Intra-ethnic Conflict and Violence:

Exploring Mimetic Desire as Practice

Among the Maya Tzotzil Chamula of Chiapas, Mexico

by

Michael Rolland

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved November 2012 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

John Chance, Chair
Hjorleifur Jonsson
Jan Rus
James Eder

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2012

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines incidents of conflict and violence amid communities of the Maya Tzotzil Chamula in Chiapas, Mexico. Despite ostensible homogeneity, or more social and cultural resemblances than differences, conflicts arise between many Chamula because of how they acquire desire according to others who mediate what is desirable. These conflicts relate well to Rene Girard's hypothesis that mimetic desire influences identity yet generates conflict as imitation fosters rivalry.

Qualitative methods of participant observation, interviews, and document research depict how desire, identity, and conflict interrelate. Ethnographic cases show how conflict emerges "interdividually" as rivals compete to obtain objects imputed desirable. The study begins with how young Tzotzils today appropriate the desires of others, becoming lawyer, spiritual guide, rock and roll singer, or anthropologist. Complex examples exhibit groups struggling for power and privilege within or between members of communities as they vie over "objects of desire" such as status, land, water, or representations of power and pecuniary interests. For some Chamula, mimetic rivalry works to deny resemblances with others despite being alike as neighbor, relative, farmer, carpenter, or member of the same political or religious affiliation. The study also highlights mimetic interactions that have shaped Maya struggles in the past, such as the uprisings of 1712, 1867, and 1911.

Interpretive analysis explores how identity formation (structures), imitative desire (motivated interaction), and practice (habitual agency) together galvanize material and psychosocial variables for conflict. Imitative desire is worth observing because of its long-term implications for human adaptation and social change. As a contribution to social conflict theory, this dissertation offers a critical perspective to current research on mimetic desire as a significant force in human relations.

DEDICATION

A little more than ten years ago, I had the honor and privilege to accompany jTatic Samuel Garcia, emeritus Bishop of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. We traveled together to the campus of Stanford University where the Dominican friars had invited him to speak to students on his experiences as a peacemaker. Some years before our trip in 2001, I had become familiar with ideas about violence and the sacred from reading Gil Bailie which in turn lead me to the mimetic theory proposed by René Girard, then professor emeritus at Stanford. I arranged for an opportunity to bring jTatic Samuel and Professor Girard together, which allowed me to witness a significant encounter of two great personages whose hearts have long struggled over how best to imitate the God-man Jesus, the Christ, especially in the essential social concerns of justice that love alone can generate.

Conscious of Bishop Samuel and Professor Girard as mediators of that propitious form of desire that is love of God and neighbor, I dedicate this dissertation to their common social legacy and spirit, thankful for those who desire to imitate their remarkable lives and above all their life-long passionate defense of the rights and dignity of the poor and vulnerable.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF SYMBOLS

PREFACE

The Problem of Communal Violence

Before introducing the salient themes structuring the chapters that comprise this dissertation, I want to first invite the reader on a brief sojourn to a previous time. More than simply explaining when, where, and how this research began, the descriptive story that follows introduces the reader to my reflexive mode of ethnographic narrative. I use the term "reflexive" here in the sense of current approaches to theory and method in anthropology where the ethnographer and the ethnography are self-consciously taken into account – i.e., the subjective production of materials that constitute knowledge. This refers to the personality or presence of the researcher as having an effect upon who undergoes investigation.[1] I will explain my ethnographic methods in the introductory chapter that follows.

So now, to set the stage for this research report, I ask the reader to come back with me to a previous time in 2002, to the woodland highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, where a difficult emotional moment unfolds within the community of La Candelaria, a large collective indigenous enclave who self-identify as Maya Tzotzil Chamula Indians.

Lynching and Lamentation

We begin on June 11, 2002. As I recall the scene, the rain was falling gently that day. The seasonal drizzle was coming down consistently, but in a way that seemed peculiar--almost as if sent by God to veil, as it were, the very public expression of pain among so many people crying at the same time. Perhaps God wished to soften the rough terrain upon which fifty plus Tzotzil Chamula men and women were now kneeling, occasionally bowing slowly, their foreheads reaching the wet pine needles that covered a thin open patch of pine-oak forest.

Having just arrived in my pick-up truck to join what was, for me, an unanticipated ritual of lamentation, I felt nervous about how I should properly participate. I was yet a bit unaware of the entire context, but still managed to quickly find a spot to kneel and cry with everyone else. Our tears mingled with the celestial food of tall slow burning wax candles. An effusive cloud of pine resin incense gently rising from several clay thuribles mysteriously offset these. I was the Dominican friar (and pastor) assigned to work among indigenous Catholic Christians living in some sixty hamlets large and small strung intermittently along the hills and valleys that surrounded San Cristóbal de Las Casas. I knew from experience what it meant to be invited to this particular community but the crisis was of a magnitude I had not previously experienced in my pastoral visits. The members of the *ejido* "La Candelaria"--a large village of Maya Tzotzil Chamula farmers and carpenters--were facing a disturbing situation.[2]

As I knelt with my friends, I observed that it was not just women crying. Men and women together were praying aloud in a cacophony of voices, many asking for forgiveness from *kajvaltik Jesús*, (Our Lord Jesus), or otherwise making some form of entreaty to *jtotik riox* (Our Father God). Others cried out to the *ángeletik* (guardians) or to the patron Saint of the community, *ch'ul jmetik xMaruch* (Our holy mother Mary, also known as The Virgin of La Candelaria).[3] Others were pleading with the local spirits or Earth Lords (*ajvalilik ta banomil*), the mysterious creatures traditionally believed to dwell below ground or near the caves, hills, and streams of the region.

Riox ti skotol xu' yu'une!
(All powerful God! Have mercy!)

Ak'o yich'otik ta k'ux, ak'o xch'ay ta yo'nton skotol jmultik!
(Wipe your mind of all our wrong doings!)

Kajval Cristo Jesus, ich'unkutik ta k'ux!
(Lord Christ Jesus, have mercy on us!)

Three homicides were the reason for this communal lamentation. The previous evening's collective violence had left two men dead by lynching. The men that died, along with two others who survived were presumed guilty for the murder of Diego Gómez Gómez. Diego, a family man and a member of the community's education committee, had been missing for several weeks. When his family found that city and state authorities in San Cristobal de Las Casas refused to search or investigate, the leaders of La Candelaria launched their own search parties. When one of these groups eventually found Diego's stolen truck, it quickly lead to the culprits and thus also to finding his corpse in an obscure canyon.

Fears About Spiritual and Legal Ramifications

During the communal lamentation the day after the lynching, I realized I was kneeling near the spot where two of Diego's alleged murderers had just been hung the night before. Because this happened only a few kilometers away from the village center, most members felt its symbolic impact; that is to say, the Chamula of La Candelaria collectively feared possible legal and spiritual ramifications from the precipitous lynching. In retrospect, it is this apprehension that can explain such an impressive public or communal sharing of anguish and distress.

As the tears progressed, I found myself feeling terribly unsure. Even though I was a priest or "pastoral agent" for the local diocese, and thus accustomed to being with a grieving family, the situation felt very different to me. Suffering a loss for words--in *batz'i k'op* (Tzotzil), or Spanish--I resigned myself to being simply physically present, content to mirror those near me grieving. I had never seen a community so collectively distraught before, and thus was unsure just how to respond appropriately. What caught my attention (and what has ultimately motivated this research project), was the image of so many people sharing a sense of responsibility for homicide. I knew many of the people

I was kneeling with, and I could see that they were somehow all caught up in this affair,

directly or indirectly involved in an act of collective violence. Of course, only a few were

directly involved in lynching the captives, but others seemed to feel connected to this

tragic act because it happened in their community.

Pondering Aggression from a Foreign Perspective

Part of my difficulty during this time in 2002 was that I did not know all the

facts. Whether acting as priest or anthropologist, there was no way forward but to wait

patiently for answers to many questions. My priestly presence, though perhaps consoling

in this awkward instance, was already highly circumscribed. Priest or not, to most

Chamula I would always be a *kaxlan* or an *aleman* (Tzotzil words for a non-Indian

outsider or foreigner). Yet I was aware from my prior times working in Chiapas that

many Chamula see humility and patience as the right way to show respect, and as the

only way for "outsiders" to understand anything important. These people faced a

tremendous emotional and spiritual crisis; it was a situation where an outsider does not

put forth impertinent questions (a skill helpful in fieldwork six years later). I trusted

Sebastián; my *compadre* (a fictional kinship term for "godfather" and thus a very close

friend) would offer me a detailed explanation when the time was right.

I eventually learned that violence had begotten violence. The ejidal authorities of

La Candelaria had organized community members to seek justice for Diego Gómez, since

he was a minor leader in the community. Some members wanted justice for Diego

through reciprocal revenge, advocating what in biblical language would be an "eye for an

eye" equal determination. In the end, the immediate and long-term impact of all three

homicides was to leave a dark emotional pall of insecurity over everyone involved–which

by implication meant most members of the community. Worse still, media reports of

reciprocal violence via *linchamiento* (lynching) generated yet another negative image of

the Chamula for many Mexicans. Historically, the ladino (non-Indian) population has often imputed a mercurial volatility to the Chamula. From prejudicial fears constructed over centuries, but especially since the 19th century, the Chamula are often imagined as aggressors ready to attack the non-Indian minority population in the highlands (Benjamin 1996:66-67; Gossen 1999:197; Rus 1983).

In recent decades, especially since the 1980s, aggression seems to mark the Chamula way of life in a number of villages, at least if one were to go by the many news reports of internal violence occurring within the hamlets of San Juan Chamula (see Appendices B). For example, in 1995 there was a crucial reverse of positions in the heated gun battle that took place in Arbenza, Chamula, a small hamlet relatively close to the municipal center of San Juan Chamula. Dozens of henchmen were sent out by the political bosses (caciques) only to fail unexpectedly in their attempt to violently eradicate by gunfire a handful of Evangelicals (Presbyterians) living in Arbenza hamlet. With faith in their cause (to worship freely), the Christians did not turn their cheeks but instead fired straight upon their attackers, and with a great deal of accuracy, mimetically using semi-automatic rifles just like those used by the local bosses.[4]

In chapter three, I discuss several examples that consider the social contexts of violence within and around Chamula communities. My discussion there reflects the situation of the Maya Tzotzil Chamula, as seems to exist today. However, at this point of the prefatory sojourn, we need to travel just a little bit further into the Chamula community of La Candelaria, returning to a time of the lynching crisis in 2002.

When I arose from a kneeling posture with the others to perform my priestly role of offering a blessing within the healing ritual underway, my compadre Sebastián and I exchanged nods of encouragement. I remember well the sadness I felt just seeing him so pale and distraught. I was well aware of the "cargo" (public duty) the community had

given him, serving as one of nearly fifty elected authorities for the ejido. At this time in 2002, Sebastián was serving as the *juez suplente* (assistant judge). This post of responsibility meant serving the ejido for a year without pay and with no time available to earn a substantial income. It also meant he could not do his permanent service with the Church as a jtunel (servant-leader or deacon); he was thus unavailable for preaching and teaching to the local Catholic community.[5] Like his father before him, many thought of Sebastián as a gifted catechist, i.e., an effective teacher of Christian traditions and doctrines. Because of his character, he became a voice of authority and leadership. In the time of Sebastián's father *mol* Manuel, the Chamula of La Candelaria had built one of the largest traditional Churches outside the boundaries of San Juan Chamula municipality; an impressive accomplishment for a small community when compared to the more famous (and for some, notorious) Catholic *templo* (temple) of San Juan Chamula.

As preachers and authority figures for this and other related Chamula Catholic communities of the eastern valley of the city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, my compadre and I both shared the responsibility of working the Word, that is to say, presenting the mysteries (sacraments) and the scriptures (Judeo-Christian bible). During the time of the lynching crisis, it was so hard to see my compadre suffering distress from events he apparently was powerless to control. Years later he shared with me how he felt responsible for much of what had happened. Here my compadre was referring not just to his very public role of one year's service as an assistant judge for the community, but also his long-term ecclesial role as a pastoral minister, a deacon--someone who was supposed to publically represent the love and mercy of Christ. In addition, he claimed distress over the fact that he had been unsuccessful at stopping the public disgrace of what apparently had been a precipitous mob lynching.

xvii

Two of the four accused men he had helped to capture were now dead. Members of La Candelaria ejido had caught all four of the accused men during a massive manhunt. The hunt began initially because Diego's family had first sought assistance from police authorities in San Cristóbal de Las Casas; but when the proper authorities did not respond to their plea for a search, family members appealed to their own ejido community authorities, who promptly sent out several search parties. One of these found Diego's small cargo truck that he always had used for transporting various goods and thus to make a living for himself and his family.

Although the men allegedly responsible for Diego's death were Chamula themselves (originally from San Juan Chamula municipality), the search party from La Candelaria traced them to a rural ranch home in La Concordia, a small agricultural community in the central valley region of Chiapas (several hours away if traveling by car). Severely beaten and then questioned, and thus "exposed" as organized criminals, the accused men were forced to admit to the theft of Diego's truck and his subsequent demise by their hands. They were compelled, as well, to lead the search party to Diego's body so that they could recover it. Apparently, they attempted to hide Diego's remains by throwing his corpse down a steep ravine. Incriminated in this way, the search team then restrained the four Chamula men as captives to bring them back together with the lifeless body to face judgment by Diego's family and the people of La Candelaria.

While praying at the site of the lynching amidst the cacophony of tears, I pondered what group action of revenge might signify. How do people see themselves before, during, and after a collective effort that results in violence? I wanted to make sense of their shared sense of grief, but also their shared involvement in what was basically an extra-judicial form of violent revenge. I wondered, too, how folks so ostensibly ordinary had become emotionally caught-up in a shared desire to harm others.

The culprits were, at least ostensibly, social and culturally not much different from their accusers–all *campesinos* (poor rural farmers), all indigenous Maya Tzotzil Chamula. I consider whether there was conflict or violence that might explain these events.

As the elders brought everyone's prayers of lamentation to an end, it seemed to me that the people of La Candelaria would never be the same again. Although community leaders had searched far to capture the culprits presumed responsible for the death of one of their own, once captured, the governing assembly itself became as split as the community's leaders, stuck over what to actually do with their captives. Should they hand them over to the *kaxlan* (non-Indian) civil authority, or dispose of them here and now, taking justice into their own hands?

Before the assembly could decide, events took a drastic turn. A phone call informed everyone that two of the alleged culprits were now hung, and two more were about to suffer the same fate. The authorities of La Candelaria, including Sebastián, scrambled to stop it, aware of the public consequences and the urgency to prevent a bad situation from getting even worse.

Pondering the Consequences of Extreme Conflict

While I was participating in the ritual lamentation the day after the lynching, I found myself feeling curious about possible social and cultural mechanisms that could precipitate both the desire and the action of collective violence against a designated victim. What does that do to a community, Christian or not? This anthropological curiosity would eventually lead me to larger questions about the origins of violent conflict, and about mechanisms that perpetuate social strife or even try to prevent it. While historically it may seem obvious that there are many factors involved in producing social strife, especially struggles over economic interests, it is not always clear how

conflict, especially intra-ethnic and local violence, can spawn significant configurations of culture and society, i.e., a felt-sense of identity.

Afterwards, when the lamentation ceremony in the forest concluded, and after having a lengthy conversation with Sebastián about the context of the murders, I was able to learn more about a number of past conflicts that had previously unfolded within La Candelaria, including some that took place between neighboring communities who shared a similar ethnic identity as Tzotzil Chamula. I wondered also to what extent these earlier instances of intra-ethnic strife were collective forms of deliberate violence. As in the lynching, I wanted to know what factors motivate people in a shared desire to harm others, or for that matter, to share a communal sense of lament about violent acts in which they may find themselves publically implicated.

It seemed to me that a simple history of La Candelaria or the region would not fully account for the complex dynamics of collective violence. Thus, in 2002, this is how I found myself in the rugged hills outside the town of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, confronted with profound research questions. Everything took place a month before leaving my pastoral duties to begin an even longer academic journey in Tempe, Arizona. My initial probing questions about the causes of intra-ethnic kinds of conflict and violence would eventually lead me to some sophisticated explanatory theories. One thing has remained very clear since the prayers of lamentation came to an end that summer day in 2002: after the lynching, neither the Chamula of La Candelaria nor myself as anthropologist would ever be the same again. A threshold had been crossed.

The dissertation that follows reflects my attempt to comprehend this threshold and to search for answers as to what initiates conflict in the first place.

ENDNOTES FOR PREFACE

1 For an overview of this mode of narrative in ethnography see B. Tedlock (1991).

2 The term ejido has a particular meaning in Mexico. Not all ejidos are alike, and much has changed since the 1990s (see Haenn 2006; Vázquez Castillo 2004). In Mexico, members who live in ejido communities can often be divided in spite of ostensible unity given the inevitable fact of struggles that arise regarding who controls internal governing structures, chief of which is the Assembly. In the face of the tragic events of 2002 in La Candelaria, such tensions were apparently put aside in favor of a unitary defense. Unity within any community setting is a matter of perspective, one relative to shifting configurations of power and authority as well as structural situations that shape how these manifest themselves in terms of service and responsibilities.

3 This particular Virgin is otherwise known in Roman Catholic iconography as Our Lady of the Presentation (referring to Luke 2:22).

4 For example, the following link: http://www.starbacks.ca/Athens/9294/EARBENZA.html. For a anthropological perspective on this and related conflicts, see Gaspar and Aramoni (1997), La otra mejilla ...pero armada. El recurso de las armas en manos de los expulsados de San Juan Chamula. For an international perspective on the plight of Chamula during this time, see the Human Rights Watch report Implausible Deniability: State Responsibility for Rural Violence in Mexico (1997).

5 For an elaboration of this role within the structures of the diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas see Ruth Chojnacki's book on "indigenous apostles" (2010) and Fr. Pablo Irribarren's views on the role of servant leaders or deacons (1980; 1997).

It is not the differences but the loss of them that gives rise to violence and chaos.

Girard 1979:51

Chapter 1

FRAMING THE PROBLEM: INTRA-ETHNIC CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Social and cultural manifestations of conflict, especially violent forms of social conflict, are perhaps among the most difficult dimensions of human experience for anthropologists to grasp empirically (Avruch 2001). This phenomenological observation impresses me as a reasonably true reflection of my brief sojourn in several Maya Tzotzil Chamula communities from the summer of 2008 to the summer of 2010. That time of field experience allowed me to learn about some significant past conflicts while actually observing a contentious on-going quarrel between several Chamula groups and communities verging violence between them.

The Challenge of Explaining Chamula Conflicts

Social conflicts are difficult to study. It is best to avoid regarding situations of strife as discrete events. Social conflicts are multifarious realities, always in motion, with no fixed shape. Because violent action constantly yields to different kinds of pressure, practices, and provocations, it is best thought of as something fluid where all factors and actors are unsettled, mutable, and malleable from multiple influences and reactions. Social conflict is a phenomenon we can only begin to comprehend through multiple subjective perspectives (e.g., Riches' 1986 triangle of Perpetrators, Victims, Witnesses). This dissertation joins the above view and explores the generative aspects of how conflict contributes to the production of ethnicity (social identity formation), and vice versa.

My research reflects a long-term interest of wanting to know more about collective dynamics associated with the way intra-ethnic conflicts originate, operate, and seem to grow. Bowman (2001:27-28) perceives violence as a force that shows its face in

ways beyond just the destruction of boundaries. It is also very much present in their creation.

> That 'intransitive violence' (which may operate conceptually prior to manifesting itself in action) serves to create the integrities and identities which are in turn subjected to those forms of violence which seek victims. Violence – rather than being a performance in the course of which one integral entity (person, community, state) violates the integrity of another – may well serve to generate integral identities by inscribing borders between something in the course of becoming an entity and its surroundings.

Considering Bowman's view and that of many others, ethnicity is perhaps best viewed as an inchoate process of on-going socio-cultural identity formation related to conflict.

Space does not allow for a complete exploration of all forms of conflict that anthropologists try to explicate (e.g., Heitmeyer and Hagan 2003; LeVine 1961; Schmidt and Schroder 2001), let alone the variety of issues related to the complex factors involved in the constitution of ethnic conflict (Brubaker 1998; Eller 1999; Horowitz 1985). Throughout the dissertation, I draw upon empirical examples from fieldwork in several

Maya Tzotzil Chamula rural communities of Chiapas, Mexico

The basic data set is composed of observations, interviews, and historical reports about conflicts within or between specific Chamula communities (Figure 1.1). These include primarily the large ejido La Candelaria, located within the municipal boundaries of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. It also includes information on conflicts related to its neighboring ejidos of San Antonio de Las Rosas, Ach' (New or "Nuevo") Corral Ch'en, and Corazón de Maria. Several smaller hamlets and two pan-indigenous organizations are also analyzed in the context of interactions related to the aforementioned communities.

My focus is upon how Chamula situations of conflict develop at the level of group or community, but in ways more intra-ethnic than inter-ethnic. Intra-ethnic conflicts are less understood than the more obvious and often dramatic aspects of inter-ethnic social strife (e.g., conflicts between peoples with noticeable phenotypic

distinctions such that tensions are imputed to suggest genotypic differences of "race" or nationality, socio-economic inequity, and so on). In contrast, intra-ethnic conflict can sometimes turn violent over a lack of difference or situations of too much sameness that provoke a crisis of identity over the apparent need to stand out from others based upon contentious claims over minor differences (cf. Blok 2000a; Ignatieff 1998).

A Heuristic Approach to Conflict and Identity Formation

My research questions at the beginning of this project were heuristic – that is to say, they had to do with seeking clues or possible indications rather than acquiring definitive answers about factors that generate volatile differences related to identity/identification (boundary formations). Given the heuristic aim of the project, it is not a scientific rendering of clear facts about causation. I only attempt to provide inklings about what in reality is a rich gamut of anthropological issues regarding the origens of conflict, especially violent forms of conflict. This dissertation thus reflects one attempt to open a small window regarding the role of mimesis in conflict development. I hope the reader will find a portal wide enough for fresh air to flow into an armoire full of theories about the causes of social conflict (e.g., Heitmeyer and Hagan 2003).

In anthropology, generally, theories seem to grow stale as their taste goes out of fashion (cf. Bentley 1987), despite the effort of some to recycle the enduring parts of former formulations (Lewis 1998). In my view, the pertinent challenge is how to account for extant troubles among ethnically distinctive peoples, while not ignoring the need to explain conflicts equally intense and maybe more so among groups not all that "distinctive" initially. The process of developing distinctiveness is, I argue, a question of imitative desire. Important to know is how identity-based differentiations appear to come about in the first place, especially when groups of people are relatively homogenous in terms of common, everyday social and cultural experiences.

My questions began to arise prior to fieldwork but after many years of pastoral work as a Dominican friar and missionary interacting with many Maya Tzotzil Chamula – a people whose roots are traditionally concentrated in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. The Dominicans, like the Indians they first sought to protect and then later "cared for" are themselves a kind of peoplehood, that is to say, a self-ascribed group or association of strong relationships lasting for generations. Indeed, the Dominican friars (brothers) have complex historical and thus traditional roots in the highlands of Chiapas where they were active for almost three centuries.

In a number of ways, the present investigation actually began in 1995 when I joined the work of the very few Dominican friars remaining in Chiapas. My association allowed me to observe and experience several village level conflicts over religious and political differences. Since the late 1960s, many scholars have extensively documented the religious-political dimension of social conflicts among or between Chamula (e.g., Robledo-Hernández 1997; Irribarren 2002 [1980]). Since 1995, however, my own quest for explanations of Chamula conflict and violence has increasingly benefitted from critical anthropological perspectives.

Probing for Possible Variables in the Production of Conflict

Just before I arrived in Chiapas, I had read Gil Bailie's book Violence Unveiled (1995). This analysis of contemporary social dilemmas of violent conflict set me thinking about similar situations of my new location, and whether there might not be one major factor (or one major set of factors) generally at work across the human production of conflicts. Bailie boldly contends that humanity is at a "crossroads" that has many historical, religious, and social implications. His radical view insists that social actors today face two crucial choices. These choices consist of either (1) doubling down on a belief in the efficacy of sacred violence (i.e., violence as a kind of saving mechanism) to

4

secure or justify certain kinds of social relations, or else (2) seek a radical alternative such as opting for the generous and generative aspects of love (benevolence).

Bailie's view of social relations is informed by René Girard's hypothesis (1977, 1986, 1987) of mimetic or imitative desire. Mimetic desire refers to the social phenomenon of what happens when people borrow a desire or passion that another person embodies or seems to represent. The basic argument from Girard's research is that violence is primarily a phenomenon of borrowed desire. The rivalrous effects of imitative desire are noticeable throughout a variety of mythic and modern literatures, but most interestingly in the Judeo-Christian narratives that constitute the Bible. According to Girard and Bailie, biblical narratives point to a way to not only notice mechanisms of violence (e.g., the scapegoat), but to avoid the "redemptive" value of justifying violence (creating victims) as a solution to problems of social order, control, and cultural meaning.

The material and psychosocial variables that imitative desire can push and pull upon are not always subject to the negative aspects of imitative desire, such as creating victims or scapegoats for the sake of social peace. Bailie's research, following Girard, suggests that there is a propitious alternative discoverable in and through a mimesis rooted not in violence but in love. Though still other-centered in terms of desire, love in its propitious sense is a form of imitative interaction that promotes not only deep affection, but also the social dimension of cooperation (in contrast to competition). Inter-subjectively, love might best be defined as a form of reciprocity or mutual giving but also receiving. Just as violence is highly mimetic because of the way passions are fueled by imitative desire, so too is love highly mimetic and, in a social sense, "contagious." Both modes of practice, however, depend greatly upon attraction, upon models and mediators. Like violence, love (again, defined as self-giving to others) is also an inter-subjective exchange that is socially transformative. The search for a "common union" or equally,

5

the search for a "unity of the commons" is something compelling. Both types of searching constitute the matrix of shared life, traditions and customs, and the general security and wellbeing of Chamula communities. In my view, it denotes both a material and psychosocial expression of love that shapes the identity of members in a variety of ways. If love is the opposite of violence or violation, as Bailie suggests, then it is a mode of being and acting that exposes negative or detrimental imitations that can lead to justifications for violence.

Applied to the situations of Chamula, community life would be arguably more difficult without some measure of love. It seems to require some form of self-giving that fosters a non-destructive or propitious mimesis for mediating peoples' desires and values. It would be inaccurate to suggest that all imitations are bad or that imitative desire among the Chamula only leads to violence. Love, if imitated, offers an alternative sphere of social interaction. And whether avoiding conflict or reconciling after engaging in conflict or violent exchange, love (however culturally expressed), depends on models who can see and turn away from the trap of competitive appropriations and the many ways violent reciprocity emerges from envy, jealousy, resentment, and other similar aspects of rivalry.

Throughout the dissertation, I try to play with the idea of a single factor pushing other elements in the generation of conflicts. My data suggest that an independent variable hypothesis is worth working and that the cases under consideration relate well to the primary notion of mimetic or imitative desire (Girard 1965). Imitative desire pushes all other factors in the production of social discordance. It happens as people in a group or community become so familiar or alike over time, they cohere by copying one another's preferences (desires). If this is the case, then it is important for investigators to take a closer look and search for evidence.

Analytical Induction

I refer to my heuristic approach to conflict and identity issues among the Chamula as analytical induction. This approach means exploring at some length a few general theoretical concepts, but doing so from the systematic examination of similarities between various social phenomena or cases. That said, I do not mean to suggest that I am searching for "universals" in social life and thus claim for the Chamula Tzotzil (or any other people or group) some invariant, complete, or positivistic aspects about conflict relations between human beings. One cannot merely deduce social reality since it is far too complex, dynamic, and inchoate. Obtaining irrefutable facts were beyond the purview of this delimited ethnographic project. Moreover, clarity was seldom if ever available from what informants felt they could share or divulge. In any case, throughout the dissertation I do my best to correlate impressions from available data that confirm or in some way modify knowledge about what seems to generate social conflicts.

A Binocular View: Two Theoretical Considerations

In order to discuss more fully data from my ethnographic observations, I have opted to relate concepts from the following two theoretical frameworks: 1) Mimetic theory and 2) Practice theory. When using these theories together in a bi-focal or binocular manner to observe the complexity of social conflict phenomena, they provide a meaningful aperture for seeing, and hopefully a better way to *understand* conflict interactions. The aim is to show how practice and imitation (mimesis) are key aspects of the production of social conflict and identity. Put more simply, and as Yin (2003) succinctly describes the task for inductive analysis, I offer a number of case studies to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when and where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not obvious.[1] The theories of practice and mimesis are explored in more detail in chapter 2.

Triangular Desire

Mimetic or imitative desire manifests itself in at least two ways, as either acquisitive or as appropriative copying. Briefly summarized here, Girard sees a fundamental process that is highly problematic for human social relations, namely what involves a triangular dynamic. According to Girard's hypothesis regarding mimesis, key influential relations occur between (1) a Model or Mediator and (2) a Subject or Agent who imitates the model, and 3) the "Object of desire"--what the mediator finds valuable, of interest, and thus "desirous."

It is this copying or imitation that Girard claims draws actors (as model and subject) into competitive interaction and more dangerously, into eventual rivalry (in which case the "model/mediator" becomes an obstacle regarding the "thing" or object of desire). Girard's theory of triangular or rivalrous desire provides a way to understand the possible origins of social conflict or how actors and groups generate their divisions in the first place.

Mimesis and Interdividuality

By extension, the triangular dynamic that characterizes imitative desire can proliferate. Because imitating the desires of others is a contagious interaction, it can spread in viral fashion as it attracts scores of actors living in the same setting. Imitative desire is a way to understand group violence and volatile crowds or mobs (Horowitz 2001). Girard's abstract notion of triangular desire, or the relation he coins with the descriptive term *interdividual*, takes account of how conflict and violence involve dynamics that go beyond mere individual agency. Individual choices alone, however rational, do not explain violence very well, he claims. For Girard, the "autonomous individual" is a romantic myth about human agency left over from the Enlightenment era. Triangular desire becomes a problem only when imitators imitate the desires of others,

that is, steal somebody else's "brand" or purloin another's preferred practice. While observers might typically think of imitation as something positive or complementary, most social conflicts appear to arise not from imitation per se but as much or more because of what gets imitated and why: desire.

A Modified Theory of Practice

In addition to mimetic or triangular desire, chapter 2 also develops the other lens of my binocular perspective for interpreting conflict dynamics. This is the theoretical understanding of "practice" – a view that I mostly derive from Sherry Ortner (2006). Ortner invites researchers to take a second look at Practice Theory originally formulated by Bourdieu (1977), and other thinkers (e.g., Giddens 1979; Sewell 1992). I relate aspects of mimetic theory and practice theory to thus argue that imitative desire operates as a form of practice. This binocular perspective allows me to discuss how imitative practice constitutes actions such as the play of power ("serious games" as Ortner call this phenomenon). The play or interactively produced representations of power are very much a multiplex form of agency (something for which Girard would likely prefer an alternative term, *interdividuality*). This kind of interactive agency is thus not merely the give and take of social structure and personal praxis as Bourdieu and others seem to imagine it. This "playing" or inter-subjective exchange (mimesis/imitation of desire) is itself a form of practice, or what Bourdieu might describe as *habitus* (disposition within an established social sphere or "cultural" world). Defined thus, I see imitative desire as a form of social practice or practices. Moreover, these practices (of imitative desire) become observable factors about agency that occur in (and produce) conflict relations. The object of study is what people do as they follow the desire(s) of models who mediate a certain measure of socially significant value (interests).

9

Framing the Analysis: Chapters 1 and 2

In Chapter 1, I introduce some key elements from René Girard's theory of mimetic or imitative desire as well as related elements from Bourdieu's theory of practice, as interpreted and modified by Sherry Ortner. In Chapter Two, I review a basic array of pertinent literature on the anthropology of conflict and violence. These theories and other related materials form the basis of my own assertion that issues of identity formation, imitative desire, and practice are all inter-related when it comes to understanding how conflicts, especially violent or extreme forms, begin in the first place. Girard's basic working assumption or hypothesis is that when conjoined, both imitation and desire operate as a powerful kind of motivational force in human social interaction. Drawing upon my recent experiences among the Chamula Tzotzil, I examine how Girard's views on imitative desire might be explored as a type of independent variable, one that affects multiple factors involved in conflict situations, whether material or Psychosocial variables. Thus, the bi-focal interpretive tool of imitative desire as a form practice (agency) is a way to understand conflict among actors who, through imitative interactions, produce or reproduce and are thus in turn produced by certain structural realities (e.g., identity/ethnicity). These structural realities can be material but also immaterial, as in psychosocial perceptions of value.

Chapter 1 concludes by focusing on the primary role of mimetic desire in the trichotomous interpretive scheme. This theory is meant to complement other ways of seeing and understanding conflict and violence. As a way of seeing social reality, it helps to frame perceptions about how structure and agency (practice) develop in the first place, change historically, and project in number of possible futures. Additionally, it allows us to take notice of the fact that as people imitate the desire(s) of their friends or heroes, their lovers or mentors, and so forth, the social dynamic they generate among themselves

plays an influential role in fomenting at least certain types of conflict. Their mutual relations as agents/actors begin to compete or rival one another over the things/objectives each person desires. This theoretical scenario seems especially pertinent to understanding the dynamic of competing aspects of copying. Rivals, for instance, enter into increasingly intense forms of reciprocal relations that can sometimes lead to certain vehement expressions of appropriation or acquisition via violent attempts to differentiate.

Chapter 2 situates Girard's theory of mimetic desire as one of many ways to understand the causes of social conflict. I examine theoretical features of mimetic desire within the context of other interpretive theories in anthropology that attempt to explain possible causes of conflict and violence. By thinking of mimetic desire as a form of practice or praxis, however, I am able to emphasize how various cross-cultural meanings for conflict and violence bring about the construction of social identity. It is worth noting here that "violence," like the notions of "culture" or "identity" in anthropology, is still very much a tricky idea, that is, not always precise. It is unstable for describing those extreme forms of conflict we call violence. For this study, I generally define violent conflict as what happens when people join forces aimed primarily at creating victims.[2]

Introducing the Tzotzil Chamula: Chapter 3

Because my focus is the interactive dynamics of imitation, desire, and practice, I have chosen to represent "the Tzotzil" (and thus the Chamula) in terms of a few interesting individual people. I take a careful look at some of their practices yet in doing so, I have decided purposively to avoid presenting this ethnic group in terms of descriptive categories typically used by anthropologists (e.g., marriage and kinship, forms of social organization, language and cultural characteristics). This descriptive information can now be readily obtained elsewhere in older monographs as well as in newer compilations about the 'peoples of Chiapas' and so forth).[3]

My aim in Chapter 3 is to put forth features of the Tzotzil that might not easily be found in the available literature that is so often produced or sponsored by state or federal government agencies for the sake of "curiosity" and tourism (see Van den Berghe 1994). As case studies I present three examples of Tzotzil women, two with law degrees and one woman's vocation as a "new age style" Maya priestess or ritual practitioner. In addition, Chapter 3 provides descriptive material about some recent social phenomena that are attractive to many indigenous youth. One case is an older Tzotzil university student; another case briefly describes the attempt on the part some youth to find innovative ways to relate their historical ethnic heritage while at the same time trying to remain relevant to their peers (e.g., Tzotzil rock and roll groups). These examples emphasize how I have chosen to observe the issue of identity in terms of formation or development–or what I would prefer to call "worldmaking." The focus is upon how identifications take place over time through the interactions that derive from the representational power of mimetic or imitative desire.

Chapter 3 considers the historical dimension of mimesis in the Tzotzil worldmaking sphere of action (practice). This theme is presented in terms of both inter- and intra-ethnic instances of known historical conflicts. By examining various so-called indigenous uprisings or rebellions involving the Chamula, I interpret what I perceive as mimetic dynamics (acquisitive and appropriative forms of imitation) at work on a large scale and try to interpret the symbolic values at play.

Case Studies in Chamula Violence: Chapters 4 through 6

These chapters examine several features of how mimetic desire may explain certain instances of identity formation related to difficult confrontations and inter-barrio conflict (intra-ethnic conflict) within the same community. I discuss what seems to me to be an important shared ideal for the Chamula Tzotzil of La Candelaria: the desire for a

"common unity." Together, these chapters ask what does this desire, wish, hope, vision, or expectation for a shared sense of unity look like as practice? Is the practice something embodied, manifest in what acting subjects take for granted in their everyday affairs? With this question I probe the extent to which competing economic activity in la Candelaria contradicts this ideal or shared goal. I try to underscore a distinction between the ideal of a "common unity" on the one hand and expectations and values surrounding the public "commons" on the other (what constitutes the ejido common lands divided up into individual care-taking parcels).

Each chapter looks at several conflicts where rivalry and resentment are at play among familiars. Of these, the two largest conflicts are (1) an intra-community struggle between barrios regarding the political implications of "propriety identities" that revolve around images of Saints; and (2) a fight among two groups of ejido members (a minority and majority) to control the heart of community decision making (and power) at the constituent assembly.

Chapter 5 analyzes a conflict between two competing but distinct Chamula communities, La Candelaria and Corazón de María. The conflict unfolds between two "land-hungry" groups of Chamula, in what is a vehement struggle that results in a brief moment of violence. Many of the Chamula involved are relatives or friends/neighbors who know each other well. Looking at this particular moment of strife, I consider how even though land was originally the main "object of desire" the struggle for land itself eventually fades in importance. Apparently, it ceases to be the main issue because mutual rivalry causes each group to shift focus from the particular object in question (e.g., land) to the rival group that suddenly seems so similar. It is interesting to see how each group redoubles their determination in order to spite their the similar desire of their rival, sometimes to the point of violence. One can ask whether it might not have been much

easier to enter into a dialogue and thus find ways of sharing a common claim. Such a move might well have constituted a new ejido composed of members from both groups. As it turns out, however, only one group prevailed, despite a profound similarity of interests (desires).

Chapter 6 looks at another particular fight, this time over access to water. It examines a more complex and long-term conflict that unfolded while I was in the field doing research. Unlike the previous chapter where access to land is the key challenge, this chapter looks at a rivalry that goes beyond mere re-organization of shared access to water (which all parties had been doing for some time, but without conflict). Issues of growing population and resource scarcity notwithstanding, the key focus in this conflict narrative is not on the lack of a particular resource but on the abundance of identity–a sense of resemblance that seems to characterize each group in contention but for some reason denied instead of recognized (for the sake of cooperation). As the conflict cycle of competing interests escalates from benign similarity or alikeness into rivalrous attempts at distinction or differentiation, the original object of desire (access to water) melts into the background. Although the challenge of access to the particular water source in question will always be there, it is not really the most important issue that the Chamula of these communities face. The major issue facing actors, who belong to specific communities, is that the "models" or "mediators" represent two highly similar campesino organizations and thus exacerbate the mode of contention. I try to illustrate how local, mostly indigenous leaders are competing for the right to mediate and "solve" conflicts, obviating how their respective organizations have become intense rivals despite having once been members of one civil organization. Once split, each group soon mirrored the others' public claims that their unique advocacy organization was the only one that could best represent and defend the social, political and economic needs of members and

sympathizers. Desire was particularly acute around issues of access to market or freedom of religious expression in Chamula communities. Each group imitated their rival in trying to stand out as the better lobby group, labor union, human rights office, and so forth.

Interestingly, the more each group tried to distinguish itself from its rival, the less dissimilar and more alike they became. Thus not only did each group come to resemble each other in their goals but even more so in behaviors and strategies that constituted their "world" or sphere of practice.

Concluding Remarks and Epilogue: Chapter 7

Finally, Chapter 7 offers a brief conclusion, revisiting the major themes of mimetic desire, identity formation, and practice. It examines how each aspect unfolds and interacts in the multifarious social contexts of community-level conflicts among several Tzotzil Chamula groups. I also present the need for further research among the Chamula (or other groups with similar circumstances). From a probing or heuristic perspective my claims about imitative desire in the life of Tzotzil men and women are limited in terms of what we can infer about influence between social identity formations and the development of conflict. Exactness notwithstanding, I conclude from my field data that imitations of other people's desires, preferences, and interests can sometimes be dangerous. For many Chamula the interplay of both imitation and desire is prone to conflict as interactions produce and are produced by competing desires.

While mimetic desire offers some theoretical possibilities for understanding dynamics that generate human strife, so intricate a conceptualization of social relations does not necessarily have to replace other viable ways of explaining what produces social conflict. If anything, mimetic theory serves to complement enduring explanations, extending them by considering "objects of desire" (material and/or Psychosocial factors) that imitative desire influences as competing "interests" among rivals.

15

Field Methods Informing this Research

Conceived as a heuristic investigation, this project is based upon qualitative methods of ethnography and analytic induction. Its results are thus distinct from what a controlled (scientific) inquiry might produce based upon logical deductions. Drawing upon some 26 informants with whom I conducted semi-structured interviews (a number of whom were re-interviewed several times), my empirical fieldwork findings are subjectively construed. The results are insightful but understandably tentative and in some aspects inconclusive with regard to the measurable extent of mimesis (imitative desire) operating as an influential independent variable. Although data from the narratives of informants is open-ended and ambiguous, it is enough to entertain further inquiry. As the reader will see, the stories I tell are part of the messy business of anthropological knowledge production, based as they are upon interviews, observations, and some archival research. Field methods for the study of human practice phenomena are not always exact, and in any case require a kind of "after the fact" or retrospective and reflexive analysis of information.

Although people I depict in this research are individuals and families that I knew prior to the investigation, there are many others I came to know while living and working in or near their communities. For the informants I interviewed (sometimes repeatedly), and the several community assemblies I attended (and recorded), an important aspect was establishing a good level of rapport and confidence. The research sites were all places I was already familiar with from my previous time in highland Chiapas doing pastoral work. In those days (1995-1997; 1999-2002), I would arrive every two months on a scheduled basis or when especially invited for a major feast day (of a patron Saint) to offer the Eucharist (Mass) or other Sacraments.

16

My previous years of pastoral work helped me to locate potential informants without losing much time searching for where I might live and work. More difficult was how I would ask about the sensitive topic of intra-ethnic strife, not to mention its implications. Being a priest was an unavoidable "social fact" of my public identity. Being the local priest quickly formed part of my active participation when I became a community resident (given that the majority of community members were more or less related to a Catholic identity). Yet, I knew that my fieldwork depended upon a creative balancing of both my academic enterprise and a delimited expression of pastoral prerogatives. I decided to live more as the anthropologist than as the presbyter in order to collect enough data.

Selecting Region and Research Sites

Two overarching concerns delimited my study region. The first and most important issue was sensitivity. My hope was that prior experience with a number of Chamula communities would open up an opportunity for the kind of study I wanted to realize, especially when it came to the very serious topic of internal conflicts and incidents of violence. Because research about conflict and violence was potentially awkward and even a contentious topic, I wanted to find communities where I already knew some people. My hope was that a certain level of friendship or familiarity would help initiate an interview process (using, for example, the ethnographic technique of "snowballing" where contact with one person leads to other new contacts).

The second issue was geographic proximity. I approached four Tzotzil Chamula communities that were close to each other and where I knew people from prior years. Each was an ejido (a delimited area of shared land tenure) which meant that each community would have its mojones or "boundaries" clearly defined and an established tradition of internal governance that informed their distinctive sense of identity (even

though they were very much alike culturally and socially). My working assumption was

that due to socio-cultural similarities rather than differences residents were more likely to

have stories related to my research questions on intra-ethnic conflict. Although a history

of violent conflict has long been a major issue for many Chamula living in the

neighboring municipality of San Juan Chamula, I decided such a region fraught with

constant turmoil and already paranoid about strange "others" would not be the best place

for me to conduct ethnographic research. The following section explains this decision.

Figure 1.1. Field Study Area upper eastern valley communities of San Cristóbal de Las
Casas: La Candelaria, San Antonio de Las Rosas, Nuevo (Ach') Corral Chen, Corazón de
Maria. Additional sites related by conflict: (to the North) San Juan Chamula, Taza de
Agua, El Pinar; and related valley communities (East): El Escalon, La Sierra, and El
Ciprés (a barrio of La Candelaria).

Selecting a Home Base

My original fieldwork plan was to reside in one community and then move to others to observe comparative differences, but I eventually saw the impracticality of this plan. By staying in one place, I was able to make life easier for local residents of all the communities whenever informants sought to find me for scheduled interviews or other matters. Living in one particular community, however, meant that if I was going to benefit from the convenience then I would have to participate as an "adopted member." Having obtained permission from local authorities, I finally took up residence in the largest of the four ejidos, La Candelaria, a community composed of eight barrios. The neighboring communities of San Antonio, Ach' (New) Corral Ch'en, and Corazón de María were much smaller and each had experienced some measure of conflict that involved other Chamula from the community of La Candelaria (Figure 1.1).

La Candelaria represented a smart alternative to San Juan Chamula municipality or what would have been a more obvious site for studying Chamula interactions involving strife, including religious motivations for violence (Appendix B). However, La Candelaria proved to be more than adequate as a primary field site. Along with its neighboring communities, the Chamula I interviewed were culturally and socially similar (if not in fact the same) as members of the neighboring municipality, San Juan Chamula.

La Candelaria, like San Juan Chamula, honors traditional life-ways. It was once a part of eastern Chamula territory until breaking off to join the municipality of San Cristóbal de Las Casas (Chapter 3). The principal reason for the switch was two-fold: more religious freedom and more economic freedom, all of which meant escaping the grip of political bosses then wielding power in San Juan Chamula (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Central Plaza, San Juan Chamula. This bronze statue represents a non-specific traditional authority figure. He faces the market plaza and Church courtyard, holding a cane and wearing a ribbon hat of office. The image was a joint gift from the Federal and State Government and suggests a mimesis (representation, appropriation) of power relations: note the PRI campaign propaganda in the background. Photo by author (1995).

As a field site, La Candelaria was actually a better option for a more worry-free ethnographic investigation than San Juan Chamula. And what was true of La Candelaria was true also of the communities nearby that offered similar ethnographic circumstances. Even though many members in La Candelaria strongly identified with traditional Catholicism using syncretistic expressions, a large number of other members practiced a Vatican II style Catholic Christianity in coordination with the local diocese. Unlike Chamula municipality, in La Candelaria there was little to no religious persecution of the Vatican II Catholics. And in recent years, prior to my fieldwork project, even Protestant groups (or Protestant-looking groups like the Adventists) were no longer subject to expulsion from La Candelaria, though there was considerable pressure upon them to pay "cooperations" (fiesta taxes).

Residing in La Candelaria allowed me to quickly establish myself in terms of rapport and trust. It also provided me the opportunity to set up a small field office in the

tiny basement room where I lived with my host family. At their invitation I was able to stay relatively "rent-free" in the house of my compadres, Sebastián and Xunca, known leaders in the community. The benefit of his friendship afforded me access to many of their acquaintances, friends, and relatives. Sebastián and his family of three daughters and two sons had a large two level home located in one of the more densely populated barrios of La Candelaria. Although my stay was free of charge this did not preclude being called upon sometimes to cooperate in helping to solve a sudden economic necessity.

In La Candelaria it was expected that a single man such as myself would live within a family and thus not alone. By this logic, it made sense for the Catholic priest to live in the house of one of the higher-ranking church ministers since Sebastián was one of four *jtuneletik* (deacons) serving the community. For the Chamula, a mature person is a married person. Married life means not only responsibility for one's family, but also to take on roles at the level of community. Once married, a young man soon begins his civil "cargo" service to the community as a *mayol* (constable), serving daily without pay the needs of other cargo holders of higher rank for at least a year. A similar structure exists in cargos of Church service, where one might begin as an assistant catechist, or as an assistant sacristan who cares for church objects and spaces. Being the priest in residence was my way of serving a cargo. But for the Catholic community in La Candelaria (a minority group) my services meant a new way of doing things, such that celebrating the Eucharist and the Word of God in the large church in the central barrio would happen almost every Sunday and on special occasions (instead of every few months).

Having a safe place to live and work was important because I could store interview materials and thus comply with the expectations of human subjects research at ASU that no individual or group would ever be in danger because of identifiable references. Avoiding San Juan Chamula was certainly justifiable, given how it was a

research area already over researched by anthropologists (cf. Rus 2004b; Wasserstrom 1983:1). By comparison, there was almost no documented research on conflict for indigenous communities located outside of Chamula municipality that dotted the urban-rural landscape of San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

My decision to maintain a single, central base allowed me to establish rapport and trust with local authorities, a circumstance that ultimately allowed me to wander their barrios for interviews, collect basic demographics, and even to develop at least a test version of bi-lingual structured survey-questionnaire (in Tzotzil and Spanish). In time, I was able to extend my inquiries into the nearby communities. The one exception to ease of access was Corazón de María community. This was a difficult district to work due to a host of factors, including the fact that I was a Catholic priest living in La Candelaria (a community with whom there was a significant history of tensions). It was also problematic given how most of the residents in Corazón de María were ex-Catholics who belonged to one or other style of evangelical church group. Another factor limiting access to this particular community was the local military/commercial airport located as part of "Corazón de María" territory where the local state and city governments had future plans for "development" projects. These projects would effectively expand the urban aspects of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Asking questions of the residents was prone to suspicions. After presenting myself through a translator, I did at least receive permission to visit homes and interview anyone willing to share their story.

Selection of Case Studies

After identifying communities for the study, my next concern was to find an actual conflict. I began looking for one or more situations I could document through observations and interviews. I knew about some past conflicts, especially within the

22

neighboring municipality of San Juan Chamula but as I mentioned earlier, access there was too difficult and dangerous. However, I did not have to worry for very long.

Whether by divine providence or dumb luck, a hot issue soon emerged that involved numerous Chamula communities in my study area. Through the cooperation of my host family, I learned about a gathering storm regarding blocked access to a traditional water source. At the risk of sounding perverse, I must admit that I felt a certain glee that a substantial conflict had fallen into my ethnographic lap, so to speak.

Because this was an unexpected opportunity, it was not immediately clear to me just how I should go about following persons or events. It is one thing to consider collecting documents or testimonies about past historical events and quite another to consider a live conflict as it happens. As events unfolded, I tried to go as often as possible to find out what I could, despite my obvious features as an outsider. This meant trying to be quietly present in places where Chamula would gather to discuss a range of possible responses, usually at special convocations or assemblies meant for all affected parties. If it had not been for staying in one place, in the home of my compadres, I would not have discovered when and where certain meetings were to occur. The ethnographic game was on. Over the course of my fieldwork I was thus able to document most of the pertinent details on who, what, when, and where for this inter-community conflict, a situation I describe at length in chapter 6.

Working with Batz'i K'op Tzotzil (Chamula Dialect)

My skills in Tzotzil were elementary after leaving pastoral work in 2002. During the summer of 2004, I went back for six weeks to study more Tzotzil along side other foreign students in a Zapatista "Caracol." This term literally means "snail" or "shell" though it is a symbol of rebel "good government" in semiotic contrast to the official state or "mal gobierno" (the bad or unjust government). My school was near San Andrés

23

Sacam Ch'en de Los Pobres (Larrainzer) where Zapatista rebels young and old teach

themselves self-government "kun kun" (little by little) while also developing skills for

teaching primary school, trades, and commerce for their respective communities. I tried

to improve my Tzotzil again four years later with a tutor in La Candelaria who also

became a fieldwork collaborator. Despite many efforts, it was clear to me that interviews

would render better results in Spanish, if I were to ever discuss delicate matters about

local conflicts. I recruited and trained several Chamula assistants who helped me

interview some 56 informants (Figure 1.3).[4]

Figure 1.3. Collaboration: Chamula Tzotzil Survey Team and Transcribers. Training workshop, Dec. 31, 2009: (L-R): Miguel Rolland, Juan Manuel Vazquez de La Torre, Suyul, Manuel Hernández Hernández, and Sebastián "Chico" Mendez.

Figure 1.4. Transcriptions Office. Left: 2, Romana Gómez, a Tzotzil Chamula from La Candelaria and an Economics major at UACH in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, working transcriptions at field office located at the Church of Our Lady of Charity (caridad). Right: Mariano Ruíz Gómez, originally from San Juan Chamula, is a transcriber and Language and Culture major at Inter-cultural University in San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

My role as a participant observer was often one of having to "go with the flow" as I was unable to control events and outcomes. As a result, it was seldom possible to produce interviews according to a fixed or pre-determined schedule. Even so, the experiences I have recorded produced more data than I can analyze here. At any rate, my fieldwork was fully participatory. Although I never ceased to be a church representative, my presence was most especially that of the ethnographer, a guest taking his time to do careful field work in several Chamula communities. Many aspects of the narratives in the chapters to follow demonstrate the significance of my presence in the community.

Ethnographic Writing Today: A Messy Business

Throughout the description and analysis of Chamula experiences with conflict, I try to bear in mind a salient observation from Simon Harrison (2006:10) who points out how aspects of social identity seem especially puzzling where

> Identities ostensibly 'different' from one another are often remarkably similar. Dissimilarities are often overdrawn by social actors themselves, and in many cases these assertions of difference seem to conceal or deny very real commonalities.

I bear in mind another concern about social identity and that is the so-called "post-modern" challenge for ethnographic representation. This refers to a critique that revolves around how to provide a "holistic sense" about any group identity (e.g., the Tzotzil Chamula) but without having to necessarily evoke a delimited sense of totality. The myth of wholeness or the search for ways to describe discrete "units of culture" was once a pervasive drive for many ethnographers prior to the 1970s. For the Chamula this meant that anthropologists did their best to capture and then put neatly in a box the complex and diverse social reality of a people. This concern remains today. Inferences of totality do not just over-define but in the case of the Chamula can too easily "fix" (in time and space) what in motion is actually a vibrant, creative, and constantly changing people.

I try to avoid defining the Chamula and their life ways as though somehow permanent or as some sort of "bounded whole." Such a depiction would be presenting an inaccurate text or false ascription, even though only a few decades ago such representations would have been unproblematic for many ethnographers. Therefore, to avoid the trap of producing "totalizing" inscriptions about the Chamula, this dissertation represents my attempt to describe and interpret Chamula interactions, events, and establishments. However, it should be clearly stated at the outset that the effort has been a truly messy business (cf. Marcus 1998:187-189). Writing up anthropological data from an *emic* (subjective) rather than *etic* (objective) perspective was a more muddled task than what I anticipated or imagined. A big part of the mess comes when trying to make sense of "sense-makers." Obtaining data on how Chamula themselves see their social and cultural reality is an inexact science.

Since the 1980s, the so-called "post-modern critique" of anthropological knowledge production has debunked ethnography as a discipline along with its key concept of "culture" (e.g., Abu-Lughod, 1991). Post-modernism has left an influential

26

mark upon descriptive practices of ethnographic representation, even though this kind of criticism is sometimes dismissed as mere intellectual playing with words. It is also debunked by some as politically correct posturing (or more harshly, a-historical), and rejected because it unnecessarily de-legitimates the art of ethnography itself (as a meaningful mode of inquiry and writing). As an intellectual perspective, however, post-modern views still critically challenge anthropologists for the ways in which they interpret the life-ways of particular groups of people.

I have therefore elected to describe the Chamula in a way that takes into account my own presence as observer, researcher, and "participant observer" interacting in their lives. This qualitative approach to description is helpful for considering inter-subjective aspects of conflict and violence, as well as seeing conflict as a both a production and reproduction process. The results of this approach are sometimes untidy or messy because of the way I describe (or inscribe) the relations of objects and subjects in the Chamula context, the "stuff" that traditionally constitutes ethnographic data. Since all politics (and social interactions) are proverbially local, it is possible to see that even the rural life-ways of Chamula communities--however seemingly removed from mainstream perceptions of urbanity--have many global dimensions. I look at this more in chapter 3. In any case, whether rural or urban, local or global, Chamula seem to enjoy a "flow" of influences inside and outside their community contexts. This is evident from a number of examples, such as the impact of the local Coca-Cola Company upon Chamula life (Ciepac 2006; Nash 2007); or when foreign tourists flow through Chamula "ethnoscapes" looking for an exotic past or future. Tourists are likely to return home loaded with perceptions that confirm certain presuppositions people may hold about Mexico's "Indians"–prejudices primarily framed by the Mexican state and other actors.

A "holistic" mode of description, while once important in early ethnographic writings about the Chamula and other groups, portrayed functionalist accounts of social life (cf. Albores 1978) that tended to avoid contradiction or neutralize the reality of conflict in their ethnographic descriptions. In contrast, the importance of producing "messy texts" as Marcus argues (1998:1988-89), is that the territory that defines the object of study is mapped by an ethnographer who is within rather than outside the landscape. He is moving and acting within it rather than being drawn in from a transcendent, detached point." Marcus insists, furthermore (1998:189) that "messy texts are messy because they insist on their own open-endedness, incompleteness, and uncertainty about how to draw a text/analysis to a close."

Looking for "unexpected connections"

Marcus (1998:189) further notes that the challenge for ethnography today is the "struggle to produce unexpected connections." Within the given formats and practices of analytic writing for today's ethnographers, the primary challenge is not just about making new descriptions of old realities but to critically displace sets of representations that no longer seem to account for the worlds observers once thought they knew, or at least could name. In keeping with Marcus's critique of what today constitutes "the art of ethnography," I use René Girard's post-structuralist theory of mimetic or imitative desire to interpret my findings. It is my belief that this theoretical frame, when coupled with other notions about identity and practice, can render "unexpected connections." The idea of finding surprising aspects about what generates conflict in the first place, however, may mean having to render "new descriptions of old realities" (Marcus 1998:189; but compare with Lewis 1998).

Consequently, in the identity material discussed in chapter 3, my hope is to do justice to how Chamula people see themselves today and perhaps even re-interpret older

descriptions of social and cultural practices. The data evince what seems to constitute key

desires among the Chamula (and what these desires themselves appear to constitute). I

look closely at how certain kinds of pursuits differentiate the ways some Chamula

imagine their individual and common efforts, hopes, and dreams, including the ways they

configure a sense of history.

Like most groups throughout Mesoamerica, the Chamula produce their past(s)

mimetically, that is, using narratives that appropriate and thus resemble features from

other people's narratives (and practices). Perhaps the Dominicans and the Chamula were

often mutually reinforcing common interests while at the same time competing over

them. Today, foreign anthropologists have begun to take a step back as increasingly

native anthropologists seek to publish about their own impressions and interpretations

regarding local and global realities. Each researcher acclaims and celebrates with a

certain amount of panache a myriad of events or circumstances that give shape to what

are supposedly unique world-views and values.

Although my intention is to provide descriptions that are as "thick" as I can

configure them, each chapter attempts what Geertz (1973:28) once described as drawing

"large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad

assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them

exactly with complex specifics." At the same time, the dissertation reflects another basic

truism about ethnography that Geertz (1973:29) once admitted:

> Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the
> more deeply it goes the less complete it is. It is a strange science whose
> most telling assertions are its most tremulously based, in which to get
> somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion, both
> your own and that of others, that you are not quite getting it right.
> However, before obtaining a robust understanding of every aspect that

constitutes experiences of intra-ethnic conflict and its multiple ramifications, an

interpretive framework is helpful. The ancient philosophers once called such an

intellectual apparatus *theoría* –what literally means "a way to see" reality. In the next chapter, I prepare an interpretive lens for the reader, based upon an overview of theoretical studies on the various causes of social conflict and a discussion of some ethnographies that take a critical look at the meaning of violent conflict within and between indigenous communities.[5]

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER 1

1 This insightful point about "case studies" originally comes from Yin (2003), cited in a presentation by Dr Heather Skipworth, a Research Fellow at Supply Chain Research Centre, (.ppt presentation no. 5, Cranfield University School of Management).

2 Litke (1992) highlights an etymological definition of violence, meaning 'to carry force towards something or someone' but when defined more narrowly as violating persons, has a greater force of social, cultural, and thus philosophical meaning. See also Bowman 2001: 25-28 on how the term 'violence' relays the sense of an assault of one entity upon the integrity of another.

3 For example, Collier 1975; Gossen 1999a; Laughlin 1964, 1993; Rosenbaum 1996; Vogt 1996)

4 Originally, I recruit assistants to help me construct a questionnairre-survey instrument, based upon some standard approaches reflected in Bradburn et al. (2004), Buckingham and Saunders (2007), and Fowler (2009). We produced a pilot study based on some 30 interviews. Time did not allow for full employment or true random sampling of the several populations (4) chose for comparison.

5 In contrast to Sandstrom (1991), who uses the term Indian in his ethnographic descriptions of Aztec (nahau) communities in Veracruz, Mexico, I deliberately choose the term "indigenous." It is a more respectful expression of ethnic identification which today has become common parlance among the Tzotzil Chamula. To use the English term "Indian" is too close to the offensive notion of *Indio*(s) in Spanish, connoting a lack of dignity in today's political discourse in Mexico. The very notion of "Indigenism" or "Indigenous identity" is a discourse of recent vintage. As Niezen (2003:xi) sees it: "The study of Indigenous identity is, in a sense, an ideal way to approach the formation of new categories of thought, social formation, and the human sense of self—ideal because the term itself is relatively new, actively used for only the past few decades, yet in invokes people's sense of permanence and their ability to survive and stay close to their cultures and homelands despite almost insurmountable odds."

> The agency of projects is not necessarily about domination and resistance.
> It is about people having desires that grow out of their own structures of life, including
> very centrally their own structures of inequality;
> it is in short about people playing, or trying to play, their own serious games even as
> more powerful parties seek to devalue and even destroy them.
> -- Sherry Ortner (2006:147)

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE CAUSES OF CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Working definitions serve a heuristic purpose to form hypotheses and theoretical frames for comparison. It is notable how "violence" violence seems ambiguous and resistant to definition (although usually defined since Riches 1986 as physical force rendering harm). However defined, the extreme form of conflict that is violence resembles a key aspect of culture–that is to say, it can mean different things in different contexts, varying within and between groups and communities (Litke 1992). In this chapter, I explore various concepts and definitions of conflict and violence. I present various theoretical views that try to explain some of the many complex aspects that constitute social conflicts, including violent ones. "Identity," a concept that includes the notion of ethnicity, comprises one such aspect. At the level of community, incidents of ethnic strife are often attributable to internal or external perceptions of incompatibility or ostensible extant differences and similar issues. While these perceptions and their consequent ramifications are frequently associated with inter-ethnic conflicts (Whites vs. Blacks, Indians and non-Indians), less understood are the causes of intra-ethnic conflict. Intra-ethnic realities can suggest social situations of sameness or similarity more than differences or dissimilarities.

Now, when it comes to understanding historical and current situations of social strife, a number of scholarly reports have tried to explain the principal causes or origins of conflict in a number of different ways, ranging from descriptions of social function to

the poetics of symbolic meanings. As with other groups, organizations, and communities throughout modern Mesoamerica, ethnographic studies of some Chamula communities have tended to focus on differences related to religious beliefs or economic inequality as prime causes of internal strife among members. While these reports provide helpful clues about social discord as an inter-ethnic phenomenon (as often occurs in Chiapas, for example, between Indians and non-Indian ladinos), what characterizes intra-ethnic conflict is not always so explicit. For me however, the real question is this: what gives rise to any conflict interactions in the first place?[1] I contend that most conflicts arise to a social and community level because of dynamics related to three inter-related factors of subjectivity: imitation, identity, and practices established over time.

The chapter focuses on setting a theoretical framework for analysis of intra-ethnic discord and how it appears to develop initially from situations of imitative desire. To highlight the problem, I focus on why conflict appears among agents who have more commonalities than differences. Two general goals structure the chapter. The first is to review pertinent literature from the anthropology of conflict and violence and thus consider theories that try to understand social discord in terms of cross-cultural categories. I complement this review with other scholarly materials regarding related cultural issues of identity formation (e.g., Jenkins 2008; Lindholm 2001; Romanucci-Ross and De Vos 1995).

A second goal is to present a unique interpretive framework for understanding how social conflicts generally arise in the first place. To this end, I present a multifaceted perspective on how human desire operates as a highly influential factor in the initial generation of discord among acting subjects who interact with each other in a familiar setting (e.g., living as members of the same community). To assist in the analysis of field data, my interpretive framework of identity formation, mimesis (or imitative desire), and

33

practice is designed to complement other ways of explaining originating factors in the

production of social strife. Each aspect of my interpretation aims to illuminate the way

actors create conflict and how social strife constitutes a sense of identity for and among

acting subjects. It is my hope that this constitutive aspect of conflict and violence will be

evident from the analysis of fieldwork data in Chapters 3-6.

My overall aim in exploring a fresh *theoria* or "way of seeing" is to understand

the meanings and mechanisms of most conflict incidents within Chamula hamlets located

within proximity to each other in the municipality of San Cristóbal de Las Casas,

Chiapas, Mexico. I conjoin my trichotomous view with other critical anthropological

perspectives to place in relief what can be hard to detect details about what generates

human social conflicts. I am especially interested in highlighting those moments of

interaction among the Maya that involve what one anthropologist calls "serious play,"

that is to say, the struggle for power. I attempt to link the practices around serious play to

the phenomenon of imitative desire in order to emphasize the interactive dynamics of

practice regarding how and why conflicts escalate into larger situations of friction,

fracture, and feuding rivalry.

With a primary focus upon intra- rather than inter-ethnic situations of conflict,

my analysis operates the following three presuppositions. (1) That identity formations are

rooted in culturally informed imitative relations (who's who, what is what) that arise

from but also produce conflict. (2) That mimetic desire is an influential factor in the

production of social conflict(s) and thus may be explored heuristically as an independent

variable. (3) The motivating factor of imitative desire operates as a form of social praxis

or "practice" (agency).

In addition to mimetic theory from René Girard (1965, 1978; see also Williams

1996) and interpreted by anthropologist Simon Harrison (2006), I also draw upon some

fundamental notions from Practice theory, as originally set forth by Pierre Bourdieu (1977) but significantly modified by Sherry Ortner (2006). I see Girard's notion of mimetic or imitative desire as a form of practice (agency), but one that generates, sustains, and also threatens structural realities (identity/ethnicity). Briefly described here but later on presented more in depth, "mimetic desire" refers to the acquisition or imitative appropriation of desire according to the desires or interests of others.

Each of the suppositions above represents a key aspect as to how conflict arises from inter-subjectivity and rival interaction (set in contrast to the presumed "autonomy" of agents acting out of individual rational choice). When these three notions are joined they provide a critical perspective on interactions related to social conflict and identity formation. Thus, using this trichotomous framework, I hope to explain findings from my fieldwork not just in terms of "structure and agency" (practices) but how such a complex set of relations operates as a mimetic dynamo. In other words, I hope to show how the material and psychosocial aspects of a people's cultural sphere are prone to reproduction by means of imitation, copying, and appropriation, all of which has impact and a major influence upon ordinary human action.

Before focusing on how the triple perspective mentioned above operates, or whether Girard's theoretical notion of "imitative desire" operates as a true independent variable moving other factors, there are some definitional questions to consider.

The Anthropology of Social Conflict and Violence

Let me invite the reader to now look at what other scholars believe constitutes the principal cause or causes of social conflict situations, including factors that give rise to violent discord and widespread communal strife. The subject of conflict and/or collective forms of violence in anthropology is relatively new. Anthropological views of conflict per se have long been under-theorized as a field of research. Recent studies seem less

35

concerned about defining violence objectively, as some scholars have tried to do, and more interested in describing perpetrators and victims ethnographically through contingent and subjective (non-apodictic) narratives.

Two general approaches

To analyze violence or extreme forms of conflict two general approaches seem to predominate the literature. There are (1) empirical approaches that rely upon verifiable or measureable experiences and observations; and (2) phenomenological approaches that privilege theorizations on the experience of violent conflicts in terms of perception and subjectivity. Currently, there are a number of attempts to combine these two approaches in terms of the general notion of performance.[2]

Positivistic or "scientific" approaches to the study of social phenomena--however once promising for empirical research in some areas of cultural anthropology--seem today less helpful for ethnographers who attempt to interpret conflict experiences. The categories available for subjective interpretation are almost necessarily flexible because they are ambiguous. This is due to the variety of perceptions about what violence "is" or seems to be: an uncertainty about what constitutes conflict and what conflict itself constitutes. Thus, much more than numbers are necessary for the study of social strife and discord. In part, this explains why investigators in the field prefer the use of descriptive narratives and qualitative analyses.[3] Writing ethnography in this way allows for a better fit for local conflict into relevant ontological and historical contexts.[4]

With these issues and approaches in mind, I would agree with most cultural anthropologists today who justifiably claim that extreme experiences of conflict (violence) are not due to biological inheritance but rather cultural construction. Recent anthropological contributions to discussions on cultural construction argue that "violence" can no longer be thought of as simply anti-social or deviant behavior, or as

merely illegal or unauthorized action (and thus a "bad" use of force as contrasted with legitimate force such as used by a state police). To the contrary, violence is more properly characterized in anthropological terms as meaningful action, albeit action that inflicts harm and/or effects many unforeseen and negative consequences. A comprehensive definition of violence includes the following criteria: (1) a category or level of conflict (as contested relations); (2) a certain type of aggression (moving forcefully against someone or something); and (3) a type of aggression specifically construed in terms of local categories.

Ethologically speaking, violence for the human animal is far from being some biological tendency, instinct, or latent predisposition. In diverse contexts, conflict as contested relations (e.g., us/them; defense/offense; legal/illegal; legitimate/illegitimate) is never simply animal-like aggression; it is rather, a culturally informed act of aggression. Thus, violence--as a volitional form of hostile behavior--reflects what marshals the wherewithal of human aggression; violence involves intentional effort that would bring harm or destruction upon an individual or group, or the material or symbolic things that pertain or represent a group or individual.

Anthropologists using a culturalist view rely upon careful distinctions that sort what 'violence' is from what it is not, especially when put along side other very similar phenomena in other socio-cultural situations. Cross-culturally, the term "violence" covers a wide range of conflict behavior and social organization. However, because the concept "violence" is so ample for describing multiple kinds of experiences it is also difficult to operationalize for field research. In other words, it is almost impossible to reduce the many complex variables of an extreme conflict to any one set of measurable traits.[5] That is why a humanistic and phenomenological approach to the study of conflict works best when viewing it as action or practice. By action, I am referring to violent acts as

something that is always culturally situated, and arise out of and likely because of certain meaningful practices.

In other words, "extreme conflict" is seldom if ever a meaningless act, nor is it ever entirely irrational behavior (cf. Abbink 2001; Anderson 2004). For example, actions of collective violence, while undoubtedly always dramatic are not entirely senseless (Abbink & Aijmer 2000a&b; Tilly 2005). Nor is collective violence entirely shocking; given, for example, how people can animate one another emotionally and psychologically by a shared sense of anger (Barkan and Snowden 2000; Greenberg 1989). Once infected by what others feel, do, or wish to do, it does not take much to justify violent exceptions to civil or moral precepts (Barkan & Snowden 2000; Tilly 2003). The desire for vengeance, such as the lynching represented in the preface, seems a particularly poignant example of a collective scapegoat action.

In recent decades, "post-modern" ethnographic narratives (e.g., Feldman 1991; Taussig 1993) attempt a mimetic perspective of conflict. This view looks at conflict situations in terms of structure and agency (practices). The focus is upon how one or another group/faction struggles to identify or dis-identify with certain formations of subjectivity and the identity that arises from highly symbolic political practices. These kinds of ethnographies indicate a much larger problem, however: whether "culture" is still a useful concept today for understanding expressions of violence as a social rather than individual phenomenon.

Types of Conflict and Violence

In discussing different forms of conflict it is important to disambiguate some related terms such as conflict, aggression, force, power, and violence. For some scholars, reducing ambiguity means facing the important challenge of how to classify a phenomenon like violent conflict. Imbusch (2003:14-15), for example, thinks it

38

incumbent upon social scientists to try to understand the root meanings of violence as a ubiquitous but largely contingent phenomenon. The best way to begin, he suggests, is by researching etymological origins (e.g. the Germanic word giwaltan "meaning to possess the ability to dispose of something and to wield power," as well as "to have strength . . . to control something"). Once the radical or at least developmental meaning of violence is duly clarified then researchers may follow links to other basic cognitive associations such as the concepts of force and power. Tracking the many possible linkages to and from violence suggests the need for a typology.[6] What types or forms of violence exist? Or, is violence–as an extreme form of conflict–so culture-specific that a typology would fail to convey key aspects?

A culturalist perspective of social conflict offers flexibility for a discussion of causes compared to a materialist understanding as to what socially gives rise to conflict situations in the first place. How do we to compare different types of violence/violation, especially collective forms of extreme conflict that manifest as violent action?[7]

Imbusch (2003:13) critically observes that a typology of violence can be used for very different purposes and fulfill various functions. Violence is a concept that is useful in purely descriptive ways or in a manner more analytically and even polemically. For example, one common differentiation for violence might examine the variety of manifestations and applications depending on which level of participation and impact is operative: individual violence, collective violence, and state level violence (Imbusch 2003:15). These types of violence--however construed in cultural relative terms--often overlap with other socially relevant conceptualizations of discordant behavior (e.g., cultural implications related to elements of conflict, such as aggression, force, control, and complex relations of 'power'). Various theoretical frameworks--especially post-structuralist, feminist, and post-modernist approaches--explore these other socially

39

relevant notions. According to Imbusch, the benefit of these different conceptualizations is to call attention to what people actually do (their practices), and it brings awareness to what people say about what they do (discourse) despite considerable divergence.

Johannes Galtung (1969, 1981, 1990) makes a helpful distinction between cultural (symbolic) violence and structural violence. For Galtung, "cultural violence" is more complex and refers to a whole array of structural characteristics. By culture, he means the expressive or meaningful aspects of actions and not just the social conditions and circumstances within which they occur. By violence, he means those forces in culture that include the symbolic spheres of our existence (e.g., religion and ideology, language and art, empirical and formal science), used to justify or legitimize direct (personal) as well as structural or indirect violence.

Both symbolic-cultural and structural aspects of violence Galtung locates within a matrix of four basic needs: survival, wellbeing, identity, and the need for freedom. These aggregate forces produce a variety of effects in society and consequently mean different things in different circumstances. Where there are survival needs direct violence can mean true killing (the mega-versions of which are extermination, genocide). Survival needs affected by situations of structural or indirect violence falls under the category of some kind of exploitation that leads to death (unlike others that only lead only to misery, illness, destitution, etc.).

Krohn-Hansen (1994:373) reminds us that the relationship between social structure and violent action always entails limitations and opportunities. Thus, a satisfactory view of violence necessitates a high degree of contextualization: "Structure never compels violence; there is always an alternative path of action. The expression "structural violence" is justified and offers fruitful perspectives when we maintain, as

does Elster (1989:13) that talking about institutions and structure is shorthand for talking about actors and interaction."

Thus, a violent social "structure" is something that marks the whole person, body, mind, and spirit. A complex set of social givens (structures) is something that affects the practices or life-ways and dispositions of entire communities.[8] Whether identified with or embedded within cultural processes, "acceptable violence" is often something hidden, unseen because taken-for-granted in the social relations and forces of everyday economic production (practices, or what people do). This includes the more justifiable kinds of violence associated with the relations of power (government, armies, police, courts). A cultural view of violence tries to ferret out the oblique factors responsible for seemingly hidden interacting forces.

But now, let us move onward from typologies of violence to a further disambiguation of its many facets or aspects, whether experienced directly or indirectly.

Defining the Experience of Violence

After fieldwork and a substantial review of the literature, I have come to think of "violence" as a projection of aggressive capacity, but a projection that is very much culturally construed. I agree with Blok (2000) and other anthropologists who develop their understanding of violence in less rationalistic terms and prefer to characterize it as an ontological phenomenon, that is to say, scholars prefer to see violence in terms of meaningful reality. In other words, violence exists. Its existence, however, owes in large part to the domains of meaning (or meaningfulness) available for cognitive apprehension.

Blok (2000b:24) has also argued that instead of trying to define violence a priori as something senseless and irrational, it is best to search for contextual understandings:

> We should consider it as a changing form of interaction and communication, as a historically developed cultural form of meaningful action. Frequently used qualifications such as 'senseless' and 'irrational' reflect a western bias and indicate how cases of violence are often divorced from their context. Without

knowledge of the specificness and circumstantiality, without a thick description, cases cannot but appear as 'senseless' and 'irrational'. Ironically, then, these qualifications close off research precisely where it should start: with questions about form, meaning, and the context of violence.

While defining semantic differences is important in cultural anthropology today (e.g., between "aggression" and "violence"), in recent years scholars argue it is less important to explain why people do violence (e.g., these folks are an aggressive tribe "by nature."), and more acceptable to simply describe the social fact of its occurrence (the fact that people do it--i.e., their actual practices). Violence connotes a methodology or instrumental means, and thus something more deliberate, more intentional. Indeed it is action/practice easily charged with emotions linked to culturally constructed meanings and purposes.

What is "aggression"?

Since the time of Gluckman, Turner, Leach, and others, most anthropologists acknowledge that not all conflict situations merit the descriptor violence, just as acts of "naked aggression" do not mark every social dimension of human conflicts. Aggression is a psychologically motivated or emotional application of some kind of force. It is a capacity for human action that, as with other animals, functions as a flight or fight recourse, and a range of other reactions and assertions. A cultural construct, violence indicates a capacity for aggressive behavior that utilizes emotional, psychological, and physical resources, all of which can be aimed or utilized for certain ends.

Most anthropologists of conflict seem to understand violent levels of aggression as a kind of useful resource. The usefulness of violence depends on when and where and how subjects implement the use of aggression or coercive force. In contrast to the apparent anti-social or 'senseless' aspects often associated with social violence, violent events are hardly chaotic. Indeed, according to Blok (2000b:24-25), violent events or

episodes are very much bound by rules or prescriptions, and thus governable by local understandings of etiquette and protocol.

> Ritualization characterizes any number of violent operations, including sacrifice, hunting, bullfights, butchering, charivari, dueling, wars, judicial torture, public executions, the killing of sacred kings, tyranicide, feuding, vendetta, ethnic cleansing, and organized crime. In all these cases, more is at stake than an instrumental move towards a specific goal. If there are any goals involved, they can only be reached in a special, prescribed, expressive, indeed ritualized way.

Even the seemingly indiscriminate violence of terrorism follows upon political intentions heavily embedded in ritual (Whitehead 2004; Strathern et al 2006).

Although it depends upon the type of conflict involved, aggression most often implies hostile action directed against another. Hostility, as an emotional and physical response, also affects the nature of conflict. In this sense, aggressive behavior (hostility) relates to a two-fold potential in human contestation: a) potential to draw upon a physiological capacity in order to effectively threaten or precipitate harm or b) potential to act in such an energetic way as to express determination and initiative, even domination. Aggression, however, is not really conflict per se, but a quality or dimension of many kinds of conflict(s).

What is conflict?

Defined in English, conflict refers to a form of interpersonal and/or social relations that involve disagreement over simultaneous but incompatible desires, needs, drives, or impulses. Characterizing particular social aspects of conflict often depends upon whether or not aggression is necessary or even useful. Conflict, much like violence, refers to a form of relations that two or more actors must construe culturally and socially. Here the term violence (violent actions) simply refers to an intensified form of conflict. The intensity of conflict as a social relation logically depends upon the amount of aggressive behavior involved within any give interaction. Actions or interactions of

43

violent conflict, however meaningful, point to something much more calculated than mere raw aggression.

Is violence the same as force or power?

According to its semantic roots, violence is a social and cultural resource made up of physical force that harms another person (Litke 1992:173). Riches (1986) was one of the first anthropologists to draw widespread attention to the problems of relativism associated with defining violent actions. His research demonstrates how diverse cultural situations reveal violent actions as contested categories of thought. Riches theorized that much of what people ordinarily think of as extreme conflict or violence is owing to, but also independent of something he traces to an "Anglo-Saxon folk model." Quite literally, the formulation we know as "violence" in English finds its basis upon primary or "primitive" experiences of force and power.

The Constitutive Dimensions of Violent Actions

Looking at violence and aggression in juxtaposed fashion calls attention to the numerous inventive ways humans engage the experience of conflict in their individual life and in community. It is this shared capacity for "inventiveness" more than any presumed biological a priori determination for human aggression that leads researchers back to the underlying questions of culture and society, that is to say the nature of human social interaction (see Bjokqvist 1997).

However, despite 'shared aspects' most scholars do not see violence as operating in any universal fashion. Recent compilations of ethnographic and historical case studies of ethnic related conflict situations attempt to decipher the "meanings" of violence within a cross-cultural perspective. The guiding theoretical notion appears to be that violence is meaningful action (whether for perpetrator, victim, or witness). Such action is not, therefore, merely arbitrary, chaotic, devoid of order, nor is it always anti-social. Abbink

(2000:xii) advocates for a new perspective, one that would grasp the importance of seeing

historical instances of violence as a "creative" or "constituent" force in structuring social

relations (to bring to representation, to make an arrangement of the known facts, to

symbolize a certain experience, e.g., as in representations of power, and so forth).

Apparently, people often inflict violence through a sense of shared purpose. It is a form

of social learning, such as, where an agent's actions are ideational and therefore

intentional (within the cognitive categories of a given cultural domain). Many

anthropologists argue that violence has certain constitutive dimensions: it actually creates

society, shapes culture—in a word, it is a mimesis and in this sense a worldmaking

phenomenon (cf. Gebaur and Wulf 1995:17;22-24; see also Goodman 1978).

Aijmer (2000:1) introduces the perspective that violence has a constitutive

dimension when he says that "violence has several natures . . ."

> It is a basic ethological phenomenon in human life on a par with
> phenomena like sexuality, sociality and domination. It is also a latent
> ingredient in the forming of social relationships and offers a strong
> foundation for the construction of power. It appears in iconic symbolism
> as an expressive device in the construction of possible worlds. In a
> discursive perspective violence is an intended, often calculated, sign in
> the flow of performative acts, with a capacity of representing a great
> number of objects and states.

By contrast, "conflict" interactions may or may not always be overtly forceful or

obviously "violent" in a public sense–at least not at first.

The anthropological question is whether there exists one or more

mechanisms that can trigger conflict dynamics (e.g., escalation). This question

relates to whether the mimetic aspect of violence as "world making" (and the

intentionality such a process entails), really belongs to an acting subject, whether

that subject is an individual or a group (such as an organization or a community).

Or is it, rather, something borrowed, where the "worlds" under production are

made according to the desire(s) of an "Other," that is to say appropriated or

imitated? Later on, in the second part of the chapter, I look more closely at

conflict and violence in terms of its "worldmaking" or mimetic potential as

representation and practice (making a world of meaning from other worlds).

In cultural anthropology, recent arguments that violence is constitutive of society

tend to refer to forceful acts that are recognized as justified (state action, police work,

armies at war) rather than to forceful acts which while they may have an effect on social

relations are not constitutive of society as such. Previous approaches in anthropology

looked to a structural-functionalist paradigm for explaining violence as a dysfunctional

aspect of social integration, and thus "anti-order." As mentioned earlier, newer, more

complex perspectives challenge this formerly dominant paradigm. Stewart and Strathern

(1999), for example, argue that violence is not an aberration but a force that is constituent

of social relations. Violence appears to deconstruct social situations even as it redefines

forms of social order.

Stewart and Strathern (2002:155-56) observe further that even where physically

harmful force seems justified, there often remains an ambiguity as to actual legitimacy.

They agree with Riches' (1986) focus upon how the ways in which violence or violent

action gets defined also tends to shape one's investigative view or hermeneutic.

Defining "Violence" in Cross-cultural Terms

In anthropology, working definitions serve a heuristic purpose to form

hypotheses and theoretical frames for comparison. Violence (usually defined since

Riches [1986] as physical force rendering harm) is a complex phenomenon, one that in

many ways resembles what we often mean by the concept of culture. In other words, like

culture, violence can mean different things in different contexts, varying within and

between groups and communities (Litke 1992). To better describe or define violence,

Arbuckle (2004:xii) uses a culturalist perspective, seeing it more abstractly as a

"qualitative dynamic" than as a measurable "thing." In his words it is best to view this
phenomenon as "every action or lack of action of persons or cultures (including customs,
institutions, structures) insensitive to and oppressive of human persons . . ." (2004:xii).
For Arbuckle, violence unequivocally constitutes a certain kind of force. My own cross-
cultural definition sees violent conflict as most often representing an aggregate set of
interacting forces that tend to produce victims. In short, no victim(s) no violence.

If we think of "violence" in the same way that we think of "culture" then it is
helpful not to consider it as a material thing but as a kind of dynamic principle of time
and place within which human action occurs. Here I agree with Arbuckle's (2004:xii-xiii)
relativist definition of culture as flexible and reflexive conditions "in which a people is
empowered to feel, think, and act in particular ways, as expressed in symbols, myths, and
rituals." If, however, we were to try to understand violence primarily from the victim's
point of view then it would be largely dependent upon the particular construal of
"violation" – that is, how it has been constructed within a given historical social matrix
where particular meanings (and their agents) emerge as they interact. Amplifying his
basic definition, Arbuckle (2004:2) elaborates upon how "culture" has the potential for
violence or for more propitious action:

> [Culture is a] pattern of shared meanings and values embodied in a
> behavioral network of symbols, myths, and rituals, created by a particular
> group as it struggles to adjust to life's challenges and educate its members
> about what is considered the orderly and correct way to feel, think, and
> behave. Negative and positive power, that is the capacity to facilitate
> violence or to empower people for good actions, resides in a people's
> symbols, myths, and rituals.

Traditionally in anthropology the concept of "culture" is most often associated
with ideational concerns, that is to say, defined in terms of symbols, values,
representations, and the like. Other definitions problematize the concept of culture. For
example, Post-modernist anthropology critiques the concept as too easily wedded to a

47

discourse of authenticity which in turn promotes a tendency toward totalizing, essentialist

depictions of groups of people and limiting them to specifically bounded regions when in

fact social reality is always much more broad and complex (not to mention fragmentary,

hybrid and trans-local).[9] Ota (2002:63), Clifford (1988:19) and others (see Fox 1991)

struggle to even use the concept at all. For these scholars, the notion of 'culture' is flawed

or "deeply compromised". At an extreme, a number of anthropologists have finally

written the concept off with a polite and respectful "adieu" (see Trouillot 1991, 2002;

Fox and King 2002:37-60). So, in cross-cultural terms, and respecting the need for

clarity, if the notion of 'culture' is in trouble then how much more is the notion of

"violence" in difficulty?

Stewart and Strathern (2002; 2006), try to develop an integrative cross-cultural

analysis that emphasizes a few general themes: (1) violence as a construct, (2)

historicizing factors of colonial and post-colonial legacies, (3) the material consequences

of "subjectivities," (4) the pragmatics of "revenge violence," and (5) the formative role of

the state in shaping ethnicity and social identity. Although admittedly eclectic in their

approach at building an integrated view or synthesis (Stewart and Strathern 2002:152-

181), and relying upon practice theory,[10] Stewart and Strathern have attempted to

advance the field of violence studies by drawing attention to a wide array of issues for

theory and ethnography. Drawing upon examples from New Guinea, the Balkans,

Northern Ireland and Africa, these authors amplify a perspective first proposed by Riches

(1986) that considers the importance of cross-cultural explanations for violent acts,

actions, practices.

Riches' model emphasized the interactive nature of social violence using a

tripartite schema -- Perpetrator, Victim, and Witness. This simple configuration meant to

show how violent experiences largely depend upon perception. This relates to what

Riches (1986) calls "arenas of contested legitimacy" where violence serves as a kind of social and cultural resource. In seeking a more integrated view of violence as a multifaceted social phenomenon, Riches and his collaborators characterize extreme conflict as a kind of resource for action (a strategy, or as meaning/justification), such that violence is always more than just actor-oriented conflict.

Stewart and Strathern (2002:10) develop a complementary view that amplifies Riches' cross-cultural rational action approach. They see violence as a pragmatic means directed towards a certain end but wish to expand Riches' essential idea of contested arenas. They thus link his phenomenological-motivational approach to violence (emphasizing intentionality) to a more robust consideration of causes and consequences. Stewart and Strathern develop their own innovative approach to the triangular model by expanding it to consider plural rather than individual interactions. Whereas Riches examined violence as a transactional model accounting for the subjectivity of violence as a rational choice, Stewart and Strathern (2002:4): broaden the idea of agency within his model:

> in order to move it from the context of individual actions to collective contexts. Performer, victim, and witness may be pluralities rather than singular actors. And especially since witnesses may be diverse and may also be directly or indirectly involved in the issues at stake, the category of witness is potentially extremely complex. Further, witnesses, depending on their reactions or positions, may themselves turn into performers or victims, or both. Giving a temporal dimension to Riches' model, then, we can see that a given configuration of performer, victim, and witness may be only one moment in a larger process.

Both agree with Riches (1986:25) that "violent acts fulfill both instrumental and expressive functions" but add that in this transactional model of seeing violent phenomena as rational action "intentionality in turn has to be inferred from narratives, and these narratives come to constitute contested histories" (1986:14). The phenomenon of violence is much more than choices or rational action.

For Stewart and Strathern the important point is not that violent actions have consequences, but that they have historical consequences. Their case studies from Papua New Guinea examine how contested arenas develop, "how violence is escalated or controlled, and what the longer term, emergent effects are that proceed from these arenas" (2002:14). Indeed, the ethnographic record suggests "there is a general perception that violent and deadly forms of conflict are becoming harder to control, and that this situation results from the complex interactions between populations which are gestured towards the term globalization" (2002:10). Aware of the long-term political ramifications of colonialism in the so-called "third world," Stewart and Strathern envision violence studies promoting the recognition that a multiplicity of interacting causes is at work (2002:10). Hence, it is not just individuals who act as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses but whole groups, communities, societies who play these roles. Riches' triangular configuration is a schema that not only models the enormous potency of violence as action (and interaction) but also as image (seen or conveyed).

