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CONSUMING THE MAYA: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF EATING AND BEING IN THE LAND OF THE CASTE WARS

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This dissertation is an ethnographic work describing how foodways have become central to identity negotiation in a Maya village that has recently been impacted by evangelical conversion and tourism. This village is in the region of Quintana Roo, Mexico best known for its involvement in the Caste Wars of Yucatán and historic resistance to assimilation to Mexican identity. However, in recent years, the demand for inexpensive labor in the hotel zone of the Caribbean coast of Quintana Roo has led to improved infrastructure and transportation to these villages.

With this improved infrastructure has come increased outside interaction including the establishment of evangelical churches and day labor buses. These combined influences of religion and labor changes have led to new ways of negotiating identity that had not previously existed in village life here. Because life in this village had always centered on subsistence farming and its associated food getting and food making tasks, the option for wage labor and evangelical

religion have provided a support system for those unable or unwilling to participate in traditional forms of subsistence.

The new social structures are often negotiated using food and foodways as a declaration of belonging or resistance. My work provides vignettes describing these processes of identity negotiation at the national, regional and familial levels.

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Chapter 1 Introduction – Why Food?

Food in Anthropological Theory

This dissertation will illustrate the role food can play in 'polite[1]' ways to negotiate resistance to and acceptance of tradition in the heart of the Caste War region of Quintana Roo. In addition foodways allow for an amicable form of identity negotiation in populations where new ways of being are becoming available. This chapter will introduce my theoretical background describing the ways in which studying foodways can provide a meaningful lens for anthropological fieldwork.

Eating is a human universal. While sex and procreation are not activities in which all humans partake, either due to age, dysfunction or choice, we all must consume calories to survive. However, this is not a uniquely human need. Elevating food preparation and consumption to an art form or to a symbolic form of communication is. This dissertation joins other anthropologists, historians and social scientists in teasing out social cues visible in the way people grow, harvest, store, prepare, cook, serve, eat and dispose of food.

Theoretically, this dissertation incorporates the historical lineage of applying socio-linguistic to food studies. Linguistic anthropologists have seen food as a symbolic form of communication at least since Claude Lévi-Strauss.

[1] See Chapter 5 for a discussion of Robin Lakoff's theory of politeness and how I apply it to the semiotics of food.

Early structuralist linguistic anthropologists, such as Lévi-Strauss (1997, 1983, 1963), rationalized that like language, eating is a human universal and as a result applied a similar methodology to the study of food and foodways.

Whereas in verbal communication the spoken word is the signifier and refers to a signified person, place or thing (Pinker 2009), in food studies, the signifier consists of a consumable or its associated method of preparation or consumption that can refer to individual or group values, ideology or status[2]. I see it as a condensed communication of beliefs signified by how an item is cooked, paired with other foods, how it is consumed, with whom, where and when. In sum, "In order to make explicit the covert meanings of a cultural system, structuralists seek to treat these systems as languages and to analyze them by methods and models borrowed from linguistics" (Brown and Mussell 1984:12).

Two levels of linguistic analysis that can be productively coopted to study foodways as a communicative system are: first, through language use, by investigating *how* language is used by people within their speech communities and second, through analyzing language ideology whereby people apply their beliefs and values regarding language. Because, like language, food is universal, it can be studied at these same levels: as a grammatical (Douglas 1997) or symbolic system (Meigs 1997). It is used differently among discrete groups therefore their interaction regarding foodways can be studied (Bourdieu 1984,

[2] See chapter 5 for a further discussion of the Ethnography of Eating, which will tie the act of eating to the speech act.

Wilk 2006). And since people have varying beliefs and values regarding food this allows the study of food ideologies (Singer 1984, Weismantel 1998).

As mentioned above, the study of food within anthropology is rooted in Structuralism. Structuralism originated from German Gestalt psychology (Sturrock 2003:49). Ferdinand de Saussure (2009) later developed it as a method for studying language in the early twentieth century. Soon after, Claude Lévi-Strauss adopted structuralism as a method for use in anthropology (1963:279). Structuralism was useful to anthropology in that it stressed the need for fieldwork and the documentation of observable "social facts[3]" (Durkheim 1966).

Lévi-Strauss believed the human mind thought in binary opposition which he based on Ferdinand de Saussure's idea that the brain is structured to think in oppositional phonemes (Lévi-Strauss 1997:28). It was his position that a structure is made of binary oppositions, which are arranged into patterns (Lévi-Strauss 1963:279). The most important contrasting elements to him were nature and culture. He practiced structuralism by studying the ways in which a society forms rules for mediating binary opposites.

In particular Strauss translated myths regarding the transformation of raw to cooked using what he termed the "gustatory" code, which he correlated with

[3] "A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations" (Durkheim 1966:13). See Chapter 4 for a further discussion of social facts.

the sense of taste. According to Lévi-Strauss, all codes "use contrasts between tangible qualities, which are thus raised to the point of having a logical existence. Since man possesses five senses, there are five basic codes" (1983:164). Using this " gustatory code" he hypothesized that the transformation from raw to cooked symbolized the transformation from the state of nature to that of culture thereby discerning the boundaries of what was considered civilized (Lévi-Strauss 1963:198). Food thereby provides the observable portion of the 'social fact'.

Mary Douglas continued Lévi-Strauss' structural dialectic as a method of analysis of foodways in her study of purity vs. danger (1966), but also studied the patterning of meals as reflective of the society's ideas of what is taboo (1997). Instead of Lévi-Strauss' phonemic[4] opposition, she based her analysis on the morpheme[5], which she correlated with the "mouthful" (1997:39) and found that each meal had an expected structure consisting of rules or codes regarding ingredients, timing and manners (1997:43)[6]. The meaning can be construed using analogies to other meals (1997:44). Grouping like items under a classificatory term allows the researcher to define that term by what is habitually included or excluded (1997:48).

Douglas also pushed the study of foodways in anthropology forward by linking culinary (or gustatory) codes to individual identity within a society by

[4] The smallest amount of sound that makes a difference in meaning (Blum 2009)
[5] The smallest meaningful element in language (Blum 2009)
[6] This is a logical break with his work, because by definition a phoneme is a sound where a morpheme is associated with meaning (usually identified as a word)

stating, “If food is treated as a code, the messages it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across boundaries” (1997:36). She therefore included the interaction of (speech) communities and ideological levels of analysis to the study of foodways.

Since the 1970’s, scholarship has moved away from the synchronic analysis provided by structuralism in order to incorporate ideas of the individual agency, identity formation, as well as political economy (Nützanadel and Trentmann 2008:1). Therefore the synchronic analysis of structure became the diachronic analysis of process(es). For food this heralded a shift from binary opposites and syntactic analysis to a less tangible study of identity formation, falling more on the level of linguistic analysis congruent with semiotics. “Foodways are one of many aspects of ethnic traditional culture which can be studied as a communicative or semiotic system much as language is studied. The term semiotics refers to the study of signs and symbols including linguistic and para-linguistic communication…” (Kalçik 1984:46)

One of the processes that scholars track using foodways is class formation. Often cited as theorizing that foodways can be indicative of class, Pierre Bourdieu states that foodways systematically represent the needs and abilities inherent to a specific class and relative to other classes (Bourdieu 1984:167). One of today’s most prolific food anthropologists in turn cites

Bourdieu's theories surrounding practice and *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977:159-182) to illustrate how cultural laws (of consumption) impact the individual:

> Consumption is more than simply a matter of choice; as Bourdieu effectively argued, it is embodied through what he called *hexis,* the daily habitus which tells us what tastes and feels right. … It does not prevent us from changing our behavior, but it provides a kind of friction, a drag on choice and change, which means we cannot simply decide to switch diets (…) overnight without paying a substantial cost. … And this is the crux of the socialized, communal aspect of all consumption, that we do it as much for and with others as for ourselves (Wilk 2009:194).

As with most anthropological methodologies, since the post-modern "crisis"[7] the field of food studies has opened up to specialized and fragmented methods and theoretical backgrounds (Nützanadel and Trentmann 2008:2-3). However some scholars still relate food back to grammar and language, such as this example by Richard Wilk:

> The idea of culinary diglossia reflects some important similarities between the symbolic content of language and food; the notion of taste, and the sense of what makes a proper meal are naturalized at both conscious and unconscious levels, just like language. We can liken the habitus of taste to the unconscious grammatical structures and knowledge that make it possible to generate and understand language (2008:101).

Some of the best material relating food's impact on communication is in early physical anthropology and linguistics which tackle the hypotheses regarding whether or not language evolved in order to communicate about food resources. Current social anthropology looks at the opposite, whether communication impacts consumption, particularly media, such as television, radio or print ads

[7] See Clifford and Marcus (1986) for further discussion of this "crisis"

and how they influence foodways (Wilk 2006, Weismantel 1998:19-21). Wilk also suggests that the medium of the cookbook has the power to create and codify "authentic" ingredients and preparations in a way in which they had never been practiced before (2006:159).

Historically, studies of food and communication lacked the holistic approach that anthropology is known for. Often studies of food and communication did not articulate with the cycles of economy, politics, history and ecology, but the monograph, or 'commodity biography'[8] has become a genre that is incorporating these areas with food and communication (Nützanadel and Trentmann 2008:3). Also, Mary Weismantel shows us an example of a successful integration of food with communication, history, politics and economy in her ethnography on the Zumbagua in *Food, Gender and Poverty in the Ecuadorian Andes* (1998).

Food, as a commodity is both economically and politically salient. Therefore, it is tied to history, technology, as well as to the local value system. Global values trickle down while local values percolate up to influence supply and demand. This often happens in a cyclical manner in that changes in politics lead to changes in technology that can in turn lead to changes in consumption. The changes in consumption behavior cause the cycle to repeat with further changes to technology, which can lead to wealth and political power.

[8] See Mark Kurlansky's "Salt", Sidney Mintz's "Sweetness and Power", Sophie Coe's "The True History of Chocolate", Deborah Brandt's "Tangled Routes" for examples of this genre.

According to Sidney Mintz (1985), Mary Weismantel (1998), and Richard Wilk (2006), one of the ways in which food is economically and politically charged is in that the marketing of a product can change the status of that product, thereby shifting demand and reflecting a certain status on consumers of the product. For example, a grain that had been a staple product can be shipped to a foreign land, processed in a way such that it is no longer recognizable as the staple grain and then is marketed to wealthy whites. Now, this product, instead of the indigenous staple becomes a symbol of wealth, whiteness or freedom, thereby increasing the social capital of those who consume such items.

Food and communication have been tied to each other in anthropological methodology and theory since the 1960s with Lévi-Strauss. While the field of study began with the constraints of structuralism, it has expanded into an incredibly diverse realm of research. Some of this research has brought the study of foodways away from its structural linguistics roots in order to expand into the cross-disciplinary needs of the topic.

It is difficult to restrict one's research to studying the grammar of food or the meal when food is inextricably linked to politics, environment, technology as well as individual and group identity(s). It is my hope that this dissertation promotes projects like Wilk's (2006) and Weismantel's (1998) ethnographies, and will illustrate food and foodways as productive frames for a holistic ethnographic work which include external structures that impact people's decisions regarding

foodways as well as internal *habitus* and practice that regulate production and consumption practices.

This dissertation focuses on analyzing foodways as observable social facts that can indicate one's shifting relationship with tradition and modernity. On a macro scale it reflects structures inherent in labor, politics and religion. However, it can also speak to individual issues of rejection and acceptance of people and gender roles.

Within the frame of food as an observable social fact that can be read for signs of cultural structures, we will follow three main families as ideal types through daily eating, festal rituals and guided interviews in order to view the complex social structure that can best be understood by participant observation at a small scale. By this I mean that the social facts anthropologists in this region have most oft studied do not, have not and cannot provide the same insight that small daily discrepancies or misunderstandings help illuminate.

Public rituals and political movements are important to understanding segments of the society, but if we are to focus on the large-scale social facts, we neglect others. Everyone eats and by switching focus from macro events that exclude certain populations to micro events that happen daily, we will see how each of these families copes with changes in labor, religion and daily life in the region.

The original fieldwork was done with an eye toward the linguistic anthropology approach to food as a material substance with semiotic properties.

This dissertation builds from Ferdinand de Saussure, Pierre Bourdieu, Richard Wilk and Mary Weissmantel's academic lineage reading foodways as a form of communication about social, familial and individual identity. Each of the core chapters focus on a different level of social structure as represented through participant observation in public and private foodways.

In chapter two, I provide an overall demographic sketch of the Señor/Tixcacal Guardia region of Quintana Roo along with a rationale for why this population is of particular interest at this moment in time. Chapter three elaborates on the social strife that is occurring in this region due to rapid modernization. Chapters four five and six discuss social structures visible in large-scale celebrations, nightly community interaction and intimate family settings, respectively. Each chapter builds on the others to complicate what has so often been deemed a cohesive unit often referred to as 'the syncretic Maya of the Caste War region'.

Chapter 2: History and Context

The primary goal of this dissertation is to address ways in which foodways can be manipulated to identify with or resist cultural norms and varying levels of social structures in the Felipe Carrillo Puerto Municipality of Quintana Roo, Mexico. Foodways and societal structures here differ from Mexico and the rest of the Yucatán peninsula due to ecological boundaries and the strong oral traditions dictating what makes up being 'puro Maya[9]' or the true, pure Maya of the Caste War. Because this identity was created and reinforced in recent memory[10], the radical changes wrought by evangelical religions, tourism and national school indoctrination are a part of daily discourse.

In analyzing social structures represented by food-related practices and beliefs this dissertation seeks to illuminate complexity in what has been considered a homogenous region. While I will do so through the description of food traditions and beliefs in future chapters, this chapter will provide contextualization for my claims that the Señor/Tixcacal Guardia region is unique and rarely discussed in ethnographic literature. By including the demographics

[9] Throughout this dissertation I will be using Mayan words or the Spanish words used by the Maya in Señor to describe certain items that are either widely known by that term even in other countries or because they are used in ways that do not necessarily translate smoothly.

[10] People in the Señor/Xcacal villages claim the Caste War wasn't over until about 35-50 years ago. Many of the older generation claim to remember it and there are many oral histories passed down about it.

and history of the region, I will introduce the main community factions interacting in the Señor/Tixcacal Guardia region.

Demographic Sketch

Señor, a village in the Felipe Carrillo Puerto municipality of Quintana Roo, Mexico is the location of this study. Felipe Carrillo Puerto is the county seat of 108 indigenous communities, in which there are five ceremonial centers, or centers where pieces of the talking cross are kept: Chancah Veracruz, Chunpom, Tulum, Tixcacal Guardia and the Talking Cross in Felipe Carrillo Puerto (Perez 2008:26, 66).

Señor is a village in southeastern Quintana Roo, Mexico and where I have performed fieldwork since 2007. It is located at 19 degrees, 50' 37" Latitude North and 88 degrees, 08'04" Longitude West. It is 25 meters above sea level (Xacur Maiza 1998:115). Today, Señor is a "modern" Maya village located along Federal Highway 295. It is situated to the north of Felipe Carrillo Puerto and to the south of Valladolid.

Señor is one of four *colonias* within the Xmaben *ejido*[11] and the Felipe Carrillo Puerto municipality. The population of the *ejido* is approximately 3000 people and its population is growing rapidly. As of 2008, there are 480 members of this *ejido* (Morales 2008). There is a commissioner elected by the members of

[11] Ejidos are communal indigenous lands granted by the government of post-revolutionary Mexico. This particular ejido was granted in 1929 and was one of the first in the Yucatán peninsula.

the *ejido* once every three years (Morales 2008). It has historically elected members of the PRI[12] party into positions of power.

It is within proximity and social influence of Tixcacal Guardia, known within the areas as one of the most conservative of the sacred pueblos remaining from the Caste War. Señor began as a suburb of Xcacal. For a detailed history of the Caste War please see Reed (2002), Rugeley (2001), Sullivan (1989). For the purposes of this dissertation, the pieces of the Caste War History that are pertinent are that (1) Yucatec Maya families escaped colonization, slavery and peon servitude by moving to a region that was of little concern to conquistadores and later to encomenderos. (2) There were few known resources in the jungle that were worth risking heat, poisonous insects, dangerous animals and toxic plant life, not to mention armed rebels. This meant that (3) the Caste War Maya were able to develop in relative isolation. As Charlotte Zimmerman summarizes:

> The Territory of Quintana Roo is the most isolated territory on the peninsula of Yucatán as it has been historically – partly because it is the tropical rain-forest section and partly because historically it was always the center of the rebellions against the dominant class, from the first rebellion against Francisco Montejo which forced him to make a second conquest of Yucatán to the subsequent rebellions up to and including the war of the Castes. Historically, therefore, the territory, especially the east-central part, remained on the periphery of the Spanish-Christian influence. For our purposes, in brief summary, this simply means that (1) Maya religious practices persisted more widely, (2) that little missionary activity was brought to bear here, so that the Indians were the least Christianized and (3) that a tradition of rebellion against the dominant society and subsequent rejection of any part of it was a real living tradition for these Indians" (Zimmerman 1963:57-58).

[12] The Institutional Revolutionary Party

What is significant is that these factors have led to a wider variety religious and ethnic performance than is often discussed in the literature of the Yucatán peninsula.

Ethnohistory

The ethnohistory of this region begins with works by Diego de Landa in the late 1500s followed by John Stephens in the mid 1800s and Robert Redfield and Alfonso Villa Rojas in the 1900s. The sources expanded greatly in the era of scholarship from the 20th century to today. Within the Yucatán peninsula that defines its identity in opposition to Mexican nationalism, Señor is a village within the state and region most recently included in the Nation. Officially, the ejido[13] was established in 1929 in a section of Quintana Roo that was uniquely left to itself post conquest and during the religious fervor of colonial times.

Naming

How Señor got its name is a contested, or more accurately, neglected fact. I am constantly curious as to how a village that prides itself on not assimilating to Mexican identity and preserving the Maya language has a Spanish name. I often ask people if they know why their village is called Señor. The story in the village seems to be that they broke off from the Xmaben ejido

[13] Ejidos are parcels of land granted to indigenous communities in Mexico. They are communally worked and managed by local residents.

and did not have a name, and then it was either lumped in by surveyors with the villages Chan Señor and El Señor, which are nearby or that when the engineers came through to mark the pueblos they would say “Hola, Señor ” to the people in the village and therefore the village decided that was what they were ‘named’ by the government. Others say it is because they are close to god, *El Señor*.

According to the *Enciclopedia de Quintana Roo*, which has the origin for many Maya place names, Señor is just a “pueblo del municipio de Felipe Carrillo Puerto” (1998:115). My friend, Julio says, “Well, the name, Señor, comes from when one group of people broke off from Xmaben and created their own space. He says the naming coincided with arrival of “*personas nuevas, extranjeras”* that greeted everyone with “Hola, Señor” which confused the Maya speakers and thought they were calling the place Señor since normally people were greeted with their place of origin”.

Neighborhoods

Within Señor there are five *colonias* (neighborhoods). They are San Oligario (Julio’s), Solidaridad, San Isidro (Centro-Terre), San Cristobal (where the fiesta was held) and Mul Tunich (the new one and only one named in Mayan instead of Spanish), which is still being built out near the cemetery. Not each has its own church, just those closest into the town center. One of these *colonias* is new, having just been added to the ejido in 2007.

Colonias (particularly those with a church) are important in local identity. One typically knows and is potentially related to many in their *colonia* and some of the older ones have small, extended family fiestas, such as the Fiesta of the three crosses held in mid March in San Oligario.

Education

Señor has a full range of schools from Pre-school through High School (bachillers). These are: Lol Ha Preschool, Primary School is the Plan de Ayala and the Telesecundaria[14] Zamna. However, there are complaints about the quality of teachers that return to the village. Particularly the parents are unhappy with the English teachers who are not trained to speak nor read English, but are given a textbook and an answer guide and assign and grade work from a workbook. They cannot prepare the children for the higher paying tourism work.

People are just now starting to continue their children's education past sixth grade. Within every family, the sixth grade graduation is a time of celebration and uncertainty. They discuss whether the child has the aptitude to continue and whether the family can afford to sacrifice the labor and wages that the child could earn in lieu of continuing education. Very few people above the

[14] This is a boarding school type of high school education. The Mexican government provides a place for students in rural areas to stay during the week in order to attend classes. These classes are viewed on satellite television. The one in Señor had enrollment of 265 students from surrounding villages as of 2012.

age of twenty-five have attended school past the sixth grade. Just two generations ago school attendance was sporadic and mistrusted.

Language

The primary language is Yucatec Mayan although most are bilingual in Mayan and Spanish. Spanish is primarily reserved for outsiders as Mayan is spoken in homes and within the *ejido* (Morales 2008). Some of the elder population does remain illiterate and monolingual. This contributes to inconsistent Mayan spellings seen on signs and buildings. It also led to confusion during fieldwork when I was seeking feedback on certain spellings.

Religious Denominations

As of 2008, there were three Catholic churches and approximately seventy percent of the population identified as Catholic (Morales 2008). However, in Señor, there are two main forms of 'syncretic' Catholic practice. One of which has its roots in the isolation of the Caste War in the Felipe Carrillo Puerto region. The other formed during the Porfiriato era and is in response to mistrust of the financial corruption of the Catholic Church in Mexico at that time (Eiss 2008 and Pilcher 1998). In addition to these Catholic forms of worship, there exist four churches considered to be evangelical. More specifically, they consist of Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventists, Baptists and Jehovah's Witnesses. Each of these churches claim approximately thirty

parishioners so they are still a minority, however a growing and increasingly vocal one.

In surrounding villages, the "*Cruz Parlante*"[15] religion is still in practice as well as forms of syncretic Catholicism throughout the area. Only the evangelical churches have designated priests. Catholic parishioners run the church themselves on a daily basis. A priest from Felipe Carrillo Puerto will perform Catholic ceremonies on special occasions provided the villagers provide them with transportation and remuneration.

Food

There is no permanent market in this *ejido*. The closest grocery store is thirty miles south in Felipe Carrillo Puerto. There are, however, convenience stores (locally called *abarrotes*) located on nearly every corner, which sell mainly pre-packaged, minimally nutritious food items but also plastic goods and some staple foods. Some have refrigeration and sell yogurts and milk, but most do not. Trucks come through on occasion with farmers selling excess fruits and

[15] The Cruz Parlante religion is also known as the talking cross or talking saint that rose to popularity during the Caste War.

vegetables from their *milpas*. There are four *molinos*[16] where the population may grind their *nixtamalized*[17] corn.

Labor

Most families are still subsistence farmers although increasingly people are leaving the village either for educational pursuits or for wage labor in the tourist area of the "Riviera Maya" along the Cancun coast and southward. For those who do participate in wage labor, many are construction workers, but increasingly, as students are becoming more fluent in Spanish and attempting to learn English, they work as busboys, room service attendants and banquet staff at the larger hotels.

