

NEW MODES OF EXPERIENCING PILGRIMAGE: DEVOTIONAL TOURISM IN
YUCATAN, MEXICO

By

ALICIA MARIA PEON ARCEO

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2009

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To Life and Laughter
To Family and Friends
To The Three Holy Kings of Tizimín

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Through this intellectual and social journey I am indebted with many colleagues, friends and family members. I want to express my gratitude to my mentor and friend, Allan F. Burns, for all his support through all these years, as well as to my committee members, Francisco Fernández, Marianne Schmink, and Manuel Vásquez, for their shared knowledge and guidance. I want to thank Karen Jones and Patricia King in the Department of Anthropology for their friendship and help. Special thanks for Dr. Carlos Hernández for his encourage and support.

My gratitude goes to all the Yucatecan pilgrims who welcomed me into their homes and lives, sharing with me their motivations and religious experiences, as well as the sacred journeys they undertook. I must give special thanks to Father Armín Rivero, and the staff of the parish of Los Tres Reyes in Tizimin, Yucatan: the secretary, Mrs. Concepción Echeverría, and the sextons, Don Silvano and Don Rodolfo. I am also thankful to the *diputados de fiesta*, Lucio Rosado and José Turriza, who introduced me to the world of the Tizimin fiesta, and to doña Chabe, who always made me feel ‘at home’ during the many hours spent together at the shrine.

Funding for my master, and a major portion of doctoral studies at the University of Florida and research in the Yucatan, came from the Consejo Nacional de Tecnología y Ciencia (CONACYT- Mexico), Teaching Assistantships provided by the UF Department of Anthropology, and from a donation made by Candy Konrad. My sincere gratitude to all.

I want to thank many friends for all the support and for the good times shared during this long and truly enjoyed journey: Leonardo Martínez, María José García, Rosana Resende, María C. Morera, Antonio de la Peña, Stephanie Arriaza, Renzo Rosales, Omaira Bolaños, Alfredo Ríos, José Antonio Tovar, Hannah Covert, Diana-Tita Alvira, Julio César Castro, Juan I. Valiente, Leonardo Rada, Richard Wallace, Alexander Rödlach, Andrea Albertin, Aly Dagang, Rose Solongaarachchi, Alayne Unterberger, and Cynthia Puranik. I am also thankful to all

members, past and present, of the Mexicans in Gainesville Student Association: Eugenio, Milena, Fabi, Carlos, Erica, Diego, Esteban, Rocio, Alex, Luis, Velia, Norma, Ivan, Maru, Horacio, Paula, Sebastian, Nicacio, and Miriam for all the great times spent together, either socializing or promoting Mexican culture in UF and in Gainesville. Special thanks to my constant friend and editor, Pauline Kulstad, and to José Rubén Colón, who shared the last stage of this project with me. Without all of you my life in Gainesville would have not been the same.

Gracias!

Finally, I would like to express my love and gratitude to all the members of my family in México: my sis María del Mar and my brother Francisco, Jorge, Doris, Valentina, Patricio, Javier, Emiliano and Diego. Special *amor* and recognition to my mothers Alicia and Candy Arceo, who have always been there for me, encouraging all my dreams, adventures and academic endeavors. My love goes for each one of you who are here with me and also to the ones, *Papi*, *Huero*, and Valen, who are no longer with us.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Alicia María Peón Arceo

May 2009

Chair: Allan F. Burns
Major: Anthropology

Traditionally, pilgrimage has been seen as a transitional journey where penance, suffering, payment of promises, and personal transformation, were the dominant themes. Nowadays, pilgrimage goes beyond the personal transformation experience to a more complex one where different motivations drive diverse categories of pilgrims to participate in more organized, commercialized, and touristized pilgrimages. In this sense, people have changed the religious significance of pilgrimage to a more multifaceted one that includes not only religious, but leisurely activities as well.

The intention of my study is to explore the regional pilgrimages and excursions undertaken to the shrine of the Three Kings during the annual patronal fiesta, one of the largest fiestas in the state, as a manifestation of popular religion and cultural consumption in Yucatan, Mexico. Pilgrimage is analyzed as a dynamic entity composed of a variety of elements such as: local religious rituals, traditional objects and forms of veneration, attitudes regarding sacred images, organized and non-organized travel to shrines, as well as space, time and cultural consumption of the religious and civic aspects of the patronal fiesta. The influence of external agents stemming from globalization, such as changes and innovations in pilgrimage structures and meanings, have

developed what I have denominated “Devotional Tourism” a cultural religious activity intimately related to popular religion, where the main motivation of the trip is not only to visit a sacred place and its surroundings, but rather, to make a devotion or to pay a promise to the supreme being, or divine image present in the place. In this way, devotional tourism is strongly motivated by an internal spiritual feeling, demonstrated in concrete actions of devotion and, to a lesser degree, motivated by the eagerness to participate in leisure activities, or travel to different places. The participant is identified as a pilgrim, rather than a religious tourist. The weight put on the religious aspect, and the different levels of commodification, consumption and commercialization of infrastructure and leisure are what will define this religious activity. Devotional tourism is a practice that has been gaining popularity among pilgrims over the past years in Yucatan and other parts of Mexico.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Religion and Pilgrimage in Motion

Religion is an institution that has existed since the beginning of humankind. Many anthropologists have studied its function, structure, and significance among different societies. Figures such as Durkheim, Evans-Pritchard (1937), Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, or more contemporary ones such as Leach, Geertz and Turner, have created precedents for the study of religion within the field of Anthropology. Current religious research in Anthropology is following a new track due to the fact that religion is part of a globalized world, or part of “a world of motion,” as stated by Ina and Rosaldo (2002).

In the last few decades the term “globalization” has become quite popular. At first this term was used to denote the influence of Western economy, politics, culture and technology on non-Western countries, also known as the Third World countries. Now globalization studies have proven that the influence is not just a one-way from the Western to non-Western culture, but rather a movement that comes and goes, back and forth, from the Western to the non-Western, and also vice versa.

According to Ina and Rosaldo (2002), to live in a globalized world means to live in “a world of motion, of complex interconnections;” where “capital traverses frontiers almost effortlessly, drawing dense networks of financial interconnections.” In this world “people readily cut across national boundaries, turning countless territories into spaces where various cultures converge, clash, and struggle with each other;” and where “commodities drift briskly from one locality to another...images flicker quickly from one screen to another... and ...ideologies circulate rapidly through ever-expanding circuits.” Since we live in a world of motion, we are constantly dealing with changes and innovations that are shaping all types of

institutions, including religious ones. That is why we cannot see religion as a static institution, although in reality it was never static. Religion is dynamic, and is in constant change. Some decades ago, the modernization theorists predicted the secularization of religion because “they largely accepted the view of the modern world as a space of shrinking religiosity (and greater scientism), less play (and increasingly regimented leisure), and inhibited spontaneity at every level” (Appadurai 1996:6). Today, however we can certify that more than ever we live in a world of religious pluralism, as well as in a globalized world in which religion plays important roles within social, political, and economic global networks.

Vásquez and Marquard state that there is indeed an active interaction within religion and globalization. This interaction is evident in what they call “lived religion: specific religious practices, discourses, and institutions which constitute the fabric of local life for large segments of the population around the world” (2003:51). My study focuses on one aspect of lived religion: Pilgrimage among low income Yucatecans. In the case study presented an external factor, globalization, and an internal behavior, cultural consumption, have reshaped the meaning of pilgrimage by redefining, restructuring and reinterpreting its functions, practices, and behaviors. The population for this study is part of the Yucatecan popular culture. This culture is not exclusively defined as Mayan or *mestiza*, urban or rural, it is just Yucateca. It is a culture embodied by low income groups with specific lifestyles and religious patterns of consumption. These groups come from localities which constantly commute from the geographies of the “rural” to the “urban,” proposing a more mixed culture present in both, rather than the existence of distinct cultural distinctions between towns and cities. Nowadays, globalization has increased not only the physical mobility of low income Yucatecans, but also their culture. Rural

and urban low income Yucatecans share cultural and religious traditions that are reflected in the act of pilgrimage.

Changes and Innovations in Pilgrimage: a Brief Introduction

Morinis defines pilgrimage as “a journey undertaken by a person in quest of a place or a state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal. At its most conventional, the end of the pilgrimage is an actual shrine located at some fixed geographical point” (1992a:4). Since the Middle Ages, pilgrimage has been a channel for the flow of people, ideas, and religious networks. Due to the fact that in Christianity pilgrimages were very popular, pilgrims created a system of pathways to most of the important sanctuaries, such as Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela. This facilitated the movement of people, ‘itinerant devotees’ that were in search of penitence, purification, expiation and redemption. However, it was not until the 12th and 13th centuries, that a ‘sanctuarial network’ was established. Since then, pilgrimage has become a common activity (Swatos and Tomasi 2002). However, pilgrimage has changed with time.

Pilgrimage changes can be found throughout its history. Pilgrimage is one of the cultural practices and beliefs that has been more documented since its institutionalization, in conjunction with the foundation of the main religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. There are also accounts that suggest ancient pilgrimages by indigenous groups in many parts of the world (Turner and Turner 1978). For some religions, pilgrimage is mandatory, as in the case of Islam, where at least once during a lifetime, Muslims have to go to Mecca. For others, such as Christianity, pilgrimage is not mandatory, but is suggested. The Catholic Church, for instance, encourages believers go on pilgrimages. Pope John Paul II was a metaphor for a pilgrim. He was called “the Traveling Pope,” and he visited many Catholic shrines all around the world.

The movement of people, ideas and beliefs is an important element of the globalization process. According to Rudolph (Vásquez and Marquard 2003:2), “religious communities are among the oldest of transnationals: Sufi orders, Catholic missionaries, and Buddhist monks carried word and praxis across vast spaces before those places became nation-states or even states.” Transnational communities are characterized by their migration to other places, and the maintenance of their transnational ties to their original communities. The ongoing relation between the two places transforms the cultural, social, economic and political structures in one way or the other. This definition can also be applied to religion. In this way, if we follow Rudolph’s take, we can assume that Catholicism had, especially in the beginning, some of the characteristics of a transnational religion. Catholicism brought flows of people, ideas and beliefs. The introduction of these flows transformed the existing religion. The imposition of Iberian Catholicism on local indigenous religions in Latin America created new syncretic expressions that resulted in changes and innovations.

If we go back in history, we find that one of the first changes in pilgrimage caused by external agents, such as the missionaries, was caused by the imposition of the Catholic religion on the Native peoples of Latin America. Before the Spaniards arrived, Native people practiced pilgrimages to their shrines. There is evidence that in the Andean culture, pilgrimage was practiced between 1000 and 500 BC (Sallnow 2000:138). In Mexico, Teotihuacan was a pilgrimage center for Mesoamericans since Pre-Classic times (1200BC-300AD) (Barba de Piña Chan 1998b). In Yucatan, Mexico, early accounts have also shown that the pilgrimage tradition existed among the Mayans before the Spaniards arrived. Pilgrimages occurred to the islands of Cozumel and Isla Mujeres, to the well at Chichen Itzá (until 1539), and to Izamal (Miller and

Taube 1993). In Guatemala, archaeological evidence has suggested pilgrimage activity was already underway by 200 BC on the shore of Lake Amatitlan (Straub 1991:158-159).

Nowadays, pilgrimages are still common practice in Latin America. Syncretic religious practices and discourses are present in pilgrim devotional behavior. This becomes more evident in pilgrimages during saints' fiestas and patronal fiestas among indigenous and *mestizo* populations¹. In many cases, pilgrimages to places which used to be Pre-Hispanic temples or natural shrines, and where ancient deities had been worshipped, are still taking place². In other cases, pilgrims visit the natural shrine—a cave, a mountain, a grotto, a lake—as part of their pilgrimage to a Christian shrine. Some natural shrines have been “Christianized.”³ Globalization has also influenced pilgrimage because of its importance in transnational Latin American communities. Images, like the Virgin of Guadalupe and Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos, had been de-territorialized and re-territorialized by hundreds of Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, and other migrants who travel on pilgrimages to their sanctuaries located in different countries⁴.

¹ There are plenty of examples in the literature covering this topic. One example, is the *Fiesta de los Reyes o del Niño* in Northern Peru, which is the major *fiesta* of the Piura indigenous peasantry. Pilgrims come from Piura department to participate in a procession and a theatrical pageant about the journey of the Magi. This presentation incorporates significant elements of indigenous cosmological symbolism (Straub 1991). Another is the pilgrimage to venerate the Christ of Esquipulas in Guatemala. This international shrine attracts pilgrims during the different celebrations of its annual calendar, including during the patronal fiesta devoted to St. Santiago (Kendall 1991).

² Most of them today are Catholic shrines like in the case of Cholula Puebla, Mexico in where all year around and especially during the annual fiesta pilgrims visit the sanctuary of the Virgin of *Remedios*. This sanctuary was built on top of the largest Mesoamerican Pre-hispanic temple (García Díaz 1998).

³ One example is the pilgrimage undertaken to venerate the Cross of Chalpon, located in a cave shrine in a rocky canyon close to the town of Motupe, Peru. Pilgrims come from many towns, cities, and countries to accompany the cross on its 3 day journey, from its cave shrine to the plaza of Motupe, stopping in several towns along the way. According to Vreeland, the cult of the Cross of Chalpon is rooted in a traditional, pre-Contact Andean matrix, and it was not until 1937 when the Catholic church build a chapel and atrium along the cave due political, economical and religious interests (Vreeland Jr. 1991).

⁴ For instance, nowadays, members of these transnational communities who are devotees of the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos undertake pilgrimages indistinctively to the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, where there is an exact replica of the Virgin, or to Gaudalajara, Mexico, where the shrine and Virgin are originally from (Vásquez and Marquard 2003). This pilgrimage mobility is also present in Mexican transnational members of the global Evangelical Church “*the Luz del Mundo*,” or the Light of the World. Pilgrims from Houston do an annual pilgrimage to participate in the religious ceremony of *Santa Cena* (Holy

‘Sacred journeys’ persist in Latin America and in other areas of the world. Most of the world’s pilgrimage destinations remain the same. New devotions have created new sacred spaces for pilgrimage, at the local and global level (see Vásquez and Marquard 2000). Religious motivations to go on a pilgrimage prevail above others. Traditionally, pilgrimage has been seen as a transitional journey where penance, suffering, payment of promises, and personal transformation were the dominant themes. However, nowadays, pilgrimage goes beyond the personal transformation experience to become a more complex one, where different motivations drive diverse categories of pilgrims to participate in more organized, commercialized and touristized pilgrimages (Swatos and Tomasi 2002; Turner and Turner 1978; Vukonic 1996). In this sense, people have changed the religious significance of pilgrimage, transforming it into a more multifaceted one that includes not only religious, but leisurely activities as well.

Devotional Tourism: Pilgrimage on Wheels

For more than a century, evidence shows that religious tourism has been a profitable industry in Europe, yet little is known about religious tours or excursions in Latin America, especially in Mexico. Because tourism is a big industry in Mexico, Mexican federal and state governments constantly invest in development and promotion of their tourism assets. Pre-Hispanic sites, colonial cities, ethnic diversity, folklore, five star resorts, ecotourism and pristine beaches are only some of the many interests that attract local, national, and international tourists to different parts of Mexico. Since tourists are always looking for new experiences, travel agencies are now offering a wider variety of tours and circuits, including those related to religious traditions. A quick search on the internet reveals a variety of religious tours to the main Mexican shrines. Nowadays, in Yucatan, Mexico popular religion has become a new channel for

Supper) that takes place in the *Hermosa Provincia*, while the church headquarters are located in Guadalajara, Mexico (Fortuny-Loret de Mola 2003).

small local travel agencies and local governments to promote and touristize community beliefs and traditions. These promotions do not target international and national tourists, but rather they target local and rural low to middle income populations.

The intention of my study is to explore the regional pilgrimages and excursions undertaken to the shrine of the Three Kings during the annual patronal fiesta, one of the largest fiestas in the state, as a manifestation of popular religion and cultural consumption in Yucatan, Mexico. In this case study, the flow of pilgrims and their motivations will be analyzed, as well as the networks and the spaces involved in these pilgrimages. The influence of external agents stemming from globalization, such as changes and innovations in their structures and meanings, will also be examined. In short, it will analyze what I have denominated “Devotional Tourism” an important cultural, religious, and leisure activity intimately related to popular religious practices and internal spiritual motivations, a practice that has been developing over the past years in Yucatan and other parts of Mexico.

Pilgrimage proposes unlimited possibilities for anthropological analysis, based on the ideas, symbols, behavior, social forces, and experiences woven into its practices (Morinis 1992b). Therefore, in my study, pilgrimage is analyzed as a dynamic entity composed of a variety of elements, such as: local religious rituals, traditional objects and forms of veneration, attitudes regarding the sacred images, organized and non-organized travel to shrines, as well as space, time⁵ and cultural consumption of the religious and civic aspects of the patronal fiesta. Different questions are explored: How do social class, economic condition, gender and age affect the way people experience and interpret pilgrimage? What motivates people to undertake pilgrimage/travel? What factors determine the boundaries, if any, between a pilgrim and a

⁵ This idea is taken from Coleman and Elsner (1995)

tourist? What drives pilgrims and locals to have different perceptions of a shrine? How are the sacred powers of the images perceived and transmitted by pilgrims? How does is the cultural consumption of pilgrims manifested during the religious and civic aspects of the fiesta? How is class related to the consumption of culture and leisure among ‘devotional tourists’? Are Pilgrim day excursions expressions of an the incipient emergence of domestic tourism industry in a specific area?

Based on theories of pilgrimage (Coleman and Eade 2004b; Eade 2000; Turner and Turner 1978) and cultural consumption (Bourdieu 1984; Douglas and Isherwood 1996; García Canclini 1993a) my study aims to analyze how place, person and movement intersect in the context of a particular pilgrimage, and how this practice helps explain the continuous relationship between religion and leisure through cultural consumption. Drawing on ethnographic data collected, the meaning of the Three Kings shrine is examined. First, it is considered to be a male shrine for pilgrims who visit, experience and consume it every year. Second, an analysis of how this shrine acts as embodiment of tradition, myth and history, and therefore how it shapes the faith and the regional devotion to the images will be presented. Third, I will present how the power of the Three Kings shrine is diffused throughout the State of Yucatan in the form of pilgrim’s narratives on miracles. Finally, the last section presents how local excursions to the shrine of the Three Kings become a microcosm that represent cultural consumption and globalization processes at the local and regional level through the development of ‘devotional tourism’ in the area.

By presenting and analyzing the case of the Three Kings pilgrimage, my study will contribute to the field of anthropology and religion. The concept of “Travel”, an inclusive term embracing a range of more or less voluntary practices, such as leaving home to go to some other

place (Clifford 1997:66), among low income Mexicans needs to be more explored. Equally important, the study of pilgrimages, and the examination of religious devotion and leisure among low income pilgrims, will help us understand the patterns of cultural consumption and religious tourism literature at a regional, national, and international level. My study will bring new insights to these topic and fields.

Towards the Three Kings Pathway: A Personal Journey

As a cultural anthropologist I have always been interested in cultural and social behavior, local and indigenous traditions, rituals and festivities. I explored these interests for the first time as an undergraduate student in anthropology during a six-month field project in a small Mayan town in Quintana Roo, Mexico as part of my thesis (Peón-Arceo 1996). I studied Mayan rituals within women's life-cycles and analyzed them as "Rites of Passage" (Turner 1969). While living in the Mayan community I had the opportunity to be part of their celebrations, including their main annual religious festivity held at their Mayan sanctuary in Tixcacal-Guardia. During the two weeks of celebrations, activities throughout the entire town, Tuzik, were paralyzed for the celebration and people were constantly commuting from the town to the sanctuary. I was fascinated by the massive mobilizations of Mayan people from all over the State who gathered for religious reasons, to venerate the Holy Mayan Cross, and for family entertainment. Since then, my interest in fiestas and flows of people led to further exploration of these topics.

Later, as a Master's degree student at the University of Florida I explored this interest. The Three Kings' Fiesta is well known to all Yucatan natives, myself included. This fiesta takes place in the city of Tizimin⁶, a small city with a population of 39,525 (INEGI 2000), located in

⁶ Tizimin is a city and the municipal seat that belongs to a municipality named after the city. In my work I refer only to the city of Tizimin.

the eastern part of Yucatan (see Figure 1-1). The city, besides being known for its cattle industry and agricultural production, holds one of the largest and most important patronal fiestas in the state. Two anthropologists have written briefly on the fiesta, Robert Redfield in *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, and later, Victor Turner in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*. Redfield emphasizes the economic aspect, while Turner explores the religious. They also mention that the Three Kings Fiesta is not only a major event in Yucatan, but also an important pilgrimage center (Redfield 1941:297-300; Turner 1974:217-223). In spite of this, this fiesta has not been the focus of major anthropological studies by Mexican or international researchers⁷.

To remedy the lack of research on the subject, my master's paper focused on the historical, religious, social, and economic aspects of the Three Kings Fiesta. Research was based on newspaper ads from 1870 to 2002. In the Yucatan Peninsula, since the introduction of the printing press in the 1800s, flyers and newspapers have played a fundamental role in informing people. Newspapers in Yucatan have covered a wide range of topics, from international to national, urban, and rural news. Due to the fact that patronal fiestas are embedded in the economic, political, social, and religious arenas, advertisements regarding the fiesta organization, dates, place, and schedules are found in the newspapers every year. Advertisement narratives and news items from different periods of time were analyzed using a historical approach. The use of language, the audience, and the changes, which stressed social, religious, or economic coverage, were interpreted. Changes in the fiesta were explored and reviewed through the analysis of the

⁷ The only book that deals with the fiesta was written by the Tizimilian Juan Rivero, a doctor interested in preserving the local traditions of his city. He describes the sacred and the profane aspects of the fiesta (1976). Brito Sansores, a Yucatecan historian, also writes about the fiesta as a linkage event to the history of Tizimín (n/d). There is a set of short storybooks written by Alfonso López Meso (2003), a chronicler of Tizimín. His book is about legends and anecdotes from this city and its people. More recently, the Universidad of Yucatan Press published a book on religious art, symbolism, and adoration of the Three Holy Kings images at Tizimín (Otero Rejón 2000).

impact of social, religious, and economic factors not only on the structure of the fiesta, but also on the way people reacted during fiesta days⁸.

Throughout different periods, pilgrimage to the fiesta was a recurrent topic that inspired news items. Social actors, modes of undertaking pilgrimage, means of transportation, seasons, motivations, interactions, social networks, and physical spaces, such as the shrine, were other topics mentioned. The ads presented the flow of pilgrims arriving by train, by car, and by coach excursions.

Dissertation Outline

The Pilgrimage, cultural consumption and the anthropology and tourism theoretical frameworks are introduced in Chapter 2 in order to anchor my study. A brief historical overview of the study of pilgrimage is presented from the approach of the main anthropological streams as well as a section with a literature review of material related to pilgrimage in Mexico and Yucatan. Chapter 3 presents the methodology used for this research, and introduces the reader to the Three Kings Fiesta. The study of pilgrimage challenges the conventional anthropological methods of one single community-long term ethnography, and is rather a multi-sited one. A metaphor of the town, its inhabitants, the sanctuary and its pilgrims, is presented. The methodology used for data collection is explained. Different personal encounters with the pilgrims are also examined. The second part of the chapter elaborates on the fiesta system in Yucatan. The religious and civic aspects of the fiesta are explored and analyzed.

The ethnographic core of my study is presented in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 explores one of the coordinates for this study: the ‘place.’ The religious, economical, political, cultural

⁸Presently, in the city of Mérida, it is possible to have access to original newspapers starting from the XIX century. A private family newspaper business runs an office which provides services to everyone interested in accessing them. For this study the data from a local newspaper initiated in 1869, first named *La Revista de Mérida*, and later *Diario de Yucatán* was analyzed.

and regional significance of the sacred place, or shrine, is analyzed. Examples are given from insights from the different actors related to the Three Kings shrine.

In chapter 5 the second and third coordinates: 'person' and 'movement' are explored. The different forms devotees undertake pilgrimage to this sanctuary, and their motivations and experiences, based on rich ethnographic accounts from pilgrim's interviews and oral histories, are examined. Chapter 6 elaborates on the topics of religious tourism and cultural consumption. The concept of Devotional Tourism, based on the different modes of experiencing pilgrimage, is presented. In the case of the Three Kings Fiesta, this small-scale industry is consumed in many ways by pilgrims and enhanced by incoming excursions organized in different areas of the state of Yucatan.

In chapter 7 I conclude with an overview of the five chapters and a categorization of the shrine of Three Kings as a regional entity in the Yucatan. I also make a reflection about how Yucatecans have become more mobile through the influence of globalization.



Figure 1-1. The city of Tizimín, located in the state of Yucatan, Mexico (adapted from source www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia08/mexico_sm_2008.gif)

CHAPTER 2 ANTHROPOLOGY AND PILGRIMAGE: A REVIEW OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this chapter a brief historical overview of the study of pilgrimage is presented from the approach of the main anthropological streams. Pilgrimage and cultural consumption theoretical frameworks are introduced in order to anchor the study as well as some key concepts of the field of anthropology and tourism. This section ends with a literature review of material related to pilgrimage in Mexico and Yucatan. This review of is not intended to cover all work related to pilgrimage studies in Europe, the United States, or Mexico, but rather is a selection of the most relevant work that guided and inspired this analysis and study on pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage on the Road

Pilgrimage has been practiced around the world for many centuries. Despite its importance among different religions and cultures, it is not until fairly recently that anthropologists have started to consider it as a topic of study. According to Morinis “the history of the anthropological study of pilgrimage is not deep, nor has it been comprehensive” (1992a:7). Some of the early works on pilgrimage come from the Scottish orientalist Robertson-Smith (*Religion of the Semites* [1907]) and from the French sociologist Robert Hertz (*St. Besse: A Study of an Alpine Cult* [orig.1913]) (Morinis 1992a:7). The work of Hertz, a doctoral student of Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, was republished by Stephen Wilson as a section of his edited book (1983). Hertz presents an ethnography of the St. Besse festival and the pilgrimage which takes place in the Italian Grain Alps. Participant observations at the mountains, the chapel itself and its surroundings, and interviews of the pilgrims, area elders and authorities, compose the core of the study (Hertz 1983). At this stage, studies on pilgrimage were more informative and descriptive than analytical.

Functionalist Study of Pilgrimage

Anthropological research on pilgrimage between the 1950s and the 1970s had a notoriously Durkheimian influence on the analysis of function and social structure. In anthropological literature, Morinis (1984) finds three types of social functions of pilgrimage. The first focus of analysis was on pilgrimage as social integrator “a force in national or regional social integration, cutting across group boundaries” (238). He cites of Wolf’s (1958:38) study of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico’s patron saint. For this author, the function of this icon is to link all Mexican social strata, those of different political tendencies, and even those of different religious tendencies The icon is also a link between the Mexican colonial past and the present “it is, ultimately, a way of talking about Mexico a “collective representation of Mexican society” (239). The second type of analysis was based on pilgrimage’s function of maintaining and enhancing group solidarity. “The effects of pilgrimage on the group of participants themselves, and how the institution functions to develop or maintain values and ideas held by the group” (238). To demonstrate his point, Morinis cites Boyce’s (1977:248) essay on the Persian Zoroastrian’s annual pilgrimages to five holy rock-shrines, stating that “pilgrimages were in general a great means of fostering solidarity among the Zoroastrians, with news being exchanged between villages, marriages arranged, and friendships kept in good repair” (246). The third type of analysis reveals that some authors see pilgrimage as an enactment of the social order, “on the replication of existing social patterns in pilgrimage practices by which the institution is an enactment of the organization of relations among the various groups in society” (238). Dale Eickelman (1976:172), in his study of Moroccan Islam, refers to a pilgrimage to the tomb of a saint. In this pilgrimage the tribesmen renew their dyadic contracts with the saint’s descendants, and through this covenant they are guaranteed divine protection “the pilgrimage to Boujad largely constitutes a continuation of the ordinary social order” (Morinis 1984:249, 238-249).

Other example of this tendency is the article by Adams and Gross. Based on a new functionalist approach, Adams presents a pilgrimage undertaken by the Tzeltales and Tojolabales (Mayan groups) to non-indigenous communities in Chiapas. The receiving shrines from this area are considered central/political places, since they attract pilgrims from different ecological areas (Adams 1983). Gross's analysis of the Brazilian pilgrimage to the shrine of Bom Jesus da Lapahe emphasizes that the relationship of the pilgrims to the saint is a reproduction of the patron-client subordinate relationship (Gross 1971).

Functionalist analysis permeated anthropological research on pilgrimage until Victor Turner (1974) and Edith Turner (Turner and Turner 1978) proposed an alternative analytic model based on pilgrimages in the Christian tradition.

The Turnerian Approach to the Study of Pilgrimage

A significant theory that has influenced the anthropological study of pilgrimage was proposed by Victor Turner. This major figure of Symbolic or Interpretative anthropology, together with his wife, based his theory of ritual analysis on the dynamic institution of pilgrimage (Turner 1974; Turner and Turner 1978). Turner's approach of pilgrimage as liminal phenomena comes from the "Rites of Passage theory" Since "the Turners's approach proved hegemonic within an ethnographic and theoretical field" (Coleman 2002:356), it is important to explain their theoretical approach from its roots.

Victor Turner sees pilgrimage as a social process. Therefore, he analyzes it using his theory of ritual, based on van Gennep's "Rites of Passage theory" (1960). According to this theory, the rites of passage, or "transition," present three phases: Separation, Margin (threshold, or *limen*, in Latin), and Re-Aggregation. Turner borrows this division and develops it within his own ritual theory. The first phase, Separation, embraces symbolic behavior representing the detachment of the individual, or group, from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a

set of cultural conditions (a “state”), or from both. In the second phase, Liminal, the ritual subject (“the passenger”) passes through a cultural realm that has few, or none, of the attributes of the past state or the one that is to come, and is in a period of ambiguity. In the third phase, Re-aggregation, the passage, or move, is consummated (Turner 1967; Turner 1969).

From this Liminal state an unstructured, or rudimentary structured, and quite undifferentiated, community emerges. In other words, a communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders is created (Turner 1969). This *Communitas*, (the Latin term for community) is spontaneous, immediate, and concrete. It is not shaped by norms, is not institutionalized, and not abstract. In liminality, *Communitas* creates anti-structural bonds in the sense that they are undifferentiated, equalitarian, direct, non-rational, and existential (Turner 1974).

Pilgrimages are not rites of passage per se, but they present some of their characteristics. For instance, pilgrims usually go through the three phases of Separation, Liminalization and Re-Aggregation. Pilgrimage liberates the person from everyday obligations and roles, from structure, and brings him/her to a liminoid phase, or threshold. From the believer’s standpoint, this liminoid phase is based on the pilgrimage center, a place and moment “in and out of time.” In this place, the believer expects to have a direct experience with the sacred, a miraculous healing or a personal transformation (Turner 1974:197). A Re-Integration phase to the structured world will constitute the end of the sacred journey. However, upon observation of the pilgrimage process, liminality presents other characteristics that lead Turner to consider it as liminoid.

Turner’s liminality is an ambiguous term. Liminal entities are not found in one phase or another. Turner describes it as “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (Turner 1969:95). The transitional beings do not have

status, property, secular clothing, rank, kinship, position or rights. The individual(s) are invisible, ambiguous and neutral. On the other hand, the liminal group is a community, or comity, of comrades, and a structure of hierarchically arrangement positions does not exist (Turner 1967). Pilgrimage has some of the attributes of liminality, such as the homogenization of status, release from a mundane structure, *Communitas*, movement from a mundane to sacred place, among others. However, pilgrims do not pass through a liminal period as ritual subjects do, but rather they experiment a liminoid phase since it is a voluntary act, and not an obligatory social mechanism (Turner and Turner 1978). It does not have the exact or same implication. Therefore, in Turnerian terms, pilgrimage is a liminoid phenomenon.

For Turner, liminoid, or quasi-liminal, is a form of symbolic action, a type of free-time activity that is applied to modern industrial societies (1974). Other examples in this genre include theater, film, ballet and art. These activities are “plural, fragmentary, experimental, idiosyncratic, quirky, subversive, utopian, and characteristically produced and consumed by identifiable individuals, in contrast to liminal phenomena, which are often anonymous or divine in origin” (Turner and Turner 1978:253). In this sense, pilgrims individually, or in groups, voluntarily journey to visit a sacred shrine. They do this in order to experiment a personal transformation, or to fulfill “a promise.” According to Turner, while they are on the pilgrimage, pilgrims experiment temporal liminoid phases that eventually create social anti-structure, or normative *Communitas*, which is another important characteristic of the Liminoid phase.

Communitas is a key aspect in the study of ritual process. Turner distinguishes three types of *Communitas*, the normative one being an important feature of pilgrimages. Normative *communitas* is influenced by time. There is mobilization and organization of resources to keep group members alive and thriving. There is also a need for social control among those members

in pursuit of these, and other, collective goals. The original existential *communitas* is organized into an enduring social system (Turner 1969; Turner 1974).

According to Turner and Turner (1978), normative *communitas* originates in a non-utilitarian experience of brotherhood and fellowship that it is preserved by religious, moral, and legal codes. It is held together by religious and civil ceremonies. It constitutes the characteristic social bond among and between pilgrims, and those who offer help and hospitality on their holy journey. For religious specialists, the freedom experienced by pilgrims in normative *communitas* can make it a potentially subversive experience. This is the reason why the “structured ritual system” model is used to control pilgrims and shrines (Turner and Turner 1978).

Victor Turner, and his wife Edith, published *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* in 1978, and it became a standard in pilgrimage studies during the 1980s and 1990s. As Yamba (1995:9) states, “ anthropologists who embark on the study of pilgrimage almost all start out debating with the pronouncements of Victor Turner, whose framework they invariably employ as a point of departure” (see Coleman 2002; Coleman and Eade 2004b:3). Interestingly enough, the explanatory model of *communitas* in the field of anthropology and sociology has expanded the theme of pilgrimage to include discussions on more diverse topics such as tourism and travel (Cohen 1979; Cohen 1988; Graburn 1989; Nash 1996).

Turner and Turner’s analysis of pilgrimage provides interesting insights into the study of pilgrimage as a socio-cultural process. This approach has influenced several anthropological studies on pilgrimage Morinis (1992b), Crumrine and Morinis on Latin American pilgrimage (1991), Frey (1998) on pilgrim’s stories walking the ‘camino’ to Santiago de Compostela , Dubisch (1995) on pilgrimage to a Greek shrine, and Garma and Shadow (1994; 2000) on Mexican pilgrimage, amongst others.

Contesting the Turnerian Approach

Turner's theory on pilgrimages as ritual has its strengths and weaknesses, just like any other theory in anthropology. However, the fact that this theory has influenced the study of pilgrimage, not only in anthropology, but also in other disciplines (religion, geography, and history) demonstrates its importance. It must be noted is the appropriate one to use in the study of pilgrimage as personal and collective transformation. For Turner the essence of pilgrimage is the experience obtained in *Communitas*, the "direct, immediate, and total confrontation of human identities" (Turner 1969:131). By experiencing normative *communitas* pilgrims separate from their social structure to be part of a liminoid state that might lead them to experience different transformations.

Critics of the Turnerian approach (Eade and Sallnow 2000; Coleman and Elsner 1995; Morinis 1992; Crumrine and Morinis 1991) coincide on two points. First, pilgrimage is not an isolated process. Therefore, pilgrimage cannot be analyzed as a solitary process with universal characteristics that can fit in a three-stage formula. It is a social, cultural and political phenomenon, varied in content, dynamic, and in constant change due to its connection with the globalized world. According to Morinis, "Pilgrimage is too varied in content to be analyzed as if there were a single, recurrent, common, manifest factor" (1992:9).

Pilgrimage is a channel for the movement of culture, knowledge, ideas and representations. We cannot study pilgrimage without taking into account the global context in which it is embedded. Pilgrimage is "an unruly process whose regularities cannot be contained within the universalist structures of integrative analysis. The diversity of contemporary research into pilgrimage around the world, and across religions and secular boundaries reflects, in part, the wider changes wrought by the interweaving of local and global processes" (Eade 2000: xx).

Secondly, *communitas* does not necessarily equalize the status or roles of the pilgrims, and does not necessarily provide a bond among them. Turner's theory has been tested in different countries, such as Morocco, Thailand, Nepal, north India, Peru, Sri Lanka, and Bengal, and none of these studies confirms his hypothesis. A leveling *communitas* situation is not always present, and in some cases, pilgrimage is highly individualistic (Morinis 1992b). Coleman and Elsner also state that *communitas* is only an ideal, and that many pilgrimages involve situations of social division and conflict (1995:202). In the case of a Peruvian pilgrimage in the Andes, Sallnow found, that instead of having an idealistic *communitas* experience "a plethora of divisions and interferences contrived to frustrate its realization, sometimes in an apparently gratuitous fashion"(1981:176).

Eade and Sallnow, the main critics of Turner's paradigm, base their point of view on the theoretical criticism others have made of Turner's approach. They state that "it is the determinism of the model which limits its usefulness, for the necessary alignment of pilgrimage and anti-structure, not only prejudices the complex character of the phenomenon, but also imposes a spurious homogeneity on the practices of pilgrimage unwieldy differing historical and cultural settings" (2000b:5). Therefore, they propose a model to demonstrate "how analytical discussion could be linked to careful ethnographic research of particular cults without recourse to the universalistic claims of structural models" (Eade and Sallnow 2000a:xiii).

The study of pilgrimage offers more than a personal transformation, or the experience of *communitas*. The pilgrimage process offers additional elements that have to be taken into account since they provide insightful information for a more in-depth understanding of the process.

Pilgrimage: A Multiplicity of Discourses

Eade and Sallnow's (2000a) book on Christian pilgrimages proposed a theoretical anthropological framework for the study of pilgrimage. Since the Functionalist and Turnerian approach share the same structuralist foundations on pilgrimage by seeing it as either supporting or subverting the established social order, Eade and Sallnow developed a view of pilgrimage "not merely as a field of social relations but also as *a realm of competing discourses*" (2000a:5). This theoretical approach is more diversified and less rigid than the one proposed by the Turners. In this sense, these authors propose a heterogeneous pilgrimage process, in which pilgrimage is "above all an arena for competing religious and secular discourses, for the official co-optation and the non-official recovery of religious meanings, for conflict between orthodoxies, sects, and confessional groups" (Ibid: 2). Therefore, pilgrimage as an institution needs to be deconstructed into historically and culturally specific behaviors and meanings, instead of being understood as a universal or homogeneous phenomenon (Ibid:3).

The theoretical agenda constructed by Eade and Sallnow originates from the sacred centre, the place to which the pilgrim is drawn. In their 'analytical endeavour' they suggest that this centre 'may assume many different forms,' and they proposed a triad of 'person', 'place', and 'text' as co-ordinates for the study of pilgrimage (Christian for the most part). However, they also consider this useful in the study of pilgrimage within other scriptural-based religious traditions (2000a:xiii, 9). Therefore, pilgrimage needs to be seen as a multiplicity of discourses, with multiple meanings and understandings. The discourses usually come from the person: pilgrims, residents, religious specialists, etc. As Kaelber points out, it is a new paradigm that presents pilgrimage as a contested activity with contested knowledge within any retelling of its undertaking. This knowledge might come from different groups: pilgrims, clerics, or heretics, and range from traditional to innovative practices (2002:53). For Eade and Sallnow, the place,

the sacred centre, the shrine, builds up its 'religious capital' through the meaning and ideas projected onto the shrine by shrine officials, pilgrims, and locals. Their "meaning and ideas are shaped by their political and religious, national and regional, ethnic and class background." The shrine can be seen as a "religious void, a ritual space capable of accommodating diverse meanings and practices...what confers upon a major shrine its essential, universalistic character is [their] capacity to absorb and reflect a multiplicity of religious discourses [and] to be able to offer a variety of clients what each of them desires... [Therefore] the sacred centre... appears as a vessel into which pilgrims devoutly pour their hopes, prayers, and aspirations" (2000b:15). Besides the person-centred and the place-centred sacredness, these authors also propose that divine power is also found in a text. Citing the work of Bowman on Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Eade and Sallnow explain that the "...sacred geography [of Jerusalem for the Roman Catholic] is relevant only in so far as it illustrates an authoritative text...[Therefore], the Holy places of Jerusalem...are visited as illustrations of a text that is itself the ultimate source of power" (Ibid:9) . A 'textual pilgrimage' (Ibid: 8) might be undertaken by pilgrims who are following particular steps, locations, and events written in a sacred text. However, this combination of person, place and text as an analytical framework for a better understanding of Christian pilgrimage proposed by Eade and Sallnow is not fully developed, and is not described in detail by the authors (see Coleman and Elsner 1995).

Beyond Contesting the Sacred

The anthropological framework proposed by Eade and Sallnow sets new lines for the study of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is seen as a multiplicity of discourses coming from place, person and text-inspired studies within the anthropological realm, and brought much criticism. Jill Dubisch (1995) for example, takes elements of the Eade and Sallnow paradigm and uses them to analyze the shrine of the Madonna of the Annunciation located on the Aegean Island of Tinos, Greece.

Her reading of the shrine as a text is augmented by her analysis on gender and human emotions, as well as her own experiences as a pilgrim and as an anthropologist, and provides another approach to pilgrimage studies.

Simon Coleman and John Elsner (1995) some years after the release of *Contesting the Sacred*, (Eade and Sallnow 2000a) published a book about pilgrimage within the different world religions. They present different pilgrimage traditions in their historical and cultural contexts. They do not present a 'brand new' analytical framework, but rather express their points of view and criticisms of the Turnerian and the Eade/Sallnow paradigms. They also propose the importance of the element of movement in the study of pilgrimage, an element missing in the previously mentioned paradigms. Coleman and Elsner argue that "while virtually all social practices are open to contestation, not all have the look of pilgrimage. In other words, the emphasis on the idea of pilgrimage sites being void of intrinsic meaning does tend to ignore the considerable structural similarities in pilgrimage practices within and between traditions. There are indeed parallels in behavior to be found across time and culture, even if the implications and meanings of such behavior vary enormously" (1995:202). By presenting, analyzing and comparing the structural similarities of pilgrimage contained in different religions such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, amongst others; and by adding the element of movement to the person, place and text co-ordinates, they opened another avenue of inquiry within the study of pilgrimage. While Eade and Sallnow failed to explain the more in-depth relationship between the co-ordinates (2000:xiv), Coleman and Elsner went further and analyzed and presented examples where place interacts with texts, as well as presenting an examination of the relationship between persons and places.

The element of movement in the study of pilgrimage is further developed by Coleman and Eade (2004b). Focusing more on the literature of globalization and culture, they see pilgrimage as a contemporary form of travel, movement, and they examine it within the context of mobility, locality, space, and place. By elaborating this idea, the authors do not pretend to add an analytical frame to those already existing, but rather present four ‘dimensions of mobility,’ to be used in a better understanding of pilgrimage.

Movement as a performative action refers to how movement sometimes causes social and cultural transformations; movement as embodied action relates to bodily experiences provided by pilgrimage; movement as part of a semantic field related to how local cultural understandings of mobility, space, place and landscape are important within the meaning of pilgrimage; and movement as a metaphor implies physical movement or the evocation of movement (Coleman and Eade 2004b:16-17).

These authors state that “if pilgrimage can be seen as involving the institutionalization (or even domestication) of mobility in physical, metaphorical and/or ideological terms, such focus can be located on various levels” (Ibid: 17). Therefore, mobility and movement can be analyzed “within the macro-context of the political economy of travel and the globalization of (religious) cultures, dynamic interplays between transnational, national and regional processes...and integrated with micro-level examinations of the embodied motion inherent within pilgrimage practices, combined with analyses of the sacred geographies and architectures that provide the material and symbolic background to such motion. In such cases, the focus on pilgrimage as ritual and performance is to the fore, with it involving sometimes unpredictable encounters between liturgical forms, personal imagination and memory translated into acts of the body”

(Ibid:17). The ‘movement framework’ presented by the authors is not intended to be a ‘new’ theoretical tool, rather another perspective that will move the existing pilgrimage discussion.

Consuming Pilgrimage

The cultural aspect embedded in the pilgrimage process is also explored and analyzed in the theories already mentioned. However, since my study also deals with the social class issues related to pilgrimage, such as those factors that determine the type of person who goes on pilgrimages to patronal fiestas on day excursions, I propose a theoretical synthesis which includes cultural, ideological, and social class explanations.

In order to do this, the study has been framed according to the perspective of cultural consumption. As a result of this globalized world, culture, and by default religion, have become valuable goods at different levels for local, national and international consumers and markets.

Pioneers in the study of cultural consumption are Douglas and Isherwood (1996), Bourdieu (1984), and Storey (1999), and, in Mexico, Garcia-Canclini (1993a; 1993b). The study of cultural consumption comes from the idea that consumption is not only the statistics of how goods are acquired, market strategies, but also how people operate in the selection and combination of products and messages. Garcia-Canclini defines consumption as a group of socio-cultural processes in which appropriation and the uses of the products are carried out. Therefore, consumption is an important area within which to build and communicate social differences. Increasingly, the differences are produced not by the objects that are possessed, but in the manner in which they are utilized (García Canclini 1993a:24, 27).

