

Popoluca

also known as “Sierra Popoluca”

Data source: eHRAF

Secondary source

Entered by Emily Pitek, Human Relations Area Files

** Data Source entry, prepared based on data sourced from an external project.*

** Secondary Source entry, prepared from a literature review by a Ph.D. RA*

Entry tags: Catholic, Religious Group, Syncretic Religions, Christian Traditions, Mesoamerican Religions

The Popoluca are a group of people who live in eastern Veracruz and Oaxaca, Mexico. Linguistically, there are four groups of Popoluca: the Sierra, Texistepec, Oluta, and Sayula. This entry focuses on the Sierra Popoluca (the largest of the four groups) living specifically in the town and environs of Soteapan, Veracruz around the time of 1950. This region has a long history of cultural contact with outsiders beginning with the Spanish arrival in the sixteenth century. With the Spanish came Catholic missionaries, who built churches, preached, and converted natives. Consequently, the Popoluca are now nominally Catholic. However, Catholic ideas and practices (including the Christian God and rites such as baptism and marriage) have been blended with indigenous beliefs. Elements of former religion can be seen in the variety of supernatural beings as well as rites and ceremonies associated with agricultural and subsistence practices. Priests occasionally visit the area, but no full-time religious leaders are present otherwise. Magical practitioners known as nawats/nawals are present and practice malevolent magic--these individuals can be described as magical practitioners. Religion does not exist within its own distinct sphere of life, but rather pervades all aspects of Popoluca life; this entry considers the religious group to be coterminous with Popoluca society.



Date Range: 1915 CE - 1945 CE

Region: Soteapan, Veracruz, Mexico

Region tags: Latin America and the Caribbean,
Central America, Mexico

Town and environs of Soteapan, Veracruz, Mexico ca.
1940

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Foster, G.M. (1942). A primitive Mexican economy. *Monographs of the American Ethnological Society*, 5:1-115.
- Source 2: Foster, G.M. (1940). Notes of the Popoluca of Veracruz. *Publicaciones del Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia*, 51:1-41.
- Source 3: Foster, G.M. (1945). Sierra Popoluca folklore and beliefs. *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology*, 42:177-250.
- Source 1: Foster, G.M. (1943). The geographical, and linguistic, and cultural position of the Popoluca of

Veracruz. *American Anthropologist*, 45:531-546.

– Source 2: Murdock, G.P. & Wilson, S.F. (Jul., 1972). Settlement patterns and community organization: *Cross-Cultural Codes 3*. *Ethnology*, 11(3), 254-295.

– Source 3: Tuden, A. & Marshall, C. (Oct., 1972). Political organization: *Cross-cultural codes 4*. *Ethnology*, 11(4), 436-464.

– Source 1: Divale, W. 2004. Codebook of Variables for the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample. *World Cultures: The Journal of Cross-Cultural and Comparative Research*.

– Source 2: Murdock, G.P. (1967). *Ethnographic Atlas*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

General Variables

Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Notes: "The Christian veneer which comes from long, if not particularly intense, contact with the Catholic church has to a considerable extent effaced aboriginal religious practices. In Soteapan, at least, during parts of the nineteenth century there was a resident priest, although documentary evidence suggests that he was absent from his parish more often than present. Today Soteapan and Ocozotepec have churches...Riding rural circuit, a priest comes two or three times a year" (Foster, 1943:543).



Is the cultural contact competitive:

– Yes

Notes: "Catholic priests pushed their way into the hills [during/following the Conquest occurring in the 16th century], teaching and converting, building churches in Soteapan and Ocozotepec, and filling them with images until the Popoluca too had that curious blend of pagan and Christian beliefs called in Mexico 'Catholicism'" (Foster, 1942:13).

Specific to this answer:

Date Range: 1500 CE - 1600 CE



Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– Field doesn't know

Notes: SCCS Variable 1649 (Frequency of Internal Warfare, Resolved Rating) was originally coded as "0", meaning no resolved rating. Further, SCCS Variable 1654 (Pacification) was originally coded as "9", meaning not enough information to judge. Source of information: Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004.



Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– Field doesn't know

Notes: SCCS Variable 1650 (Frequency of External Warfare, Resolved Rating) was originally coded as "0", meaning no resolved rating. Further, SCCS Variable 1654 (Pacification) was

originally coded as "9", meaning not enough information to judge. Source of information: Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004.

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the recruitment of new members.

