Commoners: Cooperation, Fairness, and Resource Management in

Changing Tzotzil-Maya Communities, Southern Mexico

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: SCOPE, GOALS, AND METHODS

1. The "People in Common"

It is often noted that the Tzotzil-Maya people of Southern Mexico call themselves "the real people" (*bats'i vinik antsetik*). They refer to their language as the "real language" (*bats'i k'op*). This type of endonym, although not uncommon among Native American groups has been interpreted as an expression of cultural resistance by societies that retained their autochthony despite living under colonial domination for centuries. However, another and largely ignored facet of Tzotzil's self-referential vocabulary reveals a more complicated relationship with colonialism. When Tzotzil people hold communal assemblies, they address each other as "commoners"—or, literally, "people in common" (*viniketik antsetik ta koman*). The word *koman*, common, is not an endonym; it was borrowed from Spanish (*común*).

There are about 300,000 Tzotzil speakers in Mexico. These Maya people stretch across various settings—cities, rural towns, highlands, lowlands, etc. Most of them have retained their pre-Columbian focus on small-scale farming. They cultivate corn, beans, and coffee, among other crops, and live in small rural communities scattered in the relatively cold mountains of Chiapas. In part, they gained notoriety for the unique ways they make collective decisions and organize themselves. In 1994, the Zapatista rebellion drew the world's attention to Chiapas. Foreign observers were quick to notice that Tzotzil groups make decisions by running open-ended and inclusive communal assemblies in which everyone <u>must</u> participate. Others realized that these groups follow a horizontal form of social organization in which political power cannot be translated into executive power.

The neo-Zapatista communities that originated from the 1994 rebellion would incorporate various Tzotzil traditions into their novel and experimental forms of organization. Chiefly, they inherited the Tzotzil emphasis on horizontal and inclusive decision-making. When a community gathers, every one of its members must be included in the voting process. Although no one is ever in command, all must take part in every political decision made.

It is difficult to know precisely how far back this method of decision-making goes. It seems to be present since these groups first appear in the ethnographic record. But one cannot avoid asking: if Tzotzil people are so collectively oriented, and if these traditions are indeed ancient, why did they need to borrow a word from Spanish (*koman*) to describe the very essence of their *common* resource management system? The answer to this question may give us a glimpse into how present-day Tzotzil institutions came to be. They took shape during centuries in which native and exogenous forms of organization forcefully came to overlap. Some present-day Tzotzil institutions such as communal lands (*koman osil*) and

communal labor (*koman abtel*) likely emerged during the land reform implemented in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). As the Mexican government sought to redistribute plantation lands (*fincas*) to indigenous farmers, it required local communities to adopt the *ejido*—a communal land tenure system inspired in pre-colonial Aztec society. Faced with the imposition of yet another external form of organization, the Tzotzil adapted by incorporating notions such as 'communal lands,' 'communal labor,' and 'people in common' into their lineage-based land tenure system.

As the anecdote above illustrates, behind native Maya institutions lie layers of a history of continuous adaptation to changing external realities. Maya resource management systems have always been dynamic. They continue to change today. Historically, these changes were almost always dictated from the outside, by the majority group—the Mexican government and national society. However, something new has been brewing over the past fifty years. Since the mid-1970s, Mexico's Maya communities have become increasingly autonomous. Thanks to a series of political reforms, power has become more decentralized. Decisions that were once dictated by the federal government are now being put in the hands of the thousands of small communities belonging to various ethnolinguistic groups. Since the 1994 Zapatista conflict, this process of increasing autonomy has accelerated. Mexico's indigenous communities can now develop local solutions to the resource management problems that afflict them. Many—such as the Tzotzil groups here studied—do so by holding communal assemblies and seeking input from all their members. As a Tzotzil friend once told me, "when communities get together in assemblies, they work like a brain; they think together, considering different points of view before making a decision."

It was this increasing political decentralization that drew my attention to Chiapas. Decentralization has triggered what we may call a spur in *institutional creativity*—a tendency for autonomous communities to continuously devise new ways (or reinvent old ones) to solve commons management problems. By understanding this process, we may shed light on how institutional diversity emerges over time. Why do social norms vary across groups? Why do groups devise different solutions to similar problems? Answers to these questions may be found within the confines of the central and mountainous region of Chiapas. There, hundreds of small and self-managing Tzotzil and Tzeltal communities stretch across a wide gamut of climatic zones or socially constructed niches. As time moves on, these groups encounter new commons management problems to which they respond by creating novel and locally relevant rules and regulations. They establish the social foundations that will dictate how future issues should be dealt with. Over time, rules and regulations become engraved in these communities' social memory, leading institutions to evolve in complexity, acquiring different forms and flavors across time and space. Because in Chiapas institutional diversity has expanded in such a narrow

slice of time (just 50 years) and such a small geographic region (the mountains), the place constitutes an ideal setting for comparative studies.

In this dissertation, I seek to understand how institutional change happens and how it affects present-day resource management among Tzotzil communities of Chiapas. I focus on diverse factors driving institutional change. Chiefly, I examine how modernization and a shift from smallholder agriculture toward a market-based economy have affected how Tzotzil communities and their members decide how to distribute common resources. Because modernization in Chiapas has been primarily propelled by government programs, this study reflects the long-term effects of government-led social change in that part of Mexico. I seek to shed light on how social institutions, cultural values, and economic factors come to interact in shaping the ways Tzotzil communities cooperate and come up with solutions to the commons dilemma—or how to share commonly owned resources without triggering the collapse of the social order.

My focus is on how communities develop institutions to regulate relations of cooperation and competition when having to solve commons dilemmas. How to cooperate and handle competition are fundamental problems that every society must learn to solve to grow and prosper. As Margaret Mead (1937) noticed long ago, human societies exhibit different cooperation and conflict patterns. Mead showed that this variation cannot be explained solely as the product of biology and the environment, but rather stems from inherited cultural knowledge. Learned through experiences of success and failure and accumulated and passed along to successive generations in the span of history, cultural knowledge has been key to human expansion. But despite the many strides by economists and cultural anthropologists, the exact effect of culture on cooperation remains shrouded in mystery.

To contribute to that body of research, I compare three groups in a Tzotzil town, focusing on the effect that several variables have in influencing cooperation and competition patterns in Tzotzil communities. I study how cooperation is influenced by ethnicity (Chapter 2), by rural and urban differences (Chapter 3), and by changing kinship patterns (Chapter 4). In Chapter 5, I examine how different Tzotzil solve the problem of how to allocate communal duties. Chapter 6 deals with how government interventions influenced the way these communities allocate ritual responsibilities over time. Chapter 7 is a broad examination of how Tzotzil communities respond today to government-led change by adapting their reputation hierarchies and forms of organization to new realities.

The groups I compare here are three communities in Chenalhó, a Tzotzil-Maya town in the highlands of Chiapas. Chenalhó's 36,000 residents are divided into over 100 semi-autonomous communities, which largely legislate on their own. Over the past five decades, these communities have become increasingly diverse in terms of lifestyle, religious affiliation, and political inclination. Any

casual observer can notice evident differences between life in more urban and more Rural Tzotzil communities. Some inhabit highland, cold climates, while others dwell in lowland and warm ones. Some have converted to Protestantism and pursued alternative religious faiths, while many others have retained a stubborn focus on traditional Maya ritual and cosmology. Some have joined the Zapatista rebels, and since the 1990s, they have experimented with new forms of civil organization. As I mentioned above and discuss in later chapters, this explosion of communities creates a setting that allows us to explore the emergence of institutional diversity in a short time-lapse and a confined geographic region. My primary focus will be on approaching the effects of modernization in altering resource management in Tzotzil communities. I do so by comparing urban and Rural Tzotzil and Mestizo communities. I build on previous studies that have used a similar design in the same Chiapas town (Shenton et al. 2011; Ross et al. 2015; Hertzog and Ross 2017) and on other studies using cross-cultural comparison to infer the causes and effects of social change (Atran and Medin 2008; Lamba and Mace 2011; Ensminger and Henrich 2014).

Below, I give an overview of the research site and the theoretical background used here. Section 2 explains the research design and describes the three communities compared here in detail. Section 3 discusses the mixture of research methods I used while conducting fieldwork in Chiapas.

1.1. Chenalhó, Chiapas

About 36,000 people inhabit Chenalhó. Some three thousand of those people reside in the town's urban and administrative center, known as the Cabecera ('head of the town'), while the remaining live in the over 100 rural hamlets scattered in the mountains in an area of 113 km^2. Although most of the population speaks Tzotzil-Maya, it is possible to find communities of Tzeltal and Spanish speakers. Until the 1960s, most of the town's Tzotzil-Maya population practiced shifting cultivation of corn and beans— except for a small population of Spanish-speaking Mestizos who relied on commerce and wage labor (Guiteras Holmes 1961). From the 1940s onwards, the Mexican government, through its branch known as the INI, or *Instituto Nacional Indigenista*, began to build schools and urban infrastructure in Maya towns (J. Rus 1995b; Lewis 2018). In this area, government-sponsored growth has been focused on urban and political centers like the Cabecera, where most houses today have access to electricity, drainage, and cell phone coverage. This area hosts a transportation hub, several stores, the largest market, and the only high school in the municipality.

The research presented here spans five years in which I made several trips to Chenalhó. To study social change, I used a comparative and multi-sited approach. I lived and conducted ethnographic fieldwork among three groups in Chenalhó: 1) Rural Tzotzil from Linda Vista (a small rural hamlet

located an hour drive from the town's center), and 2) Urban Tzotzil and 3) Mestizos living in the Cabecera. These three groups vary continuously in their dependence on agriculture, use of Spanish (instead of Tzotzil) and their primary language, adoption of a world religion (Christianity), among other variables discussed later (1.2). As I will show later, this continuous variation across groups provides us with a synchronic picture of how social change happens in Chiapas.

Chenalhó's Cabecera—the urban site—was founded by Mestizo traders in the late 19th century who traveled through indigenous areas to buy cheap agricultural produce and sell industrial products (alcohol, religious paraphernalia, and tools used for farming). Since then, Mestizo-Tzotzil relations have alternated between periods of cooperation and conflict. By the early 20th century, over half of the town's cultivable land was owned by Mestizo or foreign landholders who employed the native Tzotzil in their *fincas*—large coffee plantations (Wasserstrom 1983; Garza Caligaris 2002). In the 1930s, the government began to implement land reform measures devised during the Mexican Revolution in Chenalhó. During this decade, most of *finca* lands were confiscated and divided into small plots among indigenous farmers (except for at least one *ejido*, communal landholdings, which was given to Mestizo families living in the Cabecera).

Animosities between Mestizo and Tzotzil increased in the 1960s. After a wave of expulsions in the 1970s, followed by the Zapatista rebellion (1994) and the invasion of the last remaining Mestizo *ejido* in 1995, the Mestizo population in the Cabecera dropped from over 2,000 in 1960 to about 250 today. Still, the people of the Cabecera has continued to grow due to migration from rural communities. Migrants arrive in the Cabecera to use the local urban infrastructure (electricity, uninterrupted access to water, transportation). Some are attracted to political offices, commerce, and schools. Others seek refuge from religious or political conflict taking place in rural communities.

In the aftermath of the Mexican revolution, modernization projects in this part of Mexico were mostly a product of governmental policy, affecting Chenalhó's communities unevenly. From 1930 to the 1970s, the main reforms promoted by the INI took place in the Cabecera. Smaller rural communities received less priority or rejected government intervention altogether. This uneven change process has accentuated the cultural gap between Tzotzil from rural communities and those raised in the Cabecera. Although Tzotzil is the predominant language among the latter, younger Tzotzil are commonly proficient in Spanish—a necessary skill for pursuing non-agricultural jobs outside of the municipality.

In contrast, within rural communities such as Linda Vista, most residents are monolingual, roads are unpaved, there is no drainage system, and crop rotation remains the community's main economic activity. Although both the Cabecera and Linda Vista may be considered 'rural' (according to the Mexican government's criteria), modernization has unevenly affected both sites. These changes have

resulted in measurable differences in cultural knowledge, social norms, values, and cognitive orientations within a single ethnolinguistic group (Shenton et al. 2011).

Modernization in Chiapas has been linked with institutional decentralization and religious change. Until the 1970s, Chenalhó's communities participated in a hierarchy of offices known as the *cargo system*. Male heads of household from different localities receive appointments to perform religious or civil offices ('cargos,' or *abtel*) in the town's urban center. This form of social organization is widespread in Mesoamerican indigenous communities. The cargo system requires communities to rotate costly communal offices between different households annually. Rather than allocating duties according to perceived competence or skills, the cargo system follows an ability-to-pay or willingness-to-serve logic. It combines elements from the early colonial period introduced by Catholic *cofradías*—a calendar of *fiestas*, patron saints assigned to each municipality, specific religious roles—with pre-Columbian institutions centered on honor and prestige, the authority of elders, and collective management of resources and duties (Tax 1937; F. Cancian 1965). In Chenalhó, the cargo system has played two primary roles. First, it unites people from dispersed hamlets in a single political hierarchy. Second, it forces some degree of wealth redistribution, as wealthier households may be compelled to spend their wealth in political-religious service. Underpinning this form of social organization is what has been called an 'economy of prestige' in which households gain political power and rights in exchange for service to the community (M. Nash 1966). In the cargo system, inheritance plays a minor role in shaping social hierarchies in these communities, as people acquire social status through serving the community and sharing resources (F. Cancian 1965).

In the 1970s, the cargo system entered a period of crisis, as people in Chenalhó began to refuse to serve cargos. As I detail later (Chapter 6), this crisis, which affected all towns in Chiapas, was caused in part by increasing ritual costs following the arrival of government credit banks in the region. In response to the decline of cargos, some communities began to develop their local cargo systems and distribute religious and civil offices internally. Simultaneously, the government shifted its policy of centralized and directed modernization toward an approach that allowed small communities to autonomously decide how to spend public goods. From the mid-1970s onwards, these changes led to institutional decentralization and political fragmentation (F. Cancian 1992; J. Nash and Collier 1995). Some communities converted *en masse* to Protestant denominations (introduced by American missionaries), effectively breaking the ritual cycle maintained by the town's elders. Religious conversion triggered in a series of still ongoing conflicts between traditionalists and converts, which resulted in the expulsion of hundreds of converts from the municipality. Many of those refugees live in neighboring Mestizo cities such as San Cristóbal de las Casas or Tuxtla Gutiérrez (Pérez Enríquez 1998; López-Meza 2002). Changing one's religious affiliation

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is often an idiom people use to justify breaking with the expenses associated with cargo system rituals (Eber 2000).

As I detail in later chapters, Chenalhó's communities have achieved a significant degree of autonomy from municipal, state, and federal authorities. Notions of 'citizenship'—and the rights and duties that it entails—are now constructed locally. Some traditionalist elders see conversion to Protestantism and the refusal to perform cargo service as a way of abdicating one's communal duties, thus breaking the social contract that binds their communities together. In many cases, communities can ignore federal legislation in favor of *usos y costumbres*—or customary law—thus disaffiliating or expelling members who refuse to perform their mandatory cargo service.

Although most communities in Chenalhó receive support from the Mexican government through construction grants and welfare programs, the government lets people decide at the local level how to use those resources. As I mentioned earlier, communities make decisions through communal assemblies in which there is no clear leader with the power to make executive decisions. Community members meet face to face to give ideas, express grievances, debate, and bargain solutions concerning a variety of commonly owned resources such as water, construction materials, electricity, land, and labor (i.e., communal service). At first, Tzotzil communal assemblies may seem chaotic due to their lack of structure and leadership; assemblies usually take seven hours or more (I have seen communities meet for several days to come up with solutions to their problems). But as everything involving human interaction, the actors who participate and bargain in these events are guided by social norms of fairness and equity, and as I show in later chapters, these norms can be analyzed and understood. For a year, my fieldwork in Chenalhó consisted of attending decision-making events and using behavioral experiments to measure social norms of fairness and equity in different communities. Chapter 3, Chapter 5, and Chapter 7 will be dedicated to analyzing what happens in Tzotzil communal assemblies and to detect differential social norms guiding decision-making in rural and urban communities.

1.2. Social Change and Institutional Diversity

Social change among the Chiapas Maya has been a persistent research topic since the earliest ethnographic research in the region. Early scholars arrived in Chiapas to gather information on local groups that could inform policy-making in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (Villa Rojas 1946; Pozas 1947). Generally, social change in Mexico has been likened to a process of *Mestizaje* in which speakers of indigenous language in the countryside become increasingly westernized and eventually are absorbed into the Spanish-speaking Mestizo majority. Much of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista's earlier policies (1930-1970s) sought to promote such a model of change, expanding the country's school system

across rural areas to assimilate indigenous groups into Mexican culture (Lewis 2018). In the 1970s, that model came under criticism and was replaced with a more pluralistic approach that emphasizes local autonomy and seeks to preserve native forms of organization and merge them with the state apparatus.

Ethnicity and social class tend to overlap in Mexico (Harris 1964; Wade 1997). Historically, indigenous groups have practiced smallholder agriculture in remote areas and obtained additional incomes from seasonal labor. This pattern has resulted in a wide socioeconomic gap between those groups and the majority Mestizo society. Some scholars have framed modernization as a form of social mobility: as indigenous farmers move into cities and become acculturated, they are assimilated into the upper social strata (Stavenhagen 1965). Others have described this process as ethnic change—that is, passing from one ethnic group (Maya) into another (Mestizo) (Colby and van den Berghe 1961; Loewe 2010). My research on this topic—presented in Chapter 2—suggests that people in Chenalhó see Maya and Mestizo as biologically distinct groups rather than social classes. This finding does not mean, of course, that change cannot happen and that there is no social mobility for those of Native American descent. Ethnicity in this region of Mexico is primarily defined by cultural markers (language, costume, occupation). Over several generations, Tzotzil families can move to cities, shift to speaking Spanish, and forget their native tongue, thus changing their ethnic affiliation and cultural values.

Migration, thus, is a fundamental mechanism by which social change happens in Mexico. In an early study of social change in Yucatán, Redfield (1941) noticed that Maya farmers tended to migrate from small hamlets into larger centers (Cabeceras) and then into larger Mestizo cities. Over time, these migrants began to self-identify as Mestizos. Some of the data that I present in subsequent chapters confirms Redfield's model. When we compare rural, urban, and Mestizo communities in Chenalhó, we find continuous rural-urban differences (see Section 2.3 for descriptive statistics). However, this does not imply that the outcome of rural-urban migration will ultimately be cultural assimilation. Over the past century, the number of speakers of most native languages in Mexico has increased steeply, contradicting early predictions that indigenous groups would eventually be fully assimilated into the Mestizo majority. As I discuss in 2.3, rural areas have higher demographic growth rates, which has helped indigenous communities to preserve a steady number of native speakers even though about a third of its residents migrate permanently to larger areas (see also Chapter 3.2.2).

As I discussed earlier, modernization among Chiapas' indigenous groups has been primarily driven by government intervention, beginning with land reform (the 1930s) and the arrival of the INI (1940-1970s). Chenalhó exemplifies the impact that such government programs have. Chenalhó has undergone a dual process of change. On the one hand, the Mexican government's presence has expanded its urban infrastructure, modern communications, and educational institutions. Infrastructural change has

accelerated modernization, sometimes undermining traditional knowledge and resource management systems in some of the town's communities. Change has affected Chenalhó's landscape unevenly as government programs have taken place primarily in the town's administrative and urban center, the Cabecera. As a result, cultural/cognitive differences between agricultural hamlets and more urban areas have increased, with the first being more likely to preserve traditional knowledge systems and to retain subsistence agriculture as their main economic activity and Tzotzil as the sole language spoken by their residents.

On the other hand, Chenalhó has, since the mid-1970s, seen a process of decentralization of power. The locus of decision-making being transferred from the municipal administration to small communities. Decisions regarding resource allocation have been increasingly made by local community councils, outside of the municipal administration's oversight. As a result, Chenalhó's 100-plus communities have developed various political/social configurations, resource management practices and institutions over the past five decades.

To study these changes, I compared decision-making in households and community councils in two localities of Chenalhó: its urban and administrative center, the Cabecera, and Linda Vista, a small rural hamlet located an hour from the town's center. As aforementioned, Chenalhó has undergone a process of change that can be described both as (a) differential modernization and (b) decentralization of decision-making. I describe each in more detail below.

(A) Differential Modernization. Although both the Cabecera and Linda Vista may be considered 'rural' from the Mexican government's perspective, modernization has affected both communities unevenly. By 'modernization' I mean predominantly state-sponsored changes in human and information flows triggered by the implementation of fast transportation, mass communications, and educational institutions. In Chiapas as elsewhere, modernization has been tied to 1) the increasing adoption of a market/neoliberal economy with an expanding division of labor (F. Cancian 1992), 2) the empowerment of state officials (Pineda 1993), and 3) the arrival of agents promoting sociocultural change, such evangelical and catholic missionaries, NGOs, and tourists (J. Nash 2001). Modernization in Chiapas sped up from the 1950s onwards when the Mexican government, through the INI (Instituto Nacional Indigenista) began to build schools and urban infrastructure in indigenous municipalities (J. Rus 1995a). Another fundamental component of the INI's development program was the issuance of credit to rural communities, which I detail in Chapter 6.

Today these changes are much more noticeable in the Cabecera, where most houses have electricity and drainage. This area hosts a transportation hub, several stores, the largest market, and the only high school in the municipality. In 2012, a cellphone antenna was built there (it would only become

fully operational in 2015). Although Tzotzil is still the predominant language in the Cabecera, younger people are also fluent in Spanish. This area has been growing rapidly, attracting immigrants from rural areas searching for a modern lifestyle and education. In contrast, in Linda Vista, roads are unpaved, there is no drainage system, and rotation crop agriculture remains the community's main economic activity. Most of its residents are monolingual Tzotzil speakers. Women's mobility tends to be restrained (for reasons discussed in Chapter 4), and because they seldom leave the community, they are overwhelmingly monolingual.

(B) Decentralization. As I described earlier, until the 1960s Chenalhó's communities (*parajes*) used to be joined by a hierarchy of offices (the "cargo system") in which men from different localities were coerced to perform costly community service in the Cabecera. Many functions have been attributed to cargo systems in Mesoamerica; it is fair to say that it 1) created an imagined community, as it joined people from distant hamlets in a single political hierarchy and calendar of festivities, 2) it played a role in wealth redistribution as it compelled individuals to spend their wealth on community service (Tax 1937; Carrasco 1961), and 3) it served to reproduce hierarchies based on social status, as individuals used it to exchange material wealth by prestige and social capital (F. Cancian 1965; Wolf 1966).

Decentralization began with the decline of the cargo system. Its primary cause was an economic and political crisis in the 1970s, which inflated fiestas' cost to infeasible levels, leading younger generations to reject cargo nominations. From 1940 to 1970, the cost of fiestas increased steeply over the previous decades due to economic growth, rising corn prices, and rural credit policies implemented by the government. Increasing ritual costs led to an expansion of informal credit networks and growing indebtedness, forming a credit bubble that burst in the mid-1970s when inflation began to rise in Mexico. I examine the role of government credit in driving ritual costs up in Chapter 6. Other factors contributing to these changes were population growth, the declining price of produce (post-1970), increasing marginalization, and religious conversion. As some have shown, all of these changes would eventually culminate in the Zapatista rebellion (Benjamin 1996; G. A. Collier and Collier 2005). After 20 years of decline (1970-1990), the cargo system recovered some of its original functions.

A secondary factor aiding decentralization was a series of policies that changed how the Chiapas government transfers resources to rural communities. These changes were motivated, in part, by the realization that previous modernization programs had neglected rural communities and prioritized more urbanized Mestizo centers such as Chenalhó's Cabecera. In the mid-1970s, the government began to transfer resources for the construction of schools directly to small communities, seeking to bypass the municipal administrations located in the *Cabeceras* of Mayan towns (I examine this in detail in Chapter 7). This change created a powerful incentive for hamlets to seek official recognition as 'communities,'

which became a necessary condition for receiving government aid. Over time, the new decentralized distribution logic expanded beyond the construction of schools, dictating how the government ran other programs such as the distribution of fertilizer, construction materials, food, and cash assistance. As communities were increasingly permitted to decide locally how to manage and spend those resources, politics became more decentralized, with municipal administrations becoming subordinate to smaller and autonomous communities.

Decentralization in Chiapas has been accompanied by what some called "the explosion of communities" (F. Cancian 1992; J. Nash and Collier 1995). Although it was pervasive across Chiapas, it was particularly acute among Mayan towns in the highlands where decentralized distribution matched pre-existing social divisions and a sense of lineage-based autonomy that guided how communities managed common resources. In Chenalhó, the number of communities went from 35 in 1963 to 110 in 2015—a number that continues to increase every year. After the 1994 Zapatista rebellion, rural communities have staged increasing demands for political autonomy, which have been countered— sometimes violently—by the town's oligarchies (Eber 2001). Following decentralization, in the 1980s some communities developed their own cargo systems while others converted to Protestantism, effectively breaking with the traditionalist elders in the town. This resulted in the expulsion of thousands of dissidents (Pérez Enríquez 1998). In the 1990s, the Zapatista rebellion and the rise of civil organizations such as Las Abejas introduced a discourse valuing autonomy and seeking to empower local communities (C. Kovic 2003). In 1997, a paramilitary group, aided by the municipal administration, massacred 47 people in the community of Acteal, which strengthened the discourse of autonomy and established some consensus that communities should be allowed to decide on their own affairs. Since then, there has been a push for more tolerance toward political dissidents (Moksnes 2004; Solano and Castillo Ramírez 2012). As I show in Chapter 3.2, politically motivated expulsions still happen in Chenalhó (although they are not always marked by violent conflict).

Decentralization resulted in the empowerment of Agentes Municipales, or community headmen. Collectively, Chenalhó's over 100 Agentes have more power than the municipal administrations. They hold periodic meetings in the Cabecera to sanction any mayor and other municipal officials' deliberations. As I alluded to earlier, despite the federal government providing increasing construction materials and other resources to Chenalhó's communities, the town's central administration has no power to channel these resources without approval from the majority of Agentes. Often, community and municipal leaders disagree, leading to severe conflicts that have the potential to escalate. In 2012, for instance, Chenalhó's mayor was temporarily expelled from office for trying to bypass the Agentes' approval (Chapter 2.2.3). In 2015, members of a large community took control of the Cabecera and kidnapped the mayor (Chapter

7.1.4). As a result of decentralization, small communities have developed their own committees for managing resources such as construction materials, communal lands, water, and electricity. Sometimes communities emulate each other's institutions as they compete over limited government resources (Chapter 7.1.3). As I elaborate in Chapter 3, community officials such as the Agentes have coercive power since small communities have no dominance hierarchies. Hence, despite playing a crucial role in sanctioning municipal decisions, they cannot direct the course of events within their communities.

As I remarked earlier, communities make decisions horizontally through open-ended assemblies. The dynamics of these decisions depends heavily on the local context as communities have no authority over who can make executive decisions. As I discuss in Section 3, much of my fieldwork consisted in observing and describing these assemblies and trying to discern patterns in how community members negotiate certain decisions. I also made extensive use of behavioral experiments to measure people's preferences over fairness and equity norms. I oriented my participant observation by a body of works on social norms and cooperation that spans the field of anthropology, economics, and the cognitive sciences. I review some of that literature below.

1.3. Equity, Decision-Making, and Commons Management

While doing participant observation, I focused on how communities cooperate or compete and negotiate decisions regarding common goods. I sought to discern the role of moral notions of equity and fairness and resource allocation in communities that have gained autonomy over the years. Because Chenalhó's communities are horizontal and loosely structured, they concoct decisions without following written protocols, relying mostly on their members' collective memory and moral intuitions. Communal assemblies tend to be improvisational, being roughly mediated by officials with no decision-making authority, with people voting by show of hands (see description in Chapter 3.2).

As I detail in later chapters, communities in Chenalhó have no complex bureaucratic structures. There are no officials dedicated to making long term plans, rationalizing resource use, or maximizing the community's production output. Community offices (cargos) are rotated and allocated based on need, prestige, or willingness to serve rather than perceived competence or merit (see Chapter 7.2.3 on how this is changing in urban areas). Making collective decisions without a bureaucratic/hierarchical structure requires collective bargaining—i.e., bringing community members face to face to negotiate the best course of action. Over time, through iterated decision-making, these groups develop formal institutions that determine how they solve future commons dilemmas (Ostrom 1990; North 1991).

I view Chenalhó's collaborative bargaining processes as distributed cognition (Hutchins 1996). Simply put, when community members meet, they exchange information, express diverse viewpoints,

and, through debate, compute the optimal course of action. From Galton (1907) onwards (Surowiecki 2005), an extensive literature on the "wisdom of crowds" phenomenon has established that aggregate estimations tend to outperform individual ones. Chenalhó's communities are not free from bias, and the decisions made in communal assemblies are not necessarily better than the ones made by individuals. Collective choices can be influenced by 1) prestige hierarchies and 2) the uneven spread of norms of equity and fairness.

Despite having no formal chains of command or leaders with executive authority, Chenalhó's communities have prestige hierarchies. Some of their members have a greater reputation for having served prestigious offices in the past. Prestige is a decisive factor influencing information transmission (Chudek et al. 2012; Offord, Gill, and Kendal 2019). Prestigious individuals speak more often during Chenalhó's communal assemblies, and, as a result, their views tend to be more widely propagated. As I show in later chapters, prestigious community members may cluster in factions and conspire to steer collective decisions to their favor (Chapter 3.2.3). Thus, to understand collective decision-making in Chenalhó's communities, it will be necessary to explain how prestige hierarchies function. I will spend a good portion of Chapter 3 on this topic.

Another factor shaping the course of collective decisions is the distribution of notions of fairness or equity. Human morality likely evolved alongside reputation hierarchies. People who build a reputation as 'moral' are more likely to be seen as better cooperators, which in turn can increase individual or group fitness (Sperber and Baumard 2012). But how do people come to agree on what constitutes 'fair' or 'equitable' decisions? In Chenalhó, commoners arrive in assemblies with a variety of views and objectives. They do not always agree on a single notion of 'fair distribution.' Their goals can be shaped by selfish, altruistic, or norm-oriented motives. They may seek to obtain resources, display competence, build a reputation as good orators, or settle conflicts and maximize social cohesion. It is through debate— by aggregating distinct views and objectives and evaluating multiple courses of action—that they come to agree and make collective decisions. During this process, people use notions of fairness and equity to make rhetorical arguments. I take the view that reasoning and moral intuitions evolved to improve argumentation and possibly to enhance group decision-making (Mercier and Sperber 2017).

To illustrate, suppose a Tzotzil community needs to decide who must pay taxes to finance a rainmaking ceremony. Some of its members may argue that respected elders should be exempt from such taxes since they have served the community (which I call reputation-based equity). Others may reason that families in need should pay fewer taxes while more affluent ones should pay more (need-based equity). Perhaps some would argue that individuals with exceptional skills or competence should pay fewer taxes to incentivize and reward personal competence and achievement (merit). Finally, some could

argue in favor of parity—that is, all community members should contribute equally to the religious ceremony regardless of individual differences. As I demonstrate with experimental allocation games in Chapter 3.3, Rural Tzotzil, Urban Tzotzil, and Mestizo groups in Chenalhó employ distinct notions of equity when allocating resources between community members (early results in Hertzog 2013).

It is crucial to distinguish between 'fairness' and 'equity' norms that determine how people allocate resources. 'Fairness' has been measured as the extent to which humans and other animals divide resources <u>equally</u> when playing anonymous allocation games. 'Equity' entails allocating common resources <u>proportionally</u> to social indices such as need, merit, competence, and social status (Binmore 2005, 28). Much of the research on fairness norms has been done by economists using experimental games to measure behavioral preferences (Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky 1982; Fehr and Schmidt 2000). These methods were introduced to anthropology by a team led by Henrich and Ensminger in the two-phase Foundations of Human Sociality Project (Henrich et al. 2004; Ensminger and Henrich 2014). The team used experimental games to compare prosocial attitudes across 15 small-scale societies. They showed that market integration and adherence to world religions covary with 'norms of fairness.' Hunter and gatherers—the least market integrated societies—exhibited the lowest sharing levels, which the authors interpreted as the result of the absence of fairness norms regulating anonymous exchange among these groups. They explain that as societies become larger and more complex, they must adopt norms that regulate social interaction between individuals who do not know each other. World religions spread, in part, by providing the social mechanisms by which such norms are disseminated and enforced. Subsequent comparative research has confirmed some of Henrich et al.'s findings (Norenzayan et al. 2016; Purzycki et al. 2016).

