

Jane Collier (1973) categorizes conflict leading to legal battles; I have extracted her categories in table 4. Again, since gossip draws heavily on the public scandal which flows from town hall court cases, it would be reassuring if conflict categories resembled gossip themes.

It should be clear from inspection that there is a close parallel between what Zinacantecos find interesting to gossip about and what they find worth fighting about.⁶ We know that gossip often deals explicitly with town hall settlements and with the jailing that follows a dispute. Gossip precedes the courthouse; gossips may be aware of a dispute and its causes before a public conflict erupts. The corpus of gossip contains stories on each of the conflict themes Collier lists. Indeed, Collier reports some famous cases which enjoyed *municipiowide* notoriety; these stories reappeared almost word for word in Who's Who gossip sessions. For example, she lists as a case of "wrongs against the community" the story of a trip to lowland caves by a group of men who wanted to exchange the souls of their neighbors for wealth from the Earth Lord (J. Collier 1973, case 8, pp. 142-43).

It seems clear that the gossip corpus points to areas of Zinacanteco life which are interesting enough to talk about. What comes up in gossip parallels cases at the town hall, behavior that Zinacantecos ridicule. I suggest that the implicit subject of gossip is rules, somehow understood, underlying proper Zinacanteco behavior.

Gossip and the Cargo System

*Pero mi yora ch'ech' ta 'abtel
timi ilaj i tak'ine?*

"But can he survive a cargo
if his money is finished?"

6

In the last chapter I reported that cargo service was a frequent topic in the gossip I heard in Zinacantan. People continually discuss the schedule of officeholding in the hierarchy, the performances of cargoholders past and present, and their own plans and experiences in the cargo system. Less directly, men often use the cargo system to locate and identify particular people—as, say, the *martomorey* of a particular year—and to comment on them in a telescoped but significant way:

"the man who was *martomorey* three years ago but who ran away halfway through the cargo."

This conversational preponderance is a symptom of the importance of the cargo system to most of the Zinacantecos with whom I gossiped. Zinacantecos, like other people, talk about what interests them; the best clue—though not the only one—about what is on their minds is what is on their lips.

Contemporary ethnographers of Zinacantan have been similarly fascinated by the cargo system, a religious hierarchy characteristic of communities throughout the Maya area (and, indeed, a widespread concomitant of the Catholic conversion that followed Spanish conquest). The system of religious offices has been deemed central to Zinacanteco society. Pioneering ethnographic work in Zinacantan in the early 1960s suggested that "the degree and manner of a man's participation in the hierarchy is the major factor in determining his place in the community" (Cancian 1965, p. 2). The accepted analysis of the

relationship between religious office and one's "place in the community" views cargo performance as a device through which individual Zinacantecos exchange surplus wealth—which, if accumulated, would prove embarrassing, even dangerous—for prestige. Cargoholders spend large sums of money on ritual service, conceived to be beneficial to participants individually and to the community as a whole. Such community service enhances one's public reputation and at the same time ensures favor with ancestral and natural deities.

There remain, in this analysis, several unexplicated claims upon which gossip should shed some light. These concern the postulated relationship between public identity, prestige, and cargo performance, as well as the considerations said to motivate participation in the hierarchy. Gossip first reveals the conceptual apparatus (minimally, the words) through which participants perceive the hierarchy; gossip manipulates the relevant notions: hierarchy, progress, prestige. Second, gossip exposes the complex calculations by which people plan (or claim to plan) their own cargo careers and evaluate those of others. Gossip routinely penetrates beyond the formal structure of the hierarchy to include the relevant variables of (good and bad) performance in cargos. Third, gossip allows the observer (both native and foreign) to determine the place of religious service in a constellation of economic endeavor, civil office, and curing activity, given a life of shifting standards, changing opportunities for acquiring and employing wealth in Zinacantan.

In this chapter I describe in some detail the elements of a Zinacanteco's reputation that derive from participation in the cargo system. In particular, I outline the structure of the hierarchy to show how gossip rearranges and regularizes a complex schedule of offices to allow evaluation of individual performance. I reconsider the connection between prestige and cargoholding, and I examine the components of reputation on the evidence gossip provides.

The Hierarchy

It is not surprising, given the intricate calculations and strategic discussions about cargos that figure in conversation, that Tzotzil contains well-developed resources for describing the hierarchy, or that Zinacantecos deal routinely with what seems a complex set of rules governing progress through it.

Like other Meso-American systems of public office, the Zinacanteco cargo system comprises four hierarchical levels, with service at each level contingent upon successful completion of a cargo at the level immediately below. The relevant facts for the Zinacanteco system are the total repertoire of cargo offices, their places in the hierarchy of four

levels, conceptual groupings of offices, and, most important for the traditional analysis, the relative prestige associated with each office.

Cancian describes the hierarchy in the following terms:¹

The expressed purpose of the religious hierarchy is to guarantee performance of rituals for the saints in the local Catholic churches. Tradition dictates that these rituals be performed, and it is believed that harm will come to the community if they are not performed. When a man takes a cargo for a year he is responsible for part of the ritual, and is thus doing a service for the community. Most Zinacantecos believe that the saints will favor him if he performs his duties well, and punish him if he does not.

Every year 55 Zinacantecos serve cargos in the religious hierarchy. The rights and duties of each cargo are set by tradition and do not vary with the incumbent from year to year. However, the rights and duties vary greatly between cargos. Each cargo has a distinct sphere of responsibility and a distinct name." [1965, p. 28]

The cargos are arranged into four hierarchical levels, so that a man passes in sequence a first cargo (typically called *martomo*), then after some years a second-level cargo (*alperes*), then a third-level cargo as *rejirol*, and finally at the last level a cargo as *alkalte*. The numbers have increased somewhat since the early 1960s: there are currently about forty first-level cargos, twelve second level cargos, five at the third level, and four at the terminal level (table 5 shows the entire list). A man who has been *alkalte* has completed his formal service in the system and becomes a *pasaro* (Sp. *pasado*, "one who has passed"). Cancian (1965, p. 29) points out that incomplete careers are "the rule." "First service does not usually occur until the age of 35 or 40, and years of 'rest' between service periods are required to earn the money necessary to sponsor fiestas. Thus, many men who hope to compete for the limited number of offices on higher levels die before reaching their goal" (Cancian 1974, p. 165).

Formally each cargo pertains to a particular level of the hierarchy, although there is reason to believe that some cargo positions have changed level over time.² Similarly, the order of progression is ideally fixed: from first to second to third to fourth. The Tzotzil metaphor suggests passing upward from step to step.³ A man begins with a first cargo, *sba yabtel* ("the front/beginning of his work"), after which he is able to pass a cargo at the second level, *xcha²-kojol yabtel* ("the second level of his work"), and so on. A man's last cargo, ideally, but for most people not actually at the fourth level, is *slajeb yabtel* ("the end point of his work")—the point at which he either completes or abandons his career.

Table 5 Cargo Positions

Location	Tzotzil Name	Spanish Name	Number
First Level^c			
Jteklum	martomoetik	Mayordomos	12 ^a
	xanxevaxchan	San Sebastian	
	sanantonyo	San Antonio	
	jch'ulme ² tik	Virgen del Rosario	
	santakrus	Santa Cruz	
	santorominko	Santo Domingo	
	sakramentu	Sacramento	
Jteklum (chapel of ?Iskipulas)	martomorey	Mayordomo rey	2 ^a
	mexon	Mesonero	2 ^a
?Atz'am	mayol	Mayor	1
	martomo jch'ulme ² tik	Mayordomo de la Virgen del Rosario	1
Nabenchauk	martomo jch'ulme ² tik	Mayordomo de la Virgen de Guadalupe	2 ^a
?Apas	martomorey	Mayordomo rey	2 ^a
	mexon	Mesonero	2 ^a
Easter Season ^b	paxyon	Pasionero	2 ^a
Fiesta of San Lorenzo ^b	kapitan	Capitan	2 ^a
Cabildo	mayoletik	Mayores	2 ^a
Second Level			
Jteklum	?alperesetik	Alfereces	12 ^d
	trinidad	Santisima Trinidad	
	sanjosep	San Jose	
	rosaryo	Virgen del Rosario	
	nativirat	Virgen de Natividad	
	xanxevaxchan bankilal	San Sebastian	
	santorenso	San Lorenzo	
	sorirat	Virgen de Soledad	
	sanantonyo	San Antonio	
	samparomartil	San Pedro Martir	
	sanjasinto	San Jacinto	
	santaroxa	Santa Rosa	
	xanxevaxchan ?itz'inal	San Sebastian	
Third Level			
Jteklum	?alperes kajvaltik ryox rejiroletik ^f	Alferez la Divina Cruz Regidores	1 4

Fourth Level

Jteklum			
	muk'ta ?alkalte ^f	Alcalde Viejo Primero	1
	bik'it ?alkalte ^f	Alcalde Viejo Segundo	1
	?alperes santorominko ^g	Alferez Santo Domingo	1
	?alkalte xuves ^h	Alcalde Juez	1

- a Most first-level cargos are arranged in senior/junior pairs. Hence, there are two *martomo* cargos bearing the same saint name: e.g.: martomo sakramentu bankilal "senior mayordomo sacramento"
- and
martomo sakramentu ?itz'inal "junior mayordomo sacramento"
- b The first level cargos of *paxyon* and *kapitan* have ritual duties only for parts of the year at certain fiestas.
- c There are rumors of the creation of new first-level positions serving saints in the new churches, in Sek'emtik and Nachij.
- d There are two additional cargos named ?alperes (see third and fourth levels), but, although they perform ritual together with the other *alfereces*, they belong formally to higher levels of the hierarchy.
- f The four *rejiroletik* and the two ?alkalteetik perform ritual together and are known collectively as the *moletik* or 'elders.'
- g ?Alperes santorominko can be served either as a third- or fourth-level cargo.
- h *Xuves* is a terminal cargo, ending one's service, but almost always taken by a man with only one previous cargo.