Goods and consumption are part of the social process. For instance goods ‘are coded for communication’, ‘goods are neutral, their uses are social’ and ‘they make and maintain social relationships.’ Consumption behavior is influenced by specific cultural prescriptions ‘any choice between goods is the result of, and contributes to, culture’ (Douglas and Isherwood 1996:xxi, xv,

39, 52). Patterns of consumption, or goods consumed, become an interesting approach to the study of pilgrimage. By knowing the different ways people undertake pilgrimage, such as types of transportation consumed, we can identify the pilgrim's economic background.

Garcia-Canclini defines cultural consumption as the different processes utilized in the appropriation and use of goods with symbolic value, rather than their use and exchange. In this way, cultural consumption includes art, university-based knowledge, museums, theater, television programs, handcrafts, indigenous dances, and fiestas, to mention a few (1993a:34).

Cultural consumption for Pierre Bourdieu has the function of legitimating social differences, and it also expresses its differences and distinctions (1984:7). Storey affirms that social distinction is caused "by learned patterns of cultural consumption which are internalized as 'natural' cultural preferences and interpreted and mobilized as evidence of 'natural' competences, which are ultimately, used to justify forms of class domination" (1999:47); Therefore, cultural consumption operates both to identify and to mark social distinction, as well as to sustain social difference (Ibid:45). What you 'value' is culturally and socially determined.

Practices of cultural consumption are influenced by habitus. Bourdieu defines it as "the system of durable, transposable dispositions, structuring structures, that is, principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them..."(1990:53). In other words, habitus "is a 'practical sense' that inclines agents to act and react in specific situations in a matter that is not always calculated and that is not simply a question of conscious obedience to rules. Rather is a set of dispositions which generates practices and perceptions. The habitus is the result of a long process of inculcation, beginning in early childhood, which becomes a 'second sense' or a second nature.

According to Bourdieu's definition, the dispositions represented by the habitus are 'durable' in that they last throughout an agent's life" (Johnson 1993:5).

Therefore, following Bourdieu's theoretical perspective, we can understand not only patterns of cultural and religious consumption, but also the persistence of practices through the life of individuals, generations, and therefore, cultures. Since life-styles are "thus the systematic products of habitus" (Bourdieu 1984:172), the pilgrimage tradition to the shrine of the Three Kings can be explained in terms of religious devotion, but also in terms of life-style or the product of certain practices generated by individual, social, and cultural habitus.

Catholic religious practices, such as pilgrimage and popular devotion of saints during patronal fiestas, were introduced in colonial times in Yucatan. When the Catholic religion was imposed, native populations consumed it and used for their benefit. Nowadays, the persistence of these practices is notoriously present among certain Yucatecan life-styles, such as those of rural peasants and Maya descendants in urban areas.

The value of the cultural consumption approach lies in the fact that it studies forms of communication (Douglas and Isherwood 1996), and can help us understand the different categories of culture within social classes. Pilgrimage is a religious practice charged with symbolic meaning. It represents our belonging to a particular social class, tells something about our economic situation, our motivations, our leisure consumption and expenditure, our social place, and our religious beliefs.

Anthropology and Tourism

The anthropology of tourism is an area of academic and applied anthropology that only started to attract social scientist scholars in the 1960s and 1970s. Pioneer works from Valene Smith, Dennison Nash, Malcolm Crick, Nelson Graburn and Erik Cohen set the bases for this field of study. Research interests among anthropologists have ranged from the study of the

impact of tourism and tourists on local communities, to the study of the tourist and tourism itself. Topics range from ecotourism, environmental, social, and political impacts of tourism, costs and benefits for 'hosts' and 'guests', sex commerce, commodification of cultural patrimony, to the traveling western elites, tourist motivations and behavior, religion, and tourism and gender, to mention some. Anthropologists at first presented negative balances on the assessment of the influence of tourism regarding many of these topics. However, more recent studies have shown more positive and mediated balances on the impact of tourism (Brown 1999; Chambers 1997; Chambers 2000; Gibson 2001; Harrison 2003; Nash 1989; Nash 1996; Wallace 2005). Much of the study on tourism has focused on the cost and benefits associated with national and international tourism industry development mainly in Third World countries, and consumed by 'Western travelers.'

Definitions of tourism, such as Graburn's: "a special form of play involving travel, or getting away from "it all" (work and home), affording relaxation from tensions, and for some, the opportunity to temporarily become a nonentity, removed from a ringing telephone" (1989:22) is based on the three key elements that encompass the foundation of tourism: leisure time, discretionary income, and positive local sanctions (Smith 1989:1). This definition implies the dichotomy of job and leisure within the Western conception of having a steady job that provides income for living essentials, and extra money for leisure spent with the consensus of the society in which one lives. This definition of tourism, which was coined more than 30 years ago under a not yet a 'fully' globalized world, is no longer representative of the reality. The era we live in today, no longer has fixed locations and bounded societies (Clifford 1997), and the constant flow of capital, goods, ideas, and lifestyles has a strong influence on local cultural behaviors.

Chambers has pointed out that “anthropological research has tended to focus on international aspects of tourism, often as another kind or expression of the host/guest relationship. This is a relationship in which the industrially developed, principally Western countries assume the role of guests, and the developing nations, eager for foreign exchange, become the host. The assumption of this relationship does describe one important aspect of modern tourism. Its development has often followed the path of earlier imperialistic ambitions of the Western nations, in which travel is expressed as one of several colonial privileges” (1997:7; see Nash 1989). As a result of this preconception, anthropological and tourism research have tended to overlook, consciously or unconsciously, the importance and increased presence of the domestic tourism sector. In some Third World countries like Mexico, the world’s eighth most popular international tourist destination, as the World Tourism Organization (2000) and the Ministry of Tourism (1996) have stated ‘domestic tourists make up over 94 million business or leisure journeys each year, nearly five times the number of international arrivals reported in 2000.’ Along the same line, in countries like India, pilgrimage centers, such as Vrindavan, Haridwar, and Pushkar, and festivals, like the Kumbha Mela Festival in the city of Allahabad, attract millions of domestic tourists. “Domestic tourists” are defined by World Tourism Organization (WTO) as ‘any person residing in a country who travels to a place within this same country.’ (Gladstone 2005:3). There is a need for more research on the topics of domestic tourism in low-income countries, and about ‘Third-World travelers.’

The WTO (2005e) presents a much more inclusive definition of tourism than does previous anthropological research (see Smith 1989). They define tourism as ‘the activities of persons traveling to, and staying in places outside their usual environment for no more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes’, and further categorize travel into

categories of leisure, recreation and holidays; visiting friends and relatives; business and professional; health treatment; religion and pilgrimage; and other. Tourism classifications are international and domestic, and within these there are the divisions of international/domestic tourists, overnight and day-trippers, or excursionist tourists. Domestic excursionists are ‘residents of a country visiting a place other than their own for less than twenty four hours, and for reasons unrelated to employment in that place’ (Gladstone 2005:3-4,164). Since bus excursion pilgrimages to the shrine of the Three Kings last around 20 hours, and take pilgrims to another location besides home, for religious and leisure reasons, these excursions are analyzed under the classification of “domestic tourism,” and as well as under the classification of “excursionist tourists.”

Tourism and Pilgrimage: A Road of Religious and Leisure Intersections

The connection between religion and travel has existed since the beginning of the world religions. As Wall and Mathieson (2006) have pointed out, “religion has been a powerful force which has long caused people to travel to religious centres in many parts of the world” (Raj 2007:9). For instance, there are many examples of religious travel driven by diverse motivations in the history of the patriarchal religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. There is Abraham’s pilgrimage to the Promised Land, travel ordered by God, which marked the beginning of these religions. There is also Muhammed’s migration (the Hijra) in 622 AD from Mecca to Medina, and the Crusades, that according to Tomasi (2002:3), can be considered a form of *armed pilgrimage* undertaken to protect the holy places of the East.

Scholars of tourism and religion have distinguished two categories of travel that appear to emerge from a similar source: Pilgrimage and Tourism. These categories at first were analyzed as dissimilar, ‘conceiving tourism as a modern, mass-leisure phenomenon’ ‘a shallow travelling for pleasure’s fare away from the ‘spiritual’; but later, scholars focused more on the intrinsic

similarities of the two, considering ‘tourism as the pilgrimage of modern times’ (Cohen 1992a:48). The similarities can be found at the structural level, where both are in search of more profound significances, and distinctions are at the phenomenal level in the self-indulgent quest of the tourists (Shinde 2007:186). Nowadays, scholars do not see a rigid, hard distinction between pilgrimage and tourism “even when the role of pilgrim and tourist are combined, they are necessarily different but for a continuum of inseparable elements” (see Badone and Roseman 2004; Graburn 1983:16; Kaelber 2002; Tomasi 2002).

The Study of Pilgrimage in Mexico

Mexican studies about pilgrimage are diverse, and have mostly focused on indigenous and Catholic traditions. The different theoretical approaches mentioned before have influenced the pilgrimage studies in Mexico. Cámara Barbachano and Teófilo Reyes (1972) is one of the earliest studies on shrines in Mexico¹. With a functionalist approach, the authors analyze religion and pilgrimage as ethnic and class unifying elements that reinforce the social structure. The Basilica of Guadalupe becomes the main representation of unification and homogenization of the Mexican population, since it is a place that attracts and agglutinates a great diversity of pilgrims. The Turnerian approach is also present in several chapters of Garma and Shadow (1994). To some degree, the concepts of antistructure, liminality and *communitas* are part of their pilgrimage analysis. For example, Bravo studies the different pilgrimages undertaken by indigenous groups from/to the mountains of Puebla. These pilgrimages provide a liminoid phase and the experience of *communitas*, and by walking on sacred geography, they legitimize the space and their historical, cultural and social identity (1994).

¹ The only study available that focuses on non-Catholic, or indigenous, pilgrimage, is Fortuny-Loret de Mola’s study on Mexican pilgrims from the *Luz del Mundo* Church (The Light of the World) (2003).

Garma presents another example in his study of a pilgrimage from the neighborhood of Iztapalapa to the Basilica of Guadalupe located in the Tepeyac, emphasizing how the liminoid character of the pilgrimage symbolically inverts everyday differences, most notoriously in the case of women (1994).

In Gilberto Giménez's study on the religious practices and beliefs related to the Lord of Chalma, he analyses pilgrimage from the perspective of the shrine and the pilgrims. He presents a historic and sociological analysis of the traditional cult to the image and the structure of the *ferias* in Chalma. The pilgrimages to the sanctuary are manifestations of popular religion embedded in the life of rural, and subordinate, groups of people (1978). This study in a way precedes Eade and Sallnow's proposal of pilgrimage as a combination of place, person and text.

A historic and ethnographic view on pilgrimage is presented by Beatriz Barba de Piña Chan (1998a). In one of the book's sections, the editor presents a historical account of pilgrimage based on archaeological evidence, and early colonial accounts written by the Friars. The geographical area of her study is central Mexico. Circular pilgrimages, running processions, human and animal sacrifices, dances, and annual and seasonal festivals are described in detail (1998b).

Garcia-Diaz's study on the sanctuary of La Virgen de los Remedios located in Cholula, Puebla, presents a Pre-Hispanic pilgrimage city where sacrifices and vows, or *promesas*, were commonly offered by pilgrims from the surrounding areas, according to colonial accounts. Nowadays, the sanctuary's *mayordomías* or stewardships, organize the religious fiestas that still attract pilgrims and visitors (1998). Analysis on the sacred geography of pilgrimages is the main topic of another section.

Macip's study presents an ethnographic account of a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Chalma. Special attention is given to the sacred spaces acknowledged by the pilgrims, and their relation to the environment and social class structure (1998).

Rodríguez and Shadow present a more recent study of the sanctuary and the pilgrimages to Chalma. They focus on the diverse manifestations of popular religion. rites and ceremonies that take place in the sanctuary at Chalma. Based on ethnographic and bibliographic research, they describe the town, the sanctuary, the organization and structure of the cycle of fiestas that annually take place, and the different pilgrimages that arrive to the sanctuary. Detailed descriptions and pilgrim narratives compose the core of the book (2000).

Around 1999, The National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), launched a national research project named Ethnography of the Indigenous Regions in the New Millennium. *Dialogues with the Territory*, a collection of four volumes coordinated by Alicia Barabas, is the result of its second research project on territoriality, sanctuaries and pilgrimages. The main object of study was the symbolic forms used by present-day indigenous peoples to build their territoriality by putting into action holy places, as well as processions and pilgrimages to shrines. Volume Four: *Processions, Sanctuaries and Pilgrimages* (Barabas 2004) presents detailed ethnographic descriptions and analysis of different processions, pilgrimages and sanctuaries among mestizo, Nahua, Otomi, Mazahua, Atzinca, and Matlatzinca peoples in the area of Zacatecas, Valle del Mezquital, Tlaxcala, Mexico (Federal State) and Mexico City. The analysis presented is based mostly on the notion of symbolic territories, those marked by the ways people see their worlds, their mythology and their ritual practices. Therefore, processions and pilgrimages become an important source of information on different ways of space acquisition (Ibid: 21, 26). It is important to point out that, in some of the cases presented, the authors

complement their analysis by applying the Turnerian approach on pilgrimage. This volume of essays takes a step beyond the 'traditional' Turnerian approach, although it does use its structure to analyze this symbolic action. They also open new channels on the study of pilgrimage, processions and sanctuaries in Mexico.

Pilgrimage Studies in the Yucatan

Considering the number of shrines that draw pilgrims in the Yucatan Peninsula, more than twenty during the festivities of the venerated image (Quintal, et al. 2003:329), the number of ethnographic studies is very limited.

The study of pilgrimage in the Yucatan is characterized by two main elements. First, the pilgrimages undertaken by pilgrims are not isolated events, but rather are part of a more holistic endeavor known as the patronal or annual fiesta. In this sense, pilgrimages are usually a component of the fiesta, and are motivated by pilgrims' attendance. The second element is the influence of the Turnerian theoretical approach on regional pilgrimage studies in the Yucatan. Many pilgrimage case studies found in the anthropological literature acknowledge the antistructure and *communitas* paradigm, either in their analysis or as a reference.

These two elements are present in Fernández and Negroe (1997), which focuses on the pilgrimage/procession that chronicles the move of the Virgin de Asuncion, from the town of Tetiz, the patronal image's hometown, to the village of Hunucma for the fiesta days (a 9 km ride). The authors not only describe the locations and the sanctuary, but also analyze and describe a state of *communitas* experienced by the pilgrims during this religious journey. This pilgrimage/procession not only constitutes and continues the ethnic identity of the community, Mayan mestiza, but also reinforces their regional identity by attracting and embracing pilgrims from many surrounding areas (Fernández Repetto and Negroe Sierra 1997).

Quinones and Quintal (2002) focus on the Virgin of Hool, an image venerated in a community of the same name located in the state of Campeche. The article presents a detailed description of the fiesta, the Virgin, the myth behind her apparition, and the changes experienced on the pilgrimage within the years. Another theme discussed in the study is the relation of the Virgin with natural elements, such as places and animals, as a consequence of the pre-Hispanic beliefs that remain in the collective memory of the pilgrims. As a part of their final reflection, the authors reaffirm the sacred character of the place and sanctuary of Hool. They also explain the *communitas* stage experienced by the pilgrims, as well as some of their liminal moments (Quiñones and Quintal 2002).

Medina and Rejon (2002) present a similar study on the Chuina sanctuary, also located in Campeche. They describe the sanctuary, its fiesta and the pilgrims devoted to the Virgin of Chuina. For the authors, the pilgrimage undertaken by the devotees constitutes one of the mechanisms for demarking their ancient sacred territory. They also point out how class, ethnicity, and locality influence culture, making it important to analyze pilgrimages in their local, regional, and global context. The historical background of the place is also mentioned in order to understand the sanctuary's popularity and its catchment area (Medina and Rejon 2002).

A more recent work on sanctuaries and pilgrimages in the Yucatan is presented in the first volume of the *Dialogues with the Territory* collection, coordinated by Alicia Barabas and mentioned before. In the volume *Symbolisms on the Space in the Indigenous Cultures of Mexico* the INAH Yucatan analyzes the different categories which constitute the core principles of the way the Maya represent space and built their sacred territories. For this purpose, they describe and analyze the territorial entities and the sacred spaces occupied, as well as the rituals undertaken in these spaces. Some of these sacred spaces are local, such as the house, the

backyard, the town, the sinkholes or *cenotes*, the field or *milpa*, and the forest or *monte*. They also analyze the sanctuaries and pilgrimages as examples of the different modes by which people construct their sacred territoriality (Barabas 2003:33).

The work on sanctuaries, processions and pilgrimages presented in this section becomes an important piece of information since the authors summarize pilgrimage behavior of the Yucatan area. A typology of sanctuaries is presented, as well as a list of regional and peninsular sanctuaries. In addition to their analysis on sacred territoriality, the authors stand heuristically on Turner's ritual theory "to "read" Mayan myths and rituals in terms of the symbolic preservation, construction and recreation of Mayan territories" (Quintal, et al. 2003:350).

Quintal presents the case of a pilgrimage not undertaken as a part of a patronal fiesta. The pilgrimage to venerate the Virgin of Xcambo is an interesting expression of the religious syncretism present in Mexico. This image is worshipped on an archaeological site of the same name, situated in the coastal region of Yucatan. It is taken temporarily to a small chapel, build in the 1980s, inside the site, every year by the pilgrims for this ceremony. Pilgrims from the neighboring towns spend a night and a day worshipping the Virgin, in Spanish and Maya languages. While the pilgrims venerate the Virgin, the *h-men*, or Maya priest, invokes the winds from the forest, due to a belief that the Virgin lives in the surrounding forest. The author, using the Turnerian approach, analyzes the archaeological site as a sacred place, a Marian sanctuary, a pilgrimage destination, and as a liminoid space. This liminoid space is where collective practices, beliefs, and identities get exposed and experienced, as opposed to those generally expressed by pilgrims in their everyday life and rituals (Quintal 2000).

The study of pilgrimage in the Yucatan is still in its early stages. The variety of elements that pilgrimage encompasses, such as local religious rituals, traditional objects and forms of

veneration, attitudes regarding the sacred images, the movement of pilgrims, or the cultural consumption at the shrine and at the fiesta, need to be taken more in account by including them more as elements of the main analysis, rather than just as contextual descriptions.

Summary: Applying the Pilgrimage Theory

The existing paradigms for the analysis of pilgrimage provide a range of interesting approaches. The theoretical analysis used in my study is primarily based on the assumption that pilgrimage has a multiplicity of discourses coming from the ‘place,’ ‘person,’ and ‘movement’ (Coleman and Eade 2004b; Eade and Sallnow 2000a). Pilgrimage is also seen as religious practice embedded and culturally consumed by certain life-styles (1984; Bourdieu 1990; García Canclini 1993a).

The different discourses from the pilgrims, lay people, clerics, religious institutions, local authorities, and the importance of miracles, secular commerce, souvenir and postcards, and means of transportation, provide enough material for the analysis of seasonal pilgrimages to the shrine of The Three Kings. To a lesser degree, the Turnerian notion of *communitas* also becomes a part of the analytical framework, along with the notion of pilgrimage sites. For instance, “communal” experiences are sometimes shared inside the shrine, or anti-structural bonds are created among the torch groups while they pilgrimage to the shrine (Turner and Turner 1978).

In reality the paradigms applied in this study are not entirely opposed to each other. They more like a stack-adding, complementing, flexible, and encompassing. Regarding the Turnerian and Eade/Sallnow paradigms, Coleman has pointed out that “neither *communitas* nor contestation should themselves become fetishized in order to produce neatly symmetrical anthropological theory, made up of views that appear to constitute a simple binary opposition” (2002:361). Therefore, the analysis here is centered on the symbolic action of pilgrimage as a contemporary form of movement and travel to the shrine of the Three Kings during fiesta times

by the Yucatecan population. The shrine and the fiesta are contested arenas with a multiplicity of discourses and actions.

In addition, the different modes of experiencing pilgrimage are related to patterns of cultural consumption. In fact, many of the distinctions within classes are manifested in the way objects are consumed, rather than on the material goods linked to production (Storey 1999). The daily bus excursions to the shrine in Tizimin, for example, are a product of class distinction. For instance, the mode of transportation, in this case, buses 11 to 15 years old, is a social class indicator in the sense that usually only low income people ride and rent them. These practices mark and maintain the social differences and distinctions, and also represent the union within those in the same class.

I introduce the context of the anthropology and tourism in order to set the bases for the introduction of a new category of travel: Devotional Tourism. Based on the ethnographic data, I analyze the nowadays popular practice of pilgrimage through one-day bus excursions. This mode of pilgrimage supports the local and informal tourism sector.

By applying these theoretical syntheses of approaches I will be able to get better knowledge of the Yucatecan popular culture and its religious practices embedded in the pilgrimage process. The different ways that non-corporate and corporate pilgrims celebrate, organize, and consume regional pilgrimages, help construct an image of Yucatecan popular culture. Similarly, by gaining knowledge about pilgrimage studies my aim is to contribute to the field of anthropology of tourism and religion by proposing the concept of “devotional tourism”, a religious and leisure practice among the Yucatecan population.

In this chapter, the topic of pilgrimage was introduced in the context of our globalized world. The increasing mobility of capital, goods, people and ideas is reflected in changes and

innovations in religious practices such as pilgrimage. Religious motivations are no longer the only engines that draw people to sacred places. With globalization and increasing need of movement, dueling, and travelling, the comercialization and touristization of pilgrimage is more evident day by day, to the point that it is reflected in all areas and at all social and economic levels.

The purpose of this introductory chapter has been to locate this study within the Latin American framework of pilgrimage studies. In order to accomplish this objective, different studies have been presented with the intent of comparing them to the case study outlined below. The research questions of the present study have also been presented. The historical overview of the work on pilgrimage in Mexico and Yucatan demonstrates the need for new ethnographic data and theoretical frameworks to take the pilgrimage studies beyond the traditional Turnerian approach. By analyzing pilgrimage as a contested arena of discourses and as a practice of cultural consumption, this study will take pilgrimage studies in Latin America, more specifically in Mexico, one step further within the anthropological body of perspectives and knowledge. At the same time, by studying the pilgrimage process and establishing the concept of “devotional tourism” based on the Yucatecan experience, my intent is to highlight the importance that these religious and leisure practices have for Yucatecan people, and we can have a better understanding of our own culture.

CHAPTER 3 WALKING THROUGH THE THREE KINGS PATH

It is 4:45 a.m. The bells from the Three Kings shrine are ringing. I hear them in the distance. The 5 o'clock morning mass is about to start. While I am walking in direction to the shrine, I can not help but wonder who is going to attend mass at this hour? In less than 10 minutes, walking close to the main plaza, my question is answered. I see pilgrims walking towards the shrine from different parts of the city. About 20 people were coming from the bus station; another group was getting off a regional/tourist bus, and more from the market, others from adjacent open streets, and so on. When I arrived, the shrine was already packed, people were sitting on the benches, standing on the sides, and the line to venerate the Three Kings was very long, reaching the main plaza. I felt relieved, I felt excited. I thought, today will be a very busy day! I was expecting this scenario since the Three Kings patronal fiesta started on December 28, but only just today, January 5th, it happened. I kept looking around. I realized that all the articles read in newspapers and the stories heard about the oceans of pilgrims crystallized, and became real [Field notes, January 2004]

This chapter aims first, to position this research within the field of anthropology by presenting the methodology applied during fieldwork and data analysis; and second, to introduce the readers to the Three Kings Fiesta, since it is the context that surrounds the shrine, the main destination for the pilgrims. Through this reflexive position in anthropology, I will incorporate my experience as an ethnographer, as a Mexican anthropologist, and as an 'insider' researching at 'home.' I will also explore my field work practice which encompassed a combination of 'non conventional' anthropology methods with more 'conventional' ones. In the second section of this chapter, an ethnographic account of the religious and civic components of the Three Kings Fiesta will be presented. The different events that take place, actors involved in the organization, and the participants will be analyzed. Special attention is given to the continuous sacred aspect of the celebration.

My Narrative, a Personal Encounter

Nowadays, the impersonal form of ethnographic account has been discarded, and we are in an era of more experimental ethnographic writing, in both content and form (Marcus and Fischer 1986:40). Since the 1980s there has been a boom in the anthropology community of first-

person fieldwork accounts. There has been a movement from ‘participant observation to the observation of participation’ (Tedlock 1991). Narrative “represents a primary embodiment of our understanding of the world, of experience, and ultimately of ourselves” (Rapport 1999:75) For instance, narrative ethnography has become a channel to express fieldwork experiences along with “ethnographic data, epistemological reflections on fieldwork participation, and cultural analysis”(Tedlock 1991:77). As Narayan has pointed out, currently there is a greater integration of narrative into written text without abandoning the analysis. Text and analysis are more joined, giving vivid experience an honored place (Narayan 1993:682). I have chosen a ‘self-reflective personal narrative’ style for this dissertation (Pink 1999:106). This subgenre of ethnographic writing provides space for informants’ discourse as well as the ethnographer’s (Clifford 1986:14). There is a persuasion of the fieldworker insertion into his/her scripts (Wolcott 1995:85). Therefore, in this dissertation I do not only present the shrine and pilgrim’s narratives, but also my own, imprinted with my personal background, experience, gender, and ethnicity. Following Dubisch, “the ‘I’ of the anthropologist tends to wander freely throughout the ethnographic narrative, blurring the boundary between ‘personal’ and ‘objective,’ and reflecting a greater self-consciousness about the anthropologist’s own position, vis-à-vis those of the culture being studied” (1995:5). There is a very personal element in the act of pilgrimage that I want to transmit in my writing. The familiar tone of my narrative is embedded in my detailed ethnographic descriptions, and through my analysis. The ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973) in my narrative is also a reminiscent of the “classic” ethnographic work from the 1920s and 1940s, which attracted me to the anthropological world in the first place.

In addition to this personal/familiar encounter of my narrative, the nature and intention of my ‘self-reflective narrative’ is to be more reachable. As a temporarily ‘transnational researcher’

(Knowles 1999), I feel the need to write for different audiences. There is a “heightened awareness among ethnographers that they are in fact writing for these diverse and critical readerships at home and abroad” (Marcus and Fischer 1986:164).

Fieldwork ‘Away’, Fieldwork At ‘Home’

Since the 1980s, there has been a trend within the American and European anthropology community on doing fieldwork at ‘home’¹ (Amit 1999; Hume and Mulcock 2004; Jackson 1987; Messerschmidt 1981). Our ‘world in motion’ (Rapport 1999) calls for a flexible methodology that matches the requirements and necessities of today’s anthropology and anthropologists. A decrease in social science funding, specialization in anthropological inquiry, competition on the home front, and nationalism in host societies, are some reasons why this trend has emerged (Marcus and Fischer 1986:113; Messerschmidt 1981:9-10). Despite this, the expectation of doing fieldwork away from ‘home,’ or the place in where the researcher inhabits, is a trend that has been more promoted in anthropology schools from “Developed countries”. American and European schools of anthropology have predominantly encouraged students to choose a different culture and geographical place to do their ethnographic work. Governmental and non-governmental agencies are keener to support these endeavors through a variety of grants in name of the sciences, knowledge, environment, politics, or health. The reasons for going “away” have ranged from the researcher’s true interest of ‘knowing the other’ for academic venues, to political/governmental interests of ‘knowing the other’ for military, economical and political strategies or encounters. In less “Developed countries” the situation is different. “The importance of understanding what is going on in your own backyard before thinking about going off to

¹ In Anthropological literature ‘anthropology at home’ has been labeled in different ways: insider research, autoethnography, native research, introspective research (Messerschmidt 1981:13), and auto-anthropology (Strathern 1987:17) among others.

exotic places” (Tierney 2002:10) is a phrase that explains the position of anthropology. Doing fieldwork ‘at home’ has been a trend within the anthropology community in the non-Western world. Different fieldwork traditions have been developed. Economic, social and political factors have mainly established the parameters and guided the anthropological agenda. For example, the economic situation of our countries is reflected in the money invested on the social sciences by public and private institutions. As a student, economic resources to go to the field are limited and difficult to get. Gupta and Ferguson mentions how in central and eastern Europe fieldwork emphasizes the rural area and the ‘folk’ culture of the ethnographer’s own society due to the tradition of national ethnology and folklore studies (1997:28). In the case of Mexico, there has been a long history of relations and interests within the Mexican anthropology academia and the government. Governmental institutions finance anthropological projects that will benefit the country. For instance, social/applied anthropology research is closely related to the government policy of *Indigenismo* (see Aguirre Beltrán 1957; 1967; Comas 1964). According to Krotz, “Mexican anthropology has molded itself via a constant search to understand and to act upon the country’s sociocultural diversity, which has served, until now, as its principal object of study” (2006:106). My case exemplifies the two postures mentioned. Since my graduate studies at the University of Florida have been financed by a fulltime scholarship from the federal government of Mexico, my options of doing research ‘away’ from Mexico decreased. In addition, my condition of a temporarily ‘transnational researcher’ (Knowles 1999) influenced the decision I made of working not only in Mexico, but also in the state where I was born and raised. My case is not isolated. Krotz mentions that doing fieldwork at ‘home’ is a common methodological tool even among Mexican students who obtain their graduate degrees in foreign countries (2006:108). My research project became a link between my life in Florida and my life in Mexico.

Where Are You From? The Quest for an Insider

The notion of ‘home’ has been contested in the field of anthropology. What exactly is considered ‘home?’ At the same time, what does it mean for an anthropologist to do research at ‘home?’ As an international student getting my graduate degree in the United States and undertaking fieldwork in my home country, I classify as a ‘native anthropologist’² since I did my fieldwork ‘at home’. When you are a temporarily ‘transnational researcher’ (Knowles 1999) the first image of home is your country, the nationalist affiliation precedes your regional identity. Therefore, the only occasions on which I see myself as Mexican are when I have been living abroad, in another country. However, in the home country the regional affiliation becomes more relevant in terms of self-identification . When I am in Mexico I am a *Yucateca*. Within Yucatan, the identity marker becomes the city where you were born. Since I was born and raised in the city of Merida, capital of the state of Yucatan, I became a “*Meridana*”. Home is Mexico, home is Yucatan, and home is Merida.

My field work ‘at home’ entailed multi-locations in the state of Yucatan. The city of Tizimin was the place where I spent most of my days, mainly because the shrine of the Three Kings is located there, and it is a space of intensive encounters among pilgrims. This was the place where my Yucatecan identity became more exposed.

There is a notion of sameness present in doing anthropology ‘at home’, since ‘home’ is a site of origin (Hume and Mulcock 2004:xxii). However, in a pluri-ethnic country like Mexico, where there are more than 50 different ethnic groups and a marked division of wealth, this notion of sameness fades. Although the Mayas are the dominant ethnic group in the Yucatan peninsula,

² For an interesting insight to the term ‘native anthropologist’ refer to Narayan 1993.

and the languages spoken are Spanish and Mayan Yucatec, differences still exist among the population such as background, place of origin, social class, and formal education.

Scholars have written about the advantages of doing field work 'at home.' The shared language, culture, society, history, and the ability to read behavioral cues, and to blend into situations without altering social settings, are some examples (Aguilar 1981:18; Norman 1999:122). I arrived to the field confident enough of being a Yucateca doing fieldwork in my home state. Since I speak Spanish and I am familiar with Mayan culture and language, I imagined I would have a smooth and easy fieldwork experience. I was 'at home', I was an insider.

An 'In/Outsider' After All

The insider/outsider dichotomy has been always part of methodology in anthropology. By doing anthropology 'at home,' the researcher who does fieldwork at or close to home acquires the category of an 'insider.' Nowadays this dichotomy is fading, and the 'insider' status has been contested (see Narayan 1993). You can perceive yourself as an 'insider,' but this does not mean your informants have the same perception. They might not even do not see you as 'one of them.'

My phenotype falls into the 'Mexican stereotype' brown eyes, hair and skin. I speak with a Yucatecan accent. So, I was expecting to be recognized as Yucateca from Merida. However, some informants identified me many times as from central Mexico, or as '*gringa*,' a foreigner. When asked why, people said it was because of my height and my style of dress. Indeed, I am taller than the average Yucateca woman, but I was always wearing jeans and t-shirts, just like other local students. People's reactions varied, from total avoidance at the moment of approach, to a warm welcome to their lives and to their stories. The first question they usually asked me was: "*y tu de dónde eres?*" Where are you from? After answering "Mérida," the next question was: "*cómo va ser?*" Really? This was followed by the statement "*pense que eras de otra*

parte” I thought you were from a different place, and sometimes “*pense que eras gringa*”, I thought you were *gringa*. The word *gringa* in Yucatan is used to designate anyone who looks like a foreigner, not necessarily from the United States. On many occasions I was asked about my ‘mother Doña Mariana,’ a German anthropologist who has been working in the Tizimin area for more than 20 years. She has fair skin and brown hair. I guess some locals related me with her.

The physical features and looks were not the only factors informants relied on in order to make the assumption that I was from a different place, a foreigner. Culturally, women do not go by themselves to celebrations, nor do they travel alone. I attended many celebrations by myself, and visited pilgrims in their home towns around the state of Yucatan. After that, I was not seen as an ‘insider’ at all.

Colic-Peisker has pointed out that “the ‘insider status’ is granted by the community you are working with and not by your colleagues” (2004:86). However, many times I had the impression that informants perceived me as a person between the two categories: as an insider and as an outsider. The interactions about my identity with informants in general helped me to break the ice and to develop rapport. The fact that I was perceived as an ‘in/outsider’, provide me access to personal and local information because people felt comfortable enough to share their lives with a person who was not a complete ‘outsider’ or a complete ‘insider’. This status also opened many doors to multiple local celebrations.

From Traditional/Conventional Fieldwork to a More Multi-sited, Mobile Experience

As it is known, fieldwork defines the anthropologist. The ‘field journey’ undertaken during your anthropological formation is always expected. For many decades “classic” ethnographies, such as the ones written by Malinowski (1950), Evans-Pritchard (1940), or Mead (1932) established the parameters for the fieldwork method. The Trobriands, the Nuers, and the Samoans became the ‘exotic’ cultures exposed and described by these famous anthropologists.

The British, the French and the American anthropology schools encouraged their students to travel far away in search of a different culture, in search of ‘the other.’ This ‘conventional’ or ‘traditional’ way of doing fieldwork also included a long term residency in the place chosen in order to get a deeper knowledge of the subjects and the culture studied. In Amit’s words: “Thus, in this composite but familiar portrait, ‘fieldwork’ involves travel away, preferably to a distant locale where the ethnographer will immerse him/herself in personal face-to-face relationships with a variety of natives over and extended period of time” (1999:2).

This notion of the need to do fieldwork in a remote land, and for an extended period of time, not only remains popular in the anthropological scene, but also “prestige still accrues to careers which begin by doing ethnography abroad” (Marcus and Fischer 1986:112). However, now more than ever, due to the global economic and political situations, this notion has been contested and the trend of what Marcus and Fischer call ‘repatriation’ (1986:113) is becoming more common in the Western anthropological scene. The mobility that we are experiencing nowadays all through the world as a result of social process such as migration, political asylum, global enterprises and business, and religious movements, have also confronted the stipulation of doing fieldwork abroad. At the same time, these processes have affected the mobility of people who traditionally lived in the ‘anthropologist’s field sites’ (Amit 1999:12).

A Multi-sited Ethnography: On Pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Three Kings During the Annual Fiesta

The act of pilgrimage entails movement, displacement from one place to another. This act is performed in different ways: walking, running, or using transportation such as motorcycles, bikes, buses, ships, airplanes, or cars. Pilgrims moved, and I moved with them, during my fieldwork. Since my research is about the motivations that drive people to go on pilgrimages and their means for undertaking pilgrimage, I followed pilgrims from the shrine and fiesta to their

origin towns. Therefore, my research fits what Marcus has labeled ‘multi-sited ethnography.’ This research is “designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography” (Marcus 1995:105). My field work experience was very mobile. The fiesta and the shrine of The Three Kings became my ‘spatial practice of dwelling’ (Clifford 1997:57) since they are the central sites of intensive encounter among pilgrims in Tizimin. I did participant observation for two consecutive annual seasons at the fiesta and in the shrine, aside from my participation in different celebrations organized by the shrine during the months that I resided in the city of Tizimin in 2004 and January 2005. Marcus proposes different modes, or techniques, for the construction of a multi-sited ethnography, including following the people, the thing, the metaphor, the plot, story, or allegory, the life or the biography. “These techniques might be understood as practices of construction through (pre-planned or opportunistic) movement, and of tracing within different settings of a complex cultural phenomenon given an initial, baseline conceptual identity that turns out to be contingent and malleable as one traces it” (1995:106-111). By applying the technique of ‘following the people’, the pilgrims, I embarked myself in a series of pilgrimages to different shrines located in Yucatan. These experiences provided me with the opportunity to conduct ‘deep hanging out’ (Clifford 1997:56) with the pilgrims while we were at bus excursions, running with the torch, at the shrine, or spending time at the fiesta. In addition to the pilgrimages, the time I spent with them at their homes while doing interviews and recording their life histories provided me with a better understanding of the pilgrim’s religious worldview.

The Shrine as a Community Metaphor

While I was in the shrine doing participant observation during the first fiesta season, I often found myself recalling my first fieldwork experience in a Mayan community. When an anthropologist does 'conventional' long term fieldwork, after a month or two, the town/community where he or she is living goes from being just a strange location to a more familiar place. Sooner or later, the anthropologist's presence becomes part of the town/community scenario. Anthropologists have written about their experiences being part of the community's everyday life, and their interactions with the locals (Najéra-Ramírez 1997; 1999). However, when your research is not located in a single bounded site a town, or a community as with pilgrimage, the sense of placelessness and the feeling of not belonging haunt you. The study of pilgrimage entails working, for the most part, with transitory populations. Pilgrims literally flow through the shrine and its surroundings areas, and as an anthropologist you have to interact mainly with strangers. Every time you approach a new pilgrim it is like introducing yourself to a new community. It feels like starting over and over. You miss the feeling of being part of a community.

It was not until the second fiesta season when this sense of placelessness stopped haunting me. And I realized that this feeling was gone after the next incident happened. This paragraph is taken from my field journal:

Today, Saturday, the shrine was very busy. Pilgrims were coming in and out since very early in the morning. Around two in the afternoon I was inside the church walking around, observing the pilgrims' behavior. I passed by the gate (this gate helps to control the flow of pilgrims going to see the images) and don Rodolfo, the sexton who was guarding the gate called me: *senorita Alicia*, since you are just 'wandering' around, I want to ask you for a favor: I am very hungry and don Silvano my replacement does not come until three o'clock. Could you replace me and guard the gate? A spontaneous yes came out from my mouth. I took his place and I spent more than an hour guarding the gate [Field notes, January 8, 2005]

This happened after a year of ‘hanging out’ at the shrine, participating in many religious activities related to the Three Kings, and after I had interviewed the people who work there, including the two sextons: don Rodolfo and don Silvano. My multiple interactions with the parish workers, and the time spent with them granted me recognition within the shrine. My presence at the shrine by then was familiar and expected. I freely wandered around, and I was always updated about pilgrim and shrine-related anecdotes, and future events.

The gate incident provided me with the opportunity to be more in contact with the pilgrims, at the same time I was giving them access, I briefly chatted with them. Also, it made me feel, at least for a moment, that I was part of the shrine. And therefore, metaphorically, part of a ‘community’. The shrine and its pilgrims became a metaphor of a community and its inhabitants. For an anthropologist doing fieldwork on pilgrimage, the shrine becomes the ‘traditional community.’ A ‘community’ that has different authorities like the parish priest. A ‘community’ that provides religious and non-religious services, inhabited by a diverse/mobile population made up of parish workers, religious souvenirs sellers, pilgrims and locals. A ‘community’ massively populated by pilgrims during the fiesta season. Nowadays, I consider the shrine of the Three Kings a ‘community’ that opened its doors to me.

The Field Setting: The Fiesta, The Shrine, Flows of People and the Anthropologist

Doing fieldwork during a patronal fiesta season might sound very appealing and very attractive. The town is full of life, movement and entertainment. A festive atmosphere is in the air and flows of people come and go as long as the fiesta lasts. People enjoy and consume the fiesta. Who is a local? Who is a visitor? It is hard to tell if you are not from there. Sometimes not even locals can tell. Tizimin is a growing city.

From an outsider’s point of view, everything seems chaotic: street vendors, locals, visitors, pilgrims, commercial stands, mechanical rides, and performances all over the place. From an

insider's view, everything has an order and a place where it belongs. As an anthropologist new to the fiesta, it took me some time to be familiarized with this new environment, to go from being an outsider to a "sort of fiesta insider." Also, this type of fieldwork might also be very stressful, since one is in charge of covering all the information. And since participant observation is an experiencing process that includes information that comes directly through all our senses, the amount of information "we can take in through looking and listening, from the subtleties of body language to the organization of cultural space" (Wolcott 1999:46), turns out to be very overwhelming.

For instance, the Three Kings Fiesta takes place on the main square of the city. The city of Tizimin follows the Spanish colonial city pattern, which this means that the municipal building and the church of the Three Kings are located on the main square. Both physical spaces —the main square and the church— attract most of the people. Visitors, pilgrims, locals, vendors overflow the area during the fiesta, either consuming the goods provided by merchants, or visiting and attending the church services offered for the occasion. Besides the events at these locations, the fiesta also encompasses many other celebrations. The fiesta is very complex. Multiple celebrations at multiple locations also take place. For example, there are 10 consecutive days of celebrations at each one of the fiesta deputies' houses. The Three Kings Fiesta is relevant to my study, since it is the locality, the setting, the context which the engine that attracts pilgrims. It is a place of encounters. Pilgrims entertain, consume, and enjoy the fiesta.

Many anthropologists who do fieldwork, when they go to the field not only experience the community's culture, but also the well-known 'culture shock.' When I arrived to my 'field site', the fiesta and the shrine during the first season, I did not experience a whole new immersion on the culture since I am a 'native' of the area. However, my first days in the fiesta and in the shrine

were so intense that what I experienced was a 'fiesta/shrine shock.' I went through the different stages established for 'culture shock': the anticipation and excitement of doing fieldwork in a fiesta and shrine; the exhilaration and enthusiasm of being in a new place; destabilization, disenchantment or uncertainty of not knowing how and where to start; the frustration and confusion of not being able to be everywhere, and see it all; internalization, acceptance and adaptation to my particular 'field' situation plus my involvement with locals; and slack off and nostalgia when merchants, visitors and pilgrims started to leave the city and the shrine (Hopson Spring 1981).

While a reflexive position in anthropology allows you to incorporate the ethnographer experience, the space for 'formal' methods is also considered in this study. Therefore, my field work experience encompassed a combination of 'non-conventional' anthropology methods, 'multi-sited ethnography' (Marcus 1995), with more 'conventional,' 'formal' or 'traditional' ethnographic methods, such as participant observation, unstructured interviews, semi-structured and in-depth interviews (Bernard 2002:206). As a researcher you find yourself immersed in this ocean of celebrations and people, excited by the numerous ongoing activities but, at the same time, you become overwhelmed. Najera-Ramirez points out: "If fieldwork is demanding, conducting fieldwork for a festival study is specially so" (1999:183). And it is when you get to the field when you realize that nobody has told you "how to participate effectively, how to observe effectively, how to keep the one from interfering with the other, and how to get others to act 'naturally' while we try to appear nonchalant about our own presence" (Wolcott 1995:96). Many questions started haunting me: Where to go? Where should I begin? What is the relevance and importance of each celebration? Where will be the best place to contact pilgrims?

You wish you could be omnipresent in order to be part of all celebrations, but you know this cannot be possible. You follow your research proposal. Priorities and decisions have to be taken.

When The Anthropologist Meets The Pilgrims

Fieldwork is an enterprise. You plan it ahead of time, you get prepared mentally and scholarly for it, and you dream about it. Once you get in the field, you realize that doing fieldwork is a learning process. I arrived in Tizimin, and after locating myself in my 'new' home; I went to the fiesta and visited the shrine. After two days of attending the fiesta, and being at the shrine all day doing participant observation, I started to figure out the dynamics followed by the pilgrims. They arrive, buy their votive religious artifacts, and walk straight to the shrine. They get in the line that leads them to the images, do their devotions to the saints, walk out to the gift store, and from there, pilgrims go to a special chapel to light up their offered candles. Once they finish, some pilgrims go back to the shrine to pray and/or listen to the mass, and others leave the shrine in direction of the fiesta.

