



Oaxaca Times

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OAXACA OAXACA

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THE FREE TRADE (TLC)

Long before the conquistadores came to America the Indigenas living in the territory we now call Mexico engaged in trade with each other.

The Olmec groups, settler on a long strip of the coast of what is now Veracruz and Tabasco, are the precursors of this free trade. They had important contact with the indigenous groups of the central plateau and these are signs of a primitives symbiosis. This connection can be seen in the ceramic relics from the region of Tlatilco. The same Olmecs, intrepid travelers, left us signs of their influences cultures as important as the Maya and the Mixtec. Evidence of their physiognomy can be seen in Palenque and Monte Alban.



The interchange between indigenous groups contributed to the splendor of classical culture and unified characteristics which facilitated measurement of time, agricultural technology, and I must add, methods of war. Even so, we can say that until the arrival of the Mexicans, the various indigenous nations were relatively well balanced in progress and technology. It was the Nahuas who imposed their hegemony and altered the balance among the neighboring groups, extending their influence to the limits of the known territory.

This process of permanent interchange suffered a long impasse when the Spanish conquest arrived to "harmonize" the country in defined social strata. Although it was territory, (equal benefits) it was one were not available throughout. This was one accentuated, in ostensible form, by the viceroy government's developing a centralistic structure which, although permitting better administrative and political functioning, converted the vast territory of New Spain, into a state of dependence upon the capital. Add to this

imbalance the concentration of power in the state and the immobility of the political power which delegated to subalternates every type of regional function. This precarious system of information and commerce fostered economic dependency which the Spanish government, under its protectionist principle, imposed on its American colonies.

The country lost its "tecnología de punta", to use the contemporary expression with which we now identify the perennial term of modernism. And if the road was long from Spain to America, it was even longer from the capitals to the provinces in America. This isolation resulted in the regional manifestations of culture's being localized and becoming merely a refuge for idiosyncrasy and regional identity. Fundamentally very attached to religion, the two most preponderant social classes of neohispanic society developed more and more particular characteristics which accentuated our mestizo bipolarity: united racially but not developed in harmony. This was the moment of the birth of that profound Mexico which was defined so masterfully by our dear friend, the late Guillermo Bonfil.

Inequality: the free trade agreement (TLC) and Oaxaca. (adapted from an article in the September 1991 issue of Oaxaca, a magazine published by the State Population Board.

The population of underdeveloped countries has dramatically increased from 1700 million in 1950 to 4100 million in 1990. By the year 2000 there will be an estimated 5000 million.

In contrast, developed countries (Europe, North America, Japan and the Soviet Union) increased from 832 million in 1950 to 1200 million in 1990, and by 2000 it is predicted there will be 1250 million. Industrialized countries, then, which represent only 6% of the population increase, will have less than 1/5 of the world population.

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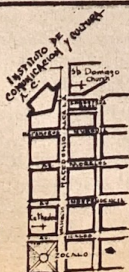
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In thinking of new trade agreements it is important to keep in mind Oaxaca's need for a plan to educate its people. We have the population for the 20th century. We need organization and attention to reduce the inequality at home.

THE FREE

The TLC between Mexico and the United States could be a good reason to analyze conditions of inequality between a developed and underdeveloped country, especially because they are neighbors (and much closer than North America commentators believe).

Mexico with a population of 81 million (1990) grows at the rate of 2.1%, and had a gross national product of \$2,080 per person in 1985. The U.S., with a population of 250 million (of which 13 million are resident Mexicans) grows only 8% in population annually and has a G.N.P. per person of \$16,400.

It is a fact that Mexico is rated among the lowest in the world for annual income per person. Nevertheless, more important than a huge difference in salaries between Mexicans and Americans is the lack of them in Mexico. This is reflected in the growing population of street sellers, windshield washers, fire eaters and others.

Indication of inequality increase when the underdeveloped are compared to militant political potential, but considering underdevelopment within Mexico. There is another inequality to consider. Oaxaca has a greater infant mortality rate than the rest of the country, as well as a shorter life span



(for example, Nuevo Leon has an average life expectancy of 73.5 years, Oaxaca, 61.2). The high birthrate here as well as early marriage and entry into the job market are also factors in the Oaxacan economy. A further complication is the large number of different ethnic groups (similar to isolated tribes in the Amazons) that have vibrant, individual custom.