Again, the language is suggestive: the word ?*abtel* ("work"), when used in a possessed form is always taken on first reading to mean cargo work, rather than, say, work in the cornfields or for wages. The grammar further suggests that a man's work or cargo career stretches through time from a definite beginning to an end.⁴

The hierarchy can be schematized as in figure 6. The decreasing number of positions at higher levels results in the pyramidal structure. I have labeled the three highest levels with a form of the cargo name that can refer to all individual cargos at that level. Thus, whereas a man can pass any one of a number of second-level ?*alperes* cargos: e.g., he may perform the cargo of ?*alperes santorenso* ("the alferez of San Lorenzo"), he may refer to this period of his life as the time he ?*ech'em ta ?alperesal* ("was serving at the alferez level"); or he may reminisce about *yalperesal* ("his tenure as alferez"). The terms ?*alkalteal* and *rejirolal* involve similar usage.⁵

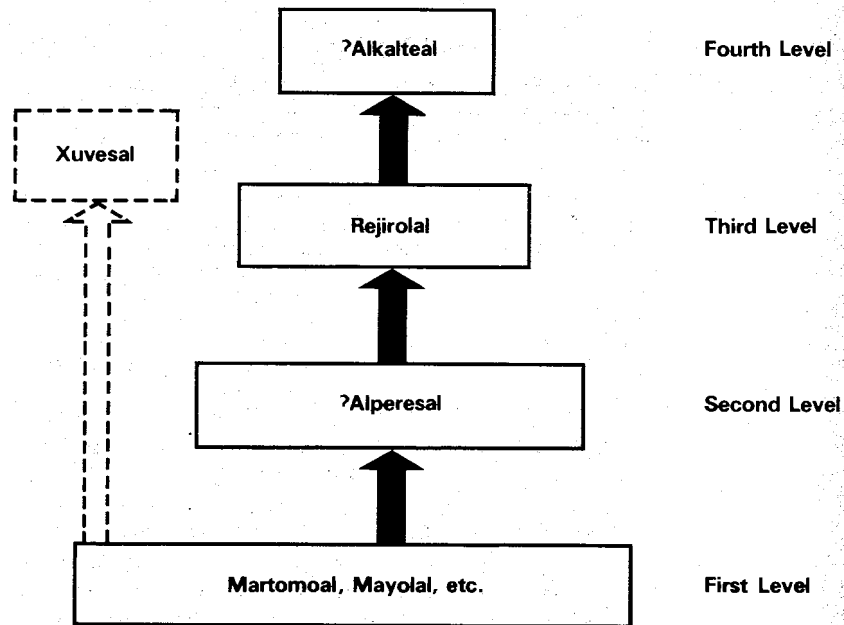


Fig. 6 Schematized cargo progression.
(Adapted from Cancian 1965,
p. 29)

Tzotzil provides evidence for some discontinuities in an otherwise orderly hierarchy. Certain *?alperes* cargos count at the *?alperes* level only in exceptional circumstances. For example, the office of *?alperes kajvaltik ryox*

skwenta rejirol (mayol).
"counts as (first) regidor."

Similarly, *?alperes santorominko*

skwenta muk'ta ?alkalte
"counts as senior alcalde,"

or,

skwenta slajeb ?abtel.
"counts as one's final cargo."

These expressions display the notion of ideal progression, labeled as in figure 6; particular cargos in a career fit into this progression, but the fit is not simply congruent to cargo names.

Irregular careers are themselves held up against the ideal progression, so that observers can both evaluate them (mark them as exceptional, ambitious, disappointing, etc.) and come to understand the logic they

display. Here gossip about nonstandard cases provides reliable evidence about the standards themselves. Consider the following discussion about a particular man's career:

"First he was *mayol* ['policeman']."

"Yes, he was a policeman."

"Then came his second-level cargo; then he was *mexon*."⁶

"Really? Was that for his *?alperes*-cargo [skwenta *?alperes*]?"

"Yes, for his second cargo he was *mexon*."

"Incredible!"

"No, no, that can't be right. He didn't count the *mayol* cargo toward his career. . . ."

"Oh, he only did that for respect, then. . . .?"

"Yes, he only did that for his own self-respect. First he spent a year as policeman; but he said that wasn't to count as cargo work. He said he didn't want to start his career that way."

"Ah."

"I myself did not see his year as *mayol*. I first knew him when he was *mexon*. He replaced our group—the year after I was *martomorey* he was *mexon*. After that he was *?alperes xanxevaxchan* as his second cargo. . . ."

"But isn't that all? He hasn't yet been *rejirol*?"

"But he will be next year. At New Year's he will become *?alperes kajvaltik ryox*."

This man appeared to have performed two first-level cargos, prompting the questions (precisely formulable in Tzotzil) whether the first-level *mexon* cargo can, in exceptional circumstances, "count as *?alperes*," that is, count as a second-level cargo. This man was himself unwilling to begin his cargo career as *mayol* and went on to perform a more respectable first cargo, followed by a second-level office as *?alperes*. And next year he would serve as *rejirol* (i.e., in his third cargo) precisely by passing an office named *?alperes kajvaltik ryox*.

Cancian (1974, p. 170) argues that the prestige one garners from patterned social behavior—taking a cargo, for instance—depends on the assessment of that behavior by social alters. Gossip about behavior is presumably a crucial vehicle (and context) for such assessment.

Tzotzil clearly labels the levels of the hierarchy and provides means for talking about the underlying concepts. Certain cargos seem to fit flexibly into a rigid sequence of hierarchical levels to provide for individual needs. It may be that individual strategies in pursuing cargo careers require and may in fact have introduced such flexibility into the system. The choice between two cargos at the same level may involve considerations of cost, of time required (both in service and in waiting

for a position to become available), and the nature of the concomitant ritual (see note 17).

Irregular or Short Cargo Careers

Two terminal cargos normally fall to men who have not completed three previous lower-level offices. Gossip suggests that both posts—*ʔalkalte xuves* and *bikʔit ʔalkalte*—are viewed as acceptable, though lowly and in some sense laughable, ways out of a failing cargo career.⁸

Hence, a taunt to a man who pridefully complains of not being able to reserve a sufficiently prestigious cargo in the near future is:

“Why don’t you just ask for *xuvesal*. . . . (Ha ha ha)?”

The implication is clear: “That cargo is certainly available; why not take that one if you are [as you imply] so anxious to finish your cargo career?” The same taunt, in different circumstances, can be based on one of the minor *ʔalperes* positions (e.g., *xanxavaxchan ʔitzʔinal*) and, notably, also on the *bikʔit ʔalkalte*.

Cancian cites the example of a man who served as *bikʔit ʔalkalte* after only two previous cargos, but who had given considerable service in civil offices during his life: “Informants recognized the exception made in appointing him, but rationalized it by saying that because of his service in many capacities, he deserved to complete his cargos in an honorable fashion” (1965, p. 32). Gossip, however, does not in most cases bear out the inference that the junior *ʔalkalte* represents a completely “honorable” conclusion to a cargo career. On the contrary, most men who fill the post seem to be ineffectual, weak-willed, aged failures, frequently laughingstocks. Although there seems to be no principled reason why some exceptional individual might not manage to make more out of it, the cargo seems to be something like a booby prize, forced on the vulnerable (much as the *mayol* “errand-boy” cargo is forced on village troublemakers), even, *pace* Cancian, after only a single previous cargo. In fact, Who’s Who lists show a man in Nachij who performed *bikʔit ʔalkalte* as his *only* cargo.

Consider the following story of a particular *bikʔit ʔalkalte* who resembles very little the hero of the above account.

Mol Manvel Komis had an unusual cargo career, passing only one cargo before becoming *bikʔit ʔalkalte*.