The constant movement inside the church does not provide an opportunity for easy interaction. The moments of solitude are devoted to their prayers. It is not until when you are in the field when you realize that the methodology proposed for your research was not as detailed as you thought, or the most useful. Therefore, selecting interviewees was not an easy task, at least at the beginning. The strategy of approaching pilgrims at the entrance of the shrine tended to be very intrusive. Pilgrims seemed to be confused, and the pressure of wanting to save their place in line was also there. Therefore, I changed my strategy, and I started approaching every tenth pilgrim while they were waiting in line, five-eight per day. Since the fiesta lasts around 15 days, my selection ended up being pretty diverse. Diversity also came from the fact that different days brought different types of pilgrims. For instance, during the weekends pilgrims come on excursions, and on day of January 6th the *antorchistas*, pilgrims carrying torches, arrive at the

shrine. My goal was to have an address book of pilgrims by the end of the fiesta. Not all pilgrims were willing to be part of my sample. Some of them did not want to talk to me, or to provide their personal information.

The First Stage of an Encounter: The Anthropologist Questions The Pilgrims

The flows of pilgrims that arrive during the fiesta days are simply overwhelming. Pilgrims usually move in groups and tend to interact amongst themselves. To be approached by a stranger does not happen often, and it is not expected, unless is a street vendor. Therefore, approaching pilgrims required a decision-making process. The first minutes of an encounter are usually the most difficult ones. In this time-frame, I, the anthropologist, can be rejected or welcomed to start a conversation. Due to time constraints and constant movement of the pilgrims, this conversation usually tended to be short. Thus, once rapport was established, a brief self introduction was given, followed by the purpose of this encounter. Very specific questions were asked: name, place of residency, age, gender, companions, years attending this pilgrimage, other pilgrimage shrines frequently visited, means of transportation, places to visit/or visited, and motivations to do the pilgrimage. The answers were written in my “pilgrims address book.” In general, pilgrims felt confident enough to share with me their time and contact information, as well as brief personal anecdotes regarding the Three Kings.

Second Stage of an Encounter: The Anthropologist Being Exposed

After breaking some barriers with the first stage encounter, and having all the necessary information for future contacts, the interviewer/the anthropologist/ I, became the interviewee. Fieldwork based on participant observation is a two-way street. As a researcher you have expectations of the people, but at the same time your interviewees also have expectations of you (Tierney 2002:13). Therefore, pilgrims felt that the “stranger” by this time knew who they were, where and how they come from, and their motivations for making this journey. Pilgrims felt as

curious about me, as I was about them at the moment I approached them. Reciprocity and honesty play an important role during participant observation. The need to be honest was there, at least in my case. The time to share my information with informants came earlier than I expected, but as Hume and Mulcock point it out that “revealing parts of ourselves and our backgrounds often enhances our relationships with others and encourages the sharing of information that informants might otherwise be reluctant to disclose” (2004:xx). I was willing to ‘open myself’ to my informants, to disclose information about myself.

I was asked many personal questions: Where I lived, my age, how many days I had spend at the fiesta, my devotion to the saints, etc. Interestingly, the most recurrent questions were if I was married, and if my mother was alive! The fact that a single female in her mid 30s was by herself wandering alone in the shrine and in the patronal fiesta, was not very common. For the Maya, marriage happens early in adulthood and males and females are expected to be married by their 30s and have kids. Their social organization, based on strong family ties, provides the social/family net support they rely on. If you do not have a husband you still have your nuclear family. This is the reason why my interviewees first asked me if I was married, and after hearing my negative answer, they asked about my mother, whether she was still alive, why she was not with me during those days. Only after doing participant observation with the pilgrims did I realize that people do not go by themselves to the fiesta or on pilgrimage. In Yucatan, pilgrims go with their families (nuclear or extensive), or close friends. Their questions were well sustained. Pilgrimage is more of a social and collective action than individualistic (see Dubish 1995:94).

The Final Account: Selecting and Analyzing the Data

At the end of the fiesta season my pilgrims address book registered more than 100 entries from different parts of the states of Yucatan and Quintana Roo. The contacted pilgrims came

from 32 locations in Yucatan, four in Quintana Roo and one in Campeche. In order to have a fair representation of pilgrims, the sample selected from my pilgrims address book was based on pilgrim geographic location (my sample covers different areas of the state), age (adults), sex (an even distribution), and on the years of attending the fiesta and pilgrimages (around 20 years). For practical and economic reasons, I narrowed the sample to those pilgrims from the state of Yucatan. I also applied the Staggered Replication method (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Stake & Easley, 1978). This method helps researchers to validate the findings in one site through testing in other sites (Johnson 1990:20). Therefore, by interviewing pilgrims from different towns I could validate the 'local knowledge' since it is constructed in multiple-sites (Kurotani 2004:203; Marcus 1995:112). Throughout the year I ended up visiting and interviewing pilgrims in their home towns. Some of the towns visited were Tekit, Chumayel, Kaua, Pisté, Cansahcab, Chemax, Celestun, Hunucma, Halacho, Muna, Motul, Telchac, Choulul, Izamal, Kanasin, and various neighborhoods in the cities of Valladolid and Merida.

Pilgrimage also needs to be seen as a multiplicity of discourses (Eade and Sallnow 2000a:2), In addition to the pilgrims, I also interviewed shrine authorities and employees, since they play an important role during the fiesta. Also, municipal and fiesta authorities, as well as organizers, and people from the host community (Tizimin).

At the end, I conducted a total of 50 interviews including pilgrims, shrine actors, fiesta authorities, Tizimileños (municipal workers and locals), priests, and excursion organizers. For a historical approach on the transformations (past and present) of the fiesta from the pilgrims' eyes, I conducted five oral history interviews of pilgrims over 60 years old. Listening to elders is valuable. They provide insights into the past and observations into the present (Slocum, et al. 1995:162). The information gathered through oral life histories not only helped me learn more

about the historical changes in the ways people have experienced pilgrimage, but also about the changes in devotion and perception of the Kings' images. They ended up complementing the information from the semi-structured and in-depth interviews.

Not all my data comes from participant observation, interviews, and oral histories. Since texts are “a pervasive and naturally occurring feature of everyday life and institutional life” (Hardy and Bryman 2004:613), I also collected local flyers, magazines, and handouts, related to the *gremios*, fiesta, and the shrine in order to analyze the different perceptions the local press had on these activities and the manner in how the information was presented. Since 2003, I also have also collected regional newspaper articles about Tizimin local matters, the fiesta, the shrine, and pilgrimage. I also read booklets and books on Tizimin, its traditions, and its fiesta produced by local authors.

Pilgrimage, *gremios* and fiesta behaviors, interactions and locations were also documented through the use of digital photography and video during fieldwork. It was common to see pilgrims using cameras and video recorders. I also recorded local radio station spots advertising the *gremios*, popular dances, and the fiesta, because I was also interested in how fiesta and local authorities promote these events.

After all the information collected was carefully organized and coded, I analyzed it using discourse and content analysis (Bernard 2002). This approach became practical for my data analysis since a good amount of my material involves talk and text. Since my dissertation is about a pilgrimage in the context of a patronal fiesta, I analyze the place: the shrine, the person: the pilgrims; I analyze the movement: the modes and motivations based on the different historical and contemporaneous narratives presented by the interviewees, and the written documentation such as books, brochures and newspapers. As a result, I present a more holistic

analysis encompassing the religious, historical, social, economical and political aspects that has given the Three Kings pilgrimage its regional significance and long popularity. By focusing on the multiple discourses that the Three Kings shrine entails, I had a better understanding of what pilgrimage represents for the church, for the fiesta, and for the municipality at the local and global levels.

Discourse and content analysis are also the key to better understanding the pilgrims' cultural consumption of the patronal fiesta. Since for the pilgrims the fiesta is a secondary destination, rather than the main one (which is the shrine and its sacred images) I do not present a chapter with an extensive ethnography and analysis of the fiesta. The fiesta, as I demonstrate in the next section, is part of the pilgrimage context, and it becomes relevant if we want to understand the continuous relation between religion and leisure through cultural consumption, the logic behind "Devotional Tourism."

The Three Kings Fiesta: A Continuous Sacred Space

Standing on the street I hear the fireworks and the *charanga* playing, everyone around me stops and looks over. A crowd is coming, walking. Males and females are dressed in traditional Yucatecan style: white and ironed *guayaberas*, and beautifully embroidered *ternos*. Around twenty people are carrying colorful *ramilletes*, paper-decorated wooden sticks, to offer as promises to the Kings. Then I realize, the second *diputado* of the fiesta, Don Lucio Rosado, his family and their friends are on their way to the bullring to fulfill their promise to the Three Kings. When the crowd passes by me, I join it. The music plays constantly while we walk through Tizimin's streets. We arrive at the bullring. The *diputado* and committee make a triumphant entrance, the contingent take a tour around the ring. Don Lucio smiles and waves his hand to everyone who is there for the bullfight. Artisanal fireworks break out, loud and smoky, the tour ends. We proceed to the *palco* and everyone sits there. The bullfight starts, the first bull promised to the Kings by Don Lucio's family inaugurates the *corrida*, and the entertainment begins. [Field notes, January 5, 2004]

An Introduction to Fiesta Systems

The tradition of celebration among Mexicans is not new. It was present before the Spanish Conquest. In Pre-Hispanic times, indigenous people took a break from their daily routine in order

to celebrate special events, and to venerate their gods. For example, according to San Bernardino de Sahagún, the Aztecs had festivals called *veintenas* in which they used to dance at the base of the pyramid of the god honored at each occasion (Miller and Taube 1993). Also, Friar Diego de Landa in his “Account of the Affairs of Yucatan,” mentions a monthly calendar of Mayan festivals that included dances, sacrifices, offerings, processions, ritual food and drinks (Gates 1978; León 1994). With the arrival of the Spaniards to the New World, and the imposition of the Catholic religion on the indigenous people, new syncretic³ forms of festivals came to be celebrated, and a new religious festival calendar started to rule their lives.

Due to the fact that fiestas have always been present, not only among Mexicans, but also among Latin Americans, many anthropologists have devoted part of their research to understanding the meaning and importance of the ‘Fiesta’ in different contexts. For instance, the anthropological literature on fiestas in Mesoamerica tends to focus on indigenous people, rural areas, and Catholicism. The topics are diverse: religious syncretism, political and religious organizations, economics, rituals, and cultural change, etc. Some examples of classical studies in the fields are those by Cancian (1965), Foster (1967), Vogt (1969), and Smith (1977). More recent research has also examined the different aspects of patronal fiestas in Mexico. Garcia-Canclini (1993b), for example, stresses the economic and touristic aspects of the fiesta. Fernandez (1988; 1994) and Quintal (1993) focus on the fiesta system composed of the sacred (*gremios*), and profane aspects. Portal (1998) and Madrazo (1998) focus on the *mayordomia*, or stewardship system, as a power structure.

³ I define syncretism as the encounter and mixture of two or more religions, resulting in a new “hybrid” religion. This new religion contains characteristics of the two or more original religions. Syncretism is a dynamic process of continuity and rupture in which new elements are incorporated, resulting in a more complex product (see Carrasco 1990)

The main aspect that distinguishes the fiesta system in Yucatan from the ones in many other parts of Mesoamerica, and especially in Mexico, is the absence of the Cargo system and the *mayordomías*⁴ that characterize many other fiestas (see Cancian 1965; Foster 1967; Friedlander 1981). In Yucatan the organization of the religious fiesta falls on the *gremio*⁵, or religious guild, organization. Catholic priests, the laity, and the group of *cargadores*, or men in charge of carrying the saints, also take part in the fiesta organization.

The Yucatan fiesta system is well represented in the *patonal* fiestas, the annual celebrations in honor to exalt the figure of the patron or saint (male or female), from a town or city. These are mandatory celebrations established by the Catholic Church, and they also reinforce the relationship between the population and the Catholic institution (Madrazo 1998:489). The patronal fiestas, ever since they were established in the “New World,” have had two main components: the religious, characterized by processions, masses, saint devotions, activities organized by the church (priests and laity), and the civic represented by official and popular activities, such as fairs and dances organized by the civil authorities (López Cantos 1992:104-105). Therefore, patronal fiestas provide not only a break in the daily routine, a time of recreation, of joy, or relaxation, but are also a time of religious meditation, reflection, and devotion.

The fiesta system in Yucatan has not been as widely studied as the Cargo system in other parts of Mexico. The work of Fernández (1994, 1988) and Quintal (1993) have served as a basis

⁴ The Cargo system is a “hierarchy of ranked offices in which individuals or male-female couples ascend. In the Fiesta system, prestige is attained through ceremonial sponsorship in the absence of any fixed hierarchy of positions” (Stephen and Dow 1990:10).

⁵ The *gremio* was introduced by the Spaniards at the time of the Conquest along with the *cofradías* and *hermandades*. The *cofradía* and the *hermandad* were religious institutions, and the *gremio* was a grouping of professionals from early Colonial times until the 19th century, the *cofradías* were the organizations in charge of the patronal fiesta organization. However, due to changes imposed by the Mexican government, the term *gremio* replaced *cofradía* (Diez Hurtado 1994; Fernández Repetto 1994).

for the study on this subject. Although Villa Rojas (1978), Redfield (1941), and Turner (1974) did not focus exclusively on this religious system, they devote some pages to fiesta description in their work. The fiesta of the Three Kings is mentioned by the last two authors.

Patronal fiestas in Yucatan are similar in structure, content and organization. They enclose a religious and civic aspect represented by religious acts such as masses, processions, pilgrimages; and by entertainment such as traditional and popular dances, mechanical rides, commercial stands, and bullfights. The organization usually falls on church and local authorities. In some cases, the fiesta has special committees devoted to managing its different aspects. Fiestas patronales tend to differ in length of duration, some last a week and others last longer. Another difference is the fiesta's importance in the political and economic context, either local or state, where the fiestas are embedded.

The Yucatecan fiesta system is well represented by the major patronal fiestas held in the state. Some examples are: the fiesta in honor of Our Lady of Izamal, the Patron Saint of the state of Yucatan, which takes place in December; The fiesta in honor of the Virgin of *La Candelaria*, held in Valladolid during February; The fiesta of *La Pobre de Dios* (the Poor of God) celebrated in Hunucma during January; The fiesta in honor of the *Cristo de las Ampollas* (Christ of the Blisters) held in Merida during the months of September and October: and The *Fiesta de los Tres Santos Reyes*, Three Kings Fiesta, that takes place in Tizimin during the last days of December and the beginning of January.

The Three Kings Fiesta: A Place of Encounter

The Three Kings Fiesta stands out from the other fiestas in Yucatan because it is one of the largest patronal fiestas, and one of the more important in terms of regional attendance and participation. It is held annually from approximately December 28 to January 16th. Like most of these types of fiestas, it is composed by two main components: the religious and the civic.

The religious aspect is organized by the parish and is composed by masses, saint devotions, the presence of the *gremios*, a magisterial mass, and three large processions. It begins with a special mass, where the Three Kings images are *bajadas*, brought down, from their niches by the *cargadores* organization, and set on a temporary wooden table under wooden and glass urns that protect them from the constant human contact (see Figure 3-1). This celebration is known as the *Bajada de los Santos Reyes*, the taking down of the Holy Kings. After the images of the Kings are taken down, the flows of pilgrims start to arrive for the fulfillment of their promises. The fiesta celebration involves various aspects: daily morning and afternoon masses, rosary prayers, and *novenas* (nine days of prayers) in honor to the Kings. The main religious celebration is the magisterial mass during the Day of the Epiphany, January 6th, the Day of the Three Kings. It is conducted by the Bishop, and ecclesiastic and governmental authorities participate. It is a massive celebration because large numbers of locals and pilgrims attend. It is the day that the most pilgrims arrive to the shrine. The mass media covers the entire event

The main actors of the religious fiesta are the *gremios*. The guilds are made up of a group of people led by a president, a secretary, and a treasurer. According to Turner, they take their name based on gender, civic status, occupation, or from religious figures (Turner 1974). Each guild is responsible for one of the days of the fiesta, and usually it is the same day every year. Their members, grouped in delegations, are made up of relatives and friends from all around the state of Yucatan. During the patronal fiesta, on the day assigned to them, the members of the guild, with a music band, depart from the president's house carrying banners, dressed in traditional clothing⁶, and lighting fireworks, on procession, to the church. After a Mass, the guild

⁶ The traditional mestiza or Maya dress is the *huipil*, a white piece of cloth with colorful embroiders on the squared neck and above the hem that Mayan women wear every day, and the *terno*, which is a more elaborate and elegant *huipil* only worn for special occasions. For everyday use, some Yucatecan men wear a *guayabera* or white shirt

leaves the banners inside the church, returns to the president's house, and a big celebration takes place. Food, drinks, and music are provided to the guests. The next day, the guild goes back to church in the same way, attends mass and stays inside until the guild in charge of that day comes in and takes their place (see Fernández Repetto 1994; Quintal 1993; Rivero 1976).

The Fiesta of Tizimin had 12 *gremios* registered at the shrine in 2004. The first *gremio* in honor of the Three Kings was organized by pilgrims who came from Mérida in 1903, following the already established tradition in this city for the fiesta of the *Cristo de las Ampollas* (Blistered Christ). This *gremio* disintegrated in 1914. It was not until 1915 when the Tizimileños organized their own *Gremio de Señoras*, or *Gremio* of Ladies, that later changed its name to *Gremio Señoras, Señoritas y Obreros*, or *Gremio* of Ladies, Young Ladies and Workers. Today it is the oldest surviving *gremio* (Rivero 1976:51-53). The majority of the *gremios* come from outside Tizimin only two or three are locally organized (See Table 3-1).

Every day the entrance of the *gremio* is expected by locals, visitors, and pilgrims. Each *gremio* pays for a special mass in their members' honor, and brings, aside of the traditional banners and *gremio* flags, flowers, and their own Three Kings images, that are left in the shrine for a complete day. The two visits –the *entrada* (entrance), and the *salida* (exit), of the *gremio* constitutes their only two religious activities at the shrine of the Three Kings (see Figure 3-2).

During the fiesta days there are three large processions organized by the church. The first one takes place in the January 1st. That morning the Three Kings are taken in procession to the bullring for a special mass in honor of the *palqueros*. The mass is said in the ring, and locals and pilgrims attend. The second procession is on January 4th or 9th (it varies). The images are taken in procession to the *posta*, or cattle, fairgrounds. The mass is in honor of the members of the

with pockets and tucks, and for celebrations, men wear the traditional *filipina*, a white shirt with tucks and a pair of white trousers.

Asociacion Ganadera (Cattle Ranchers' Organization). Both the procession ecclesiastic authorities and the devotees walk more than half an hour to get to the locations. The last procession is on January 8th, and it is around the main plaza, where the *fiesteros* stands are located. This is to commemorate old times, when this day was the last day of the fiesta. These are the only three occasions when the images are not inside the shrine. During the processions it is common to see participants praying, singing and holding three, six or eight lit candles. By doing these processions, the Catholic Church reinforces its presence in the city of Tizimin, while at the same time making the place sacred, since the images physically travel the streets and distances accompanied by people, music, and fireworks. Devote merchants and candle sellers also light a candle when the Three Kings go by their stalls (see Figure 3-3).

Daily, the religious fiesta events attract flows of pilgrims who come for the magisterial mass, the different processions, as part of a *gremio*, or just to make their promises and offerings to the Kings at their shrine. The success of the fiesta falls on the Kings' historic popularity as miraculous and powerful images able to solve any request or concern.

The religious aspect of the Three Kings Fiesta is complemented by the civic events, composed of the *vaquerias de promesa*, the *diputaciones*, bullfights, nightly entertainment, the commercial fair, and the cattle fair. The fiesta is organized by the Tizimin municipal authorities through the Fair Committee, or *Comite de Feria*,⁷ which is an autonomous committee with a constitutive board. The committee provides the fiesta with nightly entertainment, local decorations, promotes the fiesta through the distribution of flyers, organizes bullfights together with the fiesta deputies, and provides the surveillance for the all fiesta locations. This committee

⁷ The *Comite de Feria* came to replace *La Junta de Mejoramiento Material, Cívico y Moral* or a Board for the Material, Civic and Moral Improvement. This board had the same functions as the committee. In past years not only the beer and soft drinks were auctioned but also the organization of the fiesta. This auction was based on the board decision to be part of this organization or not. In this case, the board auctions the fiesta to people interested in doing this as a business

also offers *remates* (auctions) related to the fiesta, such as those for the temporary use of space for merchandise stalls, and for the concession of the commercialization exclusivity to soft drink and beer companies. Part of the municipal yearly budget comes from the profits of the Three Kings Fiesta⁸.

The preparations for the fiesta start in November with the *Convite*, or verification of the fiesta. The *convite* is a political and social event where the municipal authorities, the fiesta deputies, *palqueros*, locals, reporters and other people, followed by a music band and fireworks, visit the houses of the ten *diputados*⁹ of the fiesta for its verification, usually during the first weeks of November. When the retinue arrives at the *diputado*'s house, the host provides food and drinks to everyone, people dance, and after a while, they move to the next *diputado*'s house. It is a whole day of celebration, which ends at night with a *vaqueria*.

For Don Lucio Rosado, the fourth deputy of the fiesta, the *convite* is an open invitation made by municipal and fiesta authorities to the locals to participate in the Kings Fiesta:

In this way, the whole city of Tizimin and the neighboring towns will be informed about the fiesta, that the fiesta will indeed take place. It is also a public demonstration of our traditions. We invite the entire town, and not only one or two segments of it, to celebrate with us, to keep our traditions alive. [Tizimin: November 2004]

The *convite* functions as a reminder of social recognition and platform among the fiesta deputies, municipal authorities, and special guests, such as the present and incoming fiesta queen, wealthy ranchers and merchants from Tizimin. The newspaper and local magazine

⁸ In past years the *remate* was offered to the wealthy people of Tizimin, usually cattle ranchers and owners, who are in charge of auctioning the fiesta to the beer and soft drink companies. The authorities are paid the set up price and the auctioneers kept the profits from the second transaction. The money made for the *remate* has been used by the authorities for the improvements of services in the city and municipality. Recently, the beer companies have spent as much as the equivalent of US100,000 to sell their products.

⁹ The *diputados de fiesta*, or fiesta deputies, are a group of eight males and 2 females that yearly made a commitment with their town and authorities of Tizimin to organize the bullfights. The celebrations as a whole are known as *diputaciones*.

reporters play an important role in reinforcing these relations of power and social recognition by photographing the celebration and interviewing the main municipal and fiesta authorities.

The civic fiesta season officially starts on December 30th with the *vaquería de alborada*, or the traditional “opening night dance”. This *vaquería de promesa*¹⁰, is inaugurated by an act of the Governor of the State, which imprints the formalities characteristic of the political institution in power. In this act, local and the fiesta authorities participate as well. For the *vaquería* it is common that people from surrounding and distant towns come for nightly entertainment, and also as a promise made to the Kings. For this event everyone dresses in *ternos* and *filipinas* and dances the *jaranas*. The best dancers are expected to perform *suertes*, or special steps. This dance ends with the traditional *nona*. For this celebration, while the *jarana* is playing and fireworks cracking, all the participants walk as in procession to the bullring carrying a small *ceibo* (a Maya sacred tree), and once there, after the *coronación de la plaza*, a triumphant entrance in which the retinue goes around dancing and celebrating, they plant the tree at one side of the ring. Later on, the retinue goes back to the *vaquería* to dance the last *jarana* of the night (see Figure 3-4).

The second *vaquería de promesa* is held on December 1, during the day. This celebration is known as *pozolada* since in old times the tradition was to give participants *pozole*, a traditional beverage made with corn and honey. The *vaquería* ends with a procession to the bullring for the *coronación de la plaza*.

The last *vaquería* is the *venta de vaqueras*, or cowgirls sold on January 5th, at night time. For this *vaquería*, women wear a white cowboy hat decorated with ribbons and this is where the

¹⁰ *Vaquería* is a series of *jaranas* or songs 3 x 4 and 6 x 8 played during the first night of all patronal fiestas. The *jarana* is also a type of dance that has its roots in the Jota Aragonesa. For the *vaquería*, women dress with the *terno* and a cowboy white hat and men with the *filipina*. The term *vaquería de promesa* it was given to this celebration due to the amount of *jarana* dancers and pilgrims that come to the *vaquería* as a promise made to the Kings.

name *vaquera* or cowgirl comes from. This *vaquería* has a distinctive feature in that when a couple is dancing the *jarana*, another male can approach them and place his hat on top of hers, giving him “rights” to dance with her. At the end of the night, a good female dancer ends up wearing up to six or seven cowboy hats at the same time. In order to get their hats back, males have to pay some money to the lady. *Vaquerías* are a tradition in all patronal fiestas and other social events, mostly in the rural area of Yucatan. In the case of the Three Kings, *vaquerías* become a place for social encounters for locals, authorities, visitors, and pilgrims. For local and state authorities it is a platform to do proselytism. For *diputados*, or fiesta authorities, it is a place of social recognition. For pilgrims is a place for fulfillment of promises, and for visitors and locals it is a place to socialize, and for family entertainment.

Another main civic attraction of the patronal fiestas is the bullfights. For the Three Kings Fiesta, the organization of the bullfights falls on the fiesta authorities, a group of people known as *diputados de fiesta* (fiesta deputies). Each male and female *diputado*, or deputy, as part of a promise to the Three Kings, commits to organize a bullfighting day. For this purpose, each deputy is in charge of finding 6 devotees of the Three Kings who want to make a promise that consists of paying for the rent of a bull, which is not killed, and will fight in the bullring.

The promise consists of a complete day of celebrations in honor to the Three Kings. It starts the day before the deputy's *corrida*, or bullfight, with a late afternoon, end of the *novena* prayer, followed by the arrival of the *ramilletes*¹¹ by the *socios*, or members, of the *diputación*. For this night celebration, people arrive dressed with the traditional Yucatecan clothing and dance *Jarana* music played by a *charanga*, or group of local musicians. Those present enjoy friends, family, and conversation while eating and drinking. Three o'clock in the morning is the

¹¹ *Ramilletes* are wooden sticks decorated with layers of paper or fabric flowers and are carried by the *socios* during the walk from the deputy's house to the bullring. *Ramilletes* are symbolic promises made to the Kings.

time for the *nona*, or the reception of the ring. The retinue walks to the *ruedo*, or bullring, and by the sound of the music and fireworks, the deputy and caravan *corona la plaza*, by making an entrance and going around dancing and celebrating. Later, the retinue goes back to the deputy's house for the last *jarana* dance. With the *nona*, the deputy not only symbolically receives the ring, but also it is a way to let the entire city know that there will be a bullfight on this day.

The celebration continues at lunch time when all the *socios* arrive and eat traditional festivity dishes, such as *relleno negro* and *cochinita pibil*¹². Around two in the afternoon, after dancing some *jaranas*, the deputy and the revenue walks again in procession, carrying the *ramilletes* to the bullfighting ring to the rhythm of the *charanga* and fireworks. At the bullring, they make an entrance and *coronan la plaza* with a house full of applauses and hurrahs, followed by the bullfight. Four hours later, when the bullfight finalizes, the deputy does the same procedure and walk back to the house. At the end of the day, the deputy has to *coronar la plaza*, and goes around the ring three times, once for each King. After some *jarana* dances, those attending go back home, and the deputy's promise is finally fulfilled (see Figure 3-5).

There are ten deputies for the Three Kings Fiesta, however, only nine maintain bullfights. Don Nicolás, who is also considered a *diputado*, represents the deputies at the shrine by doing the same celebrations as the others, but instead of taking the *ramilletes* to the bullring, they take them to the shrine on December 28, or the day of the *bajada* of the Three Kings from their wooden niches. By performing this celebration, the *diputados* demarcate their territory at the shrine, while at the same time they publicly associate their devotions to the Kings. This celebration formally opens the fiesta and the bullfighting season. For this occasion, nine

¹² *Relleno negro* is dish made from boiled fowl cooked in a black paste made of burned *habanero* peppers and *cochinita pibil* is a pork dish marinated with *achiote* (*Bixa Orellana*), wrapped in banana leaves and cooked in an earth oven. Both dishes are considered to be ritual and festive, therefore always served in special celebrations.

bullfights are organized, three in honor of each of the Kings. The list of deputies and the bullfight days are in Table 3-2.

The deputies are the main actors of the civic fiesta. The position is inherited within a family, or is handed over to another family or relative when someone no longer wants to be part of the *diputaciones*. The celebration is mostly paid by them, with the help of their *socios*, or members, who as a promise to the Kings, collaborate with *ramilletes* as offerings, the rent of the bulls, and sometimes with food, drinks, or music. In some cases, the deputies help themselves with the revenues from the food and drinks sales during the celebration. The *diputaciones* are very time and monetary consuming, celebrations. Family and friends are involved in the event preparations. Many of the *socios* are pilgrims who come from different towns. The time and money invested every year is compensated by social recognition from authorities and locals.

In addition to the deputies' bullfights, the *palqueros* and *diputados* organize another two to three bullfights to recover some of the money invested, but mostly to help local charities in need. These bullfights are held at the end of the fiesta season, and the audience is composed mainly by local people, Tizimileños (see Figure 3-5).

The fiesta of the Three Kings also has a commercial component, the fair. The central streets of Tizimin which surround the shrine are flooded with the temporary commercial stalls of small-scale merchants who travel from fiesta to fiesta selling religious souvenirs, clothing, costume jewelry, toys, blankets, kitchen utensils, house decorations, furniture, music, movies, shoes, handcrafts, and sweets. Many of the *fiesteros*, or people who go from fair to fair selling their products, come from central Mexico offering attractive and cheap merchandise. Food and drink stalls are also found at the fair, mostly local-run or owned. Fair attractions also include mechanical rides such as ferris wheels, shooting galleries, merry-go-rounds, bumper cars. These

are temporarily placed on the main plaza. These rides are popular among the younger generations and tickets are reasonably priced.

In addition to the commercial fair, the city council also provides nightly entertainment for locals and visitors. Every night around eight o'clock free concerts and performances are provided by local and national famous singers, theater productions, musicians, poets, folkloric dancers, shows from the beer company sponsor, and popular national *norteño* and mariachi bands. This entertains the hundreds of local and visitor spectators gathered on the municipality facilities. The city council also organizes and pays for nightly popular dances during the fiesta time.

Another main attraction of the Three Kings Fiesta is the *feria ganadera*, or cattle fair. This fair was first established in 1956, and it started as a small-scale local cattle exhibition. Within a few years, the cattle industry in the municipality of Tizimin developed notoriously, bringing more capital to the local production. The need for cattle commercialization led the *Asociación Ganadera*, or Cattle Ranchers' Association, to invest in a larger fair, and in 1962 the Undersecretary of Cattle Ranching elevated the fair to the category of an annual and regional fair with a national projection, listing it in the Catalog of Mexican Fairs (Brito Sansores n/d; Rivero 1976). Nowadays the *Expo Ganadera* is nationally recognized in the cattle industry, and its fair grounds provides a variety of agro-industrial and commercial exhibitions, along with a variety of cattle shows, rodeos, food, and daily musical entertainment.

For almost three weeks, the patronal fiesta in honor of the Three Kings takes over the city of Tizimin, spreading into different sections of the city. The *Placita de Toros* in where the *ruedo* and the bullfights take place. Downtown, the Three Kings shrine atrium, the Benito Juárez park, and the old train station, are where many merchandise and food stalls are located. The Expo

Ganadera is located in the new fair grounds located at the city entrance, full of exhibitions and entertainment.

The Three Kings Fiesta: A Place of Continuums

The Three Kings Fiesta encompasses a variety of aspects, religious and civic, each one with different meanings, rituals, ceremonies, activities and people. There is a traditional Durkheimian tendency of wanting to distinguish between the sacred and the profane components of fiestas. However, since in the Three Kings Fiesta the division becomes blurred due to the fact that, in one way or another, both aspects are intertwined and influenced by the presence of the Three Kings, the fiesta can be analyzed as place of continuums, using Redfieldian terms. We can better say that there is a continuum of religious symbols in the secular practices within the fiesta. If we analyze the bullfights, we have that even there is a constant reminder of the Holy Kings, due to its three levels and according to the *palqueros*, each one is in honor of one of the Kings. During the bullfights, which are promises made by the *diputados*, it is common to read on the bulls' sides "*promesa de la familia Cohuo a los Santos Reyes*" or promise made by the Cohuo family to the Holy Kings. The *ramilletes* offered are also promises, and each one is built in three levels, one for each King. The *vaquerias*, the traditional dances are attended by many pilgrims who go as promises to Melchior, Gaspar and Balthazar. Even at the *Expo Ganadera*, the most secular celebration, there is a constant reminder of the presence of the Three Kings, since the images have been commercialized by the cattle industry in the form of logos, workers' uniforms, stage decorations, and radio spots, which act as magnets that attract devotees to the fair. The Catholic Church has also contributed to this continuum by bringing the procession the Three Kings to the bullring, to the cattle fair, and into the downtown main plaza. With the processions, there is a temporal appropriation of space by the images, and also a constant reminder that they have an important symbolic place in the hierarchy of the city authorities. The role that pilgrims

play also reinforces this continuum because both religious and leisurely motivations pull them to attend the multiple celebrations offered by the fiesta. Further chapters analyze in more in detail the presence of pilgrims at the fiesta and their motivations.

Tizimin: The Kings' Destination¹³

The Three Kings Fiesta has an historical tradition in the Yucatan Peninsula. More than 400 years of annual patronal celebrations have passed, if we relate the beginning of the fiesta tradition with the construction of the Franciscan convent in 1563 (López de Cogolludo 1955b:411), although there is no official written record of the actual date. Newspaper ads since 1872 had provided us with written information regarding the fiesta:

The night of the 5th, before the last day of the fair, the main plaza of this villa overflowed with people who were playing the roulette... the merchants were screaming and ringing their bells, the roulette men singing the lucky numbers, the drunk were singing new tunes and everyone were breathing feast and enthusiasm [La Revista de Mérida, January 17:1875].

The fiesta can be seen as “contact zone” in Pratt’s terms. A social space where different people interact, and notice the differences amongst each other, since is a “social space where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (1992:4). The fiesta as a “contact zone” provides spaces for multiple social class interactions, as we have seen in the *convite* and the *vaquerias*, where politicians, ranchers, locals and pilgrims share the same physical space. However, there is a class distinction barrier that prevents people from truly interacting with each other. As a consequence, the Three Kings Fiesta is a space where people get exposed to the different relations of power that reinforce the already existing differences.

¹³ *Tizimin, destino de reyes* was the motto used to promote the city and the fiesta by the Tizimin City Council from 2004-2007. The motto was used as a welcome sign located at the entrances and it was written in strategic visual places all over the city for a period of four years. The use of the word King became appropriated by the local authorities reflecting a strong relation of the patron saint images with the city.

Therefore, the fiesta since its origins has been a place of multiple encounters. It is a complex system where many people interact and many interests are intertwined. Many actors are involved in the organization, the performance, and the consumption, of the fiesta. For the state, municipal and local authorities, the fiesta becomes a platform for political proselytism, and a target for the annual budget increment. For the *diputados de fiesta*, the bullring becomes a space filled with continuous religious and secular expressions where they can publicly manifest their devotion to the Kings, while, at the same time, they can get social recognition from the locals and the visitors. The *gremios* find in the fiesta the opportunity to fulfill promises by strengthening their social networks that are part of a traditional Yucatecan institution. And for pilgrims, the fiesta is the counterpart of their religious visit to the shrine. Pilgrims make the most of their visit to the fiesta since, in addition to the fulfillment of their promises made by the Kings; they find a space for leisure and family interaction through cultural consumption.

Summary: Approaching the Fiesta and Shrine of the Three Kings

On many occasions, the work of an anthropologist goes beyond the traditional job with a regulated schedule and impersonal encounters. As an anthropologist I wanted to present not only the fieldwork and analysis methods used in this dissertation, but also share my personal account and reflections. Therefore, I have positioned myself and my work in the anthropology context.

In the first section of this chapter, I explored different topics that have been present in anthropological fieldwork literature and practice. By placing my ethnographic work in a self-reflexive writing subgenre, I disclose my own experiences as a Mexican anthropologist, as a graduate student in the United States, and as an ‘insider’ doing anthropological fieldwork ‘at home’. My intention in exploring these concepts is to bring to the table ‘other’ perspectives by reflecting on different encounters, approaches, reactions, among informants and myself.

In the same manner, by describing the fieldwork practice, I contrasted the traditional-conventional- fieldwork style, frequent in Mexican anthropological practice, with a more mobile experience, the multi-sited ethnography. Since this methodological tool entails movement, it provides with more information about the different locations visited and researched while gathering the pilgrim's perspectives. In addition, as a consequence of movement, my field work experience became a non-stop journey, filled with travel adventures, encounters, and tales.

The second section of the chapter introduces the reader to the context of the Three Kings patronal fiesta, a space for entertainment and devotion. This space is a 'contact zone' that reinforces the social divisions within locals –Tizimileños and pilgrims. By presenting an ethnographic account and analysis of the fiesta, I document the changes and innovations that this fiesta has had along the years, and also the complexity behind the Yucatecan fiesta system. Along the same line, the data presented on the fiesta provides us with enough elements (economic, social and religious) to validate the fact that it is one of the most important fiestas in the Yucatan Peninsula.

The significance of Tizimín's fiesta not only rests on its capacity to be a space for multiples religious and civic encounters, but also because it is was during fiesta days that the most flows of pilgrims come to visit the shrine. The methodological approach presented here relies on the fact that as a proper channel for data presentation and reflection, it brings new advances in the methodology of the field of pilgrimage studies.

Table 2-1. Parish record of participant *gremios* during the 2004 and 2005 fiestas

| Name | Dates of entrance and exit | Year of foundation |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Gremio Cofraternidad Católica (<i>Catholic Fraternity</i>) | Dec. 31- Jan. 1 | |
| Gremio de Agricultores (<i>Farmers</i>) | Jan. 1- Jan. 2 | 1919 |
| Gremio Señoras, Señoritas y Obreros (<i>Married and Unmarried Ladies and Workers</i>) | Jan. 2 - Jan. 3 | 1915 |
| | Jan. 3 - Jan.4 | |
| Gremio Signo de Esperanza (<i>Sign of Hope</i>) | Jan. 4 - Jan.5 | 1969 |
| Gremio Estrella del Oriente (<i>Eastern Star</i>) | Jan. 5 - Jan.6 | |
| Gremio Unión Católica, Juventud de Mérida (<i>Catholic Union, Youth of Merida</i>) | Jan. 6 - Jan.7 | 1922 |
| Gremio Fé, Esperanza y Caridad (<i>Faith, Hope and Charity</i>) | Jan. 7 - Jan.8 | 1924 |
| Gremio Obreros y Campesinos (<i>Workers and Fieldworkers</i>) | Jan. 8 - Jan.9 | 1926 |
| Gremio Baratilleros o Estrella de Oriente (<i>Sellers of Cheap Merchandise or Eastern Star</i>) | Jan. 9 - Jan.10 | 1949 |
| Gremio Unión Católica de Mérida (<i>Catholic Union of Merida</i>) | Jan. 10 - Jan.11 | 1952 |
| Gremio Juan XXIII | Jan. 11 – Jan. 12 | 1972 |

Table 3-2. List of fiesta deputies for the 2004 and 2005 festivities

| Deputy Name | Bullfight Day |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Nicolás Dzul | December 28 |
| Cristina Tello | January 1 |
| Alejandro Balam | January 2 |
| Juan Manuel Canché | January 4 |
| Lucio Rosado | January 5 |
| Amelio Kantún | January 6 |
| Gaspar Turriza | January 7 |
| Idelfonso Canché | January 8 |
| María Jesús Méndez | January 9 |
| Fausto Kantún | January 10 |



Figure 3-1. The Three Kings of Tizimin



Figure 3-2. *Gremio* entrance



Figure 3-3. Procession



Figure 3-4. *Vaquería* opening



Figure 3-5. Fiesta and municipal authorities



Figure 3-6. Bullfight

CHAPTER 4

THE SHRINE: A PLACE FOR DEVOTIONS AND ENCOUNTERS

Yesterday was my first time in the shrine. While I was walking by the atrium near the entrance, I stopped at one of the stands and asked for a candle. The woman dressed in *huipil*, or Mayan dress, with a Mayan, accent asked me in Spanish, “Are you sure you just want one candle?” And I responded yes, and then she tells me, “You shouldn’t buy just one candle, you need to buy three. *Niña*, child, don’t you see that there are Three Kings, and not just one? If you go inside the church with one candle and you offer it to one King, what will the other Kings say about it? Your *promesa*, or promise, won’t be complete, or heard by them. You need to buy three candles and offer one to each of the Kings, and then the Kings will listen to your petitions.” I ended up buying the three candles, three *kexitos*,¹ or small metal votive offerings, and some *ruda*², or aromatic herb, to offer to the Three Kings. I walked inside the shrine, and approached the images. There were at least another seven devotees there, doing their *promesa* with candles, *kexitos* and *ruda* in hand kneeling and praying. I thought for a moment on the role the vendors have in transmitting particular religious practices, and how the ‘tradition’ is created. After a little prayer and offer of my own to the Three Kings, I sat on one of the benches and looked around. It was just a regular day at the shrine. The Three Kings were in their regular place, inside their wooden green niches. There were people praying near the images, families sitting, chatting, kids running around, a man sweeping the floor, more people kneeling and reciting the rosary, another lady leaving flowers on the altar. Everyone was there for a reason. I was there not necessarily because of my devotion to the Kings. I had just introduced myself to them. I was there as an anthropologist. I was exploring the shrine, getting familiar with its dynamics, preparing myself for my upcoming fieldwork experience. I was in search of my academic future. Tizimin and the shrine of the Three Kings will host me for some time [Field notes, June 2002].

One of my objectives is to present an analysis of pilgrimage as a multiplicity of discourses coming from the place, the person, and movement. By examining the localization of the sacredness in this triad, my analysis takes a different course, and goes beyond the traditional view of pilgrimage as a sacred journey in search of divine power, to a more heterogeneous view of the pilgrimage process. This chapter examines the place, the sacred locale, the shrine. By analyzing the sacred centre, or shrine, as a vessel of multiple discourses, perceptions, meanings

¹ A *kexito* is a pressed-tin plaque shaped as a person (woman, men, girl, baby), specific body part (ears, stomach, limbs), animals (pig, cow, horse), objects (book, car, house, money, eyeglasses), vegetables (corn cob) to mention a few. *Kex* is a Mayan word that means to exchange. They are also known as *cuerpo* or body. Christian mentions how in the 16th century the tradition already existed. Votive offerings or ex-votos were made of wax (Christian 1981).

² *Ruda* (*Ruta graveolens L.*) Common name: Common Rue, Herb-of-Grace, Bitterwort. It is an aromatic herb with medical and spiritual qualities.

and relations, I establish a regional conception of the shrine and the sacred images, the two main magnets that for years have been motivating people to undertake pilgrimage, to be more mobile.

Pilgrimage from a Popular Religion Perspective

As I have mentioned before, the act of pilgrimage in Latin America is not new. Long before the Spanish conquest, Mesoamerican and Andean civilizations already had the tradition of going on religious pilgrimages to their sacred centers in order to venerate their gods. With the arrival of the Spaniards to the so-called 'New World,' the imposition of the Catholic religion on the indigenous people, and the juxtaposition of new religious buildings and saints on earlier structures and gods, the Mesoamerican tradition of sacred journeys did not disappear, rather it became re-conceptualized, transformed, reinforced and syncretized.

In order to understand the meaning and importance of the pilgrimage process in Latin America, and especially in Yucatan, Mexico, we have to situate it within the context of popular religion. Popular religion is a concept that has been explored and applied to different contexts within Latin America, and among various religions (Kohut and Meyers 1988; Parker 1996; Stephen and Dow 1990). Popular religion has been defined as "religious or ritual activities consciously practiced outside of, or in opposition to, dominant institutionalized religion or those religious activities which, although carried on within the framework of institutionalized religion, offer a critique of that framework and of larger political and economic inequities" (Stephen and Dow 1990:9). Therefore, when the Spaniards arrived in the 'New World,' they brought with them a syncretic Catholicism that encountered the already existing religions, and created a popular religion that includes Pre-Hispanic and Catholic religious elements.

Popular religion constitutes a language of its own, with a variety of meanings acquired according to different interpretations (Maldonado 1989:30). In Mexico, expressions of popular religion are more common among certain populations. It becomes the religion of social groups

composed of peasants, urban proletarian, and low classes. The main characteristic of popular religion is the tendency to express life in a very symbolic, concrete, and experiential, form. Therefore, popular classes manifest their religiosity through devotions, and cultural practices such as prayers, rites, symbolic gestures, fiestas, celebrations, and pious practices, all with the purpose of getting closer to the divine (García Román and Martín Soria 1989:354).

Popular religious practices are embedded in the pilgrimage process. The coordinates of place, person and movement can be better understood when we analyze them under the context of popular religion. Conceptions of the shrine and its foundation narratives; physical contact with the images: touching, kissing, herbs and candle rubbing; healing power properties attributed to images; human characteristics attributed to images: crying, movement, weight; exchange of favors through prayer and material offerings: *kexitos*, *ruda* are some of the popular religious practices that have defined and shaped the functions, practices, and behaviors of the regional pilgrimage process characteristic of the Yucatan. The study of religious rituality is not an easy task. There is communication with the divine, the supernatural, as well as with the different aspects of the cultural system, the economic, the social, the ethnic, the ludic, identity, etc. (Rodríguez Becerra 1989:9). My aim is to demonstrate these ‘communications’ by presenting and analyzing the case of the Three Kings shrine.

