



Indigenous marriage proposals as a traditional cultural event. The case of San Cristóbal Totonicapán, Totonicapán municipality.

INTRODUCTORY SECTION

INGRID ALEJANDRA SAY SANTIAGO



INTRODUCTION

The following analysis allows us to address questions aimed at understanding how indigenous marriage proposals constitute folkloric and/or cultural events.

In this way, we try to reaffirm, for example, that marriage proposals are cultural events, since they comply with the characteristics that folklore authors have coined to these events and that in reality they are applicable. For this reason, this research also justifies the changes in the model that these requests have had in the course of time and the way in which they are conceived in the imaginary of the settlers; taking into account age, sex and schooling.

Information provided by other authors, as well as those collected in real life show that this topic

had not yet been addressed in its entirety; therefore, we wanted to conduct an investigation from an anthropological perspective that would allow us to understand the importance of the pedidas, because like any cultural fact, its analysis allows us to address sub-themes, which may be: The importance of orality, the roles played by women, the role and social status of the people who participate, the ceremonialism involved, the temporality in which the changes have taken place and finally the symbolic value they represent for each of the people of San Cristobal.

The general objective is to identify the way in which marriage requests are carried out and how they are legitimized by society, taking into account that there have been changes, as mentioned above, but the essence of “proposal” is still the same.

Participant observation made it possible to document the forms used for the development of these activities, and also to document that, since they are considered cultural facts, their approach allows the analysis of economic and religious spheres.

The elaboration of the chapters corresponds to a presentation of final study reports and was carried out as follows:

In chapter one, we pointed out those theoretical aspects that allow the understanding of what it means or what we refer to with the word Proposal, what is a Cultural fact, the importance of Orality, who is the Spokesman, what is a approval and what is Compadrazgo^a [aKinship Ritual]. The discussion is carried out from the point of view of Cultural Anthropology.

In chapter two, a methodological process is developed that describes how the topic was selected, the review and analysis of bibliographic material, the preparation and validation of instruments, field work,

information gathering - questionnaires, interviews - as well as the analysis of the information and the drafting of the final report.

In chapter three, a brief reference is made to the context of the municipality of San Cristóbal Totonicapán, first a historical sketch is made that concludes up to the present day, continuing with a description of the geographical and historical context. This is the most extensive chapter, since it is here where a time period is developed that follows the analysis of the changes that the proposal have had starting from a Traditional or Ancient model to the model that is developed today and that is called Modern or Current, also addressing the issue of the symbolization of the proposal.

The fourth chapter presents in a statistical graphic manner the way in which the villagers answered the questionnaires, the way in which the “spokesmen” and the leaders of the municipality collaborated at the time of answering the questions, answers that were pillars to know the topic and that today allow its writing and final presentation.

The last chapter develops the final conclusions. These are structured on the basis of the research, the instruments, percentage figures and graphs that were used to address the topic.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FRAME.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE OF INDIGENOUS MARRIAGE IN GUATEMALA:

According to research conducted by authors on the subject of marriage requests and indigenous marriages, we find that historically the request

and the bride price, extended throughout the Guatemalan highlands, date back to preconquest times (Paul, Lois and Benjamin. 1966).

In this pre-conquest time Suzanne Miles records for example that the *Pokomames* Indians of the highlands were organized into classes, exactly as were the *Tzutujiles* of Lake Atitlán (*Indios de Atitlán, 1971*), in order to infer the procedures for arranging marriages, which varied according to the social class of the principals.

According to Miles, in her chapter “Clases y Matrimonios” in reference to the accounts of Las Casas and Torquemada^b [who has an immoderate eagerness to accumulate wealth], they present a problem of a documentary nature. The chapter on Marriage in the well-known edition of the *Apologetics* (16th, 17th and 18th centuries) appears under the name of “Las Leyes y costumbres que guardaban los indios de Guatemala acerca del Matrimonio”, in the opinion of Miles Las Casas was careful to include the name of the respective province in the titles of most of her chapters; and the province mentioned is La Verapaz, although all the research is similar for the entire indigenous area (Miles, Suzanne. 1983).

In the *Pokomames* of the 16th century, Miles

mentions the following in relation to the proposal: “Send then, the gentleman who asked for her for his son solemnly and take notice to the old and honored women who came with the maiden, to come accompanied by good men who would also go for it; there was a great party, dances rejoicing and there were great meals and drunkenness in the house of the father of the maiden the day she was sent away”, and then continues saying:.... “the common people either went to look for a woman for their son or brother or relative and if they had no father or uncle, the waiter was in charge. When they went the first time to ask for the woman they took the gift or thing with which they intended to buy her and the mother or closest relative went for her on the day she was to be married”. (Miles, Suzanne. 1983. P, 100-101).

On the other hand, Palomino mentions that the lack of chronicles and other related documents do not allow reconstructing the true origin and history of the traditional indigenous marriage, but only to place it in the Pre-Conquest period as a remote way. Palomino makes reference that Fray Francisco Ximénez in his work “Historia de la provincia de San Vicente Chiapa y Guatemala” studies the indigenous of Verapaz, mentioning the marriage and all its ritual as a way by means of which the parents procured women for their children; the women says.... they had to marry men

of their lineage, the young man prayed and begged for her and pleaded with her father. This description -according to Palomino - of the Verapaz Indians leads us to speculate that at the end of the 16th century the Ixiles also shared similar patterns (Palomino, Aquiles. 1972).

In the case of the Quiché people and the social stratification that prevailed in pre-Hispanic times, Carmack investigated that the Quiché were affiliated to patrilineages that were called Nimjá “Casas grandes” (big houses). The name is derived from the buildings occupied by the lineages of the cabeceras, over time these buildings were divided into more and more rooms. These “Principal” patrilineages were grouped into four sections or “Major” patrilineages that recognized affiliation with two “Maximum” patrilineages. There were also “Minimal” patrilineages. It was a segmentary lineage system that was constantly changing, although the general structure was similar for the various Quichean Kingdoms. The chronicles indicate (especially the Popol Vuh) that there was a segmentation in the patrilineages, this due to the increase in the total number of lords (Villacorta, 1962: p. 334-335) and also because of conflicts over payment for women taken in marriage. Apparently the patrilineages were exogamous and all the members of the patrilineages helped with the gifts exchanged

-probably in the pedidas- with other patrilineages at the time of the marriage. In general, the lords married people from other towns, so that all the kingdoms of Guatemala were linked by affinity (Carmack, 1979, Pray p. 72).

According to Carmack, the patrilineages of vassals were also exogamous, and practiced levirate marriage. They probably intermarried between patrilineages of the same place, as many indigenous people do today.

The ancient plebeian marriage ceremony resembled that of the lords, but the gifts and intermediaries were of lesser quality. A very similar traditional ceremony is still followed among the Quiche Indians of Guatemala. The various descriptions of the marriage process among the lords, as they appear in the chronicles, indicate that there were large ceremonies, with formal and fixed rules (Carmack, 1979, p. 72).

In Bunzel's work called "Chichicastenango"-a region inhabited by the Quichés- he mentions that weddings and marriages had the following customs: first, for no reason the young people married those of their tribe or family or kinship, and second, the speeches in the marriage ceremonies are very explicit about the sexual aspect of marriage

(Bunzel, 1952, p. 118). This means that the girl apparently arrives at the marriage without any mystery in the aspects of life and according to Bunzel the girl goes to the marriage knowing what awaits her.

The current marriage rules seem to show the old clan system in disintegration. The preference for a spouse from another canton, the prohibition to marry someone of the same surname (surnames descend through the paternal line), the acceptance of blood relatives "if they come from far away", as well as the strong emphasis on patrilineal inheritance if the daughter has left the parental home and her local group, all will return to the starting point of the time of unilateral descent with residence which in sedentary people means exogamous groups through the paternal line.

In this same work they mention the marriage requests as important ceremonies to be able to reach marriage -as it is still today- saying: "They come to ask for a girl on a Thursday. The boy's father comes with the matchmaker, the healer, very early, around two or three o'clock in the morning. They enter the courtyard and stop to greet the four cardinal points, in remembrance of the ancestors of the house and to ask their forgiveness for coming to their house to ask for their daughter (Bunzel, 1952, 157).

Proposals can be conceptualized as that manifestation of supplication and reflection that has the meaning of sensitizing the decision of the bride's life itself, first to become a bride and groom and later to get married (Baquiáx, 2002).

