

CULTURE AND LAND TENURE IN YUCATEC MAYAN COMMUNITIES, CAMPECHE,  
MEXICO

By

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To Marcia and Esteban, in taatsilo'ob. Tah ch'íijesho'on ka ik xáachikbah, ka ik k'áatintik láak'silo'ob, y kah ik ts'a ik xook táanil. Ma' uh paájtal in síijil ich uláak' familia. Dios bo'otik yóolal tuláakal eh ba'ax aj ka'ansme'exteno'.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BANRURAL	Banco Nacional de Crédito Rural; National Bank for Rural Development
COMADEP	Consultoría Mesoamericana de Asistencia y de Desarrollo Popular; Mesoamerican Consultancy for Assistance and Popular Development
COMPLAMAR	Coordinación General del Plan Nacional de Zonas Deprimidas y Grupos Marginados; General Coordination for the Disadvantaged Sectors and Marginalized Groups
CONAFOR	Comisión Nacional Forestal, National Forestry Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEGI	Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática; National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Informatics
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PES	Payment for Environmental Services
PIDER	Proyecto de Inversiones Públicas para el Desarrollo Rural; Public Investment Project for Rural Development
PROCAMPO	Programa de Apoyo Directo al Campo; Direct Rural Support Program
PROCEDE	Programa de Certificación de Derechos Ejidales y Titulación de Solares Urbanos; Program for the Certification of Ejido Land Rights and the Titling of Urban House Plots
RAN	Registro Agrario Nacional; National Agrarian Registry
SAM	Sistema Alimentaria Mexicano; Mexican Food System
SRA	Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria; Agrarian Reform Ministry

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
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Land tenure restructuring in 1992 was part of the neo-liberal policies implemented in the 1980s and early 1990s to fully integrate Mexico into the global economy. Proponents of the restructuring argued that this modernization was necessary to increase productivity of rural Mexico. It was also argued that creating a dynamic land market could address the issue of poverty through the efficient distribution of land. Literature reveals that results of the land tenure restructuring are mixed, and in most cases the restructuring failed to achieve the expected results.

Research has focused on the institutional factors that affect the land tenure restructuring of the communal land holding system—the *ejido*. Ethnicity is considered one of these internal factors. I contend that rather than ethnicity, attention should be paid to the autonomy of ejidos to produce and reproduce their specific land tenure regimes. My hypothesis is that more autonomous communities have the capacity to reject, revert from, or co-opt land-title-based tenure systems.

Research was conducted in Xmaben and Chunchintoc, Municipio of Hopelchén, Campeche, Mexico, during the summer and fall of 2010. Xmaben participated in PROCEDE, while Chunchintoc did not participate. Both communities are of Yucatec

Mayan descent. Cultural control theory, as proposed by Bonfil Batalla, was utilized to establish the “autonomy” of each community. This was part of a case study which used participant-observation, semi-structured interviews, and archival research, further complemented by theories of traditional ecological knowledge, common pool resource, and agency. It is concluded that Chunchintoc has more cultural control (autonomy) over its organizational and symbolic cultural elements. To some degree this autonomy enabled it to refuse participation in the land titling program.

Based on this case study, it is possible to state that autonomy of ejidos holds explanatory power in furthering understanding of the structural factors that implicate land tenure regimes in the Yucatec Maya region of Campeche, Mexico.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### Background

Neo-liberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s further liberalized the agricultural sector of Mexico and fully integrated Mexico into the world economy (De Janvry et al. 1997; Lewis 2002). Within the negotiations of the North American Free Trade Agreements, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari called for the amendment of Article 27 of the Constitution (Assies 2008). In 1992 Article 27 was replaced by the Agrarian Law. Prior to the 1992 Agrarian Law *ejido* land was inalienable, the state holding official titles to them (Lewis 2002).

The *ejido* system<sup>1</sup> is a community-based land-holding to which members have usufruct rights for cultivation (Tiedje 2009), it being a product of the 1917 Mexican Constitution. *Ejid*os could be established through land grants made by the State. Land was granted to existing human settlement, or land was granted and then settled as a New Centers of Ejidal Population – NCPE (De Janvry et al. 1997; Schüren 2001). The 1992 Agrarian Law made inter-alia changes to the *ejido* (Cornelius and Myhre 1998:2-4): *ejidatarios* could obtain individual certificates to their land parcels; certified parcels could be traded; certified parcels land could be “developed” with third parties; *ejidatarios* were no longer required to work their land or risk losing their land rights; and foreign investment could be made in *ejidos*.

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<sup>1</sup> The Agrarian Law stipulates that *ejidatarios* are men and women who are *ejido* right holders. Meanwhile, non *ejido* right holders that have lived in the settlement nucleus are considered as *avecindados*. *Avecindados* who gain access to land are considered *comuneros*. In La Montaña there is little to no distinction amongst non-*ejidatarios*; they are all referred to as *comuneros*. Thus, hereafter *comuneros* is used to refer to both *avecindados* and *comuneros*.

Proponents of the individual titling program argued that the ejido system seemed monolithic and needed to be modernized to increase the productivity of rural Mexico (Cornelius and Myhre 1998). Others believed that a restructuring of the land tenure regime was necessary to create a more efficient distribution of land and could also address the issue of poverty (Zoomers 2000). However, literature has demonstrated that the results of the 1992 land tenure restructuring are mixed, and in most instances restructuring did not achieve its expected outcomes. An important part of scholarship has analyzed the shift of agrarian policies and its impact, such as the removal of price guarantees and the gradual reduction of rural-agrarian subsidies to ease the lifting of this established price via PROCAMPO, PROGAN, to name just two. Another part of research has focused on understanding what the impact of the land tenure restructuring was on ejidos. If any, how did ejidos react to it, and what are the prospects for these communal land holdings. Attempts at understanding this phenomenon have focused on the different factors that influence the property rights regime of the ejido.

Barsimantov et al. (2010, emphasis added) cite internal and external drivers that influence the evolution of property rights in ejidos in Quintana Roo. The authors identify internal factors to be local governance structures, meanings of property, livelihood strategies, migration patterns, the communal resource base, and *ethnic composition*. Lewis (2002, emphasis added) also state that the factors that affect the response of an ejido to economic and tenure reforms are types of land access, agricultural management practices, proximity of the ejido to the USA, a history of the agricultural practices and agrarian reform in the region, and the *ethnic composition* of the ejido.

Culture, often times juxtaposed with ethnicity, has been analyzed to explore land tenure regimes. Ensminger (1996:180) in reviewing land titling in Africa posits that communities have complex webs of networks and meanings which allow for subsistence via land access and inheritance of land over time. Interestingly, even where a high percentage of land is titled, databases soon become outdated since communities revert to customary land right regimes, thus demonstrating that these communities do not rely exclusively on land titles to assert rights (Ensminger 1996; Zoomers 2000). Scholars propose that communities that reject, revert from, or co-opt regimes that have private-land-title as its principal form of security to property indicate that they have complementary forms of land tenure (Ensminger 1996:182). These complementary regimes, as noted above, are “complex webs of networks and meanings,” often times termed informal, customary, endogenous, et cetera. Their autochthonous nature would suggest that social groups (communities), at least to some degree, have control over the production and reproduction of those complementary regimes. It is this degree of control—autonomy—which gives them the capacity to reject, revert from, or co-opt land-title-based forms of land tenure.

My hypothesis is that more autonomous communities are able to reject a State policy whose ultimate goal is to privatize the communal land holding. I adopt Bonfil Batalla (1988; 1995) cultural control theory to explore autonomy. Bonfil Batalla uses a systematic approach to disentangle the web of elements and relations to understand cultural control. Cultural control, as the author defines it, is the social-decision-making-capacity over cultural elements. Elements can be material, organizational, knowledge, symbolic, and emotive. It is this definition that I utilize for autonomy. For purposes of this

study, communities that have more social decision making capacity over cultural elements are considered more autonomous.

Upon the closure of PROCEDE in the State of Campeche there were 9 ejidos that rejected the land regularization program (SRA 2006): four in the Municipio of Hopelchén, three in Calkiní, and two in Hecelchakán—all considered “Mayan” ejidos. This information makes for a compelling argument that indeed ethnicity is linked to the land tenure regimes. However, if ethnicity were one of the internal forces, how can it be explained when communities which are subject to the same forces make opposing decisions on their land tenure regimes? Why would one reject PROCEDE, while another accepts PROCEDE?

As mentioned above, analysis of land tenure restructuring in the ejido has focused on the internal and external forces that influence these land tenure regimes and has spent much effort on analyzing “the institution” as Agrawal (2003) criticizes. Though this research uses as starting point questioning the existence of cultural elements and control of those elements by the ejidos to accept or reject PROCEDE, it ultimately tries to establish its autonomy. In efforts to understand autonomy, micro-politics become central in analyzing the historical evolution of agency and control over key cultural elements in each community. This approach responds to Agrawal’s challenge of expanding inquiry on “the other side of the institution;” I do so by exploring autonomy, status, agency, and, to a lesser extent, power. In exploring autonomy, rather than ethnicity, much can be understood on how communities pursue their “projects” while negotiating their land tenure regimes.

## **Research Question**

What are the cultural elements that are present in an ejido that influence its decision to either accept or reject PROCEDE?

## **Chapter Outline**

This thesis has six Chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research problem, question, and its relevance to land tenure. The following Chapter 2 provides a review of the evolution of land tenure at the national, state, and regional land level. It also provides a review of State development programs implemented in the state of Campeche. Chapter 3 provides a literature review of the theories of (a) cultural control, (b) common pool resource, (c) traditional ecological knowledge, (d) agency, and (e) ethnicity. Chapter 4 reports on the method utilized to collect and analyze data for this research. Chapter 5 analyzes the data collected to establish the autonomy of each community based on the theoretical underpinnings. The last Chapter, Chapter 6, describes the implication of the research and the considerations that should be made for future land tenure research in Campeche.

## CHAPTER 2 EVOLUTION OF LAND TENURE IN MEXICO

### **Background**

This Chapter reviews the evolution of land tenure from colonial period to the 1992 land tenure restructuring. Land tenure review is made at three scales: the country, the Yucatán Peninsula, and the State of Campeche. A review of State development programs in Campeche is made to offer the reader an understanding of the State in rural Mexico/Campeche. This Chapter also illustrates the economic conditions within which land tenure restructuring happened in the 1980s and early 1990s. The Chapter closes by focusing on the research site and how it was incorporated into the State development program.

### **Land Tenure in Mexico: from Colonial Rule to the Mexican Revolution**

From 1519 to 1785 the Spanish Crown granted large tracts of land as a form of reward to the soldiers under the *Encomienda* system (Assies 2008; Hervik 2003). The *Encomenderos* were required to educate, protect, and Christianize the indigenous populations and use their services and goods (Hervik 2003). A mixture of social impact caused by the Encomienda system led to the passage of legislation in 1542 to regulate and terminate it (Assies 2008). Nonetheless, the State still kept control over the indigenous population by resettling them into Pueblos de Indios and forcing them to work for the Crown (Assies 2008; Gabbert 2004). The Spanish Crown issued land deeds to these resettled communities as ejidos (Assies 2008).

Gabbert (2004:52) states that the Spanish Crown's intention to protect Indigenous communal property—the ejidos—was fiscally motivated, to continue the collection of revenue from these communities. Despite “protection” by the Crown, colonizers

continued to appropriate land through royal grants, confirmation of *de facto* occupation, sales, or usurpation (Assies 2008). Extractive and productive activities such as mining, grain production, and cattle ranching gave rise to the Hacienda system. The use of forced labor, land appropriation, and consequent rent or sharecropping regimes by the Haciendas led to new tensions between the Spanish and Mestizo colonizers and the Commoner<sup>1</sup> indigenous population (Assies 2008; Gabbert 2004).

Alexander (2003) argues that land tenure, the Hacienda system being one of them, had distinct configurations in different parts of Mesoamerica. Competition for land and labor was among the Church, the State, the Spanish entrepreneurs, and the indigenous nobility. Regardless of the appropriator or the appropriation means, land was consolidated into a few hands (Assies 2008). After Mexico's independence in 1810 little changed with respect to land distribution and ownership. In fact, post independence liberal governments enacted policies that further consolidated the Haciendas into *Latifundios* (large landholdings) (Assies 2008). During the rule of General Porfirio Díaz from 1877 to 1910 unclaimed land was measured and became property of the State; a part was granted to the companies that demarcated these lands. The new property of the State was traded to companies and large land owners (Assies 2008). Estimates are that 87% of rural landholdings were owned by 0.2% of the landowners. Throughout this process adjudication was possible if the possessor of the land had legitimate claim over the unproductive lands. Few communities and owners had documentation of ownership, resulting in the loss of their land.

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<sup>1</sup> Efforts to dominate the Indigenous population was achieved through alliances between the Spanish Colonizers and the Indigenous elite see (Alexander 2003; Gabbert 2004; Hervik 2003).

Disproportionate distribution of land led to the Mexican Revolution in 1911. In 1915 Venustiano Carranza issued a decree to return village and community lands that had been lost as a result of The Lerdo Law of 1857. The Lerdo Law did not include ejidos from the inalienability, making way for their purchase by private parties that claimed to have rented them (Assies 2008). Various proposals and decrees were the essence of Article 27 of the 1917 Mexican Constitution; from this point onward, land belonged to the State (Assies 2008). Large landholdings were expropriated and distributed to populations that lacked land and/or water. A limit on the amount of land that could be owned as private property was established. The Church, which owned large tracts of land, could not own land.

According to De Janvry et al. (1997) the ejido was designed to fulfill multiple objectives of political control, including organizing production and serving as a body of peasant representation. The author states that under the post-revolutionary constitution individuals could acquire land via the following four mechanisms: (a) the right of land restitution for the indigenous communities that had legal documentation over land occupation; (b) living in a settlement that had available land for distribution; (c) relocating to a colonization zone and the establishment of a new population center; and (d) existing ejidos obtaining extension to land to incorporate new ejidatarios. Indigenous communities, due to displacement during the colonial period, did not have the judicial proof over their land occupation (Tiedje 2009). Thus, even in areas where the indigenous population was high, there were few *comunidades agrarias*<sup>2</sup>. Indigenous

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<sup>2</sup> Comunidades agrarias was the legal term utilized for land restituted to indigenous communities.

communities opted for the ejido as a means to obtain access and rights over land (Assies 2008; Tiedje 2009).

### **Land Tenure in the Yucatán Peninsula**

Upon the arrival of the Spanish the Yucatán Peninsula<sup>3</sup> was divided into at least sixteen polities which were ruled by *halach winik* (real men) who were also the *batab* (local leaders) (Gabbert 2004). These polities were stratified into the noble, the commoners, and the slaves (Gabbert 2004; Hervik 2003). In 1552 the colonizers reorganized the communities into *Pueblos de Indios*. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Gabbert (2004) estimates that two thirds of these *Pueblos de Indios* had been abandoned. The author argues that this was an effort to evade tributes in the form of taxes and labor to both the Crown and the local nobility. Parallel to this, the practice of swidden agriculture also increased the distance from these settlement centers which made community members relocate to areas where land for cultivation was available.

During the seventeenth to the mid eighteenth centuries *estancias* (small cattle ranches) in the Yucatán required only a few laborers. During this period the Indigenous population is alleged to have maintained access to land and conducted Milpa production. However, population growth in the Yucatán, Veracruz, and Havana led to the demand for grains and meat; activities until then considered unprofitable. According to Gabbert (2004); Hervik (2003); and Patch (1991) during the 1830s and 1840s Yucatán's legislators facilitated the expansion of the Hacienda system onto indigenous communal lands. As Gabbert (2004) states it made

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<sup>3</sup> Yucatán hereafter is used to refer to the Yucatán Peninsula including the States of Campeche, Quintana Roo and Yucatán, unless otherwise noted.

it progressively easier to transfer supposedly uncultivated public lands (*terrenos baldíos*) to private hands, thereby gradually stripping away the legal protection of Indian claims to soil. [Gabbert 2004:40]

According to these authors, agricultural expansion to accommodate grains, sugar, henequen, cattle, amongst others resulted in a debt-peonage system on the Haciendas. Those that remained on the communal lands and practiced Milpa had to pay rent, provide in-kind labor, or pay with a percentage of their produce (González Navarro 1973[1954]; Zavala and Miranda 1973[1954]).

Gabbert (2004) provides a synthesis of the Henequen industry in the Yucatán. Henequen became the most important export commodity when the preferential regional markets for sugar and beef were severed after independence. The principal market was the United States. Introduction of the mechanized harvesters increased output resulting in a demand for more land and labor. According to the author, land accommodated for Milpa production was reduced resulting in the proletarianization of most Mayans in the West and North of the Yucatán.

The outbreak of the Caste War has been labeled as an ideological battle between the elites of the Yucatán either in support of a Centrist or a Federalist regime of government. It was also a duel between the elites of Campeche and the state of Yucatán. According to Gabbert (2004) Yucatán's elite, in its efforts to mobilize militia, promised the Mayan masses the abolition or reduction of taxes and the repartition of land that had been usurped by the Haciendas.

At the onset of the Mexican Revolution, which was at the end of the Caste War in the Yucatán (1843 – 1902), 96.4% of families in the state of Yucatán had no land. In the state of Campeche communal lands were rare forcing Mayans to either be farm laborers or tenants of landowners (Schüren 2001).

## **Campeche: from the Revolution to the 1992 Land Tenure Restructuring**

As mentioned above, after independence the State “outsourced” the demarcation of land. Campeche was not exempt from this wave of land consolidation conducted by foreign companies during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Schüren 2001). Forest concessions were granted to foreign companies to extract timber (mahogany, *Sxietenia macrophyla* King; Spanish cedar, *Cedrela odorata* L.), logwood (*Haematoxylum campechianum* L.) and chicle (*Manilkara zapota*). According to Ramayo Lanza, 10,000 km<sup>2</sup> of the State’s territory was granted as concessions to five American companies (Porter Bolland 2001).

According to data presented by Schüren (2001) in 1885, 72% of the peasants were farmers; this was dramatically reduced to 13% in 1910. This proves his thesis that commercial agriculture from henequen, sugar, maize, cotton, cattle, amongst others, displaced farmers and made them peons. Working conditions on the Haciendas and *Monterías* (forest camps for forest product extractions) were repressive (Schüren 2001). According to the author, the bosses had judicial, executive, and criminal jurisdiction over the peons.