Does the religion have official political support

– Yes

Notes: The religious sphere of life is not distinguished from other aspects of life, meaning that the religious group is coterminous with the Popoluca society at large. Consequently, it can be said that the religion has official political support. [Note that this does not mean the Mexican government is officially supporting Popoluca religion; this entry focuses specifically on Popoluca society]

Is there a conception of apostasy in the religious group:

– No

Notes: Because Christian ideas have been incorporated into the indigenous Popoluca belief system, there is not a conception of apostasy.

Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Estimated population, numeric: 850

Notes: "Census figures for this region are notably poor, and do not distinguish native languages of the inhabitants of towns enumerated. The Quinto Censo de Poblacion of 1930 gives a combined population of 6779 for the villages listed where Popoluca is definitely the native idiom...Soteapan, for example, is credited with 580 inhabitants; on the basis of residence in this town I know that the figure is close to 900" (Foster, 1942:4-6).

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– No

Notes: A priest is not present among the Popoluca, rather, one occasionally visits. "In Soteapan, at least, during parts of the nineteenth century there was a resident priest, although documentary evidence suggests that he was absent from his parish more often than present. Today Soteapan and Ocozotepec have churches--rectangular barns of corrugated metal...Riding rural circuit, a priest comes two or three times a year from Acayucan and puts in a busy 24 hours baptizing babies, saying mass, and occasionally marrying a couple who feel that the social status so derived justifies the expense" (Foster, 1943:543-544). Additionally present is the nawal, or the Popoluca magical practitioner who is described as practicing malevolent magic. The nawal is not a recognized leader, but rather a private practitioner. See Foster, 1945:183, and Foster, 1943:545 for more details.

Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also "oral scriptures" (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– No

Notes: The Bible is referenced, but "...with the elements often torn from their original context and always much altered and redefined in terms of the Mexican's world..." (Foster, 1945:189). This is in addition to stories passed orally, but "no two storytellers will know quite the same stories, nor make use of quite the same elements in the same order. Lacking the authority of a written source, each teller accepts the authority he considers best, that is, the person from whom he first heard the story" (ibid).

Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes

Notes: According to Murdock and Wilson (1972), Column 6, Large or Impressive Structures [Note: Equivalent to SCCS Variable 66], "the most impressive structure (or type of structure) is a temple, church, commemorative monument, or other essentially religious or ceremonial edifice".

↳ In the average settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– I don't know

↳ Size of largest single religious monument, square meters:

– I don't know

↳ Height of largest single religious monument, meters:

– I don't know

↳ Size of average monument, square meters:

– I don't know

↳ Height of average monument, meters:

– I don't know

↳ In the largest settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– I don't know

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– Yes

↳ Temples:

– Yes

Notes: "The largest single outlay is represented by the church, a...laminated iron structure with concrete floor erected in 1935 at a cost of 3000 pesos, including both the building and the altar and images" (Foster, 1942:66).

Are pilgrimages present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of pilgrimages.

Beliefs

Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: "Death is a dangerous time for the soul of the departed, and every attempt must be made to ensure its safe arrival in the afterworld" (Foster, 1945:186).

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: "Death is a dangerous time for the soul of the departed, and every attempt must be made to ensure its safe arrival in the afterworld" (Foster, 1945:186).

↳ Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: "The souls of good persons go to la gloria, and the souls of bad persons to the underworld. Apparently the final place is not definitely determined by the individual's actions on earth, for when he finds himself on the brink of the perilous passage, with life left behind him, he is confronted by two roads. The one to the right is narrow, bad, littered with rubbish and ascends a steep grade to heaven. The one on the left is broad, smooth, clean, and by an easy grade descends to hell" (Foster, 1945:186).

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined “above” space:

– Yes

Notes: (Foster, 1945:186)

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined “below” space:

– Yes

Notes: (Foster, 1945:186)

Reincarnation in this world:

– Yes

Notes: "There is an ill-defined belief that souls are reborn, always in the same sex, but into other families, without memory of preceding incarnations. The time before rebirth depends on the nature of the deceased. Atonement first must be made for all sins. Children are normally reborn more quickly than older persons, since they have lived a shorter life and have had less time to sin" (Foster, 1945:187).

↳ In a human form:

– Yes

Notes: (Foster, 1945:187)

↳ In animal/plant form:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of a belief in reincarnation in animal/plant form.

↳ In form of an inanimate object(s):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of a belief in reincarnation in the form of an inanimate object.

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

Notes: The bodies of the deceased are buried in graves within cemeteries (Foster, 1940:19).

↳ Cremation:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of cremation.

↳ Mummification:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of mummification.

↳ Interment:

– Yes

Notes: The bodies of the deceased are buried in graves within cemeteries (Foster, 1940:19; Foster, 1943:546).