Krohn-Hansen (1994), writing before Steward and Strathern, wrote about "The Anthropology of Violent Interaction," an investigation that anticipated much of the current interest in violence as performance, that is to say as communicative violent action. In his view (Krohn-Hansen 1994:367), "we should attempt to build a perspective on the use of violence upon a notion of actions as constituting the "raw material" of society." It is also important to understand the perpetrator's view rather than, as often happens, mostly focusing on the victim.

Krohn-Hansen (1994:371) underscores Riches' insight that the potency of violence stems from elements that together make it suitable for both practical and symbolic purposes: "it can be effective, both as a means of change and of dramatizing the importance of central cultural ideas". This view moves us away from thinking about it in

50

objective terms and brings us to the domain of subjectivity. Other integrated perspectives (conjoining objectivity and subjectivity) include the work of Aijmer and Abbink (2000), Eller (1999; 2006), and Schmidt and Schröder (2001), all emphasizing context-dependent understandings for interpreting violent actions.

Anthropologically, in terms of culturally relevant meanings, just how violence gets ultimately defined is a question of communication, which requires the paradigm of 'culture'.[11] Emphasis on intentionality in conflict interaction or agency requires a new approach at both the theoretical as well as the ethnographic level. Understanding conflicts and violence in this way–empirically from case studies and phenomenologically from experience and perception–it is not simply a question of interpretation of symbols or the text-like quality of events (see Geertz 1973). Rather a new approach means attempting to grasp the multiple levels of human interaction that give shape to motivations for violent operations and events.[12]

Violence as Cultural Expression and Communication

Abbink (2000b:78) observes that violence, always has communicative aspects:

Be it as a statement of social protest, intimidation, terrorizing, or of self assertion –and thus of certain cultural representations or values. Violence is also "rupture," that is to say, and immediate and challenging action that demands a response. It may in all cases be tied to questions of social honor and of the integrity of the person or the group as these concepts are defined on a personal or cultural level.

For Abbink, violence between groups plays out as something profoundly constitutive and formative of culture and society. It remains important for anthropologists to emphasize interactive and historical processes in order to resist essensialist characterizations that tend to resist or deny violent practices the product of social interaction. The methodological challenge here is enormous: in the light of meaning-centered approaches how do anthropologists properly account for processes of symbolic communication or transactions indicating material and psychosocial value?[13]

51

John Corbin (1977), in an essay entitled "An Anthropological Perspective on Violence," was one of the first to draw attention to the communicative or "statement-making" aspects of violent actions (cf. Krohn-Hansen 1994:372). Tying together various elements of symbolic anthropology theorized by Edmund Leach, Mary Douglas, and Victor Turner, Corbin (1994:372) notices how "concern with coherence is a fundamental driving force behind all human action." In looking at violent actions, Corbin argues (1994:372) for a symbolic interpretation that would insist on how it is a mental as well as a physical phenomenon. Physically, violence involves directing force to harm or destroy objects or persons; mentally, it involves a transgression of boundaries, a violation of identities and thus social categories. Reasoning about category violations (from pure to impure, taboos and prohibitions, etc.) is itself, in Corbin's view, a source of meaning for those involved in violent actions. Ideas about disorder or social chaos, about what constitutes 'violation' and so forth, are just as much products of culture-bound conceptualization as any ideas about 'order' or social cohesion. For Corbin, violence itself is meaningful, if only implicitly. Much depends upon the kind of classification used for inquiring into violent actions (Krohn-Hansen 1994:372). In a way, violence is universal (and thus comparative), if it conveys a dimension of meaning, purpose, intent, and intended effect via its capacity to communicate.

Violence as Performance

In their important edited collection of ethnographic essays, Anthropology of Violence and Conflict, Schmidt and Schroder (2001) note that the field of violence studies is now a difficult area in anthropology, one that has become increasingly fragmented since the 1980s. Even so, these authors offer us three distinct but general approaches to recent social cultural research on violent conflict. In sum, these approaches are (1) operational, which examine causal factors and those aspects of conflict that are

measurable; (2) cognitive, which focus on autochthonous or local categories of meaning for violence; and (3) experiential approaches. For Schmidt and Schroder (2001:12), this latter approach is most important since it "looks at violence as not necessarily confined to situations of inter-group conflict but as something related to individual subjectivity, something that structures people's everyday lives, even in the absence of an actual state of war." In the work by Stewart and Strathern (2002), we see these same three approaches under consideration, but with a different analytical emphasis. For these authors, the main questions presently shaping this anthropological field of study pertain to the ways human interactions around violence are performative, and thus meaningful or communicative.

In studying extreme forms of conflict, it is important to recognize the important role of perception and subjectivity and in this way combine empirical and phenomenological investigations of violence. These are most relevant insofar as they try to ground their results in what are the inter-subjective experiences of interactive and reciprocal processes, such as revenge or looking for ways to over come (heal) violations that produce a variety of emotional states like a shared sense of resentment, anger, and grief that are often shared in a social sphere. When violence is visible in this dynamic way, it can be described as producing culturally significant performances of meaning as people act out, in practice, what seems important to them.

Imaginaries and Representations of Violence

In view of the ontological and definitional conundrums raised thus far, many anthropologists today prefer interpreting situations of violence and culture in ways that embrace rather than dispel ambiguities. There are at least two reasons for shifting from earlier efforts so preoccupied with definition and functional roles in society and from there moving more toward understanding people's actual experiences.

First, as mentioned briefly in the introductory chapter, there are the residual effects of what some scholars have called the "crisis of representation" in social science, especially in anthropological writing.[14] Second, this "crisis" has resulted in new opportunities such as the critical turn to subjectivity, experience, and thus what Appadurai (1996) calls "imaginaries." The notion of imaginaries points to a new way of understanding complex constructions of meaning and, reciprocally, how this kind of meaning-making via images in turn influence, even re-construct cultural actors as individuals, groups, or collective entities like small rural communities where members have a great deal of common (shared risks and interests). Appadurai's observations on modernity and globalization refer to "a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes." More recently, Appadurai (1996:31) emphasizes a new role for the imagination in social life today. He argues that we need to bring together a number of elements that today form the practice of social interaction:

> The old idea of images, especially mechanically produced images (in the Frankfurt School sense); the idea of the imagined community (in Anderson's sense); and the French idea of the imaginary (imaginaire) as a constructed landscape of collective aspirations, which is no more and no less real than the collective representations of Émile Durkheim, now mediate through the complex prism of modern media.

Appadurai (1996:31) sees the new role of the image, the imagined, and the imaginary as unfolding in global cultural processes (organized fields of social practices). In his view:

> The imagination is now central to all forms of social agency. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is elsewhere), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. This unleashing of the imagination links the play of pastiche (in some settings) to the terror and coercion of states and their competitors. The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order.

54

Like Appadurai, Jon Abbink (2000) thinks of violent action in terms of the human capacity for symbol manipulation and the social construction of meaning. Such constructions are formative of social identity and thus how violent actions are expressed, interpreted, understood, and accepted or resisted.

Abbink further observes (2000b:77) the importance of combining this kind of understanding (i.e., the symbological capacity of human beings to define their reality), with a sociological-historical theory based on Weberian ideas about power and legitimacy. This is important for dealing with the ambiguity of the manifold social actions labeled as violent in many societies. "Ambiguity," he says (2000b:77), "refers here to the very divergent evaluation of action based on harmful force. Few if any societies are consistently 'pacifist' in rejecting all violent action: in some conditions it is seen and experienced as necessary, inevitable, justified, or even psychologically rewarding." Much new ethnographic work on violence reflects Appadurai's observation and, like Abbink's research, takes seriously the 'work' of creativity (pastiche) and the power of the imaginary.[15]

Clarifying Analytic Terms for Violent Actions

Anthropologists Heitmeyer and Hagan (2003) do not entirely agree with these new approaches that attempt to expand the concept of violence. Limiting their scope to research on Western industrial societies, they argue for cultural explanations, but insist upon a clearer analytic terminology. In their view (2003:3) scholars now lament the "many disagreements about the authority of definitions of what violence is, or is said to be. Consequently, theories of violence not only vary in their validity and significance but also address different subjects and involve controversial assessments of the efficacy of possible strategies for addressing the problem." For these scholars, discourse about "imaginaries" does not constitute a clear lexicon for cross-cultural comparisons in the

study of violence. It fails to combine effectively with inter-disciplinary collaborations that allow anthropologists to close any theoretical variance or provide a viable research and writing strategy for addressing the real social problems of violence.

In my view, critical perspectives like that of Appadurai and Abbink bring to the analytical surface some deeper implications about violent actions. Schmidt and Schröder (2001) do not dispute that experience is an important aspect of understanding violence as a social phenomenon but nevertheless prudently point out that a subjectivist focus on "experience" is not always helpful, especially if it represents a non-analytical path of inquiry.[16] A true understanding of violent acts requires much more than exposure to it, directly or indirectly; it requires narratives recounted by those who have been hurt. For Schmidt and Schröder (2001:7) a subjectivist approach comes under criticism because:

> It will also ultimately interfere with any effort to view one specific violent confrontation from a historical or comparative perspective. We argue that no violent act can be fully understood without viewing it as one link in the chain of a long process of events of which refers to a system of cultural and material structure that can be compared to similar structural conditions anywhere else.

Thus, the predominant style today for comparative descriptions of violent conflict is no longer the definitive monograph; newer styles or approaches are much more conditional, dialogical, and multi-sited, and are very often put together into edited anthologies.

Ethnography and the Poetics of Violent Action

In order to explore the issue of power and how cultural factors shape violence, Schröder and Schmidt (2001) argue the importance of making careful distinctions between violence as practice and violence as an imaginary. This important distinction (echoing Appadurai) relates to another important feature of violence mentioned earlier, namely its performative quality. In my view, the notion of performance is very much akin to Girard's mimetic hypothesis regarding desire as a major factor in the generation of conflictive interactions, and is, moreover, a notion that reflects what people actually do in

terms of everyday "practice." According to Schröder and Schmidt, (2001:5-6), "Violence without an audience will still leave people dead, but is socially meaningless. Violent acts are efficient because of their staging of power and legitimacy, probably even more so than due to their actual physical results." Understanding violence as performance, as mimetic practice, remains a major methodological challenge whereby the researcher must find viable ways to explore the motives and values of those who elect to use violence or circumstances of conflict as an instrumental means of expression.

On this point, Whitehead (2004) may be helpful. This author (2004:67), working in conjunction with other anthropologists, develops a perspective on conflict he calls "the poetics of violent practice." Anthropological or social poetics (and thus a "cultural" poetics) is a form of mimesis. Whitehead focuses on performance by calling attention to how conflict as a cultural expression is simply another way to think about social interaction. Whitehead observes (2004:68) that violent forms of conflict (often collectively or communally expressed) are "creative and constitutive of social relations and the identities that practice them." Indeed, in his critical assessment, violent practice is fundamental to cultural practice and competency (2004:8).

Developments in social and cultural poetics avail a new kind of method for studying violent meanings in performance.[17] Ultimately about inter-subjective interactions based on creative imitation or representation, poetics explains how actors generate power (influence) through verbal and non-verbal productions of meaning. From his fieldwork in the Amazon region, Whitehead interprets expressions of violence as mimetic practices. They are highly complex social phenomena that are best understood in terms of many different yet inter-connected parts that constitute a social performance. Combining symbolic and material elements, Whitehead (2004:68) uses this term poetics as a way to "call attention to the way in which the meaning of a violent death cannot be

entirely understood in terms of biological origins, sociological functions, or material and ecological necessities." In his view,

> [It] has to be appreciated for the way in which it is also a cultural expression of the most fundamental and complex kind. Such cultural expression itself, if it is to be understood must necessarily involve competence in the manipulation of signs and symbols. Any particular act of manipulation—that is, any given cultural performance—is therefore akin to the poetical in the sense that it involves discursive forms of allusion and implication of a highly specialized kind, albeit rarely textual. In short, I am not concerned with the formal properties of signs, symbols, and rituals— semiotics—but with how those signs are used performatively through time—poetics.

In the introduction to the essays edited in *Violence*, fruit of the Advanced Seminar at the School of American Research,[18] Whitehead (2004:5) tells us that the common focus among contributing scholars "was the recognition of the need to interpret violence as a discursive practice, whose symbols and rituals are as relevant to its enactment as its instrumental aspects." Whitehead and his colleagues extend and complement anthropological approaches that have previously provided analyses of various material contexts within which violence takes place (e.g., the birth of war, the political economy of small-scale conflicts, the interplay and contexts of tribal and colonial traditions). The challenge today, however, is to integrate materialist approaches with new emergent domains from the humanities and other disciplines (Whitehead 2004:6).[19] The scholars of the Advanced Seminar came together to find ways to best study difficult subjects like state violence and death squads, postcolonial ethnic conflicts, revitalized forms of customary or "traditional" killing practices such as assault sorcery. Needless to say, research in any one of these areas is highly precarious. "Such topics are rarely broached in anthropology," Whitehead observes (2004:6), "both because of the difficult and possibly deadly nature of the subject for ethnographic research, and because we ourselves are apt to elect more positive topics for research, fearing that to discuss violent cultural practices among our informants leads to a negative stereotyping of *others*.

58

My own assessment is that Whitehead is correct when he emphasizes that the

principal goal for cultural anthropologists today is to build a "more adequate theoretical

framework for engaging such topics" (2004:6), making them better researched

ethnographically. I agree too with the 1992 Advanced Seminar researchers who in

attempting to understand violence as cultural practice challenge us to give shape and

focus to new findings. For Whitehead, (2004:5) the reason violence is so important

anthropologically is that it involves multiple social relations. As a singular phenomenon,

it has been well theorized and studied in terms of elite expressions of political or ritual

power, status, and other similar inquiries. However, violence as a cultural expression and

performance has not been well studied. The critical challenge today, he argues, (2004:5-

6), is not that "culture" can simply be cited as a cause of violence but rather how to

highlight "the generative schemes (Bourdieu's term, 1977), the logical substrate of

oppositions, analogies, and homologies upon which the cultural representations are

based, but constitute a critical field of analysis that has largely been ignored." Until very

recently, Whitehead observes (2004:6),

> there have been few attempts to map how cultural conceptions of
> violence are used discursively to amplify and extend the cultural force of
> violent acts or how those violent acts themselves can generate a shared
> idiom of meaning for violent death – and this discursive amplification is
> precisely what is meant by the "poetics" of violent practice.

A number of scholars in the anthropology of violence have taken up a humanistic

interest in the poetics (or play) of symbolic interaction[20] because it fits with inter-actionist

perspectives (distinct from agency theories). Interaction theories from sociology (e.g.,

Goffman 1959, 1967), and similar notions in anthropology (Krohn-Hansen 1994), argue

for an up-close, detailed perspective on violence as cultural production. The inter-

actionist approach critically reexamines general sociological schemas regarding the

interplay of structure and agency relationships, and how such situations of influence

appear to produce a kind of "culture" or sphere of action.[21] In contrast to structural-functional anthropology (Le Vine 1961), interactive models allow for a more processual, dialogical, dynamic, and thus poetic description, above all through the analysis of symbols and discourse, as well as in how "actions" (practices) have a way of communicating. The poetic approach, therefore, has become useful as a way to reconcile hermeneutical questions of meaning and representation.[22]

A 'poetics of violence' is very much in keeping with the trichotomy hermeneutic I wish to introduce now in the second half of this chapter. The approach is merely an interpretive tool, but one that conjoins three perspectives on what appears to happen when human groups interact: identity formation, imitative desire, and practice.

Building a Framework of Analysis: Identity, Mimesis, and Practice

From pertinent literature on the anthropology of conflict and violence, I now move to consider the definition and scope of my field data and, more broadly, to emphasize a scale of analysis appropriate for interpreting various kinds of social conflicts. There are three inter-related presuppositions that inform the framework of analysis, which are as follows: (1) Identity as "sameness" (from the Latin *idem*; the characteristics or factors that establish who or what a person or thing is/means); (2) Mimesis as imitative desire (copying, appropriation, representation), and (3) Practice(s) as everyday actions (cultural patterns, what people do/make).

These three building blocks, as it were, provide a platform upon which to map the meaning of certain kinds of interaction dynamics. Heuristically it is a framework that helps explore many questions about what gives rise in the first place to social strife among groups and communities who are more similar than different. The trichotomous framework aims to highlight internal variables that comprise local modes of familiar interaction. While external factors (e.g. globalization, national political parties) are no

less important for a full and integrated analysis of conflict dynamics, especially in places like Chiapas, less well understood are those factors that show how "all politics are local" when it comes to the denial of semblance in one's opponent or rival or enemy.

In subsequent chapters, I provide inferences for how imitative rivalries seem to have a substantial impact upon social situations for many Chamula individuals and groups. Rivalry, for example, because of its reciprocal nature emerges in a community setting as individual actors (or subjects acting in groups) rival one another as they try to pursue the same "object of desire.' As will be evinced in subsequent chapters, objects of desire for the Chamula may include the pursuit of things that represent power, privilege, and/or pecuniary and profitable interests. Very often, the meaning and quality of many of the things agents desire to acquire (by violence if necessary) are already culturally constructed. As such, their meaning and purpose in a community setting are subject to modification by those competitively seeking them. Meanings, like the value of certain objects, emerge diachronically through inter-subjective interaction.

The Notion of Identity

Let us begin first with the building block of "identity" or identity formation. One way to think analytically about the constructed aspects of social conflict is to think in terms of who does violence, or by whom situations of discord first begin to develop or take shape (and meaning). This means thinking in terms of belonging, or what is a collective or shared feeling of identity. In this affective and practical sense, belonging refers to a common or mutual sense of agency that has at least two manifest aspects. First, there are the many ways in which actors can create boundaries by the way they perceive and verbalize an imagined sense of Self and Other. Agents thus act in ways that establish and affirm certain social categorizations. Second, there is the sense of agency that points

61

to everyday practice or what emerges from identity formation as experience; for example, in terms of a transactional model of social life (actual groups).

The notion of transaction is important for understanding a key aspect of identity formation. It is something Jenkins (1997:55) prefers to call "ethnicity as process." Anthropological discussions of ethnic identification as a process emphasize less external categorization (ascriptions) and more internal group identification (self-ascription).[23] If the concept of ethnicity is about the seeming give and take of Self-Other formations then as an explanatory model it is a useful notion. As Jenkins says (1997:55), ethnicity is useful because it "has typically been accompanied by a view of social relationships rooted in reciprocation, exchange, and relatively equitable negotiation." Pitched in terms of social groups, Jenkins (1977:55) finds that most discussions of identity formation put emphasis on

> collective, internal definitions of distinctiveness: "ethnic selves" (Barth 1969a: 10) as collective internal definitions of distinctiveness. While it is clear from Barth's discussion that the 'actors themselves' can signify actors on both sides of the ethnic boundary, it is equally-if only implicitly-clear that explanatory or analytical priority is accorded to identification within the ethnic boundary. And there is a sense in which this is as it should be. A claim to ethnic identity must be validated by an audience of outsiders or Others.

What is important to emphasize about internal group identifications with respect to conflict development is the way we can characterize differences (or experiences of dissimilarity) as both a product and as a process of self/other categorizing. Primarily, the concepts of ethnicity or ethnic identity usually refer to what it means socially and culturally to belong to others like one's self, however perceived, or to be the same as others. Only secondarily does ethnicity refer to something negative (i.e., about not belonging, or exclusion).

I agree with Jenkins (1997, 2008) who argues that the best way to think about "ethnicity" is to comprehend it as a process. This view asserts that identities are

62

something humans, as social beings, constantly create through their interacting practices.

Social bonding and affinity forged by interactions based on competing imitations of

alikeness (mimetic rivalry) often become the basis for protracted social conflict. The

construction of identity claims over time is observable in the way antagonists compete for

but then negotiate to modify and/or maintain meaningful boundaries and borders, much

as Barth (1969) and also Bateson (1935) argued decades ago. Delineations of 'self and

other,' or any such category for "world making" implies observable practices that emerge

in the context of identity formation; in other words, those life-ways related to

differentiation from sameness as identification, or as dis-identification.

Drawing from field data in subsequent chapters we will see some concrete ways

in which identity, or rather the processual interactions that constitute identity claims, tend

to give rise to a profound sense of belonging and boundary. We will see also how the

building block of identity formation reflects a processual interaction among some

Chamula groups. This process has a great deal to do with imitative behavior. Indeed, it is

how many Chamula seem to act mimetically as they depend upon others for knowing the

ways they can re-present themselves with "unique" self-ascriptions (and by which they

define 'others' as dissimilar or different).

Mimesis: René Girard's hypothesis of imitative desire

The second building block we need to explore is the phenomenon of mimesis

(imitation). René Girard,[24] a long-time literary critic, historian, and scholar of

philosophical anthropology as cultural critique, has developed an intriguing hypothesis

about social conflict that offers a fresh way to think about dynamics such as rivalry and

reciprocal violence, but also ritual sacrifice, scapegoats, and the reason for social taboos.

I follow Harrison's (2006) understanding of Girard, whose ideas he links to other theories

of social conflict. Harrison's interpretations underscore the importance of Girard's

hypothesis as a salient explanation of certain factors that seem to always generate social strife and discord. Harrison (1995) examines the symbolic nature of conflict interactions as well as how these conflicts play out in the politics of resemblance that often fracture identities and reshape cultural boundary formations (Harrison 1999, 2002, 2006).

Historically, mimesis is a robust concept that has gathered meaningful dimensions of thought over many centuries, (Gebauer and Wulf 1995). Indeed, Girard notes (1978:vii) that not only in philosophy but also in other social disciplines and the humanities, like psychology, sociology, and literary criticism, one finds that a mutilated version of imitation has always prevailed. Indeed, Girard observes (vii), "the divisive and conflictual dimension of mimesis can still be sensed in Plato, where it remains unexplained. After Plato it disappears completely, and mimesis, esthetic and educational, becomes entirely positive. No philosopher or social scientist has ever challenged this strangely one-sided definition of the concept." Girard wants to correct Plato's failure to develop the full implications of mimesis, especially where imitation manifests as appropriation (1978: 201). He sees "acquisitive mimesis" as a form of imitation that is a major source of conflict. It is, therefore, a domain of experience that deserves more research on how it has evolved from prehistoric or primitive community formations to modern situations of copy-cat rivalry (borrowing other's desires). As Girard (1978: 201) states the problem, "when any gesture of appropriation is imitated, it simply means that two hands will reach for the same object simultaneously: conflict cannot fail to result."

Consequently, insofar as mimesis reflects some basic elements of human experience, it has become a broad, multifaceted concept. Today the notion of mimesis is still vibrant for diverse analytical discussions ranging from the disciplines of literary criticism to neuroscience.[25] In terms of group or collective interactions, mimesis relates to

how differences arise in the first place and how they tend to intensify competition and rivalry to the point of violence.

Broadly defined, mimesis refers to the practical manner in which individuals or groups go about creating meaningful worlds, that is to say, re-presenting the verisimilitudes that, for them, are perceivably real (Auerbach 2003; Goodman 1978). In a more narrow and definitional sense, however, mimesis refers to the practice of interactive copying among inter-related acting subjects. These practices of imitation represent both continuity and change as agents learn from others around them about how to "be" in society, how to act culturally, or how to re-present themselves based upon something presumed real in the life of the others they imitate, or whose example extends from a previous time (Bandura 1977; Warnick 2008). Custom and tradition, for example, guide the life of many communities and suggest a reproductive process of enculturation inextricably linked to imitation.

Of the three building blocks that support my own interpretive framework (identity, imitation, and practice), mimesis is by far the most powerful and influential element. It is significant because of what emerges between or among individual actors (or groups acting as though a singular agency). The multifaceted notion of imitative desire as copying, appropriation, and/or representation offers an ample theoretical explanation for conflict and violent action within the expressive and meaningful setting of identity formation and practices that usually constitute an ethnic community.

Defining Mimesis: a Classic Source of Trouble

In a number of detailed studies, Girard has elaborated his various ideas about mimesis and its role in the development of classic literature (1965, 1978). He notices that throughout the slow historical development of Western literary traditions there has been a tremendous emphasis on mimesis, including recent attempts in the arts to be more

65

"realistic" or "more true to life" than previous texts or representations. At the root of human reproduction of 'the real' or 'the natural' however, is a profound philosophical problem that not even Aristotle and Plato seem to have fully perceived. For Girard (1978:ix) "the seminal failure of these philosophers to encompass the entire range of imitative behavior cannot be unrelated to the dearest of all our illusions, the intimate conviction that our desires are really our own, that they are truly original and spontaneous." Girard argues cogently that at the center of all conflict and violence is a volatile interactive dynamic of imitation. His critical view binds together literary and anthropological questions to see more clearly the standard view of an age-old problem originally derived from Plato's mimesis via Aristotle's Poetics (Girard 1978:vii):

> The standard view … has always excluded one essential human behavior from the types subject to imitation—namely, desire and, more fundamentally still, appropriation. If one individual imitates another when the latter appropriates some object, the result cannot fail to be rivalry or conflict. Such conflict is observable in animals; beyond a certain intensity of rivalry the antagonists tend to lose sight of their common object and focus on each other, engaging in so-called prestige rivalry. In human beings, the process rapidly tends toward interminable revenge, which should be defined in mimetic or imitative terms.

Girard (1977: 146) reverts to an ancient notion--mimesis--because of the way its implications for conflict are often overlooked. "We must understand," he continues," that desire itself is essentially mimetic, directed toward an object desired by the model." For Girard, mimesis is historically hazardous; without laws, institutions, or cultural customs in place to hinder imitations related to rivalrous desires (an antagonistic mimesis), mimetic desires lead to social chaos.

Imitative situations lead to multiple competitions, rivalry that produces a plethora of resemblance between model-mediator on the one hand, and desiring subjects on the other. In Girard's view (1979: 146), agents or actors look increasingly similar the more intensely they vie for the same prize(s):

> Two desires converging on the same object are bound to clash. Thus mimesis coupled with desire leads automatically to conflict. However, men [sic] always seem half blind to this conjunction, unable to perceive it as a cause of rivalry. In human relationships words like sameness and similarity evoke an image of harmony. If we have the same tastes and like the same things, surely we are bound to get along. But what will happen when we share the same desires? Only the major dramatists and novelists have partly understood and explored this form of rivalry. Even Freud treated it in an indirect and distorted fashion.

In this view, convergence indicates a lack of distance. Because desire is configured mimetically, it can be characterized as either promoting a distant relation (far away in time or space), or else as a proximate or near configuration. According to some proponents of mimetic theory, when a model worth imitating is "far" in terms of time or distance (what Girard calls external mediation), imitative desire has little impact or few repercussions. Desiring at a distance has little consequence in terms of true rivalry. Girard's favorite image for a "distant mimesis" is Don Quixote's attempt to emulate the fictional Amadis of Gaul, the great Knight of medieval romantic literature. So distant is the example, there is no possibility of closing the distance, and thus little threat of clashing or competing; however, when imitation or emulation occurs within a familiar relationship of close proximity (internal mediation), the likelihood of conflict increases.

For Girard, internal mediation is something profoundly modern. Anspach (2004: xxxiv) makes the following observation of Girard's insight:

> The erosion of traditional social barriers favors the rise of internal mediation, and this in turn leads to a loss of distinctions between mediator and imitator, who are destined to end up as symmetrical rivals. Thus, before Girard came to interpret the Theban plague [in the Oedipus myth] as a crisis of differences, he had begun by linking the metaphysical affliction of novelistic heroes to the long, steady process of undifferentiation through which modernity emerges from the decline of traditional order.

Girard's favorite example of internal mediation comes from his study of Shakespeare's famous play about two gentlemen friends from Verona who see their long friendship deteriorate suddenly into a passionate rivalry over the same woman they both desire

(Girard 1991). Here the role of mediator moves within the same "sphere of possibilities" as the imitator, making the relationship more symmetrical, and the distinction between mediator and imitator collapse.

Anthropologically, proximity of imitation can become troublesome when it occurs repeatedly within a specific region or a local and limited cultural matrix such as a community, a barrio, or a compound. In such circumstances, competing mutual influences and rivalry can become quite volatile.[26] Speculating on how a the triangular relations of a subject-model-object rivalry can communicate contradictory messages (e.g., "Imitate me! Don't imitate me!"), Girard finds (1979:147) some support for his argument in Bateson's theory of the "double bind" (Bateson 1972:201-27). "If desire is allowed to follow its own bent," observes Girard (1979:148), "its mimetic nature will almost always lead it into a double bind. The un-channeled mimetic impulse hurls itself blindly against the obstacle of a conflicting desire. It invites its own rebuffs, and these rebuffs will in turn strengthen the mimetic inclination." It is a self-perpetuating process; one that seems to intensify through circumstances of resemblance.

Drawing again upon Western literature (this time, Oedipus the King), Girard finds themes that reveal intelligible patterns from human experience. He sees (1979:148), in the theme of "disciples and masters" for example, the way novelistic authors often reveal how neither figure (model or subject) is immune from imitative desire and its many precarious aspects:

> Whenever the disciple borrows from his model what he believes to be the "true" object, he tries to possess that truth by desiring precisely what this model desires. Whenever he sees himself closest to the supreme goal, he comes into violent conflict with a rival . . . You can imitate me . . . but Do not appropriate my object!. . . By a mental shortcut that is both eminently logical and self-defeating, he convinces himself that the violence itself is the most distinctive attribute of this supreme goal! Ever afterward, violence and desire will be linked in his mind, and the presence of violence will invariably awaken desire.

68

Many of the best novels have staying power as "classics" because their plots are often related to the problematic of desire, as in the typical so-called "love triangle" where two rivals romantically pursue the same person with whom both are "madly" in love.

In his ethnological studies, Girard sees social violence as a connecting thread that runs through the development of early or primitive human communities, out of which comes mythology, ritual, religion, and other subsequent social constructions of meaningful discourse and practice. His basic argument overall is that inter-subjective conflicts become socially violent because they are rooted in unrecognized problems of imitation or mimesis. For Girard, it is not just that conflicts arise when appropriation or copying become a threat, but when people attempt to copy the proximate other's desires. Girard describes this dilemma as a crisis of mimetic desire, or what is a fundamental conjunction of imitation and desire operating simultaneously.

Desire, Girard argues (cf. Girard 1965, 1978, 1991; Livingston 1994), is something highly mimetic in human beings. It is prone to reproduction via imitation, appropriation, and acquisitive or avaricious "borrowing." The imitation of another's desire signals something altogether more than just instinctual wants or a drive to meet basic biological needs. Girard contends it is a mistake to imagine that human beings are simply born with their desires, a belief perhaps derived from the Enlightenment notion of the modern individual subject's autonomy (the primacy of individual rational choice).

On the contrary, desire appears to be something humans must acquire and develop through others. This happens as "embodied simulation" –something Gallese (2009) characterizes as learning through others over time about what to desire and how to act accordingly such as acquiring a taste for particular things. Girard's investigation emphasizes how violence is both product and process. Always something more than just

a significant form of expression from any given culture it is a mechanism that effectively influences a complex set of variables.

As we shall see shortly, in terms of practice theory mimetic interactions may be thought of integrally as a kind of habitus or mode of agency, one that continually shapes culture or social relations in fundamental ways, however much scholars debate "culture" as a useful concept.[27] If a desire is something we "catch" or acquire from others socially, much like one catches a cold, then we likewise do not think much about it until the signs of discomfort at last appear. For Girard, it is precisely the process of becoming like another in and through (according to) the things that an Other seems to desire that a potentially dangerous kind of similitude arises. Imitation especially becomes worrisome when others start to noticeably copy or purloin what was previously imagined as one's own property. Harrison (2006:14ff) calls this reified aspect of mimesis the problem of "proprietary identities."

Mimetic theory hypothesizes that issues of similarity precede issues of dissimilarity or differentiation (Girard 1987:85). Problems of identity formation related to conflict tend to develop when another's desire (embodied in practices) becomes the object of desire. As the target of copying, imitation, reproduction, or unauthorized appropriation (e.g., pirating), mimetic or imitative desire foments a certain kind of inter-subjective interaction that leads at first to inspiration but eventually deteriorates into competition, rivalry, and similar modes of contention.

That similarity might be at the root of some social conflicts is not always obvious to those emotionally engaged in communal tension or social discord and strife. Given that mimetic phenomena are not easily detectable in vivo, situations of conflicting resemblance (claims and counter claims of identity) can be as much denied as asserted. Nevertheless, it is the hard to detect or unconscious dimension of imitation that is socially

problematic. It suggests how mimesis often operates as inculcated practices (what Bourdieu calls a "habitus" within social and cultural spheres of interaction). Here, the problematic aspect of imitation is not about "art imitating life" but the way artists (agents/actors) imitate the artifices of other artists, who are themselves creators, makers, and producers of meaningful worlds. Self-awareness in a mimetic exchange is hard to come by because the dynamic of imitation is inter-subjectively ambiguous, invisible because of the way resemblances are muted or denied. Girard (1996) refers to this denial as *méconnaissance* or misrecognition. Competing opponents will vehemently deny copying, borrowing (mimesis), however much an agent's practice resembles what an opponent is up to practically. Girard theorizes that the more subjects interact mimetically in an effort to distinguish themselves, the more they will tend to look alike. Nations at war seem to manifest this aspect of mimesis quite regularly.

Dumouchel (Garrels 2011:79), reflecting critically on Girard's theory of mimetic desire (Figure 2.1), summarizes the hidden dynamics of mimesis as "a form of collective—or precisely, to use the excellent term coined by Girard, a form of interdividual behavior. Imitation always involves more than one agent." Moreover, Dumouchel continues (Garrels 2011:79), "mimesis, unlike the explicit imitation of one person by another, is never something that one agent does to another, but something that people do to each other, something that always involves reciprocally more than one person."

MODEL   ⇆   ⇆   SUBJECT
Mediator of desire   Imitator of desire

Exemplar   Copier
Hero   Impersonator
Paragon   Admirer

OBJECT
Objective/ Interest
(of desire)
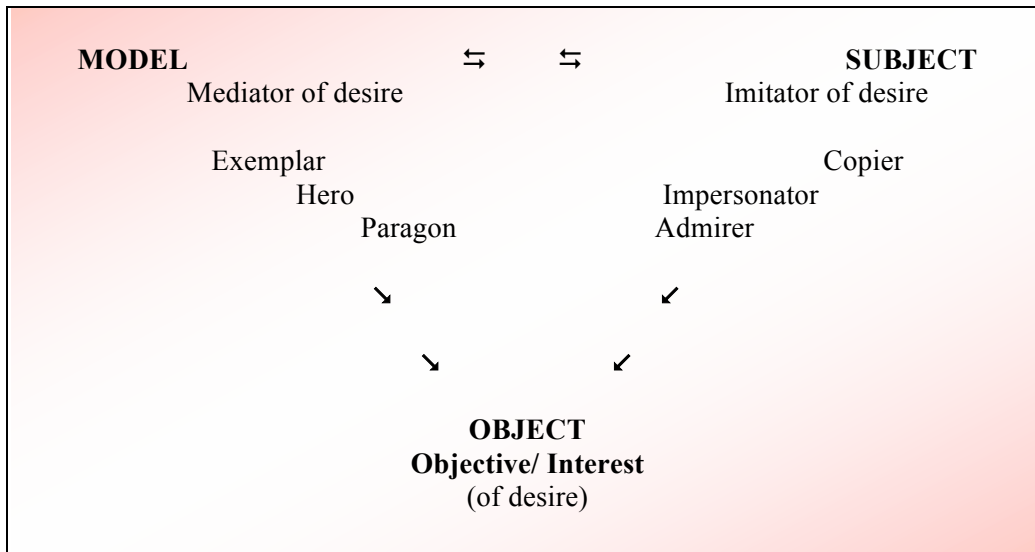
Figure 2.1. Girard's "Mimetic Triangle" or *interdividual* relations of imitative desire.

      Regarding Girard's hypothesis, Dumouchel (Garrels 2011:79) understands that "mimesis is interdividual in the sense that it is a way through which agents determine each other's desires or intentions." I interpret "interdividual" relations as a social dynamic that forms "practice," that is, it forms the agency that emerges within a community context. It arises, however, in spite of any claims to individual "rational choice" or autonomy. This inter-dividual dynamic and the contexts within which it operates, suggests the possibility a connection between Girard's hypothesis of mimetic desire and the influences of "structure and agency" proposed in practice theory.

Triangular Desire: The Interaction of Models/Subjects, and Objects

      Inter-subjectively, imitating subjects and those they copy (models or exemplars), eventually become competitive. Conflict tends to rise, for example, when a model, who is an acting subject as well, begins to imitate his or her imitator (viewed perhaps as an imposter, interloper, intruder, encroacher, trespasser, etc.). Commenting on rivals in the throes of competition, Girard (1979:145) insists that when a rival appears to a subject,

72

someone who is in pursuit of an object, it is then that the rival has a dominant role or

influence over the subject.

> Our first task is to define the rival's position within the system to which
> he [sic] belongs, in relation to both the subject and object. The rival
> desires the same object as the subject, and to assert the primacy of the
> rival can lead to only one conclusion. Rivalry does not arise because of
> the fortuitous convergence of two desires on a single object; rather the
> subject desires the object because the rival desires it. In desiring an
> object the rival alerts the subject to the desirability of the object. The
> rival, then, serves as a model for the subject, not only in regard to such
> secondary matters as style and opinion but also, and more essentially, in
> regard to desires.

Although there are many other aspects to Girard's hypothesis of mimetic desire

(see Fleming 2004; Kirwan 2004; Williams 1996), his primary focus is upon how the

"darker side" or more dangerous and seldom visible side of imitation links to the myriad

ways humans uniquely develop a state of desire. On this point, Livingston (1992, 1994)

understands Girard as underscoring the many ways actors (subjects) find themselves

developing an attraction to other actors (as models). As Figure 2.1 depicts, by means of

attraction subjects find and then make, as if their own, the desire that a

model/exemplar/mediator embodies. The acting subject copies the desires (interests) of a

chosen or available model-mediator often because they wish to appropriate a "way of

being" into his or her self (practices).

Imitation is dangerous because any number of problems can arise when a subject

and a model (who is also an acting subject) perceive one another as rivals, thus

encroaching upon or preventing access to what Harrison (2006) likes to call proprietary

interests. According to mimetic theory, as a model begins to defend or protect his or her

proper domain of interests the subject encounters an obstacle to obtaining (or identifying

with) the object of desire. As subject and model eventually come to contend over the

same 'object of desire' the social distance between them shrinks; it becomes less vertical

and more horizontal or level and homogenous. Opponents (individuals or groups)

struggle to appropriate and or defend what they feel belongs to them alone or exclusively

(as self, family, barrio, community, or nation). The shrinking in distance can generate

fears of non-distinction, alarm over undifferentiation (the loss of identity).

Girard (1987:91) refers to mimetic desire in a variety of other ways, variously

calling it acquisitive desire or appropriative desire, or even metaphysical desire. Although

one can easily understand a group's insistence upon differentiation or dissimilarity, it is

interesting to see what little difference exists when rivals (subjects and model-mediators)

increasingly clash over their one same desire for a particular object/objective. In sum, by

generating a dangerous resemblance (undifferentiation), it is not imitation per se

(learning) that is problematic for human interaction, but the eventual sameness that can

arise from imitating a rival's desire.

Mimetic Desire and Dependent Variables

As stated above, we might understand Girard's notion of mimetic desire as

acquisitive or appropriative desire. Illustrating how mimetic desire operates as an

independent variable (i.e., an influential factor for both material and psychosocial aspects

of life), the diagram in Figure 2.2 depicts Girard's notion of imitation as having either a

"distant" (external) relational aspect or a "near" (internal) one, and thus approximate

aspect of interaction between a subject and model. Though mimetic desire can manifest

in multiple ways, it always has influence upon "things" (material or environmental

circumstances), as well as ideas, emotions, or situations (psychosocial conditions). These

aspects just described represent a plethora of possible dependent factors upon which

imitative desire has influence; and to the degree to which such variables vary, eventually

constitute many dynamic and interacting features of culture and society (e.g., Chamula

customs, traditions, norms).

Harmful imitative desire (as greed, ambition, rivalry, revenge, reprisal) puts dependent variables into play. As people interact and copy each other's interests and desires, the construction of identity emerges to influence the way agents utilize material and psychosocial realities (objects of interest). The processual flow (Figure 2.2) is driven by interdividual desire but constrained by customs, traditions, norms; all of which works to limit rather than expand imitations of desire. If mimetic desire spreads as a social contagion it moves quickly, like wildfire, often precipitating mob-like mayhem. Hence, social cultural institutions arise (e.g., police forces, judicial systems, moral or religious tenets) to complement culturally significant traditions that attempt stability and thus reduce the dangerous aspects of imitative desire (Girard 1977, 1987).

As an independent variable, mimetic desire seems to drive human motivations as these develop over time through countless interactions. The desire to imitate another's desire thus influences the projects and practices of everyday life (habitus). From what I have been able to observe and from my reading of theory from Girard and others, I postulate that imitative desire influences at least two basic sets of dependent variables:

(1) Psychosocial factors (culturally contrived constructs and symbols) refers to affective dimensions related to the way human desire works as something more than just wants and needs (see Belk et al, 2003).

(2) Material factors (environmental items for constructing society) refers to the "things" or objects actors find worth moving, manipulating, or managing. Interactions around imitative desire impacts upon specific entities or symbols that represent power, privilege, or pecuniary possibilities and can thereby configure any number of social situations of wealth, class, gender, social status, property, knowledge, skill, and more.

To understand this complex dynamic another way, the flow chart in Figure 2.2 attempts to show how the material and psychosocial aspects are put into play by the

social interactions of mimetic desire among acting subjects. However, there is no pre-determined outcome other than the potential for conflict because of rivalry, envy, and jealousy regarding "objects of desire" (e.g. pecuniary interests). As people interact and copy each other's interests or desires the emerging mimesis influences a range of factors.

More than just an idea, mimesis or more precisely, imitative desire, constitutes experiences of human intercourse in which the action of copying others in rivalry impacts upon psychosocial and material components of a given community situation. The flows presented in Figure 2.2 above depict the underlying interactional dynamic for situations of conflict and violence. Culturally shaped expressions of violence are situations that actors construct mimetically (via symbols and other representations). In this way, they make (construct) a "world" out of available environmental, social (structural), and cultural (meaningful) materials. These constructed circumstances generate spheres of influence that in turn shape the habitus or everyday dispositions of individuals and/or groups and communities. This habitus is what Ortner (2006) describes as " . . . the internalized (and constantly renewed) set of representations . . . " from which people live their lives. The dynamic influence of mimesis operates ad infinitum, and thus constantly shapes and reshapes the forms of interdividual relations (practices). It also shapes the meaning of "structures" (both internal and external, i.e. psycho-social material realities that make up the spheres of people's everyday interactions).

The nexus of structure and agency within which interactions unfold, what Bourdieu calls habitus, is something that acting subjects seem to ineluctably internalize in profound ways. Habitus, however unconscious or misrecognized, can powerfully control a person or group's everyday dispositions and practices.

Independent variable:

IMITATIVE DESIRE

Cultural Constraints will affect other variables when interposed with material/psycho-social factors. Such variables tend to detain the volatile effects/affects of mimesis as sameness, conformity, similarity, resemblance, or shared identity.

Imitation of what a Model likes/desires

Imitation and

Appropriation

Copying or Re-presenting physical or Psychosocial "reality"

Dependent Variables

in Play
- Ritual
- Customs
- Traditions
- Social structures,
- Community norms

Appropriation(s)

Mímesis
(Imitative Desire)

Representation(s)

Material & Psycho-Social VARIABLES

Material variables (Dependent)

↘ Power/power relations
↘ Property/possessions
↘ Pecuniary preferences or preoccupations

Psyco-social Variables (Conditions)

↘ Self/Other relations

(1) Distant relations (external mediations), ranging from admiration to envy, jealousy

(2) Near relations (internal mediations), ranging from feelings of solidarity to resentments, rivalries, & competitions

Exteme Conflict

Figure 2.2. Mimetic desire as independent or influential variable.

Practice (Habitual Dispositions of Human Agency)

I want to proceed now to a description of practice as the third building block of my interpretive framework. My contention is that mimetic desire is best understood as a kind of practice. Like mimesis, practice relates to conflict because it refers to the worldmaking capacity of acting subjects. This capacity refers to their ability to create and re-create or reproduce meanings that structure everyday life as subjects interact mimetically with one another as interdividual actors. Understanding people's actual practices and thus, too, their modes of inter-subjective agency and structural situations, is what mimetic theory purports to illuminate. In other words, what people do when they interact stems from the non-individual ways they move in accordance with another's desire (as model).

My approach to the notion of practice draws upon a set of ideas from Sherry Ortner (2006) who modifies a sociological postulation about subject agency in and through social structures or "spheres" of action first put forth by Pierre Bourdieu (1981).[28] In looking at both mimetic theory and practice theory together I take some assurance in the common view among cultural anthropologists today that no single theoretical construct adequately accounts for the many complex dimensions involved in social conflict. Schmidt and Schröder (2001:18), for example, caution against any "simple, one dimensional approach to violence," and advocate a dialectical perspective with respect to its many ambiguous properties.

Practice refers to what people actually do in their everyday social situations (rather than simply their discourse, though this too is important). The notion allows Bourdieu (1990) to theorize about agency and structure in a new way, which he does in terms of the notion of habitus.[29] Edgar and Sedgwick (2002) summarize Bourdieu's project as an attempt to avoid the extremes of objectivist/subjectivist sociologies.

78

In other words, society is understood neither as purely an external force (one that constrains or determines the action of human subjects), nor as a purely internal force or act of will and power, as when too much emphasis is upon the power of the agent as an acting subject. Agency refers to action, to the ability to create meaningful social action, where willing is a major part of the process though never enough for one person to effect change. Religious expressions, for example, do not move independently and often from within the constraining forces of a particular historical social setting within which a subject acts.[30] Edgar and Sedgwick (2002:30-32) explain Bourdieu's basic theoretical schema, based on the concepts of "habitus" and "field" --

> "Habitus" refers to the dispositions that human agents acquire, through life-long processes of learning and socialization, that give them the competence to respond in certain ways to given social situations. While these dispositions are realized in social practice they are not readily reducible to a set of rules governing social behavior. They are rather the agent's "feel" for how to proceed in a situation. As such they have a flexibility that at once serves to explain the stability of the social order and its transformation. If "habitus" therefore allows Bourdieu to theorize the agent, "field" theorizes the objectivity of the social situation. Society is understood as a structured hierarchy of relatively autonomous fields (such as the fields of politics, economics, literature, and education). A field may be characterized in terms of the political and cultural relationships that exist between the positions occupied by agents within it. However, it is not then to be understood as a fixed structure that exists independently of human agents. Rather these relationships are maintained (or reproduced), and to a greater or lesser degree transformed, by the actions of agents within the field.

The concept of habitus or "practice" considers what actors are actually are up to, what they do, the ways they really go about making their worlds of meaning (or spheres of action) according to acquired dispositions and available structures. More critically, the term habitus suggests objective conditions of life (social structures) made to seem natural, immutable, such that people simply accept their location in life as "just the way things are" (Ortner 2006:78). How and why people become "located" as they do, or why they see (and feel) their situations as "given" or fixed, remains a complex Psychosocial question about cultural configurations of meaning and identity.

Sherry Ortner (2006) attempts to modify Bourdieu's notion of practice by adding a complementary concept she calls "serious play." With this concept, she expands the original notion of habitus (or agency) to emphasize interaction. What happens between agents is, besides something of a give and take process, has serious ramifications for power relations. Ortner plays with Bourdieu's insight that a given social structure produces relationships of influence as agents seek to acquire symbolic "capital," that is to say, the wherewithal to affect their particular sphere of action. The struggle to gain control over resources within a given sphere often involves competition, rivalry, and all the emotional or affective (subjective) ramifications such a struggle implies. The "play" (inter-subjective interactions), when it comes to playing for positions of power, is a serious business. However, power relations are not just the product of structures or spheres where "agents" find themselves "playing" together; acting subjects are also the producer of these structures. Agency, for Ortner, means that subjects are not merely acting subjects, but agents of transformation. For example, Ortner (2006:78-79) challenges us to understand the notion of "class habitus" differently and thus to think of it as "the internalized (and constantly renewed) set of representations of class-defined social location, and as the constant processes that naturalize them, it is a very powerful idea." Moreover (2002:79), she would add to this notion something that Bourdieu seems to ignore or simply does not explore: the processes that constantly denaturalize class-defined situations, ". . . the little cracks and openings that constantly appear as a result of the complex and constantly changing dynamics of practice."

From my binocular perspective, where Ortner refers to a "constantly renewed set of representations" and to "the little cracks and openings" she comes very close to what Girard claims about imitative interactions and how mimesis (as imitative desire) constitutes the many ways in which humans generally go about re-presenting a sense of

reality. Through mimesis (as in habitus) representations are continuously "internalized" in creative ways; efforts that constitute the worldmaking that arises from interdividual relations (and how "others" model desire, value, significance, etc.).

Ortner (2006) proposes to "fill-in" some theoretical gaps in Bourdieu's theory of practice as habitus. For example, she (2006:79) observes with Bourdieu that a person's position in a structural situation of social class delimits one's habitus considerably. The idea of a class habitus, she argues, is risky if treated as just another word for "culture" (risky, because it would recreate a host of problems anthropologists have for decades struggled to avoid, cf. Ortner 2006:119-27, 107-28; also Ortner 1984).

Ortner's critical perspective on what constitutes practice (and what practice itself constitutes) is, I believe, helpful for referring to what actually happens to (and between) people. It brings us closer to how most people actually behave in their everyday doings of life, including and especially producing and protecting various creative customs and traditions (whether with or without explicit awareness of imitation dynamics). In other words, where people live according to "deeply internalized structures" their practices (habitus) of social interaction may seem normal enough, but 'acting subjects' do not just reproduce their social circumstances. Rather, as Ortner insists (2006:17), they frequently strive to transform them on a continual basis.

In reformulating Bourdieu's notion of habitus, Ortner provides a palatable explanation for "public culture" on the one hand, and on the other an appreciation for the influential role of "subjectiveness" (i.e., the "identities" of actors). Both aspects come together in "hidden" ways. For example, they can manifest as issues of gender, race (ethnicity), or as previously mentioned, "class." Looking at American cultural practices, Ortner (2006:79) sees the "doubleness" of class representations and how these are often hidden on at least two levels:

> At the level of public culture or discourse, the hiddeness of class means
> that the discourse is muted and often unavailable, subordinated to
> virtually every other kind of claim about social success and social failure.
> At the level of actors-in-identities, it means that the dialectic of the
> making and unmaking of habitus, of the internalization and
> externalization of limits and of their naturalization, is not open to
> reflection and self-reflection. Yet, it is precisely in the internalization and
> naturalization of public discourses about "identities" that the fusion of
> class with race and ethnicity happens in American cultural practice.

This kind of "fusion" (class with race and ethnicity) represents transformative experiences and indicates the kind of interaction that constitutes identit. It echoes the kind of transformation Girard sees in another somewhat hidden mechanism of influence: the interdividual or non-autonomous dynamic of mimetic desire.

Imitative Desire (Mimesis) as Practice

In each kind of experience, it is always "Others" who precipitate motivation and movement for a person or a group; so moved, Subjects themselves begin to move to appropriate things of value, that is to say, those objects or ideas that others have imputed as valuable by means of a demonstrated desire. Thus, seeking "the desirable" is what brings about a transformative process. It is a process, as Girard suggests, that unfolds through an imitation of those desires that some model or mediator embodies. Movement (agency, practice) occurs around what social scientists might call "interests" or what Girard refers to simply as "objects of desire."

Assuming I understand Ortner's critique of Bourdieu correctly, her perspective of practice (and for that matter, "field" and "cultural capital" is a view that very much resonates with Girard's hypothesis of mimetic desire (1965, 1978), especially as Ortner accounts for how internalized structures extend outward through competitive, inter-subjective experiences within a sphere of action.

The trichotomous framework of identity formation, mimetic desire, and practice (habitus) that I have described provides an integral way to understand human motivation.

82

Additionally, it indicates how, as an 'Independent variable' it pushes the production and reproduction of social conflict through 'others' who model the pursuit of what Bourdieu calls 'capital' (material as well as social and symbolic). I have argued that the notion of 'mimetic desire' fits well with the notion of 'practice' since imitative behavior is very much a kind of practice. It is practice in the way it draws upon material and Psychosocial variables to shape a world of meaning. Better still, imitative desire provides a way to account for the many different kinds of practices that produce (as a habitus does) an internalized sense of the world that 'others' (as models, mediators, or masters) have supposedly already created.

However, it is important to point out that Ortner does not agree with Bourdieu's emphasis on predisposition or "fixity" or the way things often seem as though naturally given in social circumstances. She argues instead that it is better to see and understand how a social process is constantly dynamic, interactive, and consequently transformative in ways that point to the historical construction of power relations. As noted earlier, Girard's term (Girard 1979) for this kind interactive and transformative social process is not "habitus" or "agency" but rather "interdividuality." This notion suggests unlimited kinds of action-identity configurations that emerge between or among actors. "Agency" for Girard is never a mere matter of "rational choice" or mere unilateral individual action, but always inter-subjective exchanges. These exchanges are important to understand because they are replete with unintended implications and multiple social consequences.

Thus, as Ortner suggests, the ensuing dialectic that is the "making" and "unmaking" of habitus (in Girard's terms, the mimesis that is constitutive of culture or worldmaking) are not just positions in social space defined by what Bourdieu once called economic as well as cultural kinds of 'capital,' but are situations defined by actors who desire such capital. It is a reality that fits the notions of both "structure" and "agency."

83

The nature of violent interaction has at least two dimensions worth observing: (1) it is mimetic (imitative or emulating, i.e., it must be learned through available cultural categories of meaning) and (2), it is poetic or worldmaking (a creative act, often representative and thus expressive in form, a composition of the available cultural categories of meaning). These two dimensions characterize violence as a cross-cultural social phenomenon, one that although harmful or destructive in most cases, is nevertheless communicative and meaningful.

Although not a study of violence per se, recent work from Simon Harrison (2006) offers theoretical insights into how ethnic and national identity formations arise in the first place and are constitutive of violence as well as culture. Harrison draws upon the complex notion of mimetic desire from Girard and other scholars of social conflict to develop his own comparative analysis of "mutually reinforcing behavior patterns" and thus a view of conflict that is ultimately based upon identity formation practices.

Harrison (2006) connects a diverse set of thinkers to find theoretical common ground upon which to sustain mimetic theory along with a number of other equally complex theories regarding the origins of nationalism and ethnicity. He draws upon Blok (2001), for example, who gives proper consideration to Freud's notion of the 'narcissism of minor differences' –an interaction that often leads to violent rivalry as subjects insist upon clinging disproportionately to small marks of distinction. He also draws from Bateson's (1958) concept of schizmogenesis regarding how social splits occur when protagonists react to one another as well as reacting to one another's reactions.

Mutually Hostile Resemblance

Looking at studies of boundary formation Harrison links "transactionalism" (Barth 1969) to the way "distinctions" are often generated, valorized, and communicated in and through interactions. These interactions consequently structure and shape those

84

interactions. Harrison links these older ideas about the "causes of social conflict" to Girard's (1978) simple hypothesis that acquisitive mimesis (wanting to obtain what others want) will only lead to potent social conflicts over "objects of desire." For Harrison (2006:12), social "conflicts and social divisions seem often to be associated with fraught perceptions of mutually hostile resemblance." From this perspective, the core problem is one of identity or identification–what Harrison prefers to call "proprietary identities." Identifications are proprietary where cultural traditions or objects are regarded for various reasons as items to own or possess. He discusses the notion of difference itself as a form of 'denied resemblance' and how a sense of cultural boundary or cultural ownership can lead to issues of power and the negotiation of identity.

Additionally, by conjoining the insights of social conflict theory to his own ethnographic evidence regarding Melanesian groups and their "proprietary identities" (e.g., regarding the reciprocal practices such as gift giving, potlatch, etc.), he is able to further link these ideas to the economic anthropology of Annette Weiner (1992). Harrison applies the economic insights of Weiner (1992) to ideas about social reproduction, emulation and reciprocity to suggest that the problems of social violence are often produced (caused) through processes related to familiarity rather than through differences. "From this point of view," Harrison argues (2006:7) "social actors may view imitation of themselves by others, or at least unrestricted imitation of themselves, as a potential threat to their identities in very much the same way that Weiner suggests is the case with the unrestricted circulation of goods." Looking at the potency and politics of what Girard calls acquisitive mimesis, Harrison extends Weiner's economic anthropology by connecting it to the social interactive dynamics of emulation. He links Weiner's idea to mimesis in order to consider how particular kinds of groups in Melanesia and elsewhere (families, communities, companies, nations, and states) often organize and

work hard to protect unauthorized copying or reproduction. And they often do so with due regard to a sense of hard-won ethnic identity.

Harrison (2006:6) also connects acquisitive mimesis to the notion of 'identity symbol' in order to argue that "inalienable goods" are something more than just precious physical objects; such goods can include the desirability of precious symbolic practices by means of which people represent their identities as members of social groups and categories. These symbolic practices of representation, Harrison argues (2006:6), "are capable of being copied, either with or without the consent and cooperation of those from whom they are borrowed." In modern Melanesia, he observes how certain 'goods' are treated as though inalienable possessions (a practice somewhat contrary to pre-colonial notions of property). Certain possessions are regarded as "precious" because they are felt to represent identities of the trans-actors themselves. Precious goods such as heirlooms, whose possession confers political office, or insignia that define their owner's rank and status; all of these kinds of 'things' require an organized effort to capture, destroy, or defend. Harrison finds support in Girard's hypothesis that social violence derives from desire. Imitative desire drives the need to differentiate so as to acquire--as one's own-- what another person possesses or desires. In short, mimesis is a form of practice.

Harrison insists that (2006:12) "social actors conceive themselves to be in conflict not so much because they have irreconcilably different identities, but rather because they share important aspects of their identities in common, or have irreconcilable claims or aspirations to the same identities." From work in Melanesia, Harrison concludes "the protagonists … are opposed because--though they may not acknowledge it openly—they perceive themselves in certain respects as too alike. In these contexts, it is the perceived similarities of the Other that are experienced as threatening rather than the differences." Harrison (2006:13) sees this aspect of mimesis as a pervasive paradox

driving ethnic conflicts: "What appear at one level as cultural 'differences' may be, at another level, more or less elaborate and effortful attempts by social actors to forget, subvert, deny or obscure certain of their resemblances."

Using numerous ethnographic examples, Harrison challenges ethnographers to find theories and methods that can contradict the almost instinctive preference of social scientists to see violence, especially ethnic conflicts, in terms of marked differences, however conventional or constructed and culture bound. Harrison (2006:152) challenges observers to see "difference" as a denied, muted, and fractured resemblance. In other words, as a mutual likeness that divides:

> why there is relatively little variety in the ways nations and ethnic groups symbolize their identities. Far from exhibiting infinite creativity, the symbolism of ethnic and national differences seems much more like what Bernstein (1971) called a restricted code, generating mostly repetitions, parallelisms and small variations on the same themes. The point is that these recessions, which ethnicity and nationalism call 'cultural diversity', irreducible 'differences', unique 'cultural heritages' and so forth, are actually specially attenuated forms of shared identity. They are the residue of reducing or counteracting felt resemblance.

In Harrison's view (2006:154), the politics of resemblance reflect a fundamental fear, a dread over possible cultural loss from assimilation, undifferentiation, or blending, all of which is rooted in the communal edifices of particular social and cultural identities where people think of nations and/or groups as though they were individual "selves."

The Challenge of Analyzing Conflict and Violence

Of all the recent work that discusses violence in ethnographic terms, perhaps the most helpful of analyses are those that combine a variety of approaches within a broad understanding of culture. In a culturalist paradigm violence is an expressive and communicative aspect of wherever and however it occurs. The cultural approach has the advantage of presenting a wider array of comparative possibilities, especially as "units of

analysis." This approach also presents us with a vocabulary for interpreting the meanings that come with violent action, wanted or not.

Harrison and Whitehead have both demonstrated an appreciation for violence as itself a kind of "culture"–at least in so far as it begins with, is defined by, and resonates within, actions that comprise social relations. My own interest is to combine Harrison's ethnographic understanding of Girard's hypothesis with aspects of practice theory.

Throughout this chapter, I have tried to show how recent theory and ethnographic views of conflict and violence show many possible forms, types, and characteristics of what people say violence "is" or believe it to be. In this sense, violence forms a kind of "structure"–one that can organize people's experiences and common understandings. Yet any single theory by itself is inadequate for explaining the complex nature of conflict at the level of a community. Terms describing the social realities of violation are contingent upon local cultural constructs of meaning, ideation, and iconic images. When anthropologists compare local constructions of meaning for conflict, including violence, general patterns suggest specific units of analysis.

In contrast, some anthropologists prefer to think of genres of violence (see Anderson and Richards 2004:3). The idea of genre emphasizes that the goal of any anthropology of violence is not to create endless typologies and catalogues, however interesting, but to reveal general patterns, and in this way evaluate their significance when possible. I see the fundamental challenge as not so much the ongoing need for precise "definitions" regarding the nature of conflict and violence, but rather how to ascertain a meaningful point of view abut this ubiquitous social phenomenon called. New domains such as the "poetics of violence" or "mimetic dynamics" and the role of "desire" suggest that anthropology can offer some critical perspectives with (or without) the paradigm of "culture." In attempting to theorize violence and conflict in cross-cultural

88

and categorical terms, sociology has perhaps made more advances than cultural anthropology. Sociological approaches–for example Goffman (1959, 1967) and his interaction perspective--have advanced violence studies by providing in-depth, ethnographic investigations of everyday human performance(s). Anthropologist Evans-Pritchard long ago advocated a multi-perspective approach to problems such as 'conflict' as the proper mission of social anthropology. In a 1950 lecture on the past and present of social anthropology, he argued that since the Enlightenment social anthropology's failures were largely due to imitating the natural sciences; a better model would be to follow the disciplines of the historical sciences or in some way situate the discipline as a significant branch of the humanities (cf. Barnard 2000:162).

Mimetic theory wants to advance the anthropology of conflict and violence. Before addressing specific incidents of conflict, however, no matter how directly and analytically, in the chapter that follows I provide the reader first with a general portrait of the Chamula as a people I have come to know not just in my recent fieldwork, but since 1995. It was then that I first began to know their communities through pastoral work as an itinerant Catholic priest.

By interweaving the themes of identity formation, mimesis, and practice to form an integral interpretive framework, it is possible to see (and in some cases speculate) or theorize the various dimensions generated by conflict and violence as a dynamic or non-static set of relations that once produced in turn produce and reproduce similar dimensions of experience. The trichotomous framework I have proposed prepares us to interpret what for many anthropologists are hard to perceive factors in social conflict; that is to say, those elements of everyday experience (practice) that recurrently appear in social conflicts and incidents of violence. These elements create, sustain, and transform conflict situations in culturally significant ways. Symbolic transactions or interactions

are, I submit, a primary mechanism for achieving identity formation whereby local (cultural) meanings are learned, acquired, appropriated, and negotiated via the social practices of imitation. Identity formation, or the everyday sense of belonging that is ethnicity, is something shaped by competing identity claims; at the same it is also a major shaper of such conflicts by means of imitation, representation, appropriation.

When looking for the "causes" of conflict, we should recall how many scholars see the importance of considering both material and immaterial aspects, whether on a large or a small scale.[31] The "causes of violence" always seem to involve complex variables of interaction. In material terms, for example, conflicts regarding economic conditions or problems of scarcity are likely to precipitate conflict in places where competition grows into rivalry. But considering conflict in terms of immaterial factors, these same "conditions" and situations are only meaningful because of the ways that agents construe them as representing meaningful "interests" or desires (culturally constructed). Only then do members compete or rival one another.

In cases of reciprocal revenge (or more complex scenarios where conflicts rapidly escalate), any number of variables can manifest themselves. This makes the exact "cause" unclear, ambiguous, or indistinct. Where multiple variables characterize the "causal factor," there are long-standing boundary disputes (Dennis 1987), as well as struggles over access to resources like water or land (Bobrow-Strain 2007; Burguete Cal y Mayor 2000a), political fights over plays for power (De Vries 2002; Haenn 2005; Litke 1992; Ortner 2006), and more.

Surprisingly, among social scientists, anthropologists seem to have arrived somewhat late to the multi-disciplinary perspectives that focus upon the multiple causes of conflict (see the critiques in Avruch 2001; Girard 1978; Riches 1986). The good news, perhaps, is that multi-disciplinary approaches have helped numerous researchers move

away from functionalist explanations about conflict, a theoretical or methodological

perspective that once tried to understand conflict as if it were a mere piece of a

discernable puzzle, a cog in a larger, supposedly self-balancing "system." Instead of

function (the way a society supposedly "works"), newer approaches now see conflict in

terms of locally constructed meaning(s). As a consequence, researchers draw increasingly

upon more sophisticated and complex models or theories to underscore the importance of

human interaction out of which agents or actors give rise to meaningful "worlds" (or

spheres of significance).

Unwittingly or deliberately, "worldmaking" efforts can be negative or

detrimental when and where agents seek to destroy persons and property, creating any

number of victims and vicissitudes. Nevertheless, "world- making" suggests a social

process or expressive means through which structures (and agency) acquire meaning,

something akin to what the ancient Greeks used to refer to as a "poesis." In modern

anthropological parlance, *poesis* refers to an expression based upon meaningful symbols

that point to a certain reality in human experience (Whitehead 2004). The 'things' of

expressive culture (life-ways, ideas, etc.) are what members of a community reproduce

and tend to conserve, celebrate, and propagate as 'things' imputed to be valuable. Poesis

means re-presenting a social reality, however real or imagined. If poesis tells us *what,*

and perhaps something of *why* human beings re-present a social reality, *mimesis* (mimetic

desire) suggests *how* it happens in the first place. Imitation as copying, appropriation,

borrowing, even stealing, or pirating, suggests a socialization process where life-ways are

inculcated. Not always factored, however, are the competitive implications of imitative

desire–especially when copying or stealing the material or ideological interests of others.

Concluding Remarks

To summarize my basic theoretical construct of *imitative desire as practice*--by which I am combining the views of Girard (1979), Harrison (2006), and Ortner 2006)--it is a composite notion about what drives or motivates social actors. It looks at why they pursue certain "objects" (material or psychosocial) as exemplified (embodied, but more importantly, enacted) in the practice or agency of others who in some fashion serve as model or mediator (whether earthly or supernatural, ideal or real, far away or near).

Throughout this chapter on theory, I have emphasized Girard's basic understanding of imitative desire as an interdividual dynamic of non-autonomous action that stresses intersubjective influence. This dynamic does not depend upon the volition of individual agent but rather upon what happens between interacting agents (models and subjects). The interdividual dynamic is constitutive of a non-static social matrix of interacting practices among multiple actors. Imitative desire shapes and evolves any number of choices that people foster or foment through mediated (modeled) exchanges (politically, economically and thus socially and culturally). Politics and economics, as with social customs and cultural institutions, are not things that just exist on their own. Even when origins are unknown, such things still emerge. They take shape over time as actors constantly seek to acquire or appropriate 'objects of desire,' that is to say constituted desires. Modern advertizers, like war propaganda machines, have long known the power of imitative desire, though perhaps not understanding its full complexity (Belk et al 2003; Girard 2009; Oughourlian 2010). So too, the "worldmaking" of the Tzotzil Chamula is something comprised by what acting subjects find motivating or of some interest to them as they desire drives or interests of other people who seek certain objects or objectives (something more than needs and wants of the human biological condition that will always precede the formation of desire).

92

More than simply basic needs and wants in the material condition of natural beings, desire is that quality of human agency that is not innate (like instinct). It is, rather, something socially produced and culturally mediated and thus not mere human autonomy or will, but the result of inter-subjective social interaction. How desires are encouraged or thwarted is a question of habitus and the spheres of influence within which acting subjects learn life-ways or practices. Practice, as power relations (Ortner 2006) complements the notion of mimetic desire and how actors seek (or not) new spheres of influence as they appropriate the desires they find attractive in other people. As mimetic interactions (copying, appropriation) inspire or encourage "worldmaking" activity it configures Tzotzil "peoplehood" as a constantly changing social reality. In the next chapter, I explore historical dimensions of identity formation among Maya Tzotzil groups and communities, focusing especially on experiences of the Tzotzil Chamula, of Chiapas, Mexico.

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER 2

1 For an extensive analysis of relatively recent conflicts in San Juan Chamula municipality, see the human rights report *Donde muere el Agua*. For indigenous conflicts more generally, either in Chiapas or elsewhere in Mexico two outstanding examples of analysis may be found in the ethnographic work of are Dennis (1987) and Greenberg (1989).

2 See Riches 1986; Stewart and Andrew Strathern 2002, 2006; and Whitehead 2004; 2006.

3 For fieldwork situations in Chiapas, see the important fieldwork account of Earle and Simonelli (2005); for a more general understanding of the qualitative approaches that constitute much of what is current ethnographic research today, see R. H. Bernard (2002).

4 According to R. H. Bernard (2002:19-27), interpretive approaches reflect much of current research on the patterns and variables of social conflict and violence.

5 Myrdene Anderson (2004:292) explores the issue in terms of "genres" and "worlds" of violence, terrorism exemplifying these categories. She urges researchers to pay attention to the ways and means of expression, the settings, because reductive (causal) and linear constructions of social violence explain little. Scholars are better off embracing a nuanced appreciation of the complexity of cultural dynamics.

6 For example, Elwert, Feuchtwang and Neubert (1999) analyze different kinds of group or collective violence as social phenomena, warfare being the most obvious example.

7 Sociologists Barkan and Snowden (2000) present an interesting typology in their discussion of the different types of "collective violence." This form of violence is quite distinct from the popular notion that violence is something done by individuals and is usually interpersonal in nature.

8 Bourdieu and Passerson 1990[1977]) develop a similar distinction with a sociological understanding of "symbolic violence." In a sense that recalls ideas from Antonio Gramsci, these authors emphasize hegemonic influences. Hegemony, in Gramsci's sense, involves an interpolating set of assumptions that dominate and thus shape "everyday" thought and action, which serves many interests and power relations of the ruling classes. Bourdieu's understanding of symbolic violence indicates how cultural schemes produce and are constantly under production by certain structural configurations of power relations in society. Violence in this sense is reproductive through unconscious mutual reinforcement.

9 See Ota 2002; cf. Fox and King 2002: 62-63; Kahn 1989.

10 See Pierre Bourdieu's general theory of practice (Bourdieu [1977] 1990). This theory attempts to distance anthropology from the polar traps of rational choice theory and behaviorism.

11 *Culturalist* notions echo the symbolic perspective of many anthropologists who, like Geertz (1975:89) argue that the concept of culture "denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions, expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life."

12 For a general discussion of human motivation issues in terms of psychological anthropology, see D'Andrade and Strauss (eds) (1992).

13 On the "anthropology of experience" see Bruner and Turner (1986); Turner and Schechner (1986); LeVine (1961).

14 See, for example, Clifford and Marcus (1986); Fox and King (2002); D. C. Moore (1994).

15 See, for example, *Terror and Violence* (2006)--a compilation of critical essays edited by Strathern, Stewart and Whitehead.

16 Some of the best analyses of the relation between subjectivity and violence are found in Kleinman et al (1997) and Das et al (2000; 2001). The focus on subjectivity, however, is reminiscent of earlier efforts developed in *the anthropology of experience*, beginning with the extended case-study method of Victor Turner (1968; 1986). Although Turner began with accounts of community conflict as 'social drama,' his theory embraced a wider concern for ritual interactions within a general social matrix.

17 Interesting work in the area of "cultural poetics" include Clifford and Marcus (1986); and Limón 1986. Finnegan (2002: 427) addresses the emergent contribution of the poetic approach for anthropology.

18 The original seminar title was "Culture and Conflict: The Poetics of Violent Practice" and took place in Santa Fe, New Mexico, April 28-May 2, 2002. Participants included Kenneth M. George, Pradeep Jeganathan, Mark Seltzer, Stephen Ellis, Alex Hinton, Christopher C. Taylor, Kay Warren, Begonia Aretxaga, Veena Das and Neil L. Whitehead.

19 Whitehead (2000) explores these new approaches in an essay: "Hans Staden and the Cultural Politics of Cannibalism." Hispanic American Historical Review 80 (4): 721-51. See also Whitehead (2009:2), where he points out that the thematic emphasis today for informed ethnographic approaches is on the meaningful and performative aspects of violence, the subjective experience of violence, and the ways in which perpetrators might be considered cultural agents.

20 Regarding "interaction," I am in part borrowing this concept from Erving Goffman's ideas (1959, 1967) that expand upon the initial insights of G. H. Mead and others.

21 For example, Schroder and Schmidt (2001:5) identify reasoning along these lines in the work of George Elwert (1999). "[He] has proposed the term 'markets of violence to describe those arenas of a long-term violent interaction, unrestrained by overarching power structures and mitigating norms, where several rational actors employ violence as a strategy to bargain for power and material benefits".

22 See perspectives from Krohn-Hansen 1994 and Layton 1997 [Ch. 4], pp 98-126.

23 Jenkins (1997: 13-14) offers the following basic social anthropological model of ethnicity:

Ethnicity is about cultural differentiation identity … a dialectic between similarity and difference;

Ethnicity is centrally concerned with culture—shared meaning—but it is also rooted in, and to a considerable extent the outcome of, social interaction;

Ethnicity is no more fixed or unchanging than the culture of which it is a component or the situations in which it is produced and reproduced;

Ethnicity as a social identity is collective and individual, externalized in social interaction and internalized in personal self-identification.

24 For biographical materials on the life and work of René Girard, see Fleming 2004; Golsan 2001; Kirwin 2004; Williams 1996.

25 See extensive discussions of multi-disciplinary applications of *mimesis* in Golsan 2001; Hurley and Chater 2005; Potolsky 2006.

26 See the ethnographies by Blok 2001; Feldman 1991; Taylor 2004; Taussig 1993.

27 The notion of "culture" in anthropology is highly debated. Fox and King (2002) delineate challenges to its definition as symbols, values, representations; or where culture means something that resides in the mind in contrast to socially transmitted behaviors. See also Kahn 1989; R. G. Fox 1991; Ortner 1999.

28 For related theoretical views, see Giddens (1979, 1984). For an ample critique of Bourdieu's theory, see Jenkins 1992. For a similar critique of Giddens, see Sewell (1992).

29 *Habitus* is a sociological notion originally found in the observations of Durkheim's disciple, Marcel Mauss, connecting the sense of the body people carry to and from situations of culture. Pierre Bourdieu and later Thomas Csordas (cf. Lindholm 2001: 198) appropriate the notion.

30 This is a paraphrase from Edgar and Sedgwick (2002:30).

31 For examples of this consensus, see: Avruch 2001; LeVine 1961, Riches 1986; Krohn-Hansen 1994, 1997; Schmidt & Schroder 2001; Strathern and Stewart 1999; Whitehead 2004, 2009.

-- the image of a world full of people so passionately fond of each other's cultures that they aspire only to celebrate one another does not seem to me a clear and present danger; the image of one full of people happily apotheosizing their heroes and diabolizing their enemies alas does.

-- Clifford Geertz, "The Uses of Diversity"
Available Light, 2000:86

Chapter 3

THE TZOTZILETIK

This chapter presents a circumscribed portrait of an ethnic grouping of peoples who recognize themselves as the *Tzotziletik* (also spelled Tsotsiletik) of Chiapas, Mexico. Curiously, because the root word "Tzotzil" quite literally means "hair," with some historical speculation it is possible to imagine how this term once mimetically indexed a now forgotten collective attempt at self-ascription (or ascription by strangers). It is reasonable to ponder how the "hairy ones" or Tzotziletik reflect a fundamental experience of identification over time during which they eventually "put on" or wear a new fashion, or new way of life, following the arrival of the *chij* (sheep) first brought to Chiapas by the Spanish. Sheep hair and wild cotton fibers were and still are used by the native peoples of highland Chiapas for traditional clothing and other woven products.

Interpreting the "Hairy Ones"

There are some 10 major municipalities across the highlands of Chiapas in which various dialects of the Tzotzil language are spoken. These communities have developed distinctive ways of life in terms of expressive traditions and customs, much of which has solidified into consistent forms of local or regional self-ascription. The Tzotzil Chamula, for example, is the largest self-identified group. In recent decades, many Chamula have migrated and now live near but also far beyond their traditional center, the major indigenous township of San Juan Chamula, located just north of the city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. The next largest of the Tzotzil groups in Chiapas are the Zinacantecos who,

like the Chamula, claim distinctive life-ways and beliefs. Using a self-ascription that possibly goes back to the pre-Conquest period the Tzotzil of Zinacantan municipality call their selves the *Tzotsleb* or "los murcielegos" (the people of the bat).[1]

To adequately explore ethnicity as a pronounced aspect of identification for the Tzotziletik we will need to get some idea of whom the Tzotzil are (or seem to be), both in the past and in the present. This is important because many images and ideas regarding the Tzotzil once prevalent a half a century ago still linger (e.g., Pozas 1962 [1944], 1977 [1947]). Superficial or non-critical descriptions of the Tzotzil abound because of constantly re-published materials such as popular ethnographic monographs, government reports, tourist propaganda, and as a number of novels and films.[2] Indubitably, the truth is a more complex story of continuity and change, a history of experiences forged by contention and anguish over half a millennium, if not more. As we learned in the previous chapter, theorists argue that ethnic identity formations are often both the product and the producer of a range of conflict situations. This chapter aims to explicate aspects of Tzotzil identity development in relation to experiences of conflict and violence.

Chapter Overview

To challenge enduring descriptions and impressions of the Tzotziles, the chapter begins with anthropological notions of "ethnicity." It then moves to an historical interpretation of how Tzotzil identity may have developed over time, especially in contexts of conflict. By "conflict" I mean situations of social discord that not only have actors responding to inter-ethnic tensions but also intra-ethnic situations, especially at a familiar level of local rural villages or communities. Understanding ethnicity in anthropological terms as a processual or diachronic phenomenon is important if we are to consider the Tzotzil as distinctive groups of people. Such a consideration begs the question of how ethnic boundaries and distinctions arise in the first place.

In examining self-differentiation among the Tzotzil, I inquire into the way some employ social categorizations in struggles to acquire what Girard might see as the same object of desire. Applying insights from Jenkins (1997) and other theorists of ethnicity, I consider further how Tzotzil identity is in many ways mimetic, that is to say imagined within a certain cultural context of imitative desire and accordingly invented, created, and consequently embodied in the "habitus" of delimiting socio-cultural practices.

The chapter ends with a consideration of Tzotzil modernity in terms of individual life stories that reflect the complex influences of mimetic desire. Each example provides a tangible and visible form of Tzotzil agency today, and thus serves as a kind of metonymic device by which to generalize what it means "to be Tzotzil" at the dawn of the 21st century.

Anthropological Notions of "Ethnicity"

Many scholars today tend to think of "identity" and "difference" as distinct realities (sameness vs. what is not the same). Differences that mark people or groups apart from others are often emphasized as a way to define a particular identity. However, explanations of ethnic situations of conflict based solely upon a "difference paradigm" are not enough.[3] Those who study identity and emphasize particularity and individuality often neglect larger anthropological issues of collectivity and similarity. What constitutes a given temporal social reality may owe its existence to fraught relations of similarity, sameness, or competing resemblances among members of a group or a community. Such situations generate more conflict than any long recognized differences, even when new boundaries, or redefinitions of identity develop. But how do these differences make their appearance initially?

Harrison (2006) and Jenkins (1997, 2008) have argued that ethnic differences (differentiated identities) develop initially from a perceived lack of difference or what is a

crisis of "too much resemblance." In this next section, I want the reader to consider

sameness as a problem for the relative homogenous Tzotziletik. The objective is to

understand identity as a formative process. However, before looking closely at Tzotzil

struggles regarding identity formation (and thus how they relate to issues of conflict and

strife), it might be helpful to examine first the very concept of "ethnicity."

Ethnicity as a Concept: A Little History

The term "ethnicity" first acquired strategic significance for the social sciences in

the 1960s (Govers and Vermeulen 1997:3).[4] At that time, some scholars tried to look

beyond ethnicity and challenge various discourses of identity (assumptions about class,

gender, etc., regardless of whether these are relevant analytical categories or

parameters).[5] Eventually, the wide adoption of ethnicity in academic publications reflects

an attempt among scholars to modify earlier presuppositions about what properly

constitutes a tribe, a national group, or "a people." This attempt to modify academic

discourse meant that scholarly ascriptions designed to name discrete units of culture had

to be reframed, redefined, and constantly made to fit a unified national culture agendas.

Lie (2004:145) notes that the analytical concept of ethnicity helped to shift

discourse from preoccupations with "inclusionary identity of delimited territory" to more

concrete discussions about actual groups of people. "Peoplehood," he says, (2004:145):

> conveys both a positive and negative capability. The formal and nominal
> character of peoplehood identity enables it to account for distinct and
> disparate realities. If modern peoplehood is a product of cultural and
> status integration, then incomplete integration accounts for no national
> identities, usually expressed as racial, ethnic, or national minorities.
> Normative and deviant, or majority and minority, identities are
> relationally constituted. The incomplete integration of peoplehood is the
> structural source of racism.

The shift to peoplehood and away from concepts like tribe or nation or ethnic

group would eventually mean good news for peoples like the Tzotzil and other

indigenous groups. Moreover, in their respective cultural histories there was always more

change than continuity, despite the many reductive and essentialist studies that have popularized certain images of Chiapas' indigenous peoples (Rus 2004:199). This terminological shift represented an attempt to better name what was and remains a profound experience for many people at once. This sense of belonging was forged over time as a collective or accumulative experience; that is to say, a shared sense of identity wrought by inter-subjective imitative interactions (albeit circumscribed by centuries of oppressive social situations and political and economic structures).

A good example of the discursive challenge I have just described comes from Mexico. Following the anthropological critique of nationalism by Bonfil (1996 [1989]), even "the Mexicans" currently ponder how to ascribe a common sense of ethnicity. Did they or do they pertain to a "profound Mexico" (accepting their Indian heritage with pride)? Or do they belong to an "imaginary Mexico" (forgetting Mexico's Indian past or present, real or imagined, wishing to forge instead a "modern" nation, a "new race" of mixed-bloods only (i.e., mestizos)?[6]

To understand the habitus of Tzotzil peoplehood today requires critical reflection about significant historical junctures, key moments that have helped to define Tzotzil identities and that of many indigenous groups throughout Mesoamerica. When inquiring up-close about "Indians" in Mexico, many first-time observers, bystanders, and sightseers seem predisposed to find some sort of "living remnant" from a bygone past (Van den Berghe 1994). To disappoint such predispositions, instead of "Maya ruins" I want to reflect upon the difficult historical reality of "ruined Mayas" and their determined capacity for "worldmaking."

Does Ethnicity Suggest Sameness or Difference?

Perhaps one way to understand the Tzotzil capacity to make and re-make their own worlds (and that of "Others") is to look at the meaning of community, or what

people have in common rather than difference. Jenkins (2008:25) describes the challenge

for understanding the dynamics of community and identity:

> There are pressing public issues that are simply not addressed by
> proclaiming the positivities of difference, or arguing for tolerance and
> pluralism. They concern collective belonging, collective disadvantage
> and, not least, the relationship between freedom to be different, on the
> one hand, and equality and collective responsibility, on the other.
> Thinking about these issues—none of which is either new or simple—
> requires a model of identification that places similarity and difference at
> its heart, on an equal footing with each other.

Jenkins (2008:22) argues that even though a notion of difference helps for knowing

who's who, it is not enough to have identity denote relationships of similarity or

resemblance. If anything, "similarity and difference" should always be thought of

together, each implying the other.

For Jenkins (2008:23), foregrounding difference simply underestimates the

reality and significance of human collectivity: "Whatever else might be involved in

knowing who's who, it is undeniably a matter of similarity and solidarity, of belonging

and community, of "us" and "we." In this, as in other respects, the focus on difference

arguably flies in the face of the observable realities of the human world." Apparently, the

social reality of the Tzotzil is as much about solidarity and belonging as it is about not

belonging, that is to say, those interactions that produce an acute sense of difference

through denials of resemblance regarding what Others "do."

When thinking about how much difference constitutes ethnic conflict, it seems

certain to say that there are at least two dimensions: intra- and inter-ethnic kinds of

conflict. Although each dimension may appear to operate with similar dynamics of

exchange and reciprocity, mirroring and competing, intra-ethnic conflict is not really the

same experience as when discord arises from inter-ethnic struggles (Horowitz 2001).

Peoplehood: The Experience of Ethnicity

The Tzotzil Chamula have in recent decades become something of a useful

globalized "poster child" for promoting all things "indigenous" in the state of Chiapas

(Gossen 1999b; Morfeld 2000; Van den Berghe 1994). In a number of ways, they have

come to represent a dominant and highly visible ethnic identity group circulating in the

major town of San Cristóbal de Las Casas (though still highly concentrated in the

neighboring ethnic municipality of San Juan Chamula). Historically, the Chamula have

served as a convenient labor reservation for the Spanish, the criollos, and the ladinos of

San Cristóbal de Las Casas, as well as the foreign interests that established many coastal

plantations in Chiapas (see Rus 2010).

Perhaps a more down-to-earth term than "ethnicity" for describing a sense of

belonging to a larger group of people is "peoplehood." It seems an appropriate term for

representing those who share a certain measure of semblance grounded in familiar every-

day situations or common historical experiences. Indeed, the notion of "peoplehood"

seems less technical and more directly social and culturally meaningful than the abstract

notion of "ethnos" or ethnic/ethnicity.[7]

On this point I agree with John Lie (2004:4), who muses on the philosophical

implications of modern peoplehood:

> most contemporary discussions of identity are about people's social
> belonging and the meaning attached to it. Rather than the disembodied
> mind or genetic engineering, the animating concern is decidedly less
> abstract and lower tech. Put simply, it is about what it means to say that
> one is French or Fulanik, or woman or gay or disabled. It queries one's
> sense of self and probes the significance of one's social identification.

Lie complicates the notion of peoplehood with a realistic assessment of its contradictions.

We all come from ancestors, he argues (2004:67), but how we define them is not obvious.

> If the search for roots confuses human beings with plants and confounds
> the constant mobility and hybridity of our ancestors, then the same
> cautionary note applies to territorial claims. As preposterous as it may

seem, after a few generations, some U.S. Midwesterners say they are "native" Americans. Yet, as Randolph Bourne (1964:109) observed in 1916: 'We are all foreign-born or the descendants of foreign-born, and if distinctions are to be made between us they should rightly be on some other ground than Indigenous ness.' Even Native Americans were new settlers in North America not so long ago…. People do not spontaneously generate from the earth. Claims of aboriginality, indigeneity, and nativity mask movements and conquests of the past.

Despite any "masking of the past" (even though this would seem hard to do considering that people began settling the Americas some 20, 000 years ago when Europe was mostly covered in ice), concepts like "ethnicity" or "indigeneity" are referential concepts that anthropologists find still useful.[8] If they remain problematic constructs (perhaps more useful for categorizers than for the categorized) it may be because claims about particularity can hide the conflict prone social processes of interaction that brought them into existence in the first place.

Historical Precedents to Experiences of Conflict

To understand how Maya communities in Chiapas and elsewhere have become what they are in modern times,[9] we need to appreciate how historical experiences have gradually shaped what it means to be a Tzotzil generally and, in particular, a Tzotzil Chamula. Moreover, it is important to locate the Chamula as a major ethnic group within the greater context of Mexico's national society (cf. Chance 1979; Gutiérrez 1998). To comprehend this historical development I invite the reader to consider a few of the many key historical periods that have forged complex and varied expressions of Tzotziletik ethnicity (cf. Wasserstrom 1983a:5).

The Tzotzil in Pre-Columbian and Colonial Periods

Edward Calnek (1962:9) tells us that at the time of the Spanish Conquest highland Chiapas was divided into small, warring petty states governed by local nobles aligned with the resurgent Chontal dynasty from the small but significant island of Cozumel (off the coast of Yucatan, with influence in Tabasco).[10] Under Chontal control,

indigenous towns in between the Tabasco region and the highlands of Chiapas became important points of trade en route to and from Guatemala and central Mexico. "What the Spanish soldiers found when they arrived in Chiapa," observes Wasserstrom (1983:9) "was a mosaic of 'ethnic states', which occupied distinctly different territories and environments." In terms of "ethnic conflict," it is interesting to note that under Chontal control, the Chiapaneca people who existed more than 500 years ago were not only harassing the Zoque to the west and north of the Grijalva River in the Chiapas central valley, but had put under their thumb the highland Maya peoples as well. The Chiapanecas were apparently something of a bellicose group who constantly made war on their neighbors. This, at least, is how they are imagined according to Bernal Díaz de Castillo who was part of the first Spanish expedition to reach the region in 1524 under Captain Luis Marín.