### **Post Revolution Politics in Campeche**

Lukewarm positions and policies adopted by appointed and elected governors of Campeche slowed Revolutionary objectives (Schüren 2001). The administration of General Joaquin Mucel (1914 – 1919) implemented legislation that reduced the power that the large landholder wielded; however, he failed to address the issues of high land concentration in Campeche (Schüren 2001). Though Mucel abolished the debt-peonage system in the Haciendas and *Monterías* of Campeche, the peons remained landless and had to sharecrop on the property of their “former employers.” As described by

Schüren (2001), Mucel's failure to reform and establish an independent peasantry was his belief that improving working conditions on the large landholders to increase production was more efficient and modern. Ramón Félix Flores came to power in 1921. During his two years as governor was the first time that the "problem of the peasant" was addressed on a limited scale. Approaches adopted by the successive presidents between 1917 – 1934 did little to address the problems of the landless (Assies 2008). Of course this trickled to the State level. The visit of President Lázaro Cárdenas to Campeche pushed Eduardo Mena Córdova to make changes in the State agrarian reform policies. Failure to do so was threatened with destitution (Schüren 2001). Assies (2008) and De Janvry et al. (1997) state that during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas there was a surge in land grants and expansion of existing ejido lands, an epoch now dubbed *Cardenismo* (1934 – 1940).

### **From Los Pacíficos del Sur to Cardenismo**

The *Pacíficos del Sur* (Peaceful of the South) was a group of rebels escaping the front lines of the Caste War and also evading tax payments from the government of Yucatán. This region's notoriety during the Caste War was its signing of a Peace Treaty with the Yucatán government in 1853 (Angel 1997; Gabbert 2004). The significance of this treaty is the staunch refusal of the payment of the head tax (Angel 1997). Conditional to the indefinite exemption of the head tax payment was the acceptance of priests to administer the Sacraments. With the exception of periodic suspicion that the rebels had contact with the eastern rebels (in Quintana Roo) on the one hand, and that the Government would terminate the tax exemption on the other, the Treaty was honored by both parties (Angel 1997). From a population of approximately 12,000 in 1853 (Angel 1997), the population of the Pacíficos del Sur was 8000 by 1910 (Dumond

1997). The Pacíficos del Sur eventually integrated into the state of Campeche because of commercial ties and the connection of roads to this region via Hopelchén (Gabbert 2004).

After the Mexican Revolution Haciendas in Hopelchén were abandoned and share cropped by some former Hacienda workers (Gabbert 2004). Meanwhile other farmers abandoned the Haciendas completely to start settling in communities. This loss of farm labor caused large landholders to find other commercial activities. Some ventured into chicle extraction with capital provided by foreign investors Schüren (2001; 2003). Labor for chicle extraction was provided by the liberated farmhands and out of state chicleros. Hopelchén and Dzibalchén were the major centers for chicle extraction in the 1930s.

Lands for the legal establishment of ejidos in the Municipio of Hopelchén were granted between 1927 and 1935. Second expansion to most, if not all, ejidos of Hopelchén was in 1938 & 1939. Large tracts of land, in the five digits, were granted in the third, and presumably the last, expansion for the same ejidos in 1940. See (Schüren 2001:311-13) for details of the grants and expansions.

### **Planned Development and the State**

Land tenure in Campeche is difficult to understand without taking into account the intervention of the State in the rural sector. It is argued that unsustainable growth of the Mexican economy was as a result of a long history of the import-substitution model and the monopolization of export by oil in the 1970s. The oil price plunge in 1981 was all that was required to push the government into default. As per normal, loans from the International Monetary Fund implied structural adjustments with regards to public spending and an economic liberalization (Gates 1993). The author states that for most of the 1980s, especially the latter part, the public sector investment in the agricultural

sector dropped by 80%, reduction of loans to the rural sector was cut by 50%, and the guaranteed price for ten major staple products fell by almost 50%. Gates (1993) states that it was during this economic condition that the government took the daunting task of revitalizing the agricultural sector. De Janvry et al. (1997) and Gates (1993) argue that to a large extent, efforts by the State to address the debt crisis of 1982 eventually resulted in the 1992 restructuring of land tenure<sup>4</sup> in Mexico.

In the following section I describe the agrarian policies in Campeche which eventually involved both Xmaben and Chunchintoc. Focus is placed on the years that led to the Mexican debt crisis and its implications on the rural sector. Extensive analysis is provided by the classic work of Gates 1993 *In Default*.

## **Overview**

Post Cardenismo (1940 – 1965) saw the development of dual state policies toward the agrarian sector (De Janvry et al. 1997; Gates 1993). On the one hand state development agencies catered to the need of the rural poor, and on the other hand they were promoting commercial agriculture. Green Revolution technology and public infrastructure gave rise to the “Mexican Miracle” (Gates 1993). Throughout the rest of the 1960s, despite foreign investment, increased State intervention stagnated commercial agriculture. This also meant a reduction of public investment in agriculture (Gates 1993). President Luis Echeverría Alvarez (1970 – 1976) made efforts to “rectify the social justice imbalance” which was created with the internationalization of Mexican agriculture (Gates 1993). With World Bank funding the PIDER and COPLAMAR projects

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<sup>4</sup> Changes brought by the 1992 Agrarian Law, which some authors refer to as Agrarian Reform, is considered a “restructuring of land tenure” in this research. This distinction is made taking into consideration the definition of agrarian reform by Deere and León (2000:75) and observations made by thesis committee members.

were established to address the imbalance (Assies 2008; Gates 1993). Likewise, during his tenure national lands were distributed to peasants.

The economic policy of import substitution showed its effect with increased inflation. During the latter part of the 1970s there was an economic crisis; however, this was temporarily addressed with the discovery of petroleum and public debt. During this turmoil the SAM was created with the objective of increasing productivity in rain-fed areas with the State sharing the risks of the investment. Between 1976 and 1982, according to Gates (1993), an increase in ejido land “renting for State-managed production units” occurred. Even after the 1982 debt crisis, the following administrations kept promoting agricultural productivity with an emphasis on staple foods.

Carlos Salinas de Gortari’s administration (1988 – 1994) intensified debt restructuring while liberalizing the Mexican economy via NAFTA. Consequently, the agricultural sector was opened with protection limited to corn, beans, meat, and powdered milk (De Janvry et al. 1997). Gates (1993:274) states that during this austerity and liberalizing phase the State “retreated from the rural sector.” Within this period the restructuring of land tenure in Mexico took place (Barnes 2009; Gates 1993), a result of the 1992 Agrarian Law. Consequently, PROCEDE was established to operationalize the land regularization, seen as necessary for the full integration of Mexico into the world economy (Cornelius and Myhre 1998).

### **Planned Development in Campeche**

Infrastructural development during the Mexican Miracle years created social unrest by displacing peasants. Southeastern Mexico was seen as a “social pressure release valve” for the relocation of displaced peasants; example Veracruz 1941, Tabasco 1966,

and Oaxaca 1974 (Gates 1993). In Campeche Gates (1993) describes the State planned development as having four phases. During the 1960s the southern parts of the State were seen as a frontier for the relocation of landless peasants from the central part of Mexico. At the turn of the 1970s the State shifted toward transferring middle to small scale technology to ejidos in the Mayan region of Campeche. In 1973 the Alfredo V. Bonfil ejido in the Edzna valley saw the development of large mechanized agriculture as part of a national resettlement project. And finally, in 1978 the Yohaltún, in the same valley, saw the State increasing its grip on the rural sector by pursuing agribusiness with rice production on ejido lands. In the middle of the turmoil of inflation, devaluation, and the actual default of the Mexican government, Xmaben and Churchintoc were incorporated into the “State agribusiness enterprise.”

Table 2-1 provides a summary of the State planned development in Campeche. Ironically the last attempt of the planned development of the State culminates with rice projects in Xmaben and Churchintoc. In 1985 the State made the last expenditure on the Churchintoc Rice project (INEGI 1990).

As Gates (1993) predicted, after the state programs were discontinued, these lands transitioned to cattle production, either by design or by default. In Xmaben the 500 hectares of rice might have been sown once by the State enterprise. After the project was abandoned, a cattle cooperative was formed, and the *mecanizado*<sup>5</sup> that is closer to the community was fenced. Johnson and Guinea grass seeds in the rice did not require investment for pasture establishment. Churchintoc saw 10,000 hectares of forest felled. Schüren (2001) reports that only 5,000 hectares of the land were utilized for rice

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<sup>5</sup> Mecanizado is the local term used to make reference to the area where forest was felled and mechanized for the rice projects.

production. Decrease of the price of rice, mismanagement, and a reduction of State involvement in the rural sector led to the rice project disappearing. Chunchintoc's mecanizado was also fenced, and the land was gradually converted to pasture. The satellite image below (Figure 2-1) illustrates the areas where the rice projects were established; the image was taken two years after the project was halted. In Chunchintoc it is the upper left of the ejido polygon; in Xmaben it is the lower section bordering the ejido polygon.

Table 2-1. Historical summary of state planned development programs in Campeche, MX.

Year	Location	Model	Land Tenure System	Goal/s
1963	Candelaria	Tropical frontier colonization	Establishment of 6 town sites. 5,000 ha of ejido land per town.	Balanced commercial production of foods, cattle and lumber; extensive mechanization, irrigation, technical assistance & extension.
1969	Maya Region	Small-scale transfer of intermediate technology	60 – 100 ha in collective production on ejido land	Secure livelihood via intensive agriculture via irrigate high-value crops
1973	Alfredo V. Bonfil, Edzna Valley	Large-scale agricultural and resettlement project	20,000 ha ejidos; 10 ha individual/family plots and the remainder as collective land	Intensive, heavily mechanized, diversified agriculture with irrigation planned for 50% for rice and 50% for cattle
1978	Yohaltún, Edzna Valley	State agribusiness enterprise	75,000 ha organized in 7 ejidos as production units	Rice production on ejido land without directly involving the ejidatarios
1981	Chunchintoc	State agribusiness enterprise	10,000 ha of ejido land	Rice production on ejido land without directly involving the ejidatarios
1981?	Xmaben	State agribusiness enterprise	500 ha of ejido land	Rice production on ejido land without directly involving the ejidatarios

Source: Adapted from Gates (1993:65-72;169)

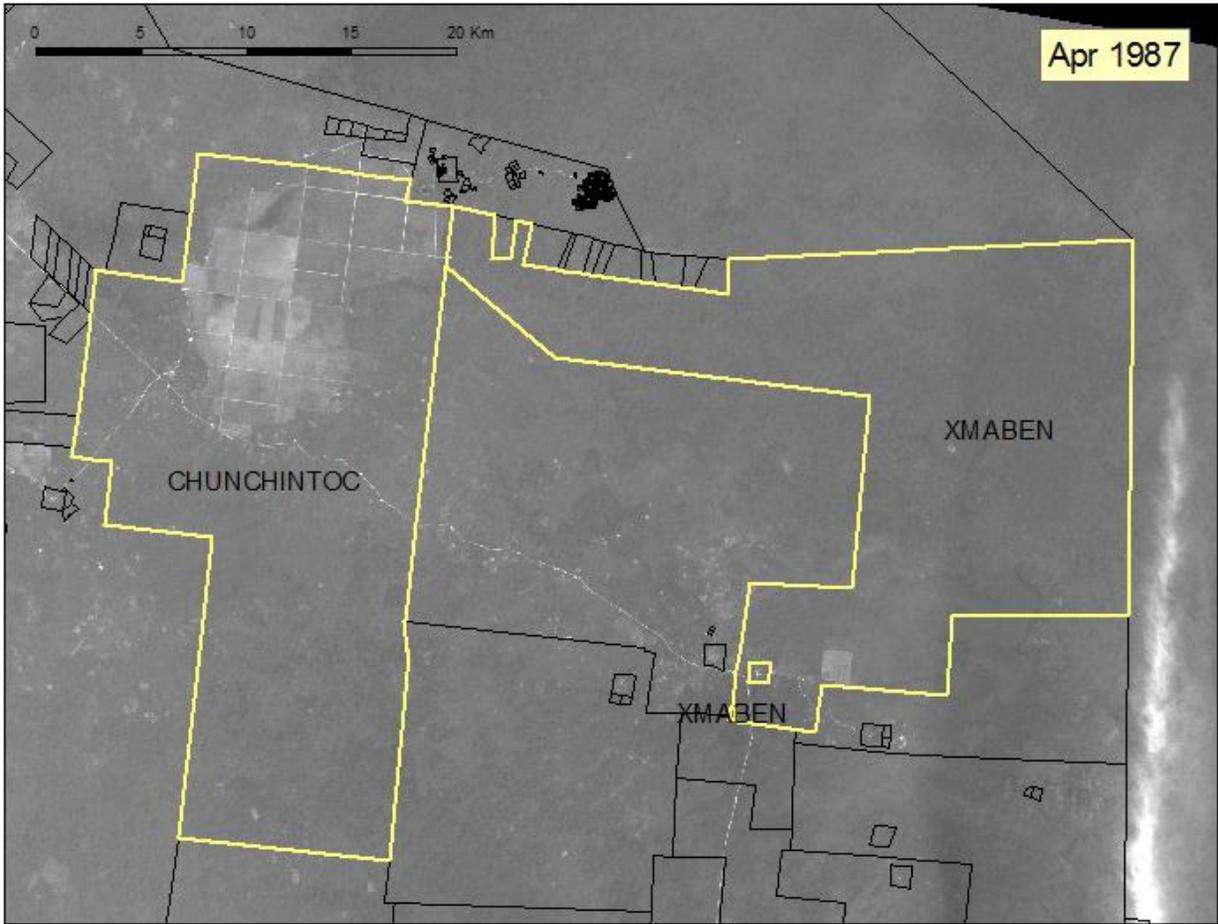


Figure 2-1. Satellite image illustrating rice projects established in early 1980s in Churchintoc and Xmaben, Campeche, MX. Courtesy of Claudia Monzon, University of Florida.

## CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### **Background**

Based on my hypothesis that more autonomous communities will be able to reject a State policy—in this case PROCEDE—I find that the use of Cultural Control Theory relevant to define that autonomy. For purposes of this study the degree of cultural control over these elements defines the degree of autonomy. Bonfil Batalla (1995) states most communities find themselves on a continuum from an autonomous culture to an imposed culture.

Common Pool Resource Theory and Traditional Ecological Knowledge are described below. Both theories are central in the analysis for this research. Their framework was essential in identifying constructs and variables that were incorporated in the interview guide. Since I argue that it is the decision making capacity of the community over cultural elements—autonomy—that is essential in determining the acceptance or rejection of PROCEDE and not ethnicity, the reader is provided with a brief description of ethnicity and how it is approached in this study. Agency is described as well. Agency is used for its explanatory power and its direct relation with Common Pool Resource, TEK and the interactions of the individual with the various “fields.” At the end of this Chapter it is hoped that the reader understands the principal and secondary theories that influenced the structure of the thesis and why they are essential in the discussion of the results.

### **Cultural Control Theory**

Cultural control theory as the author defines it is “the social-decision-making-capacity over cultural elements” (Bonfil Batalla 1988; 1995). For the author cultural

elements are the components that are necessary to be in play to *conduct all* and each social action: to maintain daily life, meet needs, define and solve problems, formulate and try to fulfill aspirations. The cultural elements are divided into the following (the definitions are translated word for word to maintain definitions as true to the author's original thesis):

- **MATERIAL.** Are all objects that are either in their natural state or transformed by human labor, which a group is able to make use of at a given moment of its historical becoming: land, raw materials, energy sources, tools and utensils, natural and manufactured products, et cetera.
- **ORGANIZATIONAL.** Are systematized forms of social relations through which members of a group can participate, and whose intervention is necessary to accomplish the action.
- **KNOWLEDGE.** The assimilated and systematized experiences that are produced, which are accumulated and transmitted from generation to generation and within which new knowledge is generated and incorporated.
- **SYMBOLIC.** Are the different codes that allow for the necessary communication between the participants at the various stages of an action. Language is the fundamental code, but there are other symbolic systems that must be shared to make efficient and possible certain actions.
- **EMOTIVE.** Can be referred to as subjective. It is the collective representation, beliefs and integrated values which motivate participation and/or acceptance of actions: subjectivity as an essential cultural element.

According to Bonfil Batalla (1988) when the cultural elements are in play to conduct an action, it is necessary to have the capacity to make decisions over those elements. These decisions can be made at an individual level, household level, communal level, specialized group level, and at macro-scales.

Autonomous culture is one where the group makes decisions over cultural elements. These elements are native since they are produced by a group of social actors, and they are preserved as pre-existing patrimony. Examples the author provides are medicinal knowledge where the knowledge, the language of communication, the

specifics of the ailment, and the decision to consult and provide this traditional knowledge are native. Another example is the production of Milpa where the knowledge of land selection, plant species, rituals, organization of labor are all elements over which the local community exerts decision. Local forms of adjudication over daily life are another component of autonomous culture (Bonfil Batalla 1988). The other extreme of the continuum, as can be observed above, is imposed culture where neither the elements nor decisions over those elements are native to the social group. An example provided is the imposition of elementary education where the parents are obligated by law to keep children in school. The content of the education (material, language – in non-official language speaking communities, etc) is not decided by the social group.

Appropriated culture is the sphere where the social group gains control over foreign elements and makes decisions over those elements. A contemporary example is the appropriation of agro-technology (e.g. agrochemicals) and their use in traditional Milpas. Though the element is foreign, its form of use is decided by the social group (individual or household). Bonfil Batalla (1988) provides other examples such as making adjustments to internal social organizations based on external appropriation of social structures. On the other hand, alienated culture is when the social group loses control over elements that are of their patrimony. Examples provided are cultural alienation or folklorization of ceremonies and feasts where the social group does not have control over its production. For a more graphic illustration of the four types of culture mentioned above see Table 3-1 below.

For Bonfil Batalla, an ethnic group is the group of relatively stable individuals that maintain historical continuity since they can biologically reproduce themselves and

because the members of that group establish among themselves a distinct social identity. They generally consider themselves of a political unit that has exclusive control over cultural elements that are native to them. Decisions are considered *propias* (autochthonous) when they generally involve cultural elements that are native and which have legitimacy within the group.

It is admissible that there are limitations to this framework of analysis. It is arguable that it is a form too static for the analysis of culture and its autonomy. Nonetheless Bonfil Batalla (1995) argues that Cultural Control Theory can be useful to analyze autonomy when culture is seen as a fluid process and not one that is monolithic and static. As he puts it “all cultures are dynamic [and] changing within certain parameters and rhythms.”