↳ Corpse is flexed (legs are bent or body is crouched):

– No

↳ Corpse is extended (lying flat on front or back):

– Yes

Notes: "The body is placed on its back, extended, head west, so that it is facing east, in which direction the soul travels until San Pedro receives it at the gates of heaven" (Foster, 1940:20).

↳ Corpse is upright (where body is interred in standing position):

– No

↳ Cannibalism:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of cannibalism.

↳ Exposure to elements (e.g. air drying):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of exposing corpses to the elements.

↳ Feeding to animals:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of feeding corpses to animals.

↳ Secondary burial:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 1850 (Secondary Bone/Body Treatment: Original Scale) indicates that secondary bone/body treatment is absent (Schroeder, 2001; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– No

Notes: Pigs and chickens are slaughtered for funeral feasts, but co-sacrifices are not present in burials (see Foster, 1942:64-66).

Are grave goods present:

– Yes

Notes: "A little food--tortillas and beans--water, clothing and a small silver coin are placed beside the body [in the grave]. In some way the soul must "pay" to enter the hereafter" (Foster, 1942:64).

↳ Valuable items:

– Yes

↳ Significant wealth (e.g. gold, jade, intensely worked objects):

– No

↳ Some wealth (some valuable or useful objects interred):

– Yes

Notes: (Foster, 1942:64).

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

Notes: "Led by singers, the corpse is carried [from the house/place of death] to the cemetery, located several hundred yards from the nearest houses, and lowered to two men standing in the bottom of the grave, who place it into position" (Foster, 1942:64).

↳ In cemetery:

– Yes

Notes: Bodies of the deceased are buried in cemeteries following death rites (Foster, 1942:64).

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– No

Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: "In addition to the Christian God, who has been incorporated into the divine hierarchy, there are numerous spirits of greater or lesser powers" (Foster, 1943:544).

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– Yes

Notes: "Superimposed upon, or rather integrated with these aboriginal beliefs, are many Christian concepts. The Popoluca recognizes Dios as supreme, the creator of the world and all of the peoples in it" (Foster, 1945:185).

↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god):

– No

Notes: No monarch is present among the Popoluca.

↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

– No

Notes: No monarch is present among the Popoluca.

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– I don't know

Notes: Human spirits are described as lingering around the realm of the living for two to three weeks following death, after which the spirits travel to the after world (Foster, 1945:186). Human spirits are not described in substantial ethnographic detail.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: "In addition to the Christian God, who has been incorporated into the divine hierarchy, there are numerous spirits of greater or lesser powers. Most important is Homshuk, god of maize. He is anthropomorphized as a form a yard tall, with hair of corn silk" (Foster, 1943:544).

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:

– Yes

Notes: "He [Homshuk] is normally invisible to man, but on occasion can be seen" (Foster, 1945:180).

↳ These supernatural beings can be physically felt:

– I don't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "Chanekos are both beneficial and dangerous. They are the 'masters' of all fish and game, particularly deer, and as such have it in their power to grant luck to hunters and fishers, or to withhold it...They become angry at men, sometimes for no apparent cause, but more often if one is greedy and kills too many deer, or is careless in hunting

and wounds deer. In such cases they punish the man by kidnapping his soul and keeping it in their encantos [enchanted places] under the mountains; unless they relent and return the man's soul he will eventually die" (Foster, 1945:181).

↳ These supernatural beings can reward:

– I don't know

Notes: In the following example, it is unclear if spirits reward as a result of receiving offerings, or if the offerings just prevent the spirits from harming crops. "The fields, the streams, the mountains, the sky, his own village--all are the homes of a host of spiritual beings who can help or hinder him in his work. Without due respect to them, without due caution, his efforts will be in vain. Certain spirits must be pacified with offerings, precautions must be taken against malevolent witches and other unseen evils, and a rigorous set of taboos governs each and every productive task. Maize, the staff of life, is the gift of Homshuk, the god of maize, and if proper offerings are not made to him the crop will fail" (Foster, 1945:180).

↳ These supernatural beings can punish:

– Yes

Notes: (Foster, 1945:181)

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "Maize, the staff of life, is the gift of Homshuk, the god of maize, and if proper offerings are not made to him the crop will fail" (Foster, 1945:180).

↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: "Superimposed upon, or rather integrated with these aboriginal beliefs, are many Christian concepts. The Popoluca recognizes Dios as supreme, the creator of the world and all of the peoples in it. More real is the power of Jesus, because his image is in the church and can be seen by all, and often he substitutes for Dios in stories. Of great importance are the Virgin Mary, also represented by an image, and a variety of Catholic saints" (Foster, 1945:185).

