



Class Conflict and Cacique in Chan Kom

Author(s): Victor Goldkind

Source: *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Winter, 1966), pp. 325-345

Published by: University of New Mexico

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3629457>

Accessed: 20/04/2009 04:26

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=unm>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of New Mexico is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

SOUTHWESTERN JOURNAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY

VOLUME 22

● NUMBER 4 ●

WINTER

● 1966



CLASS CONFLICT AND CACIQUE IN CHAN KOM

VICTOR GOLDKIND

INTRODUCTION

ROBERT REDFIELD'S PREFERRED PROTOTYPE of the non-primitive village community, whether conceptualized as *folk*, *little*, or *peasant*, was the Yucatecan village of Chan Kom, which Redfield (1950:38, 86-87) interpreted as characterized by "its homogeneity and its classlessness," as basically "a community of one kind of people: rural, Maya toilers in the milpa . . ." i.e., cultivators of corn. A previous analysis (Goldkind 1965) of the two published studies of Chan Kom (Redfield and Villa 1934; Redfield 1950) led to a contrary conclusion: heterogeneity deriving from social stratification as conceptualized by Max Weber (1946) was interpreted to have been an important factor in the social life and history of the community during the period covered by Redfield's two studies. In the summer of 1964 field work in Yucatan uncovered additional evidence to support this reinterpretation as well as new information on a persistent conflict situation in Chan Kom with respect to position in the system of social stratification, i.e., conflict over the means to economic wealth, social prestige, preferred style of life, and political power.¹ This conflict was more important during the period treated by Redfield than appears in his account, and afterwards it became more intensified than is consistent with his interpretation, culminating in the rise to power of Redfield's main informant who now dominates the economic, social, and political life of Chan Kom.

Redfield (1950:92-94) did discuss conflict in Chan Kom in connection with

¹ My trip to Yucatan was supported by a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, to which great appreciation is expressed. Many thanks are also due to Alfredo Barrera Vasquez, Director of the *Instituto Yucateco de Historia y Antropología*, for his many kindnesses which immeasurably facilitated this study; to Hector Mora Navarrete, Director of *Educación Federal* in the State of Yucatan, for his gracious cooperation; to Elly Marby Yerves Ceballos, Chief of *Misión Cultural Rural No. 4* in Kaua, for his valuable assistance; and to Henry T. Lewis for helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

the coming of Protestantism to the village in the early 1930's, and he related this to "a factional division that had long existed within the community. . . ." But usually he did not give importance to conflict in discussing aspects of the social life of Chan Kom and never interpreted conflict as deriving from class differences in the community, the occurrence of which he explicitly denied. Redfield's usual interpretation of the various aspects of the sociocultural life of Chan Kom emphasized consensus and harmony within a framework of classless homogeneity, in keeping with his conceptualizations of the *folk*, *little*, and *peasant* communities which he believed to represent the typical characteristics of this type of village community.

The reinterpretation of Redfield's view of Chan Kom offered here is very similar to that provided by Oscar Lewis regarding Redfield's interpretation of Tepoztlán. In his well-known restudy of that community, Lewis (1951:432) likewise found that Redfield overemphasized "evidence of homogeneity rather than heterogeneity . . . unity and integration rather than tensions and conflict."

The present paper is based mainly on data obtained in July and August of 1964 from interviews with about ten members of the Cime family, including Redfield's main informant, Don Eustaquio Cime (Don Eus), and some thirty-five other informants.² About a third of the latter were urban professionals, mostly rural teachers, whose activities had brought them into contact with the people of Chan Kom. Another third were residents of villages located within ten miles of Chan Kom and for whom Chan Kom was the nearest municipal (*municipio*) capital and marketing center. Another third were former residents of Chan Kom who had migrated and were interviewed in their new places of residence. These migrants were mainly in two groups: members of the Protestant Pat family living in the village of Piste on the highway near Chichen Itza; and members of the Catholic Tamay family, most of whom were living in the outskirts of the town of Tizimin.³

2 *Cime* is the spelling customarily used by members of this family and by others in Yucatan rather than the *Ceme* employed in previous publications.

3 Many thanks are due Asael T. Hansen for information on the location of these migrants. In order to minimize identification as members of the subordinate caste of Mayas (in Yucatan usually called *mestizos*), many villagers who come to have more contact with urban persons change their Maya family names to Spanish names similar in sound or meaning. Thus, many of the Pats now call themselves Padilla, the Tamays are now Tamayo, one Cime family with a home in Merida is now Castilla, Camaal becomes Camara, and Ek (meaning "star") becomes Estrella.

It is noteworthy that the Tamays and Pats have long been related to the Cimes. The mother of the oldest living generation of Tamays was a sister of Don Eus's father. Don Eus's first and main wife was a sister of the oldest living generation of Pats.

THE MAIN ISSUES

This paper is directed to three main issues in connection with Redfield's account of the social life and history of Chan Kom. One concerns the reasons why Chan Kom "chose progress" specifically regarding the decision to raise the politico-legal status of the community, first from *rancheria* to *pueblo* and then from *pueblo* to capital of an independent municipality. The previous analysis (Goldkind 1965:881) explained the first achievement in terms of the following generalization: "Important decisions influencing the general life of the community were determined by, and decided in the interests of, the minority of families in the top ranks of the economic, status, and political dimensions of the social stratification system of the community." Additional information was obtained which gives further support to the relevance of this interpretation for explaining Chan Kom's rise in status from *pueblo* to capital of a municipality.