If we can trust Díaz's report,[11] the Chiapanecas had a reputation for pillaging wherever they might take captives. Along the major trade route to Tehuantepec (present day Isthmus of Oaxaca), these supposedly war-prone people assaulted merchants traveling from one province to another and thus frequently interrupted the flow of commerce (cf. Wasserstrom 1983:9-10). The point I wish to emphasize here is that "Indian vs. Indian" dynamics is not something that began with the arrival of the Spaniards. The applicability of the "ethnicity" concept to the self-awareness of indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica before the European Conquest period seems clear (Berdan et al. 2008; Field 2005). However, intra-ethnic conflict is not necessarily or always the by-product of "inter-ethnic" conflict. But were we to assume a sense of similitude or resemblance among indigenous of pre-Columbian times, then perhaps the notions of "intra-ethnic" competition, rivalry, and group formation would help explain the nature of internecine conflict in former times.

Beginning in the 1540s, Chamula and other groups were forced by the Dominicans and Spanish authorities to form *reducciones*. This process aimed to create useful administrative entities later known as pueblos (populations or towns) in which dispersed Indian hamlets and households were concentrated into highly organized population centers protected by the royal authority (Wasserstrom 1983a:14). Centuries later Tzotzil identity remains jealously local, territorially specific, and competitive.

Since the 19th century, Tzotzil locations are usually differentiated in terms of a civic territory demarcations, for example a *municipio* (township or county), or even more specifically in reference to the place where one was born and raised, and above all where one or more generations of a person's family have settled upon particular tracts of land.

While being from a specific place is important this has not precluded centuries of migratory movement (Gossen 1983, 1999b; Rus 2003; Rus and Rus in press, n.d.; Wasserstrom 1978). Hence, the *batzi' vinik/antz* (original men/women) will usually self-identify themselves not as "the Tzotzil" (as though they belonged to some integrated tribal structure of fixed lineages), but in terms of references or markers much more local and specific. The modern variety of Tzotzil "identities" has become the following: Chamula (from San Juan Chamula), Zinacantecos (from Zinacantán), as Andreseros (from San Andrés Sak'am ch'en), Pedranos (from San Pedro Chenalhó), and so on. Even then, members who belong to these municipios find even stronger identities in terms of their local hamlet or village or ejido (agrarian collective). Since 1992, and certainly with the displacements that came after 1994, even this identification structure has begun to change under social and cultural pressures, including long-distance migrations and land privatization.

The colonial and modern periods seem little different if viewed as a painful economic and political history. Groups often contended for certain "objects of desire,"

106

that is, struggled for interests or advantages that appeared to be important at the time. Certain objects became desirous because of the way other indigenous (or, for that matter, non-Indians) would act in relation to them. What Spaniards or ladinos imputed as having worth or value would eventually become something imitable (or enviable) for indigenous themselves. Equally, Spaniards would often imitate Indian values, life-ways, or beliefs.

Rus et al. (2003:2-3) point out that beginning in the late nineteenth century, many Tzotzil workers suffered from a period of dependence on tropical plantation agriculture. However, "before that, the state was an isolated region in which the owners of large underdeveloped estates made their incomes mostly from cattle, sugar, and grains that they produced with Indian labor conscripted from nearby villages." Throughout the 19th century, the relative apartheid-like situation of Indian towns in the highlands allowed a powerful minority ladino population to survive economically, socially, and culturally in terms of consolidated power, privilege, and pecuniary priorities. According to Rus et al. (2003:3), during the Porfiriato period beginning in the 1880s, socio-economic conditions throughout southern Mexico began to change and even prosper, requiring more indigenous labor force for the production of goods for wider markets. By the time of President Lazaro Cardenas in the 1930s, economic stagnation began to change rapidly within the state of Chiapas. Before Cardenas' time, however, small cities within Chiapas had long been heavily dependent on Indians for their livelihood, "collecting civil and religious taxes from them and re-circulating the agricultural and artisan products that indigenous people traded on highly unfavorable terms in the town's markets. In sum, Chiapas was a closed, largely stagnant backwater."

Throughout most of the 20th century, Chiapas' landowners and producers prospered. Foreign investment helped establish large plantations at the turn of the century, mobilizing indigenous laborers as a valuable resource. Forced into debt-

servitude, robbed of their ancestral lands, the Tzotzil, especially the Chamula, were

forced to migrate in search of wage work to supplement their subsistence efforts. As Rus,

Mattiace and Hernández (2003:3) point out, from the 1870s until the 1970s, land poverty

forced native peoples to seek work outside their home territories. By the early 1970s,

> some eighty thousand Indigenous men, out of a total of 100 thousand –
> were moving around the state each year from one harvest to another. Even
> the agrarian reform, which finally came to most of Indian Chiapas in the
> late 1930s, had failed to remedy this dependence. On the contrary, since
> over time the land returned to the communities barely kept pace with
> population increases, the net effect of land reform was actually to keep
> Indigenous people tied down where they were. They always had just
> enough land to make it hard for them to abandon their communities
> altogether but not enough to let them be self-sufficient. Essentially,
> radical dispossession, followed by carefully rationed land reform, ensured
> for almost 100 years that Chiapas' Indigenous communities would
> provide a regularly increasing labor supply to the state's steadily
> expanding agriculture. [Stavenhagen, 1975; Wasserstrom, 1983]

The history of labor in Chiapas calls to mind Benjamin (1996) and his pithy

description of the state as a "rich land of poor people" that refers to an abundance of

natural resources but with limited access to use or distribution. A relatively inexpensive

labor force of Indians was for several centuries a "natural" resource taken-for-granted,

one that soon became a significant object of desire and competition among plantation

owners and other actors in agricultural centers throughout Chiapas.

This Tzotzil history of adverse experiences is all the more significant in mimetic

terms, when the oppressed become the oppressors beginning in the 1930s. Under the

impetus of President Cardenas, many bi-lingual indigenous teachers began to transform

their communities in ways that modeled the politics and economic power of the ruling

party itself–the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). This identity related to power

was embodied in the practices of local ladinos in Chiapas. As certain indigenous began to

rise in PRI rank and status as well as in obtaining positions of authority and control

within their own communities vis-à-vis the Mexican state, situations of strife began to

spread due to competitions for power and status within and outside what many once presumed were simply "closed and corporate" communities (Rus 1994).

The Maya Tzotzil: The True People

One could make an argument that Maya Tzoztil "ethnicity" per se does not really exist, at least not in any expected or consistent shape, or any lasting form. In many ways, "ethnicity" is more of an idea than a "thing." Observers might wish to point to some extant entity, like a corporation, for example, some identifiable, coherent, and well-defined membership, a social reality bound together by clear rules and enduring agreements. Although prior the 1970s there was a time when many scholars thought such an indication possible, today most ethnographers seem to think otherwise. In looking at the complexity of ethnicity in places like Chiapas, many scholars would argue that it is a futile exercise to attempt defining a particular culture (or cultures) as though it could be examined as a discrete and consistent unit.[12]

In coming up with adequate descriptions of "the Tzotzil" most observers have stopped looking to name or define a singular Maya entity, preferring instead to see something of a plurality. So, as mentioned previously, when speaking of Tzotzil peoples one might be speaking about the "Pedranos"--Tzotzil speakers from San Pedro Chenalho, or the Tzotzil Chamula who are from San Juan Chamula, or the Tzotzil Zinacantecos from Zinacantán, and so forth. Plurality better reflects what is a diverse association of people who have over time managed to differentiate themselves (or assimilate differentiations put upon them) and yet relate by speaking the mutually intelligible language of *batz'i k'op* or what translates as "true" or "original" speech.

Things get more complicated when we consider the customs and traditions of dress, or religious expression, or social organization. The ethnographer and linguist Robert Laughlin (1988 [1964]), principal author of *The Great Tzotzil Dictionary of Santo*

Domingo Zinacantan, while part of the Harvard Chiapas Project, noticed early that there was a great deal of variety and differences in the customs and beliefs of the "original" ones, the Tzotziles. Laughlin did his best to track and catalogue what was similar and where this or that practice and belief properly belonged, and so forth. The result was interesting, if perhaps tedious and ambiguous.

I see Tzotzil ethnicity, or "peoplehood," as the result of those social demarcations that emerge as groups vie for obtain power, protect vested interests, or pursue a desire only few can realize. Such a process of identity formation from conflicts recalls the sense of practice Ortner (2006) calls "serious games"–that interactive process or dialectic that over time shapes local or regional expressions of shared identity. Stark and Chance (2008:1) affirm the importance of a processual approach to understanding how identity-based groups emerge in Mesoamerica; "ethnicity" is something always highly salient, yet always expressed in a variety of ways. The concept of "peoplehood" provides a way to understand this salience even more since, as Lie suggested earlier, it is a flexible construct; a less determinative or definitional way of speaking.

Thus, it is important to understand that as a diverse group the Tzotziletik encompass a more diffuse social reality, one that shifts and reconfigures over time and across space (Rus 2002b). Making flexible ethnographic statements about Tzotzil groups is to see them as inter-related and always interactive. It means describing them in dialectical fashion and without "essentialist" terms that sweep across broad categories. The advantage of the construct of "peoplehood" is that ethnographic descriptions are non-static; the disadvantage of working with ambiguous ethnographic descriptions, while likely better quality or eloquence, it makes groups more difficult to categorize or describe for comparative purposes.

110

Functionalist Perspectives vs. Historical Views of Tzotzil Peoplehood

In 1978, Beatriz Andrea Albores Zárate published an important critical analysis of ethnographies about the Tzeltal and Tzotzil Maya of Chiapas. In a bold manner, her work effectively challenged the predominant structural-functionalist perspective in Mexican anthropology. This version of structural-functionalist approaches broke culture up into constituent "parts" such as its economic institutions (production skills and markets), political-religious institutions (like the traditional "cargo" system), its type of kinship system, its peculiar cosmology or vision of the world, and so forth. The fragmenting perspective of functionalism tended to inform and shape other views of indigenous circumstances; for example, government policy makers who could use it to advocate for the destruction of local customs and traditions because such apparent backwardness presented a stubborn obstacle to improved socio-economic development. By using an economic and historical analysis, Albores Zárate was able to breach the taken-for-granted truths of the functionalist paradigm and begin to diversify the myopic focus upon particular or discrete communities. Her approach linked socio-economic relations with larger regional issues of politics (power relations). In contrast, the functionalist's primary focus on local life-ways, while descriptive and often interesting, was not just incomplete but distorted the all too real situations of indigenous ways of life.

For decades, Tzotzil Chamula customs and traditions were analyzed in an isolated, ahistorical, and functionalist fashion, always under the presumption that their very existence as "living fossils" of a time past somehow constituted an ethnic entity that mysteriously had survived since the time of the Conquest. But to affirm the existence of pristine enclaves as though remnants of a practice and "cultural logic" of ancient Mesoamerica would mean that customs and traditions of modern Maya were basically unrelated to the political and economic nationalist agendas of the Mexican state (cf.

111

Joseph and Nugent 1994). The functionalist view was problematic for its uncritical synchronic perspective.

Mimetic theory can challenge such a perspective for the way it plays very seriously in the lives of native people. An interesting example of "mimesis at play" can be found in the suggestive representation of a J.D. Challenger's painting of a North American Indian, entitled *Medicine Man* (Figure 3.1).[13]
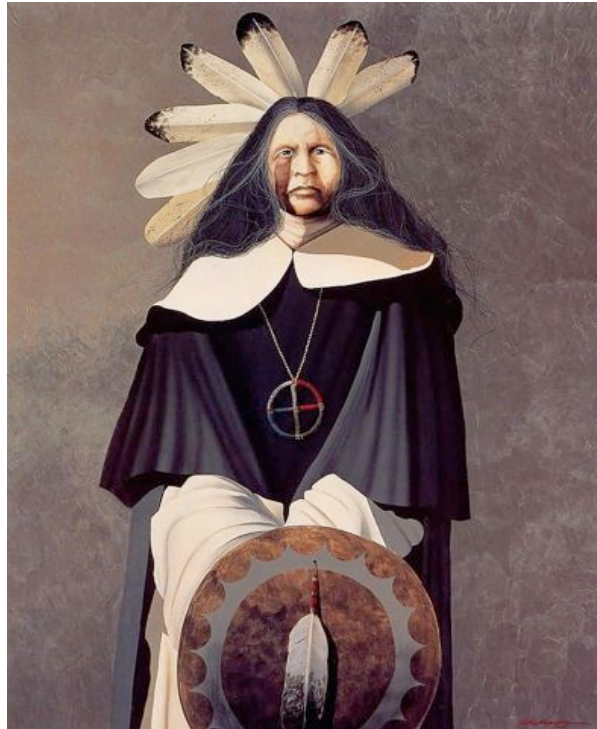
Figure 3.1 Ambiguities are Holy Dangerous: J.D. Challenger's Medicine Man. The image is a good example of appropriative mimesis, ambiguously re-presenting two historical realities. Does this image show a Dominican (represented by the religious habit) appropriating a Plains Indian (represented by shield, feathers, circle-cross of the four directions), or is it vice versa? Is this insult or praise? Good medicine or bad? Both/and more? Happy face or painful face? (image used with permission from the JDChallenger Foundation).

While the man depicted in Challenger's image is obviously not Chamula or Tzotzil, the ambiguous image (Dominican habit/Indian accoutrement) powerfully demonstrates the idea of imitative desire or an appropriative mimesis, suggesting a dual process of acquiring a symbolic good (power, medicine, the religious clothing/symbols of

the "Other") in what constitutes an ambiguous state. The visual symbolic ambiguity of Challenger's painting shows a "global flow" of "imaginal power" in two directions: Indian-Dominican friar <>Dominican friar-Indian. Challenger's striking image recalls a tenet from mimetic theory that says conflicts can likely arise when imitation and desire are conjoined as a practice of copying or otherwise appropriating (stealing) what belongs to someone else (trademarks, ceremonies, habitual clothing). Conflict is not obviated in the painting, but one could interpret its implicit or residual aspects (as in the tear flow of the right eye, or perhaps the warrior's shield). Appropriative mimesis means making as one's own what another "group"--appears to represent, possess, or own (as model/mediator of value/desire), whether materially or symbolically (as behaviors or ideas). Practices that reflect appropriation constitute a "serious game" amid players-- Ortner's (2006) term for the dynamics of power relations.

Let me turn now from the general anthropological notion of ethnicity to explore what this idea implies in terms of Tzotzil appropriations of available resources that help them construct a sense of identity.

The Tzotzil Monkey Men as Serious Players

The ritual clowns or "animators" known as *maxetik* or "Monkey Men" (Figure 3.2) provide an example of a world-making mimesis as a form of identity construction. When the maxes (pronounced "mawshes") are playful at community festivals they help members recall an ancient time of mythic destruction, when the gods cursed the incapacity of humans to think or act rationally, turning them thus into monkeys. The maxes also index the "monkey business" of more recent foibles in human history (Gossen 2002), dramatizing historical ethnic conflict at festivals. These monkey impersonators are common figures among the Maya of Zinacantan, San Juan Chamula, and in Chenalho. The Maxetik call attention to past periods of military campaigns, such as those of Mexico

113

and Guatemala during the 19th century. The max's festive costume is a montage of symbols that mirror impressions of the past, reflecting anamnesis or a recollection of experience(s) expressed in a stylized form (Bricker 1981:130).

Figure 3.2. *Maxetik* at Cemetery in Romerillo, San Juan Chamula, Chiapas. A Max (pronounced mawsh" in Tzotzil) represents an amalgam of past, present, and possible future conditions of human beings. Photo arranged by author (November 2008).

Throughout the year during festivals, the monkey impersonators appear mysteriously running about, making noises. Maxetik costumes and ritual practices seem almost like a "Disney-esque" version of history, that is to say, a colorful view full of animation and imagination. Analogically, the *maxetik* represent a host of characters related to many experiences of conflict and violence for the Chamula. Experiences of disjuncture and difference may reflect how those who are drawn to perform as *maxes* interpret their vocation. The subject matter they interpret and perform is at once similar but also distinct from other Tzotzil remembrances of "the past" (e.g., Zinacantan, Chamula, and Chenalho).[14] They sometimes play roles in ritualized historical dramas. During Semana *Santa* (Holy Week), for example, the *maxetik* act out Christian prejudices

against "the Jews" as the enemies of Christ and Christians, much as the Dominican friars

of a medieval church once taught their flocks. With respect to this particular role or

performance, Bricker (1981:130) observes that

> The Jew impersonators of Chamula wear headdresses of black howler-monkey fur. The rest of their costume is almost identical to the uniforms worn by French grenadiers during the period of the French intervention (Blom 1956:281; Martin 1963:118; 145 right). They wear black frock coats trimmed with a long red cross in back and wide horizontal red bands at the waist, wrists, and the bottom of the tails in back. These coast resemble French grenadier's dark blue uniforms faced with red . . . Chamulans call these jackets leva (draft), with reference to conscripted men or draftees. They recognize the costumes as soldier's uniforms and sometimes refer to the men wearing them by military titles such as Captain and General. The monkey-fur headdresses resemble the bear skin busbies worn by French grenadiers (and today by Buckingham Palace guards), except that they are conical rather than cylindrical, and the Jew impersonator's headdress has a monkey tail attached in back. But like the busby his headdress has a chin strap and is decorated with ribbons.

Bricker's analysis does not dwell on intra-ethnic conflict, however, but argues primarily

for a general pattern of inter-ethnic conflict in structuralism terms. According to her

research, Bricker contends (181:133) there exist an underlying motif:

> The towns differ in the conflicts portrayed during Carnival and in their choice of symbols to represent them. But the underlying structure in each case is one of ethnic conflict—warfare, death, rape, soldiers, weapons, fireworks, and the division of people into two groups: the conquerors and the conquered. The ritual of Carnival is historical drama, but drama which treats the history of ethnic conflict in symbolic terms. What is important in ritualized ethnic conflict is not the order of historical events, but the message communicated by their structure.

While Bricker presents an interesting thesis about Indians vs. non-Indians and a creative

anamnesis in historical dramaturgy, she does not seem to perceive how Monkey-men

compete with one another's styles.

As Gebauer and Wulf (1995:7) explain mimetic phenomena, they see it operating

by virtue of the changes it effects, thus making of one thing something "other." In the

case of the mashetik, men become monkeys and monkeys become men. The monkey, in

particular the howler, exhibits features that, at least for the ancient Maya if not the

present, suggest peculiar aspects of humankind. Thus their representations are close enough to substitute for the human; that is to say, they are analogous figures, enough to provoke both laughter and anxiety about what it really means to be a human being.

Bricker (1981) indicated earlier that the social role of the maxetik is a way to ritualize ethnic conflict. I certainly witnessed such a ritualizing dynamic when one older max from my community invited me to dress and dance with their group on several occasions during fieldwork (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3. *Day of the Dead*. Romerillo, San Juan Chamula, 2008. Participatory observation as "monkey business." Photo (November 2008), self-portrait by Author.

But more than just inter-ethnic conflict, it seems to me that what the monkey men represent most is the mimetic dilemma that afflicts just about every situation of human intercourse more generally, even if meant to point out the foolish aspects of the past with implications for local community members or situations. It is not clear how old this festive tradition of the maxetik really is for the Chamula. Its existence as an institution of Carnival may be similar to that of the non-antiquity many scholars once attributed to the "traditional" civil-religious cargo systems ubiquitous in much of Mesoamerica.[15] Many

116

customs that have become important to modern Chamula were actually inherited and reworked from colonial structures of the 19th century. One could reasonably speculate that all the fun and frolic of "monkey business" among the mashes of Chamula has as much to do with late 19th century Darwinian views of human evolution. This seems more likely than having anything to do with the more ancient Maya morality saga of the Popol Vu – the mytho-historical narrative about "intra-ethnic" conflict from post-classic times in the K'iche' Maya kingdom of Guatemala.

Indigenous communities seem particularly aware of how they are vulnerable and easily affected by ambition, greed, the mirroring of other's desires, not to mention the general foibles of violence resulting from envy.[16] Some of this foolishness is publically in evidence as the maxes run about in their uniforms and special hats that both resemble and mock European army fashion, with unfurled banners replete with spear points and crosses, all the while blowing their miniature trumpets as though sounding an attack or retreat. The monkeys stop and pace themselves to sing or dance at the Christian mass or around the graves of the deceased . . . all as if to say, mimetically, the grandiose affairs and wars of human beings (whether for material or spiritual 'objects of desire') are so much foolishness. Such stupidity can reduce humanity (again) to the condition of mere howling monkeys, shamelessly living like animals. Even texts of the Popol Vuh seem to mirror what for the K'iche' Maya was a perpetual bitter lesson to learn after fighting with many other Maya very similar to themselves.[17]

Expressions of Maya Tzotzil Ethnogenesis

Tzotzil expressions and life-ways in general have never been entirely unique, having much in common (style and content) with typical practices throughout Mexico. Mexican popular religious practices and syncretistic religious expressions have much in common with similar constructions found in Guatemala and Central America. For

117

instance, a Chamula curandero's style of a limpia (cleansing) is very similar to what

healers or "curanderos" do elsewhere in the regions that comprise "Mesoamerica." The

popular notion of a healing figure that for some reason many anthropologists refer to as

"Shaman" (a term, incidentally, migrating from northern Asia) is in Tzotzil roughly

equivalent to the practice or social role of the j-ilol (one who "sees") and who is a male or

female that can cure both visible and invisible illnesses.

In Chiapas, as in southern Mexico and Guatemala generally, the basic features of

healing practices and beliefs are more similar than different. Historically, these practices

pertain to spheres of a shared socio-cultural agency. Practices can be so similar that many

healers eventually find his or her self in competition for clients. If historically many

spiritual practices were never limited to particular groups (including non-Indians),[18] it

may explain why many practices of the Tzotzil have only a tenuous resemblance to

ancient forms and ideas. Identity formation must be understood, at least partially, in terms

of centuries of borrowing from "Others." However borrowed, modified, or meaningful a

practice of an *j-ilol* it is not just a creative interpretations of experience, but a mimetic

demonstration ethnogenesis.[19] The same mimetic spirit pertains to political practices ,

including social concerns where ideas or ideology does not necessarily appear as a shared

product born of cultural conformity. Linguistic anthropologist Laughlin (1964:152),

reflecting upon his observations from the 1960s, once showed a critical awareness about

Tzotzil diversity, and the importance of recognizing it from a diachronic perspective:

> At no time in recorded history have the Tzotzil formed a single political
> unit. The contemporary Tzotzil Indian still demonstrates a narrow
> allegiance to his community both by his dress and by his participation in
> a set of beliefs and practices specific to that community. Indeed a
> surprising diversity of beliefs (often conflicting) are held even by the
> members of the various hamlets that belong to a single corporate
> community. While Pan-Tzotzil traits may be discovered, blanket
> statements about Tzotzil cultural elements should be viewed initially
> with extreme skepticism.

To avoid offering "blanket statements about the Tzotzil" (or any other people), a diachronic perspective is important. Otherwise, it is simply difficult to grasp the meaningful variety of ethnic constructions that have emerged and continue to develop throughout Mesoamerica (e.g., Gossen et al. 1986; Köhler 2000, 2007; Mulhare 2000).

The complex process of mimetic interactions and associated practices that constitute a sense of belonging is ethnogenesis. This term refers to an historical process through which groups experience a delimited sense of ethnos or self-understanding as "a people" (cf. Restall 2004; Roosens 1989). For many Tzotzil, their sense of ethnicity is the result of many definitions or ascriptions that have been imposed upon them over time by exterior forces. The differentiation in traje or *batz'i k'u'il* (customary dress), for example, might represent ostensible remnant aspects of this imposition, part of the legacy from when Spanish Encomenderos would "brand" or visibly distinguish their group of Indians from others. Modern customary dress, however, can represent other interests as well, such as the elaborate embroidery of flowers that reflect the value and interests of Zinacanteco identity since the late 1970s when flower cultivation began to become a booming export industry (Greenfield 2004; Schevill 1997).

Domination notwithstanding, the Tzotzil have always struggled to be subjects of their own history, attempting to shape their own "worlds" or spheres of meaningful discourse and interaction; this struggle, in turn, also shapes processes of identification. Historically, the Tzotzil were never simply passive during the European (Spanish) invasion (Wasserstrom 1980:19-20); they were (and are) acting agents who have consistently had to play two or more roles, one at home and one in public (for Spaniards, ladinos, or for fellow community members). Understood diachronically, peoplehood or ethnicity is the product of multiple interactions. Practice theory (Ortner 2006) describes the process of ethnic "becoming" as the historical interplay of individuals with power

119

(symbolic or material, economic or representative) whose interactions give rise to both social structure(s) and socio-cultural agency. Nagel (1994:152) succinctly summarizes these dynamics in terms of two basic building blocks, identity, and culture:

> Through the construction of identity culture, individuals and groups attempt to address the problematics of ethnic boundaries and meaning. Ethnicity is best understood as a dynamic, constantly evolving property of both individual identity and group organization. The construction of ethnic identity and culture is the result of both structure and agency-a dialectic played out by ethnic groups and the larger society. Ethnicity is the product of actions undertaken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their self-definition and culture; however, ethnicity is also constructed by external social, economic, and political processes and actors as they shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions.

With the basic building blocks of ethnicity, individual actors, or groups of them, can interactively contrive some measure of an "identity culture."

Identity and cultural formation among the Tzotzil and other indigenous peoples of Chiapas and Mesoamerica, implies a great deal more than just "survivalism" as was once thought.[20] It is something more complexly wrought, the result of "worldmaking" interactions that draw upon available meanings and other resources (Psychosocial and/or material resources). "Resources" in this sense include, for example, language, customary or invented forms of social organization, religious ideas and practices, the strategic use of land area, labor skills, and perhaps most important of all, a certain imputed ability to use the "weapons of the weak" (cf. Scott 1985). In other words, to resist hegemonic control by non-Indian ladinos, the Chamula and other Tzotzil groups have had to employ time and again an imaginative and conspicuous use of available social and cultural resources.[21] What follows are some historical examples of this imaginative power and resourcefulness.

Tzotzil Ethnogenesis in the 18th Century

In briefly retelling the basic features of the 1712 Tzeltal Revolt (also known as the Cancuc rebellion), I want to emphasize several of its mimetic features. These

imitative aspects are important for understanding the social power of imitative

interactions as a dynamic of conflict production and as a major influence in identity

formation. Although a story about the Tzeltal, the impact of their rebellion affected

Tzotzil identity formation as well.

When told out loud, the story often begins with a young Tzeltal girl walking in

the forest on the edge of town, where she suddenly and miraculously comes upon a

physical image of the Virgin Mary, a venerable figure that apparently fell from heaven to

earth. However placed or mislaid by supernatural powers the young girl decided to take

possession of it. Soon the mysterious but venerable religious object was at the center of a

new and exciting cult, replete with its own chapel, market, and more.

The Virgin Mary and Ethnic Violence

What was perhaps most disturbing to local church and civil authorities about this

particular event in the early years of the 18th century was not so much that a chapel or

market had suddenly sprung up in an unauthorized manner, but the fact that this image,

the Virgin Mary no less, could actually communicate. Moreover, it apparently

communicated exclusively to and through a person of no status, the poor young Tzeltal

female whose name was known throughout the region as María López de La Candelaria.

Expressing a divine desire, the Virgin spoke to the youth in the following fashion

(Wasserstrom 1983a:81):

> I, the Virgin who have descended to this Sin World call upon you in the
> name of Our Lady of the Rosary and command you to come to this town
> of Cancuc and bring with you all the silver of your churches and the
> ornaments and bells, together with the communal funds and drums and all
> the books of the confradías, because now neither God nor King exists;
> and for this reason you must come immediately, for if you do not you will
> be punished for not coming when I and God called you.

At a time when the Tzeltal, like other indigenous in the region, were feeling

hardship from multiple impositions of the colonial system, these specific instructions

from the Virgin amounted to an inspiring mandate for an organized resistence. It was, for many, as though God had decided to hear the cry of the poor, and put a stop to the exaggerated and disproportionate economic tribute demanded from indigenous everywhere in Chiapas.

The subsequent indigenous revolt that began with precedents in 1708 among the Tzotzil revealing similar tensions of Saints images appearing out of nowhere, by 1712 had attracted the attention (if not the participation) of many indigenous villages and towns, including more Tzotzil groups than Tzeltal ones, according to Bricker (1981:61, 65). From 1712 to 1713, the Tzeltal of Cancuc and other towns in Chiapas were able to organize a major uprising against the army of the colonial authorities. During this time one Tzotzil leader seemed to have had substantial influence over the peculiar way events developed around imitative desires. This man was Sebastián Gómez "de la Gloria"--a Tzotzil speaker from the highland town of San Pedro Chenalho (Gosner 1992:125). Gómez turned himself into the presiding prelate (Bishop) and thus also the founder of an uncanny imitation of the Catholic Church, including copying its hierarchical organization of priests, Tzeltal men that he himself would ordain to serve the rebel church of the Virgin (Gosner 1992: 125-126; Wasserstrom 1980: 12-13; 1983b: 116). But the mimetic threat of the 1712 revolt was not caused by intolerable differences between "white and red" as Wasserstrom (1977) describes the inter-ethnic tensions of centuries between Indians and non-Indians in Chiapas, nor was it simply owing to expressions of heterodoxy; on the contrary, this was a mimetic crisis. Phenomenologically, rebel creativity in expressing inconformity contained too much similarity to key expressions of power and privilege that sustained the colonial system of religion and government, not to mention the symbolically rich and potent matters of commerce. The story of the Cancuc rebellion of 1712 has been examined from a number of different angles.[22] Although

scholars do not explicitly develop their insights on what happened around the mimetic features of the rebellion, to me the imitative aspects are an outstanding feature (e.g., Gosner 1992:124-126; Wasserstrom 1983b:116). Theorizing from the perspective of mimetic desire, I interpret the interactions of 1712 as underscoring how public form and feeling receives its shape through historically significant interdividual performances.

For the Tzeltal and Tzotzil peoples, these historical events and periods no doubt represented a creative (though often violent) expression. Through the artifice of communicating objects and "talking Saints," as well as the bold passions of acting subjects acquiring their desires from ladino and Indian agents of power the "new" world in the making was curiously something very much resembling the "old world." Some scholars prefer to imagine that the events of 1712 represent a "revitalization movement" (Gosner 1992:104, 163; following an idea from Anthony Wallace), while in fact it was more a movement of copying in order to resemble. In other words, it was a movement in which acquisitive and/or appropriative mimesis exploded, spreading in ways that not only copied religion and commerce, but also military forms of organization. The Tzeltal were able to form an organized army with marching flags, leaders called "Capitan" and "King," and more). Mimetically, the Tzeltal rebels of 1712 were similar to the later Tzotzil Chamula dissidents of 1869 of the so-called "caste war" in Chiapas. Both groups could draw upon available cultural resources, such as a long heritage of traditional ideas in Mesoamerica, such as the supernatural origins of secular power (Gosner 1992:144).

Considering the 1712 Revolt as Intra-ethnic Conflict

Girard has argued (1979) that when desire is coupled with imitation old or even ancient ideas can be attractive and perhaps transformative as a means to an end, especially when actors engage them or embody them in a competitive rivalry. The Tzeltal rebels were keen observers of the reality that surrounded them in the non-Indian world.

123

Consequently, they were keen imitators too (albeit putting their own stamp and style on the models or ideals construed as valuable or desirable for that period). Indeed, once violence was unleashed in the rebellion against the status quo in Chiapas of 1712, it was not long before the Tzeltal rebels had to fight not only their Spanish overlords, but other Indians too. They realized that to acquire power meant they had to be just as successful at warfare as the non-Indians were; only then would they be able to maintain control. The price was high; apparently the value of the prize was worth having to crush rival or non-conforming indigenous groups.

One such group was a competing religious cult of the Virgin who gathered next door in the Tzeltal town of Yajalón. Another competing effort arose when a rival indigenous version of Jesus Christ appeared in the northern Chol town of Tila. Perhaps fearing too much similarity (too much sameness despite the fact that the Chol, while certainly Maya and obviously indigenous, represented a distinct ethnic group), this counterfeit "Indian Christ" or imposter was brought to Cancuc for execution. According to Gosner (1992:135), these particular incidents pale in comparison to the violence where Maya castigated other Maya groups.

One way to understand this kind of intra-ethnic conflict in the middle of an inter-ethnic war is to see it within an historically situated "moral economy" where social options and cultural choices are delimited. For Gosner (1992:9), the moral economy of the Tzeltal at the dawn of the 18th century combined several kinds of socio-cultural dynamics, "the articulation of social norms, the principle of reciprocity, and the symbolic expression of community values," all of which served to mediate "not only relations between Indians and Spaniards but also inequalities among Indians themselves."

As Bricker (1981:62) describes the fateful conjuncture of 1712:

> The leaders of many towns were not moved by this ethnocentric reinterpretation of the Gospels and refused to join the confederation against the Spaniards. Such recalcitrance threatened to undermine the movement, whose best chance of success lay in presenting a united Indian front against the Spaniards. The "Soldiers of the Virgin" marched first against several Tzeltal towns which had refused to obey the summons from Cancuc.

The imitation of Spanish structures of power (church and military) was no doubt a clear goal for Tzeltal rebel leaders and other indigenous conspirators who were simply following the lead of their *Principales* (their local community leaders).[23]

Collectively, indigenous life in the colonial system had taught the Tzeltal leaders that religion is decisively established and maintained by means of violence. Equally obvious to the rebels was the fact that order and society in the early 18th century were achievable only by means of threat, cruelty, and public manifestations of humiliating punishment (and sometimes revenge). Less clear, perhaps, would have been any memory of ancient practice of Maya ancestors or what had once been their complex competing and quarrelsome city-state societies (Calnek 1962:9). But those rough and fierce days of former centuries might have paled in comparison to the more audacious performance of power displayed (modeled) in 1712 by Spanish authorities of church and state.

The mimesis of desire occurring in the 1712 conflict was embedded in what could be learned and copied (e.g., tributary "objects" of value deemed all the more desirable by Spanish overlords who seem to want to possess them more than anybody else). Moreover, it must have been an integral part of everyday *habitus*, that is to say, the growing social dispositions of interactions forming a new class of would-be elites. They were all vying for a place in the sun within early 18th century colonial society in Chiapas. Mimesis, or rather "imitative desire" explains how the indigenous of this time and place knew how to organize a new society, even to the point of boldly declaring "the death of

God and King" (if only to recreate these 'things' again for their own ends, their own competing desires).

Tzotzil Ethnogenesis in the 19th Century

A little more than a century after the Tzeltal Revolt of 1712 the ladinos of Chiapas were to witness yet another threat of similarity, this time in the late 1860s. Embedded within a context of inter-regional conflict are telling incidents of intra-ethnic discord and strife. The struggles of the mid-19th century were characterized by a mimetic crisis in which Indians had apparently once again come to very much resemble those who represented the dominant "model" that defined post-colonial society. From 1868 to 1870, it was not the Maya Tzeltal but the Maya Tzotzil Chamula trying to copy their religious and civil "masters" in ways once thought unthinkable.

In this crisis, religious sentiment was once again a major factor at the center of the crisis. According to reports, heavenly objects had once again mysteriously appeared in an out-of-the-way rural area. They appeared to a young Chamula woman named Agustina Gómez Checheb in a place that could be interpreted as a marginal zone when compared to the urban and thus "civilized" and "orthodox" normality of the nearby town of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Like in 1712 and other places and times previous (cf. Bricker 1981), the mysterious events and images of the late 1860s were once again made manifest outside the centers of ladino power. This time, mere rough stones, "talking stones" in fact, suggested a fresh visitation from heaven to earth (i.e., in the form of recognizable Church Saints). Seeing a clear opportunity, Pedro Díaz Cuzcat, the local fiscal (local civil-religious authority)[24] went to find the sacred objects recently "found" or "discovered" and soon had them positioned as the central focus of activity and interaction in the Chamula hamlet of Tzajaljemel (where Agustina was from). Like the previous Pedro of 1712 (who made himself a bishop), so too this new Pedro Cuzcat was able to

126

copy the role of priest, providing sermons and services in the new cult of the "talking stones." The appearance of divine beings or Saints among the Chamula ironically gave rise to a spiritual cult of prayer. Soon this public gathering for supplication began to compete with ladino religious traditions when the images became so popular, they not only attracted devout Tzotzil from all over the highlands but attracted as well an abundance of goods and services that sustained a bourgeoning market center. The new Saints were indeed a blessing.

Imitating ladino access to goods and services, however, was dangerous, for it implied a desire for access to real power, that is to say the ability to make choices or influence any number of social and cultural outcomes. Full access and control to the power of the market was tantamount to a social form of "heresy," so to speak. The practice represented a mimetic acquisition of spiritual and material goods valuable in post-colonial creole society, signaling the hope and promise of an abundance blessed from above that could quite literally promote an "economy of salvation." Evidence of such mimetic desire was certainly manifest in the new market near the village of Tzajaljemel, within the territory of San Juan Chamula.

When Pedro Díaz Cuscat established the new cult, he and his followers became rivals to the ladinos who controlled the town market of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, a major center of commerce largely dependent upon goods from the rural indigenous communities (Rus 1983:127ff, 148-50). Economically and politically, the symbols of autonomy and rebellion were magnified by gatherings of Tzotzil effectively "boycotting" the city market to go to Tzajaljemel and render homage to the new (and competing) representations of heavenly favor.

In terms of mimetic theory, it seems plausible that Cuscat and other Chamula had intentionally crossed a key symbolic boundary, and in doing suddenly resembled too

127

closely off-limit aspects of a post-colonial society and system very much in debt to its

Spanish forebears. The threat was mimetic in terms of inter-ethnic relations, certainly; but

there was also some intra-ethnic confusions and anxiety as Chamula of Tzajaljemel and

elsewhere took their chances for a better existence on the new but precarious practices of

other Tzotzil acting as models.

For indigenous of the late 19th century, the vulnerability to violence generated in

the previous century during the 1712 Tzeltal revolt was not so distant a memory, nor on

the edge of forgetfulness; it was very much still a floating anxiety of what could happen.

Ladinos, too, feared what could befall them, as every non-ladino person feared the

indiscriminate damage and blood shed that comes with war and injustice.

But like the rebellions of previous times, so now in 1868 the gods above were

once again sending marvelous objects from heaven. In 1712 the sacred objects were a

cross, and an image of the Virgin; the new objects were stones, at least at first. Later on,

it was a clay saint (replacing the talking stones removed by a ladino priest). However,

despite the signs from heaven, for the Chamula of Tzajaljemel things did not work out as

they had hoped they would.

Inter-ethnic Rivalry

As the market in San Cristóbal de Las Casas began to decline and ladinos found

everyday goods and services harder to obtain, the social resemblance with ladino society

presented a clear danger to the local non-Indian elite. Most threatening for them was the

fact that this religious and economic imitation or socio-cultural mimesis was now

effectively competing with established traditions. Ladino social position and spheres of

influence—in a word, habitus—that once represented normal and normalizing hegemonic

assumptions about class and social status, were soon facing a severe interruption by 1868.

Most noticeable perhaps, was the diminishing control of Indian labor to serve ladino

agricultural interests. What the ladinos possessed and protected (e.g., land and market values, as well as the symbols of class and privilege) were things that undergirded their power and presumed historical right to authority. The imputed value of key symbols had suddenly become "objects of desire" for the Chamula.

Interpreting the Chamula-Ladino Rivalry

In terms of mimetic theory, the mediation of mimetic desire between subject and mediator—in this case, Chamula rebels and ladino authorities--suddenly had less abstract social distance than, say, the previous imitations attempted in the prior century. In 1868, both groups were operating in proximity; with less land extensions to buffer contact (Chamula territory having been substantially reduced in the liberal post-colonial era by robbery or repression of new elites). Indeed, during the 19th century there was less to separate the desires of model and subject, both of whom felt emboldened to vie for the same "goods"-- as though suddenly thrust by history to share the same field, sphere of influence, situations of class, social rank, and status.

The so-called "caste-war" that engulfed the Chamula of the late 1860s is, on one level, a story about inter-ethnic conflict and violence, that is to say, a narrative about a time of intense strife between ladinos and the Tzotzil Chamula. On a whole other level, it is a tale about intra-ethnic conflict, where internecine violence occurs not between Indians so much, but between two power-hungry ladino groups: liberals at odds with conservatives. The great effect of this rivalry became the Chamula revolt of 1868; a situation that over time has come to represent both a cause of alarm and a cause célèbre. The eventual defeat of Pedro Díaz Cuscat (and those who joined his cause centered in Tzajaljemel) brought an edgy peace to the local political landscape. In the liberal-conservative rivalry among ladinos the Chamula became a kind of scapegoat, one that usefully brought competing non-Indian desires of ladinos to an end—at least for a time.

129

The "caste war" or rebellion of Chamula in the late 1860s provides a good illustration of how mimesis operates interactively in identity formation. Although the historical facts of this prolonged conflict are complex this seems not to have deterred creative and interested people from circulating certain versions that define the nature of Tzotzil–ladino relations. In fact, some storytellers appear to have presented versions that depict the Chamula as strange, exotic, and as hopelessly violent "Others." According to Rus (1983), however, these stories may provide a measure of entertainment but they have little to do with the truth. Chamula in the popular narrative are the victims, not the perpetrators of violence. If ever there was a caste war, then it was a war that ladinos brought against the Maya Tzotzil Chamula.

Competing Interpretations

However represented, there are at least two major competing views on what really happened from 1868-1870. First, there is what supposedly happened, (the mythic version, attempting to hide the truth that no such cruxifiction occurred). Secondly, there is what really happened historically (Chamula are the victims, not the perpetrators of violence). The historical view dispels the mythic romance and accounts for the real socio-political circumstances that precipitated several years of violent conflict in Chiapas.

Ethnohistorian Rus (1983:127) summarizes the mythic or unfounded version of the Chiapas "caste war" narrative whereby ladinos depict how "the people of Chamula and several related Tzotzil-speaking communities of the Chiapas highlands rose in a savage and cruel war of extermination against their "ladino" neighbors." That is the tale that constitutes the dubious version of serious of events occurring from 1868 to 1970. This mythic version circulated at the end of the 19th century and throughout the 20th century (Molina 1934). However, the contrary appears to be the actual case (Rus 1983:127). The Tzotzil Chamula were twice victimized: first by the Liberals of the

lowlands, and then again by the Conservatives of the highlands. Thus by the mid 19th century both groups had managed to victimize Chamula and other indigenous as part of an extended contest for control over lands, commerce, and government privileges in the relatively new Mexican state of Chiapas.

So it was, then, that in the late 1860s, during a time of social and cultural upheaval, "sacred objects" once again are said to have fallen from the heavens above (much as they had in 1712). The sacred nature of such mysterious objects (and thus desirability, for ladino and Indian alike) would suggest influential movement of Psychosocial and material aspects of local circumstances due to a powerful collective mimesis. The earthen images of "Saints" that Agustina Gómez Chechev discovered apparently inspired a new religious cult, which grew in popularity with the help of other Chamula (and other Tzotzil of the highland region).

Ladino scholars interpret the cult's popularity as due to one man who merely wanted to take advantage of an innocent religious sentiment. That is why he assisted Agustina in claiming that these objects had special transcendental powers to communicate divine messages. The whole conflict could be traced to the desires of "an unscrupulous leader who fooled them into believing he could talk to a set of crude clay 'Saints'" (Rus 1983:127). Since the Chamula were already predisposed to miracle stories, apparition stories of heavenly Saints, and European cosmologies of sacred sites of caves, springs, bridges, and more, the Saint cult grew rather quickly. In time, the Chamula were able to create even a new version of the holiest Saint of all, the God-man Christ (see Bricker 1981). This particular time, however, the story of "salvation" did not revolve around a "white man" bringing redemption through his violent death. It now came through a new victim, a young adolescent Chamula boy, chosen for his purity and innocence to save the people from sin and sadness. Sacrificed by a mimetic crucifixion,

131

the savior-boy was a attempt to galvanize the Chamula to rise up from their adverse and iniquitous circumstances of the 1860s. Once mimetically immolated in public, the boy (as a copy of the original Christ) would presumably not only become a God as powerful as the ladino God, but would spawn a movement. Becoming a medium or model, he would be the pathway to happiness that the Christian gods seemed incapable of providing.[25]

Reconstructing a Feeble Romance

Jan Rus (1983) reconstructs this story. He provides a critical take on what he believes might have really been going on behind such mythic versions of events. His findings show that ladinos in the highlands of Chiapas in the 1970s were still invoking this popular version of the "Indian Christ" incident, a story circulating a good one hundred years after its alleged happening. Even in the 1970s, Rus tells us (1983:127) that ladino prejudices were still looking for ways "to prove the precariousness of civilization's hold on the Indians and to demonstrate the danger of allowing even the slightest autonomous activity in their communities." He notices (127) how ladino authorities of the late 1860s were eager to emphasize the putative fact of a crucified adolescent:

> Horrified by such barbarity, [they] strove for more than a year to make the Indians see the error of their ways and return to civilization. Unfortunately, all of their efforts were finally in vain: joined by a mysterious ladino outcast who trained them in military maneuvers, the Indian hordes swept out of the mountains in June 1869, pillaging and slaughtering all not of their own race. Their first victims were the very priests and school-teachers who had gone among them to enlighten them. In short order, they also massacred the families of small ladino farmers who had dared to take up vacant lands on the borders of their territories. Finally, they attacked the nearby capital of San Cristóbal de Las Casas itself, retreating only when driven back by ladino reinforcements.

Rus questions the specific details and thus the overall impression that this mythic story presents–a tale retold for decades by ladinos and others in Chiapas as a way to frame their (fearful) understanding of the Tzotzil Chamula. By implication, the apprehensions of the ladino population precipitated images of horror that these and other Indians (e.g. the Maya of Yucatan) have purportedly always been capable of perpetrating.

According to Rus' research on 19th century sources (1983:128), the energy mobilized around the events of the so-called "caste war" in highland Chiapas was not owing to the fact that the Indians underwent a peculiar religious transformation. Even less did it come from any deep seeded hatred Indians might have harbored against ladinos. Instead, what makes the much repeated and misconstrued narrative so unfortunate is the fact that, as Rus bluntly says it, "almost none of the story appears to be true."

The several years of inter-ethnic conflict that unfolded is known locally by ladinos and scholars as "the Cuscat Rebellion" –named after the Chamula leader involved, Pedro Díaz Cuscat (Moscoso Pastrana 1992; Zebadúa 1999). Ethnohistorian Bricker (1981:119ff) refers to the Indian Christ incident and overall conflict as "the War of St. Rose" because it "emphasizes its religious origin and focus. The war was fought to legitimate a new Saint cult, the cult of St. Rose. This cult was in many respects similar to the Tzotzil and Tzeltal Virgin cults of the early nineteenth century." Bricker explains the context that informed both cult and rebellion:

> Although Mexico became independent from Spain in 1821, many attitudes and practices of colonial origin persisted into the second half of the nineteenth century in highland Chiapas. The Indian's position after 1821 was, if anything, worse than it had been during the Colonial period, for independence from Spain brought an end to royal checks on the exploitation of Indians. In highland Chiapas such exploitation took the form of economic abuses by the clergy residing in Indian towns and by Ladino merchants in San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

The Chamula rebellion from 1867 to 1870 occurred during a period when Mexico was still struggling to become a fully independent nation, and thereby obtain a widespread sense of peoplehood. This forging process of nation-building was not easy after the disruptive events of independence from Spain that ended only four decades previously in the early 1820s, nor any less easier during the brief onslaught of international imperialism under the Hapsburg effort in Mexico (Maximillian I, Mexican Emperor from 1864-1867, backed by Napoleon III of France). The religious aspects and

133

the tragic violence that unfolded once the 'cult of stone Saints' became popular (and thus both a cultural and economic threat) reflect key dimensions of what mimetic theory would recognize as a process of appropriation.

Remarkably, the Chamula were imitating ladino society so effectively they reached a flash point of resembling that society a little too much. Indeed, their rebellion reflects an acquisitive imitation of "religious goods" they could recognize as valuable, not to mention other material "objects of desire" thought significant in the context of that time. The religious objects imaged as desirable ranged from stone, wood, or clay. Yet, these objects of seemingly mundane materials provided links to the power of so many holy intercessor beings from above. For ladino and indigenous alike, such objects were important to possess, control, or at least have accessible them. Analogously, these objects of desire were emblematic representations of power-brokers. They were symbols for those who controlled the newly available lands of the mid 19th century--a territory that once belonged to the Dominican friars and, by right, to the Indian communities under their jurisdiction. Other objects suddenly became important as well, such as available and exploitable indigenous labor, and possibilities for new crops to transport to local markets.

There seems to have been two major factors working in combination in the way violence came upon the Chamula during the so-called "caste war" of the mid 19th century. First, there was a widespread anxiety about the mere possibility of replication (copying) of other indigenous uprisings (like the major one in Yucatan that began in the 1840s and which in fact went on for decades (Reed 2001 [1964]). The second factor amounts to an exacerbation of 19th century social class warfare between liberal and conservative military and political forces. Each side was in fact distinguished geographically: in the highlands were the ladino conservatives of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, desirous to maintain what had long been the seat of power during the colonial

134

period. In the lowlands, along the Grijalva River valley of the central plateau, there were the liberals who, after the 1810 revolution, represented a post-colonial agenda of new freedoms. They pushed to extend ladino prerogatives bent on securing a new socio-economic identity of status through new forms of government, land ownership, and commercial enterprises.[26]

Understanding the rebellion in terms of mimetic desire does not deny that political and economic strategies were involved, nor the possibility that a class-based formation reaction had escalated in Mexico because of gruesome inequities pervasive by the mid-19th century. On the contrary, mimetic desire explains key motivations that drive many political and/or economic factors. As practice, imitative desire is a way to understand how structure(s) and agency relate in terms of what power signifies in a particular cultural setting.

Mimetically mirroring the national social and political environment of the time, the Chamula cult of "images from heaven" competed with two important desires at once. One desire was for freedom (i.e., to be liberated from ladino acquisitiveness, greed, and bad example), while the other desire, more enduring and complex, was true autonomy for constructing their own world, that is to say, acquiring their own lands and institutions upon which to forge a reasonable social and cultural reality without ladino duress.

Mexico's political independence since 1810 and subsequent liberal priorities had promised freedom from constraints associated with the hierarchical priorities that Spanish empire had come to represent. Independence meant liberation from a kind of onerous habitus, as Bourdieu might call it, conditions and dispositions that had long marked the social, cultural, and avaricious economic practices of imperial priests, prelates and people who formed the nervous system of the Ibero-American colonial system.

135

From the Chamula point of view, according to Rus, ecclesial actors seemed more inclined to imitate European civil forms propped up by conservative religious ideology. No longer under the tutelage of Dominicans and the benefices of the Spanish crown with its empire of ecclesial agents, the Chamula now found themselves in a post-colonial time beset with a non-subsidized religious system. It did not take long, for example, to find secular clergy in need of personal income to begin burdening the communities they attended to ministerially with new kinds of taxes—that is to say, levies no longer subsized by colonial style tribute payments.

If the colonial system had built-in protections for Indians, albeit full of abuse and injustice, there was at least some redress before official audiences and other such court-of-law kinds of establishments. Under the post-colonial regimes that were only beginning to find their way in the world of governance, new extremes of abuse characterized the pecuniary desires of civil and secular ministers, primarily seeking autonomy through wealth, status, or power of political office. Unlike previous centuries when the Chamula served the Dominicans, the diocesan or secular clergy (not belonging to a religious order) sought to establish new fiestas. These efforts often required reconfigurations of the confraternity groups the friars had founded, which brought more burdens as well as limitations to the Indians who were members of these organized expressions of faith and devotion (cf. Palomo Infante 2009). Thus, under subsequent ladino administrations of government, local priests were able to charge increasingly higher fees for their ritual services (sacraments and blessings). For many traditional *cofradias* and *alfereces* among the Chamula, this eventually meant confronting a true financial crisis. This was an ironic development given the fact that these institutions were set-up by the friars to organize ways of reducing the burden of expenses for fiestas and other common community events and projects, while reinforcing basic doctrinal precepts at a time when "Lutherism" or

136

Protestantism was just beginning to assert alternative formulations of dogma and praxis (Wasserstrom 1983a:71-80).

By 1867, when the strange stone and clay figures first began to appear on earth from heaven, local clergy themselves had just begun to "invent" new religious practices. Mimetically, both turn out to be a means to an end, creatively procuring new sources of income. The clay Saints very rapidly came to symbolize an acute form of religious rivalry with ladinos and their religious presuppositions regarding not just what images of Saints should look like (with European features) but who they truly favored, that is, the ladino faithful or true believers. During the 19th century, what indigenous people believed was increasingly brought under suspicion and doubt, often characterized as insincere, despite the fact that many indigenous groups had carefully, even conscientiously preserved their acceptance of Christian preaching (cf. Wasserstrom 1983a:31, 69-70).

In the end, what seemed to have mattered most was the fact that this new situation among the Chamula symbolically clashed with the entrenched economic interests linked to the market in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. While this developing competition was irksome to the conservative Creole elite of the highlands, it was something of a convenient problem for the liberal Creole elite of the lowlands. The liberals saw any weakening of Church power and ladino authority in the highlands as best for the new state of Chiapas, and a step closer to re-making the image of the nation in terms of independence, autonomy, and the freedom unavailable during the colonial period and now required all the more for entrepreneurial progress.

Viewing this historical situation in terms of Bourdieu's practice theory, I can see how the new cult of Saints among the Chamula might suggest an intuitive search for symbolic or "cultural capital." If this was in fact the agenda of the Chamula leaders Pedro Díaz Cuscat and Agustina Gómez Checheb, then acquiring cultural capital (not to

137

mention the financial capital of actual market exchanges) meant that the Chamula of the late 1860s, unlike their ancestors, could finally begin to assert a common voice. Empowered with a strong measure of religious and economic leverage, Chamula were emboldened to contend directly with ladino power brokers. They felt themselves able to collectively bargain for an improved social and cultural situation, as well as better economic options. Operating at risk, but according to the historical structures and forms of agency available at the time, the Chamula of Tzajajemel were able to begin an authentic process of "world making" or ethnogenesis (even if imitating or copying ladino symbols of power associated with religious sentiment and material commerce).

At mid-century, the cult, culture, and cultivation of the clay images of heavenly beings (and everything that Saints entail) produced a powerful mimesis that in turned produced conflict. The entire effort inspired and thus motivated and mobilized the desire of hundreds of indigenous men and women. The inspiration was timely, and occurred when the Chamula population was increasing and previous large extensions of indigenous lands were quickly disappearing. In the true sense of Barth's analysis (1969) of ethnic identity formation, this was a process of boundary establishment through negotiation, using very powerful symbols. Liberal and conservative Creoles alike were consistently encroaching upon Chamula lands (Wasserstrom 1980:127), competing to possess and control areas previously off-limits because of Spanish Crown protections and the many economic prerogatives of the Dominican friars. The friars had once controlled large haciendas to manage multiple enterprises of cattle, sugar, and wheat production throughout Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Guatemala.

Symbolically as mimetic representations of a certain social, cultural, and spiritual reality that many of the time could perceive, the simple clay images of "Saints" held by the woman Agustina (and apparently manipulated by Cuscat), could truly "speak." In

fact, they communicated in a way that was clear for the would-be defenders of freedom (Independence-minded Liberals), and perhaps even louder for the fervent defenders of privilege and status (the Conservative landholding bourgeoisie). As for the Tzotzil and other indigenous making pilgrimages to see and hear these "communicating objects" (cf. Astor-Aguilara 2010), their earnest journey reflected something of a socially contagious desire. They were all seeking celestial favor, salvation, or better--a true and immediate liberation from earthly limitations.

Like the revolt in 1712 of the Tzeltal of Cancuc, by mid-19th century ladino fears and anxieties over a ubiquitous presence of Indians once again began to escalate, this time to the point of precipitating a disproportionate military response that brought about the tragic deaths of hundreds of Tzotziles, mostly Chamula. In the face of cultural and economic defiance, the ladino establishment reacted no doubt against what must have seemed to them like terrible indigenous recalcitrance or insolence. In light of mimetic theory, it would appear to be the case that imitations of traditional ladino institutions (church and state) amounted to a perverse kind of "monkey business"--that is to say, mimicry, fear the Tzotzil Chamula would have no doubt noted at the time and thus adding yet another feature to their Monkey men antics during major festivals. This would seem to be the reason the maxetik wear a mocking image of ladino military uniforms from a previous time of political confusion.

Because indigenous leaders and their followers refused to surrender the "objects of desire" in question, Saints, like so many significant flags, became preciosities for the power they represented. The flags were objects, but made all that more important by the fact that ladinos themselves (Conservatives or Liberals both) showed how badly they wanted them. Mimetically, and predictably, ladino refusal to be copied, and their collective resistance to Indians attempting to resemble them in terms of social class,

status, or cultural preferences, precipitated a violent reciprocity. For their part, indigenous violent responses to systemic ladino oppression demonstrated not just a desire for autonomy but also how indigenous groups of both periods were quite capable of mirroring power, and thus inflicting serious harm when pushed to the extremes of poverty and desperation. In sum, imitative desire constitutes a powerful social force that can move material and psychosocial factors in a number of different ways. It is always an interactive, mutually mirroring power seldom if ever predictable.

In 1712 and again in 1867, both historical situations of violent revolt seem to have evolved (however unconsciously or unwittingly) from the pursuit of certain socio-culturally construed "objects of desire." It was not the objects per se (clay or stone, images or figures, status or power) that were important, but what they socially represented about religion and commerce, social status and ethnic identity. Within the spheres of influence for each period, and thus within the habitus of practices available to actors at the time, there was an implicit understanding among all actors that "secular power has supernatural origins" (Gosner 1992:144-146). We see this clearly in the Chamula example where Agustina and other acting subjects are able to organize a rival religious expression (pursue the available social model itself as an object of desire). These actions represent a highly competitive economic desire focused on gaining a collective benefit, apropos for a subject people within the ladino systems of power and authority (and, by extension, a potential benefit for many Tzotzil neighbors). Following this interpretation, one might speculate that the true victim or scapegoat unifying a people was not the imaginary victim of a Chamula boy-Christ, nor even the Tzotzil people themselves, but the ladinos who were losing economic power. As preoccupation over indigenous rivalry intensified for ladinos, both groups began to see each other as a kind of substitute victim, that is to say, a way to unify their ranks against the exotic and unjust

140

"Other" while also fortifying some sense of identity during a time of inchoate nationalism in southern Mexico.

The mimetic desire that seems to have affected psychosocial and material factors of everyday life in both historical episodes, eventually intensified over time, spread, and reached a point of extreme conflict. In 1712 the Spanish made quick work at repressing what was by any measure a remarkable indigenous rebellion; in the 1860s the imitators of the ladino establishment, however conservative or liberal, likewise brought bloodshed upon those who asserted their imitative desire to be just like those who modeled a range of social, religious, and economic values. Historically, it would seem that familiarity does indeed breed a measure of contempt. While this principle is fairly easy to observe where differences are pronounced, as in inter-ethnic conflicts, it is something much harder to see when conflicts are closer to home, more internal, more intimate, and embedded within everyday forms of structure and agency (habitus).

Mimetic or imitative desire is one way to account for Tzotzil ethnic differentiation and how variations of identity arise in the first place. However, ethnographers often seem to misperceive or not see the mimetic aspects of social interaction. Often overlooked are the ways in which conflicts related to intra-ethnic differentiation tend to emerge (an aspect of ethnogenesis) from problems of similarity rather than from any true extant pre-existing differences.

Tzotzil Ethnography Before 1970

Monographs about the Tzotzil prior to the 1970s tended to reflect certain functionalist presuppositions that depict them as largely unchanged by historical happenings, and surviving as if a remnant of a once thriving pre-Conquest Maya people. The synchronic images of the Chamula, for example, amounted to very misleading ethnographic snapshots. An implicit presumption in early functionalist ethnographies was

that such groups somehow genetically conserve essential aspects of the ancient Maya way of thinking and ways of being, and thus intuitively and collectively knew how to maintain some level of continuity with ancestral traditions (Fischer 2001). According to this view, continuity from the 16th to the 20th century was and still is possible because of relatively stable predispositions. Put differently, even in the face of change, this "habitus" could still convey continuity for traditional institutions. According to this "essentialist" argument in favor of enduring cultural logic, one could explain Tzotzil poverty and limitations as due to their strategic withdrawing from dominant ladino society so that they could protect themselves, and from their "refuge" live in peace. Their "enclaves" were intentional not circumstantial, made to give themselves a secure and secluded place to live. Sufficiently far away from "outsiders" they could at least enjoy a significant measure of cognitive cohesion and cultural coherence as Maya people.

In short, those who insisted upon this theoretical explanation for the plight of Indians generally (Aguirre Beltrán 1967), it was also possible to explain how "survival" could produce institutions and traditions that were persistent, shared, and provided a fundamental sense of identity.[27] These descriptions and interpretations of Tzotzil peoplehood while not entirely ahistorical or purely functionalist reflected what critics today would categorize as a "primordialist" perspective. In other words, for the romantic anthropologist, peoples like the Tzotzil Chamula are interesting objects of study because they seem to possess a unique self-identity. The identity persists not constructed out of historical vagaries but as something enduring, like a wandering lost soul (Gossen 1983). While anthropologists have always been interested in history as preface or contrastive background, or to enrich data with examples, this interest belonged, as Susan Kellogg puts it (1991:418), to those who drew on "history as data bank." Historical examples were assumed not to differ from the present. According to Kellogg (1991:418-419):

It was ahistorical in the sense that they do not inject a truly diachronic perspective into anthropological scholarship. Thus, symbolic anthropologists tended not to examine the emergence, maintenance, or transformation of symbolic systems; structuralists tended not to analyze the impact of historical developments on structures; and British social anthropologists tended not to examine how social groups, relationships, or institutions, or social structure itself, are produced, reproduced, and transformed.

Kellogg's clarification makes all the more sense for interpreting the way the Tzotzil and other indigenous groups experience both continuity and change in their life-ways.

Today, few if any ethnographers would presume to knowingly write from such an essentialist or primordialist perspective. Some scholars, however, seem to play at the edges of its very possibility. Much of the published work of Garry Gossen (1974, 1983, 2002) seems inclined toward this preference. By 1970, ethnographic descriptions of the Tzotzil begin to reflect more diachronic and critical perspectives. Research is more focused on actual actors and structures shaping historical situations and socio-economic context, including noticing (rather than ignoring) contemporary dilemmas of social friction.[28]

Ethno-historical research has helped many ethnographers gain a more realistic view of interactions involved in the origins of "ancient" or contemporary indigenous traditions. But mistaking the recent past for an enduring ancient past is not always easily discerned, causing many historians to make mistakes of perception and anthropologists errors in assessment of evidence (Chance 1996). From the late 1970s onward, the work of Rus (1980, 1983), and Wasserstrom (1977, 1980, 1983a) provide some good tools for understanding the contemporary Tzotzil in critical historical perspective.

Kellogg (1991:419) observes that regardless of theoretical orientations, most scholars working in the discipline of anthropology (prior to 1970) had accepted a simplistic and normative definition of culture. For many researchers (Kellogg 191:419),

"culture" was a taken for granted concept, a construct that universally conveyed a discussion about a "unified, coherent unit of analysis characterized by clearly defined behavior patterns and shared symbols and values." For Kellogg (1991:419), the problem with such a view was recognizing "that latent tensions and conflict existed in all societies, but symbols, myths, and religious practices were assumed to mask these tensions and oppositions." For researchers in Chiapas it is no longer possible to ethnographically describe groups like the Tzotzil as the last "vestiges of an ancient but otherwise long-forgotten past."[29]

While Rus and Wasserstrom (1980) explain social change in terms of economic factors and shifting demographics, an argument could be made that mimetic theory and practice theory complement such views and thus help explain overlooked aspects. For example, a fresh analysis of prior ethnographic material might notice hidden motivational dynamics of imitative desire and how it shapes economic environments and political movements such as rivalry or bossism among members of Tzotzil communities.

In sum, for researchers working in Chiapas, the goal of many ethnographers from the 1970s on was to provide new approaches that could stand in obvious contrast to the interpretative descriptions of previous and once popular observers of "peasant"[30] and indigenous communities. Earlier ethnographers seemed to have preferred lamenting the loss of supposedly essential cultural traits and customs, things they could attribute to the inevitable, if regrettable, social forces of "acculturation."

Tzotzil Ethnography After 1970

At the level of community, other aspects of Tzotzil cultural life provided material for critical historical interpretations and thus a more realistic view of the Tzotzil. For Laughlin (1969) this included noticing that the Tzotziles had not one singular or unitary

belief system but a variety of beliefs regarding cosmology. Other observers noticed

variations in customary life-ways (Gossen 1983), land use (Cancian 1974; Collier 1975,

1987; Wasserstrom 1978), perceptions of inter-ethnic relations, (Favre 1985, 1992; Rus

1983; Siverts 1981,1998; Stavenhagen 1975, 1980; Wasserstrom 1977, 1983), and in

communal situations where internal strife between groups belied any sameness or

solidarity (Cancian 1992, 1974; Gossen 1983; Nash 1967, 1970).

An earlier generation of anthropologists, those who framed Tzotzil life-ways as

essentially continuous, unchanging, or relatively static and unaffected by the course of

time, once predicted that "traditionalist" natives would simply fade away under the

pressure of acculturation from the surrounding non-Indian society and cultures. They

were supposed to gradually disappear because of inevitable factors related to

acculturation by the dominant mestizo culture and society (Aguierre Beltrán 1967).

Practices themselves became objects of desire that were noticeably reinforced as valuable

in struggles for religious diversity (Canton Delgado 1997; Garcia Méndez 2008).[31]This

diversity was played out (again, a kind of "serious game") among three kinds of religious

orientations: Protestant-evangelical postures, Roman Catholic (Vatican II Reform) efforts

(see Chojnacki 2010), and a form of syncretistic popular Catholicism of indigenous

traditionalism otherwise known as *Costumbre* (customary religious expressions).[32]

New Ethnographic Approaches: The Tzotzil as Acting Subjects in History

Ethnographically, understanding the processual role of mimetic desire means

recognizing that recent ethnography it has become more meaningful to describe "the

cultural" rather than "a culture" (Appadurai's term, 1996). In other words, the goal is to

go beyond describing some fixed thing, and so see, rather, a situation or set of

circumstances that shift in relation to structural issues of power and politics changing

over time. Kellogg (1991:421) observes that the practical effect of this approach has been to encourage anthropologists to conceive of culture *as a process*.

> Instead of presenting static pictures of societies in an ethnographic present, anthropologists increasingly have sought to describe a dynamically changing world in which groups survive by making decisions, altering strategies, and changing, sometimes consciously and sometimes as an unexpected consequences of previous decisions or actions.

Consciously or unconsciously, the dynamics of continuity and change are seldom clear and obvious, often only detected in long historical perspective. By the 1980s historically conscious ethnographers were depicting the Tzotzil as true acting subjects, that is to say, active participants in the construction and performance of their own "worlds" of meaningful reality.

In historical critical perspective, ethnographers could see the Chamula, like other Tzotzil, as employing different material strategies by which to express a variety of spiritual beliefs or religious ideas. Some scholars of the Maya might attribute to the Chamula a subaltern spirit of resistance (García de Leon 1978), or undying capacity for wisdom and creativity (Aguilar Penagos 1990; Rus 2002b), while others might still prefer to suggest more stereotypic themes of enduring character or life-ways (Pozas 1977 [1947]; Morfeld 2000).

A basic misrecognition of Chamula agency regarding religious preferences would tend to run something like this: all Maya were feigning Christian beliefs, hiding behind a secure veneer so as to practice their true religion (cf. Wasserstrom 1980:69). The problem with this oversimplification of Chamula religious preference is the way it denies the possibility of voluntary assent even in the midst of factors of adverse structural circumstances and influential factors of imitative desire. The problem with stereotypic depictions is how Indians appear as though without subjectivity or capacity for choice. Choices might include choosing the gospel teachings regarding Christ on their own

146

textual merits (as opposed to Christian policies and practices). Wasserstrom (1980:69-70) judiciously observed in his historical study of the conquest period, that many Chamula actually sincerely became Christians, and did so deliberately in spite of avaricious clergy.

Tzotzil Modernity and Mimetic Identities

The Tzotzil of Chiapas are forever making and re-making their worlds. Take, for some salient examples, the following:

- The Tzeltal rebelling against the "given habitus" of 18th century society and culture.

- The Tzotzil Chamula rebelling in the 19th century to forge new ways of life.

- The poor but determined Chamula soldiers of Pajarito in 1911.

- The anxious indigenous organizing in earnest after the 1974 Indigenous Congress.

- Determined indigenous joining the so-called "post-modern" revolt of 1994, rising up in imitation of the iconic Zapata, following thus a path to change through violence as proposed by the national liberation army self-ascribed as "Zapatista."

In terms of mimetic theory, it should not be surprising that Tzotzil subjects and models, in the light of identifiable things they desire to acquire, will fight hard to modify their social and cultural circumstances whenever necessary. Gosner (1992:13) keenly observes how the highland Maya of Chiapas once nearly vanished soon after the Spanish conquest, yet "have lived with political repression and poverty ever since." As a consequence,

> their material culture and their values and ideas about the world reflect that
> experience. Among them, tradition (costumbre) is not an immutable
> artifact from the past but something that has been reshaped and altered as
> the people of each generation have reexamined their own history, struggled
> to construct their own identity, and fought to defend their way of life.

Gosner's view gives us some clues about how to regard the Chamula in terms of past, present, and future struggles. Current critical ethnography and ethnohistorical perspectives allow us to consider what the influence of imitative desire looks like for past happenings among Chamula actors, who as subjects have had to vie not only with non-

147

Indians but also with those of their own community, people very much like themselves. The interdividual dimensions of historical interactions inside and outside indigenous socio-cultural circumstances of custom, tradition, institutions and whatever marks their continuity and change over centuries is worth considering if we are to derive fuller comprehension about what the Chamula experience as changing situations over time regarding their identity.

Modern Chamulas in the 20th Century: Imitative Desire and Power

In my view, the overall experience of being a Chamula in the 20th and early 21st century appears not to depend so much on adherence to certain customs and traditions. This is true even though many enduring cultural expressions have been at the core of identity formation for both family and communitarian settings in most if not all Chamula villages and hamlets.

There is, I think, another more significant adherence: the constant management of power relations. In modern Chamula communities, power relations have a great deal to do with the "older brotherswho gives the orders." That phrase in Tzotzil is "ta spas mantal li bankilale" and refers to what many Chamula will call a local village boss or influential group leader. The phrase is almost a title of honor or status, one that in any case reveals a "familiar" line of authority ("elder brother").

More common for references to bosses, however, is the term "cacique" which was part of useful discourse originally borrowed by the Spaniards from the Taino Indians of the Carribeano refer to indigenous leaders, especially powerful "chiefs" or bosses. But in the 20th century, an indigenous cacique has a special meaning, referring to leaders generally identified for their ambiguous power to win favor for themselves and ohers, or who manage to make plenty of enemies even while protecting certain "friends" or clients who are under their purview. In time, for many Chamula, the corrupt forms of power that

148

a cacique could accrue made the term "older brother" or boss a concept co-terminous with thug, mafia-like gangster, oligarch, controler of resources, et cetera. In short, a boss was any dishonest person who could gain and use power for his or herself, gaining followers through dispensing favors.

It is interesting that major agents of social change in Chiapas have often been local bosses, or caciques, both Indian and non-Indian. Unfortunately, in describing Tzotzil communities, many anthropologists ignore the problematic of bossism, often in favor of a more romantic view (e.g. Gossen 1999a) of surviving Maya (not taking into account how much the ancient Maya had their own power-brokers and gatekeepers).

Political and economic reality of local and regional bossism in Mexico has had a major influence in shaping the modern way of life for many Chamula. It would not be unreasonable to say that bossism has become a traditional or expected feature of Tzotzil life-ways generally, even if not necessarily a preferred aspect of life. Bossism, as a matrix of social relations, represents a mimesis of power derived from a triangulation of relationships between Subjects (as clients) and Models (exemplars) and the Objects they they seek. This triangulation arises almost imperceptibly as agents interact with one another, especially in competition.

In some ways, what emerges from the relations established through interaction is analogous to the power of language. Bourdieu's sociology of practice (1977) seems to makes this very point, explaining how language represents a somewhat hidden dynamic. Language reflects the mimesis of power when one observes the relationship between the state (acting as government) and the community, with its powerful groups and individuals. Scholars of Practice Theory, such as Webb et al. (2002:95), explain that for Bourdieu, "language can be used as battlefield and as a weapon because it is . . . both a "structuring structure' (it provides the means for understanding the world) and a "structured structure"

(it is a medium by which these understandings are communicated)." Understanding the power dynamics of "structure and agency" in terms of both practice and mimesis means considering the almost invisible nature of multiple forces or influences and how these often operate through the role of a mediator (model); who evocatively draws forth imitative desires from acting subjects who then "choose" to prefer what others prefer.

Chamula Bosses and Mimetic Desire

The broker role of Chamula political bosses provides a good example of agency and structure under the influence of mimetic desire, and how it operates for good or for ill, but always to shape power relations in cultural terms. The principal burden of the local boss is to support the practice of power by controlling links to resources such as jobs or positions, and above all security.[33] In effect, bosses represent the ability to mediate both local and global flows of whatever has become culturally important. This mediation includes religious expressions, and thus the flow of representations that continually produce (and reproduce) both desire and the desirable. Chamula leaders are themselves subjects who look to certain figures as models for how to be, how to act, how to acquire a gate keeping role, and thus operate according to the desires of the the men or women they admire as "elders." Successful bosses are attractive (desirable to be under, with, for) when they show how well they can manage everyday concerns for ordinary people with or without ideology.

Within many Tzotzil communities, like for example in Chamula hamlets or villages, local bosses have often tried to rule the people with a heavy hand, that is to say, under the threat of severe harm. This approach has become increasingly more problematic, making it literally more difficult to "get away with murder" (as once was possible) due to the constant complaints of advocacy groups seeking to secure basic human rights (e.g., Donde Muere el Agua). Even so, community members would remain

loyal clients to the "older brother" as long as he (or she) was useful in rendering to them the support and benefits of patronage.

As a form of agency, bossism seems to illustrate Ortner's (2006) notion of "serious play" mentioned previously. The inter-play of mutual influence between social and economic structures on the one hand, and the role of desiring subjects on the other, suggests how people operate in practical ways to survive or thrive within any given set of circumstances. A modern cacique in Chamula today, for example, might try to develop strategic ways to play an important social or cultural role, one that would fit meaningfully within a larger playing field that involves a wide range of desirable goods: from acquisition of religious authority to identifying with state and national economic and political prerogatives.

Never Acting Alone: Chamula Bossism as Interdividuality

The Chamula boss is at once an acting subject and a mediator (model). In other words, it is through the boss that mediation fosters connecting links and networks of powerful influence. These connections enable a local boss to link to larger political and economic entities and actors. This way a boss can constantly act in ways that will draw others to join him (or her) that in turn serve to reinforce power relations with other actors.

In terms of mimetic theory applied to Chamula socio-cultural reality, "bossism" as a tradition or practice implies a hidden or behind-the-scenes dynamic out of which models (bosses) and subjects (clients and sychophants) constantly interact. The dynamic generates relations where "objects of desire" are usually under negotiation as to imputed value and social significance.

Williams (1996:291) clarifies Girard's view about the role of a model as a mediator of desire, describing it as a hidden dynamic that is not necessarily conscious, deliberate, or premeditated however much an inter-subjective product:

151

> We are never immediately conscious of mimesis and for the most part we
> are involved in mimesis unconsciously. The model mediates reality (world,
> experience, specific assumptions about life-settings, etc.) to the subject. We
> are thus always interdividuals, Girard's only neologism. It refers to our
> intersubjective make-up; as human beings we are not the other or model,
> but on the other hand, we are constituted by the other or model, and so the
> self is a set of mimetic relationships operative in the individual, both in the
> present and from the past.

I take Williams here to mean that the nature of power is not about what an individual wants or seeks, but what happens "inter-dividually" –that is to say, what comes from interaction between individuals. Their intersubjectivtiy, influenced by imitative desire, affects what happens between them. In the sense of mutual influence, imitative interactions are contagious and as such contribute to long-lasting identity constructions for groups or communities as people attempt to define themselves viz-a-viz "Others."

On this point of interdividuality, it may be helpful to recall the discussion in Chapter 2, where this specific idea was explained as Girard's critique of the modern notion of individuality, or simple rational-choice models. In contrast to solipsistic kinds of single actor models, Girard emphasizes the influential force of what emerges from both, that is to say two or more actors imitating one another's desire for an object or objective. According to this competitive model, a political boss is never just himself, never a "lone wolf" kind of actor or social agent; a boss will always have "gente" (followers) around, or perhaps an enemy, competitor. These other actors help to define a boss's identity and actions which, therefore, are never truly original, unique, or without precedent, and always interdividual.

A Model Cacique: Erasto Urbina

Amid the Tzotzil, and the Tzotzil Chamula in particular, the "serious play" that constitutes the games of establishing and maintaining organized relations of power and authority began to have pragmatic consequences in the state of Chiapas beginning in the late 1930s. This happened in large part because of one major activist, a politically astute

labor organizer by the name of Erasto Urbina. Urbina represented the power interests of President Cardenas' national administration, the primary focus of which was to forge new blocks of power among rural peasants and poor workers, including indigenous populations. Because Urbina was able to speak a fluent Tzotzil, he was able to represent himself as both Tzotzil and Mestizo. In this way, his "gate-keeping" practices of controlling access to local, state, and national resources became a model worthy of imitation among indigenous authorities for generations.

Political bossism, fostered by the Institutional Revolutionary Party or PRI, developed into a meaningful apparatus of highly effective power relations within many Tzotzil communities. It was especially significant within the territory of San Juan Chamula where Urbina had many willing disciples among bilingual school teachers. The most famous disciple (imitator) was Salvador Tuxum whose influence lasted many decades (cf. Irribarren 2002 [1980]; López Meza 2002; Rus 1994, 2005).

The Indigenous Congress of 1974

Although political bossism already had wide influence by the early 1940s among the Tzotzil, widespread ethnic activism in Chiapas had its major emergence after the Indigenous Congress of 1974 in San Cristóbal de Las Casas (Morales Bermudez 1991). This gathering was originally intended to be the state governor's attempt to give homage to the memory of Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas - the renowned Dominican friar of the XVI century and first Catholic Bishop to actually live in Chiapas. In honor of his 500th anniversary (erroneously dated 1474), then Governor Manuel Velasco Súarez sought to stage a folklore event in which Indians from around the state could join in solidarity. His plan was for the Indians to acknowledge the goodness of both church and state institutions that had made its burden care and "protection" of the Indians.

To organize the Congress the governor asked the then sole bishop of Chiapas, Don Samuel Ruiz García, to help plan a three-day event. With a year to prepare, the bishop and his pastoral agents (village Catechists, Priests, Religious Sisters, lay consultants, etc.) were able to organize a process of reflection that brought to the surface many local needs and desires. The attendees did not so much care about who did what 500 years ago; they were instead more interested in what Las Casas would do in 1974, thus wanting to give a collective voice to call attention to urgent needs affecting the respective communities of each attendee. Belief in God was not their problem; rather most indigenous were more focused on their contemporary material needs of health, education, security, and economic opportunity.

The congress that was planned was not the congress that actually happened or what the governor was expecting. Despite many smiles and handshakes with the governor and his representatives, systemic suppression began immediately as the state sought to crush indigenous efforts to organize further around the needs and concerns identified at the congress. The congress was a watershed event, since it had been the first time members representing the four largest language groups in the state (and diocese) – the Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Chol, and Tojolobal, had come together to share common concerns and experiences, not to mention hopes and desires.

However much the 1974 Indigenous Congress may have marked a major mimetic exchange of common desires, these began as cooperative rather than competing desires – and stayed that way for a while. The congress was a watershed moment that helped many indigenous communities first find and then amplify a common voice about their common problems and circumstances. As a consequence, in the late 1970s indigenous activism begins to play most seriously with the power of the state through home-grown organizations designed to represent indigenous interests and growing interests and desires

154

(Morquecho 1992). Of course, not all indigenous organizations emerging at this time were altruistic or free of competing interests. Land use and acquisition, for example, became a major divisive issue for many Indian *campesinos* (farmers) who began to compete with one another for government approval and support.

To slow down the progress of indigenous activism and organization, agents acting on behalf of state and national governments often created or backed similar organizations that could compete for certain interests important to indigenous people using much the same discourse and practice. Organizations, whether pro or anti government, began to rival one another to co-opt a basic desire for land rights, or access to agricultural inputs and markets, or the availability of education and health services, or other basic needs (cf. Collier 1994). Non-Indians (ladinos) had long monopolized these "objects of desire." For decades--if not centuries--indigenous actors could observe the practices of their ladino overseers and neighbors, but very seldom had opportunity to fully imitate them. Even when this might happen, accusations of witchcraft might precipitate panic: such ladino ways of acting were extraordinary, strange, and in one way or another associated with the demonic (Gossen 1999). Indeed, it was seldom normal to act like a ladino, let alone get too close or intimate. Imitating ladino ways meant entering into unfamiliar relations of power, something that became very clear in the late 1930s under the guidance of people like Erasto Urbina.

1994 and The Rise of The EZLN (Zapatistas)

By 1994, twenty years after the first Indigenous Congress took place in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, most of the same desires for social justice on a whole range of issues, including health, education, security, and commerce, were still pressing and of vital concern twenty years later. The fact that the demands that surfaced in peace negotiations with the EZLN also reflected the previous demands of the Congress is no

155

coincidence. Looking at the causes of the Zapatista uprising and the many conflicts and expriences of violence it brought beginning in 1994, Whitmeyer and Hopcroft (1996:517) have ascertained the following (bold my emphasis):

> Neither the ejido land tenure system, nor community solidarity, nor community disruption and proletarianization due to recent economic change, may be considered as primary causal factors behind the revolt. We find the best explanation for the revolt to lie in the desire of certain groups, notably immigrants to the Lacandon rain forest area, for land, and in recent changes in land tenure law which have ended their hopes of acquiring land. The primary effect of economic change was indirect. It promoted population growth, which has led to increasing pressure on land.

The watershed event of the 1974 Congress highlighted the importance of indigenous identities, revealing the significance of their shared and now increasingly competing desires, while also challenging historical prejudices that had frequently thwarted the development of their own desires. The Indians who were able to gather at the congress clearly witnessed the power that emerges from collective effort, thus forming their own ideas about themselves collectively.

Fortified with a new sense of dignity, however mimetically acquired, many congress leaders began to move in bold new directions. Consequently, they were eventually able to leave behind previous ascriptions about Indians in Chiapas. Defying assumptions about ignorance and limitation long imputed to them by the Mexican state as well as the Catholic Church, indigenous minority voices began to complicate categories once presumed valid by local and foreign scholars who felt they alone could explain indigenous concerns (Rus 2004b). While the Tzotzil and other groups sought to organize for a better life, it would not take long before their "shared interests" turned into acute competitions and even the serious game of a deadly politics of exclusion (Collier 1994, 1998; Morquecho 1992).

Ontological Challenges: Being Tzotzil Chamula in the 21st Century

The historical examples examined throughout the chapter thus far point to issues of ontology. The following examples illustrate questions about being and becoming someone or some "thing" –in a word, meaningful belonging and identity. I want now to explore what for some it means to be a Tzotzil Chamula in the 21st century. By "ontology" I am referring to a preoccupation in modern social science with the construction of meaning or meaningfulness.[34] The Tzotzil, and the particular Chamula I know, seem very much engaged in the construction of a meaningful way of life. A good example of recent efforts to explore a meaningful sense of Tzotzil identity can be readily found on the internet (e.g., at YouTube and other sites). There you can find an interesting revival of traditional forms, though many are often reworked into a contemporary mode, and a new cultural synthesis (or syncretism). The juxtaposition, for instance, of rock genre music with traditional customary music of the Zinacanteco Tzotzil has brought the birth of the now popular batzi' rock (which translates as original or "true" rock).

One example of this effort is the creative work of the group Sak' Tzevul (literally, white lightening)[35] and their popular album entitled Xch'ulel Balamil (spirit/soul of the earth). On this album is one of the oldest and most traditional Maya songs, the *bolom chon* (the tiger dance). The group has reset this piece in a new key, juxtaposing it with western style emotional prosody. While what is presumably traditional has been appropriated, the groups' performance deliberately shifts between traditional and non-traditional modalities. The result is a somewhat uneven performance, but one full of interesting features. For example, by juxtaposing something old and new, the group appears to appropriate classic and familiar pieces so as to, as they put it, "conserve them," while also putting it at the service of a youthful desire to resemble (imitate) a western style rock & roll band.

157

It is interesting to note, however, that the push to be "traditional" comes mostly from the Japanese wife of one of the Zinacanteco leaders in the group. Although not a Maya, she participates, playing her violin to electric guitars. The important point is to see how this rock band deeply desires to develop itself and promote their internet propaganda, which states that their style is "a fusion of traditional music with contemporary music meant to preserve the languages of the original peoples."

Curiously, and not to be upstaged in cultural competition, in San Juan Chamula there is a similar Tzotzil rock & roll group. Called Vayijel (literally, guardian animal spirit), they began their effort in 2007. Like the first (original) Tzotzil Rock group from Zinacantan (ironically, not made up entirely of Tzotzil let alone Zinacanteco members), the Chamula group thrives by copying what others do to be successful. Indeed, their stated ideal is not unique but very similar to their competitors: to develop the genre as a way to revalue their language batzi' k'op and thus prevent its loss.[36] Very much like the Sak' Tzevul group in Zinacantan, these Chamula rockers proudly and publically wear their customary *traje*, that is to say, the traditional rough wool clothing made by a woman's hands on a back-strap loom.

The elders I spoke with in La Candelaria did not seem comfortable with this new image or mode of being for young Tzotzil Chamula. If anything, my informants, both old and young, seemed more bewildered than consoled. They wondered out loud to me if the rock group might not be a distortion of true, that is to say, traditional Chamula values, including the customary use of language, song, dance, and ritual gestures, all things observable during the band's performances. These performances happened to be on the state's television channel (they were, for example, sometimes dressed as mashes, *maxetik*). It is surprising to know that major financial support for batzi' or "original" rock groups often comes from the state and federal government arts councils. The irony here

seems to be something along the lines of promoting cultural self-pride among the youth, by awarding or supporting inauthentic(?) or innovative (?) expressions in the name of the customary and traditional (i.e., authentic ?), all the while doing so from a largely western understanding of performance art and a mostly non-Indian point of view!

The elders I spoke to also seemed to express a certain measure of indifference. For them it did not matter whether the community (or its elders) should support such practices, that is to say, performances combining traditional aspects with modern sensibilities. They seemed unsure about how to characterize the innovations; if they attract rather than repel indigenous youth from a wide range of community affairs, including cargo service owed to their home community, then they might turn out to be a good thing. However understood or perceived, similar indigenous rock groups exist in Guatemala and many have come to the annual "battle of the bands" competitive events sponsored by the Chiapas state arts program.

It would be my guess that long-time interpreters of Chamula cultural customs, traditions, and social practices since the 1970s would argue that many Tzotzil today likely represent something of an aberration from the "true path." These observers may see innovative Tzotziles as falling short of what is (or once was) truly essential about being an authentic member of a wider pan-Maya identity. In other words, now corrupted by influences from the outside world, the modern (or "post-modern"?) Tzotzil are no longer pristine representatives of an uncontaminated way of life that was once, in this view at least, presumably viable only a few short decades ago (not to mention a few centuries ago since the Conquest).

In my view, if there is any aberration, it is in developing a perspective that denies agency for Chamula people and thus denies those possible interactions that eventually change and transform whatever it means to "be" a Tzotzil. It is my contention that

159

identity formation is a transformative process; it transforms individuals and groups as each member learns to mimetically appropriate the qualities, values, habits or life-ways of "Others" who might happen to serve as models, demonstrating (unwittingly or not) what is useful, desirable, and so forth.

My point here is that it is best to approach ethnographic descriptions of "Indians" (or any people) with as few preconceptions as possible.[37] But such a task can be very difficult, given the fact that there exist many widespread, historically situated, and "popular imaginings" about the indigenous peoples of Chiapas (cf. Fernández Galán 2002; García Guerrero 2003; Hernández Castillo (2003), not to mention stereotypic ideas about Indians (*el indio*) elsewhere in Mexico (López Chapoy 2007; Nolasco Armas et al. 2010). While interesting or provocative, such constructs about groups of people are limiting and often inaccurate. Take the 1994 uprising of the Zapatistas in Chiapas mentioned earlier, and all that comprises a movement that tries to promote with fresh activist romanticism an image of the very soul of those who live and struggle as their ancestors did in prior centuries (Berger 2001).

In the next and final section of the chapter, I propose that the reader attempt to imagine the Tzotzil Chamula a bit differently. By doing so, a more accurate understanding of what it means to be a Tzotzil Chamula will hopefully develop, at least insofar as ethnographic descriptions today are reflexive and open the messiness of complex and multi-dimensional descriptions of what people do (practice).

Four Individual Representations of Imitative Desire as Practice

In spite of their history, and in spite of many social and cultural obstacles placed upon the path they might otherwise have walked or walk still, it seems fair to say that the Maya Tzotzil collectively continue to find ways to celebrate their existence. They do so, in fact, while also contending among themselves competing claims to peoplehood.