The Greatest Week

The last week of the season of Lent, the time Christians spend in preparation for Easter, is the week Oaxacans like to call the "Semana Mayor"--"the Greatest Week". For many people in Mexico, Holy Week is primarily the second most important vacation period after Christmas. But vacationing is not the reason this week is called "greatest".

Holy Week in Oaxaca is laden with traditional religious practices, some shared with the rest of Mexico, some unique to Oaxaca, but all of which express a sentiment rooted as much in the history of the people as in the Catholic religion they manifest. It is no coincidence that the indigenous peoples of Oaxaca feel such a strong identification with the suffering of Jesus Christ, which is the central theme of the religious customs and rituals celebrated during Holy Week. In this year of 1992, in which the Church celebrates 500 years since the arrival of the Christian message to Latin America, it is hard to dissociate this reality from the context in which the message arrived: the Spanish Conquest. In what is now called in the media the "encounter" of two cultures, one--the indigenous--was subjugated by the other: thence the devotion to a suffering Jesus and his sorrowful mother Mary, the "Señora de Dolores" (Lady of Sorrows), who know the pain of an oppressed people.

Several popular customs express this devotion to a suffering Jesus and Mary. One of these practices which takes place on Good Friday, remembering the Friday of Jesus' death, is the procession of silence, or "pésame a la Virgen",

which is an act of accompanying Mary to console her at the death of her son, much like a wake in other cultures. As evening falls on Good Friday, the people of a town or colonia gather at the church. Accompanied by lighted torches, they carry a statue of the "Virgin of Sorrows" in a silent procession in the darkness, marked only by the funeral beat of a solitary drum. In this act of solidarity with the mother of Jesus, the poor find a refuge from their own grief, whether it be death, poverty, or family problems. This companionship is beyond words, and thus the silence of the procession.

Another custom with a particularly Oaxacan flavor is the Way of the Cross, a popular remembrance of Jesus' walk up the hill of Calvary to the place of his execution. Although there are many of these processions on Good Friday and the other Fridays of Lent throughout Mexico and in many other cultures, the indigenous groups of Oaxaca give special meaning to the fourth station of the procession which is called the "Encuentro", or the meeting of Jesus and his mother Mary. As the procession is prepared, a certain location along the route is designated as the place of "encuentro" and the women of the locality bring the statue of the Lady of Sorrows to this point and wait for the arrival of the procession. The men begin the Way

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CULTURAL EVENTS



13-14

Alameda de Leon-7pm Folk dances from Sinaloa.

15

Casa de la Cultura-6pm-Lecture about the Mixtecs.

17

The Soledad Church- 8pm-traditional-religious visit to the church-

18

Plaza de Danza-6.30pm "Guelaguetza" - (Oaxacan Folk Dances)

20

Casa de la Cultura-7pm-Classical --- guitar Concert by "Huaxyacac".

27

Casa de la Cultura-10am-Lecture about the Mixtecs.

30

Childrens day!
out of town

16

Jamiltepec-A Coast town 8 hours from Oaxaca-Candle light prossesion with music from the XVIII century.

FROMPAGE 2

of the Cross at the church building, carrying a statue of Jesus bearing his cross. They pause for prayer and reflection at the first three stations; and then, as they approach the scene of the Encuentro, the women move forward, carrying the statue of Mary, and the two groups join in an emotional recalling of the moment when Mary sees her tortured son carrying on his shoulder the very instrument of his execution.

At this point in the procession the images of Jesus and Mary are carried side by side, and women and men proceed together, but before continuing along the Way of the Cross, there is a sermon by the local priest on the theme of the encuentro. This time of reflection is typical of a ritual moment that transcends the history of years of repetition and touches the present experience of a suffering people. The anguish of some mothers may be the fact that their sons or husbands have gone to "el norte" to look for work. For others it could be the recent death of a little one from malnutrition. For all the people, this moment becomes a personal encounter in which one is able to

share his trials with others and thus does not feel alone.

The long-lived experience of suffering of the people of Mexico, and of Oaxaca in particular, is manifested by an interesting turn in the history of popular religiosity in the State of Oaxaca. The Spanish missionaries used to leave images of Christ, Mary, or other saints in the mountains where, they hoped, the indigenous people would find them and develop through them a Christian devotion. Any Oaxacan can tell you that "La Soledad" (Our Lady of Solitude), whose basilica on Independencia Street is visited daily by people from all over the state, is the patroness of the State of Oaxaca. Not many people can tell you that when the image of the Virgen de la Soledad was found in a bundle on the back of a dead burro, another image was found with it: the image of Jesus resurrected from the dead after his crucifixion. It is a testimony to the character of Oaxacan indigenous religious experience that La Soledad, and not the Risen Christ, became the state patron.