A second issue is the alleged general acceptance of the development of private holdings in the communal *ejido* lands of Chan Kom. Redfield (1950: 55-61) noted a shift in economic emphasis from the cultivation of corn on the decreasingly productive soils to the increasingly profitable herding of hogs and cattle and the buying and selling of corn, hogs, and cattle. He reported a decline in corn productivity between one-third and one-half in the seventeen years between his two studies, a period during which the village population increased from about 250 to 445 (Redfield 1950:68, 171). During this period "the increase of wealth has no doubt increased the difference in wealth between the richest man of Chan Kom and the poorest man" in part because some of the wealthier men were accumulating relatively large private holdings both outside the Chan Kom *ejido* and in the form of *de facto* private control of legally communally owned lands within the *ejido*. Although at first these men "were opposed by some in the village," according to Redfield (1950:60): "Now the people approve of the recognition of individual rights in the *ejidos*." Doubt had been at least implied in my earlier analysis that all classes of the population really would have given such approval under these circumstances, and this was a matter on which I was especially concerned to obtain information.

The third issue concerns the substantial migration from Chan Kom which began shortly after Redfield's second study. Redfield had characterized the social life of Chan Kom in 1948 as relatively free from factionalism and as otherwise so satisfying to its residents as to make migration seem highly unlikely:

By 1948 the divisive effect upon the village of the Protestant movement had been largely overcome. At least it is true that by that time the people as a whole

again moved forward on the paths of action set out for them by a leadership consistent within itself (Redfield 1950:110).

The impulse to emigrate, the spirit of pioneering, was spent in the settlement and the building of Chan Kom. The people are content in success; they are not restless. The many children are fed with the labor on the land and with the commerce that has now been added; there are no surplus sons that have to emigrate (Redfield 1950:151).

Yet during 1949 one of the three main prestigious family groupings, the Tamays, migrated together with a large number of other families of lower status. It should be noted that Redfield (1950:92-93, 111) described the Tamays as traditional allies of the Cimes in their factional dispute with the Protestant Pats, and the Tamays were the most conservatively Catholic of the prominent Chan Kom families—unlike the Cimes they had never been Protestant. This migration left the Cimes (Catholic since the 1930's) in a weaker position to confront their Protestant factional enemies, the Pats, despite the fact (according to a Tamay informant) that Don Eus appealed to them not to migrate for this very reason. In 1958 another large exodus occurred: the Pats still resident in Chan Kom and a large number of others of lesser status migrated to leave the Cimes in sole control of Chan Kom.

Many others also were said to have migrated since 1948. Redfield (1950:68) had reported the population of Chan Kom to have increased from about 250 in 1930 and 270 in 1940 to 445 in 1948. According to the Mexican census (Dirección General 1953:200; 1963:715) the Chan Kom population in 1950 had decreased to 322 and two other villages in the municipality had a larger population; the census of 1960 reported a Chan Kom population of 319. Alfonso Villa Rojas told me that on his visit to Chan Kom in 1962 he was extremely surprised to see how "depopulated" the community had become and how many old residents had migrated.⁴

Thus, the main interest of this paper is in the reasons for Chan Kom's rise in politico-legal status from pueblo to capital of a new municipality, the alleged general acceptance of the innovation of a few relatively large private holdings in the village *ejido* communal lands at a time of increasing population and declining productivity, and the large migration since 1948. These phenomena are so inter-related that the choice of a beginning is almost arbitrary. Let us begin with the *ejido*.

⁴ Chan Kom was not the only village in this region whose population failed to increase in recent years. However, in comparing 1950 and 1960 census data for the ten other municipal capitals within a 21 mile radius of Chan Kom, fully half showed population increases ranging from 13 to 48 per cent.

CLASS CONFLICT IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Redfield (1950:57-60) explained the innovation of private *ejido* holdings in terms of the greater individual initiative of the "four or five" wealthy men who were developing them. He did not mention that all of these men were members of the same patrilineal family group, the Cimes. Don Eustaquio Cime told me that he had obtained authorization from the administration of Avila Camacho (President of Mexico, 1941-1946) for himself and each of his sons to take permanent private possession for himself—and pass on to his heirs—up to twenty-four hectares of land in the Chan Kom *ejido*. Officials of the appropriate governmental agencies in Merida and Valladolid found it impossible to believe the granting of legal authorization for such differential privileges in this type of *ejido* in Yucatan.⁵

In approaching this subject with the Tamays and others who had migrated with them to Tizimin, I was especially careful to question them in as neutral a manner as possible so as not to influence their responses. However, once rapport had been established, the mere mention of this matter consistently evoked immediate and emphatic disapproval of the development of private holdings in the *ejido* lands of Chan Kom. One typical expression of resentment was: "The richest of Chan Kom, the cattle owners, took over the best *ejido* lands. If a few take over the best parts of the *ejido*, then the poor can't cultivate."

The Tamays were not among the poorest of Chan Kom, but in conversing with me they used the term *pobre* interchangeably with *milpero*—one who makes milpa. They regarded the population of Chan Kom as divided between the poor, who like themselves lived primarily from corn cultivation, and the rich, who had many cattle and engaged in the buying and selling of grain, hogs, and cattle on a relatively large scale. (This terminology, also used by other informants including Don Eus, contrasts with Redfield's contention that "there is no group of the known and self-known poor," Redfield 1950:61.) The cultivation of corn, of course, is a practice much more traditional and functionally related to various aspects of Maya culture than is the herding of hogs or cattle.

