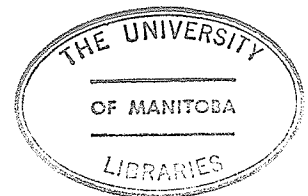


A MEXICAN PLAZA: SOCIAL ARTICULATION AND
ITS RELATION TO VENDING PATTERNS

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ABSTRACT

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The general significance of the plaza in Mexican culture has been widely recognized, but its functions have been misunderstood. Even though the literature on small-town plazas is scant, two important points are discernible: (1) that the plaza functions as a market place and (2) that it functions as a locus, or as a point of social articulation for the community. But these two functions have been viewed virtually as separate entities rather than two aspects of an integrated whole.

In the case of Acuitzio del Canje, as in many small Mexican towns, some people make their living by selling goods in the plaza on a regular basis. And because of their regular vending activities the plaza may appear to function as a marketplace. But this emphasis of the plaza as a marketplace for Acuitzio is inappropriate (as is probable for many Mexican communities); it leads to a misinterpretation of the nature of plaza vending and the general social environment. Belshaw has defined marketplaces as "...sites ...where buyers and sellers...meet for the purpose of

exchange" (1965:8). In Acuitzio the people do go to the plaza "to meet for the purpose of exchange" but for an exchange that is largely social. However, people in the plaza provide the vendors with a clientel and a market for their goods.

The purpose of this thesis is to describe the plaza as a point of social articulation and to show how the vending patterns of plaza merchants are largely contingent upon the patterns of social activity in the plaza. But the primary objective is to demonstrate the integration of the plaza as a point of social articulation and locus of vending. In order to demonstrate this integration it is necessary to discuss the physical features of the plaza that attract the people and also the cultural habits of Mexican life that make the plaza a focal point of the community. These points are demonstrated in a comparison of social activities and plaza vending on a Sunday and on weekdays.

The relationship of plaza vendors to the larger market economy is discussed and attention is drawn to the various vending strategies employed by vendors to increase their sales and minimize competition. While the vendors' activities are sensitive to the general movement of people in and out of the plaza, they are one part of the plaza environment that affects the movement of people by offering focal points for social articulation.

The study is based on a ten-week period of field work and on an intensive review of major ethnographic literature on Mexico and of literature on small-scale commercial transactions, primarily in peasant societies.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem

The general significance of the plaza in Mexican culture has been widely acknowledged by such Meso-American anthropologists as Beals 1946, Brand 1951, Diaz 1966, Foster 1948, Lewis 1963, Redfield 1930, and West 1948; but in-depth studies have not been carried out. This neglect is due in part to the fact that the plaza is such an obvious facet of Mexican culture that the understanding of its functions has been seen as rather obvious. Redfield, in his study of Tepoztlán, mentions that "Everywhere the plaza dominates the town; the only large buildings are there; it is the center of social life" (1930:89). Similarly, West, in his Cultural Geography of the Modern Tarascan Area, says "One of the outstanding features of the grid pattern imposed by the Spaniards is the plaza, or square, located in the center of the settlement" (1948:26), and, furthermore, he states that "Every Tarascan village has its plaza which functions as the commercial, social and administrative center of the town" (1948:26).

Most anthropologists, while recognizing the importance of the plaza, devote hardly more than a few paragraphs to describing its function and generally only in conjunction with marketing or social activities with little or no

elaboration. Diaz's study of Tonalá is a case in point.

The center of the town has a certain stamp of its own, as is common in towns set up by the Spaniards according to the grid plan. It is the center of the commercial life of the community, for it is here that the biweekly markets take place, and it is here that perishable foodstuffs are sold daily; it is also here that the more imposing shops are situated and that Tonaltecans buy such necessities as sugar, salt, and coffee for their families, and glaze and pigments for their pottery. Here in the plaza the Sunday evening serenatas (band concert and promenade) provide the spice and sweetening of the week's activities. Here are the houses of Tonalá's most solid citizens and its important buildings--movie theater, market, jail, registry--and gatheringplace of the political coterie. It is the place with the most movimiento, the townspeople say, but the word means more than movement alone; it also signifies noise, people, and color--all things which are valued in the social side of Tonalá life (1966:44).

Other anthropologists such as Beals (1946) have taken great pains to list the number of vendors, the types of goods sold and to some extent to discuss this briefly. But, for the most part, little more has been done on the plaza.

The two most salient points that arise from these passing remarks are (1) that the plaza functions as a market place, and (2) that it functions as a locus or as a point of social articulation for the community. These two functions, while recognized by most writers, have been viewed virtually as separate entities rather than two aspects of an integrated whole. Brand in his study of Quiroga (1951) comes closest to integrating them when he states, "However, on many evenings and especially on Sundays, there is some promenading in the Plaza Principal, punctuated by purchases at nearby stands and booths of foods,

soft drinks and ices" (1951:221). But for the most part no detailed examinations have been undertaken. This in turn has often led to the formation of erroneous assumptions based upon little more than superficial empirical examination.

In Acuitzio del Canje, Michoacan, as in many small towns in Mexico, some people make their living by selling goods in the plaza on a regular basis. Because of these regular vending activities the plaza may appear to function as a market place. But the emphasis on the plaza as a market place is inappropriate for the majority of Mexican communities. This model leads to a misinterpretation of the nature of plaza vending and of the general social environment of the plaza. Belshaw, in his book Traditional Exchange and Modern Markets, defines market places as "...sites with social, economic, cultural, political and other referents, where buyers and sellers (or perhaps exchangers of other types) meet for the purpose of exchange" (1965:8). The key to understanding the differentiation I wish to make is the phrase "meet for the purpose of exchange." I shall argue that the people in Acuitzio do not go to the plaza to "meet for the purpose of exchange" (economic) but rather that they go there for specified social reasons. Although some economic transactions do occur in the plaza, a much larger and far more significant type of exchange occurs, overshadowing economic aspects of plaza vending--that of social exchange. The vendors, knowing this, and that it is a point of social articulation for the community,

go there because there is a pre-existing cliental and market for their goods.

It is therefore my purpose in this thesis to demonstrate first that the plaza is a point of social articulation and second to show how the vendors capitalize upon this fact. This is not to state that the plaza is only a point of social articulation or that it is only a market place, but to develop and to demonstrate how these two factors are integrated. In the thesis I will also integrate these two factors with the physical features of the plaza and the cultural habits of Mexican life that make the plaza a point of social articulation. Similarly I will demonstrate how the vendors are affected by these features and how they take advantage of this economic opportunity.

B. Field Research: Techniques and Limitations

The study of the plaza in Acuitzio del Canje, Michoacan was conducted over a period of two months. It was initiated through my interest in determining whether there were any regular vending patterns with respect to the number of vendors in the plaza and the times at which they were present.

In order to determine vending patterns, a series of maps of the plaza were made on which the position of the vendors stalls were recorded. For a period of two weeks I recorded stall positions at approximately the same time every day. The position of the stalls and the number of

vendors seemed to fall into a regular pattern except on Sundays. On Sundays I noted that not only was there an increase in vendors but also that there seemed to be a changeover of vendors at various periods of the day. Consequently, it became necessary to make three maps on Sundays--one in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Considering Sunday's fluctuations, I decided to map the stalls at different times during the week days. After only two days of mapping during different time periods on week days, I noticed a variation in the number of vendors selling in the plaza in the mornings and the number of vendors selling in the afternoons. Two weeks later, after varying the mapping times, I began to realize definite patterns emerging from the seeming irregularities of plaza vending.

In order to determine the factors behind these variations, I spent two to three hours a day in the plaza talking with the vendors, observing the traffic flow and social activities, and watching small-scale transactions. During the early phases of this study a set of simple questions yielded basic information about the vendors with respect to their residence, prices of goods, selling times, taxes, and length of time selling in the plaza. But the information I obtained proved to be too restricted partially because of my lack of familiarity with the language. Consequently, I had to be content with general note taking and observations as a means to obtain data until my Spanish improved. This methodology proved to be beneficial not

only because it allowed me to collect data with a minimal knowledge of Spanish but also permitted me to see the plaza activities on a macro-level (overview) rather than on a micro-level (individual vendor activity), on which I would have concentrated had I had a better command of the language.

Not atypically, I was faced with a number of problems in the field research. The most formidable for me was the language limitation. Before entering Mexico my knowledge of Spanish was virtually nonexistent but improved slightly with my attendance of language classes in Cuernavaca. But the people were quite patient for the most part. They would sit quietly and listen as I mercilessly butchered their language. Some who were not quite so patient would have nothing to do with me. But relations with vendors improved as my command of their language improved.

Another problem was the economic nature of the project. The heavy emphasis on questions of economic import, coupled with the fact that I was a stranger in their midst, created a great deal of suspicion. Some thought I worked for the government or that I was a tax collector. But these fears were overcome quickly enough as it soon became obvious that the government would not send out an agent who could not speak the language well.

The short period of research time was a third limitation to this study. By the time all relevant data to the study had been collected and rapport was firmly established, it was time to leave. This was most unfortunate because

for the most part the vendors had complete trust in me and were very open. With this trust came the opportunity to delve into the realm of the individual household economics, a difficult and touchy subject with any group of people. If more time had been available it would have greatly increased the scope and depth of the study.

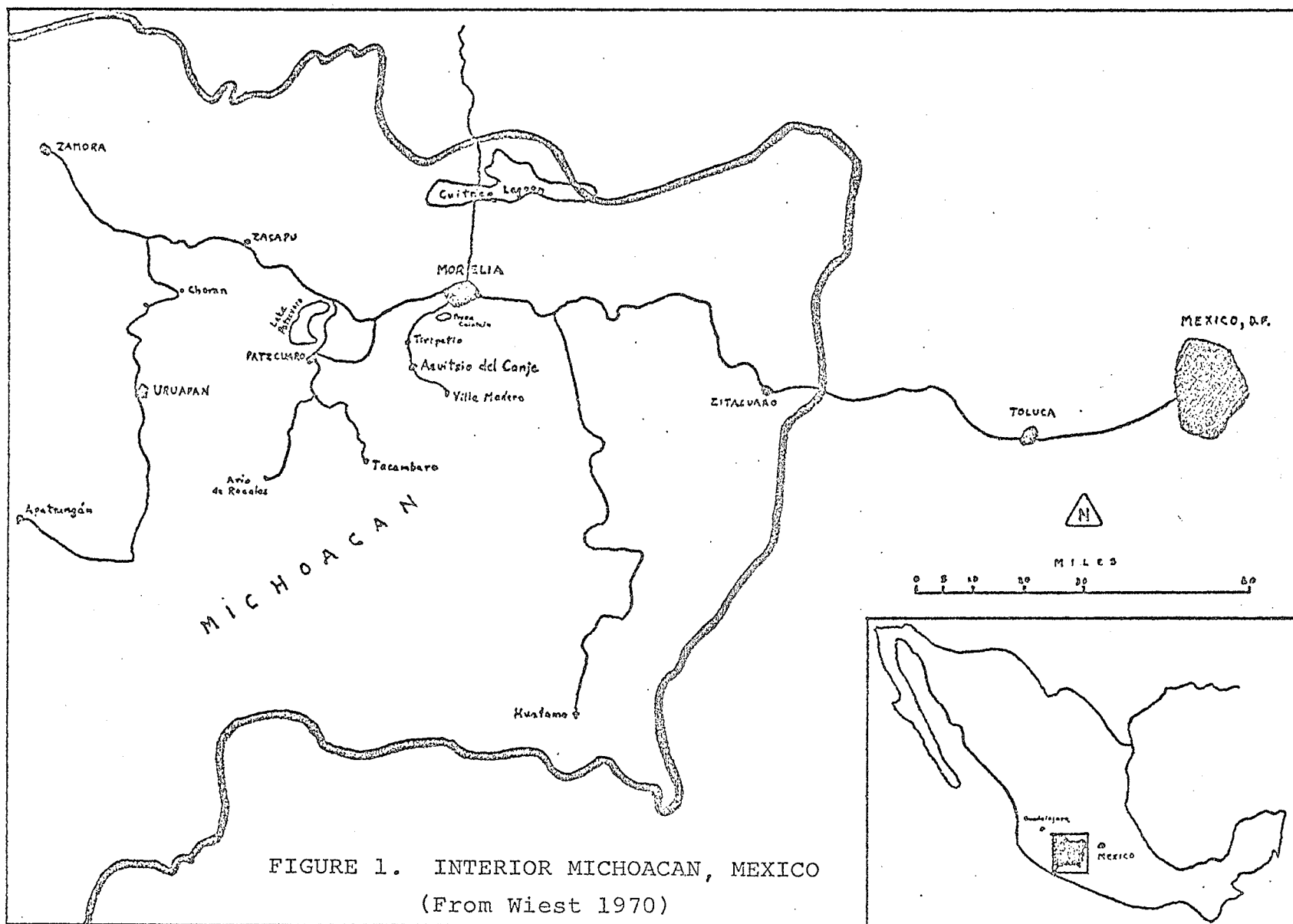
In summation, although the general significance of the small town plaza has been widely recognized, its functions have been misunderstood. The popular point of view has seen it as a market place first and as a point of social articulation second. The implication is that because it functions as a market place it attracts people. I believe this is a misconception for most small rural towns like Acuitzio. But I do not wish to imply here that this is true of all Mexican towns. The model of the plaza as a market place is quite valid for other towns such as Pátzcuaro and Tepoztlán, which possess definite market days that attract buyers and sellers who meet for the purpose of exchanging goods (e.g., Kaplan 1965, Redfield 1930). I will therefore argue that in the town in which this study was undertaken the plaza functions as a point of social articulation for the community where people congregate or pass through for a variety of reasons, thereby providing a cliental upon which the plaza merchants can depend. It is likely that the majority of Mexican rural communities resemble Acuitzio in this regard, making the commonly accepted "market place model" misleading for the majority of such communities.

II. THE TOWN AND THE PLAZA

A. The Town

The town of Acuitzio del Canje¹ (a Tarascan name meaning "Hill of the Snakes") is an agriculturally based community situated in the highlands of the state of Michoacan (Figure 1). It functions as the cabecera (head) of the municipality of Acuitzio which encompasses an area of 106.06 square kilometers (41 square miles). The town itself is located approximately 22 miles southwest of Morelia (the state capital) at an altitude of 2062 meters (6765 feet). The town lies in a zone referred to as tierra fría (cold land) with daytime temperatures between 70 to 80 degrees and nighttime temperatures between 45 and 55 degrees. The wet or rainy season, and also the poorest season for sales in the plaza, begins in June and continues into September. The dry season occupies the remaining months of the year with the period from December to February being the driest months. In Acuitzio, as in Tzintzuntzan (Foster 1948:134) and Pátzcuaro (Kaplan 1965:87), commercial activity is greater in the dry season.

¹The description of the town of Acuitzio del Canje is based on my own brief research period in the town and on information derived from Dr. R. E. Wiest's unpublished Ph.D. dissertation Wage-Labor Migration and Household Maintenance in a Central Mexican Town (1970).



Commercial activity has had a long history in Acuitzio. The town in the past was strategically located between Morelia and the tierra caliente (hot land). Because of its location the town functioned as a major stopping place for merchants and traders traveling between these two points. Thus retailing and varied services provided the community with a major portion of its income. But in the 1930's a road was built from Tacámbaro, situated on the edge of the tierra caliente, through Pátzcuaro to Morelia, bypassing Acuitzio and thus depriving it of its major source of income. Today, Acuitzio functions as a distribution center, supplying the townspeople and the rural folk with goods in a manner similar to Tepoztlán as described by Redfield--"But while the villagers live by agriculture, the village lives by trade" (1930:19).

Acuitzio is connected to Morelia by paved road as of 1972, but prior to this time a graded dirt road, constructed between 1952 and 1954, linked the town to the city. The paved section of road ends at the north end of the town but the road passes through Acuitzio on cobblestone streets to the south end, and then continues as a dirt road through the highlands for another 12 kilometers to Villa Madero, a small town of approximately 1200 people, situated on the edge of the escarpment between the tierra fría and the tierra caliente.