Marriage ceremonies can be taken as customary religious ceremonies that comply with the customs of the ancestors. In these ceremonies, marriages are performed, prayers are made for the deceased, prayers are made for individual or family wellbeing, offerings are made for a good corn harvest, children are presented, as well as prayers and offerings, among others (Morales, 2004). These ceremonies, although they vary in each town, have a festive meaning and their social function is to maintain the custom, tradition and cultural practices, although there are also cases in which ceremonies are performed when there are conflicts, pain or problems that overwhelm (Lima, 1995).

According to the National Conference of Ministers of Mayan Spirituality of Guatemala Oxlajuj Ajpop, *the ceremonies serve to preserve unity and communion between families and the community.*

In the social sciences, these ceremonies are usually studied as customs based on behaviors legitimized by an immemorial past (Weber, 1971), but which nevertheless

acquire a *sui generis* character since they are repeated not as a routine but as a transmission of norms and values within a social context of meanings and representations (Esquit, 1995).

For this reason, marriage proposals can be considered authentic manifestations of traditional popular culture, since it is through them that **popular knowledge** is transmitted to new generations.

Marriage proposals can then be considered a Cultural Fact, because they comply with characteristics such as being anonymous and not institutionalized (Carvalho-Neto, 1971).

CULTURAL FACT

For Carvalho-Neto, a cultural fact of any people is characterized mainly by being anonymous and not institutionalized; this same cultural fact can also be a folkloric fact, since the difference is that the latter extends to the word "people".

A folkloric fact is then a cultural and social fact, since it is the result of men who have lived together in society for a more or less long period of time, and which continues to be transmitted as a

collective and anonymous product (Lara, 1977).

The indigenous marriage proposals, through their practice, allow the transmission of this cultural fact, bequeathing the memory not only of one man but of many who have created and recreated this fact that is now socialized (Lara, 1977):

The meaning of a cultural fact then has to be understood at the moment in which the community apprehends it, keeps it, respects it, defends it and above all reproduces and transmits it to the generations, since this fact is already incorporated to its own culture (Lara, 1977).

Lara, quoting Augusto Raúl Cortazar - theorist of Latin American Folklore - states that the cultural or folkloric fact also has characteristics, such as the following: Folkloric phenomena are the product of a dynamic process; they are collective, socialized and in force; they are popular; they are empirical and not institutionalized; they are oral; they are functional; they are traditional; they are animic and geographically localized (Lara, 1997).

Marriage proposals as the essence of popular traditions comply with the characteristics that authors such as Cortazar have applied to cultural or

folkloric facts.

It can be stated - paraphrasing what the author has already said - that indigenous marriage proposals have undergone a series of changes that can be attributed to the passage of time, that is, to the so-called “modernity” derived directly from relevant socioeconomic conditions that have allowed them to enter a dynamic process in which changes constantly arise that allow transformations, but that do not alter their essence, in this case their practice and rituality.

On the other hand, marriage proposals are also collective events, which means that society has adopted and incorporated them into its culture.

Marriage proposals are made together and all the attendees are participants in this tradition, thus allowing them to become valid, since their realization is constant and the attendees are socialized in such a way that it seems that each pedida is considered as their own.

Also, the marriage proposals as cultural facts are empirical, oral and not institutionalized.

There is no official means to make them known, they are known by the tradition

they represent, by way of example, it is worth mentioning that the interviewees stated that this tradition is generally unknown in depth, therefore, as a first step in the pedidas it can be to look for the tertulero to instruct them in the process to be followed, the instruction is oral because there is no document that officially makes them known.

When it is said that marriage proposals can also be functional and traditional, we are saying that they satisfy the needs of society, this means that only by means of marriage proposals a vital permission to form a new family is obtained, at the moment in which society gives this permission, the need to continue the process begins to be satisfied, because for families it is very important to follow this example that has been traditionally fulfilled by all generations.

A marriage proposal is also anonymous because it cannot be attributed to any author of this tradition, although it is known that at some point it began to be performed, it is not possible to have the exact date, but it will not be important to know who started it.

And finally the marriage proposals are

geographically localized because as mentioned below in many places throughout Guatemala marriage proposals are performed, but in each place - in this case San Cristobal Totonicapán - has specific features that allow the requests are unique and are recognized precisely by some characteristic that determines them as unique and exclusive to that particular place.

IMPORTANCE OF ORALITY

For the objectives of this analysis, the study of orality was important in two senses.

The first is to reach an understanding of this as an information system that manages to constitute specific forms of teaching and conservation of norms, and the second is that this research is a product of the use of orality.

Esquit points out that orality is not only the explanation of a reality, but is reality itself in constant play with the character of the society in which it manifests itself (Esquit, 1995).

Orality is understood as an information system through which values and rituals are transmitted by means of the speech process, which in this case is the most important information phenomenon in

which language is a used and transcendent code (Esquit, 1995).

On the other hand, for Vansina, the historical value of orality can be understood at the moment in which oral transmissions are historical sources whose main characteristics are to be oral, that is, not written, but memory based on transmission between generational groups (Vansina, 1966).

Monsonyi also analyzes that all articulated language is in principle an oral language to the extent that it is not transferred to writing, therefore this oral language is used in the course of thought, to assimilate the imaginary, historical and moral of society which is transmitted generationally.

Orality is thus an inexhaustible source through which the value of rituality, the historical value of reality itself, can be collected and presented in the form of written language. Language itself allows the transmission of important information and results, as in the case of this research.

THE SPOKESMAN

In the indigenous marriage proposals that

take place in San Cristóbal Totonicapán, the so-called Spokesman, representative or spokerpersion occupies a relevant place.

In order to explain such relevance we will retake Weber's approach in relation to the routinization of charisma or charismatic authority, since the word Charisma *is applied to a certain quality of an individual personality which is set apart from individuals, treating everyone as someone who is invested with specifically exceptional powers and qualities* (Weber, 1947).

The spokesman or representative possesses certain characteristics to be able to perform this social status in society.

These characteristics can be: The ease of expression in front of several people in relevant acts, the charisma to be able to perform this status, the authority for the good performance of each step, the full knowledge of the traditions of the place and to be recognized as a religious and morally respected man.

Recovering Weber's approach, we try to explain how the "spokesman" is granted unique qualities that make it possible for him/her to be recognized and requested for an event of such magnitude as the marriage

proposal. In most cases, the “spokesman” or “representative” is entrusted with the success or failure of the activity, since he takes control and authority over it. This is the basis for the analysis of why he is considered to have unique qualities and in some cases even supernatural qualities.

According to Gabriel Xiquin, in the Maya language and in general, the “spokesman” or “representative” is called Kámóbéy, which textually means “guide of the way”. This name is given to the people who indicate the necessary steps to perform family and communal ceremonies, they are intermediaries between families in marriages, bridal and communal ceremonies (Gabriel Xiquin, 2000).

APPROVAL

The last activity that takes place in San Cristóbal Totonicapán in relation to marriage proposals is called “**Approval**”.

The approval is seen as the ideal of permission to be granted to the young couple so that they can conclude their relationship of courtship in marriage.

Once the approval has been given, it can be said that the petitions have finished the function of supplication and reflection on

the life of the bride, but also on the life of the groom and the future of both.

This activity is very important since in it, as its name indicates, the commitments that the parents of the bride and groom acquire from the moment they get married are sealed, commitments that go from moral and economic support to religious support, since both young people will form a family.

In the approval, the existing social ties between people are made known, as well as the new ties that are acquired at the moment a new family will be formed, these ties are generally compadrazgo (CEFOL, 1993).

COMPADRAZGO

Compadrazgo is a fact that is given for sponsoring a marriage, a baptism, a first communion or confirmation, and for blessing a house (CEFOL, 1993). It is also a system by which a family extends its personal relationships with other members of the community. According to Nash, by assuming virtual or fictitious kinship in the life cycle crises of baptism and marriage, a group of godparents and compadres, to whom respect and deference is shown and from whom advice can occasionally be expected

(Nash, Manning. 1970. P.108).

The decision to name a *compadre* involves the parents of the bride and groom and the bride and groom, when a person is named as such the acceptance is immediate, taking into account that it is a distinction. The person named as *compadre* may be someone who has served on occasions or in a very special circumstance, and for this reason is named as such (CEFOL, 1993).