### **On Ethnicity**

Throughout the history of social science ethnicity has been influenced by two major schools of thought, the primordialist and the instrumentalist. The primordialist sees “ethnic groups (...) as givens” (Nederveen Pieterse 1996:27), where they can “resurface” when modernity fails. Comaroff (1996:165) states that there is a more *neo*-primordialist school of thought that posits that ethnic consciousness is latent and is objectified only when the integrity or intentions of the ethnic group is threatened. Nederveen Pieterse (1996) argues that ethnicity is an unstable category, one that is plural and contested between the enclosure of the ethnic category and the contradictor pressure of competition to alter the boundaries of the ethnic category.

For Comaroff (1996:166) ethnic identities are relations whose content is produced in the particularities of their historical construction. Similar to Nederveen Pieterse (1996), the author posits that identity originates where there is inequality either over

material, political, or symbolical power. The author also states that from the assemblage of symbols, values, and meaning which occur in daily life, the construction of ethnic identity happens. After the ethnic identities are constructed, they are reified. However, what contributes in the construction of these identities is not necessarily what sustains them (Comaroff 1996:166).

In the Yucatán, according to Gabbert (2001a; 2001c; 2004), possibly until the beginning of the twentieth century there was very limited differentiation among the “social categories” of those of Spanish descent, the Creoles or the Mestizos (what in modern day are categorized as Yucatec Maya). Gabbert (2001b) argues that the term Maya was not in the imagined consciousness of the population of the Yucatán as an ethnic identity; he argues that the term Maya as a social category originated in academia in the twentieth century. Though Gabbert convincingly argues that there are symbolic characteristics (language, clothing, surname) that creates an ethnic category, he fails to elaborate on the contested “boundaries” of ethnicity and how it is negotiated by the subjects in a conscious or unconscious manner. His thesis that symbols are abandoned because they connote being an “Indian,” highlights Nederveen Pieterse's (1996:38) statement that “development does not eliminate ethnicity but makes for its refiguration.”

The above observations bolster the argument that ethnicity—in its primordial paradigm, and as often utilized in land tenure literature—is misconstrued (or is a misnomer at least) in efforts to understand the “cultural dynamics” of social groups and land.

With the propositions above by John Comaroff and Jan Nederveen Pieterse, ethnicity in the Yucatán is not something that should be freely utilized to lump groups of people into ethnic categories. If we utilized the more *neo*-primordialist view that ethnic identities are latent and given, then it is easy to fall into the conventionality to state that a group of people are Yucatec Mayans. This position is evidently contradictory even for the title of this study which assumes that the subjects studied are from an ethnic group/category. However, it is necessary to be transparent to the reader on this front.

I acknowledge that Cultural Control Theory can be criticized as being primordialist for seemingly taking ethnic group as a given and portraying them as static and monolithic. However, Bonfil Batalla (1988) argued that it is not the categorization of the elements or the groups that is essential in his theory, but the analysis of the decision-making capacity in every action or circumstance. However, my interest is not to argue for or against the primordialist view. Cultural Control Theory, as Bonfil Batalla argues, helps with analyzing the “social capacity” of decision making. The framework facilitates the ability to determine which community is autonomous versus one that is less autonomous.

## **Other Theories**

### **Common Pool Resource**

The Mexican ejido, as established by the law, is a form of Common Pool Resource (CPR). Ostrom (1990:30) defines CPR's as a natural or man-made resource system that is sufficiently large to make it costly to exclude potential beneficiaries from obtaining benefits from its use. Common Property Resource (CPR), as defined by Stevenson (1991:40), has the following characteristics:

- The resource has bounds that are determined by social, biological and physical characteristics.
- There is a well defined group of users who are distinct from the persons who are excluded from the resource use.
- Multiple included users participate in the extraction of resources.
- Explicit or implicit well-understood rules exist among users regarding their rights and their duties to one another about resource extraction.
- Users share joint, nonexclusive entitlements to the *in situ* or fugitive resource prior to its capture or use.
- Users compete for the resources, and thereby impose negative externalities on one another.
- A well-delineated group of rights holders exists which may or may not coincide with the group of users.

In a review and critique of CPR's, Agrawal (2003) summarizes the four sets of variables that have been identified over the years by scholars: (a) characteristics of the resource, (b) the nature of the groups that depend on the resource, (c) particular institutional regimes through which the resource is managed, and (d) the nature of the relationship between a group and external forces and authorities. An extensive description can be found in page 249 of the same article.

One of the observations that Stevenson (1991:40) makes is the reference of CPR's as social institutions, where in traditional societies the users themselves put in place the institutional structure to govern and manage the resources. Likewise Agrawal (2003:244), making reference to Schlager & Ostrom (1992), criticizes most theorists' take on property rights institutions as being best described as sets of rules that define access, use, exclusion, management, monitoring, sanctioning, and arbitration behavior of users.

Ejidos, for this study, are considered CPR institutions. Social institution is the variable that is relevant to this study—more precisely, the management of the *k'aax* (forest/land) in the communities of this study. As Stevenson (1991) has pointed out, there are explicit and implicit (cultural) norms that exist to regulate CPR's. In ejidos, norms can be from the area of land where a *comunero* or *ejidatario* has access, the “status” required to voice an opinion during an ejido assembly, and so on. In the Chapter 5 the value of CPR theory can be appreciated and better understood.

### **Traditional Ecological Knowledge**

Scholars converge that traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is a knowledge-practice-belief complex, as noted by Berkes (1999:13). The Milpa system can illustrate traditional ecological knowledge. It is the detailed knowledge of corn varieties, soil type, pests, et cetera; the practice of specific agronomic behaviors such as the combination of squash, beans, and corn; an elaborate belief system of performing rituals to request permission to use the land; and the giving of gratitude for a harvest. Berkes (1999:12-13) theorizes that TEK is interrelated at four levels: (a) local knowledge, (b) resource management systems, (c) social institutions, and (d) world view. Literature has noted that the reproduction of knowledge does not conform to a linear pattern from generation to generation, or from year to year for that matter.

As farmers become less isolated, their livelihood strategies respond to both local and non-local forces. This has led scholars to argue that the production and reproduction of knowledge is becoming less traditional, but more technical; thus, Bebbington's (1993:275) proposition of indigenous technical knowledge. The author refers to farmers/peasants as situated agents. Farmers generate, incorporate, and reconfigure “new knowledge” (termed cultural elements by Bonfil Batalla) into their

livelihood strategies based on cultural, economic, agroecological, and sociopolitical contexts as argued by Bebbington (1993:275). Ejidatarios can be considered as situated agents in plotting a livelihood. Retaking the Milpa system, as mentioned above, the State rice projects introduced mechanization technology in the region of study. Farmers perform rituals in these mechanized Milpas which can have local or hybrid varieties of corn. In their efforts to make more efficient use of time and capital, farmers apply agrochemicals (herbicide and fertilizers), encouraged by the State subsidies, for example PROCAMPO (Schüren 2001a).

These brief examples coincide with Bebbington's thesis that farmers are situated in structures that are local and non-local while producing and reconfiguring knowledge. In the Yucatán, ejidatarios are indeed situated agents. It is this conceptual framework which is used for this research.

### **Agency**

According to Ortner (2006:143-144), the most widely used definition of agency is the power that people have at their disposal, their ability to act on their own behalf, influence other people and events, and maintain some kind of control over their lives. The author makes a distinction that agency has two "fields of meaning." On the one hand it is seen as "intentionality and the pursuit of (culturally defined) projects." On the other, it defines agency as power, about acting within relations of social inequality, asymmetry, and force.

Ortner (2006) discusses three components of agency—that of intentionality, its cultural construction, and its relation to power. Ortner points out the extreme descriptions of intentionality. On the one hand theoreticians believe that intentionality comes out of routine practice. Intentionality is a given, unconsciously framed by socio-

cultural ability of humans to act, or that outcomes are unintended consequences of action. On the other extreme are those that posit that intentionality is an explicit manifestation of action toward a goal. "Intentionality as a concept is meant to include all the ways in which action is cognitively and emotionally pointed *toward* some purpose" (Ortner 2006:134).

According to Ortner (2006:136), agency is considered to be a universal part of "humanness." Hence, it is always culturally and historically constructed. In her thesis of power inequality, specifically of resistance and domination, Ortner identifies the continuum of agency of those dominated (considered to have a "lot of Agency," as the author puts it). It goes from outright rebellion on one end, foot-dragging, to complex and ambivalent acceptance of domination which is changed upon acceptance on the other extreme. Ortner (2006:137) states that agency is differentially shaped, and also nourished or stunted under different regimes of power. Agency in the sense of power is founded around the axis of domination and resistance as defined by the dominant party. Agency in the pursuit of projects is defined by local logics of the good and the desirable and how to pursue them. For Ortner, agents are "empowered subjects" with varying degrees of "empowerment" even in the most unbalanced power relations.

Table 3-1. Fields of culture based on cultural control of elements.

Cultural elements	Decisions	
	Native	Alien
Native ( <i>propio</i> )	Autonomous culture	Alienated culture
Alien ( <i>ajeno</i> )	Appropriated culture	Imposed culture

Source: Bonfil Batalla (1988)

## CHAPTER 4 METHOD

### **Background**

The data analyzed and presented in this research were collected over a fifteen week period spent in three phases during 2010. During the first week of May I visited the capital city of Campeche to identify a local supervisor—Dr. Luis Arriola; who eventually became part of my thesis committee. Another objective of that week was visiting government entities and NGOs that have presence in the region. After identifying the two communities, with the help of a State official, I returned in mid-May to spend a total of 12 weeks in the field, six in each community. Both communities are in the Municipio of Hopelchén, Campeche, Mexico. It was during the summer of 2010 that I conducted interviews with informants, ethnography, and archival research at RAN and the State Archives in the city of Campeche. During the month of December, I returned for two weeks to these communities to complement and corroborate data. Analysis was conducted in the field (with field-note recordings) and continued in Gainesville, FL with the assistance of MAXQDA®.

I must disclose to the reader that I am a “Yucatec Maya.” My great grandparents fled the Caste War from the Yucatán and went south, via Petén, into the then Colony of British Honduras. In my research I try to be as reflexive as possible. Thus, it is possible that the collection of data, and consequently my results, could be biased since I am both “us” and the “them.”

### **Methodology**

This research utilized a case study approach to respond to the question that was established. Case study, as the Sage Reference Online (2010) defines it, is inquiry

about a bounded unit. For Yin (2009) a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. In this study I intend to respond to a question that is relevant in the historical context, from 1997 to approximately 2005 – when the Procuraduría Agraria made the last attempts to convince Chunchintoc to accept PROCEDE. Case study is relevant for this research since I analyze the contemporary cultural dynamics of each community to understand the different degrees of autonomy between both. Yin (2009:219) adds that a case study has the benefit of having documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations that enrich inquiry. I utilized these tools to analyze the existence of cultural elements in the present as indicators of autonomy.

It is a comparative case study since the research design was framed to analyze the acceptance of a State program. For this research, the unit of analysis is at the ejido level. Results are presented at an ejido level, but, as the reader will find in Chapter 5, effort is made to make comparisons between both ejidos to see the explanatory power of the case study design.

Research tools utilized are ethnography, semi-structured interviews, and archival research. The semi-structured interview included items that address the constructs and variables from Traditional Ecological Knowledge and the management of Common Pool Resource. Both comuneros and ejidatarios were also asked questions that described their attitudes on land tenure. Another section of the questionnaire addressed the influence of partisan politics and religion on the functions of the ejido as a political unit, as an assembly.

## Site Selection

As mentioned above, the site selection was conducted during the first week of May of 2010. A Paralegal Officer from the Procuraduría Agraria, one of the many people that visited communities to promote PROCEDE, recommended ejidos where the research could be conducted. The characteristics of the communities were discussed with the Officer, and the selection was consequently made. The characteristics that both communities had were relatively the same population, speaking the same language, being within the same geographic region, and having the same land use. One community rejected PROCEDE, while the other accepted PROCEDE.

Xmaben, the ejido that accepted PROCEDE, has had a long history of development interventions by NGOs. Local and foreign researchers visit the community throughout the year. It is possible that Xmaben is the most researched community of La Montaña. Unfortunately very few research products are available for consultation. On the other hand, Chunchintoc scantily appears in research literature. Community members do not mention any past presence of researchers in their community. However, Schüren (2001c) makes reference to interviews made with the *comisario ejidal* of Chunchintoc in his historical and ethnographic analysis of the Milpa system of Hopelchén. The principal reason for selecting these communities is that they fulfilled all the criteria mentioned above. In addition, they had the advantage of being relatively accessible.

Figure 4-1 illustrates the location of Xmaben and Chunchintoc. Further below Xmaben and Chunchintoc are described from archival research, online consultations, complemented with ethnographic observation.

## **Xmaben**

Xmaben appears in the literature of the pre-Caste War era. During the Caste War emissaries from Merida Yucatán visited the community in 1864. In 1865 the local commanders of the now Peaceful Rebels gathered in Xmaben in November to declare themselves an independent State with their local Governor and Commander (Dumond 1997:282). It seems as if Xmaben was the front line and stronghold of the Pacíficos del Sur against the nascent State of Campeche, the State of Yucatán and the eastern rebels of nowadays Quintana Roo.

Oral history has that the community got its name from *Xnuuk Ben* (Mrs Ben). Xnuuk Ben accidentally came across a well that her cattle had found in its search for water. This led her to establish her new home in the area. The natural wells are said to be constructed by the *aantibo'ob* (the ancestors) with the help of *p'uuso'ob* (hunchbacks). The *Nukuch Máako'ob* (the elderly) of Xmaben believe that the first settlers of Xmaben came from Mesa Pich, the abandoned capital of the Pacíficos del Sur during the Caste War (Angel 1997:525-549; Dumond 1997:571). Porter Bolland et al. (2005:19) state that the hamlet was established by Chicleros during the seventeenth century.

Population (Gabbert 2004:252), as seen in Table 4-1 and Table 4-2, fluctuated after the Caste War. During the twentieth century Xmaben experienced migration to the southern communities of Xkanhá, Bel-Ha, and Zoh-Laguna, and other larger settlements of the Yucatán<sup>1</sup>. In 1929 fifty-one community members were granted 2,448 ha of land, formally establishing the ejido. Consequently, two expansions of the ejido

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<sup>1</sup> Personal communication with Mr. Manuel Montoy on July 7, 2010. Mr. Montoy is a local historian.

lands in 1939 and 1940 added 2,400 hectares and 44,800 hectares respectively. After demarcation, via PROCEDE, the ejido had 36,808 hectares; a difference of 12,840 hectares land could not be accounted for – between what was granted by Presidential decrees and what INEGI demarcated on the ground (Porter Bolland et al. 2005:19).

### **Churchintoc**

Churchintoc appears scantily in the pre and post Caste War literature. Seemingly, Churchintoc was the frontier between the States of Yucatán and Campeche. After several military skirmishes the State of Yucatán ceded the settlement to Campeche (Gabbert 2004:252; Reed 1964:308). Since 1872 the state of Campeche acknowledges the presence of Churchintoc and finances the first rural school in this community (Dumond 1997:571). However, as the author alleges, it is questionable whether this school was operational due to its remoteness and State presence. With data presented by (Dumond 1997:571), it is possible that the community was established between 1861 and 1872.

The name of the community, according to local oral history, is from the abundance of the plant species *Churchintok'* (*Giaiacum sanctum* L.); and from the abundance of a type of rock called *took'*. In 1927 the State granted 4,128 hectares of land to officially establish the ejido. Unlike other ejidos in Hopelchén, Churchintoc had a third ejido expansion in 1977. This placed the total land granted in 1927, 1938, 1940 and 1977 to 38,918 hectares.

### **Demography and Socio-economy**

Data published by INEGI (2010) reveal that Xmaben has more Maya speakers, see Table 4-3. Unlike Churchintoc, Maya is widely spoken by the children in Xmaben. In all four churches of Xmaben spiritual leaders conduct services in Maya. Sermons are

“officially made in Spanish,” but the local spiritual leaders would comfortably switch to Maya and finish a sermon in that language. Interesting to note is that Maya is used in the public domain in churches where local community members are tasked with performing the service. On the other hand, I did not observe any church activity being performed in Maya in Chunchintoc. A higher percentage of population of Xmaben is bilingual.

Ninety two percent of the population of Chunchintoc report practicing Catholicism, compared to 57% in Xmaben. More than 40% of Xmaben’s members belong to a Christian Protestant denomination. In that community there is one Catholic Church, two Pentecostal Evangelical Churches, and one Presbyterian Church. Chunchintoc has one Catholic Church and one Evangelical Pentecostal Church.

Both communities have almost the same percentage of its population completing secondary education. However, Chunchintoc has more people continue attending an educational institution after high school. This is in part explained by the proximity of Chunchintoc to Dzibalchén. As the census data reveal, Chunchintoc has a slightly better socio-economic standard of living. Improved economic conditions of families in Chunchintoc allow for “discretionary spending” on education.

Table 4-4 provides a description of the socio-economic differences between Chunchintoc and Xmaben. In Xmaben a significant percentage of households have motorcycles which are used as the principal mode of transportation to Milpas and nearby communities. This mode of transportation is not accounted for in the census data.

Data obtained from the regional office of SAGARPA in the town of Dzibalchén indicate that Chunchintoc is subsidized more hectares of corn, either as Milpa or as mechanized Milpa. Likewise, in 2009 approximately 50% of the ejidatarios in Chunchintoc received subsidies for livestock (PROGAN) from the State<sup>2</sup>. The reliability of data reporting and collection has been questioned in other instances. However, observations in the field do indicate that Chunchintoc has more cattle and corn production. Recorded productivity of mechanized Milpa in Chunchintoc is 2 – 2.5 ton/hectare<sup>3</sup>. Meanwhile, traditional Milpa in Xmaben has a recorded productivity of 0.5 – 0.8 ton/hectare.

Chunchintoc has mechanized agriculture as an unintended consequence of the failed rice projects of the 1980s. After the loan was “settled,” some machinery remained in the community, and Milpa was mechanized. As an ejidatario recalls

some have been doing [it] for far longer [than 15 years] because it was since the mechanization began. That was being done by machines. They found the *Káakab*<sup>4</sup> and harrowed it.<sup>5</sup>

In Xmaben, there is no mention of machinery remaining in the community, thus, the reduced acreage of mechanized Milpa.

