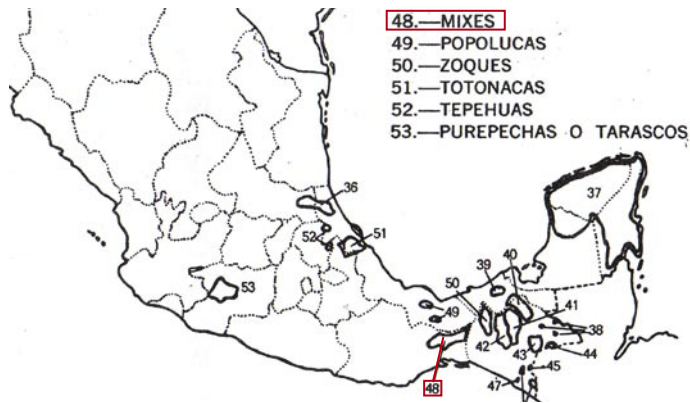


SUBREGION LA SELVA MIXE



Pic. 1: The territory of the Mixe

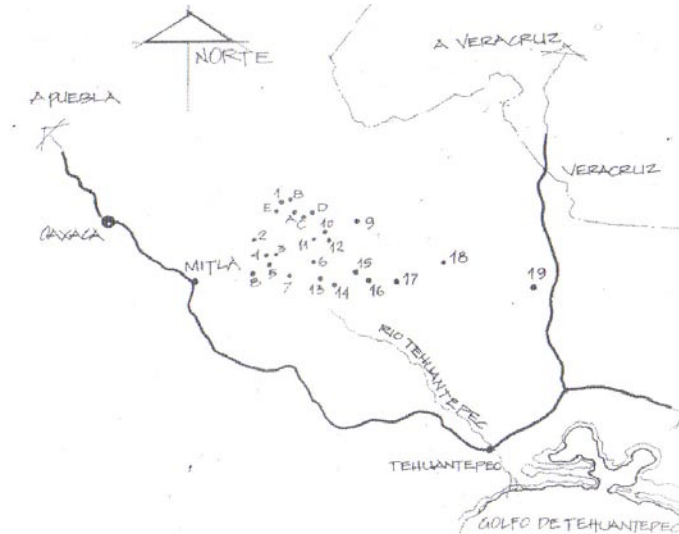
FACTS

Inhabitants:	118.924 Mixe in Mexico 105.443 Mixe in Oaxaca
Average Income:	subsident
Life Expectancy:	60+
Language:	Mixe -Zoque/ Ayuuk ja' ay, Spanish
Religion:	Catholicism mixed with traditional, indigenous beliefs and customs
Climate:	neotropical (warm and wet), most rainfall June - September
Topography:	Sierra Madre del Sur (average height 2000m)

INTRODUCTION

The indigenous group of the Mixes can be encountered in the highlands north-east of the Valle Central in the *Sierra Madre del Sur*, close to the limits of Veracruz. During colonial times the Mixes fled from Spanish conquests by hiding deep in the Oaxacan mountains and caves. Up until today they live fairly isolated preserving their traditional rituals and customs. They are famous for their traditional medicine and knowledge of herbs and plants.

Their territory -la selva mixe- can be separated in three geographical zones: *la zona alta* characterized by the heights of Zempoaltépetl at an altitude of about 1500m above sea level and a cold climate; *la zona media* at an height of 800 to 1500m with dense forest and temperate climate; *la zona baja* at an height of less than 800m with warm and rainy climate.



Pic. 2: Map of region with villages

The regions are crossed by three rivers the Coatzacoalcos, the Tehuantepec and the Papaloapan.

INFRASTRUCTURE

With the construction of a road in the year 2000 the Mixe region became connected to the rest of the country. A sand route leads from Oaxaca City over Mitla to Ayutla, and from there connects to the more remote mountain villages. Most of the villages in the region have access to electricity and clean water although somewhat unreliably.

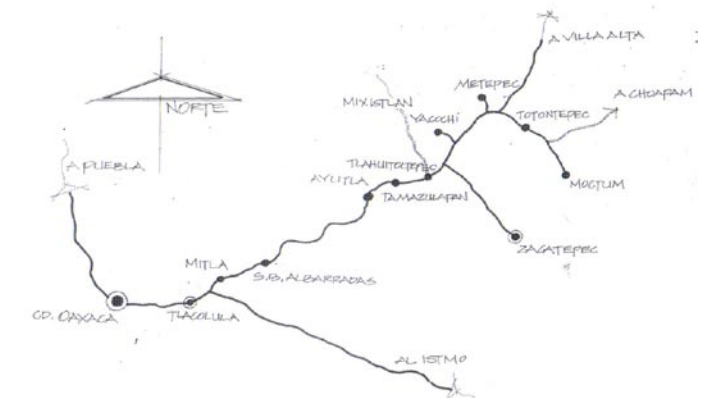
During rain season the villages are often cut off from electrical supply, and communication due to the underdeveloped state of roads and water channels.