Informants reported that they learned of the new development in a general assembly when Don Eus simply announced that certain areas of the *ejido* no longer would be generally available to *ejido* members. These areas included all of the few *ejido* water sources (except for those in the village itself) and the best land with the highest growth. Henceforth, these lands were to be treated

⁵ Although Redfield (1950:57-58) attributed the legitimacy of this development to a new law permitting private *ejido* holdings, he also noted the following: "When these enterprising men first began these developments—before, indeed, the law was made known. . . ."

as though they were the private holdings of Don Eus and several other Cimes.

In addition to seizing control of the best *ejido* lands for themselves, the Cimes prevented other members of the Chan Kom *ejido* from cultivating as much of the remainder of the *ejido* as they wished. This was accomplished through control of the office of *comisario* of the *ejido*.⁶

In the village *ejidos* of Yucatan where shifting cultivation is practiced, each member must obtain prior approval from the *ejido comisario* as to the size and location of any milpa on *ejido* lands. Every year many men must select a new milpa site. In order to decide between two or more wishing to cultivate the same land, and to assure equity in the amount and quality of land available to all members of the *ejido*, the *comisario* has considerable authority to adjudicate disputes and restrict the size of milpas. A different person is supposed to be elected to the office of *ejido comisario* by the total membership (males aged 16 to 69) every three years, along with a *Consejo de Vigilancia* to insure the proper conduct of *ejido* affairs.

However, in Chan Kom since at least the early 1940's, except for one brief notable exception discussed later, the official *ejido* positions have been occupied by the Cimes and their close allies. For four successive three-year terms prior to 1958 the *ejido comisario* was the same individual, a half-brother of Don Eus. Many found themselves given permission to cultivate only two or three hectares of poor land, barely enough to support a household, while several Cimes were cultivating up to ten times this area of much better land. In the bitter words of one informant: "The *comisario* assigned the best lands to his relatives and left rock for the poor to cultivate."

Redfield (1950:60) noted that the increase of cattle in Chan Kom had increased the frequency of cattle invading milpas and consuming the corn, a problem still very much present. Both state law and local custom required the owner of the cattle to recompense the owner of the milpa for damage to his corn. The migrants primarily dedicated to making milpa still showed their indignation when they recalled the refusal of the Cimes to pay for such damage. The Cimes had by far the most cattle and reportedly would turn them loose to wander in areas of the bush remote from their own milpas at the beginning of the dry season when the corn was ripe for harvesting. The Cimes placed all responsibility for damage to corn on the milpa owners for not constructing sufficiently strong fencing around their milpas. The corn cultivators argued that

6 This is the term used by the villagers. In urban parlance and legally he is the *Presidente* of a three-man elected *Comisariado Ejidal* (Hinojosa 1960:11). A predecessor, the Agrarian Committee, was discussed briefly in the first study (Redfield and Villa 1934:105).

it was the responsibility of the herders to provide adequate fencing and control of their cattle.

Thus, many of the Chan Kom families of lower status found themselves deprived of access to the best *ejido* land, restricted to the cultivation of relatively small areas of the worst *ejido* land, and not compensated for damage to milpas by cattle of the wealthiest cattle herders. These were important economic reasons for the migrations from Chan Kom, but certain political developments also came to play their part in making conditions increasingly intolerable, especially for those of lesser status who could least effectively defend their interests. The relatively wealthy were able to take measures to secure and even increase their economic advantages and political dominance because they occupied or controlled the official positions not only in the *ejido* organization but also in the government of Chan Kom. However, only after Chan Kom became the capital of an independent municipality could this control by a few become as complete as eventually developed.

DIFFERENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF POLITICAL PROGRESS FROM *PUEBLO TO MUNICIPIO*

Redfield (1950:18-19) reported how in 1932, only six years after successfully achieving the status of *pueblo*, the leaders of Chan Kom began to work with state and national officials to make Chan Kom the capital of a new and independent *municipio*, a goal realized in 1935. Redfield explained this effort to rise in politico-legal status, from being one of many *pueblos* in the municipality of Cuncunul to becoming the head of its own municipality, in terms of the Chan Kom leaders' "spirit of independence," their having had "few ties of sympathy with Cuncunul," and the greater prestige derived from being the head of an independent municipality: "the *municipio* is 'free'—it has its own president, its own judge, in most cases it dispenses its own justice . . . it is a little state within a big state." However, what I learned gives additional emphasis to the differential advantages obtained by the "leading citizens" as a result of this change.

Although political power and office in Chan Kom have long been controlled by a small number of men, they could not have a free hand in controlling the affairs of the community while it was only a *pueblo* under the politico-legal jurisdiction of the municipality of Cuncunul. The authority of the officials of a *pueblo* is quite limited and subject to the supervisory control of the officials of the municipality under whose jurisdiction it comes. A resident of a *pueblo*

finds it relatively easy to induce municipal authorities to investigate complaints about the actions or decisions of *pueblo* officials.

It is far more difficult to obtain the intervention of higher authority in appealing the decisions of municipal officials. In order even to make a complaint the villager in this region must go to the town of Valladolid or the city of Merida. The geographic distance is much greater but the sociocultural distance is even more serious an obstacle. In these urban centers the Maya villager must appeal to persons who regard the Maya as an inferior caste and therefore treat them with even more than the usual officious arrogance of urban officials dealing with low status rural people. The cultural gap is too great for the low status villagers who are most likely to need the protection of higher authorities but who are also usually the most uncomfortable and inept in speaking "correct" Spanish with educated urban persons.

The legal right of an independent municipality to control its own affairs with little outside interference must have seemed attractive to all the leading families of Chan Kom. Furthermore, although no official of a mere *pueblo* receives a salary, several municipal officials receive substantial salaries from higher governmental levels. These positions are filled locally and have been customarily rotated among members of the high status Chan Kom families.