Tixcacal Guardia

The followers of the talking cross declared all indigenous groups (in this case Maya groups from the North and West of the Yucatán peninsula) who made peace with the Mexican government to be their enemies and continued attacks on them at least until 1902 (Villa Rojas1945: 29). It was in this year that the federal troops were able to infiltrate and take control of Chan Santa Cruz. The rebels fled to what is now Xcacal (Tixcacal Guardia) and remained autonomous

[16] Molinos are electric gristmills where people pay to grind their maize kernels into masa.

[17] Nixtamalization is a process by which dried maize kernels are boiled and soaked with slaked lime or ash, which results in increased niacin and availability of amino acids.

until the 1960s. It later became a part of the Xmaben ejido and continues to be wary of outsiders and known for their conservative ways (Hoestettler 2001:239-248). It is in this area where I carried out my fieldwork. As of 2009, Xcacal was still wary of outsiders and when I visited, I was warned that no Protestants are allowed within the village. Evangelicals from the surrounding area acknowledge that they are not permitted to enter the village under penalty of caning.

Tixcacal Guardia is also known as La Guardia and Xcacal. According to the cargo holders in Xcacal, Tixcacal Guardia is so named because it has always been a town under guard. According to the reference books in the region, it means, to trap two times or place of the basil (Xacur 1998). I asked Martin, a 'dignitario Maya' about these translations and he responded "Nicte means basil. Tixcacal does not mean place of the basil. It means centro ceremonial. If someone says it means place of the basil, that isn't the translation. Maybe they misunderstood because there is so much basil grown there for the altar, but it isn't the name of the pueblo".

"Tixcacal Guardia is the sacred capital of a small cacicazgo composed of Tusik, Señor , Yaxley, Pino Suarez, San Antonio, Xpichil, San Jose, Chan Chen Comandante, Unidad de Riego, Campokolche and Santo Domingo" (Manzanilla Hoy 1991:92). From 1929 until 1936 this group continued to live in isolation and attack the "Mexicans" as well as overtly refusing to assimilate to perceived Mexican ways of life (Hoestattler 2001:243). In 1937, the ejido was conferred to Xmaben. These documents identified the Xcacal group as a unified autonomous

community with their own political organization and it remained so until the 1960s (Hoestattler 2007:245-248). Señor is more progressive and 'liberal' yet this leads to conflict within the community as will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Religious Categories

In order to simplify for descriptive purposes a very complex social structure, I will be calling on the analytical construct identified by Max Weber as 'ideal types'. Weber defines ideal types as analytical constructs, which amalgamate many individual phenomena into a descriptive device that allows the researcher to illustrate an emphasized viewpoint (Weber 1949:90). These constructs provide a semblance of structure to an abstract set of ideas. This in turn allows the researcher to describe a set of diffuse characteristics as a pattern, type or generality. While they are not strict representations of reality they are attempts to bring order to chaos (Weber 1949:101-105) and allow the author to make "…characteristic features pragmatically clear and understandable by reference to an ideal type" (Weber 1949:910).

I identify three core groupings within the Tixcacal Guardia/Señor area. How my work differs from other writings on religion in the Caste War region is that I am subdividing 'syncretic Mayas' into two different categories reflective of not only their religion but their forms of labor and historical development. Throughout the dissertation, I will call on three families to illustrate the 'ideal

types' of the Cargo System Mayas, the Gremio System Mayas and the Evangelical Mayas. A description of each ideal type follows.

The Cargo System Maya and the Caste War[18] Rebels

These Mayas are the 'syncretic Maya' referred to in the literature of the Caste War. I will use 'The Cargo System Maya' to refer to those who practice the military-religious system dating back to the Caste War.

Identifying Practices

The Maya participating in the Cargo System speak Yucatec Maya and occasionally some Spanish. The women tend to dress more traditionally in huipiles while the men wear loose pants and button down shirts often with a hat. Most of their food is the result of subsistence agriculture with some compensation for their political or religious participation often in the form of a dispensation of food (rice, canned goods and beans) although this could also consist of rum, cigarettes and candles for rituals or even fireworks or piñatas for celebrations. Most families have chickens and perhaps a pig on their lot. They prefer to live in the traditional well-ventilated huts of pole and thatch despite the fact that the government has begun providing *casitas* of concrete and cinder block to most families as a safe place to live during hurricane season. They belong to the traditional Maya church in Tixcacal Guardia, which is based on

[18] 1847-1901 (unofficial 1969).

following the talking cross, and still participate in the military-religious church hierarchy and the cargo system.

Figure 1 - Cargo System Maya Home

Religious Context

This is the region known most for the naissance of the Caste War as well as the last hold outs of resistance to the dominant Mexican identity including language, dress, foodways and religion. It is because this religious system grew out of the particular self-induced isolation and circumstances of the Caste War

that it is peculiar to the Felipe Carrillo Puerto Municipality. This military-religious system served as the primary government and religious system until the mid 1900s (Villa Rojas 1978:266) and most likely until the 1970s it continued in much the same format (Perez 2008).

This section will focus mainly on the lack of colonial conversion for this region and the Caste-War era establishment of military-religious rule in the area. According to Alfonso Villa Rojas the Caste War of Yucatán began in 1847 and ended in 1901 (1945). However, Nancy Farriss notes that perhaps the Caste War did not come to a close until 1969 when the last chief of the Caste War died in Chumpon (Farriss 1984:19).

This war was fought between the indigenous population and the land owning "whites" that had enslaved or otherwise subjugated the Indians of this region. The Yucatán army was expelled from the peninsula and surrounded in Merida, but then was joined by federal troops, which in turn pushed back the indigenous militia to the jungle of what is now Quintana Roo. Purchasing weapons from colonies in Belize in exchange for boots they stole from the Mexican militias allowed the Caste War rebels to maintain autonomy for fifty years (Perez 2008:44).

Jose Maria Barrera is credited with "founding" the talking cross, or *Cruz Parlante,* in 1850 in the village of *Chan Santa Cruz,* (Villa Rojas 1945:20) what is now Felipe Carrillo Puerto in Quintana Roo. The cross is believed to have been

part of a ventriloquist scheme fostered by Barrera to unify and motivate the rebels after their defeat in Merida.

Alfonso Villa Rojas (1945) and John Chuchiak (2001) hypothesize that a talking cross provided continuity with pre-conquest beliefs in talking idols that had persisted in this region at least until the mid-1700s. It would therefore make sense in the "Maya worldview" and be easily accepted by the newly united lineages taking refuge in central and southern Quintana Roo. This idol unified what had been distinct groupings/lineages of Maya families (Gabbert 2004:58) that were now residing in dense settlements in the "abandoned" forests of Quintana Roo around the cross' espoused ideology that God wanted them to kill the "whites" (Villa 1945).

Villa Rojas notes that indigenous functionaries in the church[19] that housed the talking cross conducted Catholic type masses. Therefore, the resistance movement was built around the syncretic Catholic practice of including the indigenous belief of talking idols within the trappings of Catholic mass. It is this syncretized religion that continues to be associated with traditional village life in Quintana Roo.

The fact that recent ethnographers (Farris 1984, Fallaw 2008, Kintz 2002, Manzanilla Hoy 1991, Santanas Rivas and Rosado 2007, Zimmerman 1963) have cited southern and eastern Quintana Roo as particularly conservative, resistant to change and hostile to outsiders makes the fact that growing numbers

[19] This church was built using "white" slave labor and is still used today.

of indigenous people from this particular region are changing their forms of labor, subsistence, and most notably, religious practices all the more interesting. Modern Maya religion is thought to be a syncretic blend of Catholicism and traditional, pre-Colombian pantheistic practices.

Zimmerman believes that there is no real distinction between the syncretic Maya groups and the Catholic groups. They are seen as one and the same (Zimmerman 1963:58). For the Yucatec Maya, particularly in Quintana Roo, chroniclers have noted a continued practice in honoring gods, or spirits, of nature, particularly those having to do with the *milpa*, such as rain, or the god, *Chac*[20]. A notable characteristic of both the talking cross and modern syncretic practice is that the rituals are meant to unify and reinforce the communal nature of life in the village (Peterson et al 2001). "A fundamental part of indigenous autonomy lies in the preservation of their domestic authorities, they reflect the religious cargo system as an important social organization" (Perez 2008:18).

Charlotte Zimmerman says the military-religious cargo system characteristic of this region began in 1850 with a sermon at Chan Santa Cruz (the town of Felipe Carrillo Puerto) and that this sermon has been preserved in a document at Tixcacal Guardia (1963:53). I have been told there is a book in Xcacal, but no one can read the language. They claim all the sacred Maya documents now reside in Chumpon. Perhaps this move occurred after

[20] See Redfield (1941), Redfield and Villa Rojas (1934) Villa Rojas (1945, 1978) and Hanks (2010) for further discussion of traditional practices.

Zimmerman's 1963 work, because Chumpon was the last hold out of the Maya Caste War leaders who died in 1969, which allowed federal troops to enter and build roadways (Farriss 1984:19).

Cargo System Organization

In a system of cargos there is a hierarchy similar to that of a military company (Perez 2008:68-69). In general, that company is called the 'guardia' or guard. The ranks in descending order are: comandante, capitan, teniente, sargento and cabo. In addition, each guard has two rezadores. The members of each guard will work together until retirement or death (Perez 2008:70). This military structure was put into place during the Caste War when the guards not only fought, but also guarded churches and relics, particularly that of the talking cross (ibid).

These seven positions have been referred to as 'dignitarios Maya' since the municipal president, Sebastian Estrella Pool deemed them such in the 1980s (Perez 2008:70). The Maya dignitaries can range in age. However, in Tixcacal they are mostly elderly. Marriage is a pre-requisite. Papio says to be married means your road is complete and therefore you are ready for the responsibilities. Plus, the wife eases the weight of the cargo. During their fifteen-day window of 'guard' they cannot leave the church grounds. Wives prepare and bring them food. Mamio and the sisters-in-law prepare food and send it with Julio, Martin or

Cesar. It is much easier now that they have a truck. They used to walk or bicycle.

The dignitaries are not only responsible for guarding the church and grounds but also for community chores in Xcacal and their home communities. Because of his advanced age, Papio's sons take on this part of his responsibility. They collect litter, cut brush and fill potholes among other tasks. Other church members may provide the *matan* to share after mass.

> The matam in Spanish signifies "gift" and it is an important factor in social cohesion it has an obligation to offer to god in exchange for bendiciones and support. This food is shared after every religious ceremony whether official or popular, it helps the community not disintegrate but mostly they are not lost though as customs always exist in every society its prestige status grudges of jealousy (Perez 2008:74).

Papio's Family

Papio's family is the largest of the three families with whom I lived. They all live within two blocks of each other. They were one of the founding families of Señor and as mentioned above, have ties to Tixcacal Guardia.

Papio and Mamio are the heads of this extended family group. They are both octogenarians and still stay busy with the manual labor of running a household. No one, not even Mamio's younger brother, remembers their first names. It is a common practice for parents to be known as "the mother of" or "the father of" their child instead of by their own given name.

Most days Papio does not visit the milpa any more. He does shuck dried corn, wash produce that his son's bring back from the fields and he makes drums

for his church's needs. He mends gates, cleans trash from their property and works with the home garden as needed in addition to participating in his church's cargo system. He wears sandals, loose slacks and a button down shirt most days. If he is working cleaning trash or filling potholes he might wear a T-shirt. Often he dons his well-worn woven cowboy hat to keep the sun off of his face and head.

Figure 2 - One of Papio's drums

Mamio is slighter than the sisters-in-law. She wears her long, greying, thinning hair pulled tightly in a bun and always wears a *huipil*. She often sounds angry due to staccato gestures and tone, but she is the mother of six boys and has learned to command attention. She is actually quite jovial.

She spends the majority of her days preparing masa and making tortillas. Some of these chores are starting to transition to Mari and the sisters-in-law. She boils water for the family's bathing needs. She determines what money is to be spent on foodstuffs and clothing needs (mainly flip flops).

Figure 3 - Mamio mixing masa for tortillas

There is a rift between the older brothers and the younger brothers due to political differences. The older brothers own and run a cantina and support the

PRI. They do make milpa but the majority of their income and work is related to the cantina. They do not continue in the cargo system with Tixcacal.

Of the younger brothers, one is involved with the cargo system in Tixcacal in that he is a Maya Pax musician. He is responsible for playing the ritual music during any of the church-related activities. He can also be hired to play for individuals, but does not collect a fee for his participation with the church. Martin is married and participates in politics at the municipal level. He is an *alcalde* for the PRD in Señor.

Martin, like most men in the village, wears sandals, loose-fitting, lightweight pants and a button down for days when he is working in the church, as a musician or in his political position. When he is performing more physical labor he would wear cargo shorts, flip flops and a T-shirt and ball cap.

Martin's wife, Dulce is the only one of the sisters-in-law that speaks fluent Spanish. She is very funny and quick to laugh at other's jokes. She wears her hear in a long ponytail and puts on heavier makeup than the other women in the family. She wears knit t-shirts and knit skirts while doing chores around the house, but always wears a huipil out.

Dulce is Mari's mother. Mari is ten years old and an active, funny and eager to learn participant in family life. She enjoys school and is often chastised for being a gossip. She adored spending time with me and learning more Spanish and English as well as having stories to tell her peers about the ineptitude of 'la gringa' who was staying with them.

The other two younger brothers support Papio in his cargo. They work the milpa for him in his old age; they transport him to and from Tixcacal as necessary and fulfill some of his labor. Julio was not married while I was living with them, so he was not yet participating in cargo. He said he would probably participate once he was married, but that he was not sure.

Julio is my age and we became good friends over the years. Many of my understandings of the village come from his family. As I have explained, Julio helps to support his family through work in the milpa and in support of his father's cargo in Tixcacal. However, Julio is the village mechanic. He is self-taught and can fix motorcycles, bicycles and trici-carts in nearly any condition.

Cesar is the other brother and he sells herbs and fruits from the *terreno*[21] in Tixcacal Guardia. He also works seasonally as a butcher at one of the large resorts near Tulum. Cesar is often teased as being not as smart as his brothers, but he is very protective of his family.

[21] The terreno is a plot of land nearer to the village than the milpa. Most often it is for growing fruit and herbs. This terreno had melon, cilantro, oranges, limes and mandarins.

Figure 4 - Cilantro growing in the terreno

Cesar is married to Sol and they have no children as Sol has some health issues. She speaks little Spanish, but does understand nearly everything. Occasionally Dulce translates for her but once she was comfortable with me she would speak in Spanish with me. She is very emotional and I think this was due to several health problems she was having at the time. Her family is from Tixcacal and she always wears a *huipil* and her hair in a bun. She never wore makeup.

Doña Flor is the wife of the sixth brother. He passed away in 2008, on my first day in the field. I never got to meet him. He is now referred to simply as 'el Difuncto'. Flor has three boys and a young daughter. She lives a couple of streets away from the Pool Ek family unit. Her two oldest boys work as room service attendants in one of the resorts. Luis and Abril stay home and attend school.

Figure 5 - Flor washing dishes

Flor will not speak Spanish by choice. She understands it very well and will respond appropriately in Mayan. She is always in a huipil, but wears the older worn out ones for doing her chores. She dresses to attend dinners at Papio's by wearing her nicest huipiles, her hair in a bun with a decorative clip and nice jewelry purchased for her by her deceased husband. She is an incredibly hard worker and comes to help Mamio with chores when she is able.

Luis is responsible for working the *terreno* but they no longer make *milpa*, they receive help from Papio's milpa. Luis is in his final required year of school and does not want to attend past sixth grade. He sees that his older brothers

have cell phones, laptops, jewelry and girl friends and he is eager to join the work force.

The Gremio System Maya, Porfiriato and Revolution

This category refers to the majority of the population in the peninsula. They are most often those described in literature about the Yucatec Maya. They practice the more syncretic gremio-Catholic system from colonization, which is often referred to as the Mayordomo or Cofradia system in other parts of Mexico and Guatemala.

Identifying Practices

The Gremio System does not follow a hierarchy like the Cargo System. Anyone can join, but most of the members are involved in some sort of skilled labor. In Señor, it happens that most of that skilled labor is in construction and therefore, is mainly made up of men who work seasonally at the hotel zone or on road crews. The majority of the gremio members in Señor work with concrete or in masonry.

Because most of the Gremio members have work (at least at times) outside of the village the majority of them speak Spanish as a second language. In off seasons, they pick up odd jobs in Señor or surrounding villages as handymen or assist with milpa work.

The men tend to wear jeans or cargo-type pants and T-shirts[22]. The wives wear a mix of western clothing and huipiles often this is based on whether the wife also works in a wage labor position or stays home. For example, one of the wives works as a cook in a hotel restaurant. She wears the uniform required by her position.

The men who participate in gremios still have milpas from which they at least get their corn for masa, but also other supplemental fruits and vegetables. However, during their times of labor, they also eat food provided from their job or purchased as cheaply as possible from food stands, trucks or convenience stores. It is very common to see them eat a bag of chips and a soda for 'lunch' instead of the large mid-day meal that is common amongst the subsistence farmers.

The homes are more varied than those of either the Cargo System or the Evangelicals. Some have chosen to stay with the traditional pole and thatch '*na'* but others have incorporated the government storm shelter housing into the pole and thatch structures making for a mixed media home. Often the front room will be pole and thatch as well as the kitchen but the bathroom and one or more 'bedrooms' will be made of cinderblock. These rooms are only used for sleeping

[22] Often these are T-shirts donated from the US through charities and they are unaware of what the English words mean This led to several people coming by to visit and have me translate their T-shirts…usually to my embarrassment and theirs.

in times of storms or cold fronts. Most often they are used to store electronics[23] and clothing.

Figure 6 - Gremio System Maya Home

[23] Some of the first consumer purchases tend to be cell phones and large stereo systems.

Figure 7 - Inside Flor's hurricane house. Her sons have outfitted it with stereo equipment and she hangs laundry to dry here.

Religious Context

The religious practices associated with the Gremio system stems from the expansion of the syncretic Catholic church after the Porfiriatio era in the Yucatán peninsula. The Porfiriato Era was from 1876-1910 with the start of the Mexican Revolutionary War and overlapping much of the Caste War era (1847-1901+) of the Yucatán Peninsula. During this time the Mexican government actively tried to incorporate indigenous groups into national society by means of assimilation. This involved bringing factory work to some of the outlying pueblos and attempting to change their diet to white bread by stigmatizing subsistence labor

and tortilla consumption (Pilcher 1998). In addition, the local governments organized fiestas and feasts surrounding political visits to the pueblos and villages.

The visits became intermeshed with existing celebrations of saint's days thus, leading to the association of fiesta as part of honoring the saints (Eiss 2008:540-541). The development of this form of syncretic Catholicism began outside of the Chan Santa Cruz area of the peninsula, with the villages near Merida and spread rapidly to this region once infrastructure permitted.

During the Porfiriato "…the gremios were reorganized and reconstituted within the church. When the gremios reemerged in 1875, they emphasized their religious aspects, rather than their economic and social aspects. They also came to serve as social aid clubs for their communities working directly or indirectly with the Church, but independent of it" (Turner 2005).

Victor's Family

Victor lives with his wife, three of his daughters and his toddler son. The oldest two daughters live nearby but are married and have started their own households, which Victor built for them.

Victor is an *albañil*, a construction worker. Particularly he works with cement pouring and bricklaying. He also fills potholes in the roads. Most of this type of construction is done during the dry season. During the rainy season he rents canoes at the lagoon near Señor and works on his milpa.

Luisa is a cook. Sometimes she is employed with resorts, other times, she works a roadside taco and *torta* stand on the highway that runs through Señor. Luisa wears t-shirts and skirts or kitchen uniforms. Sometimes she wears shorts, which is uncommon for women in the village.

Luisa is not usually present for public activities except for when she is assisting Victor with his service to the Gremio during the fiestas. She is often working, dealing with the children or resting when she has a chance. She has six children ranging in age from 25 to 2 and they keep her busy. She is the only woman I know who is accustomed to working away from the village and with men. She drinks beer and tells dirty jokes unlike the women from Papio's family or Alex's family.

Terre, the oldest daughter still living in the home, finished high school and got her accreditation in eco-tourism. She spends much of her time riding her bike to nearby villages to scout for potential tourism opportunities. Terre is a twenty year old. She is trying to find a career, help her family and meet a spouse. She is working hard to speak English well enough to get a well-paying job in tourism.

One of Terre's younger sisters also plans to finish school and attend the eco-tourism program. None of the other sisters have continued school past sixth grade. The eldest two sisters have married, moved away, and now have their own children. The youngest sister ran away at age twelve to marry a boy from

another village but has returned home, shamed, to live with one of her older sisters.

The Evangelical Maya: Paradigm Shifts to Wage Labor and Capitalism

The Pentecostal denomination is the largest subdivision of Evangelicals in Señor but in addition there are Presbyterians, Seventh Day Adventists, Baptists and Jehovah's Witnesses (Morales 2008). Approximately one third of Señor's population identifies as a denomination other than Catholic (ibid).

Identifying Practices

The Evangelical families tend to be smaller and more reclusive than either the cargo system or gremio system families. Often Evangelical families are organized in more of a nuclear fashion with just the parents and children living in one residence.

The men dress in normal westernized fashions: shorts, t-shirts, jeans. Women vary in their style of dress. The Evangelical women, with whom I lived or interacted, wore only skirts and tops but I have seen women in huipiles at some of the churches so it obviously is not prohibited.

All of the Evangelical men and women I met speak in Spanish but still understand and speak Mayan, although they will deny it on occasion. Many of the women decline to speak with me altogether and do not leave the house. I lived in a spare external room for my first two field seasons in Señor and I never

met the wife of the family with whom I was staying. She preferred to stay to herself in prayer. Apparently this is a fairly common practice in the stricter denominations. Many of the women only leave home for church in order to avoid temptation and sin from their Catholic neighbors.

In the confines of the village, the Evangelical homes are all made of masonry with pole and thatch kitchen rooms. They typically all have indoor plumbing and electricity. Some even have computers now with satellite internet access. It is common to find luxuries such as washing machines and refrigerators. A few of the homes I saw even had decorative tile, couches and beds instead of dirt or cement floors, wooden stools and hammocks.

Religious Context

Max Weber noted that conversion to capitalism tends to pre-date conversion to Protestantism (2008:35-36). In previous research (O'Connor 2010), I have equated conversion to protestant denominations here with conversion to capitalism. Conversion has provided disenfranchised people with a form of rebellion and support that was missing when attempts to conform to traditional village life failed. Typically the reasons for this 'failure' are tied to loss of land due to plot subdivision within the ejido, loss of family members to maintain subsistence agriculture, disagreement with the local authority structure or simply the desire for what is seen as an easier route to a better life by giving up ties to the land and accepting wage labor jobs in the tourist trade.

Common land distributed after the Revolution was reclaimed for privatization in the northwest. Ejidos were parceled and redistributed to pueblo residents by The Secretaria de Fomento and the land was then purchased or otherwise obtained by *hacendados* (Eiss 2008:529). This loss of common ejido land was what led to indigenous subsistence agriculturalists emigrating from villages to find work on estates or in towns (Fallaw 2008:554).