People wishing to go to Morelia for social or commercial reasons have access to an excellent bus system.



Buses depart from the plaza

Buses arrive and depart from Acuitzio on a regular basis. There are 14 buses a day arriving from Morelia and 16 buses a day departing from Acuitzio with some of the buses continuing through to Villa Madero. Since 1971 other buses can also be boarded to Pátzcuaro which connects with other fairly large urban centers such as Uruapan and Tacámbaro, facilitating access to markets other than those of Morelia (Figure 1). The cost of a one-way trip to Morelia is 3 pesos (24 cents), a nominal sum by western standards, but

quite significant for those villagers that must make the trip with any frequency. Most people in general, and plaza merchants in particular, must make occasional trips by bus to Morelia for the purpose of either buying or selling goods or other business related activities. Morelia's prime function in relation to the community is to supply goods that the people cannot manufacture themselves and, to some extent, to distribute goods produced by the community. In this way Acuitzio is linked into the national market system (Figure 1).

The town's population according to the 1960 Mexican Federal Census was 3,436 people. An unofficial census by Wiest (1971) places the town population at just over 3,400. In 1960 the municipio as a whole had a population of 8,717 people, meaning that just over 5,000 people lived in the rural areas. The rural people (rancheros) live in small hamlets (ranchos or rancherías) that form a semi-circle around the town (Figure 2), the heaviest concentration being to the east and south. These rural hamlets number 56 in total, with most of them being highly dependent upon the town to provide them with goods and, to some extent, absorb their marketable crops. This situation is similar to what Redfield found in Tepoztlán, "Upon the market and upon the social organization of the larger valley settlement the lesser hamlets become and remain dependent" (1930:54). The campesinos (peasant farmers) situated close to the town come in on a once-a-week basis (Sundays) to go to Mass, to

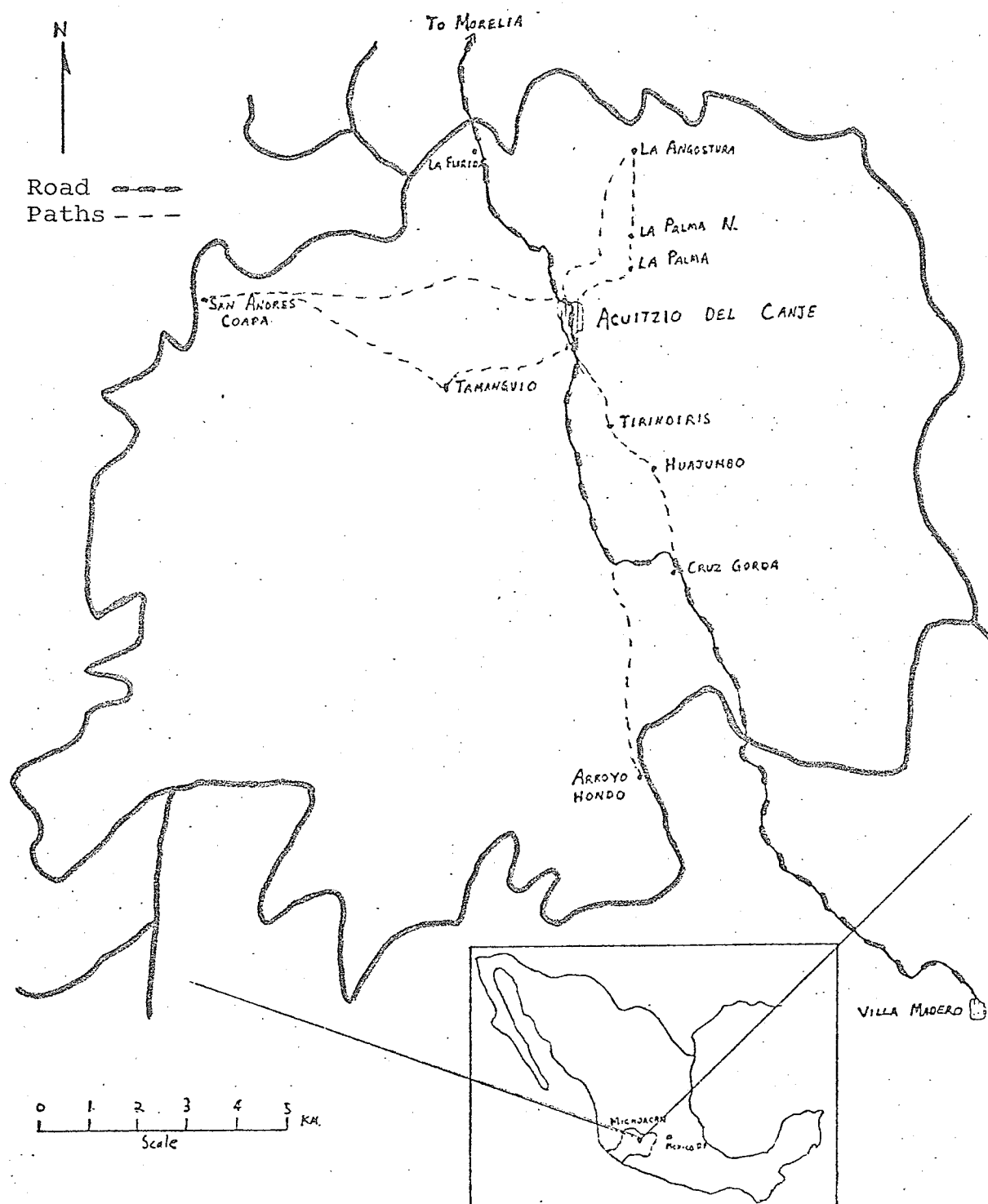


FIGURE 2. MUNICIPALITY OF ACUITZIO, MICHOACAN, WITH PRINCIPAL RANCHOS AND THE CABECERA (from Wiest 1972).

shop and visit friends, and then return home with their weekly supply of goods. Those living farther out come to town less frequently.

Many of the townspeople are involved in agricultural activities. Those who do not gain a livelihood from agriculture are employed in activities associated with commerce and services, or the supply and maintenance of the town and the outlying ranches.

Those involved in commerce and trade occupy the second largest occupational group (Table 1; cf., Wiest 1970:14-18). These people function as middlemen, by buying goods primarily in Morelia and selling them to the people in the community. The flow of goods is predominantly one way, although a small amount of goods flow from the town to the city.

The main commercial area of the town is located along the full length of the main street and to some extent in the east and west portals of the plaza (see Figure 3). Although this area contains most of the commercial establishments there are a few stores scattered throughout the community. Small-scale merchants vend goods in the plaza, and in some cases along the street sidewalks.

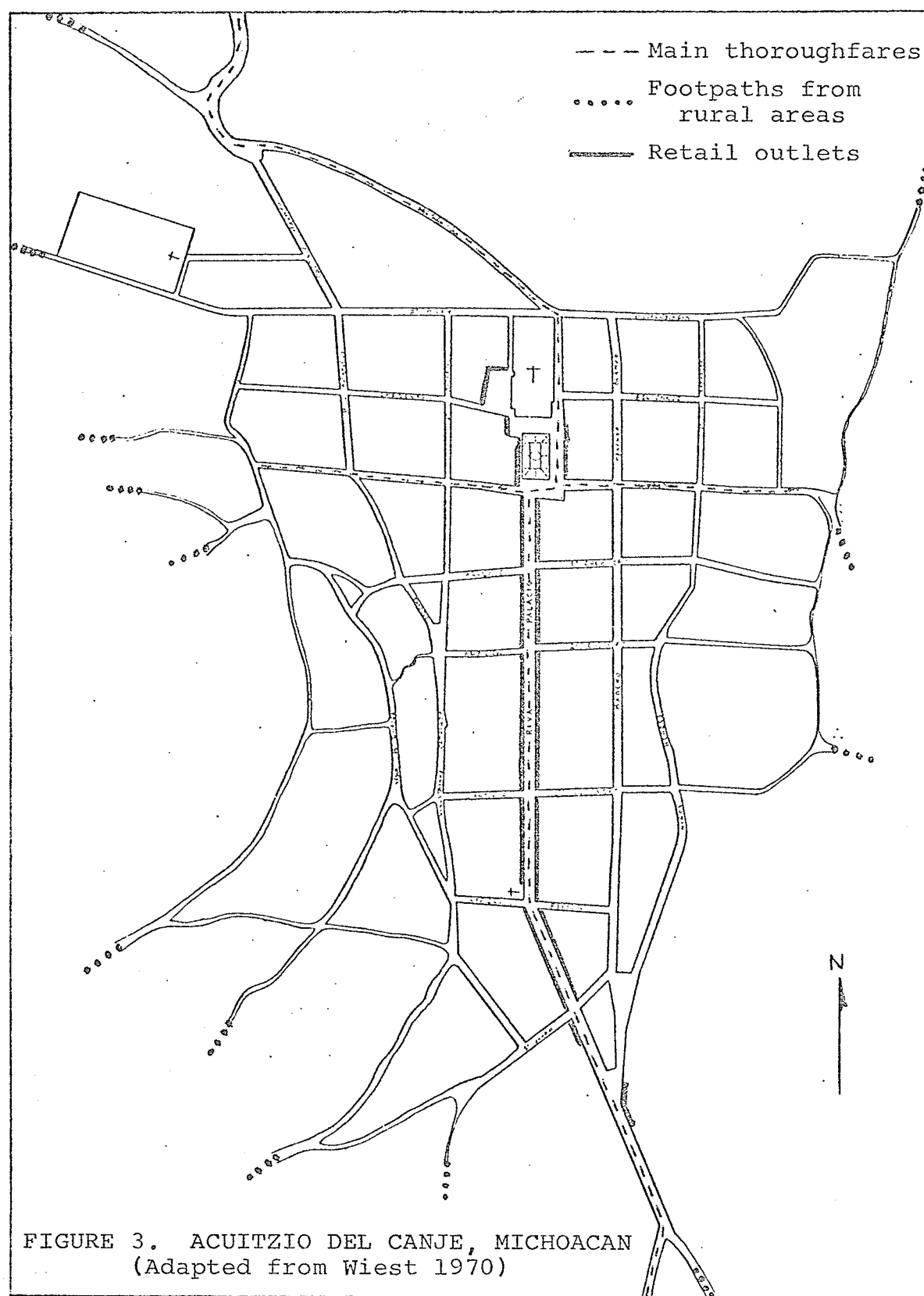
Craft specialization in the community is limited but it occupies the next largest occupational grouping (Wiest 1970:14). Crafts consist of basket making, shoe making, weaving, tanning, pottery and cart wheel making. The goods produced are consumed almost entirely within the

TABLE 1

TABLE OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

<u>Type</u>	<u>Number</u>
Clothing Store	4
Drug Store and Perfumery	2
Grocery Store (<u>Abarrotes</u>)	22
Vegetable Store	8
Bread Stand	2
Bakery	3
Fruit Stand	4
Juice Dispensary (<u>Fuente de Soda</u>)	3
Butcher, Meat Store (<u>Carnicería</u>)	7
Restaurant (<u>Fonda</u>)	7
Tavern (<u>cantina</u>)	7
Feed Store	4
Shoe Store	4
Shoe Making Shop	4
Leather Making Shop	1
Tannery	2
Weaver	2
Potter	5
Tile Maker	2
Cart Wheel Maker	4
Blacksmith	2
Barbershop	3
Billard Hall	2
Hotel (Guest House)	1
Stable	3
Distributor of soft Drinks and Beer	1
Mill (<u>Nixtamal</u>)	7
<u>Tortilleria</u>	<u>1</u>
Total	117

Adapted from Wiest 1970:18



town itself and by the campesinos in the surrounding area. Some of these goods flow out in the direction of Morelia; occasionally one will see a bus with its roof rack loaded with pottery or other goods such as vegetable produce. Some goods such as pottery and cart wheels are exported to the tierra caliente, but for the most part most of what the people produce they consume.

Those who work at trades are masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, bankers, tailors, seamstresses, bakers, and painters. These people generally work within the community supplying it with goods and services. Professional and clerical occupations exist in the form of supplying the community with services and are generally connected with medicine, schools, and municipal politics.

In physical appearance and layout, the town is much like any other rural mestizo community. At the center is the church, the plaza and municipal buildings. Radiating out from this area by way of cobblestone streets are the non-commercial sectors of the town (Figure 3). The houses are constructed of white-washed adobe, generally one story high and they form a continuous wall around each block. Acuitzio has water pumped into public reservoirs and, for those who can afford it, into their own homes. The town also has had electricity since 1923.

Town facilities consist of two Catholic churches (only one priest), a post office, the palacio (municipal headquarters), three primary schools, and the plaza.

B. The Plaza: Physical Context

The plaza in Acuitzio is located at the point of intersection of the major streets--Riva Palacio, Victoria, Bravo, and Morelos (see Figure 3)--which effectively divide the town into quadrants. The most important of these two streets for vehicular traffic are Morelos and Riva Palacio. The traffic that enters the town from the north comes in on Morelos and from the south on Riva Palacio while Bravo, Victoria, and Lázaro Cárdenas provide major access routes from the plaza area into the east and west sectors. These streets, with the exception of Riva Palacio, bound the plaza on the north, south and east sides. There is no street on the west side of the plaza but just a portal and a cobblestone path utilized by pedestrians.

The structure or layout of the plaza is similar to most small town plazas in Mexico. This is due primarily to historical factors. During the early colonial period of Mexico, King Philip II of Spain in 1573 sent "codified instructions"² which delineated the layout of hispanic towns and the plaza. Some of the more salient points set down with respect to the plaza are as follows:

The four corners of the plaza face the four principal winds, because in this way the streets leaving the plaza are not exposed to the principal winds, which would be of great inconvenience.

² Stanislawski demonstrates that the codefied instructions have been copied from ancient Greek and Roman methods of town building.

The plaza should be a rectangle, prolonged so that the length is at least half again as long as the width, because this form is the best for celebrations with horses and for any other that are to take place.

All around the plaza and the few principal streets that start from it there should be colonnades because of the great convenience that they offer to the merchants who gather here; the eight streets that leave from the four corners of the plaza are not to have colonnades that would block their juncture with the plaza.

The cathedral of inland places should not be placed at the plaza, but at some distance...and so that it can be seen from all sides, because it lends greater adornment and authority, and arrange it in such a fashion that it is raised above ground level so that it will be approached by steps. Near it on the main plaza the palace, the townhall and customs house should be built so that they do not detract from the cathedral but give it greater importance (cited in Stanislawski 1947:103-104).

Although Acuitzio's plaza does not follow perfectly the codefied instructions it does manifest the general style. I doubt that the "four corners of the plaza face the four principal winds" but it is rectangular in pattern measuring approximately 80 feet by 160 feet and is laid out on a north, south, east, west axis. The streets leading from the plaza do not have colonnades but the east and west portals do, which afford "great convenience...to the merchants that gather" by providing protection for them and their goods from the elements. The church is not raised but is set back from the plaza a fair distance forming an imposing structure that "lends adornment and authority." And similarly, the town hall or palacio, a fairly large building, and its municipal offices are placed at the opposite end of the plaza from the church "and do not detract from the cathedral."

The plaza, an open area with easy entrance and exit access, is physically enclosed on its four sides. To the east, running north and south, separated from the plaza by the cobblestone street Morelos, is the Portal Morelos. Similarly, on the west side of the plaza running north-south and separated from the plaza by a cobblestone walkway is the Portal Hildalgo, the oldest portal on the plaza--104 years old. It is a thoroughfare for the most heavy pedestrian traffic and as a consequence is probably a major reason why most vendors prefer to set up their stalls under it. Only one and sometimes two stalls are set up in Portal



The plaza and the Church, Acuitzio del Canje

Morelos, the rest being erected under Portal Hildalgo or in the open areas at the north and south ends of the plaza. To the north lies the church and its courtyard separated from the plaza by Lázaro Cárdenas and to the south lies the L-shaped Portal Palacio separated from the plaza by Victoria and Bravo.

East Portal

The east Portal Morelos, supported by two different styles of pillars, and separated from the plaza by the street Morelos, runs only two thirds the length of the plaza even though the section of buildings extend beyond that point. Pedestrian traffic in this portal is generally very light. Stores are connected to the portal, with many of the merchants living at the back of their stores. This was also found to be characteristic of many towns studied by Stanislawski; he mentions in his study of The Anatomy of Eleven Towns in Michoacan that merchants usually live in their stores and that "There is no detachment of living from business" (1950:72).

Beginning at the south end and working north, the first store is Casa Anita. It advertises itself as Mercería, Bonetería, Ropa and Novedades, selling clothes, yarns, threads and plastic gimmicks. Compared to other stores in the town it does little business. This is the case for most stores on the plaza with a couple of exceptions. Situated directly beside Casa Anita is a doctor's office displaying

a sign Consultorio Medico Quirgico, but it is closed, as is its neighbor Casa Martinez which still displays a sign advertising Mercería, Bonetería, Ropa, and Novedades. At this point the portal ends but the commercial businesses continue to the end of the plaza. The next store, also closed, advertises itself as a Cristalería, Loza, and Papelería. The next store, advertising Abarrotes, is a grocery store and it does the best business of the plaza. It is rather dimly lit and is quite cluttered with every inch of available space being utilized. It sells such items as dry goods, beer, canned goods, candles, string, and lard. Part of the reason that it does such a good business is its large variety of staples and its close proximity to the point of social articulation for the community. Consequently, it is a favorite gathering place for people after mass and at other times. People come to shop, meet friends, chat, drink beer and to discuss hog prices. The stores end at this point but the buildings continue as private residences and a large house for the religious nuns that teach school.

North End

The area just to the north end of the plaza is entirely occupied by the church--the largest structure in the town. It is a fairly imposing yellow building with a large atrio (courtyard) in front enclosed by a pink colored stone and iron fence. The fence has three entrances, one at the east and west corners and one directly in front of

the main church doors. There is a school behind the church building. The appendages present an interesting contrast of the old and the new. A bell tower on the west side is used to call people to mass, and a public address speaker mounted in the center is used to broadcast music and make speeches at church gatherings in the courtyard. The church and its courtyard are separated from the plaza by a seventy-five foot wide strip of cobblestone. It permits vehicular and pedestrian traffic and also provides an area for merchants to erect their stalls. On special festive occasions a carnival is set up in this area.

West Portal

The west Portal Hildalgo runs the full length of the plaza and is supported by three styles of pillars. The portal, besides being the oldest and with the most traffic, provides more shade from the sun than do the other portals--another reason why vendors prefer it. It protects them and their perishable goods.

Beginning at the south end of the portal is La Esmeralda, a combination cantina and grocery store. Although it is not as popular as La Favorita, a cantina directly across the street, it is often quite full. La Esmeralda offers a place for men to socialize while enjoying a few drinks. It also provides a good vantage point from which to view any social activities taking place in the plaza.

Next door and also commercially attached to La Esmeralda is a place marked Fuente de Sodas - El Paraiso.

It used to be a soda fountain. The main public telephone and switchboard is located here. An operator is employed from 8:00 A.M. to midnight. The several girls that act as operators consistently attract a number of friends so that this area is usually quite active.

Its neighbor to the north is El Buen Frato, a store that advertises Ropas Obreros, Mercería, Bonetería. It has a very small selection of goods and does very little business, in part because it is competing with Casa Anita which carries a larger line of the same goods. The woman who runs it supplements her income by vending blended drinks in the portal. The next two buildings are vacant except for that utilized as a storage area by an elderly man who sells ice cream in the plaza. Next to it is a very large, dimly lit store run by an old man and his wife. It is classified as a "Miscelanea", a store "that attempts to satisfy all customer requirements" (Pi-Sunyer 1968:153). It sells everything from candles to tacks, fly paper to cold cream, beer to fire crackers, bobby pins to plastic jewelry, and homemade paletas (ice cream bars and popcicles). Many of the items on the shelves are a number of years old and it seems doubtful that they will ever be sold, although he has a good turnover of paletas. He has in the past practiced dentistry, has made dentures, and now wants to open a photographic studio.

Next door is an abandoned school at which point the portal ends. It opens up into a large L-shaped cobblestone

area to the west which does not face directly onto the plaza. Here are a number of stores that capitalize on plaza traffic with two of them opening stalls in front of the stores on Sunday. There are two grocery stores, La Norteña, a carnicería (meat store) and a feed store, Distribuidor de Acuitzio Purina.

South Portal

The south portal is L-shaped and is supported by a series of Greek styled pillars, with iron and glass lanterns hanging from the ceiling. It is the only portal with benches utilized by the people who have business in the palacio or by people waiting to catch a bus (buses leave from the corner of Riva Palacio and the portal), or by people who just want a place to sit and chat. Vending is not supposed to take place in this portal but on a number of occasions, particularly on rainy days, it is utilized by vendors that normally sell under the trees in the open area at the south end of the plaza.

The palacio houses the municipal offices, the jail, and also serves as a storage area for municipal property such as picks, shovels, rifles, etc. On top is the clock tower--the highest point in the community. The clock with its broken glass face marks every quarter hour with a single gong and each hour with the appropriate number of gongs. On festive occasions the Mexican flag is flown on top the clock tower.

In front of the palacio is an L-shaped cobblestone area. Encompassed in the centre is the town's only statue--a bust of General Vicente Riva Palacio--the man who mediated the exchange of Belgian-French and Mexican prisoners in Acuitzio in 1865. Directly west of the Palacio, across the street named in honour of the General, is the cantina La Favorita.

Central Area

The plaza area itself has a wide red-tiled walk area enclosing a rectangular grassy area in the centre. The red-tiled walkway hosts a number of concrete and iron benches which face each other from opposite sides of the walk area. There are a total of 47 iron and concrete benches which are used by the public as places to sit and talk and to have their shoes shined. The concrete benches bear the names of people who have donated them; as a new bench is donated it replaces an old iron bench.

The plaza is lit at night by six lampposts--one at each corner of the plaza and one at the center of each of the long sides. Concrete and wooden electrical poles also surround the plaza. Some of the concrete poles display hanging lanterns which are now ineffectual as they are generally hidden by the leaves of the trees that enclose the plaza.

In the centre of the plaza is a kiosco (kiosk), reminiscent of the style of park bandstands popular in

the late Victorian era. It is octagonal in shape with a ten foot high concrete base. The top is like a carrousel with an iron grill enclosing it. On the roof is a weather vane always pointing in the same direction.

Also included in the grassy area are two fountains, one at the north end and one at the south end. These are concrete basins with an ornate concrete and iron centre piece. The only times the fountains are turned on is in the mornings when water is needed to clean the plaza. The kiosco (kiosk) and the fountains are connected by a series of geometrically laid out paths running through the green area bordered by grass, shrubs and flowers. The patterns of pedestrian traffic in the plaza are not clearly defined. For the most part, particularly on weekdays, people can be seen passing through the plaza in a random manner, but on Sundays definite patterns emerge when people come to the plaza for specific purposes. For instance, people from the south, east and west parts of town can be seen passing through the plaza on their way to Mass, or those stopping to shop at the stalls generally remain on the west side of the plaza where most stalls are situated. But for the most part the patterns are ill-defined except when there are specific social or business reasons to come to the plaza.

To summarize briefly, the plaza is located in the centre of town. On it are situated facilities such as the church, the palacio, stores, cantinas, and the bus departure point. The plaza's benches accomodate those who wish to sit

and chat and the portals provide the physical space for vendors to sell their goods. All these features contribute in some way to make the plaza the focal point of the community's activities and consequently as a point of social articulation.

III. THE PLAZA AS A POINT OF SOCIAL ARTICULATION

A. Introduction

The plaza is the focal point or hub of the community and functions as a point of social articulation. A point of social articulation as used in the context of this thesis refers to a specific area in which people gather to engage in various social activities. In this case it is the plaza, functioning to attract not only the townspeople, but the rural campesinos as well. The plaza is a large physical space, which permits physical mobility and thus encourages the social articulation of people or social exchange.

People come to the plaza for various reasons. The main church located at the north end, the palacio at the south end in which are housed the municipal offices and the jail, the stores and cantinas located in the east and west portals all serve as drawing factors. Dances sponsored by the town held in the portal of the palacio and church sponsored activities held in the church courtyard also attract people.

Similarly, the plaza provides both the physical space and a clientel which encourages plaza vendors to erect their stalls and engage in small-scale commerce. The number of people in the plaza effects the number of vendors, the vendors' peak selling periods, and the types of goods sold.

In other words, certain features or aspects of plaza vending can be correlated with, and are to a large extent determined by the social activities taking place in the plaza.

The effects of social activities upon plaza vending is much more obvious on Sundays than on weekdays. This is because Sunday is a day of rest, a day for visiting friends and relatives, a day for socializing and relaxing and the day for going to church. Weekdays are work days and therefore few people come to the plaza. But their presence, or rather their absence, also affects the vending activities of the vendors, but not to such a great extent as it does on Sundays.

Sunday is the big day of the week in Acuitzio as is true of virtually all of Mexico. This can be substantiated just through observation of the greatly increased number of people in the streets and in the plaza. Similarly, it can be seen through the greatly increased number of vendors in the plaza. On any weekday between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. the total number of vendors in the plaza will not exceed 15, yet on a Sunday between the same time period, the number of vendors may reach close to 40.

What attracts people to the plaza on Sundays? The first and foremost reason is the church. All good Catholics go to Mass at least once a week. This applies to rancheros as well as townspeople. On Sunday mornings the rancheros begin their trek into town. They come to go to Mass, to visit friends and relatives, to shop and to enjoy a day

of leisure. This is not only true of small towns but also large urban centers such as Zamora. Pi-Sunyer says:

The trip to town is also something of an excursion; a time to treat children to refrescos, eat hot barbecued meat at the market stalls, and roam around the primera cuadra looking at display's of expensive clothes and shining appliances in the windows of big stores (1968:152).

It is also shopping day for the rancheros who come to the town only once a week.

Since the church is just off the north end of the plaza people going to and from Mass must pass either through the plaza or close by it. Most people (townspeople and rancheros) just before or after Mass will spend time in the plaza talking with friends and relatives they have not seen during the week.

Similarly, the fact that the bus departure point is situated at the south end of the plaza draws people in close proximity to the plaza. Other attracting features that permit and facilitate social activities in the plaza are the two cantinas, the numerous benches in the central areas, the palacio, the small stores (the grocery store on the east side of the plaza, in particular), the vendors and the presence of people themselves.

How then does the plaza as a point of social articulation affect the vendors and their activities? And, in turn, how do the vendors affect the social activities in the plaza? In order to understand the interrelationship of the social activities and vending it is necessary to view several

days in the plaza--a Sunday and weekdays. Two objectives will be met by comparing vending days: (1) the effects of social activities in the plaza on vending will be elucidated, and (2) the position of vendors in the inter-relationship of plaza social activities and commercial transactions will be made clearer.

B. Sunday in the Plaza

Sundays in the plaza, if compared to weekdays, are rather unique. On Sundays, social activities in the plaza are at a peak and the number of vendors more than doubles. People still frequent the plaza during the week but their numbers are greatly reduced, and consequently so are the number of vendors.

Sundays are unique, not only because of the increased social and economic activity in the plaza, but also because the day is divided into three distinct periods of social and economic activity. These three periods occur from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., and can be further subdivided into high and low periods of economic and social activity. In analyzing these periods it is possible to view them from two perspectives: (1) from the perspective of the various social activities taking place in each period, and (2) from the perspective of the types of goods sold and the number of vendors selling in each period. But these two perspectives are not only analytically separable; they are functionally

interrelated. The type of goods being sold and the number of vendors present is correlated with the different types of social activity. Therefore, the three major periods of the day will be analyzed in terms of the social activities in each period and how these social activities affect the number of vendors in the plaza at various times and their vending activities.

All vendors will be referred to by number and occasionally by the type of goods they sell. Table 2 is a listing of vendors by number and indicates their frequency of vending and the type of goods they sell. The vendors' stall locations and their distribution are indicated in Figure 4. Figure 4 is a compilation of all vendors that sell in the plaza but does not denote that they are all present at the same time. It is interesting to note that the heaviest concentration of vendors is in the west portal; the most heavily trafficked area. Clarification of the high and low periods of economic activity is found in Figures 5 and 6. These figures will be discussed more fully at a point further on in this chapter. Further background information on individual vendors is incorporated in the appendix.

Sunday Period I--6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Sunday activity in the plaza begins at approximately 6:00 a.m. From 6:00 to 7:00 a.m. three different activities take place: (1) the first Mass of the day is in progress,

TABLE 2

VENDOR TYPES AND GOODS SOLD

<u>Vendor No.</u>	<u>Vendor Type</u>	<u>Goods Sold</u>
1	R	Fruit, Vegetables, Drinks
3	R	Fruit, Vegetables, Candy
4	R	Fruit, Vegetables
*5	R	Drinks
6	R	Ice Cream
7	R	Fruit, Vegetables
8	R	Fruit, Vegetables
9	R	Plastics, Clothing
10	R	Menudo
11	R	Menudo, Tacos, Enchiladas, Posole
12	R	Candy, Peanuts, Bread
*13	O	Fruit, Vegetables, Baskets
14	R	Gelatin
15	R	Camote
16	O	Clothing
*17	O	Menudo
18	S	Vegetables
19	T	Vegetables
20	T	Religious Goods
21	O	Plastics, Clothing
22-26	S	Comics
27	S	Breads
28	T	Furniture
29	S	Comics
30	S	Breads
32	S	Tacos, Enchiladas
33	S	Tacos, Enchiladas, Posole
34	S	Tacos, Enchiladas
37	T	Clothing
38	R	Candy, Peanuts
39	T	Toys
40	T	Plastics
41	S	Vegetables
42	S	Tacos, Enchiladas
43	T	Religious Goods
44	T	Pottery
45	T	Candy, Plastics, Clothing

* = Store and Stall

R = Regular

S = Sunday

O = Occasional

T = Transient

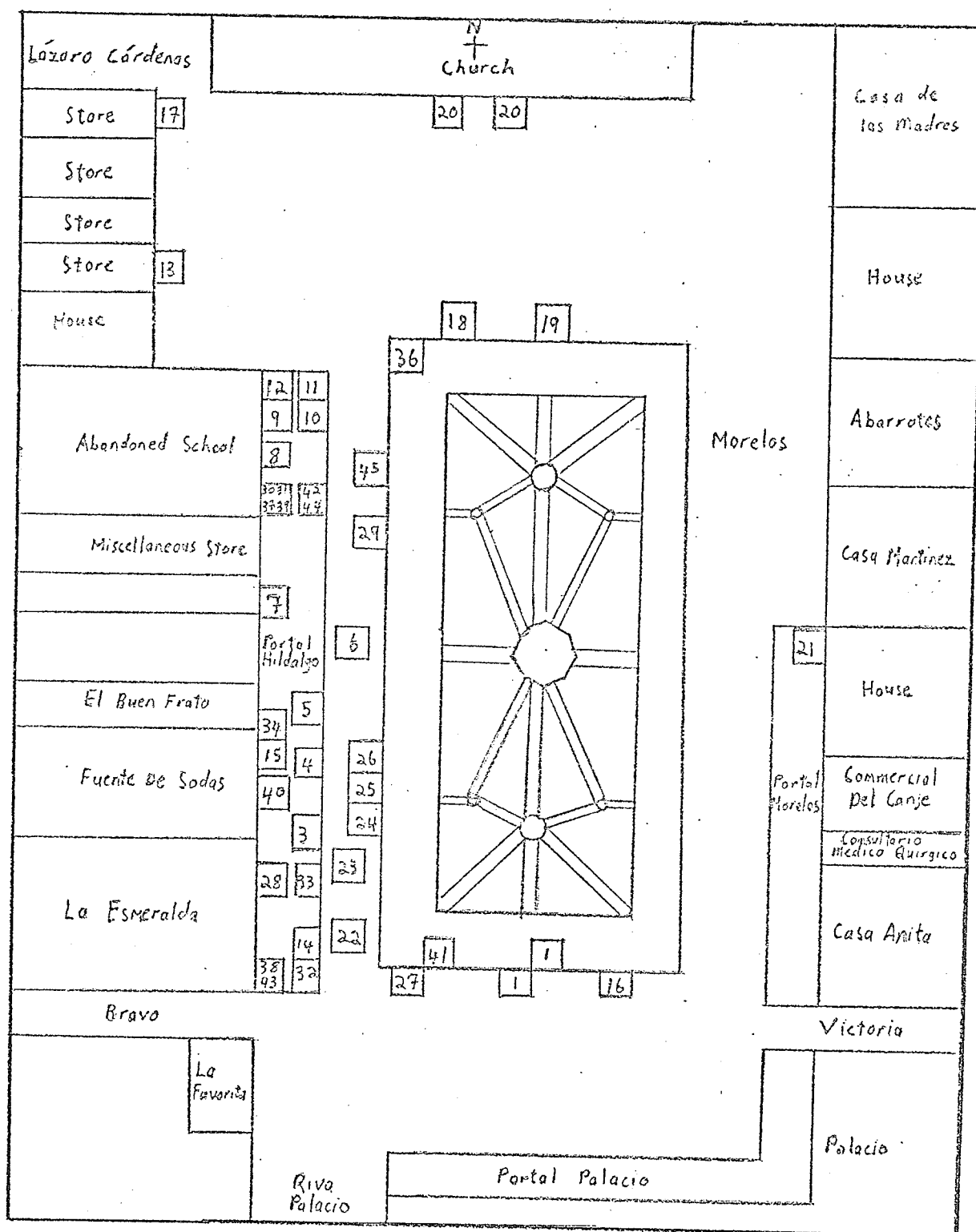


FIGURE 4. VENDOR POSITIONS IN THE PLAZA,

ACUITZIO DEL CANJE, 1972

(2) the vendors come to the plaza to prepare for vending, and (3) the plaza is washed and swept.

All vendors except #6, the ice cream man, transport their stalls from home; he stores his in the plaza. The transporting of stalls and goods to the plaza is generally done by the vendors themselves, often with the aid of familial members, such as a spouse or one or two of the children. The process involves first carrying the stall to the plaza and then returning for goods, all of which requires two or three trips. The preparation for vending, (erecting stalls and displaying goods) can take anywhere from 15 minutes to 2 hours. The time taken to prepare for vending varies with each vendor and is dependent upon the distance the goods and stalls must be carried, the amount of familial aid received, the complexity of the stall, and the age of the vendors.

While vendors are utilizing this quiet period in the plaza from 6:00 to 7:00 a.m. to prepare for vending, one of the local comandantes and the husband and wife vending team #1 use this time to prepare the plaza itself. Buckets of water are taken from the fountains and splashed over the benches and tiled walk areas. Straw brooms are used to scrub the wet areas and more water is used to rinse off the disturbed dirt. The garbage that is swept up is piled at the north end of the plaza for collection at a later point in the day. For this task the vendors #1 are paid 7 pesos daily and the comandante is paid 10 pesos.



Vendor #21 transporting his goods to the plaza

Also during this period the first Mass of the day is celebrated. Just prior to 6:00 a.m. and shortly afterwards, a number of people can be seen hurrying across the plaza or down the portals to the church. The people who attend the first Mass are the ones who begin the day's social activities in the plaza and make the first purchases.

Two other Masses are celebrated on Sundays. The second is from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. and is held at the other church four blocks south on Riva Palacio. The third Mass is held from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the church just off the plaza. Going to Mass once a week is as necessary

as eating and drinking for most people in Acuitzio, and their attendance has a major effect on the social activities in the plaza.

Most of the regular vendors (those who sell on all weekdays and Sundays), such as #'s 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 15, prepare their stalls and goods during this quiet period before Mass is let out. Then at 7:00 a.m., as the people leave Mass the plaza begins to slowly fill up with people, not only with churchgoers but also with others from the various parts of the town.

This period beginning at 7:00 a.m. and ending around 8:30 a.m. is a relatively quiet period in the plaza; the great crowds of people have not yet arrived and the amount of vending is minimal. It is still too early for the rancheros to arrive from the surrounding areas (some of whom must travel five kilometers) and it is also too early for the townspeople who are still occupied with domestic chores.

During this period the people in the plaza wander about chatting with friends, but do little buying. The produce vendors, such as #'s 4 and 7 sell very little at this point, but the prepared-food vendors #'s 10 and 11, who sell menudo (tripe), #14, who sells camote (sweet potatoes), and #15, who sells gelatin, do very well. These foods are all light foods and serve as breakfast for those who are not returning home to eat. The menudo ladies' sales drop off around 8:30 a.m., possibly because the breakfast

period in the town is over. The camote and gelatin women continue to sell well until 11:00 a.m., possibly because their foods are considered treats.

The grocery store (abarrotes) on the east side of the plaza does some of its best business of the day in this period. It serves as a point of social articulation after Mass. Here husbands and wives come, the husbands to drink beer, the wives to make purchases of dry goods and other necessities, and both to socialize. The store's business remains quite active until approximately 8:00 a.m. and then it drops considerably.



Sitting and waiting

By 8:00 a.m. the last of the regular vendors have appeared along with some of the Sunday vendors (those who only sell on Sunday). Also the first of the boleros (shoe shine boys) begin to arrive at this time. The public that gravitates to the plaza at this time come primarily for social reasons. Men come to talk with friends and to have their shoes shined. Women also gather to talk with friends and little children come to meet friends, play games, and buy dulces (sweets) and toys with their pocket money. Adolescent males and females also appear at this time dressed in their Sunday best because Sundays are the days of novios (boyfriends) and novias (girlfriends), and to look ones best is of great concern.

For those who sell produce and other goods this is the first good vending period of the day, due to the increased traffic in the plaza. Townspeople purchase small quantities of goods from the vendors, often stopping to talk with them and friends that they meet at the stalls. Prepared-food vending is generally poor except for #'s 14 and 15. Because sales of prepared foods decreases the menudo ladies #'s 10, 11, and 17 begin to solicit clientel by saying "Quieres almorzar"? ("Do you want to eat"?), which is rather unique for plaza vending in Acuitzio.

Some vendors such as #'s 4, 7 and 10 function as storage depots for people who are shopping. Often friends will deposit bags, containers and goods with them while shopping on Riva Palacio. There is no obligation to purchase

goods directly in return for the vendor's storage of their articles. Tax, in his monograph Penny Capitalism: A Guatemalan Indian Community, makes note of this same process which he refers to as recomendado (1953:128).

It is also during this time period that the transient vendors or comerciantes ambulantes begin to arrive. These are vendors that travel from town to town selling their wares, remaining only for a day or two at a time in each community. Their late arrival is probably a function of the distance they must travel. Number 19, a vegetable seller from Zamora (a town to the west), must travel 80 kilometers to reach Acuitzio. Number 44, a potter from Santa Fe, must travel 40 kilometers.

Although vending activity increases during this period it does not reach its peak until after 10:00 a.m., when the second Mass is over and the rancheros begin to arrive.

Between 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. plaza activity reaches its highest peak of the day and it is at this point that the vendors do their best business. With the second Mass letting out and the rancheros arriving in town, the plaza hums with activity. The two cantinas fill up with males of all ages, the business of the stores on the plaza increases, and La Fuente de Sodas attracts a number of girls. The vendors are kept busy not only with exchanging goods for money but with associated aspects of vending. The vendors' children are sent running to change large peso notes or are sent



Ice cream man's stall--families and couples enjoying a special treat



Vendor #27 selling homemade breads and cookies

home to bring more goods. The vendors themselves, in particular the prepared-foods vendors, must often rush to a vegetable vendor to procure ingredients that they have run out of.

It is a period of prime vending time for everyone. The ice cream man's stall, #6, is full of young couples and families enjoying a special treat; the food vendors are selling well and the produce vendors do an excellent business because of the campesino traffic. Vendors that sell plastic goods and clothing never do as well as other vendors but even they experience a peak at this time. The boleros are there in full force, approximately six of them, as it is their peak period also. Young boys who push "Koala" carts selling paletas (popcicles and ice cream bars) frequent the plaza at this time because of the heavy traffic. Later, when the traffic dies down, they will head to the streets for better vending grounds. Their mobility is an asset; when the clientel is not coming to the plaza they can take their goods to the clientel. It is also during this period that cuentos (comic books) vendors first appear because of the large number of children in the plaza. Cuento vendors, six in total, are primarily males and do not have stalls but lay their comics overlapping in a square on the cobblestone area between the west portal and the plaza.

During this period of peak activity one of the local comandantes, a type of town constable, visits the stalls to collect the daily tax. It is the first of the three rounds

that he makes on Sunday to be assured of collecting from everyone since the vendors change over in the different periods.

During this period rancheros in need of quick cash will sell agricultural produce, capitalizing upon the plaza traffic. For instance, in Acuitzio I saw only once #41, a ranchero with his wife and child, trying to sell a large sack of onions. They sat quietly on a bench at the south end of the plaza and waited for people to approach them. The quantities sold were often in lots of two or three onions. Pi-Sunyer describes the same scale of exchange among rancheros in Zamora:

...if a peasant family has need of a few quick pesos, often the only asset that can be transformed into ready cash are the agricultural produce owned by the family (1968:143).

As 11:30 a.m. approaches, the number of people in the plaza begins to thin out as most people present are off to Mass. For the menudo women, #'s 10, 11, and 17, sales begin to wither, and the camote and gelatin vendors are sold out and are in the process of dismantling their stalls. Business for all at this point is on the decline except for #20, a husband and wife vending team, who sell religious goods purchased in Guadalajara. They position themselves in front of the main entrance to the church courtyard, one on each side. People entering the church will often stop to examine the goods displayed on the ground or on the wooden cross (draped with medallions and crucifixes) that

the vendors hold. For them the peak is short lived. They wait about the gates until Mass is over to catch the last of the buying traffic and then pack up and go home.

Between 11:30 and 12:30 the plaza is very quiet because Mass is in progress. A few people circulate in the plaza but the vendors do little business. The only business that remains constant during this period is in the cantinas which are full and remain so until they close at 10:00 p.m.

At 12:30 p.m. when Mass is out, the plaza is once again jammed with people. Business picks up quickly but only for a short period. Between 1:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m.



The plaza after 11:30 a.m. Mass

it begins to decline very quickly and by 2:00 p.m. it is almost non-existent. The townspeople return home for the comida, the major meal of the day, and the rancheros, after a bit more shopping and having fulfilled their religious duties and social obligations, make their way back to the ranchos.

The most active business during this period is with the cuento vendors. Between 12:30 and 2:00 p.m. the plaza is filled with young children playing games and making purchases of dulces from #'s 1, 3, and 12. It is prime time for children to socialize with each other and with the cuento vendors.

Much of this socialization takes place in the form of games. One game in particular that is played by cuento vendors with their customers and by cuento vendors amongst themselves is boletos. It is also played by boleros with the difference being that money is exchanged, not goods.

Boletos is a game of chance similar to "flip" played by North American school boys. It is played between two parties; in the case of the cuento vendors it is played between the vendor and the customer, or between the vendor and a competing vendor. In the case of the vendor and the customer, the vendor will flip a coin into the air, or project it fifty feet down the plaza and into the street. It is generally followed by half a dozen cheering boys all racing to get there first. If the vendor wins, he receives

the monetary value of a comic book; if the customer wins he receives the comic book free.

Boletos is also used by two competing vendors to acquire different comics. No money is exchanged, just the comic. Similarly, non-vendors will play boletos for money. In most cases there never seems to be any disputes, verbal or physical, over who won or lost. Sometimes one party will leave it up to the integrity and honesty of the other party to check the coin and decide who won.

Another game played by young boys, in general, and boleros in particular, is "ficha." In this game four to six coins valued from five centavos to twenty centavos are placed a few inches apart in a straight line on the plaza tiles or in the portal. Both parties playing contribute equal numbers and values of coins. The two players then stand back ten to fifteen feet, each with a bottle cap. The first player flicks the bottle cap off the palm of his hand with his index finger, trying to hit a coin with it. If he is successful he pockets the coin and tries again, and so on. When he misses, the other party has a try. In this manner the game is played until all coins have been won.

Other games played in the plaza, particularly by young girls, are skipping rope games, and the Mexican equivalent of the English version of "London Bridge" and "Ring-around-the-roses." These games are played primarily by young girls and sometimes their younger siblings. Young children (girls in particular) are often given the

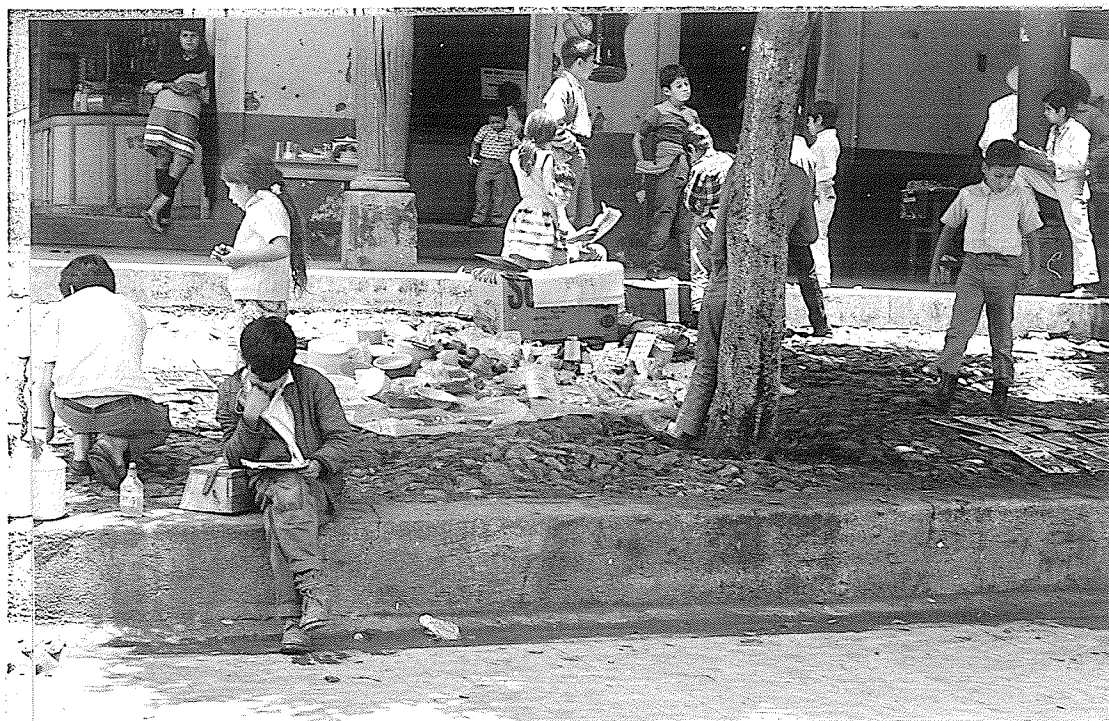
responsibility of caring for a younger sibling. Finding it difficult to look after their siblings and at the same time play games with their friends, they often incorporate the younger ones into the games.

Sunday Period II--2:00 to 7:00 p.m.

After 2:00 p.m. the face of the plaza changes completely. There is little activity, and sometimes no activity on rainy days. The townspeople have gone home to eat or off to visit friends, and the rancheros have left for the rural areas. As a consequence, many of the stalls have closed down or will be closed by 3:00 p.m. Stalls such as #'s 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 20, 21, 22-26, 29, 40, and 41 have packed up at this time (or earlier) since their selling period has come to an end. Only a few of the regular vendors, #'s 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 12 and occasionally vendor #16 (one who sells on Sundays and occasionally on other days), remain open along with a few transient vendors such as #'s 19, 28, 43, 44, and 45. These last few diehards, with a few exceptions, will close up by 5:00 or 6:00 p.m.

The only people left in the plaza at this time are little children, a few adolescent males, and females talking with friends or sitting about enjoying the afternoon. Along with them are adult males who can be seen looking out the doors of the cantinas while drinking with friends.

Even though young boys and girls play in the plaza all afternoon, their numbers are small, and consequently by



Sunday afternoon--quiet times in the plaza

2:30 p.m. all the cuento vendors have closed. The "Koala" cart boys are selling in the streets, leaving only the boleros and a few vendors. Since business is slow, vendors spend the time sitting, waiting, and talking with friends. The boleros amuse themselves by playing ficha and boletos.

Later in the afternoon the social activity of young adolescent males and females increases. Of the females, the group consists of girlfriends of the three girls that work in the telephone headquarters. Complementing this crowd of approximately twenty girls are their boyfriends.

Between 3:00 and 4:30 p.m. taco and enchilada stands begin to appear in preparation for the evening activities. They generally number about five or six, some appearing as early as 2:30 p.m., others not arriving until after 5:00 p.m. Number 11, a menudo vendor, appears again at 5:00 p.m., after two or three hours off, this time selling posole (pigs head and corn gruel), tacos, enchiladas and refrescos (soft drinks). She exemplifies the point that the vendors adjust their goods to suit the social activities taking place. Also late in the afternoon, #38--an adolescent female who sells homemade candies--appears. She is a regular vendor and only sells in the late afternoon and early evenings.

It is during this period that the garbage, swept up by #'s 1 and the comandante, is collected. A man and two young boys collect it by hand and by shovel and put it in a horse-drawn cart. The comandante also makes his second tax-collecting round at this time.

The stores on the plaza also suffer from lack of plaza traffic during this period. They remain open but only occasionally do people stop to shop.

In general, this period is very quiet and plaza activity does not begin to increase until approximately 6:00 p.m. when it begins to fill up with adolescent males and females, particularly if the town is sponsoring a dance in the palacio or if the Catholic school (colegio) organizes a kermesse (benefit fiesta).

Sunday Period III--7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Sunday evening social activities in the plaza generally begin shortly after 6:00 p.m. and are well underway by 7:00 p.m. It is during this time that unmarried females and males are able to socialize without the supervision of their parents or a chaperon. Supervision of courting couples is still common in many parts of Mexico although it is becoming more open (Lewis 1963:399). The plaza at this time also attracts a number of younger boys and girls and for #3, a candy vendor, this is the best time of the week for business. The comandante makes his third and final tax-collecting round of the day.

All food vendors (female) vend in the west portal on Sunday evenings. They sell tacos, enchiladas, refrescos and some also sell posole. There is a great deal of competition between them. Therefore, a great deal of soliciting takes place between the tending of braziers and the serving of customers. Most vendors have a table and two benches at which the customers sit and, within easy access, a charcoal brazier and a small table for preparing food. The vending of tacos and enchiladas involves several members of a family; most vendors have at least one family member (generally an older daughter) to aid in cooking and serving.

Males and females can often be seen pursuing the portals, walking in the plaza, or gathered on the benches. Often five or six males, sometimes as many as ten, will gather on one bench and watch the girls in a variation

of the paseo. A paseo is a social activity that typically involves both male and female participation. In other parts of Mexico where it is performed, the females will walk in one direction around the plaza while the males will do the same in the opposite direction, each group eyeing the other for a prospective boyfriend or girlfriend. In Acuitzio, except for large festive occasions, it is only the females that circle the plaza. Always in a counter clockwise direction, they walk arm in arm, sometimes in two's and three's and occasionally in groups of ten, but usually in groups of four to six. These waves of girls continue to circle the plaza, sometimes with a few dropping out or with the addition of newcomers. This activity continues until dark.

The males seem to be quite content to sit on the benches and watch the girls, often remarking among themselves about certain girls, but rarely ever making advances.

It is this group of people that provide the cliental for the food vendors. These stands are always full, with some more popular than others, such as #'s 11 and 33. The popularity of these two stands could possibly be attributed to the fact that out of the five or six stands present, they are the only two that sell posole, a special treat and a great favorite among the people in Acuitzio.

The two cantinas also function as a point of social articulation, providing the vendors with clientel. Drinking people get hungry and since the food stands are in the portal,

it is only a short distance from the cantinas to the stands. Similarly, La Fuente de Sodas (actually the telephone headquarters) serves as a hangout for numerous girls and people waiting to make phone calls, providing clientel for the food vendors. The heaviest concentration of food stands is just in front of its door.

The food stands themselves also seem to be a point of social articulation but more so for members of the same sex. This is not to state that males and females do not have social intercourse, but that the general pattern is that males eat with males, and females eat with females, either at the tables or standing in the portal. This form of socializing in the plaza and eating at the foodstands is similar to what Brand describes for Quiroga.

However, on many evenings and especially on Sundays, there is some promenading in the Plaza Principal, punctuated by purchases at nearby stands and booths of food, soft drinks and ices (1951:221).

Other than the food stands the only other vendors in the plaza are dulce vendors, #'s 1, 3, and 38. As mentioned above, Sunday evening is the best time for selling for #3, so it is probably true of #'s 1 and 38, who also sell dulces. Remaining open on Sunday evenings is not unique for them; it is a regular practice for all of them to remain open until 8:00 p.m. every night of the week.

Sometimes on Sunday evenings the town will sponsor a dance in the portal of the palacio. A band is provided and the portal is blocked off to pedestrian traffic by a

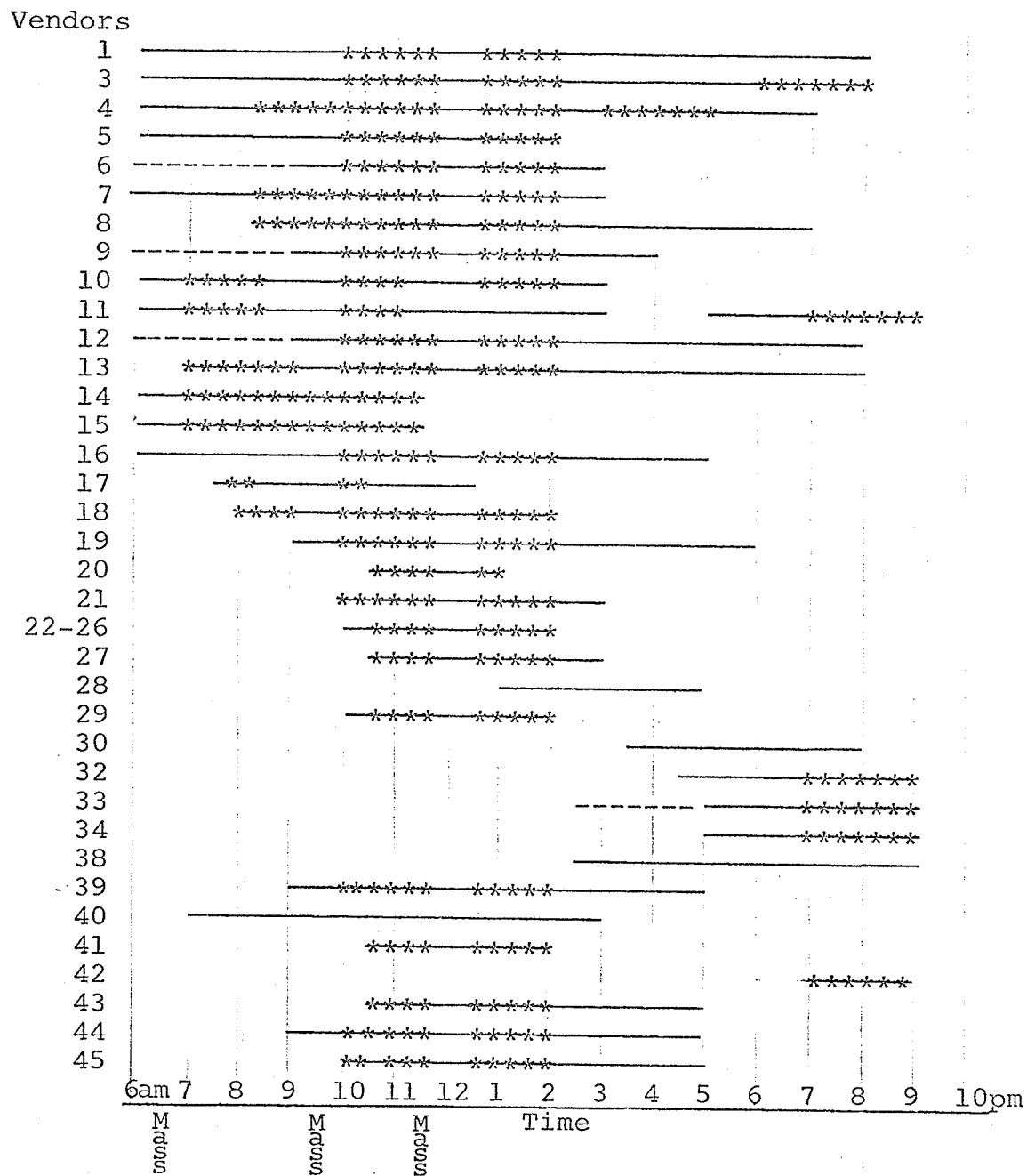
board fence nailed to the pillars. The dances are attended primarily by younger people although some adults participate also.

These dances begin around 9:00 p.m. and last until somewhere between 11:00 to 12:00 p.m. On nights of the dances the food stands appear a little earlier in the afternoon and close an hour or two later than they normally would if a dance had not been scheduled.

Figure 5 capulizes the high and low periods of economic activity for Sundays. The prepared food vendors, #'s 10, 11, 13, 14, and 15, sell well from 7:00 to 8:30 a.m. probably because this period coincides with the general eating period in the town. After 8:30 a.m. their sales die off except for #'s 14 and 15, the camote and gelatin vendors. From approximately 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. the produce vendors', #'s 4, 7, and 8, sales increase substantially while the other vendors' sales remain virtually static until 10:00 a.m. At this point the second Mass of the day is over and the rancheros are beginning to arrive. Everyone sells well because of the increased traffic in the plaza. Between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. sales drop because many people who were in the plaza prior to this are now attending Mass. After Mass is out sales increase because of the increased numbers of people from Mass who come to participate in social activities. At 2:00 p.m. most of the people have left and sales drop. The quiet afternoon period sets in. A number of vendors pack up their goods and stall and go home.

FIGURE 5

INDIVIDUAL VENDING TIMES FOR SUNDAYS



Those that remain (with a few exceptions) sell very little. Later in the afternoon the prepared-food vendors, #'s 11, 32, 33, 34, and 42, enter the plaza to prepare for the evening's social activities. At 7:00 p.m., when the adolescent male and female numbers reach a peak, the prepared-food vendors' sales increase. Unless a social function is taking place in the evening the vendors close their stalls at 9:00 p.m.

Sundays are the big days in Acuitzio. Townspeople and rancheros come to the plaza at some point during the day, either to go to Mass or to see old friends, to watch people, to play games, to get their shoes shined, to shop, or to discuss the weather and crops. For whatever reasons, people come to the plaza because it is the social centre of the town, and their presence makes it a point of social articulation. In doing so they provide the clientel for the vendors whose vending activities are determined by the crowds that are present, and who, to some extent, manipulate the type of goods they sell to correspond with the social activities taking place. Weekdays are different.

C. Weekdays in the Plaza

Weekdays in the plaza are very different from Sundays because of the reduced number of people and vendors. The plaza does not seem to function as a point of social articulation to the same extent as it does on Sundays. The reason for this is quite simple. During the week people are engaged in other routine activities. Most people, men in particular,

are working. The rancheros who come to town only once a week and the townsmen engaged in agricultural activities are at work in the fields. Those who do not farm are working at their respective occupations. The women are engaged in routine household activities such as cooking, cleaning, washing, and caring for children. The children, other than during the vacation period, are at school.

Plaza vending on weekdays is effected more by household or domestic activities than by anything else. Weekdays are workdays and every household has a basic schedule that it must follow to insure the functioning of the familial unit.

For most families depending upon the occupation of the head and other employed members, the day begins quite early. The women arise first to prepare the first meal of the day which takes place anywhere from 5:00 to 7:00 a.m. Once the men have been fed and are off to work, the women spend the next couple of hours doing domestic chores such as cleaning up from breakfast, sweeping the floors (washing, in the case of tile floors), securing water, washing clothes, etc. Often little children are expected to help in domestic chores. For the most part these domestic chores are completed somewhere between 8:00 and 11:00 a.m., permitting a short interlude of leisure before the women must begin preparing the comida. It is during this interlude that women may find time to shop, or if they are wealthy enough, to send servants to shop for them.

Preparations for the comida, depending upon the financial position of the family, can take from one hour to as long as three or four hours. The meals of poorer families take less time to prepare; they are not as elaborate as the meals of the more wealthy folk. The comida generally takes place between 12:00 and 2:00 p.m. when the men come in from the fields or from work. Sometimes the women will take the meals out to the men. Children are also fed at this time.

After serving the comida and cleaning up, the women can enjoy a fairly long break from household duties, permitting time for them to visit friends or to shop until the men return from work. At this time, somewhere between 6:00 and 8:00 p.m., a light meal is prepared after which the day is pretty much at its end.

The domestic habits of the townspeople in general restricts the vending periods to a couple of hours in mid-morning and to a short time after the comida, the mid-morning period being the most active. The food vendors are not as controlled by these periods as are the produce vendors. The food vendors are more likely to be controlled by general eating times. But this correlation of vending periods with domestic habits does not preclude vending during other periods of the day.

For the vendors the day begins as it does on Sundays, only a little later. Most regular vendors begin to appear around 6:30 a.m. and are ready for selling by 7:00 a.m. During this period #1, the husband and wife vending team,

and the comandante perform the daily ritual of cleaning the plaza. A daily Mass is held between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m. but it draws very few people and consequently, has little effect upon the selling of goods.

By 7:00 a.m. #'s 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 are established and ready for business. Other regular vendors, such as #3, will appear by 8:00 a.m. and #'s 6 and 21 a little later. As on Sundays, this period from 7:00 to 8:00 a.m. is not a prime vending time in general except for the prepared-food vendors. The business for the menudo ladies, #'s 10 and 11, is good until 8:30 a.m.--probably a function of general eating patterns. People that haven't eaten at home will often get a quick bite in the plaza. Other prepared-food vendors, #'s 14 and 15, sell well all through the morning until 11:00 a.m. at which time they are generally sold out.

For the other vendors, particularly the produce vendors, business does not increase until after 8:00 a.m. and lasts until 11:00 a.m. This correlates roughly with the domestic activities of the household, the interlude between the completion of domestic chores and the commencement of the preparations for the comida. Business is good but not by Sunday's standards, as most vendors sell two to three times more goods on Sundays than they do over the period of the whole week. The traffic in the plaza is generally light--composed mainly of people passing through, a few shoppers, and children playing games. Shoeshine boys come

to the plaza at this time, but because of the light traffic the better part of their time is spent playing boletos or ficha.

Between 11:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. business increases for the prepared-food vendors but remains static for produce vendors. The menudo ladies return to the plaza around 11:00 a.m. after having returned home in their slack period to complete domestic chores. Food sells well at this time because it is another general eating time for the townspeople that do not go home to eat.



Vending on a weekday

Between 12:00 and 2:00 p.m. business in general increases for the produce vendors. But the activity is not intense. When discussing the intensity of vending periods during the week, I do not wish to give the impression that major increases or decreases in economic activity occur. The difference between these periods during the week is quite small although definitely noticeable.

After 2:00 p.m. there is little social activity in the plaza and little vending. The menudo ladies, #'s 10 and 11 pack up and go home with the others following shortly. The merchants who remain pass the time sitting, watching, talking, reading, or rearranging their goods. By 6:00 p.m. only #'s 1, 3, 4, 9, 12, and 13 remain along with #38 who does not appear until 3:00 p.m. Those who remain vend only sporadically and probably remain, even though business is poor, to earn another two or three pesos before the day's end.

Saturdays are the poorest days of the week for vending. Only a few vendors appear, in part because the townspeople are engaged in regular occupational or domestic chores, but also because many people go to Morelia on Saturdays to shop and to take care of business. The number of people is so reduced that it is hardly worthwhile to set up one's stall to vend.

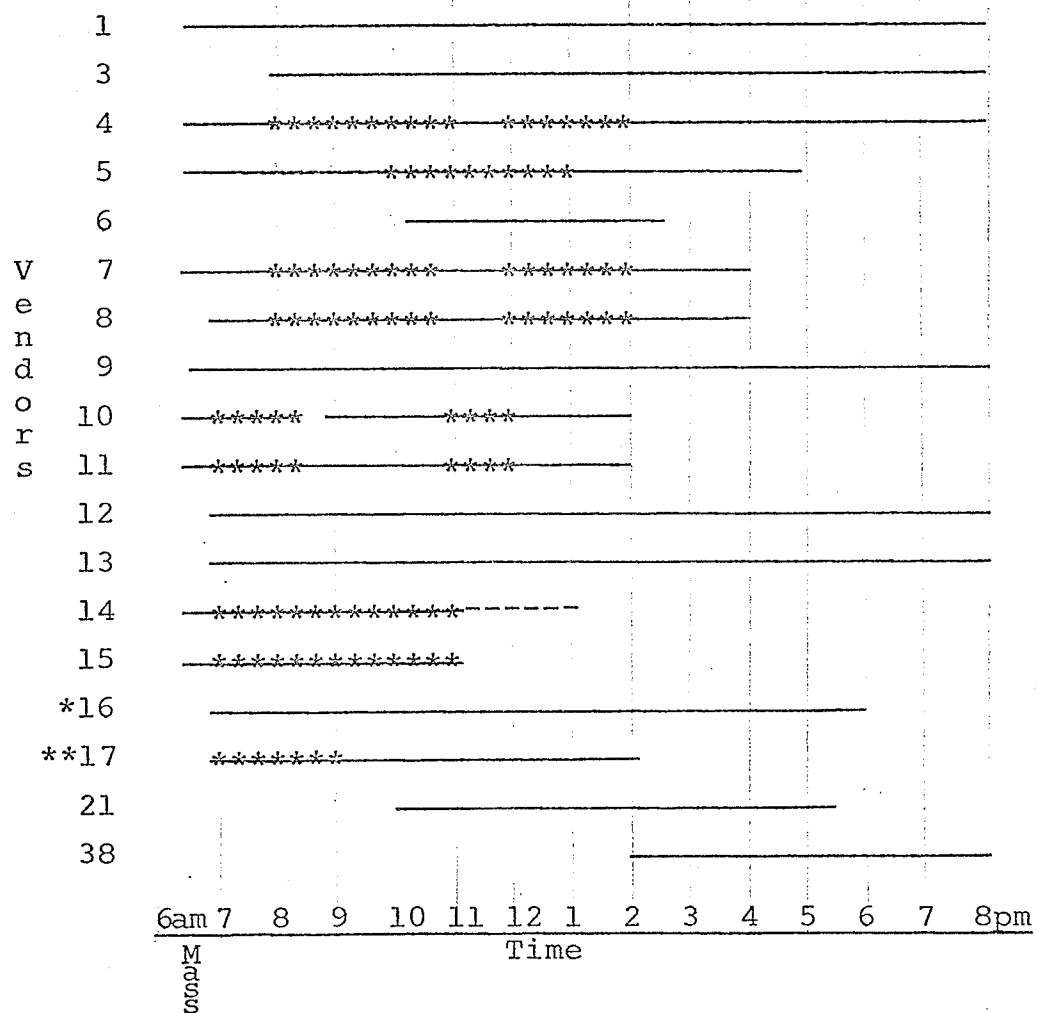
Figure 6 capsulizes the high and low periods of economic activity in the plaza on the weekdays. Although peak periods of economic activity occur they are not as

demarcated as Figure 6 indicates. Similarly, peak periods of economic activity in relation to time is difficult to correlate because of the different domestic and occupational routines that exist. Although stated in the text that 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. is the general eating time of the townspeople, and theoretically it should follow that little vending activity will occur, certain vendors experience a peak during this period. This discrepancy is created by the differing routines of various familial units. Consequently, Figure 6 is a broad correlation of vending periods and should not be interpreted as a hard and fast correlation.

During the week the vendors begin to arrive at approximately 6:30 a.m. and some as late as 10:00 a.m. All those that sell in the plaza are regular vendors with the exception of #'s 16 and 17. The vending peaks in the morning for the prepared-food vendors, #'s 10, 11, 14, 15, and 17, and for the produce vendors are quite similar to those established on Sundays. The prepared-food vendors sell well from 7:00 to 8:30 a.m. and then their sales drop, except for #'s 14 and 15, who sell camote and gelatin. The menudo women's, #'s 10, 11, and 17, sales increase later at the time of the comida. Produce vendors, #'s 4, 7, and 8, sell well after 8:30 a.m. until approximately 11:00 a.m. Their sales drop because the townswomen are at home preparing the comida. The afternoon is quiet in general with only the produce vendors experiencing any peaks. For the rest of

FIGURE 6

INDIVIDUAL VENDING TIMES FOR WEEKDAYS



*Saturdays only

**Mondays only

Peak Vending Periods *****

Regular Vending Times _____

Occasional Vending Times -----

the vendors vending is rather sporadic. No prepared-food vendors sell in the plaza in the evenings because there is no socializing taking place. All stalls are closed down by 8:00 p.m.

The contrast between weekdays and Sundays in the plaza is striking. On weekdays the number of people that frequent the plaza is appreciably decreased along with the number of vendors. The depreciation of the number of people is due to their involvement with domestic and occupational tasks of life. On the other hand there is a large increase of the number of people and vendors in the plaza on Sundays. Sunday is the big day in town and it is the day most people take a break from their daily domestic and occupational routines. Most townspeople and the rancheros utilize this weekly break to take time to participate in the social activities in the plaza. Their presence provides a cliental for the plaza vendors who take advantage of this economic opportunity.

In either case, the people's presence or absence affects the vendors and their vending activities. In other words, because the plaza functions more as a point of social articulation than as a market place the vendors are at the mercy of the crowds. The cultural habits of the people of Acuitzio control and determine the vending patterns in the plaza.

IV. VENDORS AND VENDING STRATEGIES

In this chapter I will discuss some aspects of the relationship of plaza vendors to the wider community in an attempt to provide a more complete view of plaza vending. The following points will be emphasized: (1) purchasing of goods by the vendors, (2) allocation of stall space, (3) payment of taxes, (4) the nature of small-scale transactions, and (5) strategies employed in vending.

A. Vendors and the Wider Market Economy

In the state of Michoacan there exists a well-developed and fully integrated marketing system, composed of local and regional markets serving the Tarascan area (the heart of which is centered around Lake Pátzcuaro) and the urban centers. The Tarascan area is populated by numerous small villages all partially dependent upon local and regional markets. Local market centres such as Quiroga, Tzintzuntzan, and Erongarícuaro are all accessible by road, and in the case of Erongarícuaro, also by water. These smaller local markets are in turn linked to the regional market at Pátzcuaro which in turn is connected by road to larger urban centres such as Uruápan, Morelia and Guadalajara. The large urban centres are in turn linked to the national markets.

The people in Acuitzio frequent the markets in Morelia. Market days are Thursdays and Saturdays in Morelia, and the people have a choice of two centres. Independencia and San Juan de Letran (the latter being the most frequented because of its lower prices). It is in Morelia that most plaza merchants purchase their goods.

Most of the vendors attend the markets in Morelia on a regular basis (generally week to week), but some go less often (on a monthly basis). Fruit and vegetable vendors, such as #'s 4 and 7, go to Morelia once a week to secure fresh produce while #3 goes less often to secure candies. He is not as restricted as are #'s 4 and 7 because his goods do not perish as quickly. Some merchants are fortunate enough to be able to secure their goods locally such as #'s 10 and 11, who go to the rastro (slaughterhouse) in Acuitzio twice a week to buy menudo. One vendor, #21 a plastics vendor, purchases his goods in Mexico City. But most of the vendors are dependent upon the large urban market in Morelia for goods.

Regular vendors who are dependent upon the large market in Morelia and who must take a day off to buy goods can do so without losing a day's profit. They can do so because vending for them is a family affair to a certain extent. This means that other family members can tend the stalls while the principal vendor is buying goods.

B. Regulation of Vendors and Vending

The allocation of stall space in the plaza to the vendors is quite simple. All the regular vendors utilize the same area everyday and the others take what is left over. Sunday vendors who have been selling for a period of time also have regular positions. There is no haggling for positions nor shifting of stalls except for #4--a fruit and vegetable vendor--who shifts her stall from the edge of the portal to the wall when #15 leaves.

The stalls vary from nothing but the goods for sale, to the goods on burlap sacks, to table and chairs, to elaborate collapsible stalls that can be towed home on wagons. Only #6 stores his stall in the plaza. The others do not because of the expense incurred in the rental of storage space.

Tax is paid on a daily basis, according to the size of the stall. But in the decision of how much tax is paid and how often it is collected seems to be rather arbitrary at times. The amount charged varies anywhere from 20 centavos for #38, the girl who sells homemade candies, to 6 pesos charged to #19, the vegetable seller from Zamora. The man from Zamora obviously pays more because he deals in bulk (therefore sells more) and has a truck. But #38 is not always charged a tax, the reason being that she is very poor and needs the money. Other people who place stalls in front of their stores are charged no tax for the stall but pay a tax on the store.

The plaza vendors must also meet State and Federal weight and measure regulations. Periodically, outside authorities come to town to check scales and containers, levying fees according to the amount of correction required and repair work done. These fees can be exorbitant for small-scale vendors. One woman, for example, was assessed a fee of 25 pesos--for her, close to a week's earnings.

C. Small-Scale Transactions and Vending Strategies

In Acuitzio the exchange of goods and money are on a very small scale. The merchants generally appear early in the morning and remain open until some particular time set by them and influenced by the cultural habits of the people. They pass the day waiting patiently for customers to appear. There is no soliciting except by the prepared-food vendors. Those selling fruit and vegetables have scales but they are seldom used. Generally, fruit and vegetables are sold in small lots, for example 3 chilies, 2 tomatoes, or a slice of cabbage. Similarly, Pi-Sunyer, remarking on small-scale merchants in Zamora, says "The units they deal in are often fantastically small: a single cigarette, a few inches of ribbon, a penny trinket" (1968:151). There is no bartering, all prices are fixed and there do not appear to be established social relationships comparable to "pratik" in Haiti (Mintz 1967).

In Haiti, pratik is a relationship established between buyer and seller with reciprocal obligations that

influence patterns of exchange. The closest development to pratik relationships in Acuitzio are the depositing of containers and goods by the public at certain stalls, but there is no apparent obligation to purchase in return for the favor. Similarly, some merchants, such as #15, will purchase milk from a man on a regular basis to sell with her gelatin but no obligations are established. Or #7, a fruit and vegetable vendor, on occasion will purchase vegetables from someone who wishes to sell a small quantity, thus acting as a bulker, but such purchases (bulking) are sporadic and no obligations are established. Most purchases by vendors from the public are meant for immediate resale. On occasion, however, some vendors will purchase goods from other vendors, such as #1 buying peanuts from #38, but this is meant for immediate personal consumption.

Open competition between vendors in the plaza is minimal. The plaza vendors are hurt most by the stores on Riva Palacio because of their capacity to deal in quantity and effect lower prices. But among the vendors themselves all seem to be on a friendly basis with one another and there is no open use of hostile competitive tactics such as down-grading another's goods. For the most part, competition on this level is subtle except for #19, the vegetable dealer from Zamora. He deals in bulk and can, therefore, sell cheaper. He always has a steady stream of customers when in Acuitzio, but does not come to Acuitzio every Sunday. The regular vendors from Acuitzio must rely

on sporadic purchases. Due to the short period of field work it was impossible to determine if regular client-vendor relationships existed.

Competitive actions can be isolated if we examine strategies involved in selling which, to an individual unfamiliar with plaza vending, would go unnoticed. The plaza vendors utilize a number of strategies to increase their sales.

The first strategy in vending used to increase sales is the location of the stall. All regular vendors with two exceptions, #'s 1 and 21, set up their stalls along the west portal which is the most heavily trafficked portal. Other vendors also try to use this space but if it is too full they set up shop on the cobblestone area that runs parallel to the west portal or at the north and south ends of the plaza. Thus by placing themselves in close proximity to pedestrian traffic the vendors have a better opportunity to sell their goods.

A variety of goods is useful in cornering a larger market. This strategy is used primarily by regular vendors--those who are dependent upon plaza vending for a livelihood. In order to demonstrate the importance of variety, I have lumped the various goods that are sold into eight major categories. These eight major categories can be subdivided into the individual items.

The first category is produce, which includes all fruit and vegetables. Since fruit and vegetables

(particularly vegetables) are an integral part of the daily diet for most families and are non-prepared or uncooked foods, they can be differentiated from the second category--plaza prepared foods.

The second category includes all foods that are prepared in the plaza--tacos and enchiladas, menudo, posole, and drinks. In Table 3 tacos and enchiladas are listed in the same column because they are generally sold together and are just variations in the filling of the tortilla. Although other prepared foods are sold in the plaza the preparation is done at home and thus is the basis for differentiation of the second and third categories. This third category is designated as sweet treats and includes such items as candy, peanuts, ice cream, breads, camote, and gelatin.

Children's goods form the fourth category which includes comics and toys. These goods are differentiated from the other goods in that they are meant for and bought only by children.

The fifth category includes utilitarian crafts such as pottery, furniture (stools from Cuanajo) and baskets. These are handcrafted goods meant for utilitarian usage, and are differentiated from other utilitarian wares such as clothing and plastic goods (the sixth and seventh categories) which are mass produced.

Clothing is differentiated from plastics on the basis of materials used and application.

TABLE 3

CATEGORIES OF ITEMS SOLD CORRELATED
WITH FREQUENCY OF VENDING

			Pro-duce		Plaza Pre- pared Foods				Sweet Treats					Chil- dren's Goods		Utili- tarian Crafts						
			Fruit	Vegetables	Menudo	Tacos and enchiladas	Posole	Drinks	Candy	Peanuts	Ice cream	Breads	Camote	Gelatin	Toys	Comics	Pottery	Furniture	Baskets	Clothing	Plastics	Religious goods
V e n d o r s	1	R	x	x				x														
	3	R	x	x					x													
	4	R	x	x																		
	5	R*						x														
	6	R									x											
	7	R	x	x																		
	8	R	x	x																		
	9	R																		x	x	
	10	R			x																	
	11	R			x	x	x															
	12	R								x	x		x									
	13	O*	x	x															x			
	14	R												x								
	15	R													x							
	16	O																			x	
	17	O*			x																	
	18	S		x																		
	19	T		x																		
	20	T																				
	21	O																			x	x
	22-26	S															x					
	27	S											x									
	28	T																	x			
	29	S															x					
	30	S											x									
32	S					x																
33	S					x	x															
34	S					x																
37	T																			x		
38	R									x	x											
39	T															x						
40	T																				x	
41	S		x																			
42	S					x																
43	T																					
44	T																				x	
45	T									x							x				x	x

R = Regular
S = Sunday
O = Occasional
T = Transient
* = Store and Stall

Religious goods such as medalions and crucifixes form the eighth and final category. They are differentiated from the other goods sold on the basis of their function--their religious significance.

It can be argued that vendors selling in a major category are selling only one type of good, e.g., produce. But within any single category a vendor can utilize variety, for example by selling both fruit and vegetables rather than just one or the other. He therefore is able to corner a larger market through this strategy of variety. Similarly, some vendors have extended their lines of goods into other major categories such as #1, a regular vendor who sells fruit, drinks and candy. He sells in the produce, plaza-prepared foods, and the sweet treats categories. So for the purpose of the discussion of variety, any vendor selling more than one item within a major category will be considered to be one who is utilizing variety as a vending strategy.

Of all 41 vendors listed in Table 3 there are a total of 28 that sell only one item, leaving 13 that sell more than one item. Of the 28 that sell only one item, 13 are Sunday vendors, 8 are transient vendors, 2 are occasional vendors and 5 are regular vendors. If we compare this to the total number of the various types of vendors, of 14 Sunday vendors, 13 sell in only one category; of 4 occasional vendors, 2 sell in only one category; of 9 transient vendors, 8 sell in only one category; and of 14 regular vendors, only 5 sell in one category. Therefore, of the 13 remaining

vendors selling more than one item, 9 are regular vendors, one is a Sunday vendor, 2 are occasional vendors and one is a transient vendor.

The regular vendors account for most of the vendors who utilize variety as a vending strategy. The five regular vendors that do not utilize variety sell plaza prepared foods (one sells drinks in addition to running a store). Those that sell prepared foods such as tacos and enchiladas, posole and menudo, must devote their time to food preparation, therefore making it physically impossible to handle more than one line of goods. Other than those vendors who are unable to use variety for the reasons indicated above, my observations suggest that those who are dependent upon vending in the plaza for a livelihood must utilize variety as a strategy to increase their returns.

The manner in which goods are displayed is another strategy used by vendors and can be viewed in conjunction with the strategy of variety. All vendors selling a variety of goods display them in such a way as to give the public the best view of the available selection. The fruit and vegetable vendors arrange their goods in little piles which are picked over by the customers. After purchases have been made the piles are rearranged and those that were depleted are added to form a larger stock pile. Number 3, who sells about 40 varieties of candies, is constantly rearranging his goods to demonstrate variety. After a sale he will pull candies from below to replace depleted piles

or shift piles in order to display new lines of goods. An interesting aspect with respect to #3 is that his candies are arranged in such a manner that the least expensive are on the outside of his table; the intermediately priced goods are in the center, and the most expensive are closest to him. This is possibly a safeguard against theft as he is often descended upon by 5 or 6 children at once, all handling his goods. He denies any problems of theft, however.

Soliciting, a tactic used in the larger markets in Mexico to gain customers, is not used here except by the menudo vendors and the prepared-food vendors in the plaza on Sunday evenings. The menudo vendors only use this strategy in periods of low commercial activity such as in the mid-morning.

The final strategy to be discussed is public relations. In general, all merchants try to establish good public relations. This is handled in a number of ways. Number 11 will often send her son to change a large peso note rather than lose a customer. Or #4 and 7 will act as storage depots for people that do not wish to carry their parcels about town. Similarly, #39, a transient toy maker, would sometimes fix toys for free. All these strategies are utilized by vendors to increase their sales thereby demonstrating competitive actions do exist even though they are covert.

In summation, there exists a well developed and fully integrated market system in Michoacan which links

small, regional and national markets. The vendors in Acuitzio are linked into this market system through their dependency upon the large market centres in Morelia for supply of goods. The goods purchased in Morelia are taken to Acuitzio where they are sold by the merchants in the plaza. In order to sell in the plaza, the merchants must pay a tax for their stall space and meet weight and measure regulations of the State. The economic transactions are small-scale, generally involving sales in small lots. In order to increase business without overtly competing with other vendors, the vendors employ covert vending strategies to increase their business. The strategies they use are involved with stall location, variety of goods, display techniques, soliciting and developing good public relations.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The general significance of the plaza in Mexican culture has been widely recognized, but its functions have been misunderstood. Even though the literature on small town plazas is scant two important points are discernible: (1) that the plaza functions as a market place and (2) that it functions as a locus, or as a point of social articulation for the community. But these two functions have been viewed virtually as separate entities rather than two aspects of an integrated whole.

The purpose of this thesis has been to describe how the plaza functions as a point of social articulation for the community, and to demonstrate how the vendors are affected by the social activities taking place and how they exploit this economic opportunity. I have argued that the plaza should not be viewed as only a point of social articulation or only a marketplace; the principal objective has been to demonstrate the interrelationship of these two factors.

The plaza in Acuitzio del Canje, Michoacán, located at the center of town and having a number of physical amenities such as the church, the palacio, benches, stores, two cantinas and a large physical area in which people can circulate, serves as a point of attraction for townspeople

and rural campesinos. The church and town sponsor special social activities in the vicinity. In addition, the vendors attract people and the presence of the people themselves serves to attract still other people.

The social activities that regularly occur in the plaza and that serve to attract many of the people greatly affect the vending patterns of the plaza merchants. The types of goods sold at various periods of the day (especially on Sundays), and the high and low periods of economic activity are determined by the presence or absence of the people in the plaza and the social activities they are engaged in.

The interrelationship of these factors is more obvious on Sundays than it is on weekdays. Sundays in the plaza are far more active. People come to the plaza area to attend Mass, to visit friends and relatives, to shop (for the week in the case of the rancheros), and to enjoy special treats at the vendors' stalls such as ice cream, posole, menudo, and tacos and enchiladas. With an increase in the numbers of people in the plaza there is a corresponding increase in the number of vendors.

Not only does the number of vendors increase but also the variety of vendors. On Sundays all four types of vendors are present as opposed to the weekdays when generally only the regular vendors are present. Sundays are the best days for the regular vendors (those who are dependent upon plaza vending for a livelihood); their total income for the

previous six days is often doubled and sometimes tripled on Sundays. Thus Sunday vendors, most of whom sell prepared foods or other socially related goods (i.e., goods that encourage social interaction through buying and selling) such as comic books, are present because of the large crowds. Their selling of socially related goods insures a reasonable return for their efforts because people are in the plaza in large part to visit and enjoy the break from daily mundane activities. This is clearly indicated in the case of the vendors selling plaza-prepared foods; they appear in the late afternoon and early evening in preparation for the socializing that occurs among the younger people. On nights of dances in the palacio the vendors selling plaza-prepared foods appear earlier and close later than normal.

The transient vendors come to Acuitzio on Sundays because of the increased number of people in the plaza on that day. To come on a weekday would hardly be worth their trip since only a few people are attracted to the plaza on weekdays and the plaza does not function as a regular marketplace.

The occasional vendors likewise appear on Sundays for the same reasons. Their sales are greatly increased over the one or two days that they vend during the week. The regular and transient vendors utilize plaza vending as their primary source of livelihood. For the others, selling on Sundays and special occasions only is a reasonable and viable means of supplementing their income.

Sundays in the plaza are therefore unique, not only because of the increased social and economic activity (compared to weekdays) but also because the day is divisible into three distinct periods of social and economic activity. These three periods can further be divided into high and low periods of social and economic activity. It is therefore possible to view them from two perspectives: (1) from the perspective of the various social activities taking place in each period and (2) from the perspective of the type of goods being sold and the number of vendors present. But these two perspectives are only analytically separable; they are functionally interrelated. The types of goods being sold and the number of vendors present is related to the different types of social activities.

Sundays in the plaza begin with a 6:00 a.m. Mass and with the vendors coming to the plaza to prepare for the day's vending activities. During the first period, 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., the high and low periods of economic activity are affected more by the three Masses than by anything else. After the first Mass is over the vending in general is poor, except for the prepared-food vendors who serve the first meal of the day to those who do not return home after Mass. At 8:30 a.m. their sales are reduced drastically and the produce vendors' sales increase. The period from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m. is characterized by relatively reduced social and economic activity. Then after 10:00 a.m. and the termination of the second Mass and the arrival in

town of the rancheros, the social activities in the plaza increase as do the vendors' sales. This peak period of economic and social activity is interrupted for an hour when the 11:30 a.m. Mass is in progress. At 12:30 p.m. the plaza fills with the church goers and the sales of the vendors increase markedly. Around 1:30 p.m. the sales begin to decrease as the townspeople begin to return home for the comida and the rancheros leave for the rural areas. At 2:00 p.m. the second period of the day begins, marked by little social and economic activity. Very few vendors remain in the plaza. The remaining people consist of a few young children playing games and a few adolescent males and females. Later in the afternoon plaza-prepared food vendors begin to arrive in anticipation of the night's social activities. As 7:00 p.m. approaches the social tempo of the plaza increases and by 7:00 p.m. it is in full swing. Again, with the increase in social activity there is an increase in economic activity. This continues until 9:00 p.m. and then diminishes quickly unless a dance is scheduled for the evening.

Weekdays are entirely different because of the relatively small number of people in the plaza and, as a consequence, the reduction in the number of vendors. The absence of people in the plaza is due to the fact that weekdays are workdays and every family has a daily schedule to follow to insure the functioning of the familial unit. The men go to their occupational work, the women to their

domestic chores, and the children are involved in school. There is little time to be spent socializing in the plaza. This lack of leisure time affects the vending activities of the plaza merchants and their only increased periods of economic activity can be correlated with the interludes of relaxation between the completion of various domestic chores. These periods occur for two or three hours in mid-morning and mid-afternoon.

To a great degree, then, the presence or absence of people in the plaza, as an expression of institutionalized plaza activities, influences the vending patterns of plaza merchants. To view the plaza in Acuitzio as a marketplace leads to a misinterpretation of the nature of plaza vending and the general social environment of the plaza (as is probable for many Mexican communities). People do go to the plaza "to meet for the purpose of exchange" but the exchange that occurs is primarily social rather than economic. In this case the social exchange that occurs is predominantly between non-vendors in the plaza, although there is also social exchange between vendors and clients along with economic exchange.³ The vendor-client relationship in Acuitzio is more aptly described as follows. Rather than serving the people through supplying them with goods and services the vendors are better described as being served by the people

³Mintz (1959) contains a discussion of the effects of a particular kind of social articulation between vendors and clients and among vendors--the pratik relationship.

who provide them with a clientel, for some vendors, the basis of their livelihood.

The vendors activities are therefore largely determined by other cultural features of Mexican life. Their economic importance in the community, in terms of the distribution of goods, is minimal inasmuch as the established retail outlets in the town could easily absorb the volume of business carried on by the plaza vendors. In fact, the number of stores in the community is more than twice the number of vendors present in the plaza on Sundays. Nevertheless, the small-scale merchandising of plaza vendors provides an important source of income for some families in Acuitzio.

Most of the plaza merchants are dependent upon the national and regional marketing system for goods. Most go to Morelia on a regular basis for supplies, although a few of the more fortunate ones can procure their goods locally, thereby saving themselves the cost of a roundtrip to Morelia--6 pesos.

Stall space is allocated along traditional lines. Those who vend regularly take up the same positions everyday while the others take up the spaces left over. All vendors must pay a tax to the Municipio; the amount paid is determined by the size of the stall although at times it is rather arbitrary.

The quantities of goods sold are generally very small; consequently, in order to maximize their sales a

number of strategies are employed. These strategies include such things as locating their stalls in the most heavily trafficked areas, displaying their goods in an "eye catching" manner and maintaining good public relations by offering various services free. Maintaining a variety of goods to corner a larger market is also another strategy used by some of the regular vendors. They are dependent upon vending for a livelihood and a variety of goods permits them to compete more effectively and thus increase their returns. At the same time, the wide variety of goods sold minimizes competition between vendors and is consistent with the continuous movement of people in the plaza.

The plaza in Acuitzio del Canje functions primarily as a point of social articulation for the community and the surrounding ranchos (as is probably true of many small Mexican towns like Acuitzio). Although some people probably come to the plaza with the expressed purpose of buying goods from the plaza vendors, their numbers are few. As a consequence, the plaza vendors' livelihood is dependent upon the crowds of people that come to the plaza for social reasons.

But there is another dimension to the importance of plaza vendors that makes them a very central part of the social activities of the plaza. They add to the warmth, colour, and fascination of plaza life--courtship patterns on Sunday evenings, the family get-togethers after Mass in the ice cream man's stall, and the friendly discussions

over bowls of hot menudo--none of which would have the same character without the plaza vendors. While the vendors' activities show sensitivity to the general movement of people in and out of the plaza, their very existence in the plaza shapes the movement of people, offering focal points for social articulation.

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APPENDIX

DATA ON INDIVIDUAL PLAZA VENDORS

IN ACUITZIO, 1972¹

VENDOR: 1 (MALE AND FEMALE)

Familial status:

Married. Husband age 38, wife age 26. No children.
Live in an extended family with husband's parents.

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and price of goods:

Candies--penny candies, chocolates, chicklets--
40 varieties-- 10¢ to \$1
Fruit--oranges, bananas, peaches
fruit juice (large) \$1

Stall:

Located south end of the plaza
Large white stall on wheels--enclosed on all sides
Located next to electric pole because of need for
electricity to run blender
Stall is covered in plastics when it rains
Three long red tables set end to end in front of the
white stall
Tables are covered with a red cloth
Tables are covered in plastic when it rains or are
moved under either Portal Morelos or Portal Palacio
Husband and wife take turns tending the different stalls

Tax: 40¢ daily

Length of time selling in the plaza: 2 years

Competition:

#'s 3, 12, 38--candies
#'s 5, 15--drinks, but they are totally different
#'s 4, 7, 8, 13--fruit

¹Monetary values are in pesos and centavos. 12.50 pesos equals 1 dollar.

Purchasing of goods:

Husband buys candies in Morelia
Occasionally fruit is purchased from the public in
small lots

Relationship to other vendors:

They are not related to other vendors but are friends
with some

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting, no bartering (prices are fixed),
they use no scales
Small scale transactions vary from 10¢ to \$2 or \$3
(mostly \$1)

Sources of income:

Vending
Husband shines shoes--\$1
Husband and wife clean the plaza--\$7 daily

VENDOR: 3 (MALE)

Familial status:

Married. Husband age 63, wife age 60. Have 4 children
all living in Mexico City

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and price of goods:

Assorted and store-bought candies--40 varieties ranging
from 5¢ to \$1.50
Chicklets (large and small), chocolate squares, juice
in plastic bags, candy bars (large and small), jelly
candies, sugar-coated fudge, liquid chocolate in
plastic bags, large suckers, wrapped toffies, cones
with filling
Cookies, fruit and cucumbers

Stall:

Located on west portal
Two tables, sometimes three tables
One table with store-bought candies, one table with
homemade candies and one table for fruit

Tax: 40¢ daily, \$1. Sundays

Length of time selling in the plaza: 20 years

Competition:

#'s 1, 12, 38--candies
#'s 4, 7, 8, 13, 18--fruit

Purchasing of goods:

Husband buys candy in Morelia once a month--\$100 to \$300 worth

Husband makes candies once every 2 weeks or when necessary

Relationship to other vendors:

He is not related to other vendors but is friends with some

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting, no bartering (prices are fixed)

Small scale transactions vary from 20¢ to \$1

Small children are best customers

Sources of income:

Vending--Monday to Saturday \$60 to \$80

Sundays \$100

VENDOR: 4 (2 FEMALES)

Familial status:

Daughter age 16, mother age 55. Husband is a jornalero.

There are 12 family members in the extended family household

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and price of goods:

Oranges--3 for \$1

Mangos--30¢ to 40¢

Bananas--25¢

Lemons--20¢

Chilies(large)--20¢

Chilies(small)--20¢

Carrots--30¢ per 1/4 kilo

Onions--20¢

Potatoes--\$1.70 per kilo

All prices subject to seasonal fluctuation

Stall:

Located in west portal

Two tables, chair, and a scale

Tax: 40¢ daily

Length of time selling in the plaza:

Daughter 12 years, mother indeterminable

Competition: #'s 7, 8, 13, 18, 19

Purchasing of goods:

Mother goes to San Juan de Letran market in Morelia
every Friday

They also utilize home-grown vegetables

Relationship to other vendors:

Daughter is granddaughter of #14, a camote vendor

Grandmother, #14, lives in the same household as
daughter and mother

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting, no bartering (prices are fixed),
and only occasionally are the scales used

Most goods are sold in lots of, say, 2 tomatoes or
3 chillies

Sources of income:

Vending

Husband works as a jornalero

Grandmother vends

VENDOR: 5 (FEMALE)

Familial status:

Married to a man age 68. She is his second wife.

