

Interview with Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman)
Mexico City
January 9, 2009

Kathy Kenny: I'm talking to Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman) on the 9th of January 2009 in Mexico City and you were telling me about your –

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): Great-grandfather [*** Marcos - first name unknown]

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): Let me tell you the story as I have heard it.

In 1870 [actually 1889] when the Eiffel Tower was inaugurated my great-grandfather had a shop [in Bethlehem] where he made religious articles, you know, rosaries and crucifixes out of *concha naca* [mother of pearl]. And he went with his products to the fair in Paris¹ and he did very well.

With the money he got from this fair he went back [to Bethlehem], packed everything and went to America. He arrived to New York first, but they told him in New York that these religious articles were not going to sell well there, so he should go south. So he began to journey south and for some reason, he established his initial family in a [Mexican] border town with the U.S. in Coahuila which at the time was called Ciudad Porfirio Díaz. You won't find it on the map now because after the Revolution they erased it and, it's called now Piedras Negras.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): He left my grandfather there.

Kathy Kenny: Grandfather?

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): Elias *** Marcos.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): And he made several trips all throughout Latin America all the way from the Pacific, you know, he would do this by ship, to Chile and then back, Argentina and Brazil and what have you. He made several trips and he went back to die in, in Jerusalem or in Bethlehem. We have a letter from him that it's an official picture because at one time he became the Mayor of Jerusalem..

Kathy Kenny: He was the mayor of Jerusalem?

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): He was the mayor of Jerusalem. There, there is a – I don't have it. My cousins, my cousin **** has it and I think it's very important –

Kathy Kenny: I would like to have a copy.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): – but you – I, I will get a copy for you. Where he explains that he was asked to provide, you know, this public service. He had the resources to do

¹ The Eiffel tower in Paris was inaugurated on 31 March 1889. It was the keystone of the Universal Exposition celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution.

it, so he, he spent some time working for the community as the mayor of Jerusalem. That's what I understand.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): My grandfather stayed in Mexico since he was 10 and then he went to Bethlehem and married – they must have arranged this marriage- and [he] married my grandmother, Carmen Marcos.

So my family is Marcos Marcos because both the names are Marcos. That's the origin from my father's side.

From my mother's side I know more about Dabdoub because my grandfather died when he was very young.

Kathy Kenny: Solomon.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): He migrated – Solomon Giacaman. He migrated directly from Torreon.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): To Torreon. They established themselves in Torreon and then my, my grandmother Maria Dabdoub was brought to Mexico when he was just newly born. She was born in, in Cascais in Portugal because I understand they were, they were on their on their way to America and that's where she was born.

Kathy Kenny: And do you know approximately the year when they came? What year was your grandmother born?

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): My grandmother – must have been [born] somewhere in the 19th century, you know, the end of the 19th century.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): ****. That's direct – same as my, my mother – my father's family. My, my grandfather died at the age of 94, 93 or 94 in 1970 something like that, so, yeah, he was, he was from 19 – 1880, 1880.

Kathy Kenny: 1880. That's amazing.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): That's amazing.

Kathy Kenny: You have some very good genes.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): Well, I, I'm always grateful for that.

Kathy Kenny: Yeah.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): I, I feel very nice about that.

Kathy Kenny: So –

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): My – I have a, an uncle that became a priest in one of these late vocation things. He was born in Monterrey. He started law and when he wanted to, just to dedicate himself to, to the priesthood, he went to, to the Vatican and that's where he started. He was in a seminary in the Vatican and somehow he was sent to Bethlehem for some time as part of his training or whatever. I really don't have that very clear, but he spent some time in Bethlehem and he says that he did some research on the churches in, in Bethlehem to find out the origin of the Marcos –

Kathy Kenny: The family record, yeah.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): He was – yeah, family record. He, he's a, he's a, he's a Marcos also and he claims that the Marcos family and the Canavati family and perhaps the **** family also are in the Holy Land since the, since the time of the Crusades, one of the Crusades. They stayed there. All of them worked in, in jobs related to the, to the holy places, you know. They, they were very Catholic. They were – all of my family **** –

Kathy Kenny: Are they Roman Catholic or orthodox?

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): Yeah, Roman Catholic.

Kathy Kenny: Oh, okay.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): My, my, my grandfather on my mother's side Solomon **** was –

Kathy Kenny: Orthodox.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): – orthodox and obviously my, my wife's father who was a Greek was from the, from the Greek Orthodox Church. But they have always been very religious, you know, very religious **** Catholic, so I mean, it has to have some relationship with the, with the Holy Land, you know. It's – not, not, not much of the, of the Palestinian Islamic community but somehow the, the one related with the, with the church, you know.

Kathy Kenny: Yes.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): ****.

Kathy Kenny: That's a very common –

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): Common.

Kathy Kenny: – story actually.

Ernesto Marcos Yacamán (Giacaman): Yeah.

Kathy Kenny: Let me just turn this off real quick.