A feature that can be very relevant is that the people who contract this social bond must be Catholic, this *compadrazgo* is carried out during the date of the last request of a girl, it is done immediately after agreeing and agreeing on the realization of the civil and religious marriage of the couple, this act is done before the images of the saints (CEFOL, 1993).

This *compadrazgo* takes place between the parents of the bride and groom and between the godparents of the civil and religious marriages (CEFOL, 1993).

From this it can be noted that when researching bibliography related to indigenous marriage proposals, the information found refers to different places in the republic where they are celebrated in

a similar way but with different nuances, being distinctive of these to ask in marriage to a young woman or girl. Chronologically, the studies found were:

During the period **1959 - 1979** the work of Benjamin D. Paul on "Life in a Guatemalan Indian Village", was carried out, which refers to the norms of courtship already established in San Pedro La Laguna municipality of Sololá.

These norms determine the way in which the young man in love can greet a young lady, this is developed at the moment in which the girls go to the beach several times a day to look for water, the young man then cannot touch her nor stop her when going down to look for water.

The opportunity presents itself as she ascends back up the path, balancing the heavy pitcher on her head.

He jumps onto the path, grabs her wrist from behind, and the two remain standing, while he recites his prepared speech; the young woman remains attentive, for any movement or resistance would cause the pitcher to fall.

Then there is also the work of Louis Paul and Benjamin D. Paul on "*Changing Marriage Patterns in a Highland Guatemalan Community*", a study carried

out in San Pedro La Laguna, municipality of Sololá. It deals with changes in social organization through the advent of local political groups that brought about a series of changes in the community's courtship and marriage practices in the course of the 1960s.

In this study, the authors present the traditional model of courtship prior to marriage, in this model they address the marriage by proposal and at the same time present the traditional marriage variant called "inside" and known as "Pa-jay" (in the house).

The *Revista Guatemala Indígena* publishes the "Estudio sobre la poliginia en Santa María Chiquimula, Totonicapán" by Martín Ordóñez Chipín, in which he describes how requests are carried out within the family organization, presenting two systems used, which are an old system and a system of previous falling in love. This system is established at the moment in which the first proposal takes place. In this particular case of polygyny it mentions that a man can ask for second and third wives. In all conjugal unions a patriarchal culture is manifested that gives rise to the repudiation of the wife at the moment of committing a fault.

Another study published in the *Revista Guatemala Indígena* is entitled "*Costumbres o ceremonias indígenas en el Departamento de Totonicapán*" and its author is Luis Felipe Carranza.

It deals with the marriage customs that take place during the marriage proposal, mentioning the gifts that are brought to the young woman's family, It also mentions the social prestige that the "Samajel" or "speakerperson" must have, and the changes that have taken place in the performance of the marriage proposal.

The following study is entitled "*Vida Social en Tecpán: Juventud, Clases y Matrimonio*" and its author is Concepción Ajmac Cuxil.

In this work the author develops the topic of marriages and as a direct consequence the realization of the marriage proposals in this place, she analyzes the courtship by personal choice, she tells how the first, second and third proposal is carried out.

She also mentions the role of the bride and groom's godparents, the role of the bridegroom, the role of the elders - respected people who have an important place in the family at the moment when the betrothal ritual begins.

The following period ranges from **1981-1993**, when works such as "*Chichicastenango*" and "*Sociedad de un*

pueblo Indígena” were elaborated in San Andrés Xecul, Totonicapán and published by the Centro de Estudios Folklóricos (CEFOL).

In the study “Chichicastenango” elaborated by Ruth Bunzel, the topic of marriage proposals is addressed, mentioning that marriage proposals in this place can occur in two ways: the first is that it is the parents who look for the young woman who should marry their son once he reaches puberty, the second is that the initiative to ask the young woman or girl to marry can come from the young man. He also narrates the existence of a matchmaker called “Chinamital” who is in charge of “proposing” to the young woman. An important point he mentions is that in the “marriage proposal” as part of the same dynamic occurs what is known as the rejection and acceptance of the offers of the young man’s family, in relation to the “marriage proposal” requests.

The following study is entitled “*Los Pokomames del siglo XVI*” by Suzanne W. Miles which was conducted in the area of the eastern highlands of Guatemala. In this study the author deals with the subject of clans and marriages and quotes (as already mentioned) the narratives of *Las Casas y Torquemada* and clarifies that the known version of the apologetic of *Las Casas* makes a typographical error by not specifically

mentioning the name of the province of La Verapaz in the chapter on marriage.

In this chapter she explains that in this region kinship was attributed only to men, which means that when the time came for the female daughters to marry, they regularly did so with members of another tribe, which allowed the children born in this union to be considered of a separate tribe or lineage, in the event that the father of these women had not had a male child and did not have an heir, he simply did not inherit the children of his daughters born in another tribe.

Parents on the other hand with their sons were the ones who tried to find women for their sons. In the case that the father of a boy belonged to the nobility, when he found a young woman for his son, he would send gifts with old and honored women who would come with the maiden and then they would start asking for her for their son. When the common people who did not belong to the nobility asked for a young lady, it was a brother or a relative who was in charge of asking the young woman in marriage, here it is said that the young women were bought with the presents that they brought to their parents and then an old man of the town married them.

Another research is called "El Indígena y su Cultura" by Francisco Rodríguez Rouanet, where he mentions that in Santiago Atitlán Sololá, after the process of falling in love, the boy communicates to his parents his intentions to ask a young woman in marriage.

For this, the parents look for a "shaman" who they trust and who will ask this young girl to her parents. Here the dynamics of rejection and acceptance of the request is manifested, through the acceptance or not of the gifts.

The Centro de Estudios Folklóricos (CEFOL) made a research in San Andrés Xecúl Totonicapán called "*Sociedad de un pueblo Indígena*" where it talks about the marriage proposal and the requirements that must be fulfilled prior to it (for example age).

Then he presents the organization that takes place in the marriage proposal, the days in which they take place and the Compadrazgo, which is a social link between the parents of the bride and groom and between the godparents of the civil and religious marriages.

The last period of research will be **1995-2005**. Here we find the work called "Poder Local y bosques comunales en Totonicapán. El caso de la Aldea San Vicente Buenabaj, Municipio de Momostenango" by Enrique Virgilio Reyes.

In this research he analyzes marriage and kinship in this place, mentioning that the first step to get to the marriage was the request, which consisted of the parents of the man looking for the Chuch' Kajau or Mayan priest to be in charge of establishing the first communication with the parents of the woman, to inform about the interest of a certain family in a certain girl. If the response to the request was negative, which was common at first, the Chuch' Kajau would insist and ask again. The date of the marriage was determined by the Mayan calendar, the corresponding rites were then performed and advice was given to help them conduct their marriage.

The Center of Support to the Ruk'ux Tinamit communities Santiago Development Project (PRODESSA) publishes a document called "*Ecología y Crisis Social Guatemalteca / Perspectiva Maya K'iché*" in which we find the theme of marriage, here it narrates the historical way in which the young man went to his father and told him that he wished to marry a certain young lady, the father would then look for an "Elder" matchmaker of the village who would speak on behalf of the family to the parents of the young woman or girl, it is mentioned how the gifts when received symbolized the acceptance of the boy to "propose" to the young woman.

The matchmaker is called “Tzu”. He brings gifts and valuable jewels to the engagement.

In addition, in the Collection Traditions of Guatemala of the Centro de Estudios Folklóricos (CEFOL) we find the magazine number 51-52 called Ethnology and Ethnography in which appears the work titled “Breves notas sobre el matrimonio Q'eqchi' en Guatemala” the author is Máximo Bá Tiul who investigated about the marriage, He mentions that among the Q'eqchi'es the marriage proposals or tz' aamank as they are called, are made three to five times, in each one of these proposals gifts are brought, which are usually food, and in this case when a proposal is accepted it takes the name of Sumenkil.

If the presents brought before the bride's parents, such as cocoa, sugar, candles, copal, liquor, chicken, beans, etc., are consumed by the family between each of the proposals, it is a sign that the young man is accepted; but if the presents remain untouched, it is a sign of rejection; therefore, it is better to desist from all supplication. In all the stages of the marriage rite, the elders play an important role in the celebration of these.