I was told that while the leading families were working together to obtain higher political status for Chan Kom, their personal relations were usually quite amicable. Afterwards this changed as the largest and wealthiest of the leading family groupings, the Cimes, began to take steps to increase their economic and political advantage. The Cimes were led by Don Epifanio Cime (Don Fano), long the wealthiest man in Chan Kom, and, especially after Don Fano reached advanced age in the 1940's, by Don Eus.⁷ At first the Cimes received cooperation, or at least passive acceptance, from the other leading families while taking measures which usually resulted mainly in advantages for the Cimes at the expense particularly of the lower status families, e.g., the taking of permanent private possession of *ejido* lands discussed earlier. However, when these other prominent families came to realize the extent of the threat to their own interests, overt conflict with the Cimes occurred.

Some informants were willing to express themselves more freely than others, but, except for members of the Cime family, there was essentially complete

⁷ Don Fano had raised Don Eus in his own household after the death of the latter's father, Don Diego, who was Don Fano's brother. Don Diego was the founder whose personal saint had been adopted as Chan Kom's patron saint, the latter still considered to belong to the Cime family (cf. Goldkind 1965:875-876, 883).

agreement among all informants about the role of Don Eus in the events reported here. A number of informants, both rural and urban, referred to Don Eus as a *cacique*. This term has the connotation of tyrant when applied to leaders in urban and peasant communities by Mexicans sympathetic to the ideals of the Revolution of 1910. A *cacique* is understood to have the economic and political power to dominate his local community, although this power may be shared among several *caciques*. Typically, the *cacique* engages in illegal dealing with allies of similar ethics and profits from corruption in the public offices which he occupies or controls. A substantial share of all public funds collected or distributed in the community is apt to be taken for his private use. The *cacique* often is completely ruthless in his treatment of all who oppose him in any undertaking, and in his exploitation of the economically poor and the politically weak. The *cacique* achieves and maintains his position through political intrigue, alliances, and bribery within the local community, with politicians in larger urban centers, and through the use or threat of armed violence. The *cacique* uses political power to obtain economic wealth and *vice versa*, and the greater his success the higher his prestige.

Once rapport was established with all informants but the Cimes, every suggestion from me that Don Eus had worked for the improvement of Chan Kom invariably evoked emphatic denials that he supported projects because of any genuine concern for the general welfare. Various accounts were given of Don Eus's use of public office for his own private gain, especially at the expense of the people of lower status. For example, one informant answered me with: "Is that what they say in the books, that Don Eus worked for the progress of Chan Kom? That's not true—he worked only for his own interest."

One example, in which the gain was more directly political than financial, involves a reinterpretation of Redfield's rather favorable view of the custom of unpaid communal labor (*fagina*): "The performance of *fagina* is attended with the impressiveness of collective determination and the stimulus of a situation where all men work shoulder to shoulder on one common task . . . *fagina* is permeated by a cheerful enthusiasm" (Redfield and Villa 1934:79). In his second study, Redfield (1950:83, 164) concluded that, although *fagina* for special projects was occurring less frequently, the more common form was still occurring much as in the past: "Labor for public services (*fagina*) is required of all. . . ." In both studies (Redfield and Villa 1934:6, 14; Redfield 1950: 68-70, 94) reference was made to the 1931-1933 period when Don Eus conducted the office of village headman (*comisario*) with a policy characterized by "its exacting demand of frequent compulsory labor on public works and its

policy of stern punishment for infractions of this rule . . ." which Redfield suggested had led to substantial migration and a net decrease in population between 1930 and 1935.

Informants agreed that people of lower status were and still are required to perform a disproportionate share of the *fagina* involving heavy manual labor, especially as compared to the Cimes. Furthermore, particularly after Chan Kom became an independent municipality, whenever Don Eus wished to make it unpleasant for anyone insufficiently subservient to his wishes, there was an increase in the number of tasks required of that person, an important reason to avoid offending Don Eus. Even at the time of the first study, when Don Eus was the village *comisario*, the situation was described as follows (Redfield and Villa 1934:79-80):

Failure to perform *fagina* is punished by arrest and imprisonment, and sometimes by the imposition of extra tasks. A man may not take up residence in Chan Kom without agreeing to participate in the *fagina* program then current. On the other hand, if an old resident is not faithful in the performance of his *fagina*, he is notified that he will have to discharge these duties or leave the village. There are even cases where a strong *comisario* imposes extra tasks upon such suspect citizens as a test of their willingness. . . .

In a study of the *ejido* of Sudzal, located about 40 miles to the northwest of Chan Kom in the more urbanized henequen zone, Bonfil (1962:109) reported the following (my translation):

On the large haciendas of the Porfirio period, *fagina* was used as just one more instrument to exploit the peon, obliging him to work without payment at tasks which exclusively benefited the patron. In a general assembly held some four or five years ago, the members of the *ejido* of Sudzal agreed that *fagina* was something reminiscent of "The Slavery" of the pre-revolutionary period in Yucatan and voted its abolition.

Much of what Lewis (1951:109) noted in the following characterization of communal labor in Tepoztlán, *cuatequilt* as it is called there, also applies to what I was told about it in Chan Kom:

The better-to-do families generally do not participate in the village *cuatequilt*, since they consider such work beneath their dignity and prefer to pay for substitutes. The main source of labor for the village *cuatequilt* are the poor who cannot afford substitutes or fines. The men from the smaller and poorer barrios have the reputation of being the most industrious and reliable workers for the *cuatequilt*. This is related to the fact that they have little political influence and have greater fear of the authorities.