### **Data Collection**

Most researchers write about the niceties and challenges of fieldwork due to the cultural shock, the living adventures, and the rapport that is established with informants.

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<sup>2</sup> Personal communication with the local “PROGAN agent,” Chunchintoc, December 2010. He is “hired” by the veterinarian who is contracted by the State to “monitor” and corroborate production with subsidies.

<sup>3</sup> Personal communication with Ing Jorge Yeh Gongora on August 5, 2010. Centro de Apoyo para el Desarrollo Rural Cader Dzibalchén-SAGARPA, Hopelchén, Campeche.

<sup>4</sup> *Káakab* is a deep brownish-yellowish soil that has good drainage. For an extensive description of the Mayan names for soil types and their description see (Porter Bolland 2001:14-15).

<sup>5</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, August 5, 2010.

In my case, I was struck by the lengthy process it took to establish rapport with the community members. Despite speaking Maya, I was treated as an outsider, which I was. In the case of Xmaben, I could not start making interviews until I was formally presented to the ejidatarios at an assembly, a couple of weeks after being in the community. Before then my data collection was limited to field-notes—and theorizing about the consumption of Gamesa and Coca Cola in these communities. In Chunchintoc, though I had the blessing of the comisario ejidal to do interviews, it took a while to conduct the first interview. Interestingly, I was recommended by both local people and outsiders (State Officials and other village leaders) to interview X persons; these people would outright reject my request for an interview. Even after conducting some interviews, other community members would be very hesitant and ended up refusing to be interviewed. The irony is that many, in Xmaben, fondly related about anthropologists that had been living in the community. From their conversations it seems as if their acceptance of non-Mayan anthropologists is far more embracing.

Semi-structured interviews were applied to 24 community members and one State official. The interviews, with a few exceptions, were conducted after the interviewee's Milpa and/or cattle pasture had been visited. All interviews were conducted in the community, at homes, at the Palacio Municipals, and at the worksites of those that had jobs within the community. Ideally the groups of ejidatarios sampled were to be within the following categories: two below 24.9 years; two between 25 – 34.9 years, two between 35 – 49.9 years, and three above 50 years. At least two comuneros were interviewed in each community. As seen in Table 5-1, this did not conform to the desired criteria.

Where reference to an informant becomes necessary pseudonyms are utilized. Throughout the document interviews will be referenced as a footnote which will include the social position (comunero, ejidatario, etc) of the informant, the informant's community, and the date the interview was conducted. In instances where the identity of a person can be easily determined the informant's community is not identified. It is important to reassure the informants that in no circumstance was their names, or any description which might reveal their identity, recorded in field notes, audio files, transcribed interviews, and consent forms.

The following is an ethnographic diary entry, Xmaben, 06/26/2010

Mr. A has left Xmaben for Campeche, I did not need the alarm clock. It is 4:45 AM, I am sitting in front of the rural clinic waiting for Mr. Z. I met Mr. Z at the ejido assembly where I was presented to the ejidatarios by the comisario ejidal. At first he was not too excited to have me come to his *kool* (milpa). After wait all morning yesterday and find out that they left for their farm without me, I visited him last night – around 8:30 PM – to 're-request' him to take me along with them to their kool to help them plant corn. It rained there yesterday and that is why everyone is going to plant today. We broke the silence of the morning with the pickup truck when we crossed the village to pickup his son-in-law who was also going to plant his kool.

Before reaching the kool one of Mr. Z son alighted the vehicle to open a two stranded wire gate so that we can make it into their kool where the corn planting took place. When we got into the kool, which is around 20 kilometers away. Mr. Z mixed the *box buul* (black bean), *ixim* (corn), and *sikil* (squash) to get it ready for planting. See Figure 4-2. He gave me a *chuh* (gourd) and a stake. Mr. Z said that we had 14 *mecates* to plant today. He left the *iib* (jack bean) to plant on the flat land that had deeper soil. He said that the *iib* grow best in that type of soil. Before I started to plant Mr. Z told me that his *faamilyaa* (wife) had prepared some food for me and urged me to have breakfast before planting. I asked how comes I would be the only one to eat; he said that they had breakfast before leaving for the kool (before 4:30 AM!). I was given *jaale'* (gibnut) and corn tortillas wrapped in a hand embroidered cloth.

Days before the actual planting Mr. Z and his sons demarcated the kool into *mecates*. This is facilitated by the *cuadros* that they do to demarcate the kool area even before the forest is felled. E, the youngest son of Mr. Z, explained to me how to plant. It is done in blocks - the *mecates*. Each

planter would take a block and plant in a ring-like, an inward concentric ring. Since we were planting the *xmejen naal* (small corn) the distance was 1 meter between rows and approximately 80 cm between plants. By 10 AM my right hand was blistered. If it were soft soil my hand would not have these blisters and I might have planted more mecates. They were teasing me that my mecate would not germinate.

Around 11 AM Mr. Z called everyone for a break. It was time to drink *K'eyem*<sup>6</sup>. I expected the traditional ground corn; instead, J got out the water, the plastic container, and corn starch – Maseca. Mr. Z<sup>7</sup> mixed the water and Maseca and served it to all three of us. Along with the *k'eyem* they passed around salt and habanero to accompany the drink. “Maare, did you hear of the candidate in Tamaulipas that was shot?” It was the mid-term elections in Mexico for governors and legislators, this is discussed during *k'eyem* breaks. J asked where the *iib* was going to be planted. Mr. Z told him that it was going to be on the last mecate, right where the pathway to the *kool* leads. The soil is deeper and it is on a higher ground.

Mr. Z, went ahead to planted the *iib*. J, E and I returned to planting the last 2 and a half mecate that remained. By the time I was done with my half of mecate Mr. Z was done with the *iib*. He told his sons to finish their mecate and when they were done to place the stakes at the entrance of the *Kool's* pathway. If W, his eldest son that was planting in a plot maybe 300 yards from their plot, was not done with his planting they would return tomorrow to help him. He took me for a walk.

In the lowest corner of the *kool* he has a *haguey*. With the help of the municipal government they were able to construct this pond. Some of the corn was at least a foot tall, in some areas one and a half. He said that he planted them about a month ago when the first rains came. Near the *haguey* there is grass which they had planted. He does not plant corn their anymore. Where there is less grass he plants corn but there is a lot of vines. Mr. Z told me that if they were caught up by the planting and the rains kept coming he will have to apply Esteron (2,4-D) to get ahead of the

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<sup>6</sup> To prepare *k'eyem* corn is cooked only in water until the seeds burst. Once they are burst it is ground, and made into corn dough balls for the people to take to the *kool*. At the *kool* the ground corn dough ball is diluted into a thick drink taken during breaks. *K'eyem* is also offered as food in some rituals, example *jo'oche'*.

<sup>7</sup> I noted that it would always be the eldest male (generally the father) that would be the one to prepare the *k'eyem*. The only case where this did not happen was in *Chunchintoc* where the son asked his father if he was going to prepare the drink, his father told him that he could go ahead and prepare it. In all the *Milpas* that I visited, where we worked (planting, cleaning a pasture, or even purchasing cattle) we had *k'eyem*. In all cases in *Xmaben* where I had *k'eyem* it was out of Maseca. On the other hand, in *Chunchintoc* it was made of ground corn. In *Chunchintoc* there is a female that sells ground corn *k'eyem* every day, except on Sundays.

vines. Getting rid of the vines manually takes too much time and they destroy the corn if it is not done with care.

I eventually heard *a'ajuu*, *a'ajuu* coming from the other extreme of the kool. It was E and J announcing to his eldest brother, his brother-in-law and his *padrino* that we were ready to head back home. All the other men and children joined in the chorus of *a'ajuu*. The three kids that went to plant cannot be older than 12 years, as young as 8-9 years. As per normal, they were bragging how many mecatas each had planted. Thirteen men in all went to plant in 4 different kools.

It started drizzling around 1 PM when we were actually returning. The talk had evolved into the community member who was almost sent to the hospital because of a 'family feud'. The talk eventually became less noisy; one of the kids even fell asleep. When we alighted the pickup Mr. Z told me to come by his place for lunch. In a long time had I tasted such a great *caldo* (soup).

### **Data Analysis**

Transcription of the interview was done with f4<sup>®</sup> software. This process culminated with the importation of text files into MAXQDA<sup>®</sup> for its respective coding and analysis. File attributes which were constructed in the field were also aggregated in the software.

### **Code Book Building**

Coding, an actual process of data analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994:56), is the discovery of patterns among the data; patterns that point to theoretical understandings (Babbie 2010:530). Codebook for the analysis of data took the inductive and deductive approach as recommended by Bernard and Ryan (2010). Chunks of text were coded from the "snippets of information as it arises from the text," resembling grounded theory. This led to the proliferation of codes, termed splitting.

The second step was to analyze the codes and identify which could be lumped to have fewer codes. This does not mean, however, that the process was merely to reduce the number of codes. It was a process to refine the definitions of codes. The following is an over simplified example; the crops that ejidatarios planted were coded as corn,

beans, squash, pumpkin, pepper, habanero, et cetera. Another code was modes of production; the codes were: mechanized, traditional, small machinery, livestock, agrochemicals, et cetera. The decision was made to place the Milpa crops planted by farmers under traditional mode of production. However, crops like habanero were placed under mechanized operation since farmers mechanized land to plant habanero.

After refining the codebook, eight principal codes remained: networks that the farmers have, monitoring the fulfillment of cultural norms, sanctions levied against, acceptable behavior, access to land, rituals and their practice, religious tolerance of rituals, and status in these communities. No code was kept for Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). The justification for this is that where traditional and mechanized Milpa is practiced, it is highly likely that the farmer knows of land selection, seed selection, and all the other practices that are required to harvest the Milpa.

### **Reliability**

I utilized Kappa to establish the reliability of my coding. Kappa establishes “how much better than chance is the agreement between a pair of coders with regard to the presence or absence of binary themes” (Bernard and Ryan 2010:302). The formula to calculate Kappa is:

$$K = \frac{\text{observed} - \text{chance}}{1 - \text{chance}}$$

To calculate chance the formula is:

$$\frac{(a + b)}{n} \cdot \frac{(a + c)}{n} + \frac{(c + d)}{n} \cdot \frac{(b + d)}{n}$$

a = number of times that both coder 1 and coder 2 agree that the code appears in the text

b = number of times that only coder 1 agree that a code appears in the text

c = number of times that only coder 2 agree that a code appears in the text

d = number of times that both coder 1 and coder 2 agree that the code does not appear in the text

To facilitate the test, I adopted the binary approach to establish if a code was present in the text. The standard for the process was to spend approximately twenty minutes with the second and third coder to explain—in grand terms—what the research is about and the general structure of ejidos. During this time frame I would present printed definitions of the codes and gave a brief explanation of them. With this information the coder would scribble all the codes that appear on either side of the sheet. It was understood that codes that were not noted on the sheet were not present. Contrary to coder number three, coder number two has no knowledge of land tenure in Mexico.

A total of 83 text segments, ranging from a couple of sentences to half a page in length, were provided to the two coders for the reliability test. Raw agreement between all three coders was 61%. With the 83 text segments Kappa was 0.2153. According to the “evolving standards,” as Bernard and Ryan (2010) state, my inter-coder reliability with two other coders fell in the category of fair.

## **Memoing**

Memoing is another crucial component of text analysis. Miles & Huberman (1994:72) state that memos are “conceptual in intent. ... [tying] together different pieces of data into a recognizable cluster, often to show that those data are instances of a general concept.” Miles and Huberman (1994) and Bernard and Ryan (2010) agree that there are three types of codes: personal/code memos, methodological/operational memos, and substantive/theory memos. However, these types of memos, in the “thick

of the analysis,” do not conform to neat labels. Take the example below, which is a theoretical memo and a personal memo, documented 03/30/2011 in MAXQDA®

To this ejidatario, and many others, participation in the *asamblea* is by providing “your decision” and not necessarily by voicing an opinion. I am starting to believe that status is elemental in the process of voicing an opinion and that “providing a decision” is equated to participating in the *múul t’aan*.

What remains in the air is female representation/participation. Why does status not function to their favor to voice an opinion during *asambleas* (ejido assemblies/meetings)?

The above memo formed part of my findings with regards to participation in the *asambleas* and how status is linked to voicing those opinions. It goes to show that indeed, as Charmaz has defined it, memoing “is the intermediate step between coding and the first draft of the completed analysis” (Bernard and Ryan 2010). Coding and memoing go hand in hand. Codes discover the patterns, while memos are where the coder theorizes about those patterns. As Miles and Huberman (1994:74) state, memos “build[s] toward a more integrated understanding of events, processes, and interactions.”

### **Summary**

The information above describes to the reader the method utilized for this research. It also points out the limitations and challenges of utilizing text analysis to conduct a research of this nature. In future research, quantitative data can be used to bolster the findings that are made with this case study approach.

Table 4-1. Population trend of Xmaben, Campeche, MX.

Year	Population	Description	Source
1861	387	Rancho	Campeche Census <sup>a</sup>
1915	< 800	Ranchería	Campeche State Decree <sup>b</sup>
1927	167		Secretaría de Reforma Agraria <sup>c</sup>
1957	200 – 800	Ranchería	Campeche State Decree <sup>d</sup>
1981	1,000 – 3,000	Pueblo	Campeche State Decree <sup>e</sup>
1990	675	Pueblo	INEGI <sup>f</sup>
2000	941	Pueblo	INEGI <sup>f</sup>
2010	1228	Pueblo	INEGI <sup>f</sup>

<sup>a</sup> (Dumond 1997)

<sup>b</sup> (Gobierno del Estado de Campeche 1915)

<sup>c</sup> (RAN N.d.b)

<sup>d</sup> (Gobierno del Estado de Campeche 1957)

<sup>e</sup> (Gobierno del Estado de Campeche 1981)

<sup>f</sup> (INEGI 2010)

Table 4-2. Population trend of Churchintoc, Campeche, MX.

Year	Population	Description	Source
1905	285	Rancho	Campeche Census <sup>a</sup>
1915	< 800	Ranchería	Campeche State Decree <sup>b</sup>
1957	> 800	Pueblo	Campeche State Decree <sup>c</sup>
1981	1,000 – 3,000	Pueblo	Campeche State Decree <sup>d</sup>
1990	877	Pueblo	INEGI <sup>e</sup>
2000	972	Pueblo	INEGI <sup>e</sup>
2010	1,086	Pueblo	INEGI <sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> (Dumond 1997)

<sup>b</sup> (Gobierno del Estado de Campeche 1915)

<sup>c</sup> (Gobierno del Estado de Campeche 1957; RAN N.d.b)

<sup>d</sup> (Gobierno del Estado de Campeche 1981)

<sup>e</sup> (INEGI 2010)

Table 4-3. Demographic comparison of Churchintoc and Xmaben, Campeche, MX.

Ejido	Pop.	Language		----- Religion -----			Education	
		Maya	> 5 yrs (M & S) <sup>a</sup>	Cath.	Protest.	Non-Relig.	HS <sup>b</sup>	> 3 yrs Post HS
Churchintoc	1086	78.4	74.5	92.3	4.1	3.4	19.2	8.2
Xmaben	1228	83.5	86.6	56.9	40.8	14.9	20.3	5.9

<sup>a</sup> M: Maya; S: Spanish.

<sup>b</sup> HS: High school

Source: INEGI (2010) Census.

Table 4-4. Socio-economic comparison of Chunchintoc and Xmaben, Campeche, MX

Ejido	Total Pop.	Indi. / HH <sup>a</sup>	Non-earth flooring <sup>b</sup>	TV	Refrig.	WM <sup>c</sup>	Vehicle	Cell.
			----- % of households -----					
Chunchintoc	1086	4.2	93.0	85.9	36.7	39.8	16.4	5.9
Xmaben	1228	5.1	83.2	62.9	30.9	38.7	10.2	2.7

<sup>a</sup> Indi./HH: Individual per household.

<sup>b</sup> Households with flooring that are not of earth.

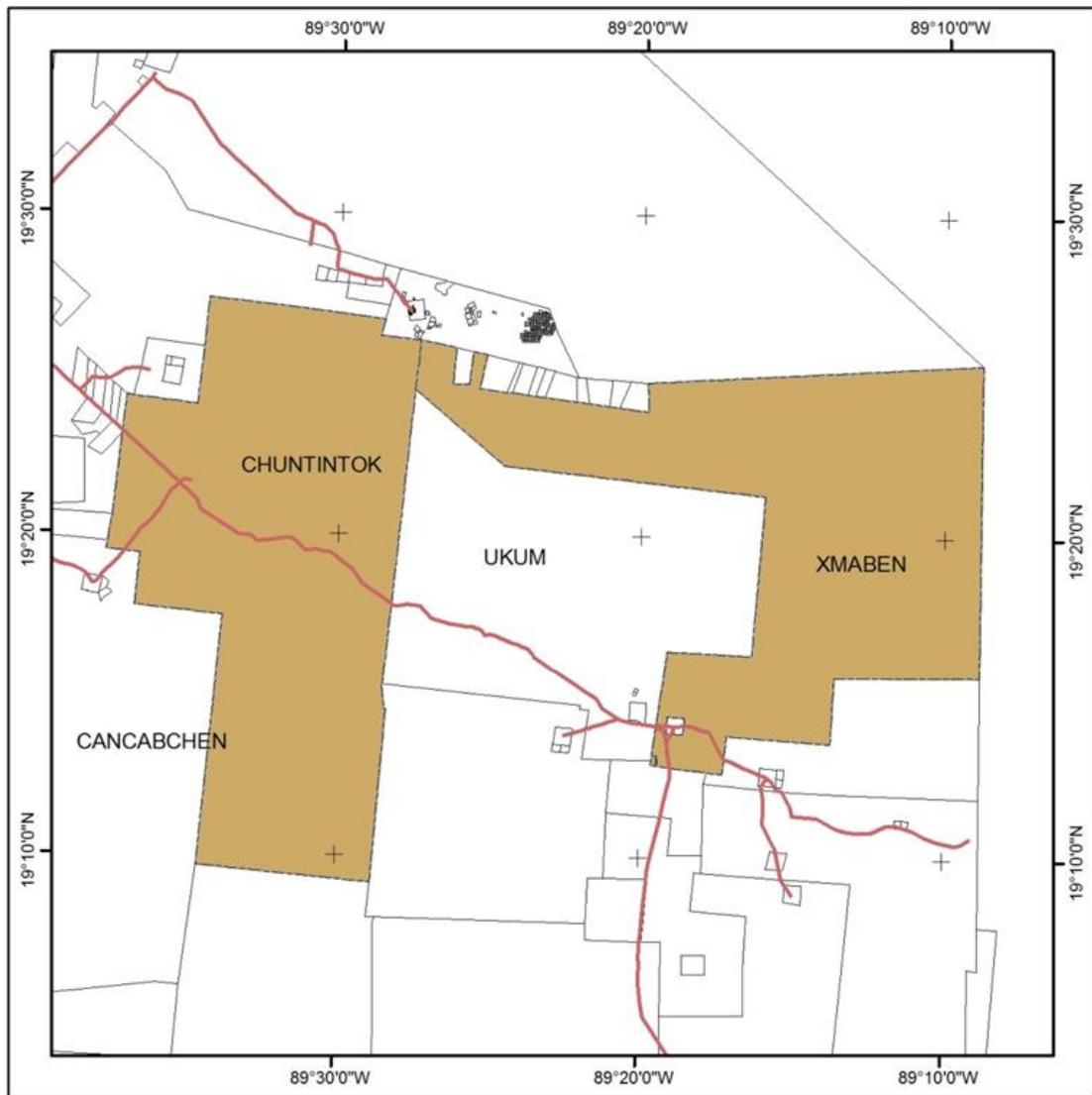
<sup>c</sup> WM: Washing Machine.