Those who have converted to evangelical religions are not well represented in the political structure of this region due to the fact that the local and regional political structure is based on articles of the constitution put in place to incorporate indigenous systems of governance prior to the popularity of religious conversion. In addition to being left out of the local political structure, they are often forced to leave their village of origin to found other villages or join villages or towns that are more open to their religious views and labor practices.

As I hypothesized in my Master's thesis, I believe the true reason for conversion is not an ideological one[24] but an economic one. People are seeking a different way to find support systems when they no longer have land (O'Connor 2010). This is one of the five conversion types identified by Brock Kilbourne and James Richardson.

> Five conversion types are suggested, corresponding to five types of social movements, by using the type of deprivation as the major reason for the conversion: economic (financial), social (power or

[24] In comparison to in Chiapas and Guatemala where often the reason for conversion is explicitly stated as a way to escape the drunkenness associated with Catholic-based festivities and celebrations.

> status), ethical (values), psychic (philosophical meaning) and organismic (health). Except for the organismic type, each of these types of conversion involves some kind of deprivation resulting from the individual's social environment (Kilbourne et al 1988:8).

For example, *evangelicos* are not welcome in Tixcacal Guardia. They are not permitted to attend festivities or live within the village's boundaries. Many who convert move to Señor or to coastal tourist towns with more job opportunities. In addition, the village of Tabi was founded within this same ejido for those seeking religious freedom.

> During the 1940s, shared religious practice came under pressure as well. When some of the Xmaben inhabitants converted to *hermanos*, they were forced to abandon their place of origin and eventually founded the village of Tabi. During the 1950s, the formation of the Xmaben grant further divided the group, as differences between the people of Señor and those who formerly lived in Xmaben became obvious (Hoestattler 2001:254-5).

Because of the fact that the ceremonial centers and 'traditional' churches are recognized by articles two[25] and four[26] of the Mexican constitution, the

[25] "In article 2 of the Mexican constitution, it permits free autodeterminacion of the indigenous pueblos. They can organize internally, impart justice and systems of agreed upon systems of norms to their use and customs, they can have participation and representation political and sustainable. They have a culture and identity to have access to justice, they are granted indigenous rights and rights to participate in building plans, to mark their territory from others and those indigenous cannot be separated from the nation's benefits and modernity that they are accepted as part of the nation and have all of those rights" (Perez 2008:96-97).

[26] "In article 4 of the constitution and 13 of the state constitution (that of 1997) they organized a system of indigenous justice with traditional judges who serve on the Tribunal of Justice of the State a propuesta del Consejo …..and a

evangelical churches are left out of this structure. The political and traditional as well as syncretic religious structure have been tied together through codification of indigenous rights in Mexican law. Because article four organized the judicial structure around the Catholic churches, Evangelicals are not elected officials in these more traditional communities.

Alex' Family

Alex's family is composed of a single nuclear unit. He lives with his wife, and his son, Ernesto. This picture was taken after I had stayed with their family for a total of four months and was the first time I met his wife.

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representative of each ceremonial center will designate those traditional judges" (Perez 2008:97).

Figure 8 - Alex, his wife, and me

He lives in a two-bedroom cinder block home with a pole and thatch kitchen. His home attaches to the Xyaat community building. He works attempting to bring tourism to the village and was fairly successful early on when

he had several partners. However, he realized he could make more money working alone.

Because he was the only one with a vehicle, he stopped picking up his partners and kept the tourism dollars for himself. This alienated much of the community and they stopped supporting his efforts. Instead of continuing to 'perform' for the tourists, people mistrust him. He now makes most of his money working for Xcaret[27] as a consultant.

Conclusion

This dissertation condenses traits of evangelical families, traditional Maya families and syncretic Catholic families into three ideal types represented by Alex, an Evangelical, Papio, who participates in the Cargo System and Don Victor, the Gremio System. It will look at the ways in which food becomes what is discussed instead of labor or religion because openly discussing someone's laziness, lack of land, or religion is viewed as discordant with village ideology. Instead, one becomes a 'good' cook or a 'bad' cook or provider. Does one's tortillas or corn '*sirve'* instead of do they, as a person, '*sirve'* is a frame that seems amenable to public discussion.

[27] Xcaret is a eco-tourism waterpark about 2 hours south of Cancun. It is Maya themed and claims to have authentic Maya rituals centered on reconstructed ballcourts and ruins.

Chapter 3: Describing 'The Problem'

I am looking at foodways in this region because it is a community experiencing what Ann Swidler refers to as "unsettled times" (Swidler 1986) or stress (Kilbourne *et al* 1988:7). This period of stress is brought about by rapid changes to infrastructure in the form of housing, roads, electricity and cell networks; jobs and wage labor due to day labor buses from the tourist zones that use the improving roads; and religion. With the increased road infrastructure and exposure from tourists seeking the 'authentic' Maya come evangelists and missionaries.

Unsettled Times

Similar to Pierre Bourdieu's ideas around orthodoxy (Bourdieu 1977[1972]:167-169), Swidler theorizes that in unsettled times, people construct more explicit ideologies that govern their actions (Swidler 1986:273). She hypothesizes that once new worldviews exist from which a culture can choose a new way of being, then an ideology also is created to explain the actions one takes as a part of this worldview (1986:273-275). Because the existing worldview has 'lost' its explicit doctrine over the years, it is now forced to reformulate its ideology in response to the newly available paths of action (Swidler 1986:284).

The increased friction between religious belief systems coupled with the increased exposure to global imaginaries through tourism and media images is leading to what Ann Swidler refers to as an "unsettled period", a time in which

“cultural meanings are more highly articulated and explicit, because they model patterns of action that do not come naturally” (1986:284). Pierre Bourdieu also discusses these “unsettled periods” as times of crisis. He believes they occur when a society is embattled in a class struggle in which a minority (or dominated) group pushes against the norms (doxa/habitus) of culture while the majority defends its traditions (Bourdieu 1977:168-170).

I postulate that as the combined improvements in technology and infrastructure (specifically access to radio, television and transportation) have increased in Señor, becoming a part of the global community has become one of the available actions. This choice is a relatively new one and has led to recent social rifts.

In choosing to become ‘modern’ through dress, technology and wage labor positions, one also seeks a community that supports the consumer lifestyle instead of the traditional community. Protestant religion has provided a support system for the shift to capitalistic pursuits. Hard work provides income, which allows one to demonstrate one’s value to their neighbors through commodity purchases. Since the jobs available to this population are low in pay, often the trappings of global modernity is limited to one’s ability to cease ‘making milpa’ in favor of purchasing foodstuffs. This in turn, makes food a valuable tool for studying social stratification.

In discussing the foodways of this region, I will not be describing recipes, but how one’s ideology, which is reinforced through religious practices, labor and

education, can be reflected in food production, consumption and discourse. In addition to my interest in Señor because of its current unsettled period, it is a region that has not been well documented due to its history of self-imposed seclusion.

Food and Status

Food can indicate both ascribed and achieved status. In Señor, the type of status seems to correlate with religious affiliation[28]. The relationship between the Evangelicals and the Gremio and Cargo system Maya can be a tenuous one. Publically in Señor, everyone declares their support for religious freedom of choice and that we are all equal, but in private, discussions of mistrust and rumors about the 'other' are rampant.

Food is visible as ascribed status during festal events where families use their prestige and social capital in order to pool labor for preparing and distributing food, particularly tamales. This is a strategy only employed by the majority syncretic Catholic population during their communal festivals that honor the saints, the natural spirits and the rain god(s) as we will see in Chapter four.

However, more commonly, food is a marker of achieved status for the evangelical Protestant community as a way to display a newly attained social position due to their participation in the capitalistic society in becoming wage laborers. This declaration of status difference is performed more simply in that

[28] This correlation will be explored in-depth in chapter five.

they can be seen purchasing and consuming “junk” foods like mass-market chips and sodas in park and along the streets. “Ordinary objects such as foods are used as symbols of ideological conflict not so much in clearly defined political arenas as in everyday debates over mundane questions, such as what to eat or what to wear” (Weismantel 1998:7). This will be further addressed in Chapter five.

To further complicate matters, evangelical converts are now purchasing staple ingredients (such as corn) and prepared foods (such as tamales) from syncretic Catholics making public the difference in status by positioning Catholics as working for the Protestants. According to sociologist Jack Goody, these differences are more explicit in smaller communities because of greater boundary problems and an increased difficulty in simply ignoring the cuisine of one’s neighbors (Goody 1982:2). Shifting and porous social and individual identities will be addressed in Chapter six.

Here, it is particularly difficult to ignore the significance behind cuisine as the syncretic Catholics believe it is pertinent to make offerings and rituals to honor *Chac*, the rain god in order to receive rain for the crops upon which they feed their families. They believe the Protestant refusal to honor this god is bringing drought and affecting their health. The Protestant believes the suffering is due to the Catholics’ pagan practices and that they have brought it on themselves. Wage labor is seen as economic advancement and a key to

personal salvation in the Protestant church (Annis 2000:198). As can be imagined, this is a source of tension.

While the minority Protestant groups are emulating images of capitalist consumption by consuming financially costly yet nutritionally poor food items, such as chips, candy and soda pop, they are putting themselves at risk for the associated Western diet-related diseases of heart disease and diabetes. At this point in time, due to the proliferation of convenience stores in Señor changes in diet can be impacted by taste and desire but they, like most dietary changes, were initially accepted because of socioeconomic and political benefits and lead to changes in culture (Mintz 2008:27).

Once "new" global consumer goods enter a foodshed, local foods and traditional methods are often tainted with ideas of inferiority. Classes[29] form along these lines of difference (Wilk 2008:99, Kalçik 1984). The cost of imported foods associates them with higher class (Wilk 2008). This is important for converts to the Protestant sects because they had lost their prestige within traditional society.

> In effect, they alienate themselves from the village-centricity that the milpa reinforces. Alternatively, their poverty may have already

[29] I am using 'class' here to denote a group with which a status is associated. Here this status is fluid. Those who participate in wage labor may think that those who can afford a vehicle, or to buy seafood are of a higher class, but those who are subsistence farmers may well believe that to successfully grow corn and provide for their families is the indicator of a higher status or class.

> so marginalized them from full communal participation that the village alienates them. One way or another, their anchorage is lost and the must find new moorings (Annis 2000:191).

Most often, this loss of prestige is associated with loss of land and therefore inability to participate in communal festal occasions where ritual production and consumption of food was necessary.

Because loss of land led to an inability to participate in the community as well as the inability to feed one's family, the dispossessed had to seek other forms of subsistence. In this region of Quintana Roo, new roads coupled with increased tourism created the demand for low paid wage laborers to perform menial tasks in the hotel zone of the "Mayan Rivera". Buses from the hotel zone provided transportation to and from the village allowing easy access to these jobs. However, leaving the village for work and abandoning the traditional way of resulted in further loss of prestige within traditional society. In theory, it is from this segment of the population that the Protestant church finds converts (Annis 2000:189).

This public performance of an identity associated with a particular religious belief is important to new converts as enunciating difference is an important way of declaring belonging (Kilbourne and Richardson 1989, Abrahams 1984, Snow and Machalek 1984). One of the ways in which the Protestant wage laborer then can communicate this new identity and prestige is through the ability to

participate in the global consumer culture associated with tourists, foreigners and media images.

Because packaged, processed foods have connotations with the modern, wealthy and foreign, they "become tokens of power and sophistication." (Wilk 2009:192). While Susan Kalçik (1984) notes that recent immigrants struggle to adopt the foodways of their new countries in order to appear civilized and modern, I find this adoption is occurring even when migration is not part of the equation. The adoption can be due to the need to align oneself with what perceived as the powerful segment of society in order re-claim lost status.

> Almost all tribes set themselves apart by the foods they eat and avoid. Once such distinctions are made, the judgment will follow that some ways of eating are superior to others, and that so are the people who practice them. Inevitably, a hierarchy of social status based on eating will be established (Farb and Armelagos 1980:156).

While processed foods gain prestige and the older population resists them not only out of financial necessity but also as a way of distancing themselves from the socially irresponsible Protestants, younger generations of all denominations are accepting of 'junk' foods. They are seen as socially irresponsible and potentially dangerous for not participating in the communal rituals that bring rain and ensure success of crops. The fact that they are consuming 'junk' foods is in line with global consumption practices where studies have shown that impoverished households will purchase and consume

expensive foods, even if they are lower in nutrition as soon as they have the resources (Abrahams 1984, Shah 1983:139).

When a new identity is formed, it is particular important to “perform” it using observable behaviors that are learned during conversion (MacClancy 2004, Kray 2001, Kilborne and Richardson 1989, Singer 1984, Snow and Machalek 1984). At this point, food seems to be the performative medium of choice in the Protestant/wagelaborer/individual/capitalist as contrasted with the Catholic /farmer/communal/traditional ethos.

The reason food can be used as an identifier of such broad categories as religion, political inclination and vocation is that it is tied to not only personal preference, but is also used as a way to publically performing one’s access to finances, goods and services and therefore one’s status within a society. However, this isomorphic association of the Catholic as subsistence laborer and the Protestant as wage laborer will likely not continue in the future.

On the one hand, if we are to believe social theorists such as Arjun Appadurai and Richard Wilk, as images of wealth and modernity proliferate throughout the village, the younger generation will likely accept these images and they will be absorbed and re-formed by Protestants and Catholics alike within the framework of the village culture. Weismantel identifies children as the early adopters of cuisine change. By accepting treats into daily consumption, they are readily converted to consumer capitalism. (Weismantel 1998:157).

On the other hand, if we are to extrapolate the future based on the past, the traditional Maya of Quintana Roo may make village life so uncomfortable for the Protestants that they will be forced to leave and seek a new proletariat way of life in the cities where they work. This has already been occurring in neighboring villages where Protestant converts are expelled from and practicing Protestants are prevented entrance to the community. This has expulsion has divided families in the past. It is my hope that through further research I will be able to ascertain in which direction Señor is heading.

Chapter 4: The Fiesta - Social Fact or Social Fiction?

This chapter discusses the patronal saint fiesta as an overarching social structure and whether it can be a useful 'social fact' for comprehending the social structure and function of Señor.

Introduction

Emile Durkheim tells us that social facts can be extrapolated by analyzing observable social behaviors (1966). Many scholars have cited public rituals (notably Bell 1997, Leach 1954, Geertz 1980, Turner 1967) and/or feasts and fiestas (Dietler 2001, Gonzales 1999, Haden 2001, Turner 1991, Fernandez 1994) as productive events at which one can interpret these observable social behaviors in order to learn about the structure of a particular society. For example, Fernandez states:

> Regarding its relationship to society it has been observed that a Yucatecan patronal fiesta reflects to a greater or lesser degree, the occupational structure of the society. In this sense, it can be said that the fiesta constitutes a key to understanding the society in which the fiesta takes place. As a reflection of the occupational structure it is important to consider that through the fiesta the different social classes express themselves (Fernandez 1994:202).

However, in the case of Señor, observing behaviors during the period of the patronal fiesta would provide an incomplete analysis of the structure and

values of the population. Only the segment of the population I have previously referred to as, 'Gremio Catholics[30]', would be readily observable. I believe it is this segment of the population that often comes to represent what constitutes 'Mayaness' to the general population for the very reason that it is the most visible during special events (namely the patronal festivals), which attract both tourists and anthropologists to the region. Christina Turner cites the patronal fiesta as "one of the definitional axis of identity of many Mesoamerican societies" (Turner 2005). Thereby perpetuating what Francisco Fernandez has referred to as a myth of ethnic identity and community (Fernandez 1994:208).

As Lucy Long has also concluded, public festivals draw tourism and contribute to the reproduction of traditions by inculcating symbols often tied to foodways (2004:9). These events are witnessed and documented, thus reinforcing their importance to future scholars and tourists who will then seek them out them in their travels thus marking those groups who perform accordingly as 'authentic'[31] and those who do not as lacking in expected authenticity. While I believe that certain social structures may well be ascertained by participating in the fiesta and its associated feasting, these are only structures associated with gremio members. The aforementioned cargo holders and evangelical Protestants remain hidden.

[30] See Chapter Two; Religious Categories for definitions of these "ideal types".
[31] See Introduction for discussion of authenticity as used in this document.

However, the fact remains that public events, particularly feasts and fiestas provide a time and space for manipulating ideological and personal goals (Dietler 2001:72). While these goals can be tied to those in the *gremio* organization structure, Fernandez reminds us that certain identities can be exaggerated above others (1994:94) and that the fiesta is consumed differently by different social classes (1994:203). This chapter will describe these social classes and their levels of participation in the fiesta.

Historical Context and Structure of Yucatecan Patronal Fiestas

Before discussing the specifics of the patronal fiesta in Señor, Quintana Roo, I will quickly review the existing literature describing patronal fiestas in Yucatán state since they are the models upon which Quintana Roo's practices are based. In general, the fiestas (as they are currently celebrated) began in small villages near Merida in the 1900s as a way for politicians to enhance local saint's days to gain popularity and votes (Eiss 2008). They typically last one to two weeks and consist of nightly dances, bullfights, Catholic mass and then concerts and more dancing. All of the participants who contribute to the festivities are fed in large feasts after the nightly mass.

While the fiesta revolves around a Catholic relic, the church does not exert control over the fiesta (Turner 2005) in fact, Fernandez asserts that the patronal fiestas are "divorced from Catholicism" (1994:197). In Señor, the fiesta is controlled by the gremios and their basis of identity and community. "Gremios

are typical of Yucatecan fiestas" (Turner 2005). These gremios also support a church, one that is associated with the saint being celebrated.

As Paul Eiss illustrates in his work on Yucatecan pueblos, the patronal fiesta is a "hegemonic public form" (Eiss 2008:540). These fiestas caught on as a way for regional leaders to reproduce the political celebrations held by the national and regional leaders in Merida (Eiss 2008:538-540). The elements of the fiesta: bullfights, dances and fireworks were the same as those present in official visits.

The local gentry employed these symbols of progress and civilization to lay claim to regional and national icons of prestige. Influential regional officials rewarded the local politicians with support of the patronal festivals via donations of money, fireworks or dances. This cycle reinforced itself – the officials expected these elements, the locals provided them and in turn are rewarded with cultural and/or actual capital from the state governors (Eiss 2008:541).

Eiss further concludes that Yucatec pueblos were "made into stages where 'modernity' and 'tradition' might play a harmonious counterpoint constructing 'the people' as disciplined, virtuous and productive entity. For government officials, el pueblo was not so much a place as a political strategy, one absolutely critical to the twin tasks of forming a state and fomenting a social world centered on production..." (Eiss 2008:547).

According to Francisco Fernandez, the lavishness of the fiesta elements correlated to the ease of travel to the pueblo (1994:109). Once rail lines or roads allowed for easy access, the fiestas became showier and better attended.

Following Eiss' analysis this was most likely due to the fact that once travel to the pueblo was possible, politicians began to visit it bringing the elements of the fiesta with them.

Ben Fallaw claims that in the 1920s, Bartolome' Garcia Correa, an unabashed assimilationist of mixed Maya and Mestizo descent rose to the political position of the governor of Yucatán. He worked to continue the Porfiriato goals of raising the indigenous population to "better ways of life" using the spread of sports and diversions as a way to increase their assimilation into national Mexican identity (Fallaw 2008:565-568).

The Fiesta in Señor

From 2007 to 2011, my friends kept encouraging me to come to the fiesta. The patronal fiesta in Señor honors the Virgin of Conception. It only happens every other year for some amount of days[32] near the end of July through early to mid August. During this time the community celebrates. What it is they celebrate remains open to interpretation. Like the discussion of why there are evangelical converts, the dates, reason for and traditions surrounding the fiesta is not orthodox.

There are as many answers for why they are celebrating as there are people to ask the questions. Some were not even confident that it is, indeed the Virgin

[32] They claim the length of the fiesta is 14-15 days, or two weeks. But I found, like Fernandez, that the actual length was much shorter due to decreased participation (Fernandez 1994:124, 192).

of Conception but that answer I heard most often and from the people most intimately involved in the festivities. A few people seemed angered that I even asked her name. 'The Virgin' or the 'sacred' or 'Holy Virgin' seemed to suffice. This 'saint' or 'virgin' is also at times referred to as pieces remaining from the talking cross of Caste War fame.

It is said that August has always been the month where this church honors the Virgin of Conception, but the fiesta is relatively new therefore implying the sacred aspects pre-date the spectacles of the dances and bullfights. Before, they celebrated, but in less obvious ways and just in that church's *barrio*[33].

They claim the reason for having it once every two years instead of the more common annual celebrations in the rest of the peninsula is because they cannot afford to have it more often. There are many costs associated with the fiesta. First and foremost, they have to pay the church in Chumpon for the use of their saint. In addition, there are costs associated with paying performers, building and hosting bullfights, and feeding participants.

Terre and Papio claim Señor is learning to have fiestas because they were too poor before. They couldn't pay dancers and musicians nor did people have

[33] "People create their own churches so they won't have more problems with "the people" in order to calm things people separate and then they can continue their cargo in peace…."(Perez 2008:117).

the time to learn because they had to work in the *milpas*. These facets of the fiesta are tied to the assimilation tactics of the Porfiriato Era[34].

Religion and the Fiesta

While the gremio Catholics are the most publically visible during the fiesta, there are multiple religious identities that take part at varying levels of participation for the festivities. The 'syncretic' religion of Señor is multifaceted. These Catholics should not be understood in the framework of Catholicism that we use in Europe or the United States of America. This is not the same understanding of doctrine or practice. This Catholicism is a remnant of the partial conversion discussed in Chapter Two above.

Gremio Catholicism and the Participants

The *gremio*, or guild, is integral to the fiesta's success. In Señor, the main gremio is that of the construction worker, or *albañil*. There is friendly competition between the sponsors of each night of the fiesta. Each works to make their night the best and their seats within the bullfighting ring the most appealing.

> Each gremio[35] is responsible for 24 hours of fiesta and its work includes, processions: one of entrada and another of salida, the entrance to and the exit from the Catholic church. Each gremio

[34] Porfiriato Era was from the 1876-1910 with the start of the Mexican Revolutionary War and overlapping much of the Caste War era (1847-1901+) of the Yucatán Peninsula.

[35] For a thorough treatment of the gremio and patronal fiesta systems see Fernandez 1994, Perez 2008 or Turner 2005.

> also organizes a meal for its associates and their guests and although any person is welcome it is not expected that everyone in the community participates in the meal. Finally each gremio has to cover certain expenses such as the music for the procession, the buying of flowers for it and so on (Fernandez 1994:93).

The fiesta started on July 22 with the arrival of the saint. As of the morning of July 23, they were still building the ring. The first bullfight is tonight. Each member of the gremio involved builds one section of the ring and can charge people for the seats in it on top of the cost of the entry ticket. Entry ticket pays the traveling rodeo while the seat fee pays the local family. Having the most attractive seating area helps to offset the cost of producing the ring and being a host for the fiesta. There is much haggling over the cost of the seats. The children and wives of the gremio members collect the fee from those sitting in their seats.