As explained later (Section 2), I sought to build on Henrich et al.'s research when designing behavioral games. However, years of fieldwork in Chiapas led me to raise methodological and theoretical concerns regarding the use of experiments to measure behavioral norms in the field. First, many experimental studies assume (rather than test) a direct relationship between game results and behavior in the wild. Some studies have found discrepancies between behavior measured through experiments and observed ethnographically (Gurven and Winking 2008; Wiessner 2009; Chibnik 2011). Moreover, participants with no formal schooling (and who are not accustomed to being tested) may not share the researcher's interest in abstract games. Thus, people might not take such experimental games seriously or put effort into answering the questions that researchers ask while performing such tasks.

But the most challenging issue with using fairness experiments in anthropological research is that anonymous games may not be the best way to elicit behaviors in societies where people interact solely on a face-to-face basis. In these societies, most decisions are based not on fairness but <u>equity</u>—that is, how to

allocate resources proportionally to merit, need, status, etc. Asking people to play games anonymously prevents them from using knowledge to make fairness decisions based on those principles. The only fairness norm that can be measured in anonymous economic experiments is 'parity,' or the 50-50 distribution, which most economists have equated with 'fairness.' As I alluded to earlier, parity is just one of several possible methods for achieving a 'fair' distribution. While most behavioral economics studies have equated parity to fairness, some have also paid attention to equity or distributive justice (Elster 1992; Young 1994; Binmore 2005). Still, cross-cultural experimental comparisons are rare (for an exception, Huppert et al. 2019).

Ethnographic and historical work on moral economies might provide a helpful addition to experimental studies above since they delve into the intersection between morality and economic behavior without losing sight of context. Thompson (1971) showed how agricultural produce prices in 18th century England were influenced by peasants' conceptions of what makes a 'fair price.' Another example of this literature (too large to be reviewed) is Prentice's (2009) study of factory-thieving in Trinidad. Prentice showed that workers justify thieving (a sort of resource allocation) by evoking ownership and authorship notions about the products: thieving is permitted to those who performed 'real work,' are the 'real authors,' and deserve to have access to the factory's products. Thieving emerges as a horizontal, collective effort after the group undergoes a negotiation process in which agreement emerges that thieving is fair (unlike 'stealing,' which is unconditionally wrong). These studies provide a contextually rich view of how shared notions of fairness (need- and merit-based fairness) can emerge spontaneously and influence economic allocation—a complex process that is tied to concepts of 'ownership' and power relations (see also Browne and Milgram 2009).

However, ethnographic studies have not attempted to make theoretical generalizations akin to what game theorists have pursued. The lack of generalizations might be due to problems inherent inf ethnographic approaches, most of which could be addressed through adopting formal methods that allow for cross-cultural comparisons. This research combines cognitive anthropology methods with modified behavioral games to abstract and index preferences toward certain fairness notions. These methods, however, differ from standard economic experiments in that people are not asked to play games anonymously. Instead, the experiments use people's interpersonal knowledge and social relations to shape economic decisions, giving a more fine-grained description of inter-community differences as observed ethnographically (see Section 3).

Moral economy studies have often shared with *substantivist* theories in economic anthropology the assumption that all economic behavior is the product of cultural institutions (Polanyi 1957). This view has been criticized for not leaving space for individual strategies and agency (for a critique see Wilk

2007). The current study focuses on decision-making processes akin to some work in legal anthropology (for a review, J. F. Collier 1975). However, while legal anthropologists have focused on conflict mediation by third parties, the present research focuses on more horizontal, unmediated negotiation processes leading communities and households to make economic decisions. This focus on processes is also an alternative to the "black box" model used by some economists, which equates the units of analysis (communities and households) to actors, ignoring their inner workings and disputes involving gender, class, and power relations (Wilk 1997).

In sum, my focus is on notions of fairness and equity as moral principles that people employ voluntarily/coercively, self-interestedly/altruistically, consciously/unconsciously when faced with any situation involving conflicting interests. These notions influence the bargaining processes by which communities come up with collective decisions. They emerge spontaneously as an expression of 'common sense' (sensu Geertz 1983) rather than being enforced by third-party authorities as in legal processes. Such notions permeate all aspects of social life, is manifested in daily life speech and practice (akin to "ordinary ethics," see Lambek 2010), while influencing the way people evaluate, validate, and contest economic outcomes. They cannot be enacted independently from other contextual meanings such as property, ownership, merit, wealth, resources, and the knowledge that people have of each other (in terms of social categories, status, and power).

2. Research Design and Study Groups

To understand the effect of social change on cooperation, I used a cross-sectional approach comparing three communities in Chenalhó of varying market integration levels, dependence on agriculture for subsistence, schooling, and fluency in Spanish/Tzotzil, among other variables discussed below. The three groups studied are 1) **Rural Tzotzil** from the community of Linda Vista, 2) **Urban Tzotzil** from the Cabecera, and 3) **Mestizos** from the Cabecera. Each of these groups represents a stage in the process of social change in Chiapas, which entails a move away from an economy primarily dependent on agriculture into a more economically and culturally integrated configuration. I give a statistical overview of these changes based on survey data in Section 2.3).

By comparing groups within a single municipality, I seek to avoid some of the issues associated with cross-cultural comparative work. Given the multifaceted character of differences between human societies, it can be challenging to identify the exact causes of behavioral differences across groups. Large-scale cross-cultural studies are often done among groups that live in diverse settings, speak different languages, and practice various livelihood strategies. Such studies may erroneously assume that between-group variation in behavior reflects different cultural norms or values. As some have shown, behavioral

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differences between groups may be due to environmental factors or population size rather than social norms (Lamba and Mace 2011; but see the rebuke by Henrich et al. 2012).

Furthermore, cross-cultural comparisons often struggle with what has been known as 'Galton's problem'—a tendency for researchers to assume that cultures exist independently from one another (Matthews 2019). All human groups share a common ancestry, and thus similarities between groups can be explained as the result of common descent or convergent evolution. When lacking information about the groups' shared histories under study, we cannot assume either of those alternatives to be true. Spatial proximity and historical intricacies must be considered when we compare similarities and differences between societies.

To avoid such problems, it is critical to ensure that the groups under study are intercomparable and that we have a good understanding of their histories of migration and resettlement. The surest way to do this is to compare groups using the smallest units of analysis possible or to study within-group cultural variation (see, for instance, Atran et al. 2002). This is what I have sought to do in this study. To understand how modernization and urbanization affect Tzotzil resource management, I compare urban and Rural Tzotzil groups. Although these groups share a single ecological setting and ethnolinguistic background, they vary slightly in the degree to which they depend on agriculture (among other variables). To make comparisons more precise, I include a third control group: Mestizos. Despite living in a Tzotzil, practice no agriculture and differ from the Tzotzil linguistically. Since the three groups coexist in a small town, differences between them cannot be attributed to environmental causes.

I based the research design strategy above on the assumption that the three groups under study here vary across a rural-urban continuum, an idea which was initially proposed by Redfield (1941) in his analysis of cultural change in Yucatán. Maya migrants in Chiapas tend to move from small rural hamlets to cities. Over generations, these migrants undergo economic, cultural, and linguistic shifts that approximates them the ideal Mexican national identity or culture—a process of change which began to take place in the early colonial period throughout Mesoamerica. As I show in Section 2.3, results from a household survey conducted in Chenalhó support the assumption that rural-urban change follows a rural-urban continuum. Rural Tzotzil, Urban Tzotzil, and Mestizos vary in the same ways Redfield observed in Yucatán several decades ago. This continuum entails a shift away from agriculture and increasing degrees of market integration, adoption of a national language (Spanish), affiliation to world religions, and bilateral kinship and exogamy. In later chapters, I also present results from experimental games that show that equity and fairness norms also vary continuously across groups.

The continuous variation between these groups matches our understanding of modernization processes affecting indigenous societies worldwide. Rural-urban differences, thus, should give us a rough

window into how social change happens in Chiapas and point to the direction of that process. This does mean, of course, that rural and urban areas respectively represent the past and future of Tzotzil society. Both the rural and the Urban Tzotzil communities studied here have changed significantly over the past decades. However, since the former has remained dependent on agriculture, certain social institutions and structures associated with rural livelihoods were more likely to persist over time in that group.

On a final note, I do not presume that social change happens linearly. Modernization will not inevitably lead every non-Western society to a similar outcome. As I show later (Chapter 6), change in Chiapas occurs in a succession of cycles of modernization and nativism. In this process, Maya groups adopt certain characteristics of modern Western society while at the same time reaffirming their unique identities, values, and customs. Thus, social change is not equivalent to assimilation into a larger group but rather entails adapting traditional institutions into new contexts.

2.1. Measuring Change

When comparing groups, which metric should we use as an index of modernization or social change? There is no consensus on this issue in the anthropological literature. Although most anthropologists understand social change as a multifaceted process, they choose cultural variables—instead of economic ones—to determine the extent to which 'native' groups have been affected by modernization. This focus on cultural change might be a legacy from early 20th century studies on acculturation, which sought to understand how cultures (defined as systems of learned behaviors) changed with intergroup contact (Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits 1936). Scholars of acculturation tended to rely on subjective perceptions of cultural 'purity' or 'mixing' in the groups they studied (e.g., Freyre 1987). Few such studies sought to quantify cultural change since it might be impossible to reduce cultural variation to a single variable.

Quantitatively inclined anthropologists tend to index cultural change by proposing specific traits or objects that can be easily measured in the groups that they study. For instance, it is possible to use pottery as an index of change since ceramic artifacts can be easily quantified through time and space. This is what Arnold (2008) did in his study of modern Maya ceramics and social change. Pottery production, however, is not a universal comparative measure of change as many groups—such as most of the urban Mestizos who live next to Maya towns—have no artisanal pottery tradition. Early editions of the Mexican census used cultural markers such as footwear (whether a person wears shoes or walks barefoot) and dietary preferences to determine the extent to which indigenous groups had been assimilated into Mexican national culture (Villarreal 2014). In the 1960s, a student suggested using the proportion of houses with tile roofs to measure modernization among the Tzotzil-Maya (R. H. Johnson 1967). At that time, most

Tzotzil houses had thatched roofs, and people saw the transition to tile roofs as a form of progress (Trosper 1967, 74).

Today, neither footwear nor tile roof proportion remain as valid measures of change. Nearly every indigenous person in Mexico now wears shoes or sandals routinely. Once seen as a symbol of prosperity, tile roofs have largely disappeared, now being replaced by metal roof sheets that have been distributed by Mexican government programs since the 1980s. Do the decline in bare footedness and tile/thatched roofs indicate a 'weakening' of indigenous culture? If we take fluency in indigenous languages as a measure of cultural vitality, the answer would be a definitive 'no.' It is well-known that the number and proportion of speakers of indigenous languages in Mexico have increased precipitously in recent decades (INALI 2009). This strengthening of native language fluency amidst rapid economic change demonstrates how the adoption of new technologies may not be a reliable indicator of cultural change. Indices of change based on single cultural traits tend to be short-lived and only applicable to the specific groups and historical periods they were devised to measure.

The most sophisticated cross-cultural study on social change is the already cited Roots of Human Sociality Project led by Henrich and Ensminger (Henrich et al. 2004; Ensminger and Henrich 2014). As we saw, the researchers used various economic games to compare patterns of cooperation and fairness across fifteen small-scale societies. They tested whether several social complexity indicators explained people's behavior in games and found that market integration and affiliation to world religions were the best predictors of game offers. In contrast, community size explained altruistic punishment (Henrich et al. 2010). Since market integration was a robust predictor of offers across all experimental games used, perhaps this could be the universal measure of social change that anthropologists have been trying to discover for decades. Market integration might be the best measure of modernization for it entails a decrease in subsistence production and an increase in dependence on monetarily mediated trade. As small-scale societies become more complex, trade networks grow, and markets play a critical role in determining how resources are produced and distributed.

Measuring market integration, however, can be challenging. In the first phase of the project, the researchers rank-ordered the 15 small-scale societies in terms of market integration, social complexity, and settlement size. They averaged these three measures to obtain an index of 'aggregate market integration,' which turned out to be the best predictors of offers in the experimental games (Henrich et al. 2005). In the second phase, they used five different measures of market integration. The one that worked best in predicting game offers was the *percentage of calories purchased in markets* by households. This was the measure that the researchers reported in their main text (Henrich et al. 2010). Since food is

universally consumed, measuring market integration as the proportion of calories purchased in markets might indeed be the most intercomparable index of social change.

As I mentioned earlier, I based much of the present research design on Henrich et al.'s work. I used the same forms—with a few additions—that they used to do household surveys. However, it was unclear whether market integration would work as a measure of change among the Maya. Archaeological data shows that market exchange and currency use are ancient in Mesoamerica (E. M. King 2015). Terms related to commerce appeared in Mayan languages around the Mid-Formative period, 1000-400 B.C. (Speal 2014). The highly developed Maya numeral system, which likely co-evolved with trade and monetization, is also ancient. Mayan groups have always been integrated into supra-local markets and used money to trade, leading to the emergence of traditional markets that remain very much alive today (Little 2010). As I discuss in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, in Chenalhó, everyone borrows or lends money and occasionally trades for a profit. People are keenly knowledgeable of—and interested in—the prices of goods of all sorts.

Given the universality and antiquity of commerce among the Maya, one might question whether it is possible to find anyone in Chiapas who does not somehow depend on markets. When we use Henrich et al.'s measure of market integration, the three groups studied vary across a continuum. Rural Tzotzil, Urban Tzotzil, and Mestizos have market integration scores of .4, .57, and .93, respectively (measured as the percentage of calories purchased in markets). Market integration, thus, works to quantify economic change in communities in Chenalhó. However, notice that compared with some of the groups studied by Henrich et al., the Rural Tzotzil community—where everyone farms corn and beans for consumption— has a relatively high market integration score. Since peasant economies are necessarily dependent on national and international markets, a market integration score of .4 might be among the lowest we will find among smallholder farmer communities in Mexico. To anticipate some results later discussed, I found that market integration did not predict within-group variation in the behavioral games used in later chapters to measure prosociality and equity preferences. This result does not contradict Henrich et al.'s findings since the present study measures prosociality at a much smaller scale. Moreover, I used semi-anonymous games that differ slightly from the anonymous experiments used by Henrich et al., and hence our results might not be directly comparable (see Chapter 2.3).

In sum, although market integration is a good measure of change, it might not be the ideal measure for Maya groups that have continuously practiced commerce for thousands of years. Perhaps there is no obvious measure that summarizes variation in economic complexity across rural-urban settings in Chiapas. To circumvent this problem, I will look at change as—to use an anthropological *cliché*—a multifaceted process involving changes in many interrelated variables. Market integration is one of those

variables. In the next Section, I give a brief overview of the three groups studied here. In 2.3, I describe the three communities here vary in terms of several cultural and economic variables. I show that there are systematic differences across communities that justify using a cross-sectional design to make causal inferences about social change.

2.2. Study Groups

The three groups researched here vary in terms of economic, demographic, linguistic, religious, and kinship variables, and such variation fits well into our understanding of how modernization changes traditional societies. The subsequent chapters can be read separately from this introduction, and the description that follows can be used for reference when needed.

1) Rural Tzotzil (Linda Vista). Linda Vista is a small hamlet located near the center of Chenalhó in a highland and cold area (around 2,000 m.a.s.l.), at about an hour's drive from the town's urban center (the Cabecera). In 2015, it had 304 members and 51 households, according to the Mexican census. The community was founded in 1994 amidst a dispute over taxation. According to oral accounts, members of Xunuch and surrounding communities were dissatisfied with the local weekly market administration, which was privately owned and exacted exceedingly high fees from its participants. Andres Pérez—one of the sons of healer and lineage patriarch Mol Pérez—mobilized a group of families in Xunuch to secede and establish an autonomously managed market. Initially, the new community was to be named Kunanbak', or 'pile of bones,' the name of a local mountain, though its members ended up opting for the less ominous name of Linda Vista, 'beautiful view.'

The central area of Chenalhó, known as Yabteclum ('old town'), remained relatively unscathed during much of the colonial period. Linda Vista is located south of Yabteclum, still in Chenalhó's central region. This area was never home to a significant *finca*—large plantations owned by foreigners who took hold of large sections of Chiapas in the 19th century. Local populations have preserved high rates of Tzotzil monolingualism, while surrounding areas tend to have more Tzeltal and Spanish speakers (Hertzog and Ross 2017). Next to Linda Vista, near the border with Mitontic, existed a *finca* which in the 1930s became an *ejido* (communal lands) known as La Libertad. According to oral history, the few remaining Mestizo members of this *ejido* were forced out in the 1980s. Tzotzil families then appropriated those lands and La Libertad was converted into a community with privately owned fields. La Libertad and Linda Vista share the same area, and many of their households tend to overlap spatially. The two communities once attempted to establish a system for managing lands communally but failed, allegedly due to conflicts of interest. The main local patron-saint fiesta, San Pedro Mártir, happens in August in a

chapel in La Libertad. Members of all surrounding communities attend this fiesta and may also sponsor it by serving the cargo of Alperes.

Like most of Chenalhó's rural communities, Linda Vista's settlement patterns differ markedly from colonial towns in Mexico. There are no streets or a central plaza marking the center of the community. Its most significant landmark is a blue cross placed on a bifurcated road next to its primary school. The area of community land is traversed by a single unpaved road which connects the geographic center of Chenalhó to the Cabecera. Scattered around that main road are the households that compose the community's 'core' faction. These families tend to be related (through affinal and consanguineal ties) to the Pérez's lineage. They tend to have higher socioeconomic status than those who inhabit the community's peripheral areas, which can only be reached through trails in the forested mountains.

All families in the community practice smallholder agriculture. Households own, on average, 2 hectares of land each, and all of them cultivate corn and beans primarily for consumption. The wealthier families may grow coffee—Chenalhó's main cash crop—or cultivate various avocado and peach trees. Most arable fields are in highland areas, which tend to be foggy and cold, even during summer. As a result, crop development is slow, and most farmers harvest corn just once a year (in comparison, lowland/warm areas in Chiapas can be twice as productive). Not much can be done to improve soil productivity. Although some farmers may use chemical fertilizers to accelerate fallowing, the mountainous landscape, the small size of landholdings, and the unreliable weather prohibit people from using agricultural machinery. Thus, most local farmers practice non-intensive farming following the traditional slash-and-burn system and using hand tools for clearing their fields (G. A. Collier 1975). This work is usually done collectively by extended family groups of men, women, and children similarly to what earlier ethnographers described (Miller 1964).

Despite being rural, some families in Linda Vista have alternative income streams. For instance, women commonly produce textiles to sell to local traders, although most production is for personal use. Some families have set up small convenience stores in front of their households. Since at least 2014, most women have received government support through the Mexican government's Prospera cash transfer program. A more critical recent development has been the introduction of trucks and cars as a venue for investment. In 2014, a group of young men from the community's core faction purchased three vehicles, which allowed them to begin a transportation 'hub' connecting the surrounding communities to Yabteclum (a large semi-urban area located at Chenalhó's geographic center). The new transportation service allowed these families to become relatively wealthy in just a couple of years. I will return to this recent change in Chapter 5.

Linda Vista's founder Andres Pérez is a public figure in Chenalhó (I refer to him using a pseudonym, as I do for most non-people in the remainder of this work). His trajectory may help us understand how the community became what it is today. Andres studied in the neighboring city of San Cristóbal and became a schoolteacher in his early 20s, being one of the few people who could speak Spanish fluently in Xunuch. After leading the rebellion against Xunuch's market owner, he used his connections with state officials to grant Linda Vista formal recognition by the government. He would then acquire immense prestige, taking important state-level positions in the PRI (the Institutional Revolutionary Party). In 2002, following years of severe conflicts in Chenalhó (the Zapatista rebellion and the Acteal Massacre), Andres was elected mayor of the town. As he told me, he received that office since he had a reputation as an agreeable man who could settle any conflict. In the years following his election, and despite having various legal troubles and being convicted of corruption, Andres became a *cacique*—a 'big man' whose reputation is known statewide. His tenure as mayor also allowed him to accumulate wealth, and—as it is usual for *caciques*—he became a polygynous man. He made powerful enemies—especially among other former mayors and *pasados* (traditionalist elders).

Andres Pérez's status as a *cacique* allowed him to exert disproportionate influence in Chenalhó's politics. As a result, Linda Vista has been overrepresented in municipal administrations. Despite their modest origins, members of the community have taken high municipal offices such as Síndico (vice-mayor), Regidor (traditional councilman), and Comisario de Bienes Comunales (the public land management authority). This apparent overrepresentation is surprising given the community's small size and somewhat peripheral location. Though Andres no longer lives permanently in Linda Vista, his lineage—the Pérez—continues to be the most influential in the community.

Thanks to the Pérez lineage's close connection to the PRI, until recently, Linda Vista's internal regulations prohibited its members from joining opposition parties. In 2015, some community members defied that one-party norm and joined Verde (Mexico's Green Party), which led to a conflict that culminated in the expulsion of three families (I discuss the event and its implications in Chapter 3.2). This type of arrangement prohibiting people from joining competing civil or religious groups is not unusual among Maya groups of Chiapas. Until the mid-1970s, entire Tzotzil-Tzeltal towns could commit to voting in unison for a single political party, almost always the PRI (Köhler 1982). It was also common for these groups to prohibit people from joining Protestant denominations—a phenomenon that led to a wave of religiously motivated expulsions in the 1980s. Linda Vista began to tolerate Protestants in 1998 after a prominent member of the core faction converted to Pentecostalism.

Nevertheless, converts remain politically and economically marginal. Most community members declare no religious affiliation, merely following 'costumbre,' or Maya folk religion. All members,

including the Protestant minority, must pay religious taxes for sponsoring the traditional rainmaking ceremonies (known as *mixa*). Despite this being a point of contention among Protestants, there was little they could do to change communal regulations in their favor.

Exclusionary arrangements such as Linda Vista's one-party norm are part of the reason why Mayan groups have been described as politically 'closed' When I did fieldwork in Chenalhó, Linda Vista was indeed closed politically. However, things have changed a bit since then. Exclusionary arrangements exist for a variety of reasons. Chiefly, in communities that legislate autonomously, majority factions led by *caciques* can easily monopolize decision-making. They may then coerce others into committing to vote for their party. In the past five decades, politics in Chiapas have become more plural, with the PRI losing some of the hegemony it previously held (de León 2005; Pineda de la Cruz 2012). However, political pluralism has tended to take hold at the municipal level, influencing mayoral election outcomes. Within the hundreds of small and semi-autonomous communities such as Linda Vista, pluralism remains a distant reality. At that scale, people often describe competing civic or religious groups as 'troublemakers' and as a potential source of 'disharmony.' I discuss these points in more detail in Chapter 3.2.

A final note on Linda Vista concerns age and gender relations—domains in which this community clearly stands out from the other two study groups. Linda Vista's membership roll lists 88 members, all males. Ideally, enlisted members should be married men, and each should represent his respective household. However, in recent years unmarried men have been allowed to join the membership roll. This is happening for two reasons. First, teenagers are now postponing marriage, following the general trend in Mexico. Second, some teenage males now leave the community to finish high school and move permanently to urban areas. This departure of men has led to a shortage of people available and willing to perform mandatory community offices (cargos) by which people pay their communal dues. In response to the lack of candidates for office, the community voted to allow younger men to become members, enabling many to take offices before marriage and establish their own nuclear household. Another recent change, approved in 2014 in an assembly which I attended, is that men who leave the community to enroll in high school or college now must pay a (relatively) high fee. Most people in Linda Vista believe that schooling can be a strategy to evade community service—a punishable offense in most Tzotzil communities (more on this in later chapters).

Finally, each of Linda Vista's 88 enlisted members must take part in horizontal communal assemblies to make collective decisions. Political absenteeism is also a punishable offense. Since women are not considered *de facto* community members, they cannot partake in such events and are thus excluded—at least formally—from public-decision-making. Again, this gender configuration resembles

what anthropologists documented in the 1960s among the Chiapas Maya (J. F. Collier 1973; J. Nash 1985). Widowed or divorced women may be pressured to remarry to local men to avoid severing their ties to their community or lineage. It should be noticed, however, that Linda Vista's gender relations pattern is no longer universal in Chiapas. In recent years, many Maya communities (such as the Cabecera, discussed below) have adopted norms that enforce gender parity and allow females to become members. Linda Vista and the surrounding communities likely preserved traditional gender roles because their relative isolation has caused them to remain dependent on agriculture. Lineage systems and endogamy play a role in regulating disputes over land inheritance. I will return to issues of gender, kinship, and land in Chapter 4.

2) Urban Tzotzil (Cabecera). The Cabecera is Chenalhó's largest urban area and home to Chenalhó's *Ayuntamiento* (town hall), the main plaza, and the Catholic church. The site, inhabited by about 3,500 people (as of 2015), is located southwest of its geographic center (near the border with Chamula—a larger Tzotzil town). I define as 'Urban Tzotzil' any person who identifies as indigenous/Tzotzil and lives in this urban area. The definition includes the many migrants from rural communities that have settled in the Cabecera in recent decades.

According to oral histories, the Cabecera's urban grid and church were built by Mestizo settlers in the 19th century in a densely forested valley next to what is known today as the San Pedro River. The river was used as a route to the northern area of Pantelhó, where the weather is warmer and where large coffee plantations were established in the 19th century. The Cabecera illustrates some fundamental differences in how Mestizos and Tzotzil-Tzeltal groups build settlements. Mestizos use river courses for exploration and water extraction, settling near river beds, while Tzotzil-Tzeltal tend to prefer mountaintops where there is greater sunlight exposure for agriculture and which do not get flooded as often. Mountains were safer from the colonial invaders for being cold, rocky, with soils, and not suitable for intensive agriculture or cattle ranching (Aguirre Beltrán 1973). Mountaintops require settlers to have a good knowledge of the local environment (which Mestizos lack) since waterholes—their primary source of water—can be unreliable. The name Chenalhó comes from *ch'enal vo'*, or 'cave water,' a water spring allegedly located near the Cabecera. I have heard of four places as supposedly being *ch'enal vo'*, so it is impossible to know the exact location of the landmark that gave its name to the town.

For reasons I discuss in Chapter 2, most of the original Mestizo settler families have left the Cabecera and moved to larger cities. Mestizos have been largely replaced with Tzotzil immigrants from rural communities, which has affected most Mayan towns with Mestizo settlements in Chiapas. Most migrants come from the 100-plus communities within Chenalhó. A significant share of the Cabecera's population are students from a variety of towns who live there temporarily while going to the CECyT—

the local high school. The Cabecera is a transient place inhabited by a relatively uprooted and diverse population and the fastest growing area in the town. Because it might be difficult to fairly characterize such a diverse population, I will concentrate on the differences between Rural Tzotzil and this urban area.

The main differences are economical. As in Linda Vista, Tzotzil families in the Cabecera are predominantly smallholders, owning, on average, 1.64 hectares of land per household. However, in this area, we see a higher percentage of people practicing non-rural livelihood strategies such as commerce, wage labor, transportation, and other services. As a result, the average income is higher. Cash circulation is more increased in the urban area, and as a result, stores, restaurants, butchers, and barbershops tend to be more viable businesses. There is also a higher percentage of people profiting from rent and informal financial services (e.g., lending money on interest)—sectors which, until the 1970s, used to be monopolized by Mestizos. Prices of land and real estate in this area have gone up significantly in the past decades, giving rise to speculators. Because the municipal offices are located in the Cabecera, government jobs are more frequent in this area, accounting for a significant part of incomes (I give descriptive statistics in Section 2.3).

There is greater spatial mobility in the Cabecera, with a local transportation hub with cabs providing cheap trips to neighboring cities such as San Cristóbal de las Casas. Higher incomes result in people having greater exposure to Mexican media. Households in the Cabecera are more likely to have television and radios, and a few cybercafes allow people to connect to the internet. Cellphones became operational in this area in 2012—several years before rural communities. Despite all of this, however, it is crucial to keep in mind that Urban Tzotzil still relies heavily on agriculture, and rural vs. urban differences in Chenalhó is more a matter of degree than substance.

There are important differences in the political configuration of urban and rural sites. Until the 1970s, there was only one community in the Cabecera, which went by the same name. Over time, due to population growth and fissioning, the Cabecera split into the over ten spatially overlapping communities that exist today. Like rural hamlets such as Linda Vista, urban communities are also semi-autonomous and periodically hold assemblies to make collective decisions. However, there is more coordination between urban communities in the Cabecera since they share a single urban grid and irrigation, sewage, and electricity networks. As such, problems regarding the distribution of such goods sometimes require cross-community dialogue mediated by officials in the municipal administration. However, coordination between communities can be permeated with conflicts of interest and disputes between local and municipal authorities. If my perception of recent changes is correct, there is an emerging 'bureaucracy' that is being built to solve problems that afflict several communities at once in the Cabecera. These

groups are in the process of becoming more like *barrios*, or neighborhoods—an urban territorial (rather than political) unit of Spanish (Hunt and Nash 1967). I will come back to this point in Chapter 7.2.2.

Most of the quantitative work presented in subsequent chapters was done in the community of Benito Juárez, the largest in the urban site. The community received its name after the school in which its communal assemblies take place. But because it is the oldest community in that area, it is often referred to as the 'Cabecera.' In 2015, Benito Juárez had 364 members, each representing a head-of-household. This number was rapidly increasing due to a recent municipal law which compelled every resident of Chenalhó to become affiliated with a community. After the law was enacted, many Mestizo families who had previously lived in the Cabecera without being affiliated with a community joined Benito Juárez. As a result, the community became more ethnically mixed. For analytical purposes, I analyze Mestizo and Tzotzil families as separate groups since most Mestizos had, until 2015, no community affiliation.

Unlike Linda Vista, the Cabecera has no single *cacique* or lineage dominating decision-making. The most influential group in the community are the traditionalists known as *pasados*, or the 'former ones,' who are men who have served important religious and political offices in the past. Because of their centrality in decision-making, I will refer to *pasados* throughout later chapters. The pasados speak far more often than commoners during communal assemblies and can influence collective decisions like no other group in Chenalhó. As I discuss in Chapter 3.2, they often hold private meetings ahead of communal assemblies in which they plan ways to get community members to vote in their favor.

There is no consensus over which cargos one must serve to join the group of pasados. The most common cargos are Paxon (an expensive office which entails sponsoring Chenalhó's traditional carnival, or Tajimoltik), Presidente (municipal mayor), *Agente* (community headman), and *kabilto vinik* (the traditional prayer maker). Thus, pasados are a mixture of former religious and civil officers. The group does not have a clear common agenda, and they sometimes compete with, even seek to expel, each other (as described in Chapter 7.2.5). Still, the *pasados* usually act to preserve the cargo system as the main way people obtain prestige in Chenalhó. They do so to maintain the power structures upon which they built their reputation. But since the *pasados* have no formal power that allows them to make executive decisions, they can only use their higher prestige to influence communal decisions. I discuss how the lack of consensual dominance hierarchies affects the political actions of *pasados* in Chapter 3.

A final distinction between the Cabecera and Linda Vista concerns gender relations. Women account for about ten percent of all enlisted members of the urban community. Since women can join the formal membership roll, they must participate in communal assemblies and take cargo nominations. There are two reasons why the Cabecera has begun to allow women to become members. First, compared with Linda Vista, there is a higher incidence of female-headed households in the urban area. Second,

since there is no single lineage dominating decision-making in the Cabecera, the community tends to be more open to change and follow federal regulations. In 2015, Mexico approved a law of gender parity, forcing local, state, and national administrations to reserve an equal amount of offices for men and women. While most rural communities ignored the new law, the Cabecera immediately sought to comply with it by nominating women to low-ranking cargos. Finally, as I discuss in Chapter 4, rural-urban differences in gender relations are also marked by the decline of the Tzotzil patrilineal system in urban areas, which is being replaced with a Westernized bilateral kinship system.

3) Mestizos. As I noticed earlier, the Cabecera was founded by Spanish-speaking Mestizo settlers next to a previously existing scattered Tzotzil settlement in the mountains surrounding the San Pedro Valley. Although most of the original settlers left, there remain about 40 Mestizo households with 250 people in the Cabecera—just a fraction of what once was a predominantly Spanish-speaking population of over 2,000 people. I will describe the Mestizos in detail in Chapter 2, which deals with changing cooperation patterns between them and the Tzotzil in the Cabecera.

The Mestizos that live in the Cabecera today represent the opposite end of the rural-urban continuum. They make a living through trade, wage labor, and by exacting rent over their properties. Commerce and trade have been, historically, their main livelihood strategies. Mestizo families own restaurants, pharmacies, candle stores, barber shops, tortillerias, and bicycle or automobile repair shops. At least four families have, for several generations, made a living from buying animals (cows and pigs) in rural communities to resell their meat in the local weekly market (although this profession appears to be disappearing).