Source: INEGI (2010) Census.

Table 4-5. State subsidies in Chunchintoc and Xmaben, Campeche, MX.

	Chunchintoc		Xmaben	
	1998	2009	1998	2009
PROCAMPO				
Total hectare of corn	500	774	320	520
Number of farmers	216	216	155	150
Ha/farmer	2.3	3.6	2.1	3.5
Of the total - ha mechanized	264	332	n.a.	150
PROGAN				
Farmers		105		25

Source: Ing Jorge Yeh Gongora, "extensión agent".



STUDY SITE,  
CHUNTINTOK AND XMABEN EJIDOS  
CAMPECHE MEXICO

Legend

- Roads
- Ejido Limits

Source: Registro Agrario Nacional (RAN)

Figure 4-1. Geographic location of Xmaben and Chunchintoc, Hopelchén, Campeche, MX. Courtesy of Claudia Monzon, University of Florida.



Figure 4-2. Preparing seeds (corn, squash, and black bean) for planting in the traditional kool (Milpa) system, Xmaben, Campeche, MX.

## CHAPTER 5 ANALYSIS OF EJIDO AUTONOMY

### **Background**

As Yin (2009:15) argues, case studies are not a sample; the purpose of case studies is to expand and generalize theories, what the author terms analytic generalizations, and not to enumerate frequencies—statistical generalizations. That is precisely what this research did and is being presented here. It explores Cultural Control Theory to establish the autonomy of communities. Common Pool Resource theory makes for the thick component for the discussion of the coded segments mentioned above. Discussion of findings and observations is complemented with the theory of agency.

Where possible, informants are given a “voice” in this Chapter. Where necessary, pseudonyms are used to maintain confidentiality of informants. In more than one occasion controversial quotes are cited without providing the community of the informant to give one more layer of confidentiality to the informant.

At the end of each subsection a summarizing paragraph is included to make the necessary theoretical arguments.

### **Rituals and Cultural Control**

Of the 24 informants interviewed during both field visits, 12 report performing rituals. Five informants are from Xmaben, and seven are from Chunchintoc. The rituals are *Saka'* and *Waaji Kool'*<sup>1</sup>. Both ceremonies are practiced by individuals in their *Sóolars*<sup>2</sup> and/or Milpa. Five of the informants that report practicing these rituals are 36

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<sup>1</sup> *Saka'* is a ceremony where a drink is prepared from boiled corn. *Waaji Kool'* is another ceremony where food – chicken or *píib* corn cakes – is offered to the gods of the forest.

<sup>2</sup> *Sóolar* is home garden/patio/yard.

or below 36 years old (see Table 5-1). Informants that are older seem to most naturally practice these rituals. Older informants in both communities who perform these ceremonies do them as part of routine practice. In the past these rituals were practiced when all the principal agronomic activities were conducted, such as: plot identification, delineating the plot, land clearing, burning of felled forest, planting, flowering of the corn, and harvesting. Contemporarily, Saka' or Waaji Kool is only performed after planting and upon harvesting.

The purpose of these rituals upon planting is to request for blessing and protection of the Milpa from natural disasters and pests. In the case of Chunchintoc, it is important to note that these rituals are practiced in traditional Milpa and mechanized Milpa. Upon harvesting, rituals are performed to give thanks to *Jaajal Dios* (God Almighty) for providing another year's harvest. Of the five informants that are either 36 or below 36 years old, two report performing the rituals during every Milpa cycle. The other three informants "circumstantially" perform the rituals. Juan is the only young informant from Xmaben that reports offering Saka' in his sóolar. He offered Saka' the day he moved into his new home. In that instance the offering had two purposes, being grateful for his house and to request protection from the *k'aak'aas iik'* (bad spirits). He recently offered Saka'; he was advised to do so by a traditional healer who attended his ailing daughter. The other two informants who "circumstantially" perform the rituals are from Chunchintoc.

Interestingly, Tomas and Ricardo owned an apiary which was at Tomas' Milpa. During a conversation with his uncle Tomas mentions his frustration with poor harvests

and absconding bees. His uncle had ceded him the land since he had Milpa elsewhere.

He was told by his uncle that

the land gets used to its little Saka'. If you do not offer it ... it has its way of reminding you to offer its drink.<sup>3</sup>

Upon hearing that there was a historical practice of making offerings to the land, they took a baked chicken on their next visit to check on the bees. Tomas stated, "I prayed the rosary and left the chicken there."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Ricardo reports offering Saka' when he fells tall forest to establish "new" Milpa. In his case, he offers Saka', "especially when the land has not been worked."<sup>5</sup> As mentioned above, Juan, Tomas, and Ricardo do not perform the rituals along or within the Milpa production cycle despite doing Milpa.

All 12 informants who perform rituals report practicing Catholicism. The rituals, at least to those that perform the rituals on an individual basis, are a syncretism of Catholic rituals and Mayan rituals. A 20 year old ejidatario in Chunchintoc summarizes this syncretism as, "You pray your rosary; that would be it, nothing more."<sup>6</sup> Another stated that "prayers are recited as it is being offered to God Almighty."<sup>7</sup> When I inquired why does the Catholic Church tolerate the practice, a 60 year old ejidatario from Xmaben who performs these rituals responded

[those that perform the rituals] they go to the *Iglesia*. They have their faith [in the Catholic Church] in that case. Like I was telling you, it could be that

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<sup>3</sup> Field notes, Chunchintoc, July 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Field notes, Chunchintoc, July 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Field notes, Chunchintoc, December 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, December 22, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Xmaben, June 26, 2010.

we are doing something good? Or it could be that we are doing something bad? But I have even seen in the Bible that it is, it is true.<sup>8</sup>

For a comunero from Chunchintoc, those that perform the rituals do so

without malice or without thinking, they have faith ... [they] have faith in two person, two gods, two things. It has been a long time since the grandfather of my grandfather did that. They did not ..., there was no church here, there was no priests, there was nothing. They were, they were, how could I tell you? Without thinking of anything else, they do it because [they want] to give thanks for their Milpa.<sup>9</sup>

All informants trace the knowledge of the rituals to their grandparents who thought their parents (generally their father). The process of transferring that knowledge is what is intriguing in the case of Gustavo—a comunero. Gustavo does not know how to perform the ritual because he spent his teen years in formal education institutions. According to him there is a time for someone to learn and be taught those rituals. He relates his interaction with his father during these rituals at a young age.

Gustavo: When we take it, we take everything. We get there (to the Milpa), he takes it out (the gourds and food), he opens it. We are talking and stuff. "Prepare this," and we prepare it and all. And he leaves to go prepare his sticks [for the Altar], and he puts everything on it. And so he says, "I will return right now. Wait for me here." So he takes it and he stays there for a while. A while, and then he returns.

Tim: How does one learn if one's father does not take one to the actual ceremony and hear the *rezoh* (prayers)?

Gustavo: [*Pause.*] Well, because, uhm, he talks a lot of the elves, that they get used to see one or they *perjudica* (affect you) at times, that is what he says. He does not want us to get involved in that. Because apparently, sometimes the wind, all of that, the wind becomes ... it can get into someone and it can make you sick. That is why he did not want to ... [*Chuckles*], he did not want us to go there [where the ritual is being performed].<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Xmaben, June 26, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with a comunero, Chunchintoc, August 5, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with a comunero, Chunchintoc, August 5, 2010.

It is evident that the transfer of this knowledge implies “growing” and going to the Milpa with parents. Gustavo reports that his older brother, who did not attend high school, knows how to perform the *Jo’oche*<sup>11</sup>. Though the practice is dwindling in both communities, Chunchintoc seems to have more people that practice these rituals.

Mayan communities have appropriated symbols and rituals (cultural elements) from Catholicism and incorporated them into their religion (Early 2006; Watanabe 1990). Early (2006:263) defines the distinct interaction and reaction of Mayan communities to different religions: Christianity believed and understood; Christianity is misunderstood; resistance to Christianity; apostasy, where the conversion occurs and then some form of resistance toward Christianity is adopted. The author’s detailed descriptions and definitions acknowledge instances where the religion of communities is transformed, but most notably, communities reconfigure the appropriated elements. It is important to bear in mind that no community is homogeneous - as has been pointed out by social scientists; this proposition applies to the contemporary practice of religious faith.

It is worthy reminding the reader that 92% of the population of Chunchintoc reports practicing Catholicism versus 57% in Xmaben. Forty one percent practice a protestant Christian faith in Xmaben. Rodríguez Balam (2006:344) states that protestant Christians see Catholics incurring fault by not fulfilling one of the Ten Commandments. That is, “Do not have other gods besides Me. Do not make an idol of yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the

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<sup>11</sup> Jo’oche’ is not simply offering the drinks and food on the ground, it requires the elaborate knowledge of constructing an altar and laying out the gourds with their respective cardinal points. When Gustavo is instructed by his father “prepare this,” they were being told to prepare the gourds with the food.

earth. You must not bow down to them or worship them.”<sup>12</sup> Based on an interview with one of the pastors it becomes evident why the practice of these rituals has dramatically decreased with the presence of the protestant Christian faiths. As the pastor puts it

once you are Christ's servant you will not practice rituals of the pueblos – not even out of tradition from our fathers – because *now you are going to serve God*.<sup>13</sup>

When I made the observation that the rituals are considered giving gratitude to god or praying to god his response was

many people use the name of God to do something [rituals] like that. Everything is permissible, but not everything is helpful. Everything is permissible, but not everything builds up. 1 Corinthians 10:23.<sup>14</sup>

It is very likely that the intolerance of these rituals by the protestant Christian faiths has reduced the practice of rituals, especially in Xmaben.

### **Public Rituals**

In June while I was conducting field research in Xmaben, Chunchintoc was busy preparing a *Ch'a' Cháac*<sup>15</sup>—I had not visited the community by then. According to anecdotes amongst the informants this ritual had been abandoned for almost a decade. In June of 2010 the issue was raised during an ejido assembly by the comisario ejidal

Well, the Authority gave his part because, what is it called? He saw how the crisis was coming. So it was said, "Let us do something, there is some

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<sup>12</sup> Exodus 20:3-5. Source: Holman Christian Standard Bible.

<sup>13</sup> Field notes, August 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Field notes, August 2010.

<sup>15</sup> *Ch'a' Cháac* is an elaborate ceremony to request the *Yuumsilo'ob* [gods] for rain to have a good harvest. It takes more than one day which includes the collection of sacred water for food preparation, food preparation and the construction of an altar to make the offerings. For a more extensive description see (Domínguez Aké 1996).

funds. If it is not enough with that fund, let us collaborate [with] x amount to complete it.” And that was it, it happened.<sup>16</sup>

The significance of the informant’s narrative is his statement that the local leader “[saw] the crisis was coming.” Irregular weather patterns result in *maalas* (crop failures). Farmers in both Xmaben and Chunchintoc spoke about the last three years of *maalas*. *Maalas* start with the *Yook Paak’áalo* [the official planting date] methodically followed, but the San Juan (June 24<sup>th</sup>) rains do not come. If the Milpa is planted on a later date - when it rains - it is generally attacked by caterpillars that hatch when the corn is small<sup>17</sup>. For the last three years even if the Milpa has grown, it has failed to produce because of late droughts that would either stunt or kill the corn. For example, Xmaben reported to SAGARPA that all the Milpa planted in 2009 was lost<sup>18</sup>. Suffice to state that all informants interviewed, with the exception of two, plant corn for their *gasto* (consumption). Indeed, it is a crisis when the *maalas* loom.

Various local farmers credit the unpredictable weather to climate change brought about by deforestation, pollution of cars, and because traditions are being forgotten. As an ejidatario in Chunchintoc states

[Public rituals were] usually done. In the past, I do not know how many years ago. It was done on a yearly basis. The thing is that with this one, I do not know how many years went by without one being done. That is why. People think that that is why, since [the Ch’a’ Cháac] it is not being done, that is why [the rains] does not come.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, July 30, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with an ejidatario Chunchintoc, July 25, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Personal communication with Ing Jorge Yeh Gongora on August 5, 2010. Centro de Apoyo para el Desarrollo Rural Cader Dzibalchén-SAGARPA, Hopelchén, Campeche.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, July 27, 2010.

This is where the difference lies between the two communities. In Xmaben farmers talk of the irregular weather patterns and link it to the discontinuity of rituals that request for the rains. However, it would be unthinkable to organize and fund a Ch'a' Cháac with money from the ejido coffers. It is possible that this is a result of the high percentage of protestant Christians who tend to view these rituals as idolatry (Rodríguez Balam 2006). On the other hand, in Chunchintoc the planning, assigning of roles for the actual ceremony, and the establishment of the contributions (P\$20.00, US\$1.58)<sup>20</sup> is planned during an ejido assembly.

Ejidatarios in Chunchintoc are expected to make financial contribution as part of their collective obligations. Besides providing money, ejidatarios and comuneros take pride in providing *K'ool*<sup>21</sup>, turkey, chicken, corn dough, honey, to mention a few of the materials offered during the ceremony. Men, as tradition holds, are the ones to prepare all the materials for the Ch'a' Cháac. Volunteering time is highly valued. As a comunero told me, most of the ejido fund was used to pay for the services and costs of bringing a *H'men* (Mayan Priest) from Bolonchén de Regón<sup>22</sup>. A comunero was the one to donate time and assets to bring the H'men. Interestingly, for this ceremony there is little distinction between ejidatarios and comuneros.

Returning to the Cultural Control Theory being utilized for this analysis; with the above description it is possible to venture and state that Chunchintoc has cultural control over at least one public ritual—the Ch'a' Cháac. As an ejido, it has decision-

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<sup>20</sup> Exchange rate of 06/16/2010, [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com)

<sup>21</sup> *K'ool* is a paste made of ground corn made into a liquefied dough that is mixed with achiote (*Bixia orellana*). Tamales is a corn tortilla, *K'ool* and meat wrapped in banana leaf and cooked.

<sup>22</sup> Field notes, August 2010.

making-capacity on the “why,” “when,” “where,” and “how” to produce and reproduce the ritual. With respect to the rituals that are performed by individuals, as described above, their practice varies from individual to individual. It seems that these rituals are autonomous and appropriated. It is autonomous in the sense that the performer decides on all three “Ws.” The content of the *rezohs* (prayers) for the Waaji Kool and Saka’ have been appropriated from the recited prayers of the Rosary from the Catholic religion. There is an active engagement in both the Christian and native religion as Early (2006) would concede. Individual rituals are practiced in both communities; in both instances they are both autonomous and appropriated cultures. However, it is very likely that its practice is higher in Chunchintoc due to higher presence of Catholicism.

### **Governance and Cultural Control**

Bonfil Batalla (1988:13-53) defines organization as one form of cultural element. For the author these are the systematized social relations where members of a group participate to conduct an action. Having this in mind, and influenced by the variables from Common Pool Resource theory as proposed by Agrawal (2003:243-262), the day to day management issues of the ejido was analyzed. Coding for this section ended being behaviors (those that are seen as desirable and the unacceptable), monitoring of established norms, and the sanctions for non-compliance of those norms. Figure 5-1 illustrates the principal norms and sanctions in both ejidos. The value of the figure is in illustrating the norms that are important to each ejido, but more so, the adjudication process preferred and the applications of sanctions for noncompliance with a norm.

Xmaben places special emphasis on fulfilling collective obligations such as participating in cleaning of the *mensura* (boundary line). In the past, opening the mensura was to demonstrate to the State and neighboring ejidos that the land was

occupied. Its purpose and how it is opened these days has changed with the participation of Xmaben in the Payment for Environmental Services (PES) program by CONAFOR. Xmaben was paid for environmental services from 2003 to 2008. The PES appears to have shifted the purpose of the mensura, from being a boundary line for the ejido to being a fire line for the “*prograama te oksihenoo* – Program for the Oxygen.” During the PES years if an ejidatario did not participate in the mensuras, his share of annual income from the program was reduced. Thus, as seen in Figure 5-1, financial sanctions appear to be the most severe amongst the ejidatarios of Xmaben. Participating in mensuras is still seen as a collective activity; however, that obligation has changed from being mandatory to being “optional.”

Chunchintoc entered the CONAFOR PES program in 2009 and will continue through 2013. Similar to Xmaben, ejidatarios are now being held liable to their collective obligation by the threat of a reduction in annual income from the PES. In recent years financial incentives are being utilized to do the mensuras (boundary lines of the ejido & fire lines for PES). Chunchintoc’s ejido assembly deliberated for two distinct sessions on the daily wage of those that are to participate in the mensura clearing. It was decided that only ejidatarios will be remunerated; if they cannot fulfill their obligations, they can hire comuneros (generally their kin) to take care of their share of mensura. Thus, attendance and participation in collective obligations and the monitoring and application of sanction—via financial coercion—appears to be gaining ground in Chunchintoc as well.