160

To paint a sophisticated portrait of the Tzotzil today, however, means taking the reader beyond readily available published encyclopedic articles and other descriptive generalizations, to show something of an inchoate situation: where Tzotzil individuals and groups are attempting to try on identities rather than inertly re-present some perpetual state of unchanging attributions of "Tzotzilness." In other words, and as mentioned earlier in a different context, there is no ready list of essential or timeless "traits" that might fully circumscribe the Tzotzil of the past or present, or make them any more "unique" than hundreds of other peoples inhabiting what anthropologists call Mesoamerica (Middle America).

Tzotzil speakers continue to experiment with new kinds of identification. Doing so, they seem to want to know whether this or that borrowed aspect meaningfully fits into their particular lives vis-à-vis significant Others (models) around them. Where this is not automatically a comfortable fit, they at least want to know if it is a useful one. Identity markers, like clothing, whether put on or taken off, often constitute something revealing (Jenkins 1978). To facilitate a more nuanced and complex understanding of identity formation among the Tzotzil today, I offer the following four personal examples. Each example illustrates how imitative desire seems to play a key role in forming relationships, as groups and individuals work and re-work claims to "self" and "other"–assertions that can sometimes come into conflict with counter-claims of what it means to be a member of this or that "group." However construed, the sense of belonging that the Tzotziletik establish for themselves is part of an interactive process, constantly bound and unbound by means of one key overarching factor: imitative desire.

Ixchel: A Typical Chamula?

I have a very close friend who is a Maya Tzotzil Chamula. Her name is Ixchel (a pseudonym), and she currently resides within the historical district of San Cristóbal de

161

Las Casas, Chiapas. Ixchel is originally from a large agrarian community located within the rural zone of the city's eastern boundaries where communal land ownership is still a viable way of life. A middle child of a large family, Ixchel grew up like many women of her village, helping her family with chores, including dutifully attending a small flock of sheep. Most Chamula women in her village learn to spin sheep wool into a rough yarn, which soon becomes creatively woven on a back-strap loom for traditional clothing. Though no longer practicing this particular skill, Ixchel learned many abilities from her mother. While at home learning the proper way to pray, or to make corn tortillas, Ixchel often wondered about whether and when she would have to leave her parents' home to join a man and his family, as is still the custom for many families in her community and others in highland Chiapas.

Ixchel's family home is like that of many within the older hamlets in rural San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Living on several plots of land assigned to them, household members help each other sustain farm work and/or carpentry while minding widespread traditions typical for Chamula living near the boundaries of neighboring municipality San Juan Chamula.[38] It is a way of life increasingly less appreciated by younger generations of Chamula whose families have relocated to the newer urban barrios and colonias (neighborhoods) of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. The northern part of this city is inhabited by thousands of Chamula people (along with other indigenous migrants and refugees) relocated there for a variety of reasons: land availability, better economic opportunities, or because their families had to flee political and religious persecution in their home communities (Hvostoff 2009; Rus and Vigil 2007).[39]

My friend left her community more than 15 years ago to join a Roman Catholic religious institute for lay women missioners.[40] This institute is one of many mission oriented organizations that form the local Catholic diocese of San Cristóbal de Las

Casas.[41] I first met Ixchel in 1995 when she was an eager new catechist and part of the Tzotzil ministry team that I was just then joining. The 1990s was a tense period of time in Chiapas. By 1998, the Federal Government had sent some 70 thousand soldiers to pressure the negotiations with the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (a.k.a, the EZLN).[42]

Church ministry allowed Ixchel to develop a variety of new friendships which brought her fresh perspectives on the experiences of her life. After about 10 years living as a Catholic lay missionary, Ixchel realized she might do better for herself spiritually were she to leave the Institute, even though she had already made a life-long commitment to the other women, most of whom were not indigenous. Although a difficult personal decision, she felt she needed the freedom to pursue her interests and desires as an indigenous woman.

No longer dependent on the Catholic Church she began living on her own in an apartment, and ultimately severed formal ties to the Institute to Church. Her new-found personal freedom in an expanded network of friends from many different backgrounds formed the basis of pursuing the possibility of forming her own spiritual institute. She decided to return to her studies and secured a full-time job in an organization that promoted social and economic development for rural indigenous communities. A bright, ambitious, creative Maya woman, Ixchel is now more than half way through her undergraduate program at the state level university in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. She is taking full advantage of higher education opportunities only recently available to indigenous determined enough to trudge through the requirements (and the prejudices), something previously unthinkable for many young indigenous until after the EZLN uprising in 1994.

In our occasional conversations, Ixchel would sometimes convey the strength of her determination and express how willing she was to meet the challenges ahead on a journey of self-realization. She was determined to be true to herself, that is to say, original and authentic as an individual Chamula woman. As she often liked to declare, "I am the color of Mother Earth" (*soy del color de la madre tierra*). In particular, Ixchel shared with me how in the future she imagines herself as becoming a woman priest, a sacerdotista.[43] But this was more than just imagining, because after classes at the University she found time to study fire ceremonies and other lessons with a spiritual mentor, someone she admired and very much wanted to imitate, that is to say, become similar to in skill and disposition. Her guide was a Mam woman who herself had become a sacerdotista en Guatemala.[44]

In addition to her academic subjects, Ixchel also explored esoteric topics, such as learning about Chakra energy points, the Enneagram, the Maya calendar, and other such tools for discerning psycho-spiritual states. As a spiritual apprentice Ixchel learned the techniques and special knowledge required for presiding over ceremonies of healing and intercession, for counseling and discernment of spirits, blessings and protections. Ixchel told me that besides attending to the needs of other Tzotzil, she hopes one day to offer her skills and gifts to non-Indians as well. She plans to support herself with goodwill offerings when providing special workshops, lectures, and private consultations for spiritual direction.[45]

Reflecting a moment on what this one Maya woman seeks in her life-journey, at least in terms of identity formation, there are a number of questions. In Ixchel's case, there is sincerity in what motivates her to act, moved by mediating factors that are more than just her individual self-will. From the perspective of mimetic theory, however unwittingly or conscientiously, Ixchel is not unlike many others in similar circumstances

who are very involved in a social interactive process that is more interdividual than individual. What I find interesting about Ixchel's story is how "authenticity" is prone to the problem of generating simulacra or what amounts to a measure of inauthenticity that comes from the copying of copies (cf. W. Benjamin 1986). My question is where did Ixchel's desire for self-realization, academic achievement, or spiritual autonomy originate in the first place? Were these ideas spontaneous and uniquely her own, or did they emerge, mimetically, through imitating the desires of others? If from others, what is the cultural significance of such copying and does it at some point produce friction (e.g., her mentor)?

Ixchel's journey toward a new identity (or an old/older identity, proudly referring to her ethnic sense of self as belonging to those who are the "color of earth") is a process that seems to embody and eventually enact a profound ontological desire, that is to say, a desire for being. In this particular case, I see Ixchel attempting to make something real and lasting in her life; something she expresses when she tells me of wanting to be connected, linked to the universe. Yet like many human journeys, her life ambitions are somewhat circumscribed according to available material and psychosocial resources out of which she can make-a-world for herself (the fundamental meaning of mimesis generally). But when engaged with others in such a process of imitative desire, just how much can a person like Ixchel really "choose" the kind of world she wants when following the desires of a model/mentor/exemplar?

Attraction, Webster's dictionary tells us, may be defined as "the action or power of evoking interest, pleasure, or liking for someone or something;" it is also "a quality or feature of something or someone that evokes interest, liking, or desire." In Ixchel's cultural context, I would interpret attraction as something that happens because of interdividual circumstances rather than something determined by deliberate choices on

165

her part. Phenomenally speaking, attraction is something that "happens" when a person stumbles across the path of another person only to notice without anticipation what that person desires, begin to find such a desire to be "of interest" or inspiring, and so forth. Ixchel reports that she feels inspired by her mentor (above all, her mentors' practices). She thus feels attracted to her mentor as a person but more importantly, attracted to what her mentor does and what those practices represent/signify. These desires, based as they are on attraction, seem to have a great deal to do with Ixchel's sense of self-discovery, self-definition, self-awareness, self-possession. Despite attraction to a mentor or some fascinating "Other" Ixchel would likely deny that her desires come from or are based upon what such another person desires.

According to Girard, the problem with mimesis, that is to say mimetic or imitative desire, is that it can present a dangerous dynamic as people compete. Spiritual practitioners, (whether priests or shamans) are not above suffering envy, jealously, or the fear of loss of being unique and somehow distinctive. Such anxiety can often be found near spiritual performances of ritual which use a certain script or discourse, certain kinds of gesture and pre- and post-staging of materials. The creativity is not so much the problem as when ritual details or meanings are somehow purloined, taken and used in an unauthorized or inauthentic manner. Or when the performance is similar to another, but imputed with entirely different meanings. The protection of one's religious goods from unauthorized copying, even though likely born of mimesis (doctrines, dogmas, beliefs, images, ceremonies, rituals, etc.) often requires delimiting counterfeit efforts, or what are mere imitations.

In Ixchel's case, after observing her ceremonial practices with friends as well as her knowledgeable mentor, I was surprised to notice the eclectic nature of the performances, however creative, imaginative and efficacious for those participating.

166

From what I could tell, many aspects of the ritual actions I could observe were apparently borrowed from numerous other esoteric sources. These include a variety of Amerindian traditions, ranging from Lakota Sioux sweat house ritual practices and Sun Dance gestures, to aspects of the fire-ceremonies one can find among the K'iche, Kachiquel, and Mam peoples of Guatemala. Ixchel's rituals were often combined imaginatively with terms or concepts associated with Maya calendrics, and the more visible aspects of Eastern and Western traditions of Christianity, such as the Trinitarian formula in making the Sign of the Cross and similar ritual gestures and language often found in Mexican traditions of curanderismo. These would be combined in ways that reflected a "new age" religious ecumenism in which practitioners "see the world as flat," freely open to an exchange or borrowing of other groups' metaphysics and values (Hindu, Christian, Islam, etc.), appropriated as though one's own. While any particular religious tradition might take exception, perhaps feel offended, or make an orthodox as well as orthopraxis distinction about the truth of proper ritual actions, any concern for "copyright" or "intellectual property" was not evident in my friend's practice, who seemed to think respect for such distinctions unnecessary.

Interpreting Ixchel's eclectic set of acquired practices, it is clear that the spiritual ritualists who form an important community of friends for her also represent beliefs in transcendent values. As such, they constitute for Ixchel a collective kind of model, as ideal and as exemplary practice, not unlike her previous mentors at the Institute or in the Catholic Church. By expropriating signs and values, practices and performances from other traditions, whether as content or as form, the myriad 'objects of desire' empower each acting subject who imitates.

These agents of transcendence preside over a variety of symbol-rich ceremonies or rituals through which they mimetically invoke a higher source of power, usually for

167

the sake of someone's stated need or a client's request for benefit. I have often wondered if the Christians were to see these efforts or performances would they associate them with the so-called "New Age Movement."[46] In response to my inquiry on this delicate point, my friend Ixchel assured me that her practices, like those of her colleagues, had absolutely nothing to do with New Age beliefs, practices, or nomenclature. On the contrary, in her case especially, these practices and beliefs are authentic and represent a profound reality (implying, of course, that New Age material is false or deceptive). "Besides," she would remind me frequently, "I am a real Maya."

Free from any contemporary structures of spiritual expression historically dominated and defined by Western theological parlance, Ixchel and her friends seem to prefer a world without distinction, a flat circle of a world as it were, where all religious value in the end is the same, homogenous, and one expression is potentially just as good or useful as another. The Spirit blows like the wind where it will. This belief is enacted by the way Ixchel and her colleagues resist constraints on their creative thought and action. If they have one common desire that unites diverse styles of prayer performance and ritual action, it is the wish to move beyond the typical, ordinary, traditional aspects of official religious tenets. This is at least paradoxical, if not, in fact, terribly ironic– practicing an eclectic assortment of non-traditional and non-customary rituals in the name of custom and tradition! Acting in this fashion, the indigenous and non-indigenous ritual practitioners claim that it allows them to respond more spontaneously or naturally to the multi-faceted reality of power in the universe. "Power" in this sense refers to life force presumed to exist inside and around all living beings, animate and inanimate; all that exists below the earth, upon it, above, and beyond it. When explaining this kind of power, Ixchel often referred to what are supposedly ancient beliefs, practices once common to many peoples (things like chakras, enneagrams, auras, dances, day signs, astro-

configurations, reincarnations or former lives, guardian spirits, animal companions, and much more). Some of these references are not entirely strange to the Tzotzil tradition and customary beliefs are far from uniform (Laughlin 1964).

In view of the theoretical discussions in Chapter 2, something interesting stands out in Ixchel's life story, and that is the question of whether what practitioners do as ritual constitutes a form of copying, a kind of mimesis or imitation based on what other people desire? Tradition or "handing on" is certainly a way to think about social reproduction, a kind of social mimesis. It is important to distinguish wants and needs from desires. In Ixchel's case, mimetic or imitative desire would seem to be in evidence. I know, for instance, that she is quite able to follow the traditional intercessory practices of her mother. Indeed, in many ways, Ixchel has become equal to her mother. For example, she knows how to make proper ritual use of different sized colored candles, placing them correctly in hierarchical rows for prayers before the home altar (replete with Roman Catholic images of Saints). In her own Chamula community, Ixchel's mother is a well-known prayer-leader and healer (*j-ilol* or "one who sees"). Besides her mother, Ixchel's father is very much a Traditionalist Catholic, that is to say, having only limited association with Christian church practices. Unlike his wife he is more reticent with his daughter about the things he believes or the way to do things when it comes to seeking divine favors.

According to mimetic theory, Ixchel may be competing with an important model, that is, the ritual competence and traditionalism of her Maya Tzotzil parents. But contrary to this theory, her parents do not seem to evidence any discomfort or react to her as a rival threat to their customary ritual practices. They do not mind that she appropriates what they have "handed on" to her. In fact, they have been supportive of their daughter's

169

choices and new activities in life. Ixchel has even been instrumental in healing family rifts and difficulties, using techniques learned from her mentor and other teachers.

If anyone feels discomfort or some level of threat from unauthorized mimesis, it is likely the Catholic catechists and deacons (known as *jtuneletik*). They may feel some sense of intense competition since she is someone they have known since she was a little girl. In terms of mimetic theory, this discomfort would be because Ixchel (who is still new at what she does) has more in common than not with the work of the catechists and healers of her home community. I am referring to their social or public spiritual role of representing God, wisdom teachings, healing the sick or afflicted, et cetera. I know of only one person who has expressed consternation with what Ixchel does; but in general, at the time of fieldwork anyway, it seemed that the community of Catholic catechists did not know much (or take interest) about her practices, which in any case did not take place in public. Ixchel told me once how she needed to be careful to do her performances in the discrete setting of her family's home, because neighbors or the uninitiated might not understand her practices. However, this privacy does not preclude the possibility that a sense of threat might grow, depending on the circumstances. If familiarity really does breed contempt then her practices, if ever public, might draw violence. But Ixchel seems quite conscious of this possible danger, which is why she takes the necessary precautions, ever mindful of what her neighbors might see and possibly (mis)construe from unfamiliar and non-traditional ritual performances (however imputed as Maya).

As is typical of many indigenous communities in Mesoamerica (Bobrow-Strain 2007; Collier 1994; Groark 2005; Nash 1970; Vidas 2007, 2008), neighbors or relatives who live nearby one another are reputably astute at noticing what goes on around them. Perhaps because they know each other too well, they are sometimes vulnerable to projected or suspected fears related to envy, jealously and other similar emotions of

170

anxiety. Ixchel's new ritual skills, supposedly traditional but in any case creative, might appear to her traditionalist neighbors (or even to the community's authorities) as something so strange and exotic they could see her as a "bruja" (i.e., a witch, or what in Tzotzil is *j'ak' chamel* or "one who throws illness"). For most Chamula, whether Traditionalist, Catholic, or Protestant, religious expression is serious business.

Gossen (1974: 191-192) describes prayer paraphernalia among the Chamula from a time more than thirty years ago. For Gossen, Chamula prayer settings are ritual settings, that is to say that they not only follow a certain style but also use a number of special materials that help the person or persons engaged in prayer to accomplish their objective.

> Most ritual settings include some or all of the various elementary ritual objects: crosses; pine needles or branches, resin incense; tobacco, usually in cigarettes, sometimes in powdered form; sugar cane rum or another beverage, usually alcoholic; and candles. Even settings for evil people's prayers involve these symbols, although they use symbols in perverse ways, such as turning the candles upside down and extinguishing them with black fuel oil. Proper behavior requires that candles, which are life symbols, be kept upright and that the officiant "feed" the flame of the candles with rum liquor.

From my own observations, much of what Gossen observed is still very much the case, despite many changes in other aspects of Chamula life-ways. The reason I draw attention to this particular description from Gossen's fieldwork is because back home in Ixchel's Chamula community just one simple misrecognition of her benevolent intentions is enough to unleash many problems, both for her and her family. In a community of relatives and long-time neighbors, little things can become big things very quickly.

One significant example of ritual competition comes to mind. In her "fire ceremony," which I have observed numerous times, Ixchel uses a number of wax candles, but in a way that might seem odd and perhaps even "perverse" or evil to uninformed neighbors or any casual observer. Ixchel's practice, following her mentor and what is supposedly ancient practice from a Maya group in Guatemala, is to begin a major circle

171

fire by leaning candles vertically against a teepee-like cone formation of wood kindling. This cone is sitting upright, on top of other materials (large pieces of chocolate and balls of resin incense). These candles are not "planted" as the Chamula say it customarily, that is to say, not fixed in place or made to stand upright as in traditional Chamula fashion. As these loosely laid wax candles melt in the eventual fire, others are thrown into the melt, landing flat as they dissolve, as if "feeding the fire." The presider of this ceremony then moves the matter about while "reading the flames" to interpret its message.

Traditionally, in many Tzotzil communities, a man or woman accused of casting spells (or appearing to do so) can constitute a very real social threat, one that is frequently resolved by drastic measures of communal self-defense.[47] A family, a barrio, or an entire community can react negatively, multiplying their anger in an imitative contagion, just from the mere suspicion of witchcraft. If a mob forms precipitously, they can quickly desire to punish one or more persons by violence (beating, hanging, burning) to rid the evil as a form of collective self-protection, even if it is someone they know quite well. If the crowd is reasonable, they might use expulsion from the community to satisfy their need for security or justice.[48] Fortunately, in Ixchel's community, the risk of accusing her is small because she is not just well known but respected for her calm and gentle way of speaking; nevertheless, even a minor misunderstanding could turn those who know her well, against her in some fashion.

Indian Lawyers Overcoming Obstacles

Another powerful image that exemplifies the current practice of mimetic desire among the Tzotzil is the example two women lawyers. The first example is Arely López Pérez, a young Tzotzil woman from the municipality of Zinacantán (an all Indian self-governing community that borders both San Cristóbal de Las Casas and San Juan Chamula). On December of 2010, Arely received her doctorate in criminal justice

172

(*Derecho Penal*). At her graduation ceremony in the capital city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, she

gave a powerful but critical speech. Like the situation described earlier, her eloquent

honesty exposed a certain structural situation. Even though she finally realized her dream,

her education involved a lare measure of social interactions with government agents and

perhaps other indigenous equally as ambitious or desierous of a profession. It was a

process over time that allowed her achievement to take place in spite of and not because

of "aid" from state and federal bureaucrats eager to support Indian causes. At every

official level --Arely's speech decried to the public--her efforts were met with

bureaucratic obstacles and unwanted prejudices:[49]

> In spite of the rudeness of the State Secretary for Indian Affairs, in spite
> of the local Chamber of Deputies, the Governor's Office of the State of
> Chiapas, the State Commission of Human rights, and in spite of the
> Treasury Inspector's office of Chiapas, and the judicial power of the
> Federal government. That is to say, I am here graduating before you
> today not because of the Mexican State, but in spite of those who control
> it and the fact that they had closed their doors to me many times, leaving
> me without the moral, economic and legal support that I asked for and
> needed.

Arely's experiences ring true for many young Tzotzil women, but also men, seeking to

acquire a university level education and a position in a professional field that is not about

being a bi-lingual school teacher.

The experiences of Doctor Arely López Pérez reflect the experiences of another

Tzotzil woman with a legal education, Guadalupe Moshan (Figure 3.4), who received her

undergraduate law degree in 2010 (*licenciatura* or bachelor's degree). Not long after

graduating, Lupe Moshan quickly found she could not obtain employment in the private

or government sectors without having some kind of pre-established *palanca*

(connections). She eventually found work for a local human rights center in Chiapas.

Tzotzil women like Arely and Lupita valiently took up the study of law for their

individual careers. Women like Ixchel risk an alternative path to success. Others dare to

173

state the truth of historical pain while forging a hopeful present for a better future. Each

effort reveals the power of imitative desire.

Figure 3.4. Lic. Guadalupe Moshan. Advocate for the poor, Lupita is from Huistan and attended UNACH, Sala de la Facultad de Derecho, SCLC, Chiapas, Mexico, 2008. Photo: Fr. Roberto Padilla, OP.

Xun's Story of Struggle

A university student recently sent me a poetic essay recounting a primary school

experience.[50] His poignant verses reflect growing up in the troubled municipality of San

Bartolomé de Los Llanos–a township divided between ladinos and Tzotziles, not to

mention divisions among the Tzotziles themselves. His story conveys a modern self-

image production and a mimesis of self-ascription that imitates the hope and desire of

many Tzotzil and other indigenous in Chiapas, and throughout México. His cry for

justice and dignity was written a decade after the EZLN uprising in 1994, when many

Mexicans began to reframe their views of who the indigenous of Mexico really were.

A Cry for Justice

It was during the last days of June, almost the time to leave for vacation at the end of the year, when I met my teacher from fifth grade. [He was] a man by the name of Bartolomé, a name as common as that of Juan and María in this *pueblo* [community], but this teacher carries the name of the holy patron of the place (San Bartolomé de los Llanos). I believe this made him think himself very special for humiliating Indian kids in my town. He was my teacher by disgrace or by fate, but he had a great hatred and disrespect toward my culture and my people, and simply for not being like him, a *kaxlan* [a non-Indian]. Perhaps the problem is that we are different compared to them [the non-Indians], but I don't really know.

He always felt offended just seeing me in the classroom. One day, with a great deal of anger for my having obtained a better grade on an exam than his son, who lamentably was my classmate, [teacher Bartolomé] felt more offended than usual. With all of the scorn and anger of his heart, [he] said to me, "Indians are only good for work, so here take the broom and put yourself to sweeping." These words I've not been able to get out of my head, since it was something so humiliating and being a child of only 10 I felt so powerless, so weak, so miserable for being unable to say anything to this big shot who had in his favor all of the swords and the dagger.

Humiliated child -- how terrible and more so when they cause you to be ashamed of who you are, your culture, your identity, of all that you are.

After this happened, I understood that I could not be like them, [the kaxlanes, the mestizos]. I could not be like some of my little ladino companions who laughed and made fun of me, just as my teacher did when he had an appetite for unleashing his anger. It was the same as my brothers in town suffered frequently, always humiliated and mistreated by the many ladinos. This was more so when one does not speak Spanish (Castellano), or when the shopkeepers try to take advantage of you because of poor Spanish, charging double the price for their products because my brothers don't know how to count. For many ladinos, there only interest is to make themselves rich.

All of this filled me with such sadness that one day, so confused after what had happened, I went with my mother to the market and in the street and I said to her that she should not speak in Tsotsil. I had a knot in my throat and full of shame for myself, I dared to tell her this; but my mother, after a moment of pause and with tears in her eyes, asked me "why?" I answered her: "because my teacher and my classmates are always saying to me ugly things in the classroom." So my mother said to me, "you do not have to change, it is necessary to continue tolerating them, wait for a little while longer until you grow older." So wise, the words of my mother helped me a lot, like when she said to me, "You will grow up!" but also her words filled me with so much valor, love, and joy that it would be difficult to forget them.

And today, the 29th of June, given that years have passed since that difficult time, I dare dedicate these translated paragraphs to my great teacher Bartolomé.

175

INDIAN I AM

I am Xun and I am an Indian.
This is what the Kaxlanes have always said to me
Now I say it with pride
And it is only to demonstrate to them
That we [Indians] are the more tolerant ones
To be different from them (in the face of their brutal ignorance).
Is a great delight for me . . . !

"Indian" they always say to me
For being different
But valor and pride
Has produced
The love and joy that I have
Of so colorful a culture
Replete with courage and love.

"Indian" the say to me
But I know how to love
Indian I am
And they do not satisfy me
Nor do they fill me
their political lies.

I am Indian
And I don't drink blood
To acquire fortunes
Indian I am
And the colors of their styles
Do not fill me

Indian I am
And I shine with the light of
Our mother the Moon
And I shine with the light of the sun
Our father.

Of many colors I am
With the rich color of customary dress
Song I am
With beautiful languages
Indian happy with love.

Indian I am
Who dances on the world
Indian who knows how to fly
Indian who knows how to love
Indeed, I am a true Indian.   --Xun.

176
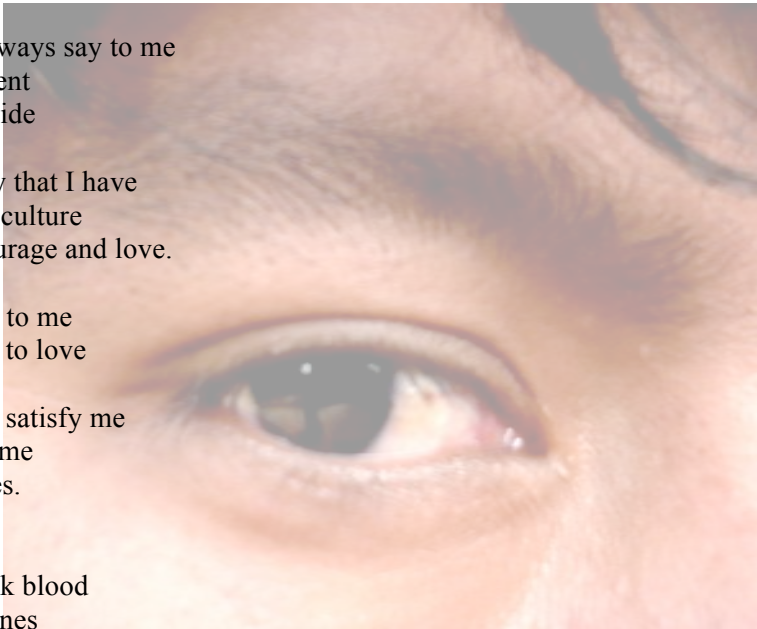
During my time in the field, Xun was in the middle of his second attempt to gain a Bachelor's degree in cultural anthropology at the Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, or UNACH, having fought off a life-threatening disease some years earlier when he first began his studies. Xun's story is one of many that represent changes in Maya Tzotzil self-perception and self-ascription by individuals. On a larger level, such as groups and communities, a similar process of growing awareness and re-definition is underway, as seems evident in the postures and practices of the EZLN as well as many local communities, as we will see later on in subsequent chapters. Higher education is certainly a part of these changes or world-making efforts, but there are more complex material and psychosocial factors. According to mimetic theory, pushing that desire for a degree or status, as with almost any individual or group (Indian or non-Indian) is a previous sense of struggle, an experience of conflict, an original moment of difference born of strife or discord. Put another way, it seems true enough to say that desiring something is one factor of push or motivation, having it denied or blocked is another–in so far as it makes the object in question more valuable, and thus actors more determined to keep it to themselves or to acquire it. In Bourdieu's practice theory, we desire the things we know about because of the sphere or "fields" within which we move and operate.

Reflexive Interpretation

My hope is that the foregoing "living examples" depicted can serve as a kind of metonymic trope. The individuals I have described are meant to stand for a living reference to the way many Tzotzil people emerge and acquire identity according to imitative desire, interaction, and change (including conflict). Metonymy, we will recall, occurs whenever we refer to a relation on the same plane, that is, name or identify something by means of mentioning something else that is a component or symbolically linked.[51] Each person stands as a way to represent the importance of understanding

Tzotzil groups generally in terms of interactive desire set within a diachronic or processual perspective. The parameters of both the old and new identities for Tzotzil individuals and groups are not clear as these constantly shift over time, albeit slowly or at varied rates. Moreover, there are combinations of new and old features of language, dress, customary ways that prevent any essentialist effort, making it hard to pin a particular long-lasting identity. Ixchel's story is a case in point of this combining effort, a kind of new syncretism of values, beliefs, and religious-spiritual practices.

These individual Tzotzil also serve to illustrate the force of mimetic desire whereby people seek to be like another. In the case of Xun, however, it illustrates a desire to be like an opposite image, to manifest a certain denial of resemblance, even while apparently affirming a certain similarity in practice (higher education). Xun says, for example, that he "delights" in being unlike the other, that is, not like the *kaxlan* (the non-Indian oppressor), though he actively pursues a Bachelor's degree in the very system that has largely produced the "Other" he refuses to accept as similar (in desire). Xun's situation is not so much ironic as it is possibly a case in point of Girard's notion of *méconnaissance* (misrecognition).

In the example of the two lawyers, they clearly experienced injustice in pursuit of their professional careers, indicating that it is no simple thing to confront a system and claim exception. In complaining of the unnecessary obstacles in their path of acquiring something of value recognized by the society in which they live, they affirm its importance as an "object of desire." Indeed, these educated women have finally achieved, merited, gained, and to some fashion appropriated a precious object (a degree in law), even doing so in spite of institutional and cultural obstacles.

We can only speculate that those who represent institutions of higher education, or agencies of the state itself, have responded with resistance because they could perceive

178

a threat in the fact that indigenous "Others" had strived to be just like them. In other words, it was a similarity so near, so recognizable, that it provoked a sense of intrusion, trespass, invasion, and discord. No longer totally "Other," these indigenous women embodied a resemblance rather than a difference, and so brought tensions to bear upon any other Indian who likewise sought to acquire what was previously off-limits.

In terms of practice theory, we might say that the "symbolic capital" at stake in these examples was something made more precious by those who knew what a university degree in fact signifies. Likewise, these people represent what it means to seek more than just a degree when acquiring spiritual power and authority, as in the case of Ixchel, the religious woman who seeks to heal other Tzotzil, other indigenous men and women. Gebauer and Wulf (1995:3) argue that mimesis is that dynamic that

> characterizes the act of producing a symbolic world while modern rational thought refers to the single isolated cognitive subject, mimesis is always concerned with a relational network of more than one person; the mimetic production of a symbolic world refers to other worlds and to their creators and draws other persons into one's own world. As is apparent in this constellation, mimesis implies the recognition of mediation between worlds and people; it does not designate a subjection to received models, but rather an acceptance of traditions and the work of predecessors. It also implies a recognition of power: the inclusion of others introduces power, if only in symbolic terms, into one's own personal world, into the interpretive and perspectival modes developed there.

In the cases of Xun, Ixchel, Arely, and Guadalupe, the symbolic world they entered and sought to appropriate for their own purposes, rendered them both a capacity for resistance and also allowed them some measure of power for those determined to obtain the "object" in question.

I have presented these individuals as a metonymic devise to illustrate imitative interaction as practice. It allows the reader to see mimetic desire as a kind of habitus that not only produces a sense of identity but also presents the potential for conflict due to competing desires. Here I am in part following the good advice of Wasserstrom

179

(1983a:3). Decades ago he suggested that when studying the Tzotzil Chamula a researcher should avoid a relatively narrow and stereotypic range of topics such as "kinship and family organization, fiestas and other "ritual behavior," civil-religious hierarchies, witchcraft and shamanism, subsistence farming and handicrafts." Descriptions of this kind while in many ways interesting and not without relevance for some Tzotzil groups and communities and easily found elsewhere in more detail, can sometimes be misleading for the "fixed" or static (synchronic) view they tend to render.[52]

Wasserstrom's point is worth underscoring. Again, in his view (1983a:3), many of the classic or stereotypic themes and topics found in the ethnographic literature had by the 1960s received "official sanction" in the Handbook on Middle American Indians. Thereafter, he says, "scholars were less interested in generalized monographs designed to touch on all of these subjects, and instead directed their efforts to investigating specialized and restricted fields of inquiry." In this respect, Wasserstrom's own study of class and society (1983) marks a critical turn whereby historically informed ethnography of the Tzotzil challenges and also revises a presumptuous "consensus on native society" that previous overviews once tended to produce.[53]

In light of Wasserstrom's advice then, for understanding the role of mimetic desire as practice among the Tzotzil it should not be so important to delve into every custom and tradition that might characterize an immense range of local life-ways. Many customs and traditional practices of prayer, meal preparation, social organization, et cetera are related to common practices among Mexicans everywhere. This is especially the case since the early 19th century.[54] In this respect the Tzotzil use, create, and reconfigure available historical material and psychosocial resources for constructing their identity ("world making" practices or mimesis).

180

Sometimes, efforts at reconfiguration are less than propitious since identity claims are seldom if ever without conflict. As pointed out in Chapter 2, imitation or copying has negative potential precisely because this kind of "world making" or mimesis is a source of power, most often manifest in discourse and public practice. This kind of power can lead to social strife as members of a group or community contend for certain kinds of status as competitive objects of desire. Power is embedded within any number of symbols or circumstances imputed as important, useful, and desirable. In terms of mimetic theory, the Tzotzil mobilize their traditions, customs, and other mediums much as their ladino neighbors do: as a way to control some of the more capricious and volatile ramifications of imitative desire within or between their communities. In the next chapter that follows, we will explore an example of power as desirable object within the extensive rural community of La Candelaria.

As outlined in the previous chapter, the crux of mimetic theory seems to be not just an attraction toward an admirable or useful Other--however construed, recognized or denied—but attraction to what that Other represents by his or her actions, that is to say, what that Other-as-model searches for, possesses, represents, strives for, et cetera. Outsiders can represent objects of desire, too. The problem of exoticizing and thus desiring the Other (or what they represent) is one way to understand the reciprocal effect of imitative desire. In the historical context of the Tzotzil, this "Othering" is a way to understand how certain desires have over time given shape to choices and actions for Indian and non-Indian alike. People's choices—or perhaps it would be better to say, their attractions or fascinations (with the Other or with what the Other possesses)—contribute to the construction of cultural situations that today continue to inform competitive identity claims for young Tzotzil like Xun, Ixchel, Arely, and Guadalupe.

Concluding Remarks

Throughout the chapter I have explored in a limited fashion how ethnic identity formation is seldom if ever an evident or clear-cut process. Nevertheless, with the interpretive tools of mimetic and practice theories it is possible to notice certain kinds of interaction, such as the interdividual aspects of imitative desire that both produce and challenge identity claims. Applying Girard's hypothesis of imitative desire to historical aspects of Tztozil experience has provided some ideas of how inter-subjective processes unfold over time and in such a way as to create worlds of meaning, that is to say "boundaries" that shape and are in turned shaped by practice.

The overall aim for this chapter has been to provide the reader with a critical contrast regarding past and present views of the Maya Tzotzil, and thus to argue for a new view on who and what the Tzotzil Chamula have become or strive to become. I have intertwined a personal reflexive perspective with a basic review of pertinent anthropological understandings of ethnicity as peoplehood. I have examined how these views coincide (or not) with how the Tzotzil Chamula perceive their sense of peoplehood today. My aim throughout has been to provide background material to help contextualize fieldwork findings, and to provide some contrast with published ethnographic and ethno-historical materials. Equipped with a critical view of ethnicity and with an historical understanding of how Tzotzil speaking peoples have developed their social and cultural contexts, the reader is prepared to understand issues of social identity formation presented in several case-studies (Chapters 4-6).

1 For example, though they are neighbors, the Tzotzil Zinacantecos from Zinacantán have a language style and customary life-ways that while similar are remarkably distinct from that of the Tzotzil Chamula from San Juan Chamula municipality. Other Tzotzil peoples include the "Totiques" from San Bartolo de Los Llanos (the modern town of Venustiano Carranza); the Tzotzil Huistecos of Huixtan; the Tzotzil "Andreseros" of San Andrés Sakam Ch'en de los Pobres; the Tzotzil of Amatan, Los Catarineros of Santa Catarina Pantelhó. Other regions where there are major populations of Tzotzil speakers include San Pablo Chalchihuitan, Simojovel, Pueblo Nuevo Solistahuacán, El Bosque (San Juan), Bochil, Ocozocoautla de Espinoza, Teopisca, Huitiupán, Mitontic, Jitotol, Ixtapa, as well as the capital city of Chiapas, Tuxtla Gutiérrez. Cf. Obregón Rodríguez (2003) [http://www.cdi.gob.mx].

2 There have been many daily news reports of internal conflict and violence within Chamula communities (see Appendix A). However, for examples of typical government-sponsored reports on the Tzotzil, see López Moreno Chapoy 2007; Nolasco Armas 2008, 2010; Rivera Farfán 2005. Popular and imaginative depictions are found in a number of fiction novels such as Rosario Castellanos' *Oficio de Tinieblas* (1962) or *The Book of Lamentations* (1996 trans.) – depicting the general features of major indigenous uprisings in Chiapas occurring in 1712 and 1867. Other novels include Carter Wilson's *Crazy February* (1966) or his *A Green Tree and a Dry Tree* (1995) and B. Traven's jungle novels, especially *The Rebellion of the Hanged* (1966) and *March to the Montería* (1971). In addition, one can find films that depict the Chamula as wild, for example Thor Anderson's ethno-documentary *Sacred Games: ritual warfare in a Maya village* (1988), or that depict Chamula as typically violent as in Paco del Toro's video film *Tierra de Sangre* (1999) which is about Traditionalist Catholics persecuting Christian Evangelicals in Chamula. Often on Mexican national television there will appear Archibaldo Burns' 1977 film version of *Juan Pérez Jolote*, which is Ricardo Pozas' (1969) much reprinted biography of a famous Chamula. Burns also did a 1981 film *Oficio de tinieblas* based on Castellanos' novel (1979).

3 For a list of those scholars working from this perspective, see Jenkins (2008:19).

4 The abstract term "ethnicity" comes into popular fashion some time after the term "ethnic group" begins to replace older terms like "tribe" (cf. Helm 1968). It was a way to refer to specific groups, or to a particular people, i.e., those who presumably belonged to the "same" society, or share the "same" culture and language (Keyes 1997:152, in Barfield 1997). In terms of theory, the idea of an ethnic group was based upon the assumption that entire cultures or social structures could easily correlate with clearly bounded discrete groups. In effect, as Keyes observes (1997:152) ethnic groups were "culture bearing units." After World War II, usage of the more abstract and theoretically flexible term ethnicity develops as a way to understand more complex relationships and processes. As early as 1922, the sociologist Max Weber (1968:389) was apparently aware of "ethnicity" or "ethnic group" as useful terms: "We shall call 'ethnic groups' those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both . . . ; it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relation exists" (cited in Govers and Vermeulen 1997:5).

5 See the review essay by Les Field, 2005, "Beyond Identity? Analytic Crosscurrents in Contemporary Mayanist Social Science." See also Chance (1979) on the various problems of ambiguity regarding use of the term "mestizo" for non-Indians in contrast to Indians in Mexico and Latin America.

6 Regarding "mestizo," Chance (1979:154) observes that the "term rarely, if at all, refers to a viable ethnic identity in Mexico today."

7 According to the *Apple Dictionary Version* 2.0.3 (51.5) [2005-2007], "Ethnic" is a late Middle English term used to refer to 'heathen', derivied from the Greek | ˈɛθnɪk | or ethnos which basically means 'nation.' It is an adjectival term referring to being of or relating to a population subgroup, usually within a larger or dominant national or cultural group. An ethnic group subsists within a common national or cultural tradition. It denotes origin by birth or descent rather than by present/current nationality.

8 See related discussion in Merlan (2009) and Niezen (2003).

9 See Restall and Solari (2011) for a fine discussion in their book 2012 and the *End of the World – The Western Roots of the Maya Apocalypse*. A time that marks the "end" of the Maya long-count calendar of 5126 years, calculated to have begun in BCE 3114. The significance of the Maya Calendar in the 21st century is not without controversy, and symbolizes the recurring problem of misperceptions, romanticism, and capitalist manipulation of a sophisticated cultural artifact.

10 This perspective is developed in Wasserstrom (1983a:7-9, n20), based on the dissertation study of Pre-Columbian Chiapas by Edward Calnek (1962).

11 I am drawing upon Wasserstrom's (1983a:9) discussion of the conquest period in which he uses a 1955 version of Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historía verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (Mexico City: Porrua, 1955), p. 210.

12 See the pertinent debates in Abu Lughod (1991); Castellanos G. (1988); Collier 1995; Clifford and Marcus (1986); Fox and King (2002); Jenkins (1997); Vermeulen and Govers (1994); Tejera G. (1997); Watanabe (2004).

13 Copyrighted material (Appendix C): image used with permission (November 11, 2012 via Curt Vickers, JDChallenger Galleries). For more information: (888) 751-4677 or email mailto:info@jdchallenger.com; see http://jdchallenger.com/originalsJD.html.

14 Bricker (1981:135) perceives at least seven notable historical "periods" in the Chamula celebration of Carnival Games: (1) the conquest of Mexico (including Chiapas) by Spaniards during the sixteenth century, (2) the Cancuc revolt of 1712, (3) the French intervention of 1862-1867, (4) the Chamulan uprising of 1867-1870, (5) the nineteenth-century boundary dispute with Guatemala, (6) the Pineda revolt of 1920, (7), the Passion of Christ. These seven ethnic conflicts are treated as one in the ritual games that comprise a Chamula version of the *Carnival* festival.

15 See discussions in Chance 1990; Chance & Taylor 1985; Rus & Wasserstrom 1980.

16 See, for examples, the works of Foster 1965, 1972; Groark 2005; Moscoso Pastrana 1990; Nash 1970; Thomas 1967; Vidas 2007.

17 In Tedlock's version of the *Popol Vu* (1985:120-121) see the part on revenge by the younger brothers Hanahpu and Xbalanque against their older brothers, One Monkey and One Artisan. The older brothers fall for the trap of the growing tree. Stuck in the taller than imaginable tree, climbing with their loin cloths trailing, the older brothers soon discover to their consternation that they have acquired tails. As the narrative relates the moment: *Now they looked like monkeys. After that they went along in the trees and the mountains . . . And when they got home they said, when they came to their grandmother and mother:'Our dear grandmother, something has happened to our elder brothers. They've become simply shameless, they're like animals now,' they said.*

18 Examples include different forms of spiritualism or curandismo, also known generaly in Mexico as "nahuatalism," but also witchcraft-type practices for good or ill, generally referred to as

brujaria. For practices of this nature in Chiapas, see Guiteras-Holmes 1961; Pitt-Rivers 1967:81; Moscoso Pastrano 1990; Thomas 1967; and for these kinds of beliefs in Mexico generally, see Nutini 1993.

19 See more detail on these practices and beliefs in the documents of Cenami 1993, and López Hernández 2000; Maurer Avalos 1997.

20 "Survivalism" is explored by Hostettler and Restall (2001:ix), who define it as ". . . the upshot of scholarly attempts to refine and hone the nature of Maya culture and identity, past and present, has effectively disappeared that identity and shattered that culture as an essential, homogeneous entity. The scholarly microscopes of archaeologists, historians, anthropologists, art historians, and linguists . . . revealed patterns of variation and localization so deep-rooted and potent as to suggest that the sole essentialist element left to help Mayanists define Mayanness is its very evanescence. This is not to propose that Mayas did not or do not exist, rather that the native peoples of the geographical area we call Maya did and do not necessarily think or act on any conscious level as "Maya." Considerations of ethnicity and examinations of local identity must form the basis of any investigation into the society and culture of any Maya social group."

21 June Nash (1966:354), in her study of a Maya village in Chiapas, once made reference to the importance of "social resources" in terms of "how these have served the Indians in the widening circumstance of their social horizons." Looking at how "bounded social groups" perceive alternatives and re-work innovation to fit a local set of givens, Nash noticed how indigenous people were not always at a disadvantage when it came to the economic schemes of economic policy makers. In Nash's view (1966: 354), "these social resources include the patterns of interaction influencing the course of economic change, perception of economic opportunity, resourcefulness in fitting social and techno logical innovation into a given schedule of production and organization."

22 See versions in Bricker 1981; Gosner 1992; Molina 1934; Moscoso Pastrana 1992; Nelson 1997; Viqueira Albán 1997.

23 This imitation was attempted in two ways. First, building on the sentiments of a simple cult honoring the Virgin Mary, "La Candelaria" (the virgin mother of Jesus, who in her arms is presented to the world as the Light of the world), the initial conspirators (Gosner 1992:124) were able to create a shrine-center. María López was the chosen one, the young girl to whom the Virgin Mary had spoken and would continue to speak to. This story was too fantastic for immediate acceptance. "But when the incumbent office holders in Cancuc threw their support behind the cult, their claims gained wider acceptance." Agustín López, the father of María, would later recall in testimony that "although at the beginning some Indians doubted, seeing that others believed, who were capable and of authority because of the offices they had occupied and still occupied, they were convinced, and all believed alike" (cf. Gosner 1992:124). The imitation of models or exemplars was a key mimetic element in recreating church and society, whereby the Tzetlal who followed were seeking to imitate the desire of their authority figures whom they trusted implicitly. And because mimetic desire is contagious and spreads like a good rumor, the new cult brought many other indigenous as pilgrim visitors.

24 Rus (1983:144, nn. 60-61 excised) describes the historical role of a "fiscal" in this manner:

It is significant that Cuzcat was a *fiscal*. According to an 1855 document describing Chamula's religious structure for future priests, the fiscales were the principle brokers between the church and the local community: in addition to acting as translators for the priests, they also kept all parish records, taught catechism to the young, and even led religious services themselves in the priests'

absence. For this they were paid a small stipend, and often served for a decade or more at a time. They were, in fact, the closest thing to a native clergy.

25 There was a similar re-enactment or *mimesis* of Christ and his 12 apostles effected in the later part of the 16th century. Wasserstrom (1983a:25) describes the 1584 case of the Chiapaneco chief/leader (alcalde) don Juan Atonal who, in spite of close friendship with the Dominican friars of the time and their entrusting him with one of their new cofradía (dedicated to a Saint), don Juan took his task literally. He apparently organized several followers as the 12 apostles, to walk abroad at night and travel from mountain to mountain, cave to cave . . . with two women acting as Holy Mary and Mary Magdelen, performing ceremonies so as to become spiritualized and thus to be transformed into gods. For a reconstruction of the details of the alleged 1864 crucifixion of a Chamula adolescent, see Molina (1934) and Bricker (1981:119-125).For critical perspectives regarding various ways to understand this fictive event, though not entirely in agreement, see Nelson (1997) and Rus (1983).

26 These interests reflected mid-19th century modernization ideology, cf. Benjamin 1996; Favre 1992 [1984]; García de Leon 1978, 1997; Rus 1983; Rus and Wasserstrom 1980).

27 Conspicuous ethnographic studies that reflect this penchant are the early work of Vogt (1964, 1969, 1976, 1970, 1978), not to mention the many monographs of the Harvard Chiapas Project, once located in San Cristóbal de Las Casas (a fieldwork study program from 1957 to about 2000).

28 A major critique of functionalist anthropology was its failure to account for conflict as a dysfunctional dilemma, other than to assume that even internal differences and disagreements can be highly functional and integrative, somehow able to serve the greater social whole by contributing to coherence, i.e., keeping that status quo or equilibrium going as much as possible. See Eller (2006:46-51).

29 Watanabe (1995:25-26), discussing ethnography in Guatemala, describes a similar problem arising with this kind of romantic imagining: ". . . revisionists often rebuke anthropology for reducing living Maya to the unknowing anachronisms of vanished civilization or the hapless victims of on-going colonialist and capitalist exploitation. . . ."

30 Perhaps "peon" is a better term, as in "unskilled laborer," or someone who does day work. I am reluctant to use the term "peasant" though prevalent in recent literature on Chiapas, probably because of its rural connotation. I prefer the Mexican Spanish of *campesino* for farmer or field/rural worker. When I refer to a "peasant" I am following Chambers and Young (1977:97, n1), who define their use of "peasant" and "rural" in a broad sense "to include Indian as well as mestizo or ladino (mixed heritage) peoples, and to include communities which may not be entirely dependent on agricultural employment."

31 On the complexity of religious diversity and conflicts in Chiapas, see also Bastian 1996; Earle 1990; Gubler and Hostettler 1995; Rivera Farfán 2005.

32 See, for example, Early 2006 for a Guatemalan example of Costumbre practices; also Palomo Infante 2009; Maurer Avalos 1993.

33 On political bosses and the nature of violence and conflict at the community level in Chiapas and elsewhere in Mexico, see Bastian 1996; De Vries 2002; Gabbert 1999, 2001; Rus 1994, 2005; Knight and Pansters 2005.

34 The phenomenology of "consciousness" and "meaning" is not easily understood or describable in in simple terms. It often generates complex and convoluted explanations, e.g. Berger and Luckmann (1995), *Modernity, Pluralism and the Crisis of Meaning*.

35 The group has a Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sak-Tzevul/20972155546?v=info . they also have a Myspace page: http://www.myspace.com/saktzevul

36 A Spanish language interview of this group is at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TN_e55CiLRU

37 Sandstrom (1991) insists upon using the term "Indian" for describing the Nahuatl groups in Central Mexico, even though he is aware how problematic this term has become in political discourse in Mexico by the 1990s. I prefer the term "Indigenous " when possible since this usage reflects current self-ascriptions by the Tzotzil themselves, "jo'on indígena" an informant will say.

38 San Juan Chamula is an extensive, mostly rural municipality comprised of some 127 hamlets which support a total population of 76, 955 inhabitants (INEGI 2010).

39 See also the research on rural to urban migration in Ángulo Barredo 1995; Canton Delgado 1997; Gossen 1983; Pérez Enríquez 1994; Rus and Vigil 2007; Schreuder 2001.

40 In the laws of the Roman Catholic church, a religious institute is defined in Cannon 607 §2. A woman's religious institute is a society in which members … pronounce public vows, either perpetual or temporary that are to be renewed… and lead a life of brothers or sisters in common. (source: *Code of Cannon Law* at http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/__P1Z.HTM)

41 In the Roman Catholic lexicon, a "diocese" (diocesis in Spanish) is a geographic and administrative territory under the pastoral care of an Ordinary or Bishop. San Cristóbal de Las Casas is the oldest of three dioceses located in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. The diocese is much larger than the city of the same name "San Cristóbal de Las Casas". This city is the location of the "seat" or cathedra of the local Bishop. Named he "Cathedral of Peace" during the 1994 conflict, it is also known as San Cristóbal, which dominates the historical center of the city. "Las Casas" is the name for both the city and the diocese, and refers to the historical memory of its second bishop, the Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas, who arrived in 1543. The name "Cristóbal" refers to Saint Christopher, the patron of travelers.

42 The CONAI peace negotiation team headed by Bishop Samuel reported an estimate of nearly 1/3 of the Mexican army was stationed in Chiapas in 1998. See SIPAZ's document: "Brief History of the Conflict in Chiapas:1994-2007." See http://www.sipaz.org/crono/proceng.htm

43 The term "priestess" (in Spanish, *sacerdotisa*) is perhaps somewhat problematic and inexact in English, all the more so if we consider its connotation as a function role within a highly structured society or organization, or as someone whose role represents the systematized tenets of an institution designed to support hierarchical religion. In any case, the Mexican term for much of what Ixchel does, e.g., "curandera" or healer/seer, seems too limiting. From what I gather in observing the way my friend uses the term "sacerdotisa," the referential sense (as her personal goal) is about entering an elevated class of Indigenous leaders. In this sense, "priest" is a term with some reference to an intelligentsia or a spiritual elite, people of special status and ability. Ixchel's role is not, therefore, your "garden variety" healer o bone-setter, etc, but something more; such an acquisition of power and status requires years of special training, initiation, and the honoring of proven unique abilities (something akin to an ordination).

44 There is no exact term in Tzotzil for describing a "priestess" per se though one could say *jme'* or *jm'etik*, as in "mother" or "our mother." Xichel is seeking to become something more specialized than what is familiar among the Tzotzil today. As for the ancient Maya, anthropologists sometimes refer to a social role of priest or priestess, though that word has connotations in Western culture that may not correspond to Maya thought in previous centuries.

45 For an example of the kind of vocation that Ixchel is training for (which some might refer to as "neo-shamanism"), see one interesting public example of a similar effort by a woman who calls herself "Aum Rak," whose website is in English: http://www.reconnections.net/AUMpage.htm.

46 The following web link lists some core beliefs http://www.spiritandsky.com/new-age/ and provides a general definition of the term "New Age". According to the web site Spirit and Sky, "This term, New Age, describes a movement in western culture to explore spiritual matters without the constraints of any set religious doctrine. Known as the "New Age Movement," it contains many of the same elements found throughout different religions. New Age itself is not an actual religion, it is more of a conglomeration of many peoples "private" beliefs."

47 See a variety of discussions about witches and witchcraft in Gómez Sántiz 2005; Henriquez 2003; Moscoso Pastrana 1990; cf. Nash 1970; Rus 2000; Thomas 1967.

48 Elio Henriquez (La Jornada, 14 April, 2003) reports an example of inhabitants of Rancho Narvaez, Chamula municipality, who asassinated Domingo Shilon, after he returned from exile to continue practicing "brujería" (witchcraft).

49 My own translation of the original Spanish text. See the web blog entry by Francisco Ruiz Zuart (7 January, 2011). "Indígena, Doctora en Derecho Penal, exhibe y desnuda a gobiernos. Source: http://pipreype.blogspot.com/2011/01/indigena-doctora-en-derecho-penal.html

50 This is my own translation of Xun's story, sent to me as an email (Spring 2011).

51 Reference from R. Nordquist at http://grammar.about.com/od/mo/g/metonymy.htm

52 For example, there is the now classic reference *The Handbook of Middle American Indians* (Wauchope 1964; cf. Vol 7 and 8, Vogt 1969), or its updated version the Supplement (Vol. 6) on Ethnology (Monaghan 2000). Major overviews that focus on the Tzotzil communities of Chiapas include, but are not limited to, the following: Bricker and Gossen 1989; Bricker 1981; Brown 2002; Cancian 1992; Collier 1975; Favre 1992 [1984]; Gossen 1974, 1999, 2002; Guiteras Holmes 1961; Kohler 2000; 2007; Laughlin 1964, 1993, 1988 [1964]; Nash 2001; Obregón Rodriguez 2003; Pérez López 1990; Pozas 1977 [1947]; Rosenbaum 1996; Rus et al. 2003; Salovesh 1996; Vogt 1969, 1970, 1976; Wasserstrom 1983a.

53 For a review on a more general shift in ethnohistory as well as ethnography for Mesoamerica, see John K. Chance (1996), "Mesoamerica's Ethnographic Past."

54 Both Wasserstrom's Ph.D. dissertation, (1977) and later monograph on class and social relations in Chiapas (1983:6) unlocks puzzles about esoteric or "mysterious" practices for many indigenous groups: "… by the late 16th century most of the differences which may have characterized native señorias (principalities or fiefdoms) before the conquest had disappeared under the combined pressures of demographic catastrophe and political collapse. For the next two centuries, these communities remained quite homogenous in both their internal structure and their position within the colonial order. Only after independence, it seems, and in fact toward the end of the 19th century, did such towns acquire the distinct ethnic identities which later fired the imaginations of anthropologists.

Here is the beginning of the defeat and destruction of the day of Seven Macaw by the two boys, the first named Hunahpu and the second named Xbalanque. Being gods, the two of them saw evil in his attempt at self-magnification before the Heart of Sky.

So the boys talked:

"Its no good without life, without people here on the face of the earth."

"Well then, lets try a shot. We could shoot him while he's at his meal. We could make him ill, then put an end to his riches, his jade, his metal, his jewels, his gems, the source of his brilliance. Everyone might do as he does, but it should not come to be that fiery splendor is merely a matter of metal. So be it!"

-- said the boys, each one with a blowgun on his shoulder, the two of them together.

The Popol Vu – The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life
Dennis Tedlock (1985:89-90)

Chapter 4

Inter-Barrio Conflict and Desires for a Common Unity

In the community where I resided during fieldwork, I noticed a shared desire to realize some measure of "common unity" among members. It seemed to me that more often than not community members were careful to act in unison, that is to say, working together to share their burdens, risks, and benefits, at least as much as possible. Despite a history sometimes indicating experiences to the contrary, the ideal of living a common unity remains attractive, appealing, practical. For many of the Chamula I interviewed, this significant ideal was worth "fighting for" or "fighting over"–that is to say, worth the risk of division. This was true even when a member or a group within the community might express dissent or simply not want to cooperate with a decision made with authority at the Sunday assembly. Nevertheless, even when division was a threat the desire for unity might still be in evidence because what these members wanted most, ideally, was that other members see things their way. In this chapter I look closely at one particular community's internal issues of identity, mimesis, and practice and how, even in the face of conflict and division, these three elements both shape and are shaped by a fundamental desire among members for some kind of a unified identity.

189

Brief Outline of Chapter

The chapter begins by introducing some basic data on the community of La Candelaria, an extensive ejido in the eastern rural zone of the city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. After providing a basic description, the chapter then looks at how this community is on many levels organized around the enduring ideal of a possible common unity. I contend that this particular ideal represents (or re-imagines) the way community leaders and others try to keep divisions or differences from getting out of hand, that is to say from becoming too scandalous or overly pronounced as to tear the community apart. The management of conflict is a constant preoccupation for leaders and community members who prefer to mute discord or k'op (problems) among members, at least as much as possible.

The maxetik or Monkey men covered in the previous chapter are explored further as an example of a mimetic approach to conflict management. Their mimetic role of representation, full of humor but also social critique, provides hope for a common unity ideal as their clown-like animations help keep members of the community level-headed, prudent, and if not wise then at least more astute in matters of passion. Monkey men can get drunk and silly because that is what animals (non-humans) act like when they cannot be rational or behave properly. To be a community of human beings means learning to not act like a bunch of monkeys: the power of non-example. The "show" put on by monkey-like-men implies that humans have their own cosmic purpose, path, or plan despite adversity precipitated by the gods or god-like higher powers who seem to often capricious in their "serious play" regarding the rarely negotiable realities of heaven and earth.

According to proponents of mimetic theory, there is a unifying/repelling dynamic of imitative desire. The chapter looks at how a shared desire for a common unity among

members of the ejido La Candelaria is usually something mimetically reproduced. I am referring here to what strikes me as being a common attraction: a shared preference for not being alone and thus the felt-sense of belonging that comes from experiences of social solidarity. Imitative desire constitutes practice as members of a group move toward solidarity (us vs. them). However, these desires are also constituted by practice (via triangular desire). Given the way community members interact, it may seem obvious that a shared desire for unity emerges over time. Unity, over time, while not a constant experience, can eventually become a common ideal. However, what is hard to understand is where a desire for unity comes from in the first place?

Ironically, the desire for a shared or common unity can become the source of division. This happens when members join forces or unify by being against someone or something, instead of "being for." Groups formed in this way cam move against another group they might impute as "Other" or consider somehow "strange" or as not thinking, and so forth (despite the fact that such groups of strange others are not much different in terms of basic social and cultural features of identity).

The latter half of Chapter 4 presents an extended analysis of a particular conflict that transpired in the late 1970s within the community of La Candelaria. According to informants, trouble unfolded between several barrios because of the ambitious desires of a few. This struggle brought about interbarrio rivalry and intra-ethnic strife, leading at one point to a drastic form of scapegoat violence: the expulsion or exile of an entire family from the community. Inter-barrio experiences like this one help illustrate key aspects that mark the mimetic nature of social conflict, and just how vulnerable the ideal of a "common unity" really is for Chamula in La Candelaria and other similar communities.

PART I

The Community of La Candelaria

Historically and technically defined, an "ejido" in Mexico generally refers to a means of owning significant and useful pieces of land (parcels) formerly part of large estates (latifundias, haciendas). This land is collectively owned and farmed communally under a system of rights and duties sponsored by the Mexican federal government. Vazquez Castillo (2004:2), writing on land privatization Mexico, offers a more descriptive definition:

> The Mexican ejido is a land tenure system that resulted from the Mexican revolution of 1910 in which more than one million Indigenous people died in their struggle for land. When propounded in the 1917 Constitution, Article 27 promised land to the landless and restoration of land to the displaced. In the political culture of Mexico, the ejido became mythicized as a "revolutionary" entity through which Mexican Indigenous people and impoverished peasants would have access to the land promised to them by means of the abolition of latifundios and the redistribution of the land that their elimination would release.[1]

In 1992, under President Salinas de Gortari, who belonged to the Institutional Revolutionary Party, amendments were made to the Constitution some 75 years since the law first established the revolutionary program of land reform. These changes, Vásquez (2004:2) reports, "were part of a bundle of macro policies intended to encourage investment and to "modernize" the countryside." In effect, however, while these reforms represented a radical transformation, land redistribution through the ejido system was characterized as outmoded, obsolete, and more of an obstacle to progress than productivity. Consequently, Vásquez Castillo says (2004:2):

> The reversal of land legislation on ejidos raised pressing questions related to ownership, future land uses, the local and regional economies sustained by ejido ownership rights and the labor markets attached to the economies of ejidos. Another question relates to the influence of the Ejido Reforms in accelerating urbanization and globalization processes that were already transforming the rural character of ejidos and shaping urban areas and national and global regions.

From what I could observe from my time among the Chamula ejiditarios in La Candelaria, to live in an ejido meant to live very seriously according to the rules of the commons (i.e., the shared use of land for living and working).

Living in a communal or semi-communal fashion offers a significant contrast with other indigenous communities in Chiapas and elsewhere that are far more stratified and composed of individual families that operate as small property holders (Betancourt Aduen 1997; Cancian 1974; 1992; Collier 1987; Reyes Ramos 1998). Encompassing some 2,783 hectares of total land surface including residential areas, forests, agricultural or workable lands and commons, the community of La Candelaria is one of the larger rural ejidos located on the outskirts of San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

According to the 2010 census the historical and once major colonial city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas today supports a total population of about 166,000 inhabitants, of which almost half (40%) is the total indigenous population of around 70,000 inhabitants within the city's boundaries.[2] Known by highland Tzotzil indigenous peoples as *jobel* (which means "grass") the large mostly non-Indian city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas is located at the center of mountainous terrain and rural zones. Of this area of land, the ejido La Candelaria represents a major extension in the upper eastern valley. By the late 19th century, most of the fertile and forested lands surrounding jobel no longer belonged to the Chamula or other indigenous peoples of the region but had become ranches and small haciendas for ladino property owners.

La Candelaria is a Chamula community of nearly 2,000 inhabitants (INEGI 2010), made up of approximately 400 households organized within nine distinct barrios.[3] Within the ejido, some proprietarios (small property tenants) control (but not really "own") more hectares of land than others do, though generally ejido lands are traditionally distributed so that no one family can have a monopoly.[4] In La Candelaria,

193

residents speak the Chamula dialect of the Maya language of Tzotzil. In fact, the

Chamula dialect of this eastern area is noticeably distinct from those who live in or near

the western districts of San Juan Chamula municipality.

Over many decades, highland indigenous peoples have migrated throughout the

state and beyond it, including massive relocation to the sprawling urban zones of nearby

San Cristóbal de Las Casas (cf. Garza et al. 1994; Gossen 1983, 1999b; Wasserstrom

1983a:156$_{\text{ff}}$). Migratory movement has had extensive repercussions for new

configurations of identity formation and social-cultural interactions between the local

ladino population and the steadily encroaching indigenous population (Garcia Guerrero

2003; Hvostoff 2009; Paniagua Mijangos 2001; Rus 2009; Siverts 1981). Within the rural

zones of San Cristóbal de Las Casas there are some 92 localities (barrios and colonias of

various sizes, as well as ejidos and hamlets).[5] Approximately 32 localities comprise urban

barrios within the city, while some 73 constitute mostly rural communities.[6] Other

localities that are not ejidos may nevertheless represent efforts to govern land jointly; this

can happen when there are agreements upon shared practices by the comuneros (property

owners) who are often related by natural or fictive kinship and constitute the community

proper. Most of the communities located in the hills that surround San Cristóbal are

comprised of Tzotzil Chamula Indians.[7]

Religious beliefs vary among the residents of La Candelaria. The majority of

members identify themselves as "Costumbre" or Costumbristas, meaning they are

Traditionalists who follow the customary ways, with or without believing Christian

doctrines strictly speaking. This means there are two kinds of "Catholics" in the ejido

who use the Church in the central barrio for worship (Figure 4.1:c and d). Besides

traditionalist or customary Catholics whose religious beliefs are often based on

syncretistic combination of religious ideas and forms, there are Roman Catholics who

identify with the local diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Following a modern

Catholicism based on the teachings of the Second Vatican Council reforms, these

Catholics readily identify themselves as Católicos de La Palabra de Dios (Word of God

or biblical Catholics), referring to living in accord with the Hebrew and Christian

Scriptures (the Bible). Several new churches have become visible within the ejido, such

as the Pentecostal congregation called "Iglesia Nuevo Pacto" (New Covenant Church; see

Figure 4.1:a and b).

(a)   (b)

(c)   (d)

Figure 4.1. Different Styles of Christian Practice and Identity. Ejido La Candelaria: (a) Participant observer Fray Miguel Rolland, OP greeting Pentecostal pastor Ermalindo while he was (b) visiting an affiliated congregation located in La Candelaria (Pentecost 2010); (c) José and his new bride Virginia, with his paternal Uncle and aunt, celebrating their traditional wedding during a community Sunday mass on 8 August, 2010; (d) A Catholic Catechist with his family in front of the Church of La Virgin de La Candelaria.

In recent years, some ejido families have chosen to become members of

Evangelical Protestant churches; other families have joined groups such as the Adventists

or Jehovah Witnesses. Although these groups have adopted many similar styles of music, preaching, participation, and organization as other church groups in the region, their beliefs seem to put them at considerable variance regarding traditional Christian creeds.

The Commons: Source of Unity, Source of Division

There is another ideal to consider when it comes to striving for a common unity. This is a notion that also suggests an even more fundamental material desire: the shared hope that is the unity of the commons. Here I am using the term "commons" in two senses; first to refer to common folks, such as a "peasant" or proletarian (Mexican farmers); and secondly, to refer to a type of community setting based upon shared ownership of agrarian lands. In Mexico, this style of ownership is referred to as an ejido.

Interestingly, while ejidos like La Candelaria are supposedly oriented toward the embodiment of an egalitarian ethos, in fact this has hardly ever been the historical reality. This seems odd for La Candelaria, where members manifest very traditional and conservative views in religion and politics. In fact, one way that the community tries to embody this ethos is by means of a form of government called the "cargo" system of cycling community duties and obligations. If a property owner is elected by peers to serve the ejido community, he has little choice but to accept the position and may have to give up a paying job for up to three years, depending on the demands of the cargo. There are some 54 cargos that constitute community service in La Candelaria that range from a lowly policeman to a secretary, to a community store-keeper, on up to the all important roles of Municipal Agent (one year cargo) or the top office which is Commissar (a three year commitment). These authorities meet every Sunday. Even the church is assigned a Sacristan, believer or not, a cargo service that lasts two years until replaced (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2. The Joy of Handing-over "cargo" Responsibilities. La Candelaria, January 2010: outgoing Sacristan handing over Church keys and gifts to the new Sacristan who will care for all ritual paraphernalia and Church related events for the next two years. Photo by author.

Among many public exhibitions of the desire for a common unity, I noticed the seriousness with which those charged with an office of authority (los cargos) ended their terms with both joy and apprehension. Handing on their burden of responsibility in a formal and ritual way in the Ejido Assembly hall takes place at the beginning of January (Figure 4.2). Even in this large community, economic stratification is a burgeoning social reality that seems to adversely impact upon customary ways of life. Imitative desire, I contend, is the "invisible hand" pushing more acute, even grievous aspects of modern class formation. And even though historically Chamula community life has always been stratified in some fashion, especially since the Conquest, there are many who seem to prefer a less obvious class division in favor of at least the semblance of more common or shared style of life. Whether in pushing stratification or in limiting such a process, imitation seems to play a role. Imitative desire is certainly a factor for many younger members in Chamula communities who see their friends risking migration to the United States. Whether to be like others, or to be different from others in the community, young Chamula see each other return and go back again to the North, only to return some years later with enough income to support their families. They see them acquire the means to

197

compete with neighbors who by the same process have managed to obtain better tools for carpentry, better trucks for transport, better materials for housing, and so forth. Other highland indigenous groups have also experienced increased stratification, something now observably true for decades in the nearby Tzotzil township of Zinacantan (Cancian 1964, 1975, 1992).

Imitative desire is one possible source of motivation influencing multiple other factors, and likely generates both similarity and difference between Chamula regarding how they value material and Psychosocial objects – even though socially and culturally, any outsider might view a Chamula community as ostensibly homogenous. This certainly seems the case in the several communities that I was able to examine closely, where differences in social status and wealth certainly exist but are somewhat hidden. Expecting homogeneity and a certain amount of egalitarian values when I first moved to the community, I was surprised to see how many Chamula had considerable access to lands beyond their own ejido, not to mention educational opportunities beyond high school level, and a variety of up-to-date marketable skills such as word processing and spreadsheet manipulation.

Whether communities really are egalitarian in practice or in spirit (attitude) is an open question, but since the 1970s, if not before, communities have had to deal with multiple divisions due to diverging political and religious desires. These have arisen within communities at an amazing rate and I would argue are partly the results of pressures arising initially from a lack of differentiation. The look alike dynamic of too much sameness or an egalitarian ethos is the product of interactive copying, a dynamic that over time seems to have more increase than decrease, and appears to spread (albeit unevenly) across generations and across geographic areas. In La Candelaria, for instance, conflict management performed by municipal agents, commissars, and other leaders, but

also through the mimetic clowning of the Monkey men reflects the current state of practice for many Chamula. Authorities in La Candelaria repeatedly told me they were worried about the way members struggle to hold on to communal values (their ideal). To what extent do such formative struggles help shape perceptions of the desirable? What determines the values associated with material objects and/or psychosocial objectives (such as what it means to own/possess/work a useful piece of land)?

In a Chamula hamlet or small community, where people likely know each other extremely well, values associated with a communal sense of unity can reflect a measure of hope for "getting along with one's neighbors, relatives, and other ejido members." But the value of a common unity also seems to reflect the value people place upon what constitutes a threat to this ideal, such as the potential fractures among people desiring to differentiate themselves, despite having a great deal in common.

One way to consider how identity formation and conflict are related dynamics is to look at reactions to similarity and difference within a particular community, and how they might compare and contrast with Chamula practices in another community, say for example, with traditions or customary practices found within the municipality of San Juan Chamula. While both groups of Chamula claim distinct identities they are in fact highly similar in terms of social, cultural, and economic practices. The next sections explore similarities and differences in particular traditions common to many large Chamula communities.

Ethnic Identity Formation in La Candelaria

Pérez López (1990), a Tzotzil writer and scholar, works with the state government office of CELALI in San Cristóbal de Las Casas (Consejo para la Cultura y Las Artes de Chiapas/the Council for Culture and Art of Chiapas). He has written the township of San Juan Chamula. Although from the Tzotzil municipio of Chalchihuitán,

199

he carefully describes what his neighbors the Chamula affectionately refer to as *xmixik balamil* ("ombligo de la tierra" or "the navel of the world"), that is to say, the center of all things. This kind of "ethno-centrism" seems almost universal in cross-cultural terms (Govers and Vermeulen 1997), but it is all the more remarkable when Maya Tzotzil groups seem to have "centers of the world" in competition (Collier 1994). The potential problem of competing "navels" does not much figure in ethnographies of the Chamula or other peoples. It is almost assumed that despite their differences and idiosyncratic qualities in each major pueblo or territory, "the Maya" presumably all share some sort of unifying "cultural logic" (Fischer 2001). Some have thought they perhaps share some kind of "phylogenetic" common root or material origin (Vogt 1994a) made up of common systemic patterns, common language and historical traditions, or remnant elements of a now diverse but once converging existence (original ancestral group).

Assumptions about a mysterious past for the Maya, something that was once in full existence but is no more than a remnant today, are highly problematic. What remains visible, according to this viewpoint, is nothing more than a pale reflection of ancient memory, energy, wisdom, and cultural artifacts. Objectified thus, the remnant few or surviving group of Maya Tzotzil could be construed for audience to see them as striving to hold onto their past with jealous determination and even some measure of creativity (Carmack et al 2007; Gossen 2002). But what else could they do? The Tzotzil like other Indians were compelled to act in certain ways because they were left relatively isolated in regions or enclaves they eventually developed as refuge from a harsh colonial and post-colonial world (Aguirre Beltrán 1967; Collier 1975). As Rus, Stavenhagen, and Wasserstrom have often pointed out, the Chamula, like other Tzotzil groups, were never isolated nor were they ever "refugees" – if any thing they were prisoners in their own homes, that is to say, their communities having become modern labor camps.[8]

200

Perhaps a more accurate way to imagine the existence of "deep structures" for indigenous peoples in Mexico would be to realize that Maya groups today are by no means the "quaint or arbitrary survival of the Maya past." Even less are they the product of "a false consciousness born of persistent colonialist oppression," as Watanabe (1990) describes something similar in Guatemala. Whether in religion, politics, economics, or cultural representations of common values, the Maya Tzotzil Chamula of today are mostly focused upon their "proprietary identities" (Harrison 2006). A proprietary identity refers to a sense of place and space forged and fired as a durable product and property that reflects local identity. Nevertheless, the question is what drives such a fierce sense of local identity. Mimetic desire is one possibility since it seems to form a kind of practice or disposition that is always more than a "rational choice," as some might characterize such situations (Weede and Muller 1998). Mimetic desire would explain key aspects of the way Maya in Chiapas or elsewhere seem to want to differentiate their selves, acting through creative recombination of conventional forms that in turn provide the sinew so necessary for configuring community life and institutions, community boundaries and moral limits.[9]

The Goal of "Common Unity" in La Candelaria

When I first arrived in La Candelaria for fieldwork in the fall of 2008, I went to live with my compadres Sebastián and Xuncax. My friend Sebastián, (who was first presented in chapter one), is a carpenter but also a corn farmer, a typical Chiapas campesino (farmer). He labors much like the vast majority of the men in his barrio and throughout his ejido community. As a carpenter, he makes simple chairs and tables and some other kinds of furniture to sell in the furniture market in San Cristobal, in the barrio of San Martín de Porres. Together with his several sons and daughters, and a neighbor he hires full-time, Sebastián takes these pieces of furniture to sell directly on the street. If in

urgent need of cash he will sometimes conveniently sell his products at a lesser price to a furniture dealer he knows. Sebastián takes his carpentry products only one day a week, typically on Friday, for that is when people know when to come. Working out of his truck directly, he can offer an attractive price because of lower "overhead" though he sometimes has to pay a policeman for the privilege to park and sell on a public street.

Like other carpenters, time and money are important factors for Sebastián. He can spend an entire day on the street in one location hoping to sell his product to people in the market. Other Tzotzil carpenters are also around doing the same thing. They have come to the market from many different communities, including some from his own ejido. Together they compete for paying customers. To my surprise, the demand for cheap, raw, rough unvarnished furniture seldom abates and these rude pine wood tables and shelves travel everywhere all over Chiapas.

I spent a few long days in the market with my compadre in the fall of 2009. Observing the obvious up-close competition, I was impressed at how all the sellers appeared to get along, even though many Chamula were impossibly concentrated in the same place and for the same purpose. Each vendor was simultaneously trying to sell the same basic kinds of goods, often with very similar designs. It was almost as if one seller had persistently copied the other. It is possible that such copying or repetition of design could be an indicator of too much sameness. In mimetic theory, too much resemblance is related to the notion of "proprietary identity" (Harrison 2006). Competitive copying is the sort of thing that can bode ill will over time, often leading to rivalrous conflict. Strife can arise not just between individuals, but between groups who pull together, associating themselves with a sense of ownership regarding a particular design, custom, way of doing things, or things like water holes or other sacred "sites" that have exclusive meaning (Burguete Cal Mayor 2000a). Subjects can join together as a small group or larger

202

associations such as an entire barrio or hamlet, even an entire ejido, joining in temporary or permanent alliances around some symbolic indication of non-resemblance with the other(s) they oppose. In highland Chiapas, political parties have been especially successful at exploiting this mimetic tendency of association and disassociation (Collier 1987; 1994; 1998; Rus and Collier 2003; Washbrook 2007).

According to mimetic theory, the politics of resemblance that tend to produce delineated forms of ethnicity or nationalism, or for that matter "trademarks" and other emblematic markers of possession (Harrison 2006) can be deadly. In the case of the competing Tzotzil carpenters, they were all selling at relatively the same low prices. In fact, they were careful not to go too far above or below one another, while at the same time attempting to differentiate themselves by way of a minimal directness with which they would engage a customer or by hoping their workmanship, material, and design, would speak for themselves as worth more than the asking price. Rude pine wood tables of 1.80 meters, for example, might sell between 150 to 200 pesos each (about $16.60 dollars) and a simple table chair between 80 to 150 pesos (about $12.50 dollars, each). In six to seven days time my friend Sebastián, with the help of at least one of his sons and an assistant, could produce about 20 tables or as many chairs, making around $2,000 pesos a week (approximately $250.00 dollars). This money would go immediately to pay for any number of business expenses, including paying wages to his day laborers who might have done work in one of his several corn milpas (fields) or to pay the 2 or 3 workers in his carpentry shop (at $100 pesos per day). He also needed cash to pay for the lumber to make more chairs in his workshop, or to pay down some of his outstanding debt to the *caja popular* (community credit union), loans for home improvement, auto repair, or carpentry shop equipment repairs. There were also the ordinary expenses related to the everyday parental care he and his wife had for their household, which

included his oldest daughter's children (while the father was away working in Tampa, Florida). Other expenses included an assortment of public expenditures related to his service commitments as a Deacon within the Catholic Church. As was customary and expected, like other Deacons, he would have to pay for his own trips to training courses or special events offered by the diocese.

Typical of his ejido community, Sebastián is a man who has worked very hard for many years to secure additional lands besides those secured from his father. Sebastián once confided to me that the chief motivation for his working so hard, everyday, seven days a week, was *por necesidad* (out of necessity); his goal was first and foremost to establish a considerable degree of well being for his family, with land the fundamental source of all security. He has title or right to several hectares of land both in the *k'ixin osil* or "hot lands" and in the cooler zone of the highlands. In my interviews with Sebastián–and others of his community and its neighbors–I was very surprised to learn how many Chamulas have had to become members of more than one ejido to acquire land. This happened out of necessity but also because of ambition.

In the case of Sebastián, I learned that he and his family are official members in three distinct ejido communities. I thought this was remarkable, if only because of the many obligations one ineluctably incurs as an *enlistado* (registered) member of any ejido, such as having to serve a "cargo" (post of service) anywhere from one to three years time if elected by the ejido assembly. As far as I know, to be a true *proprietario* (office holder) or official and registered member of more than one ejido is technically not permitted by the state or federal agrarian reform authority. For many indigenous people, however, especially the Chamula who have long suffered from a diminishing availability of land (Collier and Quaratiello 2005; Gossen 1983), having multiple ejido commitments is not a question of what is licit or not, but what is meaningful and matters, especially in terms of

food and economic security. Land in this sense is a necessary means to a good investment that can be used create a buffer against hard times (as in land you control so that you can sell it off--if and when very hard times appear). Land also conveniently provides some measure of an inheritance for children, providing parents with options and investments in an uncertain present (Hvostoff 2009; Nolasco Armas 2010) and an even more unstable future, especially when considering how given Mexico and Chiapas are continually subject to precarious political agendas (Speed 2008). However, as far as land "owned" by my compadre Sebastián, two of the ejidos to which he belongs are located near each other in the highlands. The other ejido is located much further away in the hot central valley where the Grijalva river flows widely (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3. Working the Fields with my Compadre Sebastián: Planting corn is a hard two-day job for a 1 hectare field when done in the traditional fashion. Sebastián working with his son and another hired hand, tossing 3 or 4 corn kernels per hole made with a metal tipped pole. This land, located in the hot Central Valley lowlands of ejido "Arizona," represents one of three ejidos where Sebastián manages at least 1 hectare of land for growing staple crops. Photo by author (2008).

Membership in this ejido and possession of several hectares of land for Sebastián and his brother Domingo was part of a land swap deal ten years earlier when they were

active members of the PRI sponsored SOCAMA–a joint campesino-teacher union with a socialist focus on land reform.[10] When I discussed all this with Sebastián, his *milpa* (field) in the hot lands was only being used for growing corn, beans, and squash for an earlier harvest and fuller yield than what corn renders in his highland fields. These fields are not prepared or maintained organically–which, according to my compadre, would be ideal—but are instead minimally watched over when Sebastián goes with a few workers to spay his field with insecticide, or water them during time of drought by pumping from a small river very close to his fields. All together Sebastián controls about 10 hectares.[11]

In addition to hard work, Sebastián has extensive commitments for his Church community serving as a *jtunel* (servant/deacon/preacher and minister of sacraments). The vocational commitment of a servant leader in the church often takes him away from his family on local pastoral visits to the sick, as well as study courses, or preaching commitments in nearby hamlets or ejidos and ranches).[12]Sebastián has always been and will likely remain a very busy man. Although now past 50 years of age, and undaunted in his new struggle with the onset of Type Two Diabetes, he remains focused and determined to do what he feels must be done for his family and his community.

Though relatively well off and secure financially compared to many Tzotzil communities in the highland region, most of the Chamula of La Candelaria rely heavily on carpentry more than farming to sustain any luxuries in their way of life. For some, economic conditions have worsened because of the risk they took with loans that must be paid down, suggesting a sort of Sisyphus situation of rolling the rock uphill repeatedly. Community members seem to want, then need, more and more things. Some admitted to me that they desire to have things, as others around them seem to have. They might want to borrow a desire, for instance, to remodel their homes from one floor to two or from two rooms to four. They want to acquire a new or better truck, or try for better medicines,

206

or make important purchases at "Sam's club" (recently in town). They consider making payments on larger televisions or acquiring things their parents and grandparents never used, such as a refrigerator. In short, they want things just like what a person can see or hear advertized and good things, like the ones that resemble what their neighbors have in their homes.

Monkey Men as Memory Makers

The Chamula community of San Juan Chamula and Chamula living elsewhere, such as the rural areas of San Cristóbal de Las Casas are in many ways quite similar but in other ways distinct. To understand this contrast, it is useful to ponder distinct approaches to preserving two important kinds of "commons" that belong to all Chamula and that help shape their way of life and understandings about the world.

I first want to highlight the particular "commons" that is the mimetic practice of the mashetik or Monkey Men. This is a tradition that the Chamula of La Candelaria and the Chamula of San Juan Chamula both have in common and take very seriously as an emblematic reminder of their rich social and cultural identity.

In both San Juan Chamula, but also for the so-called communities that form a kind of "diaspora" (Gossen 1983, 1999b; Wasserstrom 1983a), the monkey men characters play a unifying and connective role, but one that is also evocative of a double meaning. As animating figures, mashes play an instructive moral and historical role in key civil-religious ceremonies. A major aspect of this common role is that of "trickster" or what is the comic archetypal role of a "public fool" who can communicate difficult truths in an entertaining manner. Monkey men playfully enliven members of a community while also acting as carriers of a general social memory. Their performances reflect the important cultural cargo (burden) of providing for Chamula communities what

207

in the previous chapter I refer to as the serious fun[13] of remembering what it means to be a human being.

Serious fun refers to how mimesis (imitative desire) makes and un-makes social solidarity and social memory (something that can never be private or particular). This sense of "common property" or shared identity is interesting to observe, for example, in the way the public antics of these animators help members of a community not to forget and thus remember the importance of always moving towards their shared ideal of a common unity.

Monkey men provide the lessons of non-example and thus warn against what you can become if you do not pay attention to ritual and custom, or forget to dance in the mystery of life-in-motion. Take for example the serious games that characterize political and economic policies or agendas. These spheres of interaction can sometimes appear as so much "monkey business" and, as such, also anti-human or anti-community. Members of a community, left to their own self interest or personal ambitions can quickly get out of hand; in real life, people who act like a wild bull, or worse, like the morally dubious "fat kaxlan" (ladino), would destroy a community were it not for the mashes (maxetik). They are the ones who tease the bull and lead him in the dance of life, something quite visibly acted-out at each community festival. What seems like mere frolic is also a profound moral lesson about how human beings should live. The Monkey men are the ones who teach hard-to-learn lessons of life by "re-minding" community members not just about the dangers of excess or mimetic desire gone awry, but also about who they truly are, and the Chamula have been in the past. Through the fun of poking fun and creating contrast, these capricious clown-like figures emphasize a fundamental identity. Present at almost every solemn occasion and at every major public festival, these strange dancing-running-noise-making creatures provoke the observing Chamula to ask him or

her self what it means to be a true human being; what does it mean to be part of a community and to act according to certain boundaries, memories, and ideals. As the maxetik dance and run about, sing, shout, and scurry about, they help young and old connect to a common past, present, and possible shared futures. In short, these monkeys mimetically generate positive desires for the common good.

While common unity is an ideal that many Chamula strive for in terms of getting along with neighbors and relatives of their home community, their efforts are not without obstacles. Historically, the goal of a common unity in the municipal community of San Juan Chamula (comprised of some 126 hamlets and villages) has sometimes become little more than conformity dominated by emotions of fear and anxiety. I refer to the way a few families in San Juan Chamula who acquired a disproportionate amount of wealth and power to control a wide range of activities, above all commerce, religion, and politics. Long term family connections with state and federal officials has often brought impunity for injustice in exchange for votes, thus inculcating a certain practice of power relations (Robledo Hernández 1997; Rus 2005).

The Assembly: Symbol Common Life and Shared Struggles

The dream-ideal or desire for a common unity is at its best when driven by the desire to walk with one heart, as Kovic (1997) has keenly observed about Chamula community life. When everyone has a voice the chance for unity is greater and the possibility of division is lessened. The desire for both a common unity of members in an ejido, for example, and the desire to protect the unity of the commons (ejido property), was particularly noticeable to me whenever I could attend a monthly assembly meeting on Sundays in La Candelaria. I was not formally a member, of course, but the authorities did allow me to observe a number of meetings, including permission to record audio and digital pictures of their interactions. While five or more hours long, these meetings

impressed me as orderly but frequently tedious in the amount of detail that informed each

topic of discussion concerning community events, rules, expectations, projects, and so

forth. Fortunately, not a meeting passed that humor was not present at some point. Men

did almost all of the talking and debating using a portable microphone (Figure 4.4) and

far out numbered women in attendance. Nevertheless, women's voices were important

since many were property owners and so had the right to address any issue.

The experience of internal division due to power held in the hands of a few is not

something unique to the indigenous of San Juan Chamula or communities. I was able to

collect data on significant power struggles within La Candelaria. But even though

indigenous communities often have many of the same values and life-ways, internal

division is almost unavoidable because of ambition, greed, rivalry, and how one person's

selfish desire can be imitated by others to the point of crisis; a circumstance ubiquitous

throughout Mesoamerica.[14]

Figure 4.4. Ejido Assembly. La Candelaria 2010. Photo by author.

From the perspective of mimetic theory and practice, what is important to notice

about internal division in a large community of communities like San Juan Chamula or a

smaller community of a few barrios like La Candelaria is how symbols that represent

power, privilege, and pecuniary interests are interdividualy pursued by competing members. Theoretically, it is not the symbolic object itself which is important, but the ways in which these "things" (e.g., acquiring a truck, a concession, or a position of authority) are mediated; mediation is the crucial factor for whether a conflict fades or intensifies. It is the dynamic of competition or rivalry itself, as played out among those who model (and thus mold) desire, that eventually give shape to identity formations at the level of community. In the case of the Chamula of La Candelaria, it is not what actors play for, but how they play together that most influences the historical development and expression of their "peoplehood" which can vary over time.

One significant but seldom considered aspect of identity formation is the frailty and vulnerability of a community as a whole, or what some scholars have eloquently described as the phenomenon of "thinking together what falls apart" (Driessen and Otto 2000; Siebers 2000). La Candelaria has suffered the challenge of internal factions whereby different groups vie for their version of the ideal of a common unity. Obstacles remain, however, as efforts to establish and maintain an enduring sense of common ownership or common practice in communities like La Candelaria cannot avoid the peripatetic twists and turns of "state formation" in Mexico (Eiss 2008; Haenn 2005, 2006; Joseph and Nugent 1994; Lewis 2008; Mattiace 2003).

In the latter part of the 20th century, Mexican state formation has had an inordinate impact within indigenous communities that have become increasingly divided by partisan interests (Collier 1987). Chamula informants from La Candelaria have reported how much in the past but also more recently they feel manipulated by the capricious desires of government agents, despite the community's collective efforts at autonomy or highly circumscribed interaction with state and federal officials. Political interaction and the serious game of power is obviated every time mayoral candidates

come to La Candelaria bearing gifts or promises of infrastructure projects and expecting

local leaders to deliver a collective vote in their favor. Historically, government actors

have often been successful at co-opting indigenous interests to favor larger strategic plans

and programs focused on rural economic development (Rus 1994; 2005).