Destination: The Sacred Centre “The Parish of the Three Kings”

One of the main goals of a pilgrimage is to reach a sacred centre, the place to which the pilgrim is drawn. These locales are either natural or man-made sites. These are places that emanate special energy, or are associated with the divine, places where beliefs and rituals are contested. They are places full of symbolism, history, and narratives, and usually live in the collective memory of the people.

Following an Eliadean approach on sacred centers, we depart from a general conceptual definition that a shrine is a localized place, considered sacred, where a deity in a historical moment chose to appear or to manifest itself to the people (Eliade 1963). It differs from a temple or a church because a shrine usually houses a relic, or miraculous image, which is the object of devotion and worship (Díez Taboada 1989:274). Shrines are places of sacred and ritual manifestations. They are pilgrimage locales of spread recognition, and their geographic influence is in relation to the character of the theophany or hierophany. These sacred locales are points of convergence for pilgrims who come from diverse geographic locations, either collectively or individually (Velasco Toro 1997b:120). This chapter focuses on the sacred place. My analysis goes beyond the Eliadean conception of the sacred center as a place considered by the pilgrims as a “holy place”, to a geographical place that houses a divine power (Eliade 1963; Nthoi 2006). The aim is to explore the sacred place, the Shrine of the Three Kings, as a centre with some degree of religious power and significance that comes from its historical and social context. More importantly, the shrine is explored as ‘person-centered’ (Eade and Sallnow 2000b:7), a place whose sacredness comes from the presence of the saints, the Three Kings images, rather than from its physical location.

Generally, Mexican pilgrimage centers are based on their symbolism. For example, the greater shrines are devoted to father and mother figures (The sanctuary of Our Lord of Chalma, The Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe). There are some that have a connection with nature: hills, mountains, rivers, sinkholes (The shrine of The Three Kings). Some important Christian centers are located close to Pre-Columbian centers of pilgrimage (The Sanctuary of The Izamal Virgin). Other shrines are composed of several edifices, such as minor shrines, chapels, and crosses, which also serve as landmarks (The Sanctuary of the Black Christ of Otatitlán). The

Virgin of Guadalupe shrine holds a unique position. The Virgin of Guadalupe becomes a 'dominant symbol' since her presence has spread and is represented in many shrines, churches, and chapels throughout the country, and pilgrims still follow traditional roads and ways of travel to go to a major pilgrimage center (Turner 1973:226-227).

These symbols, many of them present in most of the greater Mexican shrines, along with local public religious representations, provide sacred places with particular characteristics that not only differentiate one from the other, but at the same time are defined in terms of the historical, social, political, economic and religious context in which the shrines are embedded. For instance, the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe is historically located in a place of pilgrimage and devotion for the Aztecs. Religious public representations were re-interpreted with the imposition of Catholic religion. Syncretic practices were created, and those remnants are still a part of pilgrimage and religious performances, such as the presence of the *concheros*, or group of dancers characterized by their seashell anklets. During the Guadalupe celebrations of December 12th, the relation of Church and State is consolidated, year by year, with the presence of the President and politicians at the shrine. *Gobernadores*, or local mayors, lead pilgrimages to this sacred place. Priests from all over the country are present, too. Also, public figures, popular singers, and actresses do a symbolic pilgrimage to the shrine on the same day. Class and ethnic structures are also present in this place. Pilgrims from different social classes visit the shrine during the year, but especially on December 12th. During that week, locals, nationals, and foreigners arrive in Mexico City by plane, bus, private car, or on foot. Social class is reflected in the way people travel. The Basilica becomes the physical place where class distinction is most evident. The access is restricted during fixed times, usually when State and religious authorities are there. The place, the image, and the celebrations are de-territorialized and re-territorialized by

the media, and mostly by social processes, such as Mexican transnational migration. Therefore, the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe can be defined as a place that constantly mediates between official and popular religion, between Church and State, and between local, regional, national, and transnational identities.

Given that sacred centers are not homogenized, due to the fact that they embody different aspects of society, and each place presents different realities even within the same religion or society, I propose an operational typology which is a re-elaboration of Cohen's (1992b) typology of pilgrimage centers as formal and popular.

Formal centers are those in which orthodox religious activities are primarily emphasized, and rituals are highly formalized and proper. Ludic and festive elements are not necessarily present, and if they are, they have a secondary role. The recognition of the center as an official shrine comes from the religious authorities through a formal decree. Examples are St. Peter in Rome and the Ka'aba of Mecca. Popular centers are less formalized, and less proper in regards to rituals and public religious displays. Ludic and festive elements frame the place, mostly during Patronal celebrations, becoming magnets for attracting people. The recognition of the center as a shrine is given by the people. That is to say, the popularity of the shrine as a place embodied by divine power. Examples in Mexico include the shrine of the Virgin of Chuiná in Campeche, and the Shrine of Tixcacal Guardia in Quintana Roo (Cohen 1992b:36-37).

The Yucatan Peninsula has more than 20 formal and popular shrines. In the states of Yucatan and Campeche, shrine devotions are mostly directed to Virgins and 'Black' Christs. In Quintana Roo, as a consequence of the Caste War (1847), shrines are devoted to the "Santísima," or the Holy Cross. The majority of the shrines are located in the state of Yucatan (Quintal, et al. 2003:330-331). Only five Marian shrines from this state are officially recognized by the Catholic

church: The Shrine of Our Lady of Izamal, the Patron Saint of the state of Yucatan, the Shrine of the Virgin of the Star in Peto, the Virgin of la Candelaria in Valladolid, the Shrine of the Virgin of Tetiz, or the *Pobre de Dios* (Poor of God), located in the town of Tetiz, and in the city of Merida, the Shrine of the Perpetual Auxiliary Virgin in the Itzimná neighborhood, and the Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the San Cristobal neighborhood (Negroe Sierra 2004:288).

The Shrine of the Three Kings is located in Tizimin, a city on the northeastern part of the state of Yucatan, 170 kilometers (106 miles) from the city of Merida, the capital of the state. Following the mentioned typology, this sacred center is considered a ‘popular’ pilgrimage center, since it has not been officially recognized by the Catholic Church. Public religious displays are a reflection of popular religious practices which are less strict and formal. And, the heaviest season of pilgrimage is during the patronal fiesta at the beginning of January with the celebration of the Epiphany.

Shrines are locations that house a diversity of behaviors, meanings and purposes. For instance, in the shrine of Izamal, also located in Yucatan, due to its formal state recognition, the affluence of people is more organized and diversified, and there is a constant and fluent representation of pilgrims from all economic levels and social classes. The shrine of the Three Kings presents a good variety of pilgrim population, but attracts mostly peasants, and low income people from rural and urban areas.

As Morinis mentions, we cannot de-contextualize the locale, the shrine, from the socio-cultural, political, an economic context in where it is embedded (1992a:3). The local and regional significance of the Three Kings shrine is linked to the history of the area, and to the city of Tizimin. Its location never has been an obstacle for the constant flow of pilgrimage that characterizes the shrine. This in spite of the fact that the northeastern part of Yucatan has always

been considered to be very distant and remote from Merida, the capital city of the state. The shrine shines due to its sacred images, rather than from being in Tizimin. The city of Tizimin historically has not been a major center of economic and touristic development. It cannot compete with other cities in the same area, such as Valladolid. The isolation has contributed to the slow process of economic growth and development of the area. For instance, small roads connected this area until the introduction of the rail system in 1913. Electricity was also introduced during the 1920s. The shrine and the devotions of the Three Kings has overcome historical events, such as when this eastern area was devastated in terms of its agricultural and cattle production due to the Caste War (1847). The images became the city's and people's protectors and saviors. In 1916, during the military occupation of Yucatan by General Salvador Alvarado, the shrine of The Three Kings was overtaken by the military and some of its lesser images were destroyed, but not the Three Kings. The images were protected, hidden, and a year later were brought back.

The economy of the region is based on agriculture, cattle and commerce. However, this area is mostly known for its cattle ranching industry that has its roots on the colonial institutions of *estancia*, and later the *hacienda*. During the patronal fiesta, the city's economy boosts due to the massive affluence of pilgrims that visit the shrine. Since 1956, the cattle industry has also taken advantage of the shrine's power to attract by holding their annual cattle fair and exhibition during the patronal celebrations. The shrine, at the same time, finds monetary support from the wealthy ranchers of the area.

The cattle industry and the Three Kings Fiesta are Tizimin's main identity emblems at the local and regional level. The Three Kings, the patron saints, not only have symbolic religious power among the locals, but also function as identity symbols for the city, since they are

represented in the coat of arms. In this way, the local significance of the images reinforces the relations between state and church, and consolidates people's identity through the public and constant identification with their sacred images.

The historical, social, political and economic events of the area have always been related, in one way or the other, to the local significance of the Three Kings shrine. Its recognition goes beyond the local and state area, and spreads along the other two states of the peninsula, giving it a category of regional shrine.

It is my intention to demonstrate in following pages, that the contexts and events where the shrine has been historically immersed and surrounded have reinforced the regional identity of the shrine, through the embodiment of regional traditions, beliefs, myths, rites, and narratives characteristic of the Yucatecan culture.

The Three Wise Men: From Worshippers to Worshipped

Since the 11th and 12th centuries, images have played an important role in Iberian Catholic religion. The popularity of specialist saints as the sacred images who tended to turn over more rapidly, eventually was supplanted by generalists like Mary and Christ (Christian 1981). When Iberian Catholicism arrived in the Mesoamerican area, there was already a specialization among saints. Virgins specialized in protecting and defending pregnancy; there were saints to facilitate rain, for lost causes, to protect from natural disasters, for spiritual healing and illness cures, for family matters, and so on. These saints' specialization favored the 'replacement' of pre-Hispanic gods, since the Mesoamerican religions were polytheistic and familiar with multiple lesser and greater devotions. New sacred places and gods were established (see Carrasco 1990).

Prat I Carós gives an explanation behind the divine power of shrines and images. According to him, the magic-religious configuration goes together with the conception that human and social life passes through a series of continuous states of disequilibrium, where the

individual is unable to remedy misfortunes and illnesses, such as afflictions, adversities, necessities, illnesses, sadness, despair, trouble, and so on. These, therefore, have to be solved through the help and protection of the supernatural that in one hand is expel in sacred places and on the other, in the images, which through the process of 'symbolic condensation' (in which the images condense all the virtue and supernatural power) store health, grace, virtue, remedies, mercy, help, life, miracles and so (1989:227). In Yucatan, neither the priests nor the pilgrims interviewed consider the Three Kings as "specialists." The petitions and promises made to them are very general. Devotees approach them mainly in relation to health, work and school, family and relationship issues, that is, for everyday aspects of life. It is certain that pilgrims come to Tizimin in search of the Three Kings' divine power, and their shrine is a place which radiates health and power, either material or spiritual

According to the Biographical Dictionary of the Saints, the Three Wise Men, The Three Kings, or the Kings from the East, were the first pagans who, guided by a star, came from the Orient to Bethlehem to adore Christ, about one year after his birth. They were probably priests of Zoroaster, versed in astronomy. The Gospel does not mention their number, or their names (Holweck 1990: 639). In the shrine of the Three Kings, these Wise Men dominate the pantheon in terms of the believers' attention. They have been the patron saints of Tizimín since 1563, and the major fiesta is in their honor. For more than a century, pilgrims from different parts of the Yucatán Peninsula, other states in Mexico, and from other countries, travel to Tizimín every year to venerate the Three Holy Kings. Thousands upon thousands of pilgrims arrive during the fiesta days to pray, make promises, or carry promises out made to the Kings. Pilgrims and devout people line up, not only to pray to the images, but also to be physically in touch with them

We can trace the power of the Three Kings through past newspaper press reports. Ads regarding the Tizimin fiesta started to appear in the press as early as 1870 in a local newspaper founded in 1869, first named *La Revista de Mérida*, and later *Diario de Yucatán*. Pilgrimage reports appeared in the newspaper for the first time in 1904, telling about people who went to Tizimin from towns in Yucatán and Campeche. In 1951, one reporter mentions that people, not only from Yucatán and Campeche, but also from Mexico City, went to the fiesta. In 1981, pilgrims slept outside in the halls of the municipal building. Each of these three press reports becomes an example of how popular and important the images have been in the religious framework of the regional and local populations throughout the years.

The devotion to the Three Kings has always concerned the Catholic Church. For this institution the Three Kings are saints, the intermediaries between God the Supreme Being, and Catholics. The church is concerned with the over veneration of images, because this act could be seen as an act of idolatry rather than devotion. During Mass homilies at the fiesta, priests try to create awareness among the Catholics that the Three Kings are just intermediaries. For this reason, priests encourage Catholics to pray to God, and emphasize his importance as the Almighty One, All-Powerful, and All-Loving. This idea is stated in at least two press reports. In January 1981, the parish priest wrote an article about the Three Kings as a manifestation of Christ (*Diario de Yucatán*. January 3rd, 1981: 8-B.) Again in December 2001, the parish priest, during his homily, talked about how the petitions made to the Three Kings are actually made to God (*Diario de Yucatán*. December 29, 2000: 7). This idea of creating awareness among the pilgrims is still present today. The fact that pilgrims are more concerned with being physically close to the images by getting in long lines to be inside the shrine and to be close to the Kings, rather than attending masses and getting communion, distresses the clergy. During the fiestas in

2004 and 2005, priests on several occasions exhorted pilgrims throughout the homilies to attend mass and pray to God, since the Kings are just His intermediaries.

In spite of the Catholic Church's concern regarding this subject, the over-veneration of the images persists. For the individuals, the images have their own personality, and powers, and that is why they venerate them³. In spite of the persistence of the Church, the practice of devotion still dominates, due to popular religious practices which tend to emphasize the devotional aspects, and to foment practices such as promises, dances, processions, and offerings, over the more liturgical and sacramental (Giménez 1978). The Three Kings Fiesta brings the people the opportunity to be close, and in physical contact, with the images, since during these days they are placed in an accessible location where pilgrims can touch, kiss, or rub their wooden urns, and place their offerings themselves without any intermediary (see Figure 4-1). Pilgrims expressed the importance of being this close with their saints, and also complain about other shrines, like in Izamal, where they cannot have direct contact with the image since the Virgin is placed on a special high altar. The closeness becomes one of the major attractions of the Three Kings shrine.

At the shrine of the Three Kings, the Three Holy Kings dominate the pantheon in terms of the believers' attention and fervor. Due to the fact that they are the patron saints of Tizimín, the major fiesta is in their honor. Additionally, the shrine encompasses lesser devotions to non-titular saints. Some are located above the altar in what is called a *retablo*, or altarpiece, and others are placed on niches. The Virgin of Guadalupe is present, as well as a Christ, Saint Anne, and some of the apostles are carved in the altarpiece. A representation of a nativity is also placed on the altar. Even though the Kings are the patron saints, they do not occupy a central position, or

³ The fact that the patronal images acquire human characteristics such as feelings, weight, and the ability to make decisions, has been studied by different researchers such as Christian (1981), Fernández (1994), and Madrazo (1998), amongst others.

location, in the shrine. Their regular wooden niche is on one of the church sides. However, during the fiesta, they get relocated to the front of the altar for their veneration in a special mobile wooden niche. The relocation of the images, *la bajada y subida*, or taking the images down and up from their niches, happens three times a year, and it is performed in a ritualistic manner, followed by a mass. The occasions are: in October to give thanks for the harvest, then in January for their annual fiesta celebration, and in June for the rainy season. The rest of the year they remain in their fixed green niches (see Figure 4-2).

The Three Kings shrine can be analyzed as a male dominant shrine that every year attracts flows of pilgrims during the days of the patronal fiesta. The Three Kings are the ‘spiritual magnetism’, the power of a pilgrimage shrine to attract devotees (Preston 1992:33). These ‘images’ represent, for their devotees, male individuals who are well respected, powerful, and capable of punishing. There is a strong feeling of “fear” among devotees and pilgrims in relation to the failure of fulfillment of a promise. When a promise has been made to the Kings, it is very important to keep it and to carry it out; otherwise the Kings might send you a physical punishment in a form of an illness or accident as a warning. This “fear” functions as an incentive to maintain vows, and as a justification of the misfortune that life brings to people. There is a tendency among the interviewed pilgrims to accept the causes of lost crops, hurricanes, or accidents as spiritual intervention.

This “fear” has always been present, as the pilgrims’ narratives show. When devotees refer to the old times, they talk about the times when pilgrims were not even allowed to have direct eye contact with the Kings while entering the shrine and fulfilling their promises. It was known that pilgrims had to keep their head down as a form of respect and humility. Direct eye contact was a cause of distress. According to the oral tradition, the power of the Kings was reduced

when the images were restored and painted around the 1950s. This is the reason why pilgrims nowadays can have direct eye contact with them.

Divine punishment from the Kings is also present when pilgrims mention they will participate at the fiesta, and for some reason they cannot make it. There does not need to be a promise involved, it can happen just by making a comment. Don Marcelo explains:

There are people who do not believe in that thing from the Holy Kings, and they say, “I am going. Where are we meeting? At what time?” And when the moment arrives, they say, “I am not going, I do not have money”, and so on. And I think, these people do not have *creencia*, they do not believe, and that’s why the Kings “*les manda castigo*,” punishes them. It is like I tell her [his wife], if there is a possibility of going we will say it, but if we cannot go, it is just pointless. One should not say if he is not completely sure, otherwise something could happen to him [Marcelo, Motul: Enero 2004].

The fear of the saints as punishers is not sole property of the Three Kings. There are other images in the Catholic pantheon that are also labeled in the same category. In Mexico, figures such as The Lord of Chalma, and the Black Christ of Otatitlán, are seen as Lords able to get mad, punish, and send the bad ‘vibes’ when a vow is not fulfilled, basically when the devotee does not carry out the divine contract (Giménez 1978; Rodríguez-Shadow and Shadow 2000; Velasco Toro 1997a). It is worth mentioning that, by the 16th century, Iberian Catholicism had already changed the nature of the personal vow as penance, or punishment, to being more or less a loving contract between the devotee and the saint (Christian 1981:206). However, the concept of punishment came with the Iberian Catholicism practices established by the Spanish clergy upon arrival. It was used as a form of control during the evangelization process, and mostly promoted through male religious images.

Fear and power are the two words that dominate regional pilgrims’ ‘shared knowledge’ about the Kings. Since the Three Kings are also perceived as protectors and providers, we can infer a paternalistic relationship between the devotee and the images. Symbolically, the Kings represent the Father figure whom we have to respect and obey. The ‘Father’ from whom we take

orders, but at the same time the ‘Father’ that can also reward us. In rural Yucatan, the father-male-protector-provider figure has not been undervalued, rather it has strong acceptance among nuclear and extended families.

The Three Kings have a serious presence in the Yucatan area. Regional pilgrims constantly express a need to present their promise to the Kings. Faith is one of the mechanisms of pilgrim movement. The Kings have been more than admired ethereal figures. They are seen as male humans, powerful and respected. There is indeed a cause and punishment effect relation that motivates people to keep going to Tizimin.

Past Accounts of the Three Kings Shrine

The religious orders entered Yucatan, along with the Spanish conquistadors. Since during the 16th century rural Iberian monasticism was predominantly Franciscan (Christian 1981), the order was assigned to help with the ‘religious conquest’ in this part of the ‘New World.’ The Franciscans arrived in Yucatan in 1530, but it was not until 1545 when they established themselves formally in the area (Bretos 1992:7). The Franciscans organized missions, built churches, ‘combated idolatry,’ and converted natives by teaching them the basics of Catholicism. Roys believes that:

purely from the missionary standpoint, the Franciscan were well advised, and that the awe inspired by the larger convents was an important factor in stabilizing the Christianization of the country. Surely it was an effective measure to rival the impressive monuments of the earlier Maya with others commemorating the greatness of the new religion (Roys 1952:146).

The Spanish settlements of Yucatan belonged sequentially to the dioceses of Tlaxcala (1527–1536), Guatemala (1536–1545), and Chiapas (1545–1562). It was not until 1549 when Spain proposed a separate bishopric called Yucatán and Cozumel. The limits of the diocese, which was part of the archbishopric of Mexico, went beyond to the area of Tabasco, Laguna de Términos and, later, Petén Itzá. The first Franciscan monasteries were built in Campeche and

Merida in 1546. Around the year of 1561, most of the settled Indians of Yucatan belonged to one of the eight Franciscan *doctrinas*, or doctrinal centers. Tizimin and Chancénote were two of them. The few Spaniards, and the considerably mulatto population of the area, lived mostly in these *pueblos indios* (Gerhard 1991:50, 108). The *doctrina* of The Three Kings was established by the Franciscans during the 16th century. Fray Diego López Cogolludo mentions that the monastery construction took place in the year of 1563, and since then, the Three Kings have been the titular saints of the parish (López Cogolludo 1955:411).

There are few historical accounts from the colonial times where the monastery is mentioned and described. Diego de Burgos Cansino, the son of the *encomendero* Sebastián de Burgos, to whom Francisco de Montejo entrusted the old province of Temozon, and Tezemi (Tizimín) in 1579, describes the Franciscan monastery as a strong fortress made of limestone with room for 8 to 10 friars, containing rich silk ornaments in the sacristy. It is also mentioned that two friars were commissioned to evangelize the twelve towns that belonged to this *doctrina* (de la Garza 1983:283-284).

At the end of 16th century, the chronicler Friar Antonio de Ciudad Real, during his visit to Yucatan, also describes the monastery of Tizimín (Tizimín) as a strong construction with a cloister, cells, bedrooms, and a large living room where the holy sacrament is placed and where the friars pray. He points out that this is a characteristic of the monasteries where there is no church. The patio has a square shape, and four small chapels are located at each corner. In this same area there is a *ramada*⁴, that he describes as a large thatched roofed, open wood structure where indigenous people gather to hear sermon and mass. The fact that this structure was built

⁴ The use of *ramadas* among the Mayans has been well documented. There is evidence of their use associated to religious temples and buildings in the Post-Classic. Also, the traditional Mayan house from then, and from today, has a thatched roof made of *guano*, or palm leaves, similar to the *ramadas* (Bretos 1992:88).

without using either nails or rope caught his attention; only *bejuco*, a natural root, to hold the structure. He finishes his description mentioning the monastery vegetable garden and orchard full of bananas, *zapotes*, avocados, and citrus. The monastery is named *Los Tres Reyes*, the Three Kings.

More recent accounts refer to the church, which also is known by the same name, as the monastery. The church, a single nave with rubblework walls, no towers, barrel vault and mosaic floor, was built beside the monastery in 1666, according to Vega (1945:741). Its front faces the west, and its architectural design is Moorish, like most of the Franciscan buildings. Around the beginning of 1900, an annex of two pieces, one for the vestry, and the other to function as an office, was built in the north part of the church. In 1953, the chapel of candles was added in the southwestern part of the parochial church, as well as an atrium in 1955 (Rivero 1976:32-35).

The steady Franciscan construction of the monastery and the church remain practically the same as described in the first accounts, although there have been some major repairs⁵. Part of the monastery still functions mainly as a home for the priests, and as the location for offices and parish meetings. During the fiesta time, Sunday masses for locals are housed in one of the corridors. This part of the monastery is open to the public (see Figure 4-3).

Foundation Narratives

It is well known that the evangelization in the Americas involved the replacement of indigenous religious images with those for catholic saints. For this transition to happen, missionaries came with a variety of stories justifying the saint's arrival and their history. Stories of everyday persons that came from Spain miraculously; images that appeared on oceans due to

⁵ In an interview the parish priest mentioned that the Governor visited the monastery in 2004, and while visiting, demonstrated an interest in investing money in order to make it more attractive for tourism. In 2006 the shrine's painting on the altarpiece was restored by a non-profit art institution.

shipwreck; images found in native natural settings, such as grottos, rocks, rivers, and mountains; became official narratives of image acceptance among the newly evangelized (Millones 1998:18).

The foundation narratives of the shrine of the Three Kings are a combination of the image apparitions, and their wish to be venerated at a specific place. These narratives have been transmitted mostly by oral tradition. There is no official booklet or flyer written by the parish. However, it is possible to buy a book on the history of Tizimin written by Brito Sansores (n/d) , a local historian, at the church store. The four foundation narratives presented seem to be ‘official’ since other authors and press articles also refer to them (Corresponsal; see Rivero 1976).

The most common narrative states that the Three Kings images were found on the beach, in the north part of the Tizimin municipality. A fisherman found them standing in the same position as they are placed at the church in Tizimin. The story tells that from a port in Europe, a boat set sail to the New World. On the boat there were three people of different aspect, the most remarkable being the one that had black skin, who asked for a ticket. They were also dressed in a special way, one with turban, another one with a hat without wings, and another one with a veil attached by two cords. The three used havelocks, and something similar to a cape to protect themselves of the low temperatures and from the sun. The boat owner denied them the tickets, but right after, the three were surrounded by a group of individuals, and therefore, the boat owner let them stay. Subsequently, nobody knew the destiny of the boat. It has been said that when they wanted to lift the images and to take them toward a place, they became heavy, and could only be taken to Tizimin, the place they were always facing. Later on, people carried the images according to the course that they indicated until they arrived at a very small hill that used to form the center of Tizimin. In this place they became so heavy that people had to leave them on that

hill. With time, a church was constructed to house them in the southeastern part of the Franciscan monastery. While the church was being built, the images were kept under the bell tower, and people through a window already started to express their devotion toward them.

The second narrative is a simpler version that tells the images appeared on a beach located north of Tizimin as a consequence of a boat sinking in view of the natives, and nobody survived.

The third narrative refers to an inland apparition. It says that the Three Kings did not arrive in a boat, but they appeared in a soft earth mine called *sascabera*. A similar version says that they appeared in an *aktun*, or grotto, a geological formation characteristic of Yucatan.

The fourth follows the traditional accounts of wooden saints' production. The images were carved by a very famous sculptor of saints in Guatemala City, as are most of the Yucatan images. Nevertheless, when in 1955 the painter and sculptor Jose del Carmen González was assigned to restore the images, he found out that they had the typical painting of images from Barcelona. He could not explain how these images could have arrived in Yucatan (Brito Sansores n/d; Rivero 1976; Rivero 1978).

The narratives presented above are known mostly by the locals and pilgrims who have read about them in newspapers, local flyers, or magazines. The church has not taken sides on which is correct. On the several occasions that I attended mass at the shrine, I never heard a priest repeating or mentioning any of these narratives. Nevertheless, biblical texts and passages related to the Kings were often cited by the priests.

According to Prat i Carós, the diverse myths of origin, and the explanatory legends and traditions, are justifications of the present location of these centers (Prat i Carós 1989:223). The case of Tizimin exemplifies this statement. The following narratives are from pilgrims interviewed around different parts of the state. None of the narratives recall exactly any of the

stories presented above. However, they contain some information related to them. The Biblical information is mixed with people's ideas on saints, apparitions, human actions, or saint decisions. Doña Benita, a Mayan woman, when asked about the story of the Kings she recalls the Biblical one:

When they heard a child was born, the Kings left their homes, their families, their palaces, and they and the shepherds were the first ones to worship the child. Only because of the star, could they find him [Uayalceh: February 2004].

For don Dionisio, a Mayan peasant who is the chief of the *cargadores* of the Three Kings:

They appeared in Spain, they came from there, left by boat but by chance they were left in the town of Kikil [a near-by town]. Well, this is the story that Father Luis told me once. Everything is in the history. Later, the Kings did not stay in Kikil, during dawn they came to Tizimin, alone; nobody brought them [Tizimin: February 2004].

This other narrative demonstrates the syncreticism of the natural place –the cave and the

Biblical story:

When we were kids, my dad used to tell us the story of the Three Kings. The Holy Kings are three, and they are very miraculous. The star that we see here is the signal letting us know where Baby Jesus is in Jerusalem. The Holy Kings went to visit Baby Jesus, they followed the star and one brought gold, the other frankincense, and the other myrrh. When they returned, my dad said, they passed by a cave close to Tizimin and stayed there until dawn. However, the holy kings became enchanted inside the cave. They were people who became enchanted, and that is the reason why they are so miraculous. And they stayed in Tizimin forever. This is the story he used to tell us [Maria, Valladolid: March 2004].

Other narratives were constructed based on Bible passages and personal interpretations:

The Holy Kings were very rich. They visit Herod and because he is a bad person, he tricks them and asks them to come back and tell him where to find Jesus. However, God tells the Holy Kings to go to Tizimin and this is how they ended up there. They went to venerate Baby Jesus, and Melchior brought gold, Baltazar frankincense, and Gaspar myrrh. And they stayed in Tizimin until when they died and they turned into saints. They are also saints because they were rich and gave away all their belongings just to go and see Baby Jesus [Lucrecia, Chemax: March 2004].

Dona Porfiria admits she does not know much about the story of the Three Kings.

However, she says:

I know they were the ones who chose the location of their church. When they mentioned the place, they stayed there. The legend says that the Holy Kings said the church will be here, and it was built there. My grandma told me this story. The Three Kings came from there to stay in Tizimin [Porfiria, Kahua: March 2004].

The shrine legitimization as sacred place derives from a marvelous fact that fuses myth and space (Velasco Toro 1997b:120). The pilgrims' imaginary conceptions of the images as humans, as capable of performing human actions such as weeping, bleeding, blinking, moving, and making decisions about where to be established, comes from 15th century Spain (see Christian 1981). By reading the pilgrims' narratives we can observe a gap between the "official" foundation narratives presented in the books of Brito Sansores and Rivero and their own. There is no regional pattern regarding the pilgrims' knowledge of these foundation narratives. Rather, there is a popular construction of events and places based on Biblical facts that justify the localized sacred space chosen by the images.

Three Sinkholes, Three Gods, and Three Kings

As I have mentioned before, the 'spiritual magnetism' in the case of the Three Kings shrine does not come from the architecture of the shrine, or from its non-magical geographical location, like other pilgrimage sites found in beautiful uninhabited or isolated locations, surrounded by mountains, or close to glaciers, like the rural shrine of El Señor de Qoyllur Rit'i, Lord of the Snow Star in Peru (Sallnow 2000), or by sacred rivers, like the Ganges in India. This 'spiritual magnetism' comes from its patron saints' images: the Magi, the Holy Kings, the Three Kings, and it is enhanced by religious rituals of devotion and reciprocity. In Prat i Carós's words, it is the image, the icon, which condenses all the virtue and the supernatural power in a process that he characterizes as 'symbolic condensation.' It is with the image, the icon, that people create a complete communicative code based on linguistic signs and corporal symbols (Prat i Carós 1989:242).

There are no written accounts of the process, or the reason, that the Three Kings were chosen to be the patron saints. However, we can identify a Catholic and a syncretic explanation of how these multi-vocal symbols ended up being the patron saints of Tizimin. It is worth noticing, that at the beginning of the colonial period, the foundation of a city came with the building of a church, or the establishment of a monastery, or both. The founders selected a name for the city, and a chose a celestial patron for its protection and of its inhabitants. To name the city, Spaniards usually chose a saint's name, or a variation of a place named given by the natives. The selection of the patron saint name was according to the calendar of saint days, and the saint's specialization. The name of the city and the patron saint did not always coincide (López Cantos 1992:103-104). In the case of the Maya area, many of the cities and towns kept their Mayan name, or were slightly modified. The Mayans used to name their towns according to animals, vegetables, or things that were abundant in the area. The city of Tizimin takes its name from the Mayan word *Tzimin*, or tapir. On the early accounts this area was known as *Te-tzimin-cah*, the place in where tapirs abound (Brito Sansorez n/d:2, 47). Since the city name was not changed to a Spanish name, and that there is no written evidence of Tizimin's foundation date, we cannot explain, based on this information, the assignment of the Three Kings.

However, we have to take into account other methods that were common during colonial times, mostly by the Catholic Church. For instance, saints were chosen to be patrons because of specific events, natural or man-made. In the case of the Three Kings, it might have been that during the Epiphany days, the friars arrived to Tizimin, or they started or ended the construction of the monastery. Or it could have been more related with the Franciscans methods of spreading the Lord's word. The order brought and spread in the "New World" the devotion of the crucifix and the Passion (Christian 1981), along with the Eucharist and the Nativity devotion. Jesus's

humanity was explained to understand the conception of God. Franciscans availed themselves of the Bethlehem story, more concretely of the idea of the Nativity, to evangelize the natives from the new territories. The Three Kings were always depicted in nativities and paintings. And in the Bible, we see they had an active role: “The three Kings traveled from East and by following the Eastern star, they found the newborn king. The magi humbled worshipped him offering gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matthew 2:9-11). Tizimin is located in the Northeastern part of Yucatan.

This syncretic explanation is related to the imposition of the Catholic religion. The combination of native and Catholic symbols created new meanings. As it is known, the Spaniard friars replaced the native gods with Christian images in order to evangelize the natives. Spaniards had the old tradition of locating sacred images in important and significant places for agricultural and herding communities. Such places were near water, caves, cliffs, and peaks (Christian 1981:91). Prat i Carós mentions that in these natural locations, Pre-Christian communities also housed practices related to cults and rites of fertility. The majority of these places were Christianized and taken over by the Catholic Church (1989:224; see also Turner and Turner 1978). Spaniards followed the same evangelizing tactics. Many Pre-Hispanic shrines which also were located close to mountains, sources of water, and caves, were re-occupied by the Church and Christianized.

Tizimin was not a Mayan village. It was an area embracing three small villages *Boox ch'e'en* (black well), *Jok ch'e'en* (dry well), and *Síis ch'e'en* (cold well) located close to each other and to their *cenotes*⁶. The Franciscans chose to build their monastery on a hill located

⁶ *Cenote*: from the Maya *ts'ono'ot*. A limestone sinkhole; a source of fresh water found throughout the Yucatán Peninsula. These natural formations are associated with powerful and mysterious forces (Rugeley 2001: 304). Today the *cenotes* are covered. However, they are still present in the collective memory of the Tizimileños. They have become popular landmarks for references, addresses, and directions.

between the first two wells, since it was already a pilgrimage place for Eastern Mayans who used to come and venerate the god *Hunab-Kú*. The popularity of this place was related to the abundance of tapirs that were considered sacred animals. They represented the god *Hunab- Kú*, the Almighty. The gods *Yum Chaac* (lord of the rain), *Yum Kax* (lord of the fields), and *Yum Ik* (lord of the winds) were also venerated in this area (Brito Sansores n/d; Rivero 1978). Therefore, the selection of the Three Kings as patron saints may have been related to the substitution of the three Mayan lords or gods, or as Rugeley has suggested, this selection was probably related to the town's organization around the 3 *cenotes* (2001:113).

As it is shown, the assignment of the Three Kings as patron saints was not by accident. The Franciscans, already established in Valladolid, knew the area. They were aware of the importance of this area as a popular sacred pilgrimage destination. They replaced the Mayan three gods and wells with the symbolic figure of the Three Kings: they were three, they came from East, and they travelled in order to venerate Jesus.

Pilgrims Analogies: Traveling to the Eastern Star

For centuries the Catholic Church has reinforced the image of the Three Kings by depicting them as very important people who came from the Far East, followed a star, leaving everything behind, material possessions and family, with the purpose of finding the newborn Jesus and venerating him. Through process of evangelization, through masses and through the Biblical text, Catholics have acquired and transmitted this knowledge. By making references to the life and story of the Three Kings during masses, priests exhort Catholics to follow their example. In Tizimin, many years of homilies and sermons had paid off since devotees know this part of the Bible, or at least have an idea of the Kings' historical content. Therefore, during the fiesta, when flows of pilgrims are flooding the shrine, the priests, during the masses, highlight

two important aspects in relation to the Kings: they came from far away, and were following a star.

If we analyze these aspects, we have that the first analogy relates the figure of the Three Kings with movement. The Bible says that they left their land and came from far away to venerate Jesus (Matthew 2:9-11). It is worth noting, how the analogy of the Magi travelling, moving to the East appears frequently in pilgrims' narratives:

I live in Hunucma, which is far from Tizimin. Every year I go and visit the Holy Kings. One of my *comadres* makes fun of me because I go there. She says, "Why do you go there? It's far and its expensive to travel there. Why do you have to make a promise to them instead of our Virgin?" I tell my *comadre* that I have faith in our Virgin, but also in the Holy Kings. I tell her, that it does not matter where do you live, how far you have to go, you make a sacrifice and you go to fulfill your vow. I tell her that we have to be like the *Santos Reyes*, or Holy Kings, they travelled, they came from far away to venerate Jesus. I also do the same [Altagracia, Hunucma: April 2004].

Mobility, displacement, journey are words embraced in the term of 'travel,' a term "embracing a range of more or less voluntary practices, as leaving 'home' to go to some 'other' place" (Clifford 1997:66). The Kings travel and move, and so do pilgrims. There is an element of understanding between the pilgrims and the Kings. Pilgrims who go to Tizimin identify themselves with Three Kings. Pilgrims state that if the Kings were capable of leaving behind all their belongings to find Jesus and worship him, they can do the same. Therefore, people find a way to go, no matter what, for an example, the economic situation is. The majority of these pilgrims are low income, from mostly peasant families, or who work in construction, building, maintenance, or are part of the informal economy. In spite of this, they are still going every year, even if this means making a sacrifice, like selling some of their belongings.

The second analogy is related to cardinal points and astral symbols. According to the Bible, the Magi were following a star located in the East, in their search for Jesus: "where is the

child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the East and have come to worship him” (Matthew 2: 2).

Since the city of Tizimin is located in the north-eastern part of the state, there is a belief, mostly an idea instilled by years of evangelization, that the Magi chose to be in Tizimin due to its geographical location pointing to the Eastern star. The figure of the Eastern star is present in some of the pilgrims’ narratives. Like the Kings, some pilgrims have seen the star on January the 6th during their visit to the shrine:

Only the ones, who have true faith in the Kings, see the star. I have seen it in more than 4 occasions. However, last year when I saw it, my *comadre* who at that time was with me, couldn’t see it [Carmita, Muna: February 2004].

I was outside the shrine, making the line when I saw the star. I just saw one, my sister says that she has seen three stars at the same time. I just saw one. It happened on their day, January the 6th, around 11 am [Porfiria, Valladolid: March 2004].

One time my sister and I were at my home town when my mom told us: Today is January the 6th, the day of the Holy Kings; if you look in the sky carefully you will see 3 stars on the East side. My sister and I lay down on the grass and started looking for them. We saw them, even though the sun was shining very strongly. We were little and when we told my dad he did not believe us, he said that we just made up the story [Porfiria, Kahua: March 2004].

Maya religion and the cosmo-vision of the world has always had a strong connection with astral symbols. For instance, as Barrera Vásquez (Konrad 1991:123) has pointed out, the word used for pilgrim in the Maya Yucatec language is *u ximbal ek’ob*, which means the “passage and course of the stars.” For rural Mayan pilgrims, the star followed by the Kings becomes a symbol already embedded in their frame of reference in the sense that people have a good understanding of the astral language.

Analyzing the above narratives, we can see how pilgrims reinforce their faith not only by doing the pilgrimage, and being at the shrine, but also by putting themselves and their faith on the spot. By seeing the star, only the ones who truly have faith, pilgrims locate themselves closer

to the images since they feel privileged by being able to see it. In the same way, pilgrims' faith gets exposed and tested in the community of devotees when they are not able to see it. The strong connection of the star with the Kings is also reflected in the fact that pilgrims de-territorialize the image of the Kings from the shrine, since they can see them anywhere on their special day.

The analogies of movement and astral symbols have been present since pre-Hispanic times. Mesoamerican religions have always had strong correlations between gods, and astral symbols, both male and female, were associated with the sun and the moon. Pilgrimage to sacred places was an important component of religious devotion (Konrad 1991:125). Conversion to Christianity did not end these associations, or the practice of pilgrimage. As a matter of fact, for years the Catholic Church in Tizimin has been reinforcing these associations by emphasizing these two analogies, and in this way promoting and exalting the figure of the Three Kings in order to encourage pilgrimage behavior among the Yucatecan population.

Devotion Multiplied by Three: Vows as Essential Religious Practices of Pilgrimage

One of the meanings of the shrine is its power to be considered as a place for entreaty, pleas, and gratitude. The 'spiritual magnetism' of many shrines comes from the presence of sacred images that are considered to be "special" or "miraculous" in the eyes of the believers. Therefore, the shrine becomes the place where personal/saint dynamics are constructed, reproduced, and recreated in various degrees and forms.

Dynamics between people and saints create special relations, through vows and promises, with a series of obligations, many of them explicit and contractual, which are represented in the shrine. Hence, vows are one of the reasons pilgrims move toward shrines.

Vows and promises are forms of straight communication and engagement between devotees and images. In the literature on Catholic shrines we find a distinction between *voto*

(vow) and *promesa* (promise). Vows are strong actions formally made to the divine, and imply an obligation of fulfillment. Vows are sacred in character and impose a religious obligation. The nature of the vow might be personal or collective. For example, collective vows in times of natural disasters made by entire communities were common in Spain in the 16th century, and are still common in some towns today (see Christian 1981; Prat i Carós 1989). Promises have some resemblance to vows. They can be made any time and are considered less formal. Promises are more personal and are made to be fulfilled.

In Mexico, more specifically in the Yucatan, the word *vow* is used more in the context of more institutionalized acts, such as the vows made by members of religious orders, or the vows made during marriage. On the other hand, the word *promesa*, or promise, is used more in the context of popular religion, and always refers to an act involving conditions, obligations, and exchanges between people and the saints, in a very individual and internal/self form. *Promesas* are formal acts in the sense that people take them very seriously because they are similar to an important verbal agreement, or a formal contract. *Promesas* are associated with religious pilgrimages.

The fulfillment of a *promesa* is one of the main reasons why pilgrims visit a shrine. For Yucatecans a promise has more than one meaning, and it has a private and a public nature. First, it is a kind of a commitment, a contract between a person and a powerful saint. Under certain circumstances, mostly in times of great stress or affliction, the person prays to a saint and makes a vow. This vow might be non-verbal because it comes from inside the person. Second, when the prayer is answered, the person has to “pay back” the vow to the saint, and in this way, the promise is fulfilled. This last action is usually public since it is performed or reflected in the shrine.

In the case of The Three Kings shrine, 95% of the pilgrims interviewed made it clear to me that they visited the shrine in order to *hacer su promesa*, or do their promise to the Kings. Pilgrims who go to this shrine are expected to be making or paying a promise. Every time I was chatting with a pilgrim about the Kings, the shrine, and Tizimin, I was asked if the reason I was visiting the shrine was because I was also making my promise to the Kings. My answer was usually a little bit confusing for the pilgrims since I tended to tell them that I was doing research, and at the same time I was also making a promise. By hearing that I was also a devotee of the Kings, I became one during my fieldwork, pilgrims immediately began to share more personal information related to the motives that led them to go on a pilgrimage.

There is plenty of literature about pilgrims' vows, promises, and votive religious objects in relation to different shrines in Europe and the Americas. What is promised and vowed, how, why, and where, varies from shrine to shrine, but there is usually a degree of similarity since Latin American Catholic religion has its base in Catholic Europe (Christian 1981; Crumrine and Morinis 1991; Dubish 1995; Frey 1998; García Román and Martín Soria 1989; Gross 1971; Prati Carós 1989; Rodríguez-Shadow and Shadow 2000; Sallnow 1987; Turner 1973).

Regarding promises and vows, the case of the shrine of the Three Kings is noteworthy. When a pilgrim makes a promise to the Kings and vows something, it is popularly known that the person has to commit him/herself to the Kings for three, six or nine years in order to fulfill a promise. The belief is based on the fact that the Kings, Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar, are referred to as in a bundle as equals, without one having more miracle power than the other, but at the same time they are considered as single individuals; therefore each one needs to be addressed and vowed to equally in order to perform a valid promise. A very common saying among the pilgrims is:

It is mandatory to come three years in a row when you make your promise. One year is for honoring Melchior, the second for Casper, and the third for Balthazar. If you do not know if you will be able to come three years in a row, you at least have to complete your triad during your lifetime. However, there are pilgrims who only enter the shrine through the main door three times and by doing this, they complete their promise. It is the same with the candles and *kexitos*, you have to offer three, six, or nine to the Holy Kings [Guillermina, Motul: February 2004].

Therefore, a pilgrim has to come to the shrine for at least 3 years, and make the same offerings to each one of the Kings. According to the pilgrims, the 3 years, if possible, have to be consecutive, but “the Kings understand that you can skip a year or two if you do not have the means or the possibility to come.” The idea is to complete the sequence and in this way, the *promesa* will be completely fulfilled, and the petition granted.

Pilgrims who visit the shrine come to Tizimin with a wide variety of religious promises made to the Kings. According to informants, reasons for making promises are related to health, such as problems of illnesses, physical and mental disabilities, pain, infertility, surgeries, lost of the senses; tragic events, such as work and travel accidents; work and love matters; gratitude and appreciation; and saint’s protection, to mention the most common.

