustee, parish, council, lot administrators and deputies. These positions were based at the household level where males were considered heads. This is shown in the composition and representation of lots: all lot administrators were male and so were all *comuneros*. For the first time in Pajapan, state legislation gave men the legal right to become legitimate landholders.

This is not to say that liberal land policies are to blame for women's lack of access to land. As shown earlier, since pre-hispanic times men were more likely than women to inherit land and manage landed estates. Furthermore, the impact of formal legal rights on the actual use of land was very limited. The next chapter will show that in early 20th century Pajapan, land tenure was established through the act of clearing unclaimed land. Kin groups used parcels of three to four hectares for two or three years and then moved onto another parcel of a similar size for a similar length of time (Stuart, 1978:35; Nahmad, 1989:25). Yet liberal policies gave men the ability to become legitimate landholders and laid the foundations for a climate hostile to women's land claims. This will become evident in the discussion of women's land rights in the land distributions of 1981 and 1992 in Pajapan.

4. Conclusions

This chapter discussed the history of the Gulf Nahua from the pre-hispanic era to the late 19th century. The first section illustrated

gender relations in the Gulf Nahua by discussing some characteristics of Aztec society. The next chapters will show that some of these characteristics (polygyny, residential and inheritance patterns, gender differences in trading activities) exist in contemporary Pajapan, albeit in different manners.

The remaining sections explored the emergence of state-defined forms of land tenure during the colonial era (1521-1821) and the Liberal and Porfiriato periods (1821-1910). I argued that the colonial state is responsible for the creation of a legal system which limits women's property rights to their roles as guardians of young children. Case studies on various Nahua communities of rural Mexico illustrated the diverse impact of this legislation on women's access to land. Unlike some native women in central Mexico, women in Pajapan maintained customary access to land thanks to the region's relative autonomy. Yet the foundations for the regulation of women's legal forms of property were laid down during this time. This will become evident in the discussion of women's land rights in the two land distribution processes of 20th century Pajapan.

**CHAPTER IV
HOUSEHOLD, MARRIAGE AND PROPERTY RELATIONS
IN PRE-CAPITALIST PAJAPAN
(1900-1950)**

This chapter examines the household labor process in Pajapan during the first half of the 20th century. Emphasis is placed on the ways in which particular principles of household recruitment, residence and marriage create differences between women and men and among women themselves in terms of their access to resources and status in the community.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section describes the subsistence economy of Pajapan. It shows that during the first half of the 20th century, Pajapeños lived on subsistence agriculture, hunting, fishing and domestic animal production. The money required to buy goods not manufactured locally was obtained through the cultivation and sale of sugar cane, wage labor contracted at sugar refineries, and the sale of agricultural produce and domestic animals in Coatzacoalcos.

The second section explores men and women's land access rights in Pajapan. Following Carney and Watts (1990), the character of Pajapan households is seen as socially constructed from the domestic unit's duality as a residence group and productive enterprise. It is primarily through affiliation with a kin group that men and women gain access to resources, and residence in a household obliges kin members to cooperate in production. Land rights and labor claims constitute a sort of architecture for productive and reproductive activities which are built

upon the bedrock of patriarchal relations and the sexual division of labor.

The last section examines the process of courtship and marriage in Pajapan. Following Rosenbaum (1993), the analysis distinguishes between marriage arrangements "inside the house" and "outside the house". An arrangement inside the house is one in which the fathers of the young couple carry out the marriage negotiations. They represent their children in the community and endorse their ability to conform to adult male and female roles. As Rosenbaum (1993:111) puts it, "inside the house means tradition, supervision by adults and family". By contrast, the arrangement outside the house is one in which the couple elopes ("runs away") without notifying their parents, thereby causing a reduction in marriage costs and the cancellation of the wedding ceremony. This arrangement bypasses parental control and is considered "a wild, anti-social way of doing things" (Rosenbaum, 1993:111).

In between both models are marriage arrangements which usually involve the mother of a young woman without a living or present father, the young woman's future husband and sometimes, his parents or other adult representatives. Like the marriage arrangement outside the house, these in-between arrangements do not go through all the stages which establish male and female reciprocity in marriage. Generally, brideprice, brideservice and wedding ceremonies are reduced or simply eliminated. This chapter will show that the existence of distinct marriage arrangements in Pajapan creates differences among women regarding their status in the community and their expectations from the father of their children.

1. Pajapan in the First Half of the 20th Century

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 brought together the discontent of a rising class of professionals and capitalists with the misery of the rural and urban poor. In 1910, Francisco I. Madero called for an end to the reelection of dictator Porfirio Díaz, who had been in power for close to 30 years. The movement started by Madero forced Díaz to flee the country and initiated a long period of social upheaval.

Elders in Pajapan remember the Revolution as a time of great hardship. The village was raided on a number of occasions by bands of revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries who killed or recruited men, raped and recruited women, and stole animals and grain. One woman describes her grandmother's fate during this time:

When the revolutionaries came, they hanged the men from trees and took the women with them. They stole cows and slaughtered them with no one's permission; people who resisted were killed. They [the revolutionaries] brought death with them. The women were raped and taken away to camps where they had to make *tortilla* and wash clothes. My grandmother was taken by a man, and when she fled the camp she was already pregnant with my father (H.B., born 1953; my translation).

The situation forced some people (including the mayor of the town, Florentino Gracio) to leave Pajapan. The village was virtually abandoned during the revolutionary epoch and eventually resettled in the early 1920's. The Revolution however served to maintain Pajapan's autonomous position vis-à-vis the outside world:

the economic crisis of 1907, the Mexican Revolution and the collapse of the trans-isthmian railway following the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 acted as major obstacles to the economic and demographic expansion of Coatzacoalcos and southeastern Veracruz. These barriers to growth protected municipal Pajapan from the usual effects of large-scale urbanization, industrialization and the market economy (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:235).

Life in Pajapan was not easy. Male and female elders recall high mortality rates among both children and adults, plagues, epidemics, dangerous animals in the fields and village (snake, jaguar, wild boar) and violence in local disputes. Female elders also recall high levels of domestic violence and alcohol abuse by men.

During the first half of the 20th century Pajapeños lived mostly on subsistence agriculture, hunting, fishing and domestic animal production. Most items required for human reproduction (clothes, kitchen equipment, furniture, fishing and hunting utensils, houses) were manufactured locally. Women wove clothes using cotton grown in the fields and made baskets with *bejuco* (a large creeping plant). They used clay to make pitchers, pots and *comales* (flat plates on which *tortillas* are cooked). Bowls and cups were also made out of clay or taken from gourd trees (*tecomate*) which were grown in the *milpa* or near home. A woman describes the labor process involved in the manufacturing of some of these goods:

We didn't have the kind of bowls that we have today. The ones that we had back then were taken from *tecomate* trees. My grandmother had some of these trees at home. You let them grow and then cut them in half with a machete. You wash both halves and let them dry until they turn white, then you can use them. Women also made plates out of clay. You have to give shape to the mass, then burn it. Men made the beds using pieces of wood and bull skin, we had no cots in those days (H.A., born 1940; my translation).

Beds and chairs were also made using the skin of deer and wild boar. Men also made harpoons and arrows for fishing and hunting. The houses were built by men too, out of a sun-dried mixture of clay and small branches.

Elders remember that the *milpa* produced a larger variety and larger amounts of agricultural products, most of which were consumed locally. The *milpa* produced corn, beans, yuca, sweet potato, squash, *chayote* (pear-

shaped vegetable), *jicama* (white, sweet, juicy tuber), rice, sugar cane, cotton, and other fruits and vegetables. Other items like coffee, small tomato, wood, cooking and medicinal plants were collected in the forest on a regular basis.

The relative proximity to Coatzacoalcos (twelve hours walk) allowed people in Pajapan to exchange cotton for fabric, so women stopped weaving long before other villages in the region.¹ An elderly woman relates:

When my father had cotton he took it to Puerto [Coatzacoalcos] to the house of a woman called Maria Turca. He put the cotton in large bags and my brothers and sisters carried one bag each. We followed my father and gave the cotton to this woman, who gave us fabric and a few coins in exchange. Then my mother made shirts, pants and dresses using the fabric (A.J., born 1910-20's;² my translation).

The nearby lagoon "del Ostión" and the small rivers offered a large variety of food. Men would catch fish, oyster, clam and crawfish in the lagoon while women would catch snail and shrimp in the nearby rivers. Storms and north gales with rain were good times to fish, because the tide would rise and the number of fish hidden in mangrove trees would also increase. An elderly man relates:

When the north gale or storm comes in, the tide comes up. In the lagoon there are mangrove trees with large roots where lots of fish hide during storms. Two men would go there at night, one with a machete and the other with a large bag. One would shatter the roots with the machete and the other would pick up the fish. They would fill up as many as three or four bags. By five in the morning, there was already fish in Pajapan. The men would rest during the day and in the evening they would go again. They did that the whole time the storm or north gale lasted (T.C., born 1930; my translation).

¹ In nearby villages, for example Tatahuicapan, female elders still wear hand-made *refajos* (skirts) and *hupiles* (blouses).

² Most elderly women do not know the year they were born, so their children and I calculated their age based on the women's recollections.

There were also many wild animals to hunt, for example deer, armadillo, wild boar, tapir, rabbit, pheasant and *tepescuincle*, a hairless, small dog eaten since pre-hispanic times. Many of these animals have disappeared. According to Ramírez and Velázquez (1993:2), the tapir and deer are in danger of extinction, together with 100 other animals of the region. Pajapeños know that deforestation and fires are to blame:

There used to be lots of animals in Pajapan. Imagine, deer would pass by in front of the church. You could not walk far from town without encountering jaguars and being scared by monkeys. Through the years animals have disappeared, just like the trees in the mountain. People burned and cut down trees which were 30 to 40 meters tall and had a diameter of 10 meters. All those trees were lost. In times of drought the San Martín [volcano] looks worse than a city. When you set fire to a tree, other trees also catch on fire (T.C., born 1930; my translation).

Wild animals were used for festivities such as *mayordomías*, celebrations organized around saints.³ An elderly man recounts:

During those days it was easy to organize a *mayordomía*. You just had to invite the hunters and kill a deer or wild boar, an armadillo or a *tepescuincle*, or go to the lagoon and bring fish, oyster. We ate lots of food at these *fiestas* (V.D., born 1924; my translation).

An elderly woman agrees:

Nowadays people don't invite you to eat, and if they do they do not give you food to take home. Before you could not eat all the food that they served you. You would get two huge plates, you did not even need a *tortilla* to eat what was on them... Other people brought *tamales*, *tortillas* and other kinds of food. Now they just give you a couple of *tacos* and when you've finished eating, you're still hungry. That's why I don't go to *mayordomías* any more (S.D., born 1910-20's; my translation).

³ According to García de León (1976:137), twelve *mayordomías* are celebrated in Pajapan. These are 1) Saint John; 2) Saint Anthony of Padua; 3) Virgin of Catemaco; 4) Saint Francis of Assis; 5) Saint Joseph; 6) Anunciación; 7) Virgin of Guadalupe; 8) Virgin of Soledad; 9) Virgin of Dolores; 10) Saint Anne; 11) the Black Christ; 12) Saint Peter.

People also raised domestic animals such as pigs, chickens and turkeys. Elders recall that "the poorest household would have between 20 and 30 large pigs" and at least 10 hens which laid eggs. In those days, chickens did not die as often as they do today.⁴ Some domestic animals were sold in Coatzacoalcas, but they were also consumed daily or used for special occasions like *mayordomías*. An elderly woman recalls:

When we ran out of food we would kill and season a pig, and we would have food for a week. Or we would kill a cow and salt it and we then had lots of nice meat. We did this because we didn't want to eat beans every day, so we had meat, shrimp, crab (C.C., born 1910-20's; my translation).

Some Pajapeños state that at that time they had enough food to eat. This is probably true since the diet of Pajapan was similar to the diet of other villages in the region which Stuart (1978) found to be nutritionally adequate.⁵ An elderly woman in Pajapan recounts that during those days

⁴ Pollution problems cause the death of chickens before they are old enough to be sold or eaten. Some people vaccinate them, but others have stopped raising chickens altogether.

⁵ Stuart conducted his research during the 1970's in four villages (Peña Hermosa, Santanón, Sayultepec and Pila Pillo) which were founded by people from Pajapan and San Juan Volador, two of the oldest towns in the region. Stuart does not tell us why these people moved, but we can assume that it was because of land shortage in Pajapan. The new villages are located on the other side of the San Martín volcano, where enough land and wild animals were still available for hunting. Stuart concludes from his analysis that "meals, which supply most of the caloric intake, include tortillas and high protein foods complementing the aminoacid content of maize. Local diet was found to be nutritionally adequate in most respects, and daily per capita consumption is estimated to be approximately 2000 calories and 70 grams of protein" (1978:ix). Seventy per cent of the meat and 13 per cent of the protein consumed in the *ejidos* came from wild animals. Today people in Pajapan have stopped hunting because the number of wild animals has decreased dramatically. Although fish is still available in the lagoon "del Ostión", it has to be bought and some people cannot afford it. Thus, we can assume that the current nutritional levels of Pajapeños are not as adequate as they were before.

the *milpa* had everything. There was *quelite* [a volunteer plant], beans, rice, all sorts of fruit. We didn't lack food. That's what our elders and grandparents were for, to look for food. And we ate it all, thrilled with life (A.S., born 1910-20's; my translation).

Another woman agrees:

there were enough beans and rice. My father would pick them with his small hand. There was also coffee. Now we have to buy coffee, rice, beans, salt, soap, even corn! Where are we going to get all that money? (C.C., born 1910-20's; my translation).

In the first half of the 20th century Pajapeños obtained money through the cultivation and sale of sugar cane or through wage labor contracted at sugar refineries at Huazuntlán or San Miguel Temoloapan (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:55). They also walked along the beach for approximately twelve hours to sell agricultural produce and domestic animals in Coatzacoalcos. While some men used horse to carry their products, women invariably carried them on their backs, heads or shoulders (Martínez et al., 1982:29) and took smaller amounts and different kinds of products. Men sold corn, beans and fruit while women sold eggs, chickens and fruit in smaller quantities. Travellers included female heads of households in groups, and men with their children. With the money people bought goods not manufactured locally such as machetes, *limas* (machete sharpener), oil, salt, soap, fabric and hats:

a lot of what was produced in Pajapan went to Puerto [Coatzacoalcos]. Seventy or eighty beasts carried corn, beans, pigs, hens, eggs, chicken, mangos and papayas. They did not carry bananas because they are too heavy and poorly paid for. Everything was taken by foot, walking down the beach and crossing the lagoon on dug-out-canoes. Those who did not have beasts carried their produce on their backs and took their children. They walked from eve until three in the afternoon, when they arrived at Puerto. At that time Puerto had only a few wood houses. With the money they got, people bought two meters of fabric, one kilo of salt, a bottle of oil, soap and some other things. They even brought some money back to Pajapan but we did not use money here, so people put it away

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or buried it. This is the reason why today there is a lot of money buried in Pajapan (anonymous informant quoted in Nahmad, 1989:36; my translation).

The daughter of a female head of household describes her mother's involvement in petty trade:

My mother walked all the way to Coatzacoalcas to sell eggs and chickens... She left at four or five in the morning and arrived in Coatzacoalcas at five in the afternoon... They walked to Jicacal, crossed the lagoon on dug-out canoes and then walked to Puerto, carrying the baskets on their shoulders. My brother went with her (M.V., born 1931; my translation).

2. Household and Property in Pajapan

As stated in the previous chapter, property ownership during the first half of the 20th century was established through the act of clearing unclaimed land. Stuart describes this process for nearby villages founded by some Pajapeños who faced land shortage in Pajapan during the 1970's:

the customary system of land tenure provides perpetual use rights to the individual who clears a piece of land from forest, and he may pass these rights to a relative, friend, or community member; or he may sell his rights to a piece of land to a community member; however the selling price is normally based on the value of the labor involved in clearing the land, rather than on its productivity. Land cannot be sold to an outsider, though it is considered acceptable to rent a piece of land to someone from an adjacent community for the cultivation of a crop (Stuart, 1978:35).

This method operated in Pajapan before the process of land concentration which started in the 1950's. According to Nahmad (1989:25), the large amount of land available coupled with a low population density allowed Pajapeños to use a particular parcel of three to four hectares for two or three years and then move onto another piece of land for a similar length of time. The previous piece of land could be used by another kin group once land nutrients were restored.

Men and women in Pajapan gained access to land through affiliation with a patrilocal kin group which usually included a senior male and his wife; his sons, their wives and children; and his unmarried daughters. Virilocal residence however, placed women in a vulnerable position in terms of their access to land. A woman's move into her husband's household at marriage severed her land access rights in her natal residential unit. Men, by contrast, benefitted from continued residence and from the development cycle of the household, which conferred power and authority to them as they went through life stages. Male heads regulated land use and property allocation and made claims to the labor of other household members.

At the time of death of the senior male, the youngest son customarily inherited the land rights and house lot of his parents, since he was expected to take care of his mother in old age and assume his father's funeral costs. Other sons received assistance to build their houses from their father and worked with him when recently married (Stuart, 1978:35). This was considered their "living inheritance". Women, by contrast, did not inherit land rights or property from their parents or in-laws. They only received bedding and cooking equipment at the time of their marriage. González Montes (1994b:182) notes that "the patrivirilocal postmarital residence pattern and the predominantly patrilineal inheritance mutually reinforced each other and were widely practiced among the Mexican peasantry".

The sexual division of labor in Pajapan households also influenced women's property rights. Men hunted and fished in the lagoon and took care of agricultural work, while women fished in rivers, raised domestic

animals, and were in charge of domestic work.⁶ Male household heads had command over women's labor when required in the fields: women weeded the *milpa*, harvested, carried, cleaned and stored produce. Children learned from a very young age the tasks related to their sex and also participated in agricultural production.⁷

Several informants recall that women and children worked at the *milpa* more frequently in the past. Only young children stayed at home with one female family member (typically their mother since they were breast fed). Once the children were old enough to start working, houses were locked for the day and all household members worked in the *milpa*. Elders point out that this is the reason for the earlier abundance of agricultural products:

Women, men, everybody went to the fields. At five in the morning people were getting ready to leave. At seven in the evening they returned, all of them carrying produce. Be it wood, corn, bananas, other fruits. Because we had everything in the *milpa*. There was more food to eat than there is today because everybody worked in agriculture (V.D., born 1924; my translation).

A woman agrees:

Before all peasants worked. They had corn, rice, beans, coffee. They stored the rice in large bags, not small bags

⁶ This included time-consuming activities like transforming agricultural produce into food. Corn, beans, rice and coffee were shed, cleaned, dried and stored; sugar cane was squeezed in the *trapiche* and boiled in order to make *panela*, or unrefined brown sugar stones; tubers (sweet potato, *jicama*) were thoroughly washed and meat and fish were salted, dried and stored. Corn was boiled and ground to make *tortillas*, *pozole* (corn-based drink) and *tamales*. *Tortillas* and *pozole* were prepared for every meal, while *tamales* were prepared for public festivities or in particular seasons (in the first weeks of harvest of beans and corn).

⁷ The age to start going to the *milpa* was around nine or ten. By that age, girls were also learning how to make *tortillas* and how to weave.

like the ones we buy today. They even sold corn. Now we call ourselves *campesinos*, but we are not. We buy corn just like everybody else (C.C., born 1910-20's; my translation).

While women participated in agricultural work, they were also responsible for reproductive tasks. A woman born in the forties describes her working day as a child:

I started to go to the *milpa* when I was nine. I woke up early in the morning, made *tortilla* and *pozole*, grabbed my machete, and left. At noon we returned home and made lunch, ate, and at three went back to work. We returned from the fields at around six, cooked again, fetched water for the next day and then went to bed. The next day at three in the morning I was already grinding corn. At five, when the sun was rising, we took a bath and left (S.S., born 1945; my translation).

When asked what kind of things she did in the *milpa* she answered:

We cleaned the *milpa* so that it would grow nicely. Before harvest we folded the *milpas* [corn plants] to help them dry and picked up the corn a couple of months later. Then we carried the harvest to the household. After that we cleaned the land, burned grasses, and sowed again. We grew corn, beans, *jicama*, squash, sweet potato, sugar cane, papaya, bananas, everything (S.S., born 1945; my translation).

In the quotation the woman only describes the process of corn cultivation. However, each crop had its own cycle. While corn was (and still is) cultivated twice a year, cotton was harvested in February or March and rice in September or October.

Women's participation in the spheres of production and reproduction was facilitated by the fact that the fields were not far from the village. Today the walking distance from Pajapan to one's parcel may range from half an hour to three hours, and parcels are separate and far from the village. However, in the first half of the century the working fields were

part of Pajapan.⁸ Population levels were lower, the town was smaller, and more land was available. Well into the sixties only the inhabitants of two villages (Pajapan and San Juan Volador) occupied Pajapan's communal land (Nahmad, 1989:47).

The proximity between the village and the fields made it easier for women to move from one space to another, especially those with young children. They could participate in agricultural production without neglecting domestic work and animal raising. Production and reproduction were not divorced spheres of activities and the household was not considered a private domain devoted only to reproductive tasks.

Thus, women worked the fields with their original kin group while young and single and with their husband's kin group after marriage. Their participation in agricultural production diminished only during the first years of married life due to child rearing responsibilities, and during old age. In spite of women's active participation in agriculture, their relationship to land was always mediated by male relatives: their fathers while young and single, their fathers-in law and husbands as they married, and their sons during old age. Women did not have access to land through inheritance or through any other means, but were expected to work the land which supported various domestic units and which eventually passed from one man to another during the women's lifetime.

Given the large amount of land available in Pajapan, women's

⁸ This is also true for the villages founded by landless Pajapeños during the 1970's, where some parcels were only 300 meters away from the settlement. In most cases, the walking distance from the household to the parcel ranged from 20 to 35 minutes (Stuart, 1978:96).

indirect relationship to land did not pose a problem. As noted earlier, kin groups moved from one plot to another and no one claimed ownership to fallow lands. Also, male and female activities were complementary in that women depended on men for corn, but men depended on women for *tortillas*, the final product. The problem became real when new relations of production turned land into a scarce object of dispute, and state legislation created categories of legitimate landholders. The following chapters will show that women's indirect relationship to land put them in a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis men during the process of land concentration in Pajapan.

3. Courtship, Marriage and Women's Status

The control that senior males exercised over household property and labor gave them the power to decide upon the marriage of their children. González Montes (1994b:182) describes the marriage practices in Xalatlalco (a Nahuatl Community in central Mexico) in the following terms:

An important aspect of the father's rights as head was to decide whom his children would marry, and when. Arranged marriages still occurred in the 1950's. Marriage was a family matter, not a question of individual selection based on romantic attraction. The elders' will had to be taken very much into account because one lived in their household and worked on their land, without much alternative to this situation.

This was also true for Pajapan. Marriage in the village was a formal arrangement of labor recruitment between two patrilineal kin groups in which a woman was transferred from her parents' household to that of her in-laws. Men, particularly the fathers of the groom and bride, were central to the process. A young groom needed the support of his father to demonstrate his ability to raise a family, while a young bride needed her

father to certify that she had been raised under parental supervision and with good morals.

The marriage process unfolded in regulated stages, each of which contained rich symbolic information about the interaction between men and women. The value of women was expressed in the marriage petition process, which required "great effort and expenditure from the young man seeking a wife" (Rosenbaum, 1993:185). Yet the value applied only to women who had been raised under their parents' supervision and had always lived under their roof. Women who had been married before, "had left their homes" prior to marriage (e.g. to generate income) or did not have a living or present father to make their case had less bargaining power in marriage transactions. These women were more likely to make marriage arrangements outside the house or somewhere in between both models.

3.1. The Beginning of Courtship

Studies on Nahua communities of rural Mexico have shown that in the first two decades of the 20th century marriage was initiated by the fathers of two people of marriageable age. The two men would agree to become *uexis* (in-laws) without consulting their children, or a young man would ask his father to ask for a young woman's hand without specifying a particular person. It was believed that "fathers knew what was good for their children and that children had no reason to oppose their will" (González Montes, in press:4; my translation).

Increasingly, the young man's initiative acquired more weight in the courtship process and the young woman had more say during the marriage negotiations. Yet young women could not initiate the process and they

could only choose among the suitors who formally asked for their hands. Accordingly, the young man would ask his father to ask for the hand of a particular young woman. Even though the young man made the decision to seek her and perhaps even approached her briefly, the fathers were in charge of the petition process (González Montes, in press:5; Sedeño and Becerril, 1985:47-48).

Male elders in Pajapan recall a time when they could only address a young woman on their way to fetch water at the well. The young woman would respond either by refusing to answer or by smiling at the young man. If the latter happened, the young man would ask whether his father could visit hers to ask for her hand in marriage. If she consented, the young man would communicate his choice to his father so that they could begin the petition process.

Young, single women were not expected to talk to males who did not belong to their domestic unit. Like Chamula women in Chiapas (Rosenbaum, 1993:99;113), women in Pajapan were taught to avoid any sign of interest in men and to respond aggressively when men attempted to talk to them on the road. Young women who did so were in a better situation to negotiate their choice for a partner with their parents once suitors asked for their hand. For example, if a young woman on her way to the well ignored a young man and he persisted in trying to get her attention, she could throw water or even stones at him:

There was this young man who always waited for me at the well. He would try to stop me but I would get mad and throw water at him... Once I picked up some mud and made a hard ball with it. I was very young, but I had a bad temper. I threw the ball at him, and since I have good aim, I hit him on the head. Then I got scared because I saw he was running away, shouting "you've ruined me." But I chased him and threw water at him. When I got home my mother asked me: "what's going on? why are you so

scared?" And I said: "this young man was bothering me, so I threw water and mud at him." And she said: "well done". He then went to complain to my mother, he said: "look what your daughter did to me, she hit me with a hard ball and soaked me". And my mother said: "that's because she doesn't want you, don't try to take her away. She is too young" (D.D., born 1944; my translation).

A young man would try to get some assurance from the young woman he had chosen to approach before proceeding to the stage of formal petition. Yet it was not uncommon for a man to ask for a young woman's hand without having talked to her previously. A man explains why:

Before there were very few young women in the village, we could not even look at them. If you saw a young woman without her father's permission, he would chop you up with a machete. You had to discuss marriage with him and her mother for a year. Now young women are everywhere. If you meet a young woman and tell her that you love her, she'll run away with you (T.C., born 1930; my translation).

Although young women were consulted about a particular suitor, some were forced to marry men that their father approved of even though they did not. A woman recounts:

My marriage was very sad. I got married at the age of twelve, can you believe that? And I did not even like the young man. During those days it was not like today, that young women choose their husbands. They fall in love by talking to each other, by walking together. Before it did not work that way. You had to go with the man who asked for your hand, even if you didn't want to, because the elders ruled, you didn't (H.A., born 1940; my translation).

Women in Pajapan threatened to run away or even kill themselves if their parents pressured them to marry. This is also true for Chamula women (Rosenbaum, 1993:101). A woman from Pajapan relates:

I told my father that I didn't want to marry that man, that I didn't like him, that I was too young. But he said: "You have to go with him because I say so." I told my mother that I was going to run away and she said: "wherever you go, your father will go and get you" (H.A., born 1940; my translation).

Sometimes the young woman and her parents would agree to wait for another suitor, but marriage could not be postponed indefinitely. Sooner or later the young woman would have to accept a candidate. As opposed to men, who started their own domestic units close to their parents, women who reached a certain age (their teens) were expected to marry and move out of their parents' household. Another woman explains:

A young man from San Juan came and asked for my hand in marriage. He said: "come with me. You will not be able to live with your mother much longer, since you are old enough and you are not a man." So I married him (M.A., born 1941; my translation).