“Long ago he was *martomo sakramentu*, for his first cargo. The next cargo he did was *bikʔit ʔalkalte*; I was among those who accompanied him then [as a *rejirol*: another one of the six elders, or senior cargo holders].”

“But hadn’t he asked to be *ʔalperes santorenso*?”

“Yes, he had asked. That old man was *santorenso* many times. (Ha ha ha.)”

“But didn’t he after all pass that *ʔalperes cargo*?”

“No, never.”

“But I remember hearing that he had already cut his firewood [in preparation for entering the *ʔalperes cargo*]. . . .”

“Yes, but didn’t he then run away just before he was to enter—it was about this time of year.”

“That’s right. . . .”

“. . . but after all he must have done his cargo as *santorenso*. . . .”

“No, no, he never did. I know.”

“But didn’t his horse die . . . wasn’t that when he fled?”

“Aaah, but his horse didn’t die. He sold it; I think he sold it.”

“So he never did an *ʔalperes cargo*?”

“No. He was *sakramentu* long ago; I never saw that. . . .”

“No, he never did that cargo as *santorenso*. He asked for it several times. I used to see him at the fiesta of San Sebastian and he would always say to me—when I myself was in *my cargo*—‘This time next year I will be San Lorenzo,’ he would tell me. But it kept on that way year after year.”

“That’s how he got old. . . . (Ha ha ha.)”

“He kept putting it off every year. Later on—I’ve forgotten now exactly when it was—he did actually cut his firewood as you say. . . .”

“Yes, I know he cut firewood once. . . .”

“He went out to get helpers. He asked me: ‘Please, let me borrow you for my cargo next year.’ ‘All right,’ I told him. He also asked Old Palas Es from Nachij, his brother-in-law. We even drank two or three beers to seal the bargain. . . .”

“You drank with him?”

“Yes. Well, so his cargo grew closer. Let’s see, I think it was about the fiesta of San Juan [in early June, about two months before the *ʔalperes santorenso* takes office] when he fled; he ran off to Hot Country. He simply let the whole thing drop entirely.”

“Aaah, he fled.”

“I don’t know who took the cargo instead; I can’t remember. They just grabbed someone quickly as his replacement. Well, so after a time he returned, and that’s when he was forced to take the cargo as junior *ʔalkalte*. It happened at the *cabildo*. He went to return his paper [naming him to the *ʔalperes* post] to the elders. His wife and son went with him. You see, the elders gave him liquor from their little bottles, right while he was supposed to be giving back the paper. In a moment, after a couple of minutes he started getting tipsy. ‘*Kere*, I can do the cargo after all; I’m a man; I know how to act here on Earth,’ he started to say. (Ha ha ha.)”

“Aha, *that’s* how he returned the paper. . . . (Ha ha ha.)”

"That's what he was supposed to be doing. *Putá*, the old lady got angry too. 'Do you think we could survive the cargo after all?' she said: 'Look at the way you behave, look at the way your head is. What we decided at home was that we couldn't do the cargo; he isn't able to pass it; he owns nothing,' said the old lady."

"They had decided already that they didn't want it."

"Same with his son, he didn't want it either. But that old man, after he drank one shot or two shots got drunk right away."

"That's the way he is: he gets drunk in a moment."

"I can do it; I can do that cargo. Hah, don't worry about me," he said again. Well in fact, he did enter his cargo, but when he entered he didn't after all give out any *atole*;⁹ instead he was made the *bik'it mol* ['junior *alcalde*']"

"Yes, I accompanied him; he was *bik'it 'alcalte* the year I was *rejrol*. . . ."

The rule for the *bik'it 'alcalte*, as with the *'alcalte xuves* (which involves fewer expenses), seems to call for the position to be occupied by a man without enough resources or energy to complete his service in a more respectable way.¹⁰ The positions are filled from the pool of men with undistinguished records who are unlikely ever to assume a more demanding cargo, but who can be pressured into taking this easy, though somewhat laughable, way out. Both cargos carry low prestige and are terminal.

At each level of service a man, by his choice of particular cargo position, can signal his ambition and energy and thereby his plans for continuing in the system (see fig. 7). Traditionally, high-ranking, high-prestige cargos at lower levels led to high-ranking cargos at higher levels and to an eventual complete career. Low-ranking cargos led to low-ranking terminal cargos (like *bik'it 'alcalte* or *'alcalte xuves*) or simply to abandoned careers. It is notable that some men embark on high-ranking careers but because of age or economic setbacks never manage a fourth cargo. These men are often called *pasaro* (Sp. *pasado*, "one who has passed") after three cargos even without a fourth-level cargo; and no one expects such people to demean themselves by taking one of the low-ranking terminal cargos.¹¹

When gossips encounter a cargo career structured in an unusual way they try to reconcile the facts with the peculiarities, disabilities, or bad luck of the individual. They explain, that is, why what happened was not exceptional, not surprising.

Manvel Komis did *bik'it mol* after only one previous cargo, but because of his own foolish boasting after failing to pass a regular second cargo, he got what he deserved by being forced to take that

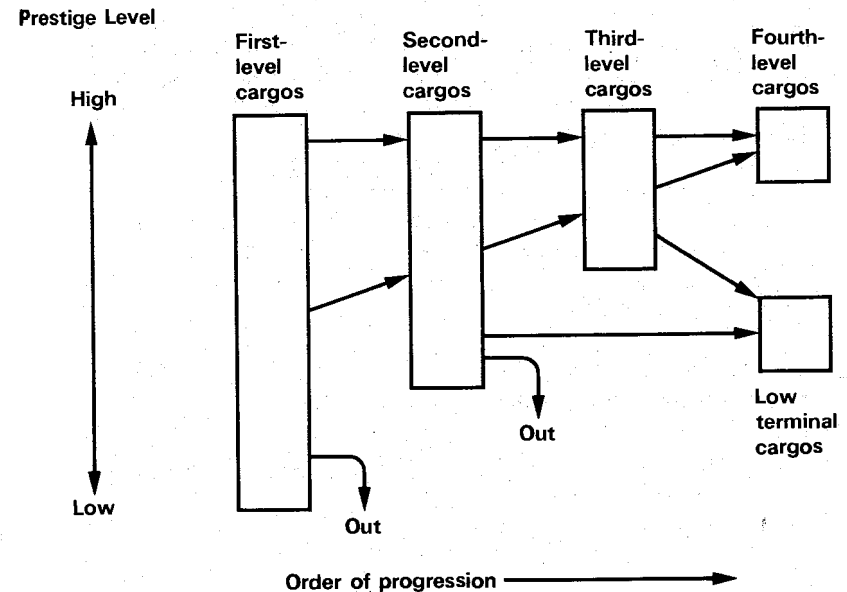


Fig. 7

Cargo strategies

laughable terminal cargo. As for the formal rule about successive levels of service—well, the elders can fill cargo positions as they see fit, if they have good reasons. After all, remember the case of Manvel Kasya, who did a *martomo* cargo and counted it at the second level.

This attention to past careers may point up a man's failure and disgrace. And equally it may celebrate a man's good fortune, skill, and cleverness at negotiating a difficult career or squeezing special merit out of what seemed undistinguished cargo positions, by "intelligent innovation" (Cancian 1974, p. 170).

One can, indeed, infer from gossip the principle that a man who passes a high-ranking cargo will, if he can, refuse a lower ranking cargo at succeeding levels.¹² One man who was considering whether or not to accept a moderately prestigious though low-ranking *'alperes* position, in a discussion with another man, cited his first cargo, which he considered to have been quite prestigious. He complained about not wanting to make a step down in his career.

"Yes, I want to be *'alperes*. But I want a cargo that is at least somewhat large, at least somewhat distinguished. One becomes accustomed to giving orders and having authority when one is *martomo sakramentu*."¹³

"Aaah, but this cargo you have been offered, this *'alperes sanantonyo* is in charge of all the other *alfereces*; he shares his authority with *santorenso* and *trinirat*. He consults with the musicians about proper procedure. . . ."

"Well, *trinirat*—now *that* is a worthy cargo!"

"Yes, but when *trinirat* doesn't know what to say, when he doesn't know what is proper, then you—*sanantonyo*—would give the orders. It all depends on what sort of man takes the cargo; some men are weak, but others are forceful. Remember how last year old Chep rose above his office."

Planning a cargo career involves calculations of prestige and often tortured rationalizations. But the participant is not limited to a fixed schedule of offices and ranks. He has time to wait (and, indeed, the long waiting lists often oblige him to) before he takes the plunge. He can often pick his fellow officeholders, on the basis of what he knows about them and the coming schedules of service, so as to insure that he will stand out during his tenure in office. And of course he can pursue various strategies in the choice of the cargo position itself. Gossip is a source of information about these calculations, and hence about the principles according to which participation in the cargo system of Zinacantan is undertaken, understood, and evaluated.