Other indications of a tendency for Don Eus to act like a *cacique* can be found in the first study of Chan Kom. For example, in his field diary Villa (1934:305) described an incident in which Don Eus, the new village *comisario* "has resolved to treat people 'militaristically,' that is, he says, 'energetically and without any sort of consideration.'" Villa then reported the new *comisario*'s severe treatment of two villagers and added: "After these two examples (Don Eus confided to me), no one would question the orders which come from the *comisaría*." Don Eus's view of his own position in the community at this time was described as follows: "His conception of his relations to the people of the village is formed on this pattern: he is the wise father; they are the dutiful children" (Redfield and Villa 1934:213). I encountered nothing to suggest that Maya villagers *willingly* would accept this behavior or viewpoint from any fellow villager merely because of his political or status position, and those who had migrated from Chan Kom explicitly rejected either as acceptable in Don Eus.

When anyone dared to question Don Eus's decisions or interpretations of the law, he justified them with his considerable verbal talents, invoking the authority of whichever office he happened to hold at the time and/or the right of special privilege for the Cimes because they were one of the "founding families" of Chan Kom. If all else failed, through a kind of influence not unusual in Mexico, Don Eus was able to get officials in the state capital of Merida to help him against his opponents. When some protested the seizing of *ejido* lands by the Cimes, Don Eus was reported to have told them: "We are the privileged ones—we founders have more rights!" However, many of those excluded by Don Eus from the privileges claimed for founding families were members of families which had been resident in Chan Kom as long or longer than the Cimes (Redfield and Villa 1934:23-25; Steggerda 1943:233). What kept them from being treated as "founding families" in Don Eus's discourses had more to do with their low stratification position than with their length of residence or contribution to the founding of Chan Kom.⁸

All this serves to throw more light on another issue raised in my first analysis. There it was argued that although Redfield seemed to assume an absence of barriers in the social structure which could have functioned to restrict opportunities for equal socioeconomic success in Chan Kom, the absence of such structural restrictions did not necessarily mean the absence of social stratifica-

⁸ A similar phenomenon was reported by Fei and Chang (1945:57-58) for a village of small landholders in China.

tion. Now it is clearer that such restrictions in fact did exist. Those of lower status were kept from achieving more prestige, improving their economic position and style of life, or increasing their political power by a social structure whose economic and political institutions were controlled by a minority for its own advantage.

Although this situation was most fully developed after Chan Kom became the capital of an independent municipality, there was some evidence of it at least as early as the 1920's when the leaders of Chan Kom achieved *pueblo* status for the village. A number of these leaders had been prominent previously in the village of Ebtun (only two or three miles from Valladolid) and, as noted in the first analysis (Goldkind 1965:872-873, 881): "Having lost control of the sociopolitical hierarchy of Ebtun, they could now look forward to the establishment and control of a similar hierarchy in a Chan Kom given the political status of a pueblo." I was told that many villages in this region have their relatively wealthy men who tend to dominate local affairs and that even when these move to a new community they somehow seem to know how to achieve relatively great wealth and political importance in comparison with most villagers.

Although during the 1950's the Tamays and Pats were losing prestige and power to the Cimes within the upper stratum of high status families, the most serious difficulties were being experienced by the lower status and politically weak families mainly preoccupied with attempting to secure subsistence from the cultivation of corn in the worsening ecological situation. Members of these families eventually mobilized political support behind two men of high status whom they considered sympathetic to their interests and helped them to obtain high office. This was how a Tamay became president of the municipality in 1947 and a Pat became *comisario* of the *ejido* in 1958. Both of these men had held these offices earlier, when cooperation still prevailed among the high status families, and they had not seriously opposed Cime interests. However, in these later terms of office their attempts to act in favor of the interests of the majority of corn cultivators became a threat to Cime economic and political dominance as well as prestige. The resulting conflicts led to the largest migrations from Chan Kom and the consolidation of power by the Cimes led by Don Eus.

THE MIGRATIONS

In 1946 a number of persons of lower status approached Don Emiliano Tamay (Don Emilio) and asked him to become a candidate for the new term of office of municipal president beginning in 1947. They asked him to become a president who would "put things right" in the administration of justice and

in defending the rights of corn cultivators against the actions of the wealthy cattle herders. Chan Kom was close to its maximum population at this time and there were many corn cultivators in favor of this type of change. Don Emilio was elected president.

The administration of Don Emilio (1947-1949) is the period when the municipal capital of Chan Kom was most well liked by those in the surrounding villages, when, except for the Cimes, the largest number of villagers were most satisfied with the municipal government, when population reached its largest size, and when Redfield (1950:x) came to visit for the six weeks during which he conducted his second study. Many reported that Don Emilio attempted to conduct a just administration, rejecting such typical advice from Don Eus as: "Don't pay any attention to any of these poor people. You should only value the opinion of those who have wealth." (Compare with Redfield's generalization (1950:77) about Chan Kom opinion: "Men do respect and put confidence in those who have cattle and other wealth. These are the men to whom money may be safely lent, and these are the men who ought to maintain control of the public affairs of the village.") Although Don Emilio made attempts to get compensation from cattle owners for destruction to corn fields, his authority did not extend into *ejido* affairs and he was powerless to do anything effective about the private holdings in the *ejido*.