Challenges to the goal of a common unity seem clearly manifest in how the

people of La Candelaria have faced both economic and political constraints and in the

many creative ways they have responded to new opportunities in these particular spheres

of social interaction. Population density and the need for more land, for example,

currently constitutes a major challenge for most member families of La Candelaria and

other indigenous communities throughout the state of Chiapas. However, such challenges

are part of the larger situation of Indians and small farmers throughout Mexico who have

had to respond to radical new changes affecting communal land tenure in Mexico.[15]

Since 1992, modifications to article 27 of Mexico's Constitution effectively

ended agrarian reform. This was a major program of land redistribution originally based

upon the ideals of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917). Mexicans who only a few

generations ago fought hard for "land and liberty" did so in order to seek an end to a

certain kind of land use that benefitted the few at the expense of the many, that is to say a

land policy based upon large establishments like haciendas. The desire for more land and

more liberty multiplied example by example, reflecting a widespread contagion of

mimetic interest. As land availability opened up for poor farmers, indigenous groups also

pursued their desire to recover ancestral lands taken away unjustly by avaricious

entrepreneurs in the previous century. The revolutionary ideal of land and liberty was

effectively ended in 1992 however, when the federal government declared that under the

modification to the Constitution it was no longer responsible for land redistribution.

212

The major change in land reform/distribution reflects how much the "institutional revolutionary party" or PRI, which for decades controlled almost all government activities, shifted its priorities after the oil shock in 1982-1983. Further shifts came with Salina's election as President in 1988. In the face of widespread economic vulnerability, under Salinas the Mexican state increasingly favored more privatized or capitalist schemes for land tenure. However, this meant that Salinas' preferences and priorities began to threaten traditional land holding practices like the communal tenure or shared ownership of an indigenous ejido. For Indians, this was not just a question of land "value" but of identity. The new approach sought to market land as a commodity that could be easily exchanged without consideration of its meaning as a place to live and work, a place of identity formation. Land was no longer important for obtaining greater yields of agricultural production but was now a means to end for extending development projects or for creating rapid access to wealth and power. For these and many other reasons, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation rose up in 1994 with a major collective response of "No!" and "Enough" to the Mexican State's official betrayal of the revolution's main objective of land redistribution and the freedom required to possess and work available lands. In terms of mimetic theory, there is a profound semiotic link worth noticing between the hero-model Zapata of 1910 and the Zapatistas of 1994 and their attempt to reproduce the desire for land and liberty.

Many observers of Mexican politics interpret the incremental shifts that became the end of Agrarian Reform as owing in large part to other desires fomented by the global-level impact of neoliberal economic policies in Mexico, including major projects of restructuration sponsored by the World Bank and the International Monetary fund (Collier and Quaratiello 2005). Harvey (1998:169-198) observes, for example, that by 1994 President Salinas de Gortari was attempting to modernize state-peasant relations

213

with an increase in targeted productive projects to the rural zones through the National

Solidarity Program (PRONASOL). The central priority for the Salinas government and

sympathizers was the new potential of a North American Free Trade Agreement and the

hope of a "common unity" among the economies of Mexico, the United States, and

Canada, forming a single trading bloc. Harvey observes (1998:170):

> In the countryside, the neoliberal reforms implied a significant shift in state-peasant relations. The dismantling of government agencies, the reduction of credit, the removal of guaranteed crop prices, and the opening to cheaper imports were to have deleterious effects on the majority of peasants and their organizations. Constitutional reforms to legislation regarding land tenure also raised fears that the ejido sector would succumb to privatization and lead to a reconcentration of agricultural land.

Nearly fifteen years later, although not always affected directly in terms of imports and

exports, indigenous communities like La Candelaria continue to struggle against intrusive

state policies reflective of the political, economic, social and environmental ramifications

of the North American Free Trade Agreement (Collier 1994, 1998; Washbrook 2007).

It is remarkable how these multiple changes in Chiapas seem to both deconstruct

yet also establish "structuring structures" (to borrow from Bourdieu); that is to say, the

establishment of social realities that influence acting subjects by either constraining or

liberating their practice. In the face of this kind of change in structure and agency, many

indigenous people in Chiapas have had to make tough choices regarding customary life-

ways. Chamula have sometimes opted, for example, to assimilate state policies of

intrusion as a way to survive economic limitation. They have also attempted to advance

their status through competition to control political or economic patronage (Robledo

Hernández 1997; Rus and Collier 2003), or else collectively organize to resist intrusive

schemes (see Collier 1987; Gossen 1999b; Morfeld 2000). Resistance in this context

reveals a disposition of practice acquired over time, an agency deeply rooted in many

historical experiences for the Chamula and other Tzotzil (cf., Benjamin 1996; Garcia de

Leon 1978; Wasserstrom 1983a, 1983b). In the previous chapter, we saw some historical

evidence of Chamula agency in the Cuscat war (Rus 1983; Wilson 1995).

For the Chamula of La Candelaria strategies like those just mentioned remain

relevant today. However, it is not always clear in the present as it is in retrospect about

when, where, and how or with whom to negotiate for advantage. This seems especially

problematic when it comes to negotiating relations of power, which often must be done

not individually but faced collectively. Agents and agencies of power mediate a host of

factors that both structure and un-structure not only how people interact with each other

but also the significance or meaning of certain "objects of desire." These objects can be

something internal or significant to the community itself, or something materially

important like a water spring, or something particularly useful like tracts of land or forest,

or perhaps a certain style of religious discourse and practice such as singing or the

manner of preaching, and so forth.

The Cooperative Way: Controlling Imitative Desire

One other important aspect about social life in ejido La Candelaria is the

existence of four community stores that operate as cooperatives, supplying basic needs to

members at reasonable prices while making a small margin of profit for the entire

community. These stores are carefully audited twice a year by the elected authorities,

some 54 men, who inspect the stores as a group over a two-day period, ending with a

large chicken dinner for all involved.

There are a few private cooperatives, for example, some small grocery stores that

try to compete with the ejido community stores that are much larger and run by

committees. However, one cooperative deals in particular kinds of services. My

compadre Sebastián is a member of such a cooperative, one of 12 socios (associates or

jchi'iltak) of *karpinteros* (carpenters or *ta spasik te'* in Tzotzil) who oversee several

215

ventures at once. This diversified cooperative has no formal name.[16] It is mostly comprised of a few close friends related to each other by blood or by a customary fictive kinship of *compadrazgo* (relations as co-parents through baptism of one's children).[17] The associates derive dividends from each transaction of services. By far the most popular service is that of a large-scale *sepilladora* (large wood planer) that takes rough-cut timber boards and turns them into useful straight pieces of lumber (Figure 4.5).

In addition to the sawmill, the cooperative runs a small scale *molino* or corn grinder to help grind the "daily bread" of corn *panim* (masa or corn dough), often boiled on a wood fire the night before, with a good measure of *cal* (lime), ready for the morning production of tortillas.
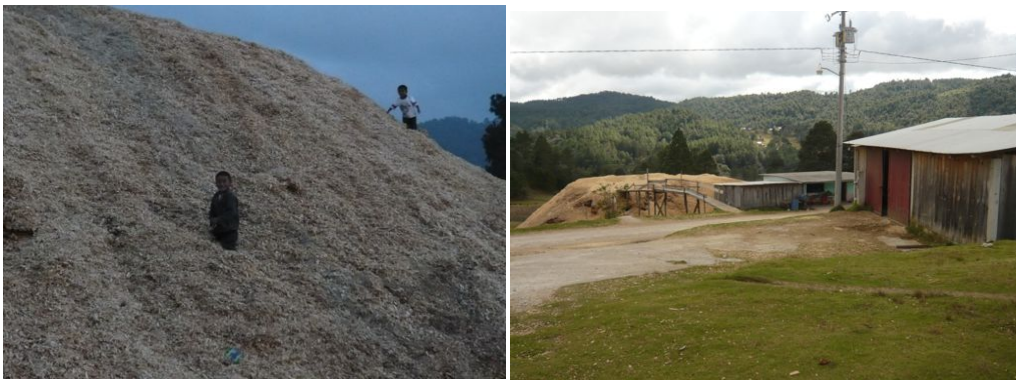
Figure 4.5. Woodchip "mountain" of *aserrín*: (L) sawdust is the product of a successful wood plane and trim business (R) in La Candelaria. Photo by author.

This small group of *socios* (partners) runs a modest *caja popular* (credit union) that makes low interest loans to members.[18]The leaders of the cooperative meet formally twice a year (Figure 4.6a) to review their progress and profits, but also to celebrate a fiesta with everyone associated with their efforts. On the first day of the year, for example, there is always the annual beef barbeque. This is when the report on the previous year's results is shared and members can find out about the benefits that will go to each associated family.

(a)   (b)
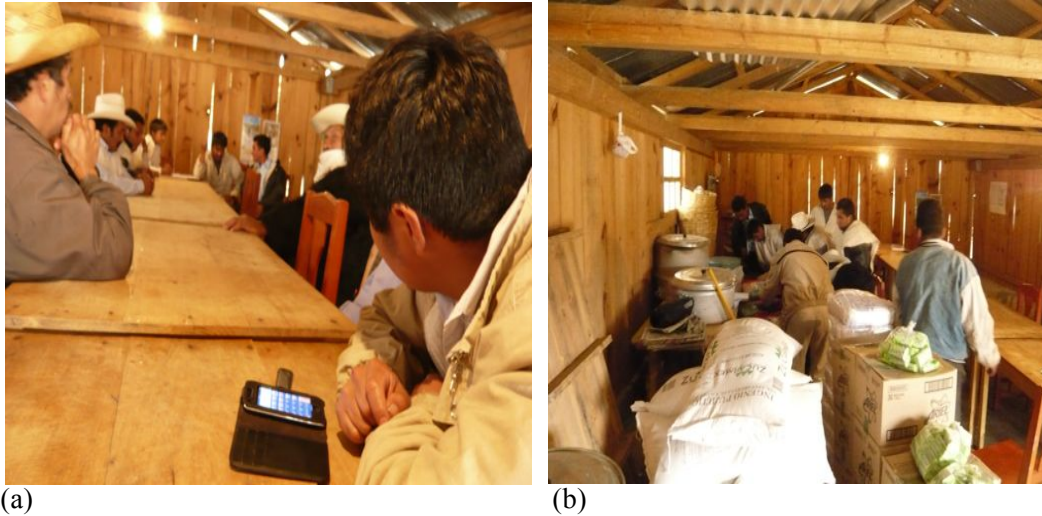
Figure 4.6. (a) Apple i-pod (used) at the ready. A young Chamula carpenter distracts himself with photos while listening to the annual report. (b) Leaders of the cooperative redistribute profits after New Year's Day meeting of local Carpenter's cooperative in La Candelaria, San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas. Photo by author, 2010.

A large portion of the benefit is something useful such as a year's supply of salt, oil and new blankets (Figure 4.6b). The cooperative also celebrates every March 19, the patron feast day of Saint Joseph the carpenter. Non-members who might be curious are invited to enjoy a meaningful portion of the "proprietary goods" (to borrow a phrase from Harrison, 2006).

The Importance of Cooperative Feasting

The feasts have become very important for the members of San José Carpenters Cooperative. These events help to create a propitious form of desire, an attraction to participate in the mission of the cooperative. This effort at outreach suggests a non-avaricious win-win scenario and thus a way to help envision the possibilities of a common unity ideal. At the same time, and perhaps even more importantly, the projects help to constrain the way imitative desire can often turn into anxious modes of envy and jealousy. Both the cooperative itself and the fiesta serve to calm or heal resentment that might foster the disrespect that comes when someone is perceived to have more than they

need, more than others possess, or is simply selfish in their pecuniary privilege. Consequently, to avoid strong emotional states among members of the community, the profit-sharing strategy of the cooperative is a proactive practice that helps the community to control the negative aspects of desire by including rather than excluding others.

It was never clear to me during fieldwork just how deliberate and thought-out this public relations strategy actually was. I suspect it may have been an intuitive response to the dangers of envy. If this was the case, then the cooperative idea may have been a strategic way to dampen down the possibilities of anyone suffering a "heated heart" or what is an emotional condition of anger or envy. Such a state can precipitously impact neighbors as it spreads among relatives or familiar neighbors. A heated heart might begin in someone who seeks, for example, to "covet thy neighbors goods." Conflict fueled by covetous resentment is the most difficult kind of "fire" to extinguish for the Chamula of La Candelaria, especially after it starts and burns for a long time.

As René Girard insists, violence begets violence precisely because violence is highly mimetic, and violent reciprocity is essentially a copycat interaction. To avoid the heated heart of envy or jealously, anger or resentment, the Cooperative San José has developed the practice of open sharing, along with the public hope of imitating generosity and the desire to share, structuring communal life in other indigenous villages and hamlets in the highlands and elsewhere in Chiapas and Mesoamerica.

Inviting the authorities of the community and neighbors from the barrio to join the cooperative in "showing off" their success provides a way to advance that goes beyond what might be characterized as the public relations of a strictly private enterprise. The cooperative to which Sebastián and his brothers belong provides a way to represent the ideal of a common unity, and is thus a form of 'world making' that challenges how

218

competition or rivalry tends to exclude others (who might purloin one's property and/or proprietary identity).

These cooperative efforts are important for warding off the dangers of mimetic desire that quickly create division over certain "objects of desire"–especially among those who know each other very well. The fiestas themselves are informal ritual engagements much as the rules of joining the "savings and loan" club are informal but not without some structure (rules). Imitation of desire is even more dangerous where egalitarian values are such as to provide no clear rules or structure, no differentiated sense that allows for respect and true cooperation. The Cooperative provides some structure to help members think twice about what they really want for their families. If a member of the community has done well for him or her self then imitating or copying that person's practice raises fundamental questions of identity within the community context. For example, did this person suddenly become wealthy by making a pact with the demon pukuj? Was it due to being part of something bigger, like an organization under the patronage of a Saint? Saints are, after all, those who know God best, and will have nothing to do with evil tricks and the wily ways of devils, and so forth.

Worries about "deals with devils" to obtain instant wealth reveal internal issues of desire possibly related to jealousy (inordinate desire to hold on to something exclusively). They also indicate envy (longing aroused by someone else's possessions, qualities, circumstances); it exposes a fundamental historical apprehension on the part of many Chamula regarding their historical experiences with non-Indian ladinos. Gossen (1993:183), in his research from the 1960s, observes that many Chamula subscribe to a traditional belief about "Earth Lords" (yajvalik ta banamil). "The earth lords," he comments, "live in caves and underground passages and are ultimately responsible, in their manifestations as clouds, lightening, and thunder (angeletik, "angels"), for rain, and

219

the water supply. The earth lords live in families . . . in caves and are typically

represented as wealthy, white-skinned ladinos." These are all images of power. Gossen

(2004:1028, n1) recounts traditional notions of the great demon pukuj:

> The Sun-Creator did not then, nor does he now, control the affairs of the
> Earth Lords, whose domain is the whole region under the surface of the
> earth, including caves, water holes, sinkholes, and crevices, which give
> access to the "inner earth" and the underworld. The inner earth is also
> associated with the Mexican mestizo cultural sphere, which is expressed
> by the fact that the Indians usually produce a fat Mexican dressed as a
> cowboy when asked to draw an Earth Lord. All of this must also be a
> symbolic way of acknowledging Ladino economic and political
> dominance in the world beyond their municipal boundaries, for indeed
> the very goods (manufactured items made of metal, money, books,
> calendars, and so forth) that come from the Mexican mestizo national
> society as trade items are also believed to arrive in the Chiapas Highland
> trade zone via demons. The demons are thought to bring them to
> mestizos from the western horizon, where the Sun/Christ leaves them but
> where Indians cannot go.

Critical native views like this one are not new. Indigenous peoples in Mexico have long

viewed mestizos as strange mythological "others" –and with good reason even as

monstrous Others (Gutiérrez, N. 1998; Gutiérrez, G. 1993). Though it is difficult to see

"mixed blood" people as a category of ethnicity (cf. Chance 1979), mestizos in Mexico

stand out in contrast to indigenous self-ascriptions. The situation is analogous to what

one scholar of identity appropriation asserts (Deloria 1998) and that is how Americans

seem to need "Indians" in order to define themselves as "Americans."

The Cooperative run by the carpenters in La Candelaria began in the 1980s with

some initial capital and advice from SOCAMA, a joint teacher-campesino organization

(Solidaridad Campesina Magisterial) then part of PRI politics. Although it remains an

informal approach to economic development, its 12 members are also able to provide a

number of useful/practical services to their community such as offering an affordable

alternative to private lenders of cash who may charge exorbitant interest on a small loan.

I say "informal" because there are no legal papers or title that correspond to state or

municipal license requirements. The "Cooperative San José" (to dub it with some kind of title) is a successful venture even despite a number of setbacks and errors in its brief history as a community-based organization. Its founders have always been determined to help each other learn to do things better, and there are fruitful results.

One of the things that seems to set my compadre and his fellow carpenters in the Cooperative apart is not so much their entrepreneurial ambitions and abilities (many Chamula excel this way), but their communal spirit in combination with what seems best described as an altruistic commitment. They seem to desire the security and satisfaction that comes from "joining forces" –but they also want to convey the same to others. They want their ideal of a common good, or a common union to be imitated by their fellow Chamula who constitute the larger community around them. As far as I can ascertain, they do what they do (practice) in order to improve the lot of their neighbors while seeking something good for themselves, as if to value the adage a rising tide lifts all boats. By securing first the well being of their community, they secure the same for their own families as well.

While such idealism may drive the intentions of cooperative efforts almost universally in the world, it seems odd that a formal Cooperative exists within the already highly structured communal enterprise that is the ejido La Candelaria. Not satisfied with community structures alone, and not willing to expose individual efforts to the possible jealousy of neighbors and relatives, the Cooperative San José represents a desire for security. Security comes from "joining forces" with like-minded others. Coordinated efforts do not guarantee, of course, that members will be free from scrutiny or scandal, but mutual observance at least keeps ambition at a minimum level.

Community life in La Candelaria is seldom if ever truly serene. Even with so auspicious an ideal as cooperation among business associates, the local community has

not always reacted favorably to manifest forms of individual or ambition. This begs the question of why imitative desire in a seemingly homogenous community is so problematic. What arouses ambitious desires in the first place and how are community members affected by the difference it can generate? How is desire blunted or moderated?

To seek answers for this inquiry I want to move now to examine a fight among barrios that actually unfolded in La Candelaria, and thus suggest how a "cooperative" spirit does not always seek the common good or common union of members.

PART II

Barrios Divided in La Candelaria

In this second part of the chapter I examine two stories about what sometimes happens in La Candelaria when, after a long and slow gestation, internal conflicts erupt among members. This can happen as violence and when it does, it clearly threatens the meaning of identity, belonging, and everyday practice in a community. The two historical incidents of social crisis that I will describe for La Candelaria took place at different times, one in the 1970s and the other in the 1980s. Both reflect a communal level of involvement that would seem to go contrary to the ideal of a "common unity."

The first incident is about a time when the ejido separated from the Municipality of San Juan Chamula to seek political, religious, and jurisdictional freedom. In 1968, Mol Manuel was the agente (municipal agent) at the time, but he was also a Catholic Catechist. Together with the Commissar and with approval from the community Assembly, he sought special concession from the state legislature to move the political jurisdiction of the ejido from San Juan Chamula to the larger municipality that is the city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Mol Manuel astutely exploited an opportunity to get out from under the political bossism of Chamula authorities, bringing votes to the "serious

222

games" of politics within San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Although Mol Manuel's major motivation for making the move was to seek more religious and political tolerance, he made it seem attractive to ladino authorities interested in new voters for city politics. Mol Manuel was determined to escape the bosses of Chamula who had begun to threaten him directly because he would not stop his work as a catechist (teacher). At one point they demanded he tear down a small chapel he and his congregation had build of wood panels and tin roofing. Worse, the bosses demanded exorbitant taxes on fruit trees. This latter grievance motivated Christians and *Costumbristas* alike to change political venues.

The Customary Catholics respected elder Manuel because for several decades prior to his conversion to Catholic Christianity, he had been (and even remained afterwards) a well-known healer or "seer," what Chamula call an *j-ilol* and Mexicans everywhere generally refer to as *curandero*. Therefore, because Manuel was the municipal representative, his "ambitions" were within the community's hierarchy (e.g., Figures 4.7 and 4.8) where ambitions were always held in check by custom and tradition, in order to lead the community with authority.

Figure 4.7. Leading authorities of ejido La Candelaria, 2009-2010

223

Figure 4.8. Outgoing municipal agent (L) with new agent (R), transition of a one year authority post in La Candelaria, 2009-2010.

Mol Manuel's desire to switch jurisdictions was an action reflective of his life-long practice of seeking common unity, that is, a meaningful shared life that could be productive for all members. But in seeking this ideal, he also sought to care for the unity of the commons, that is, the future of the ejido itself in terms of shared land tenure system. Mol Manuel died in his home in La Candelaria in November of 2008 where hundreds came to pay their respects.

In the descriptions that follow, the reader should be aware that those involved have at some point experienced emotional hurt or physical harm in their lives, either by rendering such injury to others, or by receiving it (and sometimes both). It would appear that offenses or affronts within a community setting are all the more profound when afflicted by "Others" who are familiar, known, and thus hardly strangers. Whether in contemporary settings of recent years or in prior times, hurts and betrayals magnify when perpetrator and victim share similar dispositions, customs, and traditions (cultural homogeneity).[19]

To repeat a point made in Chapter 3, where mimesis meets and combines with human desire it is likely to lead, almost inevitably, to some level of conflict. Put another way, this formula refers to a phenomenon in which "two sides of the same coin" are in operation: Inter- and intra- ethnic forms or expressions of conflict are obviously related, and when related as such they can never be "outside" of history. What are left poorly understood are the processes of assimilation, incorporation, acquisition, and desiring.

Social conflict and perhaps ethnic conflict especially, is not reducible to material factors that cause disintegration for one or several communities of people. Whether indigenous or not, a group that perceives itself as having a "common unity" also has an agency that is far from passive as members act and interact. The Chamula of La Candelaria in particular are acting subjects who are fully aware of their agency. They do not easily allow themselves to be treated by scholars, Government representatives, or Church people as mere objects of study. How and why members of a community make their "moral" choices can be revealing of their agency, that is to say, their awareness of desire and what they wish to act upon as a group. However, interaction is something of a mystery and identity construction is never a straightforward matter of will or choice making. In these terms, much is at "play" within indigenous communities today. It remains more than cliché to say that the "communal way of life" can often represent more positive than negative possibilities for its members to feel secure and even prosperous. It is for this reason that conflicts that affect experiences of a "common unity" under construction are always serious social matters.

A concrete example will help illustrate some of the abstract points inferred by mimetic theory. The following narrative is not a verbatim interview but a composite created out of several interviews with a particular informant. The narrative style, admittedly somewhat experimental, is meant to convey a collective tone. What I have in

mind is to represent a dialogical perspective, conveying information as though an observer were reporting on events witnessed in real time.

There are two reasons for presenting the material in this fashion. The first reason is to protect confidentiality as required by current academic and professional expectations. In the narrative, not only have names been changed to protect the identity of those involved, but also aspects of the events themselves have been disguised to deflect identification. My intention is to collapse time and make more readable what in fact was a process involving many small incidents, the details of which would be impossible and much too tedious to include here.

Barrio Fight Number One – The Candidate's Visit

When the candidate for municipal president came to our community to promote his campaign, it was both exciting and worrisome. It was exciting because it meant that there was a very real possibility of getting something for the community. We could exchange our people's vote in return for projects that would benefit everyone in the ejido. But this was disturbing, too, because the barrios at this time had become somewhat divided – not everyone was convinced that the PRI party could solve all our problems, answer all questions.

Comment. To this day, it remains unclear to me whether this political campaign strategy of the Candidate for mayor (Presidente Municipal) was specifically applied to other Chamula communities within the municipality of San Cristóbal, but in La Candelaria, it clearly had its effects. It not only succeeded in raising interest for the mayoral Candidate (based on what he might do for the community), but also interest for his political party, so obvious it was that such a party had the ample and necessary resources for bestowing generous gifts to poor, struggling indigenous campesinos.

The Candidate arrived for a short one-day tour around the eight barrios of La Candelaria, but not everyone wanted to give him an enthusiastic welcome. One barrio in particular had the reputation of "being rebels," or so the other members of the community informed the candidate who represented the power and prestige of the PRI– the Institutional Revolutionary Party. Indeed, those who belonged to the rebel barrio had dared to become non-conformists, since they were well known for all their new kinds of questions, their criticism of the government and even the PRI itself. Everyone knew that to be a Chamula--a real, authentic, bona fide Chamula–meant you were both a Catholic and a PRI member. Everyone in La Candelaria was, by custom and tradition, a "PRIista." This was no accident, but a well-founded strategy for progress. Everyone knew, by custom and tradition, that unless you voted for the PRI candidate, things could go wrong very quickly and there would be setbacks. If a new road was built, if the old one got paved, if a public telephone was to be installed near the basketball court and the school . . . then it was obvious, you had to vote for the PRI. The PRI always knew how to get things done, how to get what people wanted, what a community felt it needed.

To show his power and capacity, the PRI candidate, Jorge Mario Usiel, decided he would be smart. He decided to go barrio to barrio with some very special gifts. With respect for the religion of our community and the importance of our fiestas, Candidate Jorge Mario offered each barrio a very nice image of a Saint, so that each barrio could have its own fiesta if they so desired.

In one of our larger barrios, Santa Eduviges by name, the Candidate brought a beautiful little statue of a virgin, Santa Eduviges. It was an exciting moment, and the image was nicely placed in the tiny chapel that could fit maybe 20 persons. It was located in the central area of the barrio. As the Candidate arrived, there were the customary fireworks along with some traditional music from the arpa, guitarón, and accordián,

227

along with the dancing maxes (pronounced mashes) – the monkey men who were always

the best animators for civil-religious fiestas. And, of course, there was food – chicken

soup for everyone, and all the tortillas (vaj) that one could eat. The candidate had

recognized the people and the people had recognized him; a special relationship, a bond

perhaps, had once again been strengthened through hope and encouragement.

      Comment. While the image of a Roman Catholic Saint may not seem like much,

to this particular "community within a community," it meant a great deal. A powerful

person of civil authority goes out of his way to affirm the religious sentiments of the

people living in this barrio. If he could do such a thing, would he not also respond to

other sentiments of similar desire? The image–now representing an object of desire–is

clearly evocative of a desire for particularity, such as a longing for a differentiated

"identity" distinguishing one barrio from another. Apparently, in PRI political calculus,

smaller units like barrios are easier to manage than an entire ejido. It would be more

difficult to manage an assembly of all members, with outcomes less predictable. The

central barrio already has its holy image, the patron saint of the community, La Virgen

(María) de La Candelaria. Now Santa Eduviges had its special image, too; one that it

could clothe in traditional wool *traje* (costume) and in this way mark it as a *Patrona* from

heaven, someone holy and powerful who identifies with the people and watches over

them. The politician's gesture showed true recognition of the barrio's existence by at

least recognizing its symbolic name: the people of Santa Eduviges were very grateful for

this affirmation of their identity, and as a consequence, would naturally render their votes

en masse when the time came in July for all to vote.

      But some had doubts about this Candidate and his special visit with images of the

Saints. The people of the "rebel barrio" were especially doubtful. Most of them, it was

being said at the time, were rebels who belong to the PSUM–the Partido Socialista

Unificado de Mexico! That, at least, is how it was rumored. Since this information was

repeated enough, it must be true. And even if they were not members of the PSUM,

looking at the way they behaved it was as if they did belong, so opposed were they to the

PRI. The PRIistas thought that these rebels might as well be actual members of the

Socialist party. As the thinking of this time went, "how can you be a Chamula or a

Catholic and not be a Priista?'

 The rebels of San Martín de Porres barrio had earlier said aloud in the assembly

that it was their opinion that all of us who belong to the ejido community should have

options. We should consider, they urged, opening up alternatives even if only a little bit,

just a crack, because the PRI does not always respond to the needs of indigenous people,

let alone the Chamula of La Candelaria. But such a position seemed like utter nonsense

in the face of the obvious benefit that comes from supporting the only candidate who will

win: Don Jorge Mario of the PRI. How stupid the people of the other barrio! The

community authorities of La Candelaria felt they were right to advise the candidato, NOT

to visit the people of San Martin de Porres (even though they were clearly one of the

larger barrios, with many having large families). Their leader Sebastián, along with his

brothers and a few other people, would likely be the true rebel leaders–at least as far as

the PRIistas think anyway. Such thinking must come from their father, Mol Manuel! Why

only a decade earlier he had separated our entire community from the municipality of

San Juan Chamula and saw to it that everyone should sign the petition asking the state

legislature for incorporation within the ladino town of San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

 Therefore, the Candidato did not visit San Martin de Porres Barrio, but he did

pass by and go straight to the other side, to the barrio of Lek Nichim. They, too, are

carpenters and could appreciate the very fine statue of San José Carpintero (Saint

Joseph, the Carpenter) that the candidate Jorge Mario brought with him. So that's what

he did; he went to barrio Lek Nichim, along with all the authorities of La Candelaria, to deliver and celebrate the precious gift, the beautiful image of the Saint that came to stay with them. No celebration is complete without the special sugar cane liquor of pox. The arrival of San José to Lek Nichim was exciting, and like the people of Santa Eduviges, it felt very special to be found worthy of such a gift.

However, not everyone in Lek Nichim barrio was happy; the fact of the matter was that the barrio was divided. The people of Ik' Ch'en, a small section of Lek Nichim, is where the Candidate came to visit. This was a part of our ejido land that used to belong to the neighboring community of San Antonio Las Flores, at least until the authorities of La Candelaria discovered differently. They found out that since the 1930s, in a legal paper called a "presidential resolution," they had a rightful land claim pending through the Agrarian Reform office. It was an adjustment of nearly 300 hectares, and ever since then the people of Ik' Ch'en –a name which means dark cave–have longed to be the important ones. Since the Candidate's visit, in fact, they think of themselves as a new and separate barrio. Why? Because don Jorge Mario gave them a statue of San José for their little ermita; the small chapel of Ik' Chen!

Even though the real name of the barrio is Lek Nichim, the people of this part who live on the other side of the creek so seldom come to the other part, except when they use the dirt roads to go either to the center of La Candelaria or to Huixtan or to San Juan Chamula. Besides, it was obvious the minute the candidate came to visit Ik' Ch'en and the small chapel that had been prepared for festivities: the people of Lek Nichim were a little envious, maybe even jealous, and maybe some were mad, too, that all the attention and favor was not on them! That's politics!

So that is how the barrio was divided--the others, the jchi'iltak (companions) of Lek Nichim did not even want the image anyway (or so they say). They seemed to follow

the example of San Martin de Porres barrio. It took some courage to manifest their

disagreement with the candidate's visit looking for votes. Maybe they were PSUMistas,

too – who knows! There was tension on this point for some time afterward; but in spite of

the problem it was causing, it was clear to all that Ik' Ch'en now had its own La

Candelaria jTotik, San Jose. Now they could justifiably celebrate a feast day each year in

their own special part of the barrio, thanks to don Jorge Mario, el Candidato por la

Presidencia Municipal.

Comment. After the candidate's visit, according to reports, tensions between barrios continued to increase. People were getting agitated and beginning to take sides even at the assembly meetings. Most obvious were the people of Santa Eduviges barrio and the central barrio of La Candelaria, along with tiny Lek Nichim barrio and those from Ik' Ch'en barrio–they, too, were taking sides against San Martin de Porres barrio and their friends in Lek Nichim. At the ejido assemblies, they began to shout at each other. Some have reported that the reason for shouting and interruption had to do with the fact that during those days there were many cantinas in the community. This unruly situation would change later, but during this time, so many cantinas only added to tensions at the meetings at ejido assembly hall.

Barrio Fight Number Two – Sabino's Desires

According to informants, one individual seemed to shout the loudest at the assemblies. Imitating his example, others would shout just like him. This action was provocative and so induced the opposition to mirror or copy them, thus shouting even louder. The problem begins with a man named Sabino (a pseudonymn). He and a relatively small band of followers generated shouting antics that began to catch on within the assembly and thus, in a sense, began to become popular. Sabino lived in the central barrio near the newly constructed Catholic Church at the center of the ejido La

Candelaria. In this location he also sold beer the sugar cane liquor, posh, which at 60% proof is highly intoxicating. The drama unfolds with Sabino at center stage.

It was obvious that Sabino had a lot on his mind, and a lot on his heart. He wanted things, and he wanted the kinds of things that people like the Candidate Jorge Mario and the PRI could bring to La Candelaria. According to Sabino, those who did not want the things he wanted deserved to be dismissed! They didn't know anything, so they should be shouted down, even punished! Well, you can imagine how much the assemblies had become uncomfortable, and the division between barrio groups was so tense: those in favor of the PRI promises and those against them (or at least questioning them). However, all were ejido members in good standing, and many were believers who went to the church now standing at the center of the community common area. However, the growing fight was never about religion like in other parts of Chamula where evangelicals supposedly disrupted traditional ways because they opposed the costumbrista religion of our ancestors.

It is said that the evangelicals, even the Catholic ones, just wanted to cause trouble, make problems because of their own interests, ideas, customs, and traditions. Yet they don't cooperate with their neighbors or cooperate with any help like money. This is so strange because the fiesta is for everyone: food, music, games, everything. So, you see, everybody cooperates to make festivals happen. To be of one heart means to always make the fiesta a true community event in which no one is excluded but everyone included! The Evangelicals always want to exclude themselves, always try to absent themselves. However, this never makes any sense: we share alike as ejido people; we always have. We are a community. We have always been Catholic, we have always been members of the PRI, we always will–that's the way things are.

Comment. This event and the tensions surrounding it took place in the 1980s–a difficult time in Mexico's economy. It was not a good time to abandon tradition, yet that did not make it right for those who had other opinions or wanted other things, should be shouted down. That was the way some saw the situation. Like Sabino and the group of followers, he was recruiting to help promote his agenda. Sabino's strategy apparently consisted of raising doubts during the assembly, of disrupting the agenda and decision making process, while planting suspicions about Chamula in other barrios, and accusing them of not knowing anything, and general incompetence. You see he would accuse them of being communists. Nevertheless, this was because he knew many were becoming opposition members, that is to say, resisting the PRI by joining a socialist party, like the PSUM. At the time, the PUSUMistas were famous for trying to cause problems in other places of Chiapas, especially among rural communities. Sabino seems to have known this. Informants remember how he could make his voice so loud and obstreperous during assemblies, each time a bit more bold against the presiding authorities (many of whom were from the barrio of Corral Ch'en).

"They don't know anything! Ay, these authorities don't serve, they only provoke us!" He would always be rejecting as untrue anything the authorities would try to say, and deny whatever it was they were attempting to inform the community. In a way he managed to disrupt the assembly with shouts of "that's not true!" or "how is that possible?" challenging everything. He would always be shouting such things, always trying to get the members to oppose any proposal presented by those in charge of the community's welfare. He would shout, "Ah, we should go back to the way things were before! As we always did things before!"

It soon became clear to many of us that Sabino wanted to be the one in charge, wanted his word and nobody else to have a special weight. He wanted to be one of the

big spas mantal bankilal (men who gave orders). It seemed to us that he wanted to be just like the caciques--the Chamula bosses who controlled the municipal government, the party, the businesses, everything. Ah, and even though we are far from the center of Chamula, they have always given us a bad time, especially since Mol Manuel began to spread the Word of God. Oh, you see, La Candelaria was not Chamula. Well, things got so bad with the fees for fruit trees that Mol Manuel decided to do something very clever.

Those who were our elders back then, and those today, can tell you about how things used to be; the elders remember very well how it was, the force and power of the caciques–and how they always seemed to act with presumption and even impunity when La Candelaria was under the authority and jurisdiction of San Juan Chamula. The political bosses were hard, mean, and dangerous men. These guys always represented the interests of the rich families in San Juan Chamula, those who ran everything. They liked to call themselves "Traditionalists" like most Chamula do, but often they were the hypocrites, the first to violate our traditions. Families like that of old man Tuxum were especially tough and difficult, but very rich and powerful![20]

Those Tuxum people ran everything: Coca-cola, Pepsi-cola, the transportation of goods, the market, even the simple things like candles that people always needed for the temple, the church of San Juan. They were smart, and seemed to own everything. However, one day, when their henchmen came to La Candelaria, the things they wanted just seem too much. They wanted to put a huge municipal tax on every orchard! Take a huge cut! In addition, they wanted the little Catholic Church to be torn down or they would come and destroy it themselves! The only church allowed was the Church in Chamula center, jteklum chamo'etik. Our little church of wood planks and tin roofing got dismantled by members of the community, who then went to pray and preach under a tree; but it would not be long before Mol Manuel, who had long been the catechist,

234

became our agente (the municipal representative for La Candelaria). Even though he

hardly had any education from schooling, he was determined to find a way to alleviate

our people from the heavy economic burden unjustly imposed (since everyone knew

whose pockets the profits would flow to) and the ridiculous persecution of Catholics!

Persecution of the Evangelicals would be understandable, maybe; since they are so

different--but Catholics! That didn't make sense.

Comment. Apparently, Sabino's desire to mimetically "become just like" a

Chamula boss, a cacique, and thus act in certain ways within his own community of La

Candelaria amounted to a strategic political error on his part. Whatever the unspoken

limits, he appears to have gone too far within the bounds of tolerance for community

members. He already had his cantina, a bar for selling beer and pox in the center of the

ejido. He managed to acquire a significantly large transport truck through the PRI, his

political party. Members of the community began to perceive that this truck was not

really for taking simple artisan goods to market in San Cristóbal that would sell because

of the growing tourist trade (the original justification for acquisition), but rather this

"coop" truck was really for expanding Sabino's liquor business. It could also be used to

transport larger groups of Chamula to PRI rallies.

The tactic of disruption, however motivated, became counter-productive for

Sabino. It was unproductive, apparently, because according to reports he had begun to

consistently, and predictably interrupt each proceedings of the monthly ejido assembly,

as if on purpose, suggesting a political strategy influenced from outside sources.

Sabino began to organize people, form his little groups, and they would join him

whenever he would whistle or make his noises during the assemblies. This was not a

likeable thing. Besides, almost everyone knew who Sabino was, the kind of man he was,

how ambitious he was, and all that he stood for which was pretty much just himself and

his family. They knew about his big truck. Hardly any of us in the community knew how to drive in those days (not until very recently). In truth, nobody knew what do with a 3-ton load truck. However, don Sabino had somehow acquired one. It was supposed to be for his wife's cooperative group of artisan weavers and wooden toy makers–a small group, mostly women, who could make stuff for the warehouse and later sell to the tourists in San Cristóbal de Las Casas or in Tuxtla, like at Christmas. Sabino began to use his big truck for other things–or so people said; there was talk, people were saying things, perhaps a little envious, since hardly anyone had their own personal truck or ran a big operation in those days. Everybody, it seemed, was beginning to suspect that if Sabino had not bought the truck with his own money, how could that be good? Did he make a deal with el pukuj (the demon)? He would say that this truck was a kind of "gift – something he had acquired by asking the government; so he got one, a big one, through some government or PRI program. But it was not long after he got it that people began to say things; things like how Sabino was "not working right," or how he and his woman were "not doing anything good" for the community. So that truck meant trouble, and we knew things would get hot with problems. Hearts were starting to get hot!

Comment. Let us pause at this point in the narrative and reflect on the fact that envy is a phenomenal feature of human interaction; it has a history and context not just in the particular community setting that is La Candelaria, but also in many communities throughout Mesoamerica. In his book the Nexus of envy, witchcraft and ceremonial organization in a Zoque Indian pueblo (1967), Norman D. Thomas attempted to document a seemingly pervasive sentiment characteristic of many indigenous communities, at least in the 1960s.[21] In Chiapas, one of the first systematic attempts to deal with this aspect of intra-ethnic conflict expressed in terms of witchcraft power and transformative metaphysical states, what Nutini (1993) called "supernatural

236

anthropomorphism," can be found in the work of Prudencio Moscoso Pastrana (1990) in his book on "brujeria y nahualismo"–witchcraft and spiritism in highland Chiapas. Reading these kinds of materials, one gets a sense of how some native peoples have creatively constructed and imagined responses to any number of adverse circumstances. They found instrumental ways to explain relations of power and ways to act appropriately to survive the consequences of power relations.

The historical vicissitudes of life for Chamula over time (colonialism, post colonialism, liberal, and neoliberal periods in Mexico) have too often been shaped in precarious ways by "invisible hands" and the almost animal-like "monsters" that political and economic structures represent. Anthropologically, this symbolizing of power relations seems very ancient and very much related to perceptions articulated two millennia ago by the apostle Paul in his letters to Christians when he expressed explicit concern about the "principalities and powers" that seem to "rule the air" (Eph 6:12).

Envy seems to have an interactive quality motivating individual or group expressions that are personal, emotional, or needful. These modes remind me of what Girard often refers to as the condition of "ontological sickness" or "metaphysical desire" (Girard 1965:83-87). This is a state of suffering that comes from the nature of human desire, such as wanting to identify with what others "are" or appear to "be." It is the attempt to "put on" or imitate another's existence as one's own, perhaps from a perceived lack of being, lack of existence, or lack of meaning. As Girard (1965:83) sees this condition, "imitative desire is always a desire to be another. There is only one metaphysical desire but the particular desires which instantiate this primordial desire are of infinite variety." Fleming (2004:32) clarifies this aspect of Girard's view of imitative desire, observing how "Girard contests the idea that desire is primarily object-oriented—involving what psychoanalysis commonly refer to as 'cathexis'—and favors instead the

237

notion that the mediator provides the origin of a desiring subject's impetus towards an

object (cf. Girard, Violence and the Sacred 1977:180, 264-5). Fleming (2004:11) explains

how, for Girard, the nature of this dynamic between subject and mediator or model is

what constitutes "metaphysical" or ontological desire:

> This constitutive indeterminacy of desire, Girard argues, takes its cues
> from others, who mediate desire for us: 'We desire what others desire
> because we imitate their desires' (cf. Girard 1987, in Burkert et al.
> 1987:122). Grafted onto the needs and appetites of animal life—but
> underdetermined by them—desire is in large part an *act of the imagination*,
> involving fascinations with objects and figures that possess not only use
> values, but *symbolic* values as well—rivalries for symbolically mediated
> objects made possible by symbolic institutions (cf. Girard 1987:93/102; cf.
> 283-4,307-8). What Girard offers us here is an eminently parsimonious
> hypothesis about human subjectivity [italics original].

Fleming (2004:25) summarizes the fundamental thesis: "Again, as desire becomes

increasingly 'ontological' or 'metaphysical,' the object falls away and desire is direct at

the rival through the object." Such a perspective as to a "lack of being" or ontological

sickness may be thought of in terms of the traditional concept of "evil." However, the

translation of the Western concept "evil" is problematic for other cultures.

In terms of what we are describing for La Candelaria, there is Barfield's

clarification (1997:172) that for some cultures, a rough translation or connotation of

"evil" refers to a sense of excess or over-abundance. If we think about this definition for

the Chamula of La Candelaria, possessing more than others becomes not just a source of

envy or jealousy, but a kind of threatening force that endangers the ideal of "common

unity" discussed earlier. Barfield explains (1997:172):

> The very term "evil" derives from the Teutonic ubiloz, the etymology of
> which reveals primary sense of "exceeding due measure" or
> "overstepping the limits." Many peoples in the world believe that too
> much knowledge is a very bad thing and may cause terrible destruction.
> This is reflected in the Biblical story where Adam's discovery through
> Eve of nakedness, sexuality, and mortality could both destroy them and
> yet allow them to reproduce themselves: the line between abundance and
> overabundance is, then, culturally a precarious one to maintain.

Returning to the narrative, then, it turns out that Sabino, in his ambition to be a cacique or strong man like those of San Juan Chamula (i.e., a powerful "gate keeper" able to control the flow of resources and apply them to areas of his own interest) started to raise his "voice" in the community assembly. This tactic or antic appears to have become so excessive that it could no longer be tolerated. His shouts and confrontations had become so regular they were soon disproportionate. This brought attention to the fact of other things out of proportion, as in owning or controlling so many "things" (e.g., a truck, cantina, "gente" or followers, not to mention taking up lots of assembly time). However, this over-abundance does not play well in a world where one's neighbors have relatively little, or where the few things that matter often depend on hard work and years of effort.

Sabino's peculiar ambition for wealth and power fits something of a classic mythos among the Chamula, a moral narrative from the Tzotzil folk wisdom tradition about "evil" associated with somebody who "gets fat" (like a ladino) or acquires "sudden wealth" as if overnight, mysteriously. When this happens it is obvious that some bad thing has happened (*la spas chopol*), some pact or deal has taken place with the demon *li pukuje*.[22] Manifest expressions of ambition represent a level of foolishness that leads to ruin (what Monkey men warn against in public, even as they strive to mimetically represent such foibles in humorous ways within the moral economy of Tzotzil cosmological understandings.

The Final Fracas and Slugfest

During one of the assemblies, I can't remember which one, members between barrios got very "hot"–ah, and so hot were they that many soon came to blows. Sabino and his men often felt they were getting stronger and more on top at each assembly and this one was not different. When the confrontation happened it was because Sabino had already been provoking trouble for some time, as they usually did--making their noises

and causing interruptions. Many in the hall that time just lost patience! So the fistfights

began. However, it was somewhat funny too, because almost everyone in Sabino' group

had been drinking before the assembly, and well, that certainly exaggerated everything!

    After the fight had happened, later on during some of the following Sunday

community meetings, our ejido authorities decided they had had enough of all the

problems. They decided that they would confront and if necessary punish Sabino with a

big fat fine. This was their attempt to grab his attention and get him to stop being so

disruptive during our meetings. I was secretary to the Commissar at the time, so I

remember how serious it all was. Once this discussion came around again at yet another

assembly, the authorities sent the mayoles (our constables) to grab Sabino and a bunch

of his followers. They quickly threw them into the little two-room jail, not far from the

Commissar's office. But there were so many of them that some of Sabino's men had to be

put into the empty water tank made of stones that was close by; this worked because the

tank only had a tiny exit and the guards could stop any escape.

    After that, many in the assembly were excited. Everyone finally agreed it was

time to give Sabino and his supporters a tough warning: "if you and your people do not

stop provoking problems here then you are going to be thrown out of the community, we

will not want you to be here any longer! If you don't stop, we warn you now, you are

going to be expelled!"

Comment. As is the case traditionally in most ejidos in rural Mexico, the elected

authorities certainly have the power to expel any registered member. This can happen

because such matters have to do with "internal regulations" or what are *usos y*

custumbres (customary ways and expectations). This is the case with almost all ejidos

prior to, but even after the end of agrarian reform in 1992–but more so because within

indigenous communities there is always some kind of a police force. The Chamula call

those who serve the community in this fashion *mayoles*. A mayol is the first level of community service, expected of almost all young men once they are married. Even if a man has migrated to the United States for work–if he is elected to serve a community cargo (responsibility) such as a mayol (whether for one year, which is usual, or for two or three), he is obliged to come back home to the community in order to serve his duty. If not, he faces expulsion or severe fine on his parcel within the commons of the community.

Tenure in an ejido land situation is relative since technically ejidos represent self-governance. This entity of many members is something the farmers manage themselves, collectively, each having usufruct rights over one or several parcels that make up the "commons." Apparently, for the ejido authorities to threaten Sabino as they did–and thus to also warn those attracted to his ambitions and the things he desired–turned out to be no simple matter, for there were unpleasant consequences.

In the face of what was fast growing into a collective threat and having already been fined a significant amount of money for his antics at the assemblies, Sabino decided to reciprocate to escalate the conflict. According to my informants, he did this by going outside the ejido and making an appeal to dreaded ladino authorities at the city and state level, thus bringing outside pressure to bear upon the backs of the ejido officials in La Candelaria. More than antics at assemblies, this was now a real "serious game" he felt he could play, supported by his powerful friends in the ruling party, the PRI.

After only a few days in the ejido jail, Sabino went to San Cristóbal de Las Casas and to Tuxtla and there sought out the Chiapas state authorities. He went to a judge to gain legal support that would justify his right to speak at assemblies, and he sought government-backed protection. By going outside the ejido community, Sabino violated a solemn understanding among his fellow Chamula of La Candelaria, incurring thus a great

241

deal of anger. His action was a violation of one of the fundamental underlying values associated with the shared ideal of a "common unity" and related feelings of security that unity brings to members of the ejido. This value represents the need and practicality to be autochthonous and autonomous in the face of historical ladino control regarding the internal affairs of indigenous communities. What Sabino was up to was just one more manifestation of his lack of respect for community ways, exposing his self-interest and making obvious the fact that his actions were "out of bounds."

Because of Sabino's complaint, state authorities from the *ministerio público* (local Prosecutor's Office) soon made their way from San Cristóbal de Las Casas and showed-up suddenly in the community with six *judiciales* (policemen). However, these local police were not carrying small hand-held clubs like the community mayoles, but automatic weapons! Moreover, they were obnoxious, apparently, looking and asking house by house for one man in particular, the Commissar Mariano, whose name was on a list, along with many others. These were orders of arrest for unspecified reasons.

These federal police arrived in the barrio of San Martín de Porres, the first one off the main road. The people of the barrio quickly gathered. Once they knew where the police went to, everyone went fast on foot to where they were, but not to help them, rather to capture them. They went all the way to the other side of the ejido, to the barrio of Santa Eduviges. The judiciales were hunting for the Comissar, but the people were hunting for the federal police. The story continues:

There was not much of a road for it had been raining all night. As the group of ejidatarios approached, they could see that the small truck of the judiciales (state police) had become stuck in the mud. When the first group of men from barrio San Martín de Porres arrived, the policemen called out to them, pleading for assistance to get the truck out of the gum-like mud. "Compañeros, lend us a helping hand, por favor!" cried the

242

judiciales. "Ah, yes, of course; for this we have come!" replied the campesinos arriving

just then. However, as they got close to the truck with its spinning wheels, they noticed

that the judiciales had left their rifles in the back bed of their vehicle. So the compañeros

took them, and then declared to the judiciales, "Okay, we now have you in hand, you no

longer have your guns, we have them, so the rest of you get out of your truck" they said

to the driver, "and come with us!" "Ha! You have come here because of a false

accusation, so we will take you to the center of the community to put this matter right!"

But one of the police still had his gun and then cocked it to fire. "But if you have cocked

your gun and are ready to shoot someone, then I will do mine as well," said one of the

campesinos, holding a weapon--of which later it was laughed about, because everyone

knew this fellow really had no idea about how to use it!

With so many people now gathered around, these police had no choice but to

obey the people and so they went to the center of the ejido where they were tossed into

the ejido jail–all six of them. They were there for quite some time, which allowed many

people to gather from the different barrios to see what was going on. "To prove to you,"

someone said, "that we are not aggressive people we will bring you out of the jail and sit

you down in the assembly hall." And so they did, though they were under watch from the

mayoles who had their stiff wooden batons ready, just in case. "What is your telephone

number, the phone of your boss," they asked them, once they were out of the jail.

Eventually, the next day, the civil authorities from the city of San Cristóbal came to La

Candelaria, the head of the police (from the Public Ministry), and a municipal judge, and

together with the people of the entire ejido, they went through the charges, one by one.

Finally they were satisfied there was really nothing to prosecute--it had become too

obvious that all charges had been fraudulently devised for reasons internal to community

affairs. Sabino had been up to no good.

It did not take long before poor Sabino was facing the wrath of the entire community, if not his allies, who were still a minority. By this point, everyone had had enough. "If we permit this person to live here," the people began to say, "we will never have an end to the problems!" So Everyone began to say things like that: "We are not going to have a solution and it will go on and on – best that we kick him out once and for all!" Therefore, they did. The people voted to expel him from La Candelaria–Sabino and his entire family. It was sad, but that was the decision.

A few days later the ejido authorities had their mayoles proceed to destroy Sabino's house located in the center barrio. The process began by taking out all of the personal belongings of Sabino and his family, placing them out in the open in a small field near by; then the mayoles began to dismantle the home, beginning with the tin roof and then tearing down the wood beams that supported the walls. He was then told by the authorities "there they all are, all of the things that belong to you, including the pieces of your house; you have them still and you can take it all with you now, to where ever it is you are going." He and his family were crying, for it was unbelievable. Besides, he had not just one single house but three little buildings on his parcel, a place to live for all of his family. Now they had nothing. It was sad for everyone present watching, including the authorities (but they had to have tough faces). It was very sad and painful, because it had come to this extreme. Nevertheless, there was no turning back. Sabino, along with his family, was officially expelled. We all went away in tears.

Comment. It turns out, fortunately, that Sabino had access to land elsewhere because of his wife, Xmaruch. It was a small plot of land compared to what they had in the center barrio of La Candelaria. It was also more remote, near the northeastern border with San Juan Chamula municipality. Sabino and his family went there, just beyond the boundary of La Candelaria, and started over. It would take years, but Sabino and his

244

family were determined to not just survive but thrive. With time, he would acquire the entire rancho, becoming a private property owner of some 16 hectares, not to mention a good portion of a little marshy lake in the area.

I learned about Sabino's story from several sources, but what I find remarkable is how, some thirty years after the fact there remained an ambiguous feeling regarding what had happened and why. I interviewed Sabino and his wife and learned what I could of their personal perspective on everything that happened several decades earlier. Their view, not surprisingly, was quite different from other reports coming from those who, at the time, had been authorities in charge and thus responsible for the expulsion. From Sabino's point of view, everything that happened was terribly unjust and unnecessary. It came about only because people had been jealous, envious, and resentful of the good things that he and his wife had been doing in those years. "But that's the way people used to be!" he laughed as he shared this old lingering bit of resentment. After raising their kids and some grandchildren, and at last able to enjoy a fair measure of success in spite of hardships, Sabino's wife Xmaruch felt it was time to reconnect to the community that had long ago expelled them. As the Catholic priest who happened to be living in La Candelaria, I was able to help facilitate this reconciliation at the request of my compadre, who in the days of conflict with Sabino had been one of his enemies.

Interestingly, part of Sabino's economic success over the years was due to another little cantina he set up right in front of his house, located just beyond the La Candelaria ejido border. It became successful when a road came in through that part of the rural district of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. His bar or cantina (really just a porch with a few tables) was located right between La Candelaria and San Juan Chamula, so he always had customers coming and going near there. This was all the more in his favor when the ejido La Candelaria decided soon after Sabino's expulsion to shut down all

cantinas and thus out-law all sales of alcohol within the community's boundaries. If people wanted to buy a drink, they would have to walk a great distance; and if they were drunk, they would have to walk a long ways home to get sober. The prohibition did not come about because of religious reasons, but rather happened because there arose too many problems for the community judges and other authorities. They were beginning to spend too much of their time handling domestic disputes due to alcohol, not to mention related delinquencies and health issues.

This shift among the judges in terms of practice is all the more surprising when you understand that this happened despite the fact that the vast majority of authorities and community members are neither Catholic Christians or Evangelicals, but "Costumbristas" groups (each of which was usually at odds or divided). Those who followed the customary ways had voted in favor of the shared ideal, a "common unity" and thus, contrary to costumbre (custom) followed the Christian preference for refraining from alcohol. They voted to severely limit the flow of aguardiente, known as "fire water," a 60% proof sugar cane rum named posh. These items might still be present at ritual moments, where everyone would be allowed to share equally an allotted portion. Now there would be no more buying and selling, no more bars or cantinas within the entire ejido of La Candelaria. The authorities regulated liquor and reduced the problems mayoles often confronted.

Everyone I talked to about this big decision told me that it made a remarkable difference in the quality of life for the community. Drinking traditions among the Tzotzil are complex and not without extensive cultural meanings, but even these do not guarantee that some form of abuse (mental, physical, spiritual) does not occur because of drinking too much, and women are too often the objects of physical abuse (Eber 2000). For

246

Sabino, this restriction only added customer traffic headed toward his little cantina now relocated on the outskirts of La Candelaria.

Interestingly, this situation of exile or expulsion soon became an important source of income for Sabino and his family. And while his was not the only cantina on the border edge of San Juan Chamula, Sabino's little bar stop was one of the closest available for many remote farmers. In addition to his alcohol business–for which he would continue to use his famous truck acquired from the government–Sabino and his family also erected a chapel, a small "ermita" for the purposes of religious ceremonies and rites common to costumbre religion for this region. Sabino arranged to celebrate several fiestas each year, even baptisms (but only when it was possible to get a renegade priest (illegitimate) who would come from San Cristobal de Las Casas, a greedy ladino clergyman who did not like Indians. Nevertheless, this priest managed to charge a substantial fortune for his services, however illicit as Church regulations go.

Not surprisingly, the fiestas with a priest (a big draw for people who wanted their children baptized) became a fast opportunity for Sabino to sell a great deal of alcohol. Over time, the annual celebration of mass (and baptisms) had become the nexus of an annual celebration that brought indigenous people as customers from nearby Tenejapa, San Juan Chamula, La Candelaria, and even from San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Sabino was particularly solicitous to invite the authorities from San Juan Chamula. When they would come to his fiestas, he would always treat them royally, showing his respect (and desire to be like them) by serving the best of chicken soup, posh, and many other favors. Thus, Sabino was able to grow in prestige, slowly moving up the long list of privileged candidates to potentially become the paxion—the number one celebrant who presides over the annual pre-Lenten Festival of Games in San Juan Chamula.

The Sabino Affair: A Critical Reflective Summary

To sum up the significance of Sabino's story perhaps Ortner's percipient phrase "serious games" will help provide a critical reflective understanding. As an insightful trope for suggesting the wiles, ruses, and contrivances that so often constitute the "play" of power relations under construction, Ortner's expression for such practice or agency is useful. It is a way to name how an interactive situation like that of Sabino's case can embody the inter-related elements of mimesis, practice, and identity formation.

Imitative desire was certainly a major mechanism driving the struggle for power in La Candelaria. Sabino desired to be just like the bosses of San Juan Chamula and thus a man of means, a gatekeeper of benefits and opportunities, perhaps even the hero who would return the ejido to its former status as part rather than apart from San Juan Chamula municipality. Recall that the ejido members of La Candelaria, although entirely Chamula in terms of ethnic identity, decided to pull away from the municipality of San Juan Chamula only a few years prior to this struggle for power, joining the municipality of San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

The visit of the mayoral Candidates was one of many "games" the Chamula of La Candelaria found themselves having to play, even though perhaps a game less deadly than what candidates have to play for politics in the neighboring municipality of San Juan Chamula. Sabino therefore represents in many ways the longing or desire to return to the network and negotiations for power that being Chamula, Catholic, and PRIista party member once meant for many Chamula. It was a longing for a fundamental identity useful for uniting many groups and individuals. While this desire was never explicit, the implications of Sabino's attempt to divide the community and control future outcomes implied a path to power. It might lead the entire ejido back to the jurisdiction of the bosses in San Juan Chamula. Sabino's disruptions were always more about reconnection

248

than connection, disruptive in order to erupt as an opportune situation for change. In the end, the community and its leaders, influenced by the ex-Agente (authority) Mol Manuel and followers, did not tolerate Sabino's attempt to acquire power and expelled him as if surgically excising a growing canker threat to the body in order to save it.

Sabino's boldness, and the desirable objects and objectives he pursued with determination (links to the politically and economically powerful) made someone like Sabino a model, a mediator of desire and identity, influential upon other impressionable Chamula who began to form his faction. It was significant that his desire to be like the caciques of San Juan Chamula, and his evident practice or agency within what was then the PRI dominated structures of local politics (though somewhat different among the mestizos of San Cristóbal de Las Casas than among the indigenous of San Juan Chamula), made him into a certain significant menace. This eventually became manifest in his efforts to differentiate himself as a community member from the people he knew best and had most in common with by appealing outside the community, making a complaint of ill treatment to non-Indian authorities.

Sabino's neighbors and fellow community members very quickly began to see him as a monstrous or strange "Other" and thus no longer recognized as a true member of the community. He was viewed as a threat to the ideal of a common unity; even more, Sabino was perceived as a peril to the unity of the commons that was the basis of a cherished autonomy in La Candelaria. Sabino rapidly became a convenient scapegoat and blameworthy target upon which the community could easily attribute many of its troubles and worries. After numerous assembly meetings and debates, the decision finally became clear and nearly unanimous: the only way to restore peace and harmony to the common life of all was to expel Sabino and his family; they would be forced to move.

As my compadre related these events twenty years after the fact, he recounted how sad every one of the authorities felt in those days, especially as they watched the mayoles (constables) take apart the house and the catina-store, piece by piece, even as Sabino and his family were crying by the roadside. They would be allowed to take the pieces of wood and tin roofing with them, but the land was the land of the ejido. It would be re-assigned to another member of the community.

Personal Commentary

As I reflect upon the Sabino story, I have to admit that I might not have believed it, except for two significant moments during fieldwork. One moment was when I visited an ejido community distinct from La Candelaria but not very far away, where a series of dramatic expulsions had just taken place. The ostensible issue was religious differences, but underneath (or behind) this aspect was a power struggle between the federal and state government and Zapatista rebel sympathizers.

I was able to go and see for myself the dozens of dismantled homes laying where they once had stood, left for their expelled owners (Figure 4.9). The ejido Commissar explained to me that these expulsions reflected an internal split between a pro-government Evangelical church organization and the Catholic Traditionalists. He did not tell me that these Catholics also happened to be Zapatista sympathizers. The evangelicals were evidently related to a paramilitary group encouraged by the federal army only a few kilometers away in Rancho Nuevo. The Zapatista Catholics, the majority in the ejido, voted in assembly to expel those who were making life difficult within the community, taking away the rights to common land tenure. When I saw the extent of the destruction I, too, felt a great sadness. What kind of collective spirit would agree to foment harm upon neighbors of one's own community—people who had lived in proximity to one another for decades, even generations?

250

What was the motivation, apart from religion and politics, that caused such

drastic divisions among a people (Chamula) who had so much in common in terms of

socio-cultural life ways? With the homes of the Evangelicals destroyed, their wire and

picket fences pushed to the ground, and personal belongings left exposed until recovered,

if ever, by the owners, the authorities of Los Llanos ejido were determined to re-assign

ownership of the plots. I interviewed a few authorities and later visited where the

expelled were camped out at a government office in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. It was

clear that in this case, like the Sabino case, these families became a collective scapegoat,

a way to restore peace and harmony in service of at least one groups' dominant ideal of

what a common unity (and the unity of the commons) should look like.

Figure 4.9. Ejido Los Llanos (2010), municipality of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. The
belongings of one of a dozen Tzotzil Chamula Evangelical Christian families left piled on
the ground waiting for the owners to come and recover them. By decree of the assembly,
all houses belonging to the group were dismantled (not burned), so that the owners could
take away whatever materials they chose to retrieve. The land, however, was now free to
be reassigned to other members by the ejido assembly. Photo by author.

Although the Sabino story unfolded some twenty years earlier during a time of rapid change in the region, I was surprised one day to actually meet Sabino and his wife in the house of my compadre! They had come to visit, looking for "Padre Miguel." They had heard that a Catholic priest was living with Sebastián and wanted him to celebrate mass and baptisms for their annual fiesta. This was an interesting moment for my compadre because at the time of the expulsion incident he was secretary to the Ejido Commissar. They had not really crossed paths in all these years, but Sabino and his wife had moved beyond resentment long ago. They wanted to at least come back occasionally to La Candelaria, even to the Church. A time of reconciliation began the beginning of a new relationship. My compadre even started preaching services in the home of Sabino and his family where they invited neighbors to come and listen to the Word of God. Sabino still had his little "cantina" business, but my compadre the Deacon hoped that some day he might let that go.

Sabino's lasting ambition into his elder years was to finally become the paxión (Passion ritual guide) who presides over the major festive time of Carnival in San Juan Chamula (cf. Aguilar Penagos 1990; Pérez López 1990). When I last spoke with Sabino, he told me that he was one of the few candidates next in line for this privileged role. This particular desire, this life-long goal (and all the money he had saved up to accomplish it) was within reasonable reach for a man now in his early 70s. During that interview with Sabino and his wife, we laughed as we stumbled between Tzotzil and Spanish. As the conversation progressed, it was interesting to hear their version of events back when he and his wife, along with their children were forced out of La Candelaria. They simply characterized the entire affair as a problem of jealousy. The leaders in those days were jealous of their success, of their business at making artisan goods for tourists, their political connections, everything. "But what can you do, people can be like that, you

252

know – but that was so long ago. Thanks be to God, we have done well here where we came to live, even though we came here with absolutely nothing, almost starving." Leaving that interview made me think: serious games have their consequences, but life itself is a serious game, one full of mystery that makes issues of continuity and change very hard to capture let alone understand.

Judging the "Serious Games" of Community Members

There was another time in my compadre Sebastián's younger years when he had a very special "cargo" or civic duty within the community: the job of *el juez suplente* (supplementary judge). This job is not that of a "substitute" judge, or an alternate one, but rather the role of second rank, someone who is behind the "proprietario" (the proper occupier of the position) who is actually called "the judge." This post has more to do with respect and seniority in the local version of a "cargo system" (cf. Chance and Taylor 1985) and not necessarily anything to do with merit or competence. Sometimes a *suplente* knows how to read and write, but the proprietary does not. My compadre Sebastián, as the suplente, was as much or more a judge in his duties of deliberation and authority as any judge proper. In any case, as is the custom for this and many other communities, authorities often join forces in their deliberations, which is actually an intuitive rather than a legal strategy. There is greater wisdom when more heads and ears are involved in trying to figure what the right thing action to do is. No one is left alone, in other words; nobody decides by himself, or is anyone alone if an error of judgement incurs blame because of a bad call or poor decision.

In listening to my compadre, I managed to learn a great deal about the inner workings and much of the history of the community where I was living. His tenure as a rural judge, however, took place some time after the incidents involving Sabino. The events surrounding Sabino's ambition were considerably less intense or emotionally

distressing than some of the things that happened during the period Sebastián served as a the assistant rural judge. Then, as now, community judges were like the other main authorities (such as the municipal agent, the ejido council for vigilance or local sheriff, and the top post of the ejido Commissar); eventually they are all involved in hearing the cases of troubled and troubling community members. Experts or not, they are the ones who have to listen to the issues that erupt between individuals, or within and between families, or attend to issues of strife between barrios, groups within barrios, or grievances with nearby Chamula communities in the region.

My compadre Sebastián informed me that during his tenure some of the more unpleasant disputes he had to hear were those involving accusations of *brujería* or witchcraft. He pointed out that in most of these cases the core problem was not about whether somebody was or was not actually a real *brujo* or *bruja* (sorcerer or witch) who could supposedly cause mysterious harm to others. This would happen by a kind of magical force, as in making victims sick or causing the circumstances of their "accidental" death, and so forth.[23] The core problem was jealousy or envy. Accusations were often rooted in issues of resentment. Victims could vent anger by sometimes accusing others of using mysterious "powers" against them (witchcraft) or by accusing suspects of using such power.

According to my compadre (and, unfortunately, not everybody has the same views in these delicate matters), the goal of a Judge was to foment a spirit of dialogue. The idea here is that a judge must lead parties in contention to reconciliation, forgiveness, or at least an agreement of non-aggression, or in case of loss, some sort of compensation for the sake of repair or justice, a true sense of restoration.[24] Traditionally, the most important objective or goal for a judge is to avoid an increase in conflict among community members and thus avoid the destructive effects of violence.

254

Looking at the role of an indigenous judge from the point of view of mimetic theory, which sees imitative desire as a form of practice, Chamula authorities seem to intuitively recognize that, unless bridled and controlled, strong covetous emotions such as envy or jealously can potentially tear a community apart. To avoid this, the approach to a communal form of "justice" is first a matter of reconciliation and harmony (restoring the ideal of a possible "common unity") rather than 'eye for an eye' or some strict rule of compensatory justice. Reciprocal revenge can breed even more contempt, untold feuds, and other social ills, that are hard to terminate.[25]

To recall the ideal of a common unity, it is notable how much authorities work to avoid not just incidents of conflict but also the danger of imitation whereby conflict can spread beyond control into violence. In this respect, the ejido La Candelaria is both alike and different from the larger "homeland" of San Juan Chamula municipality. In the municipality of San Juan Chamula, accusations of witchcraft can have a deadly affect (Henriquez 2003; Rus 2000).

The key element to focus upon is the accusatory mode, that is to say, the obvious emotional and contagious role of resentment as a path that leads to and from imitative desire. Violent reciprocity related to vengeance sets up a scenario structured by at least three interacting elements, as Riches (1986) and others have pointed out: there is a victimizer, a victim and an audience/observer. Highly symbolic, it is within this tripartite dynamic that social violence is socially meaningful, that is to say, culturally effective in shaping human relations of identity (people taking sides, for example, or groups identifying with this or that ideology, etc.).

La Candelaria and San Juan Chamula differ because of Christian or altruistic influences informing traditions and customs. As jtuneletik or servant leaders who usually work voluntarily for the church are obliged by the ejido assembly to leave their ecclesial

duties for a time so as to serve the community in other ways. While it seems disadvantageous for the Church to lose leaders this way, it also provides a new opportunity to apply Christian ideas and principles to typical ejido problems, as for example a certain ethical orientation based on the Word of God or traditional moral teachings (Chojnacki 2010; Kovic 1997, 2005).

It is hard to measure the extent of such influence, but if mimetic desire has a propitious side as much or more than a negative one, it could mean that Christian values have helped shaped desires. Imitative desire mediated means that people look to models to learn what is worth desiring. In terms of the ideal of a "common union" it was apparently the Catholic Christian catechists in La Candelaria and not the costumbristas or so-called "traditionalists" in who first petitioned community authorities and then helped establish the patron saint festival, "La Virgin de La Candelaria."

Another important but relatively new public ritual is La Candelaria's local version of the "Festival of Games" (Figure 4.10). This is an important gathering for almost all members of the community (except, Evangelicals--unless they happen to have a cargo service of authority and so must attend all ceremonies). The Festival is the pre-Lenten Carnival time, a "wild" time that draws its initial meanings from the cultural customs common in the Catholic Church of the middle ages. Compared to the elaborate ritual forms used in San Juan Chamula (see, for example, the video by Thor Anderson 1988), the "Games" in La Candelaria are simple but just as significant as they develop further each year with detail, such as the proper way to dance the bolom chon. Another possible influence reveals itself in the fact that after more than 20 years the cantinas remain closed. Nobody within the ejido is allowed to buy, sell, or otherwise do business with alcohol even though sometimes bought by authorities to share with all community members during major festivals.

Figure 4.10. "Festival of Games," La Candelaria, 2010. Photo by author.

Judging Boundaries and the Moving Mojones

Besides worrying abut accusations of sorcery or witchcraft, another area of dispute that often comes before the listening ears of ejido authorities in La Candelaria is the almost constant problem of "mojones"–boundary markers between neighbors assigned tracts of land or forest. Not just my compadre Sebastián, but other authorities and ex-authorities that I interviewed would remark, almost casually, that this was a frequent occurrence, and a bit of a nuisance. It was bothersome to have to be going out into the woods and always measuring the lines to either reassure or to correct a misappropriation of boundary. One of the main reasons that community members were often caught-up in boundary disputes between property owners was economic necessity for a bit more land, or a few more trees. Just one or two meters of difference could embrace a great many trees eligible only for "proprietors" to cut down, and thus available

257

for sale in furniture production. Equally advantageous, is the fact that a few meters more meant just that much more corn could be grown if one were trying to expand a field (milpa) at the expense of an inattentive neighbor.

Love of one's neighbor and the ideal of a possible "common unity" fall to the way side when practical economic matters are at stake, or so it would seem. In terms of ethics or an ingrained ethical practice or habitus, it is interesting that the Christian or "believing" members of the ejido–including by my time of fieldwork many Evangelicals as well as some resident Adventists, only represent about one third of all registered ejido members. It is interesting, therefore, that even the Christian members are not above *aprovechando*–appropriating and taking advantage of "available" land by adjusting the *mojones* (boundary markers that are significant land marks or perhaps large stones or boulders delimiting a farm or forest parcel assigned to a member). Fields or properties sometimes remain vulnerable to this illicit activity because the owners are away for long periods. Why let perfectly good land go to waste; this is one possible logical stance. In addition, since "everybody does it" the effect of mimetic desire might be irresistible. For the last 15 years or so "being away" to "make money, lots of it" has meant traveling long distances away from the ejido, including all the way to the United States (such as in Americus, Georgia or Tampa, Florida). The "object of desire" that a neighbor possesses is now suddenly available, not to mention a temptation almost too difficult to resist. If one's neighbor stands to make more money, or gain more capital goods while away and in this manner neglects his usufruct rights at home in the ejido, then why should a self-respecting, stay-on-the-farm-campesino not take due advantage of what, in theory, is communal land anyway?

There are also some innocent reasons for such boundary violations: people forget where the boundaries are and do not notice they have crossed. From time to time, mojon

(boundary) disputes must be investigated. When it is sometimes discovered that a property line marker has been moved, then the offender is duly sanctioned with a monetary fine and a public scolding. At least among the authorities I spoke with in La Candelaria, there is seldom violence over these matters; since it is the kind of thing that seems too common to get much upset over; it is simply an annoying fact of community life, an everyday nuisance in ejidos. Nevertheless, even in a community of ejiditarios, the communal land tenure approach depends greatly upon the rules of agreement, supported by the classic notion that "good fences make for good neighbors." From the perspective of mimetic theory, such constraints, while conventional, go a long way to limit mimetic desire from spreading. In this sense, "structure" and "agency" go together well. It is when structures are removed, when the 'rules' are flattened or tossed aside, that a lack of difference can become dangerous as competition, rivalry are unleashed.

Concluding Remarks

At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed the importance of a particular ideal that many Chamula seem to hold up as an enduring possibility, namely, the ideal of achieving a "common unity." Indications of such a desire seem evident in the values and actions of leaders. Mol Manuel is a good example. He not only separated his ejido community from the "mother" community of San Juan Chamula but did so in order to protect the sense of common unity that in his time was just beginning to develop in La Candelaria, a relatively new ejido (formerly Las Ollas-La Candelaria). Mol Manuel even changed his religious orientation and practice (from Traditionalist shaman of a costumbre religion to that of healer and catechist for the Roman Catholic Church). Yet in seeking to differentiate, and thus deny resemblance with the political bosses of Chamula, Mol Manuel inadvertently set up the conditions for more intense competition and rivalry (barrio fights) that beforehand were at least somewhat controlled under the thumb of

259

powerful political bosses who, in traditional fashion, could at least limit public expressions of mimetic desire.

Inter-barrio fights in La Candelaria over "images" and the later power struggle for control of the ejido assembly are at least two examples of what seems to both push away and attract any hope (or desire) of embodying the common unity ideal. The ideal seems to move further away, even while others seem to reach for it more intensely. This is the problem of "fractured resemblances" discussed in chapter two (Harrison 2006). And while glimpses of a "common unity" may be detected cognitively or felt emotionally by ejido members during moments of crisis, this is merely a negative or inverse mirroring: where a common unity reflects nothing more than a defensive posture of solidarity against 'enemies within' that result in a sad experience of expulsion from the community. There is suddenly solidarity behind the one conviction that it is good to remove from the community someone who, while similar socially and culturally to the other members, has become something of a monster in terms of ambition. To protect the common good of the whole community, leaders felt compelled to remove Sabino and his entire family. While "time might heal all wounds" it does not necessarily take away the scar tissue left behind. Sabino and his wife informed me that while they had forgotten everything that happened, the fact remained that from their point view a grave injustice took place because the leaders of those days were jealous of their successes.

Undaunted by scars and wounds and displacement because certain authorities of La Candelaria had forced Sabino to leave over a circumstance of ambition, he eventually was able to relocate. Moreover, he was not only able to reconstruct his desire for power and influence; he did so using two major resources available to him, religion and commerce. These resources seem to characterize the habitus of "serious play" for many

Chamula leaders. Indeed, Sabino built his own small "ermita" or chapel for annual fiestas and for years ran his own cantina "on the edge of town" and with great financial success.

The images and/or imaginaries of religion and commerce, or religious, economic and political power (e.g., the ladino campaign for Municipal President and consequent barrio fights) are phenomenally linked to why mimesis or mimetic desire is worth paying attention to as influential variables. Mimetic desire, and the interactions it generates, puts into play a wide range of material as well as psychosocial variables. As a form of practice that is "serious play" (Ortner 2006), mimetic desire configures meaningful identities. In the examples above, Chamula are indeed Chamula, but just not the same as those "Other" Chamula elsewhere.

Now, in the next chapter, from intra-ethnic conflicts such as inter-barrio fights in La Candelaria, we move to discuss the role of mimetic desire in fomenting intra-ethnic conflicts that manifest as external or inter-community struggles. In this chapter, the object of desire worth fighting over had more to do with the psychosocial realm of "power" and "authority," autonomy and autochthonous expression, and both similarity and dissimilarity.

In what follows I look at how a relatively small area of land becomes the "object of desire" at first but eventually fades to the background as the competing Chamula forces involved with each other become increasingly more interested in each other than in the object itself. Violence and the threat of death are perhaps the unintended consequences of what happens when "familiarity breeds contempt."

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER 4

1 Juxtaposing features of the 1917 Ejido law and the 1992 reform, Vázquez Castillo (2004:3) notes how historically the ejido was defined as the legal entity of the "social interest sector," whose jurisdiction lay in the hands of the Mexican-born peasants. Ejido lands were inalienable, nontransferable, and non attachable. In addition, ejidatarios were the only ones able to own ejidos, which could not be conveyed, leased or mortgaged, or used as collateral for loans. In contrast, the 1992 amendments to Article 27 or Ejido Reforms specified that: *the State is no longer obligated to continue Agrarian Reform, the State is no longer obligated to provide land, the Mexican government has no power to expropriate land, ejiditarios are given the option to buy their own ejido, to lease it, to transfer it, to use it as collateral for loans or to mortgage it, and that ejidatarios can form associations or joint ventures with commercial groups.*

2 This figure comes from the 2005 Census information (INEGI; *Mexico en cifras*).

3 As of 2009, the official ejido registry for this community lists 392 proprietarios or "heads" of families with the rights of an ejidatorio. Male or female, these members hold the "spot" or what amounts to a title even though this ejido is not formally "certified" yet with the federal government. There are political reasons for this; both leaders and members seem to perceive a number of risks (and potential conflicts) that would come were they to communally agree (over three assembly votes) to privatize their communal land holdings (ejido).

4 The Chamula of La Candelaria, like in many other similar communities, follow the traditional pattern of patrilineal association where most families identify with the "head" of the household, which are usually men. In the community, there are a number of women who according to ejido rules and custom are proprietary owners who control the land where they live and work. In this community and elsewhere, Chamula women are allowed to inherit land (if it is passed to them by their parents), and may eventually pass it on to sons or daughters. It remains subject to ejido requirements and is not, technically, privately owned, but only used by right as long as the family is a registered member of the ejido community. The rules for ejidos have changed since the 1992 reform of Constitutional Article 27, ending true Agrarian Reform and stopped new claims for land re-distribution (cf. Collier and Quaratiello 2005:45-46; for a specific, brief outline of what the reform entails in terms of the specter of privatization see Harvey 1998:186-190). The Chamula of La Candelaria and other ejido communities protect their communal rights through "internal agreements" produced at assemblies, where the majority rule enforces a communal sense of uses and customs.

5 Patricia Figueroa Fuentes (1996) lists 93 colonias or communities (combining both urban and rural) where the population in its majority is Indian (though not necessarily Chamula ethnicity). In the Diario Official of the federal government, the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI), there are some 72 primarily Tsotsil speaking communities (see p. 44 of the 3rd section of the *Catalogue of National Indigenous Languages*, in sub-section for the municipality of San Cristóbal de Las Casas).

6 These rural communities are large and small, constituted as either official government supported ejidos or as predios of communeros (shared property owners). Each entity, if large enough, may have its own internal sub-division of respective barrios.

7 According to the 2005 (INEGI) statistical report on population counts there was a total of 166,460 inhabitants within the municipal boundaries of San Cristóbal de Las Casas; of these, 73,289 inhabitants identified themselves as indigenous. According to earlier Census data from

8 Jan Rus, personal communication (Nov 19, 2012).

9 This is Watanabe's thesis (1990) about how the Mam (a Maya people in the western highlands of Guatemala) construct or negotiate self-ascription in terms of local identity. Using religious syncretism as the major example of cultural reproduction, Watanabe argues that such an effort does not represent an indiscriminate seamless fusion of Maya and Christian elements of religion but is, rather, a highly differentiated recombination of conventional forms that provides, by means of belief or principles, an evolving sense of identity (moral and physical boundaries of community).

10 SOCAMA: Solidaridad Campesina Magisterial

11 Long-term survival of ejido style farms in Mexico is very much in doubt (see Haenn 2006). For a concise look at key provisions of the new Agrarian Law enacted in 1992 and how this now governs land rights for both private farmers and ejidatarios, see Cornelius and Myhre (1998:2-3).

12 For a more detailed description of this role within the Catholic Diocese of San Cristóbal de Las Casas see Irribarren's book (1997), *Vino nuevo en odres nuevos* or Chojnacki's more comprehensive view (2010), Indigenous Apostles – Maya Catholic Catechists Working The Word In Highland Chiapas.

13 With all due respect to Dr. Hjorleifur Jonsson (2001), "Serious Fun: Minority Cultural Dynamics and National Integration in Thailand" who also uses this play on words, I am here "playing" with Sherry Ortner's original notion of "serious games" (1994:129-30); see also her *forthcoming* Serious Games: Rethinking Practice Theory. Duke University Press. Meant to move "practice theory" in new directions, "serious games" or cultural games refers to something that is actively played, oriented toward culturally constituted goals and projects, and involving both routine practices and intentionalizec action."

14 Campbell 1996; Cline 1952; Dennis 1987; Greenberg 1989; Parnell 1988; Romanucci-Ross 1986; Vidas 2007.

15 On these developments in Chiapas see the research of Collier 1994, 1995, 1998; Harvey 1998; Ochoa-Gaona 2001; Ochoa-Gaona y González-Espinosa 2000; Reyes Ramos et al. 1998; Rus 1995; Rus and Collier 2003. On changes in rural policy for Mexico more generally, see Cornelius and Myhre 1998; Vasquez Castillo 2004.

16 Ordinarily, such a private effort at establishing a business must be registered with local and state government for purposes of taxes and fees. However, the associates do not "hang a sign" or identify their several buildings where they have equipment (on ejido land), nor do they paint any registered title of the business on their vehicles as A. C. (asociación civil) or as an S.C. (sociedad civil).

17 For some more detailed information and local Chiapas context on this very powerful form of fictive kinship and social bond see Gwendoline and Pierre E. van den Berghe (1966); Gossen (1999:274, note 4); and Wood (1987); for borader context in Latin American for this relationship, see Mitchell (1978).

18 There are others in the same community, in fact, the same barrio, who loan money out privately, usually at a monthly rate of .03 percentage. This community-wide credit union or caja

popular was begun originally through an initiative of the Catholic Church in the late 1960s. While it has had its difficulties, including scandals, in recent years it has enjoyed a secure and stable existence, even though it is becoming increasingly difficult for people to pay their loans back. The caja popular La Candelaria loans and receives back an enormous amount of money. According to the report given to me by one officer (May, 2010), the figures for each numbered individual or group (the names were removed for anonymity) shows a total of $ 6,705,970.00 pesos MN in loans (at 12.0 pesos/dollar, approximately $ 558,830.00 dls!!). The list numbers some 302 participants who have outstanding loan amounts (though it does not say for how long). This listing only identifies the barrio or community of the person or group (which includes some from outside the ejido). At .02% compounded monthly for a period of 12 months (24%), the little credit union (caja popular) makes a significant profit: $1,609,432.00 in pesos or $133,215.00 dollars. Profits are shared each year during the annual report to all members, who receive material goods such as a year supply of salt, sugar, and oil, as well as pratical materials like some new blankets. The Chamula of this community borrow money for a number of reasons: to pay for their migration to the United States (as far away as Tampa, FL or Americus, GA), or to pay for the purchase of a truck, or building materials for home improvement, and so forth.

19 See MacLeod and Wasserstrom 1983; Wasserstrom 1983a, 1983b; Garcia de Leon 1978, 1997; Rus and Collier 2003.

20 Pérez López (1990) discusses the influence of Salvador López Castellanos, a.k.a. "Tuxum" and his family in the municipality of San Juan Chamula. See also Rus (2005) and Irribarren (2002 [1980:21ff]).

21 For attempts at anthropological perspective on native practices regarding the cultural or social role of sorcerers, witches, as both benevolent and/or malicious manipulators of powers and spirits that affect native populations, see the work on anthropomorphic supernaturalism in Tlaxcala by Nutini (1993) and an ample discussion by Foster et al. (1972). For a wider view on the implications of wielding (or suffering from) metaphysical power within specific cultural settings, see Stewart and Strathern's (2004) *Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors and Gossip*.

22 Gossen (2002:1089n14) notes that the Chamula, like other Tzotzil groups, have a concept of objects (e.g., boxes) that can serve as magical sources of wealth, a concept that has many variants. Basically, "these objects are usually said to originate with or be in the possession of ladinos, demons, or Earth Lords or their surrogates. Personal testimony and many narratives report that Chamula can occasionally obtain these magical objects and their power to produce wealth, but such possession is never normal. Elsewhere, Gossen comments (2004:1028n1) that whenever Chamula are asked to describe or picture the mysterious beings called "Earth Lords" they very often will produce the image of a "fat Mexican dressed as a cowboy" and thus produce a representation that is obviously linked to Ladino economic and political dominance (see also Gossen 1999a:183-184).

23 Although somewhat dated, for some elaborate and traditional descriptions of beliefs and practices related to *brujaría* in Mexico and in Chiapas respectively, see Norman D. Thomas (Thesis, 1967) and Moscoso Pastrana (1990). For a more sympathetic and contemporary contextual understanding of what an j-ilol (medicine man) is all about, what he or she practices and are sometimes confused or mixed with malevolent spiritual powers, see Gómez Santíz (2005).

24 Laura Nader (1990) has written insightfully regarding forms of disputation and reconciliation within Zapotec towns of Oaxaca.

25 For an emic or "insider" view of this approach and process to justice in terms of actual cases among the Tzotzil, see Jane Collier (2002) and Rus (2000).

In my opinion, not only violence but desire itself is essentially imitative or mimetic.
If it were not, desire would be more or less instinctual and unchanging.
There would be no such things as freedom, language, culture and religion itself.
-- René Girard (1999)
"The First Stone" Renascence 52.1 (Fall 1999:1-18)

Chapter 5

THE STRUGGLE FOR NEW LAND

In the previous chapter, several conflict situations were examined that focused on

individuals seeking personal power and prestige. These situations involved Chamula

from several distinct barrios but within the same single community, the rural ejido La

Candelaria. In this chapter, the situation is more complex and details intra-ethnic conflict

between two communities, La Candelaria and Corazón de María (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1. Map of communities under study within the municipal territory of San
Cristóbal de Las Casas: bordered to the North by the municipalites of San Juan Chamula
and Tenejapa, and East by the indigenous municipality of Huixtan. Source: Gobierno de
Mexico: SEDESOL_2011/INEGI (2005).

The story I present in this chapter tells of a struggle that took many years, but which came to a head in 1991. It involves the struggle for newly available land in the eastern rural zone of the city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Several thousand Chamula families still farm and make their living in this area, organizing and expressing their lives in ways both traditional and non-traditional. The narrative I have constructed aims to highlight dynamics of interaction related to what I see (theoría) as an illustration of social conflict precipitated by imitative desire. I interpret a struggle to possess a specific area of land as representing a profound desire of two similar groups vying for the same object. Two neighboring Chamula groups seek acquisition of what is a small but significant area of land that they can inhabit and use as a source of food. Their mutual vehemence eventually leads to a brief episode of physical violence. Contrary to the expectations of mimetic theory, however, this fight does not escalate once violence manifests itself. One possible explanation for this could be the fact that while many Chamula were injured nobody was killed. In a way, the blinding power of mimetic desire was exposed, the violence unveiled, allowing opponents to see things differently.

My emphasis in this chapter is on the intra-ethnic aspects of this conflict, but that does not mean inter-ethnic aspects were absent. Internal communitarian struggles among the Chamula themselves are almost always framed by ladino practices, since on many levels, historically and currently, they control or influence the political, economic, and social structures that dominate the region. Ladinos frequently serve as "models"–that is to say, as "mediators of desire" and thus consciously or not, draw by attraction the imitative desires of Chamula individuals or groups interacting with them. This may well have been the case, for example, with the notorious Chamula leader Salvador López Castellanos ("Tuxum") who as a youth learned how political bosses "wheel and deal" when he

266

worked for the extraordinary Erasto Urbina. Urbina spoke Tzotzil and organized peasants

in Chiapas on behalf of the Cárdenas administration beginning in the late 1930s.

The opposite is true, as well, where Chamula may serve as "mediators of desire"

for ladinos or other non-Indians. There is some measure of this phenomenon when

politicians visit the municipal center of San Juan Chamula, such as the state Governor or

the nation's President. On those occasions, the invited official is usually obligated to

resemble or in some fashion identify with the Chamula in terms of appropriating their

traditional costume – as if a normal, everyday aspect of life (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2. President Felipe Calderón of Mexico, dressed as a Chamula authority, giving
a speech in San Juan Chamula municipality. Photo: Cuatro Poder Newspaper.

"Models" or mediators (brokers or socio-cultural gate-keepers) like Urbina

embody the "value" of things imputed worth seeking, desiring, acquiring, that Chamula

and others might imitate. Successful imitations bring a measure of benefit (prestige,

power and/or pecuniary possibilities), not to mention all of the risks that come with

patron-client politics (Rus 1994, 2005).