Cargos and Reputation

Gossip propagates information about people's cargo histories and performance through a huge volume of conversation about cargos and cargo holders. Complementing this conversation is correspondingly extensive knowledge about other people's cargo careers on the part of almost every Zinacanteco man. Members of Who's Who panels had remarkably full recollections of other people's careers—recollections that extended far into the past and well beyond hamlet boundaries. In fact, it seems likely that Zinacantecos actively collect cargo histories, if for no other reason than that they can thus compare their own progress through the hierarchy with that of their fellows.

Ordinarily the most public aspect of a man's personal history will be his cargo record. People from outlying hamlets, not otherwise familiar to those outside their own areas, acquire instant names as holders of such-and-such a cargo. A common identifying schema in conversation is to give a man's name, then to pinpoint his identity by citing his most recent cargo.

"Do you know Chep Vaskis?"

"Chep Vaskis? You mean the one living by the rock outcropping?"

"No, no, the son of Old Xap."

"Wait a minute. Is this Chep Vaskis the man who just passed *martomo jch'ulme'tik*?"

"That's right. . . ."

"Oh, that's who you mean! Certainly I know him; I went with him to Chamula to buy rum. So his name is Vaskis, is it?"

The identification of a man with his cargo position is a natural consequence of the ordinary channels of information within the community, which restrict (or do not promote) the circulation between hamlets of unremarkable bits of information. Cargo service brings otherwise undistinguished individuals to public attention by bringing them to the ceremonial center.¹⁴

A person's cargo record is usually taken as an index of other aspects of his life and character. A distinguished cargo performance carries implications of other distinction; and failure in the religious hierarchy regularly is taken to attest to some personal deficiency. During Who's Who sessions, when members of the panel heard for the first time detailed gossip about people they knew only slightly, often from their cargo records alone, reactions to surprising disclosures bore out this expected connection between cargo service and reputation.

An old man, with a distinguished, now complete cargo career, is reputed to have made improper advances toward his daughters-in-law.

"He finished his cargo service long ago it seems, but nonetheless he still seems to have acted foolishly on occasion; they say he has been involved with his daughter-in-law. . . ."

"Actually, it was both daughters-in-law. He was taken to the *cabildo*. . . ."

"But does he still know how to do that, such a 'distinguished gentleman'? . . ."

"Do you suppose he has forgotten, now that his cargo work is finished? (Ha ha ha.)"

"Yes, after all, doing a cargo is where one learns propriety. (Ha ha ha.) When we talk to him he seems an upright man, but perhaps he has little evil ways after all."

"He has given injections, but he is a well-behaved elder."

"He's a ritual adviser."

"He's a Holy Elder, but he gives injections. . . . (Ha ha ha.)"

Similarly, successful cargo service is evidence for other sorts of success. One Zinacanteco friend, whom I consulted about lending money to another old man I knew only slightly, mentioned the man's distinguished cargo career as a comforting character reference. In the discus-

sion of another lazy man who has neither corn nor money and who has fled from two different cargos, one person remarked that the only work the man was known to perform was in his father's cornfields. When another man evinced surprise that the father of such a good-for-nothing could have large cornfields, another remarked, "But of course his father knows how to work: he has finished his cargo career!"

The connection here between success in the hierarchy and success as a corn farmer certainly rests on the fact that cargos are costly; that to complete four levels of service requires considerable wealth over a lifetime. It is also true that the idiom of cargo success is, in most conversation, synonymous with virtue, diligence, and worthiness. Gossip about cargo holders, fortunate and unfortunate, leads directly to the interrelated notions of wealth, prestige, luck, seniority, and success.

Prestige and Cost

The crux of the received analysis of cargo performance in Zinacantan is the proposition that "the cargo holder . . . receives a very special kind of prestige and respect, which is principally dependent on the amount of money he spends in the service of his cargo or cargos" (Cancian 1965, p. 27). According to this analysis, it is the quest for such prestige, and the accompanying standing in the community, that motivates Zinacantecos to perform cargos. Moreover, the system is flexible enough to permit ambitious men to excel: "From the point of view of the participant, the cargo system can be a clear way to communicate his abilities and his self-image to his fellows" (Cancian 1965, p. 80). The path for the energetic is clearly marked by the costly cargos at each level of the hierarchy.

Zinacantecos with sufficient resources are subject to a (socially and morally binding) expectation that they will participate in the cargo system. Cancian argued in fact that, traditionally, virtually all Zinacanteco men participated in the system; of those who did not "most . . . are very poor, usually because of sickness, injury, or bad luck" (Cancian 1965, p. 128). Wealthy men are subject to pressures to accept costly, prestigious cargos, whereas men of more moderate resources can appropriately settle for less ambitious careers. The direction of a man's eventual career may be clear from his economic success and interest in participation at an early age, so that "not only are all Zinacantecos included in the ranking system resulting from the hierarchy, but rough estimates of every man's ultimate standing can often be made by his fellows even before he has taken any cargo" (1965, p. 128).

The notion of "prestige" is central to this argument. Cancian admits that "prestige is an elusive quality, difficult to measure in any system-

atic way" (1965, p. 87). The idea of a scale of prestige for ranking cargos emerged naturally, he writes, out of "talking with dozens of Zinacantecos about cargos, and observing dozens of interactions between persons who had passed different cargos" (1965, p. 87). But Cancian remains uncomfortable with the result. "Though Zinacantecos constantly behave in ways that indicate that they defer to and respect their fellows according to the criteria [of cargo cost and authority], no informant was able to conceptualize the notion of prestige consistently enough to produce a prestige scale. Any direct attempt to ask about the relative prestige of cargos drew either a statement about the relative cost (which is public knowledge) or a retreat to the cultural ideal that all cargos are in service of the saints, and all service of the saints is equally virtuous" (1965, p. 92). Cancian makes use of informants' mistakes (which, not surprisingly, turn out to be patterned) in remembering other people's cargo careers to convince himself that "the prestige-ranking of cargos I had intuitively made coincided with the ranking made by Zinacantecos" (1965, p. 92). Yet the conclusion is limp: "I conclude that Zinacantecos, though they will not openly discuss it, actually do perceive cargos in terms of relative prestige, and are apt to remember the approximate prestige of an individual even when they have forgotten the particular cargo he passed in the process of achieving it" (1965, p. 96).

We are left with a somewhat cryptic claim about the prestige said to attach to particular cargos and to motivate individual performance. Do Zinacantecos think in terms of prestige but lack the concept (the ability to "conceptualize the notion of prestige")? Do they merely act in accordance with traditional rules of cargo service, with no particular thought to prestige and strategies? Were early Zinacanteco informants merely being intransigent or obtuse, refusing to discuss "openly" a well-understood scale of prestige, and mouthing instead an empty "cultural ideal"? Is "prestige" anything more than the analyst's metaphor for differential participation, which in turn is an artifact of differential economic success and the expectation that Zinacantecos participate according to their means?

Gossip about cargos gives content to the notions of prestige and respect in a way that a mechanical and idealized prestige scale of offices cannot. On the one hand, in gossip Zinacantecos are not at all reticent about success and failure, prestige and scorn. And on the other, gossips demonstrate that the particular office one serves is only one indicator of the sort of reputation one will derive. I shall consider both points in order.

Gossip suggests that Zinacantecos are skilled at manipulating notions of prestige, success, and respect (and their opposites) and are capable of making and expressing in Tzotzil complex calculations of rank. In-

deed, it would be hard to argue that cargo prestige is central to an understanding of the religious hierarchy, much less the entire social structure, were Zinacantecos unable to make sense of the ideas involved. There are Tzotzil expressions which constitute a vocabulary of prestige and respect.

The man who refused to count service as a "policeman" toward cargo advancement was said to have made that choice "for respect." The Tzotzil expression—*p'is ta vinik* ("to measure as a man")—figures frequently in conversation about respect, for elders, for senior cargo-holders, and so forth. The calculations of the man who wanted a cargo that was "somewhat large" (*muk'muk'tik jset'*) clearly involve a notion of prestige/rank that relates to relative authority. The metaphor of size recurs in this context.

One man was suddenly advanced from fourth to second *rejirol* by the fortuitous death of the incumbent.

"He would have been the runt, the smallest (*sk'oxil*). But he ended up in second position, when one man died and the other fled his cargo."

Zinacantecos are proud of their cargo records, and boast of their successes. A man who takes no cargo, whatever his success in other areas of life, whatever his wealth, must walk about sheepishly at fiesta time, when men are mocked for avoiding the service of the saints.