After the PES came to an end in Xmaben, the ejido started utilizing State subsidy for temporary employment as the source of fund for the opening of the mensuras. If an

ejidatario does not participate in the mensura he is simply not “paid.” I say that it is “optional” nowadays since noncompliance does not translate in a reduction of annual PES income. Nevertheless, an ejidatario cannot simply ignore his collective obligations. As an ejidatario in Xmaben states, when you do not participate

Well, it goes accumulating. If your participation is little, well you do not ... uhm ... they can *privar* (deny) your rights.<sup>23</sup>

Participation in collective activities, besides being a norm, is also linked to the informal-internal rules that the ejido has. An ejidatario that does not participate is not taken into account when programs (PES from NGOs, State subsidies) come to the ejido.

That right can also be placed in jeopardy if attendance is low or null. Attendance is taken in announced/called meetings. Though the law stipulates that at least two weeks of notice should be given to the ejidatarios before a meeting is held, it is rarely followed. In Xmaben, a day before the meeting is to be held a member of the *comite de vigilancia* (supervisory committee) visits each ejidatario to *síitar* (summon) her/him. Attendance is jealously monitored by signing a sheet that is on a table upfront. Ejido meetings are held in the open space in front of the Palacio Municipal. The sheet is generally managed by a member of the *comite de vigilancia*, the *síitador*. When important decisions are being made by the ejido assembly, an *Acta* (a resolution) would normally be signed.

Informants report that it is not unusual for *Acta* signatures to be substituted for the attendance list. I inquired, what if someone does not agree with the resolution, does that individual still need to sign the *Acta* to prove attendance? Responses vary according to the respondent. Some say that attendance is taken at the beginning of the assembly, by signing or orally. Others say that they are coerced to agree with the majority because of

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with ejidatario, Xmaben, July 1, 2010.

the need to sign a sheet which can be substituted for the Acta signatures.

Notwithstanding, if attendance is taken separately ejidatarios would leave before signing the Acta. It is possible that those that are not in agreement with the resolution are the ones to leave. Monitoring (or coercing) attendance of announced meeting is blurred by the internal dynamics of Xmaben's ejido assembly. However, it is evident that it is THE norm that is cautiously followed.

Being summoned—your attention called upon, and being warned of an undesirable behavior—is the other internal sanction that is practiced in Xmaben. Land disputes or unsettled conflict between neighbors would merit a *síita* (summon) from the comisario ejidal. The victimizer is called separately by the comisario and told to remedy the situation; for example, to vacate the land or pay a fee for his cattle damages on a Milpa. If the victimized is not satisfied with the remedy, he returns to the comisario after which both are summoned to resolve the conflict. According to those interviewed it is rare to have a case brought before the assembly. The comisario ejidal's authority is questioned when he is not able to resolve internal conflicts amongst those involved<sup>24</sup>.

*Brechas* (fire lines) are integral to Milpa practice. Before a farmer fells the trees, he demarcates the land, which eventually becomes the fire line. Before burning the felled trees or *júu'che'* (fallow shrub) the brecha is habitually "reopened." One of the norms is to avoid the fire getting out of control and burning a neighbor's Milpa, especially when his Milpa is not ready to be burnt. If there is an escaped fire and the source can be identified, that person is "sanctioned ... the community dictates your punishment. You

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with ejidatario, Xmaben, July 7, 2010.

are not allowed to do Milpa again.”<sup>25</sup> In 2009 there was a major forest fire that is described by an elderly

Informant: In thirty years that I have been living here, that is the first time that I see something like that.

Tim: If you guys were to catch who started the forest fire, what would happen to him?

Informant: Well, it is possible that he will be sanctioned. Or if not, his rights to participate in state programs (subsidies) will be taken away.<sup>26</sup>

Alienation of agrarian rights or access to land—in the case of comuneros—appears to be severe enough of a sanction to enforce this norm.

On the other hand, Chunchintoc removes or reduces land access when someone goes beyond the established limit of occupation or if someone unduly trades land. Unduly trade means that a person covertly trades land to a *waach*<sup>27</sup> or a fellow community member, or, due process is not followed to trade the land. Trading includes rent, “sale,” and bartering of land. Land expropriation, public reprimand, and land access are a triad of sanctions that are generally applied when unduly land trade occurs.

In 2010 a recent widow returned to Chunchintoc with a common law husband. Maria’s common law husband (unduly) bought land from an ejidatario to raise cattle. The issue was raised during an ejido assembly meeting. It was decided that both seller

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with ejidatario, Xmaben, July 7, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with ejidatario, Xmaben, July 10, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> *Waach*, also spelled *uach*, is to refer to a person that is not from the State or from the Yucatán Peninsula. To refer to someone that is not from the community or a “non-Maya” *ma’ weyile’* is utilized – translated as not belonging or not from here.

and purchaser be summoned to appear before the assembly. Maria's common law husband

was called (summoned) to the assembly but he did not show up. But at the assembly, the person that sold the land was told, "you cannot sell the land. You cannot." He was made (forced) to return him the money. You cannot sell it (the land).<sup>28</sup>

According to most informants in both communities, "you cannot sell [the land]. You do not have a document where it states that, that it is yours."<sup>29</sup> If land is sold, example a parcel of pasture, an ejidatario would have to "sell it to someone from here—for the price of [his] work. The price of the amount of wire it has taken."<sup>30</sup>

In Chunchintoc there is a norm that is taken to be law. It is the Acta that define the land access limits for a comunero and an ejidatario. The following is the narration of an ejidatario of how the Acta came about.

When the mecanizado was being fenced, problems started to arise because there were people that wanted to grab a lot [of land]. Some do not want the other ejidatarios to take. So an agreement was made amongst the ejidatarios that no more than fifty hectares of mecanizado can be fenced by each ejidatario.<sup>31</sup>

That Acta also stipulates that comuneros can fence only 25 hectares of land. As the informant states, there was unequal land grabbing that was taking place after the rice project came to an end. It would appear that the establishment of the "50-25 norm" (50 hectares of mecanizado for ejidatarios and 25 hectares of mecanizado for comuneros) was effective in regulating the amount of land that each person is entitled to have

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, July 25, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, July 30, 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, July 25, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, July 27, 2010.

access in the mecanizado. According to community members in Chunchintoc, even if someone covertly purchased land in the mecanizado and went beyond the 50-25 limit, “[they] run the risk of the land being taken away from [them].”<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly, a 1998 assessment by PROCEDE officials reports that, “Within the ejido there is a stark irregular distribution of land even if there is no agreement made by the assembly on this regard. Said distribution is source for internal conflict” (RAN N.d.a). A 2000 report from the same file states that, “The area of common use has various ejidatarios with uneven surface areas; without authorization from the assembly. The assembly is apathetic in trying to solve the various conflicts that such situation generates.” I am not in a position to state if there is indeed uneven land distribution in Chunchintoc. In 2010 fencing land in the mecanizado is a costly adventure because of the fallow forest, unlike fencing grassland in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Is this a possible reason why, today, only those that have capital are the ones to fence land—in the mecanizado and elsewhere? Is this the reason of the alleged irregular land distribution? The 50-25 norm and field observations make it difficult to bring to terms the content of the RAN reports.

As the data from Table 4-5 reveal, there is far more cattle ranching in Chunchintoc than Xmaben. It is then no surprise that fines for cattle damage appear more often in Chunchintoc. In addition, conflict over land occupation and fencing appear to simmer within the ejido. Similar to Xmaben, there is preference that conflict between two people be settled privately. However, a comisario ejidal deliberately raises the issue of unresolved conflict between two people during an assembly. As a comunero illustrates:

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, July 30, 2010.

If they (the ejido assembly) see that you are in the other person's land, that is when they pounce on the one that is damaging (causing trouble). That is when all the people descend on him. He stays in bad standing with the rest. And if he tries to face-off with the people and says, "No I have the reason, I have the right." He pisses off all the ejidatarios. He only finds himself more enemies.<sup>33</sup>

This brings us to the following section on adjudication.

### **Public Versus Private Adjudication**

Of the 31 coded segments for public adjudication, 27 of them are referred to by informants from Chunchintoc. All public adjudications in Chunchintoc are related to unduly land sale or occupation and the consequent application of the sanctions. Interestingly both *waacho'ob* and comuneros can be summoned by the ejido assembly when they do not abide with established norms. Land conflicts that involve non-right holders are intentionally brought before the assembly by the comisario or by an ejidatario for resolution. It appears that locals who infringe on land norms are summoned before the assembly and warned and advised to make reparations for the unacceptable behavior. If the behavior (transaction) is not mended, then their case is solved with or without their presence. As a comunero states

He has to do it (return the land). If not, it will have to be by force. It will have to be by force, if they do not do it. If they conduct another assembly and they do not want to do it. Well there will not be anything.<sup>34</sup>

If someone does not make reparations to their behavior it seems as if there is a latent threat that their right (if they are ejidatario) or access to land (if they are comunero) can be severed.

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with a comunero, Chunchintoc, August 5, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with a comunero, Chunchintoc, August 5, 2010.

Sixty four percent of the instances where private adjudication is coded in the text are by informants from Xmaben. Private adjudication is related to disputes over cattle damages on Milpa, asserting land rights, and to a lesser extent peer monitoring of illegal timber extraction. Disputes are settled amongst farmers, and accessing local-private adjudication is avoided. As an ejidatario states, “Well, we would have to talk about it *tranquilamente* (peacefully) and then we come to an agreement.”<sup>35</sup> In Chunchintoc private adjudication is to establish a fine for the livestock damages. In some instances, where Milpa is practiced, a resolution would be a fine or reparation for damages caused by fire on a neighbor’s Milpa.

Community members in Chunchintoc and Xmaben frequently state that “[they] try to come to an agreement” with regards to inter-farmer conflicts.

### **Illegal Activities and their Meaning**

In both communities timber and non-timber forest products are extracted for personal use. Firewood is brought to the community on bikes, motorcycles, or by truck loads. In Xmaben, according to the younger ejidatarios and comuneros, written authorization from the comisario ejidal is needed to extract wood for construction. Older ejidatarios—35 to 40 years and older, who seem to have more status among the community members—believe that wood can be extracted at anytime provided that it is for personal use. In Chunchintoc, authorizations to extract timber or non-timber products are not required whatsoever.

In both communities timber extraction and sale “for profit” is demonized. However, in Xmaben an Acta was adopted that entitled ejidatarios to extract and sell one “truck

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with ejidatario, Xmaben, July 1, 2010.

load” of timber if they have an economic emergency. Community members that are held by PROFEPA, the Military, or any other State law enforcement agency can present the authorization from the comisario ejidal, and their timber would not be considered illegal. There has not been any report of this happening. Here is where the crux lies. Informants report of ejidatarios and comuneros “*que se hacen de listos*” (who play the fool) and harvest timber on a weekly basis. Ejidatarios and comuneros condemn this behavior since it is reversing past efforts made to protect the forest via the PES. Likewise, they believe that unrestrained timber extraction places in jeopardy the prospects of participating in future PES programs. As an ejidatario puts it, “When we report it, we are told ... ‘Have you seen him (the illegal timber extractor)?’”<sup>36</sup> Ejido assembly discussions on illegal timber extraction resulted in a consensus that those that are caught by a State law enforcement agency will be left to the mercy of the law. The ejido will not intervene on their behalf, like it has done in the past.

Informants from Chunchintoc do not report illegal timber extraction. The only semblance of illegal timber harvesting is when ejidatarios—who partner with comuneros—cut posts for cattle fence. Nonetheless, being in the business of cutting posts for cattle fencing or paying someone to cut posts is not deemed unacceptable. On the other hand, cutting “timber for profit” is considered a grave act. An ejidatario relates the case of a brother-in-law; “another crime of his is [that] he does carpentry. That is a veery big crime here.”<sup>37</sup> The informant narrates that besides his kin being a waach, he is not given any “form of (agrarian) right” because he is presumed to be exploiting the

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Xmaben, July 7, 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, July 27, 2010.

*K'aax* (forest). Regardless of his more than 25 years living in the community, he is not included in State programs such as PROCAMPO.

Cultural norms that relate to governance of the ejido seem to have sanctions that are autochthonous or foreign, and which are enforced internally or externally. It is my observation that what differs between both ejidos are the sanctions and the adjudication space that is preferred to enforce those sanctions.

In the case of Xmaben, it has successfully incorporated elements from PES to coerce collective participation. Banning participation from State and NGO programs has also been adopted to enforce compliance of norms. When conflict arises between farmers, private resolution is preferred. When conflicts arise between an ejidatario or a group of ejidatarios and the ejido assembly, it seems that there is a lack of naturalized sanctions which the ejido can adopt. This does not mean that the ejido cannot evolve in this direction. Xmaben's current governing structure, within the framework of Cultural Control Theory, can be termed as appropriated culture. It cannot be termed autonomous since the elements that are necessary to govern depend on external sources (NGOs and State program).

Churchintoc, similar to the history of Xmaben, is starting to incorporate PES elements to coerce compliance on collective participation. Nevertheless, it appears that land access (via expropriation and reduction of access) seems to take precedence as the norm enforcer. Land access sanctions can be enforced only by the ejido assembly, thus, the existence and practice of effective public adjudication. Private adjudication does take place to resolve farmer-farmer conflicts. However, when an issue revolves around land, public adjudication takes precedence. Churchintoc's governing structure

can be termed autonomous culture since the source of sanctions that are necessary for governance does not depend on external forces and elements. Land access is managed within the community.

### **We Rule**

I try to anchor the theoretical propositions of agency, as described by Ortner (2006), in an effort to understand the “autonomy” of each community. Ortner’s propositions of intentionality and cultural construction of agency, discussed in Chapter 2, become relevant. More importantly, the author’s proposition of “historical construction” of agency in fields of power is what is necessary to highlight in this section.

As Ortner (2006:144) argues, even where power differential exists, the less powerful can influence the outcome of “projects” pursued by the more powerful. As seen above with the interface of PES-State-green markets, both ejidos have advanced their “projects” through governance of the common pool resources. Even if they cannot establish the price per metric ton of carbon sequestered, they do influence the outcome of the “green agenda” at the loci. For example, with the payment of PES over 5 years, an ejidatario has been able to improve his socioeconomic standard by investing in cattle—which contradicts the “green agenda.” From this vantage, the ejidatario has been able to influence the outcome of this unbalanced power relation and advanced his “project.”

Xmaben, because of its geographic position with the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, has had the presence of development agencies since 1993 (Porter Bolland 2001). Interface with NGOs, and to a lesser extent the State, has brought various diversification programs (honey, sheep, pigs, etc) onto the landscape. Unlike Xmaben,

Chunchintoc is not in the priority area of buffer zone of the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve. Its historic relation with the State, in an unequal power relation, has constructed its agency in a distinct manner. With the help of informants and archival data, I will try to reconstruct what transpired with the 1980 rice project.

In 1981 ten thousand hectares of land was leveled in Chunchintoc to establish what Gates (1993) terms the State rice agribusiness enterprise. According to the author, despite the various failures of the State projects, “little had been learned.” Gates (1993:172) concludes that the top-bottom approach crafted the “industry of disaster” by being efficient at the following:

- indiscriminate spending
- technical errors
- misguided crop selection
- red tape
- deterioration of soils
- inadequate agricultural experimentation
- inadequate extension
- inadequate market research
- shortage in key inputs
- environmental deterioration
- government agency indifference.

Neither Xmaben nor Chunchintoc were immune to the mismanagement of the rice enterprise by the State. On top of all the above inefficiencies, the State’s intervention was during the debt crisis. Conditional loans from IMF restructured and required withdrawal of the State from rural Mexico. Figure 5-2 illustrates the dramatic economic State intervention on the landscape (see Figure 3-1) and the State’s quick withdrawal for multiple reasons from those listed above.

What Gates (1988) terms as “cheap semiproletarianized labor” provided by the ejidatarios for the State planned development projects occurred in Chunchintoc.

Anecdotes exist of people finding clever ways of increasing the amount of urea (fertilizer) applied in a day in the rice fields to make up for the low wages. Informants relate that it was mismanagement and a *maalas* (crop failure) that sent the ejido into default. With a bank loan and no capital the ejido found itself in a financial circumstance it did not create. The bank sold most of the large machinery (combine harvesters) to recuperate some of the loan. After this episode Churchintoc was left with some of the tractors and their equipments (harrows), which were housed at the *ga'aleróon* (garage). The financial debacle caused a communal turmoil in Churchintoc which goes as follows

A group of ejidatarios were at the *ga'aleróon*. They were the watchmen that night. They decided that they wanted to keep the machines. It was a group of them. They are *socios* (business partners), they had a bus cooperative. What they did was to drive all the machinery to their *sólar* where they have their meetings. All the machines were taken there.

So, the following day the people got together to see what they were going to do about it. Some came by the community palace. Night was falling. In the middle of the talk someone came up with the idea to go wait for their buses. Around that time they come from Campeche. When the bus arrives, it is taken hostage by the entrance of the village. Don Pedro was ordered to drive the bus to the *K'íiwik* (community park), in front of the Palacio.

Even the kids were out. One of them was taken and shoved through one of the bus windows and was told to open the back door. The kid opened the door and the bus was stormed. The driver and his *cobrador* (helper) were taken to the *calabozo* (dungeon). When news that this had taken place other members of that group, the Iraqs<sup>38</sup>, they came out. They were by the corner of the church seeing what was happening. A group of men ran after them and a couple of them were captured. The *calabozo* was being filled with Iraqs. It was dark.

Men came out; they brought their shotguns because they did not want the other Iraqs to come rescue those that were in the *calabozo*. There were men on top of the Palacio with shotguns. The Iraqs were kept there for a couple of days. Food was brought to them by the women but they were not

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<sup>38</sup> Iraq coincides with the 1990 Gulf War. Iraq is both ascribed and self ascribed to refer to the group of ejidatarios that “seemed imposing” their will on the ejido.

allowed to see them. At night people would come with buckets of cold water and throw it at them. They were not left in peace.

All of a sudden the *Presidente Municipal* (County President) came to Chunchintoc with a group of people. Some people say that he was sent by the Governor in Campeche. He wanted to rescue the people. But he did not talk about the tractors. He was leaving because he could not do anything. A *Xnuk Señora* (elderly woman) slapped him and held him. She told the Presidente, “you are not leaving until you solve the problem!” When the men saw that the Xnuk Señora had the President held they took him to the calabozo. His secretary ran behind the mob and yelled, “don’t do it, don’t do it.” The Presidente’s secretary returned to Hopelchén.

Men came back. This time they brought pistols. People say that they also brought cash. One of them went where the Iraqs were and placed a gun on the leader’s head and told him, “*a las buenas o a las malas* (through the good way or the bad way – you decide).” He did not want to give back the tractors. Some people say that he was given the cash.