The Church

Inside the gremio-supported church which hosts the patronal saint in Señor, there are no depictions of Christ, his disciples or any male figures[36]. These are the homes of the Virgin of Guadalupe or Maria or the "Holy Virgin". She is one and she is many.

[36] See Fig. 9

Figure 9 - Inside one of the churches

There are crosses draped in *huipiles*, streamers, tinsel or *papel picado*. There are banners from the years the church participated in the run of the *antorchistas*[37] on the walls. The interior of these churches is brightly painted and often has Christmas lights strung all year long.

[37] Antorchistas are followers of the Virgin of Guadalupe who have made her a promise to run a specified distance as a sacrifice to her in exchange for some act of benevolence on her part (usually help with a sick family member or something similar). They run in groups from their church and are often accompanied by someone with a truck. They divide the distance and take turns running, like a relay race and stop at other churches along the way. Upon returning they have a celebration with lots of food. They time it to return to their home church at midnight where they will sing Mananitas to the Virgin on December 12th.

The *sacerdote* or ma*estro cantores* give a version of mass, but no one need attend or listen. Mostly children play in the church and people snack, visit and laugh during the *rezo*/mass. When I kept my head bowed and quiet during my first *rezo*, people asked me what was wrong. The only space where quiet reflection or prayer occurs is in the *Gloria*.

The *Gloria* is walled partially off, and there is an old, wax droplet covered table in it. There are benches along the walls outside of the *Gloria* and a great, open cement floor in the middle.

There is no priest in residence and there are no weekly masses. There is no bible, no Book of Common Prayer, no Daily Missal, no kneelers nor acolytes. The members do not attend church every Sunday. It is this segment of the population that has the gremio organization instead of the cargo organization. This is Don Victor's family's level of participation in local religion.

The Cargo System Participants

The cargo holders[38] also participate to some extent. They realize that the saint is important to the village, but remain loyal to the saints and virgins associated with the church in Xcacal and have built small *maakans* or *capillas* near their homes that the family and close neighbors use to honor their saint of choice.

[38] See Chapter Two; Religious Categories for description/definition of ideal types.

They do not build the massive bullring[39], attend the virgin's procession or make food for this virgin. This is Papio's family's level of participation. They attend the church services as observers and they attend the secular events for entertainment, but for the most part do not attend the more ceremonial events such as the arrival of the saint or the planting of the tree. Not to say they cannot attend, or are opposed to attending or have not attended before out of curiosity, but it is not a part of their ritual. I hesitate to claim they are not believers in the power or validity of this virgin, because I do believe they are, but they believe that they are someone else's virgin or saint.

Papio's family does not belong to a gremio. They are subsistence farmers and *soldados* in the Xcacal hierarchy. Most of my interactions with the fiesta take place with this family. They are one of the first families to have moved to Señor and are active in the local politics. They do not belong to a gremio, as they are not tradesmen. They work in the milpa and in politics. The Virgin of Conception is not a virgin to whom they have made promises or petitions. Their neighborhood[40] *capilla/maakan* is dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe to whom

[39] There is a small permanent bullring near the church for the staged bullfights.
[40] "Barrios are "neighborhoods" that enable groups to define not only spatial limits but also boundaries with well-designated identity markers. For instance, barrios contain churches or chapels with a Catholic saint serving as the barrio's spiritual benefactor and a patron. Each barrio also has its own history, leaders, and social structure where members are often related either through real or fictive kin ties" (Gonzalez 1999:168). The women of the neighborhood decide how best they can honor their saint or virgin each year.

the women of this barrio have made promises and petitions for their family members. Therefore they do not participate fully in the fiesta.

Secular Participants

In addition, there are also the less religious participants, who enjoy the profane festivities that run in parallel with saint's days in the peninsula and are more associated with the state of Yucatán and city life. These celebrations have only been present in Señor for the past twenty or so years[41]. These self-professed 'Modern Maya' hang out along the fringes on bicycles or in trucks watching the spectacles but not "participating" or committing to being in the space. Some have dropped off loved ones or have friends who are participants and wait for the secular events later in the evening like the bullfights and dances.

This is Julio's level of participation and it seems to be mostly young men who work in wage labor jobs at the coast who return and celebrate at this level. They are not members of a gremio or the religious hierarchy of Xcacal. They are typically in a service industry of some sort. They tend to be younger (16-35) and do not grow a *milpa* but may have *terreno*. During the time of the fiesta, laborers who had migrated for work often return and share their new identities and status with their home village. This often involves displaying status via material goods (Gonzalez 1999:167-172) such as vehicles, clothes, jewelry and cellular phones.

[41] The answers ranged from 20-25.

Evangelical Participants

Noticeably invisible in the town center during the fiesta are Evangelicals. However, if one were to walk past their churches on fiesta nights they would find that the congregation is there, music blaring, lights on and delivering personal testimony over microphones in hopes of to drowning out the fiesta. "*La Conquesta Extrema*"[42] was back at the Pentecostal church from July 22-24 (overlapping with the first days of the fiesta) and led by a preacher they say is from Texas – Tito Paniaguas[43]. It is held here every year but this is the first time I have been present when it coincides with days of the festival and it is larger than I have ever seen it.

[42] "La Conquista Extrema" is the name of the vacation bible school that recruits young people in the village to join in a few days to a week of fun, games, and candy at the large Pentecostal church. They recruit by hosting a parade through town and throwing out candies.

[43] There does seem to be a gentleman who speaks regularly to "Real Men" at Eastern Heights Pentecostal Church in Cleburne, Texas that appears to be the same person. http://www.easternheightschurch.org/real_mens_%20ministry.htm. He is not present every year.

Figure 10 - The invitation to join the church camp

Apparently Hermano Tito is a big deal as he has drawn quite a crowd. It was the most traffic I had ever seen for the evenings of the bible school. Most say he came to keep the Evangelicals from drinking at the fiesta. The trici-taxi drivers, however, say they wait outside these churches to pick up the some of the converts to take them to the dances afterward.

Other Evangelicals, like Alex, remain invisible this week. I did not once see him during the fiesta and I had to walk by his house at least twice a day. As Maria Elisa Christie found in central Mexico, so too in Señor the Catholics are central to the fiesta and the evangelical Protestants who are forbidden to drink avoid participation. This leads to negative judgment of the protestant women by the catholic women. If they are not cooking and contributing to the fiesta, then

they are perceived as lazy and unfriendly particularly if they expect to be fed without contributing (Christie 2008:44, 106).

The Fiesta

For each night of the fiesta there is a bullfight, a mass, a dance and a late night "feast". The bullfight, mass and dance are open to all who would like to attend. Most people attend the bullfight, return home to eat, and then come wait for the dance, which starts somewhere between 10:00 pm and midnight and the mass is around 8:00 pm.

A family or a portion of a gremio sponsors each night of the fiesta. They are in charge of raising the labor and covering the costs of a bullfight and the dance as well as feeding everyone who helped them. These are the "*invitados*" who attend the late night feast.

As discussed above, the bullfights and dances originate in the Yucatán during the Porfiriato period. Fernandez names the organizations that commercialize the fiesta (the bullfighting troupes and the popular music bands that play at the dances and who charge admission or fees for performing) *fiesteros*. He remains uncertain as to how these fiesteros organizations were first organized but they originally marketed themselves to town councils (Fernandez 1994:95).

The Arrival

While much surrounding the fiesta lies shrouded in the confusion of "tradition", where the Virgin lives, how she arrives and where she is housed does have answers. She lives in Chumpon[44], a village near Tulum with which they own the saint. Each sacred community can ask to borrow the saint of another community by sending a "convite" (treat) to the other community which contains a package of cigarettes, corn, and rum. If they agree they will send a treat back, but if not there won't be a responding treat (Perez 2008:78).

> The circulation of the images can be seen as a symbolic circulation which shows the parish communion and allows a constant flow of people between neighboring communities. The presence of certain images reinforces the feelings of belonging and location of the social actors who participate actively in the carrying of the images (Fernandez 1994:189).

The virgin arrives via an old *sak be*[45] on a date that is determined by when the carriers arrive in town. They know about when based on about when they leave Chumpon and because there are runner/messengers. The journey takes approximately three days on foot through the *monte*. In general, people seem to believe this is a time to come to come together and have a good time. The

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[44] Chumpon or Chum Poom means Trunk of the Copal Tree. It is located in the municipality of Felipe Carrillo Puerto and ejido of Chunyaxche at 20 degrees 00' 12" Latitude N and 87 degrees 48' 45" Longitude W. As of 1995 the population was 408. At that time there was 1 Catholic and 1 Presbyterian Church. Their fiesta popular is held in the beginning of May (Xacur 1998:116)

[45] Sak beo'ob are the white roads constructed by the Maya using the local limestone. Many are still in existence and navigable. Often they are used for traditional pilgrimages tied to saints.

length of the festival depends on the number of families involved although they claim it lasts for fifteen days it does vary. Each family or extended family sponsors a day of food, bullfights and dances. It is like each family is a mini-mayordomo.

On July 21, 2011 at about 10:00 am, I tell Julio I am going for a walk to see if I can spy the arrival of the virgin. He comments that he thinks she has already arrived. I leave to check on the progress of the bullring since the first bullfight is supposed to take place tonight. No one in his family seems interested in the arrival of the virgin. As I approach the square where the bullring and church are located, I notice many women dressed in *huipiles* holding *juramentos* – bunches of basil leaves and white candles which according to Perez signifies an oath (Perez 2008:86). There are also a few men present.

I found a group of women waiting in the shade of a crumbling wall across the street from the church. They offered me a seat and when I asked if I could wait with them and share their shade, the most vocal and apparently the eldest said, “Why couldn’t you? Don’t you think we are all equal before the virgin?” I said, “Of course I think we are all equal”. So I sat down and asked why they were holding basil. They said to offer to the virgin. Why basil? She responds with the dreaded answer – tradition. We introduced ourselves, her name was Lucia and she shared some of her basil with me and took me around the corner to the medical clinic (located across the street from the church) to buy a candle. I

just bought one and told her I was offering it on behalf of my husband who couldn't be there. She chuckled.

The women gossiped about the men who traveled with the virgin, the *cargadores*[46] who are in charge of transporting and caring for the Virgin during her trip from Chumpon and during her stay in Señor. One of them got drunk and insulted her by aiming and firing his rifle in camp. The drunkenness itself was also considered an insult. "Besides formally belonging to a group, to take part in the pilgrimages and processions it is necessary to be "well dressed, not to wear short trousers or be drunk despite the fiesta" (Fernandez 1994:158).

Lucia told me that one year she had hurt her ankle. Her son and husband asked her not to visit the virgin that year, but she did anyway and was cured. I was told that last time she came, she brought rain after a drought. This occurred in 2009 right after I had left the field and tensions were running very high due to the drought. The virgin is widely known for her ability to heal illnesses.

[46] Fernandez describes the duties of cargadores as cleaning, transporting, caring for the belongings of the saint. He also writes that they are responsible for visiting the community where the celebration will take place prior to her transport. He also notes that these are typically only men, as it is difficult work and that they are normally from subordinate social classes (ND 156-158). Perez adds that they must also clean the sake be upon which the saint will be transported as well as small *capillas* under which they will perform rituals along the journey (Perez 2008:80-81).

Once the runners let us know that the virgin was coming and soon after we heard the *fuegos artificiales*[47] announcing her arrival, we lined up –jostling, pushing, shoving. This absolutely must be a straight line. We lined up in front of the church in two lines facing inward. I thought the virgin was going to be marched through these lines into the church, but no. When the music started we turned to face away from the church and procession to a small altar at the edge of town were atole and prayers, cantos were offered. Most of the escorts seemed drunk or hung over (wobbly, red-eyed, some even wearing sunglasses – rare here)

Five women carried buckets of atole, which were then poured into ten jicaras on the table. I was expecting a large statue in the shape of a woman carried on a palanquin. However, the Virgin was in a wooden box set in the middle of the small table.

Copal smoke, bells and drums accompanied her arrival. This all took place under arched boughs of "almond" tree. We spent about an hour here…half of it on our knees on the rocky road. Women used their flip-flops as kneelers. Here we offered the basil and took a drink of atole after the cantores finished. Those present made the sign of the cross and cross and kissed their thumb when the *maestros cantores* sounded the bells during their chants. Fernandez

[47] Sort of like a roman candle that doesn't make pretty sparks. It is a firework that shoots into the air, leaving a smoke trail and making a loud BANG. It is often used to announce the beginning and ending of ceremonies. It is also referred to as a "volador" or "flyer". It is often set off in sets of three.

describes the traditional sequence of events at the saint's arrival: first *voladores* announce the entrance then women with flowers and candles, then people holding *ramilletes* and banners and then the general public. The musicians playing Maya Pax enter last (1994:168).

Then began the procession whereupon the men carried the virgin through the arched branches from the arrival point to the church where she would reside during her celebration. The decorated box containing the relic was accompanied with three musicians playing *Maya Pax*[48], an armed guard with a rifle, the head *h-men* from Chumpon and the other *cargadores* who helped guard and carry her on her journey. Only the two *cargadores* carrying the box could pass through the arched boughs placed along the route.

[48] Consisting of a violin, a snare drum and a drum. See Fig 11.

Figure 11 - A Maya Pax group with the violin, snare, and drum

Directly outside of the church lies a flat concrete foundation where there the dances will be held and across the street is the bullfighting ring. Once the virgin passes, the celebrants begin their "procession" to church to light candles that carry their requests for the saint. This procession was more of a mad dash to the church. Everyone wanted to be first to enter the *Gloria*. We removed shoes and tossed them into a large pile of dusty sandals before entering the church.

Inside the church, the ceiling was strewn with pastel *papel picado* and strings of hand cut pastel tissue butterflies. The women (and a spare few men and children) entered the *Gloria* to put candles on the table. During this dash, I

lost the women who had been guiding me through the process. I was holding them back and they left me to clamor their way to the front.

Now I understood why the mad dash. We were swept up in the tide and packed into the church, everyone was shoving their way to the *Gloria* to light and set candles on the table, say a prayer and make a request to the virgin. I do not know how no fire broke out. The hoards of jostling people knocked over candles and burned themselves reaching over other candles to melt some wax and then stick their candle in the melted puddle. Then we had to fight our way out so the next crush of people could enter the *Gloria*. The forward press was unrelenting making it very difficult to exit the church and retrieve your shoes at the entrance. This all came to an end approximately by noon.

The celebrants were mostly women and children with approximately 10% men and older boys. I never saw one of the male attendees enter the *Gloria*. I did not see anyone I knew at the arrival of the virgin nor at the church.

After all of the excitement, I headed 'home' to Papio's family. I wanted to ask them some questions about what I had just experienced. Dulce and Sol were excited for news of the virgin's arrival. They wanted to know with whom I had visited and made me describe the woman in detail until we finally narrowed it down to a woman who lived down the street from Flor. She was deemed a hard worker and acceptable ally for me. They called her *la viejita* (the little old one).

I asked Papio how long the fiesta had been talking place and they had always honored the virgin, but Señor only started to house the virgin during this

time about twenty or thirty years ago. Julio, who was in his mid-thirties during the 2011 fiesta, said he remembered a time when the celebration did not exist. I also asked again about the basil and why it is offered. I was told it is called '*nicte ha*[49]' and is given as an offering because of tradition. When I pressed about the name, saying, "but doesn't *ha* mean water?" They replied with "pues, solo *nicte*, entonces." Or, "well, only flower then". This same conversation happened with several people over the next few days before I just accepted it as local terminology that perhaps evolved, like the *Yaaxche* tree story later in this chapter, to continue calling something by the traditionally used name even though they are now substituting a different species of plant due to local availability.

Jaranas

Dancing the *jarana* kicks off the first night of every fiesta and the set of *jaranas* that make up the first night is called the *Vaqueria*. The women who dance the *jarana* are also called *Vaquerias*. The following nights' festivities begin with bullfights. Only the people who have taken *jarana* lessons danced in the *Vaqueria* here unlike in Merida or Tulum where the performers are often joined by couples in attendance. The government provides free lessons and free dancing shoes to encourage villagers to learn the dance in order to promote

[49] Nicte ha translates to water lily. This is the small leafed basil, which they call albahaca in Spanish. It is not the same plant as the large leafed Basil Genovese that we are familiar with although the flavor and scent is similar.

patrimony. The participants wear 'traditional' dress -- the women in *huipiles* with the *justán*[50] and the men in *traje* – the *guayaberas* and white, cropped trousers often with red sash belts.

Figure 12 - Dancing the jarana

Most people just gathered under the one light bulb strung across the middle of the street and enjoyed the *Maya Pax* and dancing. This type of Maya Pax is called '*el jaranero'* and comes from the state of Yucatán. It is different

[50] The lacy underskirt or slip that makes this the formal version of the huipil.

than the type played at the sacred events (Perez 2008:93). The *Maya Pax* played in Xcacal and at the churches here in Quintana Roo is played on sacred instruments and there are no written notes (ibid). This band is not from Señor, but paid for and imported from Felipe Carrillo Puerto.

They played the same song over and over. It was general consensus that they were perhaps too drunk to fulfill their job successfully. Most entertaining though were the approximately ten people who were drunk – mainly men and older women and they all performed drunkenness[51] to its fullest with staggering, silly dancing, falling, and lewd over sexualized behaviors. This was my first time witnessing public drinking or drunkenness in Señor over the five years of visits.

The "Yaaxche"

On July 23rd around 5:00 pm, the sacred participants (the cargadores who helped to carry the virgin from Chumpon) plus a few other locals come to cut down a chicozapote tree in Papio's yard. I am told the chicozapote has come to stand in for the Ceiba because there are none here. They say they are mostly found in Yucatán because of all of the logging in Quintana Roo, there are not any locally.

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[51] Cerveceria Sol sponsored this vaqueria. As Perez found in Tixcacal Guardia, "In fiestas in the ceremonial centers of QR, the beer businesses come to help with the expenses by donating to the church things like cauldrons, candles, dispensations and fireworks. These beer companies organize and control the sale of beers and some of the popular dances" (Perez 2008:92).

There was quite an argument between the *cargadores* and my host family over whether I could take pictures of the tree cutting. Julio and Martin (who are both tied to the Xcacal church and not the one hosting the saint) said I could because it is their land but the participants (who are tied to this virgin, the Virgin of Conception) said I couldn't because it was sacred. Martin reminded them that this was not a sacred space and assured them that I would not take photos once the tree was stored in the sacred area over night. This sacred area is a space near the church where they will stay up and drink *aguardiente* all night while guarding the tree before its final planting in the bullring.

The men make much noise, ask for tortillas and salt to eat, and some habaneros and limes to flavor their rum. They are already quite drunk upon arrival and the drinking continues during the tree cutting – *aguardiente* with limes and salt is passed around in a large coca cola plastic 3 liter bottle with the top cut off. Jose Alberto Perez reminds us that these "alcoholic beverages have a festive and social use in all societies" (Perez 2008:91) and that as long as the norms of a society are not transgressed, the drunkenness of the patronal fiesta remains acceptable. Once these norms are transgressed, they are considered an alcoholic and the use of alcohol is negatively viewed (Perez 2008:91-92).

The cutting activity[52] includes whooping and hollering and is a happy time. After cutting the tree they parade through town to the sacred space near

[52] I hesitate to call this a ceremony since what settled the photo debate was that this was not considered sacred space.

the church followed by maya pax musicians. Their presence is announced by shouts of “woo hoo” and two clowning drunkards that fall over and keep everyone laughing. Mari and Abril are greatly amused by the performance of drunken celebration. Mamio shakes her head and goes inside to fetch some leftover tortillas and salt from breakfast for them.

Figure 13 - Carrying away the "Yaaxche"

Many people follow the men carrying the tree to the sacred space and Mari and Abril want to join. Dulce consents as long as I go along too. However, one of the more drunk participants keeps stopping the parade to tell me I am not

welcome. He is not from the village and apparently has a history of violent and drunk behavior so we decide to return home much to Mari's disappointment.

The following morning we awake at 5:00 am to watch them plant the Yaaxche/Ceiba/Chicozapote in the middle of the bullfighting ring (which is still in its final construction stages for the bullfight tonight). Papio claims the planting of the chicosapote/cebia is one of the ancient traditions that is being revived along with the new traditions associated with the fiesta.

Martin accompanies Mari and me in order to avoid any issues with the drunken men from yesterday. The rest of the family is uninterested and Martin only goes as escort. He waits in the truck where he can see us but Mari and I climb to the second floor of the seating area of the ring for a good view.

Tour buses from the resorts drop off some locals and some other employees who are just interested in watching the show. This is considered disrespectful since this is part of the sacred function of the fiesta. Anyone can attend the dances and the bullfights, but the sacred elements: the processions and such are not for general public. I am accepted because of my friends and because people know me from past visits.

Around 5:30am, the Maya Pax starts. Then the participants dig a hole, place the tree in it and try to raise it with guy ropes while the "*volador*" or "*nohoch chic*" rides it to the vertical position. The music stops. Then he climbs to the top (which takes several tries – remember he has been awake drinking and protecting the tree all night) and removes ropes that tied up the branches and

facilitated carrying it through town. Once the ropes are off, he showers the crowd with *pepitas* (symbolizing fertility) and the kids scramble to pick them up. He climbs down and Maya Pax resumes. Then participants process in a counter clockwise ciricle around the tree and exit the ring.

Figure 14 - The nohoch chick ascends or rides the tree as it is placed in the bullfighting ring

Figure 15 - The participants exit the ring after planting the tree

A few of the participants who stayed up guarding the tree and drinking danced in the ring as the Maya Pax played. Once again there is some discussion as to whether or not photos were permissible because once the tree is planted, the area is an extension of the church – those with ties to Tixcacal Guardia have stronger beliefs about this. Some say the ring is public space so photographs are acceptable while others say it is a sacred extension of the church during the fiesta. Traditionally, the sounding of bells and offerings of incense marks the space as sacred.

> Unlike other Mesoamerican fiestas, in Yucatán there is an important distinction between two spaces or aspects of the fiesta: the sacred space or the space of the Church and the profane space or space of the people. In the first space the actors are the Church and the gremios and in some cases the cargadores (Fernandez 1994:93).

The whole ceremony lasts about thirty minutes. At this point the participants exit to the church for another *rezo* and breakfast to which we are not invited. However, Jose Alberto Vazquez Perez describes the scene:

> Then the vaqueras and officials enter the church and after a prayer they go to their barracks to rest. Meanwhile they pull up the pib from the night before and bring it to the church and share with those present. The members divide the chimole to the participants then to those who brought their own dishes (2008:85).

The Bullfight

Before the professional bullfighters made the circuit to the Chan Santa Cruz region where Tixcacal Guardia and Señor are located, the residents of performed the "Baxal Wakax" which consists in individuals dressing up as bulls and 'drunks' fighting the bull. This still happens in Tixcacal during their fiestas, but in Señor they pay for professionals. As Pacheco Cruz observed:

> "[The Baxal wakax declined in the early 1900s] "due to the establishment of professional bullfights that charged admission, affairs that had real toreros in special costume who also took part in special bullrings. In towns without rings, they build them out of wood planks, imitating the circular form of the Roman circus. These wooden rings have an upper area and are built from wood and thatch and can be dangerous…" (Rugeley 2001:191).