Another typical object of trade was alcohol. Until the 1970s, Mestizos monopolized the trade of the pox, the distilled sugar cane liquor produced by Tzotzil people. However, due to a conflict with traders from Chamula (neighboring Tzotzil town), most Mestizo liquor traders were expelled from the Cabecera in the past decades. Mestizo families do not own land for farming today. Until 1994, some families owned plots in the Ejido San Pedro—communal lands which were lost to land invasions. While Mestizos who make a living from trade and finance have been increasingly driven out of Chenalhó, the remaining ones were those who could rely on government wages. Thus, a substantial part of their population works as teachers in the local schools, among other government-run facilities.

As I elaborate in Chapter 2, historically, Mestizo traders took advantage of the fiesta economy, specializing in buying and selling goods used by cargoholders to sponsor patron-saint fiestas (candles, alcohol, incense, soft drinks, alcohol, fireworks). Mestizos also profited largely from issuing loans on interest to fiesta sponsors, providing liquidity in economies where money had always been a scarce commodity. From the 1960s onward, this type of moneylending and trading activity was characterized as

predatory and came under fire by the INI, which sought to eliminate Mestizo middlemen in Maya communities by intervening in the local economy in a variety of ways. Despite the INI's interventions, little has changed in regard to predatory lending. High-interest loans continue to be a pervasive issue, even though most moneylenders are now Tzotzil.

Mestizos in Chenalhó are overwhelmingly Catholic—much in the same way that most of Mexico's population has historically been. They have large families and often live in multigenerational households. They have their own cargo system, although it is simpler than the Tzotzil one, consisting of just two main annual fiestas (description in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5). Mestizos born in Chenalhó tend to be bilingual, having some Tzotzil proficiency, although Spanish is always their primary language. Some Mestizos show a keen interest in indigenous rituals and traditions and enjoy bragging about their knowledge of Tzotzil culture and language. However, in private, they may refer to the Tzotzil as 'uncivilized' and 'primitive.' As one might expect, racial prejudice goes both ways; Tzotzil people can describe Mestizos as greedy, intrusive, rude, and exploitative. Nevertheless, compared with periods of more overt conflict between groups, both tend to live in relative peace today. Some Tzotzil say that the 'bad' Mestizos were kicked out of the town long ago, and "only the good ones remained."

For centuries, Mayan groups and Mestizos have depended on each other since both have developed distinct production and trade patterns. The Maya produced agricultural goods, while Mestizos traded and supplied Maya villages with manufactured products and services. Without question, the former group benefitted more from this system. However, the relationship between those groups has become more complex over the past five decades as thousands of Tzotzil-Tzeltal, among other Maya groups, migrated from the countryside into cities, taking jobs usually reserved for Mestizos. Occupational status no longer unambiguously determines the boundaries between groups. Hence, as shown by the descriptive statistics in the next Section, differences between Tzotzil and Mestizos are a matter of degree.

2.3. Process, Complexity, and Causality

I provide below some descriptive statistics that will help to introduce the three groups studied here. I use results from household surveys that I conducted to give basic descriptive statistics that characterize variation across communities (number of households for RT = 57, UT = 97, MES = 38). Such variation should explain how social change involves a complex interaction of cultural and economic factors. Because variation between groups is continuous across a rural-urban spectrum, we can make causal inferences about how modernization affects Tzotzil communities by comparing them.

I intend to show that social change involves several interrelated variables changing together in a way that makes sense and fits into our understanding of what modernization does to traditional societies. I

break down these variables into three groups: economic, demographic/cultural, and kinship variables. My goal is to show that there is a coherent process of change across different aspects of these groups. Although I captured these data synchronically, these consistent differences justify using the comparative approach to make causal inferences about social change.

      Economic change. Table 1.1 provides basic descriptive statistics with economic variables broken down by study group. Modernization in Chiapas entails abandoning agriculture and adopting livelihood strategies based on commerce and wage labor. Such a shift drives an increase in incomes (measured as the head-of-household's annual earnings) and wealth (the total value of assets owned by a household). Compared with Urban and Rural Tzotzil, Mestizos tend to have higher market integration (MI) across the measures used by Henrich et al. (see fn. 1). Mestizos derive a higher proportion of their diet from goods purchased in markets, are more likely to perform wage labor, and visit markets and engage in commerce more often. A larger share of their income comes from rent and commerce, as they are more likely to rely on returns on invested capital.

      Urbanization drives the average income from 62 (Rural Tzotzil) to 95 (Urban Tzotzil) pesos a day, while Mestizos earn 247 pesos/day on average. As I noted earlier, almost all Urban Tzotzil practice agriculture and derive a significant part of their diet from it. However, while UT may farm for subsistence, they are less likely to rely on commercial agriculture. The share of sales of agricultural products in incomes falls with urbanization (RT = .26, UT = .2, MES = .07). Government jobs play a major role in increasing incomes in urban areas. The share of government wages in incomes increases steeply with urbanization (RT = .02, UT = .09, MES = .4) simply because the government has a larger presence in urban areas. For instance, the Mexican census sporadically hires workers in the Cabecera to conduct surveys in rural areas, and this can be a significant irregular source of income for many families. Aside from government jobs, the urban area of Chenalhó has more opportunities for stable wage labor. Notice, in Table 1.1, that Rural Tzotzil are more likely to earn money from causal (unplanned) rather than seasonal (regular) work, which is more common among Urban Tzotzil.

      Rural Tzotzil households own more land than the other groups (RT = 2.03, UT = 1.64, MES = 0.59 hectares). Nevertheless, Urban Tzotzil households are slightly wealthier than their rural counterparts. In part, this is because real estate prices are higher in urban areas. With urbanization, the share of wealth from real estate ownership increases significantly (RT = .5, UT = .6, MES = .73) while the share of land decreases (RT = .38, UT = .32, MES = .09). Predictably, the share of livestock in household wealth decreases with urbanization (RT = .06, UT = .03, MES = 0).

Table 1.1: Summary of economic variables by study group

	Rural Tzotzil N: 57		Urban Tzotzil N: 91		Mestizos N: 38	
Income	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Income (Annual, MXN)	22,734	19,307	34,551	29,048	90,314	93,499
Income (Daily)	62	53	95	80	247	256
% Agricultural	0.26	0.32	0.2	0.26	0.07	0.2
% Commerce	0.12	0.27	0.09	0.22	0.14	0.25
% Government wages	0.02	0.13	0.09	0.23	0.4	0.42
% Rent	0	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.11
% Self-employment	0.08	0.23	0.09	0.24	0.08	0.21
% Casual work wages	0.16	0.3	0.08	0.21	0.05	0.19
% Seasonal work	0.14	0.27	0.17	0.31	0.05	0.18
% Welfare programs	0.21	0.29	0.27	0.29	0.18	0.28
Wealth	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Household wealth (MXN)	150,110	125,143	180,307	205,805	889,525	1,230,541
Per capita	26,890	25,520	35,790	37,997	235,061	542,495
% Livestock	0.06	0.11	0.03	0.05	0	0.01
% Land	0.38	0.25	0.32	0.31	0.09	0.24
% Real estate	0.5	0.28	0.6	0.34	0.73	0.33
% Commerce	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.06	0.09	0.25
% Vehicles	0.05	0.15	0.01	0.05	0.07	0.1
% Productive equipment	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.11	0.01	0.03
Land ownership/household (ha)	2.03	2.41	1.64	4.01	0.59	2.02
Market Integration (MI)	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
MI (% calories purchased in markets)	0.4	0.23	0.57	0.27	0.93	0.14
MI2[1]	0.31	0.36	0.26	0.33	0.62	0.38
MI3	0.3	0.33	0.25	0.31	0.41	0.37
MI4	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.22	0.23	0.23
MI5	0.02	0.05	0.03	0.08	0.05	0.11

[1] MI2: Income from wages, rent, and trade per head-of-household. MI3: frequency of wage labor in the month prior. MI4: Trips to market in the last 7 days. MI5: frequency of trading goods for resale in the past month. These measures of MI were borrowed from Henrich et al. (2010), supporting online material.

Demographic and Cultural change. Table 1.2 summarizes the main demographic, religious, and linguistic variables for the three groups studied. Fundamentally, modernization entails higher schooling levels (predominantly among females), greater spatial mobility, more permanent affiliation to world religions (Catholicism or Protestantism) and increasing fluency in the national language (Spanish).

Following the widespread pattern in Chiapas, there is a broad educational gap between Mestizos and Tzotzil in Chenalhó. The educational gap has been attributed to historical factors and the precarity of bilingual Spanish-Tzotzil schools (del Carpio 2012). Mestizos spend about twice as many years in the educational system as the Tzotzil. As the table shows, Rural and Urban Tzotzil heads-of-household do not differ in mean years of schooling (RT = 5.39, UT = 5.51, MES = 11.42). However, most heads-of-household that we interviewed were male and tended to be older than the average population. If we look at all household members' schooling levels, adult females in the rural area spend 4.75 years in school, while urban counterparts spend 6.66 years. Urbanization, thus, is associated with an increase in school attendance among Tzotzil females but not males, which is due to females in rural areas marrying earlier, as I discuss later.

Urbanization is associated with greater spatial mobility and migration. 95% of Rural Tzotzil heads-of-household were born locally—either in Linda Vista or neighboring rural communities. In comparison, 69% and 68% of Urban Tzotzil and Mestizos were born in the Cabecera. As we saw earlier, in Chiapas, migration tends to be from rural to urban centers since urbanization and schooling act as pull factors for smallholders. These spatial mobility patterns will become more evident when we examine marriage patterns below—endogamy tends to decline with increasing spatial mobility.

Among Rural Tzotzil, most people declare to have no religious affiliation or say that they follow *costumbre*, or Maya folk religion, which does not require a public commitment to a religious organization. Just 28% said that they are affiliated to the Catholic Church or a Protestant denomination— a proportion which has been increasing due to conversion over the past four decades. Among Urban Tzotzil, that percentage rises to 55% due to the town's central Catholic church and several Protestant denominations in the Cabecera. 89% of Mestizos declare to be Catholics (they have been for many generations). Since conversion to Protestantism among the Tzotzil is a recent development, religious commitment among Tzotzil tends to be less permanent and driven by practical reasons. We asked heads of households who declared to have a religious affiliation for how many years they had been going to church. As Table 1.2 shows, average years of church attendance increases steeply from Rural Tzotzil to Mestizos (RT = 4.83, UT = 11.72, MES = 36.27).

Language proficiency might be the most reliable indicator of cultural change among the Chiapas Maya. We asked heads-of-households to rate, on a scale of one to three, the proficiency of Spanish and Tzotzil spoken by themselves and their parents. We coded responses as 'no proficiency' = 0, 'some proficiency' = 0.5, and 'fluency' = 1 and averaged responses for each group. As Table 1.2 shows, self-rated Spanish fluency follows a curve similar to that of market integration across groups (RT = 0.4, UT = .67, MES = 1). With urbanization, Tzotzil people tend to shift to bilingualism. Over the generations, they can become monolingual Spanish speakers. All participants in the Rural Tzotzil community are fluent in Tzotzil, while a few their urban counterparts have shifted to speaking predominantly Spanish. This linguistic shift is more pronounced among males since the former tend to have lower spatial and occupational mobility and thus receive less Spanish exposure.

The pattern of language change in Chenalhó reiterates what scholars such as Adams called 'ladinization' in Guatemala and Chiapas (Alvarado 1973; Adams 1994). However, as I mentioned earlier, despite shifting to speaking Spanish in urban areas, the number of Tzotzil speakers has increased steeply over the past decades. This is due to two reasons. First, birth rates are higher in rural (Tzotzil-speaking) areas. Second, there has been a resurgence of Maya identity since the 1990s, which has removed some of the stigma previously attached to speaking indigenous languages in Mexico and Guatemala (Fischer and Brown 1996; England 2003).

Finally, notice that Mestizos tend to have relatively high Tzotzil speaking scores (.61), which might be an overestimation. Mestizos in Chenalhó sometimes try to 'pass' as ethnically Maya and thus may exaggerate when describing their Tzotzil proficiency. Mestizos are a numerical minority, and, since the 1970s, they have lost their previous position of dominance in the town. Loss of power has led some to seek to assimilate into the Tzotzil majority. To overcome such biases in self-reported language proficiency, I asked Mestizo and Tzotzil participants in an experiment to rate each other's linguistic abilities. I return to some of these results in Chapter 2.

Table 1.2: Summary of demographic variables by study group

	Rural Tzotzil N: 57		Urban Tzotzil N: 91		Mestizos N: 38	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Age (head of household)	37.28	12.72	41.71	13.28	44.92	14.79
Years of schooling (head of household)	5.39	2.63	5.51	4.09	11.42	4.43
Born locally	0.95	0.23	0.69	0.46	0.68	0.47
World religion	0.28	0.45	0.55	0.5	0.89	0.31
Protestant	0.28	0.45	0.22	0.42	0	0
Years of church attendance	4.83	9.73	11.72	15.19	36.27	21.96
Cargos served	3.46	2.32	2.99	2.51	3.13	2.86
Cargo expenditures (real, MXN)	32,920	54,390	24,415	48,021	58,029	126,779
Language Skills (self-reported)	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Spanish (self)	0.4	0.22	0.67	0.34	1	0
Spanish (father)	0.34	0.37	0.55	0.43	0.95	0.23
Spanish (mother)	0.11	0.25	0.3	0.41	0.95	0.23
Tzotzil (self)	1	0	0.96	0.18	0.61	0.35
Tzotzil (father)	1	0	0.96	0.19	0.59	0.43
Tzotzil (mother)	1	0	0.98	0.15	0.61	0.39

Kinship change. Social change among the Tzotzil entails a fundamental transformation of family structure and kin networks, impacting social reproduction and organization and inheritance patterns. Since kinship change has been the most overlooked aspect of social change in Chiapas, I spend a whole chapter on the topic (Chapter 4). For now, Table 1.3 summarizes a few results from household surveys that give us a glance at how modernization affects Tzotzil kinship structure. In sum, modernization entails 1) a delay of marriage and childbearing, 2) a decrease in family size, 3) a decrease in endogamy, and 4) a replacement of consanguineal patrilineal structures with a fictive kinship system (the *compadrazgo* system).

Delay of marriage and childbearing are well-known products of modernization (Saardchom and Lemaire 2005). Rural Tzotzil tend to marry and have children earlier, which results in larger households and higher rates of demographic growth (age of marriage for men RT = 21.64, UT = 23.54, 26.07). Delaying marriage is due to increasing educational expectations, higher costs of raising children in urban areas, and the more significant presence of government programs in the urban area. In 1945, Guiteras Holmes (1946, 190) reported that males in Chenalhó married between the age of 12 and 15; thus, age at

marriage appears to have increased in rural areas since then, albeit at a slower rate when compared with urban ones. As I mentioned earlier, the fact that Rural Tzotzil tend to have more children per couple explains in part why the number of monolingual Tzotzil speakers continues to grow despite a shift to bilingualism in urban areas.

One of the most crucial—and least discussed—changes in Tzotzil kinship has been the replacement of the traditional patrilineal structure with the fictive kinship of the *compadrazgo* (co-parenthood) system of Catholic origin. The compadrazgo system began to spread among Mexican indigenous groups in the early colonial period, as the Catholic Church actively sought to erase native lineal systems with fictive kinship ties that could be controlled by its priests. This process is still ongoing, as evidenced by remnants of the Tzotzil patrilineal system in the Rural Tzotzil community today (see Chapter 4 for a discussion).

In the compadrazgo system, parents of a child petition 'co-parents' (compadres) to sponsor their children's baptism or school graduation ceremonies. The co-parents and the biological parents of a child establish a fictive (or ritual) kinship tie, which they maintain through the rest of their lives (Mintz and Wolf 1950). Although both Rural and Urban Tzotzil have—to some extent—adopted compadrazgo, the system tends to be less central among Rural Tzotzil. This is evidenced by a lower number of godparents per child among the Tzotzil (RT = .84, UT = 1.25, MES = 2.71). Among Rural Tzotzil, co-parenthood tends to be optional and restricted to school graduation ceremonies (i.e., couples search for co-parents to sponsor their children's graduation from school). In addition to school graduations, Urban Tzotzil tend to search for co-parents to sponsor their children's baptism. Tzotzil—either urban or rural—tend to establish *compadrazgo* ties informally without the Catholic Church's mediation. On the other hand, Mestizos follow more strict rules of co-parenthood; they petition co-parents for baptism, marriage, and school graduation ceremonies, asking the local priest to help them select potential co-parents. Mestizos tend to serve as godparents more often than Tzotzil, as evidenced by the mean number of godchildren per head-of-household (RT = 6.42, UT = 4.04, MES = 16.16). Since people are more likely to petition prestigious individuals to be co-parents, the number of godchildren a person has often reflects their social status. Mestizos in urban areas have higher status. They tend to receive (and accept) a high number of co-parenthood petitions from Tzotzil parents, which results in a complex network of fictive kinship ties connecting both groups (more on this in Chapter 2). Differently, Rural Tzotzil solely establish fictive ties to individuals of the same ethnic group.

As the *compadrazgo* system replaces patrilineal systems, we see a decline in endogamous marriages. Ethnographies from the 1940s-1960s report that Tzotzil-Tzeltal groups followed strict endogamous norms motivated by lineage or moiety (*calpules*) systems. These norms have persisted, but

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only in predominantly rural areas such as Linda Vista. Based on our household surveys, it is possible to distinguish between two forms of endogamy: within-community and spatial endogamy (marrying someone who lives in a neighboring community). As Table 1.3 shows, both forms of endogamy decrease from Rural Tzotzil to Mestizos (spatial endogamy mean RT = .96, UT = .57, MES = .39). I discuss the various factors driving this change in Chapter 4. To summarize, endogamy likely declines as people cease to depend exclusively on agriculture for a living. As livelihoods become more diversified and less land-dependent, patrilineal land inheritance becomes obsolete, being replaced with bilateral inheritance.

Table 1.3: Summary statistics of kinship and compadrazgo variables by study group

	Rural Tzotzil		Urban Tzotzil		Mestizos	
	N: 57		N: 91		N: 38	
Household composition	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
No. members	6.47	2.8	5.51	2.42	4.61	1.78
No. children	4.4	3.62	4.05	2.83	2.71	1.92
Multigenerational	0.18	0.38	0.29	0.45	0.18	0.39
Nuclear	0.84	0.37	0.79	0.41	0.79	0.41
Marriage	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Married head of HH	0.86	0.35	0.81	0.39	0.81	0.39
Age at marriage (men)	21.64	6.1	23.54	8.34	26.07	8.61
Community endogamy	0.51	0.5	0.4	0.49	0.18	0.39
Spatial endogamy	0.96	0.19	0.57	0.5	0.18	0.39
Compadrazgo	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Godparents/child	0.84	0.92	1.25	1.59	3.28	2.71
Godchildren/HH head	6.42	12.21	4.04	6.95	16.16	25.46

A final observation from our household surveys might be counterintuitive to some readers. Modernization and rising standards of living in Latin America have been associated with a decrease in extended family and multigenerational households. Following this line of thought, the Mexican census has used multigenerational/extended families as indicators of underdevelopment. However, this is not what we see among our three groups in Chenalhó. As Table 1.3 shows, Mestizos and Rural Tzotzil show a similar proportion of nuclear family households (RT = .84, UT = .79, MES = .79), which is consistent with previous ethnographic surveys describing Mesoamerican residence patterns as neolocal (Nutini 1967). Although the proportion of multigenerational households increases from Rural to Urban Tzotzil (RT = .18, UT = .29), it decreases among Mestizos (.18). The higher proportion of multigenerational

households among Urban Tzotzil may be because many of them are migrants from rural areas who live in irregular settlements in the Cabecera.

3. Methods (Field and Writing)

In the course of this research, I experimented with a combination of ethnography and methods from behavioral economics and the cognitive sciences. In doing so, I have pursued some of the scientific goals of cultural anthropology as proposed by foundational figures in the discipline. Some readers may read this work as 'old fashioned' ethnography with a quantitative penchant. Although I have no problem with such labels, I must caution readers before dismissing the methods used here as a 'naïve' return to a style of research that was 'surpassed' (it was not). Anthropology has had many paradigm shifts over the years, and I believe that the demise of the current postmodernist/constructivist paradigms (on which I was trained) is past overdue. Much of what I did and present in later chapters stems from a personal attempt to find an answer to *what comes after* the current paradigms reach exhaustion. In Chapter 6, I develop the view that change in Chiapas happens through a succession of opposing cycles (or waves). If the same is true for anthropology, after postmodernism runs its course, anthropologists will rediscover, or perhaps reinvent, aspects of the so-called 'old school' of ethnographic research.

It is crucial to find new directions when the notion of objectivity has come under attack, leading the public to distrust science and embrace a variety of pseudoscientific theories/conspiracies (Kavanagh and Rich 2018). Postmodernism's most unfortunate contribution has been to foster anti-science views. Cultural anthropology has become overly politicized and has abandoned some of its focus on cultural relativism, replacing theoretical models with moral ones (R. D'Andrade 1995). Many cultural anthropologists have distanced themselves from relevant fields such as psychology and economics. Some speak of 'ethnographic theory' as if ethnographers could develop theories that exist apart from mainstream science and need not be validated by external reviewers. In such a context, of what value are ethnographic accounts of culture produced by ethnographers? An answer to this question is being given by the public, which is losing interest in anthropology as the discipline distances itself from science.[2]

The solution that I found to the above problems—and which I put into practice in this work—is to practice interdisciplinarity, merging old-school, Malinowksian ethnography with experimental games used by behavioral economists and formal methods for cultural analysis (Weller and Romney 1988;

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[2] Interest in cultural anthropology has declined over the past decade as evidenced by the recent decrease in the number (and proportion) of anthropology majors and academic jobs in the discipline relative to other social science fields (Ginsberg 2017; Speakman et al. 2018).

Bernard 2005; Matthews, Brown, and Kennedy 2018). Such methodologies have been proven effective in helping scholars and the public to make sense of cultural/behavioral phenomena. While such an approach might not be new, I have strived to take it to a higher level in my intense interest with interdisciplinarity, as I explain below.

3.1. Overview

I conducted two years of ethnographic fieldwork in Chenalhó. During that time, I sought to merge ethnography with a wide gamut of quantitative methods, which allowed me to make better comparisons between the three communities studied. A local research assistant, Mariano Ruiz Ortiz, shared half of the burden of doing quantitative surveys during most of the research.

In the first year of field research, I studied Tzotzil/Mestizo ethnic relations and cooperation while seeking to become fluent in Tzotzil. Much of this early work on ethnic relations appears in Chapter 2. During that time, I also did surveys and experiments on spatial cognition in urban and Rural Tzotzil areas; and I used that experience to improve my insertion in the field and knowledge of Tzotzil (Hertzog and Ross 2017). Ethnographic work consisted of doing semi-structured and biographical interviews with Mestizos and Tzotzil and attending events in the Cabecera of Chenalhó while recording reports of everything in my field notes. Upon acquiring enough knowledge of Tzotzil to conduct interviews in that language, I began to use experimental games to measure prosociality within and between ethnic groups. I asked Mestizo and Tzotzil participants to play contextualized versions of experimental games (Ultimatum and Dictator Games). I also used social network analysis to measure how social relations between informants affected their behavior in these games. I discuss these experimental methods along with my ethnographic work on ethnic relations in Chenalhó in Chapter 2.

In the second year of fieldwork, I focused exclusively on fairness norms and decision-making. I attended and recorded communal assemblies and meetings between officials in the rural and Urban Tzotzil sites (Linda Vista and the Cabecera). To obtain informed consent to attend these events, I introduced my research goals in assemblies in each community. All members of the communities studied voted to allow me to work with them. I attended a little over 100 meetings of different kinds in both communities in the subsequent year. These meetings took place between community and municipal-level officials and the general communal assemblies, requiring all community members to attend (see Chapter 3.2.3 for a description of types of decision-making events in Chenalhó). I recorded audios of these and notes of meetings. I use excerpts of my field notes and transcripts in the following chapters to illustrate how Chenalhó communal assemblies and officials work. While attending decision-making events, I observed the processes, dilemmas, and decisions involving the distribution of any kind of resource

composing the communities' joint economic base. I kept detailed records of how communities made decisions regarding collective resource management and paid attention to the role of notions of fairness and equity in shaping or validating these processes. I paid attention to the social dynamics of assemblies. And I sought to keep track of how community members relate to each other in terms of hierarchies, obligations, and kinship relations and the forms of address that people used during social interaction. I recorded community members' spatial distribution (what actors are more central/visible? Do spatial positions reflect social relations?).

Beyond attending communal assemblies, I sought to spend time with people in more informal settings (sports events, religious and ritual events, work, festivities), paying attention to gossip, and informally asking or listening to their opinions about community issues. I informally obtained information on things that went unsaid during communal assemblies: who were dissatisfied and who benefitted from what was decided? What are the undeclared disputes and how do they influence the way decisions are made? How do communities decide who should be prioritized when it is impossible to meet everyone's needs? Using formal and informal methods, I collected data on how people conceptualize and explain economic processes, using methods previously explored by economic anthropologists (Gudeman and Rivera 1990; Carrier 1997). Informally, I paid attention to models and metaphors people use to explain how wealth and goods are produced, distributed, and consumed; what scarcity is, how abundant natural resources are, what it means to own something, and what distinguishes communal from private lands. I sought to grasp folk theories of what constitutes a 'fair society' and the narratives used to explain inequalities (Taussig 1983) and how people conceptualize 'rights' and 'duties' within their communities. This allowed me to understand how fairness notions used in community meetings relate to broader cultural understandings of economic processes and concepts of ownership, fairness, and property.

Below is a list of formal methods we used to elicit information, with references to where they can be found in this work:

- Experimental games combined with social network analysis (chapters 2.3, 3.3, and 5.3).
- Household surveys (chapters 4.2.2, 6.2, 7.1.3).
- Ranking and pilesort tasks (chapters 3.1.5 and 5.2).
- Free listing tasks (chapters 5.2.3 and 5.3.3).

In addition to the above datasets, I also used data/microdata from the Mexican census (chapters 3.2.2 and 4.3.3) and historical data that I compiled from other ethnographic works (chapters 4.3.2 and 6.2.2).

I developed new allocation games that index fairness/equity norms in resource distribution to combine ethnographic observations with quantitative data. Unlike much of the literature in behavioral economics, these games use real social relations as experimental stimuli. For instance, we asked people to allocate money and taxes between other community members and then used social rankings and social networks. I discuss the use of such methods in Section 3.1 below. When using 2-person games (Dictator and Ultimatum Games) to measure prosociality, I asked participants to explain their allocations. I recorded, transcribed, and categorized their answers. By doing so, I sought to complement quantitative observations with qualitative text, which allowed me to examine the extent to which people were aware and could theorize (or rationalize) about their decisions. For instance, analyzes discrepancies between people's behavior and the way they explain Ultimatum and Dictator game allocations.

I used household surveys to have basic descriptive demographic and socioeconomic statistics of each community. The questionnaire I used followed the same questions and variables as the ones used by the Foundations of Human Sociality Project (Ensminger and Henrich 2014). The survey was designed to collect primary demographic data on all household members and more fine-grained data on incomes (of the head of household) and wealth (sum of assets owned by household members). I also included in that survey questions related to the cargo and *compadrazgo* systems, which are only relevant to Chiapas participants. For households that participated in economic experiments, the questionnaire contained an intrahousehold food allocation section. Following Ensmiger and Henrich, I used the proportion of calories purchased in markets as the main market integration measure.

I used methods such as ranking tasks, pile sorting, and free listing to map and analyze cultural domains. These methods are more commonly employed in studies in ethnobiology, in which researchers ask participants to rank order or sort cards containing names of species to obtain information on folk biological taxonomies. As I discuss in Section 3, I used, instead, people's social relations as stimuli for these tasks.[3] I asked participants to rank order photos of members of their communities according to prestige, wealth, dominance, and cooperativeness. I then used the cultural consensus analysis to generate a cultural 'answer key' for each group and used those rankings to explain experimental game allocation results (results appear in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5). Free listing provided a measure of conceptual salience as well as an unbiased way of eliciting items within a cultural domain. For instance, in Chapter 5, I use free listing tasks to measure the salience of communal offices ('cargos') and to model individual strategies for navigating through the cargo system.

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[3] A few previous studies made limited use of social relations as experimental stimuli (for instance, Boster, Johnson, and Weller 1987).

For two years, my typical weekday consisted of meeting my research assistant early in the morning, deciding what to do and splitting up the work, and doing between 5 to 10 interviews each per day. We certainly gathered more data than I can present here. I devised, over time, strategies to integrate formal methods with long-term participant observation. One of the unanticipated consequences of using such methods was that they improved my immersion in the communities studied. After obtaining permission to work in the study communities, I could freely roam from house to house, asking people to participate in surveys individually. This freedom to roam permitted me to visit and learn about every Rural Tzotzil and Mestizo household and most Urban Tzotzil ones. Although my pretext was to do surveys, I slowly became acquainted with the families that I interviewed. They, too, became accustomed to my presence. This increasing mutual familiarity allowed me to take part in informal activities as I developed friendships with informants and began to receive invitations for events and fiestas. I treat informal observations as research data. I kept detailed descriptions of these events in my field diaries— some of which will appear throughout this work.

3.2. Formal Methods and Ethnographic Research

One of the goals of this work is to try out new ways of integrating formal and informal methods to conduct ethnographic research and write about culture. Such integration, I argue, does not only involve using different methodologies in the field. Instead, it entails rethinking answers to the following questions:

1) How do we integrate data obtained through formal and informal methods in the way we conduct and report research?
2) Can we use formal methods to validate or refute first-person ethnographic observations that cannot be replicated?
3) What for is ethnography? Or what is the value of serendipity for objective research on culture?

I pursue an objective approach founded in a combination of long-term ethnographic observation with formal/experimental methods that allow for testing assumptions quantitatively. I seek ways to combine ethnographic writing with quantitative data reporting in a seamless way, which presents an honest picture of how I gathered and interpreted the qualitative and quantitative observations that underpin the ideas advanced throughout this work. At the center of such integration lies how we validate the things we observe in the field and how we can mitigate bias and attain objective results.

Ethnographic data is poised to be subjective as it often relies heavily on first-hand, irreproducible observations. Since Malinowski (1922), ethnographers have resorted to different strategies for validating cultural data. However, these strategies rely heavily on the authority of the researcher. By publishing ethnographic descriptions of facts and events, photographs, first-person narratives, or even diaries, ethnographers attempt to persuade their readers that they have obtained cultural knowledge that 1) is superior to that of the natives, and 2) could not be collected by untrained observers. Ethnography is not only a method but also a rhetorical style that embeds subjective observations with an aura of scientific legitimacy (Clifford and Marcus 1986). This realization has led many anthropologists to sink into a deep epistemological rabbit hole, from which many seem to be unable to escape.

Cognitive anthropologists have tried to solve the problem of validation by developing formal data collection methods and statistical procedures for analyzing cultural domains (Weller and Romney 1988; R. D'Andrade 1995). While many quantitative-minded scholars embrace mixed-methods approaches, in practice, their publications lean toward the quantitative side. Many see ethnography as a means of improving one's insertion in the field or acquiring background knowledge that could be used for designing better quantitative surveys. These researchers often restrict ethnographic information to writing short, third person "Research Setting" sections that usually precede the analysis of purely quantitative surveys. Despite being a quantitatively minded researcher alike, however, I am confident that ethnography can be more useful than that. While writing the subsequent chapters, one of my goals was to illustrate how ethnographic knowledge can be integrated with quantitative results in writing.

To combine ethnography with formal (quantitative) methods, we must embrace—or learn how to deal with—the noise, randomness, and serendipity integral to participant observation. When designing comparative research, quantitative-minded anthropologists usually must choose between different levels of controls and sampling methods. For instance, experiments can be conducted in the field (e.g., in public settings or inside people's houses), where researchers have little to no control over factors that can generate noise, or in controlled laboratory settings established in the research site. If we are to combine ethnography with quantitative methods, the design of choice should be to conduct cross-sectional studies with (1) experiments done in the field (as opposed to laboratory experiments) and (2) randomly sampled exploratory surveys and cultural domain analysis. The choice of doing experiments in the field over more controlled settings has several implications for understanding the role of culture and communication in shaping the interview process and how we choose between different statistical procedures to analyze data.