What is vowed, the physical action of the promise, also varies. A vow can be anything chosen by pilgrims. Some of the conventional vows include a visit to the Kings on their day for 3, 6 or 9 years; going to their procession that takes place during midday on January 8th; attending a mass at the shrine; paying for a publicly proclaimed *salve*, or ode, and a mass; the confection of embroidered table cloths with the images of the Kings and the name of the family who made it; animal donations for *gremio* meals; running with the Torch group; and holding a bullfight in honor of the Kings. On some occasions, but very few, pilgrims walk to the the church on their knees.

The most common votive offerings in this regional shrine are a triad of *kexitos*, or tin can body parts, a triad of candles, some pictures of cured persons, or of persons who need to be

healed, flowers, written letters, and locks of hair, but not too often (see Figure 4-4). *Retablos* or votive paintings, are not common offerings either, as is common in other shrines in Mexico (Rodríguez-Shadow and Shadow 2000).

Promises have a practical function, and the failure to fulfill a vow has direct consequences on a pilgrim's everyday life, rather than on their spiritual. It is common among the narratives to hear how somebody who did not keep his/her promise received a punishment in the form of illness (vomiting, broken extremities, stomach pain) or a catastrophe lost crops, belongings, jobs, or lesser accidents. Recurrent feelings of guilt and disobedience characterize pilgrim's vow behavior. However, the concept of mortal sin is absent from pilgrims' narratives.

For pilgrims, *promesas* and offerings become a symbolic form of communication with the Kings. Through this symbolic language there is an interchange of messages, feelings, faith, and devotion (private/personal) in the sense that deep inside there has been a petition or a gratitude, and public/social since the pilgrim comes to the shrine in order to share his/her devotion with the saints and other devotees. At the same time, pilgrims and saints develop a cause effect relation that motivates pilgrims to maintain a promise and to come every year to the shrine.

Males on Duty: Organizational Structure of the Shrine

The organization of the Three Kings shrine follows the traditional pattern of any Catholic parish of the same size, coverage and importance. The highest position is held by the parish priest followed by a second one, and a third who caters to the needs of the Guadalupe chapel, also located in Tizimin. Along with the priests, the shrine has a full-time staff covering administrative and maintenance positions. By the years of 2004-2005, the parish had on payroll one female secretary, an accountant, two male sextons, and another male for the general maintenance of the shrine and the monastery.

However, during fiesta time, the Three Kings shrine has additional ‘seasonal workers’ in order to cover the necessities arising with the organization and maintenance of the shrine. During those days there is a need for people to perform different tasks such as selling souvenirs in the provisional store in the shrine’s office, collecting the burned candles from the tables located at the candle chapel, security guards to organized large crowds during the pick days, and a person in charge of supplying independent re-sellers located outside in the atrium with candles, *kexitos*, and religious objects and souvenirs.

The ‘seasonal workers’ tend to be local laity who volunteer to help with these needs. Months before the fiesta, the parish makes an invitation for people who enjoy being with pilgrims and who want to do an apostolate. They do not get paid, but the parish provides them with food. In addition, the shrine has a group of *cargadores*⁷ of the images who also help altruistically at the shrine. They work only during the processions, the only times where the images of the Kings are taken outside of the shrine, in the *bajada y subida* (taking down and up) of the images from their niche, and as custodians of the images during busy days.

The parish priest, Armin Rivero, considers the shrine workers to be more like a family than a working party. The people who end up helping and working, are usually the same ones who have been working for the shrine for at least 5 or more years. They are “*gente de confianza*,” people in whom he can trust. For him, trust is very important, and is one of the qualities he looks for, since during those days the shrine handles a good amount of money and merchandise.

Another important quality people need to have is “*don de gentes*,” a way with people, due to the

⁷ The group of *cargadores* of the Holy Kings is over sixty years old. It is formed by eight to ten males, from different ages ranging from 25 to 73. It is a type of organization that is present only in some patronal fiestas, like in Hunucmá (Fernández Repetto 1994)

fact that they will be interacting most of the time with pilgrims, visitors and sellers (Tizimin: October 2004).

The priest's statement is evident after you have spent some time socializing at the shrine. There is a breathable sense of community among the workers and the volunteers. They indeed are very friendly among themselves, and with the incoming people. Their social skills are put to the test all of the time. During the fiesta time they interact around 18 hours a day, eating and sleeping in the shrine, or in the monastery, whenever it is needed. Contrary to what one would expect given the number of time working at the shrine during the fiesta, the workers do not complain of the amount of working hours, the lack of sleep or the hectic times they go through. For instance, the secretary, Concepción Echeverría, better known as Doña Conchi, feels that working at the fiesta is "*chévere*," it is cool, and "*disfruta mucho*," she enjoys the fiesta a lot. As the secretary, she has had the opportunity to meet many people from pilgrims, to Yucatan civil and religious authorities, such as the Governor and the Bishop, reporters, actors and singers. For her, these opportunities have been a blessing on her life and job. For Doña Conchi, every day is a different experience, full of excitement and entertainment (Tizimin: October 2004).

The shrine of the Three Kings is male-dominated, not only in terms of its male patron saints but also due to the presence of mainly male workers and helpers, with the exception of the female secretary. There is a hierarchy among the male personnel, where the parish priest occupies the highest position, followed by the sextons and the 'seasonal workers.' The *cargadores* traditionally have social recognition empowered by their close physical relation with the images, since they are the only ones who can actually touch and manipulate the images during the *bajada* and *subida*, and the processions (see Figure 4-5).

The presence of the male is justified by the parish priest, and the fact that the male staff have the physical condition and temper to deal and control the flows of pilgrims, and the tension that sometimes come from disruptive pilgrims, and the lack of order within the shrine.

Three of the Same Kind: The Economies of the Shrine

The Catholic Church, for many centuries, has always found different venues to obtain money from its members. For instance, parishioners, whether voluntarily (alms) or mandatory (paid masses for funerals, marriages, anniversaries, *gremios*), have provided the Church with money on a regular basis. The religious fiestas are important channels used by the churches to increase their budgets.

The parish of the Three Kings as an institution gets funding from the Archdiocese of Yucatan. However, a good part of its budget comes from the revenues of the patronal fiesta. Alms, fees, and selling profits are the main means of money collection. The shrine benefits from the oceans of pilgrims that come to venerate the Three Kings. During fiesta days, pilgrims become the major source of income. Following the offering triad characteristic of this shrine, it is expected to give the same amount of money to each King. Therefore, as a part of the devotion, pilgrims deposit, in each of the three urns, alms consisting of three coins, or bills, of the same denomination. Alms also are collected during the masses. The money from the urns is collected at least 4 times a day during the busiest days of the fiesta.

The shrine also offers paid masses and ‘salves’ on behalf of the sick, the dead, or as gratitude. The secretary distributes the names on a special mass calendar, and consequently pilgrims know in advance which day their mass or *salve* will be said. Due to the amount of masses and *salves* paid, sometimes pilgrims wait more than eight months or a year. *Salves* are more popular since they are inexpensive, approximate the equivalent of one US dollar. In gratitude, the shrine gives pilgrims a prayer card with the images of the Kings. This card is also

intended to be a souvenir since you can read on the front: As a memory of my visit to the shrine. Tizimin, Yucatan, Mexico.

Another source of income comes from the masses paid for by organizations such as the *gremios*, or guilds, the *ganaderos*, or ranchers, and the *palqueros*.⁸ The number of *gremios* for the Three Kings Fiesta fluctuates from 10 to 15. Each *gremio* has to pay approximately the equivalent of 35 US dollars as a contribution to the shrine. With this paid fee, the *gremio* makes a special entrance to the shrine, and the mass is said on behalf of all its members. The *palqueros* and rancher associations also pay for a mass, but in their precincts. For these occasions, the Three Kings are taken in procession to the bullring on January 1st and to the ranchers' fairgrounds on the 4th. The mass is celebrated in those locations. The presence of the images sacralizes the profane space, while at the same time blesses the association's members.

In addition to the profit from the pilgrims and masses paid by the *gremios* and the associations, the church rents spaces in the atrium. Vendors of candles and religious objects pay a flat fee for placing their stand there during the fiesta. There are at least 8 stands located at each of the 3 church doors. According to the priest, the fee is a donation. However, for the *veleros* or the candle sellers, it is a fee, not a donation, since the shrine always charges them. The shrine also makes profits from its own provisional store at the office. The store is strategically placed in a location where pilgrims have to go through in order to exit the shrine, once they have touched the Kings' images. The merchandise consists mostly on souvenirs with the Kings' image. T-shirts with the Kings and shrine logo, key chains, statues, cloth bags, photos, rosaries, lamps,

⁸ The group of *palqueros* has between 55-60 members. Each member is in charge of building a portion of the *tablado*, or bullring, using wooden sticks and palm leaves. They do it for tradition; the position is inherited and stays in the family for generations. They also do it as a business since they get money from the sale of seats for the bullfight. They are organized in a union "*Sindicato de Reyes de Palqueros*."

posters, glass candles, postcards, saints images, and scapulars, to mention a few, are some of the religious and souvenirs objects sold there⁹ (see Figure 4-6).

A good part of the shrine's economy is based on the revenues of what I call the "recycling vows." Vows are an important element of the pilgrimage process, and the tradition of performing them is embedded on the popular religious behavior. As part of their vow, or request, pilgrims perform a ritual interchange with the icons by offering candles, *kexitos* and *ruda*. Pilgrims do not necessarily offer all of them at the same time, but sometimes they do. According to my data, the number and amount of religious objects offered are in relation to their economic situation. Pilgrims do invest money in this request since the tradition is to make not only one offering but three, one for each king. In this way, we have that a regular size family of eight might end up buying three glass candles, three sets of *kexitos*, and a branch of *ruda*.

Pilgrims buy their offering objects at the stands inside the shrine's atrium. The church not only regulates the space, but also the price and the products sold in its atrium. Vendors located there do not have any other option but to buy their merchandise, candles and *kexitos*, from the shrine's store. This provisional store has regional and national suppliers for the merchandise sold there. For instance, the church has an exclusive contract of with "El Faro," one of the main candle manufacturers in the state. Religious objects such as rosaries, figures, statues, and *kexitos*, are supplied by a sales representative from Michoacán, Mexico.

After purchasing their offerings, the pilgrims pray to the Kings and leave their *kexitos* on the table where the images are placed. Since the space is limited, the sexton cleans the table, and the *kexitos* are taken to the office to be sorted in order to have them ready for re-sale. By

⁹ According to the priest, the shrine asks for a donation, and not for a fee. The fee amount is only suggested. However, the people interviewed mentioned that they have to pay the fees in order to have the priestly services.

recycling, or reusing them, the church increases its stock and makes revenues by re-selling them to the vendors during the fiesta.

The recycling of candles has become another source of income. Once the pilgrims have rubbed the candles against the images, they proceed to burn them. To complete this action, the pilgrims move to the candle chapel, and light them there at a special table. The candle's remains are picked up by the shrine workers, usually when the candles are only half-way burned. They do the same with the glass candles left behind. The wax from dripping candles that stacks on the floor is also scraped by the workers. When the fiesta is over, the candle's remains are bagged, weighed, and sold to "El Faro" as recycled product. The church also sells the empty candle glasses to local re-sellers (see Figure 4-7).

Since the 16th century, vows have played an important role in shrine economy. It is through the fulfillment of vows and promises that most of the shrines and chapels have been maintained (see Christian 1981), and therefore, survive during difficult times. At the same time, small shrine-run enterprises have also flourished out of the pilgrims' devotion. Some shrines have managed to run their own factories for wax reprocessing from pilgrims' votive offerings, like in the shrine of Bom Jesus da Lapa in Northeastern Brazil (Gross 1971:135).

The consumption of religious goods, candles, and sacred souvenirs like image prints, respond to two motives: the fulfillment of a promise, and the de-territorialization of the Kings' healing power. There is a strong belief that candles and sacred souvenirs, like image prints, by being in physical contact with the images, absorb the images' healing power. Therefore, it is important for the pilgrims to take home these religious objects and use them among family members in case of sickness. A lit candle brought from Tizimin, protects people from thunder storms, and its wax rubbed on people's forehead cures fever, headaches and the flu.

There is a correlation between the economy of the shrine and the pilgrimage during the fiesta days. The non-stop affluence of pilgrims bringing money and votive candles, the constant buying and selling of candles and souvenirs, due to the pilgrim's de-territorialization of the King's healing properties in order to stimulate cures at the distance, and the revenues from "recycling vows," are the main yearly factors that increment the Three Kings shrine budget.

Blessed by the Kings: Politicians in the First Pew

According to Eade and Sallnow, one of the characteristics of a shrine is its ability to be a 'religious void,' a religious space with multiple meanings and practices. A place with a universalistic character, a plural place that offers clients what each of them wishes for (Eade and Sallnow 2000b:15). In this perspective, the shrine becomes a place not only for pilgrims, who are usually in search of a space to pray and do their devotions, but also becomes a platform for political and religious expression of power.

During fiesta time, the shrine of the Three Kings becomes a fixed space where different classes converge and clash. State and local authorities, politicians, members of the Cattle Ranching Association, and local fiesta deputies, "share" this geographical space with common people, such as the "locals" from the area and the regional pilgrims.

Religious and political relations become contested with the presence of the Governor of Yucatan and municipal authorities at the shrine during the Epiphany mass on January 6th. The traditional midday mass is given by the Bishop of Yucatan, and it is one of the main religious events. The relations between church and state get consolidated when the Bishop, before he starts the mass, approaches all state authorities and formally salutes them. This is the only religious event in where the presence of the locals, the Tizimileños, is more evident and numerous. The influx of pilgrims is also heavy, sometimes provoking disruptions inside and outside the shrine. The relevance of this event has a regional dimension since the mass media, such as the regional

press and TV film crews, are present reporting and documenting the mass. By documenting and broadcasting the event, the mass media contributes to the de-territorialization of the Three Kings images. On several occasions, the pilgrims interviewed mentioned how privileged they felt by having the opportunity to watch the mass and the Three Kings at home (see Figure 4-8).

During special events, such as in the first and last day (*bajada* and *subida* of the images), Epiphany, and in the 8th, when the mayor procession takes place, the shrine of the Three Kings gets contested in terms of hierarchy and class distinctions. Turner's approach on pilgrimage process (Turner and Turner 1978) states that pilgrimage is a liminoid experience. Pilgrims leave the structure of their communities to travel to a shrine, and there enter into a liminal phase, or threshold, where pilgrims experience a new state of social relations, or anti-structure. If we follow Turner's approach, the shrine is expected to be a place free of gender and class distinctions. Therefore, pilgrims should be able to experience and share a temporarily state of *communitas*, a state in where everyone is an equal. This state disappears when the pilgrims return to their place of origin.

In the Three Kings shrine, social and economic differences do not disappear as Turner has predicted. Inside the shrine there are geographical spaces reserved for certain persons. The first pew, for VIP people such as important state, municipal and local authorities, the male group of *cargadores*, and wealthy local donors. Special permission is also given to them in some of the shrine door accesses and at the time of performing devotional rituals to the Kings. Non- VIP pilgrims make long lines under the sun to enter the shrine, share a physical space with thousands, stand up for hours during the rituals, and harmony gets disrupted by some pilgrims.

The pilgrimage experience to the Three Kings does not necessarily bring pilgrims into a state of *communitas*. Rather, special concessions to authorities, mostly male, and VIP pilgrims,

reinforces class distinctions and power relations among the regional pilgrims. However, this special VIP treatment strengthens the long life relations between the church and state in Tizimin, Yucatan.

Coming from the East, West, North and South

One of the characteristics of a shrine is to be a point of convergence for pilgrims who come from diverse locations. The geographic influence of a shrine is in relation to its importance. The Turners have stratified Christian pilgrimages into four major levels according to the size of their catchment areas, or “the geographical area from which the majority of pilgrims are drawn to a particular shrine” (Turner 1974:178). The first level is international: Jerusalem, Rome, Lourdes, Guadalupe in Mexico. The second is national: San Juan de los Lagos in Mexico, St. Anne de Beaupré in Canada, Our Lady of the Pilar in Spain; The third is regional: Our Lady of Ocotlán for Tlaxcala state in Mexico; and the fourth is intervillage: the “valley shrines” described by William Christian (Turner and Turner 1978:239). The catchment areas of Yucatecan pilgrim centers, such as Izamal and Tizimin, spread around the Peninsula, and in minor importance throughout other Mexican states such as Tabasco and Chiapas.

According to its catchment area, the shrine of the Three Kings can be labeled as regional, since its area spreads across the state of Yucatan. Pilgrims come mostly from the three states that conform the Peninsula of Yucatan, the state of Yucatan being the one which houses most of the pilgrims. During the 2004 fiesta, contacted pilgrims came from at least fifty-six towns belonging to the state of Yucatan, six from Quintana Roo, and three from Campeche. According to the sexton, pilgrims come from other states of Mexico such as Puebla, Oaxaca, Tlaxcala, Tabasco, Chiapas, Estado de Mexico, and also from other countries, like United States.

Flows of pilgrims arrive to the shrine during the patronal fiesta mostly by car, running, biking, or on public and private buses. This will be explained in more detail in the next chapter. I will explore the journey pilgrims undertake and their new modes of experiencing pilgrimage.

Summary: A Sacred Place for All

Specialists interested in popular religion have stated how important it is to locate a study in time and space, since the popular religion expressions represent specific cultural, social, religious, and historical realities (Lombardi Satriani 1989; Rodríguez-Shadow and Shadow 2000). The contextualization of a shrine in a geographic area, location, event, provides us with a better understanding of its particular characteristics, religious practices and beliefs, population, and its social, ecclesiastic and political relations.

The popular religious practices, meanings and perceptions that come from the shrine's multiplicity of discourses (Eade and Sallnow 2000b), have given local and regional significance to the Three Kings shrine. At the local level, the shrine historically has been considered sacred due to its geographical location as a pre-Hispanic pilgrimage site and its perception as a privileged place since the Kings "chose" it to be their 'home.' Tizimin's local identity is constructed in relation to its patronal saints, the Three Holy Kings, images that are housed at the shrine. The image of the Kings and their names are appropriated by local business such as restaurants, convenience and stationary stores, *tortilleria* and bakeries, and saloons. For instance, while walking in the streets it is common to find store names like *los reyes*, *los santos reyes*, *los tres reyes*, *Melchor*, *Gaspar* or *Baltazar*. Not to mention how frequently you hear that locals are called by the same names. The municipality has also commodified the Kings image by associating the city to its patronal saints. Since 1981 three crowns adorn Tizimin's coat of arms. *Tizimin, ciudad de reyes*, or Tizimin City of Kings, and *Tizimin, destino de reyes* or Tizimin, Destination of Kings, are two of the most recent names used by the municipality to refer to this

city and to commercialize the annual fiesta. The presence of the Three Kings shrine has also favored the cultural and economic development of Tizimin. The devotion to the Three Kings, through the entertainment and goods consumption during the patronal fiesta, annually boosts the economy of service sectors of Tizimin, but most importantly, it increases the annual budget of the municipality.

Even though Tizimin's identity has a strong connection with the shrine and the images, throughout the years, parish priests past and present, have not perceived a close religious identification with the Kings' image in the locals. According to them, the heaviest devotion is shown by regional pilgrims rather than from Tizimileños. Therefore, the parish has come up with different measures to instill the devotion on its local Catholic population. One of the most recent programs is during the month of November when they bring the images in a very solemn procession through the different neighborhoods followed by a mass and family gatherings. Also, during the months of October and June, the Kings are also exposed at the altar for a closer physical veneration by the locals. These months are key, since at that time the peasant population from the municipality of Tizimin, celebrate the *Uhanlikool*, or harvesting of their crops, and the *Chachaak*, or calling for the rain, two Mayan rituals common among the peasantry. Two local *gremios*, with their delegations, participate in the October celebration. Guild pilgrims come from different parts of the state. Besides the parish interest to promote the devotion to the Kings among the local Catholics, there is also a concern with the growing numbers of protestant religions in the area. According to the 2000 census, Tizimin has a population of 61,838 about 45,171 are Catholic and 14,500 belong to protestant and evangelical religions (INEGI). In many occasions, disturbances inside the shrine provoked by non-Catholics have caught the attention of local and regional newspapers.

The regional significance of the shrine comes from the pilgrim's meanings and perceptions of the Three Kings, and also through the embodiment of traditions, beliefs, myths, rites, and narratives characteristic of the Yucatecan culture. The shared 'Kings and shrine knowledge' presented in the pilgrims narratives lead us to state that there is common ground among regional pilgrims regarding the pilgrimage process, and the motives and practices involved in the *promesa* observance. As I have mentioned before, the 'spiritual magnetism' of the shrine comes from the sacred images, the Three Holy Kings, the patron saints of Tizimin city. Pilgrims' recognition of the Kings' divine power is what has driven the large regional devotion to spread all over the state of Yucatan. The foundation narratives, more than being only a reflection of Yucatecan identity, are the metaphor of the syncretic Catholic evangelization that still persist in the area. As Christian has pointed out, "legends were created to justify, illustrate, or dignify a preexisting devotion. [...] They must therefore be taken into account as part of the cultural repertoire of a given era" (Christian 1989:7). Pilgrims are shown to be careless about the shrine's foundation narratives promoted by the church, or on how the Kings "appeared" in the area. Many of them had never heard the stories, yet they were aware of the Kings being heavy, that they found a place, and they chose to be in Tizimin. This shows how pilgrims' conceptions tend to be more practical. What remains in their collective memory is the sacred power that the Kings have, since they had the power of staying were they wanted to be. What is important is that the Kings are powerful saints, who will be there for them in case of need, to help and resolve pilgrims' everyday problems and concerns.

The shrine of the Three Kings is the physical place where popular religious practices are constantly contested, while at the same time are publicly and privately manifested. The shrine embodies regional traditions on promises and devotions, which are also present in other

important shrines, such as the one in Izamal, Candelaria in Valladolid, San Cristóbal in Merida, in Hunucma, and Chuina in Campeche. These regional traditions have their roots in the syncretic Catholicism established during colonial times. For instance, the regional belief that saints have human characteristics, and therefore they weep, sweat, look, and move, comes from 16th century Spain (Christian 1981). Pilgrims in their narratives always refer to having seen the Kings moving, looking, or being sad, or mad. These “signs” are what confirms their divine powers, and gives certain saints the regional recognition of being miraculous, hence placing them in a greater position among the pantheon and believers. The regional tradition of *promesas*, the contract with the divine and devotions, the main aim for pilgrims, gets manifested in the act of being physically in touch with the images whether by hand, candle, or herb touching. Rubbing the images empowers pilgrims, they feel protected, and at the same time, the Kings’ divine power is transmitted to objects for devotion, and since pilgrims seek for lasting protection, they make sure to take the “powerful” objects with them. Votive offerings, promises, and miracle narratives not only validate the power of the saints, the Kings, but also give recognition and regional significance to the shrine. Even though there is a common group of ritual practices performed in the main shrines of Yucatan, like rubbing the *ruda*, offering the *kexitos* and lighting the candles, the ritual practice of multiplying everything by 3, 6 or 9, is only characteristic of the Three Kings shrine. As I mentioned before, the Kings are seen as individuals and at the same time as bundled. According to pilgrims, they are equally powerful, so each one deserves the same treatment, therefore the same offering. Pilgrims prayers are heard not once, but 3 times. The tradition is so embedded in the conceptual religious framework of the devotees that today there is no other way to achieve a successful promise if one does not follow the “triad offering tradition.” The shrine and sellers promote this religious practice, and believe that they get monetary benefits from this

tradition. Pilgrims, by carrying out these rituals, maintain a harmony and a good relation with the images. The “3, 6, and 9 tradition” is passed on by pilgrims and by sellers of religious artifacts orally.

The identity of the Three Kings shrine also comes from the dominance of male discourses associated with the images, besides its male organization. Pilgrims’ perceptions of the Kings locate them in a superior and authoritarian position, being able to grant permissions “*si los reyes me lo permiten,*” or to punish “*los reyes me castigaron.*” The Kings represent the paternalistic figure present, in one way or the other, in Yucatecan families. They represent the head of the household, the most respected person, who provides material goods and spiritual support, but that at the same time can take away what has been given. As a son or daughter would not question a decision made by their father, male and female pilgrims accept with resignation or admiration the Kings’ decisions and mandates over their lives.

The male figure is also represented by priests, sextons, *cargadores*, and the staff who keep order of the shrine. The discourse of the parish justifying the heavy presence of males in the shrine organization, based on the conception that males are more authoritarian when giving orders and directions, and that males are strong enough to handle any disturbance caused by the masses of pilgrims, reinforces the Yucatecan traditional relations of gender inequality, most common in the rural area. The female presence is represented by candle and religious souvenirs sellers located outside, in the shrine’s atrium.

The Shrine of the Three Kings builds up its ‘religious capital’ through the meaning and ideas invested in the shrine by shrine officials, pilgrims, and locals (Eade and Sallnow 2000b:15). This ‘religious capital’ has given a particular local and regional significance to the shrine. The parish of the Three Kings as an official organization has power through the

hegemony of its images. The Kings define the shrine, and hence it has a noticeable interest in promoting the Kings miracle narratives and the massive affluence of pilgrims. By doing this, the shrine acquires local and regional recognition, while at the same time increasing its income and gaining more power. Therefore, the practicality of constructing the shrine's 'fame' goes beyond the promotion of religious faith and beliefs. The shrine also plays its own role in the relation between church and state. It is in the religious celebrations during the fiesta days where political discourses are expressed. The church, acting as a platform for the political party in power, has been demonstrated with the yearly presence at the shrine of the state and local authorities on January 6th.

The shrine's 'religious capital' is also constructed through the presence of the mass media. The patronal fiesta, the fair, the shrine, and the pilgrims get constant coverage in the local and regional newspapers. The state TV station covers the noon official mass of January 6th officiated by the Bishop, the highest ecclesiastical authority on the state. By covering the fiesta and shrine events, the mass media de-territorializes the image of the Three Kings, and shifts it from the local to a more global level, since the newspapers are downloaded on the WWW. In this sense, the image of the Kings and the shrine become more accessible, not only to the devotees that live outside the area or the country, but also to the devotees that for different reasons remained at home.

As we have seen, the power of the Three Kings shrine derives from its character as a 'religious void' (Eade and Sallnow 2000b), a place of contestations and encounters. It is a religious place that brings together people from different locales, social and economic backgrounds. There are people with different motives or reasons. Some are religious pilgrims in search of spiritual favor or as in gratitude for the granted favor, and others are in search of leisure

or the note of the day. The shrine is a religious space for devotion, commerce, and proselytism, a place for power and control, a space for gender inequalities. A place that functions as a depository of multiple perceptions and meanings, a sacred place for anthropology research. It is a place with regional shared 'shrine and images knowledge'. A sacred locale with traditional popular religious practices and beliefs. A place that has shaped a regional identity for the Yucatecan culture, and a sacred place after all.



Figure 4-1. Pilgrims and devout people line up, not only to pray to the images, but also to be physically in touch with them



Figure 4-2. The Three Kings Shrine



Figure 4-3. Exterior Three Kings Shrine



Figure 4-4. *Kexitos* and *ruda*. Traditional offerings in the Yucatan



Figure 4-5. *Cargadores* taking down the images



Figure 4-6. Shrine temporary store



Figure 4-7. Pilgrims burning candles



Figure 4-8. Religious and political authorities. Epiphany mass, January 6th, 2005

CHAPTER 5
THE JOURNEY: PILGRIMS, DEVOTIONS AND BEYOND

Saturday at 5 pm I arrived at Don Baltazar's house in Cholul. I was going on a pilgrimage as an *antorchista* for the first time! After being introduced to all of Don Baltazar's family, I changed my clothes for my new *antorchista* uniform. A couple of hours later, I was in the back of an old rusty truck, similar to a U-Haul, along with 25 male and female *antorchistas*. Everyone knew the dynamics since they all had run before. I was the only "new *antorchista*," as Don Baltazar pointed out, out loud. Around 9 o'clock I heard: "Licenciada, su turno! Esta lista?" (Graduate, it's your turn! Are you ready?), I got off the truck, Don Baltazar gave the torch to my partner, and we started to run.... After 3 minutes the truck passed by, leaving us behind. Then, 5 minutes later, my partner, who was only 9 years old, left me running behind in the dark since I could not keep up with her. I kept running on the edge of the road. I was scared because traffic was very heavy. Saturday night is when most of the bus excursions travel to Tizimin. I could feel the sudden, warm burst of air from the buses on my body. I was worried I would not be able to reach the truck again. I did not have the slightest idea of how far ahead they were parked waiting for us, for me. I had never run before! I do not consider myself a person in shape since sports are not my thing. After some time running, I saw the truck at distance. I felt relief! For a moment I thought I was going to die, my heart was pounding...I could feel my heart inside my mouth, about to explode! Don Baltazar was there waiting for me... "Are you okay, *Licenciada*? We were worried about you!" Those were his first words to me. I could not reply, I needed to catch my breath. I do not know for how long I ran, for the group it seemed it took me too long. I felt that I had run a marathon, even though it was just for 20 minutes, more or less. During the night/dawn I ran two more times. It was not until the second time that I really enjoyed it. While running, I could feel the silence of the road and the sounds of the night insects flying around the grass. The night was quiet and beautiful. The moon was illuminating my way on the road. It was during this run that I understood the charm and beauty of being an *antorchista*. It was not until that moment, when all the stories of the *antorchistas* that I interviewed in the past months became real to me. That night I experienced being an *antorchista*, a pilgrim. I later realized that the run connected me to my inner self. You run for your beliefs. It is you, the road and the spirit world...and the Three Kings [field notes, January 13, 2005].

This chapter centers on the analysis of the cultural behaviors of pilgrimage. By presenting the case of the Three Kings pilgrimage, I demonstrate how the study of pilgrimage offers more than a personal transformation, as traditionally has been studied. By following the triad of place, person and movement, my analysis of pilgrimage demonstrates how different modes and representations of mobility, performed in this popular religious practice, show the existing connections within religious and leisure practices that define the cultural behavior of low class Yucatecans.

Pilgrimage and Movement

Religion is a reason for movement. Religious beliefs, feelings, needs, and practices encourage believers to move from one place, community, town, city, state, nation to another. One way to express religious devotion is through pilgrimage. There are different examples of people moving motivated by this religious reason. On a large scale, there are the massive pilgrimages to Mecca undertaken by the Muslims during certain times of their lives. Muslims travel inside and across borders to fulfill their religious needs. On a small scale, there are pilgrimages that encompass circular or spiral movement inside the shrine as a ritual practice such as in the case of Tibetan Buddhism and Hinduism (see Morinis 1992a:16). On both scales movement is an important element of the pilgrimage.

Tomasi defines pilgrimage as “a journey undertaken for religious purposes that culminates in a visit to a place considered to be the site or manifestation of the supernatural –a place where it is easier to obtain divine help”(2002:3). The definition of pilgrimage involves a destination, and to reach that place pilgrims have to move from one point to the other, move in a distinctive way as in spiral, dancing, walking, or running. This is the reason why, for Morinis, movement is the ‘essence of the journey’ (1992a:15-17).

The journey is undertaken by pilgrims. These main characters are usually in search of divine power intervention, a personal transformation, or people for “whom the sacred journey is a limited break from their routines and familiar context of an ordinary, settled social life” (Morinis 1992a:19). Many motivations drive different types of pilgrims to a shrine. From kids to teenagers, adults and elders, to pilgrims from all social and economical strata. The most common form of movement among pilgrims is in groups; pilgrims move with the family or friends. Traveling solo is not the norm, rather it is more the exception. It is more related to pilgrimages

that people undergo for a personal transformation (see Dubish 1995; Frey 1998; Morinis 1992a; Turner and Turner 1978).

Movement is essential to understand pilgrimage. In this chapter I explore one of the dimensions of mobility recognized by Coleman and Eade: movement as part of a semantic field, meaning how local cultural understandings of mobility or terms such as space, place, and landscape are important in the meaning of pilgrimage (2004a:16). Therefore, the religious significance of the shrine and the contemporary modes and representations of mobility presented in the following pages are linked to pre-Hispanic practices embedded in the local and regional culture of the area. Mobile practices have kept some of their ancient characteristics and functions, as is shown in the way pilgrims bring light in the form of torches and candles, and mobile practices that have changed over time through global processes that have reshaped or transformed them. Forms might have changed, symbolic meanings and functions remain.

An Overview of the Pilgrimage Tradition

Pilgrimage or the movement of people to a valued place, is driven by diverse motivations. As a religious journey, it has been a continuous common phenomenon present in the history of humanity, and found among different societies and religions. For instance, since the 19th BCE, pilgrimage was a common practice in Egypt. Abydos is considered one of the earliest pilgrimage sites, visited to venerate the god Osiris (Valero 1998). In the Hellenic civilization, the holiest place in Greece was Delphi, where oracles were issued by Pythia and flows of pilgrims travelled to visit (Tomasi 2002:4). However, it was not until the introduction of the major religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, when pilgrimage as an institutional form achieved importance and became more institutionalized (Turner and Turner 1978:1).

The peak of pilgrimage came during the Middle Ages, ‘a period pervaded by a profound sense of the religious’. Pilgrimage became a popular practice since ‘salvation was an obsession’

and ‘the undertaking of a pilgrimage was to make a major investment in eternal life’. The need to achieve sacredness led to a creation of a system of itineraries followed by pilgrims while travelling, and a sanctuarial network through the most important shrines in Europe such as Jerusalem, the tombs of Peter and Paul in Rome, Santiago de Compostela and others. Minor places of pilgrimage also started to appear along these routes, like sanctuaries dedicated to the Virgin Mary or the Archangel Gabriel. An intense flow of pilgrims was continuously crossing borders in search of penitence, purification, expiation and redemption (Tomasi 2002:4-10)

The pilgrimage tradition in Europe started to decline during the Reformation in the 16th century and later on with the Council of Trent (a Reformation within Catholicism) in most of northern Europe, and became limited in the southern countries. When the conquest of the Americas began, the pilgrimage system was already well established in Europe, particularly in Spain, with the Marian pilgrimage shrines such as Covadonga, Monserrat, and Zaragoza. However, it developed very easily and fast in the Iberian “New World”, even though at the beginning missionaries did not give pilgrimage much importance (Turner and Turner 1978:49-50).

The tradition of pilgrimage in Mexico comes from Pre-Hispanic times. The Mesoamerican gods played an important role as town protectors. They were the guides and oracles for everyday life. Therefore, their temples were in towns, roads, rivers, lakes, forests and caves. Some of these temples exceeded their local religious functions due to their special attributes, and were considered shrines. Rites, offerings and sacrifices, were practiced in order to obtain communal protection, health, life, and also to prevent natural and cosmic catastrophes. There is written evidence from the XVI century Fryers chroniclers on constant flows of people to the shrines in Central Mexico, Oaxaca, and Yucatan (Martínez Marín 1972:161-162).

The tradition of pilgrimage existed among the Mayans before the Spaniards arrived to the Yucatan Peninsula. According to Fray Diego de Landa, pilgrimages to the islands of Cozumel and Isla Mujeres, and to the well of Chichen Itzá (until 1539), were common practices. Pilgrims even came from the state of Tabasco, and the ancient Putun Maya region (Miller and Taube 1993:134). López de Cogolludo, a Spanish Franciscan historian states that:

The island of Cozumel was a supreme sanctuary where the locals and people from distant lands came to worship idols, there is even evidence of the *calzadas* (roads) that crossed all over this kingdom...this roads were like royal roads that led people to Cozumel for the fulfillment of their promises, offerings for their sacrifices, to ask for remedies for their necessities, and for the wrong worship to their fake gods (1955a:347).

He also writes about Izamal, another place of pilgrimage. He mentions a temple with an idol in the shape of a hand where dead and sick people were taken to be resurrected and healed. The idol's name was *Kab ul* (the working hand). Presents and alms were offered to the idol. Pilgrims came from everywhere on the four *calzadas* (roads) that crossed all these lands, and even from Tabasco, Chiapas and Guatemala. The flows of pilgrims were heavy (López de Cogolludo 1955a:354).

A third pilgrimage place was the well of Chichen Itzá. To the city of the Itzáes, pilgrims came to make offerings and sacrifice slaves. This sacred *cenote* (sinkhole) was a universal place for reverence, and cult not only to the aquatic gods but also for all the deities. These shrines, their roads and access ports, it is also believed were used as places and routes for commerce, taking advantage of the great affluence of pilgrims (Martínez Marín 1972:173).

The tradition to pilgrimage was so embedded in the Mayan religion and active by the time the Spaniards arrived to Yucatan, that Landa even compares the pilgrimages to Cozumel and Izamal to the great Christian *romerías* (pilgrimages) to Rome and Jerusalem (Martínez Marín 1972; Thompson 1966). With the religious conquest, the shrine of Cozumel and Izamal were Christianized as well as many other pre-Hispanic pilgrimage shrines such as Tonatzin, Chalma,

Ocotlán and Cholula in Central Mexico. The Christianization of shrines came along with the superimposition of Catholic saints on the existing gods and the establishment of new meanings to the existent religious practices such as pilgrimage (see Carrasco 1990). As the Turners have stated: “it did not take the missionaries long to realize that pilgrimage was an effective instrument for maintaining regional cohesion, and their earlier misgivings gave way to enthusiastic support” (Turner and Turner 1978:51).

In early colonial times the pilgrimage centers of the east coast of Yucatan, Chichen Itzá and Cozumel, started to decline along with the trade routes due to the pirates and smugglers that invaded the area, forcing the population to flee to safer areas. Cozumel maintained its importance as a shrine only for some time and then gradually was abandoned. As a result of this situation, during the colonial times two pilgrimage traditions grew notoriously in the Yucatan: the already existing pilgrimage tradition to Izamal, and a new one to the small village of Hool in south Campeche. Franciscans in Izamal, replaced the creator god Itzamna and the sun god Kinich Kakmo by the Virgin of Izamal, the Immaculate Conception, at the same time that they reinforced and encouraged more the pilgrimage. In Hool Campeche the friars established the devotion of the Virgin of Hool, also an Immaculate Conception, and developed the pilgrimage tradition to this shrine during the fiesta in her honor (Farriss 1984:306-307). The devotion to these two images remains very strong until today.

The tradition of pilgrimage in Mexico has been a constant religious practice since its Christianization during colonial times. Pilgrimage in Yucatan has always been mainly seasonal and related to patronal fiestas. According to Quintal et al. (2003) there are two forms of pilgrimage practiced in the Yucatan Peninsula: when the devotees travel towards a shrine or a place for devotions, and when the devotees and the sacred images together cover short or long

distances. In the first case, pilgrims leave home, go to a sacred place and then return to their towns, such as in the case of annual pilgrimages to the fiestas of Izamal, Hool, Hunucmá, Chuiná San Román, and Tixcacal Guardia. In the second case, the images are the ones who travel. Pilgrims leave home, go to a sacred place and from there they travel along with the venerated image to another town where the image is expected for ritual devotions. This town becomes a 'temporarily shrine' while the image is there; once the rituals are concluded, the image is taken back to its original shrine and pilgrims return home. Some examples of this form of pilgrimage are the pilgrimage of the Christ of Sitilpech to Izamal and the pilgrimage of the Virgin of Tetiz to Hunucmá (Quintal, et al. 2003:341-342).

The pilgrimage to the shrine of the Three Kings in Tizimin falls into the first category, when devotees travel to a shrine. Since my aim is to demonstrate how pilgrimage "continues to maintain a subsystem of beliefs and symbols derived from its historical origin" (Turner and Turner 1978:21), I present in the following pages the past accounts on this pilgrimage and the contemporary modes of doing it. This pilgrimage is in a short scale an expression of low income Yucatecan religious behavior, and in a large scale a religious practice with the presence of pre-Hispanic, medieval, and modern reminiscences and features, products of the Latin American Iberian Catholicism.

Pilgrimage to the Three Kings Shrine: A Look into the Past

As the Turners have mentioned, pilgrimages have several time dimensions. It is important to analyze each one diachronically and to relate their phases to the local, regional, and, in more or less degree, to national and international histories (Turner and Turner 1978:23). Therefore, it is important to recall and reconstruct the history of the Three Kings pilgrimage in order to have a better understanding of the present tradition and motivations that lead pilgrims to undertake this religious journey.

The beginning of the pilgrimage tradition to Tizimin is difficult to track. There are no written records on how early in time pilgrims started to visit the shrine, or when and why the images of the Three Kings became so popular in the State of Yucatan. Based on newspaper ads and oral histories from ongoing elderly pilgrims we can trace the history of this pilgrimage in order to have a glance of this religious practice that has shaped the popular religious culture of the Yucatecan population.

For research purposes, newspapers ads can be a good source of information, but there are some issues that we have to consider regarding the type of information they include. One factor is the type of audience. Newspapers just reach one part of the population, usually those with more formal education and higher incomes. Second, history matters: information is embedded into the social, political, and economic context, and for a better understanding and analysis of the information, it is necessary to understand the regional history.

The oldest written information regarding the Three Kings fiesta is found in local newspapers ads from the beginning of 1900. These press reports documents an account of the pilgrimage tradition to the Three Kings Shrine in a consistent manner. Throughout the advertisements and news from the periodicals, at different periods of time, pilgrimage to the fiesta was a recurrent topic that always inspired news reports.

Pilgrimage reports appeared in the newspaper for the first time in 1904. Before this date, reporters referred to the participants as persons, visitors, or people, not as pilgrims:

Everybody knows about the well-known fair that in this village [Tizimin] celebrates during the first days of January in honor of the Three Kings. From all over the state, [Yucatan] towns, and even from Campeche, pilgrims come. Tizimin, that during the year seems sad and monotonous, just like a magic trick gets transformed from the middle of December. If now that the roads are in bad condition and carriages are expensive, people overflow this place, how is it going to be when the railway finally gets here? The Correspondent (*La Revista de Mérida*. Friday, October 14, 1904:3).

Through newspaper ads it is also possible to notice the changes and innovations in the means of transportation, and the impact they had for pilgrimage practices. Therefore, we have that during the Presidency of General Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911), Yucatan's railroad system was built in order to expand the hemp commerce. However, the construction of the railway to Tizimin did not occur until November 1913. This mode of transportation not only connected this municipality and surrounding areas to the capital city for commercial business purposes, but also became an ally for the religious and commercial local fairs. With the new railroad system, pilgrims started to have more convenient options of transportation to the fiesta:

From December 30th (1930) to January 9th (1931), 20 trains with no less than 300 cars arrived in Tizimin. Trains arrived full of passengers, some even on the turntables. They brought an average of 100 passengers, a total of 3,000, something less than last year. [...the add continues]. The Correspondent (Diario de Yucatán. Wednesday, January 14, 1931:7)

In 1951, part of the news reports were about the trains and the visitors:

There were days that more than 4 trains arrived daily [...]. Pilgrimages to the church were numerous [...]. Some visitors came from Mexico City. The Correspondent (Diario de Yucatán. Monday, January 15, 1951:6)

The improvement of transportation systems, and the construction of better roads connecting Tizimin with the rest of the state, provided pilgrims with more alternatives in relation to the length of their stay in the city. Before, due to the lack of means of transportation, pilgrims used to stay for 2 or more days in Tizimin:

A great affluence of visitors, mainly on the weekends, from the 1st to the 8th of January, pilgrims were in town just for some hours, and returned to their place of origin the same day or the following day, thanks to communication in roads, even though they are still imperfect. The Correspondent (Diario de Yucatán. Saturday, January 14, 1961:6)

In 1981, the news coverage for January the 6th was mostly about pilgrims, since it was the main day of the celebration:

Hundreds of pilgrims file past the images of the Three Kings. The church kept its doors open all night long. Today and Sunday have been the busiest and most visited days. Public

services were not enough. A little bit before 6 am more than a hundred persons, who slept outside in the halls of the municipal building and other public places, were lining up to use public restrooms. The Correspondent (Diario de Yucatán. Wednesday, January 7, 1981:6-B)

As we notice here, flows of people in the fiesta are related to the economic and religious aspects of the fiesta. With the construction of the nearest railroad in 1903 from Mérida to Dzitas, more people were able to afford transportation to the fiesta and the entertainment. From 1913 on, with the first railroad to Tizimín, and through the implementation of a bus system, the flows of people increased incredibly. In 1926, around 50,000 persons went to the fiesta. In 1981, the press reports state that thousands of people visited the fiesta. In 1991, 300,000 persons visited the fiesta. Based on religious conceptions, the flow of people mentioned before could also be seen as a result of the economic crisis in the country and in Yucatán. Instead of saving their money, people used it to go to the fiesta, and pray to the Three Kings for a better economic situation.

However, the flows of people attending the fiesta were not only related to its religious aspect, but also to technological advances. As Levenstein points out, the invention and improvement of means of transport (steamships, railroad, cars), allowed people to move faster, safer, and farther, and facilitated the conditions for travel (1998:125-137). In the case of the Three Kings Fiesta, the flow of people is also related to technology. At the same time, this technology is not only about better means of transport, but also about creating differences, as the same author also states. Before railroad access to the fiesta, it was only possible for the people from Tizimin, surrounding areas, and people who had the economic means, to travel for many days in cars pulled by horses. With the introduction of the railroad to this area of Yucatan, the fiesta became more accessible to people from all over the peninsula.

Newspapers ads can be contrasted and complemented with the oral life histories of elder pilgrims. Past pilgrimages to the shrine have left vivid memories among elder pilgrims.