The bullfight differs each night. Some nights it is a comedic night of "Los Enanitos Toreros[53]" much of which takes place in drag, other times it is a professional group of Toreadores who actually slay the bull and sell off the pieces once it is butchered.

[53] These groups are so popular; they have their own book "Enanitos Toreros" by Livia Corona.

The most popular nights were the nights where there was going to be a “sacrificio”. It is interesting to note the terms used. The pigs killed for a family gathering are killed “mata cochino” but the animals for the fiesta are sacrificed “sacrificio”. This applied to the pigs for the fiesta as well as the nights where the bull would be killed.

Figure 16 - The construction of the bullfighting ring

Figure 17 - The sacrifice of the bull

At the bullfight, one can purchase sodas, cotton candy, popcorn, fruit with chile and the fake wagon-wheel shaped “chicharrones” which are really just a mix of wheat flour, corn starch and additives. There are no food carts like at the fiestas in Merida or Tulum where one can purchase tacos, hot dogs, elotes or marquesitas. People return to their homes to eat food before returning to the festal space for the mass and late night dance.

The Rezo

The mass, or *rezo*, is one of the pre-Porfiriato elements of the fiesta. During the Caste War, the rebels would capture priests to say mass for them and it is the descendants and apprentices of these *maestros cantores* who took of the roles of clergy in this region (Farriss 1984:341-342). The mass takes about an

hour and starts sometime around 8:00pm after enough people gather after taking dinner at home. The turnout for the mass before the dance is small and mainly attended primarily by women and children. The people who do attend bring an offering of *atole* for the altar. The *atole* is offered to the Virgin at the church and the *vaqueras*, *cantores*, *sacerdotes*, and cargadores as well as those who offered *atole* partake in it after the mass.

The Baile Popular

The post-bullfight dances are not the traditional *jaranas*, but large boy band, pop-music groups that vary by night. Sometimes it might be a *reggaeton* band, other nights it could be *cumbia* or even rap, but all in a showy stage performance. It often causes electrical shortages in the village because of the heightened load on the poorly maintained and overloaded electrical system in Señor.

Women and girls do not have to pay to attend the dance. Most people never enter the actual dance floor, but hang out around the paved foundation and watch and listen for free. The young adults and teenagers who want to dance often wait out the older generations. Once the parents and grandparents have gone to bed, the dance picks up around midnight.

Food

During the time of the fiesta, Papio's family was celebrating Martin's ascension to political office. As Paul Eiss cited (2008: 238-241), I also experienced during Martin's inaugural celebration[54], pueblos continuing to coordinate national holidays and political public works with ritual or celebratory festivities, which "symbolize their connection to the founding of Mexican patria," (Eiss 2008:542). Martin had recently moved up in the local government hierarchy from *delegado* to *alcalde*[55]. So there were two separate food systems occurring at this time. The night the saint arrived we were committed to a *xix buul*[56] and pig slaughter.[57]

However, I thought I was attending a food event for the fiesta and I was, but for a political fiesta in the park at lunch the following day for the regional politicians arriving from Felipe Carrillo Puerto to honor the local elected officials and to paint the park with the incoming political party colors, distribute shirts and flyers and give speeches.

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[54] See Chapter Four; Food for a discussion of this fiesta that was held on the first day of the patronal festival in Señor.

[55] See Chapter Two for a discussion of political hierarchy system.

[56] Xix translates to leftover bits and buul is bean so this means undesired bean remnants.

[57] This was not the same pig slaughter that also occurred for the first night of the fiesta. Apparently an important distinction is that this is called killing "*matar cochino*", but for the fiesta it is called "*sacrificio*".

Figure 18 - Political presentation in the park

I am including the discussion of food making for this event for two reasons. First, it supports Eiss' theory that political events are still tied to the fiesta and second, because it mirrors the food making for the fiesta. Because I was responsible for helping my host family prepare this food for the inauguration and was unable to help Terre's family prepare their feast for the fiesta since the days coincided. The one key difference is that the women working for the political feast do so out of duty to their family and to support their husband whereas the women cooking for the fiesta have made a direct promise to the virgin to assist with the fiesta in exchange for answering a prayer or petition for help.

At the *xix buul*, the women (myself included) cleaned beans. Not your normal quick rinse in water like we are accustomed to in the USA. These were giant baskets of beans with live insects crawling in them along with bits of dirt, rock and other debris. Our job was to sit, gossip and hand pick through every last bean. I had small black beetles crawling all over my hands. I just assumed they weren't dangerous since all of the other women did too. There was a lot of laugher and we alternated sitting and standing since there were a limited number of chairs. This took about four hours during which the men also hung out and chatted. They complimented me on my speed and thoroughness. I would later find out that the gossip was that this was my best cooking skill much to my chagrin.

The men were waiting for the arrival of the pig. My friend Julio left me with the women to continue picking bugs from the beans while he drove to Xcacal to bring the pig back in his truck. Four men return with him and a large pink pig in back of truck. It has a rope tied to its back leg. One of the men yanked it out of the truck by this rope. The pig smacked its head on tailgate and ground as it fell from truck. The same man lets the pig roam around panicked and snuffling while he pins this 'leash' underneath one foot. At one point the pig gets loose, but doesn't realize it before the men secure him. They wrap the rope leash around a tree branch and start taking turns bashing the pig senseless with a board until one steps up and slits the throat. Then they hoist him into the tree to bleed for a bit. Once they feel certain it is dead, they cut the pig down and move

it to the paved patio to wash and eviscerate it. Hilarity ensues when the dead pig twitches and some men are jumpy or startled.

At this point, we leave and a smaller subset of men stay to butcher the pig, make *chicharrones*[58] and another subset of women make the *morcilla*[59] sausage for us to eat tomorrow when we return to finish preparing the feast. On the night of the *xix buul*, Mari sleeps in my room and Dulce wakes us early to come help with the food for her cargo supporting Martin. We are making *frijol con puerco* to feed the masses that attend the inauguration ceremony. Since Martin is the local elected official, it is part of her cargo.

I am once again kept away from the cooking fire and put to work slicing buckets full of red onion, tomato and cilantro for garnishing for the pork and beans. We are outside slicing vegetables on cutting boards set on an uneven rickety basin with a knife that I believe someone crafted from scrap metal.

I can tell they are asking Dulce about me due to the occasional references to guer-a[60] or leti[61]. I can tell Dulce knows I am aware of being gossiped about so she attempts to be more furtive in her responses. I try to interject myself into

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[58] This is always made in the wee hours of the morning (*madruga)* after killing a pig. Voladores are set off to announce when people can come by and pick up some chicharron – fried crunchy pig skin and fat. Yum.

[59] Spicy sausage made from the internal organs and intestine of the pig.

[60] Guera pronounced with a Mayan accent Guer A.

[61] This is just a third person/thing pronoun but it is seldom used with someone you know personally.

the conversation so that I seem less of an outsider. I ask what the things we are using and doing are called in Maya and what the ingredients will be used for. We joke about how many of them are just Spanish words with Maya pronunciation.

Around the time they seem to be warming up to me my eyes begin to tear from the onions. This is great fun for them as according to local lore it means I am a jealous woman. I respond with "Of course I'm jealous…just look how beautiful you all are dressed in huipiles with make up on while I just rolled out of bed and threw on yesterday's pants in my hurry to attend and because I slept late after the *xix buul* last night". They think this is funny and appreciate my self-deprecation and re-tell the story to every new person that arrives.

Figure 19 - The women chopping onions

Dulce and I finish our contribution to the cooking around mid-morning. We return home to clean up and change clothes. Then we take a trici-taxi back over to the neighbor's house where we had been preparing food. The men load napkin covered cauldrons of *frijol con puerco* into the bed of the truck while the women carry embroidered napkin wrapped tortillas and Styrofoam serving platters to the main square. Only after we have dished out dozens of platters do we realize that all of the condiments we chopped (the onions, tomatoes, chile and cilantro) were missing. They thought it was quite amusing that all of the labor we had put in was for naught. I offered to walk the two blocks to fetch them, but they said it was fine, we would share them amongst the families who helped.

I was waiting patiently for all of the attendees to eat before I took a plate, but the women corrected me, "NO, you helped, you get TWO plates. Here. Take it. Also, take one to Tio Viejo[62]. He is too old to come here. Now go. Eat." I ran off to take Tio his plate and sat with him while the rest of the village jostled to the front of the line to partake in the free food. I then returned to listen to the politician's speeches, which were followed by resort employees handing out worn logo shirts and fraying towels while enrolling people for available day labor jobs for which the politicians took credit (free food, newly painted park[63] and JOBS!)

[62] Mamio's elder brother.

[63] The park was so freshly painted the bright orange of the PRD party that many people left with bright orange stains on their clothing and hands.

Exit

The final event of the fiesta is the *Cabeza de Cochino*. This is a dance performed on the last night or the following morning at the end of a fiesta. This event takes place in the church courtyard. In this 'dance' a man carrying a wrapped and decorated pig's head (or facsimile) and a candle circles a wooden table six times counter clockwise and then six times clockwise before entering the church on the thirteenth circle. The numbers are important but when I ask what the importance is no one knows.

The person carrying the pig's head is followed by a trail of females. Any female may participate as long as she is carrying a *ramillete*, or a cone full of *arepas*[64] and decorated with tissue paper streamers. This *ramillete* is left at the church as a offering. After the pigs head and *ramilletes* are taken into the church, everyone comes outside to dance.

Pacheco Cruz cites this tradition as the "*k'uub pool*, or handing over the pig's head. This was a favorite pastime of pagan origins and superstitious air that would be celebrated at the end of a dance" (P.Cruz [1947] in Rugeley 2001:189). Nancy Farriss claims this dance has pre-Columbian ties to the deer head dance of the Maya and says the purpose of the dance is to pass off the burden of this fiesta to the *mayordomo* of the following year's fiesta as a symbol

[64] Sweetened masa dough balls, like donut holes but not fried.

of his inherited burden (1984:346). However, in Señor this burden is shared by the gremio and takes on the air of a joke being played on someone. Everyone knows that the person carrying the head and being passed the head will not have to actually pay for the next fiesta. However, they laugh and point at the inheritor as if he will have to pay for it.

Analysis

Enculturation processes like Porfirio Diaz's conflation of political inauguration festivities with the patronal saint rituals can become tradition, but only if other aspects of life match the path to assimilation. For example, the infrastructure must exist, the ideology allowing for a festive secular atmosphere must be present and the ability to work in jobs that pay in wage labor must be accessible in order for a pueblo to begin to employ the material symbols associated with the Porfirato ideas of progress.

In the case of this fiesta, the spread of trains, roads and electricity allowed for travel for jobs, spread of media to advertise bullfights and dances and the ability for groups to share ideas and symbols. These new national symbols now present in the 'traditional' patronal fiesta have become tied to Catholicism, wage labor and non-subsistence foodways as were proscribed during the progressive Porfiriato.

The ideas expressed in the pueblos surrounding Merida and the northern section of the peninsula during the Porfiriato and expanding as infrastructure

worked its way south are now catching on in the smaller villages in the south of the peninsula. This is due to increased infrastructure and a ready market for entertainment and disposable income.

It is difficult to be a gremio member without a wage labor income and a particular skill. They were founded on guilds and many of their performances rely on these skillsets. Building the rings, having cash for large feasts, etc. This segment of the population is most like the rural Mexico we envision thanks to historical and ethnographic work done in short, incomplete time frames in easy to reach and research locales. There is also a pressure within academic anthropology to seek out these traditions and explain them.

However, within just twenty to thirty years after accepting these material symbols as signs of progress, pueblos in the Yucatán are deeming this display of consumption as burdensome and not important in secular or religious behavior and prestige (Fernandez 1994:203). There is discussion of ceasing these activities but support comes from political parties and tourism providers so I do not believe that Señor is at any risk of ceasing patronal fiesta activities. However, there are those who believe the celebration is excessive and unnecessary. While the fiesta is often eschewed as expensive, the population harshly judges those who do not help with at least some aspect of preparation (Christie 2008:18). This leads, in part, to the invisibility of the Evangelicals in Señor during the fiesta.

I have had difficulty finding resources describing another gremio supported patronal fiesta in Quintana Roo in order to compare Señor's fiesta to another. I do know other villages and pueblos participate in this tradition, but I will need to seek this out in future fieldwork.

I have attended patronal fiestas in both Señor and Tixcacal Guardia. The one in Señor is gremio supported, whereas the patronal fiesta I attended in Tixcacal Guardia was not gremio supported but cargo-system supported in the style of the military religious hierarchy described in detail in the History chapter.

The sacred parts of these fiestas are similar, but without large modern pop music dances and imported bullfights. The bullfights are stylized in small rings with people dressed as bulls. The lavish extravagance is noticeably absent. As Fernandez states, "The socioeconomic situation of the community shapes the structure of the fiesta" (Fernandez 1994:89). Therefore, as the gremios have expanded to work in the tourism sector, their ability to earn wages has increased allowing their influence and the size of the fiesta to expand in recent years. This is in contrast to the Xcacal fiesta, which is not supported by gremios but by the military-religious hierarchy of the cargo system as discussed in Chapter Two.

Mario Gonzalez describes these lavish changes to what had once been a small, rural tradition as beginning in the 1970s with the addition of roads and electricity. These government improvements to infrastructure allowed buses, bullfights and nighttime entertainment. It also allowed for marketing of the Porfirian ideals and material representations of progress to be marketed to rural

homes (Gonzales 1999:165-171). Historically, the gremio-supported patronal fiesta has its roots in the Porfiriato Era (Eiss 2008). In the 1930s, Pacheco Cruz claimed these traditions had not yet caught on in Quintana Roo. In a work published in 1934 Pacheco Cruz observed, "There is little interest in the k'iin k'aaba', meaning onomastic or saint's day. They waste no time in such matters, where other people squander money, often with tragic consequences. They neither know how to celebrate their saint's day, nor feel any need to" (Rugeley 2001:195 from P. Cruz [1934]).

My host family constantly discussed the cost of the festivities, particularly the dances and the bullfight that are bussed in from other towns. They would shake their heads and say "Imagine how many hours of work, just to do that" and "It is better for us to celebrate with our families and neighbors to share what we grow". The evangelicals also eschew the showy displays of wealth. As more gremio laborers leave Señor to be close to the coastal cities that employ them, it is possible that Señor will return to celebrations like those in Tixcacal – lacking the bullfights and large pop dances.

Conclusion

Analytically, merely observing Señor's fiesta and its observable parts: the arrival of the virgin, the cutting and planting of the *Yaaxche*[65], the bullfights and the feasts provides a truly incomplete picture of modern Maya society, it excludes

[65] Yaax Che or Ceiba is the sacred green tree of Maya creation myth.

three of the four social groupings I have identified -- the cargo holders, the less religious and the Evangelical portions of the pueblo. It promotes what we have come to recognize as "truth" for the Maya in Yucatán, that all Maya are syncretic Catholics who have taken virgins and saints to stand for their pre-conquest gods[66], that they all participate in the mandated assimilation of the *Porfiriato* and practice the *jaranas* and wear *huipiles*.

The truth is much more complex than this. While conquest, Christianity and Mexico's attempts at assimilation and nation building have affected all, not all have been affected in the same way. These multi-faceted Maya identities are visible during other social facts, mostly smaller, daily interactions such as snacking and visiting in the park, by what they buy at the stores, by what they drive or in what type of house they live.

While I believe that Michael Dietler's take on the feast is appropriate to the fiesta that they both

> …serve in some ways to define social boundaries while simultaneously creating a sense of community. That is, nearly all feasts serve to mark, reify and inculcate diacritical distinctions between social groups, categories, and statuses while at the same time establishing relationships across the boundaries that they define (Dietler 2001:88).

[66] Even the term "gods" should be questioned. I get the feeling that they are more spirits or anthropomorphized natural forces (See Stross 2010 and Anderson 2005a).

However, I maintain that in doing so, the patronal fiesta of Señor creates community only with some groups within the pueblo and others remain hidden to the casual observer.

To assume that by observing the fiesta one could glean sufficient information to judge the community structure would be false. As seen above, not all segments of the population participate. Even those that do participate, do so at different levels of commitment and visibility in different years. I believe my host family would not have attended half of the events we did except for the fact that Mari was finally old enough to enjoy them and I desired to see them.

Those who made promises to the virgin were the most involved and were the ones creating the bullfighting ring, making offerings, hosting the bullfights, the bands and trying to raise money to cover expenses for labor, food and entertainment. Young adults from neighboring villages come to be entertained. Evangelicals hide out until the dangers of being associated with drinking, dancing and lavish excess have passed. Others just decide it is too much trouble, too expensive, or not entertaining enough to attend. One social fact, no matter how showy, cannot and does not in this case provide enough material to fully understand social structure and interpersonal dynamics. In fact, one could glean more from a normal evening in the park, as I will describe in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Eating and Being - Communicating Religious Affiliation

> We should not forget that language, cosmology, conceptualizations of space and time, curing beliefs, and agricultural practices continue to be important cornerstones in everyday practice in central Quintana Roo. Hence people consciously maintain meaningful cultural forms and practice, which support the reproduction of identity in the face of adverse forces (Hoestattler 2001:256-7).

Introduction

In this chapter[67] I demonstrate how food in a small setting can better stand for community structure than the fiesta. During fieldwork in a traditional Maya village, I have found that as people leave the traditional interrelated practices of subsistence and religion behind, they often leave traditional foods behind as a way of publicly distancing themselves from their indigeneity. As mentioned before, I identify three main religions in Señor and they are all tied to different forms of labor and eating[68]. Due to minimal access to "fresh" foods at the small convenience stores in this community, breaking with tradition seems to lead to reduced nutrition. For example, if more of the village is following a trend towards the use of packaged foods based on religious affiliation or new wage labor

[67] A version of the information in this chapter was previously published. O'Connor, Amber. 2012. "Conversion in South Eastern Quintana Roo: Changes in Religion, Community, Economy and Nutrition in a Maya Village". In *Food, Culture and Society* 15.1. UK: Berg Publishing.

[68] See Chapter Two; Religious Categories for the initial discussion.

opportunities, it follows that certain segments of the population may be more at risk for diet-related diseases.

In the Maya villages of Felipe Carrillo Municipality in Quintana Roo, Cargo System Maya are farmers while Gremio System Maya tend to be farmers, craftsmen, mechanics, and jacks-of-all-trades, but are neither are always paid in wages. At times they may be paid in cash, but others are able to barter and trade, typically for forms of sustenance. Weber identifies this type of labor as "economic traditionalism" (2008: 38-39).

Evangelical Maya and a growing number of Gremio System Maya are identified as working for people outside of the community, typically in some sort of tourist related trade either at hotels or in restaurants as menial labor bused out of the village to the tourist zone on a rotating basis (Labrecque 2005), or else they are the storeowners. Typically those that leave the village on a permanent basis tend to deny their heritage and place of birth, claiming they come from Cancun or Playa del Carmen (Sierra Sosa 2007:97). It is typically this segment of the population that most drastically changes their foodways.

Since capitalism is so often tied to globalization, I draw upon theories of food and globalization to illustrate how food and identity practice change when new capitalistic forms of wage labor are accepted into developing regions. Richard Wilk (2006, 2008, 2009), Sidney Mintz (2008), and Arjun Appadurai (1996) provide a wealth of research encouraging social scientists to seek signs of individual agency, creolization and "processes of global cultural mixture" (Wilk

2006:109-112) within a culture's acceptance of globalized foodways. This is a cornerstone of my research as I am investigating how this culture is using food as its channel of communication of identity as well as what is driving individuals to change from traditional practices of labor and religion from 2007 to 2012.

Because conversion to Evangelical Protestant religions requires a break with the traditional systems[69] associated with the Catholic community at large (Kray 2001), public consumption of "expensive" foods seems to be a way in which the Evangelical community identifies itself as "rich" and less indigenous. Linda Brown and Kay Mussell specifically discuss how local ingredients take on "metaphorical meaning" as different groups discover foodstuffs associated with a group's identity and either consume or reject these foods based on how they want to be perceived (1984:9).

The Pentecostal (to which most Protestant converts belong) church not only requires frequent (if not nightly) attendance which restricts participation in nightly community social functions, but it also requires evangelization and "saving" of other souls. Often this is accomplished by the constant admonition to cease veneration of the saints, stop making offerings to the rain god, and give up dancing, drinking and other communal activities. The lack of participation and constant evangelical nature of these converts further removes them from patterns of expected behavior within the village and therefore escalating tension.

[69] See Chapter Two for a discussion of syncretism.

In Señor, “expensive” foods tend to be junk foods like bags of chips and bottles of soda, which are consumed in public as a way of communicating this new identity. This shift away from traditional subsistence labor and indigenous foodways is leading to increased obesity (Sobal and McIntosh 2009:260-264) and signifies a move toward acceptance of new and more global identities than in the past. These moves toward modernity are results of increased infrastructure via new and improved roadways, increased transportation via new buses provided by resorts on the coast and personal vehicles purchased using earned wages from jobs associated with the coastal tourism industry or the increased road laborers.

In the Yucatec Maya village of Señor in Quintana Roo, Mexico, I have lived and worked with three families. One maintains the Cargo System based religion, one is a Gremio member and the third is strictly Evangelical Protestant. They all used to be friends until one of the families joined an Evangelical church. Now there is conflict. All of the host families, regardless of religious affiliation, are concerned with the direction of the community and are actively involved in local organizations that support their beliefs.

One of the goals of the dietary surveys in the following chapter on tortillas and identity was to rule out any false positives as I had experienced a discrepancy between what people say they eat and what they do eat in previous field seasons. In public, I have witnessed evangelical converts consuming packaged, processed foods on the steps of the convenience stores or in the

parks at night. When I ask why the Catholics do not do the same, they say it is because they cannot afford them.

Conversely, when I ask the evangelical Protestants why they do not consume the tamales, they claim they are low class foods or dirty. However, when I ask the question, "Do Protestants and Catholics eat different foods" everyone says, "*No, aqui, todos somos iguales"*. These surveys, while not sufficient to describe diet on their own, did identify private eating patterns, not merely what is eaten in public, which was not indicative of the total dietary intake. It is my hope that new approaches to this methodology will help rule out such discrepancies. However, it is interesting that public and private consumption patterns vary. Within this chapter I will tie the act of public consumption to Dell Hymes' speech act, Robin Lakoff's theories of politeness and Richard Wilk's "style sandwich".

In general, when religion changes, foodways also experience change. This is because food is so often tied to sacred tradition (Singer 1984). Following the patterns of food as discourse, I have found that people tend to use religion as a means to provide rationalizations for why certain items are consumed. For example, a Protestant might contrast their "civilized" *masa* that came from a store against a traditional farmer's consumption of *criollo*, or native maize, which is often obtained by making pleas to agricultural "pagan" deities.