Women in Pajapan and San Juan Chamula (Rosenbaum, 1993:105) did not always approve of the choice that their husbands made for their daughters. Although most of the time women could not change these decisions, they made sure their daughters returned home if their marriage proved unstable. When the mother of one recently married young woman found out that she was suffering from domestic violence, she took her back. The woman who was a victim of domestic violence recounts:

He tried to beat me but never could because my mother-in-law protected me. When my mother learned about that she told me I would not live with that man any more. So I went back home and I stayed there. He came back to get me, but I didn't go with him. My mother complained at the town hall and sued him and we left each other (M.A., born 1941; my translation).

Similar understandings exist in San Juan Chamula. Rosenbaum quotes:

My mother got drunk and started scolding Sebastián, my sister's groom. When they counted the gift he had bought, she started saying: "It wasn't much money that he spent, I can get my daughter back if he doesn't treat her well. If he beats her or scolds her, I will return his money right away. I will make her come back", that is what she was saying (Chamula woman quoted in Rosenbaum, 1993:105).

Suitors could be refused for a number of reasons. Widowers and older men who had had previous relationships were among the less favored

candidates to marry a young woman because they "were men already", unless they were rich and had prestige in the community.⁹ Young men had to belong to hard-working families to be accepted, since they had to convince the young woman's parents that they were capable of supporting a family. Thus, young men needed their parents and especially their father to help them with the marriage petition. A young man who had grown up without a living or present father was less of a candidate than young men who had grown up with both parents, because he lacked an adult man to make his case and the means to provide for the brideprice and wedding expenses. He would have to ask an uncle or godfather to support him and marry a woman who involved less expense, e.g. women without a living or present father or who had been previously married.

Young women growing up without a living or present father were also in a precarious situation. Rosenbaum (1993: 92;111;115) shows that these women are more likely to initiate courtship without notifying their mothers, ask for little brideprice or none at all, and become the second wives of polygamous men. In other words, they are usually involved in outside-the-house or in-between marriage arrangements. Something similar used to occur in Pajapan. Young women without a living or present father married younger and the petition process and wedding ceremonies were reduced or simply eliminated; the young women were merely "sent" to live with the man in question. These men tended to be widowers, men who had had previous relationships or already had a first wife, and young, poor men (e.g. men without a living or present father).

⁹ See Sedeño and Becerril (1985:45) for the problems that poor, old widowers (above 25) in Mecayapan face when trying to find a wife.

3.2. Marriage Transactions

Like elsewhere in rural Mexico (Rosenbaum, 1993; González Montes, in press), several visits were required before the young woman's parents accepted the petition. In the first visits they would raise objections about the young man's and their own daughter's behavior. They would claim that he was a drunkard, did not know how to work, or had a bad temper. They would try to discourage the petition by pointing out that their daughter was lazy and did not possess the skills for housework. This behavior was intended to test the seriousness and perseverance of the petitioners.

When the petition was finally accepted all parties drank the *aguardiente* (local liquor) provided by the young man's parents. In doing so, both kin groups confirmed their commitment to the new union (Rosenbaum, 1993:97). More visits were required to negotiate brideservice, brideprice and the wedding. These visits would take place several months before the marriage ceremony (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:222-223).

Pre-nuptial uxoriolocality was required as part of the brideservice institution, with a young man having "to work with his father-in-law and be at his service for up to a year before he could receive the daughter in marriage" (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:221). In this way, the young woman's father could check for his future son-in law's ability to work and behavior towards his daughter. Surveillance over young women increased after the marriage petition had been accepted. Young women were taken by their mothers to make *tortillas* in the mother-in-law's kitchen before marriage so that they would adjust to their future working environment (González Montes, in press:7).

The young man's parents were also expected to provide foodstuff and services for the wedding and were asked to give a payment in kind to the bride's parents. The payment was considered tangible proof of the husband's good will, his sense of marital commitment, and his capacity to look after the needs of his future wife and children. If a young man was given a bride free of charge, there was fear that he would not "appreciate" the woman, would abandon her or fail to take proper care of her. Some informants also speak of the brideprice as a *gratificación para la crianza* or compensation for the expenses incurred in raising a daughter (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:222).

Rosenbaum (1933:107) and González Montes (in press:7) point out that a wife's excellence was expressed in the gifts of brideprice. They served three purposes: 1)to recognize the woman's worth and establish good relations with her kin group; 2)to compensate symbolically for the loss of the woman's contribution to her family and for the investment in raising her; 3)to ensure the husband's rights over the young woman's productive and reproductive capabilities.

The wedding ceremony usually lasted two days, with food being offered in both households. The actual wedding took place at the bride's house, where the couple received advice from the young woman's grandparents. The couple was told what they were expected to do for each other:

We were very young when we got married. My whole family was present at the wedding. My father, uncles and aunts gave me away. Celebrations were held in both my husband's and my family's houses. They [her in-laws] contributed a pig and *aguardiente* for the celebrations... It [the ceremony] lasted two days, it ended on Sunday. I was given advice. I was told: "you will live well, you will grind corn, wash clothes and dishes." And my husband was told: "I'm giving you my daughter

and you must bring wood and leaves to her, you must look for food so that she doesn't have to go out" (C.C., born 1910-20's; my translation).

On the afternoon of the second day, the bride was transferred (with the bedding and cooking equipment received from her parents) to her new husband's parents house. The morning after the wedding, the two fathers would ask the groom to confirm the young woman's virginity. If not confirmed, the marriage could be annulled and compensations claimed by the young man's family for the expenses incurred in the wedding (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:223).

Once the marriage ceremony was completed, the newly formed couple was expected to live at the house of the groom's parents. This was not easy for the young woman since

she had to adapt to living in a strange household and had to submit to a new family head, just as she had done before with her parents... She had to go through a period during which her capacity to work was tested, and she had to ask her father-in-law for permission to go out or do anything out of the ordinary, even to visit her own parents. Her mother-in-law directed her domestic activities (González Montes, 1994b:184).

Mothers-in-law could send their daughters-in-law away if they did not approve of them. When considerable expenses had been devoted to a scrupulous marriage ceremony, however, this was unlikely to happen. Most of the time, daughters-in-law were welcomed in their new home. Young women were an excellent source of labor for the time-consuming tasks described above. If a daughter-in-law turned out to be obedient and hard-working, her mother-in-law would protect her against domestic violence and give her a voice in household disputes and decision-making processes.

The land that the new couple would work was also part of or near the husband's kin group's working fields. As pointed out earlier, married sons

were commonly given an area of their fathers' land to cultivate. Men who grew up without a living or present father and their wives would live and work with male relatives or godfathers during the first years of the union; very few couples started up their new domestic units without some kind of support.

If a marriage proved unstable a young married woman could return to her father's house. These women would very likely remarry, but their second marriage did not involve transactions nor did they require wedding ceremonies. These women were just "given away" to the man in question.

The relationship between a man and his newly wedded wife was formalized when the couple moved out from the young man's parents house to an independent house in a patrilineal joint compound, typically after the first child was born. The compound was made up of households occupied by sons of the original couple, their wives and children. The establishment of a separate household marked the beginning of a new stage in the woman's life. She had more freedom to do things her own way without constant supervision. She also had command over the labor of her children for domestic tasks. The woman's authority increased even more when her sons brought daughters-in-law into the home and she could delegate most of the daily chores.

Not all couples went through this process. As noted earlier, young men without a living or present father lacked an adult man to make their case and the means to provide for the brideprice and wedding expenditures, so they would marry a woman who involved less expense. This is also true for poor, old widowers. Accordingly, the marriage negotiations and wedding ceremonies of women without a living or present father, women who "had

already left their homes" (e.g. to generate income) and women who had had previous relationships were reduced or simply eliminated. Men and women in these situations were usually involved in outside-the-house or in-between arrangements.

3.3. Acquiring a second wife

As shown in the previous chapter, polygyny has existed since pre-hispanic times in several regions of Mexico.¹⁰ According to an elder male informant, polygyny has existed in Pajapan "as far as I can remember." A man could have as many wives as he wanted as long as he was able to provide "corn and something to wash with" for all of them. However, wedding ceremonies were only practiced between a man and his "well proposed" (*bien pedida*) first wife. Unions with second wives involved relatively simpler negotiations at much lower costs if any at all. The first wife was treated as the principal spouse and granted authority over secondary wives (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:223). In Mecayapan, for example, the children of second wives are registered under the first wife's name. First wives must be informed about their husband's decision to acquire a second wife (Sedeño and Becerril, 1985:68-69).

Rosenbaum (1993) shows that second wives in San Juan Chamula tend to be women without a living or present father or women who have had previous relationships. These women typically make marriage arrangements outside the house. They are considered "morally loose" and condemned for giving in

¹⁰ Scholars have found evidence of polygyny among the Nahuas of Tenochtitlan (see previous chapter) and other native communities in the 16th century (Carrasco, 1976; Malvido Miranda, 1982), 19th century (Chenout, 1991) and 20th century (Nutini, 1968; Boege, 1988; Rosenbaum, 1993; González Montes, in press).

to men. The marriage circumstances of these women have significant implications for the future relationship with their husbands, since "the only real commitment for a man derives from the act of taking a woman from her parents' house to his own parents' house" (González Montes, in press:27; my translation). Women who have not been properly married have fewer rights than "well proposed" women and are subject to male abuse because they lack the protection and support of male relatives. Many second wives in Pajapan also were women who did not have a father to endorse their reputation, and/or women who had had previous relationships and had already "left their homes". They usually made outside-the-house or in-between arrangements.

First wives accepted new wives as long as they had enough provisions in their own households. When I asked an elderly woman whether she was upset because her husband had taken a second wife, she replied: "No, I didn't care. What did I lack? Nothing, I had everything I needed at home". Sedeño and Becerril received similar answers from women in Mecayapan. They write: "women ... affirm that they do not mind if their husbands take other women as long as the other woman does her work and does not receive money from their husbands" (1985:70; my translation).

First wives had command over the labor of second wives on special occasions, for example before and after childbirth. They also attempted to maintain the right to wash and cook for their husbands in order to preserve the reciprocal rights and obligations between husband and wife. Cultural beliefs sanction a woman's duty to prepare meals only for her husband and a man's responsibility to provide food for his first wife. Since the word "eating" in Nahuatl means both the ingestion of food and

sexual intercourse, women preparing meals for a man (other than a relative) can be interpreted as an act of flirtation. Thus, the "good" woman does not share her food with other men and is careful always to have meals ready for her husband.¹¹ Accordingly, a man must give the produce of his hunting expedition to his first wife only. Failure to do so could cause his death from snake poisoning (Sedeño and Becerril, 1985:61-69;111-112). Rosenbaum (1993:140) also notes that men in San Juan Chamula do not share corn with their second wives, regardless of the size of the harvest.

Second wives leave when they realize that they "will not succeed in ousting the first wife" (Rosenbaum, 1993:55). Sedeño and Becerril (1985:71) also point out that constant quarrels between first and second wives over housework cause the latter to leave, unless separate households are established.

4. Conclusions

This chapter examined the practices of household property allocation, residence and marriage in Pajapan. The first section showed that during the first half of the 20th century, Pajapeños lived on subsistence agriculture, hunting, fishing and domestic animal production. The money required to buy goods not manufactured locally was obtained through the cultivation and sale of sugar cane, wage labor contracted at

¹¹ Wife-beating in Mecayapan is related most of the times to women's ability to have the food ready for their husbands. Women are beaten up when the food is not warm enough, not ready, or it is not what their husbands want to eat.

sugar refineries, and the sale of agricultural produce and domestic animals in Coatzacoalcos.

The second section explored men and women's land access rights in Pajapan during this period. Even though women worked the fields of several domestic units throughout their lifetime, their relationship to land was always mediated by male relatives: their fathers while young and single, their fathers-in law and husbands as they married, and their sons during old age. The next chapters will show that women's indirect relationship to land put them in a vulnerable position during the process of land concentration in Pajapan.

The third section focused on the existence of different marriage arrangements in Pajapan. The arrangement inside the house is one in which the fathers of the young couple represent their children in the community and endorse their ability to conform to male and female adult roles. Both fathers conduct the marriage negotiations which usually involve brideprice, brideservice and the actual wedding. The value of women is expressed in the marriage petition process which requires "great effort and expenditure from the young man seeking a wife" (Rosenbaum, 1993:185).

The arrangements outside the house or in between both models usually involve, on the one hand, young men without a living or present father, and poor, old widowers; and on the other, women without a living or present father, women who "have left their homes" prior to marriage and women who have been previously married. Unlike the marriage arrangement inside the house, these two arrangements do not go through all the stages of courtship and marriage which make the union socially legitimate.

Brideprice, brideservice and wedding ceremonies are usually reduced or eliminated altogether.

The existence of distinct marriage arrangements in Pajapan created differences among women regarding their access to resources and expectations from their husbands. While an arrangement inside the house established the rights and obligations between husband and wife, the arrangements outside the house and in between both models did not. The next chapters will explore the meaning of these differences in the context of capitalist development.

CHAPTER V
WOMEN, MEN, AND CAPITAL ACCUMULATION
IN PAJAPAN (1950-1982)

The introduction of cattle raising in Pajapan initiated significant changes in the household labor process and affected the benefits that men and women obtained from productive and reproductive activities. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the changes in women's lives during the cattle raising period in Pajapan (1950-1982). The chapter looks at the construction of class and gender relations in a dynamic fashion by emphasizing the historical milestones that explain women's insertion in particular spheres of production. The analysis thus focuses on the interplay between women's work trajectories and marriage histories.

The chapter is divided into seven sections. Following Chevalier and Buckles (in press:31-35;69-70), the first two sections examine the development of the cattle industry and the legal framework which made possible its expansion in Mexico and particularly in southern Veracruz. Section three analyzes the changes in the household labor process in Pajapan during the cattle raising period. I show that senior male kin's control over land and access to the labor of several wives and their respective children facilitated capitalist accumulation in the hands of polygamous men. Although active in the creation of wealth, women living with ranchers were alienated from cattle transactions.

The expansion of the cattle industry in Pajapan resulted in land concentration and the displacement of many people from the land. Landless Pajapeños moved to urban centers in search of a better livelihood. Section four discusses the development of the oil industry in southern Veracruz. This helps contextualize sections five and six, which focus on female

migration to urban areas and the formation of a group of rural-urban female petty traders in Pajapan. The analysis shows that women with particular marriage histories were forced to migrate or to participate in petty trade. Migration to urban areas became common for women compelled to end their first marriage, while landless female heads of households became involved in rural-urban petty trade on a regular basis.

Finally, section seven examines the lives of women living in monogamous relationships. I argue that these women's participation in subsistence agriculture declined. They saw themselves increasingly confined to the household sphere and developed alternative ways of generating income from their own homes without neglecting their domestic responsibilities.

1. The Cattle Industry in Southern Veracruz

As noted earlier, this section and the next one are based on Chevalier and Buckles' (in press:31-35;69-70) discussion of the development of the cattle industry in Mexico and the legal framework which made possible its expansion in the country and particularly in southern Veracruz.

The Second World War initiated a period of industrialization in Mexico. The country developed several manufacturing industries producing for the national market and a strong agro-industrial sector which produced goods for export. In 1940 the state of Veracruz was one of the most important producers of raw materials (oil, cattle, sugar, coffee and sulphur) for the national and international markets. PEMEX (the state-owned oil industry) provided some 90 per cent of Mexico's oil production

and was the largest sector in the economy of Veracruz (23 per cent of total production). Cattle raising also accounted for 15 per cent of the total economic production of Veracruz and for 16 per cent of the national cattle production.

During the 1950's and 1960's the Mexican state promoted import substitution policies and state investment in electric power, petroleum, transportation and communication. During the 1950's the national economic growth rate exceeded 7 per cent and was one of the highest in the world. The agro-export sector expanded by five per cent per year from 1940 to 1965 and the country achieved self-sufficiency in grain production. Yet one of the outcomes of the "Mexican miracle" was the foreign debt, which started to increase since the late 1950's and led to a major economic crisis in the early 1980's. The "Mexican miracle" also brought about population explosion, rural depopulation and agricultural underdevelopment, which resulted in high levels of unemployment and poverty. Economic growth also increased the country's dependency on U.S. markets.

During the 1950's and 1960's the state of Veracruz continued to supply raw materials for the national and international markets. The economy of the state depended on the oil industry of southern Veracruz, an area which was becoming urbanized. The urbanization trend of the state was nonetheless behind the national trend: 61 per cent of the population of Veracruz lived in rural areas in 1961, compared to 50 per cent for the country as a whole. This was due to the relative self-sufficiency of the rural population and to the low labor demand in the state's two major industries (oil and cattle).

The cattle industry suffered a sharp decline in the 1950's both regionally and nationally due to the spread of animal diseases and the closure of U.S. markets for Mexican beef. The industry recovered in the 1960's and occupied second place in the economy of Veracruz, after the oil industry. From 1930 to 1960, the number of cattle in the state of Veracruz increased by 62 per cent and the amount of pasture by 89 per cent.

The demand for beef in national and international markets encouraged the expansion of cattle production into what were previously agricultural areas and virgin rainforest. Ranchers increased the proportion of zebu, a species better suited to the tropics than the traditional criollo, and introduced new varieties of pasture which facilitated increases in stocking rates. New roads were constructed to connect Coatzacoalcos, Minatitlán and Acayucan, and a road to Soteapan completed in 1964 opened access to the uplands of the Sierra de Santa Marta. This led to the expansion of the cattle industry in southern Veracruz, where both the total number of cattle and the total area under pasture increased.

Yet the cattle industry of southern Veracruz remained a relatively underdeveloped sector of the national cattle industry. Small and medium-scale native and *mestizo* ranchers operating in the uplands had limited access to pasture (particularly during the dry season) and therefore achieved low levels of productivity. They sold calves to large-scale ranchers or regional merchants operating in the lowlands, where improved pastures provided stable year-round grazing and allowed for a greater supervision over the development of animals. These ranchers and merchants had more access to transportation networks and capital, which allowed them

to buy calves and then resell full-grown steers to slaughterhouses in Mexico City, Puebla and Veracruz.

The expansion of the cattle industry in Pajapan was initiated under the direction of absentee *mestizo* cattle ranchers from Coatzacoalcos and Jaltipan. Ties between Pajapan villagers and outside *mestizo* ranchers started to develop in the 1940's. Native intermediaries were used by *mestizos* to gain access to grazing land within the municipality. Local agricultural capital developed gradually and land became concentrated in the hands of a few native ranchers who began to develop their own cattle operations. By the late 1960's, native men had virtually replaced their *mestizo* mentors.

During the 1970's and early 1980's the growth of the cattle industry continued. In the state of Veracruz the area under pasture increased from 1.6 million hectares in 1940 to 3.4 million in 1985, representing about 41.5 per cent of the total area of the state. This occurred at the expense of agricultural production. The number of hectares dedicated to corn and bean production decreased by 50 and 80 per cent respectively in the 1970's and 1980's. In the Santa Marta highlands, corn production fell by 36 per cent during the 1970s, while in the municipality of Pajapan corn production declined by 63 per cent, from 3,850 to 1,415 hectares.

The continuing expansion of the cattle industry in the Santa Marta highlands was a response to the increasing demand for meat in urban areas and the shortage of pasture in other parts of the state of Veracruz. New roads were built to facilitate transportation. In 1976 a dirt road suitable for vehicles was constructed from Tatahuicapan through Pajapan to

the lowland lagoon "del Ostión". The Sotavento Bus Company began to operate two years later.

In Pajapan, ranchers continued to expand their properties and increase their number of cattle. By the late 1970's, 61 per cent of all households owned no land. An estimated 3 per cent of the population (around 40 households of Pajapan and neighboring hamlets) controlled half of the arable land, with an average area of 235 hectares each and a maximum property of 800 hectares. Eighty four per cent of a total of 9,000 animals was owned by these households. Their herds averaged 190 heads of cattle each.

2. Legalizing Ranching Properties

The cattle industry was supported by means of legislation favorable to medium and large scale ranches. During the Cárdenas administration (1934-1940) between 500 and 800 *certificados de inafectabilidad* (immunity certificates) which protected ranchers from expropriation were issued on the grounds that Mexico faced problems of underproduction in the cattle sector. These certificates were valid for a period of 25 years and covered between 6 and 9 million hectares.

Legislation favoring the creation of ranches continued under the next two presidents, Avila Camacho (1940-1946) and Miguel Alemán (1946-1952). Amendments to the Constitution introduced in 1947 by Alemán made it possible for landowners to apply for "a federal court injunction against expropriation pending a legal investigation and resolution of the case, a process that on the average took 15 years to complete" (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:32). By 1969, there were more than 1,500,000 hectares of

land frozen by these injunctions. In addition, Alemán strengthened the principle of immunity established by Cárdenas by legalizing "small ranching properties" dedicated to supporting a herd of 500 head of cattle in any given environment. The properties could be up to 300 hectares in size if located on good land, and up to 50,000 hectares if located on arid land.

These measures legalized *latifundios* (large private properties) and gave them permanent immunity from expropriation. Although Cárdenas is well known for having distributed more land among peasants than any other president (mainly in central Mexico), he also favored the creation of private property and encouraged the development of large-scale ranching, particularly in northern Mexico and the Gulf coast. This trend was continued by Alemán, the ex-governor of the state of Veracruz.

3. Gender and Cattle in Pajapan

As shown in the previous chapter, cash transactions were part of Pajapan's economy long before the expansion of the cattle industry in the village. Money was obtained from the sale of corn, beans, pigs, chickens, eggs, mangos and papayas in Coatzacoalcos. It could also be obtained through the cultivation and sale of sugar cane planted on communal lands or through wage labor contracted at refineries.

Capital developed gradually through the local sale of *panela* and *aguardiente* (a sweetener and a liquor made of sugar cane). *Trapicheros* (people who had a sugar cane mill) fulfilled the demand for these products in the local market (Nahmad, 1989:38). Also, the sale of pigs in Coatzacoalcos allowed some pig farmers to purchase a few head of cattle

from *mestizo* ranchers or cattle thieves and set up commercial outlets (e.g. small stores at home) (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:70). Pig farmers went to Coatzacoalcas with as many as 100 pigs at a time. They transported them in herds along the beach to the market of Coatzacoalcas (Nahmad, 1989:38). Although domestic animals were (and still are) women's responsibility, these trips were made by men, who learned to speak Spanish and established contacts in the city.

Nahmad (1989:38) believes that three factors contributed to capital accumulation in Pajapan. These include: 1)the ability to speak Spanish; 2)commercial contacts outside Pajapan; 3)the ownership of beasts of burden. Nahmad does not discuss whether these factors favored men over women. But as will be seen in the next chapter, men involved in land issues learned to speak Spanish more often than women due to their constant contact with outsiders. Male pig traders and ranchers in Pajapan gradually developed the experience necessary to deal with outsiders and acquired the basic skills for cattle raising. The fact that the merchants they dealt with were male further contributed to the construction of cattle raising as a male activity.¹ Finally, men were also more likely to own and use beasts of burden in their trips to Coatzacoalcas. While some

¹ Only one woman in the sample of 80 gave an affirmative answer when asked whether she had participated in something directly related to cattle raising. She pointed out that she could ride a horse and had been a cattle overseer (*mayoral*) sometime ago. By contrast, 70 of the 80 interviewed women gave an affirmative answer when asked whether they knew how to work the land. Today, women who own cattle must be close to male networks (usually relatives) who look after the herds. Thus, women's participation in cattle raising is more difficult than their participation in agriculture because most women do not have enough money or land and they also lack the necessary skills and access to networks of cattle raising.

men used horses to carry their products, women invariably carried them on their backs, heads or shoulders (Martinez et al., 1982:29).

But the major factor favoring capital accumulation in male hands was men's control of land. This control stems from their direct ties to household property. Just as land is transferred between male kin (e.g. from father to the youngest son) and can be used by a group of men at any given time if necessary (e.g. sons working their father's property after marriage), cattle operations were carried out by male kin and sons became more likely to inherit cattle than daughters. In the few cases where women inherited cattle, they received fewer head (e.g. the three daughters of the wealthiest rancher in town received twelve head of cattle each at the time of his death, compared to 100 or more for each son), their herds were looked after by male relatives (typically husbands or, if single, brothers) and were considered a saving rather than an investment. Thus, women's indirect relation to land turned into an indirect relation to cattle.

Relations between male kin changed in the context of capitalist development: they became economic relations which involved monetary transactions. Senior males had access to the labor of younger male kin who were establishing new households (e.g. father-son, uncle-nephew, godfather-godson and father-in law-son-in law in some cases) and developed links with other senior kin (e.g. *compadres*, in-laws) involved in the production and sale of cattle. Hence, the sale of pigs and cattle was carried out by networks of kin-related men. These changes had a negative impact on women's control of the outcome of household labor. While in subsistence production women participated in production and played an

important role in organizing consumption, the production of cattle for the market and the income generated by cattle sales was kept under male control.

Two models of cattle raising operated in Pajapan during the expansion of the cattle industry. The first can be distinguished by the management of large herds (from 50 to 1,000 head) occupying a large land base (from 100 to about 700 hectares) and by the combination of cattle raising operations with other commercial activities such as the production and sale of *panela*, *aguardiente*, and agricultural produce. The second model is characterized by the management of smaller herds (from a few to 50 head) occupying fewer hectares of land (between 50 and 100) and by the household's involvement in subsistence agriculture.

The first model operated during the first two decades (from 1950 to 1970) of the expansion of the cattle industry in Pajapan. This model required household labor to clear the land and generate considerable amounts of income in order to make the first investments in cattle. Thus, the model facilitated primitive accumulation in Pajapan. The second model became dominant during the 1970's among younger ranchers who had acquired the necessary skills to deal with outsiders by working with male senior kin, and who then put all their energies into the buying-and-selling operations of cattle.

Although alienated from cattle raising activities, women contributed to the expansion of the cattle industry in both models. In the first model, women contributed in two major ways. On the one hand, the sexual division of labor made it possible for men to use women's and children's labor to clear the land and generate income for the first investments in

cattle. On the other hand, the diversified work of several wives and children of polygamous ranchers and the fact that reproductive costs were covered by each wife's income generating activities further contributed to capital accumulation in male hands. In the second model, women contributed to the increase in the number of cattle by raising pigs for the market and managing small businesses. Both models will be discussed in detail below.

3.1. "I was raised on hard work": The First Model of Cattle Raising in Pajapan (1950-1970)

As noted in the previous chapter, the power of the senior male within a household is articulated through his control of household property. This allows him to make claims to the labor of other household members. In subsistence production, women and children work in their fathers', father-in-laws' or husbands' property. Similarly, in the early stage of the cattle raising period the wives and children of ranchers cleared the land for cattle raising operations and performed numerous ranching activities. Pajapeños recall that the six daughters of the second wealthiest rancher in town (henceforth to be referred to as M.M.) cleared the 700 hectares of property that he later used for cattle raising. They cleared up to one hectare every two days. A man remembers:

When he [M.M.] moved to the ranch he had a few head of cattle and a small amount of land. But he settled in a good place and put all his young daughters to work. They cleared, fenced in, prepared the land for cultivation, sowed corn and picked the harvests (V.D., born 1924; my translation).

The wealthiest rancher in town (henceforth to be referred to as G.G.) also operated on a land base of about 700 hectares. As the same informant pointed out, "he had several children [seven with his first wife] who helped him".

People remember that M.M. liked to talk about his "*hacienda*" where he, his first wife and seven children (six daughters and one son) grew five or six hectares of *milpa* and three of sugar cane. His third wife relates:

His first wife worked very hard and died young. She worked at the *trapiche* [sugar cane mill] and died because of overwork, she had a hemorrhage. His son looked after the cattle and his daughters worked in the *milpa* and the cane plantation. They had about five or six hectares of *milpa* and three of sugar cane. They knew how to work the land and how to cut the cane. They even worked at night. They put flashlights on their heads to keep the snakes away from the cane plantation. They sold corn, *panela* and *aguardiente* (M.A., born 1941; my translation).

A man agrees:

I used to go to their ranch to buy chickens and cows. Once I went at noon and no one was there. I wondered what had happened to them. Had they all died? Did they all leave? No! They were in the fields pulling down trees, the young women were using axes and machetes. Everybody was working, the six young women, their mother. The young women even got tuberculosis. One of them died young and others still have tuberculosis because of overwork (T.C., born 1930; my translation).

