B. Fieldwork

Pino Tumbao is a small mountain community of some thirty households located on the northern slopes of the Cordillera Central. From the capital city of Santo Domingo, on the south coast, the journey by público is made in three stages, up to the small town of Guaroa, on the north side of the island. From Guaroa a jeep climbs 27 kilometers, in a westerly direction, up into the sierra on a dirt road made in the days when the sawmills were still cutting pine trees in the mountains. After a climb of some two hours, well up into pine tree country, the jeep comes up into a level clearing. The first buildings to be encountered is the cuartel, the military outpost manned by a corporal and six guardias. These grey wooden barracks are the final military outpost between the north and the south side of the Cordillera Central. Some three hundred yards beyond the cuartel is the small community of La Sabanita. Some twenty houses are lined around the perimeter of an open space called la sabana. In La Sabanita live the forest rangers, the alcalde for the entire mountain sección, the small clinic manned by a practicante paid by the government, and the owners of the most important businesses. Here the jeep ride ends. The road continues; all through the sierra the lumber company had built access roads for its huge trucks. But ever since its closing by the government in late 1967, no one has maintained the roads in condition.

Beyond La Sabanita the mountains continue torise, and the dwellings of the serranos--a designation which has the

same pejorative connotation in the Dominican Republic as its English counterpart "hillbilly" can have in the U.S.--stretch all the way to the ridge of the Cordillera Central where the province of Santiago Rodriguez on the north meets the province of San Juan de la Maguana on the south side of the sierra.

The trip from La Sabanita to Pino Tumbao--which is the first small _paraje_ back into the mountains beyond La Sabanita--is made in an hour on foot, in less by mule. La Sabanita is the gateway through which the thousands of _serranos_ scattered throughout the hills must pass to reach the outside world.

My first contact with La Sabanita and Pino Tumbao came, as already mentioned, in the summer of 1967. I was first drqwn therr by the presence of a sawmill in the mountains, and the "company town" (now gone) associated with this sawmill. My principal aim that summer was to do a comparatve study of the "world view" of the two different economic groups, the sawmill workers (most of whom were from outside) and the local _campesinos_.

While I was in the community, a _campesino_ from Pino Tumbao, farther into the mountains, approached me and invited me to spend some time there to find out the "true story" of what was happening. He and others were afraid that the forest rangers, who lived in Sabanita, were giving me false information about the activities of the _campesinos_.

Many of these mountaineers, who live by a combination of shifting cultivation, small-scale livestock raising, and some coffee growing, were being arrested for the felling of pine trees. Since La Sabanita and Pino Tumbao are located in a pine forest, the clearing of land for conucos had traditionally entailed the felling of pines, an activity now forbidden by law and punished by fine and imprisonment.

I was able to stay in Pino Tumbao only a week; and though I gathered some vivid and impassioned tape recordings of the attitudes, beliefs, feelings, etc. of the serranos toward the forest rangers, the government, the U.S., their farming, and their life in general, I had very few specific notions about the economic foundation of their lives.

In early 1970 the Institute for Latin American Studies at Columbia gave me a research grant for the summer. Since national elections in the Dominican Republic were to be held in May of 1970, I left for the field at the beginning of May, arriving in La Sabanita some ten days before the elections. I had previously written to my former hosts in Pino Tumbao that I would like to spend several months there this trip.

What would have otherwise been a delicate affair--the arrival of an American investigator complete with camera and tape recorder just before the elections--was made less remarkable by the fact of my former visit there. I was welcomed by the local cacique (political boss), who was a forest ranger and a friend of mine from the former visit.

This individual took me to different political meetings, both public and higher-level private, which were being held during the campaign time. For more than a month I stayed in La Sabanita, where the important local figures lived, and where most of the pre-election activity was taking place. For the first month my attention was directed almost exclusively to the political goings-on. I did very little questioning during this pre-election and election period, as I was somewhat sensitive to a possible misconstrual of my role. I merely watched, listened, and took daily notes.

About the middle of June I left La Sabanita and went further on back into the sierra, to the community of Pino Tumbao. The matter of the move was somewhat of a delicate point. My hosts in La Sabanita (a forest ranger at whose house outsiders usually ate and frequently slept) couldn't understand why I had to go to live somewhere else an hour away. And at the same time, my hosts in Pino Tumbao, to whom I had earlier written, had felt somewhat offended that I had not gone immediately to Pino Tumbao, but had stayed for over a month in La Sabanita. In their words, "Those people in La Sabanita stole you from us." And as I left La Sabanita to go to Pino Tumbao, the local political boss said, "Ya Jerry nos está botando," now Jerry is throwing us out. These remarks were made in a joking manner, but it was clear that more was involved.

On the one hand such behavior can be understood in terms

of the spectacular hospitality given to guests in the Dominican sierra, part of which entails frequent verbal assetions of welcome and regret at departure. But on the other hand it would be naîve to interpret this tug-of-war in strictly personal terms. A conflict between two social groups, the shifting cultivators and the forest rangers, manifested itself in a reluctance to let the "other side" have full possession of the foreign question-asker.