With religious conversion, come changes in the economic system and often a complete makeover of the traditional religious symbolism of duality,

reciprocity and regeneration. In Señor, the *milpa*[70] and its associated rituals are being lost to those who have converted[71], (either to a new religion or to a wage labor position) resulting in a potential nutritional deficit for the certain members of its congregation.

Theoretical Framework

The approach taken in this research integrates theoretical propositions put forth by conversion and globalization theories as they relate to identity practice and agency. I use theories linking the change to Protestant religion as a desire to shift toward a more capitalistic way of living and thinking about the world. While Virginia Garrard-Burnett (1998) and Christine Kovic (2007) found that wealth had no correlation to Protestant religious conversion I find, like Sheldon Annis (2000), that Protestants are indeed wealthier. They own the stores and vehicles identified with wage labor and surplus wealth.

Max Weber's work also supports this position, as he found Protestant conversion follows along with capitalistic ideals. He theorizes that capitalistic interests and practices tend to precede conversion (2008:35-36). In Señor an

[70] A milpa in this context basically refers to a plot of communal land worked by a particular family for subsistence agricultural purposes – mainly corn, beans and squash with other foodstuffs.

[71] For a discussion of milpa rituals involving food see Hanks 1998, 1990; Friedel 1993; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934; Redfield 1941; Villa Rojas 1978.

economic divide is forming between the denominations, which provides a fertile ground for studying the dynamics of class formation.

Why are people suddenly changing their forms of labor and religion in a historically conservative region? The answer is complicated since land, religion and labor are interrelated. I believe that as families have expanded from the traditional religious-military families related to the sacred center of Tixcacal Guardia to Señor, those who are not part of the sacred center's political and judicial process felt left out and underrepresented. These are most likely the people with less land, the younger generations and the marginal populations who joined late and therefore do not have access to the most fertile plots, or widows who do not have the ability to work the land. These people convert to find financial security after loss of arable subsistence land due to changes in economics and government policy.

Sheldon Annis believes that the loss of land is a large component in determining who converts. Families are now freer to sell off lands that may not produce enough for subsistence to loggers or other companies (2000) and they frequently then move to areas where wage labor is accessible. This category also incorporates people who have divorced and had to split or sell off land, essentially diminishing if not completely ending their ability to produce subsistence levels of food (Annis 2000).

Linda Green found widows and divorcees are also included in this component when they do not have family members who might be able to help

them work the land (1993:173). In sum, the general consensus in existing research on this phenomenon in Guatemala equates conversion to Protestantism with conversion to capitalism.

As a result, this conversion is associated with an outmigration to cities and away from traditional village life; effectively accomplishing what Guillermo Bonfil Batalla sees as assimilation to a "*Mestizaje"* citizenship (1996). In Señor, land cannot be sold. Divorces do not result in split plots, the land remains the property of the *ejido*[72] member, who is most likely a man; however, widows may inherit it. Therefore, conversion does not appear to be a result of land sales. In fact, the widow, Doña Flor retained her land and her brothers-in-law work it for her and her children.

The desire for a "better life" and upward mobility in social and economic strata is also seen as a reason, albeit a secondary reason, for conversion. This desire for a "better" way of life often manifests itself as the change from subsistence agriculturalist to wage laborer (Rothstein 2007:5, Weber 2008). This is influenced by state pressure from schools and the extant Porfirian ideas of assimilation to the Mestizo way of life in Mexico (Bonfil Batalla 1996).

[72] This term is used to describe land that was granted back to indigenous peoples after the Mexican revolution. In Señor, this occurred in 1929. These lands are communally owned and considered the property of whoever is currently working them.

Wage laborers who work outside of the village and bring money back into the village also reinforce this idea that wage labor brings a better or easier life[73]. From 2007-2008, these laborers were primarily evangelicals, but a growing number of young Catholics are now joining them. I believe this second wave of wage laborers are doing so to "keep up with the Jones'" so to speak and gain access to this perceived better way of life that provides access to cell phones, trucks, computers and western clothing. Wage labor provides the access to the "as seen on TV" lifestyle.

Discourses of Difference

Food and consumption are visible in public space, which makes them more easily observable than other aspects of religious belief, which have become more cautiously guarded in the wake of division within a small community. They are therefore observable portions of social facts that one can use to analyze the social structure. I will address the points of crisis that the community is currently undergoing in hopes of explaining what economic and cultural changes might be motivating societal change via religion and labor at this time when it had been historically resisted. While doing so, I will address the new discourse forming around who is "other" particularly as represented in this public arena of food production and consumption.

[73] There is more discussion about this process in Chapters 3 and 5.

I have cultivated friendships and working relations with both Evangelical and Catholic families in Señor. I was concerned as to how I would address these differences in religion without causing further discord between them and without damaging my relationships within the community. I was informed in 2008 of Evangelical Protestant groups telling families that they should no longer "make *milpa"* (farm), as this is a pagan practice that includes offerings to the rain "god". I decided to look at this phenomenon through the combined lens of discourse and foodways since I had already been there studying ritual foodstuffs, and food is often accessible in the public sphere, where people often use it to consciously manipulate their identity.

According to Gene Anderson, who studies food in the Yucatán peninsula, food provides symbols which are used to send messages. He argues that every society on earth uses food to communicate messages of social construction such as group solidarity, sacredness, status, gender, ethnicity and identity (2005). People on opposing sides of these issues often use food practices as a way to insult the "Other". Following the patterns of food as discourse, I have found that while studying food, people tend to use religion as a means to provide rationalizations for why certain items are consumed. For example, an Evangelical Christian might contrast their "civilized[74]" *masa* that came from a store against a traditional farmer's consumption of *criollo*, or native maize, which is often obtained by making pleas to agricultural deities.

[74] See Tortilla chapter for a further discussion of this phenomenon.

Initially, I wanted to discover how Evangelical Christianity came to the community, as this village was central to the Caste War and historically has shunned outsiders and their ways. I explored existing literature surrounding this theme in my Master's thesis (See O'Connor 2010 for a further discussion). As might be expected, there was no single clear-cut answer. In a community that values balance and tranquility (See Kray 2001), it is often difficult to tease out answers that relate to conflict or resentment. The years of drought allow for more open discussions of difference since each group tends to blame the other group for lost opportunities. Most of my findings are the result of participant observation and are obtained through informal discussions during daily walks or visits in the park.

A few stories are presented when I ask about the first evangelicals to arrive. These stories reflect concerns regarding economy, health, ritual and land use of the village residents. First, my friend Julio, the son of a guard member in the Cargo System of Tixcacal Guardia, is his mid-30s, tells the story of Don Gringo[75]. He says Don Gringo was a doctor from Texas who came to the village in the late 1970s and built what was considered a luxury house that looked like a Maya hut on the outside, but was fancy inside. He made a lot of friends and had permission to live there because he threw a lot of parties and employed many

[75] Name not changed. I saw no real need to since this just means "Mr. White Man".

people during hard economic times. He played evangelical music at his parties and built a Pentecostal church, so he might have been the first to arrive.

The important bit to notice, is he is a doctor, but there is no mention of curing in this story…what is mentioned is employment. This is an economic answer to why the first Evangelical was accepted in the village. Keep in mind this answer was given by a man who has also expressed concern about the wealth of Evangelicals saying by saying, "they have everything, all of the cars, stores ---what do we have?" Julio's family is one of the first families that lived in Señor. His father is a capitan in the cargo system of Tixcacal Guardia[76] and is very traditional in his practices. Julio has already eaten with his family, a meal of beans and eggs and is one of the few not snacking or drinking in the park.

Doña Flor, Julio's widowed sister-in-law, will sometimes sit in the park when her older boys are home to accompany her and Abril. Flor dresses only in huipiles every day whether laboring with chores or going to attending the small *capilla* or *matan* in the back yard, which is dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe.

[76] See Chapter Two; Cargo System Organization, for discussion of the guard.

Figure 20 - The matan dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe

Flor does not speak Spanish, but does understand a great deal of it. She is nearly always snacking on something…usually a seasonal fruit or some *pepitas* from her *terreno*. She watches her boys interact with the other older boys on bikes with cell phones and music. Her youngest, Abril, dresses in tight, brightly colored shirts and short skirts and plays with other girls her age, giggling and drawing on the paved portions of the park with chalk rocks. She eats spicy *Takis*™, which seem to be all the rage judging by the girls' red-dyed fingers and mouths. Only the few '*pobres'* girls this age sit on the outskirts, longing to eat the

store bought goodies while instead cracking, sucking and spitting the *guayas*[77] that are in season.

Another story told by Don Victor, a Catholic *Gremio* member in his 50s, is that the first Evangelicals arrived about 20-25 years ago from the state of Yucatán and were not gringos. They "used their lips a lot without saying anything" and tried to "confuse and intimidate" people to join. He said, "they want people to value their laws over god's laws" and that "Don Gringo didn't arrive until 10-15 years ago". The important thing to understand in this situation is that this is a syncretic Catholic construction worker and farmer who does honor the rain god and believes that Evangelical conversion results in less rain resulting in less food for his family. Don Victor is also a high-ranking member of the local *gremio*[78] of 'trabajadores' or construction workers. He is skilled in cement work. Don Victor lives near the park and snacks on popcorn with his family and friends and drinks a beer while watching his kids play from his front porch. After the kids go inside to bed, he sits on a bench with some friends in the cool of the night. One of his friends purchases a homemade steamed chicken *tamal* from a woman at the park and another eats a *cochinita* torta from a vendor that set up shop at the park. Some are suspicious of him though, as he is renting a room from Alex.

[77] Tart fruit with a thick skin and large pit, similar to a lychee. *Talisia olivaeformis*.

[78] See more on *gremios* in the Chapter Two; The Gremio System Maya, or Chapter Four; Gremio Catholicism and Participants, chapters.

Yet another story, as told by Alex, an Evangelical convert also in his mid 30s, identifies the first Evangelical arrivals in the 1970s[79], during a time when Señor was growing quickly. He claims this growth resulted in increased illness and the Maya healers were unable to save everyone. Missionaries from Merida came with a doctor and they taught medicine along with Spanish reading and writing, so they were welcomed because of their healing powers. Alex plays with the kids from his church and drinks one of the canned Jugos[80] from the store. He makes a point to show me that it is not soda and that he knows that 'his people' drink too much soda. We eat store bought white flour quesadillas with sour cream and lettuce purchased from the restaurant by the park where some of the day labor buses from the resorts stop.

Alex's family is often identified as one of the first to have converted and has many problems with other members of the population. It is of interest that he provides a medical necessity as the reason for acceptance and change. This reason for conversion in the village is echoed by many of the younger generation (both male and female) who have been educated in government run schools and not solely by familial oral tradition. He is a culture broker[81] and runs Xyaat, a

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[79] The 1970s is the most probable time of arrival since that is in line with findings in other areas of Latin America.

[80] This was one of the 'nectars' that while containing actual fruit, also contains a high percentage of sugars.

[81] See See Eric Wolf (1956:1075-76) for a further discussion of the culture broker.

local eco-tourism non-profit that is not currently active. It lost support because of community mistrust of Alex and his wife.

These stories in and of themselves echo some of the concerns of the public in Señor. First, Catholics tend to identify Evangelicals as wealthy and there is some resentment for that. Evangelical Christians are aware of this resentment and often justify their position by saying they are merely being rewarded by God for following his path more correctly than the Catholics implying the latter are judged as worse Christians. Focusing on the underlying reasons people give for conversion may provide more understanding of "Otherness" and identity, particularly as it relates to production and consumption in this village. In Señor there is most definitely an economic divide between the religious denominations.

One of the ways in which socioeconomic level can be identified is by describing a person's home. In the case of the three instances mentioned above, Julio was still living with his family since he was not yet married[82]. His family has two huts with thatch roofing and packed earth floors: one for the kitchen and one for sleeping and watching television. He was the interviewee most concerned with the economics of conversion. In the main living structure, they have two hammocks. One large one used like a sofa for watching television, and then one cordoned off for Julio's sleeping area. In the second

[82] This changed in 2012

one, the kitchen, there are two hammocks, one for each of Julio's parents. They prefer to sleep in the kitchen because it is warmer.

Doña Flor's income comes from her sons. They work as busboys and in room service at Dreams Resort in Tulum. She also has a two-room hut similar to Julio's family, but she has three concrete and cinder block structures in addition. One she rents out to a teacher at the *telesecundaria*. One is an indoor plumbed bathroom with a shower and one is a flexible room. It is often used as a place to dry laundry and store clothes. However, her older sons also use it as a place to sleep if they come home from work after Doña Flor has shut the main house for the night.

Don Victor, the gremio member has a hut onto which he has recently added and updated rooms. The kitchen is traditional but the bedroom and sitting room have cement floors and cinder block walls. The entire house has thatch roofing. He works doing some construction within the village on the side, but when there is no work he is a subsistence farmer with no sons old enough to help in the *milpa*. He was the most vocal against Protestant conversion as he saw the lack of thanksgiving to the gods and spirits of the *milpa* as detrimental to his ability to feed his family.

Alex has a brightly painted cinderblock sitting room and bedroom, with a traditional kitchen space, but his cement floors are covered in linoleum tile and his thatch is lined with maize sacks, preventing some of the debris from the thatch from falling into the home. In his kitchen he has a counter at which one

can cut instead of having to crouch near the banquet, he also has a shelved pantry and functioning refrigerator. He presented the story identifying the original Evangelists as better healers. These observations help to define the socioeconomic strata in relation to religion and trade.

Ethnography of Eating

Next, and more in line with my study of foodways and public discourse: How does this change in farming result in changes in nutrition, production and consumption in the village? I was curious as to whether these Protestants (who no longer participate in making *milpa*) could eat maize raised on a neighbors 'pagan' *milpa* or must they buy commercially produced *masa*.

Contrary to Sheldon Annis' findings that Protestants in Guatemala farm more intensively, I found that there are fewer Evangelicals making *milpa* and those that do, do not grow intensively, but marginally. In Señor, they cannot yet sell off their land because a unanimous vote of the ejido members is required to do so. As I mentioned before, there are traditional farmers who honor the rain god, and blame Evangelists for their loss of crops for economic and subsistence gain; however the majority of Evangelical Christians do still make *milpa*, but do not grow enough to feed their family. They do so in order to receive stipends from the government. This payment only goes to those who are actively working their land and it only goes to a certain number of people, based on seniority, so

the younger men do not receive this stipend and therefore do not make *milpa* and are often unemployed.

Unworked land goes back to the *ejido* to distribute to families who want to work it. Most often, the abandoning of *milpa* land occurs in families who do not need the food for subsistence; they are most often the offspring of Protestant families who perform wage labor. This unemployment tends to result in increased crime and drug abuse that are (contrary to existing research) associated with Protestants in Señor.

Furthermore, changes in labor and consumption have led to an influx of convenience stores and "fast food" restaurants (or carts) to meet the demand for purchasable food items. As has been found in other parts of Mexico, there is an association between "fast food" and the rich and powerful people within a community. To borrow from Bonfil Batalla, "Much more than necessary is spent on 'food' whose nutritional components have been obtained traditionally for a much lower price" (Bonfil Batalla 1996:154).

Summary and Conclusion

Here, for a combined *ejido* population of 3000, there are convenience stores, locally referred to as *abarrotes,* on nearly every corner, and in the four short blocks I identify as the center of village life, there are six convenience stores as of August 2009. These are places where one can purchase soda, chips, plastic ware, candy, white bread, trash bags, bottled water, lunchmeat,

processed cheese, diapers, mass produced tortillas, milk and yogurt along with the occasional bucket of *masa*, and some tomatoes, beans or chiles grown by neighbors who sell them to the store owners. Within the village, these stores are owned by individual families, but if one walks to the highway, there are larger, corporately owned convenience stores where one can buy beer and a larger array of convenience items.

I investigate this idea of public consumption as indicative of social ranking. In the public arena of the park, people play ball, chat and snack. I find that food provides an indirect way in which to state who belongs and who does not. Here type of snack consumed carries a message of religious affiliation as well as socio-economic status. Wealthier families that can afford pre-packaged, processed snacks and cola are typically Evangelical converts who have left farming for wage labor. You will not find them consuming alcohol.

By observing these interactions, it is easy to see Richard Wilk's "style sandwich" in action.

> The small striving middle class was caught in the center of what I call a style sandwich. At the bottom were poor people eating "ground foods" and game by necessity, and on top you had rich people who could eat the same things out of nostalgia or for their exotic appeal. In the middle, poverty food was a constant reminder of how precarious class position could be, and how easy it would be to fall back into poverty (Wilk 2006:123).

Catholics who farm and perform at least some wage or *gremio* labor, such as construction, vehicle repair, etc, might eat either prepared foods from neighbors who sell them in the park area such as tacos, tortas[83], or tamales or they may bring a snack from home. Often these snacks are accompanied by an *agua fresca*[84], or less commonly, a beer. Linda Brown and Kay Mussell specifically discuss how local ingredients take on "metaphorical meaning" as different groups discover foodstuffs associated with a group's identity and either consume or reject these foods based on how they want to be perceived (1984:9). This is echoed by Susan Kalçick who states that, "…people tend to eat as they would like to be perceived" (1984:54).

The most traditional Maya farmers and *cargo* holders typically will not consume these purchased items, but may bring tamales or tortillas wrapped from home. Therefore using their public consumption as a message channel by which they communicate religious affiliation and socioeconomic status to their peers. As Roger Abrahams states "Thus, rules and styles of eating enter into the process of making social choices and establishing a system of social types" (Abrahams 1984:21).

It is not only snack foods that carry this religious identity, but it is typically the only food that is eaten in public, and is often the first type of food to

[83] A torta is a sandwich. Here they are typically made with shredded chicken perhaps with a smear of black beans or avocado with a slice of tomato and cabbage. Served on a French bread style bun and wrapped in a napkin.

[84] An agua fresca is a drink made from water blended with fruit.

experience change (Wilk 2006:120) so is therefore an effective device by which one can communicate identity to others. I have eaten meals with both Catholic and Protestant families and these meals do differ, although less so than the snack. For example, a popular dish eaten by my Evangelical friends is a quesadilla made from store bought flour tortillas and processed white cheese, while tamales, *relleno negro*[85], and bean or maize gruels are more common in subsistence or cargo-system based Catholic homes.

These religious and socio-economic divisions are quite contentious and seldom discussed openly; therefore food is a safe and easy way in which to communicate identity (Kalçick 1984:55). Food provides a channel through which we can discuss this religious division in terms of public consumption tied to religion and forms of labor. I have found that people on opposing sides of these issues often use their food practices as a way to insult or at least differentiate the "other".

As I hope I have made evident, food can be viewed as a social fact indicative of the reference group a person is attempting to identify with at a given time in a given context. Susan Blum explains that people reveal their identity via their utterances (2009:223). I believe that people can also do this in a more indirect; therefore more face saving way via public consumption. Blum's text also states "identity is accomplished in interaction rather than existing in some

[85] Relleno Negro is a popular Yucatec dish consisting of a vinegary roasted chili stew or sauce served over some sort of fowl.

abstract way prior to any action. Further, people can play with their identities consciously" (2009:223). Once again, in the village where I conduct fieldwork, this identity play and establishment is most often done via public consumption.

Robin Lakoff takes this interaction farther by discussing avoidance. She says that "speakers avoid saying precisely what they mean in the interest of social goals which they pursue by adhering to one of the three rules of politeness" (Blum 2009:250). I believe that this public display of consumption is a more "polite" way of discussing identity and belonging, specifically religious affiliation in Señor. It follows all three of Lakoff's rules: (1) It allows people to maintain "distance" (Blum 2009:250). Groups tend to segregate themselves within the public sphere of the central park each night. (2) It provides people with "options". They have the choice to purchase or make and consume several types of food which tend to be stereotyped with one or another religious affiliation and socioeconomic level. (3) They are "friendly". People laugh and joke as their children play basketball, so there is interaction while publicly stating difference.

As seen above in the stories of Julio, Don Victor, Doña Flor and Alex, we are provided with a 'speech situation' (Hymes 1974:92) wherein people discuss their religious affiliation as indicative of socio-economic levels. They only discussed this with me because of the questions I asked. However, I believe this situation could also be analyzed via an 'eating situation'. This is how, in a community that values balance and unity, identity can be communicated using

rules of politeness and avoidance as discussed by Tannen (2009) and Lakoff (1973).

By using politely communicating via Context, Topic, Participants, Message and Code (Hymes 1995[1974]) tied to public consumption, we can analyze how food can be used to communicate in much the same way as actual utterances. People, or participants, interact within a context – basically a space and time for a particular reason. Within that context they discuss a particular topic and are trying to convey a particular message to each other via a particular code, which might typically be a mutually understood language, but for our purposes today will be food, and in particular, forms of corn.

The **context** for our unit of analysis is an ethnically, racially and linguistically isolated population divided mostly by religion that is attempting to communicate ideas of belonging and othering, without aggressiveness. I have found this difference to be publicly indicated via habits of public consumption. The example I will use for the speech act is the aforementioned nightly interactions of the three religions in the town square where children and young adults play basketball while families mingle and talk.

Therefore the **topic**, what is being communicated, is religious affiliation and how it overlaps with social status. There are three main affiliations – Catholic subsistence farmers or cargo holders, Catholic gremio members and much more recently, Evangelical Protestantism. Each of these groups has associated overlapping socio economic levels.

The **setting** is in the public park in the "center" of town. These are the four corner markers surrounding the gazebo and basketball court in the middle. There is have a catholic church, two evangelical owned convenience stores and the old water tower/government building.

In this case, due to a visual code instead of an auditory-based code, I'm collapsing **sender** and **receiver** into the category of **participants** (Duranti 1997:294). Typically, each religion would have at least a few participants; normally they would sit together in segregated groupings.

The code is **food**, but more importantly it is the raw materials used in making the food and the meaning those materials hold. There are two important raw materials in this process. First is the nixtamalized corn[86] grown by subsistence farmers. These farmers typically give thanks and offerings to the rain god. The evangelicals have taken issue with that and are urging their practitioners to give up farming for more capitalistic pursuits, such as opening convenience stores. Evangelicals own a large majority[87] of the convenience stores in this village. At these stores, non-nixtamalized corn meal, which is the second main raw material, may be purchased, as can chips, and sodas containing corn syrup. This non-nixtamalized corn meal is not processed in a

[86] See Fig. 21.
[87] In 2007, 2008 they were the sole owners of these types of stores. Now, more people are opening them in their home as a way to gain cash income in addition to their subsistence labor. It allows younger children or infirm to be able to add to the family's success.

way that releases the amino acids in the corn to be processed by the body as protein, therefore leading to increased risk for diabetes and pellagra.

Figure 21 - Nixtamalized corn prior to grinding

The processed “whiter” corn meal is seen as a status symbol to the Protestants. As Wilk has noted, “Another common value that emerged from colonial creolization was a strong preference for highly processed ingredients, and an equation of whiteness with purity” (Wilk 2006:126). The evangelical groups and the exposure to tourists from Europe and the United States increases exposure to these highly processed foods and those ideas of purity and whiteness are now part of the colonial process of conversion and wage labor

present in the village. Some of the Catholics wish to attain the socio-economic level that would allow them to cease farming and start purchasing their masa and yet other, more traditional Maya campesino families actively reject the use of masa as unhealthy and soulless. Some believe you are no longer 'nurturing' your family if you use this processed meal.