"The story about Mikel Komis is that he asked for a cargo long ago. But Mikel didn't check that his name was on the waiting lists year after year. Then the elders removed his name, seeing that Mikel just hid himself every year when he should have been checking the lists. Perhaps, when he asked for the cargo, he thought he could do it; he didn't know how costly it would be. But then he heard how much money others spent on their cargos, and he gave it up. He isn't a very good worker, and anyway he has fought with his father—he is rather ill-tempered—and had to go elsewhere to live with his wife. He kept moving from one borrowed house to another. The elders said: 'How are you going to do a cargo with all this houseborrowing?'"

"Anyway, this past year Mikel, who was the musician for *martomo Santa Krus*, dressed up as *mamal*¹⁵ as the replacement for his *martomo*, who was missing several finger joints and could not dance and frolic properly. But all the people knew that Mikel had lost his cargo and should have been ashamed to perform at the fiesta. They all said, 'Kere, is Mikel now doing his *second* cargo? Does he have so much money that he can be *martomo* twice?'"

"So Mikel was told to his face that he had done two cargos. People mocked him right in his own ears: 'You're such a man, you're so rich!' they said. He was much embarrassed as a man who had done no cargo, but still standing in for a *martomo*."

The shame of nonparticipation is particularly acute at the fiesta of San Sebastian, when special ritual entertainers carry small furry animals, who are given the names of failed or truncated cargoholders and mocked publicly throughout the fiesta (Bricker 1968, p. 271; Vogt 1969, p. 542). Such shame may even prick at one's relatives.

"Weren't you there when old Xulubte' was standing in for the entertainers at San Sebastian when he got so angry? His son was named."

"Yes, I heard about that."

"You see, Xun, the old man's son, was supposed to be *martomorey* that year. And the Blackmen were supposed to say his name, to mock him for fleeing the cargo. But old Xulubte' himself was also standing in as the Jaguar. He was also an entertainer.

"So the Blackmen said, 'Look here, look here. This is Xunka' Xantis. Look how thick her pubic hair is! Look how her pubic hair stands on end! We can hardly squeeze in. Ha ha ha!'"

"That is how they talk."

"But then they said Xun Xulubte's name, too. 'Look, this is Xun Xulubte'. He has finished his *martomorey* cargo. He is now an entertainer himself,' they yelled.

"'Damn, don't say that,' said old Xulubte'. 'You bastards, that is my son you're talking about,' he said.

"'We don't care if he's your son,' they replied. 'You should be mocking him, too.' (Ha ha ha.)"

Cargoholders also expect deference and respect for their accomplishments. A *compadre* of mine was once greeted on the path by another, apparently older man, who addressed my *compadre* as *totik* ("father, sir"). When I asked why the other had used a form of address reserved for men older than the speaker, my *compadre* replied: "We are actually about the same age; but because of my cargo (as *martomorey*) he accords me more respect." But gossip shows that deference is often ironic, backhanded, a mask for secret ridicule. The idioms of respect are often metonymic references to cargoholders' dress.

Antun Saklum had a secret affair while he was the ritual adviser to a cargoholder.

"He once went to be the ritual adviser of the *martomorey*. He tied his head up in a red kerchief;¹⁶ we were all there—the *martomorey* was leaving office. We were all seated around a table, facing each other, including the ritual advisers.

"But Old Antun wasn't interested in talking just among the men. All the women were sitting there, too, to one side. He turned his chair slightly to one side and kept looking, glancing sideways at the wife of one of the helpers.

"We were sitting behind him, watching him, laughing. Even when he was saying a long prayer, kissing the others' rosaries, his heart wasn't in it. He was watching the woman. But then he heard us laughing at him. . . ."

"Aha, his ears were alert. . . ."

"Yes, yes. We spoke to him outside the church. We went outside to urinate. The drummers were standing around, and when he went to urinate, they said to him, 'Is that just piss that's coming out, Father?' (Ha, ha ha.)

"'Hey, be quiet there, boy,' he said. 'I don't know what you're accusing me of. I am an elder now. Can't you see that my head is [wrapped in] red?' He was angry.

"'Your head may be red, but who knows if perhaps your pants are, too,' he was told."

"Ha ha ha."

Gossip supports the proposition that a cargo is what one makes of it. A costly senior cargo will bring more shame than fame if bungled. Conversely, sterling performance in a lesser post will not go unnoticed. One man recounted how he had arranged to take a second cargo of only medium rank rather quickly after his first cargo. He did not disguise his ambition, and revealed that his choice had been influenced by the fact that the senior man with whom he would serve (*alfereces* are arranged in junior/senior pairs) was well known to be rather weak-willed, not well-spoken, and given to intoxication. He boasted often of the fact that he had dominated the *alfereces* during his year in office, that he had been much beloved by the musicians for his joking—signs that he felt himself to have risen above the actual cargo position he occupied.¹⁷

Conversation about cargo careers and performance suggests that the idea that cargos can be ranked "in terms of the prestige they bring to the person who passes them" (Cancian 1965, p. 96) misses an essential part of the process by which prestige is assigned and reputation gained. Gossip reminds us that people fail, that careers go wrong, that following the rules is not the rule. Earlier excerpts from Zinacanteco gossip attest to the multiple ways that cargos and the cargo system can bring more

embarrassment than prestige. Consider these further stories about men whose performance in high-ranking cargos¹⁸ is tarnished.

A friend delivered the following long monologue to me about a recently retired *martomorey*.

"Well, as for Marian, there was gossip about him recently in this past cargo of his. You see, he couldn't borrow enough for his expenses. So he didn't give his helpers or the sacristans anything to eat. At every fiesta the sacristans must be fed. No one asks first whether you've got the money or not. Everyone takes his turn at feeding the sacristans. Well Marian took them home to feed them once, but he gave them rabbit to eat. He is always hunting rabbits, anyway, since he doesn't have any chickens. Why, he didn't even give any liquor each time the rosary was counted at his house. He gave only poured-off liquor,¹⁹ and it was very weak. They say it wasn't even drinkable. The sacristans put up with it, though, because Marian was so ill-tempered they didn't want to cause trouble. So that is the gossip that has come out about Marian. Also they say that when the New Year came he barely had a few cups of corn left over, because he hadn't very much to begin with. And also he didn't have a house, he just borrowed a house; just as if he came from the outlying hamlets and didn't live in the Center."

People may embark on ambitious careers by entering "prestigious" first-level cargos, but prove unsuccessful in the hierarchy because of some deficiency of performance.

"Old Aguilar was senior *martomorey*. It was Sunday and his helpers had gone there, for they take the rosary out early on Sunday. One of the helpers had a daughter and she had gone along to help. So the girl went outside. Aguilar was just sitting there outside. . . ."

"Wasn't that Paxku? Komis?"

"Yes. Paxku? Komis again. Well, anyway, they started to embrace one another, old Aguilar and the girl. He started to stick his fingers in her, right there standing up. Just then a musician came out, and he found them there like that.

"'Shit, what are you doing?' said the musician.

"Aguilar ran off right away. He went inside. A little later the musician came in.

"'Martomorey, have you washed well? Are you now going to touch the rosary of Our Lord, after what you were handling outside?' That's what the musician said as he came in. Everyone heard—Aguilar's wife, the musicians, the helpers. He didn't say anything. I guess he had already had trouble before; he had already been to the

cabildo to settle with his wife. He would have married his lover if it had not been for his cargo."

"Ah, but he was ruined because of that. He was ruined. He became a pauper, from touching another woman. . . ."

"Yes, he still has debts to this very day. . . ."

"He has debts, yes. He finished that *martomorey* cargo; he sold off all his land; he sold off his mules. Did he get it back? No; he never recovered. He has stayed poor. He touched another woman during his *martomorey* cargo. Ever since then that has been his story."

"Gossip about him will never cease, because you see he still can't repay his debts. . . ."

"No, he can't pay them. 'Go touch Paxku' Komis' they used to say to him, those who knew the story. . . ."

Stories about misdeeds by cargoholders are common, though nonetheless shocking. Gossip moralizes easily about correct and proper performance of cargo duties; transgressions are grounds for public ridicule, institutionalized in the joking of ritual entertainers at the fiesta of San Sebastian (Bricker 1937a), and add negative footnotes to the reputation one derives from cargo performance. The man who gets through a fairly prestigious cargo only by stealing and reselling flowers from the church may be treated deferentially to his face but scorned in conversation. A man whose continual drunkenness often lands him in jail and allows him to be cuckolded by his own brother-in-law will derive little prestige from a patchy year in a high cargo office. Even a long career can go wrong.

"They say he was a truncated *martomorey*. He just did six months."

"Yes, just half a year. Old Xun K'obyox went to Hot Country at the fiesta of San Juan [in June]. . . ."

"Ah, was he still alive then. . . .?"

". . . and there he became ill. He returned home only to die. That's when Antun Tzu entered; he replaced old Xun."

"Yes, Antun Tzu only did six months as *martomorey*. Then later he was *Alferez Trinirat*. Then he was third *rejirol* with me. . . ."

"But Antun gets drunk all the time."