Another woman attributes the death of one of M.M.'s daughters to her work in *panela* production. She relates:

The place where I live now belonged to M.M. We bought it from him when he moved to the ranch with his wife... He started a cane plantation with his daughters. They cut the cane, carried it and squeezed it in the *trapiche*. They also worked in the *milpa*, threshed corn, put it in bags and sold it... A beautiful young woman named Juana was the *pailera*, she carried wood and cooked the sugar cane in the *paila* [huge metallic pot]. Juana died very young because she was exposed to heat for a very long time. The *panela* takes a long time to cook, and needs constant stirring. Since we women cannot stand going to bed while still hot, she bathed after finishing work and developed constant coughing. His first wife also developed that cough and spat blood, because she also worked very hard (A.J., born 1910-20's; my translation).

As suggested by a male informant, G.G. also "formed a society with his children, with him as the boss. Fortunately, all his children were obedient and organized around him". This organization allowed for the creation of a prosperous ranch where several activities were carried out simultaneously. These activities included agricultural production, raising animals (pigs, chicken, cattle) and other income generating activities such as the production and sale of bread, milk, *panela* and *aguardiente*. Agricultural products (corn, beans and fruit) were also sold regularly in Coatzacoalcos. Money was rapidly invested in stores which sold small amounts of oil, salt, flour, soap and matches.

Many stories are told about G.G., his first wife and their seven children, all of them referring to how much they worked. They regularly sold corn, beans, coffee and pig fat in Coatzacoalcos; they carried the produce in 120 kilogram bags, using ten horses; they produced *panela*, *aguardiente* and milk for the local market, and opened a store in which they sold what Pajapeños traditionally brought from Coatzacoalcos; they continued to grow corn, beans, rice and sugar cane, and to raise domestic animals (60 or 70 pigs and hundreds of chickens) because "they had more than enough corn to feed them". On top of this, women had to feed the household members and peons and wash their clothes. One of G.G.'s daughters recalls having spent her childhood working at the *milpa*, carrying produce from the fields to the household and doing domestic work:

I was raised on hard work. When I started to wash clothes I was so young that my grandmother had to help me. I also had to make *tortillas* and *pozole* when I was a child. At that time we did not have a mill, so I had to grind the corn by hand. I would wake up at three in the morning to feed my brothers. At five they were already gone to work, taking their pile of *tortillas* with them. At around seven I had to take *tortillas* to my father who was making *aguardiente*. At harvest time I

worked in the fields. I learned how to pick corn, how to cut rice, coffee and beans, and how to fetch wood. I had to help carry all this produce to the household (H.A., born 1940; my translation).

As can be seen, a particular sexual division of labor organized these activities. While cattle were looked after by males, both men and women participated in agricultural production. Women also raised domestic animals, prepared produce for sale (e.g. seasoned and salted pork, thrashed corn and put it in bags) and took care of all reproductive work. When wage laborers were hired at the ranch, women had to feed them. Hence, ranches were built upon the labor of women and children. Male heads relied on household labor to carry out cattle raising activities, agricultural production, domestic animal raising, and reproductive work.

3.2. Polygyny and Capital Accumulation

Both M.M. and G.G. had several wives. M.M. had five, two of whom died young. The other three are still alive and live in separate households, all "built" by him. He had long lasting relationships with the three of them simultaneously. G.G. had relationships with five women as well, but lived for long periods of time and "built houses" for only two. Both men started their relationships when the women were very young, even though they themselves were getting older. They had children with all of them. M.M. had 27 children (three of them died young) and G.G. had 14.

Most subsequent wives of both men made marriage arrangements outside the house or in between both models (see previous chapter). That is, they did not go through all the stages of courtship and marriage and their marriage negotiations involved only the man in question (M.M. or G.G.) and the mother of the young women or the young women themselves. For example,

the third and fourth wives of M.M. were sisters. Their father was dead at the time of their marriage and their mother was not in a good position to negotiate. One of them relates:

He [M.M.] tricked my mother with 500 pesos. She was on her own, my father had already died and she could not stand up for us, she could not say "I will not give you my daughter because you are too old", she didn't say anything (M.A., born 1941; my translation).

This woman had previously been married while her father was still alive. In her first marriage she went through all stages of courtship and marriage. However, she suffered from domestic violence and her mother (then a widow) took her back after a year. In her second marriage she was just "given away" to M.M. and so was her sister. The fifth wife of M.M. was also "given away" to him by a sick, old widow, under the condition that M.M. pay for her funeral expenses. Similarly, the woman with whom G.G. had his second lasting relationship had been previously married.

The women who exchanged their daughters for money or services (e.g. funeral expenses) were not "heartless". Although the money was always needed and useful, it is not the only reason as to why women gave their daughters away. They believed that young women would be better off with old, wealthy ranchers than with landless young men, even if they were to become second wives. A woman in this situation explains:

My mother gave me away because she didn't want me to suffer. She said: "I'll give my daughter away to him because I don't want her to suffer with a man of her own age, like those young women who are now suffering from hunger and need. He is a mature man and she will not lack anything, she will be happy with him even though he is old" (M.V., born 1931; my translation).

Moreover, female heads of households who had young daughters were not in a position to negotiate their daughters' marriage since they had

been forced to "leave their homes" to support their households (typically through petty trade). This means that they had to leave their young daughters unsupervised and therefore victims of village gossip questioning the young women's reputation. For instance, one young woman was "sent" to live with a man as a second wife because of malicious gossip:

People started to spread rumors that he came to my home to see me while my mother was gone. It wasn't true, I was only thirteen! My mother thought I was already ruined and sent me away. She got angry and told me to pick up my stuff and leave (J.R., born 1943; my translation).

Thus, by giving their daughters away to older, wealthy ranchers, these women tried to ensure a well-established household for their daughters. If socially legitimate marriages were unlikely to be obtained, these women at least pursued unions with rich men in order to maximize their daughters' access to resources, and increase their chances for a good life. Yet in most cases the good life did not take place. A woman explains why:

A woman who goes to live with a rich man doesn't enjoy his wealth, because it is not hers. She will work hard but will not receive anything in return, because it all belongs to her father-in-law... And if she goes to live with a wealthy old man she will be thrown away soon. Those men are like that. They live with a woman, and then abandon her with one or two kids and get another woman (A.E., born 1946; my translation).

This is true for most of the wives of M.M. and G.G.: they worked hard but did not enjoy their husbands' wealth. Each wife and her respective children performed different tasks, all contributing to capital accumulation. M.M.'s first wife and her children were crucial in the first stage of cattle raising, when enough money was made to buy cattle. This money was obtained through the sale of *panela* and *aguardiente*,

agricultural produce and other goods, all activities based on household labor. She died young and he became involved in four more relationships.

The third wife (the second also died young) became involved with M.M. after his first wife and children had already cleared the land for cattle raising and he was operating at full capacity. By that time he was wholly devoted to cattle raising operations and was not growing any crops. The third wife's work involved cleaning up the *potrero* (piece of land where cattle are kept) and she also became sick because of overwork. When I asked her whether she had worked with M.M. she answered:

Of course! Why do you think I got bronchitis? I would go to the *potrero* to clean it up in the sun and in the rain. We had to get rid of the shrubs that compete with the grass. I worked in 50 meter areas. I took a string 50 meters long with me, measured up, worked, and when I was done I was ready to leave (M.A., born 1941; my translation).

M.M.'s third wife also served as a public relations agent for her husband's business. She entertained the outsiders who came to make deals with him, and performed some commercial transactions:

I worked very hard with him. We used to buy and sell corn. I met people from Chacalapa, Coscapa, Zaragoza, Minatitlán, and from banks in Acayucan. They came to buy cattle from him. I had to feed all his clients... Since I'm not lazy, I didn't mind making meals for all these people. I can make *tortilla* all day, I never get tired. I love working (M.A., born 1941; my translation).

M.M. acknowledged her work and promised to give her twelve heads of cattle, but he never did. After he acquired two more wives (one of whom was her younger sister), she stopped working at the *potrero* and no longer received foodstuff (corn and beans) from him. She had no access to land and had to rely on her and her daughters' income generating activities. Three of her daughters moved to Minatitlán and became domestic workers.

In the meantime, the fourth and fifth wives lived at the ranch where they raised a great number of chickens and pigs for the market and fed about forty peons who by then were replacing and expanding on household labor. These women only received corn and beans from M.M., which he had to buy. Other goods required for household reproduction (soap, clothes, other kinds of food) were obtained by using the income that both women earned by selling domestic animals.

The case of G.G. and his two wives and children is strikingly similar to that of M.M. The first wife and children were crucial during the first years of selling *panela*, *aguardiente*, milk, agricultural produce, and setting up the store without neglecting agricultural and animal production. The money earned in these activities was used as a first investment in cattle.

G.G.'s second lasting relationship started once enough wealth had been accumulated, and he was operating at full capacity. The woman lived at the ranch, where she fed peons and raised large amounts of domestic animals. In the meantime, the first wife looked after the store and raised her own chickens and pigs. During this time her children started their own domestic units and she stayed with her youngest son, who lived in the village.

Both women were self-sufficient in the sense that they supported themselves with their own income (resulting from the sale of domestic animals and the store). With the exception of corn and beans that G.G. bought for each woman, G.G. could reinvest all the money he made from cattle sales in more cattle, thereby increasing his wealth rapidly.

Informants recall that each of his buying-and-selling operations involved between 100 and 200 head.

Thus, the diversified labor of ranchers' wives contributed to capitalist accumulation in male hands. The division of labor created among several households devoted to various activities and the self-sufficiency of each household in terms of reproductive costs facilitated this process of capital accumulation.

Pajapeños acknowledge the work of ranchers' wives by emphasizing the women's physical strength to do "men's work" (working at the *trapiche*, carrying produce, etc.) and their ability to administer resources. However, disputes arise as to which woman worked the most and deserved the largest share of the man's fortune after his death- disputes to which we now turn.

3.3. "He liked the other woman more": Polygyny and the Marriage Contract

The organization of labor during the first model of cattle raising initiated significant changes in women's status and access to resources. The domestic arena became "a terrain of explicit contest and struggle" articulated around labor obligations and property rights (Carney and Watts, 1990:210). As subsistence production gave way to cattle raising, wealthy ranchers were able to establish separate households for all their wives. Consequently, the status of the first wife was put in jeopardy: she could lose the exclusive right to "cook and wash clothes" for her husband. Moreover, she no longer had command on the labor of second wives. In short, the new arrangements endangered the set of rights and obligations

between a man and his first wife which had been formally established in the marriage contract.

This is not to say that second wives benefitted from the situation. The control that the polygamous rancher exercised over land, cattle and money gave him the power to decide which of his wives he would benefit the most. He could choose to divide time and foodstuff equally, but he could also choose to spend more time with a particular woman and give her more foodstuff or money. If the other women complained or threatened to leave, he would stop giving them foodstuff or more importantly, threaten to throw them out of the house that he had "built" for them. The third wife of M.M., for example, had to defend her right to keep the house at the town hall. Local authorities made M.M. sign a document stating that the house belonged to her children because "he was responsible for them" and they should not "live under a tree."

Men expressed their preference for a particular woman using the language of appropriate female roles implicit in the marriage contract. That is, men praised some women for being faithful and hard-working while they accused others of unfaithfulness, laziness, inability to do women's work and administer resources. A second wife recounts how she was praised for helping the man's first wife after childbirth:

Once when he was drunk he told me: "that's how I wanted to see you, here in my house. I wanted to see you surrounded by my children. I've never found a woman like you. I've encountered many women, but they were not good for work, not like you" (M.V., born 1931; my translation).

As pointed out by Sedeño and Becerril (1985:50), the only time a woman can indulge in working less and looking after herself is right before and after childbirth. During this time men also pay attention to

their wives' needs more than usual and share some of the problems of pregnancy with them by having headaches, toothaches and feeling dizzy. The same woman relates:

barely one day after giving birth he would go to Puerto [Coatzacoalcos] and buy vitamins for me. He would say: "Here you are, this is for you so that you can recover". He would bring me food, as if he was my first mate [she had been married before]. That's why I'm very grateful to that man (M.V., born 1931; my translation).

By contrast, the third wife of M.M. was accused of laziness by her husband for resting after childbirth:

He liked the other woman more and came here to criticize me. The day after giving birth he would come and say: "Get out of bed, you are not a pig, you are not a dog, you cannot be lying down all day." He wanted me to go out and work, do things. I would get out of bed really angry, with tears in my eyes. But thank God nothing happened to me when I did this. I don't have problems in my womb like other women do (M.A., born 1941; my translation).

In turn, women also used the language of appropriate gender roles to contest the preference given to a particular woman and gain access to resources through their husbands. Women accused other women of infidelity, laziness and of being unable to administer resources, while pointing out that they themselves were exemplary wives and mothers.

Negotiations over an inheritance also involve complex claims and counterclaims about women's and children's labor and their rights to property. Women's awareness of the importance of their labor in the creation of their husbands' wealth provided them with arguments to make inheritance claims. Regardless of their status as first or second wives, all women argue that they have worked very hard and have contributed in the creation of the man's wealth. First wives stress the fact that they worked from the very beginning and were displaced by other women before

they could enjoy the man's wealth. In turn, second wives argue that "they have always worked" with their husbands and have created their own share of wealth. They point out that first wives have already received their share through their sons and that they themselves have younger sons who have not established domestic units and deserve to receive more. All women stress their ability to work and administer resources.

Yet not all claims carry the same weight. Although the time and energy invested in creating a man's fortune can be significant factors in assessing a person's right to inheritance, power differentials based on gender and age continue to be the decisive elements in inheritance claims. Women's inheritance claims (especially those by second wives) pose a threat to customary household practices of property allocation and therefore are not welcomed by the other people involved.

The dispute over G.G.'s property is a case in point. Before his death, the man expressed his decision to bequeath most of the cattle, the house and the land right to his youngest son (who was living with his first wife). In doing so, he decided to respect the rule of ultimogeniture in inheritance practices. Yet he also expressed his desire to allocate some of the cattle to the three daughters and other three older sons of his first wife, and to his second wife.

This decision was contested by his first wife's oldest sons. They argued that they deserved more than their youngest brother because they had worked with their father for a longer period of time. The youngest son argued that his older brothers had received cattle from their father when they formed their own domestic units, and that he had to take care of his mother. In the end, he received what was stipulated by his father but his

older brothers keep questioning this decision to the present day. The youngest son also controlled the number of cattle given to the second wife.

M.M.'s case is similar. He gave two head of cattle to each of the five daughters (one died young) and one son of his first wife when they married. In doing so, he acknowledged the work of his daughters and broke the rule that women should not receive property from their parents. By the time of his death he had sold all his cattle and only bequeathed a house to each of his three surviving wives. He tried to pass on his land right to the three women, knowing that two were sisters. Yet the son of the fourth wife managed to keep it for himself, arguing that he was a man and the youngest of all the sons. In the end, the three wives agreed that he could keep the land right as long as they received corn from him, and part of the money if he decided to sell the land right.

3.4. "With his share he started to buy cattle": The Second Model of Cattle Raising in Pajapan (1970-1982)

The second model of cattle raising involves younger ranchers who acquired the skills necessary to buy and sell cattle by working with older ranchers (e.g. M.M. and G.G.) and who started to do so on their own during the 1970's. As noted by Chevalier and Buckles (in press: 136-137), the 1970's witnessed a rapid increase in the sale of calves to both local and outside cattle brokers and ranchers, with yearly sales jumping from 885 head in 1968 to 1,968 in 1972 and 3,408 in 1978.

Yet younger ranchers never owned as many cattle as the older ranchers did because their working methods were different. Households headed by younger ranchers did not grow agricultural produce for the

market and did not sell *panela* and *aguardiente*. Instead, household members were involved in fewer productive activities: women raised pigs, men bought and sold pigs and cattle, and both men and women produced agricultural goods for household consumption. Some of these households also benefitted from Pajapan's new roads (the dirt road was built during the 1970's) and opened stores which sold a larger variety of urban products.

During the 1970's the prices of both pigs and cattle were stable. Given the constant inflation of the 1980's and the recent conversion of the Mexican peso², it was hard for people to remember the exact price of these two products. Yet four men and four women involved in these transactions whom I was able to interview agreed on the following exchange rate: two or three pigs were equal in value to one calf. Hence, households organized so as to be able to produce a great number of pigs, sell them, buy cattle and live on subsistence agriculture. Some managed to open stores and brought new products into town.

Women's work was important in this model, since they were responsible for pig production and household budgeting. A woman recounts:

We had corn, beans, banana, squash, and coffee in the *milpa*, so we only had to buy rice. He was responsible for bringing food into the house and I raised chickens and pigs to sell. Once I had saved enough money I gave it to him and he would multiply it by buying and selling more animals. Let's say, I would give him 13 pesos and he would say "now we have 16." He would give me some of the money back so that I could buy clothes or whatever I needed... With his share he started to buy cattle (M.R., born 1948; my translation).

Another woman describes very similar operations:

² In January 1993 the "new peso" was introduced. One new peso equals one thousand old pesos. The operation was intended to facilitate big economic transactions.

At one point he owned more than twenty head and a taxi. They were the product of our labor. First we started with chickens, then we bought pigs. They grew and we sold them, and then he bought one calf. At that time cattle was very cheap... Each time he sold an animal he gave me half of the money which I would use for household necessities, and he kept the other half (E.M., born 1947; my translation).

In both cases, the husband used his share of the money to buy cattle. As in the previous model, this was possible because women's pig production covered a good share of household necessities, particularly goods which had to be bought, like clothes. Basic food was obtained at the *milpa*.

Other households managed to open stores. The older daughter and "right arm" (as she defines herself) of a rancher explains:

In the store we had all sorts of things. We sold fabric, dresses, groceries, flashlights, horse saddles. The profits were used to pay back the debts, buy more stuff for the store, buy food for ourselves and buy more cattle... I knew that sooner or later the store would close, and it happened. I used to cry because of this but my father told me: "don't worry, what happened is that we bought animals. The store closed but we have animals and those, we can't sell, they are our savings" (T.I., born 1959; my translation).

When they closed the store they considered opening another business so that they would not have to sell their animals to support the family. They opened the first place which sold prepared food in the town. She recounts:

My father sold a cow in order to build a small place where I could sell *tacos* and *empanadas*. We bought a stove and everything. The road was being built at that time, so buses were starting to come into town. The first day I sold 10 or 15 *empanadas*. We were the first ones in town to sell prepared food... I went to Minatitlán on Sundays to buy onions, tomatoes, potatoes and carrots which I sold here... I even went to Orizaba to buy clothes which I sold here in installments... The people who came to town to sell perfume allowed me to work with them... The only thing I wanted was to earn money so that my father would not have to sell the animals which he had bought... And it worked. During that time my father's number of animals increased. I used to buy clothes for all my brothers and sisters, pay for their schooling... My father's animals reproduced, had their calves. He did not have to sell them (T.I., born 1959; my translation).

In all three examples, women contributed to the creation of wealth by raising pigs for the market, managing small businesses and budgeting adequately at home. Yet they did not control the money which was reinvested in cattle, or the cattle themselves. Even the way they speak indicates this. While the women use "we" when they refer to chickens, pigs and businesses, they say "he" when it comes to cattle. The first two women now rely on their sons' management of small herds (which they received from their fathers) and their own income generating activities. The third woman got married and her younger sister replaced her at the food stand.

Thus, the second model of cattle raising was based on women's pig raising activities and management of small businesses. The model's success relied on stable prices of pigs and cattle, the household's access to land, women's ability to budget and men's commercial contacts. Yet, younger ranchers never owned as many cattle as older ranchers did because their working methods were different. Like the older, large-scale ranchers, younger ranchers also saw their land base reduced in the land distribution process of 1981, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

4. The Oil Industry in Southern Veracruz

As stated in the first section of this chapter, the oil industry has been a key element of the Mexican economy in the 20th century. Political leaders promised to redress the social and economic imbalances created during the "Mexican miracle" of the 1950's and 1960's and to improve both rural and urban standards of living by investing oil revenues in other sectors of the economy. PEMEX (the state-owned oil company) also became a symbol of national sovereignty in post-revolutionary Mexico.

Toledo (1988) identifies four stages in the development of the oil industry in Mexico. The first begins in 1906 and is distinguished by the participation of multinational corporations in the exploration and exploitation of oil reserves. During the 1910's the first refinery was built in Minatitlán, and Coatzacoalcos provided storage and port facilities. Nolasco (1981) refers to the Coatzacoalcos-Minatitlán corridor of the time as an "imperialist enclave" which relied on unskilled and temporary native labor under the control of British administrators.

In the early 1920's Mexico became the second largest oil producer in the world. Yet only 7.7 per cent of the total number of barrels were consumed by the national productive system. During this decade, production was directed towards the needs of international capital (petro-chemicals) and national capital (oil and fertilizers) (Nolasco, 1981; Toledo, 1988).

During the Mexican Revolution, multinationals continued to extract oil although at reduced levels. Government limitations on foreign ownership of the oil fields and more effective taxation of companies forced multinationals to move their operations to Middle Eastern countries and Venezuela. By 1934, Mexican oil production had dropped by 20 per cent compared to 1921 levels. In the late 1930's production began to increase again as the price of oil on the international market went up (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:81). Oil workers led a series of strikes and confrontations which resulted in the expropriation of the oil industry by President Lázaro Cárdenas in 1938.

The nationalization of the oil industry and the creation of PEMEX signals the beginning of the second stage of the oil industry, which is

distinguished by large-scale state intervention. The Mexican government invested in infrastructure and education and research centers. It also gave credits, tax exemptions and other incentives to private companies in order to encourage them to invest in the petro-chemical sector and import capital goods and technology (Toledo, 1988).

The expropriation did not alter significantly the composition of the labor force. The majority of workers in the industry were unskilled, temporary and unprotected. They lived in the sand dunes and swamps surrounding the industrial facilities. Foreign administrators were replaced by an elite of professionals from Mexico City and other major urban centers. They occupied most of the company housing and profited most from the services supplied by the union (stores, schools, hospitals and insurance services) (Nolasco, 1980; Toledo, 1988).

During the third stage (1955-1963), the number and capacity of refineries and pipelines increased. In 1957 a new refinery and port and storage facilities were constructed near Coatzacoalcas. The refinery in Minatitlán was expanded and new petro-chemical factories were established in Cosoleacaque. The construction industry and service sector of southern Veracruz expanded (Toledo, 1988). The population of the region doubled between 1950 and 1960. The average population growth was 6.7 per cent per year, which is higher than that of Mexico City for the same period of time (3.5 per cent). Immigrants living in the region usually came from Oaxaca, Chiapas and other southern states (Nolasco, 1981).

The fourth stage (1963-1975) is characterized by the increasing dominance of private companies in the secondary sector of the petro-chemical industry. However, state investment in petro-chemicals and

fertilizers continued. The price of oil increased in the early 1970's and PEMEX responded by borrowing money from international banks in order to increase investment (Toledo, 1988).

This trend continued during the second half of the 1970's. By the late 1970's two new petro-chemical complexes, 20 huge plants and more pipelines were being planned, most of them in the southern part of the Gulf of Mexico (Veracruz, Campeche and Tabasco) (Toledo, 1988). Oil production accounted for two thirds of national exports (mainly to the United States), PEMEX absorbed 19 per cent of para-state expenditure and was responsible for 17 per cent of the national debt. Overall, PEMEX had a negative commercial balance since 75 per cent of its technology and materials was imported (Zavala de Cosío, 1985:21).

During the 1970's the economic and political power of the oil workers' union increased. Union leaders had the power to determine who could join the union and which companies would be given sub-contracts for services not supplied by the union. Corruption related to the sale of union jobs and sub-contracting became widespread. Union leaders amassed personal fortunes and became regional *caciques*.

Southern Veracruz became the center of Mexico's petro-chemical industry. In the early 1980's the region handled 70 per cent of the country's petro-chemical production, 90 per cent of crude oil production and 80 per cent of natural gas, and had the best port facilities. Coatzacoalcos became the second most important port in the country and Cosoleacaque the largest producer of ammonia in the world. Plants in Jaltipan produced a large share of the world's sulphur. Other plants in the region produced plastics, fertilizers, cement and other industrial

products. The local bourgeoisie made up of cattle ranchers, landowners and merchants invested in storage facilities, hotels, transportation companies, car dealerships and other services (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:83-84).

During the 1970's the population of Coatzacoalcos quadrupled and Minatitlán's tripled. Of the regional population (more than one million), 28 per cent were rural immigrants seeking employment. One quarter of the people eligible to work were unemployed or underemployed and many of those working were transitory, low-paid workers. Forty per cent of urban families lived in one-room houses which had an average of five people each (Toledo, 1982:61). Eighty five per cent of the household income was spent on food (Nolasco, 1980:144). In Cosoleacaque most households had no running water or electricity (Zavala de Cosío, 1985:25).

Women made up a considerable portion of this immigrant population: in Coatzacoalcos, 18 per cent of the households were female headed. Women were concentrated in the service sector e.g. domestic work, street vendors and sex traders (Nolasco, 1981).

5. Female Migration to Urban Centers

The urbanization and industrial development of southern Veracruz provided landless Pajapeños with sources of income. Men found employment in the construction and service sectors while women became domestic workers and rural-urban petty traders. Both groups of women contributed to the growth of urban centers through cheap domestic work and the distribution of cheap agricultural products.

Migration flows in and out of Pajapan have been conditioned by fluctuations in the regional economy. In 1900, the urban population of Coatzacoalcos (4,487) was less than twice the size of Pajapan. However, the population of the city increased by 35 per cent between 1900 and 1920 and by 61 per cent and 78 per cent respectively during the 1920's and 1930's. At the same time, "from 1930 to 1940, Pajapan lost about 5 per cent of its municipal population... Of those living in Pajapan in 1930, only 62 per cent remained in 1940- a result of death or out-migration" (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:239). The 1950's and 1960's witnessed

further expansion of the urban petro-chemical complex of Minatitlán and Coatzacoalcos, the development of the cattle industry and the concentration of communal land in Pajapan. Coatzacoalcos thus resumed its expansion and grew by as much as 286 per cent from 1950 to 1970... Meanwhile, the population of municipal Pajapan increased by only 15 per cent and suffered enormous cohort deficits (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:240).

Demographic shifts in Pajapan can be inferred from sex distribution statistics available for the municipality (Table 5.1). The percentage differential in the sex ratio indicates a higher proportion of females between the ages of 15 and 24 living in Pajapan prior to the 1950's, probably because young men were leaving the village in search of employment. The figures start to change in the 1960's and from 1970 to 1990 the proportion of males and females between the ages of 15 and 24 living in Pajapan is equal. This seems to indicate that young women left the village during these decades.

Table 5.1. Male-Female Ratio in Pajapan, 1900-1990 (Percentage Differential)								
Age	1900	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
0-14	4.1	0.77	2.11	2.08	1.58	4.97	0.53	1.05
15-24	-3.68	-3.31	-0.28	-2.11	-1.44	-0.53	-0.34	0.20
25-39	0.28	1.87	-0.68	0.09	-0.72	-0.39	0.11	-0.67
40+	-0.97	0.37	-0.31	1.03	0.96	0.96	1.49	0.80
Source: Chevalier and Buckles, in press:241.								

The interviews which I conducted with 80 women of Pajapan confirm this trend. The data show that prior to the 1960's, very few women left Pajapan in search of employment in urban areas. Of 14 women born before 1945 in the sample of 80, four have lived in Coatzacoalcos. Of these, only one left in search of employment. The others spent part of their childhood in Coatzacoalcos and returned to Pajapan.

Women began to move to urban areas in the early 1960's. Early female migrants were born in the late 1940's and early 1950's. Typically, these women were young and had recently separated from their husbands, or had recently married and left Pajapan with their husbands and any children.

For early migrants, learning Spanish was a painful experience:

I worked in a house where there were lots of children. They used to make fun of me because I could not speak Spanish, and I always cried. I used to wonder: "why are they laughing at me?" Their mother was a good person and asked them to stop. That's how I learned Spanish (D.D., born 1944; my translation).