In the public arena of the park, people play ball, chat and snack. The type of snack consumed carries the **message**. Wealthier families that can afford pre packaged, processed snacks and cola are typically the evangelicals who have left farming for wage labor either in the village or in he surrounding tourist areas. The evangelical group will not be consuming alcohol of any type. Catholics who farm and perform wage labor, such as construction, vehicle repair, etc, might eat either prepared foods from neighbors who sell them in the park area such as tacos, tortas, or tamales or they may bring a snack from home. Often an *agua fresca,* or possibly a beer accompanies these snacks.

Finally, the most traditional Maya farmers typically will not consume these purchased items, or will bring tamales or tortillas wrapped from home. Therefore using their public consumption as a way to reinforce their religious affiliation and socioeconomic status in relation to their peers. This is a very contentious division, and communicating via the relatively innocuous subtlety that is the evening snack prevents the aggressive dialog that can ensue when it is brought up via speech based interactions which can be seen as greater threats to face.

Food can also be used to discover the ties between socio-economic status and religious change. In this case it facilitated a study of private religion by accessing the public arena of consumption and relaxation.

Through food, people discuss their likes and dislikes, belonging and not belonging. Foodways can predict the trends of the future through nutrition based disease, land usage and waste patterns. Food can tell us about history through patterns of resistance and acceptance. By studying these patterns of public consumption, one can glean information that will be productive in assisting the community with healthcare, transportation, land usage, and waste disposal. I intend to continue spending time there while advancing my knowledge of the Maya language and, through participant observation, documenting their foodways and the discourse surrounding them while paying particular attention to identity and public consumption patterns. The influence of globalization in general and neoliberal policies in particular will be a part of my investigation into the interweaving of economy, politics and religion that are visible in production and consumption practices.

Chapter 6: The Habitus of the Tortilla

> *'You are what you eat' may be true in a broad sense, but on closer examination the situation is more complex than this proposition suggests. We have seen that you become what you eat literally and figuratively, because consumption practices construct identity; you eat what you already are owing to the fact that alimentation reflects self-concept; you are how you eat in regard to comportment and class; you often eat what others think you are, which is conveyed by what they serve you; those who prepare food for you to eat may do so on the basis of who they think you think they are; and you sometimes eat what you wish you were or want others to think you are buy might not be. Whoever we are, we express or symbolically construct an identity linked to eating practices related to the range and type of food consumed, personal characteristics of the eater (including values and lifestyle), and social categories and reference groups with which the individual is associated (*Jones 2007:151).

In this chapter I use the iconic tortilla to describe individual and family structure through rejection and assimilation of new and old identities.

Method

As of the summer of 2011, I felt my research had been successful in demonstrating that publicly consumed foods are used as a way of declaring identity differences along religious lines, but had not yet been successful in delineating health issues along these same lines. Nor had I determined whether people were eating differently in their private lives or if this was just occurring in public. During the 2011 through 2012 field season, I planned to incorporate dietary recall surveys[88] and semi-guided interviews.

[88] (see Appendix A for the full text of the survey)

These additions were put in place with the hope of expanding my observations of public consumption and diet in a few private homes to a more complete and coherent picture of what is consumed when, where and by whom. The intent was to determine if people are also eating “junk” foods in their homes and therefore incurring true dietary change. I used models for informal interviews and dietary recall surveys as outlined by both Annie Hubert (2004) and Stanley Ulijaszek (2004) who deemed them to be essential to studying nutrient intake. These studies seemed necessary to determine to what extent conversion to an evangelical Protestant religion contributes to dietary change due to the correlated change to wage labor positions outside of the community.

However, while documenting diet in Señor via the aforementioned surveys, participants made no mention of the tortilla. Out of fifty initial surveys, there was not a single mention. Regardless of whether I phrased the question in Mayan or Spanish, it was not mentioned. If pressed, “did you eat tortillas” then the response was “Claro” (of course).

My field experience, however, proves the tortilla constitutes the majority of daily caloric intake for the study group. This research seeks to understand why no one would mention the tortilla when describing what they had eaten and problematizes dietary recall survey data in general. It is easy enough to assume the tortilla is just so commonplace as to be taken for granted, but I chose to further my own understanding of whether a quotidian object can still provide salient insight to complicated and fluid forms of identity while expanding the

discussion concerning how anthropologists can contribute theory and method within the study of foodways.

Theoretical Frame

I find Pierre Bourdieu's practice theory particularly useful in describing the 'we've always done it this way' answers that are so common in fieldwork. Of note are his ideas of habitus, doxa, orthodoxy and heterodoxy. For the purposes of this chapter, I refer to habitus[89] as the social behavior that reproduces the world in which we live and allows embodied practices to be natural or 'common sensical' and is created by an ongoing interaction between social structure, historical events and current beliefs (Bourdieu 2009:72, 1984:170). This is different than doxa, which is less of a practice and more of an ideology. Bourdieu refers to Doxa as the undiscussed, unacknowledged universe, which contains and structures a society (Bourdieu 2009:164, 167-169). Doxa includes all of the human histories, behaviors and ideas involved in habitus, orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

Once the taken-for-granted structure is acknowledged and a society creates a discourse about it in order to reinforce 'correct' behavior, he describes it as orthodoxy (1994:164-165, 2009:170). Then finally, once an individual creates a point of view that allows for dissent against the orthodox, or accepted

[89] Bourdieu also refers to habitus as hexis – citing the body as the site where history becomes incorporated. It is not questioned and is not actively taught (Bourdieu 1984: 437, 466-468).

way of doing or being, Bourdieu refers to that as heterodoxy (1994:164-165, 2009:170). I will address each of these categories individually below within the context of my fieldwork. I will argue that each of these categories can be applied to the use of the tortilla in order to manipulate one's identity through a negotiation of belonging and otherness and can therefore be used to break down 'invisible' structures that often go unanalyzed in the field.

With this theoretical framework, I began paying more attention to *how* the tortilla is used. Adults consume five to ten per meal. The first time I ate in the village my host family expected me to eat first, so I waited mutely for silverware as I was afraid to ask, but after a time of awkward silence, they urged me to tear the chicken off with the tortilla. I tore off a portion large enough to fill my tortilla, poured salsa on it, rolled it up and ate it like a soft taco. I then recognized looks of repulsion and there was discussion of how hungry I must be. Later, based on my experiences and some of Christine Kray's (2001, 2005) work on moral values in the region I realized that that style of eating was associated with greed and sloppiness.

Kray researched shifting values tied to changes in religion and labor in a Maya village in Yucatán state, not too far from Señor. She has written on bodily practices of the Maya as reflective of one's religion and one's labor and that through practices of balance, tranquility and community that prioritize the village (or family) over the individual one can claim moral authority (2001, 2005). If one is tranquil and balanced within their place in the community (which often implies

food sharing), one is also healthy (Kray 2001:399). Part of this morality is tied to the even distribution of food and indicates an equilibrium and ideal state within the network (2005:340).

> An ethnography of bodily practice is especially relevant for Yucatec Maya speakers because ethnic and class identities correspond to values and themes that infuse bodily practice. An ethos of tranquility or 'balance' informs bodily practices in areas ranging from child socialization practices to dance and greeting behaviors. In Yucatán, tranquility and wealth are said to be inversely related; hence, despite their relative poverty, Maya villagers can assert moral superiority and pride through bodily practices of tranquility (Kray 2005:338).

The knowledge of how to make and appropriately eat with a tortilla is part of the norms that structure behavior and cultural knowledge[90]. For soups, strips of it are rolled into something between a straw and a spoon and used to shovel beans and their cooking liquid into the mouth in what is for me a complicated gesture. It always resulted in my wearing black bean liquor on my shirt marking me an outsider. This family is aware of Western table habits, and would usually dig out the one spoon for me after I had made attempts to learn. The father would usually command someone to get me the spoon with a wave of his hand after I dribbled yet again. The aunts and uncles were keen for me to learn the proper customs and constantly demonstrated the rolling and scooping technique. For meat, eggs, or other solid foods a shared plate is placed in the middle of the table and portions of the tortilla are torn off and used to cover the hand, which is

[90] These actions would be construed under 'habitus'.

then used like a pair of tongs to tear and grip bite sized portions of the food. It is also used as a serving platter upon which salt, chile and other condiments can be placed in order to pass around the table.

My curiosity about the validity of the surveys was piqued one night at dinner when my host family in Señor asked me how my surveys were going. I expressed my confusion as to why no one mentions eating tortillas. The family laughed and said, of course they eat tortillas. We all eat tortillas. You know this. I reminded them that when they filled out the survey they also did not mention consuming tortillas. They looked embarrassed and laughed uncomfortably and shrugged…saying, “We all eat tortillas”. This comment is also reminiscent of Kray’s findings that, “People in the village will claim a harmonious similarity…” (2005:340). She concludes that, “All sorts of differences exist, but assertions of unity are commonplace” (Kray 2005:340). “Villagers dramatize their humility by characterizing their diet as one of beans, tortillas, and garden vegetables, even though it is often more ample” (Kray 2005:350).

So, equipped with the knowledge that tortillas seem to function more as an edible utensil than merely as a ‘food’, as well as understanding of the value placed on community and food sharing in addition to incorporating Bourdieu’s theoretical anchoring and my fieldwork I continue in my attempt to explain the taken-for-granted nature of the tortilla. Perhaps it is merely locally categorized as utensil and therefore not considered food?

While in the context of the dietary recall interviews the tortilla was left unmentioned, with continued participant observation, I find that is only within certain contexts the tortilla is taken-for-granted. In other contexts it slips from the taken for granted doxic realm into both orthodoxy and heterodoxy as a symbol of affinity with and alienation of specific imagined communities[91]. While Benedict Anderson originally used "imagined community" to refer to people having an affinity with a nation or state, he also identifies imagined communities to be a group with which an individual identifies even if they do not know all of the members of that group (such as a religion or ethnicity). This chapter will discuss shifting and overlapping belonging to imagined communities of religion, ethnicity, region and nation.

Within the realm of doxa, Bourdieu claims it is the homogenizing of group habitus that allows for the taking-for-granted of certain activities within a culture (Bourdieu 2009:80). Social norms are a way of structuring behavior that allows persons to choose only between existing "acceptable options of behavior" (Bourdieu 2009:27). In Señor, tradition dictates acceptable roles of men and women and while these gendered roles are changing as some of the subsistence farmers move into the wage labor jobs of the tourist trade, *campesinos* still practice gendered forms of labor tied to the tortilla. It has traditionally structured the labor and rhythm of their daily lives: men grow corn, women make tortillas, everyone eats them at every meal – this takes up their days. The tortilla is the

[91] See Anderson (1983:48-49) for discussion.

end product of their labor as well as the main caloric unit in their diet yet never mentioned as food. It remains undiscussed as symbol and staple of their daily lives.

Structure – Doña Sol

Making tortillas occupies at least three hours a day of women's labor in Señor. Within a family with three to five women assisting in the *pak'atch*[92] process, they spend about an hour before each meal making the masa into tortillas. Typically, Dulce, Sol and Mari would sit around the low banquet[93] on the small stools and form the masa from plastic tubs into balls and transform those into tortillas. Mamio would work at the *comal*[94], gracefully flipping the thin, delicate tortillas once and then patting them until they puff. The process of forming the tortilla is not an 'ends justifies the means' type of activity. The exact motions and procedures must be followed. While I do not have a vocabulary for many of these motions and procedures, I will attempt to elaborate here.

[92] To make tortillas.

[93] See Fig. 22

[94] The comal is the surface upon which tortillas are cooked. It can be made from clay, but in most cases is now made from metal (ranging from cheap aluminum to cast iron). Other items are can be toasted on the comal including tomatoes, dry chiles, fresh chiles and spices.

Figure 22 - Making tortillas at the low banquet

First, you take a square of plastic. Often, this plastic comes from bags from vendors in town. If there isn't enough plastic to go around, a child or a man is sent to purchase one item (typically the soda for the meal) and demand a bag. Sometimes the shopkeeper will argue that one item doesn't warrant a bag, so two items must be purchased, but the family knows which shopkeepers are amenable and tend to frequent them.

As far as forming the masa, I will describe Doña Sol's technique, as her tortillas were beautiful and she was mesmerizing to watch. She would deftly grab about a golf-ball sized mass of masa. She would then roll this masa into a completely round ball. This ball is placed onto the plastic sheet and not so much

patted, but pressed outward to fill an imaginary circle. As Sol presses the dough outward, she also spins the plastic sheet with the pressing spreading motion. As the masa is pressed, a mandala-like pattern of finger indentations is formed in the dough.

Once the desired thickness and circumference is reached, any excess dough is pulled off of the middle where there is often a center stump and then the tortilla is given a final pat. At this point, Sol hands the tortilla, on its plastic to Mamio. Mamio flips the plastic side up on one hand and peels the plastic wrapper away from the delicate tortilla. She then places it on the comal with the plastic side up. It cannot be flipped onto the comal, but must be gently laid out. This requires getting her hand close to the searing hot metal comal over the fire. She places it down in a fanning motion where the pinky side of the hand nearly brushes the metal and the thumb side is up. Then she waits approximately a minute before turning the tortilla. Meanwhile, Sol has already selected another mass of masa and is rolling it into a ball shape. By the time Mamio has peeled off the plastic, Sol is ready to press out another tortilla. The finished tortilla often has rings that are visible from the mandala-like finger patterns from the dough.

Within the nuclear family, tortillas are a symbol of competency and pride. Traditionally, a man is expected to supply corn and a woman is expected to supply tortillas. At one of the traditional weddings I attended, the man brought dried maize kernels and the woman brought tortillas to the altar as gifts to one another. The shaman later told me this was the traditional offering – they

symbolize promises to feed and sustain each other in marriage. This ritual moves the doxic world of gendered forms of labor into the orthodox.

Gender Roles: Mari

Mari is ten years old. She wants to show me how much more impressive her tortilla skills are than mine. One day she comes to my room and says, "*Konex pakatch*[95]". This is the first time I am invited to join the women making tortillas. We go to the kitchen, which can only be entered through the house. After exiting the main house, you enter the first courtyard outdoor prep area with fire ring and clotheslines. To the left is the entrance to the kitchen and to the right is the fire ring near a low prep table in the courtyard.

Once you enter the kitchen, the three stone hearth is to the right next to the prep table and banquettes used for tortilla making, eating and other prep work. In the center is the higher table, made from lumber and topped with an old speed limit sign. Along the right hand wall are shelves that hold plastic sacks of spices, the hand grinder, colanders, blender, etc.

On one end between the shelves and hearth is an old harvest gold 1970s apartment sized fridge used as a pantry to store cups, plates and any utensils that don't hang from the rafters. The three stone hearth is topped with a large metal *comal* and two cauldrons hanging from hooks which hold them the appropriate distance from the fire – one is small, one large. There is also a flat-

[95] *Vamos tortillar* or Let's make tortillas

bottomed wire basket that hangs above the hearth in order to smoke items such as chiles for *chilmole*.

Doña Flor, Doña Dulce, Sol and Mamio are all present. It is dark and hot, most likely around ninety-eight degrees Fahrenheit. My hands are sweaty as it hovers around seventy percent humidity during this particularly wet rainy season[96]. The dough keeps sticking to my hands and Mari is talking rapidly about how proud she is of her tortillas. I try to explain that I learned how to make tortillas in Oaxaca and in Texas, where they are a little larger and we form them more by patting or even use a press. I am honored to be a part of the gossip circle of tortilla makers and to finally be seen as non-threatening, but then quickly realize I am there to be the gossip of the day.

Sol is patient with me, definitely more so than Doña Flor or Mamio. She recognizes my discomfort and commands that I watch instead of do. Once I realize the motions are more important than getting there quickly, I am able to absorb what I am doing wrong. Mari speeds through three tortillas to my one. Then she goes to attend the *comal* with Mamio. She tells me she is learning to gauge the fire temperature and when to flip. She makes a few errors in gauging, cooking and flipping times, tearing the partially cooked dough and causing tortilla to stick to the *comal*. Mamio shoos her back to the banquet.

[96] I was 'lucky' enough to be in the field for hurricanes Bret through Sean and this occurred around the time of Rina.

Cesar enters. Cesar is Mari's uncle and Sol's husband. He is a jokester and begins to tease me. I tease back, prodding him to show me how to do it. This makes the women roar with laughter that I can make a culturally appropriate joke. I notice him avert his gaze to Mari and she shies from it and starts washing dishes. This happens again a few hours later when we are making tortillas for the dinner meal. When her father and uncles enter, she stops making tortillas and the women stop complimenting her. At this point, I assume this is normal and do not notice it as noteworthy assuming that once the men enter the attention is no longer on the tortillas.

Talking about one's tortillas is a face saving way by which social dynamics within the community can be discussed because open insults are not a part of the societal structure. According to Robin Lakoff (1973), much of language exists to navigate our societal rules of politeness. As mentioned above[97], one can argue that food (particularly staples) can be manipulated to have different meanings. In Lakoff's work she says that in order to be polite, speakers avoid saying exactly what they mean in order to meet the goals of politeness (1973:292-305). I believe that one of the ways in which tranquility (Kray 2001, 2005) and politeness (Lakoff 1973) is maintained within the village is by using the tortilla as a symbolic form of communication.

Anyone who makes a tortilla differently or is currently at odds with the family is talked about as having bad tortillas, or inedible. To further this symbol

[97] See Michael Jones quote on pp. 133.

turned discourse, in another family, a young daughter ran off without familial consent to marry a boy from a nearby village. The mother-in-law sent her back to her family until she could learn to make proper tortillas. The girl was not yet fit to live in her household and be a partner for her son until she had learned this skill.

I am told the story about the young girl's terrible (*no sirve*) tortillas while we were making tortillas. As Robin Dunbar describes, gossip is the equivalent of physical grooming" (Dunbar 2009:40) and tortilla making time is the time for all good gossip. It is a time where women reinforce cultural and gender norms within the family. After hearing the story, I return to my confusion with Mari's tortilla duties. I comment in hopes of complimenting her on her skills, "well she could learn from Mari." The women, who are usually so ready to laugh, do not and instead look at Mari who seems to shrink into the shadows. Then I think I might understand and later we chat alone:

Me: "Mari, are you going to continue school after sixth grade?"

Mari: "*Yes*."

Me: "Mari, why don't you like to make tortillas in front of your uncles*?"*

Mari: *"I don't want to get married yet*."

The women, for the time being, are willing to shelter her from pressures and teasing that she is now, by tradition, marriageable. I do not believe any of her uncles would seriously entertain marrying her off now, but she wants to avoid the joking and sexualization that can come from men knowing she is a good tortilla

maker. I think most of her fear stems from a neighbor who makes frequent misogynistic jokes and has multiple *mujeres*[98].

Morality and Taste

Between families within the village, the tortilla can become a symbol of enmity. An example of this was during the festivities for the Virgin of Guadalupe when my host's extended family members sent over the requisite food offerings. The families are related through the 45-year-old son. He and his wife support a different political party and there have been unkind words between the daughter-in-law, Marin, and the rest of the family. Their offering of stew and tortillas was accepted, but the tortillas were not eaten. Her tortillas were thrown to the pigs and fresh ones were made. I would have assumed that this was simply because the tortillas were cold and cold tortillas are never desired, but to eat cold tortillas is common during festal times since the tortillas sit wrapped in an embroidered napkin during an hour long blessing by the shaman[99]. The rejection of her tortillas was specifically tied to products of her labor and the family's symbolic and discursive distaste for her.

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[98] This man converted to an evangelical religion recently and there is much gossip that he did so just so he could have the six wives that one of the Pentecostal religions there is rumored to allow.

[99] This offering is called the *matan*. This refers to any offering, whether it is communal offerings of food or ingredients or financial support for fiestas (Farriss 1984:324).

There has been much work in the realm of human disgust. It seems to be not only associated with distaste, but also with the rejection of the origin of the food (Schiefenhovel 2006:66) or moral undesirability of the people associated with the food in question (MacBeth and Lawry 2006:7). As Wulf Schifenhovel claims, "…contact with undesirable persons is reliably considered both disgusting and contaminating" (Schiefenhovel 2006:72) which then marks that substance and/or person as prohibited (Schiefenhovel 2006:79).

The Road Trip: Defining Identity

Outside of the village, but still in the peninsula, the tortilla was discussed at every meal. While we were on a road trip to Chiapas with friends from Señor, we stopped to eat and the tortillas were always a topic of conversation: "Are they Maseca; ™[100] were they made on the *maricon*[101]; how is the flavor, texture, etc.?" Even though we were only gone for three days, my friends often expressed the desire to be at home eating their mother's tortillas during our meals out.

We went to a "Maya Restaurant"[102] while visiting Chiapas. My friends from Señor said they didn't recognize anything on the menu. I pointed out that the majority of the menu items were dishes they were familiar with, just given

[100] The most common brand of store bought ground corn meal for tortillas.
[101] A maricon is the slang term used here for the handled tortilla press used to make tortillas. There is a connotation that only bachelors use them since any real woman would be able to make tortillas.
[102] See Fig. 23

different names. They complained that they didn't know what to do with the silverware and that the tortilla basket was full of bread. They said these two things alone marked it as a tourist restaurant that no "true Maya" person would eat there. I asked what should a Maya restaurant serve and they said, "I don't know, but it should have tortillas and no silverware".

Figure 23 - The Restaurante Maya in Palenque, Chiapas

This allowed me to reframe my analysis of the tortilla and shift it away from quotidian foodstuff and more into utensil. Perhaps one's making of tortillas and one's dexterous use of the tortilla is what makes it an identity marker, not the consumption but the practice of making and using them. The idea that using familiar foods in unusual contexts allows for a new interpretation of the food

comes from Lucy Long (2004:38). "Such framing essentially signifies the need to recognize familiar foods as potentially other, to see them as outsiders would. The second strategy of negotiation, naming or translation, involves the identification of items. This may be a literal translation of the name of a dish or food item or the invention of a new name" (Long 2004:38).

Other than the lack of tortillas, additional items that suddenly became unfamiliar when their names change or when they are served on white tablecloths with silverware[103] are: various forms of tortillas[104], rice and beans, grilled chicken and chicken soup[105]. I was also translating the menu for my friends. Which in part seems to be an issue because I realize that they do not read Spanish well.

In addition to confusion regarding the nomenclature present on the menu, Julio and Dahlia experienced discomfort with the manners and gestures implied by the setting. This upset the balance of our friendships. Julio has been my culture broker[106], but here our roles are reversed and I am explaining to him

[103] Here the tables were turned. My friends did not know how to eat the chicken with a knife and fork and since there weren't tortillas on the table they were very uncomfortable. We gave up and ordered tortillas.