"*Putá*, he gets terribly drunk. But he has finished three cargo levels. . . ."

"But he didn't pay attention to his duties even as *rejirol*, did he?"

"He drank too much; his body started to swell up [from cirrhosis]. 'Putá, don't drink so much, man,' I told him. His younger brother got angry with him. 'Why do you drink so much? You're always drunk. You'll die, forget it. Go ahead . . .,' he would say. But he wouldn't listen. He tried to get cured. . . ."

"He was jailed, too. . . ."

"That's right, he was jailed. He just wouldn't take care of himself."

These examples are intended to show that prestige, as allocated by gossip at least, accompanies cargo *performance* rather than following mechanically on incumbency in particular offices. (Perhaps this is one reason Cancian's informants resisted a relative prestige scale in the abstract.) It is clearly true that what is known of a Zinacanteco, and what is said of him (roughly, that is, his reputation), will centrally include his cargo record, if any. But a prestige scale that shows only a systematic connection between prestige and particular offices seems empty beside the sophisticated evaluative procedures gossips employ.

Gossip makes heaviest use of notions of prestige in a negative way: gossips are forever running down the performance of others. Talk is littered with failed careers, frustrated ambition, the pitiable and the laughable; and gossips never hesitate to announce why men have bungled their cargos, to discriminate new ways to fault performance. A picture emerges of cargos and the people who perform them that revolves around the same central concepts earlier ethnographers have employed. But bankruptcy and poverty are more tangible than wealth and success; shame and ridicule predominate, prestige and respect seeming dismayingly infrequent concomitants of cargo work.

A frequent theme is the truncated career, set aside by misfortune or misdeed.

"Old Muchik had already been made *muk'ta 'alkalte*; he would have been in office right now. He had already accepted the paper naming him to office. His scribe was ready, and they got together at the fiesta—it was just about this time of year. . . ."

"You mean for the fiesta of San Lorenzo?"

"Yes. Well, they say lots of people who wanted to request cargos went directly to his house. He accepted their bottles himself; the scribes didn't hear about it. . . ."²⁰

"Ah, he took the bottles in secret. . . ."

"Yes, he took their bottles in secret. 'You now have a cargo,' he would say. Even if someone else had signed up for a cargo, he would give it to another. . . ."

"They say he also took money at his house. . . ."

"Yes. Well, it became known that people had been asking him for cargos. The other elders didn't know about it; the scribes hadn't heard. Just Old Muchik himself was planning to make all the decisions. 'Well, let him stay behind,' said the others. So Muchik didn't ever actually enter as *muk'ta 'alkalte*. . . ."

"Ha ha ha. . . ."

"He was left off the path; that's why he never became *muk'ta 'alkalte*. Now he is left behind."

"Well first Xun Nuj had asked to be *martomo jch'ul-me'tik*.²¹ The senior one, I think."

"Is this the Xun Nuj who lives with Katal Te'tik?"

"That's right. Well, who knows what crime he committed—perhaps he beat her—but he separated from his wife. He was always beating her up.

"Well, how are we going to get you to behave?" said the presidente. Immediately he appointed him a *mayol*, a policeman."

"Ha ha ha. He became an errand-boy and he lost his chance to be *martomo jch'ul-me'tik!*"

"That's right. He had his cargo taken away from him when he cut his wife's head with a knife."

"What was his first cargo?"

"*Santorominko*. Then, for his *alferez* cargo he was *Trinirat*. He was going to pass one more level, but he never reached it. . . ."

"Oh. He ran off?"

"No, that was when his wife died. He was going to be second *rejirol*. But he never did it. . . ."

"If his wife were alive, she would be making tortillas for the elders right now."

Gossip demonstrates that as a device for acquiring prestige the cargo system is often treacherous: people delay, default, flee, and fail, turning the elusive prestige that might have accompanied successful cargo performance into a liability which must be overcome in some other way: into a reputation for drunkenness, stupidity, or dishonesty. And here is the main defect in the more mechanical view of the relationship between cargos and "social status" that anthropologists have urged: though the relationship exists potentially (one might say: structurally), it remains for Zinacantecos to exploit it, to bring off a cargo and to squeeze out of it what they can, or to avoid cargo service and somehow to avoid the consequences. While ethnographers may content themselves with stating the relationship between cargo and prestige as a rule, the gossip need not be so hasty. Certainly a man may pass an extremely expensive cargo; but, after all, he got his money from the sweat of his neighbors, by lending money at interest. True, a certain man may have fled his cargo; but he had been tormented by a series of illnesses which had consumed his corn and left him destitute. And of course, it may be that another man performed a rather unworthy cargo; but we must admit that he rose above it, that he talked reasonably and led his fellows to perform correctly.

Gossip does, in fact, mock the man who performs no cargos and who distinguishes himself *in no way* during his life. Of such a one it may be said:

Solel imolib ta yech.

He simply grew old for nothing.

But gossip tells us the bare facts—that Petul X passed cargo Y—and a good deal more besides: Manvel fled from his cargo; Xun had requested a cargo twenty years from now; Maryan would have served a third cargo, but his wife left him; and so on. Gossip reveals, that is, the extenuating circumstances, the special facts, the misfortunes, the character traits that bear on the evaluation of a man's cargo career, and accordingly on the reputation he derives.

Cargos and Public Identity

To establish a relationship between cargo careers and "social position" we need to find independent criteria of the latter while looking more closely at the range of variation in the former. A survey of the Who's Who lists of cargo participation yields a crude tripartite division of the men in each hamlet into (a) the nonparticipants, (b) the average participants whose records approximate the average number of cargo years in each age group, and (c) the superstars, whose records are much higher than average and who mostly are already old men. Complicating the classification by adding the variable of the prestige level of individual cargos would improve its efficiency (with respect to providing a unique rank for each man in the community). But the resulting ranking might, I claim, still fail to provide a useful guide to social standing—especially since, as I have shown, taking a high-prestige cargo does not guarantee a man success in achieving the desired respect.

Gossip, however, not only can distinguish participation from non-participation, but can uncover the differential commitment of individuals—or entire hamlets—to cargo performance. Calling all participation simply "participation" obscures what is, for gossip, the crucial distinction between, say, the ambitious young *'alperes* and the aged, tired *'alperes*; or, again, between (a) the hapless, failed farmer with no land and, hence, no cargo, (b) the wealthy truck owner who disdains cargos, and (c) the civil official, versed in Spanish, who hobnobs with cargo-holders in official capacities but himself never participates. It is unrevealing to view all men who have progressed to the same *'alperes* cargo as enjoying the same "social standing" or to consider all three types of nonparticipants equally "nonmembers of the community," at the bottom of the social ladder. The cargo system interacts with Zinacanteco social structure (however that is to be delineated) in a more elaborate way.

First, notice that a man who has never had a cargo, or served in any way in the community, may still have a reputation of sorts.

“He is not known to people.”
 “That one hasn’t served in any post at all. . . .”
 “He’s just a hidden person; we never see him leave his house.”
 “But why is that? Why do you think he remains hidden?”
 “As far as I’m concerned, you don’t ask him anything, and you don’t tell him anything.”
 “Even when everyone gets together for a meeting, he doesn’t show his face.”
 “No, no, when people gather in the open for a meeting, when there are matters to discuss, he doesn’t come out. He just stays there hidden, like some girl. . . .”
 “But then you might say he’s just a leftover. . . .”
 “But he’s a good man. . . .”
 “Hah, you can’t say he’s a good-for-nothing. He is a good man. He won’t let himself be seen on purpose. He just hides himself away on purpose. . . .”
 “Because, perhaps, he doesn’t want to be given anything [i.e., any cargo or civil office]. . . .”
 “Then he doesn’t want to serve for anything. . . .”
 “You might say he considers himself just worthless; a good man doesn’t act that way. . . .”
 “But he is rich. He’s a rich man.”