Drawing inspiration from the hard sciences and borrowing methods from psychology, cognitive anthropologists often take for granted the assumption that controlled experiments produce less biased/noisy data. Experiments are, in such view, a procedure for controlling noise *a priori* in which the

researcher constructs an artificial setting whose goal is to reduce or control random events that could affect the measurement of the independent variable being measured. It is thought that the more rigorously controlled an experiment is—i.e., the more successfully the researcher manages to isolate confounding variables from the experimental setting—the less biased results will be. However, controlled experiments also create artificial settings that alter people's expectations regarding the work that the researchers are doing. This artificiality—which can be particularly acute for field researchers working with non-Western societies—may result in eliciting behaviors that have little resemblance to how people behave in their daily lives. From such a perspective, controlled laboratory experiments may be more likely to elicit biased responses, as they can prime participants with ideas and behaviors that are not usually manifested in natural (noisy) settings.

An alternative approach, which should be more attractive to scholars interested in a holistic understanding of culture, is to design experiments that sample actual cultural complexity as it is rather than reducing cultural variation into a single variable. This is what I have pursued, as shall be evident in subsequent chapters. I designed experimental games that speak to the context in which the people I studied inhabit. In some experimental games, I used participants' social networks as the experimental stimuli (Chapter 3 and Chapter 5).

A straightforward way to detect and manage such biases is by transforming them into variables and using statistical analyses to examine their effect on the data after it is gathered. For example, interviewer bias is a well-known problem that field researchers must deal with (and a problem which researchers who do not collect their own data tend to ignore or downplay). A researcher's identity can easily affect the way respondents interpret his/her intentions, leading people to give different responses depending on who is asking the question. There are two possible solutions to this problem. First, the researcher may seek to 'control' variation by reducing the number of interviewers conducting a survey. If only one person does all the interviews, interviewer bias ceases to be a problem. Obviously, this solution is not viable for researchers interested in doing large surveys, which requires teamwork. The only available solution, then, is to create a nominal variable called 'interviewer' and, upon gathering the data, use it test whether interviewer identity affects responses. Before running any analysis of the data, I always tested for interviewer effects. In early field seasons, while working with two research assistants, I found that interviewers' identity could affect people's responses. I spent considerable time trying to find ways to solve this issue. Through experience, I found that it is possible to mitigate interviewer bias by adopting specific training strategies to improve coordination between different interviewers, even when doing experiments inside people's homes, outside of the lab.

Humans are complex creatures whose expressed beliefs and values can be influenced by subtle cues during communication acts. People respond to a researcher's utterances (e.g., questions in a survey) and a whole set of contextual cues, framing effects, expectations, and mutual alignment of intentions. Experiments are communication acts that can be influenced by the identities of the researcher and the people researched, the place in which the interaction takes place, and the mutual interpretation of intentions between participants. Given the complexities of human communication, it can be challenging to eliminate all potential factors biasing interviews. Instead of pretending to control such factors, we might be better off documenting and dealing with them statistically.

Psychology has recently been afflicted by failures to replicate experimental research. Some have criticized the methods used by some psychologists, which allow any experimental study to produce statistical significance (Simmons, Nelson, and Simonsohn 2011; Yong 2012; Collaboration 2015). Perhaps this failure to replicate studies stems from the illusion that people will perform similarly across time and space once the right 'controls' are put in place.

Anthropologists, on the other hand, have historically been more skeptical regarding the replicability of their studies. They are more aware of the nuanced factors that can affect people's behavior across time. Instead of focusing on experimental controls, anthropologists have sought to improve their strategies for documenting their observations. The more reliably recorded a data point, the more valid it is. As such, while doing qualitative fieldwork and running experimental games, I sought to record audios of everything (when permitted to do so). I maintained detailed field diaries with minute descriptions of community meetings, interviews, and informal interactions (discussed below). When using experimental games, I did not aim to find a statistical 'effect' or attain replicability as psychologists do. Instead, my goal was to record behavioral patterns in a changing Tzotzil-Maya group at a particular time and place with maximum reliability. By doing so, I sought to produce data that other researchers could use to conduct cross-cultural or temporal comparisons.

Thus, it might be useful to relinquish the notion of 'controls' that we—cognitive anthropologists who do fieldwork—took from psychology. Field anthropologists might find it more productive to use formal methods as a means of sampling and to explore cultural complexity, focusing less on controls and more on the reliability of the information recorded, as proposed by Malinowski and other early ethnographers. They might also embrace the emphasis on variation used by (non-experimental) economists. Economists use regression analysis and related techniques to infer causation from the exogenous/endogenous variation within a dataset. When possible, they use natural experiments to make causal inferences longitudinally. This use of regression to infer causation has, of course, been criticized by psychologists who study the behavior of college students in controlled experimental settings (Nisbett

2015). However, college students are not a representative sample of human behavior (Atran, Medin, and Ross 2005; Henrich, Heine, and Norenzayan 2010). What is needed is more cross-cultural field research rather than experiments done with Westernized participants. But given the difficulties associated with running controlled laboratory experiments in the field, anthropologists may be better off doing exploratory and contextual surveys/experimental tasks, as I have done.

Instead of trying to control the setting in which communication takes place, experimental anthropologists might instead record and quantify every possible factor influencing the behaviors of the study participants. They can use regression, propensity scores, and other techniques to make inferences about causation after gathering data. Alternatively, to make inferences about causation, anthropologists can use cross-group comparisons as done by previous studies using comparative designs (Atran et al. 1999; Ensminger and Henrich 2014).

3.3. Validation in Ethnography

Is there scientific value to observations obtained informally by ethnographers? In this work, I used ethnography primarily to have firsthand experience of the things I measured quantitatively through experiments and surveys. Unlike quantitatively minded researchers, I write extensively about the events I witnessed and the people I met in the field in the following chapters. To paraphrase a dictum often heard from alien abductees, "I know what I saw." But how to convince readers that this knowledge is not entirely subjective? The answer to this question is what distinguishes ethnographies as a more credible source of knowledge than personal accounts of alien abductions.

The problem of validation concerns how the scientific community comes to a consensus on what observations are accurate. Formal and informal methods are associated with different validation procedures. Formal methods (surveys, experiments, cultural domain analysis) are designed to be quantifiable, replicable, and falsifiable. Informal methods (participant observation, open-ended interviews) must be validated by trust in the researcher's observational or interpretive skills. Accumulation of knowledge is only possible when we can trust or replicate past results. Replication in anthropology can be challenging since cultures change fast and ethnographic observation relies on subjective factors. As a result, anthropologists rely on trusting each other to validate their ethnographic interpretations. This trust, however, has been under assault by recurrent crises within our discipline, as we "continually slay paradigms" and invalidate past findings—a tendency which Wolf called "intellectual deforestation" (2001b, 387).

One way to validate ethnographic findings is to run a group of longitudinal projects. The research presented here benefitted immensely from information on Tzotzil-Tzeltal groups obtained by researchers

working in groups. I sought to balance our impulse to 'slay paradigms' with an openness to the knowledge established by previous scholars. For instance, I made wide use of information gathered in the 1940s by the University of Chicago researchers led by Sol Tax, who published several exploratory reports on expeditions in Chiapas and Guatemala (e.g., Tax 1947). I also relied on information gathered by The Man in Nature Project (University of Chicago. Department of Anthropology 1959) and the Harvard Chiapas Project from 1957 to the 1970s—including rarely seen unpublished papers and fieldnotes by Harvard undergraduate students in the 1970s (Vogt 1994). Not only did I read and reflect on these documents, but I also quantified bits of information presented in them. For instance, in Chapter 6, I use various sources to trace fluctuations in ritual costs in Chiapas from 1940 to the present day. These data also allowed me to validate the ritual costs reported by my informants in Chenalhó. I also combine informant accounts with documents to trace changing kinship patterns in Chiapas (Chapter 4), to detect continuities and changes in how communities allocate offices (5.1.4), to reconstruct the evolution of policing in Chenalhó (6.1.1), and to understand why power has become decentralized in Chiapas (7.1). By linking my observations directly to historical works in Chiapas, I hope to show that some accumulation of knowledge through ethnography is possible.

Another solution to the problem of validation involves using a mixture of both informal and formal methods, combining the strengths of both approaches to circumvent their weaknesses. I have sought to blur the line between formal and informal approaches and argue that anthropologists could be better off if they focused on the similarities rather than the differences between them. But as I pointed out earlier, the use of quantitative methods in the field does not ensure replicable results. The groups that I researched in Chenalhó are changing at a fast pace. My surveys, experiments, and ethnographic observations capture their behavior at a specific point in time, and if the same research was conducted ten or twenty years from now, results might differ. Because replicability in such a microscopic context can be challenging, the only way to validate my observations through time was to carefully record everything I did (whenever I had permission to do so). Some longitudinal research projects have used repeated experiments to study social change (le Guen et al. 2013).

3.4. Serendipity in Discovery and Writing

As I stated earlier, I used the method primarily to document firsthand the phenomena that I detected quantitatively. But there are three more practical—and less selfish— reasons to use the technique in research and writing. Ethnography:

1) Helps to illustrate the human social interaction holistically without reducing social complexity into independent variables.

2) Creates situations that propitiate serendipitous discovery.

3) Allows the researcher to paint a realistic view of how such discoveries happen in the field.

Point 1 is usually how introductory anthropology books justify utilizing ethnography for studying culture. It should be more productive to elaborate on points 2 and 3, which tend to be unacknowledged by researchers from fields other than anthropology. While doing fieldwork, I used ethnography to expose myself to serendipity in the field systematically. I took advantage of random events to conduct exploratory research and learn about the people that I studied. I write about these events every chapter of this dissertation to give a realistic view of how I came to discover certain things about the Tzotzil-Maya people in Chenalhó. Using passive, undirected methods for gathering information is crucial for researchers to improve their knowledge of a population and to reduce observational bias.

Ethnography entails using passive and active research methods—a distinction which was elaborated by Bronislaw Malinowski in his classic introductory chapter of "Argonauts." Malinowski draws an analogy between <u>fishing</u> and <u>hunting</u> and the methods for gathering information:

> The Ethnographer has not only to spread his nets in the right place, and wait for what will fall into them. He must be an active huntsman, and drive his quarry into them and follow it up to its most inaccessible lairs (Malinowski 1922, 6-7).

Passive methods (fishing) involve what Russel-Bernard (2005, 211) lists as informal techniques for data collection; the researcher obtains information in undirected, chaotic, and unpredictable ways. It is through passive methods that much of serendipitous discovery happens. Malinowski gives a few examples of how to obtain data passively: walking around the village and talking to people, hearing gossip, following Trobrianders on canoe trips, and participating in public ceremonies and healing rituals. Passive methods are unfocused: the researcher always obtains information indiscriminately whenever possible. He or she then goes through her database or field notes and classifies or filters the data to test hypotheses that are formulated after obtaining data. Active methods (hunting) use systematic approaches to answer specific questions. Among the active techniques that Malinowski discusses are: conducting censuses, recording kinship data, presenting informants with hypothetical situations and thought experiments, and conducting formal interviews. Active methods tend to be focused on answering a specific question and require the adoption of a sampling strategy. A subset of one or more populations is selected according to varying criteria, depending on the goals of the research. The researcher uses samples to compare or describe populations by making inferences about them from its subset. Interviews focus on a specific topic, and the researcher classifies the information a priori. The researcher then decides which variables to use before the research is conducted.

Malinowski innovated by giving no preference to either active or passive methods, using both approaches abundantly in the field and his writings. He sought to eliminate subjective biases from his writing by using his fieldnotes to reflect on his observations after being done with fieldwork. Thus ethnography was born, changing the history of Western science by suggesting that greater objectivity could be achieved through analytical detachment (Elias and Schröter 1987; Gellner 1998, 111). It is this way of recording and systematizing information that distinguishes ethnographic observation from journalism and alien abduction accounts. Since field notes are such a crucial source of information for ethnographers, ethnographic methods and writing can never be fully separated.

When describing how we discover new knowledge, our brightest methodologists tend to focus exclusively on active data collection methods. Some characterize informal observations as too unstructured to be regarded as methods. Russell Bernard, for instance, describes informal interviewing as requiring "constant jotting and daily sessions in which you sit at a computer, typing away, unburdening your memory, and developing field notes." Informal methods are "hard, hard work... [it] can get pretty tiring… in some kinds of research, informal interviewing is all you've got" (Bernard 2005, 211). In this view, informal observation constitutes purely exploratory research, and as such, it should have no place in the way we report our findings. Confirmatory research should follow, when possible, the five steps of the classic experiment: "1. Formulate a hypothesis. 2. Randomly assign participants to the intervention group or to the control group. 3. Measure the dependent variable(s) in one or both groups…. 4. Introduce the treatment or intervention. 5. Measure the dependent variable(s) again" (Bernard 2005, 110).

The problem with the 'hypothesis testing' rhetoric is that it misrepresents how scientists make discoveries and formulate theories. As Karl Popper (2005) showed long ago, discovery is a convoluted process that involves assembling a mosaic with pieces of information from different sources and making abductive inferences. This discrepancy between how scientists learn and how they communicate their findings led Medawar (1978) to characterize the rhetoric of scientific papers as a 'fraudulent' misrepresentation of reasoning for it leaves aside the randomness and failures that are part of the discovery process. In her widely praised writing style manual for economists, Deirdre McCloskey (1999) agrees with Medawar and recommends adopting a conversational style that fits the author's argument, speaks to human beings, and discloses information on the failures leading researchers to reach their conclusions.

One might argue that the 'hypothesis testing' style might be a necessary convention for communicating findings through short papers. But by adopting formulaic methods for producing and reporting research, we risk stifling innovation and shunning more speculative ideas which—although not always supported quantitatively—could have transformative potential in the long run. Thus, in book-

length works such as this, it is possible to use more space to convey an honest account of how we reach certain conclusions. Such an account can include, for example, information on how a researcher's initial misconceptions were cleared by piecing together quantitative data and information informally/passively obtained in the field. Ethnographic writing is uniquely suited for this goal. When correctly executed, it allows us to communicate complex problems and ideas to readers who are not familiar with the distinct cultural settings that anthropologists study. As Boyd (2010) argues, human cognition evolved to interpret and draw lessons from stories. Storytelling remains our most efficient technology for distributing ideas.

Following McCloskey's advice and taking inspiration from classic ethnographies, I arranged the subsequent chapters into three parts 1) ethnographic description or narrative, 2) formulation of the problem and 3) quantitative/qualitative data analysis. This arrangement represents how I reason (I search for patterns, generalize from informally observed events or anecdotes, and then try to falsify those generalizations with quantitative analyses). I hope that this way of presenting results will be to other human beings as intuitive as it is to me and that the ethnographic descriptions at the beginning of each chapter will help to familiarize others with the settings and the people that I researched.

As is usual in ethnographic writing, I use the first-person perspective when narrating events. In the ethnographic sections, I disclose possible biases and uncertainties in the information presented and include notes on the reliability of informants and their emotional reactions (as registered in field diaries) while speaking with the author or others. When describing incidents in which my research assistant Mariano was present, I use the first-person plural noun 'we.' To improve this work's readability, I avoid unnecessary metadiscourse in subsequent chapters. This should draw a line between this work from the overly self-reflective style of ethnographic writing that become popular in the 1980s.

Finally, I use ethnography narratives at the beginning of each chapter to demonstrate to readers the role of serendipity in helping me to discover certain things and formulate ideas. Again, this is a tradition that goes back to Malinowski's writings. Here are some examples of serendipitous events described in each chapter.

- Chapter 2: watching a brawl break out in a fiesta; realizing that the two groups involved in the brawl danced in different ways; tracing the origins of those differences and their relation to changing cross-ethnic interaction patterns.
- Chapter 3: watching the expulsion of three families from a community; realizing that similar expulsions occur since communities have no dominance hierarchies, which is demonstrated using data from experiments.
- Chapter 4: getting lost in a forest in the mountains; finding, by accident, an informant who explained an event that I had witnessed two years earlier. While doing social

network surveys, noticing that people in a rural community used kinship terms that were different from the ones used in the urban area.

- Chapter 5: watching the nomination of a community headman; explaining people's behavior during that event using data from behavioral games.

- Chapter 6: noticing that traditionalist elders had spent all their income in religious fiestas in the 1970s; comparing their trajectories to historical fluctuations in ritual costs and discovering a pattern.

- Chapter 7: watching a community's officials petition government contractors for a gift; tracing the recent and deep historical origins of such behaviors.

I hope that these and other ethnographic descriptions of events will promote consilience between information obtained through formal and informal methods while helping to give insight into the role of serendipity in discovery.

3.5. Approaching Culture Statistically

Following Sperber's (1996) 'cultural epidemiology' I view culture as the distribution of public and mental representations in a population. Each of the three communities in this study (Rural Tzotzil, Urban Tzotzil, and Mestizos) is a sample of larger populations that exhibit similar patterns. As I showed earlier (2.3), these communities can be distinguished quantitatively based on several economic, demographic, sociocultural, and familial traits. These clearly distinguishable population traits result in respectively distinct distributions of cultural representations, behavioral norms, and moral notions for each group. For instance, in Chapter 3 I show that each of these three communities behaves differently when thry play a simple allocation game. While Rural Tzotzil allocate resources based on prestige, Urban Tzotzil and Mestizos tend to allocate based on need. I explain these behavioral differences as the result of uneven distributions of cultural representations across groups.

To summarize my view of culture in two bullet points:

1) A population's traits (demographic, economic, spatial, structural, etc.) affect the distribution of cultural representations within it.

2) The distribution of cultural representations shapes how members of the group make decisions, which in turn reinforces the broader population traits.

In short, culture and decision-making reinforce each other, creating patterned differences across groups. I see culture as the measurable distribution of representations and behaviors within a population. This approach to culture informed the research methods and statistical analyses I use throughout this work.

The spread of cultural representations in a population can be modeled by using a combination of multivariate statistics and social network analysis. In later chapters, I will use the Cultural Consensus Model (CCM) to measure the degree to which study participants share the same cultural models when responding to formal tasks and surveys. To avoid repetition later, I explain the basics of the CCM below (warning: understanding the following discussion requires some knowledge of multivariate statistics). I leave the discussion on the social network analysis methods for later chapters.

The CCM was developed by Romney, Batchelder, Weller, and Boster (among others) and formally published in the American Anthropologist (Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986). Romney et al. were initially interested in how to identify cultural knowledge statistically—that is, if we ask a group of people to answer a set of questions, what constitutes the culturally 'correct' answer? They reasoned that cultural knowledge is unequally distributed and that some informants—experts—would have more culturally accurate knowledge of certain cultural domains. But how to identify who the experts of a cultural domain are, in the absence of a previous answer key? To answer this question, Romney et al. devised a multivariate method allowing us to rate respondents' cultural expertise based on the overall pattern of answers.

To run a cultural consensus analysis, the researcher builds an informant-by-informant agreement matrix and then runs a factor analysis on it. The factor analysis results in a sequence of one or more answer keys. The eigenvalues for each factor serve as an index of the extent to which one common answer explains the overall pattern of results. If the first eigenvalue is 3 or more times higher than the second, the answer pattern is likely explained by a single consensual answer. If first and second eigenvalues are equivalent, either there might be disagreement between subgroups in the sample or people answered randomly. The answer key produced by the factor analysis is correlated to each informant's answers, and the resulting r is each informant's individual "competence score" (the extent to which each informant answers according to the consensual pattern). The CCM's original (formal) version only supported true/false or multiple-choice questionnaires, as the agreement matrix consisted in the percentage of matching answers across all informants. Romney et al later published an "informal" version of the CCM for ordinal or integer variables, in which the matching agreement matrix is substituted by a correlation matrix (Romney, Batchelder, and Weller 1987).

Throughout this work I use the informal version of the CCM for ordinal datasets to measure agreement among groups of participants and the extent to which each individual agrees with the overall model elicited (Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986; Romney, Batchelder, and Weller 1987). For instance, one of the methods I use frequently is the 'ranking task'—i.e., asking people to rank-order several items based on a certain quality. Ranking tasks produce an ordinal dataset—that is, respondents

rank-order some items ordinally: levels 1, 2, 3, 4… and so on. The informal CCM is a factor analysis of the inter-participant correlation matrix. The model provides criteria for establishing when respondents share knowledge in structured surveys: consensus is found to the extent that the data overall conform to a single factor solution. A single factor solution is usually ascertained with the criteria below:[4]

1) The ratio of first to second factor eigenvalues is large (>3).

2) The first factor explains a large amount of the total variance.

3) Participants' first factor loadings, or "competence scores," are high and positive.

4) A participant's first-factor score represents his/her agreement with everyone else (Weller 2007; Gatewood 2012).

In sum, I use the CCM to measure the extent to which cultural representations and behavior are distributed within a population. Notice that I do not view the CCM as a tool for testing hypotheses (like t-tests and ANOVAs). The CCM simply provides a measure of whether a population agrees or not when answering a questionnaire. High CCM scores indicate that a certain behavior/cultural representation is shared between respondents. This can either mean that 1) people think in a similar way about something, or 2) people make patterned 'mistakes' when answering the questionnaire. Low CCM scores can either mean that 1) people do not agree and there are subgroups with different views within the population, or 2) people do not know how to answer a questionnaire, so they guess the answers. There are statistical techniques that allow us to distinguish whether (1) or (2) is the case when there is high or low cultural consensus, but for the sake of brevity I will leave this discussion for the quantitative analyses presented in later chapters.

3.6. Impossibilities

David Graeber (2007, 1) described anthropology as the discipline which reminds us that "human possibilities are in almost every way greater than we ordinarily imagine." To add a side note, it might also be necessary to disclose the methodological *impossibilities* that every ethnographer faces in the field.

The main limitation of the ethnographic parts of this study concern the issues of positionality and gender. The following chapters contain descriptions of communal assemblies whose actors are mostly men. As a male researcher studying a group marked by strict gender divisions, it was far more straightforward for me to access predominantly male settings. Gender is the primary source of social

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[4] A more recent version of the CCM uses Bayesian statistics to calculate agreement and detect cultural subgroups (Anders and Batchelder 2012; Oravecz, Vandekerckhove, and Batchelder 2014). Since there is still no consensus over how to report results using the new model, I report results using the classical criteria.

differentiation in the Tzotzil and Mestizo communities portrayed here. Rural Tzotzil communities, in particular, follow strict gender divisions. There are specific spaces and events where females or males are not supposed to be. Women can be explicitly prohibited from attending communal assemblies and other public events (as I detail in Chapter 4). Gender divisions also determine the kind of speech that people are exposed to. Tzotzil has a vast vocabulary and a body of jokes that are not supposed to be spoken near females, a register which Laughlin (1975) called Tzotzil's 'male joking speech.'

This bias, which cannot be entirely overcome, certainly affected what I saw and heard while conducting participant observation. On the one hand, gender divisions helped me observe male-dominated political events and exposed me to a good deal of 'male joking speech.' On the other, it created barriers for conducting participant observation in female spaces (for instance, the female-only assemblies for discussing issues related to welfare programs). I believe that some of the effects of gender bias were mitigated by my recurrent visits to Chenalhó, as people became accustomed to my presence over time. After more than a year in the field, people were no longer startled by the sight of my research assistant and I walking from house to house, asking random residents for an interview. We spent the final months conducting intrahousehold resource allocation surveys predominantly with rural and Urban Tzotzil women. Due to a lack of space here, I will report these results elsewhere.

Notice that except for the household surveys (in which we interviewed mostly male heads of households), the quantitative data discussed in later chapters are less likely to be affected by gender bias. Since my earliest research in Chiapas, I have used random sampling when conducting surveys, which generally results in an equal proportion of men and women participants. Readers interested in alternative perspectives on the Chiapas Maya will find a wealth of ethnographies written by women. For Chenalhó, there are the works by Guiteras Holmes (1961), Bricker (1973; 1981), Eber (2000; Eber and Antonia 2011), Garza (2002), Freyermuth (2003), Kovic (2005), del Carpio (2012), and Moksnes (2013). For other Tzotzil-Tzeltal groups in Chiapas, see Collier (1968; 1973), Cancian (1975), Brown (1979), Nash (1985), Rostas (1986), Rosenbaum (1993), Hermitte (2004), Karasik et al. (2008), and Kotni (2016; 2019), among many others cited in the remainder of this work.

Finally, it might be useful to make a note on the context in which I undertook the present study. Some of the ethnographic descriptions in later chapters relate to political events that took place while I was in the field. I did the bulk of the research presented here between 2010 and 2015. I did several field trips, spending two years in total in Chenalhó. During that time, I rarely left the town, except when traveling to San Cristóbal de las Casas over the weekend to use the internet or do archival research. I have continued to follow the communities studied since then. However, since most of my quantitative observations were recorded between 2010-2015, I will restrict the ethnographic descriptions to those

years. Important events happened during that period, some of which continue to transform politics and social interaction patterns in the town.

The most impactful changes that took place between 2010-5 concern Chenalhó's political situation. In 2010, the town elected its first Mestizo mayor since the 1930s. I narrate this change in detail in Chapter 2, as it is related to my earlier research on cooperation and ethnic relations. In 2015, Chenalhó elected its first female mayor, Rosa Pérez Pérez. This was an unprecedented and radical change for a group with strict gender divisions and taboos prohibiting women from participating in decision-making— let alone taking political offices.[5] The 2015 campaign was a fundamental part of my fieldwork, and I will recurrently refer to it in the ethnographic sections of some chapters. However, the 2015 election itself will not be a topic of any of my chapters. To discuss this event and its subsequent consequences would take considerable space, and I have no intention of doing so. The election of the new mayor triggered years of political conflict in Chenalhó, which I have followed closely. But since much of it was covered by the press, I refer to Chiapas online newspapers for readers wanting to learn more about this issue. Interested readers may also contact me personally if interested in my field notes from the campaign period.

Another remarkable change in recent years was the introduction of smartphones in Tzotzil towns. The first 2G cellphone tower in Chenalhó began to be built in 2010 in the Cabecera. The tower became operational in 2012. However, by 2015, the town's internet connection still barely functioned and remained too expensive for most people. In Linda Vista, a cellphone network became operational in 2014, although coverage remained exceedingly limited for several years. This is no longer the case, and people now use social network applications frequently. When I did much of the fieldwork presented here, face-to-face interaction was, for most people, the only way to communicate. This has consequences on how rural communities organize themselves. For instance, it was difficult for sparsely settled communities with more than 200 members to maintain a sense of unity. As I discuss in Chapter 3.2.2, this was one of the reasons that kept communities demographically small, with a tendency toward breaking apart upon reaching a certain number of members. Thanks to the dissemination of cellphones, it has become easier for people to contact distant community members. Internet access has also been influencing how people in Chenalhó manage resources. There has been a push toward using new technologies (social media) to increase transparency in how the municipality allocates construction resources to communities. I will discuss some of these changes in Chapter 7.2.2.

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[5] Other Tzotzil-Tzeltal towns, such as Oxchuc, elected female leaders in 2015, which suggests that Chenalhó's election outcome was not isolated, but part of more systemic changes taking place in Mexico and Chiapas. See Chapter 4 for more.

Finally, one unexpected effect of the widespread adoption of mobile phones appears to be a rise in Tzotzil literacy. When I began to work in the town, Tzotzil was considered an oral language, and most schooled Tzotzil speakers could only read and write in Spanish. Remarkably, thanks to the dissemination of text messaging, this is no longer the case. I routinely chat (via text messaging) in Tzotzil with friends from Chenalhó. The quality of their writing is improving in a way that I could not have anticipated, and perhaps Tzotzil should no longer be considered an oral language.

CHAPTER 2. CLASHING OVER SAN PEDRO: ETHNICITY, COMPETITION, AND COOPERATION

In this chapter, I explore how Tzotzil and Mestizos in Chenalhó alternate between relations of competition and cooperation over time, paying attention to the role of resource competition in shaping how these groups interact. Ethnic boundaries are fundamental in determining how groups build relations of trust, cooperation, and competition (Barth 1969; Glaeser et al. 2000; Blanton 2015), while ethnic fractionalization has been described as a factor shaping public goods allocation (Alesina and Angeletos 2005; Alesina, Gennaioli, and Lovo 2014; see also Wimmer 2016). Several ethnographies of Mesoamerican communities have described a situation in which ethnic categories are flexible and ethnic 'passing' tends to be accepted. In a context where ethnic groups are fluid, how do changing power relations affect competition over resources?

Mestizos are Mexico's majority ethnic group. In Chiapas and Guatemala, that group has also been known as 'ladinos,' an exonym coined by Maya populations to denote people who can speak a *latin* language. Despite being Mexico's majority, however, the younger Mestizos who live in Chenalhó sees themselves as a local ethnic minority. This paradox in how Mestizos perceive their status stems from recent historical changes: over the past five decades, Mestizos living within indigenous areas of Chiapas have progressively relinquished political power to the Maya majority. The shift in Mestizo-Tzotzil power relations allows us to explore ethnicity in a dynamic way. Thus, I combine ethnography, oral history, and behavioral games to compare across generations of Mestizos and Tzotzil to shed light on how relations between the groups have changed over the past 50 years.

1. Circumstantial Enemies

In 1998, on a cold night in March, a group of men assembled in the rural outskirts of the Cabecera. They sat on wood logs around an improvised fire. There, they waited until all others arrived, shivering and trying to maintain their bodies warm. One of them—the leader of the group—counted about 120 heads. Attendance had exceeded his expectations. Late into the night, the leader signaled that the 'event' was about to start. In Spanish, he briefed the group one last time about their mission: they had gathered to recover the land that had been stolen from them.

An older man then parked his car nearby and popped its trunk open, exposing a stack of firearms—rifles, shotguns, and *cuernos de chivo* (AK-47s?). Speaking Spanish, he patiently handed the guns to others who replied in Tzotzil, *kolaval, bankil*—thank you, older brother. Once they were armed and loaded, the men put on their black ski masks, or whatever else they had in hand to cover their faces.

They frantically waved at each other, perhaps trying to coordinate or figure out who to go along with. They split into four groups. Each group converged toward a pickup truck. The drivers turned their headlights off. The men put out their cigarettes. In complete silence, they headed toward the limits of the Ejido San Pedro.

At night, the 120 militiamen were ready to attack. One truck was taken to the northwestern corner of the Ejido, near the top of a sacred mountain in Chenalhó. The other three trucks followed suit and positioned themselves in the opposing ends of the communal lands. They sought to besiege the place from every possible corner, making sure no one could flee unscathed from the raid that was about to take place.

After hearing a signal—perhaps a firework explosion or a code sent via radio—the four groups stormed the Ejido from its different sides. To scare their opponents, the men riding the pickup trucks began to fire their weapons straight up into the air. Men, women, and children—some crying, others running away, in panic—came out of their wooden houses and surrendered. None of them was prepared to defend against such a rapid and forceful attack in the middle of the night.

There was, of course, a bit of resistance: one of the militiamen was shot three times and killed on the spot. But that did not prevent the raiders from declaring a victory that night. They took 26 male captives. Women and children were let go. The raiders tied their captives' hands to their genitalia and threatened to castrate them if they refused to follow their orders. Subdued, the prisoners were taken to the town's *cabildo*, where they were arrested and tried. Some were beaten up, scolded, and expelled from the town. Their leader was charged with murder and handed over to the state police.

Once the raid was over, the militiamen took their masks off, revealing a mosaic of faces that are not often seen working together. Half of them were Mestizos. The other half were Tzotzil. The group had formed a coalition to recover the Ejido San Pedro—lands that had allegedly been occupied by Zapatista rebels in 1994.

1.1. The Ejido San Pedro

The Ejido San Pedro is an area of about 5 km^2 located northwest of the Cabecera of Chenalhó. The area, which accounts for about 4% of Chenalhó's territory, was the only section of the town that was allotted to Mestizos during land reform in 1936. The remaining lands that were expropriated from foreign landowners—about 80% of the town's area—were transferred to indigenous smallholders. In 1994, after the Zapatista rebellion, squatters from a variety of highland towns—Oxchuc, Larráinzar, Chanal, and some from Chenalhó—began to settle in the area. It is not clear whether the 'squatters' were indeed Zapatistas or if they were just framed as such. They were likely among the thousands of landless *campesinos* that emigrated from their communities in search of vacant lands at that time.

When the first families began to occupy the Ejido San Pedro, Don Alonzo (whose real name I omit) was living in San Cristóbal. Upon hearing the news that his lands had been occupied, he gave up a comfortable office job and moved permanently to his house in the Cabecera of Chenalhó. There, he began to organize the other 59 Mestizo *ejidatários* whose communal lands had also being occupied. At first, the group sought to resolve the conflict legally. For four years, they requested that the government intervene, making calls and sending, in vain, letters to government officials. Their appeals for help fell mostly onto deaf ears. During those turbulent years, the government had to focus on broader issues.