The migration of young women after a first failed marriage signaled a new trend in marriage and residence patterns. As opposed to women born prior to 1945, who were expected to return home if they were unhappy with their marriages, women born in the late 1940's and early 1950's began to

seek urban employment in order to disengage themselves from unwanted relationships. This is the case of three sisters who worked for long periods of time in Coatzacoalcos. One of them recounts:

The first to go was my older sister. She went to Coatzacoalcos because her husband used to beat her up. She left her young daughter with my mother. When I broke up with my husband my sister advised me to go and stay with her, and I did... Then my other sister joined us because my brother-in-law tried to rape her and my mother sent her to live with us (D.D., born 1944; my translation).

The three of them spent long periods (from 20 to 40 years) of time in various cities. They had passing relationships with men and had children who were raised in Pajapan by the children's grandmother. Two of the three sisters returned to Pajapan when they were middle-aged and the other moved elsewhere.

Moving to urban areas to search for employment became common for women born between 1945 and 1965 who had problems in their first marriage. Ten of the 47 women born between 1945 and 1965 in the sample of 80 have lived in urban areas. More than half of these ten (six) left after their first marriages failed. One of them explains why:

Women leave because they have problems with their husbands. They realize that men do not look after their needs, they do not buy them shoes or clothes. So women leave and search for work. When they start making money they buy their own clothes and shoes, and things change. These women feel that they would rather be alone than with a man who does not give them what they need (H.B., born 1953; my translation).

Thus, women willing to disengage themselves from an unwanted relationship saw in urban employment the possibility to do so. By working in urban areas, these women could also earn the income necessary to support themselves and any children. Chapter Seven will further explore

the work trajectories and marriage histories of women who have migrated to urban centers.

6. Female Heads of Households and Petty Trade

As shown in the previous chapter, Pajapeños already travelled to Coatzacoalcos to sell produce long before the 1950's. During the expansion of the cattle industry, however, their trips changed in various ways. First, more efficient means of travel were developed and visits to Coatzacoalcos became more frequent. Second, the gender profile of petty traders changed over time. Third, the role of petty trade in the household economy also changed.

Trips to Coatzacoalcos became more frequent as more efficient means of travel were developed. As shown in the previous chapter, during the first half of the present century trips were made by walking along the Gulf coast. During the 1960's female-dominated groups were taken by truck to Las Barrillas where they took a bus to Coatzacoalcos. When roads linking Sierra villages to Minatitlán were built during the 1970's, female petty traders walked to Huazuntlán and then to Tatahuicapan in order to take a bus that would take them to Coatzacoalcos from there (Martínez et al., 1982:23-33). Buses started to service Pajapan in the early 1980's, and a special run for women who wanted to be taken directly to the market of Coatzacoalcos started in 1989. Presently, a bus leaves Pajapan every night, goes to the Morelos market in Coatzacoalcos, and brings the petty traders back the next afternoon. A similar service is offered to female petty traders from San Juan Volador, a nearby village. Other female petty traders in the region (mainly from Mecayapan and Tatahuicapan) go to the

5 de Febrero market in Minatitlán or sell door to door. They do not have a special bus service.

The gender profile of travellers also changed over time. Prior to the 1950's groups of petty traders were of both sexes (female heads of households in groups accompanied by relatives; men and their children). The decades following the 1950's witnessed the creation of a group of female traders and a reduction in the number of male traders. Petty trade thus stopped being a family enterprise and became a female-dominated occupation.

The role of petty trade in the domestic economy also changed. In the first half of the century Pajapeños sold products such as eggs, chickens, corn, beans and fruit in order to buy products not manufactured locally (fabric, oil, hats, soap, machetes and *limas*). During the expansion of the cattle industry, petty trade became the single and most important source of income for landless households needing to buy basic foodstuff like corn, beans, sugar and coffee. As the next chapter will show, many of these households are female-headed. Hence, an activity which used to bring into Pajapan's households the manufactured goods that complemented agricultural production and domestic animal raising, later became the main source of income for landless, female-headed households.

Most of these female heads of households are the daughters of women who were engaged in petty trade in the first half of the century. These women made marriage arrangements outside the house or in between both models (see previous chapter) and later became female heads. Chapter Seven will explore the work trajectories and marriage histories of these women in order to pinpoint particular patterns of female poverty in Pajapan.

7. "There I was, without anything to eat": Women in Monogamous Relationships

So far this chapter has referred to changes in the lives of particular categories of women - women living with polygamous wealthy ranchers (section three), women ending their first marriages and moving to urban areas (section five) and female heads of households involved in petty trade (section six). However the expansion of the cattle industry in Pajapan also brought about changes in the lives of women living with monogamous men.

For example, newly-wedded couples began their married life with no access to land. Some men became unskilled, poorly paid laborers in the construction and service sectors. A woman relates:

My husband did not know how to work the *milpa*. He could not fetch wood, could not handle the axe or the machete... He only knew how to work as a bricklayer (A.E., born 1946; my translation).

Women (especially those in the early years of child bearing) depended on male wages. The same woman continues:

My husband worked as a bricklayer and I was always in the kitchen. He would give me some money and I would buy whatever I needed. But sometimes he didn't give me anything and there I was, without anything to eat (A.E., born 1946; my translation).

Other men worked as peons in agriculture but could not always find work:

When I went to live with my husband I suffered a lot. He was very young and could not support us, so he started to drink. Sometimes he looked for work as a peon but could not find any, so we ate boiled bananas, we didn't even have *tortillas*... I had one dress, I washed it and put it on again even though it was still wet (S.S., born 1945; my translation).

In a context of increasing land shortage, the sons of peasants were not always well received in marriage petitions:

I met my husband at the well. His father came to ask for my hand in marriage. In the beginning my mother didn't like him [the young man] because his father worked the land, he was a *campesino*. She did not want him as her in-law, she wanted a rich in-law. But in the end she accepted (M.T., born 1950; my translation).

Hence, the sons of peasants started to work in urban areas in order to pay for wedding expenses and demonstrate their commitment towards their future wives:

When my son got married we had to give one head of cattle, beer, soft drinks and *aguardiente* to my in-laws... My son had to work three years to buy all that. He worked in a bakery in Coatzacoalcos and then in Pajaritos. He paid for the whole wedding. They had a huge party, it lasted two days (S.S., born 1945; my translation).

Like wealthy ranchers, peasants also wanted to have several relationships. Yet they did not establish various households at the same time. These men could not start new domestic units ("build a house") for every woman because they were poorly paid wage laborers or subsistence producers with little land. When the wives of these men found out that their husbands were involved with other women, they saw few reasons for staying with them, since they were getting little financial support from them and they were not "working together". Women in these circumstances decided to "go their own way" and rely on their own resources. The woman living with the bricklayer explains:

We broke up because he got another woman. He wanted to bring her to live with us, but I told him that if he did that I'd leave ... I said: "OK, bring her to take care of your children. I'm not stupid. While I'm fetching wood and looking after my children, you are spending money on another woman. So bring her and I'll leave." I finally kept three children and he kept the other three. They went to live in Coatzacoalcos. I started to sell *empanadas* in the school and to wash clothes to earn some money (A.E., born 1946; my translation).

The lives of women in monogamous relationships changed in other ways as well. Their participation in subsistence agriculture declined and their work space was reduced to their own households. When the public primary school opened in the late 1960's, these women had to adjust to the school schedules of their children. In the absence of children and especially daughters, adult women became totally responsible for housework and could not be absent from their households for long periods of time. Hence, even women living in households with access to land could not participate in agricultural production on a regular basis.

The decline in women's participation in subsistence agriculture was coupled with their increasing dependence on money. Pajapeños stopped growing cotton, rice and sugar cane when the first stores opened in Pajapan during the sixties. Coffee plants and wild tomato also disappeared during the growth of the cattle industry as the village surroundings were deforested to raise cattle. Women confined to their households had thus to look for ways of generating income from their own homes without neglecting their domestic responsibilities. The predominant way of achieving this was (and still is) the raising of domestic animals (pigs, chickens, turkeys and ducks) for the market rather than for household consumption. Like the wives of polygamous ranchers, women confined to their households started to sell domestic animals, albeit on a smaller scale. These women did not have to leave their households to sell their animals since buyers (petty traders who sold in Coatzacoalcas) visited them (and still do) regularly.

Women raising domestic animals at home did not consider their animals an investment, but rather a source of income for the purchase of essential goods. They used the money obtained from sales to buy basic

products (coffee, rice, sugar) which were no longer produced at the *milpa*. Chapter Seven will explore the role that domestic animal raising plays in Pajapan households today.

8. Conclusions

In this chapter I have examined the changes in the household labor process in Pajapan during the cattle raising period (1950-1982). The construction of class and gender relations was examined in a dynamic fashion. The analysis showed that women's insertion into particular spheres of production was linked to their marriage histories. Women living with wealthy, polygamous ranchers contributed to capitalist accumulation through their labor but were alienated from cattle wealth. Women compelled to end their first marriages were increasingly forced to migrate to urban centers while female heads of households became involved in petty trade. Finally, women in monogamous relationships had to face landlessness and a marked decline in their participation in subsistence agriculture. They saw themselves increasingly confined to the household sphere and developed ways to generate income from their own homes without neglecting their domestic responsibilities.

Women's active roles in the creation of wealth and the fact that a good number of women have spent some time in urban areas or regularly go there to sell produce does away with the notion that women are more "traditional," "home-bound" and "marginal" to development. The case of Pajapan is one of many which show that women are incorporated into newly-emerging economic structures, albeit at the lowest levels. In this particular case, they have contributed to the growth of the cattle

industry and urban development of southern Veracruz through their labor and the distribution of rural products.

CHAPTER VI
GENDER AND LAND RIGHTS IN PAJAPAN:
THE AGRARIAN COMMUNITY OF 1981
AND THE EJIDO OF 1992

The previous chapter examined the impact of the cattle industry on the subsistence economy of Pajapan. It was shown that the introduction of the cattle industry in the village resulted in land concentration and the displacement of many Pajapeños from the land. The expansion of the cattle industry came to a halt in 1979 when PEMEX, the state-owned oil company, expropriated one fourth of Pajapan's communal lands. The expropriation accelerated the process of land distribution which landless Pajapeños had been fighting for since the 1950's. The non-expropriated land was distributed among individual *comuneros* (land right holders) in 1981 and a new *ejido* named Pajapan II was created on the expropriated land which PEMEX returned to the community a few years later.

This chapter focuses on the struggle for land which led to the land distribution of 1981 and the creation of the new *ejido* in 1992. The first section is mostly based on Chevalier and Buckles' (in press:50-118) discussion of land issues in Pajapan from the 1930's to the present day. This material sets the scene for the remaining sections, in which I explore the mechanisms which prevented women from receiving land in 1981 and 1992 and the strategies used by some of them to succeed in their land claims.

1. The Struggle for Land in Pajapan

1.1. Ejido versus Communal Titles (1930-1968)

Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution of 1917 states that ownership of land and waters within the national territory is vested in the nation. Like the Spanish Crown during colonial times, the state can transfer rights to private persons or corporations. Ownership of property is thus conditional and subject to the requirements of public interests.

This principle gave way to three forms of land rights: the *ejido*, the agrarian community and private property. The first two are collective forms of property. The *ejido* is both a specific territory and an association of independent producers with rights to land. When the *ejido* is divided into plots, members have exclusive rights to specific parcels of land and common untitled lands (usually forests). Currently, *ejido* lands cover approximately half of the country's arable land, with roughly 28,000 *ejidos* and 2.6 million *ejidatarios*. Virtually all *ejidos* have been divided into individual parcels. Reforms to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution made by President Salinas (1988-1994) at the end of 1991 and beginning of 1992 permit the sale and rental of *ejido* land to outsiders and open up the possibility of joint ventures between *ejidos* and private groups (Goldring, 1995:2).

By contrast, the agrarian community is a regimen of communal land title without any specified method of distribution or use. This system applies mostly to native communities which were not displaced from their land prior to the Revolution and had to apply to state authorities for the recognition of their communal lands. Unlike *ejidatarios*, *comuneros* may use lands in any part of their territory. Also, while an *ejido* is established

by a land grant, the land rights of an agrarian community are merely recognized by the state. The Mexican government has tended to favor the granting of *ejidos* because they are subject to greater administrative control than agrarian communities.

Land issues in Pajapan from the 1930's to the late 1960's centered on the struggle over these two alternative land tenure systems. Prior to the introduction of cattle raising, local authorities in Pajapan decided to support the *ejido* system. An Agrarian Ejido Committee formed in the 1930's attempted on a number of instances to present an *ejido* request to the Agrarian Ministry. These attempts were blocked by *mestizo* ranchers from outside the municipality. During the 1940's ties developed between some Pajapan villagers and ranchers from Coatzacoalcos, causing greater internal opposition to the *ejido* request. In the 1950's and 1960's some native ranchers applied for the recognition of the Pajapan's communal land title because it guaranteed them open access to land. They used the rhetoric of the native tradition of communal forms of land ownership in order to maintain control of the land. This rhetoric gave ranchers legitimacy in the eyes of outside agents and reinforced ranchers' control of economic and political resources inside Pajapan.

During the 1950's and 1960's all political institutions in Pajapan fell under the control of native ranchers. As shown by Caouette (1989), all municipal presidents elected between 1948 and 1968 were ranchers who belonged to the local Rancher Association. During this period, peasants continued to fight for the establishment of the *ejido* system by means of committee petitions, requests and formal protests. They gained the support of some ranchers who wanted to create an *ejido* on the poorer lands near

the volcano and establish private properties on the fertile lands below the village.

Government officials were sent to Pajapan on several occasions in response to both ranchers' request for the recognition of the communal titles and peasants' request for the creation of an *ejido*. Several censuses whose purpose was to identify eligible land right holders were carried out. The first census was carried out in response to the ranchers' request for the recognition of communal titles and took place in 1957. It identified 1,222 heads of households. A second team of engineers went to Pajapan one year later to carry out a census in accordance with the *ejido* request. This census was never completed because native ranchers, supported by the municipal government, confiscated the technician's equipment. In 1965 the state land commission once again sent an engineer to undertake an *ejido* census and survey, but he was overwhelmingly opposed by ranchers, their peons and a number of peasants who supported the communal land request. The *ejido* request was struck down during an assembly and this ended several decades of struggle between the two land tenure systems.

In 1968 a Presidential Resolution recognized Pajapan's communal right to 19,158 hectares. The document identified 905 heads of households and was based on a census conducted in 1967. Although promoted by ranchers, the resolution was an important gain for the peasants of Pajapan because it named a specific number of *comuneros*. The resolution however did not mean that peasants gained immediate access to land. Ranchers placed obstacles in the way of the communal land administration and the effective implementation of agrarian laws, and peasants would have to wait

until 1981 to obtain effective use rights of parcels of their own. Moreover, a number of people were excluded from the census, making it extremely difficult for them to receive land when the land distribution took place in 1981. My research shows that many of these people were women. In fact, only eight of the 905 eligible *comuneros* are women. In section 4.1 of this chapter I will examine how the census of 1967 was carried out in order to pinpoint the mechanisms which prevented women from signing up for it.

1.2. Oil versus Cattle (1969-1982)

During the 1970's ranchers continued to control the municipal presidency and the Communal Land Commission while peasants insisted on having the Presidential Resolution of 1968 implemented. The period following the resolution was characterized by a constant struggle between the demand for land distribution by landless peasants, and ranchers' attempts to stop the census update. Over a period of several years, the Ministry of Agriculture asked on five different occasions the delegate for the state of Veracruz to proceed with the land distribution process. The delegate argued that he lacked the personnel to do so, but local informants believe that he was pressured into not acting by the Southern Veracruz Rancher Association.

Landless peasants managed to organize themselves into an electoral force through various parties, the PPS (Popular Socialist Party) and the PARM (Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution). In the elections of 1976 a candidate running for the PPS managed to obtain enough votes to become an alderman, and in 1979 a slate of candidates running for the PARM was

elected for posts on the Communal Land Commission. But the results of the election were annulled by the previous commission and municipal authorities. Six months later the rancher-dominated PRI won a new election.

Thus, ranchers used their control over local political institutions and their connections with regional and state level organizations in order to avoid any state intervention in land distribution and retain *de facto* control of communal lands. Peasants did not receive sustained support from outside agencies and their attempts at running their own slate of candidates for municipal and land administration offices were undermined by the more powerful ranchers. Peasants would have to wait for the intervention of an external agent (PEMEX) to have their demands met.

The event which initiated the process of land distribution in Pajapan was PEMEX's expropriation of one fourth of the village's communal land in 1979. Prior to the 1980's, the urban-based oil industry and Pajapan's cattle economy complemented each other: men and women expelled from land were a source of cheap labor for the industrial sector, the service sector and the distribution of agricultural products in the cities. But the two entered into conflict in 1979, when PEMEX announced the expropriation of 5,154 hectares of Pajapan's communal land for the construction of an industrial project. The decree was signed by the President of Mexico in 1980. As Chevalier and Buckles (in press:85) explain,

the short-term interests of the Indian rancher class were no longer compatible with the growth of the state-owned oil industry, nor was the Indian rancher class in a position to foil federal state plans to expand oil industry operations in southern Veracruz... The expansion of a weak branch of agricultural capital gave way to the imperatives of industrial

growth in both the private and public sectors of the national economy.

The conflict of interest between ranchers and state capital resulted in the creation of an alliance between native ranchers who opposed the expropriation, and peasants who saw it as an opportunity for land distribution and for the amelioration of their livelihood in the urban industry. The front formed by ranchers and peasants used legal injunctions, lobbying, strikes and mass media coverage to obtain compensation for the lost property of ranchers, the redistribution of the non-expropriated land among *comuneros*, and the improvement of public services in Pajapan.

During the negotiations, ranchers disagreed with government officials as to the number of people who should be compensated and the amount that should be received, while peasants continued to push for land distribution. In an assembly held in November of 1980, ranchers and peasants put together their demands. They asked for a new inventory of private property in the expropriated zone, a census update to a maximum of 905 *comuneros*, and the parcelling of the non-expropriated land. The agreement had the support of the municipal president, the Communal Land Commission and a majority of ranchers and peasants. In February of 1981, a meeting in Xalapa between peasants, ranchers, local authorities and government officials resolved to delineate the communal lands of Pajapan, divide the non-expropriated land into individual parcels and make an inventory of private goods eligible for compensation. In May and June of the same year, engineers of the Ministry of Agriculture marked the boundaries of the communal land and divided the non-expropriated area into 36 lots of 300 hectares each, and one lot of 60 hectares. Peasants and

ranchers formed 36 groups of 25 *comuneros* and one group of five *comuneros*, and each group was assigned to a lot modelled after the traditional lot system (see Chapter Three). Unlike the older system, however, *comuneros* sub-divided the large lots into parcels of 12 hectares each, which were distributed to individual *comuneros* (see Map 2).

Formal agreements on payments to ranchers for losses in property soon followed. The number of beneficiaries rose from 182 to 364 and the total amount of compensation from \$28,756 to \$185,250 U.S. But the land compensation payments for all *comuneros* were not paid until November of 1982, when each *comunero* received a cheque equivalent to \$303 U.S. New installations including a municipal town hall, a high school, a kindergarten, 20 primary school classrooms, three sport fields, a new potable running water system, a market place, eight small bridges and new roads were built in Pajapan during the couple of years following the expropriation.

As noted earlier, the list used to distribute the land in 1981 was the census of 1967. My research in Pajapan shows that five of the eight women who had signed up in 1967 lost their land right to their sons who by 1981 were sixteen years of age or older, while two others lost them to non-relatives. Only one woman who had signed up for the census of 1967 was able to keep her land right, although as the next sections will show, this was not easy.

By 1981, 290 of the 905 eligible *comuneros* listed in the census of 1967 had died or were absent from the community. My research shows that forty of these vacancies were filled by the wives of these deceased or absent men (39 by their widows and one by the wife of an alcoholic man).

The rest were taken over by their sons who by 1981 were sixteen years of age or older, by wealthy ranchers who had not signed up in 1967 but nevertheless were occupying land (among these was the widow of a rancher), and by landless male peasants who fought to obtain land rights in assembly meetings. Sections two, three and four of this chapter will attempt to explain why the overwhelming majority of women who received land in 1981 were widows with sons under sixteen years of age.

1.3. The New *Ejido* of Pajapan II

Economic growth and industrial expansion in southern Veracruz came to a sudden halt in 1982 when the price of oil plummeted and interest rates tripled. Mexico had been borrowing at a higher rate than any other country in the world and had accumulated one of the largest debts in Latin America. Lower revenues from the oil industry and the massive debt resulted in the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

The economic crisis forced the federal government to cancel Pajapan's industrial project. Rumors about the cancellation started to circulate at the end of 1982 and President de la Madrid Hurtado made the official announcement at the end of his term, in October 1984. Other industrial projects were more advanced and there were some concerns about the technical feasibility of the project in Pajapan.

The withdrawal of federal agencies from Pajapan brought to an end the inter-class alliance formed against PEMEX. During the second part of the 1980's, ranchers recuperated some of their lost land by gaining control of the new lot administration and by renting and illegally purchasing land. However, the economy of Pajapan had already undergone

major transformations. The influx of subsidies into public works and the distribution of the remaining part of the communal lands had resulted in the decline in cattle raising activities, the proliferation of small businesses, and a reversion to subsistence agriculture combined with small-ranching and cash crop production.

The expropriated lands were entrusted to the National Fund for the Support of the *Ejido* (FIFONAFE) with the understanding that they be returned to their original owners (the people of Pajapan) after a period of five years. Yet three groups were already actively vying for use of the expropriated zone: local ranchers who were still occupying or began to occupy the land as soon as they heard that the industrial project was not going ahead; *comuneros* of Pajapan who wanted access to the expropriated land; and peasants living in El Mangal, Jicacal and Palma Real (hamlets located within the expropriated area) who petitioned for the creation of three new *ejidos* independent from the agrarian community of Pajapan. Many of these peasants were the landless sons of *comuneros*. They had occupied small parcels of land in the expropriated zone left vacant by ranchers following the expropriatory decree.

The 1980's and the early 1990's witnessed a series of delays in the distribution process. The problem was finally solved in 1992, when FIFONAFE authorized the creation of a new *ejido* in the expropriated area. In an effort to satisfy the interests of both the *comuneros* of Pajapan and landless peasants of the hamlets, it was agreed that each of the 905 *comuneros* would be able to register his son or wife if all his sons were under sixteen years of age. Seventy one individuals, mostly the sons of *comuneros* living in the hamlets, were added to the census for a total of

976 petitioners. The *ejido* was named Pajapan II and was divided into 37 lots with about 25 *ejidatarios* each. The *ejidatarios* came from both Pajapan and the hamlets, including Jicacal, San Juan, Mangal, Palma Real, Bajatapan and Tecolapan. Each *ejidatario* received right to a parcel of four hectares.

In July of 1993 I asked 28 lot administrators of Pajapan II about the gender composition of their respective lots and the ways by which each member received his or her land right. The available data account for 676 members of the *ejido*, that is, 69.3 per cent of the total number of beneficiaries. I interviewed 24 lot administrators in Pajapan, three in Batajapan and one in Tecolapan.

The data reveal several differences in the composition of the agrarian community and the new *ejido*. First, Pajapan II has a much larger number of women in it: they make up 32.6 per cent (n.221) of the total sample. Unlike the agrarian community, where women who received land were usually widows, the sample of Pajapan II has married women (187), single women (13) and female heads of households (21) (Table 6.1).

The male composition of Pajapan II is also different from that of the agrarian community. Although information on the marital status of *comuneros* at the time they received land rights in 1981 is not available, there are reasons to believe that the number of single men in Pajapan II is higher than in the agrarian community. In fact, single men make up 18.3 per cent (n. 124) of the sample of Pajapan II, and 27.2 per cent of the total number of male beneficiaries in the sample (Table 6.2). The reason for this is that the creation of the *ejido* stipulated that *comuneros* could

register one of their sons regardless of their marital status, while in the census of 1967 only household heads were considered eligible.

In the remaining sections of this chapter I will discuss women's land rights in the land distribution of 1981 and the *ejido* of 1992. I will argue that three major factors determined women's ability to receive land rights. These include: 1) women's separation from the land, dictated by local forms of household organization; 2) legal criteria defining beneficiary status; 3) women's exclusion from formal politics. All three factors will be explored in detail below.

2. Women's Separation from the Land

The structural characteristics of women's participation in the labor force have resulted in women's being excluded as a group from Latin American agrarian reforms. In Peru and Chile, for example, permanent agricultural wage workers were usually men; women were displaced to the seasonal labor force as estates were mechanized. The agrarian reform in both countries benefitted only the permanent agricultural wage workers employed on estates at the moment of the expropriation, excluding the large seasonal labor force. As a result, the beneficiaries of the land reform were overwhelmingly men (Deere, 1985:1042).

As shown in Chapter Four, the organization of production in Pajapan households places women in a vulnerable position in terms of their access to land. While fathers, sons and brothers maintain residential and economic ties, women sever their relations with their kin group and lose their land access rights in their original domestic unit when they marry. In regulating land use, the male head of the household is empowered to

make claims to the labor of other household members. Women weed the *milpa*, harvest, carry, clean and store agricultural produce, but they are considered mere "helpers" of male agriculturalists.

Women's separation from the land dictated by local forms of household organization worsens in a context of land shortage. As shown in the previous chapter, during the cattle raising period (1950-1982) women living with polygamous ranchers did not participate in cattle raising operations and their indirect relation to land turned into an indirect relation to cattle. Just as land is transferred from father to son and women access it through male relatives, the cattle industry developed into a male-dominated business in which male kin looked after cattle and carried out all cattle transactions. Women prepared the meals of household members and peons, raised domestic animals and took part in agricultural production (if any). Although active in the creation of wealth in ranchers' households, women continued to relate to land (and wealth) through males.

Other women started to work for wages and distribute agricultural produce in urban areas. Domestic work in the cities of the oil boom became a common alternative for young women willing to disengage themselves from unwanted relationships, while rural-urban petty trade became a female-dominated occupation. Also, women in monogamous relationships faced the increasing monetarization of Pajapan's economy as their participation in agricultural production diminished.

Thus, many women were separated from the land during the land distribution of 1981 and the creation of Pajapan II in 1992. Women were engaged in urban domestic work, rural-urban petty trade, or income

generating activities at home. Women's land claims were usually attacked on the grounds that they "were not working the land". The statement is true not only for women, but also for a large number of men. Yet the fact that it was used to attack only women's land claims speaks to the ideological constraints facing potential female land right holders. Ideological norms prescribe that a woman's place is in the home and a man's place is in the fields, and reproduce the notion that women are mere "helpers" in agricultural work. This factor coupled with male bias in the Agrarian Law and women's exclusion from formal politics resulted in women being excluded from the land distribution processes of Pajapan.

3. Male Bias in the Agrarian Law

Procedures regarding women's land rights within *ejidos* and agrarian communities in Mexico have changed through the years. The first Agrarian Law promulgated in 1915 made no reference to "individual land rights or to the size of landholdings beneficiaries were to receive: land was either given or returned, with legal title, to communities. The land right clauses in the 1917 constitution also made no reference to gender" (Arizpe and Botey, 1987:70).

The Ejido Law of 1920 was the first to establish that land should be distributed equitably among the heads of households. Article 9 of the By-Laws, ratified in 1922, states that "wherever land is granted to *ejidos*, the heads of households or individuals over the age of eighteen shall receive from three to five hectares of irrigated or rainfed land." Article 97 of the 1927 law establishes that "*ejido* members shall be Mexican

nationals, males over the age of eighteen, or single women or widows supporting a family" (Arizpe and Botey, 1987:70).