If we look at other indexes of social standing, based on characterizations, both positively and negatively evaluated, occurring in Who’s Who gossip, the relationship to cargo service seems far from straightforward. Figure 8 presents graphically the Who’s Who characterizations of men of different ages in Nabenchauk with respect to six different indexes of reputation. Cargoholders are distinguished from nonparticipants. The first three categories in figure 8 include men known as curers, civil officials at either the municipal or hamlet level, and men known as frequent auxiliary personnel for cargo ritual: musicians, helpers. Men listed in the next two categories are (a) those known for wealth, for special skills or professions (distillers, hat weavers), or for owning trucks, stores, or corn mills; and (b) men known for frequent participation in political disputes or troublemaking. Finally, the last category includes men judged to be deficient in some way: poor, stupid, or criminal. These are rough, intuitive categories and are only crude marks of social position. It seems clear from the results, however, that cargoholders have no monopoly on success in other areas of Zinacanteco life; moreover, cargoholders are not themselves immune from the defects and character faults of their nonparticipant fellows. Though the numbers are too small to be significant, certain regularities emerge: curers who take cargos seem to outnumber those who do not, while the opposite is true for

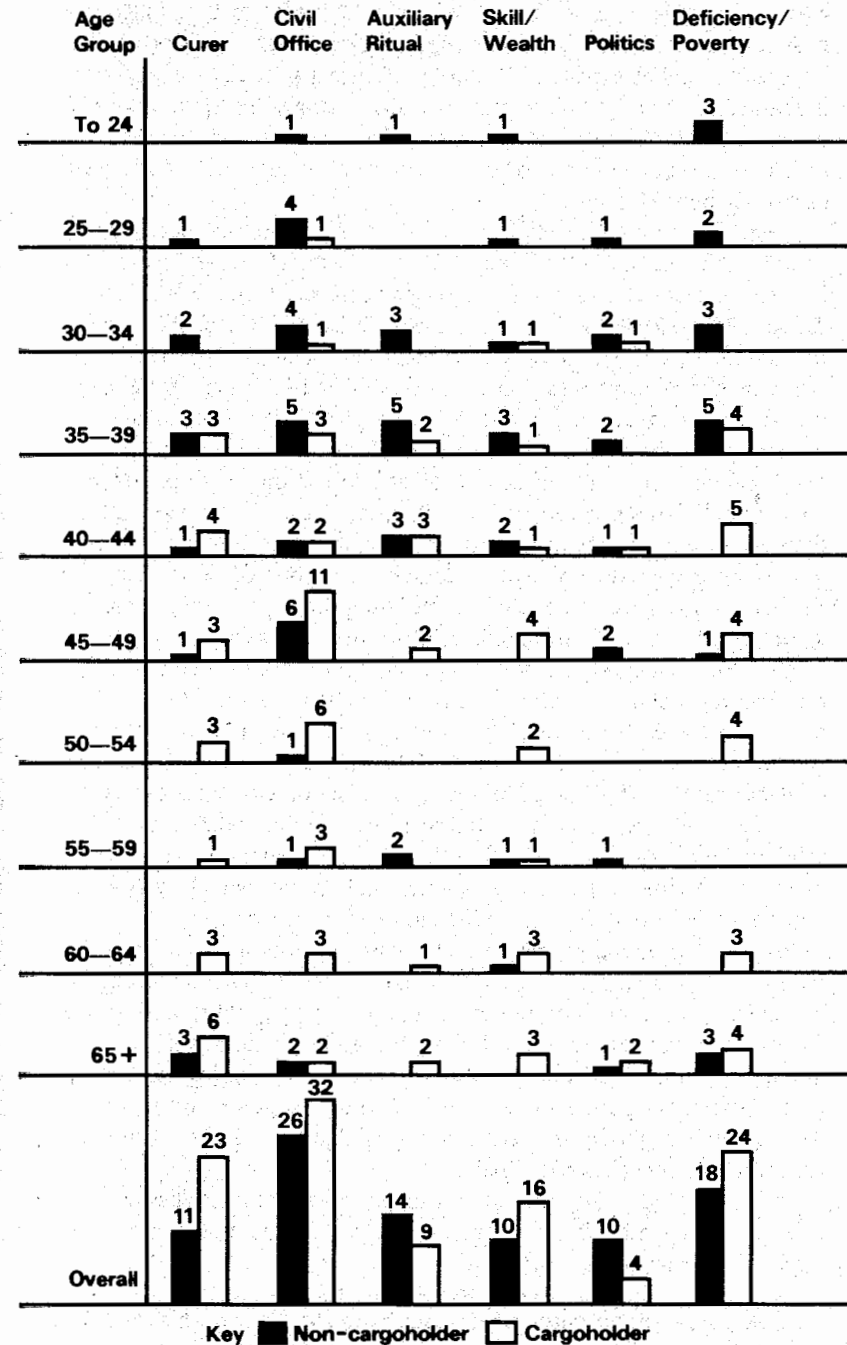


Fig. 8

Who's Who categories for Nabenchauk

politically active men. Still, the Who's Who suggests that cargo service is simply a feature of advancing age in Zinacantan, with other socially important variables equally distributed among participants and nonparticipants. As men get older they are increasingly likely to take cargos; but participation may arguably not affect their social standing except as it allows them to conform to the expectation that a man will perform cargos as befits his age.

There is certainly a relationship between economic success in Zinacantan, the extent and efficacy of one's personal relationships (ritual kin, friends, etc.), and one's cargo performance. Cancian's metaphor of Zinacanteco cargos as American automobiles (1965, p. 90) suggests a not unlikely parallel: there is a similar relationship in the United States between a man's income, his associates, and the make of his car. But the anthropological fascination with cargos, cargo rituals, and cargo-holders (who have been the most sought-after informants) has dulled our appreciation of how much of Zinacantan is made up of people who have bungled their cargo careers, if indeed, they have ever attempted them. Analysts do not ordinarily (though much of American life does) define those who do not own automobiles as out of American society; neither does Zinacantan exclude nonparticipants or marginal participants in the cargo system from membership in the community.

There is an ideology advocating cargo participation. But the rules of this ideology can be violated equally by the rich man who takes one cargo and thereafter steadfastly refuses to continue and by the poor man who never tries or the truck driver who weasels his way out of service. Conversation, furthermore, indicates a kind of conceptual merging of other sorts of service noted in figure 8: on hamlet-level committees (for schools, *ejido* land, electrification, etc.), at the town hall as civil official, as curer, as ritual auxiliary personnel—all service which may compensate to some extent for an undistinguished cargo career.

Who's Who gossip seems, in fact, to assign reputation and prominence to many individuals whose cargo performance is substandard. Though a hamlet like *'Elan Vo'* or *'Atz'am* may be laughable and ridiculous for its poor showing in the religious hierarchy, residents of such places are nonetheless unmistakably Zinacantecos, often enjoying reputations more far-reaching than those gained through cargos: *'Atz'am* is known for its witches; an *'Elan Vo'* family possess the *t'ent'en* drum, one of Zinacantan's most sacred objects.

Indeed, the idea that the religious hierarchy circumscribes the boundaries of Zinacantan is troublesome. Note that there is some rare, but explicit, anticargo talk.

An old woman curer, whose husband died during his cargo, is known for speaking against cargos during drunken moments.

"That's what the old woman says. She doesn't want to dance; she doesn't want to enjoy herself there beneath the feet of Our Lord. She says that the saints are eaters of men, that that is why her husband died so young."

"Yes, that's what the old woman is likely to say when she is drunk."

Lol, a wealthy man (who has, incidentally, taken a local Nabenchauk cargo and is a curer), scolds cargo-holders who want to borrow money.

"But Lol's head is bad anyway, if you ask to borrow money from him. Old Telex, when he was about to enter his cargo as *'alperes santorominko*, went to borrow money from him. He had a hard time getting to talk to Lol, but he finally found him.

"Well, all right, you can have the money," he said. "You can have the money; but why have you asked for a cargo if you don't have any money of your own?"

"Yes, they say he got angry right away."

"People take cargos, but they only use up the money they have borrowed from others; they take pride in doing cargos, but on other people's money," he says.

"What does God want? What does San Lorenzo want? The saints just stand there silently. They just stand there silent on their long legs, with their eyes closed," he says. Lol doesn't want to aid cargo-holders."

"Our Lord doesn't know how to drink liquor; He doesn't go asking people for money. It is *you* who squander the money. It is to *your* companions that you give liquor. For them you measure out the rum, you give meals, not for Our Lord," Lol says to cargo-holders. (Ha ha ha.)"

Similarly, some men reverse the normal pattern of avoiding civil service—considered an impediment to a cargo career—by taking civil office or employing other ruses to avoid cargos. Sometimes their motives are perceived to be personal.

Antun refused a cargo in order, the story goes, to pursue his womanizing.

"He used to have a lot of mistresses and that is why he has become poor."

"Well, Antun used to sell flowers and he made lots of money. But when it was seen that he had money, they sent him the candles [signifying selection] for *martomo santorominko*. But Antun wouldn't accept them. He returned them to the elders, saying he had no money, that he was poor. But what was in his heart then was all his mistresses.

"Well, the elders were unwilling to take back the candles; Antun only managed to get off with great difficulty. Then Antun was elated because he was free from the cargo. Well, he still didn't abandon his mistresses; he kept going to visit them, and eventually he lost his money from it. He ended up poor.

"Now it may be seen that he didn't accept his *martomo* cargo. Now it is clear that Our Lord gave punishment, and thus Antun lost all his money."

"The story about old Xap is that he never did a cargo. He just got old here on earth, never wanted a cargo."

"Yes, but that was because he was the money-collector for the *ejido* committee. That's why he never asked for a cargo, he said he wasn't free, he didn't have time, since he had been elected to the office. And now he has given up because he is too old."