Pic. 3: Typical mountain road

Pic. 4: Road after landslide

There are medical facilities in most of the larger villages, but no hospitals for serious emergencies. The nearest are situated in Mitla or Oaxaca City. All villages have a small school yet often



Pic. 5: Map of Mixe villages

without teachers. The main villages also offer secondary and higher education on a bilingual level, the regional dialect and Spanish.

ECONOMY

The majority of the people work in agriculture. The produces vary between the three zones. In the high and cold part they cultivate corn, potatoes and chilli, in the middle part which offers better soil and climate they cultivate corn, chilli, beans, sugar, bananas and coffee, the same as in the low part only that they have a stress on the breeding of pigs and lambs.



Pic. 5: Coffee beans

Pic. 6: Coffee growers drying beans

The traditional craft objects are traditionally embroidered textiles which are produced for personal use and for sale, clay pottery and everyday articles of palm and grass.

The inhabitants of these three regions also commute temporarily into bigger cities and industrial regions, and even as far as the USA to offer their work as builders, housemades, cooks and alike.

SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE

As most of the Mexican settlements, the rural villages in the mixe region draw parallels to the traditional, colonial spanish settlements with a public plaza in the central position of the village. On the place, the so called *zocalo*, lie the municipal palance, the church and the quarters of village officials, teachers or the priest. The public market is held close to the *zocalo*, if not directly on it.



Pic. 7: Central village square

Pic. 8: Houses tucked to mountain side

Below and around the main place are the houses of the village families, usually with a small adjoining garden to grow plants and food. As agriculture is traditionally done extensively, the fields lie hidden within the forest surrounding a village.



Pic. 9: Typical arrangement of family houses

MOBILITY

Villagers commute within the region by means of public buses, private pick-ups and by foot to trade local and foreign produce. Private car ownership is limited. Individual traffic is rare, as nearly every car owner offers taxi service as a side

Images:

Pic.-Nr.: 1 Lilian Scheffler, Los Indeginas mexicanos, Pic.-Nr.: 3-4 Carola Scholz, Pic.-Nr.: 2,5 Noemi Gomez Bravo, Moctum. Antigua Grandeza de un Pueblo Mixe, 2004, Oaxaca Carola Scholz Pic.-Nr.: 5-17 Carola Scholz

income. This unofficial system of transport substitutes for the underdeveloped public transportation system. Within a village the people do their business by foot or, which is becoming more common now, by bicycle. On the field they work with mulis and donkies.



Pic. 10: Typical form of Transport

Pic. 11: Mulis carrying fire wood

MATERIALS

Due to the isolation of many villages the use of purely organic materials for daily use and construction was the rule. These organic materials are clay, straw, natural stone, leaves etc.. Now that the infrastructure developed, people start to construct their houses with concrete. Usually, depending on the financial



Pic. 12: Regional stone

Pic. 13: Earth bricks



Pic. 14: Men carrying sand

Pic. 15: washing coffee beans

Literature:

Barabas A.M. Bartolomé M.A. Maldonado B., Atlas Etnografía. Los pueblos indígenas de Oaxaca, 2003, Mexico D.F.; Noemi Gomez Bravo, Moctum. Antigua Grandeza de un Pueblo Mixe, 2004, Oaxaca, Frank j. Lipp, The Mixe of Oaxaca. Religion, Ritual, and Healing, 1998 Austin; Lilian Scheffler. Los Indeginas mexicanos, 1992 Mexico D.F.

situation, families begin with a tin shed, which they later build up into a adobe or concrete and steel house. Roofs covered with metal sheets are common and preferred to the original grass or palm leave covers.

The traditional construction tools of wood are gradually replaced by commercial tools, traditional ovens by electric stoves, traditional by cheap chinese clothes.



Pic. 16: Adobe and wood house

Pic. 17: Prefabricated concrete house



Pic. 17: Concrete brick house

Pic. 17: Tin sheet shed

Websites:

<http://www.ienegi.com>