Nostalgia invades pilgrims when they recall good moments, adventures, and harsh times on the road to Tizimin. The location of the Three Kings' city was always considered to be far, distant, difficult to reach. Multiple means of transportation, like walking, horse back riding, train and bus rides, have left a mark, a trace, a path in pilgrims' sacred journeys.

Through oral life histories we are able to recreate pilgrimages to Tizimin. In their narratives, elder pilgrims first recall the hard conditions of going on a pilgrimage when they were children or teenagers. They start their narratives by highlighting the fact that pilgrimages in those days were not easy tasks to perform. Families had to work for their preparations in advance. The day before leaving, woman had to prepare the food to be eaten on the road. In order to take the earliest train, pilgrims had to walk holding lit candles during the night to the nearest town with a train station. Entire families used to walk through dark roads for hours. Mothers carrying babies, toddlers running around, and male adults leading the journey. Walking was just part of the pilgrimage experience, in the times when roads and public transportation were non-existent or limited. When pilgrims remember these experiences, they refer to them as the 'old times' or the 'time before the *modernidad* (modern times)'.

According to pilgrims, travelling on the train was a pleasant experience. This portion of the pilgrimage was expected by adults, teenagers and children, even though wagons were usually crowded with people, goods and belongings. The distances travelled varied from town to town. Some pilgrims had to be on the road for more than five hours, others just for one. Each pilgrim interviewed spoke about their experience, with nostalgia, as if were yesterday when they were traveling by train, as the next narrative shows:

My parents used to take me to Tizimin by train. We used to leave the Mérida train station at 5 in the morning, on 55th street on the corner of 48 and 46, and arrived at 12, all dirty, because the train ran on wood, and were all covered with soot. It is only recently when the train started to use diesel. We left at 5, and at 10 we stopped at a station to fill the wagon

with wood. At every station there were woodcutters who loaded the train, and at the same time, the train was also filled with water. First, we passed by Cholul and stopped for wood, then Conkal, Motul, Temax, and many train stations, but I assure you it was lots of fun. I really liked it, while waiting in each station, sellers use to come with *atolito*, *panuchos*, *salbutes*, *sik de venado*¹ and more different food. Nowadays, the train does not run anymore because our ‘supreme government’ sold it. When I was a kid I liked it. The train fare was 5 pesos for the roundtrip, but lately it was 25 pesos. It has been about 15 years since the train stopped going to Tizimin. Now the train station is a fire department. Even when the public buses started to run to Tizimin, my wife and I kept going by train because we were always entertained, and even for the kids, they were running from wagon to wagon and playing without any danger, because the wagons were closed. You can even step out of the wagon and enjoy the view. We either used to take our own food, or we bought it, *era una convivencia muy bonita* (it was a very nice gathering) [Sergio, Mérida: September 2004].

The advantages of going by train were numerous. The main one was that children were able to run and play freely between wagons; therefore, parents could have some time to enjoy the landscapes and chat. Another advantage was that ticket prices were affordable, and kids rode for free, allowing complete families to travel together. Some pilgrims in their narratives even remember how much they enjoyed feeling the wind on their faces, or buying food from the train vendors. Long rides seemed shorter due to good time experiences. The sense of being on a *paseo* (trip), being away from home, away from the everyday, is usually present in their narratives.

Tragedies that happened on trains are also in the collective memory of pilgrims. Elders recall many stories, from babies stolen from their mothers, kids falling off the train and hurting themselves, children left behind in train stations, to thieves pretending to be pilgrims and stealing belongings.

Pilgrims stopped traveling on train to Tizimin around 1980, when the railroad companies started to discontinue their passenger service and incremented its freight. However, pilgrims still wish they still were able to go on the train and share with their children the same experiences

¹ All these are traditional Yucatecan food and beverages. *Atolito* is a corn beverage, *panuchos y salbutes* are Yucatecan snacks made of corn dough and cover with chicken, and *sik de venado* is a dish made with deer.

they shared as kids with their families. Nowadays, other means of transportation such as passenger bus services, rented vans and private cars are in use by pilgrims.

Journeying to the Shrine

The shrine of the Three Kings has a constant flow of pilgrims all year around, the most visited times being when the Kings images are placed besides the altar during their three annual celebrations in October and June for the harvesting and rainy seasons consecutively, and in January for their annual fiesta. However, the heaviest constant presence and movement of pilgrims comes during the days of the patronal fiesta, from December 28th to January 16th. This seasonal² pilgrimage is encompassed of two main categories of pilgrims: *Non-corporate*, or those who do not belong to an organization, with or without church affiliation composed by families and groups of people that travel on their own or at bus excursions, and *corporate pilgrims*, who do belong to a religious or non religious organization or group such as Torch groups and *gremios*. Both types of pilgrims overflow the shrine during the length of the fiesta.

Non-corporate Pilgrims

Non-corporate pilgrims are the most common type of visitors to the shrine. These pilgrims usually travel in small groups. Couples, nuclear and extended families, friends, neighbors, and a mix of these groups, constantly visit the sanctuary during the length of the fiesta. Pilgrims are expected to come accompanied, and solitary pilgrims are not commonly seen. The tradition of group pilgrimage is found in many shrines around the world. As an anthropologist and pilgrim myself, I was constantly questioned about my single status, my family and my friends. Every time I encountered a group of pilgrims, they immediately started asking about my husband, or

² It is important to highlight that even though the heaviest flow of people comes during the seasonal pilgrimage related to the fiesta; the shrine is visited by pilgrims year around. There is also a notorious presence of pilgrims during the October celebrations.

my mother. When pilgrims realized I was there alone, they tended to invite me to spend time and food with them.

During the fiesta in Tizimin, it is common to see groups of families everywhere. Families are found on the green areas resting or having picnics. They sit in the central park while the kids are wandering around or going on the mechanical rides. You can also see groups of family pilgrims waiting in the church atrium, eating at local restaurants and food stands. There are even complete families sleeping at night on the floors of the municipal building during the main days of the fiesta.

Non-corporate pilgrims also travel in bus excursions organized at their places of origin. It is common to see nuclear and extended families as well as groups of friends and acquaintances arriving to Tizimin in bus charters. These excursions tend to arrive during the weekends, and the time spent at the shrine is short, about 3-5 hours and measured by their leader. The rest of the day is spent at the fair and at the surrounding neighboring town. This alternative form of pilgrimage has become very popular among females and pilgrims who do not have immediate family or relatives to go with.

The means of transportation used by non-corporate pilgrims vary, from private cars, to hired vehicles and buses. In rural Yucatan, it is common to *fletar*, or hire, a local truck or minivan, to transport passengers when family members do not own a private car. Therefore, families, relatives, or even acquaintances, get together to diminish the price. Another mode of transportation frequently used is the bus. Only few towns have a direct bus to Tizimin, most of the pilgrims have to go to Merida in order to make a bus connection. On the bus route to Tizimin, it is common to see pilgrims carrying flowers, candles, or even souvenirs. Since bus routes are a popular means of transportation, bus companies increase bus schedules during the

days of the fiesta. The route Merida – Tizimin is one of the most expensive routes since it has been monopolized by two bus companies. A single trip will cost around 80 Mexican pesos, or 8 US dollars. Bus prices are reasonable, but are still expensive, if we take into account that minimum wage in Yucatan ranges from 3 to 5 dollars a day. Since 1990, bus excursions to Tizimin have gained popularity among pilgrims from the rural areas.

Non-corporate pilgrims tend to visit Tizimin for shorter periods of time in comparison to some corporate pilgrims such as the guild pilgrims. The length of their stay ranges from 5 to 9 hours to a complete day and night. According to interviewed pilgrims, the decisive factor of their staying is in relation to over night accommodations. When pilgrims do not have relatives or friends in town where they can stay or if pilgrims do not have the economic means to pay for a room in one of the 5 hotels in Tizimin, they either go for the day or they sleep at public places. During the main days of the fiesta, 5, 6 and 7 of January, a good amount of pilgrims stay for the night for a vigil at the shrine. It is common to see pilgrims discretely sleeping inside the shrine, at the atrium or at the municipality halls, the most popular place among pilgrims. For the main days and weekends, the halls after 11 pm start to fill up with entire families arranged on the floor, covered with their own blankets. There is even a police officer hired by the municipality to guard the hall all night long. Public paid toilets are strategically located nearby for pilgrims' use.

The perception that pilgrims have regarding Tizimileños is in relation to warm hospitality. Pilgrim elders have more vivid memories from the time when locals were very welcoming with pilgrims, opening their houses for over night staying and food sharing. It was not difficult to find a place to hang up your hammock, do your *promesa* and enjoy the fiesta. As Doña Justina recalls:

When I started going to Tizimin, I didn't have a place to stay. I used to go by bus on the 5th just for the day. I only went there to see the Santos Reyes, do my *promesa*, attend mass

and then back. When my kids were a little bit older, is when we started to go there and sleep over. Since we did not know anyone in Tizimin, we ended up sleeping at the municipality hall, on the floor. After many years of doing this, one night we were there eating on the floor when a man passed by and started a conversation with me. Hi, hi, *señora*, where are you coming from? Well from Muna; and where are you going to sleep? Here, we are just waiting until dawn. Come on' you cannot do this with your kids! Let's go to my house, I live nearby. Oh my God, we do not want to bother your family. How about if your wife gets angry? No, she doesn't have to. Okay, let's go; and we went to his house. We arrived and she offered us dinner and a place to sleep, a very nice person. Since then, every time we go to Tizimin we stay there; we bring our hammocks and food, rice, beans, a chicken I cook over there and both families eat together. Now, it has been more than 50 years that we know each other and stay with them. They are really nice to us [Muna: February 2004].

Nowadays the situation is different; it is more difficult to find a local offer to stay since people are now more reluctant or afraid to open their house door to a stranger. Tizimileños no longer trust people so easily, only in situations in where there is a connection or reference coming from friends or acquaintances.

For non-corporate pilgrims, the weight of religious motivations in relation to leisure varies from person to person. However, there is a strong consensus among interviewed pilgrims that what motivates them to go to Tizimin is the religious factor. When pilgrims arrive to Tizimin, the first place to visit is the shrine. As don Pablo mentions: "when we arrive to Tizimin the first thing we do is *pisar la iglesia*, step into the church, we go to the church. Faith and *creencia* are first, then comes *el paseo*, the entertainment, everything else" (Halachó: May 2004). In the pilgrims' logic, the Kings visit is the main reason to be there. Pilgrims first have to fulfill their obligation to see the Kings and then, to attend and consume the fiesta. The weight on religious and leisure activities many times is well distributed since pilgrims enjoy the shrine activities, and at the same time they are looking forward to be part of the fair entertainment. The importance of the activities lies on the order in which they are performed at arrival, the religious being the one performed first (see Figure 5-1 and 5-2).

Dancing for a *Promesa*: Pilgrim's Rhythm Devotions

In Latin America, the tradition to dance as a form of worship in shrines comes from Pre-Hispanic times. In the Andean area, early Spanish chroniclers describe adorned dancers wearing masks and costumes performing specialized dance forms at Inca shrines and state feasts, in Cuzco, Peru (Poole 1991:308). In Pre-Hispanic Mexico, the Aztecs had *veintenas*, or festivals, where they used to dance at the base of the temple honoring their gods. The Mayas performed, among many other rituals, dances during their festival calendars (Gates 1978; León 1994; Miller and Taube 1993). With the arrival of the Spaniards, and the imposition of the Catholic religion, these forms of pre-Hispanic dances were re-interpreted while adapting the new ones which were brought and imposed. As Najera-Ramírez points out, “during the conquest, the Spaniards discovered that they could make use of indigenous forms, such as festivals, to communicate new religious and political ideas, and that doing so was more effective than simply destroying or erasing indigenous elements” (1997:8). Therefore, the Pre-Hispanic ritualistic sense of dance became a form of syncretic Catholic devotion in the “New World.”

In central Mexico, where the *fiesta cargo* system is the religious institution that regulates the fiestas and some pilgrimages, dances are a common form of devotion during these celebrations and religious journeys. *Cuadrillas*, or troupes of dancers, accompany the *mayordomos*, or main fiesta officials, during pilgrimages. According to Giménez, these groups do not perform artistically as if they were at a contest; rather the group's main motivation is strictly religious, as well as the organization and content of their dances. Group members join the *cuadrillas* in order to fulfill a *promesa*, or promise, for a year, or even for a lifetime. In some cases, the group constitutes a socio-religious brotherhood immersed in all aspects of the dancers' life (1978:128). In addition to the *cuadrillas*, other prominent groups are the *concheros*, who journey to shrines performing Pre-Hispanic dances with shell anklets and musical instruments.

Based on the missionaries' previous knowledge of the existence of Pre-Hispanic dances, many popular 'vow dances' in Catholic Iberia were used as part of the evangelization doctrine in "New Spain." For instance, dances representing battles that were common among Aztecs were Christianized when the dance of *moros y cristianos* (dance of Moors and Christians), the battle of Christianity against Islam, was superimposed (Giménez 1978; Najéra-Ramírez 1997). Other syncretic dances are the *pascola y matachines* dances among the Yaquis of Sonora, where one of the *pascolas* is a Moor, and the *matachines* become the soldiers of the Virgin (Olavarría 1994).

Shrines such as Chalma, Villa de Guadalupe, and San Juan de los Lagos, are constantly visited by groups of *cuadrillas* and *concheros* dancers fulfilling *promesas*, along with the performance of stewardship in the atriums, or surrounding shrine areas. Some other examples of common dances are the *Tecuanes* (the Tiger Dance) and the *Gitana* (Gypsy Dance). In the *Tecuanes* the peasants and landowners battle against the animal which is harmful to the cattle (Cortéz Ruiz 1994). In the *Gitana*, which is influenced by the May Pole dance from Europe, the participants, while dancing, tangle and untangle colorful ribbons attached to a tall pole (Rodríguez-Shadow and Shadow 2000:117).

For the Yucatan area, Farris explains how syncretic religious practices created by the colonial Maya, like public worship, were based on Pre-Columbian songs and dances that were incorporated into the Christian fiestas (1984:320). However, dancing inside shrines, or in their atriums, is not as common a display of saint promise devotion as it is central Mexico. There are scarce examples of this type of devotion in the Peninsula. For instance, in the shrine of Tixcatal Guardia in Quintana Roo, one of the shrines that arose from the Caste War around 1847, devoted to the Holy Cross, the fiesta chiefs perform a ceremony known as *okoztah pol*, or "dance of the

head,” where fiesta authorities renew their vow, and delegate their responsibilities to the next ones. They dance inside the shrine carrying a roasted pig’s head decorated with food and *ramilletes*. The dance ends when the pig’s head is offered to the Holy Cross, a rosary is recited, and the head is left at the altar (Redfield 1941:285-286).

In spite of it all, the tradition to dance as a form of devotion is present in the Yucatan area. This religious expression is characterized by the fact that promised saints dances are performed at public locations during the patronal fiesta. Events such as *vaquerías* are platforms for pilgrim’s devotions, since these traditional fiesta events become recognized spaces for social interaction, entertainment and, for some pilgrims, a space for religious devotion, as is the case for the Three Kings Fiesta.

Votive *Jaraneros*: Three Kings, Three Consecutive Dances

The *vaquería* is the traditional dance event of Yucatan. *Vaquerías* are usually “opening events” for patronal fiestas. They are social gatherings that resemble and reinforce the Yucatecan identity of the participants through the dress code, the music and the dance. People dress in the traditional clothing for Yucatan: *huipil* or *terno* for women, and white trousers and *filipina* shirt for the men. During the *vaquería*, *jarana* music is played and danced. The word *jarana* can mean both the actual melodies, and also the type of dance. They are popular events among locals and visitors.

As I have mentioned in Chapter 3, during the Three Kings Fiesta there are three *vaquerías de promesa*: *vaquería de alborada*, *vaquería o pozolada*, and *vaquería or venta de vaqueras*. The first and second are the most popular ones for pilgrims since they are night events. In these *vaquerías*, pilgrims find a space for social interaction and religious devotions. Dancing *jarana* becomes another motivation to go on a pilgrimage to Tizimin; therefore, another form of pilgrimage is the one made by what I call the ‘Votive *Jaraneros*.’

Votive *Jaraneros* are pilgrims who, as an offering, promise to dance at least one night at the *vaquería* during a patronal fiesta. Therefore, pilgrims make a promise to a patronal saint, and during the fiesta they visit the saint at the shrine, and pray to remind the saint of the reason for their visit. Thereafter, later at night, pilgrims dance *jarana* in the *vaquería* all night long in order to fulfill their promise. As one female pilgrim explains:

My mother used to take me to the *vaquería*. When I turned 15 years old, I made a promise to the Holy Kings that I would dance for them, so I could keep myself healthy. Health was what I always asked them for. I do not know what my mom was asking for. I danced for nine years in a row. On the 5th of January, early in the morning I bathed, packed my *terno*, and my mom, my two aunts, my four cousins and I, went to Tizimin. Arriving around early afternoon, we went straight to the Kings' house [shrine], and then to the fair. Later, we changed into our *ternos*, and then, we danced the entire night, sometimes with boys, others with girlfriends, but you were there to dance, you had to dance...that was your promise [Socorro, Chemax: March 2004].

The Votive *Jaraneros* at Tizimin make an offering to the Three Kings and for three, six, or nine consecutive years they dance *jarana* at the *vaquería*. According to the pilgrims, in order to fulfill a promise, one has to go to a *vaquería*, a different one from that of your hometown, dressed wearing the traditional Yucatecan clothing, and dance until dawn. The shrine's visit is a must, even if you end up praying outside the closed doors. This form of promise entails organization, economic means, and dancing skills.

This type of pilgrim travels by public bus transportation, and in *fletes*, or rented trucks, according to the number of people attending. Female pilgrims travel with small bags where they bring food, spare clothing and cosmetics. Only during *vaquería* days do you see many *jaraneros*, people dressed up in *traje regional* (regional clothing), at the shrine at night. These pilgrims do the devotions of praying, touching the Kings, and the lighting of candles, as do the other pilgrims that visit the shrine. Likewise, during these nights is when you see the same *jaraneros* consuming the fair, buying or eating at stalls, at mechanical rides, or just wandering around at the main plaza. At the *Recreativa Popular*, the salon where *vaquerías* are held, the landscape is

full of nuclear and extended families, and friends, enjoying the *vaquería*. However, according to pilgrims interviewed, only single family members make dancing promises. A common scene is a couple of adults with three or four teenagers.

The expenditures of Votive *Jaraneros* come from the bus fare; the rent of the *traje regional* in case they do not own one; the cost of votive offerings, such as *kexitos*, *ruda*, candles, and alms given to the Three Kings at the shrine; money for food, drinks and rides at the fair and; for the males, *vaquería* cover. The amount of money varies from pilgrim to pilgrim, according to their consumption patterns. The money expended is considered part of the *promesa*. Pilgrims save money during the year, or invest in growing animals, such as pigs and chickens that they sell when the fiesta time approaches.

Votive *Jaraneros* are expected to dance the entire night. They are usually very skillful, dancing the different *jaranas* that are traditionally played during a *vaquería*. Pilgrims learn from an early age, and during adolescence they polish their steps, and improve their dancing skills, knowing one day they will make a dancing promise to a saint. Pilgrims interviewed come from a family line of Votive *Jaraneros*. Their families travel to patronal fiestas in order to fulfill their dancing promises.

As I have mentioned before, pilgrims do make a contract with the saints. They interchange offerings through saint's favors related to health, work, social and family issues. It is a trust relationship. Therefore, promises made to the Three Kings are treated seriously, and the failure of their fulfillment brings misfortune or trouble, as is shown in the next narrative:

I use to go and make a dance promise when I was younger. We danced on the 30th and 31st of December at the *vaquerías*. But one day, let me tell you a story... We used to go to Tizimin from December 30 to January 1st, but that year my brother was getting married on the 2nd, so my mom didn't take me on the 30th. Thus, I was talking with my friends and they were asking me if I was going or not, they were going on the same days. But I knew I needed to go, and dance from night to dawn, so I insisted on going. "Mom, take me, take

me!” And she replied she couldn’t because of the wedding. So I got mad at her and told her, “If you do not take me on the 30th for the *vaqueria*, I won’t go with you on the 6th to see the Kings!” And we started arguing again... then I lay down on my hammock and swung, and suddenly the arms of my hammock broke and I fell on the floor. It hurt!! And then my mom said to me, I am glad it happened to you! And it was because you do not respect the Kings. You said you were going from the beginning, and later you changed your mind. This is not right. I started to cry, and in Maya I asked forgiveness to the Holy Kings, and I told them that I was going to see them on the 6th [Porfiria, Valladolid: March 2004].

The divine power of the Kings is benevolent, and at the same time, harmful. There is a ‘shared’ sense of obligation and respect towards them around the state of Yucatan. If one treats the Kings, or the promises made to them, lightly, their power manifests as a form of divine punishment and devotees expected misfortune to happen. This knowledge is passed from generation to generation. Everyone is aware of the Kings’ power. Votive *Jaraneros* know that dancing is a promise, and one must always fulfill the obligation contracted with the divine.

Vaquerías: Where Devotion, Entertainment and Social Distinction Coincides

Dancing as a mode of experiencing pilgrimage, as in the case of the Votive *Jaraneros*, can be analyzed as a religious act of devotion and social interaction. For these pilgrims, the primary motivation to do this is the faith that they have to the Three Kings. The belief that the saints give special protection leads pilgrims to make a contract with the divinity, the Three Kings, and in order to fulfill their contract, their *promesa*, they attend the *vaquería* and dance the entire night. The commitment becomes their drive and main reason for religious devotion. Since pilgrimage is no longer seen as an exclusive act of penance and suffering (Tomasi 2002; Turner and Turner 1978), the motivation to go and dance responds to the Yucatecan tradition of seeing dances as a public space for social encounters. *Vaquerías* and popular dances organized in the context of a patronal fiesta become ‘recognized spaces’ by adults and by the youth for ‘allowed public interactions’ among young males and females. These events bring opportunities for the younger generations to interact and, in some cases, even start relationships that could eventually lead to

more serious ones, like marriage. The perception of these traditional dances as recognized spaces for socialization is more present among people from small rural towns in Yucatan, where the opportunities for social interactions among youth are scarce and limited. Votive *Jaraneros* find in their promises a space for religious devotion, leisure and social relations.

The *vaquerías de promesa* at the Three Kings Fiesta are spaces of multiple discourses. They are spaces for religious devotions with the presence of the Votive *Jaraneros*, and a space for public recognitions. Similar to the Three Kings Fiesta, *vaquerías* can be seen as ‘contact zones’ (Pratt 1992), spaces of multiple encounters where social and economical distinctions can be noticed, and lead to social space segregation. The distribution of space inside the *Recreativa Popular* is related to the social stratification of Tizimin, which in turn is based on economic factors. For the Tizimileños, the *vaquerías* are a form of entertainment consumed by locals with low and middle income, such as peasants, school teachers, small business owners, etc., who still identify with the Mayan culture, either because they grew up in a Maya-speaking household, or due to their relation to the peasantry. There is a distinction made through a VIP section where the local and state politicians, fiesta authorities and sponsors, and representatives of the local cattle industry, are physically located. This distinction also includes a special kind of treatment reflected in the service and products consumed. For this section, group identity is related to the role they play in Tizimin society. The first group of local Tizimileños, along with other visitors and pilgrims, share the same physical space that spreads along the entire place. The sense of Turnerian *communitas*, no distinctions, is present only in this section, and it breaks down when it reaches the VIP section. At the end of the night, the rhythm devotion of the Votive *Jaraneros* is not completely shared with all the participants, and the dancing devotions remain within the family and friends, but mostly in the pilgrim’s inner self journey.

Corporate Pilgrims

Running for a *Promesa*: Pilgrims, Torches and Saints

The devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe is considered one of the oldest and more important for Mexican Catholics since early colonial times. She is ‘the patron saint of all Mexicans.’ Her image has been used as a symbol for national identity. She presents the same physical characteristics of over half of the Mexican population: dark skin, and black hair and eyes. This makes her a good example of *mestizaje* and of identity. Throughout Mexican history, she has played a role as mediator between the State and the Church. Her image was used during the two major Mexican battles: the Mexican Independence and the Mexican Revolution. The colors of the Mexican flag are related to her image, and the same colors characterize the political party PRI (Partido Revolucionario Mexicano) that governed Mexico for more than 70 years. The Virgin’s celebration day is December 12.

During the days of her celebration, pilgrims from all over the country, and from different social classes, visit her Basilica. Individually, or in groups, pilgrims come to the Virgin’s shrine to make, or fulfill, a promise. Locals, nationals, and foreigners arrive in Mexico City by plane, by bus, by private car, by bike, on foot or running.

One way to experience this pilgrimage to the Basilica is the Guadalupe torch run, a tradition that started in central Mexico, with the devotion of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Groups of young people run a relay race event during the first and second week of December. The religious purpose of this event is to venerate the Virgin and/ or fulfill a promise made to her. Torch runners run on Mexican highways and streets, and nowadays, even go across borders.

The ‘torch movement’ is an organizational model promoted by the Catholic Church. This movement, through the figure of the Virgin of Guadalupe, or Our Lady of Tepeyac, is intended to serve as an evangelization tool among the youth:

We wish that this torch experience be well spent by the youth so they can feel the maternal affection of Mary of Guadalupe, and want to be compromised with her to fill with new light and life the many hearts, especially of the youth, that have lost the desire to live (Comisión Diocesana de Pastoral Juvenil 2001:3).

Since the Church wants to reach all ages, the torch becomes an attractive alternative for the ones who traditionally have been the hardest to reach: the youth. The popularity of the torch comes not only from its religious motivation, but also from its athletic spirit, and in Turnerian words, its social liminoid phase. By spending hours or days socializing, distinctions and structures are vanished, and creates an atmosphere of comradeship among the participants (see Turner 1974 ; Turner and Turner 1978).

This type of pilgrimage is very common among the Mexican youth. The torch groups, or *antorchistas*, are made up of young men and women who spend hours, or days and nights, running a relay race carrying a lit torch. The uniformed group goes on a truck, from 3-ton trucks to pick-ups, decorated with images of the Virgin, flowers, balloons, Mexican flags, and a banner with the name of their town and destination. They depart from their home town, or city, one week, or several days, before December 12, the day of the Virgin of Guadalupe. They usually drive straight to Mexico City, visit the Basilica, get a blessing as a group from the priest, and then begin the run. One at a time, the members run along the road for long or short periods, depending on their athletic endurance. When the next member gets out of the truck, he/she receives the torch, and continues running. This run can take several days, or even weeks. As the group arrives to their hometown on December 12, the community celebrates them with a mass, and sometimes with fireworks and food.

The tradition of celebrating with fire and light comes from the Aztecs. During the winter solstice, the Aztecs had the tradition of lighting a new fire on the top of the hills. This ceremony, called *Huixacetcatl*, or *New Fire*, attracted pilgrims from different parts of the valley to the

highest hill (the *Huixachtécatl*, or Star Hill). At the end of the 52 cycle, all the fires were put out. The priests led a procession carrying the god of the sun and war, Huitzilopochtli, and after a sacrifice at the top of the hill, they lit the new fire. The light was spread among the pilgrims, and taken to their communities. Also, the people in the surrounding areas climbed the hills to see the fire light from a distance. Once the fire was lit, spread and shared, all the towns celebrated with a fiesta (Martínez Marín 1972:167-168).

When the Spaniards arrived, this festivity still celebrated. Therefore, it might be possible that the clergy took advantage of this celebration to reinforce the devotion of the Virgin of Guadalupe by identifying her as a messenger of the sun, since her image is illuminated from behind by rays of light that symbolize the sun. In this sense, the Virgin Mary is the one who brings the New Fire. She is the real light.

The *antorchistas* run for a promise. They depart from their local church with a lit torch, the sacred light represented by Virgin, and run back and forth from a popular shrine. During their journeys, some pilgrims stop to visit churches, or touristic places, if there are located on the route. One interesting feature of this pilgrimage is that the final destination is not the Guadalupe Basilica, but rather their local church. The shrine is a recognized landmark. It is the most important stop since the miraculous image, the center of pilgrims' devotion, is housed there. However, once the image is visited, pilgrims return and are welcomed by their community or relatives with a mass, a rosary, or a novena.

Quintal et. al see torch pilgrimages as a rite of passage, since they encompass the separation, limen, and reintegration phases. Separation begins before the run. Pilgrims attend meetings, and receive religious information on the significance of torch runs. When the day arrives, pilgrims attend a mass in their local church before leaving. It is during the journey when

a sense of *limen* is created among the pilgrims, due to the fact that pilgrimage is a voluntary action. Finally, the family celebrations upon their return to their home town, mark the reintegration phase (Quintal, et al. 2003:339-340)

The phenomenon of *antorchismo* not only has gained importance on a religious level, but also in the media. As part of the national celebrations, during the months of November and December, Guadalupe *antorchistas* make news on national and local television and in the newspapers. Pilgrims are interviewed, videotaped, photographed running, or during their entrance to the Basilica. Torch pilgrimages are also tabloid news when suffering accidents on the road, many times accompanied by a member's death.

The Torch Movement in Yucatan

The religious movement of the Guadalupe Torch in Yucatan is not new. This type of pilgrimage has been around for more than 40 years. It is difficult to know when it really started, since there is little information written about it. What is certainly known is that this tradition has grown in recent years in Yucatan.

The Archdiocese of Yucatan has been promoting and supporting this religious activity. In 1992, the diocese released a pedagogical booklet called "Training and Guidance for *Antorchistas Guadalupanos*," targeted to group leaders and runners. As an evangelization tool, it emphasizes how our faith arrived to us as a big lit torch. The Virgin Mary came to Mexico surrounded by rays of light. For the indigenous people this was a big sign of God bringing her to the Sun God. For the Europeans she gave us God, and God is the light. The brochure ends with the phrase: "With Mary, our mother, let's carry the torch of the third millennium" (Comisión Diocesana de Pastoral Juvenil 2001).

The Mecca of *antorchistas* is the Basilica of Lady of Guadalupe located in Mexico City, and this place is not the exception for Yucatecan *antorchistas*. The next narrative is from Don Fito, a veteran *antorchista* who leads a group every year:

I have been an *antorchista* for more than 26 years. The *Antorchistas Guadalupanos* Group was founded 42 years ago by Don Victor Aguilar. This was the first *Guadalupe torch* in Valladolid. By that time they even ran over white roads. The Guadalupe torch is the original. It is the one that has the most tradition. However, over the years, we have taken the torch to many places, like Izamal, Tizimin, Carrillo Puerto, and Merida. When Don Victor passed away 8 years ago, I took the leadership of the group. I became the president, since I am the one who has more experience on doing it. Don Victor at the end of his days, he was concerned with the continuance of his group. I always told him not to worry, because I was planning to continue with this tradition until my health allows me to do it. Until now I am in good shape, my health is fine.

I have brought the torch from the Basilica of Lady of Guadalupe to Valladolid more than 4 times. It takes us from 6 to 7 months to organize the torch, and 9 days to run from Mexico City to Valladolid. The group is usually formed by 4 organizers, including me, and 50-60 young male and female runners. We rent a 12-18 ton truck which provides enough space to stretch out, lie on the floor, and hang 22-25 hammocks. We leave Valladolid 12 days before December 12, and drive all the way to Mexico City. After spending one night in Mexico City, we visit the Basilica, and it is in there where we lit our torch. We come back running. We all run. Since we have done it many times, we have already visited many different cities and states, because we try to change our trajectory. I have a friend who is familiar with road maps, and he helps us plan our trips. We have to process road permits ahead of time in order to be allowed to run on state and federal roads. We have never had an accident. The Virgin always protects us while we are on the road. On December 12 we arrive in Valladolid. Our families, relatives and friends welcome us with music and food. As you can see, it is not an easy task. Leading a torch requires a lot of time, work, and responsibility. Our torch is the oldest, the biggest, and the happiest in Valladolid. Running the torch is my life [Valladolid: March 2004].

The pilgrimage to Mexico City is considered to be the ‘ultimate’ experience as an *antorchista*. The reasons are related to money, health, and time constraints. It requires economic means because it is the most expensive destination. A range of expenses have to be covered by each *antorchista*. As a group, they share expenses such as truck rental, diesel, tow, aluminum torches, tolls and fees. And individually, pilgrims have to pay for a uniform, tennis shoes, meals and other expenses related to the trip. Good health is a must since they spend nights and days on the road, exposed to weather changes, sharing the same space and air. But it is more important to

be in shape, and to have the physical endurance to run for days. The *antorchista* who usually affords to go is a worker, or a student with a job. For students it is more feasible to miss classes during the pilgrimage days. Still for some, finding time is usually an issue. Given that the torch pilgrimage is well known in Mexico and Yucatan, it is not uncommon for companies, factories, stores, and other employers, to give unpaid leave absences during the days of Guadalupe. However, this is not always the case, and on many occasions, it is not always possible to fulfill the promise.

The official Guadalupe shrine in Yucatan is located in the neighborhood of San Cristobal, near downtown Merida. During the week of December 12, the shrine becomes very active since pilgrims come to venerate the Virgin, and enjoy the amenities characteristic of a patronal fiesta. Flows of *antorchistas* arrive running or biking. They are welcomed at the shrine entrance by nuns, who at the same time register them for the parish records.

We are here to welcome them and cheer them up. In this way we promote and encourage this type of pilgrimage. We ask them where they come from, time of departure and arrival, number of group members, and the name of their leader. We also register them because, in the case on an accident, their families can call the shrine for information [Sister Maria, Mérida: December 2004].

One important feature of the Guadalupe torch is that it unifies the three states that make up the Peninsula. For a couple of days, the transit of *antorchistas* creates a joint network of pilgrims and churches. Yucatan, Campeche and Quintana Roo become guests and hosts since they send and receive this type of corporative pilgrims. The roads are shared and are continuously appropriated by *antorchistas*. For instance, torches are taken from Tecoh, Yucatan, to Escarsega, Campeche; from Kinchil, Yucatan, to Can Cun, Quintana Roo; from Campeche to Kanasin, Yucatan; from Chetumal, Quintana Roo to Hunucmá, Yucatan. Other destination places mentioned by Yucatecan *antorchistas* are the archeological site of Uxmal, Mexico City, and

different cities in Tabasco, and Belize. The shrine of San Cristobal is an obligatory stop. It might not be the final destination for everyone, but it is always a part of their itinerary³.

The Virgin of Guadalupe's image travels with the *antorchistas*, in this sense the Virgin is part of the pilgrimage. Her presence not only is recognized along the way, by people who share the road, but also becomes a public display of Catholic devotion while passing through towns, cities and communities along the way. Pilgrimages advertize and promote this Mexican religious icon and reinforce the national identity.

In Yucatan, the tradition of the torch has been extended to different saints' devotions. Popular *antorchas* devotions are for the Virgin of Conception, patron and queen of Yucatan in Izamal, Hunucma, for The Virgin of La Candelaria in Valladolid, and for The Three Kings in Tizimin. For some pilgrims, running short distances is considered to be the 'basic' torch experience in the pilgrimage. *Antorchistas* who have gone to Guadalupe have run a short distance torch before. For them, in-state torches are seen more like training. For other pilgrims, it is not the distance that matters, but the devotion you have to a certain saint.

Tizimin: A Three Year Torch Run for the Kings

During the week of January 6th, mainly on the 5th, *antorchistas* arrive to the city of the Three Kings. As you drive through all the entrances to Tizimin, it is very common to see groups of *antorchistas* running, or biking, towards this destination. The runners go, one or three running at the time, carrying torches, followed by a decorated truck with the images of the Three Kings. They wear t-shirts with the image of the Kings on the front and, on the back, a torch figure between the name of their home town and the destination, as well as shorts or sweats. The bikers go on groups of 5-8. The bikes are decorated with pictures, or small statues of the Kings,

³ This information is taken from informal interviews I made at the shrine on December 12, 2004.

sometimes with flowers and flags. They wear similar uniforms to the runners. The bikers are followed by a single bike with a red line on the back and a siren.

Antorchistas enter Tizimin either running or biking. They make a public entrance, saying cheers to the Kings, or using the siren, when they start getting close to the shrine. As they are approaching the shrine, there is an ‘increasing sacralization’ (Turner 1974:182) of their behavior. Once inside the shrine, they do their devotion to the Kings, burn their candles, and sometimes they attend mass. The blessing from the priest on the members of the group and their torches is an important and expected part of the pilgrimage (see Figure 5-5).

The catchment area for *antorchistas* is mostly from the states of Yucatan and Quintana Roo. Groups from Izamal, Pisté, Mérida, Cholul, Valladolid, Tesoco, Acanceh, Tekon, Kantunikil, Tixcacalcupul, Cuyo, Tepakan, Chelem, Tecoh, Muna from Yucatan, and –from the following towns in Quintana Roo: Tepich, Carrillo Puerto, Can Cún, Tulum, La Presumida, Jose Maria Morelos, and Tihosuco, among others ⁴.

The characteristics of the Three Kings torches are very similar to the torches from other devotions. Groups are made from 3 to 35 male and female members, ages ranging from 11 to 35 years. Decorated trucks and bikes transport them. Groups are made up of a leader, the organizers and the members. Bike groups tend to be smaller, from 3 to 12 members. The time spent ‘doing the torch’ is about a night and a whole day. Families and friends welcome them to their home towns with *novenas*, rosaries, and food. The only distinct feature the King’s torch has in relation to the others is that you have to do it three times: one dedicated to Melchior, the other to Casper, and the third to Balthazar.

⁴ The information presented is taken from a sample of 30 groups of *antorchistas* that arrived to the shrine on January 2004 and 2005.

As mentioned before, one of the particularities of the shrine is that all devotions are made in multiples of three. The Kings are seen as a group and as individuals. As one pilgrim mentioned, “the Kings are always together, they are like family. However each King deserves personalized attention”. Therefore, torch pilgrimages run or bike for three consecutive years. Some of the torch pilgrims I encountered have run or biked for 3 or 6 times, and some organizers have taken torches from 2 to 20 years. A torch to the Three Kings is not fulfilled until you have run 3, 6, 9, or 12 years.

Usually, the shrine of the Three Kings is not a final destination for the *antorchistas*. It becomes an intermediate point in their journey. In the shrine, torch pilgrims become ‘ambassadors’ of their towns and cities, since their names are imprinted on their uniforms. In this sense, pilgrims share their own identity with the locals and with other pilgrims. The act of pilgrimage has an implicit message content of announcing the group. By the simple fact that pilgrims are moving to a different place, they communicate their intentions of devotion, their sufferings, or their happiness. By running with the torch, and wearing a uniform depicting a saint’s image, pilgrims publicly announce their religious affiliation. At the same time, they announce their identification with specific practices of popular religion.

The attractive features of torch pilgrimages are the social and leisure components. Religious devotion and leisure are not separated, but rather more or less are intertwined, during most type of pilgrimages. Torch pilgrimages are no the exception. Sociability is also present. Taking into consideration that the majority of young pilgrims do not necessarily know each other, torch runs provide them with a space for social interaction during the hours, or days, spent together. The words *relajo* and *relajear*, to mess, play or fool around, appear frequently in pilgrim narratives:

We go for devotion. Running is exhausting, but you hardly feel it. When we are inside the truck, the *chavos* (guys) will crack jokes, tell stories, or sing songs that are not necessarily religious. *El relajo se pone bueno* (we made a good mess). And then, you do not feel tired or sore any longer [Armando, Pisté: March 2004].

Sometimes when we are running we *relajamos*, we mess around, with other runners from a different group. Sometimes we know them if they are from the same town, but it does not matter, since we *relajamos*, mess with everyone, we see on the road. If there is a group running ahead of us, we send our best runner so he passes the other runner, and meanwhile we are just cheering him very loud. We get a kick from these races, everyone enjoys them a lot [Raul, Chelem Puerto: April 2004].

Torch pilgrimages also provide a space for couples to meet, and later to date. There are not many occasions and locations, especially in the rural areas, where youths can partly, or totally, spend the night together as a part of a social activity. Therefore, pilgrims, with the excuse of religious purposes, make the most of this pilgrimage, and socialize. Torches' organizers comment that it is not uncommon to see pilgrims finding their soul mates during the pilgrimages. Don Silverio mentions the story of two of his runners who fell in love during a run, and today are happily married, and even continue to run with his torch. Being part of a torch myself, I also observed a couple of teenagers cuddling and making out under the sheets at night, while we were waiting for our turns to run.

Another popular aspect of this type of pilgrimage is its leisure component. *Antorchistas*, while doing their route to the shrine, stop and visit cities, towns and churches. The places visited are not necessarily touristic. However, there are groups that have stopped in archaeological sites, like Chichen Itzá, colonial cities, such as Valladolid, or natural reserves, such as Río Lagartos. Visited places are usually on, or close by, the route. Some *antorchistas* even plan their route according to places they want to visit when they have the economic means, and the time to do it.

Once in Tizimin, after doing religious devotions, *antorchistas* get free time from the group to enjoy the attractions provided by the city hall, and the patronal fiesta fair. It is very common to see *antorchistas* in their uniforms relaxing and wandering around. The two fairs are the most

popular places consumed by the *antorchistas*. The attractions of the patronal fair, which consists of commercial stalls and mechanical rides, are convenient for pilgrims who do not count with much free time and money, since it is located near by the shrine. The *Posta*, or rancher's fairground, which is located in the outskirts of the city, is more consumed by torch pilgrims who can spend a little more money, since it is more sophisticated, thus more expensive. Other places consumed by pilgrims are the bullfighting ring and the zoo. Also, some *antorchistas* would rather spend their leisure time visiting relatives in the city.

Torch pilgrims bring cameras and camcorders to their journey. Photos taken at the shrine with the Kings images, at the fair attractions, or at visited places, become part of their documented memories. Pilgrims also buy souvenirs with the image of the Kings. Prayer cards, t-shirts, caps, images, key chains, and framed pictures, are popular souvenirs among the youth. Pictures and souvenirs document the visit, the journey, and at the same time become social markers of recognition and prestige among family and friends. As one *antorchista* pointed out:

Look, this is me standing besides the Kings. I had my picture taken so everyone can see that I was there, that *lo logré* (that I made it)! My picture is like my trophy from my finished race [Carlos, Muna: February 2004].

The pictures and the souvenirs were usually shown to me by the pilgrims, or their parents, with excitement and pride. They show pilgrims running, posing at the shrine, carrying the torch, group pictures, at the fair, visiting a church or a town, and more. Some of these pictures were on display at home altars, or hanging on the wall (see Figure 5-6).

Torch pilgrimages to Tizimin as a devotion to the Three Kings are popular among the youth from many parts of the Peninsula. The images of the Kings become de-localized since they are taken along the route. Most rural, and certain urban parishes, promote them as religious devotions suitable for young pilgrims. Charity fairs and raffles in church atriums are common forms of collecting money to support torch pilgrims. Motivations to go on these pilgrimages

range from purely devotive, to athletic and leisure events, being a mixture of the two motivations, religious and leisure, the most common. For young pilgrims, one does not interfere with the other. Pilgrims choose to run the torch for devotion, but at the same time expect some leisure activities, some fun. In the end, religion is still the main motivation to run the miles.

Pilgrim Guilds: Banners, Devotions and Entertainment

The tradition of pilgrimage among corporate groups comes from Catholic Europe. As part of their annual activities, religious institutions, such as *hermandades*, or brotherhoods, included a pilgrimage to the place where its patron saints were venerated (see Christian 1981; Turner and Turner 1978). In Yucatan, the *gremios*, or guilds, are the basis of the fiesta system. The *gremio* was introduced by the Spaniards at the time of the Conquest, along with the *cofradías* and *hermandades*. The *cofradía* and the *hermandad* were religious institutions, and the *gremio* was a grouping of professionals, and workers who share the same job skills and professions⁵. From early colonial times until the 19th century, the *cofradías* were the organizations in charge of the patronal fiesta organization. However, due to changes imposed by the Mexican government, the term *gremio* replaced the term *cofradía* (Fernández 1994). Nowadays, the affiliation to a *gremio* is not related to a profession. People get invited, or join, through their shared devotional interest on a saint.

The *gremios* are formed by an elected board on which the organization of the 3-day *gremio* celebration falls. Every *gremio* has *socios*, or members, that belong to *delegaciones*, or delegations, from different parts of the Peninsula that travel in order to attend the celebrations. The *gremio* organization is economic and cultural. They are maintained by an annual payment from their members. The organization is considered cultural because it reproduces traditional

⁵ For a more detailed explanation of these religious institutions refer to Fernández 1994 and Diez 1994.

Yucatecan culture, and reinforces regional identity through religious devotions, *jarana* dancing, regional clothing, among other expressions.

According to Quintal (2003), these organizations are typical devotions of the main Peninsular sanctuaries, such as, Tizimin, Sitalpech, Hool, and Izamal. The oldest pilgrim *gremios* exist since the 1920s-1930s, and were formed through the initiative of a lady who annually visits a shrine, and invites pilgrims from other places to join in her journey (Quintal, et al. 2003:338). The shrine of the Three Kings has 12 *gremios* that enhance the religious fiesta in their honor. Most of them are '*gremios peregrinos*,' or pilgrim guilds that come from different parts of Yucatan. Due to the *gremio* characteristic of being formed by people with the devotional purpose of travelling to a sacred place in order to make public their religious affiliation to a patronal saint, the guild becomes an important unit of pilgrimage in terms of traditional religious devotions.