Most of my field work was done right in the *paraje* of Pino Tumbao. A long interview schedule was given to over twenty families outside of Pino Tumbao as well, to get some quantified information about the families farther back into the sierra; but most of the intensive observation and questioning was done in Pino Tumbao. The economic situation of the families in the sierra is relatively homogeneous. They are all formally landless; interhousehold distinctions are based principally on the amount of coffee one has planted and the number of cows and pigs one has wandering over the sierra. But these distinctions are not great enough to warrant different social classes as constructs for differentiating mountaineer families one from another. The principal differences occurred around coffee, where some individuals entered into economic relationships with credit-merchants and bought coffee from their neighbors at half price *before* the harvest. But with respect to the shifting cultivation, the sierra is practically homogeneous. Every family makes

at least one <u>conuco</u> per year, and every family plants pretty much the same crops as their neighbors.

In the observation of daily behavior, I had determined which were the most frequent behavior sequences in which people appeared to be engaged and on that basis observed and recorded different scenes. Some important behavior sequences--such as <u>conuco</u> making--were long range serials, not every scene of which I was able to be present at. For example, felling and burning takes place between January and March. Such scenes I had to reconstruct by careful verbal elicitation. But whereas the elicitation during my 1967 field trip had been in the nature of "what-do-you-think-how-do-you-feel" types of questions, the observer-oriented point of view adopted in this summer's study motivated more specific sorts of questions. "In what month did you clear? Did anybody help you? How many days did it take?" Such sorts of questions, while falling short of the data gleaned in actual observation, nonetheless can provide the investigator with specific data on the occurrence or lack of occurrence of certain higher level chains.

As for the tape recording, I not only interviewed people, but obtained permission from my host family--who were shifting cultivators as every other family--to tape record the conversations that occurred intheir house, their kitchen, and their patio. The tape recorder was a daily sight. In several cases, I was able to make an actonic

recording (by note taking) of different activities carried out, while the tape recorder picked up the verbal interaction between the family members and any relatives or neighbors who were present. On several coccasions I left the tape recorder running in the house and absented myself. Thought there were a few instances where the participants didn't know they were beigg taped, most of the participants were aware of the tape recorder. I made it a practice to play back all of the tapes to the people involved--an event which inevitably provoked hilarity and insigbtful comments. Several of the tapes I transcribed right in the field with the help of the people who had participated in them.

The effect of the tape recorder proved to be similar to the effect of a strange ethnographer. For the first few days and weeks, people are on their guard; but when the outside person or object becomes a commonplace, behavior reverts to normal. Some of the conversations I have tape recorded are, to my knowledge, as genuine and natural as the conversations in which I participated where there was no tape recorder.

The tape recordings--not all of which have been transcribed yet--have provided me with an enormous amount of material which has yet to be analyzed. One of the surprising contributions of recording--electronically or with pencil and paper--conversations between people are the insights gleaned into the scenes which one has observed. Significant

technological problems and social conflicts that the ethnographer would never dream of looking for come to the fore when the people are conversing among themselves. Though this source of data presupposes a high fluency in the language (for which there are admittedly more facilities for attaining in Spanish than in the languages of primitive tribes), those who are able to understand the language of their informants will do their study servide if they suppress question asking at least part of the time and become casual eavesdroppers.

The question of public nonte taking is simiaar to that of tape recording. There are situations in which it is positively detrimental to be writing down what people are saying--either to each other or to the anthropologist. But I found that by publicly taking notes right from the beginnigg of my stay, by becoming identified with this strange activity, I was eventually able to take notes almost anywhere without evoking comment or causing heads to turn. My impression was that often people saw me writing but were unaware that their activities or conversations were the subject of my recording. Some of the situations were so 'trivial' as not to merit recording, in their view. It was always rather obvious when note-taking was making someone on thesscene nervous, and these situations were rare. The only individual who inevitably commented on my note-taking was the political boss in La Sabanita. He

considered it quite valuable that I should carefully record our conversations about the situation in the hills, prospects for the future, and the like; but found it hilarous that I should sit and watch children arguing at stick-ball and then write it down.

In general I believe that one can be "oversensitive" about public note taking. By doing it from the start, the people with whom I established any sort of regular contact eventually came to consider it a normal and unthreatening activity on my part. At least I believe the burden of proof would lie on him who declares it disruptive of either behavior or relationships.

At the end of the summer I was given access, in Santo Domingo, to the individual census sheets filled in each house in the entire sección of Monte Adentro, of which Pino Tumbao and La Sabanita are parajes. The census had been made in January of 1970 and on the whole was very competently done. There is little serious discrepancy between what I know to be the case in many households and what was reported on the census. Access to these individual hoase sheets, generously given me by the Oficina Nacional de Estadística, was a great boon, in teems of providing much quantified data on household composition, common-law unions, and general demographic information on the entire population of oter 3,000 individuals and 500 households.

At the end of the year, between December 24 and December 31, I returned to Pino Tumbao. During this brief Christmas visit, I made a rapid economic census of the yields for different crops which had been planted, but not yet harvested, while I was there during the summer. During this trip I also had the opportunity to clear up some questions that had popped up concerning the *conuco* cycle during the Fall, as I was writing my first formulation of the sequence.