The independence shown by the president, his attempt to dispense justice fairly, his concern for the interests of the corn cultivators, and his general popularity throughout the municipality aroused the hostility of the Cimes. The Tamays remained reluctant to speak about this aspect of their experiences, but others reported a series of efforts by the Cimes to make things as unpleasant as possible for the Tamays not only in Chan Kom but also with higher authorities in Merida. Enough of this harassment occurred so that by the last year of Don Emilio's term of office the Tamays and many of their supporters decided to migrate. A Tamay informant eventually told me: "We Tamays left Chan Kom to avoid difficulties with the Cimes. We didn't want any trouble. If we had stayed, how many more difficulties we would have had! That is why we left."

During the 1950's the impact of the continuing decrease in productivity and land suitable for cultivation was making itself felt even more seriously by an increasing proportion of the population still resident in Chan Kom. Many of these people became increasingly vocal in their complaints to the *comisario* of the *ejido* about the *ejido* land seized by the Cimes and not available for general use as well as the increasing destruction of corn fields by the growing number of Cime cattle for which proper compensation was not paid.

Whether because of a genuine concern for the plight of the corn cultivators or a concern that officials of the state banking system which has some supervisory control over the *ejido* might take action, a remedy opposed to Cime interests was proposed by the *comisario*, even though he was a half-brother of Don Eus. This proposal, which has been realized in some *ejidos* in Yucatan, was that one large section of the Chan Kom *ejido* should be fenced off as a common pasture to be used for the cattle of all *ejido* members. Since such a pasture would require a water source, it would have to include land already seized by the Cimes for their exclusive private use.

In the midst of the ensuing controversy, the term of office of the *ejido comisario* was nearing its end, and it became necessary to assemble the membership for the election of a new *comisario*. Although Don Eus actively sought the post for one of his sons, the out-going *comisario* nominated one sympathetic to the proposal for *ejido* reform: Don Primitivo Pat, the same "young Pat" leader whose preaching had made him the favorite of the Protestant missionaries some twenty-five years previously (Redfield 1950:94-109). Don Primitivo was elected with the strong support of those primarily dedicated to corn cultivation. Don Eus stalked furiously out of the meeting, calling his half-brother a "traitor." The latter soon found it prudent to migrate from Chan Kom.

When Don Eus realized that the new *comisario* was conferring frequently with the lower status corn cultivators in favor of the plan for a common *ejido* pasture, he went to speak with the new *comisario's* father, Don Eluterio Pat (Don Elut), the patriarch of the Pats remaining resident in Chan Kom. Don Elut reported that Don Eus addressed him as follows: "Don't be foolish. Do the same as I'm doing. Put a fence around some of the *ejido* land for yourself. These others are poor people and newcomers to Chan Kom—they can't win against us. Don't pay attention to what they say. It cost us a great deal to make this *pueblo* and convert it to an independent municipality. Why shouldn't we enjoy the benefits of these lands?" However, the *ejido* land which he suggested that the Pats might take was relatively poor land with no source of water, and this hardly seemed to the Pats like a generous offer. (One Pat informant suggested that this offer should have been accepted to avoid the conflict which followed because "the Cimes and Pats were the only ones who were important.")

Despite many discussions and meetings, at least one of which ended in mass fisticuffs, the Cimes still refused to withdraw control from any of the *ejido* land they had seized. One night a group of men—led by Don Primitivo, according to the Cimes—with the reluctant consent of Primitivo, according to the Pats—destroyed the fencing around sections of the *ejido* taken by Don Eus and

Don Fano. The latter told me that some cattle also were killed, although this was denied by the Pats. The Cimes went to the appropriate officials in Merida and accused the Pats of having destroyed their property. A number of policemen were sent to arrest the Pat men and took them to Merida where they were made to spend time in jail, reportedly were beaten by the police seeking a confession, and finally released after paying a fine of several thousand pesos.

The Pats explained that since the Cimes had received no compensation for the damage to their fencing they still wanted more revenge, especially against Don Primitivo whom they regarded as the main source of their troubles. (Don Eus was reported to have said: "If not for this Primitivo who reads and thinks he knows so much, we wouldn't have this trouble—the others don't know what to do.") According to the Pats, the Cimes began shooting one day when they saw Don Primitivo standing in his doorway arguing with a brother of Don Eus. The Cimes insisted that the Pats began the shooting and because of their Protestantism even shot into the *oratorio* (public chapel) in an unsuccessful attempt to destroy the saints kept there. Both sides agreed that shots were exchanged across the plaza between Cime and Pat houses.

One shot passed through Don Primitivo's face, another entered his chest. Severely wounded, he was carried to the highway during the dark predawn hours and an ambulance took him to a Merida hospital, where he recovered. Meanwhile the Pats went to officials in Merida to make an accusation, and police were sent to arrest the Cimes. Don Eus avoided capture, but several of the Cime men were arrested and fined several thousand pesos.

Thus, the poor who had sought *ejido* land reform found that the two *comisarios* who attempted to act in their interest were forced out of Chan Kom by actual or threatened violence. Many decided it best to leave and settle elsewhere, as had happened at the time of the Tamay migration.⁹ Since these events of 1958 the population of Chan Kom has consisted of the Cimes, led by Don Eus, a few others allied or married to the Cimes, and a number of lesser status who offer no opposition whatsoever.

All informants, except the Cimes, insisted that the Tamay, Pat, and other migrations from Chan Kom never had been caused by religious differences but

⁹ Because of similar difficulties, Don Ignacio Barun (Don Nas), described in the first study (Redfield and Villa 1934:212), along with Don Fano and Don Eus as one of Chan Kom's three main leaders, also found it prudent to leave in the 1940's. When I asked why Don Nas, a close friend of the Cimes, had encountered such difficulties with them that he found it necessary to leave, a Tamay replied: "Because he was friendly to all and could not bring himself to harm anyone."

rather by the kind of conflict with the Cimes described here. There was complete agreement on this interpretation by all informants from both the Catholic Tamay and Protestant Pat families. Typical was this statement from a Catholic migrant: "All Don Eus thinks about is himself and his family. He doesn't want the poor to have enough to eat or a little money. He doesn't want the poor to better their condition so that he can exploit them more easily. All those who left Chan Kom know this and that is why they left."

