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SANTA BARBARA • SANTA CRUZ

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93106

June 5, 1972

Mr. Jay Sokolovsky
Department of Anthropology
409 Social Sciences Building
Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania, 16802

Dear Mr. Sokolovsky:

Do excuse my long delay in response to your much appreciated letters. I had been hopeful of finding some old notes which might have been useful to you, but somehow in my many moves in the academic chess-game they have vanished. The fruitless search caused my slowness in replying.

I thoroughly enjoyed your thesis proposal. It is well thought out, nicely structured, and should yield a valuable contribution to our knowledge of change in Nahuatl culture. I hope you find the archival material on the Milpa Alta area in better shape than I did when I worked on it over a decade ago. At that time an enormous number of documents had simply vanished. They may have been relocated by now.

My return to the area was a delightful experience, but due to more pressing matters in Mexico City I only had one day in the Milpa Alta area and therefore was not able to dig up much to help you. Most of that day was occupied with joyful reunions with old friends. It was also saddened by the number of Indians who had been close to me who had died, including a compadre. All I can do, therefore, is give you some impressionistic descriptions of what I believe and the major changes since I worked the area.

The fact of change is overwhelming. Physical and social ties to the bigger world have increased enormously. For example, the old dirt road connecting Tecospa to the Milpa Alta-Mexico highway is now paved. The residents of both Milpa Alta and Tecospa today show a far greater sophistication about the national political and economic scene. At the village level, formerly the commonest view of the national Mestizo culture was of a gigantic, corrupt, materialistic and encroaching evil. Today most of those I spoke to saw it as a potential source of good if one was not "out-witted" by the "selfish" power sources in Mexico City. There was strong evidence of a reluctant willingness to seek resolution of conflict and general help outside the village confines. It was stated by one that all today hoped for a compadre in the Mestizo "class" for "power" today resided outside the village.

Pride in "Indian ways" is rapidly on the decline. Previously, apologies for "our poor village" was a subtle way of expressing one type of pride. Today,

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I got the impression that a real shame was felt by a few about the lack of economic success despite the tremendous material progress of the village. In other words, there seems to be a beginning of measuring success against Mestizo rather than Indian values.

Indian inconspicuous consumption is giving way to Mestizo prestige symbols. The upward mobility of many of my old Indian friends is apparent in better housing, mechanical appliances, and in several cases automobiles. Moreover, TV sets are found throughout the village and I am sure are a major factor in the changing world view. So is the new school in Tecospa.

There is an apparent increase in the pursuit of cash beyond the confines of the area. When I previously was in the area few left for economic reasons except for occasional girls leaving for a few years to serve as maids. Today, I was told, quite a few of the young men work in Mestizo towns or even in Mexico City. Perhaps because of this, I saw several examples of Mestizo type "macho" behavior which would have been unheard of when I was previously there.

A generational split can be felt at almost a physical level. The young dress, act, and speak differently from the ones I knew over a decade ago. The ties of family, village, area and Indianhood are still there, but are greatly weakened. The Indian identity, I would guess, has weakened by far the most.

I regret to hear of Dr. Sanders' grant cut and its resultant effects on you. However, I hope the NIMH fellowship comes through. I regret I can think of no other sources of funds in these money-tight days.

Wishing you the best of luck and looking forward to seeing the result of your research.

Sincerely,

Wm. Madsen

William Madsen
Professor of Anthropology