Some Mestizos who owned land in the Ejido recall being targets of violence: "I received many death threats during that time… One time, a group of masked men surrounded me within my own land and tried to set the grass on fire. They only dispersed once I showed that I had no fear," Don Carlos, 50, one of the original *ejidatários*, told me. Don Alonzo recalls visiting his land three times while it was occupied. "I visited my land three times during the invasion. I had to fire my *cuerno de chivo* up to the air before entering it… the invaders dressed like Zapatistas… they were destroying everything, cutting down all the trees of the Ejido, setting fire to the forest."

By 1998, 8 of the 60 Mestizo *ejidatários* had given up their land. After formally renouncing their titles, they fled to San Cristóbal in fear of further invasions. The remaining 52 decided that they had nothing to lose by taking matters into their own hands. They began to amass an arsenal of firearms and devised a plan to expel the occupiers by force. But there was a problem: they lacked manpower. Like Don Alonzo, most *ejidatários* were older than 40. Some feared for their reputation; others felt that they did not have enough energy to take part in a militia. The solution: to hire mercenaries.

The 'mercenaries' were a miscellaneous group of indigenous men from Chenalhó. Most of them were poor—perhaps as poor as the people who had occupied the ejido's land. The ejidatários promised to give one hectare of land to each mercenary if the mission to recover the Ejido succeeded. Although one hectare may not seem like much land, it was a substantial amount a wealth for a largely landless peasantry at a time when demographic pressures over natural resources had hit an all-time high in Chiapas.

"This is how we recovered our land," bragged Don Alonzo in an interview. "We did this with almost no violence. Now compare what we did to the horrible events of Acteal [the 1997 Acteal massacre]. We did the right thing. Almost no one got hurt. The state police threatened to arrest our militia members afterward, but since it was one of us who died—and he was just a *borrachito* [a drunkard]— they let us get away with it." According to the official version of the story, the man was killed by the leader of the occupiers. Don Alonzo, however, questions whether the man's death was used as a pretext to incriminate the alleged Zapatistas: "I think that they [other Mestizos] lied about it… I'll be frank with

you. No one knows who killed that man. Maybe it was one of us. In my view, they used his death to accuse the leader of the Zapatistas of murder."

For the death of the 'borrachito,' the leader of the Zapatista occupiers was sentenced to ten years in prison. He was found dead shortly after fulfilling his decade-long sentence. Cause unknown.

After transferring a hectare of land to each Tzotzil mercenary, most Mestizos immediately sold off what remained of the land that they had just recovered. They charged about 30,000 pesos per hectare, and most fled to cities never to come back. For them, it was no longer safe to hold onto property in Chenalhó. Today, there are over 100 *ejidatários* sharing the Ejido's communal lands. Only five of them— Don Alonso included—are Mestizos. The plots within the Ejido have become smaller over the years, following the general trend of fragmentation across highland Chiapas. Most of the previously lush area has now been deforested.

Of all places, why did the 'Zapatista' occupiers decide to settle on a Mestizo ejido? Were they motivated by ethnic animosity against the majority group? Throughout the colonial period, it was the Spaniards and then Mestizos who encroached on Mayan lands. Were these people fighting for historical reparations? The answer to those questions is likely negative. The occupiers chose to invade the Ejido San Pedro since those lands were not being farmed. In Don Alonzo's words:

> I will tell you something that contradicts what you've been hearing from others [other Mestizos I had interviewed]. We were not working those lands. The Ejido was a forested [*monte*] area. It had the most massive trees in Chenalhó. We liked that as it was and wanted to preserve it. None of us wanted to cut down those immense trees. We used to visit our ranches sometimes during weekends to hunt for squirrels. No one farmed there.

Until the 1990s, the Ejido San Pedro was one of the few remaining areas of Chenalhó that had not been cleared for farming. The occupiers' decision to settle within the Ejido makes sense given the folk notion of usufruct—a fundamental component of rights of ownership among the Maya. Traditionally, land ownership was determined in part by how and for what purpose the land was used. Hence, in contexts of land scarcity, the expropriation of unproductive land was sometimes justified. In the 1990s, landless migrants often targeted forested, unproductive areas, which they then could clear—through the traditional slash-and-burn method—and use for farming (de Vos 2015).

Mestizos who do not farm fail to comprehend why the Tzotzil set their land on fire. Tzotzil people see slash-and-burn as a form of *creative destruction*—that is, a method for clearing and fertilizing the soil, making farming more productive. Mestizos, however, see human-induced fires as an unjustifiable

act of violence. Some, such as Don Carlos—cited earlier—described these fires as a means of intimidating him and other landowners. Such mutual misunderstandings between these two groups do not stop here; I will provide a variety of other examples in the remainder of this chapter.

1.2. A Matter of Class?

The story of the Ejido San Pedro raid is an example of how Mestizos and Maya sometimes form coalitions to fight for a common goal.[6] From an ecological perspective, ethnic categories should be a powerful basis for organizing relations of cooperation. As van den Berghe (1987) theorized, ethnic categories may expand relations of nepotism beyond consanguineal kinship ties. When members of a group believe they share a common biological 'essence,' they are more likely to favor in-group members. Several studies show that ethnicity plays a role in determining how common goods are distributed (Habyarimana et al. 2007; Alesina, Gennaioli, and Lovo 2014).

But if ethnicity so commonly shapes relations of cooperation, one would expect that the Tzotzil mercenaries would think twice before helping Mestizos against their fellow indigenous occupiers. Clearly, being promised a hectare of land was sufficient to override any sentiment of ethnic favoritism that Tzotzil mercenaries may have had.

Considering the centuries-long history of animosity and distrust between groups, one wonders: why did the Tzotzil mercenaries trust Mestizos? How did they make sure that Mestizos would not cheat them or defect from their coalition? I met a few Tzotzil men who participated in the Ejido San Pedro. I asked one of them—in his late 30s—if he had had second thoughts before helping Mestizos. He seemed uncomfortable talking about the raid. He told me that indigenous 'squatters' had broken the law and the Mestizos were on the side of justice. He also stressed that some of the indigenous settlers were not from Chenalhó and hence should not be allowed to own land in the town. His motivation, then, was not as much to receive property as it was to enforce order. But his account of the events might be a *post hoc* rationalization.

Let us consider two hypotheses that might explain why the Tzotzil, ignoring ethnic boundaries, so promptly joined Mestizos in the Ejido San Pedro raid. First, the Maya may not essentialize ethnicity the same way Westerners do. Instead, they conceptualize ethnicity following a cultural logic that is more flexible and open to change (Fischer 1999). Thus, the Maya might be more open to cooperate with other

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[6] The story I retold here is based on the points of agreement between six Mestizo informants who owned land in the ejido. By far, the most detailed account was that of Don Alonzo, so I might be biased toward his version of the events.

group members and show less intra-ethnic nepotism than we would expect from Western populations. In some circumstances, however, they do essentialize ethnicity, evoking a collective identity across Maya groups (e.g., the Pan-Maya Movement in Guatemala). Second, trade networks between these groups have existed for a long time. Over centuries, Mestizos and Maya developed institutions that allow them to strategically alternate between relationships of competition and cooperation. The Ejido San Pedro raid was just another variation of these centuries-old trade networks between groups. Both hypotheses are worth exploring, although I will concentrate on the latter in this chapter.

Mestizo-Maya relations have been characterized as the continuation of a colonial extractive system. Stavenhagen (1964; 1965) advocated framing ethnic groups in Chiapas as social classes. This view stresses that class and ethnic identity tend to overlap in Mexico. During the colonial period, that overlap gave rise to a system that diverts resources from indigenous peasants to Mestizo upper classes. Stavenhagen discouraged other scholars from qualifying intergroup relations in Mexico as 'ethnic' which, according to him, risked masquerading a deeper truth of class struggle.

There is no question that Maya-Mestizo relations are rooted in the colonial period and that the latter have had the upper hand throughout Mexican history. But ethnic relations are dynamic; they evolve over time. Relationships of exchange, inversions of power, and punctuated events of cooperation exist even during periods of domination of one group by another. For instance, in 1965 Stavenhagen wrote that

> Commercial relationships between Indians and Ladinos are not relations between
> equals. The Indian, as a small producer, small seller, small buyer, and finally as a
> small consumer, can influence neither prices nor market tendencies. The Ladino, on
> the contrary, holds a privileged situation in the region. The Ladinos, small in number
> are for the greatest part traders and middlemen. The city, populated by Ladinos, is
> monopolistic. Regional production is concentrated in it (1965, 63-64).

Five decades later, almost nothing in Stavenhagen's quote remains the same. Most middlemen in rural Chiapas are of Maya descent. Many of them engage in the exploitative commercial and financial practices traditionally associated with Mestizos—e.g., loan sharking, debt peonage, and the sale of counterfeit alcohol products. Due to migration, cities such as San Cristóbal de las Casas are no longer unambiguously Mestizo centers. Ethnic boundaries no longer overlap with class divisions as clearly as they used to.

Scholars following Stavenhagen's line of thought have become too used to framing intergroup relations as a matter of class. Their views are molded by the assumption that beneath every social event there is one group which will benefit at the expense of others. The reality, however, is more complex:

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social hierarchies can change quickly. Even centuries-long relations of domination can be interwoven in relations of cooperation. To explain how these changes happen, it is crucial to pay attention to context. As the Ejido San Pedro raid illustrates, it has become difficult to separate oppressed from oppressing classes in Chiapas. All groups involved—Mestizos, indigenous occupiers, and Tzotzil mercenaries—played a part in initiating the conflict. No particular group benefitted from the land occupation and the subsequent raid. The root cause of conflicts such as that lies not in any group, but in the structural factors underpinning intergroup relations.

To give a sense of the complexity of intergroup relations in Chiapas, take the case of Don Alonzo—the man who organized the militia that raided the Ejido San Pedro. By all accounts, Alonzo is a charismatic man. Short and bulky, always neatly shaved, now in his 60s, he is always busy—it took me several weeks to get a hold of him for an interview. He remains one of the most politically engaged members of the Ejido San Pedro community, which has become ethnically Maya. Speaking pidgin Tzotzil with confidence, Alonzo brags about feeling more comfortable among the indigenous people than among his fellow Mestizos. After moving back to Chenalhó in 1994, Alonzo began to work on his reputation. That same year, in response to requests from other Mestizos, he spent a fortune sponsoring the Anuncio de San Pedro—the largest Mestizo annual fiesta. To promote the image of a charitable man, he often hires people who need assistance (homeless, landless, orphans).

I met several of the people whom Alonzo helped. These people universally praised him for his generosity. For instance, when I informally asked Fernando, a 16-year-old Tzotzil friend of mine, what he thought about the *kaxlan* (Mestizos). I wondered if he held racialist attitudes against Mestizos. I expected to hear some sort of resentful commentary about the other group. Bewildered, I transcribed Fernando's answer in a field diary entry (2015):

> I admire the Mestizos. They are great people. I learned to speak Spanish with one of
> them, Don Alonzo. You've met him, right [gesticulates and describes the location of
> his house]? When I was 6 or so, he hired me to paint his house. He taught me to speak
> Spanish. He also taught me how to work. I spent much of my childhood at his home.
> He has always been good friends with my mother [a single mother of four] since then.
> I feel like he is part of the family.

One could say Fernando's views of Mestizos reflect a paternalistic acceptance of the oppressor. Or perhaps the young man is blinded by a hegemonic ideology. But on what evidence would such interpretations be based? I cannot assume the existence of relations of exploitation based on the information I received—that is, what Fernando. who is an intelligent man and well capable of discerning

relations of exploitation, related to me. Another possibility is that Fernando's views represent a form of *false consciousness*—which, for Marxist theorists, is the tendency for subordinate classes to inculcate a dominant ideology that goes against their interests. Such a view, however, cannot be ascertained empirically; a researcher cannot objectively assess whether a person's utterances reflect a deceptive ideology or knowledge that they acquired through experience.

When social scientists insist on framing groups as 'classes' and assume the existence of immutable relations of exploitation between groups, they risk essentializing class membership. They also risk scapegoating certain groups, which in turn may exacerbate conflict rather than explaining it. A less preconceived way to examine the reality of ethnicity in Chenalhó is to focus, instead, on the structure of the social network that connects intergroup members. For instance, Don Alonzo plays a key role in bridging Mestizo and Tzotzil social networks. He stands at the center of both groups—as I show later. As such, he has no problem drawing allies among the Tzotzil or Mestizos alike. He is a central node in a persistent network of exchange and cooperation that has connected Mestizos and Tzotzil for centuries. It is through that network that, under certain circumstances, relations of trust and cooperation emerge between the rival groups.

My goal with this chapter is to shed light on the complexity of those interethnic networks: how they change over time, what causes relations to shift from competition to cooperation, whether people can change group membership, and how cultural differences and ethnic boundaries emerge over time as groups compete or cooperate.

1.3. A Revolt Against Middlemen

"We, the Mestizos, are discriminated against in Chenalhó," Abel, 35, told me while we chatted in a sunny and dry afternoon (unusual weather for a Chiapas summer). A week before, I had asked Abel for an interview about ethnicity in Chenalhó. Upon agreeing to an interview, he promised he had important things to say about the topic.

Abel is a middle schoolteacher from a relatively well-off Mestizo family in Chenalhó. Picture him as a typical rancher (even though he does not own any cattle): curly dark hair, tucked-in checkered shirt, well-trimmed pencil mustache, dress pants, and shoes. Our interview took place during my first attempt to conduct meaningful research in Chenalhó (2012). I drafted a short questionnaire as part of pilot research on ethnic relations in Chiapas. I planned to use experimental games to measure prosocial attitudes among Mestizos and Tzotzil. But before I ran the experiments, I spent several months in the *Cabecera* studying and practicing Tzotzil. I also conducted about two dozen unstructured interviews with the Mestizos who were not participating in the experimental study.

We met at Abel's father-in-law's house, a *hacienda*-style building with adobe walls and a courtyard with a fountain in its center. His family is well-off: they are central to the *Cabecera* economy. They own an estate in an area known by some Tzotzil people as the 'navel of the town': a plot next to the town's central plaza, where the church, the court, and the town hall are located. Despite his relatively wealthy background, however, Abel told a story that directly contradicts the established academic narrative of ethnic relations in Mexico. In Abel's view, Mestizos have been increasingly disempowered and stripped of fundamental political rights. I asked him if he knows of ethnically driven conflicts in Chenalhó:

> There have always been issues [between groups]. They [Tzotzil elders] don't want to give power to other people… Some say that 100 years ago Mestizos abused indigenous people. But this happened over 100 years ago, and today these things no longer take place. Today, discrimination is against Mestizos. There is no mistreatment [*maltratos*] against the indigenous today. Discrimination existed among the ones [Mestizos] who lived before me. We are equal now.

I asked Abel if he can give me examples of how Mestizos are discriminated. He told me that the discrimination against Mestizos is political and that Mestizos had been consistently barred from running for political offices. He then went on to tell the story of how he had recently run a campaign for municipal mayor but his candidacy was vetted by the *pasados*[7]—a powerful group of traditionalist elders, ex-mayors, and *caciques* who derive much of their power from the control of tradition—because he was a Mestizo. While Abel told his story, I looked around his father-in-law's house, trying to find any signs of racial or ethnic conflict—or, as he phrased it, discrimination. What I found, instead, evidenced the messy, fluid relations of the interdependence and competition between Mayas and Mestizos. For example, Abel's father-in-law (the owner of the picturesque hacienda-style house where we met) is a Tzotzil man who learned to speak Spanish and 'passed' into the Mestizo group during his lifetime. I discuss this case of passing in 1.3.

Is Abel's account of Mestizos being disempowered over the past decades true? The answer is *yes*, but the story is more complicated than it appears. Mestizos in Chenalhó account for less than one percent of the population of the town. Over the past 50 years, their population has been reduced to just about 200—a small fraction of what it once was. To some degree, the Mestizo 'flight' was due to increasing

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[7] *Pasados* are also known as *tradicionalistas* or *costumbreros* in Spanish or, in Tzotzil, as *moletik* (literally, 'elders').

hostilities from the Tzotzil population initiated in the 1970s and exacerbated somewhat in the 1990s. Education and a class differentiation dynamic were essential factors driving Mestizos to migrate to larger cities. Many of their youth left the countryside in search of university degrees and higher-paying jobs in densely populated areas.

Most Mestizos enjoy living standards that far exceed what the average Tzotzil-Maya farmer can attain. They derive income from a variety of sources. Those who own property in the center may profit off rent, offering rooms to local students, seasonal workers, or casual visitors. Some own small businesses such as restaurants, convenience stores (*abarrotes*), and butcher shops. Others have secured permanent government jobs—schoolteachers, engineers, nurses. The typical Mestizo does all those things together, pooling income from a variety of sources, saving as much as possible. Abel's father, Don Abel (who died in 2019), owned rental property. His adult children are a nurse, an engineer, and a teacher. The family runs a restaurant on the first floor of their two-story house.

Perhaps economic diversification emerged as a strategy for mitigating risk and uncertainty. Since land reform in the 1930s, when *finca* lands were transferred to indigenous hands, most Mestizos have remained landless. As we saw, the Ejido San Pedro—the last Mestizo enclave in the town—was transferred to Tzotzil farmers in the 1990s. Because it is risky for Mestizos to own or invest in land in indigenous towns, they live an insecure livelihood, even despite their relative affluence. The memory of the expulsions and the more recent Ejido San Pedro conflict has not yet waned, and in fear of being expelled they are always prepared to pack up and leave.[8]

Many studies have shown that beginning in the late 1960s the Mestizo populations of Tzotzil and Tzeltal towns began to be replaced with indigenous migrants from rural communities. Until then, *Cabeceras* had been described as 'vacant towns' or colonial settlements that were used by the Maya for ceremonial purposes. In a study of ethnic relations in Tenejapa (Tzeltal), Whitmeyer (1997) framed the 1970-90s departure of the Mestizo population as a process of *ethnic succession*, a concept used to describe the economically driven replacement of a high-status ethnic group by a low-status one.

Whitmeyer claims that the empowerment of Maya populations by the INI (Instituto Nacional Indigenista) was the main factor leading to the departure of Mestizos from Tenejapa. He argues that ethnic succession was triggered by the election of an indigenous Presidente (mayor) supported by the INI in the 1960s. Until then, Presidente was one of the cargos that were occupied exclusively by Mestizos.

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[8] The situation in Chenalhó—where the remaining Mestizos constitute a middleman minority—is remarkably different from that of larger municipalities such as Chilón, where large Mestizo landowners still exert considerable influence (Bobrow-Strain 2007). It is also different from lowland Maya regions where the Mestizo population relies heavily on cattle ranching (Haenn 2005).

After failing to intimidate the new Presidente, Tenejepa's Mestizos slowly transferred political power to increasingly bilingual and formally educated indigenous officeholders. Ethnic succession in Tenejapa happened "with a minimum of overt, physical conflict between groups": there was no noticeable eruption of violence nor a single push factor causing the departure of Mestizos (1997, 454). Ethnic succession was motivated by a class dynamic: as the indigenous population ascended in status thanks to government intervention, Mestizos sought to retain ranking distinctions by moving into more expensive, upper-class urban areas.

In other towns, the departure of Mestizos was marked by violent expulsions. For instance, there are the cases of Pantelhó and Larráinzar, where Mestizo families were violently forced out (Pete Brown 1993; Ross 1996). In Chenalhó, Mestizos began to leave in the mid-1970s, following the regional trend. Their departure was due to a combination of threats from the Tzotzil population and a similar dynamic of ethnic succession as described by Whitmeyer: younger Mestizos left to seek jobs and higher education degrees in urban areas. Some of those who were born during the 1970s, such as Abel, deny that expulsions ever happened in Chenalhó. "they left because their children went away to study… they were not thrown out [*no fueron corridos*]," Abel told me. However, Abel's account is contradicted by oral histories I recorded from older Mestizos, who described a wave of increasing threats, imprisonments, and land invasion of the Mestizo lands as the primary motivation for ethnic succession in the town. The main point of agreement between all the informants was that the 1970s saw growing indigenous resentment against Mestizos who made a living off trading liquor (*pox*) and charged usurious interest rates on loans.

Older informants described Mestizo settlers as always leaving and arriving in Chenalhó and living in a permanent state of flux with kin networks extending across towns (it is not uncommon for Mestizos to have relatives or property in the Mestizo city of San Cristóbal, while some have extended family members in neighboring indigenous towns such as Pantelhó or Larráinzar). For instance, Don Armando, 68, was a veterinarian who arrived in Chenalhó in the mid-1960s to work for the Campaña de Paludismo (Campaign Against Malaria), a project run by the INI which sought to eradicate malaria vectors by spraying DDT in farm or forest areas (Lewis 2018, 159). He married a local woman and decided to settle permanently in the town. Don Armando told me that "Mestizos started to leave over a hundred years ago… and they have always been leaving since then while new ones arrive… I remember there were over 2,000 Mestizos when I arrived here, it was not as today… now that most people left, and no one wants to do Capitán anymore [referring to the Mestizo cargo of Capitán del Anunciode San Pedro, which I discuss later]." Two other informants confirmed Armando's figures and said that the number of Mestizo families in the Cabecera fell from 150-200 to just about 15 families today.

Don Armando's view that Mestizos are continually arriving and departing from Chenalhó is, to a certain extent, backed by historical data. However, again, the data reveals a more complex story. There were two waves of migration instead of a continuous one. The first settlers arrived during the latter half of the 19th century (Arias 1990, 76). Those settlers descended from peddlers who profited from arbitrage by trading goods between indigenous and Mestizo areas. Their arrival likely intensified during the *porfiriato* (the mandate of president Porfírio Díaz), a period in which much of the town's land was sold to large landowners who established large fincas in the region (Garza Caligaris 2002). Fincas were oriented toward the export of goods (mainly coffee), which incentivized traders to settle permanently in indigenous areas. Finca money likely stimulated the emergence of a basic urban-like infra-structure in the Cabeceras. Contrary to a widespread misconception, most Mestizo settlers in highland Chiapas were not large landowners, but middlemen who settled in indigenous areas and ended up staying there permanently.

While most finca owners left in the 1930s, the middlemen were allowed to stay. A second migratory wave began around the 1950s. In part, second-wave Mestizo migrants were government officials who worked on development projects (such as Don Armando). Others were middlemen (peddlers, traders, itinerant salespeople, speculators, currency traders) who specialized in the provision of manufactured goods consumed by the indigenous population during the annual cycle of fiestas (cargos). During that period there was an increase in fiesta spending, which incentivized the emergence of an entire industry of fiesta paraphernalia that was dominated by Mestizos.

Each migratory wave was countered with expulsions. Arias (1990), a native anthropologist who compiled a large body of oral history in Chenalhó, says that the first wave of expulsions was caused by the imposition of constitutional offices (Presidente, *secretario*) by the Mexican government in the 1910s. Since these offices required their incumbents to speak and read in Spanish fluently, they were given, at first, to Mestizos. The nomination of Mestizos to positions of power caused a backlash from the indigenous population. In the 1930s, indigenous leaders began to organize and fight for land reform. The government responded by applying land reform policies formulated during the Mexican revolution, expropriating fincas, and reallocating those lands to Tzotzil farmers (J. Rus 1995a). It was during that time that Mestizo middlemen living in the Cabecera took advantage of land reform laws and petitioned the government for the territory of what would become the Ejido San Pedro.

The second migratory wave of Mestizos, which began in the 1950s, has remained largely unnoticed. Most studies have focused on the 1970s expulsion while ignoring the fact that the Mestizo populations within Maya towns had been increasing rapidly in the preceding decades. To quantify this second migratory wave, I used data from the Mexican census from 1950 to 2015. Table 2.1 shows the

changing proportion of monolingual and bilingual speakers in Chenalhó during that period. Language proficiency is the best proxy measure for ethnicity that exists for that time. As we can see, the percentage of monolingual Spanish speakers increases from 8.64% in 1950 to 28% of the total population in 1970, when it peaks. Census data might be skewed upwards since the number of monolingual Spanish speakers in 1970 (3,063) appears to be an overestimation.[9] Still, the figure confirms what Don Armando and other Mestizos told me: that there used to be at least 2,000 Mestizos in the Cabecera until the 1960s. The fact that the number of Spanish speakers begins to decline rapidly after 1970, falling to about 1% of the total population in 1990, also confirms the stories of expulsions and ethnic succession that Mestizos told me.

Table 2.1: Proportion of monolingual and bilingual speakers in Chenalhó, 1950-2015

Year	Monolingual Spanish (%)	Monolingual Tzotzil (%)	Bilingual (%)	Total
1950	547 (8.64)	3,332 (52.60)	2,455 (38.76)	6,334
1960	934 (10.68)	6,386 (73.03)	1,424 (16.29)	8,744
1970	3,063 (28.02)	4,860 (44.46)	3,007 (27.51)	10,930
1980	573 (3.92)	8,524 (58.24)	5,539 (37.85)	14,636
1990	242 (1.02)	10,154 (42.63)	13,425 (56.36)	23,821
2000	236 (1.26)	12,223 (65.14)	6,304 (33.60)	18,763
2005	205 (0.91)	9,191 (40.75)	13,157 (58.34)	22,553
2010	354 (1.20)	18,864 (63.72)	10,386 (35.08)	29,604
2015	469 (1.30)	22,724 (62.94)	12,332 (34.16)	36,104

The census draws attention to a trend unnoticed in previous studies: that expulsions and ethnic succession were preceded by a migratory wave of Mestizos to indigenous areas. Expulsions, thus, could be a reaction against increasing migration. But again, the conjuncture leading to the expulsions is more complex than it appears.

To understand why Mestizos migrate to indigenous towns, we must ask what the 'push' and 'pull' factors leading Mestizos to move to those areas are. I asked the following question to my informants: 'why did you decide to stay in Chenalhó given the risks of living in the town?' Both Mestizo business owners and government workers cited marriage and a lower cost of living as the main reasons for settling in Chenalhó. Some, like Don Armando, stayed because of marriage. Others implied that by staying in

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[9] That number seems too high to be accurate. Some censuses do not provide the number of monolingual Spanish speakers in each town. I obtained that number by subtracting the number of Tzotzil (bilingual or monolingual) age 5 or older from the total number of individuals age 5 or older.

Chenalhó they benefit from the price differences between urban and rural areas. For instance, while a schoolteacher like Abel can live comfortably with a government wage in Chenalhó, teachers living in more expensive cities might face financial constraints. I met some recent Mestizo migrants to the Cabecera. One of them is Jorge, 42, an engineer who works for the local SAGARPA.[10] Jorge was born and raised in the neighboring Tzotzil town of El Bosque, which is also home to a small Mestizo center. Initially, Jorge, who is married and has two children, tried to commute from San Cristóbal and stay in Chenalhó temporarily, as rent in Chenalhó costs a fraction of rent in larger cities, but he eventually bought a house and now stays permanently in the Cabecera. Jorge listed several advantages to moving to an indigenous town. Ironically, safety was at the top of his list. As a newcomer, he was not present when the last expulsions and land invasions took place and, since the late 1990s, there have not been major violent events in the town. But unsurprisingly, the chief reason for Jorge to move to Chenalhó is that life in the town is more affordable[11] for someone with a stable government wage.

My interviewees did not cite land ownership as an essential factor in determining their decision to live in the town. As we saw, most Mestizos today do not own agricultural land in Chenalhó since the Ejido San Pedro was occupied. I traced the genealogy of most Mestizo families and compared their surnames with those of the original 19th-century finca owners. There appears to be no continuity between both groups. Again, this contradicts the common perception that today's Mestizos as large landowners occupying Maya lands. Instead, today's Mestizo families descend from migrant intermediaries. The Mestizos constitute a classic middleman minority. The possibility of profiting off arbitrage has been the primary 'pull' factor for them.

As I remarked earlier, traders have been a constant in the two migratory waves to the Cabecera. Traders thrive by taking advantage of differences in prices between indigenous (rural) and Mestizo (urban) areas. One of my interviewees, a shop owner in his 60s, expressed this dependence on locality

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[10] Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food.

[11] There are two reasons why the cost of living in indigenous areas is lower. First, there are multiple ways to evade taxation and skip the payment of utilities such as electricity and water. Second, local regulations tend to create barriers against the participation of outsiders in the local economy. Because non-natives are discouraged or prohibited from investing in local property, the demand for those assets remains low, which drives their prices down. For example, foreigners—including people from neighboring indigenous municipalities—are usually not allowed to buy land in Chenalhó (unless they obtain a permit). As a result, the pool of potential buyers of property remains small and restricted to the local population of about 40 thousand people, which drives property prices down in comparison to unregulated areas. This principle of regulated demand applies to everything that is commercialized within the limits of the town. It is these within-municipality regulations that underpin the 'bounded social system' described by Wolf (1955) in his classical description of corporate peasant communities.

through statements such as "[the reason why] we stay because our business [*negocio*] is here, we have nowhere to go… we can't settle in San Cristóbal, there is no profit [*ganancia*] in being in a city." By this, he meant that some Mestizo businesses are targeted toward a niche market that is only profitable in indigenous areas. Mestizo businesses often specialize in goods that Tzotzil people use in their annual fiestas, selling meat, candles, incense, fireworks, dyes, and alcohol; it is only areas such as Chenalhó, where there is a high demand for fiesta goods and low competition, that they can thrive. A candle shop would not be as profitable in a large urban area as it is a small indigenous area with no competitors and where greater ceremonial activity drives the demand for candles up. A 72-year-old butcher who lived in Chenalhó all his life explained how he buys cheap *criollo*[12] pigs that were raised in rural communities and sell the pork at the weekly market for almost 100% profit. Such a business model would not be viable in large Mestizo cities where production is more centralized and most livestock is raised in large farms.

Another area in which Mestizos have specialized over time is the <u>provision of liquidity</u>. Until the 1960s, Mestizo traders were the only ones who could raise enough capital to issue cash loans. As Wolf (1955, 456) observed, in the 1950s, indigenous economies lacked fluid capital. Maya farmers almost never had cash savings. To purchase something in a market, a farmer had to liquidate part of his produce or livestock. He could sell a pig to a Mestizo butcher or corn futures to corn futures traders (as I discuss in Chapter 6). Some expenses, however, were too large to be covered just by liquidating produce. To finance a fiesta, to pay for a bride price, or to cover funeral expenses, Tzotzil farmers had to borrow money. Until the 1970s, they borrowed from Mestizo moneylenders who were the only ones who had enough cash savings. Plattner (1969) showed that Mestizo peddlers based in San Cristóbal also profited from giving out cash loans during their regular visits to indigenous towns. Borrowers who were considered risky were charged higher interest rates. Since money was a scarce commodity, Mestizos had an incentive to play the role of liquidity providers—i.e., to become moneylenders.

This simple credit system still exists today, although on a smaller scale as there are other sources of credit today. Before his death (2019), Don Abel (Abel's father) gave out loans at an average of 10% monthly interest rates (not compounded). He explained to me that interest rates were negotiable and that reliable borrowers could get a better deal upon request. He kept track of all the loans he issued in a

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[12] *Cerdo criollo*, a local breed of pigs characterized by distinctive thick brown fur. They are more robust, less fat, and tend to be half of the size of the white pigs (*cerdo de granja*) that are raised in pig farms and sold to grocery stores in larger cities. People say *criollo* pigs are more resistant against local diseases and do not require much intervention from farmers. The pigs are usually raised by the Tzotzil, who feed them corn and other leftover produce and allow them to roam freely. They then sell the pig to a Mestizo butcher, who often resells the meat to Tzotzil fiesta sponsors.

notebook. In one sheet, he held a list of people who defaulted on his loans. Mestizos can talk to each other and exchange information on the reputation of borrowers before agreeing to give out a loan. They use the information on borrowers to manage risk by adjusting interest rates accordingly.

In Chapter 6, I show that fiesta spending increased five times between the 1940s and 1970 in Maya towns in Chiapas. It is not a coincidence that the Mestizo population in Chenalhó surged during that same period as Mestizos were the ones who profited the most from the cargo system by selling most of the goods consumed during the fiestas and providing interest loans to cargoholders. The growth of the fiesta industry in 1940-1970 thus might explain why the Mestizo population in Chenalhó increased so dramatically at that time. Liquor (*pox*) was the most critical traded product during the period, accounting for about one-third of all fiesta expenditures.[13] According to older interviewees, until the 1960s, liquor trade in Chenalhó was dominated by a Mestizo named Crisóstomo Pérez, nicknamed Don Chon. Don Chon developed a massive operation for importing liquor produced in the neighboring town of Chamula. The 1970s, however, saw increasing hostility from Chamula liquor producers against Mestizo alcohol traders. The local Tzotzil liquor consumers also turned against Mestizos, complaining about unfair business practices: Mestizos allegedly watering the liquor and overcharging for it. Two Mestizo informants recalled that Don Chon had to abandon the town after surviving an assassination attempt reportedly done by Chamulas, while the latter took over the liquor trade over time. During that conflict, the INI tended to side with Chamula traders as they sought to break down Mestizo commercial monopolies.