The following study is entitled “La Ley que llevamos en el Corazón” its author is Eva

Kalny and it is carried out in two Mayan communities-Sakapultecos and Chiquimulas de Sacapulas Quiché. Here the author addresses the subject of marriage among the Sakapultecos and says that a condition for marriage is that the groom's family asks for the bride's hand. The normal thing in this place is that the boy who wants to get married asks his parents to ask for the bride's hand. The parents ask the young man if it is something serious for him, they warn him of the consequences and obligations of a marriage and inform themselves of the girl's wishes, if the parents of this young woman reject the request under pretexts but at the same time promise to think about it, it is a good sign. The name of the spokesman is Ajk'amal be and it is in his hands to inform about the intentions and aspirations of the family.

And finally there is the work published by the magazine “D” of Prensa Libre entitled “El Camino al Altar”, its author is Francisco Mauricio Martínez and the study was conducted in La Aldea Las Canoas, San Andrés Semetabaj, Sololá.

For the author, the marriage ceremony is the culmination of the rituals of courtship and marriage proposal, which are being transformed. He tells that among the Kakchiqueles there is a first date which is achieved through an intermediary who is

a friend of both, if the young woman is interested in the gentleman then she comes to this date and if he talks to her about his feelings she tells him that she will think about what he has told her and she will answer him soon. If she accepts him they will spend time together until the time comes when they decide to formalize their courtship, that is when the requests begin not to be engaged but to get married.

During the day of the proposal, the groom is accompanied by a "Pey" (representative), who is the one who leads the retinue that arrives at the bride's home. According to the author, not all proposals are as easy as they seem, since some are complicated when the future son-in-law does not like the bride's family.

Before knocking on the door of the house, the petitioner and the family group make a prayer to God to help them and grant them the hand of the woman, and at the same time that the parents have the patience to listen to them. In this place regularly the number of proposals is three times.

CHAPTER II METHODOLOGICAL PROCESS

This study was conducted in San Cristóbal Totonicapán, municipality of Totonicapán.

The title of this study is due to the interest in folklore theory and Cultural

Anthropology, an interest that arises at the moment in which these theories are taught in the classroom. Therefore, by recognizing these theories in the context in which they are situated, it was possible to generate a scientific contribution of the cultural fact and a contribution to the municipality itself.

The research has a methodological process headed by two works that obeyed the seminar courses given in the School of History. From these works, theoretical-methodological revisions were made in order to reach a clarity of the concepts that were going to be used in the work.

The selection of the place where the study was carried out was not difficult, taking into account that field work had already been done here in the past. Derived from these first approaches, there were several doubts about how to delimit the study problem, a delimitation that was clarified once the interest of the research itself was reviewed.

Once this was clarified, the methodology was divided into four stages:

The First Stage consisted of the compilation, review and analysis of the bibliographic material that was pertinent to this research, in order to identify any gaps that might be present.

At this stage, there were problems because the bibliography referring specifically to marriage requests is very precarious, with the exception of a work that specifically addresses this topic, since most of the information obtained is immersed in the topic of marriage, a topic that will not be analyzed in this research, but only mentioned in some cases that merit it.

In this search for bibliographic material, the folkloric theories, Cultural Anthropology and monographs of the place were included as the main part.

At this point a first visit to the municipality was scheduled.

This visit had many goals to accomplish, among which we can mention: the first and most important was to present a letter to the Municipality and present a letter in which the consultant supported the visit to this municipality. Then participant observation was carried out in order to determine which people were appropriate to participate in the investigation, determining that those indicated were: The President of the Brotherhood of the Buried Lord, the President of the Drinking Water Committee, local businessmen, young women who at that time were being asked, adult women who were already married and therefore had already been asked and

older adults who with their experience would enrich the investigation. It was determined how long this research would last and in which part of the municipality it would be carried out. After this was done, the stage of contacting them to ask for the necessary collaboration began.

After contacting them, a calendar was drawn up to plan the daily tasks and the number of days they would have to stay in this place, in the end they stayed forty-five days.

Upon returning to the Capital City, information such as the monographs that had been obtained was again reviewed and new ideas were incorporated, which allowed for a review of the material once again.

At this point, we began the elaboration of the questionnaire guides for the questionnaires that were to be given to the inhabitants in general, the interview guides for the “spokesman” and the interview guides for the local leaders. A special or pilot test was also developed to determine whether what was to be asked was understood.

This allowed a meeting for the first time with the assessment consultant so that they could work on reviewing the prepared

guides, which led to some questions being refined and others added for the benefit of the research. Once they were ready, the research could continue.

The second stage is developed when the tests of the guides are passed on to four villagers, once this validation procedure was determined, the actual guides were used.

The time of the people is a real limitation for any investigation because unforeseen events always occur that delay what was planned, in spite of this, the previous contact was very useful to have the confidence to continue looking for them until it was possible to interview them. A personal experience acquired is that the more sincere the researcher is when knocking on doors, the better he/she will be received, since people open the doors of their homes voluntarily, which allows not only to create friendships but also to collect valuable information for the work.

As for the work sample, it can be said that El Barrio San Sebastián, which is located between zone 2 and 5 of the municipality, was worked in its entirety and the people who participated in this research were taken at random.

The number of questionnaires worked on was one hundred, the interviewed

“spokesman” were the most important of the municipality, five of them, and the interviewed leaders of the place were ten.

Among the one hundred people who collaborated by answering the questionnaires were - as already mentioned - women who at that moment were being proposed to, parents who at that moment were preparing for the proposal of a daughter or parents who were together with their son asking the young lady.

Older adults also participated, narrating the way in which many years ago they asked their wife and vice versa, since we listened to testimonies of adult women who narrated how they were asked; at this moment we tried to give a time lapse as they expressed themselves, which we had to listen to as a way of respecting the time and the information they were providing, although it was not necessarily linked to the research, but we had to break with the tradition of talking only about what interests us and be polite to that which we evaluate as irrelevant to our work.

In this second stage, we learned about logistical aspects such as: travel time, travel costs, places, lodging prices, food, and travel conditions.

The third stage consisted of classifying all the material obtained.

This classification was done in the following way: by age and sex. The questionnaires of young women who were being asked, adult women who had already been asked, older adult women -who made a clear differentiation of the relevant changes that the women who had been asked-, the tertuleros, the leaders of the municipality, and family men who narrated the process they followed when they asked for the woman who is currently their wife, were then separated.

When the materials that had been obtained were read and listened to, it was decided that the best way to save time was to work on the statistical data at once so that when they had to be included in the research they would already be ready.

The work of reviewing all the material obtained took between thirty and forty-five days, at the end it was possible to know that each questionnaire and each interview had unique data that should be taken advantage of and valued as highly as possible.

Every time the materials are read, reviewed and transcribed it can be noticed how valuable the data are since through them we can reach important conclusions, for

example these questionnaires reflect the religious identity to which the interviewees belong, the ideas that those young women may have regarding marriage proposal, the ideas that adult women handle regarding their marriage, the ideas of those women who have had the opportunity to finish their primary, basic and diversified studies and who today study in a university, the ideas of those young women who today are single mothers, the ideas of those men who attend a university and finally the similar ideas that exist regarding the pedida and the importance of the realization and conservation of these.

As for its temporality, it is worth mentioning that this fieldwork was planned to be carried out from February 20th to March 20th, this planning had to be determined in this way since the schedule of the people who were going to participate in this work was mainly governed by the time offered to interview them at home. In the end it did not last a month but forty-five days.

It is worth mentioning that the stay in the municipality went without any problem, on the contrary, the municipality is so accessible not only in terms of its hospitality but also in terms of its geographical location.

The Fourth Stage

This stage is very important for the research, since here we began the process of the executive work of "putting together" everything obtained.

This process, as the first part, seeks to create a guiding thread that allows not getting lost in the sense of relating the information from the questionnaires, the interviews, the monographs and the theories that had already been analyzed. This process is the most complex and the most time-consuming, since here everyone becomes the author, and for this reason, one is solely responsible for the analysis that is presented at this point.

During this stage, the statistical information that was ready from the previous stage was used and deposited in the eragraphs. Once the database was emptied, errors began to be checked and corrected.

The description and analysis of the results obtained will be presented in a separate chapter.

The interviews were transcribed with a degree of difficulty. This information, because of its value to the research, should be transcribed as immediately as possible, since the more time the information spends with the researcher, the more likely it is to be misrepresented or changed

unintentionally.