A teacher who taught for three years in Chan Kom during the early 1960's characterized the situation he saw in Chan Kom as follows: "All political power is in the hands of Don Eus and his relatives. Whatever they decide to do is what happens. They respect no principle but their own advantage. They calculate every action. They will do anything for money and nothing if it gains them no money." Informants in the villages near Chan Kom provided a similar view, one of them summarizing his feelings in the following parable:

There is a story they tell of a very poor man who prayed for help to Saint Anthony. The Saint heard his prayers and helped him to become very rich, with much land and cattle. Then the man forgot about his previous condition and the help of the Saint, and discarded him. To teach him a lesson, the Saint took everything away from him, and the man became very poor again. Then he remembered the Saint and prayed to him. But the Saint would not help him again. That is the way they are in Chan Kom—now that they are rich, they don't think they need the saints or any help from anyone. They don't believe in anything but their riches!

In conversing with me, Don Eus expressed great satisfaction in his wealth, private land holdings, and large herd of cattle, but only contempt for those who had migrated: "The people who left are people who did not want to work—they didn't want to cooperate with our program." He nodded agreement as his son added: "Nowhere will you find a community where people work as long and hard as we of Chan Kom do. People in other villages do not work as much; they dedicate themselves to drinking hard liquor and beer and that is why they are poor." And, although Redfield (1950:86-87, 151) had characterized the Chan Kom of 1948 as basically a homogeneous community of "Maya toilers in the milpa," ready to "welcome as settlers hard-working Maya villagers," Don Eus told me the following: "We don't allow a newcomer to settle in Chan Kom if all he wants to work at is making milpa. We want people who like to herd cattle. My sons and I don't want Chan Kom to become a community of poor people."

CONCLUSION

Consensus among a variety of informants—Catholic and Protestant migrants from Chan Kom, residents of nearby villages, urban professionals—as well as data from field work in Chan Kom provide a view of a persistent conflict in the community with respect to position in the system of social stratification, i.e., conflict over the means to economic wealth, social prestige, preferred style of life, and political power, culminating in the rise to power of one man who now dominates the economic, social, and political life of Chan Kom and whom many therefore call a *cacique*.

These findings differ from those of Redfield in a way similar to Oscar Lewis's differences with Redfield regarding the interpretation of the social life of Tepoztlán, for which Redfield likewise overemphasized homogeneity, consensus, and harmony in important aspects of social life. In contrast to Redfield's claim that there was general approval when a few of the wealthy took *de facto* private possession of relatively large sections of the best of Chan Kom's communal *ejido* land, strong disapproval was found among members of other families, particularly the less wealthy dedicated primarily to the cultivation of corn whose basic means to subsistence was being threatened. However, their opposition was ineffective in preventing the wealthiest from taking this and other measures to increase their differential advantages. As often occurs in a stratified community, the wealthiest were able to mobilize sufficient political power to overcome any serious resistance to their economic and political dominance. This latter situation was made possible especially after Chan Kom became the capital of an independent municipality whose internal government was legally controlled by local people with minimal outside interference. The conflict situation which developed especially after the achievement of municipal status led to considerable migration from Chan Kom by the corn cultivators of comparatively low status who were placed in an increasingly disadvantageous economic situation as population grew, productivity declined, and the cattle of the wealthy increasingly attacked their corn fields. On several occasions they were joined in migrating by those of higher status who were defeated in attempts to prevent the growing concentration of economic advantages and political power in the hands of the leaders of the largest and wealthiest patrilineal family group.

This type of conflict over position in the system of social stratification, in which a *cacique* eventually came to power in Chan Kom, is not a rare occurrence in this type of community. Local *caciques* were so prevalent during the Diaz regime that much of the revolutionary fervor of rural people in the Mex-

ican Revolution was directed against their oppression (Azuela 1963:189-191; Lewis 1951:57, 115). Lewis (1951:51) reported that in Tepoztlán, along with the famous "land and liberty," another popular revolutionary slogan was "down with the *caciques*."

One must note the contention of Ralph Beals (1961:10-11) that the histories of Tepoztlán and Chan Kom made them poor models for what Redfield conceptualized for them because both communities had experienced more urban influence than seems appropriate for typical folk or peasant communities. Francisco Benet (1963:13) has made a similar point regarding the entire Maya population of Yucatan. And Howard Cline (1950:524) has commented on the atypicality of Chan Kom as follows: "The very publicity given it by Carnegie studies has been a major factor in its recent development, and has given rise to special and peculiar problems."

However, evidence of conflict and the characteristics associated with the *cacique* occurs also in other studies of rural Mexico. For example, in his renowned study of the *ejido* in Mexico, Simpson (1937:331-332) referred to the situation in 1925 as follows: "It cannot be denied . . . that in a number of cases the *ejido* communities were dominated by self-seeking *caciques* and corrupt Administrative Committees . . ." And regarding the more contemporary period (Simpson 1937:351): "It is true that favoritism and nepotism, duplicity and double dealing, tyranny and despotism are often more apparent in the political processes of the Mexican rural community than fair play, law and order, and democratic procedure," a generalization Simpson supported with a number of case histories. In his classic *Rural Mexico*, Whetten (1948:535-536) concluded that "the vast majority of Mexico's inhabitants still live in isolated rural communities . . ." in which "their lives are often subjected to the control of a local *cacique* ('political boss')." More recently, Friedrich (1965) has presented an account of *caciques* in Tarascan *ejido* communities which is similar in many respects to much of what has been reported here for Chan Kom and by Lewis for Tepoztlán, noting that this phenomenon in Mexico "remains a largely unstudied and partly covert feature of the culture."