"But other people say that he just offered himself on purpose for the money-collecting job, so that he wouldn't have to do a cargo."

Cancian's hypothesis about this deviation from the normal cargo ideology is stronger. "The nonparticipants who are *not* held back by economic limitations or the demands of other roles in public life are very few. They are men whose loyalty is divided between Zinacantan and the Ladino world outside. (Note: An undetermined number of Zinacantecos disappear completely into the Ladino world each year, losing all contact with their relatives.)" (1965, pp. 128-29). This view rests on what is at present an untenable dichotomy between what is in and what is out of Zinacantan. It is not necessary to postulate the existence of a faceless mass of disappeared Indians: there are many Zinacantecos with whom I am acquainted who have left Zinacantan in one way or another without having to "lose all contact with their relatives." Indeed, many politically active Zinacantecos themselves returned to the community after some period in the "ladino world" and now occupy important positions. One wealthy cargoholder in Nabenchauk has sent two sons away to school in the lowland city of Tuxtla Gutierrez; Zinacantecos travel, work, and—in at least one new lowland colony—live outside the *municipio* in ladino environments. It is thus a distortion to insist on the central role of the cargo system in defining the limits of the community, when many young Zinacantecos avoid cargos, and when the boundaries of the community are themselves under attack. Cancian, in a recent paper describing changes in cargo participation from the early to the late 1960s, makes this same point: "Population growth was producing many more adult men than could be accommodated in the cargo system, while economic prosperity was producing a great over-demand for the most expensive and prestigious cargos" (1974, p. 167).

One result, with wide community ramifications, was that "the cargo system was becoming unable to provide a controlled mode of expression that would commit men to the community by exchanging their money for prestige good only in Zinacantan" (1974, p. 167). Zinacantecos have discovered, and have been peddled, new ways to spend their money, from wider Mexican and world society. Cancian concludes that "while the cargo system served Zinacanteco identity, it was never equivalent to it" (1974, p. 172).

Notice, also, that gossip shows how cargo service, from an individual standpoint, may represent something other than a commitment "to the Indian way of life" (Cancian 1965, p. 133). Zinacantecos employ cargos in their personal life strategies in manifold ways: for showing off and self-aggrandizement, to stave off criticism and envy, to salvage otherwise failed lives. I cannot avoid the feeling that some Zinacantecos take cargos or involve themselves with ritual simply because they enjoy it. They are part of the core of ritualists who surround the hierarchy year after year—much as some devoted alumni return for homecoming year after year. Similarly, some men, like Lol in the story above, perform cargos but still criticize the tradition, call it into question, ridicule others for participating.

Again, though cargo service may provide for "socially controlled . . . display" by stipulating "rules under which a man may enhance his public image" (Cancian 1965, p. 135), gossip reveals that it is also possible for overzealous pursuit of cargo glory to backfire. Men can overuse or twist the rules. A man progressing too rapidly will offend his elders. One Zinacanteco, trying to decide whether to accept a chance to take a second cargo at a relatively young age, went to his father for advice. The older man, who had completed only one cargo, flew into a rage and accused his son of disrespect for trying to surpass his own father in the hierarchy. Similarly, I recall the remarks of a young man unwilling, though technically qualified, to serve as ritual adviser, in which position he would have been senior to men much older than he. Hubris and ambition are rarely appreciated.

Public opinion may accord only grudging admiration to even the most ostentatious cargoholder when gossip grumbles about the sources of his wealth: he got money from the Earth Lord, from charging interest to his fellows, from selling his daughters' weaving, from gringo anthropologists. Furthermore the argument that the good man is rewarded by wealth and cargo success is hardly convincing, still less satisfying, to the poor Zinacanteco who can never afford a cargo. Zinacantecos are no more receptive than we are to the argument that they have never gotten ahead because they don't deserve success. Conversation does make use of an idiom of fate and luck, and no one hesitates to run down the

lazy good-for-nothing. But gossip is two-faced: occasionally it is willing to pity the unfortunate and excoriate the wicked rich.

I suggested in chapter 1 that gossip provides members of a community with a map of their social environment. Individuals in Zinacantan and elsewhere know (perhaps with varying certainty, in ever-widening, more diluted concentric circles) the identities of their neighbors. More than this, they know a good deal *about* their neighbors: Some of the information they possess may have direct practical importance; a man's community map will mark not only, say, the best spots for gathering firewood or for planting a particular variety of bean, but also the most likely lenders and the most powerful curers. Some of the information they possess about their neighbors may also feed speculation of a less instrumental sort; it may enable evaluation and moral calculation which influence how a man *feels* about his fellows—whom he counts as friends or enemies, allies or rivals. I may portray this social map as a collection, thoroughly cross-indexed but uneven, of dossiers on salient individual neighbors (whose dossiers might, for example, be considered to include information about less salient individuals peripheral to them—for example, adolescent sons and daughters).

My survey in chapter 5 of frequent gossip themes, along with the list of Who's Who categories, constitutes an index of sorts to the set of possible dossier entries. Gossip provides, on this analysis, a common source of input to the ongoing reputations people acquire, and the short characterizations which figure in Who's Who eliciting sessions represent a kind of distillate of gossip items, on their way to becoming reputation—that is, entries in individual dossiers.

In this chapter I have concentrated on a central component of reputation (an especially important entry for Zinacanteco dossiers)—one's cargo career. It should be clear that a cargo career, to extend the metaphor, opens new pages in one's dossier. Cargo performance enables and provides data for speculation about ambition and self-esteem. Moreover, the fact that a man embarks on a cargo career implies that his performance will be carefully scrutinized, and various facets even of his private life (his success at corn farming, his proper relations with his wife and kinsmen) will suddenly become relevant to calculations of his success (or probable success) in office and the esteem he will merit as a result.

A person's dossier will be pieced together from bits of information gathered in varying circumstances, crucially including gossip. And it is precisely by attention to gossip that we can tease apart, within a person's reputation, several interacting components (see fig. 9). In a society like Zinacantan we can distinguish certain culturally given possibilities: roles or identities which individuals can occupy (in various clusterings, and with all the familiar sorts of complexity). But when gossips deal with

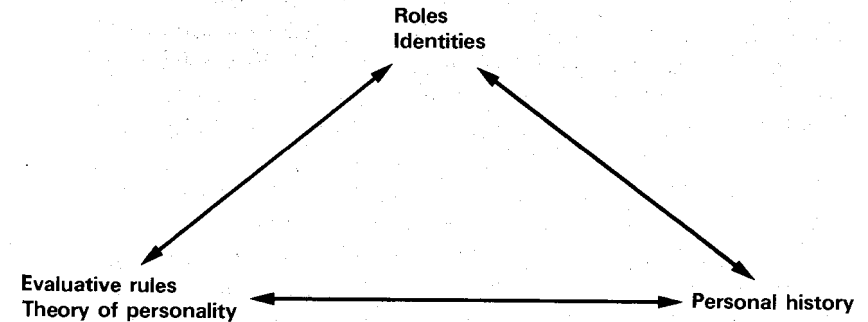


Fig. 9 Components of reputation

real individuals, not mere analytical abstractions, they play off idealized identities against their protagonist's personal history—a history that can be widened to include all mishaps, strokes of luck, favorable marriages, unforeseen illnesses, grand inheritances, and so forth, that are deemed relevant to the issues. The gossip strains all this through a conceptual apparatus that contains evaluative words, theories of personality or motivation, and logical mechanisms by which actions are interpreted and evaluated, opinions formed, agreement solicited, and conclusions promulgated. What emerges from this process is an item of gossip that can be entered in a person's dossier. An aggregate of such bits is his reputation—a record of his personal history, filtered and evaluated.

Notice that the process of compiling dossiers on one's neighbors may lead one to expect certain *interdependencies*, whose status is inductive and empirical (based on a collection of individual cases) but which acquire a logical, analytic character. Thus, many people known as *jsa'-k'opetik* ("troublemakers")—men and women who frequent the town hall and the San Cristóbal courts in one intrigue after another—are also renowned as competent Spanish-speakers. Similarly, to name someone as a powerful curer is automatically to wonder whether he is also a witch. Thus, too, are the lazy man, the poor man, and the thief linked. It is for such reasons that the man with a distinguished cargo record, in theory a paragon of propriety and high-minded public generosity, is the same man whose illicit sexual exploits and shady financial dealings (or, worse, alleged connections with the Earth Lord or wealth gained by selling souls) make such juicy news. Discussion tends to follow these conceptual interdependencies, which thereby become gossip formulas as well.

Cargos are, then, a major input to reputation, as they are realized in an individual's personal history. And as a man's performance survives the scrutiny of the gossip's evaluative apparatus, it will yield something we may as well call prestige; just as, when it does not survive such scrutiny, a career may result in notoriety, scandal, and shame.