As can be seen, the legislation considered male-headed households as the norm, and assumed that the land right of the male head was equivalent to the land right of the household. Men over the age of eighteen, regardless of their marital status, were eligible for land rights. By contrast, women could receive land only if they had children to support, in the absence of a male head of household. If a woman with land rights married another *ejido* member, she would automatically lose her rights to *ejido* land. While the intention of the law was to prevent land concentration, its consequence was to dispossess married women of land rights (Deere, 1985:1042). As in colonial times and throughout the Liberal and Porfiriato periods, women in post-Revolutionary Mexico were eligible for land rights only as guardians of young children.¹

Women's organizations asked for amendments to the law in the 1920's and 1930's (prior to and during the Cárdenas administration). In the first congress of women workers and peasants organized in 1931 by the PFR (Revolutionary Feminist Party) and the BNMR (National Bloc of Revolutionary Women), Cuca García pointed out the male bias of the Agrarian Law:

Thousands of women work the land like peons for a small salary, or work the miserable parcel of their husband, father, or brother, because they are almost completely limited in their right to land. The Agrarian Law states that they can obtain land [ejidos] only as the female head of the family, [or] as adult campesinas who have suitable needs. The young campesinas don't have a right to the land; that is, the

¹ Similar agrarian laws exist in other Latin American countries, for example Venezuela, Costa Rica, Bolivia and Honduras (Deere, 1985:1042-1043).

agrarian legislation condemns them to always live at the poor economic level of their father, their husband [or] their brother, and as we have already said, economic independence is the base of political independence among women (Cuca García quoted in Soto, 1990:109; Soto's translation).

The issue was raised again during a second congress held in 1933. Juana Gutiérrez de Mendoza, a veteran of the Revolution, collaborator of the PLM (Mexican Liberal Party), the Maderistas and the Zapatistas,² spoke of the need for women peasants to have the same opportunities as men to receive land under the Agrarian Reform program (Soto, 1990:110). Women's organizations asked for amendments to the Agrarian Law in 1935 and again in 1937 so that women could be eligible to receive land (Tuñón, 1992). The most important of these organizations was the FUPDM (United Front for Women's Rights) an umbrella organization which by 1939 was composed of 800 groups with a total membership of around 50,000 women. The FUPDM managed to place considerable pressure on the Cárdenas administration regarding women's right to vote. Yet Cárdenas refused to grant the right because he felt that women's vote in federal elections could lead to the victory of the right-wing opposition and displace the revolutionary government from power (Soto, 1990).

In the 1940's the ruling revolutionary party developed corporate control of women's organizations and the FUPDM slowly disappeared as a broadly-based, independent movement (Tuñón, 1992). The president who followed Cárdenas, Manuel Avila Camacho (1940-1946), was not as supportive as his predecessor. Avila Camacho's administration signals the beginning of a tradition of charity-type activities conducted by the wives of the Presidents of the country. His own wife promoted the idea that women's

² Different factions in the Mexican Revolution.

role in society was to "love and help those in need", and emphasized women's caring responsibilities in public life.

The Agrarian Law was not modified until 1971, when Mexico City was getting ready to host the first International Women's Conference (held in 1975). President Echeverría wanted to take an active stand in defending women's rights in order to promote his image as a Third World leader and reestablish his credibility after the Tlatelolco massacre. The law was modified to give women the same rights as men to receive land. Article 200 of the Federal Law of Agrarian Reform states that "Mexicans by birth, male or female over 16 years of age, or of any age if with dependents" are eligible for land rights (Arizpe and Botey, 1987:70). Articles 76 and 78 were designed to favor *ejidatarías*:

Land rights conferred in the foregoing Article may not be the subject of sharecropping, leasing or third party contracts, nor may land be farmed by wage workers, unless the beneficiary is a female head of household prevented by domestic obligations and the care of young and dependent children from farming the land herself, and the beneficiary resides in the community.

Individuals may not accumulate land units... If an ejidatario marries or becomes the common law spouse of an ejidataria having land rights, each shall retain their separate holding. Under agrarian law, it shall be considered that the marriage was celebrated under the rule of separation of properties (quoted in Arizpe and Botey, 1987: 70).

In any other circumstance, only one land right can be granted per household, and parents can pass their land right on only to one child (Taggart, 1983).

The Agrarian Law was also modified to ensure women's representation in the administrative structures of agrarian communities and *ejidos*. Positions include that of *comisariado*, who represents the collective before outside authorities, oversees the division of land, administers

communal lands and collective resources, enforces decisions taken by the general assembly and resolves conflicts between members; the administrative council (comprised of a president, a secretary and a treasurer) and the vigilance council (three individuals who monitor the *comisariado* and denounce his failings). Article 45 of the Agrarian Law stipulates that "women shall enjoy all the rights pertaining to *ejido* members, shall have voice and vote in the General Assemblies, and shall be eligible for all positions in the Committees and Vigilance Councils" (Arizpe and Botey, 1987:70).

3.1. The Application of the Agrarian Law in Pajapan

In the census of 1967, the condition that women should be "supporting a family" of the Agrarian Law was understood by both male government officials and local authorities as "should have young sons". Government officials maintained the view that land should be transferred from mother to son when the son reached adulthood. Women were considered heads of households only by default, and were seen as temporary land right holders and property mediators between a man and his son. For local authorities, the presence of a son in the household was a prerequisite to the guarantee of the reproduction of patrilineal inheritance practices.

Thus, only widows with young sons were accepted at the census table. Women separated from their husbands were not accepted because the fathers of their children, although not providing for the family, were still alive. A woman who was in the process of separating from her husband at the time the census was conducted recounts that she was not allowed to

sign up because her husband had done so already. She was told by census agents that "once the man signs up, the woman has no right to do so."

Subsequent wives of polygamous men were in a similar position. Those who had been or were still the second or third wives of wealthy ranchers did not even try to sign up because they knew that the community would refuse to give them land. This is the case of the third wife of M.M. At the time of the census she was not living with her husband and was totally responsible for her children, but she did not sign up because she knew that the community would not give land to "the children of the rich". M.M. did sign up and his land right was passed on to the son of his fourth wife (the first two wives had died) after his death. The third wife had to wait until 1992 to receive land rights. At that time she was already a widow.

Finally, widows who had sons older than sixteen years of age were also refused by census agents. A widow recounts that when she tried to sign up, government officials asked her about her sons' ages. They told her that she was not eligible to sign up because her sons were old enough to receive land: "not all women were allowed to sign up by the engineer. You had to have a deceased husband and young sons. Those with older sons like me were not accepted."

Thus, the clause of the Agrarian Law stating that women should be "supporting a family" prevented many women from signing up in the land census of 1967. But even women supporting a family were denied the right to sign up because their husbands were alive, they had grown sons or only daughters. All eight women who signed up were widows with young sons and were allowed to sign up "because of their children" (Comisariado Comunal, June 1993). As in colonial times and throughout the Liberal and Porfiriato

periods, women in the census of 1967 had legal access to land only if they were guardians of young children, of whom at least one had to be a boy.

The same is true for the land distribution process of 1981. Even though the Agrarian Law had been changed to give women equal rights to land, women who received land rights in the land distribution of 1981 did so because they were considered guardians of young children. The assembly of *comuneros* in Pajapan decided not to alter the census of 1967 because they did not want to reduce the amount of land that they were each going to receive. Thus, the 40 new female beneficiaries who received land rights in 1981 were either widows replacing their deceased husbands (39) or the wives of alcoholic men (one) who had signed up for the census. As the next section will show, these women defended their land rights by drawing on their roles as guardians of young children and property mediators between a man and his son.

The provisions made for the creation of Pajapan II in 1992 do not reflect the amendments made to the Agrarian Law either. In fact, the agreement reached to satisfy the interests of the mostly male *comuneros* and peasants of the hamlets reproduces the construction of women as guardians of minors and property mediators between two men: women are eligible for land rights in the *ejido* only if all the sons of the *comunero* are under sixteen years of age, which means that the woman's land right should be transferred to one of the *comunero's* sons when he reaches adulthood. Most of the women of the *ejido* fall into this category.

Thus, the legal criteria defining beneficiary status limited women's eligibility for land rights to their roles as guardians of young children in both the land distribution of 1981 and the creation of Pajapan II. Even

after the changes to the Agrarian Law had been made, women in Pajapan were considered eligible for land rights only by default. The reason for this has also to do with women's exclusion from formal politics, to which we now turn.

4. Women's Exclusion from Formal Politics

The creation of new federal, state and municipal institutions and electoral bodies after the Mexican Revolution transformed the form of government of the Gulf Nahuas and reduced the region's relative autonomy vis-à-vis the outside world. This section will examine the impact of these changes on women's ability to make land claims during the land distribution processes of 1981 and 1992.

4.1. Women's Political Rights in Post-Revolutionary Mexico: Towards the Land Census of 1967

The Constitution of 1917 requires that local governments be organized in the form of municipalities. Municipal governments are responsible for the collection of taxes, preserving natural resources, the administration of justice, public security, the civil registry, roads and public utilities. They negotiate with outside agents the provision of services to villages and hamlets within the municipality.

The president and aldermen of the municipal council are elected every three years and cannot be reelected. The council appoints a trustee, a secretary, a treasurer, representatives of smaller villages, police officers and a justice of peace to handle minor civil and criminal cases. The trustee protects communal resources, investigates violations of state law and has the authority to use the services of the local police, while

the secretary signs all correspondence and maintains the archives and civil records. Individuals must be literate in Spanish to hold office.

Municipal governments have become appendages of a centralized corporate polity dominated by the President of Mexico and the federal bureaucracy. Although nominally a federalist country, Mexico is run from Mexico City. Land claims, for example, are usually forwarded to the President of the country. Most of the taxes collected go to the federal bureaucracy and municipalities receive very little in return.

Prior to the federal elections of 1988, the PRI had total control of the electoral process. Mexico's political regime was a one-party system legitimized by the presence of weak opposition parties. The most influential members of the party nominated candidates and the party apparatus was controlled by a small oligarchy of party officials of the National and State Executive Committees.³

Prior to the 1980's, the PRI ruled like a corporate machine divided into three major sectors: labor (represented by PRI-affiliated unions); the popular sector (groups of professionals, intellectuals, civil servants, small entrepreneurs, artisans, women, youth and urban groups); and the agrarian sector represented by the National Peasant Federation

³ This situation started to change in the presidential elections of 1988, when the left-wing opposition declared the victory of its candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Government authorities stated that the electoral computing system of the country "had broken down" and a couple of days later announced the victory of the PRI candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, to the disbelief of many Mexicans. In the last few years the PRI has been forced to acknowledge the victory of right-wing candidates in state elections in the north and center of the country (Baja California and Guanajuato, respectively) but has not been willing to do so for left-wing candidates in the south.

(CNC). All *ejidatarios* are members of the CNC and hence the PRI, and are dependent on the organization for access to state-subsidized resources like seeds, fertilizers and credits.⁴

Due to its relative isolation, Pajapan managed to adapt the new political institutions to its local form of government- a system of civil-religious authority vested in elders who acted as government officers and land administrators. As the cattle industry and state agencies began to make inroads in the late 1940's, however, the PRI started to dominate politics.

The new regime resulted in a full separation of civil and ritual posts, reducing the responsibilities assigned to religious brotherhoods and senior community members acting as protectors of communal lands and brokers between village interests and the Mexican state (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:52).

The separation of civil and religious posts affected women's participation in local politics. The elimination of religious sponsorship as a requirement for political service in civil systems and the emphasis on individual skills such as literacy in Spanish and experience with state bureaucrats as the basis of selection to political positions eliminated many women from consideration. Women were unable to vote or be elected in

⁴ Since the 1980's a number of independent unions and organizations have challenged the hegemony of PRI institutions. The CNPA (National Congress Plan de Ayala), for example, is an independent organization of peasants based on the principles of decentralization and regional group autonomy (Paré, 1990). The CTM (PRI-affiliated Labor Congress) has also lost the support of some of its members. On May 1 of 1995 the traditional Labor Day parade was cancelled for the first time in modern Mexican history, but close to 300,000 people took to the streets of Mexico City to express their opposition to neo-liberal policies and to ask for the resignation of President Ernesto Zedillo. The demonstrators included the unemployed, independent unions and urban and peasant organizations.

most states until 1944. Even after they were formally given the right to vote and hold office, local traditions limited attendance at community meetings to men in many regions of Mexico (Stephen, 1991:156-177; Rosenbaum, 1993:153).

The land census of 1967 was promoted and conducted by male-dominated political structures. No women were among those who made trips to Xalapa and Mexico City to apply for the recognition of Pajapan's communal titles or for the creation of the *ejido*. Unlike the men who went, women did not develop experience in dealing with Spanish-speaking officials. This limited their ability to access information.

Information was hard to access even within the community. According to several informants, ranchers carried out a misinformation campaign in order to prevent people from signing up. As one male informant eloquently put it,

Census collecting lasted for almost four days, and people had to stand in line for their turn. Ranchers and their peons spread the rumor that waiting in line was a waste of time and that people should be working rather than just standing there doing nothing. They also warned that the government was going to charge the people on the list money, and some believed this because the land situation was unclear. But the thing that scared people the most was the rumor that only those who were already working the land could sign up. So the census is not correct... In some cases, sons signed up and their fathers did not. A lot of elders and widows did not sign up because they were afraid and did not know what the census was for. People did not know that the bread was being distributed! (V.D., born 1924; my translation).

A female informant also notes:

Many widows did not sign up [for the census] because they did not know what it was for. Once they learned that they did not have a place to grow *milpa* they realized that they had been left out and got angry, but it was too late. The number of *comuneros* was already set and could not be changed. Others did not sign up because they thought that only those working the land could do so. They were scared because they were told that

the government was going to charge them for a piece of land. My husband lied when he signed up because he was also scared. He said that he was working two hectares and was allowed to sign up by the engineer [working at the census table] (A.E., born 1946; my translation).

An elderly woman who did not sign up at the time and later realized that she was landless expresses her regrets:

I did not sign up and now I have nothing. Some of the women who signed up now have land, but I don't. I didn't know what the census was for, I didn't know that if I didn't sign up I was going to be left landless (C.C., born 1910-20's; my translation).

Even some ranchers who did not know about the implications of the 1967 census failed to sign up. They received land in 1981 because they were already occupying land and were allowed to replace some of the 290 beneficiaries who were either dead or absent from the community. According to a male peasant involved in the struggle for land distribution, this should have also applied to widows and to landless Pajapeños living in urban areas who had not signed up in 1967. "But it wasn't easy. Only those who had the means got in. The weak ones, both men and women, were left out." Another informant points out that if those excluded from the census of 1967 (elders, women, people living in cities) had been included, the number of *comuneros* "would have doubled".

The municipal president in power at the time the census was carried out points to the cultural barriers which prevented women from accessing information:

You have to understand that Pajapan was very different then. There was no paved road, cars could not come into town, there were only small paths for horses. Women were always at home and were not expected to leave their households. They were shy, they would not talk to strangers. You would pass by them in the street, and they would not answer your greeting. They did not understand what was happening and you had to translate everything for them (my translation).

When asked about the reason as to why eight women did get the chance to sign up, he explained:

M.V. [a woman who signed up] did very well because she grew up in Coatzacoalcos and spoke Spanish from the time she was young. That's why she was able to defend her interests during the census and afterwards. She was the leader of a group of women and gave them advice (my translation).

M.V. was not only fluent in Spanish (her father was an outsider and she lived in Coatzacoalcos when she was young), but she was also the widow of a former municipal president. She knew the men involved in the census process and had *compadrazgo* ties with many of them. One of her *compadres* advised her to sign up because "since she was a widow she was eligible." She explains:

An engineer came from Xalapa to write down people's names in the census. My *compadre* [name] was a member of the organizing committee and he told me to sign up and invite other widows to do so because the land was going to be distributed. I told my friends. Four of us went with the engineer. We were all widows (M.V., born 1931; my translation).

M.V. created a small female network around herself. She encouraged other widows to sign up, supported them when they spoke up in the assemblies and even intervened in family disputes concerning one woman's land right (to be explained shortly). She thought it was important to do all this because "no one had explained to them [women] the purpose of the census, they were not close to the people who knew what it was about and they did not know how to read and write."

Thus, women were unable to learn about the importance of the land census of 1967 due to their lack of representation in formal political structures. The next section will show that during the 1970's new spaces were created for women to participate in the political process. However,

these spaces were restricted to women with formal education, and they confined women's political participation to their roles as care providers responsible for children. Women had to build support for their land rights through informal networks (e.g. kinship and *compadrazgo* ties) and draw on their roles as guardians of young children in order to receive land in the land distribution of 1981.

4.2. The DIF and the General Assemblies of 1981

The DIF (Integral Development of the Family) is a government institution created during the 1970's to "support the development of the Mexican family". It was one of the first national programs to target women as a group. The wife of the country's President acts as the DIF's director and organizes educational, health care and family planning services. The same model operates at the municipal level: the municipal president's wife becomes the director of the DIF in every municipality. The presidential couple must be officially married in order for them to take their respective posts.

The DIF program in Pajapan receives five per cent of the municipal budget per month. The money is used to organize small celebrations at the central square on Mother's Day, Children's Day, the Day of the Elderly and Christmas. The money is also used to distribute basic products among the local population (milk, cooking oil, beans, processed corn) and to coordinate with other institutions such as SEP (Ministry of Education), INEA (National Institute for the Education of Adults) or INI (Indigenous

National Institute) training workshops on health, family planning, nursing, sewing, embroidery, and literacy in Spanish.⁵

Prior to the 1980's, the wives of the municipal presidents in Pajapan did not fill the position of president of the DIF because they lacked the ability to read and write Spanish. The DIF budget was therefore allocated to other projects or non-native female school teachers were in charge of DIF activities on a voluntary basis.

The expropriation of Pajapan's communal land by PEMEX and the land distribution which followed signals the beginning of native women's involvement in DIF activities. The first native woman to become the director of the DIF was the wife of the municipal president at the time the land distribution took place. The woman was also the president of the Parents Association at the local high school a few years later and is still praised by community members for her work in both organizations. She is perfectly fluent in both Nahuatl and Spanish and unlike many women of her age (she was born in 1953), she can read and write in Spanish.

Another woman remembered for her achievements as DIF president is also fluent in both Nahuatl and Spanish and literate in Spanish. It is noteworthy that she is considered the best DIF president Pajapan has ever had even by people who do not like her husband and did not vote for him (he ran for the FCRN [Cardenista Front for National Reconstruction] in

⁵ The success of these activities depends on the degree of commitment of the local DIF president and the women themselves. Literacy programs have been more successful among young, single women who for some reason did not finish primary school. By contrast, workshops on sewing and embroidery are the favorite ones among middle-aged women with full domestic responsibilities, since the work load is much less than in the literacy programs.

1988 and was the first municipal president not to belong to the PRI). The woman was a school teacher from Oteapan, a nearby village. People remember her as "fearless to speak in public."

More recently, young, native female school teachers have been involved in DIF organizing and even electoral politics. One of them was the municipal coordinator (the only woman holding this position in the region) of the National Program for the Promotion of the Vote during 1994. She is the representative of the teachers' union in the Sierra and delivers speeches in the PRI's closing campaigns for the municipal elections.

As can be seen, the creation of the DIF opened up new spaces for the political participation of women. Like other positions in the local government, however, these positions were also limited to women with formal education. The first two women are ranchers' wives and the third is the daughter of a rancher who received support to continue her studies both from her parents and from government grants. Other women are not in leadership positions because they lack the ability to read and write in Spanish. This is the case of female petty traders who have joined the CNC and must have political representation to settle issues like market space, selling licenses, transportation costs and facilities, etc. with both the market authorities in Coatzacoalcos and the Sotavento Bus Company. Even though the overwhelming majority of petty traders are women, they have a male representative because they are all illiterate.

On the whole, the DIF programs confines women's political participation to their roles as care providers responsible for children. The young school teacher involved in electoral politics mobilizes female

support for the PRI candidate by emphasizing his commitment towards services used mostly by women. These include corn mills and basic food programs provided by the DIF (milk for schools, food baskets etc.). Most of the courses offered by the institution (nursing, sewing, embroidery workshops) also strengthen traditional female roles.

Furthermore, the DIF has also served to increase state control over women's reproductive capabilities. In fact, the program was launched in unison with other projects aimed at reducing population growth in the country.⁶ The best DIF president in the history of Pajapan is known not only for her ability to organize and lead festivities at the central square, but also for undertaking the most extensive campaign of female sterilization ever in Pajapan.

Thus, women's involvement in DIF activities does not necessarily mean that they participate equally with men in other political arenas. The structure of women's discussions is different from the structure of formal meetings in rural communities. Discussions among women occur in gendered spheres such as the market, the well, the river, and *fiestas*, and they are characterized by fluidity and a lack of formal procedures and leadership. Women use kinship and *compadrazgo* ties to build political support, and their speaking skills are related to listening, consensus building and persuasive discourse. This is in sharp contrast to formal meeting structures, which emphasize public speaking abilities, maintaining control

⁶ The number of children conceived per couple in Mexico decreased from 9.04 in 1976 to 5.85 in 1987, with a marked decline in rural areas (Olaya García y Garma, 1989:61). See also García, 1969; García y de Oliveira, 1984; Juárez et al., 1989; and López, 1989 for an analysis of population policies in Mexico during the 1970's and 1980's.

over large assemblies and the need to negotiate with bureaucrats in Spanish. Thus, differences in formal education and language ability "critically affect how well women are able to maintain a presence in male-dominated organizations, particularly if there is ongoing resistance to women's presence and participation" (Stephen, 1991:231).

When asked why they do not attend assemblies, women in Pajapan repeatedly refer to their workload at home, to the time at which assemblies are held and to the few chances they get to speak. And they are right. Assemblies are usually held in the evening, a time when men are resting from agricultural work, but women are preparing dinner, doing dishes or looking after children; or on Sunday morning, when men do not go to the *milpa* but women prepare breakfast, do the dishes, or take care of children. Assemblies take place at the central square. People who make speeches, conduct the assembly or intervene to make a point must stand on a platform and address a large audience.

In 1981, who received land rights was usually decided in assemblies. The list of 905 *comuneros* was called out in the central square of the village. People had to answer when their names were called out. If the person was not there, potential candidates (people not in the census of 1967 who were interested in receiving land) would state their case and the assembly would decide whether they could become beneficiaries. People who were occupying land (mainly ranchers who had not signed up in 1967) were the most likely to be accepted. In fact, the only woman who was accepted by the assembly even though neither she nor her husband were in the census was a rancher's widow who was occupying land. Four other widows of

ranchers managed to keep the land right which their husbands had signed up for because they were occupying land as well.

Widows were supposed to answer when their names or those of their deceased husbands were called out. But they were not welcomed in male-dominated assemblies. Women who attended them were criticized for stepping into traditionally male domains. M.V. explains:

Each time the representatives called for an assembly we had to go. We had to stand under the sun all day, waiting to hear our names called out. One could not even go home to drink a glass of water. The land committee advised us not to miss an assembly in order to show that we really needed the land, because the *comuneros* did not want us there. They said: "those women, what are they doing among the men? Don't they have anything to do? Why are they wasting their time?" They said that we should not be given any land because we don't know how to work it. Men hated the widows (M.V., born 1931; my translation).

It comes as no surprise that some of the women whose husbands had signed up in 1967 and had died by 1981 were unable to defend their land rights in the assemblies. Only those who were occupying land (mainly widows of ranchers) or were determined to defend their land rights and fulfilled the requirements (to be a widow and to have at least one young son under sixteen) managed to keep hold of their land. As one woman put it, only those that "were tough and could rely on their sons" received land.

As stated earlier, five women who had signed up for the census of 1967 lost their land rights to their sons, while two others lost them to non-relatives. Of those who should have received land because their deceased husbands had signed up for the census, only forty managed to keep them. An unknown number lost them to other candidates. Some of these women

lost their land rights because they did not have the money to pay for "cooperations."⁷ Other women did not know that they had to attend the assemblies to receive land, were too busy to do so, or saw little chance of succeeding and simply decided not to go. Specific cases include a widow who decided not to fight for her land right because she had only five daughters and no sons; another lost it because she went to see her daughter who was about to give birth in Coatzacoalcas, and missed the assembly at which her name was called out. Another woman was sick and the assembly decided that, even though she had a teenaged son, "she could not work the land".

Women's lack of participation in assemblies also made it easier for married men to sell or give away land rights without consulting their wives. As one woman put it, transactions were made "from one man to another" (*de varón a varón*). The most common examples of this are alcoholic men who sold land rights to buy liquor or pay debts.

Yet some women were able to build support for their land rights by using kinship and *compadrazgo* ties. This is the case of M.V., the only woman of those who had signed up in 1967 who was able to retain her land right. She advised widows to sign up in 1967 and was careful to attend every assembly in 1981 because her *compadres* instructed her to do so. As a fluent Spanish-speaker, she often spoke up in assemblies to defend her

⁷ People expecting to receive land had to contribute a specific amount of money each month to help pay for the trips that the land committee members made to Mexico City and Xalapa and the expenses of government officials who spent time in the village. Land beneficiaries were also expected to compensate the previous occupants of the land if there were products of any value (e.g. fruit trees) in the parcel.

and other women's land rights. M.V. spoke in the name of their sons "who are still young but will need a piece of land when they are grown".

Another case in point is a widow whose deceased husband had signed up in 1967. By 1981, the woman was living with a prestigious *mestizo* healer from a nearby village. At first the assembly refused her right to land because she had no sons, only daughters. However, the healer played a key role in defending her land right since he was fluent in Spanish and could negotiate with government officials. He also drew on his prestige as a healer to get community support; this prestige counterbalanced the fact that he was an outsider. Like M.V., this woman attended every assembly. She defended her land right by referring to customary law, which prescribes that the person who looks after a land right holder at the time of his or her death and covers his or her funeral expenses (typically the youngest son; see Chapter Four) is expected to inherit the land right. The woman argued that she had looked after her husband at the time of his death and paid for his funeral expenses, while the man's brothers, who wanted the land right for themselves, had not. In the end, the assembly decided in her favor.

Women also learned to make land claims by drawing on their roles as guardians of young children and property mediators between a man and his son. For example, the only woman who received a land right despite having a living husband (an alcoholic) stated in an assembly that her husband was unable to provide for their children and that she needed the parcel to look after them. She further alleged that "tomorrow my sons will need a piece of land to work and they will ask me what happened to their father's land right". The man had already passed over the land right to his father-

in-law, a middle size rancher. She had to stand up to her own father and argue face to face with her husband during assemblies. The assembly finally decided in her favor when her father withdrew his claim to the parcel (M.V. convinced him to do so), and after her husband showed up drunk at an assembly and was totally incoherent.

Yet the assembly still had to decide between her and another man fighting for her land right. A man who remembers her case recounts:

People in the assembly said that she should not receive the land right because she can't work the land. But I said "it doesn't matter, because her sons are growing up and they will eventually need the parcel." And that's the way it is. Today the boys don't know what's going on, they don't know that we are taking the land right away from them. But when they grow up they will realize that they are landless and they will want their land right. They are going to ask their mother: "What happened to our land right? If you knew that it belonged to my father, why did it go to someone else?" That's how we have to think, that children are growing up and we are getting old. And so the engineer asked: "Who do you support? That guy, (the guy who was fighting for the land right), or this woman?" And people said: "The land right must go to the son of the *comunero* who signed up. No one wants the land right to go to some one else, it should stay within the same family" (V.D., born 1924; my translation).

Another woman whose alcoholic husband had sold the land certificate was not so lucky. Although she also drew on her role as guardian and property mediator to get the land right back, her claim lacked legitimacy because the rancher (one of the most powerful in town) had actually paid the woman's husband for the land right.

The exchanges that follow suggest that she clearly knew that claiming the land right in the name of her son would strengthen her case. On her first visit to the rancher, her claim is discredited because she is a woman. She then decides to go back with her son:

I went to see him [the rancher] and he said: "I settled things with your husband, not with you. Where a man rules, a woman

doesn't." I went back again with my son and told him "look, here is my son. I'm not fighting for myself, I'm fighting for my son. Because he is my husband's son and he should have that land right." (H.A., born 1940; my translation).