Thus, the reinterpretation offered here of a Chan Kom characterized by conflict over position in the system of social stratification and culminating in the rise to power of a *cacique* does not seem unrealistic, or even very unusual, as an account of peasant village life in Mexico, and probably elsewhere.

One reason that social stratification and structural heterogeneity often have been assumed to be practically absent from rural peasant communities as compared to urban commercial and industrial centers is the much greater degree of

specialization in economic activity and the diverse occupations usually found in the latter. Since nearly all residents of a rural peasant community may be engaged in agricultural activity, and peasant values tend to discourage the extremes of differential conspicuous consumption and display common among urban people, observers often conclude that whatever differences do occur among rural peasants are not as structurally significant as the social stratification found among urban people. However, it seems to me that the information available about Chan Kom and other peasant communities indicates that the stratification differences among relatively wealthy peasants, those who cultivate barely enough for subsistence, and the completely landless can be quite comparable, and just as important to the people involved, as those occurring among the distinct classes or occupational groupings of the urban center.

Furthermore, the economy of a peasant community like Chan Kom is organized into a series of relatively independent family units of production, each normally capable of satisfying nearly all its consumption needs by its own production. From the viewpoint of the observer, there is less *economic* need for integration and consensus among such units than among the highly specialized economic segments of the urban industrialized community. The conflict of interest between factory worker and owner-manager emphasized by Marx and others as the classic example of class conflict usually occurs in a framework of greater economic functional integration than that occurring in this type of peasant community. Whatever other differences might divide them, factory workers and owner-managers must perform their economic activities cooperatively within the same production unit: some must work at one kind of task, some at others, and some must plan and direct the work in order for anyone to obtain earnings from the enterprise. This kind of economic cooperation is required *within* but not *among* the distinct family economic units in a peasant community like Chan Kom. Thus, in such a community, especially when ecological conditions make for a scarcity of adequate means to subsistence, the occurrence of social stratification among family units easily lends itself to an awareness of conflicting interests and the development of class conflict.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AZUELA, MARIANO

- 1963 *The Underdogs, in Two Novels of the Mexican Revolution: The Trials of a Respectable Family and The Underdogs* (trans. by Francis Kellam Hendricks and Beatrice Berler). San Antonio, Texas: Principia Press of Trinity University.

- BEALS, RALPH L.
1961 Community Typologies in Latin America. *Anthropological Linguistics* 3:8-16.
- BENET, FRANCISCO
1963 Sociology Uncertain: the Ideology of the Rural-Urban Continuum. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 6:1-23.
- BONFIL BATALLA, GUILLERMO
1962 *Diagnóstico Sobre el Hambre en Sudzal, Yucatán: un Ensayo de Antropología Aplicada*. Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.
- CLINE, HOWARD
1950 Review of: *A Village That Chose Progress: Chan Kom Revisited* by R. Redfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press). *Hispanic American Historical Review* 30:521-525.
- DIRECCIÓN GENERAL DE ESTADÍSTICA
1953 *Séptimo Censo General de Población—6 de Junio de 1950: Estado de Yucatán*. Mexico: Secretaría de Economía.
1963 *VIII Censo General de Población: 1960—8 de Junio de 1960: Localidades de la República por Entidades Federativas y Municipios* (tomo II). Mexico: Secretaría de Industria y Comercio.
- FEI, HSIAO-TUNG, AND CHIH-I CHANG
1945 *Earthbound China: a Study of Rural Economy in Yunnan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- FRIEDRICH, PAUL
1965 A Mexican Cacicazgo. *Ethnology* 4:190-209.
- GOLDKIND, VICTOR
1965 Social Stratification in the Peasant Community: Redfield's Chan Kom Reinterpreted. *American Anthropologist* 67:863-884.
- HINOJOSA ORTIZ, MANUEL
1960 *Código Agrario y Sus Reglamentos*. Mexico.
- LEWIS, OSCAR
1951 *Life in a Mexican Village: Tepoztlán Restudied*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- REDFIELD, ROBERT
1947 The Folk Society. *American Journal of Sociology* 52:292-308.
1950 *A Village That Chose Progress: Chan Kom Revisited*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
1956 *The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books (1960 edition).
- REDFIELD, ROBERT, AND ALFONSO VILLA ROJAS
1934 *Chan Kom: a Maya Village*. Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, publication 448.
- SIMPSON, EYLER N.
1937 *The Ejido: Mexico's Way Out*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

STEGGERDA, MORRIS

1943 *A Description of Thirty Towns in Yucatan, Mexico*. Bureau of American Ethnology, bulletin 136:227-248.

VILLA ROJAS, ALFONSO

1934 "A Chan Kom Diary," in *Chan Kom: a Maya Village* (by Robert Redfield and Alfonso Villa Rojas), pp. 231-327. Washington, D. C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, publication 448.

WEBER, MAX

1946 "Class, Status, Party," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (trans. and ed. by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills), pp. 180-195. New York: Oxford University Press.

WHETTEN, NATHAN L.

1948 *Rural Mexico*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

SAN DIEGO STATE COLLEGE
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA