

Religious Change and Social Transformation: A Guatemalan Case

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I. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to describe the process of religious change in an indigenous Guatemalan community and examine the way the change brings about a totally different formation of the society. The paper is composed of four sections. First, it outlines the social and cultural circumstances in which the community is situated. Second, it describes the process in which the religious condition of the community is seriously affected by the recent introduction of two new religions. Third, it analyzes how the new religions originating outside of Guatemala are reinterpreted by the community members and how their new religious identity is constructed by negation, reversal and modification of traditional religious symbols. Finally, the paper inquires far-reaching implications of the change in the religious sphere for the understanding of radical transformation of the society. It is specifically argued that the change gave rise to new quasi-ethnic groups with different value systems, distinct behavioral patterns, and clear-cut boundaries, creating a new source of tension which can develop into political factionalism.

This Guatemalan community, San Francisco (pseudonym), is located in the Department of Huehuetenango in the northwestern part of the country.¹ It is a fairly large community of some 10,000 people who are predominantly Indian. The majority of Indian males, as well as a few Ladinos,² are bilinguals who speak both Spanish and the Northern Mam (a Mayan language of highland Guatemala), while most of Indian females are monolinguals of the native language. The economy is primarily based on the traditional cultivation of maize, beans and squash, and it is supplemented by the cultivation of other

agricultural products, sheep raising, and part-time activities as itinerant traders. In addition, seasonal labor in large coffee plantations in the coastal regions of Guatemala has been a major source of cash income for many Indian members.

San Francisco is characterized by a high degree of cultural conservativeness, which may be attributed to its relative isolation and inaccessibility. The village is located on hilly slopes, and the sole communication with nearby urban centers is provided by a narrow, steep road constructed merely several years ago. But these geographical factors may not alone explain the conservative nature of the community. It is relatively close to Pan American Highway and local cities, and we find much less "native" societies in more remote regions. More importantly, cultural conservativeness is itself a cultural product. It is not a remnant of the past or the result of "conservative momentum" of a culture, but it is a product of the attitudes and activities of the community members. Inaccessibility to the community, while it may be a reason for the conservativeness, is at least partly the result of the villagers' indifference about, or aversion to, the construction of an adequate road leading to San Francisco.³ Why a society opts for being "native" while others do not is a complex issue which requires a full analysis not only of the geographical, internal and historical nature of the society but also of its position within larger economic, social and political systems.

This cultural conservativeness of San Francisco manifests itself in various aspects of native life. Everyday conversation is carried out in the Mam language, and most of the community members, males and females alike, wear a handwoven native costume that has been a major indicator of the Indian identity. Technological innovations have occurred only to a limited extent and cooking, for example, is done with clay pots placed on three stones arranged on the dirt floor. There are six small primary schools in San Francisco, but the attendance rate is low and only three boys finished the sixth grade in 1979 in this fairly populous community. The cargo system or the civil-religious hierarchy, another typical feature of Middle American Indian

culture,⁴ maintains a form similar to that which existed in Chimaltenango of the 1930s (Wagley 1949) and in Cantel of the late nineteenth century (Nash 1958a) with few signs of separation between civil and religious hierarchies.

This conservativeness of San Francisco is best seen in its religious beliefs and practices. The world view consists of a variety of folk concepts, and everyday life is literally filled with ritual activities that gives "Indianness" to the performers. But it is also in the religious sphere that actual and potential change is most tangible. The next section describes this change.

II. Religious Change

The traditional and most important religion in San Francisco is so-called folk Catholicism.⁵ This religion was born in a syncretism between the prehispanic Mayan religion and mediaeval Spanish Catholicism,⁶ and it is organized around the knowledge and activity of senior males called *chman*.⁷ These males are religious specialists who are shaman-priests, diviners, curers, or sorcerers. They perform a ritual called *kostumbr* (from Spanish *costumbre* or "custom") based on a special knowledge of the native Mayan calendar consisting of twenty days. Apart from the private practice of *chman*, folk Catholicism is characterized by the public celebration of festivals for various Catholic saints.

Formerly, folk Catholicism was contested only by Ladino Catholicism. This is the religion of the Ladino members of the community who now comprise less than half a percent of the total population. The proportion of Ladinos was somewhat higher in the past, but an exodus occurred due to the lack of economic and educational opportunities, reducing the religious significance of this group accordingly. But more important religious change took place in the mid-twentieth century when the followers of different religions started to appear among the Indians.

One of the new religions is catechist Catholicism or *acción católica* (Catholic Action).⁸ This religion is directly connected with the Roman Church

and one of its major aims is to eradicate pagan practices of folk Catholics. The first catechist Catholics (*katolik* from Spanish *católicos*) in San Francisco were a former mayor and a boy in the teens both of whom were converted in the early 1950s. The number of converts steadily increased in the subsequent years and thirteen families⁹ were counted as catechists in the late 1960s. By now the number has increased by several times, and catechist Catholics comprise well over ten percent of the total population.¹⁰ They have built a "convent" adjacent to the village church, but no Catholic priest is resident inside the community.

The other of the new religions of San Francisco is evangelical Protestantism. This religion has a history similar to that of catechist Catholicism. The first Protestant (*ebanje:li* from Spanish *evangélico*) was a boy who met a missionary in a neighboring village in the late 1950s. The number of converted families reached twelve as late as in the early 1970s, but Protestants now comprise around ten percent of the population.¹¹ The majority of them belong to one of the major Protestant sects in Guatemala, while some are affiliated with a minor sect, and the two groups have built their own churches in separate locations. But such an internal differentiation has a minimum significance and all the Protestants are considered to be identical by the community members. As in the case of catechist Catholicism, no resident pastor has been sent in from outside and missionary activities are carried out by the native converts.

Due to the rise of catechism and Protestantism, the number of folk Catholics has been cut by about one-fourths in the past quarter century.¹² But this reduction does not mean a corresponding decline of the folk religion. On the contrary, there are indications that folk Catholicism in recent years has intensified its ritual activities.¹³ For example, *chman* (religious specialists) who are the focus of the traditional religion now comprise close to thirty percent of the adult male¹⁴ folk Catholics, or approximately twenty percent of all adult Indian males. According to older informants, the number of *chman* has considerably increased and much younger ones have appeared, proliferating folk

rituals as a consequence. Large scale communal festivals are now celebrated as many as eight times a year, and some of them are recent creations. The rain-making ceremony (*txokb'l jb'al*, "calling rain") was resumed in the past years after a period of neglect, so that at least one major ritual for the entire community is a restoration of previous practice. The images of patron saints inside the village church wear the Indian costume as an apparent indication of the "conservativeness" of San Francisco, but this is an innovation in the 1970s and it is reasonably inferred that the elaborate ritual associated with the change of the sacred costume was initiated very recently.

Rituals of folk Catholicism have thus been intensified, but so have the activities of both catechist Catholics and evangelical Protestants, resulting in a deep opposition among the religious groups. But the main division does not lie between Catholicism and Protestantism. It is true that folk Catholics, catechist Catholics and Ladino Catholics all belong to the same religion and all are baptized and counted as Catholics. But this familiar categorization does not have a primary significance in the local context. What matters is, first, the religious distinction based on the social opposition between Indians (*ini*) and Ladinos (*mo:s*); second, within the Indian sector, the opposition between the followers of the folk religion (*chman*)¹⁵ and the believers of the two new religions (*okslal* or "believers"); third, the distinction made by evangelical Protestants against other religions. In fact, catechist Catholics and Protestants are considered to be very much alike as opposed to folk Catholics. In other words, religions here are reinterpreted and categorized in a culturally specific way. How and with what concrete materials these categories are constructed is the subject of the next section.

III. Religious Categories

The first distinction among the religions of this community is made between Indian religions and Ladino Catholicism. The Ladinos are neither significant in number, nor organized as a religious group, nor active in religious practice.

Some of them individually offer candles to the patron saints at certain occasions, but Ladinos do not attend regular masses and the majority take part in religious activities only at baptism, wedding and funeral. Not only their religious practices are limited in scope but their religious beliefs seem to be ill-defined. There are even indications that the Ladino beliefs in part overlap with Indian folk Catholicism. Some Ladinos, for example, are known to have hired *chman* to have rituals performed for protecting themselves from the attacks of sorcery or for causing misfortunes among their enemies. Although Ladinos themselves neither become religious specialists nor perform the folk ritual, hiring a *chman* for these purposes is a measure typical of Indian folk Catholicism.

Nevertheless, Ladinos attempt to make an absolute distinction between their religion and the Indians'. Ladinos identify themselves as *católicos* (Catholics) and they know that most of the Indians are also *católicos*, but they draw a clear boundary around themselves. This is best seen in the days of the festival which is the focus of the religious activity of the community. Both Ladino and Indian Catholics are fond of the festival which is animated by the marimba music, but the Ladinos, with the cooperation of Indian political officials, independently bring a Ladino marimba band (*chimb' mo:s*, "Ladino music") from a nearby local town, while the Indians hire their own bands (*chnab'*, "music") composed of the community members. Similarly, one of the central activities of the festival is the masked dance (*b'i:xb'l*) Indian volunteers perform in the gorgeous costumes rented in a distant town, while the highlight for the Ladino members is the social dance (also *b'i:xb'l*) with professional dancers hired in a nearby town. In short, Ladino Catholicism is defined not so much by the religious content as by the boundary maintained by ethnic symbols.

The second opposition among the religions of San Francisco lies between folk Catholicism, on the one hand, and catechist Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism, on the other. And again the opposition is not so much a matter

of religious content as of distinctive features. In the following, the features differentiating catechist Catholicism from folk Catholicism are examined first; then those differentiating Protestantism are discussed.

The most important feature of folk Catholicism is the *kostumbr* ritual mentioned above. This ritual lies at the center of the traditional religious life and it is frequently performed in order to cure patients, dispel misfortunes, obtain general well-being, and send illness or death to enemies. It is usually accompanied by sacrifice and it has been a major indicator of the Indian identity. But the Indian leaders of catechist Catholics have prohibited this ritual among their people, and they have sharply attacked *chman* whose main task is to perform this ritual. Although *chman* are highly respected and venerated by folk Catholics, the catechists call them liars who attempt to gain income through fake rituals. The catechists now lock the door of the village church at dusk in order to eliminate *chman*'s ritual performed inside.

Behind this condemnation is a religious concept of "sin" (*il*) which is not understood in the normal Christian sense but in a thoroughly local way.¹⁶ The concept comprehensively explains evil incidents attributing them to the transgressions, disputes and other "sins" of the community members. Illnesses, deaths, accidents, conflicts and other serious human sufferings are generally interpreted as caused by the past sins, and the relief from them has traditionally been sought by the *kostumbr* ritual. Newly appeared catechist Catholics do not criticize the belief in the causal relation between sins and misfortunes, but they deny the effectiveness of the traditional ritual as a means to be relieved of sins and thereby of sufferings, claiming that more sins are added by performing the *kostumbr* ritual. Catechist Catholics hold that all sins disappear if one is converted,¹⁷ and they hold cultic meetings in which they sing together and beseech for the relief from sins in order to obtain the recovery of a sick fellow. The religious songs, which were introduced by the missionaries, at least partly replaced the traditional ritual to the eyes of the community members.

Because the value of the *kostumbr* ritual is reversed among catechist

Catholics, they tend to deny anything associated with the ritual. Some of them claim, for example, that they never have a dream. The same claim is also made by Protestants, and this is a reaction to the extreme importance placed on the dream experience in folk Catholicism. In fact, the dream is not only a source of omens with which imminent misfortunes are predicted but also a source of information with which the cause of present misfortunes is judged by divination. The traditional religion is thus inseparably connected with the dream experience, which is denied by the converts in its entirety.

The *kostumbr* ritual is also closely associated with the celebration of the community festival, and the catechists therefore refuse to make a small amount of cash contribution for the traditional celebration. They also refrain from participating in such central activities of the festival as the ritual drinking session, the procession of the images of the Catholic saints, and the performance of the masked dance.

The catechists not only avoid participating in the festival but also actively interfere with the celebration. During the festive days, catechist "masses" are held in the village church in order to disturb the ritual procession which marks the culmination of the folk celebration. The catechist leaders have also prohibited folk Catholics' customs including playing the marimba inside the church, consuming ritual drinks and foods there, embellishing the images of saints with leaves and flowers, and building a huge decorative wall dividing the church interior at Holy Week. While prohibiting these activities, the new Catholics have set up small images of the saints of their own in opposition to the patron saints venerated by folk Catholics. Catechists have also organized their own festival at Christmas when folk Catholics carry out only a minor festival without performing procession.

Again because of their aversion to the *kostumbr* ritual, the catechist Catholics often refuse to serve in the traditional civil-religious hierarchy. Although this service is explicitly for the entire community and necessary for the proper functioning of the community, catechist Catholics are appointed only

to lower offices.¹⁸ Even in case they agree to serve, they do not perform the *kostumbr* ritual and thus fulfill the duty only incompletely.

In contrast to the aggressive and oppressive attitude of catechist Catholics, evangelical Protestants are relatively indifferent to the ritual of folk Catholics, letting others make as many "sins" as they want, while they themselves are supposedly relieved from them. Protestants, like catechists, disdain the *kostumbr* ritual as a meaningless, sinful and harmful act, but they, also like catechists, fail to criticize the traditional view of the causal connection between sins and sufferings. Conversion to Protestantism is, at least for many, a method to obtain a relief from threatening sins, particularly from serious ones. Protestants, like catechists, also organize cultic meetings in which religious songs, some identical to catechist ones, are sung in chorus for bringing about the recovery of a Protestant patient in a manner analogous to the *kostumbr* ritual of folk Catholics. Protestants, again like the new Catholics, refuse to make the contribution for the celebration of the festival or to serve in higher offices of the civil-religious hierarchy. The Protestants' aversion to the traditional festival is yet stronger. They do not even approach the village center which is allegedly filled with "devils" during the celebration.

In addition to these attitudes that find parallels among catechist Catholics, the Protestants have their own practices that make themselves distinct from folk Catholics. As a means to "attach" to God, Protestants tend to praise Him with an extreme frequency and enact exactly what is described in the Bible. They avoid, for example, taking a rest during the funeral procession. This is an emulation of Jesus Christ at Golgotha, and the practice is contrasted to the folk Catholics' procession which is detained at specified locations. Similarly, Protestants are baptized by being immersed in the river following the precedence of Saint John, a practice parallel to the ritual purification in the river among folk Catholics.

Not only these practices of Protestants but also their beliefs show a striking contrast with folk Catholicism. While the old religion holds that humans

are destined by their sins to an eternal labor in a netherworld (*kapiyo7k*), Protestants, and to a lesser degree catechists, claim that they shall return to the "sky" and take an eternal rest by the side of God now that they are freed from all the sins through the act of conversion. The fatalism of the folk religion again manifests itself in the belief that this world shall come to an end around All Saints Day (*towsant* from Spanish *Todos Santos*), which is a remote echoe of the old Mayan religion. In contrast, the eschatological view among the Protestants takes a millenarian form in which the destruction of the world by the rain of fire and the survival of the blessed Protestants is predicted.

Thus far I have described the opposition between folk Catholicism and two newly introduced religions. The third level of opposition among the religions of San Francisco lies between evangelical Protestantism and Catholicism in general.

The Protestants differentiate themselves by criticizing the idolatory of both old and new Catholics. While Catholics adhere to the village church where the Catholic saints reside, Protestants avoid even approaching the church, derogatorily calling the saints the lord of sins, scarecrows, devils and so forth. Protestants also attack the Catholics in general for their habit of drinking and smoking.¹⁹ In fact, the abstinence from drinking and smoking is considered to be the most significant and visible sign of the "Protestant faith," and the termination of the faith is usually marked by yielding to the temptation of alcohol. The abstinence is partially due to the instruction of the missionaries, but it also seems to derive from the chastity injunction (*i:qn ti7j*) which precedes every kind of ritual performance by folk Catholics. Endurance, and a supposed reward obtained in exchange for it, is a central theme in this cultural tradition.²⁰ Some Protestants have given up not only alcohol and cigarettes but also their foods for days in the imitation of Jesus Christ's fast.

Finally, Protestants assume a distinctive attitude towards their real and fictive kins. They tend not only to sever the previous *compadrazgo* ties at conversion but also to emphasize brotherhood among Protestants. This may

be an antithesis of fatherhood so stressed in this culture. Protestants declare the presence of their only father in the heaven and they criticize Catholic confession to the Father as a foolish act of kneeling to a mere foreigner. They use the word brother (*hermano*) with an extreme frequency and, in fact, the Indian Protestant leaders once instructed the converts to call their real fathers brothers.

The above discussion of local construction of religious categories is summarized in Table 1. It is clear that each religion is interpreted in a culturally specific way. Particularly important is that each religion is not so much a system of abstract values, morals and sentiments as a set of concrete behavioral norms coupled with material specifications. What matters is not an internal doctrine but outward differentiation, and the differentiation is accomplished by negation, reversal, and modification of such traditional ingredients as ritual, festival, myth, injunction, office, and so on. New religions, no matter what are their origins or outer connections, are recasted in a cultural mold. And the religious formation thus generated does not merely represent mental operation of classification or construction of cognitive categories. The formation gives a basis for social action and interaction, and its far-reaching implications are the subject of the last section.

IV. Social Transformation

Social change in a small scale society is often accelerated by school education. But this factor has been insignificant in San Francisco due to the low attendance rate and other reasons. The change instead has been greatly encouraged by the economic activities of the community members, though the activities themselves represent an aspect of ongoing transformation. These change-inducing economic activities include the plantation labor which results in a seasonal exodus of community members, the organization of and participation in the village cooperatives which are part of the nation-wide system,²¹ and the activity of the newly appearing part-time merchants who engage in an

Table 1. Construction of religious categories and some of their distinctive features

Ladino Catholicism	folk Catholicism	catechist Catholicism	evangelical Protestantism
ethnic elements	ethnic elements		
	the <i>kostumbr</i> ritual <i>chman</i> (religious specialists) dream community festivals the civil-religious hierarchy myth of an eternal labor (fatalism)	religious songs (prohibition of the ritual)	(indifference to the ritual) denied no dream no contribution or participation (interference) (indifference) limited participation (lower offices) (lowest offices) return to the sky (eschatology)
	baptism (purification)	(confession)	baptism in the river (enactment of the Bible)
	the village church and the Catholic saints	(new saints) (own procession)	condemnation of idolatory
	drinking and smoking (chastity injunction)		abstinence (fast)
	compadrazgo ties		severance
	fatherhood		brotherhood

itinerant trading mostly outside of the community.²²

While these activities give occasions for cultural exposure and create a field where the little and great traditions meet, a more important source of change has been the two new religions so far described. They have not only caused a radical shift in religious beliefs and practices but also brought about new social activities and institutions. Particularly the promotion of literacy by Protestants may have a major impact in the long run, though the effort is yet to yield a significant result. So far the most consequential change outside the religious sphere has been the alteration in the pattern of economic behavior.

By denying the traditional *kostumbr* ritual on the religious ground, catechist Catholics and Protestants have also eliminated the economic expenses associated with the ritual. These expenses include candles and copal incense, chickens and turkeys for sacrifice, ritual foods and drinks, and the payment to *chman*. Even a minor ritual requires at least a few dollars and, as the ritual is carried out repeatedly, the expenses can be a considerable burden for the people whose main source of cash income is limited to the sale of surplus maize and the wage labor in plantations.²³ The avoidance of the festivals by the catechists and evangelicals have further eliminated cash expenses, because the festivals are accompanied not only by the heavy consumption of alcohol but also by the masked dance and the horse race, both of which may cost the individual participant over one hundred dollars. The converts also refuse to serve in the traditional civil-religious hierarchy and this may have an even greater economic consequence, because the service always accompanies heavy expenditure which can amount to several hundred dollars. There are some catechists who do serve in the hierarchy, but they spend a very limited amount because they do not perform individual rituals or participate in collective rituals. The Protestants are even more relieved in economic terms because they are assigned only the lowest and least expensive offices. Their expenses are further alleviated by the abstinence from drinking and smoking, an important

item of daily consumption among folk Catholics and, to a lesser degree, the catechists. The severance of the *compadrazgo* ties also reduces cash expenses, because *compadres* are obligated to exchange considerable amounts of gift.

In short, the religious change has resulted in an altered pattern of economic behavior and a radical shift in the flow of wealth. Through the functioning of the traditional rituals, festivals, and the civil-religious hierarchy, much of the wealth of the community members, whether surplus or not, has been drained out of the community either for the purchase of drinks, fireworks, copal incense, candles and other ritual items, or for the rented dance costumes and race horses. Much of the wealth has also been exchanged among the community members not only in the form of gift and free beverage but also through the purchase of ritual goods produced inside the community. While this pattern continues among folk Catholics, the wealth has now started to accumulate around the individuals who have changed their religious identity and are thus freed from religious expenses and exchanges. Because the necessities of cash are limited in this subsistence economy except for the ritual expenses, the economic advantage of the converts is quite obvious. In fact, the villagers wonder about the relative well-being of the converts despite of their sloth and the swift economic rise which is often observed among them. Probably it is too early to call this "capital accumulation," but the potential for it is evident.²⁴

The new religions thus have brought a radically different pattern of economic behavior, but this is not the only major consequence to be noted. More importantly, the religious change *is* the social change. It has given rise to a new social structure, and a new source of social tension, a problem which assumes a particular significance when we consider the relative absence of other structural factors in this fairly homogeneous society. Although such an examination is itself a subject of another paper, a brief sketch follows.

1. Ethnic structure

The ethnic relation between the Indian and Ladino groups is relatively peaceful

inside this community. This is due to several factors, including the lack of political and economic power of the local Ladinos. They are not the richest members or the largest land holders of the community, and the stereo-type of "Ladino exploiters" does not obtain here.

2. *Class structure*

It is difficult to detect what may be characterized as class structure inside this community where virtually all the members, Indians and Ladinos alike, are peasants, except for those who have such part-time occupations as traders, carpenters, plasterers and so forth. The most important symptom in this respect may be the existence of "foremen" (*caporales*) who are hired by the plantation owners as labor recruiters and contract enforcers. Under the supervision of Ladino administrators in local towns, the foremen make contracts with native laborers and advance them cash. Some Indians sign so many contracts and receive so much cash advance that they are placed in a kind of debt bondage. Because the foremen, who enforce unfulfilled contracts by resorting to court trials, earn the wage without engaging in arduous plantation labor, they are seen with envy and are likely targets of sorcery. Thus, there exists a cleavage between the native laborers who actually work and the native recruiters who enjoy a structural advantage as mediators between the laborers and the plantation owners. But this opposition is usually overridden by the collective sentiments among fellow community members, and this cleavage has not developed into a serious one.

3. *Political structure*

In this society, political factions are formed by personal relations around a figure of the *caudillo* type. A Ladino once reigned over the community, but no dominant figure has appeared after his death and no clear-cut factional division is found at present. The traditional civil-religious hierarchy also tends to disperse the political power. Although the mayor and other political officials are now chosen in biennial elections independent of the traditional rotational hierarchy, the political officials are partially incorporated into the

hierarchy and they have not become the nucleus of significant political factions. Further, the competition among national political parties develops only temporarily in relation to the Presidential election and disappears when it is over. There are some individuals who are associated with specific parties, but they do not play a significant role in the political life of the community. In other words, the political party system takes only a tenuous and ephemeral form and has not penetrated below the surface of this society.

4. *Economic structure*

It has long been pointed out that the civil-religious hierarchy functions as a leveling mechanism which reduces the internal economic differentiation of the community through the heavy ritual consumption (Wolf 1955, 1959; Nash 1958b; Tax 1953; Carrasco 1961).²⁵ As seen in the above description of ritual expenses among folk Catholics, the hierarchy has undoubtedly an effect to hamper the development of an economic inequality within the community. This does not mean that the hierarchy has eliminated the differentiation. On the contrary, wealth is distributed among the community members very unevenly and some individuals or families have accumulated considerable wealth in the form of cash, land, sheep, and so forth. But such an accumulation in itself does not have a significant social effect as far as the pattern of economic *behavior* remains unchanged. The concentrated wealth should be enough to upset the existing balance if it were employed for land monopoly, political control, or capitalistic enterprise. But the wealthiest persons, invariably folk Catholics, live in the same Indian house, wear the same clothes, subsist on the same poor diet, and engage in the same manual labor, the only difference being their enormous ritual consumption. The actual differentiation is covered under the seeming sameness and the disruptive potential has not been materialized. But the situation is bound to change because, as discussed above, the pattern of economic behavior has been radically altered by the introduction of new religions.

As seen from this brief summary, this society, with a potential for political and economic dynamism, has been relatively homogeneous without definite internal structural elements. But the religious change gave rise to a totally different social formation consisting of three factions in the Indian sector. And these religious groups are much more than mere factions. They are closer to three different *communities* with different value systems, different behavioral patterns, and clear-cut boundaries.

The resemblance of the three religious sects to independent communities should be judged again in the local context. As Tax (1937) points out in his classic article, highland Guatemalan communities are relatively independent social units which are defined by such distinctive features as languages, patron saints, costumes, rituals and specialized products, as well as by endogamous practice and independent civil-religious hierarchies. Most of these criteria also apply to the three religious sects of San Francisco.

1. *Language*: The converts, particularly Protestants, are known to use a language different from that of folk Catholics.²⁶
2. *Saints*: As noted above, catechists have established their own saints different from the patron saints of the community. The evangelicals are considered to be under the command of the "lord" (*ta7w*) of their own.
3. *Costume*: Although the dress does not define the converts, Protestants show a marked tendency to prefer the clothes of the Ladino type as opposed to the Indian costume worn by folk and catechist Catholics.
4. *Ritual*: The attitudes towards the *kostumbr* ritual have already been discussed as important distinctive features of each religious group. Ritual participation in the civil-religious hierarchy has also been pointed out as a significant indicator of the religious identity.
5. *Economic activity*: Although the converts have not so far developed their own specialized productive activities, they show a markedly different pattern of economic behavior, as discussed earlier.

6. *Marriage practice*: Endogamy characterizes each religious group, and the converts either intermarry within their own group or require the conversion of the partner as the condition for the marriage.
7. *The civil-religious hierarchy*: The catechists and Protestants have developed their own hierarchy of offices.²⁷ The evangelicals even established their own judicial system to handle minor cases among themselves.

Thus, the religious groups are not merely collections of individuals sharing a common religion. They are also constructed as something close to the traditional highland Guatemalan communities. The religious sects, as well as the traditional communities, define themselves by distinct religious beliefs and practices; they have their own internal organization, and they show a distinct pattern of economic behavior; they procreate within themselves by endogamy, and they maintain clear-cut boundaries by the language, ritual, and other cultural differentia.²⁸

But these boundaries among religious groups do not have territorial counterparts, and this is the primary difference between the religious groups and the traditional communities. Unlike the latter, the religious groups are not localized and territorially overlap with one another. This inevitably intensifies friction, and the religious opposition has become a major source of social conflicts. This is not to assume peaceful village life before the introduction of new religions but to focus on an added dimension of social tension. Verbal assaults and slanders abound among the three religious sects, and the *chman* of folk Catholicism are called sinners and devils, Catholic priests rapists, and Protestants collective adulterers. The altars of the converted *chman* are scornfully burnt, and those who originally set up the altars perform sorcery against the offenders. Some individual oppositions have turned into violent confrontations, and there have been cases of quasi-violent mass encounters even in this society characterized by an extraordinarily submissive attitude. More importantly, the religious opposition can be translated into the political opposi-

tion.²⁹ In fact, the present religious oppression by the catechist leaders is enabled by a passive support of the village mayor who, although a folk Catholic, is close to the catechists. Only the mayor can formally decide upon any change in collective religious practice, and the catechists always seek his approval before taking action. This does not mean that politics overrides religion but the contrary. In an illuminating case, a mayor who attempted to prohibit a major ritual was forced to resign before the threat of the use of physical force by a throng of folk Catholics.

In sum, religious change in this community is not a mere introduction of new practices and beliefs. The change gave rise to a new structure in the society which had been characterized by relative homogeneity; it crystalized new group formation similar to ethnic communities whose boundaries are maintained by ongoing dichotomization; it added a new dimension of social tension which can be translated into fully developed political factionalism; and it resulted in an altered pattern of economic behavior which significantly affects the flow, accumulation and use of wealth. The effect is at the same time religious, social, political and economic. Religious change, in this Guatemalan case, means a total social transformation.

NOTES:

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1. The fieldwork was conducted in 1978–79. In order to simplify the

description, I disregard the changes which may have occurred after this date and discuss as if 1979 were the present.