The analysis was carried out according to the information obtained and the variables of the guiding questions of the interviews and questionnaires that identified the substantive elements of the responses.

Finally, it is necessary to say that in all fieldwork the richness that corresponds to us and that is invaluable is the experience of spending time with the people we interviewed.

CHARTER III

**MUNICIPALITY OF SAN CRISTÓBAL
TOTONICAPÁN, DEPARTMENT OF
TOTONICAPÁN - GETTING TO KNOW
IT**

Being San Cristóbal Totonicapán a municipality of the Department of Totonicapán, it is necessary to elaborate an outline of the municipality with outstanding historical facts, geographic location and socio-demographic indicators, in order to frame our place of study.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

*Historical Knowledge of the Town /
Origins of the Name.*

The town is of Pre-Columbian origin as it is located on an archaeological site that has been called San Cristóbal.

The chronicler of the colony Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán, in his work "Recordación Florida" written towards the last decade of the 17th century, stated that the town was known as San Cristóbal Paxula, undoubtedly it was the old name, to which following the Spanish tradition and custom, the name of the Saint under whose dedication the town was placed; Vázquez, in his chronicle gives the name of San Cristóbal Pahula, and it could also be San Cristóbal Pajula.

In that sense and that probably is the original name of the town, name of K'iché origin that can be interpreted as In the place of the waterfalls or Place where the river forks and this surely is due to the Río Samalá.

Fuentes y Guzmán also quotes in their work the names of San Cristóbal Puxila, to which others say San Cristóbal Totonicapa, which is one of the main guardians of the region of San Francisco.

Brief Historical Facts

San Cristóbal Totonicapán is a town of pre-Columbian origin, which allows us to suppose that the town hall was established in San Cristóbal Totonicapán in the year 1578, judging by the information given by the corregidor who resided in San Miguel Totonicapán (today Totonicapán) in such

year.

Fray Francisco Vázquez de Herrera mentions that the bishop Fray Payo de Rivera went in pastoral visit in 1,661 to San Cristóbal Pahula and that its inhabitants requested him to erect a convent, which he considered appropriate on June 8, 1,689, signing the chronicler Fray Francisco Vázquez, he mentioned the town as San Cristóbal Paxula. That undoubtedly was the old name with the indication that it was San Cristobal Pajula.

The also Franciscan, Francisco Zuaza wrote a description of the Franciscan convents, at the request of the bishop of Guatemala, and Fray Francisco Vázquez mentioned the town as San Cristóbal Totonicapán so it can be affirmed that at the end of the 17th century it was already known by that name with the indications pointed out.

Fuentes y Guzmán makes a description of the town indicating that its material aspect is as beautiful as that of Totonicapán, with all the farmhouse of tile and ostentatious guardian convent with rich and sumptuous temple and rich adornment of sacristy, house of council and of much capacity and relief.

Where the number of eight thousand one hundred and twenty-four inhabitants is produced, all very applied to the cultivation of the virtue of the large number of parishioners who were there. The

authorized government dispatch is dated December 24, 1663, where the Indians had built a convent house.

The second parochial temple was built in 1977 next to the first one, with the intention of collecting its old altarpieces and using part of the walls, as well as other materials. In this temple a bishop was consecrated, because the first Franciscan bishop who arrived in Guatemala, Mr. Juan Bautista Alvarez de Toledo, who according to the historian Agustin Estrada Monroy, responded exactly to the name of Juan Alvarez de Castillo, on December 27, 1714 consecrated Mr. Jacinto Olivera and Pardo as bishop of Chiapas.

The bachelor, the priest Domingo Juaron, wrote in 1,880 that the town was the head of a parish within the party of Totonicapán that spoke Kiché and that its extension was of two leagues being located thirty leagues to the nor - east of the capital.

In the printed board attached to the circular of the superior political chief Gabino Gainza of November 7, 1821 for the election of deputies to the congress of the united provinces of Guatemala appears as San Cristóbal Totonicapán, belonging to the then party of Totonicapán.

When the constituent assembly declared on

October 11, 1895 the Political Constitution of the State of Guatemala, it indicated the towns that comprised the territory.

San Cristóbal appears as belonging to the ninth district of Totonicapán. It also appears in the decree of the assembly of August 27, 1863 for the administration of justice by the jury system.

On October 31, 1880 a population census was taken and the information provided states that San Cristóbal is a town in the department of Totonicapán, two leagues from the capital. It is indicated that there are only in the branch of industries, as specialties, some weavers, potters, wool workers and carpenters. It is mentioned as a curiosity the church whose construction recalls the buildings of the time of the Conquest, besides that the climate is cold. No records of the population were obtained at that date.

Brief Description of the Foundation

It is believed that the municipality was founded between 1,524 and 1,540. Its founders were Franciscan missionaries in charge of the Christianization of the indigenous people and the name with which it was baptized was San Cristóbal Pahula.

The valley that today covers San Cristóbal and the neighboring towns, was formed by

different human settlements and inhabited by the indigenous people of the place, belonging to the K'iché branch. Pahula in etymology K'iché means Catarata^c [*waterfall*]. The Quiché were socially organized at the state level, where there were several social, cultural and economic stratifications, in which the ruling class was formed by the nobility King, Viceroy, Prince, priests, high military chiefs who exercised power and were affiliated to patrilineages or partial houses.

The Quiché culture was in a moment of decadence in the late post-classical period due to internal problems, such as: diseases, wars of territorial dominance and wars against the Cakchiqueles. These problems must have had a direct influence on the fact that they were somewhat disorganized when the conquistadors arrived at the beginning of the 16th century.

Factors that have determined during the Colonization

When the Spaniards arrived in Guatemala in the year 1524, they looked for the Cakchiqueles as allies, which led to the conquest of the Quiché people. It was necessary to have control over the conquered indigenous people and for this a series of towns were founded not very

distant from each other such as: Salcajá, San Andrés Xecúl, San Cristóbal Totonicapán and others. This represented security, administration and commerce. So it is believed that the foundation of the town of San Cristobal Totonicapán was between the years of 1524 and 1540, first tracing the urban area and carrying out the construction of the first works that were directed by Franciscan missionaries, which first covered the part corresponding to the centro del Barrio Santiago which was where the first church was located, the stables and the house of the religious.

Later in the year 1,578 the Mayor of San Miguel Totonicapán ordered that San Cristóbal organize a town council to administer justice and collect taxes, tributes that were paid to the Spanish crown and the church, in kind, in personal services or in money.

Important Aspects during the 17th and 18th Centuries

The dispositions of the Royal Crown to get together the natives that were dispersed and the increase of the population brought with it a new extension of the urban area.

Thus acquiring importance, San Cristóbal in the year 1,674 is elevated to head of doctrine, having as subsidiary towns San Andrés Xecúl

and San Juan Olinstepeque, which indicates that since colonial times San Cristóbal was considered a strategic point for the development of certain activities.

One of the main aspects in the year 1721 is that in the municipality there is a growth of the urban area and it can be noted that it has covered the entire Barrio Santiago, El Salvador and El Calvario. The construction of the Church of San Sebastian corresponds to the 17th century as well as the trace of some constructions so it can be considered that in this period enough architecture began to be made, an example of this is that the Church of Barrio Salvador is from the end of the 18th century.

The constructions used a well-known common model, which consists of a grid formed by equal elements, occasionally rectangular, although San Cristóbal was not traced this way because the outline is irregular, which until today has been preserved.

In the middle of the 17th century, as a consequence of the Santa Olaya earthquake of 1,689, the first church was ruined and of course the houses of the town had to be rebuilt by the natives themselves. For this reason the first main church, Santiago, was consecrated in the year 1,711.

In the early eighteenth century in official documents appears San Cristobal Totonicapa or Totonicapán and from the year 1725 appears definitively as San Cristobal Totonicapán.

Important Aspects During the 19th Century

From the beginning of the colony, the production and the indigenous work was managed by the Spaniards, this naturally was a consequence of the obligatory commerce between Guatemala and Spain, trade of disadvantage for the American Spaniards, facts that together with the revolutionary movements of the United States and France came to provoke the independent spirit of Guatemala achieving the same in 1,821.

Independence was the conquest of colonial non-oppression, from then on trade was directed to other countries, the basis of coffee cultivation constituted the system of peonage, a system of hidden slavery.