The struggle analyzed in this chapter concerns a particular "object of desire" that is related to the history and practice of ladino desires, like what it means to possess titled land. In this sense, the story that follows is an example of how the imitative nature of intra-ethnic conflict can intensify desire to the point of being able to both affirm and fragment configurations of identity related boundary production, (or in Jenkin's terms, configuring "who's who, what's what"). As Potolsky points out (2005:122) "mimesis" has a psychological dimension. Issues of identification entail a potentially radical rethinking of mimesis. Potolsky further informs us that for Freud, "identifications are akin to an unconscious script that we unwittingly 'perform' throughout our lives. We incessantly imitate others, but not always by choice." Potolsky adds (2005:122) that

> identification installs an uncanny trace of otherness at the heart of identity so much so that we can be surprised by the direction, intensity or emotional character of our identifications. Abandoned mimetic bonds can be revivified in new circumstances, casting a shadow over our present interactions. We may find ourselves habitually attracted to people with the same character or physical traits, or we may realize retrospectively that careers or hobbies we thought were freely chosen are in fact imitated from people with whom we once identified. Identifications often surface in seemingly insignificant gestures, catch-phrases and vocal intonations, and because we can maintain conflicting identifications at the same time, we may struggle with entrenched feelings that go conspicuously against more conscious convictions.

As the reader engages the narrative for this chapter, it is important to keep in mind that the main actors share a resemblance or relative homogeneity in terms of social and cultural similarities. In Chapter 2 we discussed Harrison's argument (2002, 2006) that social or cultural "homogeneity" is a major ingredient in the production of group conflict, especially violent confrontations. Jenkins also argues (2008) that social identity is best understood not simply in terms of differences but both similarity and difference.

Ejido La Candelaria

The current configuration that comprises the bounded territory of ejido La Candelaria (Figure 5.3) was established under a federal land grant during the Presidential

administration (1934-1940) of Lázaro Cardenas. However, decades of bureaucratic

neglect left the full extent of the Presidential donation in something of a forgotten state.

Only when reviewing documented boundaries with a neighboring community (San

Antonio de Las Rosas) did members of La Candelaria (Figure 5.3) learn about lands

promised but never actually handed over to ejido members. Ladino families were still

living on the expropriated lands in question. The full grant was for "the Chamula of San

Juan Chamula," a designation that still included the extensive ejido that was then a major

area in the eastern part of Chamula, known as Las Ollas-La Candelaria.

Figure 5.3. Ejido La Candelaria, eastern rural zone of the San Cristóbal de Las Casas

When La Candelaria pulled away from San Juan Chamula in 1968 it effectively

separated into two distinct ejidos, one remaining in the municipio of Chamula and the

other in the municipal rural zone of San Cristóba de Las Casas (cf. López Mesa 2002:22).

This split was a public action approved by the state legislature of that time. Even so, several decades would pass before the rest of the land grant was ready for execution. The conflict that eventually erupted between the two Chamula groups of La Candelaria and Corazón de Maria came about because they wanted to possess for themselves what was quality agricultural land that once belonged to their common ancestors prior to the ladino intrusions during the 19th century. The ranchería "Corazón de Maria" was bought by a group of Chamula campesinos whose families used to work the fields and forests owned by the Rojas Hess family.

Nearby, the ranch land of San Antonio de las Rosas was acquired a little more aggressively. In this case, in the late 1940s, Erasto Urbina led a band of invaders from Nixnamtik, Chamula, along with his Chamula prodigé Salvador "Tuxum," threatening the ladino owners with the destruction of their cattle if they did not sell, or rather settle, at a certain price. Today, the Catholic Church sits on the border with the ejido La Candelaria, whose boundary line runs precisely down the middle of the Church itself and through part of the older cementary.

Ejido-want-to-be: Corazón de María

The historical origins of Corazón de María as an indigenous communal entity dates back to 1965 as 113 hectares of land purchased by a few Chamula families from a ladina landowner, Doña Elena Martinez Rojas, Viuda de Hess. The Chamula who made the purchase were part of families that had worked the land for several generations. Because the Ladina owner, a widow, could no longer effectively work the ranchería, she provided her workers with a right of first refusal. Anxious to own what they knew already by the sweat of their own labor, the Chamula pooled funds or borrowed to make the purchase. Land from this original purpose was later expanded by land invasion to more than one hundred hectares more for a total of 243 hectares. In conjunction with a federal

270

government program for rural development, *Programa Operativo 2001*, the Chamula of

Corazón de María began to formalize ownership of the land they felt they had always

lived upon (Figure 5.4). By formalizing their acquisition in a collective manner, they

were eventually able to obtain credits and loans from local and state government, thus

constructing a better situation for the city itself.

Figure 5.4. Corazón de Maria area (3375 Has.) with projected "Palenque highway" – a
government plan opposed by the EZLN's "The Other Campaign". Source: Ma. Luisa
Armendariz , Chiapas State Government, City of San Cristóbal de Las Casas (Feb 2007).
http://www.scribd.com/doc/17222544/.

Once in good standing, a farming community like Corazón de María could then

make confident decisions about diversification of cultivates, whether or not to allow

cattle or sheep. The government initiative was designed in the hope of reducing land

invasions. By 2001, Corazón de María was finally able to form itself into an ejido. Since

the changes in agrarian law in 1992, the ejido as an institution of land reform was no

longer a protected and supported government entity. Today it amounts to something akin

to a "gated community" structure, governed by its own collectively agreed upon internal rules and regulations.

Since 1994, when the Zapatista struggle began, numerous land invasions began to take place throughout the state of Chiapas by mostly indigenous organized groups (Reyes Ramos 2001) imitating the boldness if not the principles and ideals of the rebel initiative. According to Vázques Castillo (2004), since the 1980s the Mexican government has made it a priority to stop these invasions, but with the intended outcome to establish and enforce laws that could balance between communal and individual land rights. After reform laws were passed in 1992, the government stilled sponsored technical expertise in land surveys and boundary documentation in order to fortify its juridical authority over lands within the state, aiming to reduce uncertainty and instability for the sake of better development. Federal and state governments sought to deploy a public strategy that would (a) recognize the severity of problems, such as poverty but most especially new and multiple competing claims to land areas; and (b) take appropriate or prudent action steps toward reducing or avoiding controversies. Ambiguities in the land systems had historically led to violence and economic insecurity that quickly resulted in weak investment for many regions in need of development.

These governmental efforts represented an attempt to deal with the fundamental fact that after the Zapatista rebellion in 1994 people were now massively on the move within the state. Farmers who needed land in order to grow subsistence and/or commercial crops constituted an important population of some size that required large-scale (government) solutions for their problems and challenges. From the perspective of the Chiapas state government, the more that land ownership changed hands through various avenues of purchase, homesteading, or organized invasion, the greater liklihood of social unrest and violence. Morever, since the late 1970s, many indigenous groups had

become organized so that their collective strength was more difficult to manipulate or intimidate, forcing the government to deal in new ways with both ladino and indigenous players of the serious games affecting land and its associated "proprietary identities."

It was in this post-1994 context that Corazón de María began a long-term process for becoming not just a recognized settlement of *comuneros* (individual or private proprietors of small land tracts), but a full-fledged ejido that could receive support from state and federal government programs. Here, the most important fact to keep in mind is that those Chamula who had formally worked on the nearly 500 hectares that once belonged to Doña Elena Martinez Rojas were able to organize together a purchase of their own land rights according to legal parameters of the time.

It was these families, working as "mozos" or peasants for many ladino Ranchers at the time of the 1974 Indigenous Congress who began organizing their families and friends to take full advantage of new opportunities to acquire new land of their own account. By 1994, in Corazón de María already enjoyed a certain sense of pride regarding their established efforts to achieve a "common unity" around the agricultural "commons" that once constituted the old ranch house and chapel – that is, the "casco" or headquarters of the ranch lands (Figure 5.5). With this historical context in mind, the reader can understand better the strong emotions and sense of identity involved in the conflict over land that unfolded between members of Corazón de María and La Candelaria. Constituted primarily of *pequeño proprietarios privados* (individual land-holders), the community of Corazón de María operates in a communal fashion to govern over about 243 hectares of land to sustain at least 704 inhabitants (approximately 125 families, according to the official listing of households).[1]

Figure 5.5. The *casco* or "helm" of ejido Corazon de Maria. Location of city agent's office, meeting hall, elementary school, general store, and the older Catholic church currently used only by Chamula Traditionalists for *Costumbrista* religious expressions. Photo by author (2010).

Properties were first purchased in January of 1965 from a renowned ladino family who sold off 113 hectares to Indians who had lived and worked on their property. Although more hectares were eventually purchased from other landowners contiguous to the main property of Corazón de María, it would not be enough to sustain its numerous families trying to sustain themselves through subsistence agriculture. Several families sought to acquire additional lands, even though the fields were located in non-contiguous area not too far away. What this particular group did not comprehend when organizing their original purchase, was that the Chamula of La Candelaria had begun to process a certain legal claim to land very near Corazón de Maria, but bordering La Candelaria, located in the upper eastern valley of San Cristóbal de Las Casas (see Figure 5.1). This claim related to a little known provision from a Presidential declaration (*resolución*), by which activists in the Cárdenas administration of 1934-40 sought to return appropriated native lands to indigenous groups willing to make them productive enterprises.

Upon learning of this claim, the farmers of Corazón de María soon found themselves in direct confrontation with Chamula farm people just like themselves, that is to say their friends, relatives, and neighbors from La Candelaria. In the next section, I explore how the conflict unfolded. In the end, things could have turned out differently had the Chamula sought negotiation rather than confrontation. As one of my informants observed in retrospect, if both groups had managed to discuss their common needs and hopes first instead of acting in the greedy way they did, they might have all become associate members a new Chamula community. But in the heat of the moment, cooperation was not desirable or opportune, especially from the perspective of the more land-desperate farmers of Corazón de Maria. Girard would argue that in this kind of situation, mimetic desire, once set in motion and fixed on a certain object, can easily produce a generous measure of myopia or blindness. Perhaps in the conflict that developed between the two groups of Chamula there was a significant measure of misrecognition or denial, since it seems to have demonstrated a failure to see or recognize resemblance of those who were most visibly and socially similar on many levels.

Historical Context of The Inter-Ejido Conflict

I now provide the reader some additional historical context before examining the intra-ethnic and inter-comunitarian conflict that occurred in 1990-1991 between members of the ejidos Corazón de Maria and La Candelaria. The following is a brief overview of Mexico's decades-long agonistic politics of land reform and related agrarian politics. Many radical changes for much of rural Mexico began during the Revolution (1910-1917) and later became institutional and practical under President Cárdenas in the late 1930s and afterwards (see Benjamin 1996; see also Rus 1994).

Centuries before that time of restructuring, beginning with the Spanish Conquest and throughout the Colonial and Post-colonial periods, Tzotzil Chamula claims to land in

275

the upper valley of *jobel* (the indigenous name for San Cristóbal de Las Casas, known in colonial times as the royal city or Ciudad Real) were severely delimited and most of it eventually lost. During the conquest and throughout the colonial period, Chamula towns, forests, and croplands were reconfigured and largely controlled under the administration of the Dominican friars (1544–1762). To sustain their extensive preaching missions and religious houses and convents, the friars were ambitious in establishing major agricultural and cattle enterprises or haciendas, incorporating extensive land tracts located throughout what is today most of southern Mexico and major parts of Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guatemala. They established what became a practical and powerful network of labor and commerce useful not only for sustaining the friars' way of life, but also provided the basis for negotiating on-going protection of certain economic and religious privileges granted by the royal authority in Spain.

The Dominicans had to compete with other religious orders working as missionaries in the Americas, dedicated men very much like themselves but who were all facing similarly difficult economic and social challenges of Spain's expansion throughout the imperial territory of New Spain. Besides other religious clergy, by the late 18th century the Dominicans had to face a growing and more consequential rivalry for land, labor, and luxuries that the secular (diocesan) clergy increasingly sought for themselves. Royal privileges provided to the Dominicans tended to guarantee their almost exclusive right to direct the propagation of Christian doctrine in most of southern Mesoamerica, especially Chiapas. Dominican religious hegemony over this region, and their control of Chamula territory in particular, managed to produce economic advantages. Ironically, for an order of men who take vows of poverty, these privileges over land and labor ensured a substantial income from agricultural production (Wasserstrom 1977; 1983a & b). The Dominican network also produced some political advantages that in many ways brought

276

not just protection for the Order's own spiritual, political, and economic interests, but also created the by-product of a protective "buffer zone" around indigenous communities under the friars' supervision.

Through the mid-18th century, the Dominicans stood between Chiapas' criollo landowners and the indigenous labor they coveted. After the Dominicans' expulsion in the 1760s, their diocesan (secular clergy) successors tried to continue Church control of access to the indigenous communities, with diminishing success until they were finally removed from any role at all in the civil life by the Constitution of 1857, and the beginning of the period of Mexican history known as La Reforma. (Rus 1983). Notable in this regard were the liberal criollo entrepreneurs who throughout the late 19th century sought to appropriate the productivity of indigenous lands and labor for their new pacific coast plantations in Chiapas. Liberal and conservative ranchers and plantation owners were both able to find legal and extra-legal ways to expropriate Chamula lands, while inventing new ways to use indigenous men as a cheap labor force to work cattle, sugar cane, hard woods, and relatively new cash-crop products like coffee (Rus 2003, 2010).

The social upheaval of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) also widely reconfigured the usufruct rights and purposes of land tenure for Indians as for the entire nation of Mexico and the rich lands of Chiapas (Benjamin 1996; Favre 1992 [1984]). In the wake of the Mexican Revolution, a series of land reform policies was implemented. During the late 1930s, the Cárdenas administration sought to intensify these reforms as a way to increase internal domestic production, especially in the tumultuous wake of the 1929 worldwide economic collapse. In Chiapas, a large part of what was known to have been ancestral land was returned to the Chamula by a Presidential edict. This land was for their exclusive use in government supported land collectives, or ejidos. The original land grant from President Cárdenas provided for a primary ejido named San Juan Chamula.[2]

Subsequent agreements among all ejido members allowed for new land divisions and separations, with documentation and processing of boundaries by government engineers. In the decades after Cárdenas, agrarian reforms slowed in Chiapas with the mire of internal politics, causing serious land redistribution to poor farmers to wane. The bold ideals for "land and liberty" emergent from the Mexican Revolution quickly diminished in the onslought of other nation-building interests (Benjamin 1996; Rus 1994).

By the late 1980s, the Chamula of La Candelaria ejido were not aware of the remaining land owed to them from the Presidential resolution of the 1940s, most of which was directed to form what became the Chamula ejido Las Ollas-La Candelaria. This "forgotten" commitment constituted nearly 500 hectares that had been expropriated on paper but never executed in fact. Thus, non-Indian ladinos continued to prosper on very fertile farmland surrounded by lush pine-oak groves.

Ladino-Indigenous Relations of Rivalry

Relations between the Chamula and local ladinos have never been good in Chiapas. There are, of course, many historical reasons for distrust. The apparently Machiavellian scheme on the part of the ladino landowner Burguete to provoke a crisis by "selling" forest and agricultural land he had no right to sell seems typical of dynamics that have long constituted difficult ladino-indigenous relations in Chiapas (Ángulo Barredo 1995; Colby 1966; Colby and Van den berghe 1961; Pitt-Rivers 1966; Rus, D. 1997). Relations shifted dramatically in the late 1930s. The Cárdenas administration organized indigenous communities under the leadership of Erasto Urbina, the mestizo mentioned in Chapter 4. Urbina spoke Tzotzil well and was successful in organizing strong PRI labor sectors as a kind of "wedge" against the political forces of highland Conservative interests that exploited indigenous labor (Rus 1995; Rus and Collier 2003). The sharp improvement in indigenous people's status during the Cárdenas years of the

278

late 1930s was followed by a decade of rearguard resistance by ladino landowners and

politicians, and stubborn efforts on the part of the Chamulas to defend their gains.[3]

Relations with ladinos took a further dive after the 1974 Indigenous Congress in

San Cristóbal de Las Casas which, as previously mentioned, was a watershed moment for

distinct indigenous language groups (see Morales Burmúdez 1991). Recall that this three-

day congress represented the first time that indigenous representatives from different

regions in Chiapas had come together to confer openly on serious matters. They met not

just to reflect on common woes but also to organize themselves (even in the face of the

historical restraints established by ladino hegemony). The delegates gathered around a

common theme, "equality in justice" and in this spirit demanded the realization of their

honest desires, such as true land reform. "Land and liberty" was something that still

echoed from the days of the Mexican Revolution, but in Chiapas this ideal had long been

denied to Mexican peasants in general. True land reform in Chiapas was especially

difficult for the Indians of impoverished zones despite increased income from the oil

boom in the 1970s and even afterwards (Collier and Quaratiello 2005). At the Congress,

delegates demanded action on other vital interests such as better access to resources for

health, education, and better support for commerce (e.g. rural access roads).

In the mid-1970s, many powerful agents for the state government under

Governor Manuel Velasco Suárez saw these kinds of demands on the part of peasants as

a threat to social stability. To protect powerful economic interests and infrastructure

linked to land and labor, party and government leaders sought the help of local bosses

(caciques) to begin a repressive crackdown against all dissidents (Irribarren 1980;

Robledo Hernández 1997). Their efforts at represseion, however, inadvertently brought

new forms of empowerment for the poor and dispossessed Chamula who lost homes and

lands.[4] By the early 1990s, some sixteen years after the indigenous congress, many

Chamula and other ethnic groups had organized politically and economically, and were intensely focused upon defending and advancing their own interests and desires (Morquecho 1992), even at the increasingly likely risk of clashing with other indigenous of similar goals and ideals.

Obstacles and Opportunities

The petitioners from La Candelaria were the sons and daughters of long established ejido community members who belonged to one of the larger barrios of La Candelaria called "Corral Chen." Provided the government would honor its historical commitment to the original Presidential resolution made about thirty years before, the families from La Candelaria were determined to continue the tradition of their parents and grandparents by copying the name for their own new community Ach'(new) Corral Ch'en, an area that was physically contiguous with their home ejido of La Candelaria.

Already by the late 1970s, all original family parcels in La Candelaria had been sub-divided several times to provide young families a simple home and space for basic husbandry; but it was not enough. For any family to live from a typical corn milpa they needed at least one or two hectares to grow a year's worth of beans and corn. Since the 1940s (Pozas 1977 [1947]), it was increasingly obvious that the lack of land was creating pressure to migrate.

When young Chamula families of La Candelaria found out about a new land opportunity almost by accident,[5] they were elated. Following advice from representatives of SOCAMA (Solidario Campesino Magisterial, or Farmer -Teacher Solidarity movement)[6] each family quickly put their name on an official government list. Doing so would demonstrate their sincere commitment to making a claim on the land. Unfortunately, the 1992 reforms to the Constitution (Article 27) ended the government's full responsibility for land redistribution and slowed pending petitions considerably.

While these families were hopeful, many other young Chamula families in the

1990s (whether in La Candelaria or elsewhere) found it difficult or impossible to find

available fertile land they could afford. In order to obtain workable fields they would

purchase or rent hectares sometimes available in other communities, including the hot

lowlands.[7] Over the past forty years migrations for many Chamula has been occurring as

people search for capital or the financial wherewithal to acquire land for field or home

building, or as a way to earn some income from local markets. Most recently, this is the

same reason that so many young Chamula men and women risk an arduous migration to

work in the United States. So, as Chamula from Corral Ch'en barrio were making their

claim on expropriated ladino lands in the early 1990s, others were beginning to travel far

away in search of substantial capital to use back home, a practice that continues today. In

Corazón de Maria, for example, many young Chamula have recently brought back

enough dollars to finish building some very fine houses–sometimes to the envy and

consternation of their fellow Chamula neighbors who could not afford the risk or danger

of migration (Figure 5.6).

Figure 5.6. US. money can build a house. Still under construction in 2010, this house
belongs to the older son of a founding member of the Corazón de María community. The
son has worked more than five years doing yard work in Tampa, Florida, where two other
siblings also work.

For many Chamula who migrate, their goals are similar; they want to situate themselves with sufficient capital so as to purchase land, a truck, buy equipment for carpentry, or hire the necessary workers to build a decent house for a family. My field notes confirm the findings of Jan and Diana Rus (forthcoming) indicating how Chamula migrants have gone and returned several times to the United States for these reasons.

For those unable to seek capital outside of their homelands, the effort to acquire new land of any significant size and value often meant having to borrow money. Chamula men or women in need of funds will either borrow from a fellow Chamula who has money to lend (often at very high interest and severe consequences for default), or from a community *caja popular* (credit cooperative) where interest rates are usually reasonable. Another option is to make a common purchase by pooling credit (share a debt) with "socios" (partners or associates), who are usually relatives or trusted friends. .

Since the 1992 government reforms, the Chamula are no longer able to petition for land grants or for the establishment of new ejido organizations. Those who had begun the process prior to reforms may have taken decades to acquire the promised partitions through a labyrinth-like bureaucratic process. Understanding this context then, it is not suprising that in 1990, when young families from La Candelaria discovered a possible path for acquiring "free" land with which they might possibly establish a new ejido, the depth of their shared desire was profound. Although the bureaucratic paperwork presented a challenge, the hope of land as an object of desire awakened a sense of proprietary identity. By making this claim they would be able to migrate just like their parents and grandparents moved from the hamlet of Corral Ch'en in San Juan Chamula municipio to settle another "Corral Ch'en" as a barrio in La Candelaria. But just as young families began to construct a new sense of identity (imitating the same desires of their

282

elders) their doing so also awakened a desire among several other young families who were their neighbors, kin and friends, in the Chamula community of Corazón de María.

The question remains as to why something as large and important as a land grant took the government so long to process. Was it not something the Agrarian Reform authorities should have processed decades earlier, when the Presidential resolution (decree) was fresh? All together, the process took some 70 years (1940 – 2010) from the time of the original decree to what finally became its resolution. During the period of 1990-1991, the riddle of governmental delay was obviously related to the entrenched interests of ladino ranchers and property owners who possessed major tracts of land on the outskirts of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Once the shape of the resolution began to affect actual ladino property owners, legal action was interposed to try and stop, slow down, or in some way redirect the desire of many indigenous communities and poor peasants looking to form new ejidos, or establish additional communal lands. Ladino interests were behind the "procedural labyrinths" (Vazques Castillo 2002:39), a tactic to prevent effective redistribution of productive lands.

To the advantage of the indigenous petitioners, the lands sought were, technically, already "given" and would simply form a contiguous part of the southeastern border of La Candelaria's ejido territory. Even more important was the fact that this land would not be physically part of the municipality of San Juan Chamula. A section of the original Chamula ejido, "Las Ollas-La Candelaria," the community of La Candelaria itself had long since separated politically, economically, and religiously from San Juan Chamula territory. The formal process to confirm acquisition began around 1990, when the Ach' (New) Corral Ch'en group began to take concrete legal steps to advance their own claim for lands previously granted but never fully bestowed.

Although the desire to proceed with a formal claim might have seemed to those involved as entirely an "internal" Chamula matter, it should be noted that they were guided by the advice of an outsider, a non-Indian man named Ángel Fonseca, the lawyer from the Farmer & Teacher Solidarity organization (SOCAMA). And it should also be noted that they were increasingly forced to deal with the counter desire of the ladino landowner, Burguete, whose property had been expropriated decades before but ignored by the Agrarian Reform section of the government. Indeed, the Chamula from Corazón de María may have thought likewise. They may have considered that their desires were their own business, except for the fact that these desires were in many ways influenced not only by the competing families in La Candelaria who also wanted the land in question, but also influenced in an interdividual fashion. Burguete's strong desire interacted with that of the Indian campesinos and the result is historical.

Nuevo Corral Ch'en y el Ángel

For almost 17 years Tumín, with the help of his brother Sebastián served as a key leader for New Corral Ch'en, thus acting as a sort of proto commissar for the new community they hoped to gain complete title one day. A "commissar" (*comisariado* in Spanish) is the customary title for the top official of an agricultural collective in Mexico. It was Tumín's duty to oversee the certification process and to push the legal paperwork forward at the Agrarian Reform office with the help of the lawyer Fonseca. At that time, a petition required at least 20 farmers to start a communal venture like an ejido; to their advantage, they had some fifty members ready to sign up and designate a name for their new community. By 1990, 54 families began to claim 477 hectares of productive, workable, agricultural land--supposedly already expropriated in their favor as Chamula. Little did these families realize that the process that would take some 20 years to complete, ending with full government certification in 2010 (Figure 5.7).

284

Figure 5.7. Some of the original founders for the ejido New Corral Ch'en y el Ángel, here holding their individual "titles" to their parcels, acquired in 2010. Photo by author (2010).

They wanted the name of their ejido to reflect the migratory path of their elders, referring to their home barrio in ejido La Candelaria called Corral Ch'en, which in turn refers back to the land their grandparents had left behind in San Juan Chamula, a hamlet also known as Corral Ch'en. So, all agreed that their community-to-be should be called New Corral Ch'en. But some also wanted the community's name to also reflect the extraordinary solidarity they had received from the ladino, Angel Fonseca. Fonseca had guided them in their initial steps of a very long process fraught with many obstacles and frustrations. Thus the full name of the new ejido was Ach' Corral Ch'en y Ángel.From the very beginning New Corral Ch'en members were faced with many troubles. It turns out that even though in principle the Federal government's Agrarian Reform program had expropriated private lands in favor of the Chamula people, there was little documentation and decades later even less political will to execute the old land grant commitment. Times had changed. Land Reform redistributions were now pasé and by 1992 quickly coming to an end under President Salinas de Gotari.

In 1990, however, when the claim was first being processed, the land area in question was still in the power of the Burguete family. Although the main residence of this ladino family was in nearby San Cristóbal de Las Casas, they enjoyed an extensive ranch property in the eastern rural zone of the city, not far from the new airport. From the land-hungry Chamula point of view, the land and forests of the Burguete family, like that of other ladinos, was "just sitting there"–ripe for the taking. To them it seemed as though the ladinos did not really care to use their land, keeping it largely unproductive, not making better use of it raising corn and beans to feed their families.

According to the ideology of Mexican land reform politics, unproductive land was best given to those who were willing to work it (a value reflecting the great epitaph of Emiliano Zapata's rallying cry Land and Liberty!). To the credit of the bureaucrats rather than any local politician, the highland office of Agrarian Reform in 1990-1991 worked hard to facilitate the request of the young Chamula farmers. The agency had confirmed, for example, technical research findings that the ejido land was already set apart, designated legally in favor of Chamulas living in this specific region. Enthusiastic and hopeful, but before completing all the paperwork, the young Chamulas from La Candelaria began to work the land they had petitioned. One day, while they were digging a well for water in the forest, the ladino "owner" of the land, Manuel Burguete, arrived by surprise. He came waving a pistol and even firing a few shots, as one informant recalls:

> When we saw him like this, we just wanted to go for our guns (hunting rifles), but decided 'what would be the point' -- we should hide them instead, and that is what we did. The Ladino, who was a medical doctor working in Tuxtla but whose family were kaxlanes [Ladinos] from San Cristóbal, was red in the face at what we were doing, the wire fences we had set around our property. He yelled at us with his pistola and warned us that there would be trouble if we did not leave his land!

This initial confrontation was, obviously, inter-ethnic given the opposing claims between the non-Indian Burguete family and the Chamula from La Candelaria. Burguete

286

wanted to defend his rightful property from an Indian incursion. He saw the land, after all, as his family's historical and inalienable possession, something his forebears had acquired several generations ago. Besides its sentimental value as a family possession, the land also represented a valuable resource in a time of increasing land scarcity for the region around San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Although I have no documented indication of Burguete's true intentions, it is my impression that he likely would have wanted to avoid a low-end compensation offer--such as what might typically come from a government expropriation settlement. One might speculate further that as a ladino, Burguete wanted to move toward crisis with the Chamula for reasons of self-interest. He likely calculated that the government would move more quickly and perhaps more generously to compensate him and his family if they had to respond to a life and death crisis "among Indians" rather than have to respond to a mere written petition (cf. Bobrow-Strain 2007). Whatever "rational choices" available at the time, Burguete resolved to arrange for his compensation one way or another, but in such fashion as to satisfy his desire for revenge by fomenting an intra-ethnic struggle amongst Chamula themselves. Whatever the collective desire of the Burguete family (and other ladino neighbors like them), it was a desire similar to the desire shared among the Chamula in may ways: this land signified much more than just a place to own, it represented an entire future for families and also an opportunity to realize the grand ideal of a common union.

According to mimetic theory, when two or more agents (individuals or groups) mimic one another's interactions in the way they vie for the same "object of desire" the intensity of their alikeness or sameness (identity) inevitably generates conflict. With each attempt to vanquish, out-do, or differentiate from the other, rivalry can become so intense that the actual object in contention can fade from view. Those competing increasingly fixate upon each other to the point of being almost indistinguishable. Unless such a

287

situation is otherwise mediated, redirected, or constrained, the power of acquisitive desire is likely to lead straight to strife.

In the case of the Chamula we are discussing, the ladino Burguete, quickly realized he could not win any legal contest because of the historical "Presidential Resolution." That being the case, he apparently began to look for ways that might cause dismay for the federal government's Agrarian Reform office but also consternation and even harm for the Chamula families already intruding upon his family's property.[8] Burguete decided he would foster an intra-ethnic dispute between the Chamula invaders and the Chamula neighboring community nearby the land in question. With this plan in mind he approached the *comuneros* of Corazón de María.[9] He then offered any interested person from Corazón de María an attractive price for his land. While no individual could afford such a price, Burguete figured the Chamula of Corazón de María would likely pool resources so as to collectively pay him what he was asking for the land. It was almost as if he knew that the Chamula families from Corazón de María were in need of more land for their growing families, so that when presented with this too-good-to-ignore offer they were immediately interested, even if it meant they might have to borrow money to make a common purchase of something they could jointly own.

Unfortunately, Burguete was not interested in any kind of union, common or particular. He had apparently made his offer not in good faith, far from generously seeking to facilitate land acquisition for poor Indian farmers. Their parents and grandparents had once worked as *mozos* (economic servitude) for many ladino landed families in previous times. On the contrary, Burguete's offer was designed to bring division not union, leading Chamula farmers from Corazón de Maria into a trap of contested desires, fomenting a dispute against their Chamula brothers and sisters eager to

establish the new ejido Ach' Corral Ch'en y Ángel. It would become a new neighboring community to the south of Corazón de María.

The people of Corazón de María had experience of acquiring the land they did have through purchase rather than petition to a government agency, an area of land about 243 hectares that today constitutes the community of Corazón de María (Figure 5). As documents tell the story, this community began with the purchase of a major Ranchería from a ladino family who no longer wished to work the land. When they began to deal with Burguete, the hopeful campesinos of Corazón de María acted on a significant precedent. They were imitating what their parents did before them after laboring upon the owners land for many years. To the Chamula of Corazón de María, the ladino Burguete was the obvious and true "owner" for how could it be otherwise? The government did not own or work this land.

But even if the Chamula of Corazón de María may have eventually learned about the details driving the petitioners from La Candelaria, their involvement with Burguete's direct, non-bureaucratic offer was too tempting to let go. Indeed, one might say from the perspective of mimetic theory that the group from Corazón de Maria was now caught in desiring the desire of their Chamula neighbors from La Candelaria. Here we can ask was it in fact the land, so proximate and potentially useful, or was it Chamula neighbors (and friends, some of whom were also realtives, or fellow Church members) who so earnestly wanted this land? Acquisitive desire seems in evidence from this narrative, indicated by the steps these Chamula took to actually acquire something they perceived as not just valuable but desireous. I was unable to learn the actual price offered by Burguete in 1991. I do know that it was enough to make the risk palatable to a significant group of interested Chamula, willing to struggle and suffer in order to obtain what had become a truly competitive "object of desire."

The Problem of Sameness: Too Much or Too Little?

From a mimetic perspective, it is interesting to note a factor of "sameness" that seems pervasive throughout the interactions described thus far. Both Chamula communities involved in seeking the Burguete predio or ranch lands were not only ethnically the same in terms of language and a shared cultural heritage related to San Juan Chamula, but they also shared features in common with regard to social class, limited education, and economic poverty as rural peasant farmers (campesinos). They also shared a common apprehension and historical distrust of ladinos. Moreover, at this time in 1991, both communities generally shared the same religious orientation as Catholics.[10] Evangelical Protestantism had not yet fully rooted itself in the eastern valley so most Chamula residents held common beliefs and practices as more or less traditionalist Catholics.

Despite several common identifications, it was apparently not enough to thwart the dynamics of intra-ethnic or inter-community conflict for the Chamula of Corazón de Maria and La Candelaria. In fact, these common features seem to have exacerbated a kind of social version of a sibling rivalry.[11] Although it is a ladino (Burguete) who introduces an "object of desire" such as land in such a way that it ends up seeding a fight among familiars rather than strangers, the conflict does not really escalate until the Chamula of one group perceive for themselves the value it seems to hold for the other rival group. Even if this group of campesinos had fully known beforehand that it was part of a previous expropriation related to the old ejido in San Juan Chamula (Las Ollas-La Candelaria) that particular configuration of land no longer existed. Since 1968 La Candelaria had effectively joined the city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, and was no longer part of San Juan Chamula.

Fallen Advocate: The Lawyer Ángel Fonseca

The bureaucratic paperwork was barely set in motion when the Chamula of La Candelaria began to delineate their future land parcels for each family that would constitute their ejido community of New Corral Ch'en y el Ángel. They had assistance in moving quickly on this new land opportunity because they were encouraged by Ángel Fonseca, an astute legal representative then working for SOCAMA (the Farmer-Teacher Solidarity Movement). In 1988, this organization (politically oriented to the left with a former Maoist approach to peasant organizing) had been co-opted by the ruling party in Mexico, the Partido Revolutionario Institucional, or PRI. The reoriented political purpose of SOCAMA in Chiapas was to pre-empt opposition to new state policies (designed by the new Salinas administration), thus distributing practical benefits of patron-client efforts to win hearts and minds in the rural sector, especially indigenous groups and communities. Since 1974, indigenous peoples in Chiapas and elsewhere had become politically active and aware of the their obstacles to a better future (Morquecho 1992).

In 1988, a group from barrio Corral Ch'en in La Candelaria had decided to join the new pro-Indian Farmer-Teacher Solidarity organization SOCAMA. This was a result of the inter-barrio fighting examined in Chapter 4. This organization represented one way to advance the interests and desires of a few families willing to organize. Its economic and social support stood in contrast to other Chamula who belonged to the status quo "model" organization that was the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* or CNC. Both organizations, interestingly enough, were PRI supported labor unions. Thus, the lawyer Fonseca was able to help the barrio group from La Candelaria broker their claim with government officials concerning the Presidential Resolution on a pending land donation. He arranged, for example, for documentation to properly inform the landowner Burguete of the prior expropriation from the Cárdenas Administration in the 1940s. Fonseca's

291

advisement convinced the founding families of New Corral Ch'en that everything would proceed quickly with the paperwork process.

The New Corral Ch'en group began to dig a well for water in the grove close to where they imagined a future schoolhouse would be located. It was while digging the well and cutting some trees that the group first encountered the angry Burguete, when he suddenly came upon them firing shots in the air to run them off his family's land.

The farmers of Corazón de Maria, however, who were also PRI, were surprised to find themselves summoned one day to the offices of the Agrarian Reform authorities in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Assuming they were not fully aware of Burguete's double-dealing (selling something that was not his to transfer), they went to find out what was the matter. They were surprised to learn that federal authorities clearly backed the historical claim of the Chamula from La Candelaria. These authorities echoed a stern warning that the petitioners from New Corral Ch'en had previously tried to convey: saying in effect to the fellow Chamulas of Corazón de María that "if you buy this land from the Burguete family then you will not only be throwing your money away you will also be purchasing huge problems!"

Apparently undaunted by this threat from their rivals, the farmers of Corazón de María felt they had no choice but to plan an invasion (in effect, to become the very thing they had accused their neighbors of doing). By pulling off an invasion and quickly establishing themselves like homesteaders on the land in question, they could at least at least stir up the political pot, enough to force a government mediated court settlement. It would be a risky move, but they decided to put their faith and confidence not in the government but in the wealthy ladino they already knew well, the "owner" of the land that once belonged to their Chamula ancestors. It was, after all, part of Chamula practice and habitus to distrust the Mexican government if only to then "get along" with the

292

powerful ladino class who had always made life easy or difficult for indigenous people. Everybody knew, as a matter of course, that the local ladinos were the ones who, by tradition if nothing else, always had true control of local lands; it was not really the federal or state government. Besides, thought those from Corazón de María, they were acting by means of a signed bill of sale documenting that it was Burguete himself selling them land.

However, it was not a question of "paperwork" or documents but more a matter of what Mexicans generally know as *palanca* or leverage, thus knowing with whom to deal as key players in the game or play of power relations. The families of Corazón de Maria already knew the Burguete family because for several generations Chamula friends and relatives had worked on their rancheria, just as they had on the estates of other ladinos in the area. In this way, Corazón de María farmers were at least hoping to trump any legal claim made by their Chamula competitors from La Candelaria who were trying to establish a new ejido. Besides, in these days before 1992, but even for decades previously many petitions to the government for new ejidos were denied or delayed indefinitely.

Machete Blows, Bullets, and Blood

It was in February of 1991 when word came to La Candelaria that some families from Corazón de María had suddenly invaded overnight, setting up make-shift houses of tin roofing and wood plank walls on the land solicited for the new ejido. Only about 15 or so families had invaded but these were enough to start putting up fences and cooking food on open fires, demonstrating their determination to stay on land rightfully theirs. To the Chamula from La Candelaria, this invasion upon their claim communicated not just a lack of respect or a failure to dialogue about problems (as is customary), it was clearly an open aggressive act, a provocation. From a Chamula perspective, even though the

293

invaders were neighbors and thus people they knew, the failure to show respect was offensive. To them it seemed intentionally unjust and criminal. As one informant recalled the feeling, "our hearts were hot, we were plenty angry."

Once the news of this invasion reached those directly affected, they quickly organized themselves into a group of some 20 defenders, armed with a few hunting rifles just in case they encountered bullets. In addition, each man brought their long machete – the everyday cutting tool of a farm worker. Before launching a confrontation, these men, including Tumín and his brother Sebastián, decided it would be wise to first send a messenger to San Cristóbal de Las Casas. He would inform the SOCAMA lawyer, Fonseca. It would be his job to file a protest with the Agrarian Reform office and thus document the fact that the Chamula of La Candelaria (the new Corral Chen ejido group) were acting in self-defense to protect their claim.

When the men from La Candelaria were ready with a plan of approach they headed for the disputed ranch land, arriving in two groups from two separate directions. Their original plan was peaceful enough, that being to arrest the two main leaders, Mateo and their community elder, Sebastián. Upon capturing them they would then take them back to the small two-cell jailhouse in La Candelaria. But this plan did not play out. Upon arriving, the confrontation began when men from Corazón de Maria started to fire shots. The men from La Candelaria had also brought rifles and reacted with return fire. Within minutes, everybody was close enough to fight each other with their machetes.

The battle did not last long, however, perhaps only 10 or fifteen minutes. There were gunshot wounds and quite a few cuts from severe slashes. In one exchange, a leader from Corazón de María had managed to strike a near lethal blow with his machete, cutting a major tendon in his opponent's right leg. As this man fell, one witness told me, he protected himself by wildly waving his machete to fend off any further blows. The

attacker, machete in hand, was about to make another strike when he, too, fell to the ground from a bullet in his buttock.

Once the gunshots and slashing stopped, both groups realized the damage they had inflicted upon each other. Each group proceeded to transport their wounded to the regional hospital in nearby San Cristóbal de Las Casas. No one died, but death had come close. According to my informants, both groups ended up in the same small hospital emergency. "It did not take long for us to again start speaking," one man told me; "some of us started to cry, for we were plenty scared, embarrassed, and confused by what had happened; some wanted to blame but most of us just wanted to ask forgiveness and go home. The shame was in the fact that we were neighbors." Another reported, "Perhaps we wouldn't have acted with guns and machetes if we'd first sought more knowledge, you know, more clarity about our different claims."

Emotions aside, legal action began almost immediately. Sebastián and his brother Tumín, both members of the new ejido group from Corral Ch'en, were present during the entire skirmish, but had no injuries. While Tumin took their people to the hospital, Sebastián remained at the site of conflict to watch over the land, just in case more men from Corazón de María would come and continue the fight. The women were beginning to leave by then, or go to the hospital. In a sense, this violent incident made the land in question something more valuable: it was more precious than ever because it was all nearly lost within minutes, because of a violent outburst with "neighbors" (*jchi'iltak* or the more familiar *kutz'kaltak*).

Sebastián and Ángel Go To Jail

Sebastián told me what happened to him and others after the skirmish. While the wounded were in the hospital, Sebastián stood guard over their hard won land area until the police arrived. Without really investigating anything they took him by force to the

295

city jail in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, at that time located at the ex-convent of the Church of La Merced. It remains unclear whether Burguete was linked to the authorities who accused Sebastián of fomenting conflict, leading land invasions, and more. They put him in the tower (Figure 5.8) and applied electric shock tortures, beating him intermittently until he would tell all he knew about the leader behind the land invasion and why he was causing so many problems.

Figure 5.8. Located at the ex-convent of La Merced church, San Cristóbal de Las Casas, this tower was part of the city jail until 1993. It was often used for political and torture-related interrogations.

To the conservative elites of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, the land trouble just described suggested subversion of the social order. The police found out that Sebastián was a Catholic catechist. As he reports the story, for many government authorities this implied a connection to the controversial Bishop Samuel who was then a public figure that local ladinos (nicknamed *coletos*) despised for his support of indigenous rights and concerns.[12] In addition, Sebastián's apparent links to SOCAMA also made him suspicious. Even though it was a PRI organization linking farmers and teachers, in this

region, SOCAMA was known for supporting pro-Indian concerns; something that the local Coletos often associated with theft of land and cattle. Indeed, for decades, organized land invasions were often sponsored by the ruling party, the PRI. This was one way local governments could pre-empt and sometimes co-opt anti-government organizing.[13]

Sebastián was released after two days, having told the police the name and residence of Ángel Fonseca. It turns out, by helping the campesinos of La Candelaria in the way that he did, Fonseca seems to have betrayed the leaders of the SOCAMA. The organization wanted him arrested on charges of misappropriation of funds, that is, stealing from the organization. He was taken to the state prison outside of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Although a capable lawyer, not even Fonseca could beat the system of impunity that put many innocent people behind prison bars. He served nearly five years in prison, apparently under false charges.[14]As a PRI organization, SOCAMA had received millions of pesos for the express purpose of purchasing land in favor of peasant groups, a carrot and stick strategy to support government initiatives under the auspices of SEDESOL development programs.

By the time Fonseca was arriving to his jail cell, his clients from La Candelaria (New Corral Ch'en group) were returning to their respective communities to continue healing their wounds, both physical and spiritual. Even though the lawyer-leader of their rivals was incarcerated, the Chamula of Corazón de Maria soon realized that the group from La Candelaria had a more robust legal claim on Burguete's land. The dubious bill of sale would not go very far in the courts. Though some reconciliation had taken place among those who fought, in the post-machete period there remained a considerable amount of resentment among some; especially over the fact that La Candelaria finally got what they were after, even though La Candelaria had far more land than any other

Chamula community in the region, except perhaps the ejido of Cuxtitali-El Pinar. This resentment would linger for years, like an ache in the heart that will never go away.

Analysis

Chamula as Acting Subjects: the Practice of Identity

The original Presidential donation was designed to garner support from the rural sectors for the interests of the Ruling Party in the 1930s and 1940s. As such, it was explicitly intended to support groups like the Chamula among whom government agents like Erasto Urbina would have to work. But if, in the eyes of the government, one Chamula was as good as another, then even decades later what would be the true difference if one group rather than another managed to first possess the area still in dispute? Moreover, what difference would it make if this land were to bog down for months or years in the serious games claims and counter-claims in a legal morass? If that were to happen, it is very likely that the government (Agrarian Reform) would have been forced to reach some sort of compromise settlement with one or the other group, perhaps as a way to reconcile the claims in favor of Government interests. For the land-hungry group from Corazón de María, even if they were to lose the Burguete land that they had already bought from him, their investment might still gain them land elsewhere if the government were to offer a solution to problem they had bought into unawares.

As mentioned earlier, tactics of land invasion and government negotiation is nothing new in Mexico (Vásquez Castillo 2004:640-66). In this particular case, the vehemence of land struggle was no doubt related to what, at this point in 1991, was becoming a new "habitus" or social disposition for indigenous campesinos. A new kind of practice that had began to manifest openly since events like the Indigenous Congress of 1974, or the struggle for political power and religious freedom in San Juan Chamula

298

municipio (Irribarren 1980), or what would become the new sense of political freedom with the EZLN updrising of the 1990s.

What the struggle reveals clearly is that Indians, generally, and the Chamula in particular, were hardly passive subjects but the contrary: they were true acting agents attempting to shape their own destiny. Gone were the days of being mere objects of historical curiosity, and gone, too, were the days when ethnographers or historians could use them as a canvass upon which anybody could paint a romantic past (a past that neither existed once upon a time nor in the present). Chamula now saw themselves not merely as self-aware subjects capable of their own "world making" but as active subjects, makers determined to form their own history and that of others around them. The Burguete land (but the Presidential donation of land, too), when thought of as an "object of desire," could take on life or death importance only when one of the Chamula groups actually tried to acquire it, or appropriate it, and thus physically identify with it.

Interpretation of the Machete Fight

From a Catholic Christian point of view the rivalry between the two Chamula groups was scandalous given how several of the participants in each group not only knew each other well but were also serving the Catholic Church as religion teachers (catechists) in their respective communities. The object of desire that came between these "hermanos" (brothers, or *kutz'kalaltak* in Tzotzil) was not land, precisely, but the fact that they knew that the members of the other group coveted this particular land–making them want it all the more. The competition for additional land between these two groups became so intense it reached the point of a brief, but dramatic exchange of machete blows, bullets, and blood. Again, mimetic theory would interpret this brief mêlée of Chamula upon Chamula as not due to an outside factor (e.g., that a *ladino* had induced an avaricious and competing desire for additional land); but rather because Chamula felt

299

compelled to copy their rivals (neighbors) in desiring the very thing they were petitioning the government to obtain. As Girard observes, "wherever differences are lacking, violence threatens" (1979:57).

According to mimetic theory, when the model's desire becomes the primary or sole focus of mutual interest, conflict, even violence, is likely to arise as the subject (admirer) impinges on the model (mediator of desire). This is sometimes avoidable, however, whenever there exists some mitigating circumstance or socio-cultural (structural) constraint that can redirect the rivalrous expressions of imitative desire. Not civil law alone, not custom or tradition, nor the threat of pain from machete cuts, were apparently enough to dissuade active discord, or provide enough disincentives to stop the struggle over this available land from beginning. Law and custom, and perhaps a certain Christian ethos among catechists may have thwarted its likely advance, however, and so prevent it from spreading as an unending feud of reciprocal revenge.

In my view, Burguete, as a ladino, would not have been so convincing a *pukuj* or devil character (the ladino-like chthonic figure who helps Indians get rich fast) had there not already been a pre-existing factor of rivalrous desire set in motion by imitation (copying). In other words, there may have been a basis for a growing envy, perhaps driven by historically induced feelings of insecurity. This is a plausible speculation given the fact that the land base for Corazón de María was many times smaller compared to that of La Candelaria. Indeed, as one of the leaders of the 1991 machete fracas related to me , "we could see even then that they had more than enough land for themselves, why did they need more!" The skirmish erupts for reasons related to familiarity. Afterwards, reconciliatory measures are explored by each group's leaders to restore something of a once shared but now wounded ideal of solidarity, the hope of a Chamula common union.

Mimetic Desire and Practice

Cordell and Wolff (2009:4) point out that 'ethnic conflict' is a term "loaded with often legitimate negative associations and entirely unnecessary confusions." They see confusion in thinking that such conflicts are actually about ethnicity. "Alternatively," they observe, "ethnicity may provide the mobilizational basis for collective action, with violence being used as a tactic. It often forms an important part of the explanation, but we do not know of any conflict that can be explained solely by reference to ethnicity." The term "conflict" describes a situation of incompatibility; where two or more subjects pursue individual perspectives that while felt to be entirely just, turn out to be incompatible. In their view (2009:5):

> An ethnic conflict is one particular form of this: that in which the goals of a least one party are defined in (exclusively) ethnic terms, and in which the primary fault line of confrontation is one of ethnic distinctions. Whatever the concrete issues may be over which conflict erupts, at least one of the parties will explain its dissatisfaction in ethnic terms. That is, at least one party to the conflict will claim that its distinct ethnic identity is the reason why its members cannot realize their interests, why they do not have the same rights, or why their claims are not satisfied. Thus, ethnic conflicts are a form of group conflict in which at least one of the parties involved interprets the conflict, its causes and potential remedies along an actually existing or perceived discriminating ethnic divide. In other words, the term ethnic conflict is itself a misnomer – it is not the conflict that is 'ethnic' but at least one of its participants. To put it differently, an ethnic conflict involves at least one party that is organized around the ethnic identity of its members.

While Cordell and Wolff seem to suggest that empirically ethnic driven conflicts are such that you would know one if you saw one, when it comes to "intra" ethnic conflict it would not be quite so easy to know the precise "driving mechanism." While there are certainly inter ethnic features to the land conflict just presented –Burguete the ladino vs. the Chamula--and while there are non-Indian actors involved (including government agrarian reform officials, and the SOCAMA lawyer Fonseca) in this particular case the conflictive dynamic for analysis (regarding cause, event, and post-

301

conflict effects) is the one that pertains to the Chamula themselves. Clearly, for them, the conflict at hand is not really about ethnicity per se (viz-a-viz ladinos). However, it is very much about identity, at least in the sense of asserting and perhaps redefining an us/them perception of each group's desire for a particular location of land.

Space does not allow an adequate or full analysis of this particular Chamula land struggle on other possible levels.[15] In any case, both inter- and intra-ethnic dimensions suggest at least two levels of analysis that can embrace the movement of many factors, both material and Psychosocial or cultural. However, in terms of social identity formation, it should be clear by now that ethnicity is not the fundamental issue, even though a felt sense of group identity is always a highly adaptive and malleable phenomenon (albeit slow in developing). It is not ethnicity, then, but desire that informs the ways both parties reach simultaneously for the same "object" (in this case, an old government promise to return land that once belonged to Chamula Indians).

Following Codell and Wolff (2009:15), we might say that Chamula ethnicity is an adaptive and malleable phenomenon, and thus "primarily a practical resource that individuals and groups deploy opportunistically to promote their more fundamental security and economic interests and that they may even discard when alternative affiliations promise a better return (cf. Esman 1994b:10-11)." Nevertheless, the question is not why this particular area of land is so significant for opportunistic promotion, but how these two groups (who are so similar) enter into dispute. They share similar elements of identity construction, so by what mode or manner do their passions lead them to the point of lethal risk?

In 1991, members of each group were still similar enough as to share resemblances in religious and cultural values, and had more or less the same socio-economic and educational levels of experience. They could even relate to each other from

302

the same history of inequity under centuries of ladino domination in the region. But in spite of resemblances (e.g., political similarities from loyalty to PRI bosses), I would interpret the vehemence of the conflict as having little to do with any extant differences; on the contrary, it had everything to do with the sameness or similarity of their desire.

Religious Sameness and Difference

Although everyone involved in the physical fight for possession of Burguete land were Chamula (sharing a social and cultural resemblance) there already existed a sense of us/them distinction from extant property lines that operated as a kind of distinctive habitus or practice by which communities in the area identified themselves. This may explain how, in the years after the fight, the Roman Catholic community diminished in Corazón de Maria; while the Evangelical and some non-Christian religious groups grew rapidly, almost as if to encourage differentiation based upon "disimilarities" rather than "similarities" of beliefs or politics. For a long time La Candelaria had only one dominant church, with a traditionalist emphasis; very recently, since about 2002, several non-Catholic groups have begun to celebrate their beliefs openly in the community. In contrast, it is curious that the ejido New Corral Ch'en has yet to establish even one church or chapel, despite the fact that is founders are almost all believing Catholic Christians. To date, they have only a simple meeting hall made of wood planks and tin roofing, a place that sometimes use as a chapel when celebrating a few major feast days each year. In Corazón de María, because of internal differences and despite such a small territory of some 600 acres, the community now hosts at least five competing religious church groups (Figures 5.8 to 5.12). There is a Roman Catholic Church group but also, at the center of the ejido, a Catholic Tradtionalist group who adhere to an active syncretistic expression of local beliefs and practices. There are also several Evangelical or Pentecostal style churches of which the largest of these is "the Church of the

303

Restoration." This particular ecclesial formation was encouraged by the Mexican military not long after the 1994 Zapatista uprising because indigenous communities surrounded the local military installation at Rancho Nuevo. One way to keep indigenous hamlets politically useful was to encourage religious divisions within them.

Figure 5.9. Corazón de María."Church of Christ in Restoration." Photo by author (2010).

Figure 5.10. Corzazon de María. "Casa de Dios" (Presbyterian). Photo by author (2010).

Figure 5.11. Corazón de Maria. "Costumbre" Catholic Church. Photo by author (2010).

Figure 5.12. Corazón de María. Roman Catholic Church. Photo by author.

Figure 5.13. Corazón de Maria. Pentecostal Church "House of Prayer". Photo by author.

A Complementary View on the Causes of Intra-ethnic Conflict

There are many possible explanations for intra-ethnic conflicts like the one narrated above (e.g., Cordell and Wolff 2009:25-78; Horowitz 1982, 2001). However, I argue that the case of conflicting claims of potential land ownership highlights two types of variables that often precipitate (catalyze) conflict between groups who know each other very well.

For indigenous situations in southern Mexico, some explanations of conflict employ a material emphasis. Campbell (1996), Dennis (1987), and Greenberg (1989), for example, develop material s in their respective studies from rural Oaxaca. Their explanations for inter-village conflicts (occurring during the 1970s and early 1980s) reduce the factors of contention to a hidden political agenda of "interests"–especially political interests on the part of the Mexican state. These authors refer to situations where presumably neutral government mediators are present not to resolve conflicts between indigenous groups or rural campesinos (who, despite their denials, actually have a great deal in common), but rather to manage the conflicts. It is to the advantage of the Mexican state to keep rural groups, especially indigenous ones, in play long enough to favor a hegemonic advantage for government officials who have "gate-keeping" roles as local political bosses (caciques). It is a power that sustains a widespread system of political clientalism, not to mention a major agenda of assimilation (Indigenismo).

My question is what, exactly, constitutes "interests" and what makes the indigenous actors in the land-fight narrative above so interested in what the state or other actors appear to model as valuable? What makes them so interested in the "interests" (desires) expressed by "Others"–that is, either their immediate rivals or more distant models of desire (such as pioneering grandparents migrating from San Juan Chamula)?

Following Campbell (1996), it would not be far from the truth to say the ramifications of the intra-ethnic conflict in 1991 seems to have opened a political advantage of influence for what was then the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI (before its surprising downfall in 2000). Still, insofar as the PRI agenda is able to image itself as a kind of "model" it is thus capable of indicating a possible path of interest for desiring subjects, followers, or clients (Knight and Pansters 2005). The image continually projected by the PRI as the ruling party in Chiapas and the nation was certainly one worth imitating. My assumption here is that positions of power (and its effects) represent a true kind of material object of desire.[16]

What is interesting about the land fight, however, is the fact that Chamula PRIistas were at odds with one another. The Burguete family might represent a status quo aspect of the PRI; the lawyer Fonseca of SOCAMA might represent a more militant agenda of the PRI; and the Chamula of Corazón de Maria a typical indigenous grouping of PRI supporters. The PRI that was ruling the local government at this time (which since the 1930s enjoyed its hegemonic longevity via patron-client style politics) had the complex task of looking out for its own interests (to justify a culture of impunity). Its task was finding new ways in which to co-opt or control indigenous groups growing not just in numbers but also in political awareness and organizational determination. This was important in the face of an inevitable transition from land reform as a redistribution ethos left over from the 1910 Revolution to the neo-liberal moral imperative of land capitalization and commodification.

Influencing Material and Psychosocial Factors

Consideration of material factors for the causes of conflict is important, but they are by no means the only key factors involved in the way conflicts development, especially violence. As Dennis argues the point (1987:4, my italics), "in peasant societies,

307

dense population and scarce land resources are underlying sources of conflict, but patterns of social organization determine the form conflicts takes." Mimesis has a great deal to do with the how patterns of social organization develop and how, in turn, they shape the ways a conflict will develop socially (interactively, interdividually) as meaningful action. Drawing on Lewis Coser (1956:104-105), Dennis asserts (1987:4) that "strong village identification as a source of conflict may often serve no other purpose than to define group boundaries." As us/them divisions linger and become historically entrenched, and as structures permit vague hatreds to periodically revive, it is understandable how centuries-old disputes tend to harden into permanent antagonisms (reinforced by emblematic expressions or forms of identification). For example, inter-ethnic (Mixtec vs. Zapotec) village conflict in Oaxaca is interesting because, as Dennis observes carefully (1987:11), while there are "good reasons for persistence of intervillage disputes . . . social mechanisms seem to operate [in this case], among them the moral nature of community itself." Perhaps on this point it would be helpful to recall that as "practice" mimetic desire is an interdividual action as well as a disposition, which seem to be related to what Dennis means by the phrase "the moral nature of community itslf."

On the level of internal or intra-ethnic tensions, however, there is also the explanation of Bateson's "symmetrical schizmogenesis" (the creation of a cleft among competitive equals; see Bateson 1935, 1958; cf. Harrison 2006:3-6). While for Bateson this was a profound and highly abstract description about some aspects of the Iatmul people and their social relations, it remained a rare notion that never quite developed in the face of much more popular causal explanations of ethnic related conflict and violence.

On this particular view from Bateson, Harrison (2006:153) refers to it as comprising part of two contrary traditions in Western social thought regarding the origins of order and conflict. The major, dominant tradition is the one in which social cohesion is

308

understood to rest upon commonalities among people. "Here," writes Harrison (2006:153), "conflict appears to arise out of dissimilarity. The other, subdominant tradition understands conflict as capable of arising, quite to the contrary, from too much likeness, and social order thus appears to require that social actors maintain a degree of mutual differentiation and distance." Both traditions, Harrison argues (2006:153), rely upon the same underlying presupposition: "they both originate in the modeling of the social actor—singular or collective—as an individual." But does society (as group, as barrio, hamlet, ejido, or community, etc.) really consist of "bounded individuals" who have succeeded in establishing mutual relations? Images of individuality, however construed, tend to give rise to deep and recurrent anxieties. Collective kinds of anxiety, according to Harrison (2006:154), is something that many nationalisms exhibit:

> Such anxiety is based upon the pervasive fear of the possibility of the loss of cultural identity and distinctiveness, of becoming increasingly similar to others in an increasingly globalized world. This claustrophobia, with is fearful imaginings of homogeneity and blending with the Other, is a product, ultimately, of a certain conception of the person, and did not exist, at least in this heightened and pronounced form, in the culturally open and extraverted societies of precolonial Melanesia. Because these societies explicitly acknowledged—indeed, went to some lengths to emphasise and valorize–the imitative foundations of their own cultural identities. Just as nationalism's tendency to deny and misrecognise its own mimetic nature is itself mimetic, so its fears of cultural standardization are, of course, themselves cultural stadardised fears.

It is possible that both Chamula groups ended up hurting one another because of a tendency to deny or misrecognize (not see or acknowledge) their own cultural identities (the actual extent of sameness, resemblance, or alikeness). They may have shared anxieties that arise, as Harrison suggests (2006:154), about how to be diverse. So intense is this in terms of feelings (e.g., belonging to a common local culture), they can only express ambivalence toward actually acknowledging their cultural commonalities. Each group defines its own distinctiveness by foregrounding the ways in which its heritage and history are unique in their specific contents. Its blind spot is the community form itself,

which to most members tends to appear natural, ahistorical, constructed by no human agency (something given to the Chamula long ago by the mythic god, "Our holy father San Juan, ch'ul jtotik Xun). And as such, it was original, that is to say nowhere invented, or copied from anyone (cf. Harrison 2006:254). The denial that Chamula may express about the mimetic character of their commonality, their relative homogeneity, is a constant active process of boundary formation (identity development or redefinition, differentiation).

The attempt to model collective identity–as though an idealization of the person, and thus as an autonomous actor–causes groups to seek symbols of their bounded, unitary, self-sufficient, discrete, "Self." The core problem presents itself when Chamula attempt to mask or deny the inherently mimetic character of a collective cultural identity or the inescapable embeddedness of culture in human relations of inter-dependence and reciprocity (what Girard likes to describe as "interdividuality"). The irony, following Harrison (2006:154), is that for much of contemporary nationalism and ethnicism (in Melanesia as much as places like Chiapas) these concerted efforts too often "show themselves most clearly to be ideologies of difference: ways of imagining ourselves dissimilar to one another which, in truth, have made us grow ever more alike (Harrison 2006:154). Mimetic theory seems to explain further the endogenous dynamics of human interaction, albeit in ways that infer more than define in any scientific apodictic way. Thus, although they do not rely upon exact quantification, this kind of qualitative explanation draws attention to the salience of what subjects report about their personal experiences of wounds and wounding.

Again, what is most interesting in the conflict described in this chapter is why it did not escalate further. Perhaps sharing the same hospital ward, bleeding the same blood from similar wounds, the entire experience had an eye-opening affect that exposed or

310

revealed the trap of a mimetic crisis. I would even speculate further that while these wounds brought a sobering, up-close view of the dangers of imitative desire, it only diminished that desire. Recognition rather than misrecognition of their precarious interaction may have kindled anew a sense of the "common unity" ideal that many Chamula hamlets seem to organize around. The near-fatal experience may have reawakened a more propitious imitation of desire; a transcendent form of desire rooted in religious, spiritual or other ethical values that have long been a part of Chamula practice (Gossen 2002; Rus 2002). Chamula spiritual mimesis may explain why the candidate for municipal president (Chapter 4) wanted so badly to co-opt the political will of various barrios in La Candelaria using images of Saints as a sign of solidarity and favor.

If we consider the negative aspect of imitative desire (acquisitive mimesis, appropriative mimesis) and how it seems to function as a prime mover or independent variable in the production of conflicts, then we can try to note its effects upon dependent variables -- those material and/or psychosocial elements involved in the constitution and outcome of any conflict. While the focus of the narrative above is upon intra-ethnic relations, this is not to ignore important factors such as the inducement to strife that comes from "outside" actors, whether that be Burguete or his nemesis, the ladino lawyer Fonseca and or SOCAMA. Both actors seem to have added fuel to the fire of desire among the Chamula acting subjects. Other actors would include the government officials from agricultural reform, or other ladino families who might wish to hold on to quality land, an object considered valuable as far back as the Conquest, if not in fact before.

The dynamic I wish to call more attention to, however, is not these inter-ethnic dimensions that certainly exist (different ethnic groups, social classes, different languages and discourses, etc.), but precisely the intra-ethnic aspects that are more difficult to see and more challenging to comprehend. Many scholars seem to consider intra-ethnic

311

relations as less relevant and so give more deliberation to the material and psychosocial

influences that combine to create the bad weather of inter-ethnic strife. Dennis (1987:21),

for example, disagreed with a perspective of Selby (1974) who attributed inter-village

conflict in Oaxaca as due to basic ethnic differences (i.e., conscpicuous cultural

differences between the traditionalist Zapotec of Malzatepec village versus the more

progressive, ex-Zapotec or ladinoized Zapotec of Zuatla village). Dennis, in contrast, saw

this feud as a chronic problem that had less to do with ethnicity and was more about

being rooted in village identification and organization (where a village and its people

form a basic social unit).

Following Dennis (1987), I see a similar situation among many Maya Tzotzil

communities in highland Chiapas, whether between the Tzotzil of Zinacantan and the

Tzotzil of Chamula, or among Chamula villages themselves, whether inside our outside

of San Juan Chamula municipio. In the case study about land above (but like the conflicts

in chapter four as well), the basic social unit for the Chamula is not municipal or even

regional. Group identifications are actually strongest at the village and barrio level where

kinship reinforces a complex sense of belonging as well as social security, all of which is

tied to a migratory history of land acquisition and habitation.

Earlier in the dissertation I gave consideration to how intra-ethnic relations are

inextricably linked to identity formation at the most local level (where interdividual

exchange within a community or barrio generates motivations that inform practice). It is

at the local level that mimetic theory can help the reader understand the contagious and

conflictive nature of imitative desire and how it promotes identity perceptions about

sameness and difference.

Theorizing the Chamula Land Conflict

On the level of theory, it would be great to predict when, where, and how mimetic desire would likely precipitate conflict. Still, looking backwards it is phenomenal (not to say "uncanny") how conflict seems to develop when familiar individuals or groups sharing significant resemblance like the Chamula farm communities under discussion, contend for the same objective and/or position of superiority within the same field of action/interaction. Obviously, when people play at "serious games" (as Ortner 2006 as suggested), they play to win. Chamula seem to know from experience that playing "serious games" has consequences, risky ramifications that can be deadly or destructive. The "Festival of games" may be fun and games for tourists to see, but behind this mimetic performance of war, battle, conflict, and historical parody, there are profound warnings about imitation, that is to say, what happens when we reproduce the desires of others. The monkey men (*mashetik*) who are key "players" in the Festival of Games (as well as other occasions of cultural importance) are there to provide an entertaining reminder of what happens to humanity when desires go askew.

While difficult to predict when and where the dynamic of imitative desire (not just imitation or mimicry) might emerge from interdividual relations, it may be enough to simply anticipate its likelihood by taking measures to minimize it, hold it in check, or reduce its potency. Envy, jealousy, and covetousness or greed are perhaps the most pernicious aspects of "desires gone askew"–and may bring about a sort of "temporary blindness" that arises in the heat of passion. The little machete war of ten minutes in 1991 seems to have exposed such a passionate blindness to the light of day. Social structures and rituals, cultural norms and customs, all seem to come about after rather than before such incidents, as if to mark in public an unforgettable message of "lets agree not to get to that point again" or "lets do our best to avoid that extreme."

313

That said I do not have any data on what "agreements" or customs may have emerged because of the conflict. I might note, however, a suspicion. To me it is curious that the community of Nuevo Corral Ch'en was finally able to establish its ejido-style community in peace but not without first voting among its members to affirm the ways of their elders. This meant that at certain times during the year they would come together for traditional style celebrations. I would venture to speculate that part of the reason for the absence of any obvious "organized religion" in the new ejido and the apparent preference for the more ambiguous ancestral ways is related to a fear of imitative passion. They were afraid of the competitive spirit that arises from new religious practices. Instead of identifying with just one religious preference like that of their elders (in the place they had come from, La Candelaria) they decided, perhaps passively, not to have any. Thus, nothing of religion was organized except a few annual traditional expressions–despite the fact that the majority of members were practicing "Word of God" Catholics. Perhaps this is because organized religions in all their variety are not unlike political parties. They are not always helpful for realizing the ideal of a common union or care for the commons. Nuevo Corral Chen y el Ángel wanted be distinct from "old" Corral Ch'en.

I suggest that something along these lines may be the case (pending further investigation) because just the opposite happened to the community that lost their bid for claiming the Burguete land. In the days, months and years after the 1991 skirmish, many Chamula from Corazón de María apparently did not want to be like other Chamula anymore, even less like their ancestors. They began to divide and subdivide among themselves into many distinctive (and competing) Evangelical groups, dividing severely their small community in such a way as to reduce the possibility of any ideal "common union" among its members. After the Zapatista rebellion broke open many hidden issues in the social reality of Chiapas, Corazón de Maria was not the only Chamula community

314

of "small individual property owners" to experience strife; other neighboring communities (La Sierra, Escalón, Ciprés) faced similar "passions."

Practice theory helps fill in some of the mystery of the mimetic perspective, and would see the exchange more in terms of an emerging dynamic of agency, where inter-subjective communications take place within fluctuating structural situations. Both theoretical perspectives seem to agree that the dynamic of familiarity or alikeness multiplies (intensifies) interaction at the level of group association (or put negatively, disassociation). Through imitating the desires of those who mediate the desirable (as models), the Chamula fight over a particular location of land "promised to Chamulas" long ago resulted in groups converging and coalescing around a common objective of "worldmaking" (mimesis): to differentiate themselves from the 'others' who were not like themselves by denying any semblance or sameness. The illusion of this passionate effort seemed to dissipate rapidly, however, once various members from both groups began to spill the same red blood that made little difference to the ground it fell upon.

Logically, were all conditions equal, it is likely these interactions around a competing interest could have reached a "tip" point where those involved are so emotionally charged, volatile, and violent that the battle would not have stopped: an all against all scenario, perhaps with reinforcements from their respective communities. As discussed in Chapter 2, the sociological notion of habitus (cf. Bourdieu 1977, 1990)[17] refers to an internalized and constantly reinforced sense of the world within which behaviors take place. The habitus of one's situation, the "objective conditions of life," reflect a reality produced from interacting with one's self, group, or others . . . (practices) that make a particular circumstance of social life seem normal, natural, and perhaps unchanging. In other words, as practice theory might see a crisis of mimetic desire (born of fraught perceptions of resemblance as well as resulting in an undifferentiated moment

315

of blow-for-blow alikeness), practices either affirm or radically reconfigure for the Chamula involved a meaningful sense of an us/them boundary. These practices (shaped by agency and structures) derive from at least two sets of factors influenced by mimetic desire: (1) Material factors involved in this crisis included those things associated with power, privilege, or status, such as land representing a major object of desire. (2) Psychosocial factors included the conditions associated with structuring the communicative aspects of interaction or exchange, such as the social and cultural conditions of poverty, prejudice, and precedent (tradition). Both material and psychosocial variables involved in a crisis of imitative desire gone awry seem to originate from and at the same time reconfigure the particular habitus shared by the Chamula involved. As I interpret the event, this is because, as Jenkins notes (2002:75), the "habitus" only exists "in, through, and because of the practices of actors and their interaction with each other and with the rest of their environment: ways of talking, ways of moving, ways of making things, or whatever."

More consequential for understanding Chamula practice or habitus in this situation is what 'things' signified within the cultural circumstances (spheres) of the time; the social meanings objects acquire through the desire of desire (and thus the interdividual formation of a new habitus among the actors involved). Passionate interactions between Chamula actors precipitated a certain way of relating to any given object/objective; something that emerged once one group became away of what 'other' Chamula (as model and as obstacle) seem determined to seek, acquire, appropriate no matter the risk.

Concluding Remarks

When I examine multiple factors in the particular conflict between Corazon de María and the new ejido community, Nuevo Corral Ch'en y el Ángel, and as I evaluate

316

the situation from the perspective of both mimetic and practice theory, the data I have collected suggests that practice motivated by mimetic desire operates as a highly influential independent variable. Imitative desire as practice moves (motivates) the different ways Chamula use available material and psychosocial resources. The notion of imitative desire thus helps explain, or at least complement, other kinds of theory about causes of conflict. Imitation and desire, when viewed conjointly in terms of practice (as agency and also habitus) helps to explain why acting subjects move and choose, act and react, in the ways they do.

In the case of Chamula desiring the same object of land it is not simply scarcity that causes them to engage one another aggressively or to put their very lives at risk (though land remains a vital need). There is, rather, a deeper causal factor in the way they see one another's pursuit and the way this particular area of land is historically constituted by inter-subjective or interdividual desiring. Interpreting the conflict this way draws attention to the priority of sequence: economic selfishness due to imitative desire (acquisitive or appropriative desire), emerges prior to 'things' such as land, water, power, or social prestige, or any other "object." Desire, i.e., imitative desire, precedes the object.

The Chamula conflict over land also raises the issue of identity formation; an issue that is not easily reducible to ethnic claims, as some scholars argue today.[18] There are, of course, other ways besides conflict for dealing with social identity challenges of similarity and dissimilarity, or problems associated with a lack of land or any other material necessity. In terms of human evolution, in order to survive successfully, it would seem that humans tend to want to cooperate with each other more than fight one another (Abbink 2001; Fry 2005). We are not "naturally" aggressive, but certainly capable of aggression when necessary–depending upon what motivates it. Nor are we innately

"violent" beings (or mere animals)–violence is always something learned (Girard 1977, 1978; Harrison 2002:213).

As for identity formations among the Chamula, like anybody else they are clearly capable of adapting to multiple environments and shifting circumstances. Conflict can define a sense of ethnic identity but it is equally true that certain identity claims can produce (or reproduce) conflict, even violent action. Cooperating for survival or banding together for aggression may explain, at least to some degree, the deeper causes of decades of "bossism" that has affected thousands of Chamula in highland Chiapas. And cooperation may explain, too, the creative forms of wisdom and religious practice (syncretism or other expressions), not to mention the imaginative and often elegant "telling of tales" for whichy many Chamula are now known the world over (Gossen 1999; 2002; Rus 2002).

But given how human beings tend to interpret their lives (their identity) through the eyes of 'others' then it matters little whether the Chamula identity is something simple or complex; however formed, inter-subjective interactions (interdividuality) will only burn with the motivating (and sometime volatile) fire of imitative desire.[19] Desires, including the desire to do violence, is something human beings have to learn, and in ways that implicate "objects" and "objectives" that go far beyond mere wants and needs (Belk et al; Heuer 2004).

What happened, and the way things happened in the case presented, are pieces of a much larger complex puzzle about understanding intra-ethnic types of conflict. Even though the actual violent exchange was brief, the more important story in my view is the process, that is the intersubjective (and imitative) production of desire among the actors. How did this come to generate a collective wish to render harm? When fitted together with the incidents described in the previous chapter, along with what the reader will

318

examine in the next, it may be possible to resolve an important part of the puzzle. Because desire is mimetic, conflicts arise because of the "objects of desire" actors pursue. And while opposing or contentious claims may generate a differentiated position for groups or individuals in the beginning, the practices of competitive rivalry make opponents to look one another. In the same way, conflict itself reconfigures experiences through a triangle of mimetic relations: object, model/mediator, and subject.

Admittedly, much that I have argued about the particular conflict over land can only be inferred. There is the obvious fact that, despite ethnographic techniques, the actual process of interactions that give rise to conflict and identity relations is not something one could ever easily observe and document, let alone accurately inscribe as narrative from retrospective references based on interviews. The given "normality" of any agency, practice, or "habitus," and the various roles, events, and conditions that are created from a myriad of exchanges that constitute (and are constituted by) the dynamics of human desire, make it hard to interpret exactly "just what happened" in any precise or definitive way.

Mimesis is perhaps one concept broad enough to be useful for encompassing what inter-subjective "worldmaking" is all about and thus what imitation and desire mean together as a form of practice. The most important dynamic to notice about the land conflict is not that Chamula, like all other human beings, have desire(s); no, but that they engage in an imitation of another's desire, an acquisitive desire. This imitative desire, this practice of copying somebody else's interests, constitutes the fundamental interplay of acting subjects in the land fight. Imitative desire is the starting point, not the end point of the violence. The Chamula involved in this particular struggle for land knew each others' families as neighbors, and were recognizable as part of "the Chamula community" at large. Fundamentally, they had grown up together, met each other in common meetings,

319

observed each other working in the fields, bought and sold from one another, crossed

paths in the local markets, festivals, same rural schools, and much more.

Yet, interestingly enough, when it came to a meaningful opportunity (to acquire

land), each group seemed to deny familiarity, expressing distrust of whatever might

reflect their common Chamula identity, among other possible shared identifications such

as being a Catholic, a farmer, a Mexican, a member of the PRI. From the perspective of

mimetic theory, this denied resemblance makes familiars into "others"--unwanted

"invaders" and thus even enemies. The denial of sameness (identity) in this case

intensified to the point of killing or being killed.

The land conflict above, like the one over water that follows, magnifies many of

these hard to see, but related, factors in the production of conflict, culture, and identity

1 INEGI: II Conteo de Poblacion y Vivienda 2005.

2 The *ejido* of San Juan Chamula is not the same exact territorial entity as the municipality of San Juan Chamula, even though both are located within the eastern region.

3 Jan Rus, personal communication (Nov 19, 2012)

4 See Bobrow-Strain 2007; Collier 1998; Collier and Quaratiello 2005; Robledo Hernández 1997; Rus 1995; Rus et al 2003.

5 It was about 1990 when this new possibility of land came into view. It was significant to younger family men who had no land of their own in what was already the crowded community of La Candelaria. The government promise of land was discovered by accident when civil authorities were checking historical documents while re-measururing boundaries between the neighboring *ejido* San Antonio de Las Rosas and the *ejido* La Candelaria.

6 SOCAMA was founded in 1988, by Julián Nazar Morales from Chiapas, Mexico. This Teacher – Peasant Solidarity group was formed under the direction of the new Salinas Gotari administration to push the development of Indigenous communities in conjunction with PRI programs for the rural sector.

7 It was not always easy or affordable to acquire private lands; but if Chamula bought into land belonging to another *ejido*, they would also have to commit to being "members" – that is, take their turn to do community service in the "cargo system" of shared responsibility and communal leadership.

8 In 1994, the state of Chiapas and the entire nation of Mexico suddenly began to notice indigenous concerns like never before. The land invasions erupted suddenly after the EZLN uprising took place on a scale unprecedented since the last major uprising of 1712 (see Gosner 1992). After 1994, the Mexican government seemed to adopt strategies like that of Burguete: pitting Indian communities against one another, hoping for their mutual destruction or neutralization. The government tried to "mediate" problems that it had helped generate in the first place. Ever since the Mexican Revolution, government officials have favored non-Indians and their land holdings by constraining peasants – even in their legitimate demands for social justice. It was thus the prerogative of the state at local and federal levels to avoid any lasting solution for Indigenous affairs, but instead only simulate or appear to be doing so, by playing the role of grand mediator (Harvey 1999; Nash 2001; Stephens 2002). Even before the Zapatista rebellion, however, the government often advanced conflicts in various areas of the nation. Dennis (1987) observes such a hegemonic process in Zapotec inter-village conflicts in Oaxaca that took place during the 1970s, though feuding seems to characterize the nature of inter village conflict in this area for centuries.

9 According to the Glossary published by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI), "Comunero" is a way to define particular agrarian land ownership with access rights to common use lands: http://mapserver.inegi.org.mx/geografia/espanol/cartcat/glosario1.cfm

10 *Catholic* in the sense of customary practices more than doctrinal coherence, i.e. a community used to traditional ceremony and rituals, but with some of its members learning what was then still a very new emphasis on the bible from modern Roman Catholic institutional reforms of Vatican II in the local diocese. Characteristic Catholicism for this and other regions of the central highlands

of Chiapas was still very much shaped by syncretistic beliefs and practices (for more on syncretistic religious belief and practice among the modern Maya, see Aguilar Penagos 1990; Chojnacki 2010; Earle 1990; Early 2006; Morfeld 2000; Tavanti 2003; Watanabe 1990).

11 On the issue of how conflict often arises out of sibling rivalry, or the seeming threat poised by the semblance found in brothers, doubles, and twins, etc, see Girard 1979: 56-63.

12 For a basic introduction to the many controversies surrounding Bishop Samuel Rúiz Garica, known and respect as as *jtotik* among the Tzotzil, see Fazio 1994; MacEóin 1996; Rolland 1996.

13 On this kind of PRI organizing see Vázquez Castillo 2004; and also Ramos 1998, 2001: 198.

14 The families of La Candelaria eventually decided to name their new *ejido* "Nuevo Corral Ch'en *y el Ángel*. "Angel" is in honor of Angel Fonseca who had helped them for years in their bureaucratic and legal struggles. In one of their letters to state authorities, Tumín and other leaders from the new community added a personal petition, specifically asking for Fonseca's release from jail. For whatever else he might have been accused of, or guilty for, Fonseca had at least advised correctly in this case. Finally, after five years in a state prison, state authorities released Fonseca. Unfortunately, he would die a few years later because of severe health issues. For the people of La Candelaria and Nuevo Corral Ch'en y Angel, *Angel Fonseca* was a memorable advocate whose name is now symbolically enshrined.

15 There are other levels such as the challenges of *campesinos* in Mexico and Latin America (peasants, farm workers, and laborers). There are less broad levels of state or national actors and structures (end of agrarian reform), and the socio-cultural level of southern Mexico (the meaning of large Indian populations, etc). There are actions particular to local communities or sub-state levels (Coletos, Ladinos, Tzotzil), not to mention global influences which by the late 1990s were just beginning to impact the central highlands of Chiapas.

16 Phillip Denis (1987:2) observes that inter-village conflicts in Oaxaca "involves hatred, violence, and a burden of debt, and it prevents opponents from working together for the common good." In so far as inter-village strife takes place within a larger state system it serves, Dennis argues, (2) as a "mechanism through which central governments have both exploited and maintained control over their peasant constituents."

17 Jenkins (2002: 74) clarifies this term from Bourdieu as a bridge concept, closing the gap between individual decision making on the one hand and human action as determined by supra-individual 'structures' on the other; it is, for Bourdieu, "an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted" [cited in Jenkins 2002, 74]. Jenkins (75) notes the non-idealist sense of embodied categories or classifying schemes, but notes a more innovative sense that Bourdieu implies: *the habitus only exists in, through, and because of the practices of actors and their interaction with each other and with the rest of their environment: ways of talking, ways of moving, ways of making things, or whatever.* Ortner (2006: 7887) refines this sociological term from Bourdieu's theory of practice.

18 See, for example, Hans Siebers' essay "Thinking together what falls apart: some reflections on the concept of identity," and that of Borsboom and Hulsker, "'We are one but still different: communality and diversity in aboriginal Australia" in Driessen and Otto (2000).

19 On the social dimensions of desire in modern times, see Belk *et al*, 2003; see also the Girardian perspectives put forth by Palaver and Steinmair-Posel's work on *Passions in Economy, Politics, and the Media*, 2005.

A theory of practice is a theory of history.
It is a theory of how social beings, with their diverse motives and their diverse intentions,
make and transform the world in which they live. It is a theory for answering the
simplest-seeming, and yet largest, questions that social science seeks to answer.
Why does a given society have a particular form at a particular moment - that form and
not some other? And how do people whose very selves are part of that social form
nonetheless transform themselves and their society?
A theory of practice...is a theory of conversion, or translation, between internal dynamics
and external forces...one dimension of the theory concerns the ways in which a given
social order
mediates the impact of external events
by shaping ways in which actors experience and respond to those events.

Sherry B. Ortner
High Religion (1989:192,200)

Chapter 6

WATER FIGHT: MIMETIC DESIRE AS A CASCADING CRISIS

This Chapter interprets the meaning of a particular year-long instance of intra-

ethnic conflict among the Maya Tzotzil Chamula, interpreted within the framework of the

critical perspective offered by Girard's mimetic theory as well as an amplified notion of

practice or "agency" (*habitus*) developed by Ortner (2006). While the conflict involves

more than just a simple fight among the Chamula over access to a natural water spring

(and all that it represents), the focus of my analysis is primarily upon the reciprocal

interactions that develop among community members, whether kin related or not. The

fight is among those who are in many ways alike, and yet seem to suffer an intense

antipathy as neighbors. Barth (1998 [1969]: 27) once observed about ethnic groups

generally that even where stratified social situations exist when it comes to ethnicity

"stratification is based simply on the notion of scales and the recognition of an ego-

centered level of 'people who are just like us' versus those more select and those more

vulgar. In such systems, cultural differences, whatever they are, grade into each other,

and nothing like social organization of ethnic groups emerges." Strata with respect to

positions of privilege or the lack of them do not remove a sense of identity to

peoplehood; and as hierarchically organized as the Chamula are, internal struggles will

likely depend more upon how they accept or deny (misrecognize) those "who are just like

us" than economic or other stratifying criteria.

Barrio Fight: *Taza de Agua* versus *El Pinar*

The nearly one year long contest over access to a particular small natural spring

began in the northern highland region of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, near the municipal

boundary with San Juan Chamula (Figure 6.1). The small community where the natural

wellspring and holding tanks are located is known as *Taza de Agua*. Per various

agreements made over the years, water from the spring flows downhill to several distinct

communities, all of which self-identity as ethnically Chamula. Each community is

located well within the city limits of San Cristóbal de Las Casas (Figure 5.1 from the
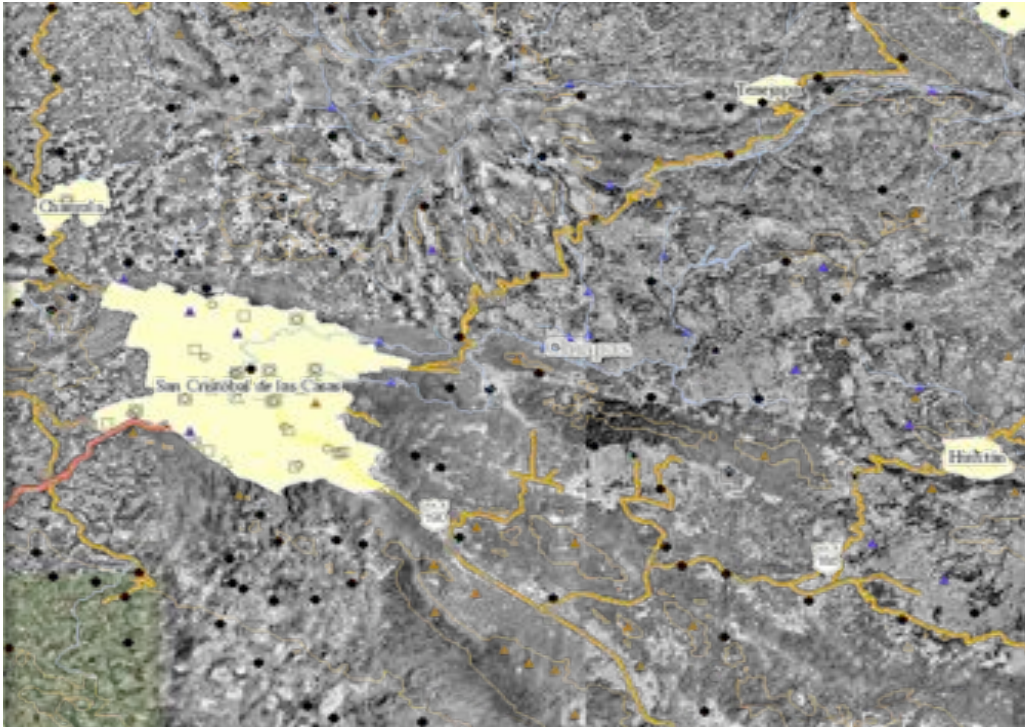
previous chapter).

Figure 6.1. Highland locations of major townships, hamlets and villages near the major
city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. Source: INEGI 2005.

The neighboring community of Taza, named El Pinar, decided to organize its members to appropriate the natural spring, even though this water source was obviously not within their barrio. Both barrios legally pertain to the larger rural *ejido* named Cuxtitali-El Pinar which incorporates some 11 barrios, where most though not all inhabitants are Chamula. The Chamula from El Pinar barrio desired this water source for their exclusive use. As the reader will see, the water conflict intensifies when the aggressors successfully "capture" the fenced-in water source and antagonistically modify the outflow of the distribution tank, effectively cutting off access by other communities that were dependent upon its continuous supply. The everyday use of this water by several communities had been governed by two decades of customary agreements with members of the community of Taza de Agua.

The Site of Agonistic Contention

The natural spring in question is located in a rural area within the municipality of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Its access point is an area of land located on the particular parcel of Juan López where he and his small family live within a small hamlet of some 68 residents named *Taza de Agua I* (Table 6.1). Taza I is an extension of the slightly larger *Taza de Agua* with some 168 residents. Both belong to the extensive rural *ejido* known as *Cuxtitali-El Pinar*. The entire *ejido* is composed of some 8 barrios or hamlets (for the sake of clarity, I will only refer now to "Taza de Agua," or more simply Taza. The spring in question feeds both communities with a combined population of about 230 people in 2010). The *ejido* Cuxtitali-El Pinar to which Taza belongs, is about the same age and origin as the ejido La Candelaria, located more to the east and closer to the indigenous town of Huixtan. Although most of Cuxtitali-El Pinar is part of the rural zone in the northern hills of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, it also has a few urban barrios. A key center for the rural part of Cuxtital-El Pinar is the hamlet named El Pinar, a community of about

325

931 Tzotzil speaking residents.[1] In most of the east valley communities in the hills

surrounding San Cristóbal de Las Casas, inhabitants will self-identify themselves

ethnically as Tzotzil Chamula. Even though not members of the Cuxtitali-El Pinar ejido,

those east valley communities that have had access to the Taza water source have grown

accustomed to its blessing for several decades. What began as a small quarrel between

the neighboring barrios of Taza and El Pinar in the summer of 2009 soon began spilling

over and affecting five specific Chamula communities located many kilometers away

below Taza but in the upper eastern valley of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Table 6.1 is a

listing of all the communities involved in the water conflict and listed according to

population data from the 2010 census. The "at risk" indication is a poverty index of very

high, high, medium, or low.

Interestingly, unlike the majority of Chamula in nearby San Juan Chamula, the

east valley communities of San Cristóbal de Las Casas have a mixed religious population.