Bienvenidos amigos

Welcome, reader to the Oaxaca Times
Oaxaca is a beautiful, clean Colonial city with friendly people and a nearly perfect climate.

OAXACA TIMES aims to provide you, the English speaking visitor, with valuable information which will enhance and enrich your stay. Write, call, or come by our office with your tips and recommendations about Oaxaca. But, above all, enjoy our beautiful Oaxaca.

Yolanda Garcia C.
Publisher



traditional festivity

Do not miss the Palm Sunday in San Antonino Castillo Velasco a charming little town, 30 minutes from the city. You catch a bus on the 5th St. of Armenta y Lopez. Will see you there.

Yet the triumphant note of resurrection and glory which is the climax of "the greatest week" is not completely lost to Oaxacans. The image of Jesus Risen in his glory is still to be found in the church of Carmen Alto, a few blocks above the Zócalo on Garcia Vigil Street. And on Easter Sunday, all the suffering past, the people of the parish bring out the image and carry it in procession. The message of nature and sacrifice to a new beginning--is humbly present in the indigenous customs which live on in present-day Oaxaca.

--James M. Gibson, C.R.

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helpful hints



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Taxes and tips: All services and products in Mexico include the IVA (ad valorem) tax. Tips to waiters for a good service are 15% percent of the bill. Check your bill to see if the tip has been included. Bellhops at the hotels and skycaps at the airport are generally tipped 1 to 3 dollars.

Change is usually given in pesos.



24-hour Bank Machines: Visa and Mastercard Ave. Hidalgo # 821 or around the corner on the first street of Armenta y Lopez.

Bancomer: their machine is located on Independencia Ave. 801 (Carnet cards only)

Banamex open from 9 to 1:30 and 4 to 6 pm. Dollar exch. 9-11:30 and 4-5 pm.

Most banks open only in the morning from 9-1. Dollar exchange from 9-11:30. Their service is slow so if you want to take advantage of your time go to any of the money exchange agencies that advertise with us.



Speed limits: 60 kilometers or 37 miles in the school zone; 40 kilometers or 24 miles downtown; 90 kilometers or 55 miles on highways.



Long distance: Dial 98 for international calls and 95 for the United States and Canada, then dial code and area. The number of 100-peso coins you will need will immediately appear on the screen of the telephone. Then dial the complete number you wish to call. For collect calls dial 09.



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Most hotels have bottled or purified water, most restaurants serve purified water to their customers.

Tourist information: located at Cinco de Mayo and Morelos St.

Phone: 6-48-28

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS



To: the Oaxaca Times

Dear Yolanda,

We always enjoy receiving your paper. It makes us feel that we're in Oaxaca even though 2000 miles away. We especially like the Schedules of Events for each month. Its a very easy way to find out what's happening in Oaxaca - especially when we pick up your paper in Oaxaca.

Keep up the good work. Sincerely, Bob and Judi Pocan, Santa Rosa, California.

I.C.C.:

Please continue my subscription to the Oaxaca Times newspaper.

I hope to be in Oaxaca again soon and will stop in to see you.

Thank you. Paul B. McCay, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Sending a Package Home

Want to send a package home? Would you like to buy some local crafts and not have to carry them around with you? Well, don't worry! It's very easy.

It's not a complicated procedure. First of all, you need a form called, "FACTURA". You will need four of them. They are very inexpensive and can be easily purchased at most Libreria and Papeleria stores. Take these forms to SECOFI; an office located at 419 Xicotencatl. Have a list prepared of all the items you want to send, the quantity of each item, and its cost. A man will complete the forms and give you the copies free of charge.

Next, you need to find a box. All you have to do is ask around the various shops to find the size you need. Bookstores usually have a lot of different sized boxes. You need to purchase manilla or brown wrapping paper, a small roll of scotch tape, a medium-sized plain white card (For the address), and rope. All of these cost me less than 1000 pesos and can be purchased at a Libreria or Papeleria.

Prepare your package, tie it well, and now you're ready to go to the Post Office. Don't forget the Factura forms! You can send your package by air or rail. You will be given a certificate which means your package has been registered. If you are returning "used" personal possessions to the U.S.A., then you don't need the Factura forms.

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