↳ These mixed human-divine beings can be seen:

– I don't know

↳ These mixed human-divine beings can be physically felt:

– I don't know

↳ These mixed human-divine beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– I don't know

↳ These mixed human-divine beings exhibit positive emotion:

– Yes

Notes: "The saints are normally kindly disposed toward man, but a witch who knows the proper techniques can by means of magic enlist their services for nefarious purposes" (Foster, 1945:185).

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: "In addition to the Christian God, who has been incorporated into the divine hierarchy, there are numerous spirits of greater or lesser powers" (Foster, 1943:544). These other spirits include mixed human-divine beings (saints and Jesus), as well as non-human supernatural beings.

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– Yes

Notes: Only two clear ethnographic examples of supernatural monitoring were found. See below for available information.

↳ There is supernatural monitoring of prosocial norm adherence in particular:

Prosocial norms are norms that enhance cooperation among members of the group, including obviously "moral" or "ethical" norms, but also extending to norms concerning honouring contracts and oaths, providing hospitality, coming to mutual aid in emergencies, etc.

– No

Notes: Because only two clear ethnographic examples of supernatural monitoring were found, and these examples related to hunting and subsistence practices, it is assumed that supernatural beings are not particularly concerned with prosocial norm adherence.

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of coreligionists:

– I don't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other religions:

– I don't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other polities:

– I don't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about performance of rituals:

– Yes

Notes: "The fields, the streams, the mountains, the sky, his own village--all are the homes of a host of spiritual beings who can help or hinder him in his work. Without due respect to them, without due caution, his efforts will be in vain. Certain spirits must be pacified with offerings, precautions must be taken against malevolent witches and other unseen evils, and a rigorous set of taboos governs each and every productive task. Maize, the staff of life, is the gift of Homshuk, the god of maize, and if proper offerings are not made to him the crop will fail" (Foster, 1945:180).

↳ Supernatural beings care about other:

– Yes [specify]: Hunting

Notes: "Chanekos are both beneficial and dangerous. They are the 'masters' of all fish and game, particularly deer, and as such have it in their power to grant luck to hunters and fishers, or to withhold it...They become angry at men, sometimes for no apparent cause, but more often if one is greedy and kills too many deer, or is careless in hunting and wounds deer. In such cases they punish the man by kidnapping his soul and keeping it in their encantos [enchanted places] under the mountains; unless they relent and return the man's soul he will eventually die" (Foster, 1945:181).

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

Notes: The only clear ethnographic example of supernatural punishment is shown in the following passage: "Chanekos are both beneficial and dangerous. They are the 'masters' of all fish and game, particularly deer, and as such have it in their power to grant luck to hunters and fishers, or to withhold it...They become angry at men, sometimes for no apparent cause, but more often if one is greedy and kills too many deer, or is careless in hunting and wounds deer. In such cases they punish the man by kidnapping his soul and keeping it in their encantos [enchanted places] under the mountains; unless they relent and return the man's soul he will eventually die" (Foster, 1945:181).

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: In the one clear example of supernatural punishment (quoted above), a non-human supernatural being causes punishment. It is not clear if other supernatural beings do not particulate in punishing humans, or if these actions are not described in ethnographic detail.

↳ Done only by high god:

– No

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: See below for available information concerning reasons for supernatural punishment.

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– I don't know

↳ Done to enforce group norms:

– I don't know

↳ Done to inhibit selfishness:

– I don't know

↳ Other [specify]

– Yes

Notes: "Chanekos are both beneficial and dangerous. They are the 'masters' of all fish and game, particularly deer, and as such have it in their power to grant luck to hunters and fishers, or to withhold it...They become angry at men, sometimes for no apparent cause, but more often if one is greedy and kills too many deer, or is careless in hunting and wounds deer. In such cases they punish the man by kidnapping his soul and keeping it in their encantos [enchanted places] under the mountains; unless they relent and return the man's soul he will eventually die" (Foster, 1945:181).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife:

– No

Notes: "The souls of good persons go to la gloria, and the souls of bad persons go to the underworld. Apparently the final place is not definitely determined by the individual's actions on earth, for when he finds himself on the brink of the perilous passage, with life left behind him, he is confronted by two roads. The one to the right is narrow, bad, littered with rubbish and ascends a steep grade to heaven. The one on the left is broad, smooth, clean, and by an easy grade descends to hell" (Foster, 1945: 186).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime:

– Yes

Notes: Only one ethnographic example of supernatural punishment was found. See below for available details.

↳ Supernatural punishments in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– No

Notes: Because only one example of supernatural punishment was provided, presumably, it is not highly emphasized.

↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck:

– I don't know

- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of political failure:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of defeat in battle:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of crop failure or bad weather:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of disaster on journeys.
 - I don't know
- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of mild sensory displeasure:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of extreme sensory displeasure:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of sickness or illness:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of impaired reproduction:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck visited on descendants:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Other [specify]
 - Yes

Notes: Punishment consists of kidnapping the soul. "Chanekos are both beneficial and dangerous. They are the 'masters' of all fish and game, particularly deer, and as such have it in their power to grant luck to hunters and fishers, or to withhold it...They become angry at men, sometimes for no apparent cause, but more often if one is greedy and kills too many deer, or is careless in hunting and wounds deer. In such cases they punish the man by kidnapping his soul and keeping it in their encantos [enchanted places] under the mountains; unless they relent and return the man's soul he will eventually die" (Foster, 1945:181).

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– I don't know

Notes: Insufficient ethnographic information.

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of messianic beliefs.

Is an eschatology present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of an eschatology.

Practices

Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of required celibacy.

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of required castration.

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of food taboos.

Does membership in this religious group require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of required permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular

Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– No

Notes: Regular prayer services (mass) are not held. Mass is only held when visiting priests come to town (see Foster, 1943:543-544).

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– I don't know

Notes: Large-scale rituals are present, but it is not clear if participation is required. When visiting priests come to the community, baptisms, mass, and marriages are held. "Other than these major events, the typical religious celebration is the *velorio*, at which a saint or virgin is honored. For several preceding Sundays the selected image is carried from door to door in a sedan chair, by windows, and contributions in the form of maize or money are exacted. On the appointed day one or more hogs are killed, tamales are made, and a leafy bower to shelter the image is erected, gaily festooned with palm and flower decorations. The tamales are placed in large pot and boiled all night, while singers chant hymns in front of the image and women hold children and look on from a distance, occasionally advancing timidly to light a candle for the saint or virgin. About four in the morning the pots are opened, the tamales are consumed, and everyone goes home for a few hours of rest" (Foster, 1943:543-544).

Society and Institutions

Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– Other [specify in comments]

Notes: At the time this entry focuses on, the Popoluca are under the jurisdiction of the Mexican government. SCCS Variable 237 [Note: Equivalent to Ethnographic Atlas Column 32], Jurisdictional Hierarchy Beyond the Local Community indicates that there are no levels of political authority beyond the local community (Murdock, 1962-1971; Retrieved from Divale, 2004). Additionally, "I was unable to find traces of clans, moities, initiations, societies, clubs or group competitions...All Popoluca villages are united in one district, with executive headquarters in Soteapan. Here is found the 'presidente municipal' and the commandant of the garrison. The other villages have 'agentes', who are nominally subject to the presidente, and who constitute the vested authority for the immediate neighborhood" (Foster, 1940:15). Further, neither patrilineal kin groups/exogamy nor matrilineal kin groups/exogamy are present (Ethnographic Atlas Columns 20 and 22; Murdock, 1967).

Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of formal education.

Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 14, Routes of Land Transport, indicates that unimproved trails are present (Murdock and Morrow, 1970; Retrieved from Divale, 2004). Presumably, transportation infrastructure is not present.

Taxation

Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– Yes

Notes: "Collecting with the saint' is a practice following a rigid pattern. On many Sundays throughout the year, particularly before major fiestas, an image is carried in a covered sedan chair by old women, preferably widows, from house to house, missing none of the 200 odd families in the town. While it is in motion drums and a flute play continually, and a chorus of men sings. Before each house the chair is placed, and each member emerges in turn carrying a couple ears of corn or a few centavos to be laid on a plate in front of the image" (Foster, 1942:66-67).

Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Notes: "There are no personal or property taxed [levied by the government], except for stores which pay one peso a month, and only a few minor fees" (Foster, 1942:72).

Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– Yes

Notes: According to Tuden and Marshall (1972), Column 10, Police [Note: Equivalent to SCCS Variable 90], "police functions are specialized and institutionalized on at least some level or levels of political integration".

Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– No

Notes: SCCS Variable 149 (Scale 1 of Cultural Complexity, Writing and Records) indicates that neither writing nor records are present (Murdock and Provist, 1971; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Yes

Notes: Agriculture is the primary source of subsistence, with fishing and hunting supplementing the diet. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232. "Agriculture forms the economic basis of life, and a typical migratory digging stick tillage is practiced" (Foster, 1943:539-540).



Please characterize the forms/level of food production [choose all that apply]:

– Hunting (including marine animals)

– Fishing

– Small-scale agriculture / horticultural gardens or orchards

– Large-scale agriculture (e.g., monocropping, organized irrigation systems)

Notes: Agriculture is the primary source of subsistence, with fishing and hunting supplementing the diet. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.