Many hamlets are predominantly Evangelical but a large number are Traditionalist

oriented Catholics who follow a syncretistic variety of beliefs and practices loosely based

on older Catholic ritual forms. One major difference between the two barrios at the heart

of the conflict is that Taza is primarily Catholic (i.e., Traditionalist style and syncretistic)

and El Pinar is primarily Protestant (Evangelical and Pentecostal). The Chamula of Taza

de Agua and El Pinar migrated from the township of San Juan Chamula to live in the hills

or in the lower valley around San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

The communities listed in Table 6.1 have all received their apportioned ration of

water according to pre-established agreements with Juan López and the people of Taza de

Agua. The fresh spring water flows normally without a pumping system and arrives over

great distance by means of an extensive gravity-pull pipeline system. The receiving

communities are responsible for the pipeline through their respective "patronatos" or

326

water committees who help maintain pre-established permissions with other Chamula communities over whose territory a pipeline may cross. Although these other communities do not need access to the water, they nevertheless demand respect if its use involves their territory. These are oral accords made in a customary ritual fashion of gift exchange with pertinent authorities and other witnesses. The *patronatos* are responsible for the ritual renewal and affirmation of these agreements each year, especially at the site of the water source itself. A special ceremony takes place, for example, every year in May, the feast of the Holy Cross (*k'in Kurus*) marks the beginning of the rainy season.

City	SITE NUMBER	Location	Population 2010	At Risk Status 2010	Area
SCLC	070780006	Corazón de María	714	High	Rural
SCLC	070780110	El Ciprés	112	High	Rural
SCLC	070780009	El Escalón	615	High	Rural
SCLC	070780050	El Pinar	931	Very high	Rural
SCLC	070780062	La Candelaria	1,955	Very high	Rural
SCLC	070780036	La Sierra	615	High	Rural
SCLC	070780192	Nuevo Corral Che'n el Ángel	225	Very high	Rural
SCLC	070780001	SCLC	158,027	Medium	Urban
SCLC	070780048	Taza de Agua	168	Very high	Rural
SCLC	070780178	Taza de Agua Uno	62	Very high	Rural

Table 6.1. Community populations for the dissertation study. INEGI/SEDESOL 2010[2]

Fraught Resemblances

The disputed water comes from an underground source deep within the extinct

volcano of *Tzontevuitz*. This is a sacred mountain and a major cultural reference point for

all Chamula. Legend has it that this is where the greater aspect of the sacred being "Our

holy Father San Juan" lives, that is, Saint John the Baptist. Traditionally he dwells in a

cave at the summit of the mountain as a perpetual presence who, god-like, never seems to

die. As "the Baptist" he looks like an ordinary Chamula, reflecting the typical

iconography of the cousin of Jesus from Nazareth who "in the wilderness" wore nothing

more than sheep hair clothing (much as many Chamula have dressed in the past and some

still today). San Juan the Baptist has a minor or "junior" aspect (a "look alike" brother),

who lives further away from the chthonic world of the mountain cave, enjoying instead a

significant focal point above the altar inside the old colonial church of San Juan (at the

civic center of the San Juan Chamula township).

Besides the patron saint John the Baptist (*San Juan Bautista*), there are other

images or statuary figures of Saints and Virgins that occupy spaces inside the Church of

San Juan Chamula. Saints have places of honor either because they are viewed as *holy*

(i.e., in the sense the latin *sanctus* meaning special and set apart for/by God), or simply

because they are other worldly beings who have power to aid anyone who seeks their

favor. In biblical terms, and traditionally, God sanctifies or "makes holy" and thus

generates "Sainthood" as a state of grace or gift. Because the Saints are so intimately

associated with the Divine, they are the best ones to reflect and distribute God's graces or

blessings to human beings. Sociologically, this "economy of grace" makes a powerful

being like a Saint a kind of "gate-keeper" whose relationship is important because of the

potential favors that can come through a patron-client relationship. In terms of mimetic

theory, it may be the case that if art is an imitation of nature then the artful that is cacique

328

politics in Chamula may be an astute imitation of the "economy of grace" modeled by the Catholic Christian ethos, and perhaps even earlier, as modeled by systems of exchange and tribute in the pre-Hispanic era.

Like the figure of San Juan (the Baptist), figures of Saints found in the Chamula temple have major and minor aspects or physical appearances (cf. Gossen 1999:272n19; 2002:323-35, 1048n.7, 1067n4). From the perspective of mimetic theory, the Chamula practice of differentiating "doubles" in the manner of older and younger brothers is worth noticing as a possible cultural intuition that reflects a larger sphere of influence or habitus. What do images of Saints represent? What does the Chamula habitus or everyday practice express? Do double aspects, differentiated into major and minor aspects, reflect perhaps a perceived danger of imitation, the problem (and danger) of rivals rooted in too much resemblance?

Girard (1977, 1987) makes an extensive ethnological reflection on social problems related to the phenomena of twins or "doubles" documented in other cultures and times (cf. Fleming 2004:42-47). The fact that many Chamula have come to think of their patron Saints in terms of a "duality" of major and minor aspects is suggestive. Following Girard's suspicion that imitation is a precarious business, the Chamula themselves may have developed ritualized ways of dealing with this danger, responding thus to a profound historical preference for stratification and hierarchy. It is reasonable to argue that a stratified orientation for much of Chamula social relations trumps any romantic perspective of outside observers who might notice the prima face aspects of homogeneity for Chamula and similar groups, only to project an egalitarian ethos that does not really exist.

It is also reasonable to speculate on the origin of anxiety about sameness or the problem of doubles and thus the potential crisis of undifferentiated social relations. For

instance, perhaps the double aspect of powerful holy men and women is somehow rooted in negative experiences of an ecclesial past (now only vaguely remembered, like a bad dream). Perhaps present-day anxieties refer back to a time of Maya ancestors who once had to work under the custodianship of Spanish Dominican overlords. More likely, the anxiety reflects an even more ancient time where the "model" a "double" had a dangerous or precarious aspect (e.g., the Chamula tale of the super-boy *K'ox* struggling against his older brothers is a variant of the *Popol Vu* stories of violent rivalry).

René Girard's research has focused on ancient mythic stories of a foundational identity that stems from a community crisis involving splits or schismatic relations between "twins" or "brothers" (Cain/Abel; Romulus/Remus). In his view, such myths hide the details of historical reality, allowing subsequent generations to forget the likely viscious aspects that gave rise to rivalry and what may have precipitated a "mimetic crisis" of too much sameness, that is to say, where protagonist and antagonist alike finally resemble each other in the way they compete. An entire community can be caught in an all-against-all battle unless otherwise averted or alleviated. This kind of crisis, Girard speculates, is where competing forces get out of hand because of imitative desire. The copying becomes so bad that no member can tell who is friend or enemy, and thus no longer able to detect or "tell the difference" as in previous times.

A speculative scenario like this may explain some qualities about Chamula ritual practice. For example, in the week long Chamula Festival of Games (*k'in tajimol*), which takes place just before Lent begins each year, there is a famous mimetic battle. In this fake contest that mimics (and ridicules) war, dozens of "soldiers" throw dried animal manure at one another. This action does not only represent metaphorically how "shitty," ugly, and stinky real war can be, but it also mimetically re-presents past contending forces, like the armies of "Guatemala" and "Mexico" who once were alike but later

330

became part of distinct national entities. The Carnival manure fight is a battle for all to see but one in which nobody ever wins--though everybody in the representation has loads of fun in a serious game of anamnesis (remembering). In the end, the lesson is clear: the familiars (Chiapas and Guatemala) are able to forge a lasting peace by agreeing to respect a differentiated existence as distinct nation-states, or distinct peoples.

If Girard's suspect view of imitation is correct, then the case of dealing with "doubles" among the Chamula themselves, as among their Saints, there may be an indication that somewhere back in time community members experienced as problematic the dangers of sibling rivalry. The intensity of relations involving a competing look-alike sameness or the problem of "doubles" might have meant potential chaos represented by the tensions of co-equal familiars or "twins." Thus, for the Chamula, elders and elder brothers (*jbankilaletik*, or "our elders") remain an important source of authority and leadership for "minor brothers" in many Chamula communities, including Taza de Agua, El Pinar, and La Candelaria.

Girard hypothesizes that social tension and conflict most often arise because of a crisis related in some fashion to the threat or actuality of an *undifferentiated social identity,* or as Harrison (2006) puts it, the problem of *too much resemblance*. Exceeding resemblance fosters situations that can quickly divide and bring discord or identity confusion to a community. Violent forms of reciprocity (eye for an eye) and vengeance can precipitate between individuals or groups who represent "doubles" or whatever breaks down differentiated cultural norms designed to prevent social disorder.

Girard extends his intuitive speculation to interpret historical patterns of a mimetic crisis as eventual arriving to simple societies of a prehistoric past in what amounts to a "sacrificial crisis." Girard suspects that as human communities took form there likely existed a precipitous moment or period when escape from the problematic

331

nature of "doubles" or twins (sameness) became urgently necessary. He imagines such a circumstance in prehistory as arising when those in contention were only able to escape by finding a third "other" element, that is, a victim to blame as the cause of a communities discord. The victim is the target upon which or through which mutual antagonists can resolve their dilemmas of rivalry, rivalrous strife leading to a mutually assured destruction. Fleming (2004:46) summarizes Girard's imaginary for a downward spiral of a mimetic crisis:[3]

> This corrosion itself, operating as a positive feedback loop, further promotes such rivalries by erasing all forms of 'external mediation', all vestiges of social, cultural, and religious transcendence – during a sacrificial crisis, no deference to 'superiority' is tolerated as competitors increasingly meet each other in the same time and on the same ground. That is, as antagonism generates doubling, this doubling itself gives rise to renewed threats of violence, violence which is able to draw in people putatively external to a dispute while at the same time obscuring the very symmetry in evidence at the moment that they become implicated: 'From within the system, only differences are perceived; from without the antagonists all seem alike. From inside, sameness is not visible; from outside, differences cannot be seen.

However such antagonisms are ultimately perceived or historically constituted, the confusing problem of *undifferentiation* that might arise from look-alike actors, twins, or doubles among the Chamula is somewhat avoidable because of the ways they ritually celebrate differentiation as hierarchy. In other words, they publically respect both sameness and difference (as apparently evinced in the sacred beings or Saints within their communities or territories).

On the level of historical religious experience, ritual acknowledgment of difference may be one way to limit dangers of sameness. This might explain part of what happened in 1712 or 1867 when many indigenous in Chiapas apparently tried to enter into the serious gamesmanship of their overlords. If they were focusing on how to model the model, then they were organizing themselves into a resistance in order to "be just like them" or "to be the same as"–and thus imitate what was an available social model for

332

power and authority in the ladino-indigenous world. Going further back further in time to the conquest era, one might see the Chamula attempting to grasp the meaning of the new phenomenon of Spaniards. Is it possible that, as images go, not only did the Spaniards appear to look-alike as "brothers" but also their great houses called churches and the European images of Saints that adorned the interior and exterior. The equivocation of look-alike images may well have been what Chamula first perceived, if we suppose they were looking at wooden human faces also associated with representations of power. Perhaps, for the Chamula of that time, the images of Saints configured mimetically as statues or paintings were so realistic they seemed meaningfully alive, fantastic beings that Spanish ritual experts would constantly surround with incense, special words and sounds (Latin choirs, for example), making the mimesis literally larger than life.

My argument, albeit a speculation, is that Chamula from times past may have reacted to a social crisis of mimesis with a differentiated solution for the visual and spiritual problem of equality of "brothers" or "virgins" (as the Chamula and other Tzotzil like to call the images Saints). The primary example involves the important image of the patron Saint, John the Baptist. His images present a challenge, one that reflects the problem of sibling rivalry. The solution would be the positing of "older" or "younger" ascriptions as a way to get around to the crisis of apparent sameness, permitting some degree of acceptable differentiation. While the Chamula reaction to euro-images or representations of material and spiritual realites likely unfolded slowly over time, situations of "too much sameness" are always situations of *fraught resemblances* –as Harrison (2006) has pointed out.

There may be some evidence of an early attempt by Chamula to protect themselves from the rivalrous danger of doubles in the way reflective mirrors are placed upon each Saint. During fieldwork I often speculated on the problem of threatening

resemblance (and rivalrous imitation) by considering the ways Chamula ritual leaders adorn their heavenly intercessors by placing small mirrors on the chest of each divine figure in their temple or church. The Tzotzil of Zinacantan also do this with their collection of Saints, which are many. The looking glass device is placed upon the carved figure of a Saint to reflect light as well as to reflect images. It is a way to ward off evil and to protect the holy Saint—however odd to think that such a powerful entity, perhaps a god-like being of special powers, is somehow vulnerable to harm. Are the Saints located in heaven or on earth; do they represent some kind of portal or access to a world beyond? Chamula in their communal wisdom and cultural logic, like anybody else, seek answers to the mysteries or unknowns that surround them in life-experience.

Through the interpretive framework of mimetic theory, the experience of Saint-images and reflectivity is related to a motivational state that Girard calls "metaphysical desire" –the attempt to acquire the being of another as though a preciosity, something valuable to possess. A mirror on over the heart of a Saint just might convey the simple, obvious fact that *reflected light* helps a person to see, that is to say, to see one's own self. Only in this case, it is not to see one's human face reflected in the life of the Saint (who is alive in Christ) but just the opposite: to see or realize just how distant or incomparable a Saint is in relation to one's self, or to all human beings on earth. The mirror protects the *Santo* from evil by the "light he or she bears" (a basic Christian theological idea).

From the point of view of mimetic theory, the "evil" from which a Saint might want or need protection could be understood as unauthorized copying, or unwanted imitations or acquisitions of his or her *power*. It is possible that for many Chamula, Saints are inimitable; Saints are not people and therefore cannot be duplicated, copied, appropriated.[4] One therefore pleads with these powerful transcendent beings for favors, intercession, help with money or for power over others or situations. Indeed, Chamula

have had to do this with their *caciques* or political bosses who are powerful intercessors. They have had to do the same with powerful figures in ladino society. Indeed, historically, negotiating one's needs and/or desires with powerful figures is an old practice, rooted in the historical dispositions (*habitus*) of a range of 'structure and agency' configurations since the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial system(s) of what mostly seems to have been experiences of subservience.[5] Saints, like most powerful beings (including the *caciques* of every era)*,* seem to have their mysterious purposes and desires, yet can be useful. This perhaps explains why so many people follow them, attend to them, even try to bribe their influence with objects thought to contain "value" (e.g., incense, flowers, candles, tobacco, sugar cane liquor, or money). It is possible that the practice or habitus of the Church itself or even the State has in some way modeled the value of certain actions for the Chamula and others over centuries.

Eventually, as often happens with brothers or other familiars who are "too close," life turns difficult and competitive, so much so that one of the "doubles" must go away, disappear, if life is to go on or move forward. This is one way to understand why the colonial Church of the great San Juan Bautista (claiming a founding date of 1524), still stands today. In stands, however, in contrast to the seeming equally old colonial church of San Sebastián, less than a kilometer away, and long ago abandoned as a ruin without roof, marking the Chamula cemetery of the dead who lay all around it.

The imaging of "brothers" (as churches or as patron Saints) who resemble one another is an important issue in terms of the discussion thus far about "imitative desire" and "identity formations" related to conflict. There is at least a potential threat in "doubles" because of the unnatural or "monstrous" degree of similarity (Fleming 2004:42-47; Girard 1977, 1987). One of the key postulates in Girard's hypothesis about the generative aspects of conflict concerns the progressive erosion of differences between

mimetic antagonists. Fleming makes note of this but further observes (2004:42) how

Girard perceives a key interactive dynamic: "as rivalry and combativeness between

individuals (or groups -- acting as corporate individuals) intensifies, characteristics that

previously distinguished opponents begin to dissolve or fade from view. Mimetically, as

copies, opponents thus effectively become 'doubles' of each other.

Fleming (2004:42) also describes a key "Girardian irony" that comes from

patterns found in novelistic literature:

> More neurotic attempts at differentiation or 'distinction' at the
> interpersonal level are not simply compatible with the effacement of all
> significant differences -- they *coeval* with it. That is the more [rivals]
> attempt to *outdo* each other, the more both come to resemble each other –
> including the resemblance of each other with respect to their increasingly
> desperate attempts at differentiation.

We saw this pattern in the previous chapter in the way the Chamula from distinct

communities came to resemble each other more, the more they tried to vanquish each

other. As their mirroring gave rise to violence, it also revealed to them the extremes to

which they had extended themselves, risking their distinct identities by becoming

fundamentally undifferentiated. The danger of doubles is that no matter the "object of

desire" at the origin of conflicts among familiars rivalry tends to erode social and cultural

differentiation (e.g. hierarchy, communal institutions, cultural norms of respect, and so

forth). When this is too much, at least according to Girard's theory, it can reach a disaster

point or crisis where undifferentiation sets all against all.

In Mexico, at least since the Zapatista rebellion of 1994 (if not before), many

people complain about the lack of true differences among political parties seeking to get

their candidates elected. It is curious that in 2012, the former ruling party that fell in 2000

after seven decades in power has again won back political control of the nation. This

seems largely due to how opposition parties (e.g., PAN, PRD) have become equal in

policy proposals, but also equal or similar in their practices of corruption. Calderón's

PAN became, as it were, just like Salinas de Gortari's PRI once was and perhaps remains. Moreover, the dramatic death toll from President Calderón's "war" on drug cartels has left some observers wondering how much difference really exists anymore between rival gangs of mafia and rival political parties. Both have often influenced state power with reputations of corruption and acts of violence. As they contest territory and vie for symbolic victories before the public, one can ask who has more power, more authority, more practice at killing or systematic violation of basic human rights?

The Historical Dangers of Undifferentiation

Mimetic theory argues that a situation of social *undifferentiation* is dangerous in so far as it constitutes a lack of distinction, a certain flatness where everyone looks the same. This seems to reflect the case of the Zapatista rebels of Chiapas. They insist that people should not vote, encouraging followers and sympathizers to "act" by not acting, and in this way express, albeit negatively, a true or real vote, one that actually reflects the current condition of social-political reality. It is a vote of awareness and protest, a vote of differentiation rather than undifferentiation, that dangerous condition of ambiguity that arises with look-alike national political parties. This way of "voting" (by not voting) allows everyone to see clearly, distinctly, what is a very 'serious game' of politics, and just how deadly it is when you cannot tell one group from the other. The "don't vote" campaign is a way of asking the profound and critical question: "What is the difference?" Voting seems foolish when there is little if anything that separates the political parties or modes of government. Political parties especially seem to suffer from a mimesis of appropriation (constantly maneuvering to become just like the 'other' or acting just like one's opponent does). In the end, when there is too much of this kind of sameness it eventually leads to conflict because it generates a *mimesis of accusation.* This is where one group excels at the expense of another, or where groups blame one another for the

337

country's ills, suffering from "fraught perceptions of too much sameness," as Harrison (2006) reconfigures Girard's central idea of mimesis.

Fleming (2004:42) further clarifies Girard's initial postulate of mimetic desire, however, noting that for Girard "conflict does not merely produce doubling (although it does) – it actually depends upon it." Moreover, following Girard's hypothesis from *Violence and the Sacred* (1977:44-5/ 71-3) that a conflict stretches on interminably because between the two adversaries there is very little difference, Fleming (2004:43) underscores a counter-intuitive thesis:

> From the perspective of many of the claims of contemporary social-cultural theory, which tends towards explanations of the genesis of interpersonal conflict in terms of unmanageable *differences* between people rather than the *absence* of those differences. But this, Girard asserts, is almost the inverse to the truth: 'Order, peace, and fecundity depend on cultural distinctions; it is not these distinctions but the loss of them that gives birth to fierce rivalries and sets members of the same family or social group at one another's throats' (VS 49/78). He argues that one of the central factors which has blinded anthropologists and other social and cultural theorists to the relations between undifferentiation and virulent forms of social conflict – in 'primitive' as well as 'modern' societies – is a kind of entrenched hermeneutic ethnocentrism, and unwitting imposition onto all cultures and interpretive schemes of certain egalitarian ideals originating in the West.

Similar to the intra-ethnic struggle that I discussed in the previous chapter, so too in the struggle for water access in Taza de Agua are Chamula in contention over the same "object of desire." The water contest reflects, one the one hand, a collective attempt by one group to produce difference, distinction, separateness, and dissimilarity. At the same time, ironically, it also reflects a collective attempt to produce *similarity* (in the sense of little difference between members compared to non-members), relates to the above mythic problem of "identical brothers" or "monstrous doubles." It is conceivable that Chamula in other centuries might have once viewed such relations in terms of resemblance. In other words, they would have noticed the amount of similarity there was between what were once supposedly distinct "churches" or concentrations of Chamula

338

(Barrios San Juan Bautista, San Sebastián, Martyr, San Pedro). Historically, these Saints did not survive, even though these "congregations" (as forced reductions and later townships) were supposedly of the same religion (Catholic Christianity), and not to mention the same ethnic grouping and the same economic sub-social status. Legend has it that San Sebastián Martyr used to sneak back at night, sneaking into San Juan's "house" so as not to be separated from his brother. To know the historical story behind or underneath such a mythos narrative would be illuminating.

Then and now, these images of "brothers" (images of resemblance) may have represented a threat of competing desire, especially if by the 1540s the Maya suddenly found themselves "reduced" to congregations of "clans" and forced into barrios not of their own making. Forced together as though they were all the same, Chamula were soon at odds with one another more than with their Dominican or Spanish "masters" (García de Leon 1978). From the perspective of the mimetic hypothesis, it is not an insignificant myth that San Juan, the founder, was known to have herded large white boulders "like sheep" to build his "house" (his Church temple; cf. Gossen 1999), only to one day see the need ask for "volunteers" among his helpers so he could fill-in the cavities between the boulders. These volunteers became, as it were, "efficacious" sacrifices, whose very bodies, bones, and blood symbolized not just building a church (a house for San Juan) but all it takes to hold such an enterprise together far into the colonial future.

Models, Subjects, and Competing Convergences

In the previous example from Chapter 5 on inter-community struggle between Chamula groups seeking to possess newly available land, I focused on how those in contention were very much alike along several levels of resemblance (more similar than dissimilar). I now consider the ramifications of what happens when multiple actors from a variety of Chamula communities imitate one another's desires.[6]

In the beginning, the affected members of communities came together to try and respond to Juan López' plea for help in dealing with the illicit appropriation of his natural spring located on his particular parcel of ejido lands. To be clear, Taza de Agua (I and II) is only one of some 11 hamlets that comprise the entire ejido Cuxtitali-El Pinar. Juan's care of the water is part of his right to stewardship. The conflict arose because the larger neighboring community of El Pinar (San Antonio) challenged his right or responsibility. El Pinar happens to be the head village for the entire ejido, that is, where the municipal agent's office is located. Juan, the current steward of the natural spring, decided to defend his stewardship role and the resource itself by seeking support from the other Tzotzil Chamula-related communities that were beneficiaries of the water for many years. Loss of access represented a clear and present danger to everyone involved. The question everyone was asking was why the fight over access to Juan's well now and not before? Why were the Chamula of El Pinar so aggressive instead of engaging in the more customary approach of tradition, a dialogue or a negotiation process? "The leaders from El Pinar were "acting in a most capricious and arbitrary manner" my informants would often say when describing the incident (which I translate as "they of El Pinar are just do this for the hell of it, arbitrarily, selfishly, playing with us!").

The Upper East Valley Alliance

The communities that Juan López approached for backing his claim (Table 6.1), were loosely comprised of the *ejidos* Escalante, La Sierra, and Corazón de Maria, as well as other communities nearby who were only slightly affected by the water cut-off. These included the barrio *El Ciprés* (a small section within the *ejido La Candelaria*), and the *ejido* discussed previously in chapter five, *Nuevo Corral Ch'en*, whose families are originally from La Candelaria.[7] My use of "alliance" is descriptive for the way these communities came together and does not refer to any formal organization. Because the

340

people of New Corral Ch'en were on the cusp of finally receiving their land title papers

as an "official" *ejido* they decided it would be prudent to avoid any controversy that

might involve government agents, especially the federal government agency of the

national water commission. The *ejido* leaders of New Corral Ch'en (Figure 6.2) therefore

decided they would participate only in an unofficial (clandestine) capacity, to add their

numbers to the ranks of their neighbors since they, too, received some of this water.

Although the press reported three Chamula communities in the conflict with El Pinar

(Escalón, La Sierra, and Corazón de Maria) there were actually five groups from the

upper east valley of San Cristóbal de Las Casas (including El Ciprés of La Candelaria,

and New (Nuevo) Corral Ch'en y el Ángel). Table 6.2. offers a guide to the many

complex actors involved at different points in the year-long conflict over water.

Figure 6.2. Feast of the Holy Cross (Sept 14, 2009). New Corral Ch'en leaders pray in
traditional fashion at their annual feast, commemorating the beginning of their
community. The "chapel" is only used a few times a year and located at the sight of the
brief "machete battle" with Corazón de María (Chapter five). Photo by author (2009).

SETTING or LOCATION	ACTOR or AGENCY
San Cristóbal de Las Casas and rural eastern valley communities	Chamula groups and communities (*barrios* and *ejidos*)
Ejido Cuxtitali-El Pinar (aka *El Pinar*)	*Ejido* Commissar, Mélchion
Barrio *Taza de Agua* -- location of natural water spring	Juan López Gómez - owner of water spring
Barrio El Pinar	Pastor/boss Domingo supported by Narciso of CODICECH
La Candelaria, barrio Corral Ch'en	Sebastián & Domingo, brothers
East Valley *Patronatos*	Water Stewards for each community
Ejido Nuevo Corral Ch'en	*Ejido* Commissar, *Lorenzo*
Barrio El Ciprés	Barrio La Candelaria, 24 members
Comuninity Corazón de María	East Valley; Location of airport;
Community El Escalón	East Valley, near Huixtan
Community La Sierra	Artemio Gutiérrez Díaz, *agente ;* Salvador López Díaz, Patronato
SAPAM -- Sistema de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado Municipal	City Dept. of Drinking Water and Sewage. Director: Juan Carlos Flores
CONAGUA	National Water Commission
City Mayor's office (SCLC)	Mariano Díaz Ochoa (PRI city mayor)[8]
Federal Deputy (rep. for SCLC)	Sergio Lobato García
State governor (Gobernador del Estado de Chiapas) Governor's representative	* Juan Sabines Guerrero: PRI until 2006 with new coalition (PT, PRD, Convergencia). Supports Cecelia, first woman mayor of SCLC 2010, replacing Mariano Díaz Ochoa. * Adán Ruíz Guillén:
CODICECH – Coordinated Organizations for the Defense of Indians, Campesinos and Evangelicals of Chiapas.	Leader and Founder (2006): Narciso Lúnes; former Secretary for OPEACH; favored by the City mayor, Mariano Díaz Ochoa.
OPEACH – Org. of Evangelical Peoples in Highland Chiapas.	Founder: Manuel Gómez Hernandez; Leader: Javier Gómez Hernández

Table 6.2. *Dramatis personae* for Taza de Agua--El Pinar conflict, 2009-2010.

Not every actor was a Chamula, as different government agencies were also involved at different points. Although there are very noticeable differences in styles of religious belief or in terms of content (ideas, doctrines) and form (styles of practice), on a more general and structural level the members of each Chamula community are very similar. They all seem to take religious sentiment very seriously. They are also similar as campesinos that live the same rural agrarian life-style with very limited socio-economic options, including education. Almost all families have (or once have had) a relative or someone they know working as an undocumented migrant in the United States. The Chamula in contention with El Pinar over water rights also share the same common ethnic background and marking features such as the Tzotzil language, Chamula manner of dress, food, housing, including the style of trucks they use.

The water conflict begins to heat up a bit when the stewards or *patronatos* of each east valley community came together and decided they needed a convocation of all affected parties. They formed an *alianza* or alliance to function together for the express purpose of returning to normal the access each community benefitted from before the sudden interruption. They agreed to use majority vote agreements as the way to organize and coordinate the actions of their communal effort. Only by agreement would the group support its respective representatives the water stewards, charged with the finer details of committee meetings, logistics, and above all the difficult work of rapid communication.

It should be noted that while most every *campesino* has his own personal cell phone, some (like in the house where I lived) also have land-lines. However, some matters were best communicated in person, in which case constables (*mayoles*) would come to a person's house to inform at length about a certain decision or pending communal action. As a combined authority of the moment, the *patronatos* would have their constables to act as aids for protection but also communication. This alliance had no

formal structure or name but it nonetheless represented an organized response to a sudden act of aggression from another Chamula community.

Source of The Problem: El Pinar and *Acquisitive Desire*

I was barely getting to know my way around La Candelaria where I had been living for some months when news of a growing conflict began to circulate. It was about July of 2009, when I was making a brief visit at the house of my neighbor, Domingo. His wife told me that Domingo was not home because he had been called away suddenly; there was tension over in the *ejido* Nuevo Corral Ch'en. Domingo was part of a special committee in the new community (even though his home was still in La Candelaria); it was his job to support those with annual "cargos" of caring for community water affairs. His experience as a leader of the community would help guide the others in what was a series of confrontations over the course of the year, until access to the common water source in *Taza de Agua* could be restored.

It seems that the conflict over water began when Chamula people from El Pinar, a community located 12 kilometers away in the northern hills of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, suddenly decided to divert the water at its source for reasons that were not clear.[9] According to Sebastián and his brother Domingo, the basic problem was that the Chamula from the community of El Pinar had unilaterally decided to suspend water flow to communities a great distance below the source. Apparently, the people of El Pinar wanted to take it away from Juan, its present owner, and appropriate it for themselves, exclusively. After all, they had over 900 members who belonged to their community, where as Juan only had about 60 people, not counting the other Taza de Agua a short distance away. To accomplish this action, once the spring and its tanks were under their control, the El Pinar Chamula had only to raise the lip or small retention wall just a few inches, only slightly. In this way, they could divert all water flow from the natural spring

344

to their own separate collecting tank. When they finally did so, only a trickle arrived to the east valley communities.

Needs or Desires?

The sudden lack of water underscored a common vulnerability for many Chamula communities in this region. By any measure, most of these communities were constantly 'water poor' (Fenwick 2010). By previous agreement they had access to a natural water spring located on property that was at once "personal" or private, but also communal. By law, it belonged to the 8 barrio *ejido* of Cuxtitali-el Pinar. In Chamula cultural settings, a spring would traditionally belong to its local caretaker or "owner" (Burguete Cal y Mayor 2000a). Although an *ejido* member in this case, Juan López held the usufruct rights for this real estate, together with its natural spring.

The distance between Juan's water source and the neighboring barrio of El Pinar was only a few kilometers. The distance to the valley communities was about 12 kilometers. From the southeastern slopes of the volcano-mountain Tzonte'vitz, the water from Juan's property in Taza de Agua had a long way to flow downhill. It flowed first to a collecting tank made of cement and then to a second slightly bigger cement square tank. From this tank, water flowed down a tube of about 2.5 inches wide toward various large tanks in a forested area just above the communities La Sierra, Escalón, and Corazón de Maria. The amount of water collected in these tanks varies from 50, 45, 27, to 16,000 liters respectively. In addition to the communities mentioned, two other communities receive some benefit from these tanks: the new ejido Nuevo Corral Ch'en and El Ciprés (a barrio of ejido La Candelaria). Another separate tank near the spring sends water to Taza de Agua, with a capacity of about 13,700 liters. El Pinar uses two tanks to collect 12,500 liters in one and 3,150 liters in another.[10] Again, from the natural spring in Taza

de Agua the water would be redistributed by gravity down to the east valley (*los llanos*) of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, about hundred meters lower in altitude.

Such a set-up was not entirely unusual; like many of the Tzotzil Chamula communities located in the hills and pocket valleys surrounding the entire central valley of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, farmers had to get what water they could find, usually at slightly higher elevations. El Pinar and Taza de Agua are located above the 2300 meter level. Unless they were able to acquire a special government assistance grant, or help from an non-governmental organization (NGO) focused on development projects, most Chamula have to pool their money to purchase and maintain the meters of plastic pipe required to access mountain water sources.

The Ejido Cuxtitali-El Pinar

The ejido of Cuxtitali-El Pinar is a large communal land tenure entity, a sort of community of communities. Its population is about 90% Chamula Indians and the rest are non-Indian ladinos. Although El Pinar is actually located within the municipal boundaries of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, it forms part of the city's northern-most border with the municipality of San Juan Chamula and in 2010 now has a total population of about 2000 people. While most of the non-Indians live in the concentrated urban barrios of Cuxtitali, Peje de Oro and Las Piedracitas (Burguete Cal y Mayor 2000a:126-127), the rural hamlets of El Pinar comprise more than 300 households all together.[11] A major part of this community is located throughout the hills sloping down from the western face of the volcano Tzonte'vitz.[12]

The story of this conflict begins and ends with the ebb and flow of problems surrounding not just Chamula communities, but one Chamula person in particular, Juan López Gómez from the barrio of Taza de Agua (El Pinar). Asking other people like Juan and his community for permission to use water is a very "serious game" about power

relations. A community will first send a delegation of water caretaker, the *patronato,* to convey to the owner of a spring, pond, or lake the actual need of members. This happens in a very formal and highly respectful fashion according to custom such as the presentation of gifts and formal discourse, taking the time, and more. This ritual approach is a way to communicate non-threatening purposes as well as on-going commitment to what the water represents as a vital resource that requires care. Above all it is way to establish some measure of social relationship, perhaps even close friendship. In any case, these ritual actions affirm a sense of respectful connection, bonding, and thus fellowship, all of which is rooted in a shared ideal of common union (social and cultural identity) of what it means to be a Tzotzil Chamula. Thus, the *patronato*s, if they are good at what they do, very carefully prepare an effective presentation. In the case of Juan López Gómez, the *patronatos* had arranged to arrive with generous offerings of tobacco, crates of soda pop, and an ample supply of locally distilled rum or *posh.* The offerings were meant to please the owner of the land but also to ensure continued relations of security that would keep the water flowing downhill.

The fiesta is not just to please the "owner" of land where the water spring is located, but also to propitiate the "Owner of the land" itself, or what is an "Ángel" or *Earth Lord* (*ajvalil banomil*) who might dwell there. It would be risky and disrespectful to ignore that in the invisible world bad things can happen (Burguete Cal y Mayor 2000a:157). Typically, when visiting, a delegation would have to perform some aspect of this reciprocity ritual. It might take several visits for a community to finally agree to allow pipes across a boundary point. Negotiations can be expensive and time-consuming; they can sometimes fail, have to be abandoned and the search for water goes elsewhere. They might be forced to return and make a better or more convincing offer of gifts.

347

Communities that "give permission" receive the solemn (and joyful) ritual of petition – a good excuse for prayers and a party. After presenting gifts, they might shake on the terms they have agreed to (a moral contract) for a one-time payment (those in the valley, for example, had offered 4,000.00 pesos in 1986). As mentioned earlier, the moral and spiritual sense of the agreement is renewed by means of ritual and fiesta each year during the May 3rd holy cross celebration at the natural spring. The communities receiving water would help pay the costs.

Traditionally, this practice also honors the spiritual beings known as "Earth Lords" or *Ángeletik* –creatures believed to live near any water hole or natural spring. These creatures remind many Chamula that water is not just a mystery but also a gift of God, or the *gods* (sacred beings who while powerful, are not necessarily all-powerful like *jtotik ta vinajel ja' Kristo*, our father in heaven, Christ). The Earth Lords seem to represent the mysterious overseers of what in this region is a precious source of life and wellbeing: water and anything related to it.

The recorded mythology of Earth Lords (or Water Lords) depicts them in a negative light, at least as some anthropologists report about this phenomenon (e.g., Burguete Cal y Mayor 2000a; Gossen 2002). They are not angelic beings like the "messengers" (*evangelion*) of the Christian or Hebrew Biblical traditions, but do seem to represent invisible manifestations of power, even capricious power. To do business with an Earth Lord or Ángel requires an understanding about the obligations of *quid pro quo*, a "this for that" sense of reciprocity (Burguete Cal y Mayor 2002a:157-158). These mysterious creatures are powerful and often associated with lightning bolts, mountain mists, and caves--that is to say, dark, unfamiliar places. When they are visible, these beings supposedly resemble fat, ugly ladinos, and are thought to be capricious, mercurial, and dangerous.

348

The symbolic link to ladinos reflects the image of control over the precious things that come from deep in the earth (metals, water) and the power these represent (Gossen 1991). Capricious and cunning Earth Lords can grant wishes for easy or instant wealth, much like a devil or demon (*li pukuje*) can do; yet for a Chamula or anyone to gain status this way necessarily incurs a life-long debt. Historically, this image seems to reflect perceptions about 19th century labor hardships for thousands of migratory Chamula forced to service their debts with labor on the great fincas and plantations of the pacific coastal regions.

This sense of life and death and the mystery of power that a water source like a natural spring can entail is one of the major reasons many Chamula (and other Tzotzil, too) treat it as something sacred. Its sacred character is traditionally marked by a set of crosses called a *calvario*. These crosses in the Chamula region will have an identifiable Chamula style and are placed at the water source to represent a particular barrio, hamlet, or community. The custom is by no means exclusive to Chamula. In 1982, El Pinar had made an agreement with the Taza de Agua community for water access. In 1986, there was an agreement between several of the east valley communities and Taza de Agua concerning the water source located there.[13] These agreements, however, were not with Juan López Gómez, but with a previous owner of the property. In fact, at this time in 1986, permission for access came not so much from the owner or possessor of the parcel (which has long been the customary way), as from the residents of the local barrio, Taza de Agua, something of a new form of "normative expectation" regarding water and other increasingly rare resources.[14] In addition, the entire *ejido* community of Cuxtitali-El Pinar had confirmed this particular permission during an assembly meeting. This was necessary since legally the barrio of Taza de Agua stands under the authority of the *ejido* and this is where any final say about "rights" to water pertain. Juan López, the current embattled

349

occupant of the land, continued support for the 1986 traditional water agreement. In the spring of 2009, however, this access agreement began to suffer twists under local community rivalry.

The Patronato Committee

Because of his facility in Spanish, fellow members of New Corral Ch'en community asked Domingo to assist the *patronatos* from each of the valley communities. They needed his support in dealing with the Spanish speaking *kaxlanes* (the Tzotzil word for "other" or stranger). As mentioned earlier, in Chamula traditional life, a *patronato* is a water caretaker or custodian and one of many customary posts or "cargos" found in most indigenous and *campesino* communities of highland Chiapas. The community (or a group of communities) charges the custodian of water with the duty and authority to (a) oversee all aspects of water access, maintenance, and distribution and (b) interact with all municipal, state and federal officials that deal with water.[15] In Chamula communities generally, men serve in this role as a one-year term of office. When the problem concerns water, for instance, members (by family) are often required to donate funds to support their particular *patronato* (caretaker or custodian). Periodically, or at special convocations when there is urgency or a crisis, the *patronato* informs the assembly. He may also ask them for cash assistance.[16] The assembly asked Domingo to help the *patronato* of New Corral Ch'en and thus help strengthen the strategic east valley alliance to fight with the Chamula of El Pinar.

An Alliance of Victims

There are clear boundary markers (*mojones*) that carefully distinguish each community's territory. The east valley alliance, such as it was, had formed a solidarity group of convenience for strategic reasons but their boundaries as Chamula were relatively flexible for this purpose, because it meant having to defend their common

interest in having access to water. When this kind of solidarity is necessary, they still think of themselves as distinct communities but behave as "the same people." In terms of identity, they are Chamula first, then a distinct "community" and only then members of a particular group (as in religious affiliations or political associations). At least during short periods of crisis, threats tend to unify and thus create a certain measure or felt-quality of sameness (shared identity).

In terms of specific intra-ethnic situations, members of each community will self-identify as Tzotzil Chamula. Because they share a common resource (water), members from each community attend assemblies of collective concern. Whenever possible I attended these joint inter-community emergency meetings. I was able to observe how members discussed and decided what to do about what was becoming, for them, an unprecedented water crisis.[17]

The situation with the Chamula of El Pinar had turned anxious and tense. Negotiations with them did not seem to be progressing, even though they were Chamula like themselves. Their stubbornness to return the water flow as it had been was now hard to explain. At one pre-meeting with the *campesinos* from El Ciprés and Nuevo Corral Ch'en, I could observe how the members in discussion had rather grim faces. They were just then coming to agree that they should now be prepared to act with violence if necessary. According to the *patronato's* report at this meeting, El Pinar had threatened to shoot anybody daring to approach the water tank that they now claimed exclusively under their control and reserved only for themselves. After many negotiation attempts, matters had grown beyond the scope of the spring's owner, Juan López Gómez, and even beyond the ability of the community of Taza de Agua. The discussion revealed that the valley communities had to demonstrate a more convincing action.

351

El Pinar's Unexplainable Aggression

When Juan López approached the valley communities to ask for support in his fight with his neighbors in El Pinar, he thought a mere show of force would be enough to get them to back down and thus return the water tank to normal distribution. According to a document that I was able to obtain later, this was the initial period when the various *patronatos* and other authorities went together to seek clarification. They wanted to know why El Pinar had stopped the water flow. At that meeting, they reaffirmed many years of joint interest among the communities involved to preserve their customary use of the natural spring located on Juan's property.[18]

What is interesting in this document however, is the indication of the behind-the-scenes presence of a very powerful "gatekeeper"–a kind of political boss or "big man." The Chamula often refer to such players as "the older brother who commands" (*bankilal ta spas mantal*), or the common local term *cacique*. His name is "el pastor" (a pseudonym) and my informants refer to him as a *cacique*; however, I was surprised to learn also–contrary to my own image of indigenous or mestizo *caciques* in Chiapas or Mexico--that this particular strong man was also a Pentecostal Christian pastor.[19] His church was at the center of El Pinar (also known locally as San Antonio El Pinar), the largest barrio and administrative center for the entire *ejido*. El Pastor and members of his congregation were apparently able to control what went on in El Pinar, a rural mountain community of 931 inhabitants (see Table 6.1).

The "agreement of clarification" document (signed in June of 2009) was between Juan López, a few representatives from Taza de Agua, and several representatives of five upper east valley communities. They stated two goals in their document. First, the urgency to stop the evangelical pastor and thus prevent his group from El Pinar who were attempting to appropriate Juan's land or usurp his documented "right" to the natural

spring; and second, to help ensure everyone's continued access and equal share of water--a "vital liquid."[20]

In my conversations with members of the affected valley communities it was clear that the most egregious aspect about the sudden cut-off was the fact that despite the 1986 signed agreement and custom, they could not explain precisely even to themselves, why they found themselves having to face unexpected consternation.[21] For more than two decades they had grown confident that their "brothers"--their *compañeros* or fellow Chamula (*jchi'iltak chamo'*)--would always respect what seemed an obvious customary right. What is more, those who used this water source had been faithful over the years to their customary duties of bringing gifts of tribute to the annual prayer rituals and fiestas in Taza de Agua. These celebrations meant giving thanks to God our Father (*jtotik riox ta vinajel*) and to the local spirit (*Angel kajvalik ta banomil* or "lightening, our lord of the earth") who oversees/owns the location of any natural spring or cave.[22] According to custom or traditional wisdom, it is best to keep an Earth Lord happy so as to avoid the possibility of displeasing 'it' and risk the mercurial wrath for which they are known in many tales (Bricker 1981:274n64; Gossen 2002:1049n2; Moscoso Pastrana 1990).

The document of "clarification" soon led to the writing of another document in June of 2009, a petition to the state governor, Juan Sabines Guerrero. The petition was carefully written with the help of advisors and explains that the inter-barrio conflict between Taza de Agua and El Pinar had actually begun months earlier, on the 26th of April, 2009. It elaborates as well on several other incidents of transgression, thus establishing a trail of protest against El Pinar's obvious role as aggressor. Essentially, the petition asks the governor to intervene immediately because people from San Antonio have entered the fenced area around the natural spring and have modified the water level wall on the redistribution tank. This was something done arbitrarily the petition claims,

entering without permission from either Juan López or the inhabitants of Taza de Agua.[23] According to this written complaint, El Pinar's inhabitants (and their leaders or elected authorities) took it upon themselves to reconfigure the collection tank by building a small retention wall some 50 centimeters higher than normal, enough difference to prevent water from flowing anywhere else but into El Pinar's own tank, located a short distance away from the spring.

According to informants, the worst part about diverting the water was the fact that this tank had such an overflow it was spilling water upon the forest ground. To the valley communities without water this was unnecessary and a profligate misuse of a very precious resource. From what they could see or understand, it was happening for no apparent reason or purpose. Those who observed it could only lament: "they're just throwing it away; it is true, those El Pinar people just cause it to be lost, evil is what they've done."

Juan and the residents of Taza de Agua were traditional Chamula who followed the religion of *costumbre*. This meant that they had a tenacious spirit and a determination to protect a traditional right to control the water source. They thus pushed back against El Pinar's aggressive effort to appropriate the water. In the petition to the governor (June 2009), they explained why they had "decided to take matters into their own hands by tearing down 25 centimeters to restore its former level . . . where it had been for many years." Petitioning the governor for justice was justified by the fact that the state and federal government had built the tanks in the early 1980s. Despite traditionalist claims, Juan was invoking the state's authority to solve what is normally a local and customary dispute.[24] Unfortunately, by returning the wall to its former state, Juan found himself caught in the "serious game" (cf. Ortner 2006:129-30) of reprisals.

Mimetic Escalation: Evangelicals vs. Evangelicals

The document of complaint (directed to governor Sabines) was prepared in large part *not* by the residents of Taza, nor by Juan himself, but a leader of an evangelical organization known as OPEACH (Organization of Evangelical Peoples of the Highlands (Altos) of Chiapas.[25] Javier Collazo Gómez was the Secretary General of this organization and likely the intellectual author behind the style and intended impact of the petition. Javier, and his older brother Manuel Collazo Gómez, the actual founder of OPEACH, were originally from Milpoleta, San Juan Chamula. However, after their family and many from their hamlet were expelled they grew up in San Cristóbal de Las Casas in the early 1990s (Schreuder 2001:115-116). The Collazo brothers had converted to Christianity, including their older brother Xalik who was later murdered. Like many others, they were part of the rapidly growing Pentecostal movement that was evangelizing indigenous communities in the highlands. Since the early 1960s, but especially since 1974 (after the first Indigenous Congress in San Cristóbal de Las Casas) there was widespread persecution of Evangelicals, Catholics, and all manner of "dissidents" throughout the township of San Juan Chamula (see Irribarren 2002 [1980]; Robledo Hernández 1997). State sponsored impunity encouraged a politics of exclusion that spread to numerous municipalities.

According to my informants from the valley communities, it was Javier Collazo that the leaders of El Pinar first approached for assistance with their effort to expropriate water. They wanted his special brand of "services" (as a "lobbyist" with advocacy skills) and hoped that he would help them acquire the land and natural spring that in their view Juan López was selfishly sitting upon. Javier, they said, supposedly showed interested in the project at first, but then soon after they made him the offer, he switched sides, lending his assistance instead to Taza de Agua.

355

When the residents of barrio El Pinar realized that Javier Collazo had, in effect, betrayed their desire (appropriated their desire), they decided that the best thing to do would be to approach a former OPEACH operative, Narciso Lunes Hernández. Only a few years earlier Narciso Lunes had founded his own organization, having left OPEACH when he was the Secretary General (the same position once held by his ex-colleague and now rival, Javier Collazo). In November of 2005, Narciso inaugurated his own version of OPEACH, a new organization he called the "Coordination of Organizations for the Defense of Indigenous, *Campesinos* and Evangelicals" (*Coordinadora de Organizaciones por la Defensa de los Indígenas Campesinos y Evangélicos de Chiapas*) or CODICECH.[26] Part of the reason for Narciso's defection from OPEACH was that Javier's brother, Manuel, who founded the organization a decade before, was rumored to be on the verge of release from federal prison.[27]

The story of Manuel Collazo Gómez (the brother of Javier) and his family is one of many ups and downs of many triumphs, tragedies and trajectories (Schreuder 2001). One thing above all sticks out from his known biography: he was a quick learner of how powerful people operate. He learned how to organize an effective "Christian" organization. Evidently, his former Secretary, Narciso Lunes, was also a quick learner, having learned a trick or two from the Collazo brothers. He now runs a large and powerful syndicate of his own, consisting of several thousand members.

Like the Collazo brothers, Narciso himself enjoys something of a notorious reputation, at least according to what his rival, Javier Collazo wrote in Juan's petition to governor Sabines. In this document of complaint (that Javier helped author), the people of Taza de Agua were seeking protection for their property and rights and for this reason sought intervention of state power. This was no longer a mere local conflict but a matter of state level concern. The authors of the document are very explicit about the "dubious

356

intentions" of Narciso. They accuse him and his organization CODICECH of supporting the malicious intentions of the people of El Pinar in an unjust invasion against Juan, his property, and the people of Taza de Agua.

What had begun in April 2009 as a typical community conflict within a rural *ejido* of *campesinos* took a turn for the worse by July. Representing their respective *Patronato de Agua* (water caretaker), the *mayoles* (community constables) were sent to each community affected by the water cut-off. A few arrived where I was living in the house of Xapax in La Candelaria. Xapax had once served Nuevo Corral Ch'en as one of its leaders representing the community at city hall meetings with the mayor, a one-year service *cargo* (duty). His peers thought of him as a good speaker at these meetings. He did not have interesting or provocative things to say, but was wise enough to get members thinking about their presumptions and prejudices. In La Candelaria he was once the assistant judge, and even the secretary to the *ejido* commissar, in other words positions of high responsibility. Whether in La Candelaria or in Nuevo Corral Ch'en, members respected his words even if they might disagree with him on some point. We met Manuel in the previous section as a true defender of Nuevo Corral Ch'en against the invasion of other Chamula from the neighboring community of Corazón de Maria.

Emergency Assembly in Barrio El Ciprés

The message the constables brought was for an important meeting the next day on the basketball court in the barrio of El Ciprés, followed by a larger meeting in the nearby community of La Sierra (Figure 6.3). The basketball court was where members from El Ciprés and Nuevo Corral Chen would first gather for this kind of public discussion of social "problems." This particular time they had to discuss what action to take against El Pinar. The time had come to do something. Xapax told the constables he would be at the meeting, and there join in with all other affected members from La

Candelaria (those in barrio El Ciprés and barrio Nuevo Corral Ch'en) and the other

contiguous Chamula communities who depended upon water flow from Taza de Agua.

Figure 6.3. Emergency Assembly: discussing war. Chamula men (and women) at a basketball court in barrio Ciprés, La Candelaria (July 2009); leaders are seated on the bench in the middle. Photo by author.

About 70 men and only a few women came to the brief meeting. Most of the

women obviously represented their husbands but some of them were property owners in

their own right. A great many of the men, both young and older, were away as migrant

laborers in Georgia or Florida. One of the major themes at the meeting was an update on

the progress of Javier Collazo Gómez. Collazo, as the leader of OPEACH, was

negotiating on behalf of the east valley communities; it was his job to go (with a

delegation of *patronatos*) before the city mayor and ask him to take action against barrio

El Pinar. The *campesinos* were disposed to gather near the mayor's office to help Javier

convince the mayor. They would be ready to demonstrate their willingness to take

matters into their own hands, unless the mayor acted in favor of their just cause. This was

the plan that the *patronatos* presented in which all agreed to mobilize themselves

358

accordingly. So they got into trucks and went to San Cristóbal de Las Casas as a show of force. They gathered and waited at the staging area at the plaza of Guadalupe Church that is above the downtown historical district of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. From there, if necessary, they would march to the mayor's office.

Although the natural spring in Taza de Agua was clearly located on a private parcel and even though its owner, Juan, was a certified member within the *ejido* Cuxtitali-El Pinar, his neighbors in El Pinar did not apparently care. They were attempting to appropriate his water. To do so, it seemed as though they were making a distinction between Juan López's land and the water source itself, especially their claim on the water redistribution tank. In this effort, there was one person with particular interest in such a distinction, the former owner of the land (and the water), Domingo Pérez Hernández.[28] Domingo used to live in Taza de Agua before Juan López bought the property from him in January of 1991. Circumstances suggest he was actively seeking to recover the water resource and, if possible, the land as well.[29]

This possibility was only speculation among some of my informants involved in looking for a solution to the confrontation. Nowhere in any of the *ejido* documents, or petitions to the governor, nor in any of the published news stories or local opinion columns, was such an intention stated or obvious. In one document sent to the state governor, however, Juan and those who were supporting him, complain that the Chamula of El Pinar are lying when the say "they had bought the land and that it no longer pertained to Juan López." If this were true, there would be a receipt of sale or transfer. Juan López demands that they produce it, so that all may see their claim are false. If an *ejido* separation was a hidden agenda, it remained hidden.[30]

Direct Action Protest

After almost two months of complaining over the lack of water, the affected

communities decided to take collective action against their fellow *jchi'iltak* (Chamula

fellows or *compañeros*). They wanted to stop them from causing any further harm; harm

that was, in their eyes, unjust and without justification in tradition, custom, or even

municipal, state, or federal laws.[31] When I would ask informants to explain what they

thought the reason might be for why the Chamula of El Pinar-El Pinar were acting in this

way, I would always get the same answer: "Es su capricho, pues; así son ellos, pues, son

tremendos!!" *They are simply being arbitrary, capricious, for that is the way they are,*

that is what they are, nasty and horrendous people!

Just what would be an appropriate form of pressure was much debated at the

special assembly of all the communities. This meeting took place right after the gathering

in El Ciprés, on the basketball court of the primary school in *ejido* La Sierra in early

September of 2009. The meeting of some 200 valley Chamula lasted nearly three hours

under the hot late afternoon sun. Although I was a stranger to most of the men gathered

there, they seemed to know who I was and that I was living with the Chamula in La

Candelaria. To be sure I appeared friendly and not as some suspicious character from the

government, I greeted as many people as I could recognize from the communities I knew.

Thus was I able to observe and listen to some long discourses and debates. The assembly

ended with a hand vote by which a clear majority showed their desire to take direct

action. They decided they would attempt to put pressure on the mayor Ochoa Díaz, *el*

Presidente Municipal of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. It was later explained to me why he

would be the target. It was because the large *ejido* community of Cuxtitali-El Pinar is

under the authority and legal jurisdiction of the municipality of San Cristóbal de Las

Casas, that the indigenous *campesinos* of the affected communities decided they would

have to pressure the municipal president (mayor), Mariano Díaz Ochoa. In their eyes, he

was the pertinent civil authority, and thus had the ultimate responsibility (and means) for

correcting this civil situation. Besides, as a non-Indian, he could take action against the

culprits. This way–it seemed to me, anyway–it would avoid the appearance of an

internecine fight and fellow Chamula would not have to have such an unpleasant

confrontation. It was decided: they would perform a kind of civil disobedience and act

without violence, even though their plan called for them to take prisoners.

The plan was to sequester not persons, but the fleet of municipal garbage trucks.

They would cut off access to the city dump. The dump would continue under blockade,

and the trucks missing, until the mayor Mariano took action by means at his disposal to

resolve the conflict. The majority justified the action as necessary because the *ejido*

Cuxtitali-El Pinar had obviously failed to take action against the wrong doing of its own

members. But it appears they only had half the facts since the people of Taza de Agua did

not go to their own community assembly. Besides, the Commissar of the *ejido* Cuxtitali-

El Pinar was Melitón Hernández López, one of the leaders of the El Pinar group

attempting to appropriate the spring. He fined the *ejido* members from Taza de Agua

$5,000.00 pesos to punish them for their absence at the monthly assembly meeting. Most

fines for such things would not be more than one or two days of wages, worth about 100

or 200 pesos maximum. For these and other reasons, the Chamula of the valley

communities felt the entire *ejido* of El Pinar was responsible for the conflict.

The next time the Cuxtitali-El Pinar *ejido* assembly met, they were upset with

Commissar Melitón; they eventually began to connect the dots and could see that he was

part of the problem rather than a solution. He had been withholding information about his

role in the conflict with Juan López Gómez and the Taza de Agua community. According

to one of my informants who lives in that *ejido*, when assembly members finally understood the facts a month after the fine was placed the assembly voted to cancel it.

Conflict Sometimes Smells Like Garbage

The east valley alliance organized strike teams to "kidnap" 11 of 16 city garbage trucks. They pulled of the "garbage job" in a matter of hours and held the turcks for two weeks in the cemetery at Corazón de María (Figures 6.4 and 6.5). As the garbage piled up all over San Cristóbal de Las Casas, pressure mounted upon the mayor as citizens became irritated.[32]The mayor had little choice but to take action (or appear to do so) against El Pinar, forcing them to return previous levels of water flow.

Figure 6.4. Eleven city garbage trucks in the cemetery of ejido "Corazón de María". The trucks were liberated after sunset on September 29, 2009. Photos by author.

During the morning of September 29, 2009, the mayor sent workers to deconstruct the offending barrier that the people from El Pinar had placed on the cement water tank in Taza de Agua. When water flowed again to the communities, a meeting at the cemetery was arranged that same evening for the mayor and the alliance communities to negotiate the release of the trucks. I was present at this final late night assembly in Corazón de Maria and recorded the mayor's speech and some of the dialogue. Later on, I was able to obtain a copy of their simple signed accord, typed right there in front of

several hundred *campesinos*. Curiously, most of this terce document states a public

disavowal that Javier Collazo, the OPEACH leader, was ever responsible for sequestering

of trucks or public protest (and thus, by implication, not legally culpable or vulnerable for

imprisonment). Javier had acted as a key negotiator for the valley communities.

However, the *campesinos* of El Pinar had told the mayor they would only negotiate if

Javier Collazo removed himself from the process. Apparently, this disavowal let Javier

and OPEACH "off the hook" but it may have also damaged his reputation. Press reports

of the accord put into doubt whether Javier, a Chamula originally from Milpotea, San

Juan Chamula, was an effective powerbroker or negotiator with the civil, non-Indian

authorities. It was tantamount to saying he had become less influential than he used to be

as a political organizer / leader for his organization's membership. In this light, Javier –at

least according to the PRI mayor--was not such a "big man" because he obviously did not

know how to "make things happen" for vulnerable *campesino*s. With, or without Javier's

discursive performances, in the end, the Chamula farmers themselves (and not Javier's

organization) were the ones who by direct action produced the desired results.

Figure 6.5. Protesters on the day of the big sequester job: a "dirty war" had begun. Valley
Chamula guarding city garbage trucks at Corazon de Maria cemetary. Photo by author.

A Proxy War?

Just a week prior to the garbage truck liberation event, the Chamula evangelical leader Narciso and his organization CODICECH, in representation of Evangelicals and others in the large barrio of (San Antonio) El Pinar, had sent a major petition document to the Governors office. It was addressed as well to all the pertinent federal and state agencies regarding land, water, and indigenous affairs. Almost as though imitating Javier Collazo's letter to the Governor some weeks before, Narciso's petition was also asking for the governor's immediate intervention. They asked him to intervene against the real culprits, those who were threatening the "good of public order." The petition ominously warned that unless something happened soon to "stop those truly responsible for generating problems in the *ejido* Cuxtitali-El Pinar" (referring, of course, to Javier Collazo and his cohorts at OPEACH), "there could soon be grave and lamentable consequences" (that is to say, bloodshed and loss of life). These were not idle threats or warnings; if anything, these words dramatized a mimetic effect of reciprocity as the two rival leaders intensified their contest, fighting what I would describe a "proxy war" in which "others" are used to test and measure the power and prestige of their respective organizations. In a way, El Pinar was being used, along with the East Valley communities and Juan López from Taza. Their concerns were secondary to the real battle: CODICECH vs. OPEACH. If one of the meaningful objects of desire in this social drama was originally the water spring and the privilege of access, that object had begun to fade as the two rival Evangelical leaders (and their organizations) focused more on each other and less on their "clients" who were apparently being sacrificed to the greater concern now consuming both men. The bigger problem, however, was that in the middle of this duel, this proxy war for rival doubles, there were also the victims of caprice: several hundred Chamula farmers in need of water.

The petition to the Governor was signed not only by Narciso but also by the

secretary general of the national association of Christian Lawyers and other evangelical

supporters. The letter was directed to the governor on the pretext that the water collection

tanks were designed and built many years ago by state engineers. This appeal for justice

reflects the general orientation of many evangelical churches in Chiapas who, among the

Chamula, tend to reject traditional norms. In the past, these norms have supported

indigenous customary practices and beliefs (Burguete Cal y Mayor 2000a; Collier 2000a;

García Méndez 2008; Rivera 2001; Schreuder 2001; Sterk 1992). Instead of appealing to

native customs or even normative principles of a spiritual nature, Narciso, the

Evangelical leader and nemesis to Javier (and his brother Manuel, in jail), was making his

appeal to the secular authority of the Governor's office. This action indicated his desire to

associate himself with the power of the state and the authority of the nation, or what

Bourdieu has called social or cultural forms of symbolic capital. At the heart of his

petition was how the natural water spring in Taza de Agua was not something that

belonged to an individual (Juan) or to an *ejido* (Cuxtitali-El Pinar), but was something far

more precious and need of protection, the water source properly belonged to the nation.[33]

Traditions and Customs: Constraining Imitative Desire

After Narciso had written to the governor (but before the actual release of the

garbage trucks on September 29, 2009), members of the entire *ejido* Cuxtitali-El Pinar

voted a resolution At their monthly assembly meeting on September 27, they insisted that

its two disputing barrios (Taza de Agua and El Pinar) take full responsibility for their

own foolishness. They insisted upon a resolution of the problem they had generated. The

growing public nature of the dispute had caused embarrassment and irritation for the

entire *ejido*; the assembly saw little reason to bring every barrio into this rivalrous

conflict. According to one of my El Pinar informants, the *ejido* assembly discovered that

their own Commissar, who lived in El Pinar, was heavily involved in the conflict. The problem was not the Commissar so much as the people with whom he was involved, namely the large evangelical syndicate CODICECH, along with his treasurer, Domingo (the pastor and cacique of El Pinar). My informant from El Pinar told me that the *ejidatorios* did not like this scandalous behavior since the idea of "outside" influences determining internal communal affairs was reprehensible. Members generally view the interference of "outsiders" as a threat to self-determination, unless it is something that everyone (the majority in assembly) agrees upon beforehand.

As we saw earlier in Chapter 4, in the case of the would-be *cacique* Sabino, the attempt to commandeer an entire *ejido* of "peers" is far from easy and nearly always fraught with tension and potential violence. This seems evident from the last five decades of political bossism impacting Chamula communities (Rus 1994, 2005) and elsewhere in the highlands (Bastian 1996, Gabbert 2001). The fight between the barrios, however, was beginning to affect a great many people beyond *ejido* borders but still within the city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

After sending city workers to remove the few centimeters of cement lip that was stopping the water-flow, the mayor finally was able to get his garbage trucks back. Even so, members of El Pinar remained determined. For several months afterwards there ensued a series of tug-o-war incidents lowering and restoring the water level. At one point, long after the garbage truck affair had passed, the mayor was fed-up. He arranged for a major police action in Taza that took place on February 23, 2010. The justification for this action was based on the fact that what had been set in place and agreed upon by all seven communities had been violated. The blame, however, was not upon El Pinar but upon Juan López Gómez and the people of his community at Taza de Agua, the owners of the spring.

366

The mayor was present during the entire action, which involved helicopters, municipal and state police forces, and at least 10 pick-up trucks full of people. Local media covered the event. The news organization *El Imparcial* of Chiapas shot later posted a YouTube link.[34] The edited video clip shows some things and not others, but it generally depicts a dramatic series of events, almost as if following a script. Indeed, to observe the video material one wonders just how staged the police action was, and for what purpose or goal. The highlight is a scene near the water tank when one of Juan's sons utters a gross insult at the police commander. With the help of another policeman, they tackled and cuffed the young man. In the process of other arrests, a woman screams as police try to put her in one of the pick-up trucks. The police took all of these people to the city jail. Almost immediately, the valley communities mobilized in solidarity with Juan and Taza de Agua, organizing a protest action outside the city jail in San Cristóbal de Las Casas vociferously demanding the release of the three prisoners. Within a few hours, the three prisoners were finally released.

When I watched the edited film through the Internet, I noticed something peculiar about the representation of the conflict. I got the impression that the incident (and images) were quite possibly staged, as if the mayor himself wanted this "coverage" and thus attempted to demonstrate his capacity to "uphold the law" while simultaneously using that law to punish his enemy (or to favor his ally, who in this case was Narciso and his followers from El Pinar). But why? For all we know, the water level might have been perfect, not in the least affected. But the mayor's show of force was designed to accomplish a raising of the level (in favor of El Pinar) while claiming to be lowering it (while scapegoating Juan López and the families of Taza de Agua). If this is what was happening in fact, it would reflect one of the oldest tricks in politics: making the good look bad and the bad look good.

367

The people of Taza de Agua, together with members from their alliance in the

east valley communities, quickly published a press release on February 25, 2010. In this

bulletin they not only denounce the police action and brutality launched against them, but

the violation of their human rights and their property rights. There are three interesting

features about this particular press release, written in the formal fact-centered style of a

human rights urgent action bulletin. First, it lays out a complex history of the case.

Second, it uses an inclusive *plural* sense of those who affected by the mayor's violation

of rights. For example, it says "We, the inhabitants of the 4 communities (Taza, La

Sierra, Corazón de Maria, El Escalón) who love each other and respect one another and

have begun to organize ourselves to collectively defend our water spring that we all draw

from . . . ." Third, there is a strong voice of *accusation*.

The following excerpt (my translation) is from their report in which they defend

their collective rights against the "lucrative and capricious interests" of the city mayor

Ochoa Díaz and also the El Pinar leaders (Evangelicals), who all wanted to control access

to the spring "to make money from bottled water companies":[35]

> We therefore have begun to act by destroying the wall that was
> constructed by the mayor and his police on February 23 and have decided
> to no longer give any water from our spring to the inhabitants of San
> Antonio El Pinar because they have lost respect for us, especially since
> they have plunged us all into this problem through their complicity with
> mayor Mariano. Together they have violated our right as Indigenous
> peoples to have our own uses and customs (usos y costumbres). They
> have entered our property (*territorio*) with a lack of respect; so, for this
> reason we are organized to defend our water source on our land. They
> have already begun to violate many principles of our community life:
> violating our right to consultation, the care of our natural resources in our
> own territory, the conservation of the environment and the care of water.
> We clearly know the interests of these authorities (municipal and local) in
> our water spring, which is to negotiate its use with water purification
> industries (empresas) in order to obtain profit from our spring.

A few weeks later, on March 14, of 2010, a major accord was signed in the

mayor's office (Figure 6.6). Representatives from all of the communities were present,

along with important witnesses from the state governor's office. The accord specified the exact height in centimeters for the water distribution tank. It also specified a severe penalty that could not be altered if anyone dares to adjust the level again.

Once the threat was resolved and former levels of redistribution were restored (but *after* the respective organizational influences of Javier and Narciso had been neutralized publically), the conflict calmed down. The intervention by the National Commission for Water (to clarify the nature of any traditional claim on a water resource as "the property of the nation") was helpful to the mayor though in the end it did not matter very much to the Chamula of Taza and el Pinar. After all these negotiations and interventions and protests had transpired, there arose yet another, more pernicious rivalry. Since mimetic rivalry is the product not of individual agency but of interdividual relations, what emerges inter-subjectively are the outcomes of copied desires that can sometimes prove stranger than fiction.

Figure 6.6. End of Conflict. Mayor Díaz Ochoa (center chair) reviews an agreement to end the water conflict between Taza de Agua (Left) and San Antonio-El Pinar (Right). Source: Cuatro Poder, San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas (24 March, 2010).

Analysis: The Mimesis of Avaricious Desire

By April of 2010, even though a "final accord" had supposedly put everything back in its place the month before, the fight for worry-free access to the natural spring was not quite over. As far as Juan López Gómez of Taza de Agua was concerned, everything had been turned around backwards. Juan felt that he and his family had gotten the short end of an already bad deal. For reasons not entirely clear to me as yet, Juan apparently decided that if people wanted access to "his water," they would have to pay, and pay dearly. To the surprise of the east valley communities, their worry was no longer the aggressive or arbitrary Chamula of El Pinar, but the individual Chamula named Juan López: he was demanding $130,000.00 pesos per year from the all of the communities of the east valley with access to his spring. In other words, the price of access had gone up, greatly inflated from "paying for the annual fiesta" on the feast of the Cross May 3, to a straight mercantile-like cash payment for what seemed like one more commodity in an avaricious capitalist economy. Something was suddenly and terribly wrong.

From the normative standpoint of Tzotzil Chamula traditions of reciprocity and a preference for reconciliation rather than judgment or punishment (Burguete Cal y Mayor 2000a), Juan's new and unexpected demand seemed all the more tragic. In terms of traditionalist values among the Chamula themselves, his action suggests something of a perverse moral twist and betrayal; it also seems to reproduce and augment the notion that things work out best in a community when a person can privatize an appropriation of community water—if only for protection or self-preservation. When I asked my informants about how this could be after everything the alliance did to struggle in Juan Lopez's favor, one informant simply replied, "Well, you see, there are "interests" at work here; what can you do?! But if we want the water--and we do need the water, especially for our animals--we will have to pay something, even if it is more than we think we

370

should have to pay." In truth, none of my informants seemed preoccupied that Juan was violating some traditional norm, only that he himself had become capricious, unjust and unreasonable – almost as bad if not worse than his enemies in El Pinar. Juan's new and extreme demands turned into several "emergency" assembly meetings with several *patronatos* representing the different communities. These assemblies got Juan to lower his price only slightly. He for some reason had become stubborn. Considering all the time and money already spent on the struggle, the communities decided the best they could do for him was $30,000.00 pesos for the year. Juan refused this small amount. They then decided there was no way to win and refused to give him anything. They could tell that if that is what he got now, then next year it would most likely be even worse.

To address this unexpected challenge to access, the water stewards decided on a more traditional approach to finding a solution. They would make a direct appeal to each of the municipal agents representing the eight barrios of *ejido* Cuxtitali-El Pinar. With the customary gestures mentioned earlier, the *patronatos* would express their respect and appreciation to these authorities. They would make it extra-enjoyable, or as one informant related: "it was good to bring with us gifts of cooked chicken and tortillas, some cigarettes, crates of soda pop, and just enough *aguardiente* (sugar cane rum) for all to enjoy." Thus, losing the spirit of humility in the exchange, the strategy was simply the principle of reciprocity; by this means, they could ask the authorities for their moral and legal (normative) intervention that would encourage Juan to see things more reasonably.

It took several days but the *Patronatos* produced a successful response; the rural agents all promised to put Juan in line since what he had asked was wrong to do (he had no right to make a profit from the community's water). They promised to help correct his selfishness, his "non-traditional" ways. They agreed to confront him and if necessary slap a fine on him to pay, or bring the matter up at the next community assembly. Because the

371

valley communities refused to give in to intimidation and wanted a traditional solution, they were able to prevail against this threat. The situation once again revealed the vulnerability of the valley communities. To Juan's credit, however, even though he had made such a grand threat, he was unable to affect the flow of water (which was forbidden under penalty per witnessed agreement in the mayor's office).

It is difficult to know whether Juan, after a year of struggle, was lately trying to imitate his rival neighbors in El Pinar. Perhaps, alternatively, he was trying to live in accord with a model, copying out of admiration the selfish actions of some other person or group, some other example of power and greed. It does not take much to imagine, however consciously or not, that such a model could easily have been a leader like Narciso; or Javier; or mayor Mariano. Perhaps it was his principal rival, the one next door: the evangelical *cacique* Domingo, of El Pinar.

Juan's epilogue of betrayal and intimidation seems a surprising reversal from the victim role depicted earlier in this chapter. The role reversal suggests an alternative view about how the conflict may have begun in actuality. If his behavior is any indication (assuming "past is prologue"), could it be that Juan López had previously attempted extortion? Was he doing it already, from the beginning? Would he have attempted to extort his neighbors, the Pentecostals for example, in barrio El Pinar (San Antonio El Pinar)? It is possible. After all, these Chamula had been drawing from this natural spring since 1982 well before the east valley communities came looking to connect a pipeline for their needs. Besides, the population of El Pinar had grown considerably.[36] They needed the water as much or more than anybody, and maybe Juan López knew this was in fact the case.

As I question Juan's motives in this way, I am suggesting that we should also ask about what happened to the all the "human rights rhetoric" and the sentimental

372

expressions of *solidarity* (the collective "we") that were so often expressed in the Taza de Agua post-arrests press release? How true was the accusation of the mayor's complicity with El Pinar's leaders to negotiate a lucrative access for water purification companies? Could this have also been Juan's own desire, to negotiate a lucrative deal for access to a natural resource that traditionally could not be privatized within an *ejido* structure? Was Juan López imitating a pattern of desire, i.e., other people's desires?

If Juan had earlier tried to threaten by extortion either the Pastor Domingo, or the *ejido* Commissar of Cuxtitali-El Pinar, then their negative reaction, their aggression and apparent capriciousness is, from this hermeneutic perspective, more than understandable. It is likely they were acting in such a way as to defend themselves against Juan's imitative desire. To see events and actions this way would explain at least some of El Pinar's supposed arbitrary behavior trying to expropriate the spring "for themselves."

Whatever the true rationale, every May 3rd there is a fiesta at the water spring in Taza de Agua to thank God the Father in heaven (*jTotik ta vinajel*) and, at the same time, equally thank and propitiate the local invisible Earth lord creature who lurks about the water source as an ambiguous spirit of good and evil. Some Chamula, of course, come to the water spring on May 3 to celebrate in the traditional fashion and thus please the chthonic Lord or *j-Ángel* that has made his home there. When Traditionalist Catholics come to this kind of event and believing Catholic Christians as well, they do so to help maintain a public sense of order and cosmic balance. Other Chamula come, however, with almost an agnostic indifference, more business-like in their attitudes than spiritual or devout to a religious praxis. Like functionaries of an organization, this latter group comes because it is required to do so, sent by their communities. If anything, they are determined to celebrate the benefit of water and be done with it. Still others come, but arrive a bit wary about the metaphysics of power and are not quite sure that such fiestas

373

are really all that healthy for the soul, or body, or spirit (suggesting that the Evangelicals are possibly right to avoid such events whenever possible).

Concluding Remarks

In the end, whether out of concern for the cosmos or for the precious (profitable) prospects of shared water, the issues of mimesis and power show water's significance in Chamula customary life. From a traditional perspective, showing up at a water hole fiesta still means having to deal with "earth lords" and their unpredictable "lightning strikes." If you should have to displease an Earth Lord these days, it may be best to offend the ones you cannot see. The visible ones, perhaps earth lord caciques or the earth lord extortionists, seem far more unpredictable and dangerous. In view of Juan's *metanoia* or "turn about," it seems that modern "Earth Lords" are even more mercurial and volatile than those of former, perhaps more ancient times. I am referring to Girard's theory of "doubles" discussed earlier and how through imitative desire "owners" or over-lords of mysteriously vital places like water wells have become a kind of "monstrous twin" of familiar "Others." While Earth Lords may resemble fat ladinos, it is worse yet if they begin to resemble others who look just like themselves (e.g., Sabino, or Javier, or Narciso). The monsters might be anyone who, in pursuit of another's desire, ends-up looking like the model and thus can compete in mediating desire for certain objects.

The conflict in the above narrative is more complex than the previous narratives of Chapters 4 and 5. The imitative aspects I have depicted pertain to how Chamula seem to emulate desires they impute to other Chamula actors who they admire (or envy –what amounts to a negative kind of admiration). More than just mere copying, however, this noticing of what others do or represent serves as a source of inspiration toward action, or motivation for praxis and solidarity of effort (e.g., sequestering garbage trucks). Taken together with the theoretical constructs discussed in chapter 2 (i.e., Ortner's view of

practice theory, and Harrison's understanding of "proprietary identity," or Girard's notion of appropriative desire), we can interpret the Taza de Agua–El Pinar conflict. It is a series of inter-subjective exchanges where preferences and interests lead acting subjects to compete with one another for both things they need but also those they desire.

Let us recall a major tenet of Mimetic theory that when imitation and desire are conjoined, conflict is inevitable. What is interesting about the water conflict story is that while imitative desire seems to produce tensions that come close to violent exchange, unlike the brief machete fight in the previous chapter, this fight shows no severe violent acts. This is surprising despite many physical alternations of the small diversion damn administering water flows (not to mention a number of quarrelsome situations and meetings between opposing groups). In my view, a major difference is the role of ritual and the assembly meeting structures, plus other cultural features that help mitigate and buffer strong passions. In the previous chapter, I referred to the importance of social structure and ritual forms for holding passions or desires in check or at some distance for less influence. The idea was to attempt constraining passions long enough to redirect the "danger" of mimesis, and thus allow for a more propitious form of imitative desire. This was evidenced to some degree in the Chamula "festival of games" (*k'in tajimoltik*).

Another factor was the existing "hierarchy" of *patronatos* and their agents, the *mayoles* (constables). Structures like these are important where human interaction takes place, because they help delimit the contagious or *interdividual* nature of imitative desire. Without social and cultural structures of some sort, passions can get carried away; they can even become capricious if not unimpeded by the roles and expectations of customary life. It is possible that the 1712 and 1869 Chamula imitations of ladino social structures, might have been even more wild and unstoppable had there not been a certain "practice" or structure and agency in place.

Related to this structural argument, however, is the role of religious *habitus* in the Taza de Agua–El Pinar conflict. Whether Christian evangelical or Traditionalist Catholics, the role of religious commitment to transcendent values is part of what it means to be a player of "serious games." Violence, it seems obvious to say, is highly mimetic; but for people who take their religious values seriously as a community, it is harder (but not impossible) to get caught up in imitative reproduction of other people's passions (the mob effect).

The key mimetic crisis in the water conflict had more to do with the two competing Evangelical organizations–who were almost mirror doubles--than it did with any reciprocal imitations between community groups. The communities were more unalike than alike, despite alliance and their resemblances as Chamula; perhaps this was the "saving grace" so to speak – the fact that there was already some differentiation at work in the variety or diversity of religious preferences. While Taza de Agua and some of the valley communities were Traditionalists, El Pinar was mostly an evangelical community (though not necessarily influential with the other evangelicals affected by the lack of water in the valley below). There does not seem to be anything systematically tragic about being different; on the contrary, it seems quite good to have variety, to diversify, and to learn from another's distinctions as well as another's "desires". Too much sameness may lead to jealously in guarding what little one has (like the presumption of power, as the mayor Mariano might have been contemplating). Perhaps Mariano realized too late that the more he hid "power" or any other "precious object" the more others found it interesting, valuable, desirable or otherwise try to acquire it or appropriate some significant aspect.

The mayor seems to have managed in the end, however, when he overtook Juan López' water spring and treated him as a blameworthy scapegoat. The mayor

appropriated Juan's water spring in full view of the camera, mimetically acting as though he were as powerful as his public enemies, the indigenous actors who had humiliated him over the garbage truck affair). He no doubt had in mind the pending mayoral elections of July 2010; which he later it turns out were his to win but he lost considerably because he did not have the Indian vote.

Recall, too, from our discussion of theory in the second chapter that *desire, despite being a strong complex of emotion/motivation,* does not necessarily lead to action. For that to happen, imitation is more than helpful. It is *mimesis*, together with desire, that evokes *agentive* action in human beings. Because it motivates them to become aggressive (or capricious, or avaricious), it is an aspect of social learning that makes humans appear unique among animals. According to mimetic theory, when desire is conjoined with emulation, *purposive* actions arise. They emerge in and through the interactions of desiring subjects. As they seek (desire) to copy one another's interests or desires (even if only unconsciously), there emerges an *interdividual* dynamic, with any number of unintended consequences. This is evident, for example, when Narcisso entered into rivalry with Javier (and through him, Javier's brother Manuel, his former model); it is also evident in the way entire communities acted to make public their demands, to draw "Others" into a contagion of strife that so they could blame them for their grief. It is also evident in the pecuniary interests that seemed to have driven the desires of both Juan López and his nemesis, the PRI mayor, Mariano.

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER 6

1 Also known as *San Antonio El Pinar*, but should not be confused with another Tzotzil community elsewhere, *Santiago El Pinar*.

2 Source: http://cat.microrregiones.gob.mx/catloc/LocdeMun.aspx?tipo=clave&campo=loc&ent=07&mun=078).

3 Fleming takes the quotation from *Violence and the Sacred* (1977: 159/235). Fleming (2004: 171) writes an important endnote (6) clarifying Girard's notion of a 'sacrificial' crisis as a formal or general description. In the complex situations of real conflict there is a range of intermediate instantiations that do not always exhibit the degree of dissolution depicted formally. To support of his idea of a 'sacrificial crisis,' Girard draws from a large body of ethnological evidence (Fleming 2004: 70-110).

4 For San Juan's story see Gossen's Telling Maya tales (1999: 47-53).

5 Gossen 1999: 277n5, certainly thinks this is probably the historical case. "The logic of this arrangement," he says, referring to the duality of images Senior and Junior, "Ladinos first, Indians second, in order of language acquisition—is consonant with the Chamula view that saints, who are the common ancestors of all people, are Ladinos. Like saints, Ladinos have greater power than Indians in most spheres of contemporary life."

6 This intra-ethnic conflict story is based upon several interviews I conducted in 2009 and 2010 as the water conflict unfolded. Information about the history and internal structures of the *ejido* Cuxtitali-El Pinar comes primarily from two Chamula informants from distinct communities who attended the Cuxtitali-el Pinar monthly assemblies. Without permission I would not have been welcome at these meetings, not just because I was a "Aleman" (foreigner or stranger,) but because I was living in the particular community of La Candelaria. That fact alone would have complicated any attempts at rapport with those living in El Pinar.

7 Although the intra-ethnic conflict occurs between distinct Chamula communities (following their respective leaders and assembly agreements), it is interesting that some are semi-autonomous barrios located within larger *ejido* complexes. Others are integral communities with no barrios, who collectively act as if they were an *ejido* (as co-property owners or *comuneros*).

8 His family owns a construction company *Peje de Oro*, which is well know for building new apartment complexes on top of or near sensitive ecological areas. Mariano Díaz Ochoa (and his family) do not seem opposed to city planners who envision one day building a "new" SCLC in the Eastern valley. See, for example, http://www.scribd.com/doc/17222544/PROYECTO-CORAZON-DE-MARIA-SALVANDO-SAN-CRISTOBAL

9 Government internal memorandum: CONAGUA (Comisión Nacional del Agua), August 6, 2009, from Ing. José Raúl Saavedra Horita, Director General del OCFS de La CONAGUA and directed to Dr. Noé Castañon León, Secretario General de Gobierno (File no. 005249).

10 This information comes from two reports prepared by a special technician on behalf of the National Water Comision, CONAGUA (dated July and August 2009). As a recommendation to end the conflict, the report concluded that whatever was changed should be restored to the way it was before.

11 This is my own estimate from INEGI 2005 population figures. There are no exact numbers for residents of the Cuxtitali barrio or the newer barrios of Peje de Oro (land invasions since the late 1990s).

12 The volcano, which reaches a total height of 2,876 masl, dominates most of the eastern region within the municipal boundaries of San Juan Chamula. Most of the natural springs do not flow toward the Chamula side of Tzonte'vitz but toward the communities near Tenejapa and San Cristóbal de Las Casas located at around 2,200 meters.

13 The three valley communities authorized by the original 1986 contract to access water in El Pinar's barrio of Taza de Agua are La Sierra, Corazón de María, and El Escalón, the other non-authorized groups are two contiguous communities near by: El Ciprés (which is a barrio of La Candelaria) and the *ejido* New Corral Ch'en el Ángel. These two latter communities have essentially "sub-contracted" for water access with the authorized hamlets; which was viable when water was flowing their way.

14According to Burguete Caly y Mayor (2000a:112) having to ask an assembly "particular or private permission" about what one can or cannot do with their water hole or spring, is something of a new situation in Chamula "traditional" practice. But from the 1990s onward it has become rapidly negative if the community as a whole does not feel included in a deal. Apparently, according to the older traditions, it used to be that the owner was "generous" because he has total authority over access to the resource (not to mention the *Earth Lord – Angel*, a creature who seems to always lurk near such resources).

15 Fenwick (2010: 103) provides a more precise description of the water caretaker role which is applicable to almost all indigenous/*campesino* communities in highland Chiapas: *Each year the community appoints a male member to serve voluntarily as el patron del agua (water caretaker) whose primary role is to ensure the regular maintenance of the distribution network.*

16 These "fees" or "cooperative payments" can range from $100 pesos to $1000.00 per family, depending on whether it concerns equipment (pumps, repairs, new pipe, etc) or travel.

17 Altogether there are (6) six communities affected by San Antonio El Pinar's attempt to appropriate the natural spring at Taza de Agua. To clarify, although there are five lowland communities drawing upon this spring since 1986 there have only been three (3) communities actually authorized (named in a document) to receive this water. Before there was agreement with the three authorized communities, however, the barrio of El Pinar already had permission to draw water for its community in 1982. Until recently, there was no controversy or conflict. Cf. Document "Certificado de Derechos Sobre Tierras De Uso Común (Registro Agrario Nacional, Folio 07FC00057138; No. 000000058137; issued to Juan López Gómez of Taza de Agua, *ejido* Cuxtitali on 28 November, 2006; and according to approval by *Ejido* Assembly (5, June, 2005).

18 *Acta de Acuerdo*, Taza de Agua, 14 de junio, 2009. This was a signed document of clarification, reconfirming an original commitment and renewing it for present circumstances, prepared between Juan López Gómez and the *patronatos* of the four affected lowland communities. Although this meeting happened in June, the problem actually began in April of 2009 when the alleged aggressors from El Pinar (San Antonio) raised the trim wall of the water-collecting tank 25 centimeters, they caused a lack of flow. All concerned decided (1) stay firm and united according to the original agreement; and (2) return the water distribution level of the collection tank wall to the way it was before.

19 That a religious minister could be a political boss is not that unusual in terms of cacique politics in Mexico. Knight (2005: 28), in *Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, mentions this based on situations in Oaxaca reported by Greenberg (1988: 5) and Parnell (1988: 19-20).

20 Document "Acta Definitiva de Acuerdo," Archivo Taza de Agua-El Pinar (14 June, 2009)

21 Document "Solicitando superior intervención," (copia) Archivo Taza de Agua-El Pinar (17 de junio, 2009, copia). Documento "Acta de Acuerdo"-- Oficinas de la Sec. Reforma Agraria, Archivo Taza de Agua-El Pinar (8 de Mayo de 1986, copia).

22 According to tradition, on the day of Santa Cruz (May 3rd), the *patronatos* arrive to celebrate, invoking the grace of God and the Virgin, but also the favor of the Holy Cross (god) and also the favor of the local "Earth Lords" (pleasing the invisible spirits is better than incurring their wrath or mischief). The fiestas of May 3rd at springs and water-holes are ubiquitous in Chiapas, a ritual act of bonding that also marks the beginning of the rainy season which lasts for six months.

23 Based upon a chronology of points indicated as well in an earlier internal document dated 14 June, 2009, "Acta Definitiva de Acuerdo," drawn up by the affected communities.

24 Document "Solicitando superior intervención," (copia) Archivo Taza de Agua-El Pinar (17 de junio, 2009, copia), p. 1, petition number One.

25 For the beginnings of this organization in Chiapas, see *Chiapas: el Factor Religioso* (1998). See also Morquecho (1997).

26 See Cuatro Poder "Celebrará la CODICECH su cuarto aniversario, en San Cristóbal de las Casas." [Escrito por Administrator] Jueves, 26 de Noviembre de 2009.

27 Manuel Collazo Gómez was put in jail on racketeering charges by the former Governor, Pablo Salazar Mendiguchía [2000-2006]. He was finally released from the federal prison system in September of 2010, after eight years of incarceration. Whether Collazo was actually guilty of these charges is debatable, despite his reputation for violence (Interview with Manuel Gómez Hernández).

28 Domingo Pérez Hernández. This is the name listed in Juan López registered complaint (529/2009) to the State Office for the Minister of Indigenous Justice (14 July, 2009). Domingo was apparently the original owner of land and spring before Juan. Property transferred in January of 1991. State recognition/regularization/certification of this property came in 2006 (after final *Ejido* Assembly approval in 2005). Note: This name is not the same as Domingo Pérez López, who at this time is the Treasurer for the *Ejido* and Commisar (Melitón Hernández López). Pérez López is a member of the new Evangelical Syndicate, CODICECH (headed by Narciso Lunes Hernández, ex-member of OPEACH which was a similar organization).

29 Document "Acta Administrativa Número 529" (14 de julio, 2009).

30 Nevertheless, there is evidence that Domingo Pérez Hernández did in fact transfer his *parcela* to Juan López Gómez on 6 January, 1991.

31 Burguete Cal y Mayor (2000) explores the problematic nature of this relationship between I∂ndigenous customary law and Mexican Law regarding norms related to water.

32 Elio Henríquez. San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas. *Indígenas están Preionando. Retienen a nueve camiones de Limpia.* Cuatro Poder (viernes, 18 de septiembre, 2009). Pepe

Camas/Corresponsal. Túxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas. *Ante Nula Respuesta De Autoridades En Conflicto: Secuestran campesinos unidades de Limipia* (El Heraldo de Chiapas. Viernes 18 de Septiembre de 2009).

33 In Mexico, church buildings are the "property of the nation," whether Catholic, Protestant, or something else. Since 1992, all church buildings and congregations are registered entities with the "Religious Association" office of the Federal Government. Most protestant churches obviate their buildings as "federal property" with prominent placement of the registry number on the front of the church. Catholic churches–with the exception of some Indigenous chapels prone to persecution by Traditionalists in their community, do not obviate the association (signaling either a stance of autonomy or independence to the power of the state over the church or perhaps a co-equal identification of power).