The contradictions between the same national and foreign politicians led to the collapse of the conservatives in the revolution of 1,871. With this, the Church lost its power as a landowner, passing the lands to the power of the book sellers,

headed by Justo Rufino Barrios.

This revolution represented benefits for San Cristobal, since the people no longer had to pay taxes to the church, nor personal services as they had been doing, the buildings of the convent passed to the municipality, which is where it operates today.

Important Aspects During the 20th Century

Particularly in the second half of this century the general infrastructure improved, what at the beginning were ecclesiastical constructions and houses today has become a better equipped fabric such as education, health, commerce, etc. This is not the case in rural areas where infrastructure is generally very scarce.

The growth in the urban area has been disorderly, land tenure coupled with the lack of planning, has led and continues to lead to spontaneous urban sprawl, as an example is the Barrio San Sebastian that grows east of the CA1 with scattered buildings, the same happens with the other neighborhoods without streets or avenues, only with roads and pedestrian walkways that hinder access to housing, which is a problem for a possible urban planning.

This century has also seen the formation of several communal nuclei in rural areas, nuclei that will later become the urban center of the villages that are emerging without any planning process, since there are no solid pre-established planning criteria, nor are there any applications to the laws that try to regulate this type of human settlements, as in the case of the urban area of San Cristóbal, where certain areas considered rural tend to merge with the urban area.

GEOGRAPHIC, PHYSICAL AND HYDROGRAPHIC BACKGROUND



The municipality of San Cristobal Totonicapán, is located in the southern part of the department of Totonicapán, is located in the southwestern highlands of Guatemala, at an altitude of 2,330 meters above sea level.

It is communicated by the Panamerican highway CA-1 to the capital city from which it is 189 kilometers away, the same that leads to the city of Huehuetenango, 77 kilometers away; 12 kilometers from the

departmental capital on the national route RN1; to Quetzaltenango 15 kilometers and 1 kilometer from the intersection of the road called Cuatro Caminos, all of them asphalted.

In the town most of the streets are cobblestone, others are dirt roads, as well as country roads, sidewalks and slopes that communicate with other municipalities and rural towns. The municipality is located at latitude 15°55'05' and longitude 91°26'36'. It is bordered to the north by San Francisco El Alto (Totonicapán), to the south by Salcajá (Quetzaltenango) and San Andrés Xecúl (Totonicapán); to the east by the municipality of San Miguel Totonicapán, and to the west by San Andrés Xecúl (Totonicapán).

Territorial Extension

It is one of the 8 municipalities of the department of San Miguel Totonicapán, constitutes 3.39% of the departmental territory with 36 square kilometers, of the 1,061 square kilometers of the total of the same.

In these 36 square kilometers of territorial extension are located, the municipal head that has the category of town, 1 village, 7 cantons which are: La Cienega, Chiricaja,

Chuitaquyup, Xetalk'abaj, Colixquel, El Molino, Paxquequenil and Paxcomil; 9 neighborhoods which are: Santiago, Chigonón, El Calvario, San Sebastián, San Salvador, Las Claras, La Reforma, La Independencia and Bella Vista; and 87 communities.

It is located in the southwestern region, its climate is generally cold, it has a mountainous configuration, with broken terrain.

The municipality of San Cristóbal Totonicapán is irrigated by the Caquixá or Samalá, Los Tuices, Chisaquija, Pabacil Xesuc and Xeaj rivers, the most important being the Río Samalá, which crosses the municipal capital.

San Cristóbal Totonicapán has basic services, especially in the urban area. Among its productive activities are agricultural production, livestock, handicrafts, and commerce developed both in the local market and in the cantonal markets that also extends into the surrounding municipalities. It is located in the most important highway junction in the western part of the country called Cuatro Caminos, so it benefits from the abundant supply of extra-urban transportation that goes to San Marcos, Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán and Huehuetenango, as well as the units that communicate the highlands with the southwest coast and the remaining municipalities of Totonicapán.

Important Places.

The municipality has a hot water source, such as the baths of Fray Bernardino located in the Xesuc canton, the so-called Baños Chiquitos located in the Santiago neighborhood in zone 4 of the centro and those of Paxcacanil in the municipal capital. The Río Samalá used to form two cascadas [waterfalls] of approximately two hundred meters in height, which today have been affected by the extraction of water sources for crop irrigation, which has caused one of them to run out.

The main attraction of the town is the majestic parochial church that in its interior conserves numerous baroque altarpieces of great beauty that contain numerous paintings and sculptures of great artistic and historical value, together with the convent it constitutes one of the most important monuments of the Guatemalan highlands.

Soils

The municipality's soils are characterized by being shallow, developed on volcanic material that varies from light to dark in color and in some cases a mixture of both, with relief or broken and mountainous terrain.

Some 81% of the land has forest potential. Only 19% is suitable for intensive

agricultural cultivation (3% of the prime land plus 16% of the second land). This confirms the predominant forestry vocation of the municipality's soils, so agricultural activity is limited by the steep slopes, the shallowness of the soils and the consequent risk of erosion.

As a result of the steep slopes, the soils are highly susceptible to erosion, which increases as the forest cover is removed for agriculture; crops grown on the slopes are generally of low productivity due to the limitations imposed by the relief and the constant loss of nutrients.

Even so, 42% of the land is non-forested, because it is used for agriculture and pasture. These are used for the cultivation of corn, beans and wheat, and finally, to a lesser extent, pasture is used for cattle and sheep.

Forests

The municipality's forests are characterized by native species, including *Abis guatemalensis*, *Pinus hartwegii*, *Pinus Oocarpa*, *Pinus Pseudostrobus*, *Pinus teocate*, and *Cupreus Lusitanica* (Codersa, 2000).

The topography of the municipality is dominated by severely eroded slopes, steep and stony slopes. This means that these municipal lands do not have the characteristics of soils with agricultural aptitude, which leads us to propose the protection of the forest redoubts that survive in this region.

The territory has a natural wealth, which has diminished as a result of social factors, including population growth, constant migration and the application of inadequate techniques for forest management.

It was established that 80% of the rural population uses firewood for food preparation, which is the main cause of deforestation. It is not possible to determine the actual loss, but it is believed that the municipality has a percentage of forest mass.

Rivers

The municipality is bathed by several rivers, among which we can mention: Caquixa or Samalá, which comes from San Carlos Sija Quetzaltenango, crosses the bridge Chigonon, Azul and Pahulá, towards Quetzaltenango, Chuisaquijá, Los Trices, Pabacil, Xesuc, Xeaj and Pabacul.

The manto acuífero is located within the slope of the most important phreatic mantle in the area of the department of Totonicapán, so the drilling of artesian wells has been the most appropriate way to use for human consumption, in the existing springs or sources, the deforestation of the area has caused water erosion so that this resource has begun to diminish considerably.

Climate

The climate of this municipality is cold throughout the year and intensifies during the months of November to February, which is largely due to its elevation.

It is quite rainy during the months of May to October, a period during which the greatest evapotranspiration is generated; the region is very rainy and therefore maintains a relatively high humidity. The environment maintains the average annual temperature between 15° and 22° Celsius, with drops of up to 0° Celsius in the cold season, which seriously affects the crops with the so-called “freezing weather”.

Mines and quarries

In the municipality, sand excavators, better known as “los areneros” (sand diggers), extract sand from the Samalá River and

then distribute it to the sand block companies.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

Demographics

The total population in the municipality of San Cristóbal Totonicapán is 40,275 inhabitants, which represents 10.67% of the total of the Department; of which 18,930 are men or 47% and 21,345 are women with 53%. Women thus outnumber men by 6%. In terms of inhabitants, 6,283 live in urban areas 15.6% and 33,992 live in rural areas 84.4% (INE, 2004).

MUNICIPALITY OF SAN CRISTOBAL TOTONICAPAN - TOTONICAPAN POPULATION BY GENDER, URBAN AND RURAL AREA. YEARS: 2002 - 2004				
	POPULATION	Males	Females	Total
CENSUS 2002	URBAN	1,990	2,243	4,233
	RURAL	12,401	13,974	26,375
	TOTAL	14,391	16,217	30,608
	%	47	53	100
RURAL PROJECTION	URBAN	2,020	2,278	4,296
	RURAL	12,585	14,162	26,747
	TOTAL	14,605	16,440	31,045
	%	47	53	100

SOURCE - Compilation based on data from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística - INE

The difference in these figures allows women to participate in different sectors that allow for economic, social and cultural growth. It is worth mentioning that during the elaboration of this research it was a woman who occupied the municipal mayor's office.