Pilgrimage, processions and offerings in honor to the Three Kings are public religious manifestations from *gremio* members. Annually, the *delegaciones* make a pilgrimage to the Kings' shrine, and stay in Tizimin for about 2 to 3 days. The *gremio* celebrations consist of two days and a night of prayers, friends and family gatherings, and entertainment. The main day of the *gremio* there is a procession known as "*la entrada del gremio*," or the *gremio* entrance. The procession goes from the *gremio* house, or locale, to the shrine, where delegations carry their name banners and walk to the rhythm of a *charanga*, or rustic band, and fireworks. The *gremio* enters the shrine as a corporate group, led by the images of the Three Kings carried by one of the members.

The *gremio* brings offerings to the Kings. Some of these offerings are left at the shrine, as in the case of candles and flowers. However, the banners, *ramilletes*, and Kings images are

temporarily offered, since the members take them back home the next day when they leave the shrine. The surrogate images of the Kings are placed at the altar, and according to pilgrims, by spending the night there the images get special properties, qualities from the original Three Kings of Tizimin. Giménez has explained this tradition in terms of rites of communication. By placing images beside, or close, to the saints, the images, through a 'capture technique' of the sacred virtue, attract the saint's power not only by being adjacent to them, but also by analogy (1978:177). The *gremio*'s images are respected by their members, and there is a belief that they also contain the Kings' divine power. At the *gremio* locale, these images are also the object of multiple veneration. The most common veneration is the *novena* held by the leaders of the *gremio* 3 days before the celebrations begin, and the *rezos*, or prayers, during the celebrations. At the *gremio* locale, by having the Kings placed in the premise altar, the images sacralize the space and the celebrations (see Figure 5-4).

After leaving the shrine, the *gremio* pilgrims return to the locale for a lunch gathering that lasts until late afternoon. At night, the celebration continues with more food, live music and the *jarana* dance. The presence of the *delegaciones* and the hard labor of the organizers are publicly recognized. Traditional *jarana* dances, such as *el Baile de la Cabeza del Cochino*, or the Pig's Head Dance, and *el Torito*, or the Bull Dance, are popular among the members. During the celebrations, people wear traditional clothing such as *huipiles*, *ternos*, and *filipinas*. On the next day, the *gremio* makes another procession to the shrine known as "*la salida del gremio*," or the *gremio* exit, where the group recovers their temporal offerings, and stands inside the shrine to welcome the next *gremio*. Upon returning to the *gremio* locale, a meal is held to say goodbye to the other *gremio* members. Then, pilgrims return to their hometowns.

Affiliation to a *gremio* might be for life, as Don Primitivo, a *gremio* pilgrim, told me during an interview, “Nobody abandons the *gremio* by *voluntad propia* (their own will) It is until our Lord calls them. We are *socios* who can keep up with everything, thanks to God” [Chochó Hacienda: October 2004]. The *gremio* is similar to a family. The *Gremio* ‘membership’ is in many cases culturally transmitted through generations, older generations being more willing to participate than the younger generations. The presence of kids in most of the Tizimin *gremios* is notorious since complete families travel in order to attend these celebrations. Kids are seen during the processions carrying small banners, images or offerings such as embroidered napkins and tablecloths with legends such as “Promesa de la Familia Canul Noh a los Santos Reyes de Tizimin, Yucatan. Días 2 y 3 de Enero de 2005”. They also participate in the all-day celebrations. In some cases, the *gremio* becomes a point of encounter for a family reunion when the family is spread out living all over the State or across state, national and international borders (see Figure 5-7).

A pilgrim’s affiliation to a guild might also have begun later in life. In the case of Doña Carmen who is 50, since an early age she used to go to Tizimín with her family but it was not until 27 years ago when she started to become a member of “*Gremio señoras, señoritas y obreros: fé, esperanza y caridad*”:

I was sitting at the plaza when I started to have a conversation with a man: are you from here? He asked me. No, we are from Maxcanú, I answered. And when are you leaving (from Tizimin)? *Pues* we are living tomorrow since we can stay longer at the place, there is more people coming to stay here. And then, the man says, Well, then, let’s go to my house, we are celebrating the *gremio*, you can arrive anytime, you just come to my house. And we ended up going there; when we arrived he treated us like guests, offering us food, he introduced us to all the other *socias y pues asi entramos* –and this is how we became part of the *gremio* [Carmen, Maxcanú: April 2004]

Invitation to the *gremio* also comes from the same *socios* when they do their annual money collections at their home towns. People who donate money to the *gremio* receive an invitation to

be part of the celebrations. There is not a maximum on the number of delegations and members that a *gremio* can reach through the years. They are very welcoming with new *socios*. In Tizimin *gremios* present the two extremes: some *gremios* are large and very active with the presence of many delegations and others are “*cayendo*” or falling, meaning that the *gremio* do not have many members, consequently enough money to do all the celebrations. However, they still participate since the *gremio* needs to be always committed to the Kings.

The *gremio* is a space for interaction. *Socios* from different delegations interact with each other as well with Tizimileños. The social network provided by the *gremios* gets reinforced during the fiesta of the Three Kings but also when some of the *delegaciones* visit other *gremios* throughout the year. There is a continuous reciprocity in these visits and with the money gathered. The *gremio* participation provides pilgrims with a space to socialize among members and guests: an opportunity to make new friends or even to meet new potential significant others.

One of the advantages of being part of a *gremio* is that these organizations provide members with lodging during the celebrations. One of the ‘responsibilities’ is to find houses near the *gremio* locale for the *socios*. These houses are from families in Tizimin who kindly open their homes and let people stay over. In retribution families attend the *gremio* celebrations and guests leave a symbolic amount of money or food as a gratification. Therefore, guild pilgrims know in advance that they do have a place to stay. This is very convenient since it does not cost much; some pilgrims interviewed mentioned around 20 to 40 pesos, US 3 to 6 dollars per family for the two-day celebrations. When I was attending *gremios* I had the opportunity to meet some of these ‘host’ families and they mentioned that Tizimileños do not do it as a business since they do not charge a fee, and that they understand that people are coming to fulfill a promise with very a limited budget.

In addition to the religious component of the *gremio* (composed of processions, prayers, and offerings), there is a festive side that complements the religious experience. There is no question that pilgrim guilds go for more than just the religious experience. Religion and entertainment go hand in hand in this type of pilgrimage. Each individual makes their own *gremio* experience as religious or as leisurely as they want. As Don Federico points out:

If going to the *gremio* is considered more religious, or more *paseo* (leisure) it is according to their faith, your faith, my faith, his faith... According to how one wants the experience to be more religious or more leisurely or both. There are members, who arrive to Tizimin and go straight to the church, do the prayers, veneration, and offerings to the Holy Kings. However, when they are done, they go for *el chupe* (alcoholic drinks), go dancing, get drunk, and after 2 days, when they have to return home they go by the shrine to say goodbye to the Kings. And there are members in this *gremio* who come to Tizimin, go to the shrine, do their prayers and offerings, do the *gremio* entrance, eat, take a break, shower, and then return to the shrine for the mass and prayers. Next day, they go for the *gremio* exit procession, come back to the *gremio* locale, pack their banners, and then leave to their towns. These members never touch a beer or alcoholic beverage. So as you can see, some get drunk, go to the bullfights, and others just enjoy the fair, the rides and never drink. This is why I am telling you, it depends on your *creencia*, on your faith and belief [Telchac Pueblo: November 2004].

The leisure component of the *gremio* is a plus; it is another of the factors that make *gremios* attractive for family low cost entertainment. Additionally to the food, nightly *jarana* dances, and accommodation provided by the *gremio*, pilgrims have also the opportunity to attend the events or spectacles offered by the municipality as part of the civic fiesta. For instance, bullfights and *vaquerías* are very popular events among guild pilgrims. Same for the commercial stalls of the fair and the mechanical rides. The word *paseo* (leisure) is frequently mentioned among guild pilgrims. The *gremio* is an opportunity to fulfill their religious *promesas* but at the same time, a space for relaxation, enjoyment and family entertainment.

Gremios also provide a space for re-inforcing regional identities, in addition to religious devotion and entertainment. Pilgrims and locals manifest their identity and compromise as a corporate group every time they perform ritual devotions at the shrine, at the *gremio* locale and

even during the processions. By bringing and carrying their banners with the names of the saint and of their hometown in the procession and in the shrine, their local identity is exposed to the people who are watching and joining them. At the same time identity is also reinforced as part of an extended group that encompasses the other delegations. During the 2 days of celebrations, member identities shift from local to regional, to religious, through the shared affiliation to a patronal saint (see Figure 5-8).

Pilgrimage by Proxy: Reminiscences

The practice of being a pilgrim by proxy is common among corporate and non-corporate pilgrims independently of the mode of pilgrimage performed. The concept of pilgrim by proxy comes from the Medieval Period, when the search for salvation was widespread, and pilgrimage became one of the means to acquire it. Pilgrims invaded roads in search of salvation, and proxy pilgrimage became a popular form in cases of impediments among those searching for eternal life. Due to the proliferation of pilgrimages, many forms of pilgrimages arose, such as the penitential, penitence in this life reduced punishment in the next world, and some, like pilgrimage by proxy, became questioned because it soon became a easy form of devotion for those who lacked the means to travel (Tomasi 2002:9). During the 16th century, this form of pilgrimage was still common on some parts of Spain, like in the Catalan and Aragonese cities and villages. For instance, proxy pilgrims were sent to shrines during epidemics and also, people with ailments used to send offerings to a shrine with them (Christian 1981:99).

Nowadays, pilgrims do not necessarily go on pilgrimages in search of salvation, or to stop natural disasters. However, in some circumstances, pilgrims resort to the practice of pilgrimage by proxy in a more figurate way:

This time when I went to Tizimin, my neighbor don Manuel gave me his 3 candles and some *ruda* to take. When I arrived to the shrine, I offered his candles and rubbed the *ruda* against the Holy Kings. He asked me to mention his name to the Kings, and to tell them to

forgive him since he couldn't make it to Tizimin. My sister also gave me 6 candles, three for her, and three in name of my niece. She also asked me to speak to the Kings on her behalf. I did not burn her candles completely since she asked me to bring them back half burned. Whenever my niece gets sick, my sister lights one of the candles, and rubs the warm wax onto her chest. The wax cures her because it still has the power of the Holy Kings [Marcelo, Motul: January 2004].

Every time we travel to Tizimin, Machi, my neighbor, always gives me *cuerpos* (*kexitos*) and votive candles to take there with me. I offer them to Three Kings. She visits us when January 6 is approaching. She comes and brings the *cuerpos* and votive candles. Her offering consists always of *cuerpos* and candles [Maria Jesus, Merida: October 2004].

I had the experience of being a proxy pilgrim myself. It happened when I was interviewing a Mayan woman in Chemax. After the interview, when we were saying good-bye, I mentioned that I was on my way to the shrine of the Virgin of Chuina, located in Campeche. Right away she asked me if I could do her a favor, and then she gave me money to buy a whole box of candles at the site to burn after telling the Virgin why she could not come to fulfill her promise. I was also asked to name each one of her family members on a list she made for me (March 2004). This practice is so embedded on the religious culture that I heard at least one proxy story of each of the pilgrim types: *Guild*, excursionists, *jarana* dancers, *antorchistas*, and family pilgrims.

The role of a present day proxy pilgrim is more of a messenger and an intermediary between the devotee and the saints, rather than somebody who represents a devotee like in the Medieval period. This practice is also found in other Latin American pilgrimage centers. Gross mentions how in the pilgrimage to Bom Jesus da Lapa in Northeastern Brazil, some pilgrims bring money as offering from people who were unable to make the journey (Gross 1971:143). Devotees, when they do not have the means, or the condition to fulfill their promises, turn to pilgrims they know, usually relatives or neighbors, to proxy for them during their visit to the shrine. The proxies do not receive money, or do this for business purposes. It becomes more of a matter of trust and confidentiality, since the devotee has to abandon his/her offerings and prayers

in the proxy's hands. The proxies express some feelings of social recognition, but at the same time they felt very responsible of being the intermediaries.

The Three Kings have the Last Word

Corporate and non-corporate pilgrims overflow the shrine during the fiesta time and, as we have seen they experience the journey in different forms and for many reasons. However, there is a 'regional pattern' on the way pilgrims make decisions and behave based on their perception of the King's images as miraculous and active participants. As I have mentioned in chapter 4, the 'spiritual magnetism' that attracts these typologies of pilgrims to Tizimin is in the figure of the Three Kings. The 'divine power' nature embedded in them is one of the main reasons why pilgrims turn to them in case of misfortune or distress in their personal and familiar life. The Kings are not seen as 'specialists' in a specific aspect and petitions and promises made to them are very general: health, work and school, family and relationship issues, that is, for everyday aspects of life. The importance of the Kings lies in their characteristic of being considered as *imagenes con milagro* –miracle images and images with ability to intervene in pilgrims' decisions.

Pilgrims embark in a journey to Tizimin because they believe in the Kings divine power reflected on their ability to perform miracles. As Christian has mentioned, miracles are evidence of the power of the image, the person must believe in a saint for the saint to cure them. (1981:102). Pilgrims who go to Tizimin do not expect for 'great miracles' to happen; the fact that they are healthy and able to go on a pilgrimage is already consider a miracle. When I used to ask pilgrims for performed miracles to them, they usually refer to the fact that they were able to go and visit the Kings. As don Carlos answered: "fue por su milagro que yo fui a Tizimin este año" (Uyalceh: February 2004) it was because of their miracle that I went to Tizimin. Also, concrete miracles were mentioned to me within cases related to surgeries, pregnancies, jobs, and

health problems. Therefore, the miracle power of the Kings is expected to be performed in a more practical manner than ethereal or divine. There were only a few cases in which pilgrims mentioned stories of ‘great miracles’ like in the case of Don Sergio, a *gremio* member who lost mobility due to a car accident, and he recovered it in the shrine while paying his promise to the Kings. There is an oral tradition among pilgrims and shrine personnel on miracles that happened, that is passed by word of mouth and physically expressed in the shrine with votive offering such as photographs, letters, and *kexitos*.

The Kings miracle divine nature is also reflected on their active participation in pilgrims lives. For instance, the Kings are the ones who allow pilgrims to go on a pilgrimage; common phrases were “*si los Reyes me lo permiten voy a la fiesta*”, I will go to the feast, if the Kings allow me to go or “*si los Reyes me dan dinero yo voy*”, if the kings provide the money I will go. The Kings as forms of miracles and dreams communicate their decisions and intentions to the pilgrims. Pilgrims dream with them having conversations, telling them what to do, taking them to places, or showing them special scenarios. There is an active participation of the Kings in the pilgrims’ lives. This is shown in cases such as the decision making on the next pilgrimage and the expenses involved on its performance since they will be determined by the Kings.

Promises made by corporate and non-corporate pilgrims have to be fulfilled every 3, 6 or 9 years with visits to the shrine. When or how, are questions that at the end will be addressed to the divine. Therefore, miracles and dreams become symbols of actions and decisions regarding the pilgrim presence at the Kings sanctuary year after year.

Summary: In Search of More than Devotion

For centuries, pilgrimage has been a cultural and religious activity that has offered a range of experiences to the people who undertake them. Whether for a personal inner transformation, for payment of a promise, or for a time of social recreation, pilgrims travel; they displace themselves

in order to achieve these experiences. Pilgrimage is a cultural construction influenced by historical processes and reinforced by local practices of devotion and social interaction. For the Catholic Church, the act of pilgrimage has a meaning. A person walks to meet with the Lord at the shrine where He is venerated, and this is the way people have to walk through our lives. For many pilgrims, this act entails more than this action. The coordinates of place, person and movement parallel to the categories of shrine, pilgrim, and journey provide a holistic framework for the study of this phenomenon.

The case study of the Three Kings pilgrimage demonstrates how the journey becomes meaningful through movement, contact with the images and participation in the multiple activities provided by the City of Tizimin and the religious organization such as the gremios. The tradition of pilgrimage since pre-hispanic times has been embedded in the Mayan culture and therefore in the Yucatecan. The journey encompassed more than religious motivations. For instance, pilgrimage and commerce were common practices among the Mayas; in the Island of Cozumel interchanged of goods were linked to offerings and consultation of sacred oracles. During the Spanish Colony, pilgrimage practices became linked to patronal fiestas in which the commerce activity was present, as well and important for the people who culturally consumed it (Farriss 1984; Thompson 1966).

Through the newspaper and ethnographic research presented, nowadays we can see how functions, practices and pilgrimage behaviors have remained and changed over time due to external factors such as globalization or what Yucatecans call '*la modernidad*' (modern times) and also due to internal, local, and regional behaviors like within the practice of cultural consumption. As in the Medieval period, the pilgrimage tradition in Yucatan was initially on foot because people used to walk all the time; it was the main means of locomotion for most people.

With '*la modernidad*' new means of transportation were introduced and consumed according to pilgrims' economic situation. With the arrival of the train to Yucatan a new era on pilgrimage transportation begun. The train was a fast and convenient option of transportation besides being affordable for low class pilgrims. For many years, the train became 'the transportation' used for commercial and also for religious purposes as the newspaper ads state and pilgrims recalled during interviews. With time, the interstate paid buses and private vehicles slowly replaced the trains and rented transportation such as vans as buses gained more popularity among pilgrims.

Through the years, many non corporate and corporate pilgrims have recalled consuming those means of transportation. Nowadays pilgrims arrive to the shrine of the Three Kings by buses, cars, bikes or running. According to Monseñor Camargo "the ways, in which people go on a pilgrimage ultimately do not matter; it is the intention and the motivation which does" (Mérida: December 2004). Diverse are the modes in where pilgrims experience the pilgrimage as for the motivations that in the first instance move pilgrims to undertake the journey. Each mode is unique and charged with meanings. Non corporate pilgrims such as nuclear and extended families travel, make their devotions and consume the fair and local attractions such as the local zoo together, in groups. For the "votive dancers" it is the movement as an action that gives meaning to their pilgrimage. Their *promesa* implies physical and spiritual work; outside the shrine, the religious and leisure distinctions become blurred for the audience but not for the dancers, since they know the roots of their motivations. The *antorchistas* link devotion with exercise, either running or biking, targeting the younger population. On the road, in the city and in the shrine, pilgrims make a public display of their devotion and by wearing uniforms with the Kings image and town names depicted, they deterritorialize the images and become 'ambassadors' of their home towns. Guild pilgrims are the ones who annually carry on with the

tradition of these religious organizations that are core during patronal fiestas. The *gremio* provides space for family, friends and acquaintances to gather. By being members of the *gremio*, pilgrims ascribe themselves to the Three Kings devotion, and at the same time they reinforce their regional identity.

The microcosm of the Three Kings Fiesta provides us with a pilgrimage context influenced by gender, age, social class, and economic condition and filled it with meanings, symbolisms and local practices. The diverse forms in which this pilgrimage is culturally consumed in the region, legitimize social difference and express distinctions shown in the systematic products of habitus that conform a certain life-style (Bourdieu 1984) of a group of Yucatecos who year after year consume the shrine and the fiesta. The social and cultural distinctions are present in the different modes and representations of mobility in corporate and non corporate pilgrims, who overflow the shrine of the Three Kings during the religious and civic celebrations of the patronal fiesta.

Pilgrims' perception of the divine power embodied in the Three Kings is the main motivation, but not the only one, that draws devotees to their shrine. Waves of pilgrims invade the city of Tizimin, the shrine and the fairgrounds; as in many other pilgrimage traditions, pilgrims arrive in groups conformed by family members, friends, and acquaintances (see Frey 1998; Morinis 1984; Rodríguez-Shadow and Shadow 2000; Sallnow 1987). The Three Kings become the driving force for people to assemble, to gather together in the same place and for similar reasons. Journey and devotional practices are undertaken and practiced in groups, reinforcing family, friendship or communal bonds. These religious practices and family perceptions are part of a lifestyle product of the habitus process. The gender and age composition of pilgrims who visit the shrine varies in relation to the modes of experiencing the pilgrimage. During the fiesta days, the shrine has a constant representation of both genders doing devotional

practices. However, torch groups are composed mostly by males and the votive *jaraneros* by females. All ages are as well represented since entire families visit the Kings. Through the process of socialization, since early in life the habitus devotional behavior that characterizes the Three Kings shrine is inculcated and later reproduced to the next generations. It is a common scene to see parents lighting up their kid's 3 candles or holding them in order to reach the images. Distinctions in age are more notorious in the group's constitution. For instance, *antorchistas* groups are made up mostly by young people, and *gremios* by adults. Votive *jaraneros* are both, young single people who dance, and adults who accompany them. The Three Kings pilgrimage becomes for both genders a channel for the transmission of religious devotion, and reinforces the cultural behavior of a group of Yucatecos.

The way that social class and economic condition affect the way people experience and interpret pilgrim can be analyzed through one of the coordinates for the study of pilgrimage: movement. Pilgrims move from one place to the other as a part of their promise. The ways of doing this varies and the transportation too, and the way they do it also reflects the social class background, and economic needs of the pilgrims. The use of public interstate transportation, such as commercial routes that link the state, and private buses for rent, are more common among corporate *gremios* because their members travel in couples and in small groups, and they come from middle and low income populations in Yucatan. Non corporate pilgrims who come from the rural areas, where the economic situation of the peasantry does not allow them to own vehicles, *fleta*, or rent, a privately-owned car or van which makes trips to hospitals, special events or popular destinations, or rely on public transportation. *Antorchistas* also come from the same economic strata, and the way they have to move forces them to rent trucks for the running torch or make the pilgrimage on their own bikes. Other non-corporate low class pilgrims who

come from the urban areas, own private cars. Since many of the distinctions within classes are manifested in the way objects are consumed (Storey 1999), the means of transportation that are consumed during the Three Kings pilgrimage, become identifiers and marker of distinctions that underline the social class of the pilgrims –low class, who attend patronal fiestas in Yucatan as their annual religious and leisure event.

Throughout the journey, pilgrims are confronted with personal encounters with the divinity and the people who surround them, acts of kindness, inner feelings, new and old friendships. Being in the torch groups and *gremios* give a feeling of sociability and belonging to a group, and to a family. Every journey is filled with good memories, anecdotes, and stories to share with their family, friends and anthropologists. Anecdotes are created and stay in the collective memory of the pilgrim, or they become “model stories” among pilgrims and priests. An example of this is the often mentioned case of one of the *gremio* presidents, who in a car accident lost some mobility in his lower body, and who was able to recover it through his faith and devotion, and by walking on his knees to the Three Kings on January 6th.

By undertaking a pilgrimage, non corporate and corporate pilgrims go through processes similar to a rite of passage since the pilgrim temporarily leaves his community, town or city and voluntarily travels to a place which is considered sacred, where people are in a liminoide stage far from everyday structures, to later return to everyday life more spiritually fortified (Turner 1974; Turner and Turner 1978). Not everyone necessarily goes through an inner transformation nor does everyone achieve a liminoide stage in where there are no structures, no differences and a feeling of *communitas* is shared among the pilgrims. For instance, social distinctions are clearly stated inside the shrine during the 6th of January mass and at the *vaquería*. However, among *antorchistas* and *agremiados* distinctions are more blurred and *communitas* achieved.

Local cultural understandings of mobility are key for the understanding of pilgrimage in Yucatan. Pilgrims to Tizimin not necessarily go there in search of a personal transformation like in other pilgrimage cases where this becomes the aim of their journey (Dubish 1995; Feinberg 1989; Frey 1998). Pilgrims undertake the journey in order to be close with the images, to pay and make their promises to the Kings. In general, devotees do not expect 'great miracles' to be performed, rather 'small' actions related to health, work, and relations; what also pilgrims anticipate is to have the economic means and the opportunity to go to Tizimin year after year; only the Three Kings can grant them with this. There are other reasons that motivate pilgrims to visit the Three Kings shrine like leisure activities encompassed in the *gremios* and the ones provided by the city. However, there is a strong consensus across the State of Yucatan that religious motives are indeed the main incentives that draw pilgrims to the shrine of the Three Kings.

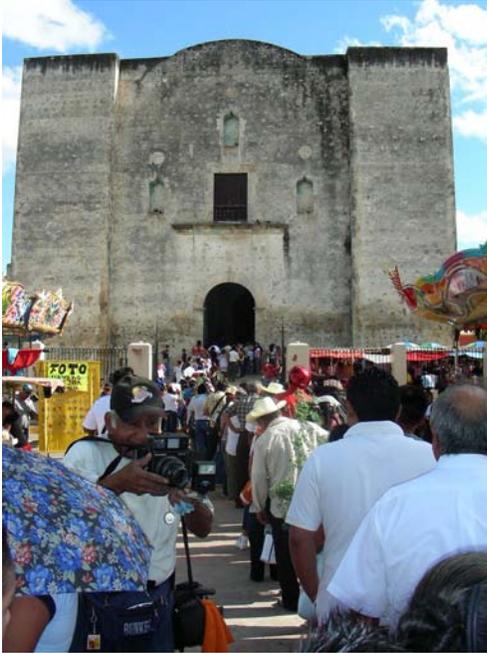


Figure 5-1. Pilgrims lining up outside the shrine



Figure 5-2. Paid transportation used by pilgrims



Figure 5-3. Votive *Jaraneras* at the *vaquería*



Figure 5-4. Surrogate images of the Three Kings



Figure 5-5. *Antorchistas* arriving to Tizimin



Figure 5-6. “Three Kings *Antorchistas*” after fulfilling their *promesas*



Figure 5-7. Departing *gremio*, showing their tablecloth, an offering made to the Three Kings



Figure 5-8. Entering *gremio* carrying their banners

CHAPTER 6
PILGRIMAGE ON THE MOVE: DEVOTIONAL TOURISM

I arrived in Tekit at 10 pm. I had to be at a Coca-Cola stand outside of *el centro de salud* (the local public clinic) at 11pm since the excursion was leaving from there. I got there on time and nobody was there. The stand was closed and a handwritten sign was posted there:

Excursión Tizimín-Río Lagartos-San Felipe
Día sábado 11 de enero a las 11 pm / Saturday, January 11 at 11 pm
Separe su lugar/ reserve your place
Contactar Doña Ema/contact Doña Ema

I paid 180 Mexican pesos (US\$17). I had a one inch piece of hot pink cardboard with the number 8. Half an hour later people started to arrive. 45 minutes later, Doña Ema showed up. One hour after that, a 40 seat tourism bus parked close by. By that time, all the excursionists were there waiting, chatting, laughing, and kids were playing. You could easily tell people were excited, relaxed, and in a 'vacation mood'. Once inside the bus, Doña Ema, our guide, gave us instructions, and introduced her husband. Half an hour later, the bus was completely silent, since people were sleeping or quietly chatting. Around 2:30 am we arrived in Tizimin. Lights were turned on, and another set of instruction were given again. We needed to be back at this spot 8 hours later. The entire group walked together towards the shrine. When we got to there, I was shocked! The plaza, the atrium and the shrine were completely packed. The line to get inside the shrine was the longest I had ever seen. We waited for more than 4 hours to be close to the Kings. While making the line, I started to chat with people. All pilgrims were also from other excursions. At that moment I realized how popular these excursions had become. By 11:30am, we were on our way to Río Lagartos. Once there, we visited the *ojo de agua* (fresh water spring). An hour later, around lunch time, we were at San Felipe, a coastal fishing village where most of the excursionists had lunch at the local restaurants, or bought fried fish and tortillas and had a picnic in a shadowy spot along the *malecón* (the boardwalk). Around 4 pm we went back to Tizimin, but this time they dropped us at the *posta*, the main fairground. Three hours later we were back at the bus; you could notice people were all excited, talking, and showing their purchases and souvenirs. We came back to Tekit at night, around 10 pm. The bus parked at the same point of departure, Doña Ema thanked us for going on her excursion, and invited people to join her again next year. It was not until I was walking back to my friend's house that I felt exhausted. We had spent almost 24 hours in full, nonstop action. *Promesas* were made and fulfilled at the same time leisure time was enjoyed [Field notes, January 12, 2004]

Pilgrimage is not only about traveling on foot, and looking for forgiveness. Pilgrimage is movement, and because we live in a 'world in/of motion,' changes have to encounter and redefine these movements. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate, through the analysis of 'bus excursions' and practices of cultural consumption, how there is a continuous relation between religion and leisure. The consumption of this new mode of experiencing pilgrimage is a

manifestation of “devotional tourism”, a cultural, religious, and leisure activity. It is a consumed practice that defines a Yucatecan lifestyle, and has reshaped the regional culture of pilgrimage into a more mobile and globalized form of popular religious expression.

Religious Tourism: Between the Divine and Entertainment

Under the umbrella of “tourism” there are many classifications that explain the leisure behavior of the people. When we hear this word, we tend to picture mega beach resort complexes, medieval castles, markets, hotels, people taking pictures and video of the places visited, buses full of tourists, and more. The Western conception of international tourism based on the idea that it is supported by the formal economy of the countries, and is represented by Western tourists with economic means, touring and in search of adventures, is what has been promoted and commercialized at the global level. On the other hand, there is “domestic tourism,” which is more related to the informal economy and represented by nationals and regional travelers within their own countries. Their search of a journey is not necessarily motivated by a feeling of adventure so pilgrims fit in this category of tourism.

Besides the distinctions of nationality and residence, tourism can be also classified based on what motivates people to separate “from normal ‘instrumental’ life and the business of making a living, to enter into another kind of moral state in which mental, expressive, and cultural needs come to the fore” (Graburn 1983:11). Rinschede mentions that sometimes it is difficult to differentiate, or clearly define, a tourist’s travel motivation, or motivations, since there may be more than one. Nevertheless, he provides a classification of different types of tourism, according to motivation: “Holiday tourism, which includes weekend and vacation tourism, health resort, and pleasure tourism; cultural tourism, which roughly corresponds to educational tourism, but which also includes scientific tourism; religious tourism, which includes the visit to religious ceremonies and conferences, and above all the visit to local, regional,

national, and international religious centers; social or group tourism, which occurs as extended family tourism, or as club tourism, with the integration of the tourist in the traveling group; sport tourism, which is carried out by both competitive athletes, as well as visitors of sporting events (active and passive sport tourism); economic tourism, which appears in the form of business tourism, conference tourism, exhibition, and fair tourism; and political tourism, which is defined as diplomatic tourism, tourism at political events, and tourism at national monuments” (Rinschede 1992:52). Religious tourism is the type of tourism that concerns us here.

As with tourism, religious activities are also induced by motivations, “a persisting tendency, a chronic inclination to perform certain sorts of acts, and experience certain sorts of feelings in certain sorts of situations, the ‘sorts’ being commonly very heterogeneous, and rather ill-defined classes” (Geertz 1973). Therefore, for religious people, different motivations can lead them to a single action, without necessarily determining, or ranking the nature of the cause. We see this in religious tourism and in pilgrimage cases where religious and tourism motivations intersect.

For Tomasi, religious tourism “is not tourism tout court, but rather it is a form of tourism motivated, partly or wholly, by religious motives, and closely or loosely connected with holiday, making, or with journeys undertaken for social, cultural or political reasons, over short or long distances. In Europe, religious tourism usually takes the form of pilgrimages to sanctuaries or shrines, religious festivals, and the ‘special events’ connected with them. There are thus, three types of places concerned to this activity: the shrines of holy pilgrimage, religious tourist attractions associated with historical or cultural events, and religious festivals” (2002:19). There are five characteristics present in religious tourism: voluntary, temporal and unpaid travel; religious motivation; supplemented by other motivations; the destination is a religious site (local,

regional, national or international status); and travel to the destination is not a religious practice (Blackwell 2007:38).

In the Christian context, religious tourism includes all kinds of travel, motivated in part or wholly by religion, and the destination is a place either from nature, a river, a cave, or manmade, a cathedral, which is considered sacred. Travel which implies movement comes in the form of walking, running, biking, or by car, plane, train or bus. Nowadays, organized travel and the business industry behind the travel logistics and the places visited have become main features of this type of tourism.

Religious tourism has existed as a business for awhile, as is shown in the case of Catholic Europe (Swatos and Tomasi 2002; Vukonic 1996). Scholars from different disciplines have documented this presence either as a separate entity, or within the information presented. Pilgrimage excursions to shrines, such as to Lourdes in France (Dahlberg 2000; Eade 2000), Santiago de Compostela (Feinberg 1989; Frey 1998; Roseman 2004) and El Rocio (Crain 1997) in Spain, and Medjugorje in the Balkans (Vukonic 1996), are organized by tourist agencies and Catholic parishes from all over the world. In other countries, like in India and Mexico, where the domestic tourism industry has grown from pilgrimage, religious tourism is also present (Gladstone 2005; Rodríguez-Shadow and Shadow 2000; Shinde 2007).

Information on religious tourism is also found in other outlets. In our globalized world, as a result of massive communications through the World Wide Web, religious tourism has reached a global level by making information more accessible about “top destinations” such as Jerusalem, Mecca and Lourdes. For instance, you can find sites such as ‘religious-tourism.com,’ dedicated to promoting and organizing multi-faith journeys, or sites like ‘206tour.com’ devoted to organizing Catholic pilgrimages around the world. Virtual pilgrimages for Judaic-Christian

religions to the Holy Land, Lourdes, Rome, and Guadalupe are also part of the internet pilgrimage offering. The internet has become an alternative to the religious experience by the virtual transportation of the self, and the temporary abandonment of the local space for the gain of a religious experience, as in the case of the virtual pilgrimage to Maha Kumbh Mela, where Hindus can be cleansed in an animated image of the Ganges River. As Castells (1996:375) has pointed out, “localities become disembodied from their cultural, historical, geographic meaning, and reintegrated into functional networks, or into image collages, inducing a space of flows that substitutes for the space of places” (Vásquez and Marquard 2003:92-93).

The study of tourism and religion is not new. Many scholars have devoted time to the study of religious and secular travel, tourism and pilgrimage. As mentioned earlier, the tendency to analyze the categories of tourism and pilgrimage as overlapping, rather than rigid and dissimilar, is more accurate in our globalized world where mobility plays a fundamental role. In the area of anthropology, Turner was the pioneer in the study of pilgrimage as a social process. Starting with his early work, he mentions the evident relation within pilgrimage and tourism that has been present since the time of medieval pilgrimages. Later in his work with his wife Edith, and based on their field work experience during many pilgrimages, they stress the continuous relation between these two categories. The well-known phrase “a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist” (Turner and Turner 1978:20) became a point of inspiration, reflection and departure for the study of pilgrimage and tourism.

According to Inda and Rosaldo, globalization has pulled culture apart from place. We live in a world where culture is in motion, a “world where cultural subjects and objects, that is, meaningful forms, such as capital, people, commodities, images, and ideas, have become unhinged from particular localities” (2002:11). In this sense, pilgrimage becomes a channel for

this motion of culture, knowledge, ideas and representations. We cannot study pilgrimage without taking into account the touristic global context where it is embedded. Tourism “is, in principle, the modern metamorphosis of both pilgrimage and travel” (Cohen 1992a:59).

As demonstrated in previous chapters, pilgrimage and sacred places have become an umbrella of discourses (Eade and Sallnow 2000a) that through decades have shaped the regional identity of a sector of the Yucatecan population, as well as the popular religious identity of a place, and its devotional practices. Therefore, today pilgrimage is seen to be more than a transformative process, from which the individual emerges in an altered state, different from his or her previous situation (Crumrine and Morinis 1991). The personal transformation, which indeed is still present, is a part of the religious experience which provides a space for touristic and leisure activities. Under this umbrella is the fact that pilgrimages are getting more organized, bureaucratized, and touristized by different institutions, such as small travel agencies, private practice and local churches (Turner and Turner 1978). Below I will demonstrate this with the example of regional bus excursions to the Three Kings Shrine in Tizimin.

Devotional Tourism: When the Roads Coincide

In Latin America, there is a strong connection between pilgrimage, fairs and fiestas. The categories of travel within pilgrimage and tourism find a point of intersection during these celebrations. This intersection has been an important feature of pilgrimage since Medieval times. The medieval pilgrimages in Islam and Christianity were associated with fairs and fiestas. For example, in the case of Islam, Wensinck (1966:32) writes “great fairs were from early times associated with the hadjdj or hajj, which was celebrated at the conclusion of the date harvest” (Turner and Turner 1978:36). For rural communities, France Weber mentions there was more to pilgrimage than religious activity. Pilgrimages were ‘festive occasions involving food and drink, shopping and dancing...It’s more a pleasure trip than a pious action’ (Kaelber 2002:64-65). This

Medieval tradition of pilgrimage and celebrations crossed oceans. Therefore, with the Conquest and the spread of the Catholic religion in the “New World,” the tradition of pilgrimage and of Iberian fiestas was imposed on the Native peoples. Masses, saint’s processions, bands of musicians, bullfights, dances, theatrical performances, banquets and fireworks were fiesta elements, religious and civic, that came with the Iberian fiesta system. The fiestas were assigned by the missionaries as a means of entertainment, to honor the saints and as places for marketing goods (Farriss 1984:321). These three features became key motivations for people to embark in religious journeys.

In Mexico, pilgrimages to main shrines such as Guadalupe, Chalma, Ocotlán, Otatitlán, Izamal, Zapopan, and San Juan de los Lagos, are undertaken in the context of their patronal fiestas (Giménez 1978; Rodríguez-Shadow and Shadow 2000; Turner 1973; Turner 1974; Turner and Turner 1978; Velasco Toro 1997a). Some of these fiestas have a national impact, such as Guadalupe, since the Virgin is a national symbol; regional, as in the case of Otatitlán; and local, as on the case of Izamal. The religious, social, and economic aspects embedded in them are reflected in pilgrim devotions, leisure, and commerce activities that occur during the celebrations. The importance of these fiestas is manifested in the heavy mobilization of people due to religious and leisure motives, and in the ways these celebrations affect the infrastructure created to support and maintain them at a local and global level.

Federal and state governments, as well as private industry, have come to recognize the potential of these celebrations as channels for promoting Mexican culture through the tourism industry. At an international and national level, the Mexican Ministry of Tourism advertizes through the internet the different tourism offers located in the country. Under the category of Cultural Tourism, the Federal government promotes three types of tourism: religious,

gastronomic, and language tourism. Religious Tourism is described as an ancestral religious mobilization, present in humankind, and practiced by people of all sexes and social classes. And given that millions of pilgrims undertake this type of journey, religious tourism becomes an alternative for tourism development since it is a type of 'faithful tourism,' meaning recurrent visits from pilgrims to the same shrines and surrounding touristic areas, even though pilgrims stay for short periods of time. The most important Marian sanctuary, the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe, annually gets 14 million visitors, mostly nationals, but also a large group of internationals, since the Basilica is part of all the touristic city circuits. The next in importance is the sanctuary of San Juan de los Lagos, in the state of Jalisco, with an annual flow of more than 6 million pilgrims. Among the most prominent sanctuaries in the country are the Our Lady of Zapopan in Jalisco; El Santo Niño de Atocha in Plateros, Zacatecas; Santuario del Santo Señor de Chalma in the state of Mexico; El Cerro del Cubilete in Guanajuato; Nuestra Señora de la Soledad and la Virgen de Juquila, in Oaxaca; Santuario del Cristo Roto in San José de Gracia, Aguascalientes; the temple devoted to the Virgen de la Candelaria in Veracruz, and many others (www.sectur.gob.mx).

Even though the Mexican government endeavors to promote religious tourism, it is still a touristic enterprise in a state of development, especially if we compare it to the European religious tourism system already in full function in main sanctuaries like Compostela, Lourdes, Fatima, Medjugorje, and The Vatican. The architecture of their historical religious constructions, as well as the surrounding landscapes and commercial districts, work as magnets to attract the Western international and domestic tourists who annually boost the national and local formal economies of the area. In Mexico this differs in the sense that, with the exception of sanctuaries such as Guadalupe and San Juan de los Lagos, that attract international, national and domestic

tourism, the other shrines target mostly domestic tourism from regional and local populations, supporting the formal and more often informal, economies of the area.

In the case of the state of Yucatan, it is a touristic destination per excellence. Local, national and international tourism industries promote the culture richness of this Mexican state. The Mayan legacy of Pre-Hispanic cities, their buildings, open spaces, temples, and ballcourts, have become the distinctive signature of this area. Its natural wonders, like its diverse ecosystems, and the magnificent colonial architecture of cities, churches, convents and haciendas, translate into traditions, festivals, music, gastronomy and handcrafts which make this Mexican state a “Mecca” of international and domestic tourism. The Yucatan Ministry of Tourism promotes the state globally through their internet site, and at tourism conferences as Yucatan ‘Land of Wonders.’ A good percentage of tourists that visit Yucatan arrive through Cancun, a beach mega resort located at the neighboring state of Quintana Roo.

The classification of “religious tourism” is absent as a term on the website. However, it is embedded within the categories of cultural tourism and touristic routes, but only in its most raw connotation. Under the category of Cultural Tourism, the Tourism Ministry promotes the religious architecture of monasteries, convents, and churches, as well as the main fairs, patronal fiestas, and celebrations from each of the tourist towns encompassed in the four areas in which the state is divided: east, west, south and north. Among the festivities listed for the East is the *Feria Agrícola Ganadera, Industrial y Artesanal de Tizimín* [Agricultural, Cattle, Industrial and Crafts Fair of Tizimin], in reference to the civic aspect of The Three Kings Fiesta. Within the touristic routes, the government promotes the Convents Route as an historical and architectural one day tour visiting temples, churches and convents from 11 colonial towns located ‘in the heart

of Yucatan' (www.mayayucatan.com). These two categories can be considered as religious tourism if there is an existing religious motivation, either entire or partial, on the traveler's side.

In Yucatan, the presence of religious tourism is in early stages, and it is more noticeable in the urban and touristic cities of Merida and Valladolid, and in some archeological sites, like Chichen Itzá. Colonial churches and convents are visited by religious tourists, and are supported by the tourism industry in the same way as the archaeological sites that annually receives New Age tourists and those from other religious denominations during the vernal and autumnal equinox (see Castañeda 1996). Nowadays, the main religious tourism destinations rely on governmental and private tourism enterprises that generate the economic monies for the 'host' towns where the sacred attractions are located, destinations which are usually commercialized and promoted by state, national and private institutions which support, for the most part, the formal economy of the area. I propose an additional category, devotional tourism, for the analysis of popular religious practices of pilgrimages to patronal fiestas. This category explains better the logic behind the domestic tourism, informal economies, and religious and leisure consumer patterns among low-income sectors. It is important to mention that this category may or may not be seen as a precursor stage to a more developed religious tourism system in the area.

Devotional tourism is defined as a cultural religious activity intimately related to popular religion, where the main motivation of the trip is not only to visit a sacred place and its surroundings, but rather, to make a devotion or to pay a promise to the supreme being, or divine image present in the place. In this way, devotional tourism is strongly motivated by an internal spiritual feeling, demonstrated in concrete actions of devotion and, to a lesser degree, motivated by the eagerness to participate in leisure activities, or travel to different places. The participant is identified as a pilgrim, rather than a religious tourist. The weight put on the religious aspect, and

the different levels of commodification, consumption and commercialization of infrastructure and leisure are what will define this religious activity.

The consumers of devotional tourism are ‘day-trippers,’ or ‘excursionist tourists,’ under the classification of ‘domestic tourists’ (Gladstone 2005:3-4,164), since they are visiting a place other than their own for less than twenty four hours, for religious and leisure purposes.

Devotional tourism relies mostly, but not solely, on the domestic informal sector, a characteristic of the local places where the main shrines are located. This type of tourism is consumed by low-income pilgrims who are likely to work in agriculture, in informal-sector activities, or sometimes even unemployed. These are the sectors of the population, who according to Gladstone, are more likely to participate in pilgrimages to religious centers. Low-income travelers are a type of tourist that has hardly been addressed in the literature of anthropology and/or tourism. There is the belief that all tourists are from rich countries, and that poor people do not travel for leisure purposes.

Based on the case of day excursions to the Three Kings Shrine, I demonstrate how devotional tourism is an important cultural, religious, and leisure activity intimately related to popular religious practices and internal spiritual motivations. This a practice influenced by external agents within this globalized world that nowadays have become a practical alternative for low income pilgrims to express devotion and enjoy recreational time.

Excursionist Pilgrims: From *Promesas* to *Paseo*

Since Medieval times, pilgrimage has provided people with a ‘positive social sanction’ to move and travel freely. In a society with scant economic opportunities, holy journeys, such as pilgrimages or crusades, were the only possible type of travel for the common people (see Tomasi 2002). Centuries later, pilgrimage still functions as a channel for movement of people, ideas, beliefs, and goods. In Yucatan, pilgrimage, a religious practice embedded in the society

since Pre-Hispanic times, is still a journey that gives people ‘socially recognized mobility,’ translated into modern forms of travel, such as in the case of devotional tourism.