Because Mestizos profited from the cargo system, they were often portrayed negatively in ethnographies of Chiapas. In a well-known attempt to explain cargo systems, Marvin Harris (1964) argued that fiestas in Mesoamerica are part of an extractive system that drains resources from indigenous/peasant economies to Mestizo urban centers. This theory is known as the 'expropriation model' of ethnic relations (Greenberg 1981, 6). For Harris, Mestizo moneylenders represent the continuation of extractive systems run by the Church and the Spanish colonial administration, such as the *encomienda* and *repartimiento*. By offering high-interest loans, Mestizos turned indigenous farmers into debt slaves, thus reproducing ancient relations of patronage. Many scholars have shared such view with Harris. For instance, Rus and Wassestrom (1982) argued that cargo systems in Chiapas were purposefully strengthened by government officials since Mestizos were the primary beneficiaries of patron saint fiestas.

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[13] See Cancian (1962, 82).

Harris published his theory in 1964. Since then, things have changed substantially in the way cargoholders finance their fiestas in Chiapas. The 1940-1970 period saw an expansion in the informal credit networks that underpin cargo systems. As borrowing activity increased, driving the cost of cargos up, so did the interest rates charged by Mestizos moneylenders. Interest rates on informal loans went from 5% a month in the 1940s to up to 30% a month in the mid-1970s. As I show in Chapter 6, the increase in interest was a consequence of growing default rates. As cargos became more expensive and credit dried out (due to inflation and government reforms), borrowers could no longer repay their debts. Rising default rates led Mestizo moneylenders to adjust interest rates upward to minimize risk. That move drew anger and resentment from the Maya, who depended on informal loans for financing their mandatory *fiestas*. Thus began an episode of scapegoating, which culminated in the expulsion of Mestizo moneylenders and traders.

In the 1970s, faced with unpayable debts, Maya cargoholders sought support from the Catholic Church. Some priests at that time began to single out Mestizo moneylenders and accuse them of exploiting the Maya population by offering usurious loans. A 1978 documentary on Chenalhó's carnival features Michel Chanteau, a French priest who resided for several decades in Chenalhó. The narrator of the documentary profiles Father Chanteau as

> a Catholic priest [who] represents another power and influence in the village
> [Chenalhó]. His sole principal mission is not to evangelize Indians. Instead, he wants
> to help them fight the continuous exploitation of the ladinos on the Indians. As an
> example, Michel Chanteau told us that this year some of the Paxon [carnival sponsors]
> had to borrow money at the rate of 30 percent per month to pay for the tariff [i.e., the
> cost of the fiesta]. He is also trying to fight alcoholism, one symbol of the exploitation
> which he admits started with the coming of Cortez (Payrastre and Viallon 1978b).

The resident priest of Chamula (a Tzotzil town) also sought to counter rising interest rates by creating an informal credit pool, or *caja popular*. The *caja* established a ceiling of 3% on monthly interest rates (Reed 1973, 28; J. Rus 2010, 139). The loans offered by the church violated Mexican law, which prohibited interest rates greater than 5% annually; nevertheless, they were significantly lower than the 20-30 percent charged by informal moneylenders. Chamula's *caja popular*'s funds were quickly drained out (perhaps by cargoholders desperate for cheap credit), and the priest was expelled from the town shortly afterward (Reed 1973, 29). Father Chanteau, too, would eventually be expelled from Chenalhó in 1998 after being accused of instigating political rivalries and disharmony following the Acteal massacre of 1997.

Could Harris' expropriation model, published in the mid-1960s, have influenced the anti-Mestizo sentiment among Catholic priests in Chiapas? At that time, according to one informant, father Chateau was in close dialogue with anthropologists, to whom he supplied information about local Tzotzil communities (for instance, Köhler 1995, xiii). At any rate, the fact that priests turned against Mestizo moneylenders in the 1970s is an ironic historical turn of events. As Harris himself insisted in showing, the colonial debt peonage practices denounced by those priests were instituted by the Catholic Church in the first place (1964, 21).

Harris' expropriation model remains unconvincing for two reasons. First, after being expelled from Maya towns, Mestizos were quickly replaced with indigenous intermediaries. This new class of traders and moneylenders continued to charge interest rates between 20 and 30 percent well until the 1980s (G. A. Collier 1990; J. Rus 2010). Today, interest rates on informal loans have fallen back to about 10 percent/month. Maya moneylenders, nevertheless, continue to profit from giving out loans to prospective migrants to the United States (D. L. Rus and Rus 2014). Thus, contrary to Harris' views, Mestizos did not exert a durable monopoly over credit issuance. They emerged as moneylenders in the 1940s since they were the only ones who had enough capital to lend.

The second problem with Harris' model is that the coercive structures that underpinned colonial extractive systems (*encomienda* and *repartimiento*) disappeared long before the 1960s. While 18th-century *Alcaldes Mayores* could use physical coercion to force Maya farmers to buy or sell products at artificial prices, the 20th-century Mestizo middlemen had little coercive power over the Maya. The lack of coercive power by Mestizos is evidenced by the fact that thousands of them were expelled from Maya towns without much resistance. Older Mestizos told me that the INI tended to ignore their requests for protection as the institute saw moneylending as a usurious illegal practice that had to be abolished. If people were coerced to serve cargos and sponsor fiestas, that coercion came from within the Maya communities themselves. Maya communities today still have strict regulations enforcing participation in the cargo system to all community members (see Chapter 5).

Mestizo moneylenders, thus, did not represent the continuation of the colonial extractive system. They appeared in the region in response to a demand for cash. Rural economies in Chiapas were illiquid: currency was scarce, and Maya farmers did not have cash savings. As it is widely known, financial illiquidity generates demand for credit. If Maya farmers are willing to pay a 5-30 percent monthly premium on cash loans, they likely saw value in the liquidity provided by moneylenders.

In sum, Mestizos migrate to indigenous areas to profit from arbitrage and the issuance of credit. The 1970s expulsions of Mestizos were a part of a larger revolt against a group of middlemen. Revolts of such kind have been widely studied by historians and economists. It is not uncommon for ethnic

minorities in multiethnic societies to specialize in trade or financial intermediation. Ethnic middlemen are usually tolerated as long as they supply goods and financial services to the majority. But when an economic crisis takes place, mediators become easy targets for scapegoating. This type of crisis happened in the 1970s in Chiapas (as I detail in Chapter 6). An economic crisis led cargoholders to default on their loans, which led moneylenders to increase interest rates. After the initial expulsions of Mestizos, people in Maya communities began to turn against converts to Protestantism, who refused to accept religious cargo nominations at a time when serving cargos entailed acquiring lifelong debts.

It might be productive to follow Girard (1986) in seeing the expulsions during this period of crisis as mechanisms for restoring the social order. While scapegoating per se is not necessarily the product of rational decision-making (imitation tends to play a role in determining who the scapegoats are), it is possible to discern the economic triggers of the process that resulted in the expulsions of Mestizos in the 1970s. In Chiapas, these triggers were: credit scarcity, an overdependence on loans, and the concentration of credit issuance in the hands of a middleman minority. Following Harris' approach, several anthropologists have depicted interethnic exchange systems as inherently exploitative, with middleman minorities extracting financial surpluses from peasants and the latter having little to benefit from commercial relations with outsiders. But for that model to be valid, one must provide evidence that a particular group exerts an economic monopoly over others.

As I have shown, there is no good evidence that Mestizos had a monopoly over credit in Chiapas. The reality that I have sought to describe is more nuanced. Both farmers and middlemen depend, to some extent, on each other, as their economies are intertwined by the demand and supply of credit. Both groups take risks; and they must weigh the risks and benefits of their trades. The Maya reliance on high-interest loans will not be solved through scapegoating. It will persist unless these economies grow and develop better banking/credit institutions to supply credit to farmers and address the issues of poverty, debt, and illiquidity.[14]

1.4. Ethnic Change

Recall Abel's account of shifting power relations: after the 1970s expulsions and ethnic succession, Mestizos lost political clout and were banned from taking municipal offices. In recent years, however, some Mestizos found a way to circumvent the limitations imposed by their ethnic backgrounds. Their solution can be summarized as "if you cannot beat them, join them."

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[14] In 2013, a microcredit bank (Microbanco) began to operate in Chenalhó. It still too early, however, to evaluate the impact that the bank is having in the local economy.

These younger Mestizos began to call themselves *indígenas* and to volunteer to participate in the Tzotzil cargo system. They sought to 'pass' as ethnic Maya to regain some of the political power they lost in the preceding decades. To understand <u>passing</u> among Mestizos and Maya we must now turn our focus to how people conceptualize ethnicity in Chiapas. Is it possible for a person to change their ethnic affiliation during their lifetime? To what extent are ethnic categories in Chiapas essentialized?

Abel was born in Chenalhó and identifies primarily as a Mestizo. He was raised speaking Spanish and his phenotype—lighter skin, curly hair, and abundant facial hair—reveals clear European ancestry. However, when I asked him whether he identified as Mestizo or *indígena*, he struggled to give a straightforward answer:

> I'm *indígena*… because I'm from here. I was born and raised in Chenalhó. My family and I are from here, and we speak Spanish and Tzotzil. We are Mestizos, but also *indigenous to this pueblo* [raising his index finger as if he was trying to point out his main insight].

In another interview, when Abel and I discussed current political events in Chenalhó, he positioned himself unambiguously as a Mestizo. As I quoted him earlier: "we, the Mestizos, are discriminated against in Chenalhó."

In Chiapas, there is considerable fluidity in how people determine (or infer) the ethnic identity of themselves or others. Many have noticed that language, behavior, and religious affiliation are more important than phenotype in determining racial boundaries in southern Mexico and Guatemala (Tax 1942; Colby and van den Berghe 1961). Supposedly, this greater reliance on culture rather than phenotype in determining ethnic membership allows people to transition between ethnic groups more freely. Sometimes they can change group affiliation during their lifetime. The more common historical trend is the Maya tend to learn Spanish and dress like Mestizos or ladinos. Over generations, they tend to lose their sense of ethnic identity and language and are assimilated into the larger Mestizo or ladino group—a process of change that has been called ethnic 'passing,' or *ladinoization* (Pitt-Rivers 1964; Siverts 1969b; Adams 1994). The protean system of categorization in Chiapas stands in stark contrast with the more rigid racial boundaries in the United States, where categorization tends to be binary and minority groups are lumped together via the rule of *hypodescent*, or the one-drop rule (Harris 1964).

To illustrate what I mean by 'ethnic fluidity,' let us examine the case of Abel's father-in-law: Don Vicente Comate, 75. Vicente—who died recently—was a prominent man in Chenalhó: he was one of the first Tzotzil men to ascend through government ranks while working as a nurse for the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) in the 1950s. The practice of healing ran deep into his lineage. His father,

Miguel López Comate—known as Mol Comate, or 'Elder Comate'—had been a well-known Tzotzil healer, one who was frequently consulted by anthropologists of Maya medicine and filmmakers.[15] Vicente, however, did not relate to ancient Maya healing practices as much as his father. To treat his patients, he preferred the science-based treatments he had learned with the INI doctors. Once I asked him what his secret to staying in good health in old age was: "I take long walks every morning because sweating helps to remove the toxins from my body," he replied. He never alluded to Maya traditions unless he wanted to satisfy the curiosity of ethnographers eager to reconstruct the 'pagan customs' (his choice of words) now defunct in his family.

The intergenerational change in healing practices—from Mol Comate's shamanistic healing to Don Vicente's use of biomedical treatments—was clearly manifested in Vicente's public behavior. Contrary to his father, Vicente only attended typically Mestizo festivities. He spoke Spanish almost exclusively despite being fluent in Tzotzil. He followed the same dress code as his son-in-law (tucked in long sleeve shirt, dress pants and shoes, pencil mustache). His wife of many decades was a Mestiza, and they raised their children speaking Spanish only, making sure they would be well accepted within majority circles. But though Spanish was the only language spoken in Vicente's house, neither he nor his children sought to conceal their indigenous ancestry. Instead, he sometimes seemed to emphasize his indigenous roots. Perhaps this was a means of relating to outsiders like me, who often come to Chenalhó expecting to see Tzotzil-Maya traditions. When I asked Vicente about his past, he spoke of his deprived background and how, through hard work and good connections, he managed to escape the limitations ascribed to indigenous people. He showed old photos of Mol Comate dressed in traditional Maya costume and performing rituals in a much less urban 1960s Chenalhó.[16]

Vicente's ambiguous position between Mestizos and Mayas allowed him to evoke different identities depending on the context and the expectations of his interlocutors. Nevertheless, he preferred to appear Mestizo, an identity that many until the 1970s saw as epitomizing social mobility. Vicente Comate passed from Maya to Mestizo in the space of two generations.

Some scholars such as Stavenhagen have argued that people in Chiapas and Guatemala experience ethnic change as a form of upward mobility. If this perspective is correct, the groups that we call 'ethnic' should be better understood as social classes or—to use the term of choice of Spaniards—*castes*. Like other settings around the world,[17] ethnic change in Chiapas tends to be unidirectional, usually occurring when members of the minority group (indigenous) move toward the majority (Mestizo). While

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[15] For instance, Köhler (1995) and Payrastre and Viallon (1978a).

[16] I later learned that Mol Comate's 1960s photos were taken by Marcey Jacobson (2002).

[17] See Keyes (1981) for an overview.

hearing Vicente tell his life story, I had the impression that he likewise saw the distinction between Mayas and Mestizo as a matter of class. He described his life trajectory as one of social ascendance: one could become 'civilized' (i.e., Mestizo) through education and hard work, seeking to inculcate the values promoted by the Mexican educational system. For him, the Mestizos and Mayas were not diametrically opposite identities, but instead were separated by a continuum; being Mestizo was a matter of <u>degree</u>, or of how much cultural capital one managed to acquire.

But in Chiapas, things can be more complicated than they seem at first. One cannot just change ethnic membership at his or her own volition; ethnic passing depends on the approval of other members of the group. Ethnic identity is a complex phenomenon that emerges from the combination of self-identification (what one claims to be) and within-group consensus (the aggregate opinion of all members of a group on the identities of others). Whether Vicente's 'passing' convinced anyone is a difficult question. Some have argued that human cognition 'essentializes' ethnicity by endowing ethnic categories with immutable biological properties. While people intuitively think that members of an ethnic group share a common ancestor, they reason about ethnic categories similarly to how they reason about biological species (Gil-White 2001; D. A. Prentice and Miller 2007; Pereira, Estramiana, and Schweiger Gallo 2010). Hence, even if someone who sees ethnicity as social class and wants to believe that social mobility across ethnic groups is possible will inevitably depend on social approval for their change of status to be successful.

If categories such as *Indígena* and *Mestizo* are essentialized in Chenalhó, passing from one group to another would only be possible when a person's ancestry is unknown to other group members. When I asked Abel to explain how people distinguish between Mestizos and Tzotzil, he replied, "physical appearance does not matter. Here, in Chenalhó, <u>we know the families</u>. There are people like me [Mestizos] who love the traditional [Tzotzil] fiestas." In other words, given that people know about a family's ethnic background, to convincingly pass as Mestizo, Vicente would have to migrate to an urban area or join a community of strangers who knew nothing about his background. Since Vicente's father was a famous healer, most people in Chenalhó know about Vicente's indigenous ancestry. Thus, despite signaling a Mestizo identity through his proficiency in Spanish, demeanor, and appearance, Vicente was locally seen as an indigenous man. For outsiders with little knowledge of local genealogies, however, Vicente appeared to be Mestizo.

While it is not surprising to find cases of Mayan people passing as Mestizos, there is a newer trend taking place that has not been adequately documented by ethnographers today. Some Mestizos are now trying to pass as Maya. Some have referred to this phenomenon as *Mayanization*, a term which refers to an increase (measurable through census data) in the proportion of people who self-identify as Maya

(Bastos and Cumes 2007). To begin to understand why this is happening in Chenalhó—and how this new phenomenon relates to ongoing changes in Mexico and the world—we must return our focus to Abel.

Abel comes from a much different background from that of his father-in-law. He was raised in a well-established Mestizo family—perhaps the best-known Mestizo family in Chenalhó. Mestizos in Chiapas are divided into social strata: *clase alta*, *la crema*, *clase media*, *gente humilde*, etc. (Colby and van den Berghe 1961, 772). In Chenalhó, those at the top of the hierarchy are known in Tzotzil as the *mero kaxlanetik*, or the 'true Mestizos.' These are people who, like Abel, have visible European descent. They belong to the more central and wealthier families in the town. They sometimes call themselves *blancos* (whites), likely referring to their lighter skin tone rather than notions of racial purity. Because 'true' Mestizos have higher social status and are phenotypically distinct from most indigenous people, historically they have had no incentive to shift ethnic affiliation. For them, passing as indigenous would be tantamount to moving downward in the social hierarchy. Historically, 'passing' tended to be unidirectional: while Vicente could transition from Maya into Mestizo, it is unlikely that Abel could pass as Maya.

However, things are starting to change, complicating even further the mosaic of ethnicity in Chiapas. Although most people in Chenalhó classify Abel as a 'true Mestizo' (I could demonstrate this quantitatively), he could still take advantage of the classificatory fluidity between Mestizos and indigenous. Like Vicente, Abel could position himself between groups, strategically evoking his ties to Mestizo and Maya identities, depending on the topic of our conversation. While we discussed race relations in Chenalhó, he kept reminding me of his wife's indigenous ancestry. He talked about how their two daughters could not be classified as Mestizo nor indigenous. He portrayed his family as the triumph of *mestizaje*—the foundational notion that Mexico became (and ought to be) a Spanish-speaking country born out of the encounter between natives and Spaniards. For over a century, since the earliest *indigenista* intellectuals, the term *indígena* in Mexico has had an ethnic connotation. The term is roughly equivalent to that of 'Native American' or 'Indian' in the United States: it refers to descendants (biological or cultural) of the population that inhabited Mexico and Central America before the conquest. When Abel called himself *indígena*, he seemed to be trying to redefine the term as 'native'—a definition that follows the present-day use of 'indigenous' in Europe and the United States. Under this new definition, Abel undoubtedly is *indígena* as he and his family are 'native to'Chenalhó (and have been for several generations).

There are several reasons why Mestizos now claim indigeneity. The most important is that Mestizos need to assert certain rights that no longer can be enforced by the Mexican state. For instance, they need to continually reassert the right to own property (land, estate) if they are to stay in a majority

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Maya town. Until the 1960s, Mestizos still exerted some influence over the issuance of land titles. Every Tzotzil and Tzeltal Maya town had a Mestizo officer known as *secretario* who played the role of mediator between local and state governments. The *secretarios* were the most powerful officials in these towns, and they used their positions of power to favor Mestizos in legal disputes. As we saw earlier, since the mid-1970s a fundamental shift has been occurring in Maya towns. After the expulsion of Mestizo traders and moneylenders, political power has been progressively transferred to indigenous leaders. Decision-making has become more local and less dependent on the Mexican state. The few political positions that belonged to Mestizos are now occupied by formally educated and bilingual Tzotzil.

Abel had a good reason for claiming indigeneity: in 2012, he ran an unsuccessful campaign for municipal mayor but was disqualified for being too Mestizo (a story which I tell in 2.4). But by no means is Abel the only Mestizo who also identifies as indigenous. As I came to learn while doing this research, that pattern is now widespread in Chenalhó. This recent pattern raises questions as to what extent their claims of indigeneity are convincing from the perspective of the Tzotzil. Do Mestizos gain anything (protection, rights, and political purchase) from claiming to be indigenous? Would such a strategy even work in a small town such as Chenalhó?

To answer the questions above, we need to take a step back. Whether the Mestizo strategy works depends on the extent to which people in Chenalhó believe that one can change ethnic affiliation during their life. In other words, do Tzotzil people essentialize ethnic categories in Chenalhó?

1.5. Ethnic Essentialism

I investigated the question of ethnic essentialism with formal methods during my earliest field seasons. To put it simply: if people in Chenalhó essentialize ethnic membership, ethnic groups and classes are different classes of social phenomena for them, and they should be less prone to accept ethnic passing. But if Stavenhagen's argument is correct, and if ethnic groups in Mexico are indeed social classes determined by their relations with the means production, then people should be less inclined to essentialize ethnic membership and more accepting of ethnic passing.

To test for ethnic essentialism, I ran an 'adoption task' similar to the one devised by Gil-White (2001) to measure ethnic essentialism in Mongolia.[18] In that task, we read a vignette about a Tzotzil or Mestizo woman who died upon giving birth in a hospital. The child is then adopted by another woman of the other group who had just given birth to a child at the same hospital and the adoptive mother raises both children. We then asked several questions about the biological and cultural traits of the children:

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[18] I used a questionnaire designed years earlier by Norbert Ross, Mike Kohut, and Jeffrey Shenton.

a) The Mestizo/Tzotzil woman was tall, the Tzotzil/Mestizo woman was short. Will the children grow to be of the same height?

b) The Mestizo/Tzotzil had long fingers, the Tzotzil/Mestizo had short fingers. Will the children have fingers of the same length as adults?

c) The Mestizo/Tzotzil woman liked the color red, the Tzotzil/Mestizo woman liked the color green. Will the children like the same color as adults?

d) As the children start school, they start learning Spanish/Tzotzil. Which child will learn that language fast?

e) The children also take an advanced Tzotzil/Spanish course. Which child will learn better?

f) Are the children Tzotzil/Mestizos?

A research assistant and I administered this questionnaire to 65 people in Chenalhó (33 men, 32 women, average age = 40). The survey had two versions: A) Tzotzil mother adopting a Mestizo child, and B) Mestizo mother adopting a Tzotzil child.

As it often happens during anthropological fieldwork, the results of this experiment were less than enlightening. As expected, people in Chenalhó essentialize biological traits: most said that the children will grow to have the same height (.936) and skin color (.968). Most participants essentialize language proficiency, saying that the adopted child will learn the language of her diseased biological parent faster than the biological child (.872) and that the child will learn the language of her mother better than the adopted child (.744). Participants also essentialize color taste (.764)—although in some cases it was not clear whether respondents believed that color taste develops differentially from person to person or is biologically or culturally transmitted. I found no questionnaire version or interviewer effects for any question.

While most respondents seem to believe that language proficiency is inherited biologically— which renders support to the essentialist hypothesis—,when we asked them about ethnic affiliation (question 6), the majority responded that the adoptive child would belong to the same group as her adoptive mother. Just 38% of participants said that ethnic membership is inherited biologically. Consider a typical response to question 6 by a 57-year-old female informant: "both children are Tzotzil because they grew up with a Tzotzil woman." The same informant, however, essentializes biological and cultural traits—she told us that the adopted child would learn her biological mother's language faster and would lag behind in learning her adoptive mother's language. The only pattern associated with ethnic essentialism was that male respondents were slightly more likely to essentialize ethnicity than females (males = .484, females = .25, t = -1.995, p = .05).

Taken at face value, our results show that most people in Chenalhó do not essentialize ethnic membership, even despite believing that cultural and phenotypical traits can be inherited biologically. However, the contradictory results above drew my attention to an experimental flaw inherent in the adoption task that Gil-White and we used to measure ethnic essentialism. The flaw is due to ethnonyms (words for ethnic or racial categories) having two meanings: a biological and a cultural one. For instance, the term 'Mestizo' can either refer to a group defined by its shared cultural heritage or to a group of biologically related (or similar) individuals.[19] To illustrate, take the answer to question 6 by a 30-year-old female participant: "Both children will grow up to be Mestizos because they are raised since childhood by Mestizo people under their way of living, though one child will always be of Tzotzil blood or race." For that participant, a person can be culturally Mestizo and racially indigenous at the same time. Since our task did not specify whether we referred to ethnicity as a biological or a cultural group, our respondents could freely choose either of those meanings. Essentialist answers in question 6 can be easily triggered by pragmatic factors shaping the interview process—factors that we did not control for. Perhaps female informants were less likely to essentialize ethnic membership because they tend to pay more attention to the effect of culture in children's upbringing.[20]

To summarize, when we asked participants about specific cultural or biological traits (language, height, taste, etc.), most expressed essentialist views: for the majority, those traits can be inherited biologically. But when we asked participants if the adopted child will fall into Mestizo or Tzotzil categories, there was little agreement between informants. Most—women especially—tended to give constructivist answers emphasizing the role of culture in shaping one's ethnic identity. These results likely stem from ethnonyms having a cultural and biological meaning. In conclusion, ethnicity can be essentialized or not, depending on the pragmatic context in which people use ethnonyms to communicate notions of group membership.

Fortunately, there is another way to investigate the effect of social essentialism on ethnic categorization. Let us set cognition aside—for now—and focus instead on social networks and cultural consensus. As I proposed earlier, we should see ethnic identity is an emergent phenomenon: a person's

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[19] The adoption task was originally designed by cognitive psychologists to study how infants develop an understanding of biological inheritance (Solomon et al. 1996). In its original version, the task contained questions about concrete physical and psychological traits, skills, preferences, and temperaments. It did not contain questions about abstract categories such as ethnicity.

[20] Tzotzil women spend far more time with children than men (as demonstrated quantitatively by time allocation surveys I did in 2015), which might cause them to pay more attention to enculturation and pedagogy.

ethnic identity is not only determined by self-identification, but by his/her position within a group. To determine a person's identity, within-group consensus is just as important as self-identification. Abel's attempt to pass as Tzotzil would only succeed if approved by other people. This insight allows us to make two testable predictions about how people categorize others in Chenalhó. If people essentialize ethnicity, we should expect to find that:

1) Group consensus on categorization overrides self-identification. In other words, the Tzotzil who 'passed' (and now call themselves Mestizo) will nevertheless be classified as Tzotzil by others.

2) Group consensus on ethnic categories is not influenced by one's position within multi-ethnic social networks.

To elaborate on prediction B: from a constructivist viewpoint, a person's behavior should influence how others classify her. Take the case of Don Alonzo—the mastermind behind the Ejido San Pedro raid. As I discussed earlier, although Alonzo is Mestizo, he speaks Tzotzil and frequently interacts with the Tzotzil. He often calls himself 'indigenous.' If people in Chenalhó essentialize ethnicity, they will classify Don Alonzo as Mestizo regardless of how well connected he is to Tzotzil individuals or groups.

To test those predictions, I use data from a social network survey that we administered to 60 men in the Cabecera (28 Mestizo, 32 Tzotzil) in 2012. The survey was part of the broader study on cooperation relations between groups which I describe in detail in Section 3 of this chapter. For each interviewee, we showed pictures of the other 59 participants and asked the following questions: 1) Are you related, and how? 2) How often do you talk to each other [1-5 Likert scale]? 3) Does this person speak Tzotzil [yes, no, some]? 4) Does this person speak Spanish [yes, no, some]? And 5) Is this person indigenous [yes, no, mixed]? Using responses for questions 3 to 5, I calculated agreement levels using the cultural consensus model for multiple-choice questionnaires (Romney, Batchelder, and Weller 1987). The results are shown in Table 2.2. Participants agree in the way they evaluate the Tzotzil and Spanish proficiency of others (eigenratio > 5). They agree more strongly in the way they classify others by ethnicity (eigenratio > 20).[21]

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[21] Although the ethnicity question had three possible answers (Tzotzil, Mestizo, or mixed), participants tended to use a binary classification (Tzotzil vs. Mestizo). The 'mixed' alternative was almost never used. The only person with low a competence score (.17) for that question was a man who tended to classify all Mestizos as 'mixed,' thus disagreeing with the majority who used a binary classification. This preference for using a binary

Table 2.2: Perceived language fluency and ethnic categorization consensus scores

Question	1st/ 2nd factor	Eigenratio	Mean competence	Consensus
Tzotzil proficiency	36.557/3.893	9.390	.766	High
Spanish proficiency	41.840/6.976	5.998	.827	High
Ethnicity	45.141/2.204	20.481	.86	High

Overall, ethnic categorization by others matched people's self-identification. The consensus key scores for perceived ethnic affiliation correctly predict the self-declared ethnicity of 58 of the 60 participants. The two outliers were Mestizos who 'passed': 1) a retired schoolteacher, 49, born in the Cabecera, and 2) a schoolteacher, 52, who was born in the neighboring town of Pantelhó but had been living Chenalhó for 33 years. Although both men self-identify as Mestizos today, they acknowledged having indigenous ancestry. Both completed high school, speak predominantly Spanish, and have participated in the Mestizo cargo system (discussed later). The first man was classified as indigenous by 58% of participants and the second by 82%. Despite self-identifying as Mestizos, thus, these men continue to be seen as Tzotzil by others. This finding gives some support to prediction A—that when people essentialize ethnicity, cultural consensus overrides self-classification.

Let us turn to prediction B—that when people essentialize ethnicity, one's position within a social network will not influence how others classify him/her. There is no formal segregation system in Chiapas, and Mestizo and Tzotzil social networks are interconnected. Figure 2.1 shows a graph depicting the frequency of interaction between the 60 study participants. Thicker ties connecting nodes symbolize a higher rate of interaction—how often each participant talks to each other. The score next to each node is the level of bilingualism for each participant (calculated as the average Spanish and Tzotzil proficiency scores ascribed by others). Node shapes (squares, triangles, and circles) represent the participants' behavior while playing the dictator and ultimatum games (I will come back to this in part 3 of this chapter). Although at first it seems that Mestizos and Tzotzil are highly interconnected, participants tend to cluster with within-group members. To prove that, I used an algorithm used to identify factions in a social network.[22] With only information on the frequency of interaction between participants, the algorithm correctly predicts the ethnicity of 54 of the 60 nodes in the network—a 90% accuracy based

classification explains why agreement scores for the ethnicity question tend to be higher than the language proficiency ones.

[22] I used the 'Factions' algorithm in the UCINET package (Borgatti, Everett, and Freeman 2002).

solely on who talks to whom and how often. This shows how crucial ethnicity is in determining the shape of social networks.
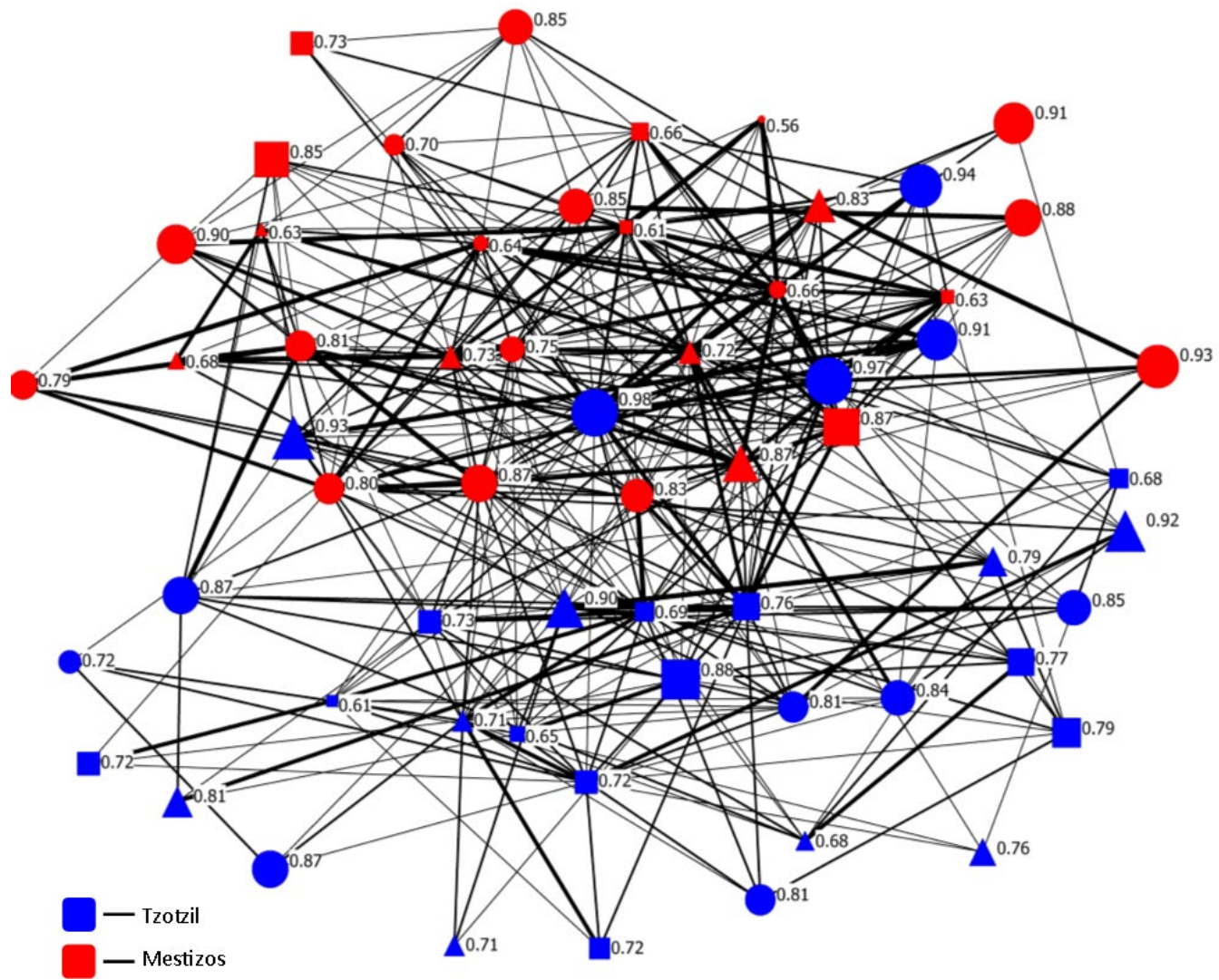
Figure 2.1: Mestizo-Tzotzil frequency of interaction social network

To test prediction (B), I elaborated an 'identity dissonance' score[23] to rank participants in terms of how much their self-declared identity diverged from the identity attributed to them by others. Using stepwise regression, I tested the relationship between identity dissonance scores and several measures of network centrality,[24] but I found no clear correlations. I also found statistical relationship identity dissonance scores and the frequency with which participants interact with ingroup and out-group members.