The people told the Iraqs, “we will not let you go if you do not return the tractors.” After a couple days they reacted. As tractors were being returned, one of them would be taken out of the calabozo. Until all of the machines were returned to where they should be they were all released.

That is *la ley del pueblo* (law of the land).

After the chaotic episode, the ejido decided to distribute the tractors amongst subgroups of ejidatarios. A subgroup would have approximately twenty people. These groups were formed based on affinity and kinship. All the tractors were eventually sold with the exception of two. Both groups that kept the machines paid off the share of the non-kin member and they remained as family groups.

It is possible that within a decade Chunchintoc transitioned from traditional *Milperos*, to “semiproletarian” wage laborers of the State agribusiness system, to cattle ranchers. Rice mechanization technology remained in the community. It was actually adopted ever since the rice project came to Chunchintoc. As an ejidatario notes, “Some have been doing [mechanized Milpa] for far longer, it was since [land] mechanization

began.”<sup>39</sup> After the rice debacle the mecanizado was not converted to Milpa because of the traditional knowledge that the area inundates and that the soil type is unsuitable for corn production. “After that, land (*Káakab*) was found to be *destroncado* (tree roots uprooted).”<sup>40</sup> As quoted above from an ejidatario’s recollection, ejidatarios started fencing the mecanizado and converting it to pasture. It was at this point that the infamous 50-25 norm of land access for the mecanizado was established.

The effect of the rice project was felt well into the 1990s. Rosa María Martínez Denegri, a legislator from Campeche, brought the case of Chunchintoc to national prominence by requesting that the Cámara de Diputados of Mexico investigate what transpired in Chunchintoc between SAGARPA (Secretaría de Agricultura y Recursos Hidráulicos), BANRURAL (Banco Nacional de Crédito Rural), and the shareholders of "Tumbo de la Montaña." Information presented to the Chamber states that the ejido was being held liable for 570 million Mexican Pesos “to which they did not accede” (Poder Legislativo Federal 1991).

Six years after Martínez Denegri placed the spotlight on Chunchintoc, the State returned, now as PROCEDE. For the next eight years more than nudging, the State pressured the community to accept the land regularization program. Appendix A provides excerpts gathered from reports of State officials who visited Chunchintoc from 1997 to 2005. The last recorded meeting held on March 13, 2005, clearly indicates the pressure that was placed on the ejido to decide to participate in PROCEDE. Chunchintoc rejected the State program based on premises discussed below.

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, August 5, 2010.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, July 20, 2010.

## La Ley del Pueblo

Reconstructing la ley del pueblo through the mosaic of narratives from the informants expands on the two fronts of agency which Ortner proposes. On the one hand, “agents are always embedded in relations of solidarity,” and on the other, “agents are always enmeshed in relations of power, inequality and competition” (Ortner 2006:131). The Iraqs on the one hand, using their political leverage, acted in solidarity to influence the outcome of the post-rice enterprise. Their dramatic move to hold the machines was to assert their “project,” as an Iraq member states, “our interest was to work the mecanizado.”<sup>41</sup> As agents they were literally acting in an uneven power relation with regards to the majority of the ejidatarios who wanted to get rid of all the machinery. If the issue, “of what will be done with the tractors,” were to be submitted for voting during an ejido assembly, very likely they (the Iraqs) would have lost. Likewise, holding the Iraqs hostage can be seen as acting in an unbalanced power field. As an ejidatario relates, “They were backed by the government, and they thought that they were the maximum [authority] you see.”<sup>42</sup> The presence of the Municipal President bolsters the informant’s thesis. It is conceivable that with the backing of the government, if the Iraqs were left unchecked, they would have imposed their “project” on the ejido. In the end, these competitions in uncertain power fields—perceived by both sides—led to the “cultural construction of agency.” Ejidatarios (un)consciously, at least for some time, (re)interpreted or (re)confirmed their perceptions of the State—now as an debtor, and at minimum, rescuer of its local allies. On the other hand, the Iraqs (re)learned their

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, August 5, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, July 27, 2010.

roles as community members who are enmeshed in the locality and not so much with the State. As one of the comunero recounts, the Iraqs “learned their lesson”

“I am cure gentlemen. I will not get involved in stupidity again,” that is what he said. They put him in the dungeon.<sup>43</sup>

The la ley del pueblo episode (re)constructed values, symbols and meanings in Chunchintoc. For one, the institutional structure—embodied by the ejido assembly—gained new meaning. To this day, it can be argued that it is THE space for adjudication when the “project” of the ejido is threatened. Respecting and abiding to collective norms is seen not only as necessary, but also as valuable, and something to be maintained by community members. Its cultural control over the governance of its commons has been the unintended consequence of an uneven power relation of the ejido, the local elites, and the State. Gates brilliantly describes the unintended consequence of this power relation

Irrespective of the project success or failure, many of the ejidatarios who have participated in the state-directed agricultural modernization process have acquired confidence in dealing with the agrarian bureaucracy, gained greater awareness of policies and programs, discovered how to use institutionalized corruption to their advantage, learned new technical skills, mastered strategies for negotiating a cut of the now-limited state resource pie, and, in general, become better able to defend themselves against manipulation by outside agencies. [Gates 1993:6]

### **Neutralizing the State**

I agree with Ortner (2006) on her proposition of agency as being historically constructed in fields of power. In relations of domination and resistance Ortner defines a continuum from ambivalent acceptance of domination, foot-dragging, to outright rebellion. Though the State, embodied by the *Dependencia* (State Ministry)

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with a comunero, Chunchintoc, August 5, 2010.

representatives, flaunted its power and insisted that the ejido accept PROCEDE, such power was neutralized by rebellion. The most effective form of rebellion in this case was absenteeism from the announced meetings to provide information and consent for the Program (PROCEDE). Agency was “nourished,” as Ortner terms it, by the very Agrarian Law. The law makes provision for minimum attendance for a legal quorum to decide the land tenure regimes of an ejido. An interviewed State official who visited Chunchintoc to promote PROCEDE had the following to say about the ejido’s rejection of the land titling program:

Informant: I tell you that with the comisario I do not have any complaints, but unfortunately when you get to the *asamblea* that is when the problems begin.

Tim: I see.

Informant: And the situation is that the people say no, no and no. Like how they say it, “Ma’.”<sup>44</sup> When they say Ma’ it is Ma’! And I tell you that we are talking about 2001 - 2002, I tell you [that it went like that] to (2005).<sup>45</sup>

It is difficult to subscribe to the position that apathy is the principal reason why ejidatarios do not attend meetings where information on a State policy is provided, and where they are going to be pressured to provide consent to accept a state policy. What to some may seem as apathy is the display of agency in the community’s pursuit of its “projects.” For example, contrary to official reports, Chunchintoc has been effective in “governing its commons.” It would seem that cultural norms and cost of adjudication of land tenure issues render neo-liberal land regularization programs, such as PROCEDE, inconsequential in Chunchintoc. In the State of Yucatán Baños Ramírez (1998:46) also

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<sup>44</sup> Ma’ is literally translated as no. However, based on the tone of the enunciation it can be a staunch refusal – which is the case at hand.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with a State official, Campeche, August 8, 2010. The informant worked with the Procuraduría Agraria, the agency tasked to provide legal advice to ejidos on agrarian law.

concludes that, “nothing in our findings (...) suggests that Yucatán’s ejidos are embracing neoliberalism.”

### **Asamblea and Acta**

As McCay and Jentoft (1998:22-3) argue, influenced by Durkeim, communities are not aggregates of individuals but are corporates that are capable of making decisions over common resources. In both cases of Xmaben and Chunchintoc, this ultimate expression is during the *asambleas ejidales*. According to the Agrarian Law of 1992, the assembly is the supreme body of the ejido. The law grants it authority to manage ejido resources, manage agrarian rights, decide the land tenure system, and apply all internal rules. In both communities major decisions are made when the assembly is in session.

Decisions are made via resolutions, established in *Actas* which are signed by the *ejidatarios*. *Actas* are used to record agreements, from deciding to lobby for a State program, establishing limits of access to resources, among others. Statements like “we have an agreement at the assembly” and “there was an agreement that was made internally” are used to describe an *Acta*.

Xmaben, for example, has established, via an *Acta*, “that every peasant has the right to use [forest resources] (...) when there is a sick person [in his family], then he is authorized to do something to defend himself.”<sup>46</sup> When timber extraction became problematic, the assembly made an *Acta* which states that if any community member is caught by any State enforcement agency with timber that was harvested “illegitimately,” the ejido will not intercede on his behalf.

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with ejidatario, Xmaben, July 10,2010.

On the other hand, in Chunchintoc, Actas are seen as law. As such, it provides protection and sanctions. The Acta that establishes land access limits is widely known in the community, among comuneros, and recent ejidatarios. The infamous Acta states that ejidatarios can fence up to 50 hectares of land in the mecanizado—the abandoned rice project, while comuneros have access to 25 hectares. However, ejidatarios and comuneros alike can fence more land beyond that limit, provided it is not in the mecanizado. Two additional Actas that are enforced in Chunchintoc are the ban on timber extraction and a ban on land sale to outsiders.

Communal meetings (asambleas, interchangeably used for the meeting and the legal body), at first sight, would resemble a chaotic ramble of opinions—*múul t'aan* or *múuch' t'aan*, which is various people speaking at the same time. This brings us to the following section.

### **Status**

Interestingly, *múul* is something done in common or in a community (Bastarrachea Manzano et al. 2003). After information has been presented to those attending, a communal meeting (the *múul t'aan*) ensues<sup>47</sup>. During this period almost everyone would be talking to the person or people right next to him or her. This is essential to the “democratic” process of idea proposition and vetting. Groups of ejidatarios and comuneros would actively (and passionately) discuss topics brought before the assembly. As an informant states

There are many decisions that are made by the ejido that are at times right and other times they are not. I have noted that, let us say ... if a decision is made amongst all and everyone is fighting, everyone is talking, everyone is

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<sup>47</sup> Ejido meetings are attended by both ejidatarios and comuneros. In Chunchintoc there is a history of comunero attendance and participation during these communal meetings.

giving their idea, it goes well. But, when someone stands up to talk and he is the only one who is heard and the rest do not talk ... it does not go well because it is only his idea. It is not the assembly's idea. We have proved that. We have been through many things. We have a lot of history.<sup>48</sup>

However, *múul t'aan*, as I see it, is the first stage for the “shopping of ideas” by the ejido assembly. After the ideas have surfaced, there is the need for someone to market them to those in attendance. The characteristics of the “marketer of an idea” during a communal meeting vary between both communities. I argue that “marketers of ideas” have status within the community. The five qualities which I identified are being an ejidatario, being a *Nukuch Máak* (an elderly), having credibility, proposing “good ideas”—as locally termed, and having *capacidad de gestión* (liaison capacity).

In both communities being an ejidatario gives someone status. With status comes freedom to access land wherever it is available. To the contrary, a comunero—either the son or son-in-law of an ejidatario—is expected to work land that is right next to his parent's. When I asked a male comunero why he wanted to become an ejidatario he said, “Well, because you have a little bit more rights on the decisions that the ejido make on the lands.”<sup>49</sup> *Nukuch Máako'ob* gain status over the years for the accumulated contributions they make to the ejido by patrolling the lands, opening boundary lines, et cetera. Moreover, they are credited for the existence of the ejido through their efforts to lobby the State to make the land grant and the consequent ejido expansions. In addition, as a comunero who rears bees states, “They took care of their forest; that is

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<sup>48</sup> Interview with ejidatario, Chunchintoc, July 27, 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with a comunero, Chunchintoc, August 5, 2010.

why we enjoy the benefits [nowadays].”<sup>50</sup> But most importantly, Nukuch Máako’ob are the embodiment of traditional knowledge.

I was intrigued by what a good idea is. It turns out that it is quite straight forward. A good idea is one that benefits the ejido—in grand terms. According to the informants, good ideas are given by the people that have experience, those who have the (academic) preparation, or those who understand the State programs. Eighty percent of the 49 coded segments as “good ideas” were enunciated by informants from Xmaben. For reasons of space I cannot elaborate on gender and agrarian rights in both communities. However, this one instance highlights the value that education and good ideas have in Xmaben. I noted that women attending communal meetings would not voice (market) their ideas. Reasons provided by male informants are mixed, from being shy, being “only representatives” to their husbands who are out of the community, among other explanations. Nonetheless, a young *ejidataria* (female agrarian right holder) is actively engaged in the administrative operation of the ejido. She works with an NGO that has development programs in Xmaben and seven other neighboring communities. “Despite being” young and a female, she has status among the ejidatarios. Her status is derived from the “good ideas” that she provides and her *capacidad de gestión*—a direct products of her education.

Liaising with external institutions requires skill and knowledge of the intricacies of State and NGO bureaucracy. It is not surprising that there are key people in each community who are the ones to approach Dependencias. “They are the ones to take care of the programs” that come to the community, or, they are the ones to do the

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with a comunero, Ixmaben, July 6, 2010.

liaising for those programs to come to the community<sup>51</sup>. In Xmaben it seems that the technical assistance of COMADEP makes liaising a one-man endeavor; undertaken by the comisario ejidal. Nonetheless, 60% of coded segments for liaison are from informants from Xmaben. In Chunchintoc liaison for the timely disbursement for the PES by a Dependencia sees a delegation of elected ejidatarios, non-elected ejidatarios, and comuneros visit Campeche city. In the case of the comunero, for example, not having a land right or an elected post overrides the more conventional paths of obtaining status. These people acquire status for their skills and contributions to the ejido.

In Chunchintoc “good ideas” are pre-selected and evaluated for voting by ejidatarios on the basis of the credibility of the person making the proposition. Credibility is intimately linked with good behaviors such as being *tranquilo* (peaceful), having patience, not having vices, not being a gossip, and not being *grillera* (an agitator). Seemingly someone can have all other four qualities but his “good ideas” can be discredited on the basis of not having *kredibilidad* (credibility).

But how does this help explain anything with regards to PROCEDE? Currently, the explanatory power of status is limited. However, the historical construction—at least in one of the communities—of status can explain the acceptance of PROCEDE in 1998. In the following section I analyze the geographic position of Xmaben and larger development initiatives in La Montaña.

### **Status and Agency Colluding to High-jack the State**

Xmaben has had the intervention of NGO since 1993 (Porter Bolland 2001). In 1999 Oxfam/COMADEP established a honey producers’ cooperative in the region with

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with an ejidatario, Chunchintoc, December 22, 2010.

its headquarters in Xmaben. The same organization also financed a food processing facility for women in Xmaben. Financing alternative livelihoods is as a result of the establishment of the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve in 1989. La Montaña is in the buffer zone of the Reserve. According to the comisario ejidal of Xmaben, La Montaña is subdivided into three regions based on marginalization; high, medium and low marginalization. Xmaben is categorized as of medium marginalization. But, how is this relevant?

Xmaben, as pointed out above, has had working relations with NGOs due to its geographic and socioeconomic peculiarities. Projects have been planned, implemented, and some have ceased to exist in the community. Over the years it is evident that this mutualistic NGOs-community relationship has had an organizational impact on the ejido. Interface with NGOs, scholars, and to a lesser extent the State has provided some people with the skills to manage projects, adopt the jargon of “development” and have a better understanding of the bureaucracies of the State and NGOs. As a result, people that have these skills have (un)consciously been seen to have status; they are the ones that “know,” the “*abusados* (sharp).”

Xmaben, even if it did not have the ability to change the power differentials, has been able to co-opt the initiatives of those with whom it has interfaced. This historically constructed form of agency of the ejido, with the help of its *gestionadores* (“liaison officers”), has given Xmaben the ability to read programs and influence their outcome. I believe that this is precisely what happened with their acceptance to participate in PROCEDE in 1998. Solidifying this argument is the fact that the ejido opted to join PROCEDE but maintain its communal form of land tenure. Ortner (2006:144) terms this

“the complex and ambivalent acceptance of domination which is changed upon acceptance.” In this specific case, it is possible that not much changed upon the acceptance of PROCEDE.

### Summary of Findings

As a way of concluding I must remind the reader that I consider myself a Yucatec Maya by race and ethnicity; thus, my findings could be biased. However, I believe that inquiry is both a scientific and personal enterprise, rich in (un)expected and (un)pleasant findings.

- Limited to this case study, an ejido that accepted PROCEDE—Xmaben, and one that rejected PROCEDE—Churchintoc, it can be concluded that there are cultural elements, emotive and institutional, that are present in the ejido that reject the land regularization program. In Churchintoc rituals are practiced at the individual level (Saka' and Waaji Kool) and in the collective domain (*Ch'a' Cháak*). In Xmaben rituals are also reproduced, but its practice is limited to the individual.
- Institutional elements of governance have been restructured by way of participation in Payment for Environmental Services. In the case of Churchintoc, there is a communal practice of public forms of adjudication, especially to address issues related to land tenure. In Xmaben there is preference of private adjudication over public adjudication.
- The distinct trajectory of each ejido has shaped their construction of agency. In each instance, the collective ejido has been able to pursue its “projects.” To say the least, the pursuit of those “projects” is permanently contested.

Within the framework of Cultural Control Theory, Churchintoc seems to have more decision capacity over the rituals that are collectively practiced. Likewise, it seems to have much capacity to decide over its institutional structure of governance—as of 2010. On the other hand, individuals from Xmaben and Churchintoc who practice rituals are in-part limited by the syncretism with Catholic symbols. The collective ejido of Xmaben has adopted and incorporated elements of PES into its governing structures.

Using Cultural Control Theory to tease out “autonomy,” it can be concluded that the hypothesis that more autonomous communities have the capacity to reject a state policy holds. Limiting analysis on two major elements—governance and control over rituals—it is evident that Chunchintoc is more autonomous by having more decision making capacity over these elements. I am not stating, by omission, that Xmaben does not have any autonomy whatsoever. Within the framework of Cultural Control Theory, however, it can be concluded that it has “less autonomy” over the two elements explored.

As for the purpose of this document, I maintain my position that ethnicity cannot be one more label of the internal drivers that influence land tenure regimes in Mayan—or any “ethnic group.” Adopting ethnicity as a label reinforces the (now discredited) primordialist paradigm. As seen in Chapter 5, locality, agency (in power relations), and an ensemble of “fields” deserve a second look to further our understanding of the pursuit of “projects” by communities in the commons.