34 The video of this organized police action in the community of Taza de Agua may be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqxXgDecUbw

35 There are a couple of places where this bulletin/press-release (February 25, 2010) may be found: for example, search for http://chiapasdenuncia.blogspot.com/2010/02/la-comunidad-de-tasa-de-agua-de-sclc.html and also http://eloficiodehistoriar.com.mx/2010/02/25/indigenas-en-defensa-de-su-territorio-denuncian/

36 INEGI reports 830 people in 2005 and 932 in 2010.

> Ethnography is part philosophy, and a good deal of the rest is confession.
> Clifford Geertz
> *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973:346)

Chapter 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It is worth reiterating what I stated at the beginning in the introduction to this dissertation: that this has been a *heuristic* project, an exploratory investigation into the possibilities of applying both mimetic theory and practice theory to the conflicts in Chamula life related to identity formation. The process is hardly clear or obvious, and so the study of how mimesis, practice, and identity relate to each other entails a way to understand how identity generates conflict and how conflicts in turn generate identities. That is why, if understood as a form of practice (habitus or social predisposition), Girard's notion of "triangular desire" opens up new avenues of research regarding causal factors pushing the dynamic of conflict relations. It explains the nature of both structure (models as mediators of desire) and agency (subjects as actors and "world making" agents). It also explains how certain objects or objectives imputed as worth desiring are always mediated between the structures and agents.

To postulate that desire is somehow "triangular" in the way it operates among and between human beings is a way to indicate that desire is always something relational. It is more than just autonomous individuals making choices; on the contrary, it is, as Girard has argued, an *interdividual* communication where individuals are far from ever autonomous agents merely acting on their own. Social reality is always a mediated reality, thus always about agents as well as agencies, and always an intersubjective exchange out of which desire emerges, if often unconsciously.

Mimesis, Practice, and Identity

Based on a limited amount of ethnographic and other kinds of data drawn from nearly two years of fieldwork, this dissertation has investigated incidents and indicators of intra-ethnic conflict and identity formation amid the Maya Tzoztil Chamula of Chiapas, Mexico. It has sought to know whether imitation and desire combine in such a way as to foment identity-related issues of conflict. The working hypothesis for the dissertation has been that imitative desire (variously understood as metaphysical desire, triangular desire, appropriative desire, acquisitive desire) constitutes an independent variable. It is independent in the sense that imitative desire predominantly influences the interdividual ways actors put material and psychosocial elements into play.

From a heuristic perspective, I have argued that in order to comprehend the mimetic nature of intra-ethnic conflicts and violence, and particularly community conflicts among the Tzotzil Chamula, it is analytically valuable to explore Girard's theory of imitative desire, but to do so in conjunction with Ortner's reformulation of Bourdieu's "practice theory." These perspectives, when utilized together, offer what I believe is a plausible *theoría* or "way to see" and thus explain how and why social conflicts arise in the first place and why they persist.

The results of this dissertation effort show that it is possible to develop and apply an interpretive matrix or hermeneutic using both Girard's notion of mimesis (imitation shaped by the power of desire) in combination with Ortner's notion of "practice" (as agency or habitus shaped by the "interests" of power). Both views amplify one another's potential for explaining at least some of the initial causes of conflict and the way identity (ethnicity) can take shape in, through, and because of conflictual relations, even violence. To summarize a multi-faceted perspective of both theories I suggest using Girard's neologism "inter-dividual" agency.

Review of Research Goals

As developed at length in Chapter 1, the aims of this research have been to provide:

 1. A reasonable set of inferences from which to explore whether the imitation of another's desire operates as a key motivational factor in volatile situations of competition and rivalry between Maya Tzotzil Chamula individuals and groups.

 2. A review and evaluation of pertinent literature on mimetic theory and practice theory.

 3. A general assessment of anthropological perspectives that examine the social dimensions of conflict and violence.

 4. Documentation on conflict prone relations of negative forms of imitation that involve envy, jealousy, greed, avarice, or whatever "interests" appear to drive inter-subjective interactions.

 5. Identify generative elements or causal factors of conflict formation; that is to say, what precipitates conflict and the making of differences in the first place.

 6. Identify, if possible, any symbolic mechanisms that attract a positive mimesis, that is to say a propitious imitation that does not necessarily generate rivalrous conflict.

 7. Explore to what extent "similarity" and "difference" shape identity (a felt sense of belonging) within the current social and cultural context of Chamula communities.

 8. Explore a reflexive form of ethnographic description for depicting Chamula experiences of conflict and violence.

It was with the above research aims in mind, that I set out to determine what factors might work to generate a felt-sense of difference among people who are very similar, and to what extent similarity and difference produces and/or is produced by, conflict. In other words, if "too much familiarity or sameness fosters contempt" then to what degree is this old maxim true for the Tzotzil Chamula. The dissertation shows it is true to some extent, given how imitative desire leads to an increase or intensity in competition and rivalry, or envy and jealousy, not to mention situations of disdain or misrecognition, all of which generates conflict prone forms of us/them differentiation. Overall, the project was undertaken to probe (rather than necessarily prove) the applicability of imitative theory, practice theory, and various theoretical views of identity formation and thus ethnicity.

Summary of Findings

The conclusion that the above familiar adage does seem to reverberate with meaning, at least to some extent, in the historical and contemporary context of Chamula identity formations, is based upon the evident ways that "the desire of desire" (imitative desire) imputes worth, value, or attractiveness to certain objects (e.g. objects representing power, privilege, or pecuniary interests). The perception of what others (Tzotzil, Ladinos, Gringos, etc) find interesting or desirable is something that emerges unpredictably through everyday interactions that most Tzotzil Chamula know through community life in their families, barrios, hamlets, or ejidos.

Although quite limited in scope, my study has shown that identity formation and conflict production and reproduction are related social phenomena. The first finding, however, is not just that these phenomena are related, but that they appear to be socially constructed through forms of practice rooted in imitative desire. While this finding is tentative and based upon a discrete amount of ethnographic research, it nevertheless provides a reasonable empirical basis for inferring its relevance or explanatory power for understanding social conflict situations generally or broadly, but also specifically. The research findings are based on the following observations.

1. The way some Tzotzil individuals (Xun, Lupita, Arecely, Ixchel, but also Sabino and others) undergo identity transformations through the way their desires arise interactively (interdividually) and expand by means of an acquisitive or appropriative mimesis. This is a process over time, at varied rates, whereby the values and meanings that seem to belong to "others" are sought after as though pertinent to one's true or original "Self"-- despite the risk of conflict that self-definition can bring vis-à-vis more customary, or long established self-ascriptions that drive ideals about belonging to a common unity (Chapter 3).

Mimesis or imitative desire is a 'worldmaking' activity but not because of individual self-invention, but rather the mutual reproduction of what other people find themselves seeking as interesting, significant, desirable.

2. How barrios within the same community can come to conflict because of symbolic associations (e.g., images of Saints, images of the powerful) as when Chamula community members attempt to self-define themselves vis-à-vis 'others' whom they misrecognize even though they are more than familiar with them as neighbors, Catholics, Priistas, farmers or carpenters (Chapter 4).

3. How distinct but neighboring rural ejido communities sometimes find themselves in conflict (e.g., Chamula clashing with Chamula), when in many ways they are identical in terms of social, economic, political, and spiritual practice (habitus). They discover themselves embattled over competing claims because of similar ambitions and desires. The desire intensifies as each group struggles to obtain definition by winning the prize of a particular 'object of desire' (land), that only by happenstance presented such a possibility to each group (Chapter 5).

4. Imitative desire is a form of practice or interdividual agency. In Chapter 6, some Chamula are attempting to protect their traditional access to a natural water source while other Chamula seek to appropriate it for exclusive use. Both groups seek to appropriate non-Chamula to favor their battle; and both groups employ similar tactics drawing upon extra-community organizations (OPEACH, CODICECH) to act as shield and lance, even while these same indigenous organizations are fixated with each other as rivals. The finding here is not so much how Chamula are able to differentiate themselves as they employ similar methods in striving for the same object of desire, but how the original object (water) eventually falls to a level of secondary importance. This happened when the key actors (Javier and Narciso; and their organizations) shifted to focus upon

386

the "object" of the other very similar leader and organization as rival. True to the predictions of mimetic theory, in their rivalry these antagonists increasingly resemble each other more rather than less. Thus they become "doubles" as the inter-community struggles they represent escalate.

5. Another important finding from this research is the fact that intra-ethnic conflicts, while always ambiguous and multi-dimensional, can be thought of in terms of a triangular set of relationships. The anthropology of conflict has often used a schema like that of Riches (1986) to describe inter-related actions and meanings between Perpetrator (Antagonist), Victim, and Audience. But the configuration of "triangular desire" from Girard's mimetic theory may be more flexible and applicable not only in terms of Riches' schema just mentioned but also other complex frameworks. Girard's notion of triangular desire is not limited to only three aspects, but states that these aspects form a dynamic mechanism always present interdividually and in endless combination.

Wider Implications

The relevance of imitative desire as a form of practice (i.e., not simply practice but interdividual agency that both produces and is produced by socio-cultural structures) is clearly suggested by the inferences just summarily stated. Additional long-term and in-depth research could develop these findings further, perhaps using a more systematic design. Additional research might probe more comparative examples as a way to comprehend imitative desire as a form of practice. Thus, the overall implications of this research are that intra-ethnic experiences of conflict (and to some degree, inter-ethnic forms of conflict as well) can be more accurately understood not just in terms of politics, economics, or material dimensions, nor by motivational schemas alone, but through the less well known but likely present independent variable that is imitative desire. The implication here is that previous ethnographic research, e.g., studies of inter-village

387

conflicts in Mesoamerica, can undergo a re-evaluation and receive additional interpretation.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of the dissertation, it seems possible to affirm that familiarity does breed contempt, at least among some Chamula community members and groups (though, of course, not always). The larger social significance of this aphorism is evidenced in the ways people go about the business of 'worldmaking' – that is to say, constructing wittingly or unwittingly those boundaries and identities that define us/them relations of persons, places, and peoplehood.

Moreover, the adage reflects an older minority perspective in social conflict theory that sees conflicts likely to arise where people find themselves threatened by too much resemblance (homogenous in most of their social and cultural experiences). To this end, the dissertation follows upon Blok's view (2000:27) that "the fiercest struggles often take place between individuals, groups, and communities that differ very little—or between which differences have greatly diminished"--a phenomenon Harrison (2002: 229) observes regarding "proprietary identities" and "trademark" identity conflicts.

The larger aim of this project, however, has been to make a modest contribution to both older and newer areas of research. It points, hopefully, to a widening horizon of perspectives regarding the phenomenon of imitation in human interactions. It especially contributes to the variety of cutting edge projects taking place today, research that attempts to forge significant links between the ancient notion of mimesis and the variety of knowledge and disciplines that constitute contemporary modes of scientific inquiry (Garrels 2011). Of special import is research on the recent discovery of "mirror neurons" and other issues (Hurley & Chater 2005). I wish to add my enthusiasm for research horizon of "non-disciplinary" researchers looking at human evolution and social change with a critical lens that permits seeing how to proceed in new directions.

388

Psychologist Scott R. Garrels (2011: 1-2), in the example that follows, expresses his desire for concrete new avenues of research:

> Few areas of recent research have shed as much light on our understanding of human nature as those that address with fresh insight the unique and foundational properties of human imitation. Far from being the simple and mindless act that we typically associate it with ("monkey see, monkey do"), imitation is now understood as a complex, generative, and multidimensional phenomenon at the heart of what makes us human. In fact, imitation may very well be the basis for not only how we learn, but also how we understand each other's intentions and desires, establish relational bonds, fall in love, become jealous, compete with one another, and violently destroy each other, all the while operating outside of our conscious awareness.

While it is unlikely there will ever be any "unified field" approach to human action or interaction, that sees imitation and desire behind so much creative, expressive, intentional, and even non-rational human practice, it is nevertheless compelling to inquire into its possibility. Of course, material explanations alone are not enough to explain specifically human behavior and cultural forms of conduct, though they can certainly explain a great deal. The significance of researching imitative desire as a key element pushing social conflict and identity formation is that this line of inquiry helps us to see structure and agency differently.

My data set does not tell us everything we need to know, but it does open the door to looking for more information--anything new about what generates volatile differences in the first place, or what factors are at work in driving the intensification of conflict escalation, even to the point of turning violent. I accounted only for a few of the many worries that exist among Chamula today, and I have only described a few historical moments that reflect how intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflict often share the same triangular dynamic of Mediator-Subject-Object.

In terms of identity formation, I have looked at a number of ways Chamula self-ascribe themselves as "ethnically distinct" in relation to other Tzotzil groups, and as

389

distinctive, too, from non-Indians. This does not mean I have exhausted adequately the larger anthropological question of how "distinctiveness" is formulated originally, even when differentiated aggressively out of some initial homogeneity or sameness. The phenomenon of imitative desire seems to be one way to understand that process, a view further amplified by practice theory.

In terms of my heuristic goal, the dissertation helps the reader to enter and explore new territory, new questions and approaches, and the many implications such inquiry suggests. There is enough evidence to infer that the binocular perspective of both mimetic theory and practice theory can offer a fresh approach to understanding ethnic identity formation and its relationship to the causes of conflict. Theoretically, imitative desire may very well be the predominant factor to watch for; but this is hard to prove. But this is the purpose of a "messy ethnography" – to tell a story of stories, to collect as many fragments possible, rendering any "authentic story" impossible to finish, complete, or close once and for all.

Epilogue: Tears of Sorrow, Water of Hope

The "peoplehood" or ethnicity of Chamula people is somewhat reflected in their name, which some anthropologists believe derives from *cham vo'*. In Tzotzil, this expression literally means "where the water dies." The phrase could possible echo an association with a lake that the Spaniards might have drained in order to establish the first reducciones for the initial indigenous settlements--not far from where Chamula township stands today. Others, including many Chamula themselves, enjoy telling another story, one that is less realistic but perhaps more meaningful and a bit humorous besides. It plays with the phrase *la cham mula xa*–a combination of Tzotzil and Spanish that denotes "where the mule died." In my view, this silly metaphor is sadly ambiguous. It refers to a great deal of history in which many Chamula men and women were burdened like mules

390

to carry the weight of Spanish, creole, and ladino oppression and prejudice. Both versions of this tale, a kind of name game, are reasons enough for lamentation--that seemingly perpetual state of regret or disappointment that the conditions of life for one's people is unsatisfactory, unreasonable, unfair, and forever unjust. Historically, many Chamula are no strangers to grief and lamentation when it comes to social conflict and violence and intra-ethnic violence seems to be particular lamentable, however construed physically or psychologically.

On that day in 2002 when I was grieving with the Chamula of La Candelaria, I was not then aware of all the many factors that could produce a lynching or other forms of violence. Even less was I cognizant of any prior tensions that might have shaped community attitudes about violence some years before. I was certainly aware of the role of political bosses in the highlands, especially in San Juan Chamula where strong-men (caciques) have long had controlling power over political and economic affairs, and where conflicts were often disguised as problems of religious intolerance and indifference.

In retrospect, it is not surprising that the community of La Candelaria in 2002 was in the midst of a debate on what to do with the prisoners they had captured. That a debate existed at all during that time of tension was probably a very good indicator that the urge to violent revenge had been slowed down. The assembly seems to have scrutinized their passionate intention by deliberate, conscious consideration rather than capriciously acting in ways that reflected the heat of angry hearts. Unfortunately, the debate was too long; it did not prevent two men, however guilty, from a cruel lynching by those who were supposed to guard them, supposed to hold them in safe keeping until the community would decide what to do with them. Of four accused men, two of them died

and two more came very close to death, but for the intervention of community authorities getting there in time to stop it.

Even now, years later, it is difficult to interpret what really went on. The collective effort at execution of an extra-judicial style of vengeance almost seems to depend upon expeditious responses, intuitive or instinctual action, non-thinking behavior, or what Girard would call the "contagion" of imitative desire. All of this seems to reflect the interactive nature of violence (violent behavior) as a powerful social reality. Violence begets violence. But it also seems to create a sense of identity, definition, boundary.

Creating ethnicity is a mimetic act. It is the forging of group and groups into a sense of "peoplehood"–however porous or closed the "boundaries" which, over time, indubitably shift and vary. "Worldmaking" is almost always a creative action, often a mimetic performance of representation, ethnically embodied, that is to say, configured in terms of some felt-sense of meaningful identity, as belonging or association. But no identity, whether social or individual, is ever autonomously arrived at, let alone ever remains static, "essential" and thus immutable. The significance of my research on conflict and identity formation among the Chamula underscores how worldmaking and peoplehood, along with other mimetic "constructions" are product and production of rational and non-rational aspects of human interaction. In a word, I want to call this process "interdividual agency" (conjoining Girard's notion of imitative relations and Ortner's view of habitus). By coining this compound term, I am summarizing two very complex frameworks for explaining what human beings do and say, something all the more difficult to understand when humans engage one another in aggressive or violent fashion. But like any bridge, the idea is to connect between two otherwise seemingly isolated but highly significant "spheres"--each useful for helping us learn what transpires

392

as well as how things get started when conflict erupts. Awareness of conflict dynamics is the first step to reduce or even prevent further escalations.

"I want what you want," seems to be the emotional 'raison d'etre' of desire in collective forms of violence and thus at the root of interdividuality–that intersubjective exchange from which motivation emerges in the ways individuals learn from one another as they interact, something singular rational choice alone could never quite accomplish. When everyone else is "doing it" the desire arises very quickly as if to respond "and why not me?"

Yes, in retrospect, to me it seems the debate on whether to lynch Diego's alleged murderers without trial in La Candelaria was a good sign of how slowing down the passion of imitative desire can produce a more positive outcome; unless, of course, as in fact happened, the course of events are redirected suddenly. Where two or three are gathered, mimetic desire is sure to operate and precipitate certain kinds of effects or influence. The important contrast seems to be this: the assembly debate in La Candelaria was a propitious or positive mimesis whereas what happened among the *mayoles* (constables) and others first guarding and then attempting to lynch all four prisoners in the forest was a negative or non-propitious mimesis. After all, the elders, the authorities who came on the man hunt to Concordia, had themselves ordered a severe beating of these men before consigning them to the forest commons for safekeeping during the assembly meeting. In a rather concrete fashion, the elders perpetuated the historical irony born of the way many Spaniards, ladinos, and even Chamula themselves have long wayward indigenous like the Chamula. The elders seem to have modeled or mediated the fact that the accused Chamula should be beaten, kicked, and perhaps killed—treated as if they were nothing more than stubborn "mules."

393

I can only believe that the debate in the assembly, the urgent discussion about whether to kill or not to kill as a community (to put it bluntly), was an indication (though hardly incontrovertible evidence) that many had learned from previous experiences of conflict and violence. Chamula who had experienced intra-ethnic conflict with other Chamula much like themselves most likely knew, up-close, just how dangerous desire is or can be, especially if unleashed and allowed to spread its influence without constraint. Life in La Candelaria was conservative and traditional for a reason.

Again, as the dissertation has emphasized throughout it is not imitation (mimicry or emulation) that is problematic; rather it is the imitation of desire. We learn our desires, Girard has argued, and we learn what these desires value from the others who model them to us. And when those desires come into close range, when desire provokes competition, or the threat of the counterfeit reproduction, the pirating of the authentic, that is when conflict is sure to rise.

For the Chamula of La Candelaria and the other communities nearby that also self-ascribe as Chamula, previous experiences of conflict and violence – both inter- and intra- forms of conflict – have influenced the formation of Chamula "practice" or habitus. Although it is hard to know for sure how past influences or events determine a subsequent present, I draw my inference in part from the experiences of my Chamula friends, especially my compadre.

As I have presented the story, at the time of the lynching episode he was then acting as a community official, an assistant judge. But even before the lynching in 2002, he was very much affected by other conflicts, like that of the barrio fights inside ejido La Candelaria. And when he recently married, he also joined the struggle to obtain new land that would one day be New Corral Ch'en ejido (after fighting with the Chamula of Corazon de Maria community). But later as a young judge, my compadre joined with

394

other authorities in discerning how to reconcile community members affected by the desires of others, including those malevolent desires from witchcraft accusations (where a neighbor can accuse another of perpetrating metaphysical harm).

My compadre Sebastián has been a "monkey man" or mash for many years, and gladly jumps at the chance to perform. In 2008, he wanted me to learn the social and cultural role of this mysterious creature that he enjoyed appropriating so much, acting on behalf of his community (Figure 7.1). Being a *max* meant performing the necessary "serious fun" (cf. Jonsson 2002) that brings so much attention to the "serious games" of power and presumption that so often characterize social relations (Ortner 2006).

Figure 7.1. Day of the Dead 2009. Village of Romerillo, San Juan Chamula. "El Gringo Mash" Miguel the Ethnographer, preparing to perform with other "Monkey men" as they roam the cemetery to sing and dance, and make animate noises that honor the living and the dead.

When joining with other monkey men to wear the military-looking grenadier costume for their public role, mashes aim to play a game with memory provocation by calling attention to foolish things like war and conflict, or the dangers of ambition and

envy, or simply the plain "craziness" of desire. Maxes will even drink substantial amounts of sugar cane rum or *pox* in order to effect such craziness (though a max is not compelled do so). Humans forget, but according to Maya legend, in the long ago it was foolish business that once affected the first type of human beings (who survived the great flood), who were condemned to wear tails on their bare behinds.

The *maxetik* make these life lessons visible, mimetically represented, and performed in a manner that is highly efficacious as representation, appropriation, symbolic re-enactment, and more.

Glancing at The Past to Keep an Eye on the Future

All together, the instructive mimesis about the dangers of desire seems to stand out all the more when contemporary experiences receive the light of past history. The hesitancy toward all-out and no-holds-barred kinds of violence is in part sustained not only by the recent experiences of barrio fights and inter-community land claim disputes described in the dissertation, but by the larger dramas of the past. As I pointed out in Chapter 3, this remembrance includes the 1712 Tzeltal rebellion, which was not simply against the dominant ladino population and its hegemony, but swelled to attack other indigenous populations who did not wish to imitate the rebel's desires to be and act just like the ladino Church and Army. The result was tragic on many levels, but especially when Indian killed Indian because both were "rebelling."

There was also the 1869 Cuscat rebellion (the so-called "caste war" or "war of Santa Rosa") and the mimetic power of holy images–Chamula style. During that conflict, many Chamula saw first hand the repercussions of mimetic desire as ladino began to fight ladino, only to set upon the Chamula as a kind of sacrificeable scapegoat for the sake of uniting common interests among the contenders.

In addition, although not discussed at length in the dissertation, many Chamula remember a similar fate in the bits and pieces of story they know about a once famous Chamula leader named Jacinto Pérez Chixtot, also known as *el Pajarito*. Chixtot, with the help of ladino military leaders from San Cristóbal de Las Casas, led an army of aggrieved Chamula in 1911 against the ladino liberals, thus ostensibly defending the highland conservative ladinos. However, Chixtot was so successful in organizing and maintaining a Chamula army of several thousand men that he inadvertently brought to fore the worst imaginings of most ladinos, Conservatives and Liberals alike. When Pajarito and his army were stopped by overwhelming military forces from the lowlands (Tuxtla Gutierrez) he was then further defeated by enemies from among his own people in San Juan Chamula.

It is, of course, reasonable to guess that these contemporary and historical experiences are not the only ones where group conflict has eventually formed an apprehension about the crazy potency of imitative desire. I did not have the time or means to document all Chamula conflicts, let alone elaborate on those reported in recent decades in the local media or by other researchers regarding "dissidence" and religious and political conflict (See *Donde Muere el Agua*; see also Appendix B).

Perhaps the sadness I once observed in the face of my compadre was not so much about the horrendous crime of lynching, but the fact that an opportunity had been lost. The community assembly was set to avoid this collective act of violence and thus not do things in a "heated" way. But the actual lynching of two of the four men accused had the effect of taking this opportunity away, irrevocably lost. What made it depressingly painful for my compadre was that the assembly he served, his own community of Chamula just like himself, had come so close to a communal decision to hand over the alleged murderers (that he had helped to capture) to proper city and state authorities.

397

Apparently, the desire for revenge and "pay back" was greater, or just too strong for some to resist. As Diego had died, so did a similar violence come upon his killers.

Part of what the tears meant that rainy day in 2002, was having to lament the crime of a few that implicated the many. In this sense, I see the tears as exposing the depth of feeling for how most of the people of La Candelaria felt: still struggling to realize a shared hope or ideal of common unity, and still unsure of the direction these events would take them. Mimetic desire had split the community, while at the same time strangely uniting it, albeit in the silence of solidarity against non-Indian authority set to scrutinize the details of a terrible lynching.

REFERENCES

Donde Muere El Agua: Expulsiones y Derechos Humanos en San Juan Chamula. 2001. San Cristóbal de Las Casas, México: Centro Derechos Humanos: Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas.

Abbink, Jon. 2000a. Preface: Violation and Violence as Cultural Phenomena. *In* Meanings of Violence: A Cross Crultural Perspective, edited by G. Aijmer and J. Abbink. Oxford: Berg.

------. 2000b. Restoring the Balance - Violence and Culture among the Suri of Southern Ethiopia. *In* Meanings of Violence - A Cross-cultural Perspective, edited by G. Aijmer and J. Abbink. Oxford, New York: Berg.

------. 2001. Violence and Culture - Anthropological and Evolutionary-psychological Reflections on Inter-Group Conflict in Southern Ethiopia. *In* Anthropology of Violence and Conflict, edited by J. Abbink and G. Aijmer. London and New York: Routledge.

Abbink, J., and Göran Aijmer, eds. 2000. Meanings of Violence: A Cross Cultural Perspective. Oxford; New York: Berg.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1991. Writing Against Culture. *In* Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present, edited by R. G. Fox. Santa Fe, NM: SAR.

Aguilar Penagos, Mario. 1990. La celebración de nuestro juego: el carnaval chamula, un sincretismo religioso. 1a ed. México: Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas, Consejo Estatal para el Fomento a la Investigación y Difusión de la Cultura.

Aguirre Beltrán, Gonzalo. 1967. Regiones de refugio; el desarrollo de la comunidad y el proceso dominical en mestizo América. 1. ed, Instituto Indigenista Interamericano. Ediciones especiales. México: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano.

Aijmer, G. 2000. Introduction: The Idiom of Violence in Imagery and Discourse. *In* Meanings of Violence, edited by G. Aijmer and J. Abbink. Oxford, New York: Berg.

Albores Zárate, Beatriz Andrea. 1978. El funcionalismo en la etnografía tzeltal-tzotzil: un análisis de sus implicaciones teóricas y políticas. Tuxtla Gutiérrez: Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas.

Anderson, Myrdene. 2004. Cultural Shaping of Violence: Victimization, Escalation, Response. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

Anderson, Myrdene and Cara Richards. 2004. Introduction: The Careless Feeding of Violence in Culture. *In* Cultural Shaping of Violence - Victimization, Escalation, Response, edited by M. Anderson. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

Anderson, Thor. 1988. Sacred Games: Ritual Warfare in a Maya Village. Berkeley: University of California, Extension Media Center.

Ángulo Barredo, Jorge Ignacio. 1995. Comportamiento de la Población Regional y Grupos Étnicos en Los Altos de Chiapas (1960-1990). Anuario de estudios indígenas V:193-208.

Anspach, Mark R. 2004. Introduction (Imitating Oedipus). I*n* Oedipus Unbound: Selected Writings on Rivalry and Desire, edited by R. Girard and M. R. Anspach. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization, Public worlds; v. 1. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Arbuckle, Gerald A. 2004. Violence, Society, and the Church: A Cultural Approach. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.

Armendariz, Ma. Luisa. Proyecto Corazón de Maria - Salvando San Cristóbal. Chiapas State Government, City of San Cristóbal de Las Casas (Feb 2007). http://www.scribd.com/doc/17222544/PROYECTO-CORAZON-DE-MARIA-SALVANDO-SAN-CRISTOBAL.

Astor-Aguilera, Miguel Angel. 2010. The Maya World of Communicating Objects: Quadripartite Crosses, Trees, and Stones. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Auerbach, Erich. 2003. Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature. 50th anniversary ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Avruch, K. 2001. Notes toward ethnographies of conflict and violence. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography 30 (5): 637-648.

Bailie, Gil. 1995. Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads. New York: Crossroad.

Bandura, Albert. 1977. Social Learning Theory. Prentice-Hall series in Social Learning Theory. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Barfield, Thomas, ed. 1997. The Dictionary of Anthropology. Oxford, UK; Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Barkan, Steven and Lynn L. Snowden, eds. 2000. Collective Violence: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.

Barnard, Alan. 2000. History and Theory in Anthropology. Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Barth, Fredrik, ed. 1969. Introduction. Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference. [Results of a symposium held at the University of Bergen, 23rd to 26th February 1967]. Boston: Little, Brown series in anthropology.

Barth, Fredrick, ed. 1998. Introduction. Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.

Bastian, Jean-Pierre. 1996. Violencia, etnicidad y religion entre los mayas del estado de Chiapas en México. Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos 12 (2):301-314.

Bateson, Gregory. 1935. Culture Contact and Schismogenesis. Man 35. Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland: 178-183.

------. 1958. Naven, a Survey of the Problems Suggested by a Composite Picture of the Culture of a New Guinea Tribe Drawn from Three Points of View. 2d ed. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

------. 1972. Steps to an Ecology of Mind. New York: Ballantine Books.

Belk, Russell, W., Guliz Ger, and Soren Askegaard. 2003. The Fire of Desire: A Multisited Inquiry into Consumer Passion. The Journal of Consumer Research 30 (3): 326-351.

Benjamin, Thomas. 1996. A Rich Land, a Poor People: Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas. Rev. ed. Albuqueque: University of New Mexico Press.

Bentley, G. Carter. 1987. Ethnicity and Practice. Comparative Studies in Society and History 29 (1): 24-55.

Berdan, Frances; John K. Chance; Alan R. Sandstrom; Barbara L. Stark; James Taggart; Emily Umberger, ed. 2008. Ethnic Identity in Nahua Mesoamerica: The View from Archaeology, Art History, Ethnohistory, and Contemporary Ethnography. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Berger, Mark T. 2001. Romancing the Zapatistas: International Intellectuals and the Chiapas Rebellion. Latin American Perspectives 28 (2): 149-170.

Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. 1995. Modernity, Pluralism and the Crisis of Meaning: the Orientation of Modern Man. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers.

Bernard, H. Russell. 2002. Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. 3rd ed. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

Bernstein, Basil B. 1971. Class, Codes and Control. Edited by B. B. Bernstein. 4 vols, Primary Socialization, Language and Education. London: Routledge and K. Paul.

Betancourt Aduen, Darío, and Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas. Facultad de Ciencias Sociales. 1997. Bases regionales en la formación de comunas rurales-urbanas en San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Colección Ciencias sociales. Serie Migración y religión. Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas: Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, Dirección General de Extensión Universitaria, Dirección Editorial.

Björkqvist, Kaj. 1997. The Inevitability of Conflict, But Not of Violence: Theoretical Considerations on Conflict and Aggression. *In* Cultural Variation in Conflict Resolution: Alternatives to Violence, edited by D. P. Fry and K. Borkqvist. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Blok, Anton. 2000a. Relatives and Rivals: The Narcissism of Minor Differences. *In* Perplexities of Identification: Anthropological Studies in Cultural Differentiation and the Use of Resources, edited by H. Driessen and T. Otto. Aarhus Denmark; Oakville, CN: Aarhus University Press.

------. 2000b. The Enigma of Senseless Violence. *In* Meanings of Violence - A Cross-Cultural Perspective, edited by G. Aijmer and J. Abbink. NY: Berg.

------. 2001. Honour and Violence. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity; Blackwell.

Bobrow-Strain, Aaron. 2007. Intimate Enemies: Landowners, Power, and Violence in Chiapas. Durham: Duke University Press.

Bonfil Batalla, Guillermo. Translated by Philip Adams Dennis. 1996 [1989]. México Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization. 1st ed, Translations from Latin America series. Austin: University of Texas Press. Original edition, México profundo: una civilización negada (1989).

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. Outline of a Theory of Practice. Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology16. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean Claude Passeron. 1990 [1977]. Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture. 1990 ed. Theory, Culture & Society. London; Newbury Park, CA: Sage in association with Theory, Culture & Society, Dept. of Administrative and Social Studies, Teesside Polytechnic.

Bourne, Randolph Silliman. 1964. War and the Intellectuals: Essays, 1915-1919. New York: Harper & Row.

Bowman, Glenn. 2001. The Violence in Identity. *In* Anthropology of Violence and Conflict, edited by J. Abbink and G. Aijmer. London and New York: Routledge.

Bradburn, Norman M., Seymour Sudman, and Brian Wansink. 2004. Asking Questions: The Definitive Guide to Questionnaire D: for Market Research, Political Polls, and Social and Health Questionnaires. Rev. ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Bricker, Victoria Reifler. 1981. The Indian Christ, the Indian king: The Historical Substrate of Maya Myth and Ritual. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bricker, Victoria Reifler, and Gary H. Gossen, eds. 1989. Ethnographic Encounters in Southern Mesoamerica: Essays in Honor of Evon Zartman Vogt, Jr. Studies on Culture and Society. Albany, NY: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, University at Albany distributed by University of Texas Press.

Brown, Pete. 2002. Pantelhó: History-Making and Identity in Highland Chiapas. Journal of Latin American Anthropology 7 (1): 104-127.

Brubaker, Rogers and David D. Laitin. 1998. Ethnic and Nationalist Violence. Annual Review of Sociology 24:423-52.

Bruner, Edward M., and Victor W. Turner. 1986. The Anthropology of Experience. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Buckingham, Alan, and Peter Saunders. 2004. The Survey Methods Workbook: From Design to Analysis. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity.

Burguete Cal y Mayor, Aracely. 2000a. Agua que nace y muere: sistemas normativos indígenas y disputas por el agua en Chamula y Zinacantán, Científica. México: Programa sobre Investigaciones Multidisciplinarias sobre Mesoamérica y el Sureste, UNAM.

Burguete Cal y Mayor, Aracely, and International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. 2000b. Indigenous autonomy in Mexico, IWGIA document. Copenhagen: IWGIA.

Burkert, Walter, René Girard, Jonathan Z. Smith, and Robert Hamerton-Kelly. 1987. Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Calnek, Edward E. 1962. "Highland Chiapas Before the Spanish Conquest." Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago.

Campbell, Howard. 1996. The Politics of Ethnicity in Southern Mexico, Vanderbilt University publications in anthropology. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University.

Cancian, Frank. 1965. Economics and Prestige in a Maya Community: The Religious Cargo System in Zinacantán. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

------. 1974. New Patterns of Stratification in the Zinacantan Cargo System. Journal of
        Anthropological Research 30 (3): 164-173.

------. 1992. The Decline of Community in Zinacantán : Economy, Public Life, and Social
        Stratification, 1960-1987. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Canton Delgado, Manuela. 1997. Las expulsiones indígenas en Los Altos de Chiapas: Algo mas
        que un problema de cambio religioso. Mesoamerica 33:147-69.

Carmack, Robert M., Janine Gasco, and Gary H. Gossen, eds. 2007. The Legacy of Mesoamerica:
        History and Culture of a Native American Civilization. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ:
        Pearson/Prentice Hall.

Castellanos Guerrero, Alicia. 1988. Notas sobre la identidad étnica en la región Tzotzil Tzeltal de
        Los Altos de Chiapas. 1a ed, Cuadernos universitarios. México, D.F.: Universidad
        Autónoma Metropolitana/Iztapalapa.

Castellanos, Rosario. 1962. Oficio de tinieblas. 1 ed, Novelistas contemporáneos. México, D.F.: J.
        Mortiz.

Castellanos, Rosario, and Esther Allen. 1996. The Book of Lamentations. New York: Marsilio
        Publications.

CENAMI, (Organization), and Comisión Cristiana de Desarrollo. 1993. Teología india mayense:
        memorias, experiencias y reflexiones de encuentros teológicos regionales. 1. ed. México:
        Ediciones Abya-Yala.

Chambers, E. J., and P. D. Young. 1979. Mesoamerican Community Studies: The Past Decade.
        Annual Review of Anthropology 8 (1): 45-69.

Chance, John K. 1979. On the Mexican Mestizo. Latin American Research Review 14 (3): 153-
        168.

------. 1990. Changes in Twentieth-Century Mesoamerican Cargo Systems. *In* Class, Politics, and
        Popular Religion in Mexico and Central America, edited by L. Lynn Stephen and J. Dow.
        Washington, DC: American Anthropological Association.

------. 1996. Mesoamerica's Ethnographic Past. Ethnohistory 43 (3): 379-403.

------. 2008. Indigenous ethnicity in colonial central Mexico. *In* Ethnic Identity in Nahua
        Mesoamerica: The View from Archaeology, Art History, Ethnohistory, and
        Contemporary Ethnography, edited by F. Berdan, J. K. Chance, A. R. Sandstrom, B. L.
        Stark, J. Taggart and E. Umberger. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Chance, John K, and William B. Taylor. 1985. Confradías and Cargos: An Historical Perspective
        on the Mesoamerican Civil-Religious Hierarchy. American Ethnologist 12:1-26.

Chojnacki, Ruth J. 2010. Indigenous Apostles: Maya Catholic Catechists Working the Word in
        Highland Chiapas, Studies in world Christianity and interreligious relations. New York:
        Rodopi.

CIEPAC. 2006 (Dec 15). Stop Killer Coke. San Cristóbal de Las Casas: Centro de Investigaciones
        Económicas y Políticas de Acción Comunitaria, A.C.

Clifford, James. 1988. The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature, and Art. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Clifford, James, George E. Marcus, and School of American Research (Santa Fe N.M.). 1986. Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. A School of American Research Advanced Seminar. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cline, Howard. 1952. Mexican Community Studies. The Hispanic American Historical Review 32 (2): 212-242.

Colby, Benjamin N. 1966. Ethnic Relations in the Chiapas Highlands of Mexico. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press.

Colby, Benjamin N., and Pierre L. Van den Berghe. 1961. Ethnic Relations in Southeastern Mexico. American Anthropologist 63 (4): 772-792.

Collier, George. 1995. La reestructuración de la etnicidad en Chiapas y en el mundo. In La Explosión de Comunidades en Chiapas, edited by J. Nash and A. Parellada. Copenhague: IWGIA.

Collier, George Allen. 1975. Fields of the Tzotzil: The Ecological Bases of Tradition in Highland Chiapas. Texas Pan American series: xv, 255.

Collier, George A. 1987. Peasant Politics and the Mexican State: Indigenous Compliance in Highland Chiapas. Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos 3 (1): 71-98.

------. 1994. The New Politics of Exclusion: Antecedents to the Rebellion in Mexico. Dialectical Anthropology 19 (1): 1-44.

------. 1998. Differentiation, Radicalization, and the Emergence of the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas. PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review 21 (2): 111-122.

Collier, George Allen, and Elizabeth Lowery Quaratiello. 2005. Basta! -- Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas. 3rd ed. Oakland, CA: Food First Books.

Corbin, John R. 1977. An Anthropological Perspective on Violence. The International Journal of Environmental Studies 10:107-11.

Cordell, Karl, and Stefan Wolff. 2009. Ethnic Conflict: Causes, Consequences, Responses. Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity.

Cornelius, Wayne A., and David Myhre, eds. 1998. The Rransformation of Rural Mexico: Reforming the ejido Sector. U.S.-Mexico Contemporary Perspectives Series. La Jolla: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego.

Coser, Lewis A. 1956. The Functions of Social Conflict. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

D'Andrade, Roy G., and Claudia Strauss. 1992. Human Motives and Cultural Models, Publications of the Society for Psychological Anthropology. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Das, Veena. 2001. Remaking a World - Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

De Vries, Pieter. 2002. Vanishing Mediators: Enjoyment as a Political Factor in Western Mexico. American Ethnologist 29 (4): 901-927.

Del Toro, Paco. 1999. Chamula, tierra de sangre. Mexico.

Deloria, Philip Joseph. 1998. Playing Indian. Yale historical publications. New Haven CT: Yale University Press.

Dennis, Philip Adams. 1987. Intervillage Conflict in Oaxaca. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Dewalt, Billie R. 1975. Changes in the Cargo Systems of MesoAmerica. Anthropological Quarterly 48 (2): 87-105.

Díaz del Castillo, Bernal. 1955. Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España. 5. ed. 2 vols, Biblioteca-Porrúa. México: Porrúa.

Driessen, Henk, and Ton Otto, eds. 2000. Perplexities of Identification: Anthropological Studies in Cultural Differentiation and the Use of Resources. Aarhus Denmark; Oakville, CT: Aarhus University Press.

Earle, Duncan. 1990. Appropriating the Enemy: Highland Maya Religious Organization and Community Survival. *In* Class, Politics, and Popular Religion in Mexico and Central America edited by L. Stephen, J. Dow and L. Binford. Washington, DC: Society for Latin American Anthropology: American Anthropological Association.

Earle, Duncan, and Jeanne M. Simonelli. 2005. Uprising of Hope: Sharing the Zapatista Journey to Alternative Development. Crossroads in Qualitative Inquiry. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Early, John D. 2006. The Maya and Catholicism: An Encounter of Worldviews. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.

Eber, Christine Engla. 2000. Women & Alcohol in a Highland Maya Town: Water of hope, Water of Sorrow. Updated ed. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Edgar, Andrew, and Peter R. Sedgwick. 2002. Cultural Theory: The Key Concepts. Routledge key guides. London; New York: Routledge.

Eiss, Paul K. 2008. Constructing the Maya. Ethnohistory 55 (4): 503-508.

Eller, Jack David. 1999. From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict: An Anthropological Perspective on International Ethnic Conflict. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

------. 2006. Violence and Culture: A Cross-Cultural and Interdisciplinary Approach. Wadsworth Publishing.

Elster, Jon. 1989. Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences. Cambridge [England]; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Elwert, George, Stephan Feuchtwang, and Dieter Neubert, eds. 1999. Dynamics of Violence - Processes of Escalation and De-escalation in Violent Group Conflicts. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.

Esman, Milton J. 1994. Ethnic Politics. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Favre, Henri. 1992 [1984]. Cambio y continuidad entre los mayas de México: contribución al estudio de la situación colonial en América Latina. 2a ed, Colección Presencias. México, D.F.: Dirección General de Publicaciones del Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes Instituto Nacional Indigenista.

Favre, Henri, and Rosa Cusminsky. 1985. El cambio socio-cultural y el nuevo indigenismo en Chiapas. Revista Mexicana de Sociología 47 (3):161-196.

Feldman, Allen. 1991. Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fenwick, Crystal. 2010. Identifying the Water Poor: an Indicator Approach to Assessing Water Poverty in Rural Mexico, Department of Civil, Environmental and Geomatic Engineering, University College, London.

Fernández Galán, María Elena. 2002. Muerte de un alemán. *En* Estudios sobre la violencia: teoría y práctica, edited by W. Jacorzynski. México, DF: CIESAS: M. A. Porrúa.

Field, Les. 2005. Beyond Identity? Analytic Crosscurrents in Contemporary Mayanist Social Science. Latin American Research Review 40 (October): 283-293.

Figueroa Fuentes, Patricia, and Ma Judith Herrera Jácome. 2000. Rumbo a la Calle: El trabajo infantil, una estrategia de sobrevivencia. San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, México: Melel Xojobal; Caridad y Educación Integral.

Finnegan, Ruth. 2002. Poetics. *In* Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology, edited by A. Barnard and J. S. (eds). London; NY: Routledge.

Fischer, Edward F. 2001. Cultural Logics and Global Economies: Maya Identity in Thought and Practice. 1st ed. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Fleming, Chris. 2004. René Girard: Violence and Mimesis. Key Contemporary Thinkers. Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity.

Foster, George M. 1965. Cultural Responses to Expressions of Envy in Tzintzuntzan. Southwestern Journal of Anthropology 21 (1): 24-35.

Foster, George M. (et al.). 1972. The Anatomy of Envy: A Study in Symbolic Behavior [and Comments and Reply]. Current Anthropology 13 (2): 165-202.

Fowler, Floyd J. 2002. Survey Research Methods. 3rd ed. Applied Social Research Methods Series. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Fox, Richard Gabriel, ed. 1991. Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present. School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press: Distributed by the University of Washington Press.

Fox, Richard Gabriel, and Barbara J. King, eds. 2002. Anthropology Beyond Culture. Oxford; New York: Berg.

Fry, Douglas P., and Kaj Björkqvist. 1997. Cultural Variation in Conflict Resolution: Alternatives to Violence. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers.

Gabbert, Wolfgang. 1999. Violence and Social Change in Highland Maya Communities, Chiapas, Mexico. Iberoamerikanisches Archiv 25 (3/4): 351-374.

------. 2001. Causas de los conflictos intra e intercomunitarios en Chiapas. *En* Violencia y regulación de conflictos en América Latina, edited by S. K. Klaus Bodemer, Klaus Meschkat. Heinrich-Boell Stiftung-HBS: Editorial Nueva Sociedad.

Gallese, Vittorio. 2009. The Two Sides of Mimesis: Girard's Mimetic Theory, Embodied Simulation and Social Identification. Journal of Consciousness Studies 16 (4): 21-44.

Galtung, Johan. 1969. Violence, Peace and Peace Research. Journal of Peace Research 6 (3): 167-191.

------. 1981. The Specific Contribution of Peace Research to the Analysis of the Causes of Social Violence: typologies. *In* Violence and its causes, edited by J.-M. Domenach, [et al]. Paris, France: UNESCO.

Galtung, J. 1990. Cultural Violence. Journal of Peace Research 27 (3): 291-305.

García de León, Antonio. 1978. Chamula: Una Larga Historia de Resistencia. In La Violencia en Chamula (2a edición corregida y aumentada), edited by A. G. d. L. Juan Jaime Manguen E., José N. Cortés S., Oliveirio Ichín S. San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, México: UNACH-Ciencias Sociales.

------. 1997 [1985]. Resistencia y utopía: memorial de agravios y crónica de revueltas y profecías acaecidas en la provincia de Chiapas durante los últimos quinientos años de su historia. 2a ed. Colección Problemas de México. México, D.F.: Ediciones Era. Original edition, 1985.

García Guerrero, y Jorge Luis de León González. 2003. Ciudad Real en Tres Visitas A Propósito del Enfrentamiento Étnico en San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Anuario de estudios indígenas IX:189-209.

García Méndez, José Andrés. 2008. Chiapas Para Cristo - Diversidad Doctrinal y Cambio Político en el Campo Religioso Chiapaneco. Mexico, DF: MC Editores.

Garrels, Scott R. 2011. Mimesis and Science: Empirical Research on Imitation and the Mimetic Theory of Culture and Religion. Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.

Garza, Anna María. 1994. Voces de la historia : Nuevo San Juan Chamula, Nuevo Huixtán, Nuevo Matzam. 1a. ed. Cuernavaca, Mor.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Centro Regional de Investigaciones Multidisciplinarias.

Gebauer, Gunter, and Christoph Wulf. 1995. Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. The Interpretation of Cultures; Selected Essays. New York: Basic Books.

------. 1973. Deep play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight. *In* The Interpretation of Cultures, Selected Essays. New York: Basic Books.

------. 2000. Available light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1979. Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis. Berkeley: University of California Press.

------. 1984. The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Girard, René. 1965. Deceit, Desire, and the Novel; Self and Other in Literary Structure. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.

------. 1977. Violence and the Sacred. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

------. 1978. "To double business bound" -- Essays on Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

------. 1979. Interdividual Psychology. Denver Quarterly 14:3-19.

------. 1986. The Scapegoat. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

------. 1987. Generative Scapegoating. *In* Violent origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard and Jonathan Z. Smith on ritual killing and cultural formation, edited by W. Burkert, R. Girard, J. Z. Smith and R. Hamerton-Kelly. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

------. 1991. A Theater of Envy : William Shakespeare. New York: Oxford University Press.

------. 1999. The First Stone. Renascence 52 (1): 1-18.

------. 2009. On War and Apocalypse. First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion & Public Life 195:17-22.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

------. 1967. Interaction Ritual; Essays on Face-to-face Behavior. [1st] ed. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

Golsan, Richard Joseph. 2001. Réne Girard and Myth. New York, London: Routledge.

Gómez Sántiz, María Magdalena, and Centro Estatal de Lenguas Arte y Literatura Indígenas (Chiapas Mexico). 2005. J-Iloletik : médicos tradicionales de los altos de Chiapas, Ts'ib-jaye. Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas: Centro Estatal de Lenguas, Arte y Literatura Indígenas, Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas.

Goodman, Nelson. 1978. Ways of Worldmaking. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co.

Gosner, Kevin. 1992. Soldiers of the Virgin: The Moral Economy of a Colonial Maya Rebellion. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Gossen, Garry. 2004. "Everything Has Begun to Change" - Appraisals of the Mexican State in Chiapas Maya Discourse, 1980 - 2000. *In* Pluralizing Ethnography - Comparison and Representation in Maya Cultures, Histories, Identities, edited by J. M. Watanabe and E. F. Fischer. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research.

Gossen, Gary H. 1974. Chamulas in the World of the Sun: Time and Space in a Maya Oral Tradition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

------. 1983. A Modern Maya Diaspora: Out-migration and the Cultural Persistence of San Juan Chamula, Chiapas. Mesoamérica 5 (June): 253-276.

------, ed. 1986. Symbol and Meaning Beyond the Closed Community: Essays in Mesoamerican Ideas, Studies on Culture and Society. Albany, NY: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, The University at Albany, State University of New York.

------. 1993. The Other in Chamula Tzotzil Cosmology and History: Reflections of a Kansan in Chiapas. Cultural Anthropology 8 (4): 443-475.

------. 1999a. Telling Maya tales : Tzotzil Identities in Modern Mexico. New York: Routledge.

------. 1999b. Indians Inside and Outside of the Mexican National Idea: A Case Study of the Modern Diaspora of San Juan Chamula. *In* Telling Maya Tales: Tzotzil Identities in Modern Mexico, edited by G. Gossen. New York: Routledge.

------. 2002. Four Creations: An Epic Story of the Chiapas Mayas, The civilization of the American Indian series. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Govers, Cora, and Hans Vermeulen. 1997. The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness. New York: Macmillan; St. Martin's Press.

Greenberg, James B. 1989. Blood Ties: Life and Violence in Rural Mexico. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Greenfield, Patricia Marks. 2004. Weaving Generations Together: Evolving Creativity among the Mayas of Chiapas. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Groark, Kevin Patrick. 2005. "Pathogenic Emotions: Sentiment, Sociality, and Sickness among the Tzotzil Maya of San Juan Chamula, Chiapas, Mexico." Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles.

Gubler, Ruth, and Ueli Hostettler. 1995. The Fragmented Present: Mesoamerican Societies Facing Modernization. Acta Mesoamericana. Möckmühl, Germany: A. Saurwein.

Guiteras Holmes, Calixta. 1961. Perils of the Soul: The World View of a Tzotzil Indian. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. 1993. Las Casas: in Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Gutiérrez, Natividad. 1998. What Indians Say about Mestizos: A Critical View of a Cultural Archetype of Mexican Nationalism. Bulletin of Latin American Research 17 (3): 285-301.

Haenn, Nora. 2005. Fields of Power, Forests of Discontent: Culture, Conservation, and the State in Mexico. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

------. 2006. The Changing and Enduring Ejido: A State and Regional Examination of Mexico's Land Tenure Counter-reforms. Land Use Policy 23 (2): 136-146.

Harrison, Simon. 1995. Four Types of Symbolic Conflict. The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Incorporating Man 1 (2): 255-272.

------. 1999. Cultural Boundaries. Anthropology Today 15 (5): 10-13.

------. 2002. The Politics of Resemblance: Ethnicity, Trademarks, Head-Hunting. The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 8 (2): 211-232.

------. 2006. Fracturing Resemblances: Identity and Mimetic Conflict in Melanesia and the West, EASA monographs; v. 1. New York: Berghahn Books.

Harvey, Neil. 1998. The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Heitmeyer, Wilhelm, and John Hagan, eds. 2003. International Handbook of Violence Research. Dordrecht; Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

------. 2003. Violence: The Difficulties of a Systematic International Review. *In* International Handbook of Violence Research, edited by W. Heitmeyer and J. Hagan. Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Helm, June, ed. 1968. Essays on the Problem of Tribe. Edited by A. E. Society, Annual Spring Meeting, 1967. Seattle: Distributed by the University of Washington Press.

Henriquez, Elio. 2003 Asesinan a indígena en San Juan Chamula, por practicar brujería. La Jornada, 14 de abril.

Henriquez, Elio and Juan Balboa. 2002. Venganza por el asesinato de uno de sus compañeros de La Candelaria. Lincharon cientos de indígenas chiapanecos a dos tzotziles sospechosos de homicidio. Detuvieron a cuatro ante la falta de respuesta de la procuraduría de Justicia estatal La Jornada, 12 de junio.

Hernández Castillo, Aída. 2003. La invención del indio en la etnografía chiapaneca. Repensar la etnografía dese la antropología dialógica. Anuario de estudios indígenas IX:455-487.

Heuer, Ulrike. 2004. Reasons for Actions and Desires. Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition 121 (1): 43-63.

Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. Ethnic Groups in Conflict. Berkeley: University of California Press.

------. 2001. The Deadly Ethnic Riot. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hostettler, Ueli, and Matthew Restall. 2001. Maya Survivalism. Acta Mesoamericana 12:xiv, 325.

Hurley, Susan, and Nick Chater. 2005. Perspectives on Imitation: From Neuroscience to Social Science. Vol. 1. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Hvostoff, Sophie. 2009. La comunidad abandonada. La invención de una nueva indianidad urbana en las zonas periféricas tzotziles y tzeltales de San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, México (1974-2001). *En* Chiapas después de la tormenta: estudios sobre economía, sociedad y política, edited by M. E. Saavedra. México, D.F., Tuxtla Gutiérrez: El Colegio de México; Chiapas, Gobierno del Estado, Cámara de Diputados, LX Legislatura.

Ignatieff, Michael. 1998. The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience. London: Chatto & Windus.

Imbusch, Peter. 2003. "The Concept of Violence". *In* International Handbook of Violence Research, edited by W. Heitmeyer and J. Hagan. Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publisher.

INEGI. 210. Catálogo de Localidades (Municipal de San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas). Mexico, DF: INEGI y SEDESOL.

Irribarren Pascal, OP, Pablo. 1997. Vino Nuevo en Odres Nuevos. México, DF: Editorial Presencia Dominicana. Edición original: Colección "Oasis" Tultenango (1987).

------. 2002 [1980]. Misión Chamula - Experiencia de trabajo pastoral de los años 1966 - 1977 en Chamula. San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, México: Archivo Diocesano, Diócesis de San Cristobal de Las Casas.

Jenkins, Richard. 1992. Pierre Bourdieu. Key Sociologists. London; New York: Routledge.

------. 1997. Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations. London ; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

------. 2008. Social identity. 3rd ed. Key Ideas. London; New York: Routledge.

Jonsson, Hjorleifur. 2001. Serious Fun: Minority Cultural Dynamics and National Integration in Thailand. American Ethnologist 28 (1): 151-178.

Joseph, Gilbert. M., and Daniel Nugent, eds. 1994. Everyday forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico. Durham: Duke University Press.

Kahn, Joel S. 1989. Culture: Demise or Resurrection? Critique of Anthropology 9 (2): 5-26.

Kellogg, Susan. 1991. Histories for Anthropology: Ten Years of Historical Research and Writing by Anthropologists, 1980-1990. Social Science History 15 (417-55).

Keyes, Charles. 1997. Ethnic groups, Ethnicity. *In* The Dictionary of Anthropology, edited by T. Barfield. Oxford, UK; Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Kirwan, Michael. 2004. Discovering Girard. London: Darton, Longman & Todd.

Kleinman, Arthur, Veena Das, and Margaret M. Lock. 1997. Social suffering. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Köhler, Ulrich. 2000. The Maya of Chiapas Since 1965. In Ethnology - Supplement to the Handbook of Middle American Indians, edited by J. Monaghan and B. Edmonson. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Köhler, Ulrich. 2007. Santa Catarina Pantelhó : un pueblo de indios y ladinos en Chiapas, México, Colección Selva Negra. Tuxtla Gutiérrez: UNICACH.

Kovic, Christine Marie. 1997. Walking With One Heart: Human Rights and the Catholic Church Among the Maya of Highland Chiapas, Anthropology, City University of New York, NY.

------. 2005. Mayan Voices for Human Rights: Displaced Catholics in Highland Chiapas. 1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press.

411

Krohn-Hansen, Christian. 1994. The anthropology of violent interaction. Journal of Anthropological Research 50 (4): 367-381.

Las Casas, Bartolomé de, Helen Rand Parish, and Francis Sullivan. 1992. The Only Way. Sources of American Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press.

Laughlin, Robert B. 1964. The Tzotzil. *In* Ethnology: Handbook of Middle American Indians, edited by R. Wauchope. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Laughlin, Robert M. 1993. Los Tzotziles. La población indígena de Chiapas (11): 119-180.

Laughlin, Robert M., and John Beard Haviland. 1988 [1964]. The Great Tzotzil Dictionary of Santo Domingo Zinacantán: with Grammatical Analysis and Historical Commentary. *In* Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Layton, Robert. 1997. An Introduction to Theory in Anthropology. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

LeVine, Robert A. 1961. Anthropology and the Study of Conflict: An Introduction. The Journal of Conflict Resolution 5 (1): 3-15.

Lewis, Herbert S. 1998. The Misrepresentation of Anthropology and Its Consequences. American Anthropologist 100 (No. 3): 716-731.

Lewis, Stephen E. 2008. Mexico's National Indigenist Institute and the Negotiation of Applied Anthropology in Highland Chiapas, 1951-1954. Ethnohistory 55 (4): 609-632.

Lie, John. 2004. Modern Peoplehood. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Limón, José Eduardo. 1994. Dancing with the Devil: Society and Cultural Poetics in Mexican-American South Texas. New directions in Anthropological Writing. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Lindholm, Charles. 2001. Culture and Identity: The History, Theory, and Practice of Psychological Anthropology. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Litke, Robert F. 1992. Violence and Power. International Social Science Journal 44 (2): 173-183.

Livingston, Paisley. 1992. Models of Desire: René Girard and the Psychology of Mimesis. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

------. 1994. What is Mimetic Desire? Philosophical Psychology 7 (3): 291-305.

López Hernández, Eleazar. 2000. Teología india: antología. 1 ed, Serie Evangelio y culturas. Cochabamba, Bolivia; Buenos Aires, Ar.: Editorial Verbo Divino: Universidad Católica Boliviana, Instituto Superior de Estudios Teológicos; Editorial Guadalupe.

López Meza, Antonio. 2002. Sistema religioso-político y las expulsiones en Chamula. Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas: Consejo Estatal para la Cultura y las Artes de Chiapas, Polyfórum Mesoamericano, Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas.

López Moreno Chapoy, Andrés Iván, and Centro Estatal de Lenguas Arte y Literatura Indígenas (Chiapas Mexico). 2007. La construcción de los pueblos indígenas de México, Ts'ib-jaye: textos de los pueblos originarios. Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas: Centro Estatal de Lenguas Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas.

MacLeod, Murdo J., and Robert Wasserstrom. 1983. Spaniards and Indians in Southeastern Mesoamerica: Essays on the History of Ethnic Relations. Latin American Studies Series. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Marcus, George E. 1998. Ethnography Through Thick and Thin. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Marcus, George E., and Michael M. J. Fischer. 1999. Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mattiace, Shannan L. 2003. To See with Two Eyes: Peasant Activism & Indian Autonomy in Chiapas, Mexico. 1st ed. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Maurer Avalos, Eugenio. 1993. The Tzeltal Maya-Christian Synthesis. *In* South and Meso-American Native Spirituality: from the Cult of the Feathered Serpent to the Theology of Liberation, edited by G. H. Gossen and M. León Portilla. New York: Crossroad.

Merlan, Francesca. 2009. Indigeneity: Global and Local. Current Anthropology 50 (3): 303-333.

Mitchell, Simon. 1978. The Patterning of Compadrazgo Ties in Latin America. Occasional papers - Institute of Latin American Studies, Glasgow University. Glasgow: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Glasgow.

Molina, Cristóbal, ed. 1934. War of the Castes: Indian Uprisings in Chiapas, 1867-1870. Edited by E. Noyes and D. Morgadanes. Vol. 5, Middle American Series. New Orleans: Tulane University.

Monaghan, John, and Barbara Edmonson. 2000. Ethnology. 1st ed, Supplement to the Handbook of Middle American Indians. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Moore, David Chioni. 1994. Anthropology is Dead, Long Live Anthropology: Poststructuralism, Literary Studies, and Anthropology's "Nervous Present". Journal of Anthropological Research 50:345-365.

Morales Bermúdez, Jesús. 1991. El Congreso Indígena de Chiapas: Un testimonio. In Anuario de Cultura e Investigación. Tuxtla Gutíerrez: El Instituto Chiapaneco de Cultura.

Morfeld, Mary Elizabeth Phelps. 2000. San Juan Chamula: Reaffirmation and Redefinition of a Highland Indigenous Community. Ph. D. Dissertation, Department of Humanities, The University of Texas at Arlington.

Morquecho, Gaspar. 1992. Los indios en un proceso de organización. La Organización Indígena de los Altos de Chiapas, 1981-1991, Antropología Social, UNACH, Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, San Cristóbal de Las Casas.

Morquecho, Gaspar y Dolores Aramoni. 1997. La otra mejilla ...pero armada. El recurso de las armas en manos de los expulsados de San Juan Chamula. Anuario Cesmeca 1996. Centro de Estudios Superiores de México y Centroamérica, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas.

Moscoso Pastrana, Prudencio. 1990. Las cabezas rodantes del mal : brujería y nahualismo en los altos de Chiapas. 1. ed. México: Miguel Angel Porrua Grupo Editorial.

------. 1992. Rebeliones indígenas en los Altos de Chiapas. 1. ed. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Centro de Investigaciones Humanísticas de Mesoamérica y del Estado de Chiapas.

Mulhare, Eileen. 2000. Mesoamerican Social-Organization and Community After 1960. *In* Ethnology. Supplement 6 to the Handbook of Middle American Indians, edited by J. Monaghan and B. Edmonson. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Nader, Laura. 1990. Harmony ideology: Justice and Control in a Zapotec Mountain Village. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Nagel, Joane. 1994. Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture. Theme Issue: "Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America." Social Problems 41 (1): 152-176.

Nash, June. 1966. Social Resources of A Latin American Peasantry: The Case of a Maya Indian Community. Social and Economic Studies 15 (4): 353-367.

------. 1967. Death as a Way of Life: The Increasing Resort to Homicide in a Maya Indian Community. American Anthropologist 69 (5): 455-470.

------. 2007. Consuming Interests: Water, Rum, and Coca-Cola from Ritual Propitiation to Corporate Expropriation in Highland Chiapas. Cultural Anthropology 22 (4): 621-639.

Nash, June C. 1970. In the Eyes of the Ancestors; Belief and Behavior in a Maya community. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

------. 2001. Mayan Visions: The Quest for Autonomy in an Age of Globalization. New York; London: Routledge.

Nelson, Diane M. 1997. Crucifixion Stories, the 1869 Caste War of Chiapas, and Negative Consciousness: A Disruptive Subaltern Study. American Ethnologist 24 (2): 331-354.

Niezen, Ronald. 2003. The origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Nolasco Armas, Margarita, ed. 2008. Los pueblos indígenas de Chiapas: atlas etnográfico. Serie Divulgación (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Méjico). México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

------. 2010. La condición Indígena en el Siglo XXI. Del Indio "Indito" a los Indígenas Mexicanos. In Los pueblos indígenas de Chiapas : la respuesta está en el aire, y los avatares del siglo XXI la guiarán : Margarita Nolasco, un homenaje, edited by J. G. S. Margarita Nolasco Armas, H. Cuadriello Olivos. Tlapan, D.F., Mexico, D.F.: ENAH ; INAH.

Nolasco Armas, Margarita, Javier Gutiérrez Sánchez, and Hadlyyn Cuadriello Olivos, eds. 2010. Los pueblos indígenas de Chiapas : la respuesta está en el aire, y los avatares del siglo XXI la guiarán : Margarita Nolasco, un homenaje. 1. ed. Tlapan, D.F., Mexico, D.F.: ENAH, INAH.

Nutini, Hugo G., and John M. Roberts. 1993. Bloodsucking Witchcraft: An Epistemological Study of Anthropomorphic Supernaturalism in Rural Tlaxcala. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Obregón Rodríguez, María Concepción. 2003. Tzotziles. México, DF: PNUD; CDI.

Ochoa-Gaona, Susana. 2001. Traditional Land-use Systems and Patterns of Forest Fragmentation in the Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. Environmental Management 27 (4): 571-586.

Ochoa-Gaona, Susana, and Mario González-Espinosa. 2000. Land Use and Deforestation in the Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. Applied Geography 20 (1): 17-42.

Ortner, Sherry B. 1984. Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties. Comparative Studies in Society and History 26 (1): 126-166.

------. 1989. High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

------. 1999. The Fate of "Culture" -- Geertz and Beyond. Representations books. Berkeley: University of California Press.

------. 2006. Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ota, Yoshinobu. 2002. Culture and Anthropology in Ethnographic Modernity. *In* Anthropology Beyond Culture, edited by R. G. Fox and B. J. King. Oxford; New York: Berg.

Otto, Ton and Henk Driessen. 2000. Protean Perplexities: An Introduction. *In* Perplexities of Identification--Anthropological Studies in Cultural Differentiation and the Use of Resources, edited by H. Driessen and T. Otto. Aarhus Denmark; Oakville, CN: Aarhus University Press.

Oughourlian, Jean-Michel. 2010. The Genesis of Desire. Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture Series. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Palomo Infante, María Dolores. 2009. Juntos y congregados: historia de las cofradías en los pueblos de indios tzotziles y tzeltales de Chiapas (siglos XVI al XIX). 1. ed, Publicaciones de la Casa Chata. México, D.F.: CIESAS.

Paniagua Mijangos, Jorge. 2001. Los ladinos. Imaginario social y antropologá urbana en San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Anuario de estudios indígenas Maestría en antropología social.

Parish, Helen Rand, Harold E. Weidman. 1992. Las Casas en México : historia y obra desconocidas. 1. ed, Sección de obras de historia. México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Parnell, Philip C. 1988. Escalating Disputes: Social Participation and Change in the Oaxacan Highlands, Profmex Monograph Series. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Pérez Enríquez, Ma Isabel. 1994. Expulsiones indigenas: religión y migración en tres municipios de los altos de Chiapas, Chenalhó, Larrainzar y Chamula. 1. ed. México D.F.: Claves Latinoamericanas.

Pérez López, Enrique. 1990. Chamula: un pueblo indígena tzotzil. 2. ed. Serie Nuestros pueblos. Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas: Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas, Consejo Estatal de Fomento a la Investigación y Difusión de la Cultura, DIF-Chiapas/Instituto Chiapaneco de Cultura.

Pitt-Rivers, Julian. 1967. Words and Deeds: The Ladinos of Chiapas. Man 2 (1): 71-86.

Potolsky, Matthew. 2006. Mimesis. New York; London: Routledge.

Pozas, Ricardo. 1962 [1944]. Juan the Chamula: An Ethnological Re-creation of the Life of a Mexican Indian. Berkeley: University of California Press.

------. 1977 [1947]. Chamula. 2 vols, Clásicos de la antropología mexicana. México: Instituto Nacional Indigenista.

Ramos, María Eugenia Reyes. 2001. El movimiento zapatista y la redefinición de la política agraria en Chiapas (The Zapatista Movement and the Redefinition of Agrarian Policy in Chiapas). Revista Mexicana de Sociología 63 (4): 197-220.

Ramos, María Eugenia Reyes, Reyna Moguel, and Gemma van der Haar. 1998. Espacios disputados: transformaciones rurales en Chiapas. 1. ed. México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana.

Reed, Nelson A. 2001[1964]. The Caste War of Yucatán. Rev. ed. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Restall, Matthew. 2004. Maya Ethnogenesis. The Journal of Latin American Anthropology 9 (1): 64-89.

Restall, Matthew, and Amara Solari. 2011. 2012 and the End of the World: the Western Roots of the Maya Apocalypse. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: Distributed by National Book Network.

Ricard, Robert. 1966. The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico: An Essay on the Apostolate and the evangelizing Methods of the Mendicant Orders in New Spain, 1523-1572. Translated by L. B. Simpson. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Riches, David, ed. 1986. The Anthropology of Violence. New York, NY: Blackwell.

Rivera Farfán, Carolina. 2005. Diversidad religiosa y conflicto en Chiapas: intereses, utopías y realidades. 1a ed. México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México; Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social; Consejo de Ciencia y Tecnología del Estado de Chiapas; Secretaría de Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas; Secretaría de Gobernación.

Robledo Hernández, Gabriela. 1997. Disidencia y religión: los expulsados de San Juan Chamula, Colección Ciencias sociales. Serie Migración y religión. Chiapas: Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas Asociación Mexicana de Población.

Romanucci-Ross, Lola. 1986 [1973]. Conflict, Violence, and Morality in a Mexican village. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Romanucci-Ross, Lola, and George A. De Vos. 1995. Ethnic identity: Creation, Conflict, and Accommodation. 3rd ed. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Roosens, Eugeen. 1989. Creating Ethnicity: The Process of Ethnogenesis. Frontiers of Anthropology. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Rosenbaum, Brenda. 1996. Tzotzil of Chamula. In Encyclopedia of World Cultures - Middle America and the Caribbean. New York: Macmillan Reference USA.

Ruiz Zuart, Francisco. 2011. Indígena, Doctora en Derecho Penal, exhibe y desnuda a gobiernos. Piensa, Prensa y Pega -- Información, Ironías y Reflexión., 7 de enero.

Rus, III, Jan. 2010. The End of the Plantations and the Transformation of Indigenous Society in Highland Chiapas, Mexico, 1974-2009. Ph. D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of California Riverside, Riverside, CA.

Rus, Jan. 1983. Whose Caste War? Indians, Ladinos, and the "Caste War". *In* Spaniards and Indians in Southeastern Mesoamerica: Essays on the History of Ethnic Relations, edited by M. J. MacLeod and R. Wasserstrom. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

------. 1994. The "Comunidad Revolucionaria Institucional": The Subversion of Native Government in Chiapas, 1936-1968. *In* Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico, edited by G. M. Joseph and D. Nugent. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

------. 1995. Local Adaptation to Global Change: The Reordering of Native Society in Highland Chiapas, Mexico, 1974-1994. European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies 58 (June): 71-78.

------. 2000. Un Juzgado, Dos Culturas: Estrategia Retórica e Interferencia Cultural en una Comunidad Maya en Transformación. Anuario de estudios indígenas VIII:99-108.

------. 2002. Afterward. *In* Four creations: An Epic Story of the Chiapas Mayas. G. H. Gossen, ed. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

------. 2003. Coffee and the Recolonialization of Highland Chiapas, Mexico, 1892-1912. *In* The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500-1989, edited by W. Clarence-Smith and S. Topik. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

------. 2004a. Revoluciones contenidas: Los Indígenas y La Lucha por Los Altos de Chiapas, 1910-1925. Mesoamérica 46 (Enero-Diciembre): 57-85.

------. 2004b. Rereading Tzotzil Ethnography: Recent Scholarship from Chiapas, Mexico. *In* Pluralizing Ethnography - Comparison and Representation in Maya Cultures, Histories, Identities, edited by J. M. Watanabe and E. F. Fischer. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research.

------. 2005. The Struggle against Indigenous Caciques in Highland Chiapas: Dissent, Religion, and Exile in Chamula, 1965-1977. *In* Caciquismo in Twentieth Century Mexico, edited by A. Knight and W. Pansters. London: Institute for the Study of the Americas.

------. 2009. La Nueva Ciudad Maya en el Valle de Jovel: Urbanización y comunidad en San Cristóbal de Las Casas. *En* Chiapas después de la tormenta : estudios sobre economía, sociedad y política, edited by M. E. Saavedra. México, D.F., Tuxtla Gutiérrez: El Colegio de México, Chiapas, Gobierno del Estado, Cámara de Diputados, LX Legislatura.

Rus, Jan, Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo, and Shannan L. Mattiace. 2003. Mayan lives, Mayan Utopias: The Indigenous Peoples of Chiapas and the Zapatista Rebellion. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Rus, Jan, and Diane Rus. N.d. La migración de Chamula a Estados Unidos: Notas de investigación, 2003-2005.

Rus, Jan, and Diego Vigil. 2007. Rapid Urbanization and Migrant Indigenous Youth in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. *In* Gangs in the Global City: Alternatives to Traditional Criminology, edited by J. Hagedorn. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Rus, Jan, and Robert Wasserstrom. 1980. Civil-Religious Hierarchies in Central Chiapas: A Critical Perspective. American Ethnologist 7 (3): 466-478.

Rus, Jan and George A. Collier. 2003. A Generation of Crisis in the Central Highlands of Chiapas: The Cases of Chamula and Zinacantan, 1974-2000. *In* Mayan Lives, Mayan Utopias: The Indigenous Peoples of Chiapas and the Zapatista Rebellion, edited by J. Rus, R. A. Hernández Castillo and S. L. Mattiace. Lanham, MD; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.

Salovesh, Michael. 1996. Tzotzil of San Bartolomé de los Llanos. *In* Middle America and the Caribbean. NY: Macmillan Reference USA.

Sandstrom, Alan R. 1991. Corn is Our Blood: Culture and Ethnic Identity in a Contemporary Aztec Indian Village. 1st ed. Civilization of the American Indian series. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Schevill, Margot, and Linda Asturias de Barrios. 1997. The Maya Textile Tradition. New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Schmidt, Bettina E., and Ingo W. Schroder, eds. 2001. Anthropology of Violence and Conflict. London and New York: Routledge.

Schreuder, Alan John. 2001. A History of the Rise of the Chamula Church. School of World Mission, M.Th. in Missiology. Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA.

Scott, James C. 1985. Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Selby, Henry A. 1974. Zapotec Deviance: The Convergence of Folk and Modern Sociology. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Sewell, William H., Jr. 1992. A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation. American Journal of Sociology 98 (1): 1-29.

Siebers, Hans. 2000. Thinking Together What Falls Apart: Some Reflections on the Concept of Identity. *In* Perplexities of Identification: Anthropological Studies in Cultural Differentiation and the Use of Resources, edited by H. Driessen and T. Otto. Aarhus Denmark; Oakville, CN: Aarhus University Press.

Siverts, Henning. 1998 [1969]. Ethnic Stability and Boundary Dynamics in Southern México. *In* Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organization of Culture Difference, edited by F. Barth. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc. Original edition, 1969. Little, Brown series in Anthropology.

Speed, Shannon. 2008. Rights in Rebellion: Indigenous Struggle and Human Rights in Chiapas. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Stark, Barbara L., and John K. Chance. 2008. Diachronic and Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Mesoamerican Ethnicity. *In* Ethnic identity in Nahua Mesoamerica: The View from Archaeology, Art History, Ethnohistory, and Contemporary Ethnography, edited by F. B. Frances, J. K. Chance, A. R. Sandstrom, B. L. Stark, J. Taggart and E. Umberger. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Stavenhagen, Rodolfo. 1975. Social Classes in Agrarian Societies. Translated by J. A. Hellman. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press.

------. 1980. Problemas étnicos y campesinos: ensayos. Colección INI. México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional Indigenista.

Sterk, Vernon Jay. 1992. The Dynamics of Persecution, School of World Mission, Ph. D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA.

Stewart, Pamela J., and Andrew Strathern. 2002. Violence: Theory and Ethnography. London; New York: Continuum.

------. 2004. Witchcraft, Sorcery, Rumors, and Gossip. New Departures in Anthropology. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Stocking, George W. 1989. Romantic Motives: Essays on Anthropological Sensibility, History of Anthropology. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Strathern, Andrew, Pamela J. Stewart, and Neil L. Whitehead. 2006. Terror and Violence: Imagination and the Unimaginable. London; Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto.

Strathern, Andrew J. and Pamela J. Stewart. 1999. Anthropology of Violence and Conflict. *In* Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict, edited by L. R. Kurtz. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Taussig, Michael T. 1993. Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses. New York: Routledge.

Tedlock, Barbara. 1991. From Participant Observation to the Observation of Participation: The Emergence of Narrative Ethnography. Journal of Anthropological Research 47 (1):69-94.

Tedlock, Dennis. 1985. Popol Vuh: the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life. Rev. ed. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Thomas, Norman D. 1967. The Nexus of Envy, Witchcraft, and Ceremonial Organization in a Zoque Indian Pueblo. Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.

Tilly, Charles. 2003. The Politics of Collective Violence. Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

------. 2005. Identities, Boundaries, and Social Ties. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 2002. Adieu, Culture: A New Duty Arises. *In* Anthropology Beyond Culture, edited by R. G. Fox and B. J. King. Oxford; New York: BERG.

Turner, V. W. 1968. The Drums of Affliction: A Study of Religious Processes among the Ndembu of Zambia. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Turner, Victor Witter, and Richard Schechner. 1986. The Anthropology of Performance. New York: PAJ Publications.

Van den Berghe, Gwendoline, and Pierre L. 1966. Compadrazgo and Class in Southeastern Mexico. American Anthropologist 68 (5): 1236-44.

Van den Berghe, Pierre L. 1994. The Quest for the Other: Ethnic Tourism in San Cristóbal, Mexico. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Vázquez Castillo, María Teresa. 2004. Land Privatization in Mexico: Urbanization, Formation of Regions, and Globalization in Ejidos. Latin American Studies, Social Sciences and Law. New York: Routledge.

Vermeulen, Hans, and Cora Govers. 1994. The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond 'Ethnic groups and Boundaries'. Amsterdam, Hague, Netherlands: Spinhuis; Distribution outside The Netherlands, M. Nijhoff International.

Vidas, Anath Ariel de. 2007. The Symbolic and Ethnic Aspects of Envy among a Teenek Community (Mexico). Journal of Anthropological Research 63 (2): 215-237.

------. 2008. What Makes a Place Ethnic? The Formal and Symbolic Spatial Manifestations of Teenek Identity (Mexico). Anthropological Quarterly 81 (1): 161-205.

Viqueira Albán, Juan Pedro. 1997. Indios rebeldes e idólatras : dos ensayos históricos sobre la rebelión india de Canuc, Chiapas, acaecida en el año 1712. 1. ed. México: Ciesas.

Vogt, Evon Z., ed. 1969. Ethnology. Edited by R. Wauchope. 2 vols. Vol. 7 (pt 1), Handbook of Middle American Indians. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Vogt, Evon Zartman. 1970. The Zinacantecos of Mexico: A Modern Maya Way of Life, Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology. New York: Holt.

------. 1976. Tortillas for the Gods: A Symbolic Analysis of Zinacanteco Rituals. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

------. 1994a. On the Application of the Phylogenetic Model to the Maya. *In* North American Indian Anthropology: Essays on Society and Culture, edited by R. J. DeMallie and A. Ortiz. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Vogt, Evon Z. 1996. Tzotzil of Zinacantan. *In* Encyclopedia of World Cultures - Middle America and the Caribbean. New York: Macmillan Reference USA.

Vogt, Evon Zartman, Alberto Ruz, and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Seminario de Cultura Maya. 1964. Desarrollo cultural de los mayas. [1.ed.] ed. Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Seminario de Cultura Maya.

Warnick, Bryan R. 2008. Imitation and Education: A Philosophical Inquiry into Learning by Example. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Washbrook, Sarah. 2007. Rural Chiapas Ten Years after the Zapatista Uprising. The Library of Peasant Studies. London; New York: Routledge.

Wasserstrom, Robert. 1977. White Fathers and Red Souls: Indian-Ladino Relations in Highland Chiapas, 1528-1973, Ph.D. dissertation. Department of Anthropology, Harvard, Cambridge.

------. 1978. Population Growth and Economic Development in Chiapas, 1524-1975. Human Ecology 6 (2): 127-143.

------. 1980. Ethnic Violence and Indigenous Protest: The Tzeltal (Maya) Rebellion of 1712. Journal of Latin American Studies 12:1-19.

------. 1983a. Class and Society in Central Chiapas. Berkeley: University of California Press.

------. 1983b. Spaniards and Indians in Colonial Chiapas. *In* Spaniards and Indians in Southeastern Mesoamerica: Essays on the History of Ethnic Relations, edited by M. J. MacLeod and R. Wasserstrom. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Watanabe, John M. 1990. From Saints to Shibboleths: Image, Structure, and Identity in Maya Religious Syncretism. American Ethnologist 17 (1): 131-150.

Wauchope, Robert, ed. 1964. Handbook of Middle American Indians. 16 vols. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Webb, Jen, Tony Schirato, and Geoff Danaher. 2002. Understanding Bourdieu. London; Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Weber, Max. 1968. Economy and Society; an outline of interpretive sociology. 3 vols. New York: Bedminster Press.

Weede, Erich, and Edward N. Muller. 1998. Rebellion, Violence and Revolution: A Rational Choice Perspective. Journal of Peace Research 35 (1): 43-59.

Weiner, A. B. 1992. Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-while-giving. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Whitehead, Neil L. 2002. Dark Shamans: Kanaimé and the Poetics of Violent Death. Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press.

------, ed. 2004. Violence. School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series. Santa Fe: School of American Research.

------. 2008. Introduction. *In* Hans Staden's True History: An Account of Cannibal Captivity in Brazil, edited by H. Staden and N. L. Whitehead. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

------. 2009. Introduction: Humanistic Approaches to Violence. Anthropology and Humanism 34 (1): 1-10.

Whitmeyer, Joseph M., and Rosemary L. Hopcroft. 1996. Community, Capitalism, and Rebellion in Chiapas. Sociological Perspectives 39 (4):517-538.

Williams, James G., and René Girard. 1996. The Girard Reader. New York: Crossroad.

Wilson, Carter. 1966. Crazy February. 1st ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott.

------. 1995. A Green Tree & A Dry Tree: a Novel of Chiapas. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Wood, Elena Uribe. 1982. Compadrazgo en Apas. Investigaciones sociales. México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional Indigenista.

Yin, Robert K. 2003. Case Study Research: Design and Methods. 3rd ed. Applied Social Research Methods Series. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Zebadúa, Emilio. 1999. Breve historia de Chiapas. 1. ed, Sección de obras de historia. México: Colegio de México: Fideicomiso Historia de las Américas: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

IRB APPROVAL

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To:	John Chance
	MH
From:	Mark Roosa, Chair
	Soc Beh IRB
Date:	07/06/2009
Committee Action:	**Exemption Granted**
IRB Action Date:	07/06/2009
IRB Protocol #:	0906004063
Study Title:	Ethnic Identity Formations and Mimesis among the Maya Tzotzil Chamula of Chiapas, Mexico

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B

ITEMS OF VIOLENCE IN TZOTZIL COMMUNITIES

LATE 20TH CENTURY

Item. 1974 -1994: Township of San Juan Chamula, Highland Chiapas, Mexico.
Condemned as "dissidents" by local traditionalist political bosses, Chamula Tzotzil Maya are continuously expelled from their homeland. Over several decades some 30 thousand indigenous are displaced (mostly Evangelicals and Roman Catholics).

Item. March 31, 1992: Colonia La Hormiga, *San Cristóbal de Las Casas*.
In the indigenous municipality of San Juan Chamula, Traditionalist bosses jail fifty Evangelical Protestants. Reprisal occurs when organized Evangelicals capture 2 Chamula bosses as they pass through new urban barrios in northern San Cristóbal de Las Casas.[1]

Item: May 5, 1994: City of *San Cristóbal de Las Casas*, Chiapas, Mexico.
Five months after the Zapatista uprising of January 1, 1994, almost one-third of Mexico's Federal troops are now stationed in the State. Some 250 Evangelical Chamula capture four Chamula bosses. In reprisal, five hundred Chamula Traditionalist Catholics demand effectively block entrances to San Cristóbal de Las Casas to demand their release. The Protestants demand restitution from the State government for thousands of Tzotzil expelled unjustly from their homeland.

Item: July 4, 1994: Colonia La Hormiga, *San Cristóbal de Las Casas*, North.
Living in the growing shantytown *colonias* of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, expelled indigenous Evangelicals take hostage the municipal President of San Juan Chamula, frustrated the state does not defend their just cause or help them return to their homes.

Item. July 6, 1994: City of *San Cristóbal de Las Casas*, Western Sector.
Hundreds of non Christian Chamulas (Traditionalists) move en masse to San Cristóbal ready to fight for the liberation of their municipal President. Protestants block the main highway entrance to San Cristóbal de Las Casas, precipitating a gunfight that leaves six injured and two dead.

Item. Fall of 1995: Hamlet of Arbenza I, Municipality of San Juan Chamula.
Chamula Catholic Traditionalists attack Chamula Evangelical Presbyterians. Some twenty-five Traditionalists and only one Evangelical are killed in the gun battle.

Item. December 22, 1997: Village of Acteal, Municipality of Chenalhó.
North of Chamula, in the mountainous municipality of Chenalhó, a paramilitary group of 150 Tzotzil Maya Evangelicals, equipped with AK-47s and machetes, attack Tzotzil Catholic refugees. 45 men, women, and children lose their lives while dozens of wounded flee and surive. Investigations provoke a national scandal for the Zedillo government. Secretary of State Chuayffet resigns under suspicion of perpetrating massacre set to look like intra-ethnic dispute and religious intolerance.
Item. May 1999: Village of Temtoj (Tres Cruces), Muni. San Juan Chamula.

---

[1] Data from local investigators Dolores Aramoni and Gaspar Morquecho (2002) and local Human Rights Center (CDHFBLC 2002).

Chamula Catholic "Traditionalists" violently attack Chamula Roman Catholic believers, taking several to municipal jail after destroying small adobe chapel and smashing religious images of Saints and traditional musical instruments of harp and guitar

Item. January 26-28, 2003: Hamlet Tres Cruces, Muni. of San Juan Chamula. Roman Catholics struggle to protect their traditional rights at a customary common use water hole, a sacred site. Traditionalist bosses destroy the hole to build a modern tank that will control distribution. In the end, five people are dead and a new persecution of dissidents begins.

Item. April 2003: Village of Rancho Narvaez, Municipality of San Juan Chamula. Local mob lynches and burns the body of a Chamula neighbor, whose reputation as a traditionalist "shaman" (a curandero or healter). He was accused of wishing harm to others by practicing witchcraft or sorcery.

Item. October 23, 2003: Hamlet of Votatulan, Municipality of San Juan Chamula. Chamula Evangelical Pastor killed by AK-47, target of unknown assassin.

Item. November 8, 2003, San Cristóbal de Las Casas: Headline from La Foja Coleta (no. 1216), regarding San Juan Chamula: CATHOLIC TRADITIONALIST CRIPPLED BY CHAMULA EVANGELICAL BULLET.[2]

Item. November 4, 2003: Indigenous Municipality of Santiago El Pinar. Tzotzil Village official "crucified" by mob of fellow neighbors, tying him to a large cross in village plaza to demand a share of government credits the leader (cacique) is accused of sharing only with family and cronies.

---

[2] Carlos Herrera (November 8, 2003). "No se recupera víctima de la violencia religiosa – a casi un año de haber sido balaceado por un evangélico," *La Foja Coleta*. No. 1216.

APPENDIX C

"MEDICINE MAN" PERMISSION FOR USE OF IMAGE

ASU

Permission

Jdchallenger1@aol.com <Jdchallenger1@aol.com>
To: michael.rolland@asu.edu

Hi Michael,
Yes you do have permission to use *Medicine Man*
Sorry for the delay, and good luck!

Curt Vickers
Jd Challenger Gallery
201 Paseo del Pueblo Sur
Taos, New Mexico 87571
1.888.751.4677
www.jdchallenger.com

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Michael "Miguel" Rolland went to public elementary and high school in Tempe and Scottsdale, Arizona. After obtaining a BA in History and Philosophy at St. Meinrad Seminary College (Indiana) in 1981, his vocation led him to join the Order of Preachers in the Catholic Church to live as a Dominican friar. Ordained to the presbyterate in 1988 with a master of divinity degree and a master of arts (theology) degree, Miguel was soon assigned by his Order to work in Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico at Our Lady of the Rosary parish. In 1991, he was assigned as chaplain to students at the University of Arizona, Tucson where he also eventually began advanced studies in social-cultural anthropology. Studying under Dr. Ellen Basso and Daniel Nugent, in 1996 Fr. Miguel obtained a master of arts degree in anthropology based on fieldwork in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. The Masters Report was titled *Bishop Samuel Ruiz as "j-tatic" - Social Symbol of Resistance to Ethnocide*. After several periods of pastoral work in Phoenix, in Tucson, and again in Chiapas, he began Ph.D. studies in 2002 at Arizona State University. Interested in René Girard's mimetic hypothesis and "scapegoat theory" Miguel began to us this model as a framework for inquiry into intra-ethnic aspects of conflict and violence in Chiapas. While teaching or assisting with classes at ASU during full time studies, Miguel has also responded intermittently to pastoral duties in Tucson, Tempe, Tucson, Chiapas and most recently in Mexicali, Baja California, México. Ten years at ASU and SHESC have given Miguel an appreciation for the sound academic advise of Dr. John Chance, especially his admirable sensible approach to the empirical aspects of ethno-history and ethnographic analysis. While intellectual "Hedgehogs" like Girard are often good at explaining social realities in terms of one big idea, that does not exclude the contributions of perspicacious "Foxes" such as Chance (not to mention Professors such as Jonsson, Eder, and Rus), who might agree with Archilochus' insistence from long ago that wisdom also comes from learning to know about many things.