The two dimensions of pilgrimage are present in devotional tourism: the religious and the touristic, the first being the most dominant. People go on a pilgrimage motivated by different reasons. The journey undertaken is in the name of a *promesa* to be fulfilled through popular religious practices entrenched in the culture. It is an annual search for the proper space to be in physical contact with the divine as an exchange to solve or avoid health issues; solve difficulties for their family, relatives or themselves; to find a job, love; or to reconstruct a family; among some of the practical motivations. The search for ludic time, for a space for recreation, for the internal self assurance of being rewarded as a result of the fulfilled *promesa*, pair up with the religious motivations.

Devotional tourism is usually seasonal, following the calendar of religious fiestas, and other official celebration days, established by the Catholic Church. The more common destinations among the Yucatecan devotional tourists are the patronal fiestas held at formal and popular shrines. The presence of devotional tourism in Yucatan is manifested in the shrine of Our Lady of Izamal, the patron saint of the state, and at the Three Kings Shrine. In Campeche, the shrine of the Virgin of Chuiná is a popular destination as well as the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

The different means of transportation pilgrims use to mobilize vary according to their motivations for traveling, their economic means, and their location in relation to the sacred place to visit. For instance, there are situations where some Catholic shrines are only accessible to a certain class of pilgrims. There is a parish in the northern part of the city of Merida where the parishioners come from different social and economic classes. Most are from middle and high

income classes. Religious excursions are organized annually by the priest to shrines such as Lourdes in France, Santiago de Compostela in Spain, or to Jerusalem in Israel. As expected, only the pilgrims with the more income can afford to go on those. At the same time, the parish also offers three types of pilgrimages to the Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe during her celebrations. The same pilgrims that could afford to go on pilgrimage to Europe, are able to buy the excursion with the plane ticket and arrive in Mexico City two hours after their departure. Pilgrims with less income can only afford to buy a bus excursion arriving in the same place 24 hours later. And, for parishioners that cannot afford either, they are offered a pilgrimage to San Cristóbal, a local sanctuary devoted to the Virgin of Guadalupe located two hours away. These excursions can be placed under the category of religious tourism.

Nowadays, the shrine of Three Kings in Tizimin welcomes a great number of pilgrims. A previous chapter mentions how the non-corporate and corporate pilgrims travel to the shrine of the Three Kings running, biking, dancing, by car, by *fletes*, or on public transportation. From a couple of decades ago to the present, devotional tourism has become a convenient option of transportation for pilgrims who are looking for spiritual or religious motivation, without worrying about the distances implied in the trip, or the time spent at their destination. This mode of moving adds the element of *paseo* (trip) entertainment, and leisure time for a complete experience (see Figure 6-1).

The increasing popularity of this new mode of experiencing pilgrimage, and its recognition as an important consumer practice in the Yucatan Peninsula, has also been documented by local newspapers, as it is written in the following press report:

Hundreds of the faithful gave the perfect end to the Three Kings Fair. Since dawn, dozens of pilgrims have arrived in buses to Tizimin. The church opened at 3 am. The majority of the faithful arrived in excursions. There were approximately 200 buses that arrived on

Saturday at 11pm, and stayed through Sunday at 7 am. Some of the visitors organized the excursions in advance and paid them in small payments over a period of time. The excursions came mostly from Mérida, Tixcocoob, Hoctun, Campeche, Ciudad del Carmen, Cancun, Playa del Carmen, and about 5 from Chetumal. They are organized in such a way that the excursions arrive at dawn in Tizimin, pay their promises by doing their devotions, enjoy their time at the fair, and in some cases, travel to the beaches of Río Lagartos and San Felipe. Besides arriving to Tizimin on excursions, pilgrims also came in vans and private vehicles (Diario de Yucatán. Monday, January 15, 2001:1).

As we can see, devotional tourism takes the form of day excursions from the sending pilgrim communities, either cities or towns, to the receiving shrine. The distance between the communities to the shrine determines, for the most part, the commodification of this practice. The farther the community is located, the more likely its pilgrims are to arrive by excursion. During the fieldwork seasons of 2004 and 2005, I registered around 60 sending cities, towns and haciendas from the state of Yucatan, 9 from Quintana Roo, and 3 from Campeche. More than one excursion came from cities like Mérida, Umán, Progreso, Cozumel, Cancun, Carrillo Puerto and Tulúm. Urban populations are more familiar within the tourism typology of bus excursions, and also have larger and more diversified populations. It is worth noticing that all these cities, with the exception of Carrillo Puerto, are important receiving communities of international, national, regional and local tourism all year around.

In the case of Yucatan, day excursions are organized through the local formal economy sector, and on the family level through the informal. For the city of Merida, local, privately-owned, small travel agencies, such as Excursiones de Wilberth Maldonado, Viajes Zac Nicté, or Excursiones Thomas Mena Salas, located downtown, and specializing mostly on tours to central Mexico, and targeting the low class sector of the Yucatecan population, offer day excursions to Tizimin and Chuiná, Campeche. Through small local newspaper ads they offer their products:

Excursion to Tizimín

Visiting Extravaganza, Río Lagartos and San Felipe

January 5 and 12

Viajes Zac Nicté

Calle 42 #524-c entre 65 y 67. Downtown

Phone: 23-95-56

(Diario de Yucatán. Wednesday, January 2, 1991:12)

There are other similar newspaper ads from locals who also organize excursions to Tizimin and Chuiná. All are similar in content and the products offered. In the rural area, excursions are organized at the family level without gender distinction, many times by couples, or a single person with the help of a relative from the opposite sex. They are promoted through word of mouth among relatives, friends and acquaintances, or through handmade signs placed in stores, public thorough fares, or outside the organizer's house. The target population for excursions in the rural areas are *campesinos*, people who work in agriculture and their families.

The most popular devotional tourism circuit offered by day-excursions organizers includes, in addition to Tizimin, the two small fishing villages of Río Lagartos and San Felipe, located on the north coast. Río Lagartos is located 52 km away from Tizimin, and is home to a National Park with the largest concentrations of flamingos. West of Río Lagartos, 11 km away, is San Felipe, another fishing village with wooden houses, a nice pier and most importantly, it is well known among Yucatecans for the fresh seafood served at its local restaurants. Both places are promoted as tourist destinations by the state government. Not all the excursions offer the visit to the three places. Some skip one or the other fishing village, and add an archeological site, like Chichen Itzá, or the colonial city of Valladolid. For some, the only destination is Tizimin.

For this circuit, the excursion departs from the sending community, usually Saturday in the late afternoon or even at night, and goes straight to Tizimin for a visit to the Three Kings Shrine for pilgrims to fulfill their promises, and to visit the nearby fair. Around midday, the excursion

leaves for Río Lagartos and visits the *ojo de agua* (fresh water spring). For lunch it goes to San Felipe, where most of the excursionists eat lunch at the local restaurants, or buy fried fish and tortillas and have a picnic in a shadowy spot along the *malecón*. Later in the afternoon, the excursion goes back to Tizimin, but this time the visit is to the *posta*, or the main cattle fairgrounds (see Figure 6-2).

People who live in the city of Merida tend to be more demanding in terms of the places they want to visit during their excursion to Tizimin. The increased interest in seeing more than the traditional Tizimin-Rio Lagartos-San Felipe-Posta circuit gets expressed to the ‘excursion organizer,’ as we can see in the following narrative:

This year I am planning to go from Tizimin to Las Coloradas. I always go to Tizimin-San Felipe, or to Tizimin-Valladolid, visiting the sink holes of Samulá and Kekén. People swim in them. On our way back we go through Valladolid, and we take people to the handcraft’s market. This past year, on our way coming back, we passed by Izamal. We visited the monastery, and luckily the Santa Teresina Prayers were happening, so we joined them. That is why I was telling my husband to go to Las Coloradas. It is usually the same people who go on my excursion every year, and this is why they ask me to take them to different places. When the days are approaching, they ask you: “And where are you taking us this year?” And when you answer back, they right away tell you: “Pero si ya fuimos alla, but we have been there, Doña, how about if we go to...” and they tell me where they want to visit, and I say: “All right.” That is how I knew this year they want to go to Las Coloradas. So, I told my husband so he can find about how much it would be to rent the bus, kilometers plus rent, and in this way once I know the cost I divided among the number of seats and see how much the excursion will be [Sebastiana, Mérida: November 2004].

City people who want to expand their horizons, and are more into cultural and global consumption of goods and ideas, see the excursion as a good opportunity to make it happen. Yearly suggestions of new places to visit, or new activities to undertake, are well accepted in order to avoid pilgrim-excursionists from looking for another travel offer. Nowadays, according to the organizers, there is a lot of competition in this area. Every year the amount of excursions increases, and not necessarily in relation to the demand. One of the reasons is because excursionists who have gone on the excursions learn the dynamics involved, and later want to

organize their own. And since usually they are from the same neighborhood, they compete for the same clientele.

It is during the weekends when the flow of pilgrims increases, due to the arrival of ‘day excursions.’ This particular mode of pilgrimage supports the domestic tourism sector of the areas visited, and boosts the local formal and informal economy of these places. As Smith points out, “travelers, whether they journey as pilgrims or tourists, generally share the same infrastructure” (Smith 1992:3). The day trips are structured in the same way as regular touristic excursions, with fixed itineraries, scheduled times for visits, and free time. For instance, during the visit to Tizimin, pilgrims are able to combine religious motives with more mundane forms of tourism, and therefore, they consume the same local attractions and services that the city offers to locals, national and international visitors. These include the local market, the downtown fair with mechanical rides and commercial stalls, the *posta*, the local zoo, restaurants, and the *catacumbas*, which are handmade caves with carvings and drawings including religious images. Some pilgrims make use of their free time to visit local relatives or friends (see Figure 6-3, 6-4)

Pilgrim-excursionist behavior is similar to the regular national, or international, tourist behavior regarding the consumption of souvenirs, in-situ photos, sometimes even professionally taken, and the use of regular and digital cameras and camcorders. The souvenir consumption is most notorious during the visit to the shrine and the nearby fair. The amount of religious souvenir trinkets with the image of the Three Kings imprinted is an indicator of the heavy consumption practices among all types of pilgrims. Clothing, mostly t-shirts and shorts, key chains, pictures, paintings, sculptures, watches, prayer cards, rosaries, baseball caps, totes, backpacks, and banners are products charged with meaning once they are part of the pilgrim’s ‘tourist baggage.’ They become a public display of their devotion and an acknowledgment of

their visit to the shrine. Photos and videos are another type of popular souvenir among the pilgrims, since it is a way to graphically document their presence at the shrine and at the other tourist attractions (see Figure 6-5, 6-6).

People who organize the excursions do not necessarily do it for business. At a first glance, one tends to think that this is the reason why they go through all the logistical work involved. From the outside, the excursions have the appearance of a type of small-scale profitable business run locally, but as Doña Benita points out, they are rarely profitable:

Look, do not think that *se gana mucho*, that you make money. It is not that one makes money from it. In my case I do not make money since I take my sister with me, thus she can help me with the logistics during the trip. I do not give her money, but I give her a seat on the bus, and I do the same if there is another person who also goes to help me. If I take my two children with me, then there are two more seats, plus mine. Therefore, I do not make money from those 5 seats. This is the reason why I do not make any profit. Of course that there must be people who makes money by not taking their families, or they just give a few pesos to whoever helps them. Last year I asked a lady from another neighborhood to help me find 11 persons to full my excursion, and I said, I will give you a free seat. She did it. It is not that easy to fill the bus, to find 40 persons. Like my husband always says to me: don't you want to cover the whole cost, you need to share, even if in this way you only make a little profit. [Benita, Kanasín: November 2004]

Most of the interviewed excursion organizers agreed that they did not do the excursions as a business, and that making a profit is not their main objective. Rather, they expressed their religious devotion to the Three Kings and other saints and virgins to be the objective. Thus the main motivation for them to embark on this venture is more religious and less economic oriented, as Don Manuel states:

As I said, it does not matter even if I just make little money, I do not do it to become rich. If the people and I go with devotion to see the Kings and the Virgin, I am fine with this. I am happy if I make some pennies, and if I have a place for me and my family, and for the people who help me. I do not like to be ambitious [Manuel, Muna: February 2004]

We cannot speak of a capitalistic commercial industry for devotional tourism in Yucatan. This type of tourism is organized at a local level, and is promoted by word of mouth through social networks beyond the family. At the same time, it cannot be considered strictly business,

since there are no significant revenues to be had. Their most important payment is based that organizers and their families are able to go on the bus to Tizimin, visit the shrine, do their devotions, and visit some places for free, instead of spending their money on someone else's excursion. The only commercial transaction that provides some monetary profits to the organizers is *la venta*, the selling of snacks and drinks during the excursion. The prices set for their products are often cheaper than at the places they visit; therefore excursionist pilgrims are more likely to buy them. And also the convenience of having something to eat on the bus rather than making long lines at the fair stalls and paying inflated prices, a common practice during heavy seasons of visitors at the fiesta.

Organizers also gain personal internal satisfaction since they consider this temporary job to be rewarding at the personal and social level:

The excursions are seasonal, I like to organize them, *me gusta, te distrae*, it is a good distraction. Before, I was inside my house all the time with my kids, and I only used to go to the market for groceries. My life has changed because I organize excursions, there are people who change who they are, but not me. No, because you make few more pesos you don't feel superior. In this life we all are equals, even though some people do not have anything. I have changed my character, since my husband used to drink and it bothered me and I complained to him, and now I do not do it. Organizing the excursions, dealing with so many people has helped me to be more tolerant, and more understanding of people [Pastora, Tekax: April 2004]

There is an element of social recognition at the community level. Since organizers have to promote their excursions, they are in continuous contact with people, and they become well known as figures of self-employment and group leadership. To locate them, more at the town level than in the city of Merida, was an easy task for me. You just need to mention to locals that they organize excursions to Tizimin, for them to give you directions in order to contact them. This recognition goes beyond their own social contexts when they manage to get clientele from surrounding neighborhoods or towns, as in some cases happens when there is competition around.

Bus excursions are becoming more popular among pilgrims from the state of Yucatan. The advantages of going on them are diverse as the following interviewed excursionist pilgrims explains: “*ademas de hacer mi devoción aprovecho y paseo*”(besides doing my devotion, I travel), “*así en excursión pasamos por muchos pueblos y conozco más*” (going on the excursion we pass through many towns and I get to see them), “*en excursión nos llevan a la posta y me gusta porque ahi en llegan huaches a vender cosas diferentes que no hay aqui en el pueblo*” (on the excursion they take us to the cattle fairgrounds, and there you find sellers from Mexico City that have merchandise that you do not find here in town), “*es más fácil ir en excursión, asi uno no hace tanta cola en las estaciones del camión*” (it is easy to go on excursion since you do not need to stand in line at the bus terminals), “*así en excursión puedo ir junto con toda mi familia, mis hijos, mis nueras, nietos, hasta con mis consuegros vamos juntos y hay veces que hasta mis compadres van*” (on the excursion I can go with all my family altogether, my children, their wives, my grandchildren, even my in-laws go with us, and sometimes my ritual family), “*la excursión nos sale barato porque ademas de rezar paseamos y pagamos por el mismo precio que el camión de pasaje*” (the excursion is a good deal since besides doing our devotions we have the opportunity to travel for the same price as if we were paying a regular interstate bus ticket), and “*es bonito que vayas así con muchos porque es divertido*” (it is nice to go with more people since it makes the ride more fun).

There is indeed evidence that excursions are more popular in rural areas where pilgrims would have to take more than one bus to get to Tizimin. The convenience of just taking one bus all the way, avoiding long lines and changing bus terminals in Merida is one of the main decision factors pilgrims take into account when they go on excursions. Also, the fact that most excursionist organizers give easy payment opportunities to pilgrims also makes them more

attractive. 180 Mexican pesos (US\$17) is not a small amount of money for many of the pilgrims who rely on agriculture subsistence and raising animals. Therefore, pilgrims pay these excursions months in advance with small payments, without affecting much their monthly income. Also, excursions legitimate time away from home and from duties. In rural areas the spaces for social interaction are reduced and limited to activities related with household chores or jobs. Excursions provide spaces to socialize with more pilgrims from the community, and others besides the family.

It is through the consumption of bus excursions that religion and tourism, the two dimensions of pilgrimage, intersect. The strong feeling of duty that pilgrims have with the Three Kings images stands out when excursionist pilgrims and organizers undertake the journey. The religious dimension is demonstrated in devotional practices characteristic of popular religion. The most important is the physical contact with the images and the exchange of personal promises through votive objects offered as a symbolic 'contracts' with the divine and supreme power. The importance of these actions is confirmed with the fact that the visit to the shrine in order to fulfill pilgrims and organizers' devotions is the most important and often the first stop of the excursion, thus making the religious aspect of the trip the dominant.

The tourism dimension comes in at a second level of importance, but expected as the first one. The leisure component of the excursions –from visiting new places, like in the case in where excursions change their routes, to recurring visits to the fishing villages, or even the absence of these visits compensated by the consumption of the fairground, contributes to the popularity of the devotional day-excursions. This mode of experiencing pilgrimage provides pilgrims with 'socially recognized mobility' that translates into the consumption and commodification of these religious and leisure activities, providing recreational spaces for low-income families. The

leisure opportunities that patronal fiestas and excursions provide to these families underline the importance that the Western conception of 'family vacations' have acquired globally through the mass media, and how the notions of traveling and vacations are gaining a space in sectors where mobility has always existed, but with less levels of commodification.

Summary: Towards Travel Devotions

More than 30 years ago, Victor and Edith Turner had already recognized the existing relation between pilgrimage and tourism. They noticed that the two categories of travel, pilgrimage and tourism, were intimately related: "the most characteristic modern pilgrimage is blended with tourism, and involves a major journey, usually by modern means of transportation, to a national or international shrine" (Turner and Turner 1978:240). Nowadays, the existing connection between the two categories has become a recurrent topic in the field of anthropology and tourism. More than ever before, since we live in a globalized world, where the mobility of goods, ideas and people has become the norm more than the exception, these two categories are seen more related to each other than before.

The connection of pilgrimage and tourism is well represented on one of the classifications of tourism: religious tourism. A religious industry that is already established at important Catholic shrines in Europe is still developing in Latin America. There is a connection between global networks and the promotion of information about pilgrimages, shrines and tourism. At the international and national level, the global religious tourism industry in Mexico has taken advantage of this by promoting touristic circuits for visiting different shrines. By globalizing the tours, travel agencies brings very specific opportunities to their clients, like in the case of Guadalupe and San Juan de los Lagos. Religious tourism is also present in cyberspace and provides free tours to the Basilica of Guadalupe, and plenty of information about religious and touristic tours.

At the local level, devotional tourism, a proposed category within religious tourism, becomes important in order to understand the global processes that shape pilgrims mobility and construct pilgrimage and leisure behavior. For some populations, devotional tourism provides the only possibility of travel due to their social and economic situations. In the case of less developed countries, pilgrimages to patronal fiestas and religious celebrations are forms of leisure available to the low-income populations. The bus excursion pilgrimage to the Three Kings shrine reflects the consumption and leisure behavior of the low class rural and urban Yucatecan populations immersed in the global processes of mass transportation and communications. Pilgrimage motives are not necessarily only religious, although these are dominant, but they are also recreational since the day excursions or three day stays, as for the *gremios*, become the family holiday. As Gladstone have pointed out: “Travel and tourism is not only, or even primarily, a condition of advanced industrial capitalism; it is much more prevalent in the Third World (at least in terms of absolute numbers), even though it may not always take the same form that it does in wealthy First World countries” (2005:168). Trips to Rio Lagartos and San Felipe provides opportunities to be in contact with different ecosystems, and exposes pilgrims to different cultural patterns of domestic tourism behavior.

In Yucatan, the commodification of the domestic formal tourism industry by pilgrims is reflected in the consumption of small private travel agencies that promote religious excursions to regional fiestas and shrines like Tizimin and Chuiná, or national shrines such as Guadalupe, San Juan de los Lagos promoting along with them leisure travel visiting natural wonders or markets; agencies that target the low -middle economic urban sectors of the Yucatecan population. In the same way, local bus excursions organized in the informal economy sector of rural areas support the domestic informal tourism behavior by pilgrims staying in local houses, and voluntarily

paying or giving gratifications to the local families, or pilgrims eating in a temporarily stand placed outside a house, or buying food from a neighboring seller who came to the shrine to commercialize his product (see Figure 6-7).

The tradition of pilgrimage has been embedded among the Yucatecans for centuries, and it continues as a contemporary form of movement and travel. The different ways of experiencing pilgrimage have been historically related to patterns of cultural consumption among people from different social and economic backgrounds. Since cultural consumption practices have a function of legitimating social differences (Bourdieu 1984), pilgrimage and leisure behavior based on popular religious practices such as family visits at the shrine, torch groups, *gremios*, votive dancers, and bus excursionists have maintained the social differences of pilgrimage and domestic tourist consumption in relation to other sectors of the population who rely on more formal practices of religion and have a higher level of purchasing power and different consumption behavior. These practices of pilgrimage behavior and leisure are influenced by ‘the practical sense’ of habitus that has channeled people to act in specific situations (Bourdieu 1990) through generations, shaping a lifestyle of these behaviors based on the practices of popular religion devotions, and consumption of patronal fiestas as ‘socially recognized’ spaces for holidays among low-income Yucatecans (see Figure 6-8).

“Travel has become so central to contemporary societies” (Urry 2002:257). Western upper classes, which are related to formal jobs and fixed days for holidays, are the tourist prototype by excellence, since they count leisure time, discretionary income, and positive local sanctions (Smith 1989:1). However, nowadays in our shared globalized and mobile world, we cannot deny the fact that more diversified people in developing countries are ‘hitting the road’. Lower class are also part of the travel culture at much less scale on distance, expenditure, and time. At first

sight, the motivations might be different, leaning to the devotional, religious side, but in the break down of everyday life, the leisure aspect is present there, too.

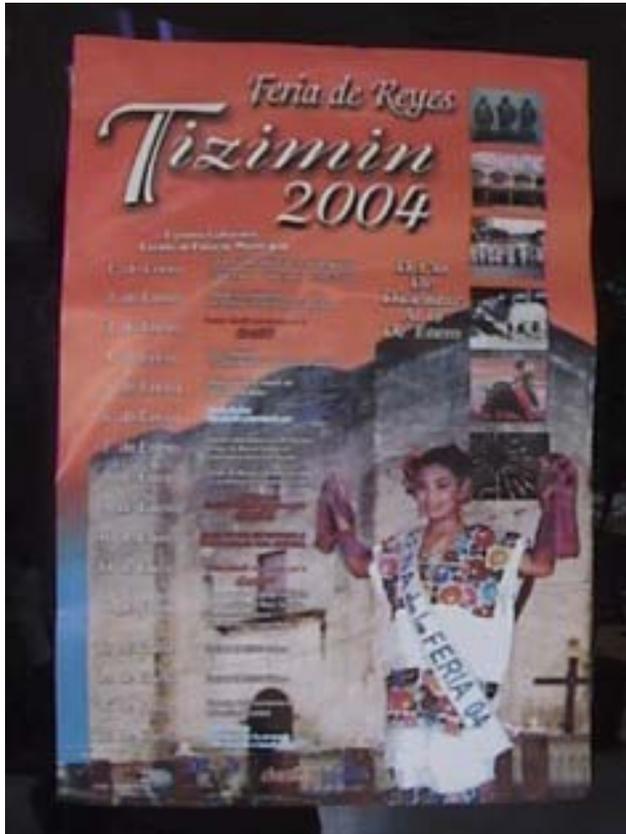


Figure 6-1. Poster used by the municipal authorities to promote the *feria*, civic aspect of the fiesta



Figure 6-2. A view of the San Felipe boardwalk



Figure 6-3. Bus excursions leaving Tizimin and excursionist pilgrims waiting to be picked up



Figure 6-4. A common means of transportation among pilgrims



Figure 6-5. Excursionist pilgrim documenting his visit



Figure 6-6. A souvenir praying card from the shrine



Figure 6-7. Stand selling regular clothing and souvenir t-shirts



Figure 6-8. A group of pilgrim excursionists from Merida documenting our visit to San Felipe

CHAPTER 7
FINAL REMARKS: THE FULLFILLMENT OF MY *PROMESA*

While it remains open, the shrine does not rest. Once inside, one can lose the sense of time. When people arrive, they come inside. The ones who are inside wait patiently for their turn to be physically close to their Three Holy Kings. People who are on their way out stop and check out the souvenirs, and buy something that they can carry back, something that would remind them of their visit to the shrine, their visit to the Kings. You can smell the *ruda* all over the shrine. The Images, the Three Holy Kings, contemplate the never-ending pilgrimage of their devotees, and at the same time they listen without exhaustion to the endless *promesas*, prayers, implorations and gratitudes from their faithful followers. Pilgrims constantly come and go, the Kings just stand still [Field notes 2005].

A Final View to an Undertaken Journey

We live in a globalized era, in a ‘world in motion,’ where changes and innovations constantly reshape meanings, as in the case of religion, a dynamic institution that has been, and still is, an important motivator for humankind. Pilgrimage, an expression of religious behavior, is one aspect of ‘lived religion.’ It is a journey undertaken by a person who is in search of a religious experience, divine power, a supreme being, a special connection, or an inner state. It can also be a journey to a sacred place, natural or handmade, a meaningful locale; the search for a state of relaxation and enjoyment; or the quest for all of these motives and more. Pilgrimage is an active religious practice that is present in all the major world religions. It is not only an important religious manifestation, but also a practice embedded with cultural meanings and symbols. It is a dynamic practice that constantly gets contested and reshaped, since it is immersed in our globalized, changing world.

The main goal of my study has been to demonstrate how pilgrimage goes beyond personal transformation, as traditional anthropological studies based on the Turner’s paradigm have shown before, to a more complex experience where different motivations drive diverse categories of pilgrims to undertake journeys that tend to be more organized, more commercialized and touristized, thanks to the modern influence of globalization. Building on the

notions of pilgrimage as a multiplicity of discourses coming from the place, the person and movement (Coleman and Eade 2004; Eade and Sallnow 2000), and pilgrimage as a religious practice culturally consumed by certain lifestyles (Bourdieu 1984; 1990; García Canclini 1993), pilgrimage has demonstrated in this study to be a channel for the movement of culture, knowledge, ideas, and representations, linked to its historical and contemporary context.

A More Mobile Yucatecan Culture?

Nowadays, in our globalized era, throughout the world, people are experiencing more mobility. Social processes such as migration, political asylum, global enterprises and business, and religious movements, to mention some, voluntary or involuntary, influence and affect people's mobility. We can no longer take for granted the 'conventionally necessary' relation between sufficient economic means and travel. At the same time, we cannot totally separate the travel motivation from the leisure experience that is often embedded, in one way or the other, to these social processes.

Pilgrimage and tourism are two categories of travel. Pilgrimage as a journey for the search of divine intervention dates at least to the Greek era. Leisure travel increased with the Industrial Revolution (Smith 1992). The more broad definition of tourism refers to the activities of persons traveling. The words "tourism" and "tourists" have always had Western connotations. Tourism is related to mass tourism, sightseeing, beach resorts, and tours organized by the international and national formal tourism sectors, and is consumed by middle-upper class people and families referred to as "tourists." However, a tourist could be anyone who travels outside of his own environment for leisure, business and other purposes (Gladstone 2005).

Today there is no rigid distinction between pilgrimage and tourism. They may have different motivations, but are similar in that they involve journeys, attractions, related goods and services such as hotels, *posadas*, souvenirs, photography, and means of transportation. Both are

done by people in their spare time (weekends), and both are markers of social and economic class. In Mexico, tourism and regular roads are shared by pilgrims and tourists, and the same goes for local fairs and religious fiestas.

Federal and state governments, as well as the private tourism industry, have been promoting patronal fiestas and local fairs as tourist attractions targeted to international and national travelers who are interested in the cultural and religious aspect of tourism. A search on “patronal fiestas” on the Internet leads to a good amount of information about these celebrations, not only held in Mexico, but also in other countries. Yucatan is not the exception, and it is shown through the many online advertisements of one of its largest and most important celebrations: The Three Kings Fiesta.

The Three Kings Fiesta is a celebration which in spite of being embedded in global processes has not become an important tourist attraction on the national or international level. Rather, it is a fiesta consumed regionally, and its significance is spread mostly throughout the Peninsula. This event is a major engine that attracts pilgrims to Tizimin, Yucatan. It is a place of continuums, since the religious and civic aspects intertwine at all levels. The fiesta is a devotional space since the presence and images of the Three Kings can be seen everywhere, in the bullfight with the *promesa* bulls and the *diputados*, in the processions, in the commerce stalls, at the *gremios*, on the news, and in the newspapers. The fiesta is a continuum of religious symbols in its secular practices, a space for devotions and entertainment, and the area most commercialized by the locals and consumed by the pilgrims.

Bus excursions have become a popular way of experiencing pilgrimage to Tizimin. This religious practice encompasses two categories of travel: pilgrimage and tourism. Since religious tourism relies on governmental and private tourism enterprises, and supports the formal economy

of the area, devotional tourism becomes a better concept for the analysis of these excursions, a more recent type of pilgrimage in the Yucatan. Devotional tourism is seen as a cultural religious and recreational activity related to popular religious practices that reaches low-income pilgrims, and boosts the domestic tourism sector by relying on the local informal activity. Since the fulfillment of a promise for a favor, or as a payment, is the essence of this type of pilgrimage, the concept of devotional tourism is entrenched in reciprocity, a quality commonly present among Yucatecans. The bus excursion pilgrimage to the Three Kings Shrine reflects the consumption and leisure behavior among the low-income, rural, and urban Yucatecan populations immersed in the global processes of mass transportation and communications.

The proposed concept of devotional tourism encapsulates the coordinates of person, place and movement used for the analysis of the regional pilgrimage to the Three Kings shrine. The people that are participating in this pilgrimage are Yucatecans, they are not necessarily Mayans or *mestizos*. Rather, they are people who some days might show more Mayanness, and others more Yucatecaness. They may or may not speak the Maya language, and may or may not wear traditional clothing. They may come from both rural and urban areas, mostly from low-income households with specific lifestyles and religious patterns of consumption. Finally, these pilgrims represent an image of Yucatecan popular culture more embedded in the global context.

These pilgrims have, and follow, a religious devotion. The Three Kings are indeed the driving force for pilgrims to undertake the journey. The motivations that lead pilgrims to experience it are diverse. The most important is, at a regional level, the religious and the fulfillment of promises, and the second is leisure. Person and movement are immersed in the different modes of experiencing pilgrimage undertaken by corporate and non-corporate pilgrims, according to their preferences, beliefs and tastes. Groups of families, dancers, guilders, runner

and biker torch-carriers, and bus day-excursionists travel to the shrine and consume the fiesta and the local attractions. Some modes have been around for more than a century, like the tradition of going to a *gremio*, for example; while bus excursions have been around for no more than 30 years. Each mode has its own dynamic, its own religious practices, its own gender and age composition, its own way of enjoy leisure, and its own reason to be. The diverse forms of pilgrimage that are culturally consumed in the region legitimize social differences, and express distinctions that reflects the lifestyle of low-income Yucatecans, product of the habitus process (Bourdieu 1984; 1990).

Parallel to the fiesta is the Three Kings Shrine. It is a sacred place better understood in the context of popular religion and its practices, meanings, and perceptions. The place, the shrine, is a ‘religious void’ (Eade and Sallnow 2000), a place that fills up with contestations, encounters, and different discourses from pilgrims, locals, workers, clerics, and local authorities that through the years have constructed its local and regional significance. The Three Kings Shrine is a sacred place that has given Tizimin a local identity, along with the cattle production characteristic of the area. This an identity that heavily relies on its patron saints: the Three Kings, and is conveniently appropriated and commoditized by the locals and the municipal authorities all year long. Its regional significance is intimately related to religious traditions, beliefs, myths, and rites manifested in the pilgrim’s ‘shared knowledge’ about the Kings and the shrine. Also, it is a place that embodies regional syncretic traditions of promises and devotions that have been around since colonial times, and are distinctive of Yucatecan shrines.

Devotional tourism offers one possibility of travel for many groups of Yucatecans. For instance, lower income populations, mostly from the rural area, due to their social and financial situations, cannot afford long journeys, and cannot leave their properties and tasks behind. The

conception of Western tourism travel is not embedded in their cultural framework as is the practice of traveling for short periods of time to a religious celebration. As mentioned before, pilgrims who embark on day trip excursions to patronal fiestas are motivated by a fulfillment of a promise, and also by its recreational context, and the additional places visited. The reasonable price for the excursion, the payment facilities, and the fact that children under six travel free as long as they are seated on a lap, makes this relatively new mode of experiencing pilgrimage a convenient traveling alternative for low-income families.

Historically, the Yucatecan population has been very mobile. However, the mobilization that Yucatecans experience day by day, from rural to urban areas, or vice versa, for work or pleasure reasons, their exposure to other cultures through the mass media, and the influence of globalization, has increased, and has generated a more mobile population. This reflects how locally and family organized bus excursions are not exclusively consumed for devotional and religious tourism. Low income populations from rural and urban areas are increasingly traveling to domestic destinations for commercial and leisure purposes. Excursion organizers agendas include, in addition to the devotional excursions to Tizimin in January, the ones to Izamal in December, the ones to Chuiná during Holy Week, and to the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City in July, but also excursions to the beach in July, and to the border free-zone of Santa Elena, Belize, in November. Small payments and low prices, the convenience of departure and arrival in their own town or neighborhood, and the places to visit, are what make these excursions attractive.

Nowadays, religious devotions and cultural consumption have motivated low-income people from both rural and urban areas to mobilize, to move, and to travel even more than before. With the influence of mass communication in a more interconnected world, and the

availability of various means of transportation, Yucatecans are turning to more convenient and economic resources, rather than the ones provided by the formal economy tourism industry, such as travel agencies, to become more mobile. Throughout my study of pilgrimage there is indeed a continuous relationship between religion and leisure, manifested in the motivations that drive people to embark in different modes of experiencing pilgrimage. As Rotherham has pointed out, “pilgrimage is one of the oldest forms of tourism and is an integral component of the tourism industry” (2007:64).

Final Comments

New Means or Modes of Experiencing Pilgrimage is a contribution to the anthropological study of pilgrimage in Latin America. Methodologically, my study breaks with the ‘conventional’ fieldwork frequent in Mexican anthropology practice, and brings a more mobile experience with a multi-sited ethnography. I also place my work in the self-reflexive writing subgenre by sharing extracts of my field notes. The existing literature on pilgrimage is rich in diverse ethnographic information, but too theoretically similar. The influence of the Turnerian paradigm stands out, with some exceptions (see Giménez 1978; Sallnow 1987). My proposed theoretical framework, based on the assumption of seen pilgrimage as a multiplicity of discourses coming from the place, person and movement, and as a religious practice embedded and culturally consumed in certain lifestyles, enhances, challenges and contributes to the scholarship of pilgrimage, especially for Mexico and Yucatan. In the same line, my proposed definition of Devotional Tourism is a contribution not only to the study of anthropology and pilgrimage, but also to the fields of travel and tourism. My study also contributes to a better understanding of the Yucatecan culture, a dynamic culture that is part of our globalized world. It is a culture that has been always mobile, and that is constantly being reshaped.

There is a need for more literature on tourism and pilgrimage in Latin America. We live in a more globalized world, and this is reflected in the fact that people are being more stimulated visually and culturally, and through consumer goods, and are becoming more mobile at all levels. New studies are necessary to document and analyze interesting topics related to low-income tourist mobilizations, and the consumption of the domestic tourism sector. My study brings new insights to these topics.

APPENDIX RESEARCH QUESTIONS

These are the questions that were used as a guide during the interviews

1. To all pilgrims

What motivated you to go on a pilgrimage?

Why do you go on a pilgrimage? Do you have a promise?

How long have you been coming to the Three Kings Shrine?

Do you know the Kings' story? What do the people say about them?

Have the Kings performed a miracle for you or your family?

What can you tell me about the Three Kings?

Which other members of your family go on a pilgrimage with you?

Which member of your family decides who goes and who does not?

Who covers the expenses? How do you get the money? Approximately, how much money do you spend on transportation, offerings, lodge, food, souvenirs?

Do you bring offerings to the Kings? What type?

Do you do a special type of devotion inside the shrine?

What do you have to do in order to fulfill your promise?

Do you pray to the Three Kings or just one in particular?

What do you do during pilgrimage?

How did you make the pilgrimage? Which means of transportation were used?

Have you gone on an excursion? Who did you contact for? How was it? Where else did you go? Did you like the experience? Would you rather go on your own or in an excursion? During the excursion, did you socialize with the other excursionists? In which ways? Did you make friends on the excursions? Do you still see them?

Do you belong to a religious or non-religious group? A guild or *gremio*? Torch-bearer (*antorchista*)?

Do you buy souvenirs at the shrine or from outside vendors?

What do you do after visiting the shrine? Which other places do you visit while in Tizimin?

Do you visit downtown and the cattle fair? What do you do while being there?

What do you think of the shrine? When do you visit it?

Do you visit other Three Kings besides the ones from Tizimin?

Are you devoted to other saints? Do you attend other patronal fiestas?

Have you made friends during your visit to the shrine? Do you recognize people from year to year? During your visit do you spend time with others than your family?

What are the impressions you get while doing the pilgrimage?

How do you feel after your visit to Tizimin?

What do you do for living?

2. To *antorchistas* pilgrims (Torch-bearer) and organizers

Who founded the group, why, and when? What is the name of the torch group? What are your motivations? Who motivated you to participate in the group?

Which are the shrines you pilgrimage to? And the places you visit?

How do you pilgrimage?

How many members does the group have? Approximately ages? Sex?

What do you need to do if you want to be part of the group?

For how long have you been an *antorchista*?

What are your responsibilities as the leader of the group? What is involved in the organization?

What type of transportation do you use? Is there a special reason for that?

Who designs and makes the uniforms?

How much time does a Torch organization require?

Where do you get the money to do it? How do you calculate the cost of a trip?

Is there any profit for the organizer?

Where or how do the pilgrims get the money to pay for their torch pilgrimage?

How you deal with an accident?

Do you take pictures or video of the pilgrimage?

Are you registered at your church or is the torch group registered?

Do you advertize the group? How?

3. To Excursionist pilgrims and organizers

How long have you been visiting the Kings?

How long have you been going to the pilgrimage in an excursion? How did you go before?

Do you go for a promise? Or do you go as a pilgrim or as a 'tour guide'?

Do you belong to a religious group in your church? Do you participate in church activities?

Do you know if your parish organizes excursions to shrines and patronal fiestas? Who else organize these types of trips?

What do you do for living?

How long have you being organizing excursions? Why do you do it? Is it good business?

Where else do you organize excursion besides Tizimin? For what months?

How did you start doing them?

What are the logistics involved? What do you have to do in order to organize an excursion?

Does anyone help you? Who? Do you pay them to do it?

Where do you rent the bus? How many months in anticipation is needed for the organization?

What is the cost of an excursion? What are the payment options?

It is the same people who go year after year?

How do you advertize your excursion?

Which places do you visit during the excursion? Do you visit the same places year after year?

Have you gotten complaints from the locals and/or from the pilgrims?

Do you sell food and drinks during the excursions?

Who else goes with you to Tizimin?

How long is the excursion?

In case you decided to stay overnight in Tizimin, how do you arrange for the place?

Do you think you have gained prestige among the community through the organization of these excursions?

Do the people identify you as an excursion organizer?

Who else from your family goes with you?

Have you ever encountered an accident during an excursion? Has anything happened to excursionist pilgrims? Any stories?

Do the pilgrims get along during the trip?

Have you heard from somebody else about miracles performed by the Kings?

4. To guild presidents

What is your guild's name?

When was it founded? By whom?

How did you get involved? Is your family involved too?

Why do you do it?

How many members are registered? Where are they from?

How many delegations are there? From where?

When is your entrance day?

What are the activities performed during the *gremio's* day?

Where do you get the money to pay for the *gremio* activities?

How do you invest the money?

What do you do with the profits, if any?

What are the *gremio's* responsibilities with the members?

Do the *gremios* have pilgrims involved with it?

Do you have a devotion for the Kings? Are you involved with the *gremio* as a promise?

Do you have any relation with the shrine?

Why do you think the Kings are so popular among Yucatecans?

Do you get some kind of local recognition for being a *gremio* president?

Do you participate in other fiestas? How?

Have you ever gone on a pilgrimage?

5. To people involved with the shrine

Is this considered a formal sanctuary? Since when?

What is the shrine's story? Is there an official story of the Three Kings?

Who is in charge of the organization of the activities at the shrine?

Approximately how many people visit the shrine every day?

What are the things pilgrims bring as offerings?

What do you do with them?

Where does the offered money go?

What do you consider attracts more people -the fiesta or the shrine?

Do pilgrims come to the shrine during the year?

What is the relationship between the shrine and the municipal authorities?

Does the shrine receive monetary help from the municipality?

How do you see or perceive the presence of pilgrims at the shrine?

Is there any damage to the shrine after the fiesta?

Have pilgrims approached you to tell you about a miracle performed for them by the Kings?

Do you think the shrine could be considered as a tourist destination in the future?

What can you say about the pilgrims?

Why do you think the Kings' images and the fiesta are so popular among Yucatecans?

Does the shrine offer any type of accommodations to pilgrims during the fiesta? How about in the past?

What is your opinion about the *antorchistas*? Are there any records or book-registration for these groups? Does the church encourages or promote this type of pilgrimage?

How does the shrine prepare for the fiesta and for the housing of all the pilgrims?

Does the church accept the use of *ruda*?

Is there any relation between the shrine and the municipal authorities?

What is the relation between the candle sellers and the church?

Which are the times when the Kings are brought down?

What do you do with the left over candles and *kexitos*?

Have you heard comments from the pilgrims about the human characteristics of the images?

6. To the main fiesta authorities

How old is the fiesta?

Who organizes it?

What are the fiesta attractions?

Where does the money for the fiesta come from? Where is it invested?

Who establishes the dates and duration of the fiesta?

How does the fiesta committee get organized? For how many years do they keep their positions?

What is the relationship between the committee and the municipality?

Do you have an idea of how many people attend the fiesta every year?

What is the relationship between the fiesta and the municipal authorities?

What are the impacts of the pilgrims on the Tizimin community?

What is your opinion of the pilgrims?

Do you think the fiesta would be the same without the pilgrims?

How do you promote or advertize the fiesta? What mass media do you rely on for this?

Who deals with the fiesta sellers?

Is there a fiesta auction? Among who? For how much?

7. To the fiesta deputies

Who organizes the *convite*? When does it take place? What is its meaning? Who pays for it? For how long have you been doing it?

How many fiesta deputies are there? For how long have you been one? What do they do? Who chooses them? Are they all from Tizimin? What is a *diputación*? How do you organize one?

Where does the money come from? Could you tell me what you do, step by step, during yours?

Who organizes the bullfights? Do you get any profit from them?

Who organizes the *vaquerías*? How many are organized during the fiesta? Where do the people come from? Do you get any profit from them?

What does crowning the bullring means?

Where does the municipality get the *ceiba* from?

What is the *nona*?

What is the relationship between the *palqueros* and the fiesta deputies? What are the differences between them?

Is there any economic profit from being a deputy?

Does the municipality help deputies with the *diputaciones* and bullfight expenses?

How do you get the money?

What are the *ramilletes*? What are they for? Who brings them?

Who participates in the *diputaciones* and bullfights?

Do the *diputaciones* have pilgrims involved?

Do you have a devotion to the Kings? Do you do the *diputación* as a promise?

Do you have any connection with the shrine?

Do you have any connection to the pilgrims?

Why do you think the Kings are so popular among Yucatecans?

Do you get some kind of local recognition from being a *diputado*?

8. To Tizimileños

Do you participate in the fiesta? How?

Which places do you visit during the fiesta?

Do you visit the shrine during the fiesta? How often?

Why do you think the pilgrims come to the shrine?

Why do you think the Kings are so popular among the Yucatecans?

What is the impact of the pilgrims on the community?

Does the presence of the pilgrims during the fiesta affect you?

Do you have any type of relation with the pilgrims?

Do you accommodate pilgrims in your home during the fiesta?

What is your opinion of the pilgrims?

Do you have devotion for the Kings? Do you make a promise?

Do you have any connection to the shrine?

Do you participate in other patronal fiestas? Do you make pilgrimages to other shrines?

Who do you think the fiesta benefits the most?

9. Life history

Age

Sex

Number of years attending the pilgrimage

Past memories from childhood, adolescence, and adulthood of the fiesta and the pilgrimages

Miracle chronicles

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alicia María Peón Arceo was born in Mérida, Yucatán, México. She received a bachelor's degree in Social Anthropology from the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán (UADY) in 1996. Her BA thesis was on Rites of Passage among the Mayan *Cruzoob* of Quintana Roo, Mexico. After graduating, Alicia worked with women's cooperatives for an NGO in Chiapas, Mexico, and participated in different research projects in Yucatan. Later, she became a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology at the UADY. In 2002, she earned a Master's degree in anthropology and in 2009 a PhD in anthropology, with a concentration in Latin American Studies at the University of Florida.