[104] There was some debate over the *penchuques* and whether they were technically the same as the *iswaa* or not. The consensus was that they are except the *penchuques* are not made with fresh, but instead with dried corn.

[105] I had to explain that beans and rice would be very similar to *buliwah* and that *Caldo Tlalpeno* would be the equivalent of *Caldo de Pollo*.

[106] See Eric Wolf (1956:1075-76) for a further discussion of the culture broker.

which glasses are used for what and which utensils are employed first. "And since actions performed with others tend to forsake the simply functional level to take on a communicative value, our human socializing instinct immediately attributes *meaning* to the gestures performed while eating" (Montanari 2006:93). As Douglas concludes, it isn't necessarily the food that marks eating as a particular ethnic practice (2003:30) but perhaps it is the setting and manners that mark it more profoundly.

Alex Nützanadel and Frank Trentmann discuss this shift in power that comes from dining out at an 'ethnic' restaurant as commodification of 'the other' and tie it to racial stereotyping rooted in "specific forms of class, ethnic and gender differences" (2008:9). I saw treating my friends to a nice dinner at a "Maya" restaurant as a gesture of friendship and acceptance as well as a useful time for participant observation. However, I sensed their discomfort and from then on, I was careful to choose less 'upscale' options for dining. I included them in the decision making process…we walked around and picked places together in order for me to avoid usurping the existing power structure with Julio as the culture broker and me as the apprentice. We chose street food, such as *tortas* and *cocteleria*-like food such as *ceviche* in outdoor restaurants. These were more similar to options available in Felipe Carrillo Puerto, Tulum and in the village.

Identity Resistance: Papio

The tortilla can move from orthodoxy to heterodoxy in the *campesino's* active resistance to global tourism.

> One of the greatest ironies about food globalizations is that when actors perceive what they take to be their national and local cuisines as being under threat from 'outside' homogenizing processes, they often turn not only to the defense of such traditions, but to their actual construction. Resistance to perceived homogenization can create self-conscious modes of heterogenization" (Inglix and Gimlin 2009:27).

To have home made tortillas every day requires agency and effort. Papio is 88. He has lived in the village since the day he was born back when there were only eight families in Señor. He remembers being surrounded by the *monte* and *tepezcuintle* was on the table all of the time. Now he claims he doesn't know most of the people in the village and there is never *tepe* on the table or in the *monte*.

He likes to spend his fifteen days of service[107] in Xcacal chatting with his friends and thinking but it is getting hard on him to spend that time away from home and he is considering having his sons help fulfill his service requirements. It is important to him that they continue with subsistence farming and he has to constantly remind them to go check on his *milpa*. His identity is tied to the *milpa* and the church in Xcacal. By choosing to remain subsistence farmers, some

[107] See Chapter Two for a detailed description of the cargo system in Tixcacal Guardia.

families specifically choose to resist incorporation into Western orthodoxy and practice.

They not only have to resist the constant rotation of doctors from Mexico City telling them to quit eating the tortillas because of the misinformed allegation that they contain high cholesterol[108], but also the younger generations are less likely to have sufficient land or the desire to work it or spare income to pay workers to labor in the fields. It is much easier to take the bus to the coast and work in construction, hotels or restaurants.

Labor in the tourist industry was scoffed at as a way for the lazy young men to make a quick buck as late as 2008, but today there is a wide range of people working in the tourist region and it is growing in respectability and acceptance. This is an interesting phenomenon studied by Theron Nuñez who suggests that marginal individuals (such as the evangelicals and those without milpas) are leaders in times of rapid and stressful change (Nuñez 1989:268).

When these marginalized individuals left for wage labor jobs, they were ridiculed for not conforming to social norms, but when they returned with prestige items such as vehicles, cell phones and jewelry, they became social innovators

[108] This was actually happening while I was there. The itinerant doctor was telling women to stop eating tortillas because they were high in fat and cholesterol. There were many allegations that he was a drunk and would even drink in public. He was also not well liked because he did not conform to societal norms about respect for women. He often touched pregnant women's bellies or hugged married women, which is seen as incredibly disrespectful. Many women refused to see him even though it meant finding transportation to Carrillo or to a *partera* or healer in Xcacal.

to be emulated. "They learn the necessary second or third language; they change occupations from subsistence or salaried to entrepreneurial; they migrate to potential or developing resort areas, etc.; and if they are successful, they are emulated by the previously less daring" (Nuñez 1989:269).

Outside of the peninsula, the tortilla becomes a statement of resistance to national identity. As seen in Chapter Two, during the Porfiriato and throughout the early 1900s, Mexico struggled to define itself as a unified nation, but in this region the Caste War was still underway, so the rural areas of Quintana Roo were never fully institutionalized into Mexican nationalism. Nor did they get absorbed into the factory labor, as did more metropolitan sectors of the peninsula (Pilcher 1998). Because Quintana Roo did not gain state-hood status until 1974, the infrastructure necessary to build factories and import labor was non-existent. The commercialized tourism in the Yucatán peninsula was built around the customs of pueblos surrounding Merida in the north of the peninsula (Eiss 2008:525-527).

Identity Negotiation: The Nephews

As demonstrated above, the tortilla can be a very salient symbol of home and homemade. Through their work in the hotels of Tulum, the younger generation of males in this family, nephews of my friends have been exposed to international cuisines. Their father[109], passed away on my first day in the field in

[109] Now only referred to as "el difunto" (the deceased).

2008. He died of a heart attack after a hot, strenuous day of work in the *milpa*. His sons were just young children at the time and never took over the family farm due to the amount of work involved or the need to hire laborers.

Their uncles help to provide food and work the *milpa* for Doña Flor and now that the oldest two boys have completed sixth grade, they take a bus out and work in all-inclusive resorts and eat whatever "family meal" is provided during their shift. They assist the family by bringing home wages, however, a significant portion of their wages are spent on technology, jewelry and clothing. They, like many of the younger generation who works with tourists, have found that they can construct an identity, which they call "Maya Moderno" by these commodity purchases[110].

The oldest, Jaime, twenty, was married in 2011. The youngest boy, Luis, works the house garden and attends school but cannot wait until he is finished and can follow in his brothers' footsteps. Until then he remains resentfully obedient as most twelve year olds are. As soon as his brothers are home, he begs to play with their cell phones, laptops and loves to play Angry Birds™ on my cell phone and enjoys being my designated photographer for family gatherings.

Despite the attraction to modern technology, Western clothing and large amounts of hair gel, upon arriving home the nephews want/crave their mother's

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[110] See Kray (2001:401) for detailed discussion of this process of identity construction.

tortillas and very simple bean dishes. They return home nearly every day, yet there is a hunger for mom's food. While they prefer homemade food and consistently turn up their noses at "gringo" food, they will only wear Western clothing, they use cell phones and laptops and say, "this is the way of the modern Maya". They specifically expressed distaste for American favorites like beef, shellfish and white bread. To them these are the foods of the lazy, even disgusting tourist.

They are the first of this family to work in 'front of the house' situations with tourists. They work as busboys and late night room service attendants. These jobs increase their social capital in the village where most of the laborers work for the hotels in back of the house positions such as construction, maintenance or kitchen staff carrying considerably less cachet. Of the family members with whom I regularly interacted, it was these nephews who seemed to resent my presence the most. They admitted they had difficulty separating me from a tourist. I wore ugly "tourist" sandals[111] etc. In time, they watched me eat and mentioned that I did not eat like a tourist. When I asked them about that they commented that tourists say vegetables and fruits are not healthy. I was shocked. Then it occurred to me that are dealing with the "recreational tourist"[112]

[111] In reference to my plain black Chacos™ sturdy, water resistant sandals good for hiking, swimming and getting dirty (a good choice for the region when one only wants to bring one pair of shoes) instead of the decorative, dainty sandals their mothers and sisters prefer.

[112] See Valene Smith (1989:4-5) for descriptions of tourist types.

who has been counseled by tour operators to avoid fresh foods because of contamination issues.

They also ask me about tourists in questions phrased "Why do tourists do…?" This, I believe comes from a popular idea that Westerners all think alike, which is not unlike the anthropologist using a family or a set of individuals as ideal types[113] that begin to stand for a culture as a whole. Valene Smith discusses this phenomenon as objectification on the part of both parties, "…individual guests' identities become obscured and they are labeled 'tourists' who, in turn, may be stereotyped in national character images. As guests become de-humanized objects that are tolerated for economic gain, tourists have little alternative other than to look upon their hosts only with curiosity, and, too, as objects" (Smith 1989:10).

The nephews avoid interaction with me more than the other people in the village despite the fact we often eat together as a family. When we do interact it is so that they can ask me about phrases in English or about technology or general questions about tourist behavior. At times I took it personally that they would avoid me, but I realized I have entered their 'back region'[114], what Jennie Germann Molz terms the space that is "off-limits to outsiders" (2004:55-56). I have entered their area where they can relax and not have to smile and interact with foreigners or tourists. While the rest of the village has come to accept that I

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[113] See Max Weber (1949:90) for further discussion of ideal types.
[114] This terminology is attributed to Erving Goffman (1959:112)

am not a tourist, those 'front-of-the-house' laborers have already grown weary of being on display.

Even when making a dish in Mexico of ingredients purchased in the village, the foreign nature of a meal can be rejected and the tortilla is then used to mark a meal as familiar. One evening when the women weren't feeling well, I offered to make tuna salad for dinner. I went shopping and then the women gathered to inspect the ingredients, asking if I got all of those ingredients here, in Señor.

Once I assembled the salad of tuna, mayonnaise, capers, pickles, onions and a squirt of mustard, they asked the daughter to go buy chiles. I asked why, and they said it needed chile to give it flavor…before tasting it. Upon adding the canned jalapenos, I demonstrated eating the salad on a Saladitas™ soda cracker. At this point the grandmother starts the fire under the *comal*. She said the family would not eat without tortillas. I thought maybe this meant they would scoop up the tuna salad from the communal bowl using the tortilla as they had with other bean or meat main courses, but they ate the tuna salad on crackers as I did and enjoyed it, but they rolled up the tortilla and ate it on the side. It did not add to the dish, but it along with the chile, was necessary to mark the meal as home made and edible.

Figure 24 - Notice the rolled tortilla in his hand while we are eating tuna salad on soda crackers with Pepsi.

Everyone ate and enjoyed trying something different for dinner except for the nephews who ate cold leftover *buliwaah* from days ago claiming "We eat stuff like that all of the time at work, we don't want it at home." Thereby exercising their right to resist western identity in specific ways – accepting the clothing and technology but rejecting it at the basic level of ingesting it at home.

Analysis

What the prevalence of the tortilla does provide is a way of negotiating belonging. It communicates values of family, sharing, humility and morality that are fluid. In sum, the tortilla seems to be an item of material culture that instead of moving through phases or "moments" of being doxic, orthodoxic and

heterodoxic can encompass all of these states at the same time. The fact that it does exist at every table for every meal merely provides a common discourse by which individuals, families, communities and national identities can be manipulated and discussed. To Mexico in general, it is an orthodox symbol of Mestizo national identity, but to rural *campesinos* in Quintana Roo it can be taken for granted within one's own home -- even while structuring the rhythm of daily life it goes unmentioned. Yet, it occupies places in orthodoxy via its ability to stand for a person's moral character and status within the community or heterodoxy in its symbolic resistance to Mexican national identity or globalization.

I do not think one can claim the ubiquity of the tortilla as the reason it is taken for granted. It cannot be discretely classified as merely food, utensil or symbol. It is all of these in one. It bleeds across these artificial boundaries. It is obviously thought about and missed when it is not present. Practice theory seems to provide a theoretical standpoint by which we can analyze embodied and taken for granted actions in a useful way. It allows us to look deeper at the "we've always done it this way" explanations that we so often experience in ethnographic fieldwork. Most relevantly, the fieldworker must pay attention to how a food or a practice changes based on context. Does it change in new locations, with new people involved, with different ingredients, with different labor conditions?

According to F. Xavier Medina, the use of open ended or partially guided interviews provides more richness to the research because it allows for fuller

answers and new directions that the researcher may not have considered. It also allows for relationship building that leads to trust and better answers (2004:57). From my experiences last year, the surveys were more fruitful in noting what was left unsaid instead of the data accumulated on paper. The informal discussions provided significantly more insight as to what people are actually consuming. The surveys however, did provide me with a point of interest. I believe it is the gaps in classification or understanding where the best anthropology can be 'done'.

One of the goals of the dietary surveys was to rule out any false positives as I had experienced a discrepancy between what people say they eat and what they do eat in previous field seasons. In public, I have witnessed evangelical converts consuming packaged, processed foods on the steps of the convenience stores or in the parks at night. When I ask why the Catholics do not do the same, they say it is because they cannot afford them. Conversely, when I ask the evangelical Protestants why they do not consume the tamales, they claim they are low class foods or dirty. However, when I ask the question, "Do Protestants and Catholics eat different foods" everyone says, "*No, aqui, todos son iguales"*. However, I find that people eat not in line with their religion *per se*, but in line with their socio-economic status which does seem tied to religion in a more complex way than I originally imagined.

Concluding Thoughts

In Señor, Quintana Roo, people are navigating new ways of being in the wake of new technologies, labor and education opportunities and religious freedoms. This is resulting in newly acceptable forms of identity. There is palpable anxiety regarding these changes. While some are excited about the new opportunities, others are wary of perceived culture loss or change, particularly loss of community ties that are important to traditional ritual practices and success in subsistence farming communities. These are stressors consistent with processes of globalization in other regions (Appaduri 1996, Jones 2007, Messer 2004, Nash 1989, Wilk 2009, Whitehead 2003).

By studying these cross-cultural similarities in the response to global flows that correspond to the spread of technology and infrastructure (from roads, electricity and the television, computers and cell phones that follow) we are able to see how social hierarchies form in specific political and economic situations. Because Señor is undergoing a rapid introduction to these globalized processes, it has also undergone intense stress over the years in which I have studied there.

I chose to examine this using foodways as markers of belonging and othering. By doing so, this dissertation contributes two main ideas to anthropological science. First, it identifies emerging hierarchies in small Maya villages and examines how those hierarchies are navigated using food. Second, it investigates food as a methodological device. By finding incongruities in

survey data, it identifies important discrepancies in classification. Once the classification issue was resolved, the study of the tortilla opened up new ways of identifying in groups and out groups.

Initially, I believed, based on informal interviews, that these groupings simply marked boundaries between religions. I had been told (see O'Connor 2010 for a more thorough discussion) that evangelical religious groups were opting out of the milpa culture and making more money as wage laborers in the tourist industry or as store owners within the village. As a result, more traditional Catholic affiliated groups felt judged and othered while the diets of the Evangelicals had changed. All of this is true, but the boundaries were not so discrete.

It is difficult to extricate the shifts in labor from the shifts in religion and the shifts in food. While I am not the first to tie Capitalism to Protestantism, it is important to note that shifts from traditional subsistence or guild labor to more capitalistic forms of wage labor, whether factory work like Weber (2008) and Pilcher (1998) have cited or tourism (Kray 2005) these two shifts do coincide.

Scholars have tied religion and capitalism and foodways to capitalism, but I think that in times of 'crisis' or stress when the first waves of change happen, they are all intertwined adding to the complexity in theorizing of identity change. The rapid introduction to pluralistic society causes people to defend and/or restate their identities in culturally appropriate ways. Food, being intrinsically tied to labor and religion becomes a polite way to assert one's identity in public

situations. This identity is multifaceted and fluid or as Richard Wilk has called it, heteroglossic.

I have discussed how fiestas provide a way for local Caste War descendants to participate in a more national Mexican culture while obscuring the increasing Evangelical subset of the population. I then suggested that in order to view how all segments of the population interact using food, it is more useful to view a night in the park during the summer when people are out attempting to cool off and children play late into the night since there is no school. Here, there is more reason to eat according to hierarchical rules. Here, where there is difference, one eats as they want to be perceived. This allows for resistance to certain ways of life and communicating one's belonging.

Finally, I examined the tortilla. I avoided studying this quotidian object because people like Jeffery Pilcher had so thoroughly examined it in the past. However, I found it to be methodologically useful in identifying boundaries. By tracing its production and consumption, I have discovered boundaries between childhood and adulthood, family ties, family feuds as well as boundaries between the family and other, the village and towns, the peninsula and the country and even the country and foreigners. It was useful to see which divisions were porous and which remained rigidly intact as we physically crossed these borders.

While this dissertation discusses the malleability of identity using foodways as a lens, it also reminds us to be thorough participants and observers. Should one limit their studies to the fiestas, rituals and performances that garner

tourism as well as anthropological interest, one will miss the variety of social groups and social stresses that are routinely being navigated. For example, if one made the fiesta their focus of inquiry, it could perpetuate the belief that there is not all that much unique to the region. In particular, I would warn that it could lead people to conflate the cargo system Catholics with the gremio system Catholics as I believe has been done in previous literature (Cruz 1934, Eiss 2008, Fallaw 2008, Farriss 1984, Fernandez 1994, Forand 2002, Gonzales 1999, Hanks 1990, Redfield and Villa Rojas 1941, Villa Rojas 1945 & 1978).

Without participant observation including living, eating and cooking with the various social divisions based in labor and religion, I could not have understood the basis for the groupings of those eating and playing in the park. I could have misconstrued that these groups were merely based on friendships or familial ties instead of the more recent division based in wage labor and conversion.

Finally, focusing on the tortilla provided many unexpected insights into methodological concerns as well as additional layers of resistance and acceptance of traditional and modern identities. First, that the classification of the tortilla as food was problematic, instead it seems to function more as a utensil. By understanding that, I was able to see that the use of certain utensils was more of a solid boundary between what was edible and what was not than the actual foodstuffs. Instead of a particular food item being seen as marker or contaminator, it appears that the utensil used is more important.

In the village, neither in the fiesta, park nor home settings, does one use utensils to eat. At the roadside stands and small *loncherias*, (see Fig 25) no one uses anything other than bread (only in the case of sandwiches) or a tortilla[115] to consume their food. However, once we left the village and went to more formal restaurants, the food was eschewed. This was not because the items or ingredients were unfamiliar but because of the lack of the tortilla, or the difference in the tortilla provided. Once we returned to more casual settings that provided tortillas or chips, the food was once more deemed edible.

[115] Sometimes these tortillas are in the form of panuchos, salbutes or polcanes…a sturdier base for toppings and snacking.

Figure 25 - The 'loncheria', which served nothing advertised on this sign.

My initial concern that religion equated neatly with nutrition cannot be supported with data. People eat in complex ways, particularly when they are aware that a researcher is watching their consumption habits. An interesting logic began to form the longer I spent with individuals. The Sabritas™ were eschewed for 'local' packaged chips, of the Barcel™ variety. They would then say, "See, it's made here (actually in Merida), so it isn't global junk food." However, there was no move to give up soda. They remain steadfastly convinced that it is healthy with food, but should not be consumed alone.

Directions for Further Research

There are further investigations that should be undertaken in this region. I am interested in how people are starting to define their identity in relationship to authenticity. This is due in part to the popularizing of 'heritage' foodways resulting from UNESCO's declaration of Michoacan's indigenous Purépecha cuisine as Mexican intangible heritage. The tourist industry has pounced on marketing the 'indigenous cuisine' of Mexico.

There are often tours out to the village to discover this element of 'heritage' or authenticity. This process disturbs many residents. They do not mind profiting from it but are also offended by the tourists. Women in Senor complain that tourists never want to help cook nor do they want to eat what is made. They just want to take pictures.

Contributing to the confusion and anxiety that results from these new expectations of authenticity and cultural heritage, a nearby eco-park has started to include children and adults in their recreations of Maya rituals for tourists. They costume the workers and teach them the 'correct' authentic way to celebrate old Maya traditions. Many of these traditions are those described in the *Popol Vuh*, written in during the conquest era by the Quiche Maya in Guatemala. The park often constructs differences between the pueblos in order to market them. In addition to the confusion these activities create, they also engender artificial community divisions between pueblos in the region. This furthers 'anxiety' about performing authenticity in food and tradition.

As Richard Wilk has noted for food practices, sometimes an external hegemonic homogenizing force results in increased heterogeneity and defense of, or even creation of, the "authentic" (Wilk 2006). I have yet to experience new creations of the authentic here. As of 2012, people were more prone to mimic what was selling to the tourists at the coast or stick with the ever-popular grilled chicken, *panuchos* and *salbutes* in order to attract customers.

As I left in January of 2012, there was talk of being able to buy a certificate to hang on the door of a food establishment or advertise on the menu signifying the restaurant owner or chef has passed a UNESCO heritage course that would teach the 'correct' heritage foodways. I wonder if this will lead to a spread of Michoacán inspired dishes working their way through the Yucatan, or if people will begin to define, codify and produce a newly enunciated Quintanarooense heritage cuisine.

Food is used as a face-saving way to express one's relationship to different groups. It communicates belonging and resistance in a non-confrontational way that is in line with the ideals of balance and tranquility in the Maya community (Kray 2005). One's foodways, that is, one's choices regarding food getting, cooking consuming and disposing of food allows neighbors to understand a person's opinions on national, regional and community politics. It also allows people to claim their ties to the global marketplace and religion. Therefore food remains an ideal lens through which to study times of anxiety and unrest in this region.

Appendix A

Dietary Recall Survey

Investigator will record approximate age group of participant. Choose one:

Child, Teen, Adult, Elderly

The following Questions are regarding Breakfast:

1. What do you eat for breakfast? Who prepared it? (general answer expected here like, my wife, my kids, etc. No names to be recorded).
2. Where do you eat breakfast?
3. With whom do you eat breakfast? (general answer expected here like, my wife, my kids, etc. No names to be recorded).
4. When do you eat breakfast?
5. What do you wish you ate/what is your favorite breakfast?
6. When (on what occasions) do you get to eat your favorite breakfast?

The following Questions are regarding Lunch:

7. What do you eat for Lunch? Who prepared it? (general answer expected here like, my wife, my kids, etc. No names to be recorded).
8. Where do you eat Lunch?
9. With whom do you eat Lunch? (general answer expected here like, my wife, my kids, etc. No names to be recorded).
10. When do you eat Lunch?
11. What do you wish you ate/what is your favorite lunch?
12. When do you get to eat your favorite lunch?

The following Questions are regarding Dinner:

13. What do you eat for dinner? Who prepared it? (general answer expected here like, my wife, my kids, etc. No names to be recorded).
14. Where do you eat dinner?
15. With whom do you eat dinner? (general answer expected here like, my wife, my kids, etc. No names to be recorded).
16. When do you eat dinner?
17. What do you wish you ate/what is your favorite dinner?
18. When do you get to eat your favorite dinner?

General Questions:

19. What is your favorite food?
20. What is your favorite special meal? Who prepared it?
21. What types of snacks do you eat? Who prepared it?
22. Where do you snack?
23. With whom do you snack?
24. Does anyone in your family have heart problems?
25. Does anyone in your family have diabetes?
26. Is anyone in your family overweight?
27. How do you most often obtain your food? Did you or someone in your family grow it/buy it/trade for it?
28. What do you eat for at church/religious festivals?
29. What type of job do you do?

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