The structure of the population by **age** and by area allows us to identify the range where the majority of the population is found and establishes the availability of the economically active population.

The population is made up of a high percentage of young people and adults, between the ages of 18 and 59 years, this range concentrates 43% of the population. This is followed by the range of 7 to 14 years of age, which represents the potential human resource and integrates 24% of the population. Children from 0 to 6 years of age make up 19% of the population, who, like the previous range, require investment in education, health and other requirements to later integrate into the municipality's economy.

MUNICIPALITY OF SAN CRISTOBAL TOTONICAPAN. TOTONICAPAN POPULATION BY AGE, URBAN AND RURAL AREA. YEARS: 2002 - 2004									
AGE RANGE	2002				PROJECTED 2004				
	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL	%	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL	%	
0 - 6	812	5,059	5,871	19	816	5,086	5,902	19	
7 - 14	1,006	6,271	7,277	24	1,031	6,424	7,455	24	
15 - 17	304	1,892	2,196	7	301	1,874	2,175	7	
18 - 59	1,820	11,337	13,157	43	1,847	11,509	13,356	43	
60 - 64	85	529	614	2	86	535	621	2	
65 and more.	206	1,287	1,493	5	215	1,338	1,553	5	
TOTAL	4,233	26,375	30,608	100	4,296	26,766	31,062	100	

SOURCE - Compilation based on data from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística - INE

The population by **ethnicity** in the urban and rural areas, according to the research conducted, 90% of the population is indigenous, while 10% is of ladino origin.

It was observed that there is a significant difference between the population living in rural and urban areas. About 14% is concentrated in the urban area and 86% resides in the Villages, Cantons, hamlets and communities that make up the municipality's system of population centers.

MUNICIPALITY OF SAN CRISTOBAL TOTONICAPÁN - TOTONICAPÁN URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION. YEARS: 2002 - 2004				
	AREA	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL
CENSUS 2002	POPULATION	4,233	26,374	30,607
	%	14	88	100
PROJECTION 2004	POPULATION	4,349	26,713	31,062
	%	14	86	100

SOURCE - Compilation based on data from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística - INE

Education

The percentage of alphabetism in the municipality is 65%, while the remaining 35% is the level of illiteracy, which shows that the coverage of the education system is high. Of the total households surveyed, it was determined that 30% of the population does not know how to read and write.

In order to show the development and behavior of education in the municipality, we used as a basis the information from the X National Population Census for 1994, the record of the Educational Supervision for 1998 and the records of the Administrative Technical Coordination for 2004.

The level of schooling in the urban area according to the X National Population Census for 1994 is as follows:

MUNICIPALITY OF SAN CRISTOBAL TOTONICAPÁN - TOTONICAPÁN EDUCATION LEVEL URBAN AREA YEAR: 1994						
POPULATION AREAS	NONE	KINDERGARTEN	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL	TOTAL
URBAN AREA	1,215	127	2,853	957	189	5,341
CHUICOTÓN	2	3	157	2	0	164
COXLIQUEL	168	4	128	18	1	319
XETACABAJ	219	7	180	10	0	416
TOTAL	1,604	141	3,318	987	190	6,240

Source: X Censo Nacional de Población Instituto Nacional de Estadística -INE- 1994.

The important thing to note from the above table is that for 1994 the population that received elementary school education represents 51.12%, and the 28.58% did not receive any type of education, while only 2.93% have received high school education.

It can be noticed that a high percentage of the population has received at least basic education, but few of them are able to study at the basic levels, and of these, only a small percentage go on to university.

According to the information provided by the Education Supervision Office No. 96-17, the education situation in 1998 was as follows:

MUNICIPALITY OF SAN CRISTOBÁL TOTONICAPÁN - TOTONICAPÁN EDUCATIONAL SITUATION URBAN AREA YEAR: 1998										
No.	POPULATION AREAS	EDUCATION								
		KINDERGARTEN			ELEMENTARY SCHOOL			MIDDLE SCHOOL		
		Schools	Teachers	Students	Schools	Teachers	Students	Schools	Teachers	Students
1	URBAN AREA OUM	7	9	169	7	47	1,558	1	20	452
2	ANGELA GARCIA OUM	1	2	60	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	LA CIENAGA EDUM	1	1	27	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	THE INDEPENDENCE	1	1	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALES		10	13	270	7	47	1,558	1	20	452

It is evident that in the municipality there is a strong demand for teachers at all levels of education, as well as schools and institutes. In the urban area there were only 17 schools, one institute and 80 teachers for a total of 6,491 students.

Nowadays, there are four schools that provide basic education.

According to information received from the Administrative Technical Coordinator No. 08-0206 for 2004, statistics are as follows:

MUNICIPALITY OF SAN CRISTOBÁL TONONICAPÁN - TONONICAPÁN EDUCATIONAL SITUATION URBAN AREA YEAR: 1998							
LEVEL	STUDENTS			TEACHERS			SCHOOLS
	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL	
KINDERGARTEN	123	1446	269	0	10	10	10
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	1,062	937	1,999	22	35	57	10
MIDDLE SCHOOL	149	123	272	6	5	11	1
TOTAL	1334	1206	2540	28	50	78	21

Source: Technical Administrative Coordination 08-02-06

This table shows a comparative analysis with respect to 1998, with no significant variation in the number of students, which has been maintained despite the fact that the number of schools has increased from 7 to 10, the number of students has increased by 28.30%; it is important to mention that there are 3 Community Self-Management Schools (PRONADE); another significant fact is the number of women who attend

school, compared to men, is only 128 people. The basic level had an increase of 9 teachers and 180 students.

As for the diversified level there are already four schools that provide this type of educational service to the population, those who wish to study outside the municipality go to the departmental capital, Quetzaltenango or the capital city, this situation is similar for the university level.

Political-Administrative Division

POLITICAL

The political division of the municipality is as follows: 1 village (Nueva Candelaria), 7 cantons (Patachaj, Pacanac, Chuicotom, Xetacabaj, Xesuc, Xecanchavox, San Ramón), 9 neighborhoods and 87 communities. In some documents consulted, the cantons are identified as villages; this was confirmed with the municipal authorities, who rectified the aforementioned denomination.

ADMINISTRATIVE

In the municipality, the administrative division is composed of a municipal corporation presided over by the mayor, three trustees (two incumbents and one alternate), seven councilors (five

incumbents and two alternates), a secretary and a municipal treasurer who are elected by universal suffrage for a period of four years. In rural areas, the village and cantons have an auxiliary mayor's office.

The municipality also has a Court of Justice a substation of the National Civil Police and a sub-delegation of the *Tribunal Supremo Electoral*, offices where the population goes to carry out various types of formalities.

Culture

POPULAR TRADITIONS

San Cristóbal Totonicapán is a municipality rich in popular traditions, which is why this place is recognized nationally and internationally for its distinctive features.

Some of these traditions are listed below:

A) CELEBRATION OF THE TITULAR FAIR.

The celebration of the titular festival is a very important event within the locals of this municipality, this is celebrated from July 20 to 26 of each year being the most important day on July 25 in honor of the

Patron Saint Santiago Apostle and the 26th of the same month is celebrated in honor of the Apostle Saint Christopher Martyr.

At the beginning of July, the preparations for this fair begin, for example, the committees that are generally from the municipality begin to elect the young ladies who will be the representatives of the municipality. Among these are: Miss San Cristobal, Miss Sports and the Indigenous Queen. In a similar way the Urban School, the institutes and the schools make this selection. On this date religious, cultural and sports activities are also planned such as: Eucharist, concerts and social dances that take place in the municipal theater Raul Ovando Santiago, races, basketball and soccer games.

For the week from the 20th to the 26th all the activities are already planned and underway, within the events that mark and harmonize the fair we have: The representation during this week of the dance of the conquest and the different parades that for three consecutive days are carried out; on the first day the youngest students go for a walk these are the kindergarten students, on the second day walk the students enrolled in all the primary and basic and on the third day they perform a parade of floats where the representatives of the municipality and its different areas go.

B) CONFIRMATIONS

These are held every year, even though the head pastor of the church is the only one who performs them and also attends the entire municipality.