When the rancher refused to give the land right back, she went to the Agrarian Law offices in Chinameca. The government official told her:

You must recover that land right, not for you, but for your son. Even if he were very young, even if you were carrying him in your arms, his father's land right belongs to him. But it is your duty to fight for it. Ask the *comisariado* to call an assembly to deal with the problem (H.A., born 1940; my translation).

The *comisariado* raised the issue during an assembly, but the rancher was not present. The woman made a last effort to get the land right back and went to see the man accompanied by the local police:

"[name], here we are. I have my son with me. Please give the certificate back to me." He said: "Look, I did not take it from your husband by force. Your husband sold it to me because he wanted to. I have the certificate and I won't give it back to you. Go away before I shoot you." And he went inside, probably to get his gun, so we left. You don't mess with that man. Not even the authorities can touch him (H.A., born 1940; my translation).

The woman continued to pay the annual fees required to keep the parcel, even though the rancher was occupying it. Three years ago she stopped paying. The lot administrator went to see her and suggested she go to the office in Xalapa and discuss her case with a female government official. But she did not go. By that time she already knew that "not even the authorities can touch" the man who had the land certificate.

Thus, the new spaces for women's political participation which were created during the 1970's were limited to women with formal education. New government programs confined women's participation in formal politics to their roles as care providers responsible for young children. Women who made land claims in the assemblies of 1981 had to build support for their

land rights through informal networks (e.g. kinship and *compadrazgo* ties) and draw on their roles as guardians of young children and property mediators between a man and his son in order to receive land.

4.3. Census Taking and Assemblies in 1992

The data that I collected by interviewing lot administrators in Pajapan II show important differences regarding the ways in which female land beneficiaries received their land rights in 1981 and 1992. While in 1981 the overwhelming majority of women who received land were widows who asserted their right to land in the name of their children, in Pajapan II different categories of women (married, single and female heads of households) joined Pajapan I by different means. Table 6.1 shows that most married women in the sample received their land right from their husbands, and that single women did so mostly from their fathers. By contrast, most female heads obtained their land rights by signing up in the census and participating in assemblies.

Several factors account for these differences. First, many *comuneros* who had eligible sons preferred to register their wives in order to increase their access to land. These men's households now have access to twelve hectares in the agrarian community and four hectares in Pajapan II. Other *comuneros* (mostly ranchers) registered or even bought land rights for their daughters if their sons were already provided for: the men's households now have access to 12 hectares in the agrarian community and from eight to twelve in the *ejido*. Almost without exception, the single women with land rights in Pajapan II are the daughters of wealthy ranchers.

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Unlike wealthy ranchers, female heads of households were unable to pay for land rights. As one of them explains,

when I heard that someone was selling a land right I thought about the possibility of buying one, but they were asking for too much money. Some asked for 800 pesos, others for one thousand [\$300 U.S.]. It is rather difficult to come up with such a large amount from one day to the next. And you don't even know if you will be able to keep the land right (H.B., born 1953; my translation).

Second, the admission of married and single women into the *ejido* made it easier for other women to receive land: people became used to seeing them at the census table and assemblies. Also, since some *comuneros* sold or gave their land right to other relatives or even to non-relatives, the categories of people joining Pajapan II were broadened. As can be seen in Tables 6.1 and 6.2, both men and women received land rights from all kind of relatives beyond those of the nuclear family. This benefitted women who were not related to a particular *comunero* and yet showed interest in land.

More importantly, female heads of households who had remained landless in the previous distribution or had close female relatives in that situation (e.g. mothers) were determined to receive land rights this time. As one lot administrator put it, female heads "smartened up" this time around. M.V. explains:

Women who were left out [in 1981] still wanted their piece of land, but how were they going to get it? It was too late. Some of them fought to receive land in the new *ejido*. This time they didn't let themselves be pushed around (*no se dejaron*) (M.V., born 1931; my translation).

Lot administrators of the new *ejido* agree. All 28 of them pointed out that female heads in their respective lots became *ejidatarias* because they showed interest in land, attended assemblies and paid "cooperations"

for the committee's trips to Xalapa and Mexico City, and for the engineers' expenses. Lot administrators acknowledge the right of female heads to receive land, but express discomfort with the presence of married women in Pajapan II because these women "are taking away land rights from those in real need". Although their concerns have some validity (as stated earlier, some *comuneros* registered their wives to increase their household's access to land), lot administrators do not challenge the presence of single men in the new *ejido*, many of whom are the sons of wealthy ranchers who are attending high school or even living out of town. The lot administrators' concerns reflect the prevailing view that women should be eligible for land rights only by default.

5. Conclusions

This chapter has examined the struggle for land in Pajapan. Emphasis was placed on women's land rights in the land distribution of 1981 and in the *ejido* created in 1992. I argued that three major factors limited women's ability to receive land in 1981. First, the organization of production in Pajapan households and the increasing separation of women from the land during the cattle raising period (1950-1982) placed them in a disadvantaged position when land was distributed in 1981. Some women were working in urban areas while others were involved in rural-urban petty trade. Women living in ranches did not participate in cattle raising operations and their indirect relation to land turned into an indirect relation to cattle. All women in Pajapan faced the decline in subsistence production and the growing monetarization of the local economy.

Second, the legal criteria defining beneficiary status also contributed to the exclusion of women. The land census was conducted before the changes to the Agrarian Law were made, so it was mostly widows with young children (at least one boy) who were accepted at the census table. Although the Agrarian Law had been changed by the land distribution of 1981 to grant equal rights to women and men, the local assemblies decided not to modify the land census of 1967. Thus, the male bias of the Agrarian Law continued to limit women's eligibility for land rights to their roles as guardians of young children.

Third, women were also at a disadvantage regarding the political structures through which land rights were delivered. When the census was carried out in 1967 women were unable to learn about its importance. When land was distributed in 1981, women who were in the census or whose deceased husbands had signed up for the land census of 1967 found it hard to defend their land rights in male-dominated assemblies.

The provisions for the creation of Pajapan II in 1992 required that *comuneros* register one of their sons or their wives if all their sons were under sixteen years of age. The agreement reached to satisfy the interests of mostly male *comuneros* and landless peasants from the hamlets not only went against the changes made to the Agrarian Law in 1971, but also reproduced the construction of women as guardians of young children and property mediators between two men. This explains why the majority of women in the *ejido* are married women who received their land right from their husbands. Yet a number of female heads of households managed to receive land in the new *ejido*. The presence of married and single women at the census table and assemblies during the creation of Pajapan II and the

fact that some *comuneros* gave their land right to a variety of relatives made it easier for female heads to assert land claims. These women had also learned from the 1981 experience and did what was necessary (attend assemblies, pay for cooperations) to receive land.

The analysis has shown that women in Pajapan asserted land claims using their roles as guardians of young children and property mediators between two men. In spite of having equal rights before the law, women are not treated the same way as men when processes of land distribution occur. As in colonial times and the Liberal and Porfiriato periods, women in contemporary Mexico do not have access to land in their own right.

**Table 6.1. Sources of women's land rights in Pajapan II
(69.3 per cent of the total number of beneficiaries)**

Source/ Marital Status	Married	Single	Female Heads	TOTAL
Census			7	7
Husband	174			174
Father	7	8	3	18
Mother	1	1	2	4
Brother	1	1	1	3
Grandfather		1		1
Uncle	1			1
Son			1	1
Transfers	1	2		3
Assembly Participation	2		7	9
TOTAL	187	13	21	221
PERCENTAGE	84.6	5.8	9.5	100

**Table 6.2. Sources of men's land rights
in Pajapan II
(69.3 per cent of the total number of beneficiaries)**

Source/ Marital Status	Married	Single	Missing Data	TOTAL
Census	6			6
Wife	1			1
Father/ Father- in law	225/1	75		301
Mother/ Mother- in law	7/1	7		15
Brother/ Brother-in law	8/2	5		15
Grandfather	4	6		10
Uncle	6	5		11
Aunt		1		1
Transfers	29	11		40
Assembly Participation	9	14		23
Missing Data			32	32
TOTAL	299	124	32	455
PERCENTAGE	65.7	27.2	7.0	100

Map 2. Pajapan's land base, showing expropriated area and divisions into 37 lots in 198_.

Source: Chevalier and Buckles, in press: 88

CHAPTER VII
"RESPECTING YOUR HOME": CLASS, GENDER
AND THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOR
IN CONTEMPORARY PAJAPAN

Chapter Four examined the household labor process in pre-capitalist Pajapan. It showed that patrivirilocal residence places women in a vulnerable position regarding their access to land. A woman's move into her husband's household at marriage severs her land access rights in her natal residential unit. Men, by contrast, maintain residential and economic ties. Male heads of households regulate land use and property allocation and make claims to the labor of other household members.

The introduction of cattle raising in the 1950's initiated significant changes in the household labor process. As shown in Chapter Five, most women faced the decline in subsistence agriculture and became even further separated from the land. Women's insertion in particular spheres of production was interwoven with their marriage histories. For example, women compelled to end their first marriage migrated to urban centers where they usually became domestic workers, while female heads of households became involved in rural-urban petty trade. Women living with wealthy, polygamous ranchers contributed to capitalist accumulation but were alienated from cattle wealth, while women living with monogamous men were confined to the household sphere and developed ways to generate income from within their homes.

The process of differentiation among women did not end with the land distribution processes of 1981 and 1992. Women's participation in productive activities in today's Pajapan is related to the household's composition and access to resources. This chapter will focus on the impact of new patterns of household composition and inter-household class

differentiation on the sexual division of labor at home and women's position within the household.

Women's contribution to the household economy can be seen in two conflicting discourses. While some men jokingly refer to Pajapan's regional reputation as a town where women financially support men, others hold the opposite view: women are "bitches" (*cabronas*) because they do not want to work like they used to, "they only want men's money." Women "lean on" (*se arriman*) rich men and ruin them. They "use up" all their money (*se acaban todo su dinero*).

Similarly, women see their relationship to their husbands in conflicting ways: some think that only "stupid" women sit at home with their needy children if their husbands are not providing for them; others believe that only "stupid" women leave their households to earn a living instead of forcing their husbands to do so.

These conflicting views reflect the various ways in which different men and women articulate their responses to changing gender roles in Pajapan. This chapter will attempt to explain these differences by focusing on women's marriage histories and work trajectories. It will be shown that the circumstances of a woman's marriage (which are influenced by her family history and work trajectory prior to marriage) determine her class position after marriage. Women who now live in wealthy households did not generate income outside their households before marriage, and they made marriage arrangements inside the house. Today, these women limit their income generating activities to their own homes, and argue that it is "stupid" to leave their households to earn a living instead of forcing their husbands to do so. By contrast, women who are presently involved in

income generating activities outside their homes (e.g. petty trade) have a paid work trajectory previous to their present marriage, and made marriage arrangements outside the house or somewhere in between both models. These women argue it is "stupid" to sit at home with their needy children if their husbands are not providing for them.

The chapter is divided into six sections. The first three examine the relationship between class, household composition and land tenure in today's Pajapan. Sections four and five examine the construction of class and gender relations by focusing on the marriage histories and work trajectories of different women. Finally, the last section focuses on the ways in which different women assume, resist or negotiate traditional gender roles implicit in the marriage contract.

1. Class Typology

As shown in Chapter Five, the development of the cattle industry in Pajapan led to the usurpation of communal property by ranchers and the proletarianization of a considerable portion of the native population. Landless Pajapeños migrated to urban centers and became involved in rural-urban petty trade in order to survive.

The expropriation of 1979 and the land distribution of 1981 resulted in a net loss of wealth and property controlled by ranchers. As Chevalier and Buckles (in press:138) show, the total herd in Pajapan decreased from approximately 9,000 to 7,000 head after the land distribution. Cattle sales increased from 3,021 animals in 1980 to 4,003 in 1981, following the official announcement of the expropriation. Sales jumped to 4,745 in 1982 and 4,380 in 1983, after the land distribution took place. The total

number of cattle sold has remained constant at about 3,000 per year since 1984.

The average size of individual herds has also diminished. A large herd before the distribution of 1981 consisted of 50 to 700 head, while after the reform the average size was between 50 and 200 head. Some ranchers have managed to rebuild their herds (300 head maximum) by renting pasture and illegally buying the land rights of other *comuneros*, but the land distribution imposed severe limits on the process of land concentration in Pajapan (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:138).

The decline in cattle raising activities gave way to the proliferation of small businesses and a reversion to subsistence agriculture combined with small-scale ranching, cash crop production and other income generating activities. According to Chevalier and Buckles (in press:127-129), in 1986 the population of Pajapan was divided into three classes. Each class has a particular occupational profile combining a variety of activities. These classes are:

1) **Subsistence and wage working.**- This class includes households which combine subsistence production and wage-work (rural or urban) or depend on just one of the two activities for survival. These households have no assets or savings of their own and possess fewer than five head of cattle. They sell less than \$40 U.S.¹ of produce per year and engage in wage labor one to five days per week. They represent 47 per cent of all households in Pajapan.

¹ The values given by Chevalier and Buckles are based on the exchange rate of 1986 (650 pesos for one U.S. dollar).

2) **Small-scale commodity production.**— This class includes households which combine or derive most earnings from either one of these activities: small-scale ranching (they own fewer than 25 heads of cattle); cash crop production (they sell at least \$40 U.S. of produce per year); craft work (carpentry, baking, auto repair); petty trade (they buy and sell fruit, vegetables, bread, fish, seafood, fowl, pigs, beer, clothes and prepared food at least two days a week); and stores with less than \$230 U.S. invested. These households represent 47 per cent of the total number of households of Pajapan.

3) **Capital.**— This class includes households which have capital invested in cattle and small businesses. They own more than 25 head of cattle and may also own businesses such as stores, taxis, cattle brokerages, restaurants and rooming houses with a minimum worth of \$230 U.S. They represent six per cent of all households in Pajapan.

This typology applies not to individuals but rather to households engaged in several activities. As noted in Chapter One, however, the authors do not address the sexual division of labor within each class and the ways in which women's responsibility for reproductive work determines their involvement in productive activities. Sections four, five and six of this chapter will discuss these issues in detail.

The next section examines the role of the land distribution of 1981 and the creation of Pajapan II in the development of the class typology. I compare Chevalier and Buckles' (in press:131-132) material on class profile and land rights in 1986 with the data I collected on 80 households

after the creation of the new *ejido*. This is followed by a discussion of household composition in contemporary Pajapan.

1.1. Class and Land Tenure

The 40 households which controlled almost half of all the arable land in Pajapan prior to the reform of 1981 lost practically all of it in the expropriation of 1979 and the land distribution of 1981. While one fourth (25.1 per cent) of Pajapan's communal land was retained by ranchers and peasants who had land prior to the reform, about one third (31.6 per cent) was allocated to landless households which moved from dependence on urban and rural cash earnings to small-scale commodity production or subsistence production (Table 7.1). Indeed, nearly half (47 per cent) of the households who received land rights had no access to land whatsoever prior to the land distribution of 1981. However, 40 per cent of all households in Pajapan still remained landless after the land distribution of 1981. Moreover, 17 per cent of the households with access to land before the land distribution lost all land rights to the communal land of Pajapan because they had not been included in the census of 1967 and lacked the political influence to receive land rights during the census update.

Table 7.1. The Distribution of Pajapan's Communal Land, 1981	
Expropriated	5,153 Has. (26.9%)
Redistributed	6,054 Has. (31.6%)
Retained	4,806 Has. (25.1%)
Forest Reserve and Urban Zone	3,145 Has. (16.4%)
Total Land	19,158 Has. (100%)
Source: Chevalier and Buckles, in press:130.	

The 905 *comuneros* of Pajapan form a politically constituted group of land right holders with titles recognized by law, yet they do not form a homogeneous class at the economic level. *Comuneros* belong to different classes and engage in different occupations. Households which engage in cash crop production and own capital invested in cattle and businesses (classes 2 and 3) usually have land rights and better quality parcels:

virtually all ranchers and owners of businesses have land rights, as do about 86 per cent of the farmers... Members of these classes tend to be the wealthiest in the village or their involvement in market agriculture and cattle raising presupposes access to land. By contrast, only 44 per cent of the petty traders have land as do 37 per cent of the households in the subsistence-wage worker class and 11 per cent of the full-time wage laborers. Given their legally limited access to land, these poorer families typically resort to petty trade and wage labor in lieu of food production for the market to meet their family needs (Chevalier and Buckles, in press:132).

The creation of Pajapan II in 1992 reduced the number of landless households in Pajapan. As shown in the previous chapter, a good number of the *ejidatario* population are married males and female heads of households

who were previously landless. Table 7.2 shows that 12 of the 80 households which I studied after the creation of Pajapan II had been landless prior to the creation of the new *ejido* and recently received land rights in Pajapan II. Most of them (ten) belong to class 1 (subsistence production-wage labor).

Yet a much larger number of households of my sample (19) did not receive land rights in Pajapan II and are still landless (Table 7.2). Nine of these households belong to class 1 (subsistence production-wage labor) and ten to class 2 (simple commodity production). They generally rely on wage labor, craft work and petty trade for survival.

Other households in Pajapan increased their access to land with the creation of Pajapan II. Table 7.2 shows that 23 of the 80 households of my sample now have rights to twelve hectares of land in the agrarian community and four hectares in the new *ejido*. Of these 23 households, nine belong to class 1, eleven to class 2 and three to class 3 (households which own capital). The next section will show that most of the households in classes 1 and 2 which have land rights in both the communal land of Pajapan and the new *ejido* of Pajapan II are multiple family households, which means that they are made up of two or more conjugal units. By contrast, all three households from class 3 are single family households. All of them have access to more than 16 hectares of land (32, 24 and 24, respectively), since they have managed to buy more parcels than those to which they are legally entitled.

Table 7.2. Class Profile and Land Rights in Pajapan after the creation of Pajapan II (sample of 80 households)				
Area/Class	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Total
Pajapan (12 has. per household)	10	16		26 (32.5%)
Pajapan II (4 has. per household)	10	2		12 (15%)
Both Areas (16 has. per household)	9	11	3*	23 (28.7%)
None (landless households)	9	10		19 (23.7%)
Total	38	39	3	80 (100%)
* These three households have access to more than 16 hectares of land (32, 24 and 24, respectively).				

2. Household Composition

I have used two criteria to classify the 80 households of my sample. These criteria are household headship (whether they are monoparental, two-parented or male-attached) and household membership (whether they are single family or multiple family households). Monoparental households are those headed by only one parent, male or female. In two-parent households, both parents live under the same roof with their children and perhaps some other relatives. Male-attached households are households established by polygamous men in which the woman lives under the same roof as her children while the man moves between several domestic units.

Single family households consist of either one or both parents and their unmarried children. In other words, this category includes not only two-parent households living with their unmarried children, but also monoparental or male-attached households composed of one parent and his/her unmarried children, or the wife of a polygamous man and her unmarried children. These people do not live in a joint compound close to other relatives. Multiple family households, by contrast, refer to households composed of multiple conjugal units: either one parent or both, their unmarried daughters, their married sons, and their sons' wives and children. Household members usually live in joint compounds and share land rights, kitchen, stockyard and washing space.

As shown in Table 7.3, the majority of households in my sample are two-parented: 56 of 80 fall within this category. Thirteen of the 80 households are female-headed. Four of these female heads have previously been the second wives of polygamous men. Finally, eleven households are male-attached. Three of the women living in these households are first wives and the remaining eight are second wives.

Fifty three of the 80 households are single family households while 27 are multiple family households. As can be seen in Table 7.3, multiple family households tend to be two-parented whereas single family households fall into the three categories (two-parent, male-attached and female-headed). The reason for this has to do with the household's access to land to which we now turn.

**Table 7.3. Household Composition in Pajapan
(sample of 80 households)**

	Single Families	Multiple Families	Total
Two-parent	30	26	56 (70%)
Female-headed	13		13 (16.3%)
Male-attached*	10	1	11 (13.7%)
Total	53 (66.3%)	27 (33.7%)	80 (100%)
*Three first wives and eight second wives of polygamous men.			

2.1. Household Composition and Land Tenure

In this section I will discuss the relationship between household composition and land tenure. I will show that multiple family households formed by a couple above 40 years of age are more likely to have access to land than single family households formed either by a couple or by a female head under 40 years of age. Most male-attached households in the sample are single family households with access to land. However, first and second wives relate to the parcel in different ways. These arrangements have an impact on women's involvement in productive activities within and outside their households.

Table 7.4 indicates the relationship between household composition and land tenure. Most two-parent, multiple family households have land rights in the agrarian community or in both the agrarian community and the *ejido*. By contrast, two-parent, single family households are evenly distributed throughout all four categories (households with land rights in Pajapan, in Pajapan II, in both areas or with no land rights). Seven of these two-parent, single family households

were landless prior to the creation of Pajapan II and recently received land rights in Pajapan II, while nine are still landless.

Table 7.4. Household Composition and Land Rights in Pajapan (sample of 80 households)							
	Two-parent		Female-headed		Male-attached		
Area/ Type of Household	SF	MF	SF	MF	SF	MF	TOTAL
Pajapan (12 has. per household)	7	12	2		5		26
Pajapan II (4 has. per household)	7	3	2				12
Both (16 has. per household)	7	8	2		5	1	23
None (landless households)	9	3	7				19
Total	30	26	13		10	1	80
S.F. Single family households M.F. Multiple family households							

These differences are partly due to differences in age. As can be seen in Table 7.5, most of the couples living in two-parent, single family households are below 40 years of age. Prior to the creation of Pajapan II, these households were generally landless and engaged in wage-labor or craft work. By contrast, couples living in two-parent, multiple family households are generally above 40 years of age. These households are more likely to have land rights in the communal property of Pajapan. Married sons live in the same joint compound as their parents and they received land rights to the *ejido* of Pajapan II from their fathers.

Table 7.5. Household Composition and Age Profile in Pajapan (sample of 80 households)								
Age/ Type of Household		Two- parents		Female- headed		Male- attached		
H.	W.	SF	MF	SF	MF	SF	MF	TOTAL
20	20	8	3					11
30-50	20	3	1			4		8
30	30	9						9
40-60	30	3	6	8		2		19
40	40	6	2	3		1	1	13
50-70	40		4			2		6
60-80	50	1	2	2		1		6
80+	60+		8					8
Total		30	26	13		10	1	80
S.F. Single family households M.F. Multiple family households								

Table 7.4 indicates that more than half (seven) of the 13 female-headed households in the sample are landless, two recently received rights in the *ejido* and four have rights in the agrarian community or in both areas. These figures can also be explained by age differences. As Table 7.5 indicates, most female heads in the sample are in their thirties. They were too young to receive land in the land distribution of 1981 and only two managed to receive rights in 1992. By contrast, female heads with land rights in the agrarian community or in both the agrarian community and the *ejido* are in their forties or older. They inherited their land rights from their husbands or fought for them in the assemblies of 1981.

All of the female heads in the sample live in single family households and most of them support dependent children. As will be seen

later, many of these female heads are rural-urban petty traders who are not engaged in an agricultural or cattle raising enterprise. This means that their sons are unlikely to establish their domestic units close to their mothers after they marry. In other words, it is very possible that these women will continue to live in single family households in the future.

Table 7.4 indicates that all but one of the eleven male-attached households in the sample are single family households. The table also shows that half of these eleven households have rights in the agrarian community and the other half have rights in both the agrarian community and the *ejido*. Table 7.5 shows that most of the women living in male-attached households are in their forties or younger. However, important differences between first and second wives must be pointed out.

First wives are older than second wives. The three first wives in the sample are over 40 years of age, while most second wives are in their thirties or younger. Also, the age difference between the eight second wives and their respective partners is much larger than in the case of the three first wives. Two first wives were born in the same decade as their husbands, while second wives live with men much older than themselves.

Second, the three first wives of the sample live in households with land rights in the agrarian community (one) or in both the agrarian community and the *ejido* (two). All eight second wives in the sample also live in households with access to land. Four live in households with land rights in the agrarian community while the remaining four live in households which have land rights in both the agrarian community and the new *ejido*. Yet the access to land by second wives is not straightforward.

For example, second wives do not claim right to the parcel in the agrarian community because they know that it belongs to one of the sons of their husbands' first wife. Similarly, only one second wife in the sample is making effective use of the parcel in the new *ejido* (she grows her own *milpa*).

Third, most women in male-attached households live in single family households. Yet first wives are more likely than second wives to form multiple family households in the future: one of them is already living with one married son and other unmarried children, and the other two have unmarried sons who are very likely to establish their domestic units near to their mothers, since the lot is large enough to accommodate them and the young men have access to land and cattle through their fathers. In other words, the sons of first wives maintain their ties to household property and are more likely to settle close to their original domestic unit after they marry.

By contrast, all eight second wives live in single family households and have dependent children. As will be seen shortly, half (four of eight) of the second wives in the sample support their households with the income they earn from a combination of small-scale commercial activities (local petty trade, selling prepared food at home and at schools) even though their husbands are cattle owners. Thus, the sons of these second wives are unlikely to work with their fathers and establish their domestic units near to their mothers' after they marry. Like female heads of households, it is very possible that these second wives will continue to live in single family households in the future.

To sum up, multiple family households formed by a couple above 40 years of age are more likely to have access to land than single family households formed either by a couple or by a female head under 40 years of age. Most male-attached households are single family households with access to land. However, first and second wives of polygamous men relate to the land in different ways. While first wives (or their sons) have access to the parcel in the agrarian community, second wives do not. Given their relationship to land, first wives are more likely than second wives to form multiple family households. As the following sections will show, these arrangements have an impact on women's involvement in productive activities within and outside their households.

3. Class and Household Composition

As Table 7.6 indicates, there are two-parent households in all three classes. Younger couples forming single family households are generally engaged in subsistence production, wage work or craft work, or a combination of subsistence production with either one of these two activities. Older couples tend to form multiple family households generally engaged in subsistence production and/or other income generating activities (e.g. cash crop production, craft work, small-scale ranching, trading activities).

Table 7.6. Class and Household Composition in Pajapan: Two-parent Households (56 cases)			
Class/ Type of Household	Single Families	Multiple Families	Total
1	16	16	32
2	13	10	23
3	1		1
Total	30	26	56

Table 7.7 shows that eight of the 13 female-headed households in the sample belong to class 2 (simple commodity production): seven households are engaged in rural-urban or local petty trade, and one in cash crop production. Four female-headed households belong to class 1: three are devoted to subsistence production and one to wage labor (a school teacher). The only female-headed household in class 3 is the widow of a rancher who owns cattle and a taxi.

Table 7.7. Class and Household Composition in Pajapan: Female-headed Households (13 cases)			
Class/ Type of Household	Single Families	Multiple Families	Total
1	4		4
2	8		8
3	1		1
Total	13		13

Table 7.8 shows that all three first wives in the sample belong to class 2 (simple commodity production). All of them live in households devoted to cash crop production and small-scale ranching activities.

Although these women are not involved in farming or cattle operations and may not see their husbands often, they have access to income through their sons (who work with their fathers) and through small businesses (one woman manages a store at home and another one rents rooms to school teachers from outside Pajapan).

Table 7.8. Class and Household Composition in Pajapan: Male-attached Households (11 cases)			
Class/ Type of Household	Single Families	Multiple Families	Total
1	2 second wives		2
2	2 first wives, 5 second wives	1 first wife	8
3	1 second wife		1
Total	10	1	11

Five of the eight second wives in the sample also belong to class 2 (simple commodity production). Two of these five households are supported by male earnings (auto repair and farming; carpentry and small-scale ranching activities, respectively) while the other three are supported by female earnings. These three second wives engage in a combination of small-scale commercial activities (local petty trade, selling prepared food at home or at schools) to support their households even though their husbands are cattle owners. This is also the case of the second wife who belongs to class 3 (households which own capital): her husband provides her with corn and beans and she buys other household necessities (other kind of food, clothes, school supplies) with the money she earns from selling food and running a store at home. Unlike first wives and women living in two-parent households, these four second wives

keep bank accounts separate from their husbands (if any) and own their own head of cattle (if any). One fought for land rights in the *ejido* of Pajapan II and she invests in her *milpa* independently from her husband.

Finally, two second wives live in households which belong to class I (subsistence production-wage labor). Men are the major income earners in these households. These two women are the youngest of all second wives in the sample and have very young children.

In the remaining sections of this chapter I will attempt to explain the process of class differentiation among women by focusing on their premarriage and postmarriage work and family histories. I will argue that the circumstances of a woman's marriage (which are in turn shaped by the woman's previous family history and work trajectory) determine her class position after marriage. Women who now live in wealthy households did not generate income outside their households before marriage, and they made marriage arrangements inside the house. Today, these women limit their income generating activities to their own homes. By contrast, women who are involved in productive activities outside their homes (petty trade, selling prepared food at home or at schools, subsistence agriculture) on a regular basis have a paid work trajectory previous to their present marriage. These women made marriage arrangements outside the house or somewhere in between both kind of arrangements.

4. Marrying "Inside the House": Women in Two-Parent Households and First Wives of Polygamous Men

Most women in two-parent households made marriage arrangements inside the house, although some changes have taken place over time regarding the courtship and marriage process. Unlike their mothers,

today's young women (in their teens) have more opportunities to socialize with young men for longer periods of time and beyond parental supervision. Young people meet at the school, the library, the market and the central square. Elderly women believe that today's young women cannot be "controlled" and spend too much time "in the streets", while elderly men refer to the "craziness of young people" who leave their households "without permission".

The fact is that the new arrangements have not entirely altered the nature of marriage, since sooner or later the parents of the young couple intervene in the marriage process. Once the parents of a young woman learn that she is seeing a young man who "has not asked for their permission", they generally make the couple formalize their engagement. This leads to marriage negotiations and the wedding. Four of the 15 women under 30 years of age who are living in two-parent households (see Table 7.5) met their husbands in these new meeting places; three of them later formalized their relationship, their parents were involved in marriage negotiations and a wedding was held.

In general, the wedding celebrations of women under 30 years of age who are living in two-parent households are still held in the homes of both sets of parents, and the groom's kin group covers brideprice and wedding expenses. Marriage negotiations have nonetheless been reduced to their simplest expression (one or two visits within a short period of time), brideservice has practically disappeared and brideprice has declined.² Generally, the young woman's parents only ask for provisions

² See Chevalier and Buckles (in press:242) for details on the reduction of brideprice in Pajapan as of the 1950's.

for the celebrations (liquor, food, music) and in some cases, for a civil or religious wedding. Eight of the 15 women under 30 years of age who are living in two-parent households are officially married. Three of these eight couples had both religious (Catholic or Protestant) and civil marriages.³ They are the first couples in Pajapan to have Protestant weddings, which are very different from customary weddings: liquor, music and brideprice are forbidden. Overall, Protestant weddings are less expensive.

Thirty two of the 41 women over 30 years of age who are living in two-parent households (see Table 7.5) started the courtship process in customary ways: they met at the well or at "the woman's house". As in the previous age group, the bride's parents usually asked for provisions for the celebrations and in some cases, for a religious or civil wedding. Six couples had a Catholic wedding and four married before the law.

Thus, the data indicate that most women presently living in two-parent households made marriage arrangements inside the house. Even though the courtship process and wedding ceremonies have changed over time, most women living in two-parent households did not "leave their households" until they got married.

Like most women in two-parent households, the three first wives of polygamous men in the sample did not "leave their households" prior to marriage, and made marriage arrangements inside the house. The parents of the young woman asked for pigs and bottles of *aguardiente* and for a civil

³Mexican civil law does not recognize religious marriages. Couples must marry before civil authorities for their marriage to be legally recognized and then proceed to a religious wedding if so desired.

or religious wedding. Two of these three first wives are officially married before the law and the other had a Catholic wedding.

As noted in Chapter Four, the marriage arrangement inside the house establishes the set of rights and obligations which regulate the interaction and exchanges between husband and wife. Men have to prove that they are capable of supporting a family and that they deserve a wife, while women are valued for their ability to work and reproduce and for being raised in good morals. A woman willing to marry "well" must protect her reputation until the day she is transferred from her parents' household to her in laws' household, and must continue doing so even after marriage. In return, the woman can expect marital commitment and attention to the needs of her children. Civil and religious weddings are viewed as a way of further formalizing this commitment.

The circumstances of a woman's marriage shape her options for income generating activities. Women who make marriage arrangements inside the house have a reputation to protect and try not to leave their households. These women limit their income generating activities to their own homes, and argue that it is "stupid" to earn a living outside their households instead of forcing their husbands to do so. The next section will discuss the sexual division of labor within these women's households.

4.1. Generating Income at Home: Women in Two-Parent Households and First Wives of Polygamous Men

As noted earlier, younger couples forming single family households are generally engaged in subsistence production, wage work or craft work, or a combination of subsistence production with either one of these two activities. In the case of wage work, men are the major income earners.

Women are in the early years of child bearing and count on little help from other adult relatives to look after their young children. The labor-intensive and time-consuming nature of housework (clothes, dishes, furniture and floors have to be washed by hand every day; food prepared three times a day) forces them to stay at home most of the day.

Thus, these women have developed ways to generate income from their own households. They sell snacks (*bolis, dulces, chicharrones, palomitas*), soft drinks, cakes, hand-made clothes and embroidery locally. They also sell fruit, herbs and plants from their backyard to petty traders. The small amount of money these women earn is considered their own, but it is always spent on the children (clothes, school supplies, medicine) or on household necessities (food, soap).

Women living in two-parent, simple family households which are engaged in craft work (carpentry, baking, auto repair) make a more important contribution to the household economy, since the production of commodities is a household enterprise in which all household members take part. Yet productive activities are not interchangeable. The social construction of trades as either masculine or feminine determines women's participation in the process of production. Auto repair and carpentry are strictly male occupations although in the last case women may participate in sales. In the case of baking, the work is done by both men and women, but only women bake cakes for special orders (e.g. sweet sixteen parties). Even though the women living in these households participate in the production of commodities, they are still solely responsible for reproductive work. Yet they are able to reconcile domestic

responsibilities with productive work because both sets of activities are carried out at home.

Two-parent, single family households which devote most of their energies to trading activities have a similar division of labor. The men travel to urban areas to sell pigs or buy clothes and agricultural products which are not produced in Pajapan at all (e.g. tomatoes) or are produced only for some months of the year (e.g. oranges), in order to resell them in Pajapan. The women do not leave town, but they take care of small businesses (stores which sell clothes, fruit, vegetables) at home while their husbands are absent. They are also in charge of reproductive work.

This is also the case of two-parent, single family households devoted to cattle raising activities. While the men (father and sons) take care of cattle raising operations, women (mother and daughters) look after small businesses (e.g. stores) at home. They usually hire someone to do domestic work for them, and have domestic appliances such as a stove, fridge, blender, iron and washing machine. These women are the only ones in Pajapan who claim that they do not have to do the time-consuming and labor-intensive housework most women in Pajapan do every day.

Like some women in two-parent, single family households, one of the three first wives of polygamous men in the sample also looks after a store at home. Since first wives live in households devoted to cash crop production and small-scale cattle raising activities, they also have access to income through their sons (who work with their fathers) even if their husbands are absent for long periods of time. Thus, first wives have access to income without having to leave their households, and their

income generating activities do not conflict with their domestic responsibilities. Although they do not hire anyone to help at home, these women also own some domestic appliances such as a stove, fridge, blender and iron.

Married women living in two-parent, multiple family households have more physical mobility than those living in two-parent, single family households. As pointed out earlier, multiple family households generally have access to land. Women living in this type of household share common spaces (e.g. washing space, kitchen, stock yard) and also take care of each other's children. The social character of reproductive work allows them to go to the fields an average of three times per week to participate in agricultural work, take lunch to other household members working in the fields, and fetch wood. Women may also generate income as petty traders, midwives and *hueseras* (women who fix bones) if old, or as domestic workers in town or in urban areas, if young and single.

Although women in this type of household leave their homes to go to the parcel or to generate income, they do it in such a way as not to damage their reputation. For example, married women with young children go in groups of two to fetch wood, or with their husbands if their labor is required in the fields. Older women living with married sons have more physical mobility because their domestic chores have been reduced or delegated to younger women. Like other regions of rural Mexico, daughters and daughters in-law relieve mature women (50 and older) of most daily chores (Nash, 1985:27; Rosenbaum, 1993:51; González Montes, 1994:184). Mature women can move more freely and go out alone because they are believed to be

beyond sexual escapades that would bring dishonor to the entire kinship group. In many societies in which the young bride must move into the household of her husband and his family, she is at first mistrusted. It is only as the mother of grown sons that she is viewed as assimilated into her kin group by marriage. She is finally considered beyond disloyalty... Thus, once a woman is the mother of adult offspring, she is no longer ... confined (Brown, 1985:3).

Hence, mature women can participate in petty trade without facing disapproval from the community. They can also derive recognition from prestigious positions (e.g. *mayordoma*) or occupations (e.g. midwife, *huesera*), which are in fact traditionally occupied by women with married children. Younger women heading single family households who are engaged in petty trade are not looked upon favorably.

4.1.1. Raising and Selling Domestic Animals

In addition to the income generating activities mentioned above, most women in two-parent households and first wives of polygamous men in the sample also raise and sell domestic animals such as pigs, chickens, turkeys and ducks. This provides these women with an opportunity to generate income from their own households without neglecting their domestic responsibilities. The average number of animals per household is five, but the number ranges from one or two to close to one hundred depending on the household. In my second set of interviews (see Chapter One or Appendix), I asked women who had recently sold one or more animals to describe the transaction and explain to me how they had spent the money they received.

Women in two-parent households who belong to class 1 (subsistence production and wage working) consider their animals a form of saving. They usually sell them in times of corn shortage, in case of sickness, or at

the beginning of the agricultural season. With the money they buy corn, other kind of food (beans, coffee, sugar, cooking oil, bread, vegetables), agricultural inputs, and medicine. If they have any money left, they buy more animals to start saving again. According to Buckles (quoted in Paré et al., 1993:19), 45 per cent of households in Pajapan buy corn from four to six months a year. A woman explains:

I raise animals so that I can buy food. When I need money I sell them and buy corn, rice, beans, a bar of soap, oil. My husband does not give me any money, he has nowhere to get it from. The poor *milpero* [land worker] leaves early in the morning and goes to work the *milpa*. While he is gone I have to look for food, I have to sell an animal so that when he comes home there is enough food to eat. If he goes to the *milpa* and I forget about food, what is he going to eat when he comes back? (A.E., born 1946; my translation).

Studies on the region have shown that animal raising and crop production are closely interrelated. García de León (quoted in Nahmad, 1989:43) shows that pig production decreased during the decades of cattle raising due to corn shortage. Stuart's estimates (1978:177-205) also reveal that chickens and pigs consume approximately 75 per cent as much maize as people in the *ejidos* under his scrutiny. Domestic animals are bought after large maize harvests and they are sold when maize stocks decline, or in years of poor harvests. The larger the amount of corn harvested every season, the easier it is for women to raise a larger number and variety of animals, which in turn makes it easier for household members to buy fertilizers for the next agricultural season.

First wives of polygamous men and women in two-parent households who belong to classes 2 (simple commodity production) and 3 (households which own capital) generally consider their domestic animals a form of investment. They keep the animals for longer periods of time and sell them

only when they know that they will be paid fairly (e.g. turkeys at Christmas). With the money they buy domestic appliances (stove, blender), construction materials to fix the house, school supplies, or clothes for all their children.

5. Marrying "Outside The House": Female Heads of Households and Second Wives of Polygamous Men

Most female heads of households in the sample have irregular marriage patterns. For example, two were kidnapped and raped by polygamous wealthy ranchers. One of them recounts:

I was taken away by force when I was fourteen. He already had two women. When my grandma found out what happened she didn't do anything, because the damage had already been done. She said: "Oh well, you will have to go to live with him. What else can we do?" (F.V., born 1957; my translation).

The other woman tells a similar story:

I was on my way to fetch wood when he took me by force. My father and grandfather became very angry when they found out about it and they sued him. He offered them a head of cattle but they didn't accept it. They said that they wanted reparation for the damage done. They wanted him put in jail, but he protected himself. He took me to Chinameca and we got married, so when he was caught they could not do anything to him (C.F., born 1960; my translation).

These two examples illustrate the major role that senior male kin play in the marriage process. In the first example, the young woman's grandmother had no choice but to accept what had happened, while in the second the rancher had to protect himself from the young woman's father and grandfather by marrying her. Both of these relationships ended shortly after, but unlike the first woman, the second one was later able to use the marriage contract to sue the rancher for having neglected their children. The man went to jail for a very short period of time (he was let

out on bail), but the woman managed to keep his house for herself and her children.

Stories like these are not uncommon among female heads of households. Four of the 13 female heads in the sample have been the second wives of polygamous men earlier in their lives, and eight of the 13 have lived with more than one man. This means that the majority of them have ended their first marriage. This is in sharp contrast to both women in two-parent households and first wives of polygamous men, most of whom have lived with only one man (Table 7.9).

Table 7.9. Number of women in Pajapan who have lived with more than one man (sample of 80 women)	
Women in Two-parent Households	7 of 56
First Wives	0 of 3
Female Heads	8 of 13
Second Wives	6 of 8
Total	21 of 80

Why do female heads of households have marriage patterns different from other women in the sample? The answer to this question lies in their premarriage work and histories. As shown in Table 7.10, almost half of the female heads in the sample (six of 13) grew up without a living or present father. These women make up one fourth of all the women without a living or present father in the sample. The mothers of these six women were involved in petty trade or domestic work. This means that the young women were left unsupervised for long periods of time or even had to "leave

their households" in order to help their mothers out. Consequently, the mothers of these women were not in a good position to negotiate their daughters' marriage and most of them made marriage arrangements outside the house, or somewhere in between both models.

Table 7.10. Number of women in Pajapan who grew up without a living or present father (sample of 80 women)	
Women in Two-parent Households	13 of 56
First Wives	0 of 3
Female Heads	6 of 13
Second Wives	4 of 8
Total	23 of 80

The second wives of polygamous men in the sample have marriage histories similar to those of female heads of households. Only two of the eight second wives in the sample became second wives in their first relationship. Five of the eight women ended their first marriage and became second wives in their second or even third relationship, and one did so after the death of her first husband. Again, this is in sharp contrast to both women in two-parent households and first wives of polygamous men, most of whom have lived with only one man (Table 7.9).

Like the female heads of households, half (four of eight) of the second wives in the sample grew up without a living or present father. Together with the female heads they make up almost half (10 of 23) of all the women in similar circumstances in the sample (Table 7.10). The mothers of three of these four second wives were involved in petty trade or domestic work.

When asked about their marriage histories, female heads of households and second wives of polygamous men give similar answers: their in-laws "did not want to give anything" (brideprice and provisions for the wedding) because they were women who "had already left their households". The mothers of these women had little bargaining power vis-à-vis the other party due to their and (sometimes) their daughters' involvement in income generating activities (petty trade and domestic work) which require physical mobility beyond male surveillance. Growing up without adult supervision and/or having left their households before marriage endangered these women's reputation and reduced their chances of a "proper" marriage.

The marriage process takes a different shape when the women's good morals are being questioned. Generally, brideprice, brideservice and wedding ceremonies are either reduced or eliminated altogether. No need is seen to express a woman's worth in the marriage transactions and a man does not have to prove that he is capable of supporting a family. In short, the mutual rights and obligations which regulate the exchanges between husband and wife are not clearly established in the marriage contract. This has an impact on the level of commitment that a man has towards his wife. In the words of a female head of household (petty trader) whose daughter is now also a female head (and also a petty trader), "when you don't ask for anything [during the marriage negotiations], men don't value your daughters. After a while they dump them, put them in the garbage."

This is also true for Nahua women in Xalatlalco, central Mexico. According to González Montes (in press:20), women who have not been properly married have fewer rights than "well proposed" women and are more

often subject to male abuse, because they lack the protection and support of male relatives.

5.1. Moving to Urban Centers, Returning to Pajapan

Female heads of households and second wives of polygamous men tend to go to urban areas to search for employment after ending their first marriage. As can be seen in Table 7.11, almost half of all the female heads and second wives in the sample have lived in urban centers for more than six months at some point in their lives, while less than one fifth of the women living in two-parent households and no first wives have done so.

Table 7.11. Number of women in Pajapan who have lived in urban areas for more than six months (sample of 80 women)	
Women in Two-parent Households	10 of 56
First Wives	0 of 3
Female Heads	6 of 13
Second Wives	3 of 8
Total	19 of 80

Female heads of households and second wives of polygamous men generally leave Pajapan on their own. In doing so, they reproduce their mother's work and family histories, and probably compromise the future of their daughters. By contrast, women in two-parent households moving to urban areas leave with their husbands and children, or while single to pursue formal education, take employment as domestic workers, or spend time with relatives.

Obviously, the nine female heads and second wives in the sample who have lived in urban centers returned to Pajapan, where they now live. Some women never return. I asked the 80 women of my sample whether they had any female relatives currently living in urban areas. I enquired about their relatives' marital status at the time of departure, their present one, reasons for leaving, and occupation. The information is presented in Tables 7.12 and 7.13.

Table 7.12. Women's Marital Status at the Time of Departure			
Separated	Married	Single	Total
26	20	23	69

Table 7.13. Female Employment in Urban Centers					
Domestic Work	Small Businesses	Studies	Pink Collar Jobs	Missing Data	Total
35	12	7	5	10	69

Most women leave after ending their first marriage (Table 7.12). They find it easier to support themselves and any children through paid labor, typically domestic work. Since their chances of remarrying "well" in Pajapan are slim after a first failed marriage, they also tend to remarry in urban areas. One third of these women (nine of 26) have done so.

Single women who migrate are either young women forced to take employment as domestic workers in order to help out at home, or the daughters of well-to-do ranchers who want to continue their studies. They migrate to urban areas because they cannot obtain paid work or continue their studies in Pajapan. Some of them end up getting married in urban

centers. One third (eight of 23) of the women who left Pajapan while still single are now married and they return to Pajapan only for short visits.

Table 7.13 shows the kind of employment that female migrants find in urban areas. The majority become domestic workers. Second in number are women who set up small stands at which they sell fruit, vegetables, chicken and clothes. Third in number are women who left Pajapan in order to continue their studies and finally those who obtained pink collar jobs. But these women are a minority. Even among young, single women, female migrants are more likely to become domestic workers. This is also true for married women who leave with their husbands and children and do paid domestic work in their own homes (e.g. washing clothes) or work for the day in different households.

As noted earlier, some of the women who leave for urban areas later return to Pajapan. The reasons for returning have to do with the quality of life in the city. A woman returned after being away for twenty years because she was tired of "hardship and loneliness". She explains her working conditions as a domestic worker:

I had to do everything by myself. I washed clothes, ironed them, did the grocery shopping, cleaned the two storey house, cooked, washed the van, the sidewalk, and even took care of the backyard. I lived in my employer's house because I did not have a place of my own. I grew older in their home (D.D., born 1944; my translation).

Another woman who decided to stop working as a domestic worker found a job in a restaurant. But there she worked just as hard and spent most of her earnings on rent. She recounts:

I earned ten pesos more, but worked three shifts. The first one was from five to nine or ten in the morning, the second from one to about three in the afternoon, and the third from six to about ten at night. Sometimes when I finished work there were no buses running which would take me home and the

owner of the restaurant would pay for my taxi, but when she was not there I had to walk all the way from downtown to my neighborhood (H.B., born 1953; my translation).

As noted earlier, the nine female heads and second wives in the sample who have lived in urban areas have returned to Pajapan. Once they returned they became either second wives of polygamous men or female heads of households who have been involved in several relationships. These unions do not require marriage ceremonies nor do they establish reciprocal rights and obligations between the man and the woman. Thus, these second wives of polygamous men and female heads of households expect little financial support from the father of their children. As the next sections will show, those who have land rights are engaged in subsistence production while those with no access to land resort to rural-urban petty trade or a combination of small-scale commercial activities (local petty trade, selling prepared food at home and at schools) in order to support their households.

5.2. Working Outside the Home: Female Heads of Households and Second Wives of Polygamous Men

Like the women living in two-parent households and the first wives of polygamous men in the sample, female heads of households and second wives also raise domestic animals at home in order to sell them. They use the money earned to buy corn, other kind of food, construction materials and school supplies. One of them explains:

I bought the turkeys for ten pesos [\$0 U.S.] each. Whenever I need money I sell them for 25 pesos. I paid 50 pesos for those two pigs. They already had children... I spend the money as I need, and when it is all gone I sell another animal. One has to figure out ways to get by, otherwise... (M.A., born 1941; my translation).

Most of the second wives and the female heads in the sample are also engaged in productive activities which require them to leave their households, and they have been involved in similar activities at different points in their lives. Since all of them live in single family households, they are also responsible for domestic work. Only one school teacher with a regular salary can afford to hire some help at home and has managed to buy some domestic appliances. Other women work double shifts which result in the deterioration of their health. The next three subsections will focus on the sexual division of labor within these women's households.

5.2.1. Female Heads of Households and Subsistence Agriculture

Three of the female-headed households in the sample are engaged in subsistence production. Unlike two-parent households, where work in the fields and at home is somehow distributed among women and men, female heads engaged in agriculture are responsible for both agricultural work and domestic work.

Even though women participate in agricultural production since they are young, people in Pajapan believe that women "do not know how to work the land". Like elsewhere in Latin America (see Phillips, 1989:305), female heads of households who work the land are believed to be stepping on traditionally male domains. However, these women redefine their gender identities by asserting their ability to "work like a man" and be both "mother and father" to their children.

I interviewed three female heads working the land in the summer of 1994, while collecting life histories. All three had recently received

land rights in Pajapan II. I asked them questions dealing with agricultural inputs, organization of work and number of hectares worked.

Two of the women do all the agricultural work by themselves, while the third gets help from her children. None of them can afford to hire peons. Moreover, two of them are raising very young children or grandchildren and are also responsible for domestic work. An *ejidataria* raising four grandchildren explains:

It is really hard for me to work the land. The children are on holidays from school and wake up at seven. Between eight and nine they eat breakfast and I cannot leave until ten. I walk under the hot sun all the way to the parcel. I have to take the kids with me because there is no one else to look after them. The parcel is about three kilometers from my home so it takes me one hour to get there; if I walk at a bit slower pace it takes me one hour and a half. So I get there at about noon and I have to come back home before sunset to prepare supper for the children. I'm always worried that they might get hurt at the parcel, because they are too young to help me out and just play (D.D., born 1944; my translation).

Given these conditions, these women cannot grow as much produce as they would like. They were each working less than half an hectare (six *tareas*) in the 1994 summer season. This is in sharp contrast with the rest of the farming population, which averages one hectare (16 *tareas*) per household (Daniel Buckles, personal communication).

These women also lack the time to attend assemblies and participate in *faenas* (communal work), so they have to hire someone to replace them. The woman raising four grandchildren explains:

Sometimes I can't go to a *faena* so I have to hire a peon to go in my place. If I can't find anyone, I give 15 pesos [\$5 U.S.] to the *compañeros* so that they can hire someone to replace me. I don't go, but I fulfil my duty (D.D., born 1944; my translation).

Female heads do not have enough money to invest in agricultural inputs such as seeds, herbicides, fertilizers, horses and wire fence. Only

one of the three women interviewed uses herbicides and none of them use fertilizers. This is in sharp contrast with the rest of the farming population, of which 80 per cent uses herbicides and 30 per cent uses fertilizers (Daniel Buckles, personal communication). Not using herbicides increases the women's work load, since they have to get rid of weeds by hand.

Yet these women produce enough to meet their family needs. As one of them puts it,

When I planted the bananas trees, they were really small. Now I have about forty trees. Thank God they are already producing. If I want to give the children bananas I take them from my trees, I don't have to buy them. I also have *chayotes* and green onions which I use to make soup for the children (H.B., born 1953; my translation).

The woman raising her grandchildren makes a similar point:

People tell me that I should sell my parcel because I can't work it, but I tell them that they are wrong. I don't use fertilizers or anything like that, but I have a good parcel and I get good harvests. Not much, but enough (D.D., born 1944; my translation).

5.2.2. Female Heads of Households and Petty Trade

Seven female heads of households in the sample are engaged in rural-urban (five) or local petty trade (two). Rural-urban petty traders go to the market of Morelos in Coatzacoalcas three times a week. They have been members of the CNC since 1989 and pay a monthly fee (\$3 U.S) to market authorities. They are not allowed to sell in the indoor market, so they stay in the street next to the front door. They put their products on the floor and sell by amount because they do not have scales. They do not have access to the market's warehouse either, so they try to sell as much as they can within the same day. Since they must pay an extra fee for each

large bag that they take in the bus and for someone to carry the bags, they tend to take small amounts of produce, and carry it in buckets or small boxes. Buckles (1989:176) estimates that "the cost of transportation by bus to the cities and towns of the region reduces their net income by as much as 25 to 35 per cent".

The local petty traders do not sell in the market of Coatzacoalcos. They sell door to door in Pajapan, nearby villages and the "rich" neighborhoods of Coatzacoalcos and Minatitlán. They sell vegetables, fruit, fish, seafood, bread, clothes, *tamales*, *tortillas* and Avon products.

5.2.3. Gender and Trade: Men and Women Compared

Men are also engaged in trading activities. Yet the occupation is a gendered one in various ways. Men and women sell different products and use different means of transportation. Overall, men have access to broader commercial networks and a greater ability to make investments than women.

There are some striking similarities between trading practices in 15th century Tenochtitlan and contemporary Pajapan. As shown in Chapter Three, women in the imperial city sold products for daily needs in the market and "on the corners", while men were engaged in long distance commerce and sold luxury items in the palaces of the nobility. In other words, most petty traders were women and most merchants were men. Although female petty traders were vital in the distribution of products for daily needs, they had no political or economic power.

Men and women in Pajapan also sell different goods. Men who go to urban areas usually sell pigs and agricultural products (sweet potato,

arum, *chayote*, *jicama*, hot pepper, seasonal fruit). Local male traders sell fruit and vegetables not available in Pajapan, clothes and beer. Women who go to urban areas sell fowl, fruit and vegetables (e.g. *quelite*, *nopales*). Local female traders sell vegetables, fruit, fish, seafood, bread, prepared food, clothes and Avon products.

As well, men and women in Pajapan carry out their commercial activities in different ways. Men not only sell agricultural goods and pigs in the nearby cities, but they also do the reverse operation: they buy in cities (typically Minatitlán) products which are not available in Pajapan in order to resell them in the village, usually in commercial outlets which are located within their homes. Like Aztec men, men in Pajapan are engaged in "long distance trade" and have access to larger commercial networks than women. For example, men who sell clothes in Pajapan may go as far as Puebla to purchase them. Some of them own trucks or can at least afford to rent one to transport their merchandise. Those who sell agricultural goods use large bags to carry their produce.

By contrast, women buy goods from producers in Pajapan and other nearby villages and sell them in the cities. Those who sell clothes and Avon products locally receive their merchandise from regional male distributors. Women sell within a relatively short area because their domestic responsibilities prevent them from being absent from their homes for long periods of time. Since they do not know how to drive, they either walk or take the bus to go from one place to another. Female petty traders carry small amounts of produce on the head, in buckets or in small boxes.

Thus, men in Pajapan are more mobile than women and have greater access to commercial networks. Unlike Aztec men, they cannot become

members of the nobility through trading activities. But they can afford to make larger investments and therefore obtain more profits than women.

Local male traders are also more likely than female traders to sell luxury items (e.g. beer) and agricultural goods which are not produced in Pajapan at all (e.g. tomatoes) or are produced only during certain months of the year (e.g. oranges). Both men and women sell products for daily needs, but men are more likely to sell agricultural goods produced in their own *milpa*. Thus, men do not have to make a previous investment because they are marketing their own product.

By contrast, most female petty traders have no access to land or do not have the time or energy to work it. They must buy the produce that they sell as well as the food which is consumed in their own households. Hence, their earnings are spent on basic necessities and may be reinvested in small amounts of produce for future sales. Like the women of Tenochtitlan, female petty traders in Pajapan are vital in the distribution of products for daily needs, but have no economic or political power.

Women's involvement in petty trade is considered inappropriate in both societies. Fathers in Aztec society advised their daughters not to sell "on the corners". Similarly, a woman's reputation in Pajapan depends on their seclusion at home and village. The daughters of female petty traders see their chances of a "proper" marriage reduced due to their mothers' (and sometimes their own) participation in an activity which requires physical mobility beyond male supervision. Due to the conditions of their marriage, these women are likely to become second wives of

polygamous men or female heads of households, and end up involved in petty trade just like their mothers.

5.2.4. Selling Prepared Food at Home and Schools: Second Wives of Polygamous Men

Three second wives in the sample sell prepared food at home or at food stands in schools. These women do not comply with the notion of the "good" woman who is expected to make meals only for her husband and close relatives: most of their customers are male school teachers from outside Pajapan who make special arrangements to pay for a certain number of meals at the end of the month. Without exception, all the women heading restaurants or food stands in Pajapan are either second wives of polygamous men, women separated from their husbands, or single women.

Although living with ranchers, second wives and their husbands maintain separate income streams. This situation has a positive side because it gives women the opportunity to control and administer their own income. Yet the situation also results in the enrichment of men at the expenses of women, as described in Chapter Five. All of the earnings of male ranchers are allocated to cattle operations while women obtain what they need for household necessities (food, clothes, children's schooling) from their own businesses. Cattle is used for household needs only in case of emergency, such as serious sickness or death.

For example, a second wife supports her household by feeding school teachers at home and running a food stand at the local high school. She has managed to buy a cow and three calves (which are looked after by her father) with her earnings, and is planning to open a bank account of her

own. She received land in Pajapan II by attending assemblies and by paying for "cooperations", and hires peons to work her *milpa*. She explains:

With the money I earn I hire peons to work my *milpa*. On Saturdays and Sundays I check how they are doing. I want my *milpa* to be clean so that it yields as much as possible. But I only plant in the *temporal* season [June-September] because I don't have time to look after the *milpa* during the *tapachole* season [November-January] and birds eat the harvest (P.J., born 1960; my translation).

The second wife of G.G.'s youngest and wealthiest son is not in the sample of 80 women but I interviewed her on another visit to Pajapan. The woman "does not even know" when her husband sells cattle. She opened a mill and a store five years ago and a second mill two years ago. With her profits she not only covers household needs but has also invested in cattle. She owns twenty head which she plans to sell in the future in order to pay for some changes that she wants to make to her house. Although her husband looks after her cattle, she considers them hers and has marked them with her own brand.

As noted earlier, women in two-parent households and first wives of polygamous men also look after small businesses and raise domestic animals. However, these women do not own cattle separately from their husbands. They do not invest independently from their husbands in the *milpa* nor do they keep different bank accounts. The next section will explore the ways in which women of different status negotiate access to resources within their households.

6. Status and Gender Roles: Women's Negotiation of The Marriage Contract

As noted earlier, the marriage contract establishes the set of rights and obligations which regulate the interaction and exchanges

between husband and wife. Women of different status articulate the marriage contract in different ways. The next two subsections will show that first wives of polygamous men and women living in two-parent households make material claims by drawing on their roles as "respectable" women who "stay at home". By contrast, second wives of polygamous men and female heads of households resist dominant gender ideology by reconciling their roles as mothers with that of income earners or agricultural producers working outside their households.

6.1. "That is his duty": First Wives of Polygamous Men and Women in Two-Parent Households

As noted in Chapter Four, polygyny in Pajapan has existed as long as anyone can remember. A first wife can accept her husband taking a second wife as long as the conjugal arrangement established between herself and her husband is in no way altered. Cultural beliefs sanction a woman's duty to prepare meals only for her husband and a man's responsibility to provide food for his first wife. In contemporary Pajapan, first wives tolerate second wives if they do not cause too much expense and do not threaten their access to the household's land rights, businesses and food stuff.

Men also believe that as long as their first wife is provided for, they have a right to establish new households. A second wife tells about the advice given by her uncle to her husband when she told her uncle that her husband was involved with yet another woman:

The other day my husband and I were at my uncle's and I told him: "I'm very angry. I need things at home and he [her husband] is spending money on another woman." My uncle said to him: "That's not right. First, you have to make sure my niece

has all she needs, and then you can do whatever you want" (T.I., born 1959; my translation).

Yet second wives do involve some expenditure. For one thing, the man has to "build a house" for them. The monetarization of the economy has made it difficult for men to establish new households without incurring some expense. Even if their second wives are hard-working women, men still have to buy some furniture and materials to build the house.

First wives can accept this first investment as long as second wives do not draw on additional household resources. This means that second wives are expected to support their households with their own income. If this is not the case, the first wife may decide to "go her own way" and end the relationship with her husband. Yet first wives are unlikely to do so because they could lose the house and the land right, and harm their sons' relationship with their fathers. Second wives have much less to lose, since they have no access to the parcel anyway and are used to generating their own income. As will be seen shortly, second wives are more likely to end a relationship than first wives.

As noted earlier, women of different status articulate the marriage contract in different ways. First wives resort to the marriage contract to enforce male responsibility towards their children. When I asked a first wife whether her husband had paid for their children schooling, she replied:

He paid for everything. It is his duty since he is the man of the house. Only if the father dies does the mother take care of everything. If the father is alive, he is responsible for his children (H.H., born 1953; my translation).

Although this woman feels that her husband is not contributing as much as he should to the household maintenance (he keeps most of the money he

makes), she knows that he recently hired peons to plant one hectare of corn, beans and bananas in his parcel, and that this produce will be going to her household once it is harvested. She also runs a store at home and when she asks her husband for money she receives more than her husband's second wife does (50 or 100 pesos compared to 20 or 30).

First wives also draw on the marriage contract in order to define their roles as wives and mothers. They believe that by "staying at home" they protect their own and their daughters' reputation. A first wife states:

When you know that your man is going to other women you feel bad. Some women ask me: "Why do you stay at home, if your husband is enjoying himself with other women?" ... But here I am, asking God to look after me and my daughters. I suffer and cry a lot, but God gives me strength, because if I leave my house, what will happen to my daughters? (H.H., born 1953; my translation).

This type of attitude is seen positively by the community since the woman is regarded as virtuous. A man explains:

If a woman is faithful to her husband even though she knows that he is sleeping with thousand of women, she is not criticized, quite the contrary. She is well spoken of. People say that she is patient, virtuous and honorable. A woman's status and reputation increases if her husband is a womanizer and she puts up with it (V.D., born 1924; my translation).

Thus, first wives derive respect from the fact that they "stay at home". The real story however is that they can afford to do so, since they have access to property and income through their sons. By behaving like exemplary wives and mothers, first wives of polygamous men maintain their access to property (land rights and house lot) and income. They do not harm their sons' relationship with their fathers nor do they alter their own income generating activities at home.

Women living in two-parent households have also developed ways of generating income from their own homes for similar reasons. They too are expected to behave as respectable women. But the fact that many of these women live in single family households makes it more difficult for them to search for income outside their homes, even if they wanted to. Since they are responsible for reproductive work, they need to stay at home and find ways of generating income which do not conflict with their domestic responsibilities. As shown in section four, women living in two-parent, single family households who are responsible for young children have been able to reconcile "proper" motherhood with income generating activities by selling domestic animals, local snacks and produce from their backyard within their own homes. Mature women (50 years of age or older) living in two-parent, multiple family households have more physical mobility. They delegate domestic chores to younger women and engage in rural-urban or local petty trade, midwifery or other health-related activities (e.g. *huesera*) without facing disapproval from the community.

6.2. "Think of him as a friend of the family": Second Wives of Polygamous Men and Female Heads of Households

As shown in section five, most second wives in the sample have paid work trajectories previous to their current marriage and continue to generate income in their present relationship. Since conjugal rights and obligations were never clearly defined, these women do not expect much financial support from the father of their children nor do they resort to the marriage contract to enforce male responsibility towards themselves and their children. The second wife of H.H.'s husband (see quotations in the previous subsection) explains:

He gives me no money at all. I sell food here [her home] and at the high school and that's how I make ends meet. If I ask him for money, he gives me 20 or 30 pesos if I'm lucky. If I don't ask, he forgets about me and does not even buy me a bar of soap. He comes every two or three days as a visitor and he's impatient with the children. Think of him as a friend of the family... I wonder what would become of me if I was unable to work (R.J., born 1960; my translation).

As opposed to this man's first wife, this second wife hires her own peons to plant corn and beans in the parcel that she recently fought for in the new *ejido* (see subsection 5.2.4 of this chapter). She also owns a cow and two calves which are looked after by her father.

Second wives do not draw on the marriage contract to challenge their husbands' behavior. If their husbands establish a new household, second wives do not insist on their staying at home, but quite the opposite: they threaten to leave for good. A second wife who recently found out that her husband was involved with another woman relates:

Not too long ago I said to myself: "enough is enough." I told him: "I'm leaving. I'm taking only the youngest child with me, you keep the other two. I don't care what you do with them, whether you raise them or give them away. I'm taking the youngest one because he needs me the most. I'm going to Mexico City. There I'll leave the boy with my aunt when I go to work. They pay 30 pesos [\$10 U.S.] in rich houses for only a couple of hours of work. My cousins work there, I know." He said: "No, don't go. It's my fault, I'm a womanizer. I promise you, there won't be too many more" (T.I., born 1959; my translation).

Although this woman has not left her husband, some second wives do leave them. As stated earlier, second wives are more likely to end a relationship than first wives. Twelve women in the sample have been second wives. Eight continue to be so, while the other four are now female heads of households. As one of them pointed out, they "have always worked" and know they can support themselves and their children on their own.

Some second wives may choose to stay in the relationship. When asked why, some women referred to their sexual needs. For example, one woman explained that she had been bewitched by the man in question and could not resist him; others pointed out that sexual abstinence is unhealthy, and ruled out masturbation and other forms of sexual gratification.⁴ Other women referred to the importance of having a man around to discipline their sons, or to some other benefits derived from the relationship, for example, having their own house. Stories are told about second wives of polygamous men who have been evicted from their homes because they did not want to receive or serve the man who "built the house" for them. Some second wives have managed to make the man sign a document stating that the house belongs to their youngest son. A second wife explains:

He can't take the house because he signed a document stating that the house belongs to my son. I was selling beer and he wanted me to stop so I told him: "OK, I'll stop, but you sign the paper". And he did (R.J., born 1960; my translation).

Female heads of households relate to men in similar ways. They prefer to have occasional encounters rather than living with one for good. When asked why, most explained that entering a new relationship opened up the possibility for the mistreatment of their children. They also stated that having a man in the house means losing authority in household decision-making and an increase in their workload, without getting much in return. A female head working the land recounts her unsuccessful attempt to live with a man:

⁴ This may have to do with Nahua cosmology which divides humans and objects according to their heat qualities- the reign of the cold and the reign of the hot. Like the *milpa* earth that needs water in order to produce, women's hot bodies need men's sexual fluids to cool them down through sexual intercourse.

He used to leave for the fields at six in the morning so he wanted me to wake up at four to feed him and prepare his lunch. I also had to wash his clothes and those of all my grandchildren. He came home at around six in the evening and expected dinner to be ready. It was very hard for me, too much work. I was wearing myself out. Where was I supposed to find all that energy? On top of this, he didn't give me any money, not even to buy a bar of soap! I was supposed to wash his clothes but he wouldn't even buy me a bar of soap. So he stayed only for two months and I told him to leave (D.D., born 1944; my translation).

I asked her whether she preferred to live alone. She replied:

Yes. I can't see myself married, I'm used to being alone. I feel uncomfortable when I'm living with a man. I'm very happy on my own, I sleep well, I dream in peace (D.D., born 1944; my translation).

The only female head in the sample with formal education beyond primary school (she is a school teacher) tells a similar story. She did not have to work for income when she was younger, but she had to "leave her household" and village in order to continue her studies. When she returned to Pajapan she was too old (mid-twenties) to get married. She established her own household and has had several partners. Although few in numbers, it is possible that other women with formal education continue this trend in the future. Young women who have attended high school or have pursued post-secondary education are either marrying older (in their early twenties) or staying single.

Second wives and female heads do not resort to the marriage contract to define their roles as wives and mothers. Rather, they attempt to reconcile motherhood with the fact that they generate income outside their households or work the land "like a man". They portray themselves as hard-working women capable of "getting ahead" and supporting their children, and refer to the women who stay home as "lazy". In doing so, these women challenge traditional gender roles and redefine "proper" motherhood.

By asserting their right to "leave their households" to generate income or work the land "like a man", these women justify their involvement in low-paid and labor-intensive activities when in fact they could not be doing otherwise. But they also affirm themselves. Even though they resent their working conditions, their double burden and male financial irresponsibility, these women know that they are economically independent. Like women in similar situations (see Benería and Roldán, 1987:159), second wives and female heads in Pajapan have gained in autonomy and self-respect because they know that they can support their households by themselves.

Pajapan's double and contradictory reputation as a town where men are financially supported by women and where women only want money from men has to do with these differences among women in terms of status and class. "Respectable" women (typically the first wives of polygamous men and women living in two-parent households) limit their income generating activities to their homes in order to protect their reputation. They draw on "appropriate" gender roles implicit in the marriage contract to ensure their access to resources. On the other hand, second wives of polygamous men and female heads of households forced into productive activities outside their homes (petty trade, subsistence agriculture, selling prepared food at home and at school stands) challenge traditional gender roles and redefine "proper" motherhood by portraying themselves as hard-working women capable of supporting their children by themselves and getting ahead.

While first wives of polygamous men and most women living in two-parent households made marriage arrangements inside the house, female

heads of households and second wives of polygamous men made marriage arrangements outside the house. First wives and women in two-parent households protect their reputation by staying at home. In doing so, they secure their access to property and in some cases cattle. On the other hand, female heads and second wives define their roles as wives and mothers by drawing on their ability to generate income outside their households and work the land on their own.

7. Conclusions

This chapter has examined the household labor process in contemporary Pajapan. Emphasis was placed on the ways in which differences of class, status and age shape women's choices for income generating activities and articulation of the marriage contract.

The process of differentiation among women was seen in a dynamic fashion. It was shown that the circumstances of a woman's marriage (which are shaped by her family history and work trajectory prior to marriage) determine her class position after marriage. Women who now live in wealthy households did not generate income outside their households before marriage, and they made marriage arrangements inside the house. Today, these women limit their income generating activities to their own homes. By contrast, women who are presently involved in productive activities outside their homes (petty trade, selling prepared food at home or at schools, subsistence agriculture) have a paid work trajectory previous to their present marriage. These women made marriage arrangements outside the house or in between both models.

Women who generate income from their own homes are usually the first wives of polygamous men or women living in two-parent households. They argue that it is "stupid" to earn a living instead of forcing their husbands to do so, and limit their income generating activities to their homes. These women draw on "appropriate" gender roles implicit in the marriage contract to ensure their access to resources.

On the other hand, women who leave their households on a regular basis in order to generate income or work the land are usually the second wives of polygamous men or female heads of households. They argue that it is "stupid" to "sit at home" waiting for their husband to provide for their children, and portray themselves as hard-working women capable of supporting their children and getting ahead. In doing so, these women challenge traditional gender roles and redefine "proper" motherhood.

CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has examined the changes in women's work and status resulting from the introduction of capitalist development in Pajapan, a Nahuatl community of southern Veracruz, Mexico. Previous research on the region (García de León, 1976; Stuart, 1978; Martínez Morales et al., 1978, 1982; Martínez Morales, 1983; González Cruz et al., 1983; Sedeño and Becerril, 1985; Nahmad, 1989; Caouette, 1989; Chevalier and Buckles, in press) has shown that the expansion of the cattle industry in Pajapan resulted in a decline in subsistence production, the monetarization of the local economy, class differentiation and changes in native forms of government and family organization. The material presented in this dissertation contributes to the literature on the Gulf Nahuas in various ways.

First, the study highlights the gender dimension of capitalist development in Pajapan. It shows that senior male kin's control of household property and command over the labor of other household members led to capitalist accumulation in male hands. Women living with polygamous ranchers contributed to capital accumulation but were alienated from land and cattle wealth. Other women also experienced an increasing separation from the land and were pushed into low-paid and labor-intensive income generating activities, such as urban domestic work and rural-urban petty trade. Women compelled to end their first marriage were drawn to migrate to urban centers where they usually became domestic workers, while female heads of households became involved in rural-urban petty trade. Finally, women in monogamous relationships saw a marked decline in their participation in subsistence agriculture and became increasingly confined

to the household sphere. These women developed new ways to generate income from their own households.

Second, a major theme of this dissertation has been the processes of differentiation among women themselves. Land shortage, changes in the household labor process, state intervention in land reform, different educational levels, the monetarization of the economy, shifts in local class relations and in traditional gender roles -- all of these factors influence what it means to be female in Pajapan.

The study looks at these processes of differentiation in a dynamic fashion. It shows that the circumstances of a woman's marriage (which are shaped by her family history and work trajectory prior to marriage) determine her class position after marriage. Women who now live in wealthy households did not generate income outside their households before marriage, and they made marriage arrangements "inside the house". Today, these women limit their income generating activities to their own homes. By contrast, women who are presently involved in productive activities outside their homes (petty trade, selling prepared food at home or at schools, subsistence agriculture) have a paid work trajectory previous to their present marriage. These women made marriage arrangements "outside the house" or somewhere in between both kind of arrangements.

Third, this dissertation has analyzed women's responses to capitalist development by exploring women's strategies to defend their land rights in land distribution processes as well as their negotiation of gender roles in everyday life. It shows that women drew on their roles as guardians of young children and property mediators between a man and his son defined by the Mexican state in order to receive land during the two

land distribution processes of Pajapan (1981 and 1992). Similarly, women with a vested interest in protecting their reputation limit their income generating activities to their own homes and draw on "appropriate" gender roles implicit in the marriage contract to secure their access to household resources. By contrast, women forced into income generating activities or agricultural production outside their homes portray themselves as hard-working women capable of raising their children and getting ahead. In so doing, they challenge traditional gender roles and redefine "proper" motherhood.

The dissertation adds to a growing body of literature which is critical of the representation of Third World women as passive victims of economic change (see Amos and Parmar, 1984; Amadiume, 1985; Moore, 1988; Nash, 1988; Stamp, 1989; Phillips, 1990; Mohanty, 1991; Parpart, 1991). The study looks at women as social actors who are constrained by wider structures and yet are actively involved in the constant definition and redefinition of gender roles. Gender relations in Pajapan are constantly constituted and reconstituted in relation to other social, cultural, economic and historical arrangements, and women are active subjects in this process.

Fourth, the present dissertation critically examines the role of preexisting social relations in shaping women's work, status, and access to land, labor and income. In other words, the development process is viewed in conjunction with preexisting social relations which shape and are in turn shaped by that process. The study shows that the household composition and organization of pre-capitalist Pajapan shaped women's status and access to resources in the new context of capitalist

development. Distinct marriage and residence arrangements interacted with other divisions among women- for example, class divisions- and resulted in the further differentiation of women.

In this sense, the present study has been particularly careful to investigate the construction of sexual difference within the particular context of Pajapan. Following Mohanty (1991), the analysis of gender relations in the village did not assume the universal subordination of women, but rather focused on the production of women as socioeconomic political groups within a particular cultural and historical context.

Finally, the present study has attempted to give women a voice in the research process. Although women were not actively involved in the design of the research instruments and data analysis for various reasons (see Chapter One), their testimonies are a central part of this dissertation. This is the first piece of work in the region which documents women's experiences in a systematic way.

This dissertation has thus combined the conceptual and analytical tools of two bodies of literature: feminist anthropology and feminist political economy. The notion of the household as conceived in both theoretical perspectives has been of particular relevance to this study. On the one hand, feminist anthropology sheds new light on the study of gender relations by examining how membership in a household affects "people's access to resources, obligations to others, and understandings of their options" (Berry quoted in Carney and Watts, 1990:217). Scholars using this approach have shown that the household composition and organization have a direct impact on women's ability to gain access to resources, labor and income (Moore, 1988; Roberts, 1991; see Whitehead,

1984; Carney and Watts, 1990). On the other hand, feminist political economy shows that women's position within the household is related to their position outside the household. For example, migration is influenced by the sexual division of labor at home and at the same time has a significant impact on household dynamics and women's roles (Benería and Roldán, 1987:4-5). Following this approach, the present study has examined the impact of new patterns of household composition and inter-household class differentiation on the sexual division of labor at home and women's position within the household.

This dissertation is a valuable source of information for the SSM Project and other NGO's working in the region. It contains systematic data on women's access to resources, patterns of female land use, patterns of female income generating activities and cycles of female poverty. The success of the chicken farm described in Chapter One permits the way to similar projects both in the region and in other parts of Mexico.

This is not to say that I have written the definitive statement on women in the region. Many aspects of gender relations have remained unexplored. For example, women's relationship to their changing environment was barely touched upon and requires further investigation. As homemakers, women constantly use the resources available to them. Any project willing to promote sustainable development in the region must take women's relationship to the environment seriously.

This study also falls short in analyzing alternative bases of women's power. Other works on gender relations in rural Mexico (Stephen, 1991; Rosenbaum, 1993) have shown that in spite of the existing separation between civil and religious responsibilities in the political system,

women derive considerable prestige and influence in the community from organizing *mayordomías*. Although very few and mostly old people participate in such festivities in Pajapan, it is still worth asking how women perceive their roles in these events and whether they are a source of authority and power for women. The role that other forms of organized religion (CEBES, protestant groups) play in creating alternative bases for women's power and in shaping women's identities also requires further study.

Finally, many of the issues discussed in this dissertation can be further explored by examining the ways in which Nahua cosmology translates into social practices. For example, the acts of planting and harvesting corn are charged with gender symbolism where the peasant is male and the land is female. The relationship between the male peasant and the female land is parallel to sexual intercourse where males "open" the earth in order to plant the corn seed. What are the implications of this analogy for women's ability to own, inherit and make use of land? Similarly, Nahua cosmology separates humans and objects according to their heat qualities—the reign of the cold and the reign of the hot. Women's hot bodies need men's sexual fluids to cool them down through sexual intercourse. What are the implications of this for women's sexuality? These are some of the questions which other studies can tackle insightfully, without slighting the importance of feminist analyses of native political economy.

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APPENDIX
VISITS TO THE FIELD

Date	Activity
April and May, 1991	Identify research topic after informal conversations with different women
Jan. Feb. and March, 1993	Interviews with 80 women (see attached questionnaire)
May and June, 1993	Interviews with 40 women on household decision-making practices
July and August, 1993	Interviews with land administrators of Pajapan and Pajapan II; archival research
July and August, 1994	Interviews with 25 women and three men (oral histories)

QUESTIONNAIRE (N=80)

I.- EDAD Y EDUCACION

1.- Edad

2.- Escuela

a) ¿Hasta qué año?

b) ¿Razón para dejar de estudiar?

c) ¿Sabe leer y escribir?

3.- Número y sexo de hermanos(as)

4.- Escolaridad de sus hermanos(as)

5.- Escolaridad de sus padres

II.- MATRIMONIO

6.- Estado civil actual:

- a) casada por lo civil o la iglesia
- b) arrejuntada
- c) viuda
- d) separada
- e) soltera (fin del cuestionario)

7.- Edad de ella y del primer marido al casarse

8.- Tipo de matrimonio:

- a) estilo Pajapan (describir)
- b) civil
- c) religioso
- d) se huyó
- e) mezcla (describir)

9.- ¿Sigue con él?

a) (No) ¿Desde cuándo? ¿Por qué?

10.- ¿Ha vivido con otro(s) hombre(s)?

11.- Edad de otro(s) hombre(s)

12.- Describir matrimonio con otros hombres

13.- Escolaridad de marido actual

14.- Otras mujeres del marido actual

15.- Otros hijos del marido actual

16.- Edad, estado civil, escolaridad, ocupación y lugar de residencia de todos los hijos de la mujer

III.- HISTORIA FAMILIAR

17.- De niña vivió con:

- a) padre
- b) madre
- c) hermanos
- d) hermanas
- e) abuelos (de qué lado?)
- f) tías (")
- g) tíos (")
- h) primos (")
- i) otros (describir)

18.- En la misma casa antes de casarse

19.- Fuera de Pajapan antes o después de casarse

20.- En zonas urbanas (dónde, por qué, por cuánto tiempo) antes o después de casarse

21.- Parientes femeninos en ciudades

22.- Cuando usted era niña, su padre se dedicaba a (colocar en orden de importancia y verificar cambios en el tiempo):

- a)Hacer milpa
- b)Cuidar ganado
- c)Cuidar otros animales (cuáles)
- d)Trabajar para ganar dinero (cómo)
- e)Vender productos (cuáles, dónde, cuánto, cada cuándo)
- f)Cazar animales (cuáles, dónde)
- g)Pescar (qué, dónde)
- h)Traer agua
- i)Traer leña

23.- Su madre se dedicaba a (orden de importancia, cambios en el tiempo):

- a)Hacer milpa
- b)Cuidar ganado
- c)Cuidar otros animales (cuáles)
- d)Trabajar para ganar dinero (cómo)
- e)Vender productos
- f)Cazar
- g)Pescar
- h)Tejer
- i)Quehacer (describir)
- j)Traer leña
- k)Traer agua

24.- Otros miembros de la vivienda (revisar actividades, ponerlas en orden de importancia y describir cambios con el paso del tiempo)

25.- Actividades actuales del padre y la madre

26.- Parcela del padre o de la madre

27.- Parcela de hermanos y hermanas

28.- Otras mujeres del padre, maridos de la madre

IV.- PERFIL ECONOMICO DE LA VIVIENDA

29.- Ahora vive con (edad, sexo, escolaridad, si han vivido fuera de Pajapan):

- a) esposo
- b) suegros
- c) padres
- d) cuñados(as)
- e) hermanos(as)
- f) hijos(as)
- g) sobrinos(as)
- h) nietos(as)
- i) otros (describir)

30.- En su casa, quién se dedica a (colocar por frecuencia y orden de importancia; verificar cambios en el tiempo):

- a) Hacer milpa (qué productos)
- b) Cuidar el ganado (cuánto)
- c) Cuidar otros animales (cuáles)
- d) Trabajar para conseguir dinero (en qué, cuánto a la semana)
- e) Vender para conseguir dinero (qué, de dónde, en dónde, cada cuándo, cuánto dinero a la semana)
- f) Pescar
- g) Cazar
- h) Leñar
- i) Quehacer

31.- Número de derechosos en la vivienda (Pajapan, Pajapan II)

32.- Casa (quién la hizo, de quién es). Tienen:

- a) agua corriente
- b) luz
- c) televisión
- d) refrigerador
- e) estufa
- f) camas o catres
- g) ropero
- h) mesas y sillas
- i) plancha
- j) licuadora
- k) grabadora
- l) otros

33.- Otras casas, camionetas, caballos, negocios

V.- TRAYECTORIA DE TRABAJO PERSONAL

34.- Conocimientos sobre el trabajo de la miipa

35.- Conocimientos sobre el cuidado del ganado

36.- Ha generado ingresos a través de alguna de estas actividades (investigar estado civil, año, duración, lugar, motivos):

- a) Vender productos de la milpa (propia o ajena)
- b) Vender empanadas
- c) Vender tamales o tortillas
- d) Vender dulces, bolis, palomitas, chicharrones
- e) Trabajar de cocinera
- f) Trabajar de empleada
- g) Trabajar de partera, huesera
- h) Hacer ropa ajena
- i) Lavar ropa ajena
- j) Vender hierbas del solar (propio o ajeno)
- k) Vender animales del solar (" " ")
- l) Vender fruta del solar (" " ")
- m) Atender puesto, tienda o negocio propio

37.- Con el dinero que gana, compra (entrar en detalle):

- a) comida
- b) jabón
- c) ropa
- d) muebles
- e) aparatos eléctricos
- f) otros

VI.- RELIGION

38.- Católica, Protestante, otra, ninguna

39.- Va al templo/ a la iglesia (frecuencia)

40.- Mayordomías (frecuencia)

END

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FIN