The lack of relationship between identity dissonance and social network data suggests that people in Chenalhó do essentialize ethnic group membership, contradicting question 6 of the adoption task indicated earlier. Regardless of how much Mestizo or Tzotzil person interacts with out-group members, his/her identity is unlikely to change for others. This is true even for cases when a person decides to self-identify as a member of the other and shifts to speaking the other group language—such as the two Tzotzil schoolteachers who passed into the Mestizo group I discussed earlier. There is a caveat, however: because all participants in the social network survey were men, which might have biased results toward the ethnic essentialism side. It remains to be seen whether females are more accepting of ethnic passing than males.

Even if people essentialize ethnicity, as the case of Vicente Comate shows, ethnic passing is a reality. However, for passing to occur successfully, one must hide her ancestry from other group members. To exemplify, Don Armando—an older Mestizo informant I cited earlier—made the following comments about Vicente Comate: "he is not a Mestizo. He used to live in a mud wall and thatched-roof house until he bought his current house from [person's name]." Thatched roof houses—almost universally present until the 1960s—constitute a public and indelible marker of indigeneity. Although the Cabecera of Chenalhó is semi-urban today, even there hiding one's ancestry can be difficult. As I quoted Abel earlier, in Chenalhó "people know the families." Most of our study participants were acquainted with each other and had good knowledge of each other's ethnic background.[25]

In a face-to-face semi-urban community like the Cabecera, thus, passing is unlikely to happen. As Siverts (1969b) discusses, it can take generations for one's ancestry to be forgotten in rural Chiapas. For

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[23] $dissonance = |selfID - othersID|$, or: identity dissonance equals the absolute difference between one's self-declared ethnic identity (1 = Tzotzil, 0 = Mestizo) and the average ratings of other participants for the identity of the same person.

[24] Bonacich centrality, geodesic distances, betweenness, Freeman centrality, and Eigenvector centrality.

[25] Participants confirmed knowing others 89% of the time. They knew each other's names 62% of the time.

that reason, the possibility of changing ethnic affiliation might be an incentive for Maya people to migrate to urban areas where they can hide their indigenous ancestry and pass as Spanish-speaking Mestizos. Passing might also incentivize hypergamy (marrying people from the higher-status group), which could be a strategy for changing one's ethnic affiliation over generations.

As we saw, in recent years some Mestizos have been trying to pass as Tzotzil in an attempt to recover political power. As I tell in the next section, their strategy has thus far backfired. Despite its fluidity, the Maya-Mestizo boundary is more resilient than people think. Ethnicity in Chiapas can make unexpected comebacks. To understand why the Maya-Mestizo boundary is at the same time so elusive and resistant to change, we must take a historical look into how differences between groups emerged by reinforcing each other in symmetric ways. We might call this "deep ethnicity"—an understanding of ethnic differences and mutual stereotyping that pays attention to the history of resource competition between groups.

2. Deep Ethnicity: Symmetry in the Emergence of Intergroup Differences

In 2010, Martin Cruz Aguilar became the first Mestizo to be elected as mayor of Chenalhó since the 1930s. In a town where 98% of the population identifies Tzotzil as their primary language, the election of a Mestizo had been a groundbreaking event. During his two and a half years in power, Martin Cruz sought to implement some norm-breaking and controversial reforms. One of his stated campaign goals was to modernize the town without putting local traditions at risk. Like most PRI candidates, Martin had been supported by the *pasados*—the traditionalist elders. By seeking to modernize tradition without subverting it, Martin was treading dangerous ground. To do so, he invested resources in promoting cultural change.

Martin named a Tzotzil man, Sebastián Perez Pérez, as his Secretario de la Casa de Cultura (secretary of culture). Sebastián—a college-educated sociologist—had a different understanding of 'culture' from that of previous officials in his position. In Mayan Chiapas, when people talk about 'culture,' they usually refer to indigenous folk traditions: the cargo system, the fiestas, the cult of saints, the prayers, and healing rituals. The Casas de Cultura—'palaces of culture'—that have existed in Maya towns since the 1980s tend to put more emphasis on <u>preserving</u> rather than <u>changing</u> culture. Chenalhó's Casa de Cultura is where the *pasados* meet to nominate cargoholders. It is there where the *Agentes* (headmen) of all communities gather to make decisions regarding the municipal affairs. The place, located between the main church and the town hall (Ayuntamiento), symbolizes the maintenance of folk

customs and beliefs. If the church and the town hall take care of spirituality and politics, the Casa de Cultura is in charge of overseeing religious traditions.

Sebastián, however, saw 'culture' from a more academic perspective. For him, promoting culture was also about instructing literacy and the Western arts: music, dance, theater, cinema, and the visual arts. To expand literacy, he began to teach free Tzotzil to anyone interested in learning how to read and write in the language. To my knowledge, this was the first attempt to teach Tzotzil lessons outside of a school classroom in the town. Perhaps inadvertently, Sebastián endorsed the view of cultural change promoted for several decades by Instituto Nacional Indigenista of Chiapas, according to which modernization was tantamount to promoting cultural assimilation into the Mestizo majority culture (Lewis 2018, 64).

I spent much of 2012 in Chenalhó so I had the opportunity to attend Sebastián's Tzotzil course. Aside from me, Sebastian's Tzotzil lessons attracted two types of students: Mestizo government workers temporarily stationed in Chenalhó and some younger Tzotzil men and women in their 20-30s who had been raised in Spanish-speaking centers. Due to changes in power relations over the past five decades, fluency in Spanish is no longer indispensable for those who seek to ascend through Chenalhó's social hierarchies. It is now common for younger Mestizos to take Tzotzil classes since fluency in an indigenous language has become a requirement for many government offices. Literacy rates in Tzotzil remain low despite previous efforts to improve them. The over 98% native Tzotzil speakers in Chenalhó still see no reason to attend Tzotzil classes as they are already fluent in that language anyway. Still, the fact that the town's administration held a program to enculturate the few monolingual Spanish speakers in the town is significant. It serves as another indication of how power relations between Mestizos and Tzotzil have shifted over the past decades.

While attending Sebastian's classes, I took some time to observe other programs that were being offered at the Casa de Cultura. Weekly movie sessions introduced locals to a wide variety of film genera—from Hollywood thrillers to Disney movies. There were painting classes for children. The most popular program were free dance classes which attracted a loyal group of teenagers and youth in the 20s. Many of those teenagers were not from Chenalhó but from neighboring towns such as Chalchihuitán or Larráinzar who stay in Chenalhó temporarily while attending the local technical school (CECyTE). The locals who participated in the dance classes are part of a growing number of bilingual youths born and raised in the Cabecera. Despite their indigenous background, they tend to prefer speaking Spanish over Tzotzil. They are friends with Mestizos of the same age. Both groups routinely play volleyball together in the afternoons in a court set up in front of the *cabildo*. The teams are gender and ethnically mixed. I never

noticed any animosity between the Mestizo and the Spanish-speaking Tzotzil youth (that is, until the events that I describe in Section 2.4 took place).

The dance lessons attempted to overcome a widespread ethnic stereotype in Chiapas: that Maya people cannot dance. Mestizos sometimes talk about how 'rudimentary' Tzotzil dance traditions are. I once saw a Mestizo mock the ritual dance performed by Tzotzil cargoholders: holding a beer bottle in each hand, he jerkily stomped his feet while others laughed. Like the Tzotzil, Mestizos tend to essentialize certain cultural traits. Some say that indigenous people lack the agility to dance or excel in sports for genetic reasons. Stereotypes such as these deeply bothered Sebastián. As a college student, he had lived in San Cristóbal for years. There, he felt firsthand how demoralizing it can be to be an indigenous man in a predominantly Mestizo city. He spent much of his time writing grant proposals seeking to attract outside investment to Chenalhó.

Stereotypes may stem from distortions or exaggerations of observable behavior. The ritual dance that Tzotzil cargoholders perform is indeed simple, as I witnessed on numerous occasions. Holding a flag in one hand and sometimes a rattle in the other, the cargoholders stomps his feet repeatedly. The dancer's movements resemble certain forms of repetitive farmwork, such as stomping on dry cacao beans (see Figure 2.2). Perhaps that dance style, like much of Tzotzil's ceremonial behavior, originated during the time indigenous laborers worked in lowland plantations.

During the time I lived in Chenalhó, I watched at least 20 fiestas. Only once did I see couples dancing in what seemed to be a spontaneous, non-ceremonial manner. It was on Christmas Day (*Sk'in Niño*). Inside the town's main church, late at night, women and men wearing their traditional outfits danced under the peculiar rhythm of the locally made violins (*vob*, 'instrument' or, more specifically, *meolin*). The participants, who seemed intoxicated, clearly wanted to stay away from the public eye. They conveniently kept the church doors shut and only let me in after I insisted for a while. Because Mestizos celebrate Christmas separately, few of them may have had a chance to watch what happens on December 25 inside the town's main church.

Figure 2.2: A religious cargoholder performs a ceremonial dance during Carnival (Tajimoltik)

Mestizos have a distinct relationship with dance, which they see as a more casual, spontaneous form of expression and, above all, as a form of entertainment. For people like Abel, dancing in public is part of life. Men and women always dance in pairs during their fiestas. They are expected to do so: they have learned to dance at home, with their family members, since childhood, and through dance they solidify kinship ties. Obviously, they see no need to take lessons on something they have already mastered. Dancing is one of the ways the Mestizo distinguish themselves from the Tzotzil. For them, those who cannot dance might seem strange—less articulate, perhaps even less civilized.

Tzotzil, on the other hand, mock Mestizos for dancing and gesticulating too much, which they consider childish and improper. Some liken the more extroverted temperament of Mestizos to that of children and dogs, which 'have no shame' (Gossen 1984, 303). Extreme extroversion, from the Tzotzil view, signals a lack of self-control and disregard for others; it is a rough intrusion of the individual self into the ever more crucial communal order.

While it is true that Tzotzil people rarely dance in public, the stereotype that they *cannot* dance is false. The dance classes promoted by the Casa de Cultura proved the stereotype wrong. The youth who

attended the classes quickly became dancing virtuosos (at least from the perspective of an anthropologist who cannot dance). They learned to dance in pairs, and seemed comfortable with different dance styles—bolero, tango, flamenco, impromptu, etc.. But in comparison with Mestizos, the Tzotzil youth danced more studiously and robotically. It was clear that they had just learned a new bodily technique by memorizing certain moves rather than intuitively embodying a rhythm. Sometimes they seemed to be out of pace, although their steps were clearly more complex and thought through than those of the more intuitive Mestizos.

These differences in dancing styles are just an example the many structural symmetries delineating Maya and Mestizo identities. Several scholars have noticed that Maya and Mestizo cultural traits appear to have developed in opposition to each other. Maya cultural traits are often described as developing against colonial subordination (Aguirre Beltrán 1973; Warren 1989). Hawkins (1984) characterized differences between Ladinos and Mayas in Guatemala as 'inverse images.' After finding cultural parallels between Moors in Christian Spain and the Maya (for instance, both practiced endogamy), Hawkins argued that both groups may have strengthened some of their cultural institutions to oppose the Spanish. In a similar manner, Bricker (1973; 1981) gathered an impressive amount evidence that Tzotzil-Maya rituals offer a historical commentary on Maya-Mestizos relations. According to Bricker, some Tzotzil fiestas—such as the Tajimoltik (carnival) in Chenalhó—use ritual performance to commemorate past conflicts between groups while at the same time mocking Mestizos.

The evidence that Maya and Mestizo identities and cultural practices developed together and in opposition to one another is compelling. However, some anthropologists might engage in cherry-picking when they single out some specific cultural traits to compare Mestizos and Maya. Dancing in public is—at least for Mestizos—an ethnic marker. Ethnic markers are salient cultural differences between groups (from an emic perspective) that likely evolved to solve problems of coordination (McElreath, Boyd, and Richerson 2003; Efferson, Lalive, and Fehr 2008). These are the cultural traits that people recognize, talk about, or mock when they talk about ethnicity in Chiapas. When we establish our comparisons on ethnic markers alone, it comes as no surprise that we find symmetric cultural oppositions. We forget that—ethnic markers aside—Mestizos and Maya may share more cultural similarities than differences.

Instead of fixating solely on ethnic markers, it might be productive to examine the roots of some deeper cultural distinctions across groups. Perhaps differences in dancing styles—or, more broadly, the way people use their bodies in public—are rooted in underlying, hard-to-measure conceptions of the 'self.' As Hall (1966) and Goffman (1971) proposed, the 'self' has a territorial component. The territoriality of the self finds expression in—for instance—politeness norms guiding the interaction

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between individuals of different classes, genders, or ethnic groups. Much has been written about gendered norms of politeness among the highland-Maya of Chiapas (Penelope Brown 1979; see also Chapter 4 of this work). In Tzotzil fiestas or communal assemblies, women tend to sit aside or hide in private places, while men stand at the center of public events. The spatial distribution of men and women reflects the territories of the self that are attributed to each gender. It is because of these gendered differences that Tzotzil men and women rarely dance in pairs in fiestas. For men and women to touch each other in public would constitute what Goffman (1971) called a violation of the territorial self—that is, an intrusion into one's personal, gendered space.

It might be productive to discuss differences in how members of each group express their territorial selves in public. These are the more subtle, unspoken, unbeknown traits that natives seldom talk about because they are seen as natural. For instance, Mestizo men tend to exude self-confidence and show an unusual openness toward strangers. They gesticulate and speak fast and loudly as if they were trying to make sure they are in command of social interaction. This attitude stands in stark contrast with the more self-restrained, and inward-looking Tzotzil who rarely gesticulate when speaking in public. These differences in temperament and openness are clear and should be evident to any foreign observer. Still, the differences were seldom mentioned when I asked my interviewees to list the traits that distinguished Tzotzil from Mestizos. The interviewees tended to focus on more salient ethnic markers such as dress, height, facial hair, music styles, and so on.

Subtle differences in demeanor, politeness norms, and notions of personal space likely reflect the history of power asymmetries marked by Spanish domination. Until the 1960s, Maya people were not allowed to walk on the sidewalks of San Cristóbal or sell products without being harassed by *atajadores* ('grabbers'), a sort of dry land pirate whose specialty was to intercept merchants on their way to the market (Köhler 1980, 320). For centuries, being under constant exogenous aggression, the Maya developed a more defensive attitude toward strangers. As Nash (1958) noticed early on, for the ladinos in Guatemala built political ties at the national level, while the Maya focused on strengthening relationships within their local communities. The Mestizo openness toward outsiders, when contrasted with the Maya reticence, makes sense both historically and economically. These cultural traits are tied to how each group makes a livelihood and competed over resources. The dance lessons in the Casa de Cultura were perhaps a means of mitigating those deep-seated differences in self-expression. The lessons were supposed to make Tzotzil and Mestizo more like each other, thus overcoming some of the cultural and temperamental distances between both groups. Whether this strategy worked or not is something we will learn later in this chapter (2.4).

Because of their antiquity, some cultural differences are deeply ingrained and hard to erase—as the new Mestizo president would eventually learn. These deeply rooted cultural differences between groups have an ecological basis. They evolved differentially, over time, as adaptations for obtaining or maintaining resources in a context marked by ethnic competition. To exemplify, let us focus on distinctions between how Mestizos and Tzotzil practice hospitality—that is, how members of each group deal with strangers.

2.1. Of Hospitality Norms

Hospitality practices are semi-routinized procedures that groups enact when encountering strangers. These practices are important as it is during first exchanges that groups begin to determine their relative bargaining power and build relations of cooperation or competition. Because first encounters can have a profound impact on a group's survival chances—as they can determine chances of obtaining or losing resources through exchange, theft, or warfare—we should expect hospitality practices to be susceptible to adaptive selection and reflect a group's strategy for maximizing resources. For instance, bargaining power is a determinant in how cultural norms flow from one ethnic group to another (Bunce and McElreath 2017). If hospitality practices influence a group's perceived bargaining power during a first encounter, they might determine the fate of that group during the subsequent intergroup interaction.

An anecdote from my earliest field season should illustrate how Chenalhó Mestizos practice hospitality. I traveled to Chenalhó for the first time during the summer of 2010. Inadvertently, I arrived during the Anuncio de San Pedro (the largest and most important Mestizo fiesta). As I stepped out of the cab, I was abruptly taken to the fiesta area by two drunk Mestizo men. The men asked me if I was there to investigate the Acteal massacre and the Zapatista rebellion. "No," I answered emphatically. I then recited the simple *spiel* I had practiced days before: "I'm here to learn more about life in Chenalhó; I want to do research among Mestizos and Maya people." The men invited me to sit with them and their relatives—a long table with dozens of people, ages ranging from 18 to 50, all drunk, some singing *ranchera* songs. They handed me a bottle of Corona Extra and asked me to drink it, to which I complied. One by one, the men at the table introduced themselves. Without knowing much about me, several offered me 'protection.' "Don't worry, stay with us, and nothing will happen to you; you are protected here; *aquí no pasa nada*" (nothing occurs here). I was struck by their openness to an outsider and could not believe that these people sincerely want to 'protect' me without knowing me. Some of these men are friends of mine and still say they will protect me when I go to Chenalhó.

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When a (non-indigenous) stranger arrives among Mestizos (men), he or she is offered protection. Mestizos attempt to bind with and incorporate the stranger into their group. We can speculate as to why such is the case. Mestizos seek allies in the outside world because their livelihood depends on it. Since they do not own land, to thrive in Chenalhó they depend on having strong social and commercial ties with outsiders. Mestizos are more likely than Tzotzil to marry people from other towns (see Chapter 4). Their networks expand centrifugally: from small towns to cities and toward the world. This outward-looking approach may have emerged as an economic adaptation.

When strangers arrive among the Tzotzil, they receive a radically different treatment. Strangers are not to be trusted. Historically, strangers were terrible news for Tzotzil communities. First, they were, Aztec, and then Spaniard tribute collectors. Later, they became colonial inspectors (Alcaldes Mayores) forcing native populations to sell produce at artificially low prices. They then became *atajadores*, or interceptors of produce. Today, they are government officials and anthropologists. Instead of offering protection, the Tzotzil ask strangers for a gift. They do so by performing a semi-ritualized script that is recited to all kinds of strangers (and sometimes deities): "how much can you give from the goodness of your heart?" This style of hospitality also emerged as an economic adaptation and has historical roots. Tzotzil people ask strangers for a gift to test their intentions. Are strangers willing to act altruistically? Are they willing to sacrifice something of value to be in the community? I will discuss examples of this gift-request ritual in Chapter 5.1.2 and Chapter 7.

Just like politeness norms, hospitality practices stem from people's conception of the 'self.' The more outward-looking Mestizo self is reflected in rules of hospitality that seek to associate with and incorporate the stranger. The more inward-looking Tzotzil, on the other hand, challenge strangers to make an offering to test their intentions.

How did distinct and symmetric practices of hospitality emerge over time? To answer this question, it might be productive to reconsider a model proposed long ago by Bateson (1936): *schismogenesis*. Bateson defines schismogenesis as "a process of differentiation in the norms of individual behavior resulting from cumulative interaction between individuals" (175). To put it in simpler terms, as people with different characteristics come to interact over time, the traits that distinguish them become more prominent. The mutual, symmetric reinforcement of differences is particularly true in contexts where the individuals who interact are competitors. For instance, in Iatmul initiation rites discussed by Bateson, where moieties compete to bully their novices. Bateson noticed that when competing groups interact through ritual—i.e., punctuated, ceremonial forms of interaction—they tend to develop symmetric differences over time. At that time, the theory of schismogenesis offered an alternative

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to theories of acculturation, which presupposed that intergroup contact would necessarily result in groups becoming culturally similar.

While Bateson's model offers a way to understand how intergroup differences emerge iteratively, it tends to ignore the role that resource competition plays in shaping repeated interaction between groups. Spaniards and Maya, as we saw, have been in constant interaction since the earliest days of colonialism. Although markets were perhaps the main venue for cross-ethnic exchange in Chiapas, interaction also happened through the colonial extractive system, when tax/tribute collectors visited Maya communities. This type of interaction is like the punctuated/ritualized exchanges that Bateson studied among the Itamul. However, Spaniards and Maya had distinct goals and faced different problems when interacting: while the Spaniards sought to take other-group resources, the Maya responded by devising ways to retain the resources they already had.

The symmetric cultural differences between Maya and Mestizos emerged as they played a game of cat and mouse iteratively. For centuries, through repeated interaction, Spaniards sought to collect resources from the Maya. Each time colonial officials arrived at a Maya village, they strategized on how to maximize tribute collection. The Maya, on the other hand, sought ways to conceal their wealth and to give the least possible to the dominant group. Over time, through repeated iterations of the game, the strategies of each group co-evolved and escalated: the Maya became better at hiding resources, while the Mestizos became better at surveilling trade and confiscating those resources. The cultural differences between Maya and Mestizos that we see today are the product of the accumulated iterations of that game.

The outcome of the game of cat and mouse is nowhere more clearly manifested than in differences in how each group tells treasure tales.

2.2. Of Treasure Tales

Treasure tales are a modality of folk narratives typical to Mesoamerica in which a narrator elaborates on secret stores of wealth sometimes hidden beneath the earth or waiting to be discovered in mythical places. As Foster (1964) showed, the study of folk narratives can yield insight into people's folk economic theories. Treasure tales express implicit cultural assumptions of how new wealth is created and how people conceptualize 'resources.' For instance, do treasure tales depict resources as finite or infinite? Are resources produced and regulated by natural mechanisms, supernatural entities, or specific social groups?

Foster noticed that peasants from Tzintzuntzan (Michoacán) used treasure tales as a heuristic to explain how individual community members became wealthy. He argued that peasants see wealth as a

limited good: for them, new wealth cannot be produced unless someone unearths a new magically concealed wealth store—that is, a treasure. According to Foster, the notion that wealth is limited good is typical of peasant societies across the world, and it stems from peasants' objective observation that growth in traditional rural settings tends to be slow and limited. Peasants see the competition over resources as a zero-sum game: one who accumulates wealth does so at the expense of others, creating disharmony and imbalances in the distribution of wealth within a community.[26]

While Foster is right in that treasure tales might offer insight into people's folk economic theories, these narratives are the outcome of a historical process rather than the result of a timeless 'cognitive orientation' among 'peasants.' Treasure tales were shaped by the elaborate system of extraction incrementally established over the centuries by Spanish colonists. Spaniards depended on knowing how (and where) to find concealed goods to survive. Finding 'treasure' was a crucial skill for extracting resources from the human landscape. Colonists relied on tribute—produce, cloth, or metals—produced by native populations. In response to the colonial extractive system, the Maya developed, over centuries, sophisticated strategies for concealing wealth from colonial officials. As a result, strategies for capital preservation have become deeply embedded in Maya culture and cosmology today.

Mestizos in Chenalhó talk about treasures as something that can yield immense power and wealth to those who discover it. I heard stories about people who found ancient silver or gold coins hidden within caves, and Mestizos often express interest in finding lost treasures and becoming wealthy. For example, two Mestizo men asked me if I could bring a metal detector from the United States that they could use to search for ancient gold coins and become rich. Another invited me to go visit a cave where he believed there were hidden golden treasures. The Mestizo interest in finding treasures already appears in the first ethnographic reports on Chiapas. During a 1925 expedition among Tzeltal groups, Blom and LaFarge noticed:

> It is remarkable how persistent are rumors of buried treasures. Every Ladino [Mestizo] expects to find "dinero," money, in any mound, and they are usually sadly disappointed. Also, most of these people believe that we find money, why else should

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[26] In a more recent version of Foster's argument, Cancian (1992, 258–59 fn. 4.17) noticed that the Tzotzil from Zinacantán often spread rumors that wealthy individuals became rich by producing or trafficking illicit drugs. Cancian speculated that stories about drugs might be a secular substitute to mythical narratives such as treasure tales. I heard similar stories in Chenalhó, though without verifying their veracity I cannot assume them to be just heuristic narratives.

we dedicate so much time to our explorations? We had a case where one man offered to go fifty-fifty with us if we would explore a mound on his lands. The whole mound at Santa Teresa has been dug through, and it is told in Ocosingo that the excavators found, not money, but a small wooden sanctuary with a saint inside. We hear every day, when among the Ladinos and Mexicans, stories of church bells of solid gold, and cocks that crow at midnight on top of the mounds (Blom and Farge 1927, 255).

Mestizos often describe the economic behavior of the Maya as irrational and focused on short term rewards. They say Maya people don't know how to handle money and or make long term investments, being solely focused on instant gratification. One of the pieces of information that Mestizos cite in support of that view is that indigenous people 'bury their money.' When I first heard this from a Mestizo, I interpreted 'burying money' as a metaphor for 'not using money correctly'—that is, failing to spend or reinvest money according to Mestizo expectations of what constitutes rational financial behavior. However, I realized over time that some Mestizos believe that indigenous people bury their money in a literal sense—that is, they store cash in a cache and hide it underneath the earth.

The ethnographic literature of Chiapas and Guatemala is full of quotes alike from Mestizos. For example, an ethnographer of Venustiano Carranza (Tzotzil-speaking) quotes a Mestizo government official in his field notes: "he says that the Indians have money but instead of spending it they bury it, they are not interested in 'progress' which is why in Pinola they have not collaborated to have electricity" (Díaz de Salas 1991, 199). In Tenejapa, Mestizos speculated that the Tzeltal-Maya hid treasures under the crosses that marked the location of sacred places (Cámara Barbachano 1945b, 127). In Amatenango (Tzeltal), it was common practice for Mestizos to ask indigenous people for the location of treasures hidden in the surroundings of sacred mountains (J. Nash 1985, 24). The Mestizo interest in how the Maya hide their wealth appears in the earliest ethnographies of the regions. In Guatemala, Wisdom documented the government officials' astonishment after realizing that the Chorti-Maya had buried large amounts of the Guatemalan peso which had been phased-out and replaced with the Quetzal three decades earlier:

> This practice [of hiding money] increased after the pesos were being called in [i.e., after the government began to remove the old currency from circulation]. The Indians were confident that before long the government would see its "mistake, after which the pesos would have their former value. The agents knew of this, but could do nothing beyond issuing more and sterner warnings. After many of the wealthier and more conservative Indians began turning over their pesos, the agents were astonished

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to discover how many of them showed signs of having been buried for a long time.

According to the agents, no one had suspected that the Indians owned so many pesos.

(Wisdom 1940, 27, fn. 22)

Hiding wealth—predominantly in the form of money—was a core part of the Maya strategy of wealth preservation under colonial rule. The practice was perfected over time, as Spaniards and Maya played the cat-and-mouse-game over resources. Among Maya groups, the most common way of hiding wealth was to bury gold or silver, whose scarcity and intrinsic value turned them into a sort of insurance against recurrent inflationary periods described by historians (more on this in Chapter 6). In Tzotzil, the association between *burying* and *hiding* is even marked lexically: the transitive verb for 'burying', *muk*, shares the same root with the word meaning 'secret,' *mukul*.

The ideas that Maya people bury their money and that there are treasures hidden beneath are obviously intertwined. Both ideas are parts of a single, coherent worldview, a worldview that came into existence during the colonial period, as the Spaniard officials made regular inspections to indigenous towns in search of tribute. In response to the Spaniard encroachment, the Maya developed several strategies to evade taxation: for example, they began to bury precious metals or hide perishable goods (produce) within caves. When neither these strategies worked, they had no choice but to consume or destroy surpluses, which is one of the reasons behind the spread of the cargo and fiesta systems in Mesoamerica (as I discuss in Chapter 6).

As the Maya became better at evading tribute and taxes, the Spaniards counteracted this by improving and expanding their surveillance systems. Carpio-Penagos (2018) details how inspections took place in the town of Simojovel (Tzotzil-speaking), which specialized in the production of tobacco. In the late 18th century, crown officials responded to an increase in 'contraband' by naming a *comisario de siembras* (who they put in charge of surveying the production of tobacco, issuing permits, and enforcing regulations *in situ*. They also hired guards to patrol trading routes to search for hidden money and merchandise inside caves and hilltops (2018, 173). Before that 18th century increase in 'contraband,' colonial officials depended mostly on the information provided by the Church to capture tax evaders and find hidden tribute. As the Maya learned how to circumvent the Church apparatus, Alcaldes Mayores (colonial inspectors) responded by financing their own secular surveillance system, establishing outposts near trade routes and performing inspections in caves. Repeated encounters between groups led, over the centuries, to an escalation of cultural differences.

As Spaniards improved their surveillance and confiscation techniques, the Maya became better at evasion and concealment. This is evidenced by how the Maya narrate treasure tales. Maya treasure tales

usually assume a more somber tone: they make references to death, looting by foreigners, wars, and dangerous supernatural caves. Some narratives depict treasures as something that no one can or should have access to. These stories teach listeners about implicit moral prohibitions: 1) that treasures should never be discovered, and 2) that those who attempt to control stores of wealth hidden beneath the earth will eventually face punishment (either from the community or from deities).

In one of the stories I heard, a group of children entered a cave in search of treasures and disappeared never to be found. I documented a different version of the same cave story: once upon a time, a group of Europeans and Americans arrived in Chenalhó to explore underwater caves. The group got lost (people often describe caves as inescapable mazes). Suspicious of the foreigners, town authorities sent out a rescue expedition and arrested the cave explorers, who were only released after paying a high fine (in boxes of soda). Sometimes treasure tales are reshuffled to modern parlance: once I heard a story about the time when the American government landed helicopters on the mountains surrounding the Cabecera in search of oil beneath the surface. Here, oil seems to be a contemporary substitute for precious metals, while Americans play the role of foreign invaders traditionally played by colonial tribute collectors and Mestizo government officials.

Throughout Chiapas, Tzotzil and Tzeltal-Maya tell a story about the 'owner of the land' (*yajual osil*, in Tzotzil), a spirit who looks like a fat Mestizo and controls the production of money (Holland 1962; Vogt 1969; J. Nash 1985; Pitarch 1996). The story, of course, is based on the (somewhat accurate) perception that Mestizos control wealth. But not only that—the story also conveys the message that Mestizos did not *earn* their wealth as they created their money from fiat instead of having to work for it. Maya treasure tales are also associated with war and conflict: in a narrative recorded by Pitarch, the 1712 Tzeltal war is said to be triggered by the Guatemalan president's decision to search for a treasure buried within the territory of Cancuc[27] (Tzeltal) (Pitarch 1994). One story I heard in Chenalhó takes place during the Mexican revolution: during the war, 'treasures' were hidden somewhere in the Cabecera of Chenalhó when foreign troops hanged several indigenous rebels and buried their belongings with them. The lesson taught by that story is that treasures are better not to be found as they might belong to ancestors who perished during wartime. The story depicts treasures as grave goods, suggesting that treasure hunting is a form of looting.