Table 5-1. Profile of informants in Chunchintoc and Xmaben, Campeche, MX.

Community	Age	Completed High school	Religion <sup>a</sup>	Practices Ritual	Milpa (ha)	Mechanized Milpa (ha)
Chunchintoc	20	No	C	No	0	0
Chunchintoc	20	No	C	Yes	0	1
Chunchintoc	28	Yes	C	No	0	0
Chunchintoc	34	No	C	Yes	0	2
Chunchintoc	35	No	C	Yes	3	0
Chunchintoc	36	No	C	Yes	4	0
Chunchintoc	38	No	C	No	0	16
Chunchintoc	38	No	C	No	0	1
Chunchintoc	46	No	C	No	5	2.5
Chunchintoc	61	No	C	Yes	0	2
Chunchintoc	62	No	C	Yes	0	3
Chunchintoc	70	No	C	Yes	2	0
Xmaben	21	Yes	P	No	2	0
Xmaben	22	No	P	No	2	0
Xmaben	24	Yes	E	No	1	0
Xmaben	26	No	C	Yes	1	0
Xmaben	29	No	P	No	1	0
Xmaben	37	No	C	No	0.5	0
Xmaben	39	No	C	No	3	0
Xmaben	39	Yes	C	No	1	0
Xmaben	57	No	C	Yes	10	0
Xmaben	59	No	E	No	1	0
Xmaben	60	No	C	Yes	3	0
Xmaben	60	No	C	Yes	2	0

<sup>a</sup> C: Catholic; P: Presbyterian; E: Evangelical.

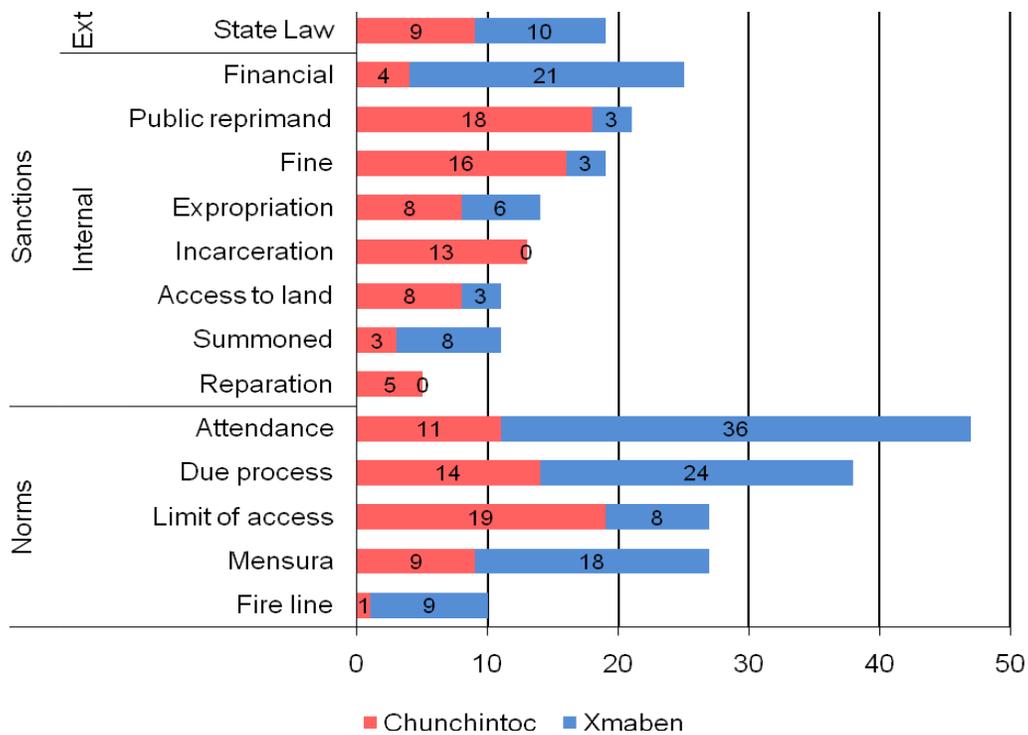


Figure 5-1. Occurrence of coded segments of norms and sanctions amongst informants from Xmaben and Chunchintoc, Campeche, MX.

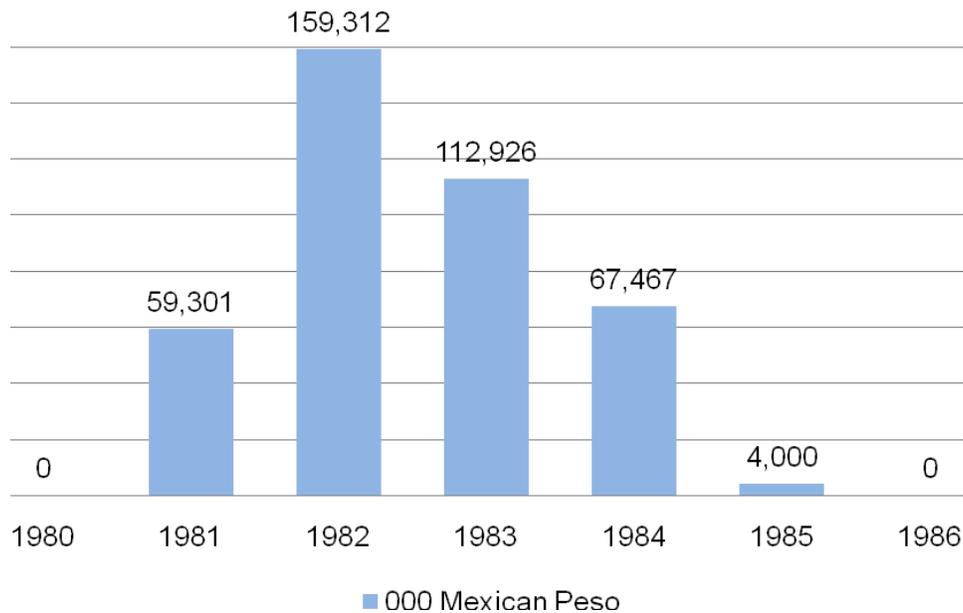


Figure 5-2. State investment in Chunchintoc rice project. Source: INEGI (1984); INEGI (1986)



A



B



C



D

Figure 5-3. Collage of field research pictures. (A) Traditional Milpa, Xmaben, (B) Cattle production in the mecanizado, Chunchintoc, (C) Infamous *calabozo*, Chunchintoc, (D) Author's photo op – transporting ramón to feed sheep, Xmaben.

## CHAPTER 6 IMPLICATIONS

### **Alternative Explanations**

Some literature suggests that the historical interface of an ejido with the State can determine the participation of an ejido in the land titling program. Schüren (2001a) reports that the Xcupilcacab, an ejido in the Municipio of Hopelchén, did not accept PROCEDE since the government had expropriated a part of the ejido lands to establish the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve. Schüren (2001a:215) reports that “much pressure was put on the ejido by the staff of the Procuraduría Agraria” to participate in PROCEDE, but it refused. However, the SRA (2006) report indicates that Xcupilcacab eventually participated in the land titling program.

Based on interviews with the informants and non-structured interviews with community members from Chunchintoc, it would seem that there are two main reasons why the ejido refused to participate in PROCEDE. First, it seems that ejidatarios had learned from nearby ejidos, example Kancabchén, that when INEGI surveyed their land, what was found on the ground does not match the land grants and expansions which the Presidential decrees state. This is reported in Xmaben by the comisario ejidal and Porter Bolland (2001). Some community members interpret the “missing land” as being “re-nationalized” by the government. Some ejidatarios believe that if the government came onto ejido lands to survey, it would be in a position to repossess land. Second, there is a strong belief that the document which the ejidatarios have is sufficient to assert their right to the land which they occupy and use. With a few exceptions, there seems to be a discrediting of the indispensability of the agrarian certificates which PROCEDE issues to ejidatarios when the community participates in the certification

program. In RAN (N.d.a.) there is “accusation” from the Procuraduría Agraria agents that SAGARPA technicians were misinforming ejidatarios of Chunchintoc; that is, that participating in PROCEDE would produce invalid agrarian rights which would not serve as credentials to participate in PROCAMPO. This contradicts other cases where ejidatarios were advised that the “new-agrarian-right” was necessary to participate in State programs. In fact, an interviewed State official stated that some Dependencias demand a copy of the PROCEDE agrarian rights for paperwork to be conducted specific State programs—especially subsidy programs.

*Weyile'* (belonging and/or being from here) explains much with respect to land tenure regimes in the two communities where this research was conducted. Access to land is seen as a given as necessary since agriculture and livestock rearing are central for the sustenance of the household. However, access to land implies “being the son of ejidatarios,” “being born on the land,” or if “[your] generation (...) continues on the land,” amongst others. New comers—men—can gain access to land if “he marries a girl that is from here,” “they stay and live here,” “[gains] the trust of the community,” “[requests] permission to be citizens of the community,” “duly purchases land,” and/or being a “*Mayero* (speaker of the Yucatec Maya).” The ideology revolving on access to land and sustenance of the community has lead to sophisticated mechanisms to guarantee access to those who belong to the social group, and, “guard spatial and social borders” from outsiders. Evidently, new comers to the community have requirements and phases whereby they earn access to the land. Thus, land regularization programs seem redundant with the existing governance patterns in the communities.

The above are alternative explanations to the reasons why a community accept or reject participating in PROCEDE. Where PROCEDE was accepted it was done with hesitation, and where rejected, it was done so since the communities were not in dire need of regularizing ejido land in the first place.

### **Land Tenure Implications**

As Agrawal (2003) has pointed out, research has not adequately explored the other side of the institutional framework of the commons. This study, while limited in scope, tried to shift the focus on autonomy in its effort to understand the social-decision-making-capacity of a group of individuals as subjects embedded in local and non-local “fields.” It incorporated some elements of governance of the commons while addressing the micro-politics in a historical context to understand decisions made by ejidos with respect to the 1992 land tenure restructuring of Mexico. This approach explores the historical construction of the collective agency of ejidos in its effort to understand governance, and the interpretation and reaction of ejidos toward land tenure policy.

In Campeche, the focus on autonomy and not ethnicity can help us understand the processes of decision making by ejidos in the pursuit of their “projects.” It also has the potential of explaining why even when communities adopt a State policy, such as the land titling program, they still maintain property as a communal land holding. I must reiterate that I am not advocating for theory to abandon its focus on “the institution” as such. To the contrary, as Agrawal calls for, the commons and its evolution can be better understood by analyzing the inter institution-subject dynamic.

This research does not report on the past and present construction of subjectivities of rights within the ejido. However, understanding the underlying dynamics of the ejido deepens knowledge of the many factors that establish rights in the communal land

holdings. For example, in the ejidos of La Montaña those that are born within the community automatically have usufruct rights to land. Likewise, the land mass that is accessible to a right holder and a non-right holder is dictated by the legal recognition of agrarian rights by the State. As Ensminger (1996:182) argues, these rights are complementary, not mutually exclusive. Understanding how agrarian rights are enmeshed in cultural norms to guarantee that right can place research in a better position to analyze the evolution of the ejido system.

I must remind the reader what triggered my interest in the commons—ethnicity. I maintain the position that while ethnicity might be an indicator to identifying land tenure regimes of communities, it cannot explain the becoming of those regimes. However, the construction and negotiation of ethnic identity in power differentials—as Comaroff states—provides scholarship with the opportunity to understand the inter institution-subject dynamics. This is where its potential to contribute to the theory of the commons lies.

Finally, managing the language in which the subjectivities of the commons are constructed and negotiated is fundamental to understanding their ideological underpinnings. For too long subjectivities have been researched, theorized, and defended on rather obvious fronts and not so much on its intricacies, its nuanced meanings. Thus, this is one more tool which can complement our understanding of the commons.

### **Themes for Consideration**

With the many limitations that I find in the methodological approach and the theoretical underpinnings in this research, I propose that these areas be explored:

**Systematic analysis:** A systematic analysis of the nine communities in the State of Campeche that rejected PROCEDE is conducted to identify if there are any commonalities among them, aside from being “Mayan communities.”

**Autonomy:** Future research on the micro-politics of land tenure in communal land holdings, in Campeche or elsewhere, should incorporate other elements to establish the autonomy of these commons. Other elements which can be included are the social and economic networks that the community members have in plotting their livelihoods. Autonomy should also explore the ability of communities to reject, accept, and reconfigure State policies while responding to local and nonlocal “forces.”

**Women:** Most of my observations, with the exception of one case, were based on information provided by men. Half or more than half of a world of discovery exists in these communities. The role of women as right “holders” or as “representatives of rights” for a growing number of migrant spouses will influence community dynamics. The “invisible right,” as it seems to be today, can be explored by incorporating female voices in future studies that explore ethnicity, land tenure, et cetera, in Mayan communities.

**Waacho’ob (outsiders):** Though ethnicity cannot explain much as a theory, it has the capacity of shedding light on the negotiation of the new meanings of the commons. There are (not so new) dimensions to land tenure in the Yucatán. Ethnographic work reveal that one of the principal reasons why communities decided to not opt for the individual land title regime is the possibility it opens of land being traded to outsiders—waacho’ob. Research can pursue what it means to belong and have land rights in a community (to be weyile’), and why or how waacho’ob can alter this meaning.

**Migration:** With livelihood being shifted into the service industry, identity is being constructed at the local (rural communities) and non-local places (in Cancun, Merida, Canada or the United States of America). The construction of identity is becoming more of a hybrid, even in rural Campeche. Belonging to rural Campeche can mean migrating to urban settings for a few years on end and returning when economic conditions improve. Though the law protects those that migrate, do they return to find themselves with the worst land? Do those that migrate formulate strategies to maintain occupation to establish right over land? Or is land that is historically occupied remain to the migrant, and if so, for how long is the historical occupation respected? These are only some of the internal land ownership dynamics which can change or remain unchanged with new migration patterns in the Yucatán.

**Migration and identity:** With respect to those that migrate; how is their conscious construction of “Mayan” identity altered? Or is their identity not altered since it continues to be nonexistent as Gabbert suggest? Are there (not so new) dimensions to becoming Maya which is less centered on locality and class? How is land factored in the (un)conscious construction of ethnic identity, if at all? What if “being a modern day Maya” means abandoning symbols that connote “Mayan-ness.”

**Global “green agendas” at the loci:** Climate change and its policies, such as the Reduction of Emissions by Deforestation and Degradation (REDD), are becoming another force that will make it to these loci. In fact, in the summer of 2010 the leaders of Xmaben, in unison with an NGO, were debating which land could be set aside for REDD. Farmers were weighing the benefits of doing Milpa in these places versus “ceding” the space for PES. As seen in Chapter 5, PES does have impact on the

governance of the commons. REDD or any other “global meta-innovation” of the “green agenda” will be interpreted and often times reconfigured by these communities in the pursuit of their “projects.” It is in these loci where objective assessments of PES can be analyzed to evaluate their impacts. How will these “global meta-projects” alter the micro-politics of the commons? How will it alter the trajectory of agency of these commons?

**Climate change:** As informants suggest, unpredictable weather pattern is a product of climate change which is caused within and beyond the boundaries of their communities. Nonetheless, these communities bear the cost of this unpredictability through maalas, migration, worsening poverty, et cetera. There is the need to systematically analyze the impact of climate change, or project its impact, on the ability of communities to govern these commons. Will these impacts be the starting point to disintegrate the commons and not a State neo-liberal land titling program? Or will it be one more non-local factor that will further consolidate the governance of the commons with the revival of communal rituals in some enclaves? Where there is a “revival of rituals” how can scholarship understand contemporary Mayan cosmology and its growing affair with the “green agenda?”

The above are observations made from classes, thoughts that are sparked from exchanges with colleagues, or opinions of advisors and colleagues. Nonetheless, I am the one to bear all the errors it may contain and criticism which they could generate.

APPENDIX  
EXCERPT FROM STATE OFFICIAL REPORTS FROM VISITS TO CHUNCHINTOC  
TO PROMOTE PROCEDE

<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Excerpt</b>
03/21/1997	2/189	1 <sup>st</sup> Call: Information and Consent	The meeting was not held because a legal quorum was not met. Only 2 ejidatarios out of 189 ejidatarios attended.
03/30/1997	8/189	2 <sup>nd</sup> Call: Information and Consent	The meeting was not held due to the apathy of the ejidatarios.
09/05/1999	58/108	1 <sup>st</sup> Call: Information and Consent	Despite being the third assembly to provide information (by State officials), it is the first time that a large number of ejidatarios attend and are willing to sign an Acta regardless of the decision they make.
03/04/2005	9/201	1 <sup>st</sup> Call: Information and Consent	After assembly was called to order and by virtue of being the first called assembly, and taking into consideration that it is an ordinary assembly, it should be celebrated with a minimum of 50% plus one ejidatario from the ejido roster. (...) taking into consideration that the assembly cannot be legally called to order a second call for assembly is established for March 13, 2005 ...
03/13/2005	45/201	2 <sup>nd</sup> Call: Information and Consent	At the end of the information session the ejidatarios made questions and comments emphasizing that they did not want the Program under any circumstance. That the issue not be insisted since they have consistently manifested their rejection of PROCEDE and that it is their will to not participate and maintain the costumes of the ejido. With this the majority decided to not participate in Program, thus the representative of the Procuraduría Agraria signaled that their decision is respected but that a decision should be voted upon to respect the orders of the session. With the preceding observation, consideration to participate in PROCEDE was submitted for the consent of the assembly. The ejidatarios showed their discomfort with this being submitted for voting once again since they had decided that their decision

			is no and they requested that their decision be respected. To this the representative of the Procuraduría Agraria exhorted that hands be raised. After insisting, the ejidatarios by a unanimous vote decided to not consent participating in the Program.
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Source: RAN (N.d.a)

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Timoteo's great grandparents fled the Yucatan's Caste War and settled in British Colony, present day Belize. He was born and raised in Belize. At age fifteen he attends the University of Belize to pursue an Associate Degree in Agriculture. In 2004 he completed his undergraduate degree as an *Ingeniero Agrónomo* at EARTH University, Costa Rica. After college he was hired by the Faculty of Science and Technology at the University of Belize. On a separate appointment, he was the Belize technical assistant to the Integrated Ecosystem Management in Indigenous Communities (PMIIE) Project. It was during this period that his interest on land tenure grew. In 2009 he attended the School of Natural Resources and Environment at the University of Florida to pursue a Master of Science Degree in Interdisciplinary Ecology.