The number of confirmands gathered for such an activity ranges between 300 to 350 people who come from the municipality, the villages, cantons and hamlets. This celebration is important because here the catholic faithful make *compadrazgo* with the people who are the godparents of the young lady or young man who at that moment will be confirmed, therefore they can already be called by this "Godfather and Godmother".

C) HOLY WEEK

From the beginning of the so called "Lent" the processions go through the streets of the municipality from Friday to Friday. On Palm Sunday, all the street corners are decorated with arches from which hang fruits and corozos of the season, providing a special aroma.

The making of bread and carpets mark this time of the year.

As for food, bread and honey can not be missing, in relation to the bread it is common to see people taking the materials to the bakery where they will make their bread.

On Holy Wednesday it is a tradition to see ladies distributing small samples of bread and honey made at home in the homes of friends and neighbors, this is repeated on Friday and as a law of reciprocity the samples are sent to those who have also shared with certain people.

On Holy Friday the dramatization of the Passion of Christ takes place in the Parish Hall located next to the Catholic Church of El Centro and annexed to the municipal theater Raúl Ovando Santiago.

It is believed that the year in which the Río Samalá overflowed precisely on Holy Friday, it was because the actor who represented Jesus did not want to act anymore and said a farewell to the population, at that time it fell a lot of hail and rained excessively which caused the overflowing of the river.

D) MAY 10TH

This day is very special for all the mothers of San Cristobal, since many years ago until today all the young men and women who study in the institutes get together to serenade all the mothers, therefore at 4:00 in the morning you can already hear movement in the streets. Each student puts special emphasis on his or her mother. On

the 10th every house already has small posters with poems alluding to the date.

E) DECEMBER 7, 11 AND 12

The month of December is much awaited by young people and children who like to have fun being run by the “devils”.

This tradition of the devils is very remote and it is carried out by men - in its majority - who in the afternoons usually dress up in costumes.

The costume used is the same that is used for the dances of the conquest, Moors, deer and monkeys, only that instead of putting on the Spanish mask, they put on a devil's mask. There are two ways of being a devil: One is to dress up using what has already been described and the other is to paint the body of some color and use a mask, for this reason they are commonly called dressed devils and naked devils.

In the past, the devils began to come out during the last week of November, then when the clock struck 3:00 in the afternoon, the screams of the young people were heard calling for them to run away. At present the value that represents the rent of this costume has been rising, reason why the dressed devils have been decreasing and

the most common at this time are the naked ones, this is because the paint is easier to obtain and more accessible to the pockets.

At the present time the devils no longer go out daily only on certain days, it is difficult to see dressed devils, therefore the naked devils are the most common and the tradition continues that they go out on the 7th and 11th at night, being the 12th the only day in which only naked devils are seen and on this day this activity is also closed.

Every day the devils come out at three o'clock in the afternoon, only on the twelfth day the devils come out at noon.

On December 7th the anniversary of the Virgin of Concepción is celebrated and the procession leaves the church at six o'clock in the afternoon to go through the main streets of the municipality and it is a tradition that just behind this procession come the naked devils.

The celebration of the Virgin of the Guadalupe begins on the 11th and ends on the 12th at four o'clock in the afternoon.

During these days the population also participates with costumes that are incorporated to the devils parade, at the end there is an award for the best painted devil and the best costume.

The population that goes out to observe this parade, is exposed to be painted by the

participating devils.

F) MEMORÍAS

The *morerías* that are located within the municipality are establishments where they manufacture and rent masks, costumes and other implements used in the dances and vernacular dances and that are represented on the occasion of the festivities of the people and the celebrations of the brotherhoods so that practically all over the republic visit the morerías.

The two morerías that remain are those of the *Tistoj* brothers located on the street known as *Morería* and that of Mrs. Josefa Chaclán. The *Tistoj* brothers are also dedicated to the elaboration of polychrome wooden masks. In addition, the workshop “El arte obrero” of Mr. Bonifacio Son Elías stands out for the perfection in the carving of these masks.

G) MARRIAGE PROPOSAL AND WEDDINGS:

To be able to sustain this study it is necessary to capture historical background of the marriage proposals, with the objective of being able to verify which are the characteristics that fulfill the proposals according to Cortazar and thus to be able to recognize at what moment and when an event can be considered folkloric. On the other

hand, these historical backgrounds are also relevant because they can point out important changes in the current performance of these marriage rites.

Marriage proposals in the 30's to 50's: Traditional Model.

Marriage proposals at that time were totally governed by the father of the family. The fathers were the main authorities who decided when, with whom and on what date the children should marry. A particular case represented the father of the young lady since he was the only one who could allow the marriage proposal to take place, without his consent no step could be taken.

It could be said that in that time the system that today is known as “Traditional” or “Ancient” was developed.

The main characteristic of this period was that the young people did not know each other until they were introduced to each other. For no reason there were no expressions of public affection.

It is also mentioned that the young man who was to be the husband of a young lady was known many years before, because the father of this one selected him since he was a child in order to be able to notice his

behavior for a long time, so the father would know personal aspects such as: his character, the work he would perform, his vices if they existed, the respect due to his parents, grandparents, brothers and older people as well as his participation in the church.

For example, one interviewee noted that the mother of an adolescent girl had been proposed to fourteen times. This is an unlimited number, since it must be taken into account that the father of the young woman was the only one who could decide when to accept the young man or in some cases not to accept him, regardless of the number of requests that had already been made.

The fact of denying so many times the realization of a proposal and the due permission, could be due to the fact that there were cases in which the choice of the young lady was made by the parents of the young man, for such reason the denial that the father of the young lady manifested regarding the proposals can be explained in two ways: one in function of the little or no knowledge he had of the young man of his family and character, and two: because he simply did not believe him suitable for his daughter, which made him generally not receive the proposal.

Once they had ironed out the differences and reached an agreement, both parents would set a date and time for the first proposal to take place, at which point preparations could begin.

It should be noted that these proposals were more difficult when the parents of the young man were the ones who chose the young lady, the opposite was the case when the parents of the young lady selected the young man and only agreed and began the talks to start the proposal.

According to the interviewees, at this time the “marriage proposal” were events that stood out in importance since they were considered “celebrations” for that reason the symbolism transmitted was to place the marimba outside the house of the young lady, by means of the music, the whole town knew how important that day was and who they were asking for. The interviewees said that the marimba remained outside the house from one to eight days and then returned until the day of the second proposal, and so on, according to the calendar.

The role of the father of the family is very important, since it is important to take into account that the proposals took place and continue to take place within a patriarchal family.

At that time as previously mentioned, all the young ladies had to be proposed to. The proposal was the permission before the society to perform a family consolidation. This means, the marriage proposals are legitimized by the society that in this case grants the “Permission” and teaches to generations the traditions - and customs that must be fulfilled - proper of the town. Therefore, there are cases in which it is said that the “proposal” lasted two years, since it was until this time that the marriage took place.

Older people often say that economic resources were very important - they are still very important today - because they allowed the number of proposals to be extended to the extent required by the father of the young lady, taking into account this expense the families had to prepare and have the money, in the words of those interviewed, something that was very favorable at that time was that “life was cheaper”, since making the proposals with all the ceremonialism that entailed meant investment.

During this time there were cases in which a type of barter was carried out, which consisted of the fathers receiving money or animals as a type of “payment” for all the expenses that had been incurred during their upbringing, in exchange for asking for

their daughters and giving them their hand. The father as the authority of the home was the one who received this payment.

From this it can be interpreted that the patriarchal model was reproduced by the father of the young woman since he was the head or owner of the family.

Once a young woman was chosen by her father to be a member of his family, she had to possess certain characteristics and vice versa. For example, the woman had to be known in the village for her respect towards her family and the older adults of the village. She would have to have an impeccable reputation and, above all, hold positions in the church. The religious aspect is important because within the marriage proposals a religious syncretism is manifested, uniting Spanish traits left over from the colony with traditional, distinctly indigenous traits.

According to those interviewed, the interest in a young lady could only be demonstrated by the insistence of the marriage proposal, therefore, on many occasions, no expense could be spared. On the other hand, the parents of the young lady did not give their hand neither at the first nor at the third marriage proposal, since if this happened it could be taken as an intention to “get rid” of her as soon as possible, which in no way should be interpreted as such.