2. The term Ladino in this region indicates the non-Indians. The Ladinos may not racially different from the Indians but they are distinct in the use of the Spanish language, the Western-style clothes, and the general life way. In short, Ladinos are culturally defined.
3. Reportedly, a proposal to construct a second road failed before the unwillingness of the residents.
4. The civil-religious hierarchy is a system in which adult Indian males serve in a series of hierarchically arranged offices established for both civil and ritual aspects of community life. The service is carried out on a rotational basis, and the incumbents usually receive no pay for their service. Rather they spend substantial amounts of money.
5. Folk Catholicism of this community is described in detail in Koizumi (1981). Similar religions are reported in Wagley (1949), Oaks (1951) and Valladares (1957).
6. This by no means implies that folk Catholicism in the present form was born at the moment of the contact. There must have been a history of transformation in the colonial period as well as in the postcolonial period.
7. The phonemic transcription in this paper is based on the orthography designed by Kaufman (1976).
8. A good description of the Catholic Action is found in Warren (1978).
9. Families are the units of religious composition. The religious identity of adult males determines that of their wives and children.
10. This number is based on my estimate for two of the seven hamlets of San Francisco. The catechist Catholics comprise 18.3 percent of a hamlet of 169 families, and 11.5 percent of another hamlet of 226 families.
11. Protestants comprise 6.5 percent of one hamlet and 13.3 percent of the other.
12. My estimate of the folk Catholic population is 74.6 percent for one hamlet

and 73.5 percent for the other.

13. Here again the problem of cultural conservativeness arises.
14. Only the adult males can become the religious specialists.
15. The Mam name for folk Catholics is identical to that of the religious specialists. The term *chman* in the following text is used in the sense of the specialists.
16. For a detailed discussion of the religious notion of *il*, see Koizumi (*op. cit.*).
17. I elsewhere (1982a) discussed how the religious conversion can be interpreted in terms of the notion of sins.
18. The service in the civil-religious hierarchy of San Francisco is obligatory, but it is not unusual that a person refuses to serve despite of an appointment. See Koizumi (1982b) for more details.
19. The Protestants' concern with drinking and smoking is not special to this community. Nash (1960) reports a case in which Protestantism gives a social support for rejecting the habits of drinking and smoking in a manner similar to the Alcoholics Anonymous of the United States.
20. More generally, this theme is congruent with the notion of the image of the Limited Good proposed by Foster (1965).
21. Participation in the cooperatives is very much limited.
22. At least 15 percent of adult males of a hamlet have become part-time merchants.
23. The price of maize grains is between \$6.50 and \$9.00 for one hundred pounds. The wage for the plantation labor is between \$1.50 and \$3.00 a day.
24. Weber (1956) and Tawney (1926) compellingly argued for the historical connection between the rise of capitalism and the Protestant ethic. Their argument may apply to this Guatemalan case, but this local Protestant pattern of economic behavior must be seen in relation to the behavior of folk Catholics. Further, the Protestant pattern is shared by catechist

Catholics.

25. Cancian (1965, 1967) points out that the operation of the hierarchy has a "stratifying" effect along with the leveling one. My argument here is simply that in this specific case the hierarchy (and folk Catholicism in general) has acted to impede the employment of wealth in disruptive ways and that the introduction of new religions into this situation can have a major impact.
26. The differences are similar to those found among adjacent communities of highland Guatemala. The use of the different Mam language by the converts is probably influenced by the language of the native missionaries from a local town as well as by the Bible translated into a Mam dialect. But the historical origin of the modified language is not relevant here. The issue is that those small dialectal differences are used as a tool for building boundaries among religious groups.
27. Again the historical origin of these organizations is not important in the present discussion. Probably they were formed at least partly upon the instruction of the missionaries, but the problem addressed here is how these offices are interpreted by the community members. Even the civil-religious hierarchy, of which some argue for the prehispanic origin, is likely to have been first introduced by the Spaniards. Rus and Wasserstrom (1980) even suggest that the hierarchy emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
28. My approach which focuses on the maintenance of the group-defining boundary conforms with Barth's (1969) study of ethnic groups. In fact, I see no difficulty in calling the Indian religious sects "ethnic groups." Certainly they are not racially distinct, but Ladinos and Indians, conventionally called ethnic groups, are not biologically defined either. For an argument which proposes to designate Indians and Ladinos "races" rather than "ethnic groups," see Brintnall (1979).
29. Redfield (1950) reports a case in which conversion to Protestantism is

based on a preexisting political factional division within the community. What I suggest here is the opposite. Religion can determine the political formation.

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