They have 2 children

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and price of goods:

Carrot juice--\$1

Blended chocolate milk with egg--\$2 to \$3

Stall:

Located in west portal

Small table against a post with electricity for blender

Tax: 20¢ daily

Length of time selling in the plaza:

Competition:

#1 sells juice and #15 sells ron pope but they are
totally different from #5

Purchasing of goods: Probably procured locally

Relationship to other vendors:

She is not related to other vendors but is friends with some

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting, no bartering (prices are fixed)

Sources of income:

Vending blended drinks

Owner of the store El Pariso in front at which she has her stall

VENDOR: 6 (MALE)

Familial status:

Married. Age 87, wife 76. They have 11 married children.

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and price of goods:

Icecream--20¢, 50¢, \$1

Stall:

Located in front of west portal

The stall consists of a fairly large platform with two cross shaped end pieces that stand upright. These support a ridgepole over which canvas is draped leaving the two sides exposed. Inside are tables and chairs

This is the only stall stored in the plaza

Tax: \$10 a month

Length of time selling in the plaza: 27 years

Competition:

Boys who push Koala carts selling paletas

Purchasing of goods:

He makes his own icecream

He purchases the raw materials in Acuitzio--milk, eggs, and ice

Relationship to other vendors:

He is not related to other vendors but is friends with some

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting, no bartering (prices are fixed)

Sources of income:

Vending--\$6,000 annually

Children send money--\$600 annually

VENDOR: 7 (2 FEMALES)

Familial status:

Daughter age 33, mother age 67. Both widows. They live together with the daughters daughter age 10. Daughter's husband was shot 12 years ago.

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and price of goods:

Tomatoes (large)--2 for 20¢

Tomatoes (small)--10 for 20¢

Carrots--2 for 20¢

Lemons--3 for 20¢

Bananas--25¢

Onions--2 for 20¢

Chilies (large)--3 for 20¢

Chilies (small)--7 for 20¢

Chilies (dried)--2 for \$1

All prices subject to seasonal fluctuations

Stall:

Located in west portal

Two tables, a box to sit on, and a scale

Tax: 20¢ daily

Length of time selling in the plaza:

Daughter 11 years. Mother indeterminable

Competition: #'s 4, 8, 13, 18, 19

Purchasing of goods:

Daughter goes to San Juan de Letran market in Morelia every Saturday morning

Relationship to other vendors:

They are not related to other vendors but are friends with some

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting, no bartering (prices are fixed)

Scales are utilized very little. Most transactions average \$1 to \$3

Sources of Income:

Vending--Weekdays--\$10 to \$15

Sundays--\$50 to \$80

VENDOR: 8 (MALE)

Familial status:

Small boy age 8, and sometimes his parents sell

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and price of goods:

Camote, onions, cabbage, tomatoes, chilies and lemons

Stall:

Located on west portal

Two large tables and some burlap sacking on the ground

Tax: 60¢ daily

Length of time selling in the plaza: 1 year

Competition: #'s 4, 7, 13, 18, 19

Purchasing of goods: They are bought in Morelia

Relationship to other vendors: None

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting, no bartering, scales are used
very little

Sources of income: Vending

VENDOR: 9 (MALE)

Familial status:

Married. Age 64, wife age 54. They have 3 children.

Two are married.

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and price of goods:

Plastic goods and toys, scarves, thread, combs, rings--
50¢ to \$3

Stall:

Located in west portal
Long table mounted on two saw horses

Tax: No Data

Length of time selling in the plaza: 40 years

Competition: #'s 21, 40

Purchasing of goods:

He buys goods in Morelia once every 2 or 3 months

Relationship to other vendors:

Father of #27
Husband of #12
In-law of #10

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting, no bartering (prices are fixed)
He has a very low turnover of volume of goods

Sources of income:

Vending
Wife, #12, vends

VENDOR: 10 (FEMALE)

Familial status:

Married. Age 50. Husband is sick. They have 7
children--3 are at home, 4 are away.

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and prices of goods:

Menudo--\$1.50, \$2.50, \$3.50

Stall:

Located in west portal
Cloth-covered table, 2 benches
Charcoal brazier, large pot, spoons and bowls

Tax: 20¢ weekdays, \$1 Sundays

Length of time selling in the plaza: 30 years

Competition: #'s 11, 17

Purchasing of goods:

She buys menudo twice weekly from the rastro in Acuitzio

Small-scale transactions:

There is soliciting but no bartering

Relationship to other vendors:

In-law of #9, 12

Mother of wife of #27

Comadre of #11

Sources of income:

Vending

Children send money

VENDOR: 11 (FEMALE)

Familial status:

Married. Age 40. She is second wife of her husband.

Five children live at home. They share a house compound with another family who have 10 members

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and prices of goods:

Menudo--\$1.50, \$2.50, \$3.50

Sunday evening--posole, refresco 70¢, tacos 25¢

Stall:

Located in west portal

Long covered table, 2 benches, charcoal brazier, large pot, spoons and bowls

Tax: 20¢ weekdays, \$1 Sundays

Length of time selling in the plaza: 5 years

Competition: #'s 10, 17

Purchasing of goods:

She buys menudo twice weekly from the rastro in Acuitzio

Relationship to other vendors:

Comadre of #10

Madrina of wife of #27

Small-scale transactions: There is soliciting but no bartering

Sources of income:

Vending

Husband is jornalero

Children contribute \$200 weekly

VENDOR: 12 (FEMALE)

Familial status:

Married. Age 54, husband age 64. They have 3 children.
Two are married

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and price of goods:

Cakes, breads, peanuts, candies, pumpkin seeds--5¢ to 20¢

Stall:

Located in west portal
Table and chair

Tax: No Data

Length of time selling in the plaza: 40 years

Competition: #'s 1, 4, 38

Purchasing of goods:

She makes her own candies and cakes
She purchases peanuts and pumpkin seeds in Acuitzio

Relationship to other vendors:

Wife of #9
Mother of #27
In-law of #10

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting, no bartering (prices are fixed)
Uses a charolita as a measure for pumpkin seeds

Sources of income:

Vending
Husband, #9, vends

VENDOR: 13 (FEMALE)

Familial status: Two elderly women in their 60's

Type of vendor:

Her store is open everyday but her stall only
occasionally

Description and price of goods:

Baskets, peanuts, oranges, bananas, pineapples, papayas

Stall:

Located just off plaza in northwest corner
The stall is an extension of her store. It consists of
a canvas awning attached at the back to the store
and supported at the front by 2 poles

Tax: \$1 daily for store

Length of time selling in the plaza: No Data

Competition:

Other stores
#'s 4, 7, 8

Purchasing of goods:

She goes to Morelia every Saturday morning to buy goods

Relationship to other vendors: No Data

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting, no bartering (prices are fixed)
Uses scales

Sources of income:

Store
Vending

VENDOR: 14 (FEMALE)

Familial status:

Member, age 70, of a 12-member extended family

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and price of goods: Camote with milk--50¢

Stall:

Located in west portal
Table on which sits a wooden dish of camote, a dish
and bowls
Serves camote on brown paper when short of dishes

Tax: No Data

Length of time selling in the plaza: 5 years

Competition: None

Purchasing of goods:

Possibly procured locally. She purchases milk in the
plaza

Relationship to other vendors:

Grandmother of #14

She lives in the same household as granddaughter, #4,
and her mother

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting, no bartering

Has a high volume turnover of goods

Sources of income:

Vending

Granddaughter, #4, vends

VENDOR: 15 (FEMALE)

Familial status:

Married. Age 47. Seven family members

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and price of goods:

Gelatin--20¢ and 40¢

Ron pope (rum and eggnog)--50¢

Stall:

Located in west portal

Table and a chair

Tax: 40¢ daily

Length of time selling in the plaza: 4 to 5 years

Competition:

#'s 1 and 5 sell drinks but they are totally different

Purchasing of goods: She makes them herself

Relationship to other vendors:

She is not related to other vendors but is a friend
of some

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting, no bartering

She has a high volume turnover of goods

Sources of income: Vending

VENDOR: 16 (MALE)

Familial status:

Married. Age 40. Eight people in the family

Type of vendor: Occasional

Description and price of goods:

Aprons, little dresses, blouses and dish towels--
\$3 to \$20

Stall:

Located at south end of the plaza
Large red enclosed and roofed stall. It is collapsible
and can be wheeled home on a wagon
He utilizes ropes tied to trees to display his goods

Tax: \$1.50 daily

Length of time selling in the plaza: Less than 1 year

Competition: #37

Purchasing of goods:

He makes a biannual trip to Mexico City to buy goods
He also buys goods in Morelia

Relationship to other vendors: None

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting, no bartering
He has a low volume turnover

Sources of income:

Vending
He works as a comercio in Morelia

VENDOR: 17 (FEMALE)--sometimes 2 other girls vend

Familial status: No Data

Type of vendor: Occasional

Description and price of goods:

Menudo--\$1.50, \$2.50, \$3.50 (based on prices of #'s
10 and 11)

Stall:

Located off plaza in northwest corner
Long cloth-covered table, 2 benches, charcoal brazier
large pot, spoons and bowls
Is located in front of a store

Tax: \$65 monthly (includes tax for the store)

Length of time selling in the plaza: Less than 1 year

Competition: #'s 10 and 11

Purchasing of goods:

Possibly purchases them at the rastro in Acuitzio

Relationship to other vendors: None

Small-scale transactions:

There is soliciting but no bartering

Sources of income: Vending

VENDOR: 19 (MALE)**Familial status:**

Married. Age 40. He claims to have 3 wives and 27 children. He lives in Zamora

Type of vendor:

Transient

He comes to Acuitzio every second Sunday. The day he isn't in Acuitzio he is in Guanajuato

He sells in Zamora on Tuesdays, La Piedad on Thursdays, Patzcuaro on Friday

He also sells in Tacambaro, Playa Azul, Tiripetio, and Lagunillas

Sells in various ranchos in the dry season

He owns his own truck but works for a nationwide company that has 162 trucks

He travels 800 kilometers a week

Description and prices of goods:

Chilies--\$1.50 per kilo

Tomatoes--\$1 per 1 1/2 kilos

Potatoes--80¢ per kilo

Lemons--\$1 per kilo

Onions--\$1 per 1 1/2 kilos

Stall:

Located at north end of the plaza
He sells from his truck
Truck has a cooking and sleeping unit which he uses
while on the road

Tax: \$6 daily

Length of time selling in the plaza:

1 year in Acuitzio, but has been in the business for
12 years

Competition:

#'s 4, 7, 8, 13, and 18 sell the same goods as he does
but none can compete because he deals in bulk

Purchasing of goods:

He buys them in the market in Uruapan
He does not vary his goods

Relationship to other vendors: None

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting but he does barter
He sells in 1/4, 1/2, and full kilos
He uses his scale but not all the time
He has a high volume turnover of goods

Sources of income: Vending

VENDOR: 20 (MALE AND FEMALE)**Familial status:**

Probably husband and wife. They live in Morelia

Type of vendor:

Transient. They come to Acuitzio every 2 or 3 weeks

Description and price of goods:

Religious goods, books, crucifixes and medallions--20¢
to \$1.50

Stall:

Located at the main entrance of the church
Some goods are displayed on the ground while the others
are hung from the arms of the wooden crosses each
carries

Tax: 20¢ daily

Length of time selling in the plaza: 4 years

Competition:

#43 also sells religious goods along with other articles

Purchasing of goods:

He buys them in Guadalajara

Relationship to other vendors: None

Small-scale transactions:

There is some soliciting, no bartering

Sources of income: Vending

VENDOR: 21 (MALE)

Familial status: Widower. Age 70. Lives alone

Type of vendor: Occasional

Description and prices of goods:

Plastic jewelry, mirrors, combs, rings, and scarves--
50¢ to \$3

Stall:

Located in east portal
Large table

Tax: No Data

Length of time selling in the plaza: Many years

Competition: #'s 9 and 40

Purchasing of goods: He buys them in Mexico City

Relationship to other vendors:

He is not related to other vendors but is friends
with some

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting and no bartering. He has a
low volume turnover of goods

Sources of income:

Vending

Shines shoes

Carries goods for people i.e. bread

VENDOR: 27 (MALE)

Familial status:

Married. Age 28, wife age 23. They have been married for 7 years and have 3 children. His wife vends sometimes when he is away in Villa Madero.

Type of vendor:

Sunday

Sometimes he goes to Villa Madero to sell goods

Description and prices of goods:

Polboron--10¢

Puerquitos--10¢

Trocante--20¢

Panda--10¢

Arepitas--10¢

Chicheron--20¢

Campancha--20¢

Stall:

Located at south end of the plaza

Small table with folding legs and a chair

Tax: No Data

Length of time selling in the plaza: 8 years

Competition: None

Purchasing of goods:

He is a baker by trade and therefore makes them himself

Relationship to other vendors:

Son of #'s 9 and 12

His wife is daughter of #10

His wife is madrina of #11

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting and no bartering

Cookies, cakes are sold singly

Sources of income:

Vending--his wife helps

Panadero (baker)

VENDOR: 32 (FEMALE)

Familial status:

Widow. Age 44. Nine members in the family. She is aided in vending by her daughter

Type of vendor: Sunday

Description and prices of goods:

Potatoes, enchiladas, chilie, cabbage and tacos--
10¢ to 25¢

Stall:

Located in west portal
Table with a bench and chairs, brazier and plates

Tax: No Data

Length of time selling in the plaza: 10 years

Competition: #'s 11, 33, 34, and 42

Purchasing of goods:

Buys ingredients locally and prepares them herself

Relationship to other vendors: None

Small-scale transactions:

There is soliciting and bartering
Has a fairly large turnover

Sources of income:

Vending--\$25 a day
Children contribute money

VENDOR: 38 (FEMALE)

Familial status:

Single. Age 15. Member of a 12 member extended family

Type of vendor: Regular

Description and prices of goods:

She sells 8 types of homemade candies and pumpkin seeds--5¢ to 10¢

Stall:

Located in west portal
Small table and a chair

Tax: 20¢ sometimes

Length of time selling in the plaza: 5 years

Competition: #'s 1, 3, and 12

Purchasing of goods:

Her grandmother makes the candy for her
She purchases the seeds in Acuitzio

Relationship to other vendors: None

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting and no bartering
Since she sits just outside the cantina, a good percentage of the customers are from there

Sources of income:

Vending
She works as a serving girl

VENDOR: 39 (MALE)

Familial status:

Married. Age 55. Resides in Morelia

Type of vendor:

Transient. He comes to Acuitzio about twice a year

Description and prices of goods:

He makes children's toys out of old oil cans. He also collects scrap metal for resale

Charolitas--5¢

Whistles (small)--5¢

Whistles (large)--20¢

Helicopters (small)--6 for 20¢

Helicopters (large)--4 for 20¢

Stall:

Located in west portal

Burlap sack on which he sits and displays his goods

Tax: 20¢ daily

Length of time selling in the plaza:

He sells only for a few days and then leaves
He has been to Acuitzio 3 times

Competition: None

Purchasing of goods:

He buys oil cans from a particular gasoline station in Morelia where he knows they are clean--100 cans for \$4

If forced to buy material in Acuitzio he buys beer cans

He buys old metal pieces, iron, steel, aluminium, scissors, cap guns, locks, etc. for resale in Mexico City

Competition: None

Small-scale transactions:

Children are his best customers

He sells while he works. Often many children at once will gather round him to watch him work

He exchanges toys for scrap metal and sometimes fixes things for free

He does not solicit but barter to a certain extent

Sources of income:

Vending--\$4 to \$5 a day

When employed in Morelia he works as an albañil--\$125 a week

VENDOR: 44 (MALE)

Familial status:

Elderly man. Age 60. From Santa Fé

Type of vendor: Transient

Description and price of goods:

Flowered pottery from Santa Fé

Decorated small pots with handles--2 for \$1.50

Decorated large pots with handles--1 for \$1.50

Decorated mugs--1 for \$1.50

Stall:

Located in west portal

Burlap sack with goods displayed on it

Tax: No Data

Length of time selling in the plaza:

He comes to Acuitzio occasionally

Competition: None

Purchasing of goods:

He is a potter by trade and makes his own goods. He
has been making pots for 40 to 50 years

Relationship to other vendors: None

Small-scale transactions:

There is no soliciting and no bartering

Sources of income:

Vending

Making pottery