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[27] Although hiding saint images in caves was a common practice during the Tzeltal rebellion (Viqueira 1997, 125–26; Hopkins, Bassie-Sweet, and Laughlin 2015), there is no historical evidence that the Guatemalan president was interested in finding treasures near Cancuc.

Some of the narratives that are told to foreigners (such as the author) may be a form warning: stay away from local resources. Foreigners are often mistaken for treasure hunters in Chiapas. In the 1950s, the arrival of anthropologist Robert Laughlin in Zinacantán triggered the spread of a story about an 'archaeologist' who "wanted to make a survey of the magic mountain to steal its treasure" and that he "was collecting money at each house to hold a ceremony to close [Zinacanteco's] eyes" (Torre and Peres 2010, 45). Laughlin's story was documented by the Zinacantecos themselves (some of whom would later become his friends and informants). Similarly, Tzotzil people in rural areas of Chenalhó often inquired about my intentions: was I interested in land (or what is beneath the ground)? Had I tried to access caves? How would I benefit (materially) from the study I was conducting?

Another way to understand treasure-related narratives is to frame them as weapons of the weak— or subtle social commentaries that are produced by a subjugated group (e.g., Fischer and Hendrickson 2003, 77). In addition to that, I have sought to highlight how treasure tales and related narratives make sense historically. They are not just the product of a 'peasant cognitive orientation' as Foster wanted. They emerged from centuries of colonialism in which Spaniards and the Maya competed for scarce resources. I framed those stories as the product of a historical game over resources to show that there is a deep history behind the folk narratives of Mestizos and Maya. They are not only narratives designed to contest present power relations, but they emerged over centuries of repeated interaction and have an ecological basis.

2.3. The 'Past President'

With that deep history of Mestizo-Maya competition over resources in mind, let us return to a more recent moment in time and examine how the symmetric cultural differences between those groups affect today's course of events.

As I discussed earlier, Martin Cruz Aguilar became the first Mestizo mayor of Chenalhó since the 1930s. Two years later, I interviewed Abel Villafuerte, another Mestizo, who months earlier had just run an unsuccessful campaign to be Chenalhó's second Mestizo mayor. Abel complains that Mestizos are discriminated against in Chenalhó. As we have seen, Abel has a point given the demographic decline of Mestizos that has been ongoing since the 1970s. But is it true that Mestizos have lost political power?

As the story is usually told, for many decades, Mestizos had been barred from elected offices by the *pasados,* an influential *clique* of traditionalist elders. This form of political exclusion was what Abel meant when he told me that Mestizos are 'discriminated' against. *Pasados* are men who have served principal civil-religious offices, such as Presidente *municipal* (municipal mayor) or *Paxon* (carnival

sponsor). The civil cargos that compose the Ayuntamiento Municipal (municipal administration)—such as Presidente and Secretario—were introduced by Mestizos in the early 1900s. Initially, Maya people across Chiapas had little interest in civil positions that could not be used to obtain prestige (as the posts did not require officeholders to sponsor fiestas). For Mestizos, however, these offices proved to be highly lucrative, as they play the role of mediators between local and state administrations. While Presidente*s* and *secretarios* received—if any—only meager wages from the government, they were authorized to collect tribute from market vendors or profit off fees for handling legal papers.[28] Over decades, these civil positions slowly began to be occupied by indigenous people, being gradually incorporated into their civil-religious hierarchies. In Chenalhó, the last Presidente with a non-indigenous name took office in 1938—incidentally, the year when the government began to require Presidente*s* of indigenous towns to be bilingual (J. Rus 1995a, 261). The cargo of *Secretario* (by all accounts, the most lucrative position in the early 1900s) continued to be occupied by Mestizos until the 1960s as it required literacy and Spanish fluency. Eventually, even Mestizo Secretarios gave way to college-educated indigenous incumbents. By the late 1970s, most Tzotzil and Tzeltal municipal administrations had been 're-indianized,' leaving no space for Mestizo minorities to participate in politics in their hometowns.

In 2012, Martin Cruz was elected as mayor, breaking an informal prohibition that had been in place since at least the 1930s. How did he do it? I was in Chenalhó in 2010 and watched his campaign. During the campaign, Martin was criticized continuously for marrying a woman who was not native from Chiapas. He managed, nevertheless, to build a reputation of competence over the years. Not only did he hold a college degree in engineering (which granted him the title of *Licenciado*, Graduate), but he also managed to amass a fortune by running a construction company in the early 2000s. During that period, investment in infrastructure skyrocketed in Chiapas, following the new government policy to quell the Zapatista uprising (and smaller rebellions) through increasing investment. Construction, fueled mainly by government contracts, became the most important source of economic growth in the region.

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[28] In some towns, such as Chenalhó, Mitontic, and Oxchuc the Mestizo officers collected tribute from vendors at the market (Cámara Barbachano 1945a, 69; Guiteras Holmes 1946, 60; Villa Rojas 1946, 24–25). In others, such as Chamula, the Secretario could profit from officiating civil weddings and controlling the sales of meat and liquor to religious cargoholders (Pozas 1947, 259, 415).

Figure 2.3: Chenalhó's mayoral candidate gives a campaign speech in the Cabecera

Like most wealthy men who live in Chenalhó's Cabecera, Martin frequently receives petitions for donations from various groups—a practice which I discuss in Chapter 3. These petitions can be made by different types of organizations, especially school committees and Patronatos de Obra (construction trustee boards named by local communities). When made by school committees, petitions usually request donations to finance expensive school graduation ceremonies (*clausuras*). In the decade preceding the launch of his candidacy, Martin received petitions to sponsor graduation ceremonies frequently and—willingly or not—fulfilled several of them, redistributing part of his personal fortune through graduation ceremonies. In exchange, for each *clausura,* Martin received the title of *padriño de generación* (cohort godfather) and had his photograph, along with his students, affixed to the cohort's school hall. I saw Martin's photos in every school I visited in the Cabecera; sometimes, he appeared as the *padriño* of several cohorts of a single school. In the early 2000s, when Martin began to build his name, few people in Chenalhó were aware that *clausura* sponsorship was becoming a source of prestige.

Prestige, in Maya communities, can be easily exchanged for votes. *Clausura* sponsorship by itself, however, is not enough for a candidate to gain acceptance from political caciques. More crucial for Martin was to serve as *Paxon*—the sponsor of Chenalhó's carnival (*Tajimoltik*) and the town's most expensive religious cargo. By serving as *Paxon*, Martin signaled his endorsement of Chenalhó's traditional civil-religious hierarchies. The *pasados* universally lauded Martin for doing so and gave him the green light that allowed him to run as a candidate for the PRI.

Other Mestizos, such as Abel Villafuerte (introduced in Section 1.3), saw the 2010 election as setting a precedent: it showed that it was possible, after all, for non-indigenous people to be elected to high offices. By launching his candidacy for Presidente in 2011, Abel followed Martin Cruz's steps, seeking to gain acceptance from influential Tzotzil leaders, with whom he had held daily meetings throughout the year. Here is how Abel introduced his story in our interview:

> I'm a primary schoolteacher. In 2011, I made myself known as a respectful person, an
> <u>indigenous</u> person. A person that has relations with the indigenous culture. Months
> later, the pasados proposed that I should run as a candidate [for mayor]. From October
> 2011 to 2012, they began to hold political meetings at my house. Six meetings in total.

As I noted earlier, I spent some time interviewing Mestizos in the months after Abel called off his mayoral campaign. In the interviews, I focused specifically on whether cargo service played a role in building a sense of ethnic identity. I also took the opportunity to ask them about their views on the then-

mayor Martin Cruz. Mestizos were universally cynical about Martin's sponsorship of graduation ceremonies and service in the indigenous cargo system: they saw Martin as a calculated individual who consciously used fiestas to gain political acceptance. In their view, Martin Cruz strategically reinvested part of his wealth into prestige vying to take the most important—and best remunerated—office in the town. "Nobody likes him, but he has done a good job. It is a matter of taste [*es cosa de gustos*]," Don Alonzo told me, echoing the prevailing view of Martin as competent but not warm. "Martin has done a good job and given construction material to many communities… Likewise, he won the elections by buying people with gifts through the graduation ceremonies," Don Alejandro, 55, told me.

Over time, I began to doubt the narrative that Martin had bought his way into the presidency by sponsoring school graduation ceremonies. Years later, in 2015, I spent a lot of time following and working with the Cabecera's Comités (school committee members). I observed, among other things, the strategies that these officers employed to raise funds for school events. During that year, the Comités and I visited Martin Cruz's house twice to deliver petitions. One petition was for sponsoring a mother's day fiesta, while the other asked for funds to repair the school's gymnasium. The Comités are tasked by their communities with finding wealthy people willing to sponsor fiestas. When delivering petitions to wealthy men, they would often tell me that *no cuesta nada intentarlo*—'there is no cost in trying' [to ask them for money]. Unsurprisingly, Martin was always at the top of the list of potential donors for projects such as these. It is common knowledge that Martin is wealthy, and his wealth makes him one of the few people in Chenalhó with the means of sponsoring graduate ceremonies. Thus, he did not have to strategically chase prestige for political gain, as most Mestizos claimed. Instead, prestige was consistently offered to him by Tzotzil petitioners, who always invited Martin to sponsor school and other festivities. Since Martin spent much of his life outside of Chenalhó, it would be impossible for him reject every petition presented to him without risking being sanctioned (i.e., being expelled from the town).

In 2010, the unexpected election of a Mestizo mayor opened an electoral Pandora's Box, leading to a collective reappraisal of the town's political landscape. Aside from Abel, I knew three other Mestizos who had begun considering a career in politics (one of them was Abel's brother, Jaime, who also launched candidacies in 2011 and 2015). Until Martin's election, it had never occurred to any Mestizo that they could serve an indigenous cargo such as *Paxon*. They never considered that participation in these officers could be a viable means of obtaining political clout. They simply assumed that these offices were out of their reach, even if there were no formal prohibitions against them taking indigenous cargos. *Paxon* is one of the few expensive *cargos* that still finds volunteers every year (see Chapter 6). Before Martin, no Mestizo had ever been asked to serve the office, as there was no shortage of candidates among

Tzotzil people. But for Mestizos, serving that office was simply unthinkable. Moreover, Chenalhó's Mestizos have their own parallel system of fiestas. The most prestigious Mestizo cargos—the *Capitanes* of San Pedro and Jesús de la Buena Esperanza—are nearly as expensive as Paxon. However, Mestizo fiesta sponsorship has a major downside. Mestizos cannot use their fiestas to obtain political support. One who sponsors a costly Mestizo fiesta signals unequivocal commitment to the numerical minority in town, thus closing the doors to a political career among the majority of Tzotzil voters.

Being a modest middle-class schoolteacher, Abel could not afford to sponsor as many school graduation ceremonies. Nor did he receive as many sponsorship petitions as Martin Cruz. To get around these limitations, then, he volunteered to serve as Paxon—the cargo that he believed would produce the highest political impact. Abel served that office in 2011, being the second Mestizo ever to sponsor Chenalhó's carnival.

As I quoted Abel earlier, he believed that he made himself known as a "indigenous person" during that year. For him, serving as Paxon was a means of introducing himself to indigenous authorities while at the same time gaining prestige and claiming indigeneity. During the 2011 summer— just a few months after he concluded his cargo service—I had an informal conversation with Abel at his family's restaurant. He showed me photographs of himself wearing the traditional *lixton*—a hat adorned with colorful ribbons traditionally worn by cargoholders. He spoke of how he had grown up in Chenalhó and learned Tzotzil as his second language, and how it had been an honor to perform the 'beautiful traditions of our people' [*pueblo*]. He carefully avoided divisive terms such as 'Maya,' 'Tzotzil,' or 'Mestizo,' always framing indigenous traditions as 'our traditions.' Perhaps setting the stage for his candidacy a year later, he talked about unity and the end of racial divisions between Mestizos and Mayas. He even compared his service as *Paxon* with the election of Barack Obama for president in the United States: after many decades, the Mestizo minority had finally begun to break the social barriers that impeded them from participating in the town's system of offices. Had Chenalhó joined the United States in being a 'post-racial society?' At that time, when I had this conversation with Abel, I was trying to develop a research project on ethnic relations in Chenalhó. Hearing that intergroup tensions had ended forever was a watershed moment that led me to rethink my long-term research goals.

Things did not go as well as Abel had planned, however. In 2011-12, a series of unexpected events showed that racial tensions were still alive in Chenalhó. Chiefly, Martin faced ruthless criticism throughout his mandate, drawing the ire of indigenous people against Mestizos. Oddly, one of the chief complaints by Tzotzil people was that the Mestizo mayor was 'too professional' for the office. Long before his election, Martin had hired a secretary to attend to petitioners coming to his house. After taking

office, Martin set up office hours to attend to the public, refusing to speak with petitioners who arrived at his home before dawn. "A Presidente has to answer to people from the communities as they arrive. People travel from far away, sometimes walking hours just to speak with the Presidente… They have to be received cordially, and not with the presumption of superiority" Victorio, 32, an outspoken Tzotzil critic of the Mestizo mayor told me. To make matters worse, Martin traveled for business frequently, drawing criticism for failing to establish face-to-face contact with petitioners from rural communities. Though Martin exuded an image of professionalism, he was unable to build a reputation of warmth and generosity—the essential qualities of leaders in Maya communities, which are still predominantly structured by prestige hierarchies (see Chapter 3).

The most severe criticism against Martin, however, concerned accusations of corruption. Every mayor in Chenalhó is, to an extent, accused of taking a cut from public funds. But there was something novel about the criticism directed against Martin's presidency. The usual corruption accusations now had a taint of ethnic favoritism. Indigenous people often noticed that Martin appointed an unprecedented number of Mestizos (or people with affinal ties to Mestizo families) to his 2010-2012 Ayuntamiento. The question of who gets to receive positions filled by appointment is of crucial importance in Chenalhó. The few lucky individuals who receive appointments to these high offices instantly become far more affluent than most people in the town. There is fierce competition for these positions by appointment, as I witnessed during the 2010 and 2015 elections. At the end of the election, people line up in front of the candidates' houses to turn in their resumes and petition the candidates for an administrative job following the usual petitioning 'ritual' discussed in Equity and Common Good Provision. Nearly every male in the Cabecera turns in a petition for one or more positions, flooding mayoral candidates with endless stacks of paper before the election.

For many, the accusations of ethnic favoritism against Martin were justified. In my view, Martin's Ayuntamiento had, indeed, an unusual Mestizo face when compared with previous and subsequent ones, which hardly ever had any Mestizo official. It is unclear to me why Martin appointed Mestizos to municipal offices, drawing unnecessary criticism from the indigenous majority. Perhaps he thought Spanish fluency was a sign of competence. Or maybe Mestizos were the people whom he trusted. In 2012, I watched Martin and his Secretario defend against accusations of ethnic favoritism in their last public speeches. The Secretario remarked that the administration had only made appointments on a merit-basis. True or not, Martin's defense fell on deaf ears. His critics—most of whom were from well-to-do indigenous families from rural communities—were quick to point out that Martin's personal choices—his participation in religious events and the people he had surrounded himself with, including his wife and

friends—signaled a greater commitment to Mestizos. For people from rural communities, the notion of 'merit' had an entirely different meaning than it had for Martin. In communities traditionally structured by the cargo system, *merit* and *prestige* cannot be separated. Merit is achieved through service to the community and displays of altruism, rather than through the possession of skills (Chapter 3.1.2). For those who held the traditional understanding of merit, Martin's appointees were anything but meritorious: like most Mestizos, they lacked a history of community service and unambiguous displays of altruism through the indigenous cargo system.

As Martin's term in office progressed, conflicts between Mestizos and Tzotzil continued to pile up. Minor tensions began to simmer. In 2011, Mestizos—most of whom never practice agriculture—began to accuse the Tzotzil of setting fires on the steep mountains that surround the Cabecera valley. They claimed that deforestation could increase the risk of landslides, jeopardizing those who owned property in the lower parts of the valley. As we saw with the story of the Ejido San Pedro earlier, it is not uncommon to hear Mestizos portraying Maya farming techniques as 'irrational,' in particular their use of slash-and-burn to clear forest areas for agriculture. This ecological conflict was exacerbated when a Tzotzil man cut down immense trees (supposedly centenarian) located on the margins of the river San Pedro. This drew the ire of Tzotzil and Mestizo elders, who were quick to recall stories related to the trees dating back to the Mexican revolution. To make matters worse, in June 2011, in the middle of his presidency, Martin Cruz was nominated to serve the Mestizo cargo of Capitán del Anuncio de San Pedro. He accepted the nomination and sponsored the expensive fiesta a year later, clearly signaling a commitment to the Mestizo fiesta system and raising eyebrows among some of his Tzotzil supporters.

Abel's candidacy was eventually rejected by the *pasados*, who have the (unwritten) power to vet PRI candidates. To select its candidate, the PRI holds a traditional plebiscite. They set up a stage in the central plaza and have each mayoral candidate stand up and briefly introduce themselves. The crowd then raises their hands and woos in support of their favorite candidates. I was not present at the 2012 plebiscite, but I heard the story of what happened from several different people (including Abel himself). As Abel introduced himself, he received enough support from his PRI supporters. But According to various witnesses, Abel was rejected by *pasados*, who claimed that he was too young and lacked experience for the office. The only female candidate, Rosa Pérez Pérez, was also rejected by the PRI

pasados despite having a sizeable number of supporters. The pasados claimed that Rosa was not eligible for taking office as women are not allowed to touch the *vaxton*, or ceremonial staff.[29]

After the 2012 campaign, I began to hear some Tzotzil jokingly call Abel *Pasado Presidente*, or 'past president.' The nickname stuck during months after his botched candidacy. Some were scornful about Abel's participation in the cargo system, saying Abel's service as Paxon had been planned as a strategy for gaining acceptance from the traditionalist elders. For most Tzotzil, a cargoholder must show genuine interest in participating in the Tajimoltik rituals, which entail appeasing deities and distributing food to fiesta participants. To put it in Tzotzil terms, altruism must come from "the goodness of one's heart," and one must "give food" to gain prestige. Abel reassured me that the rumors that his service as Paxon had been premediated or politically motivated were false and stressed that he had been interested in Tzotzil rituals since childhood. He failed, however, to convince Tzotzil traditionalists of the truthfulness of his intentions.

In 2015, Abel and his brother Jaime attempted another run for mayor but again their candidacy was rejected, according to them, despite having a substantial number of backers. Mestizos universally told me that Abel's candidacy was barred because he is not indigenous. To quote Abel's father, Don Abel, "none of us [Mestizos] will ever be mayor again… we had our chance, but Martin ruined everything. They [the *pasados*] will never accept another Mestizo candidate. It's over for us." After failing to run for mayor again, Abel moved to San Cristóbal de las Casas. Nevertheless, he told me that he had not given up and planned to run for mayor again in the future "once the dust settles."

As I documented this entire political process, while interviewing Mestizos and Tzotzil I noticed that how hard it is for people in both groups to talk about ethnicity explicitly. Despite the tensions related to Martin's administration and the deliberate rejection of a Mestizo candidate, most of my informants continued to avoid making comments about ethnicity. When they spoke about ethnic favoritism, they did so in a nonchalant, discreet manner without ever talking about the topic explicitly. Some referred to the Mestizo-Tzotzil conflict as a "matter of the past." Mol Hernández, a Tzotzil elder (whose extensive cargo service career I discuss in Chapter 6.2.1), told me "the INI expelled all the bad Mestizos in the 1970s. Only the good ones stayed, and that's how the conflict between us came to an end." In 2011-12 it seemed that ethnicity was no longer an important issue in Chenalhó. Aside from the stories of conflict between

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[29] Rosa Pérez would eventually be elected as municipal mayor for the Green Party in 2015, leading to years of political disputes in Chenalhó; I do not narrate those events in this chapter as they have been widely covered by Chiapas newspapers.

groups before the 2000s, nothing in the present moment seemed to constitute new research material. Just like Abel, many people appeared to want to believe that Martin's election had put an end to the animosities between Mestizos and Tzotzil in Chenalhó. They tended to downplay those recent conflicts or stated that they had nothing to do with race and ethnicity. This led me to begin looking for more impactful research topics.

Had Chenalhó really become a 'post-racial' society? Did the election of a Mestizo put an end to centuries of ethnic animosity? As we saw, these things never happened, and beneath the appearance of harmony, ethnicity continued to play a role in shaping relations of cooperation and competition. However, that interethnic animosity remained unspoken and unacknowledged. In moments such as this, it is challenging to elicit people's thoughts on ethnicity through formal interviews. This happens because there are implicit rules of politeness that discourage people from using ethnonyms. For instance, when among their peers, the Tzotzil call Mestizos *kaxlan*—'non-indigenous,' a term which is considered by many a slur. But Tzotzil will avoid using that same term when speaking with foreigners (such as the anthropologist). Mestizos, too, often refer to indigenous people as *campesinos*[30] (peasants), *pobrecitos* (the poor). Although these words are class markers, in certain contexts they are used as euphemisms for ethnicity. Given that Tzotzil and Mestizos coexist in a small urban space, the existence of these unspoken rules of politeness might be a way of avoiding unnecessary mutual insults, which could easily cause latent and tacit animosities between the groups to escalate.

But while eliciting attitudes toward ethnicity through formal interviews can be challenging (or sometimes even impossible), certain public events, when observed ethnographically, can bring those implicit attitudes to the surface. This is what would happen in 2012, when Mestizos and Tzotzil would clash over fiesta space.

2.4. Fighting for the Right to Party

In late 2011, Martin Cruz announced that he had decided to leave a legacy to memorialize his administration for future generations: he issued an order to construct a large fiberglass roof (*techado*) above the central plaza's volleyball court, which stands between the *cabildo* and the central kiosk.

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[30] As an example, an interview excerpt: "the people who are setting fire in the forest are uneducated *campesinos*… these people are irrational and can only think about the present moment. Those *campesinos* can't think about the consequences of their actions." The interviewee was referring to indigenous people using slash-and-burn agriculture to clear areas for farming on the mountains surrounding the Cabecera.

The decision to build the roof drew heavy criticism from Tzotzil people. First, Martin approved funding for the project through an executive order, bypassing the standard procedure for deciding on funding for large municipal projects. In Chenalhó, if a construction project is considered of municipal importance—that is, if the project affects more than one of the over 100 communities—it must be discussed and approved through an assembly with *Agentes* (headmen) of all communities. Such municipal-level meetings typically happen twice a month at the Casa de Cultura (see Chapter 3.2.3). When the construction of the glass roof began, many Agentes questioned why they had not been consulted before the project's approval. For many Tzotzil, this was the last straw. They no longer refrained from referring to the mayor as a *kaxlan* (foreigner/Mestizo). Agentes from communities in the Cabecera began to meet with the *pasados* to discuss whether Martin's decision to fund the glass roof without approval from the communities had broken *usos y costumbres* (customary law).

But the more important reason was that the dome stands precisely in the area where the Mestizos used to celebrate their fiesta de San Pedro, the largest celebration in town that happens every June. There are two interrelated Fiestas de San Pedro: 1) the Tzotzil Muk'ta K'in ('the big festival') which is organized and financed mostly by indigenous cargoholders (the *Alperes* and *Kapitan* of San Pedro); 2) the smaller Mestizo fiesta, which happens a day before the Muk'ta K'in's main concert.

The main attraction of the Muk'ta K'in is a large concert that occurs in the Cebecera's central plaza. Usually, the municipal administration invites a big *norteña* band (from Northern Mexico) to play in Chenalhó, and they set up a big stage in the central plaza, between the church and the court. A day before the concert, the Mestizo members of the Junta de Festejos (Committee of Festivities) sets up a sheltered area on the opposite side of the central plaza (between the town hall and the kiosk). The Junta then places tables and chairs in the area and hire some local and less known band (*technobandas*, which mix electronic and traditional instruments) to play covers of *ranchera* songs. The Mestizo event is sometimes called *baile*, 'dancing party.' I attended both concerts several times. It is hard to tell the two events apart. Mestizo and Tzotzil cargoholders coordinate to ensure that the transition between the Mestizo *baile* and the Tzotzil concert happens smoothly. The first time that I watched the event I did not notice that there were two fiestas happening at the same, each being organized by a its own committee.

The Fiesta of San Pedro happens in the middle of the rainy season, when it rains almost every day. The main concert of the Muk'ta K'in happens in an open area for anyone wishing to attend, free of charge. Hundreds of visitors from neighboring Maya towns come to Chenalhó just to watch the *norteña* band play, and there are no sheltered areas for those participants. Due to the seasonal weather, visitors almost always get exposed to thunderstorms. But while rain does not seem to bother indigenous men—

especially those from rural communities—it is seen as a major problem for Mestizos. For that reason, Mestizos hire a company to set up a temporary canopy to shelter the area where their smaller fiesta takes place. To cover the expenses, the Committee of Festivities charges an entrance fee to people willing to attend their fiesta. The fee is also a way of creating an entrance barrier against lower-class families who cannot afford attending the fiesta. Charging entrance fees for fiestas, however, contradicts one of the most rooted Tzotzil traditions: that all fiesta expenditures must be covered by a single fiesta sponsor. For that reason, Tzotzil rarely attend the Mestizo fiesta—except for a few *ladinoized* families who live in the Cabecera and have shifted to speaking Spanish. In Figure 2.4, I show a view of Chenalhó's central plaza. The Muk'ta K'in concert takes place in the uncovered area to the left side of the main church, while the Mestizo *baile* happens on the other side of the plaza, to the right side of the church, the area that since 2012 has been covered by a blue fiberglass roof.

Figure 2.4: View of Chenalhó's urban center

When the administration of Martin Cruz began to build the glass roof exactly where Mestizos have their fiesta, some questioned whether the mayor was trying to help Mestizos. With a permanent roof, the majority-Mestizo Committee of Festivities would no longer need to hire a company to set up a canopy, which would in turn save money for the organizers of the fiesta. The Mestizo mayor rebutted accusations of ethnic favoritism by saying that the roof would be used for all types of events—including political speeches and some Tzotzil rituals—that would benefit everyone, not just Mestizos. But few paid attention to his defense. By then, there were already too many reasons to question his loyalty to the indigenous majority. In June 2012, the Committee of Festivities announced that they would charge a fee of 200 pesos for those wishing to reserve a table for the inauguration of the new roof. The inauguration was set to happen on June 28—not by coincidence, the same date of the Mestizo Fiesta de San Pedro. The decision to charge a fee to fiesta attendants drew outrage from the Tzotzil community. Others complained that the flyer announcing the baile did not mention that there would be a fee to attend. Combined with the historical Tzotzil aversion against Mestizo taxation, the misunderstanding over the attendance fee turned out to be a recipe for conflict.

In the weeks ahead of the *Fiesta*, June 2012, I reached to some of my Mestizo friends with whom I had watched the concerts in the two previous years. I wanted to know what their plans were for the upcoming event. The municipal administration had invited Banda Machos, a *technobanda* from the state of Jalisco. I visited my friend Roberto, 23, who works at his family-owned restaurant and hotel. When I asked him about his plans were, he replied,

"I'm not coming to the concert this year."

"Why are you not coming?" I asked.

"I have too much work here in the restaurant. It's going to be packed. There are too many drunkards around the time of the fiesta."

"Wait… but we watched the concert last year together. And the year before too. What happened now?"

"Well, it was different bands. I really liked Pesado [the 2011 band]. Didn't you?"

"Yes."

"So who wants to watch this Banda Machos? Who the hell chose that band? They are terrible. None of us [the Mestizos] is going to watch the concert this year. But you're welcome to join us a day earlier for the *baile* and the inauguration of the *techado*."

I did not immediately understand why Mestizos wanted to boycott the Banda Machos concert. They never explained what the problem with the *banda* was. I was not in Chenalhó in the beginning of

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that year, so I am not aware that there was disagreement over who to invite to play during the fiesta. In 2010, the municipality hosted Grupo Exterminador, a northern band specialized in *narcocorridos* with fairly explicit lyrics. In 2011, they received the Grupo Pesado, another *norteña* band that performs mostly romantic songs with an old-school *ranchera* inclination. Banda Machos—I would later learn—become popular nationwide for their lyrics honoring Mexican indigenous groups. For example, their hit "Sangre de Indio" ('Indian Blood') begins with the following lines:

> *Por las venas de mi padre*
> *Le corre la sangre también*
> *Como a mí, sangre del indio*
> *Que calla, que llora, que ama*
> *Que sabe sufrir, el indio aquel*
> *Que mi madre amo porque sabe*
> *Que es un hombre fiel*
> *Gracias a Dios que es mi padre*
> *Y que yo he heredado*
> *Ser indio como él.*

This song, among other famous nativist tunes by Banda Machos, motivated the Mestizo contempt. The contempt was more visible amongst their youngest, such as Roberto, who see themselves as increasingly powerless in the town where they were born. As the Fiesta de San Pedro began, the ethnic tensions that had been simmering for two years since Martin's election would finally come to a boil. I watched a major fight between Mestizos and Tzotzil break out during the inauguration of the glass cover in front of the *cabildo*. My field diary entry for that day tells the rest of the story [notes in brackets]:

> We went to the inauguration of the *techado*. There was a band playing, possibly hired by the Mestizos [indeed, the *technobanda* was hired by the Junta de Festejos]. The inauguration happened right after the explosion of the *castillo* and the dance of the *vakax k'ok'* [men wearing bull-shaped frames with fireworks attached to them]. Since it rained, most people sought refuge under the *techado* during the fireworks show and the dance of the bulls. When the show began, a lot of people, mostly indigenous men, squeezed under the *techado*, and there was little to no space to watch the band. Leslie [author's wife] and I walked around it, looking for an entrance, to no avail. There was

a large group of young Mestizos in the middle of the crowd, while older Mestizos and women were inside the *kiosko* [where they served beer]. I tried to make myself visible to see if the Mestizos were going to invite me to join them, but my strategy didn't work. Some of them had already taken their chairs and tables while others were trying to move more chairs to the center of the crowd. That's when the confusion began. As the Mestizos handed their chairs to each other, a group of indigenous men began intercepting the chairs and throwing them outside of the covered area. The Mestizos insisted on trying to bring chairs into the area designated for the fiesta, which in turn made the much larger indigenous crowd angrier. The police were called (by who?), but they didn't intervene, perhaps because there was no way to catch the instigators in the middle of the crowd. The throwing of the chairs gained momentum, and soon dozens of indigenous men were throwing every chair away, not only those that were being passed along by the Mestizos, but also those that were piled up on the sides. The Mestizos stopped resisting; the women seemed scared. For a moment, it seemed like a huge brawl was about break out. Some men pushed each other, but I couldn't tell who they were. I asked a Tzotzil guy about what was happening, and he said that "those who want to get drunk" [Mestizo men] wanted to use public space for their chairs. I saw Alejandro [my then Tzotzil teacher], and he told me that "those who have money" [i.e., those who can afford the 200 peso fee] were taking all the space with their chairs and tables.

We saw a bunch of Regidores [traditional councilmen] walking in the crowd, near to wear the chairs were. They probably had been called by someone to solve the dispute. A few minutes later, the show stopped, and the *sindico* [vice mayor] took the microphone and said in Tzotzil that the area under the *techado* was for everyone and that chairs and tables would not be allowed. Some indigenous men took away the chairs and tables that the Mestizos had saved for themselves, and the latter didn't react. The Mestizos were obviously powerless; most of them were young. Don Carlos [50-year-old Mestizo man] seemed furious. He seemed like he was trying to identify who his enemies were so that he could take revenge later. About an hour later, when the conflict seemed to dissipate, the Mestizos tried to take advantage of it by trying to look 'in control.' Abel stood on a chair, perhaps trying to stay visible and look calm, downplaying the incident at the same time. Maybe they were downplaying the conflict

to maintain their 'macho' appearance. Besides, I don't think they had any other option as they were outnumbered. Roberto called me and insisted that Leslie should have a seat [on the chairs under dispute]. Leslie refused to sit, saying she was afraid. I said "se molestaron unos por las sillas, no?" ['some people were upset because of the chairs, right?'] But Roberto refused to speak about the incident, downplaying it again, saying that it was nothing. Business as usual. Everyone was trying to save face and appear calm. No Mestizo was sitting on the chairs at this point, though Roberto insisted that we should sit down. What was he trying to do? Was he just being cordial or trying to use us to claim chair space? [I now believe that he was trying to 'protect' us following the Mestizo hospitality practices discussed earlier.]… About an hour after the chair incident, most Tzotzil men had left the place, and by then there was enough space for people to dance. Ironically, most indigenous men quickly became disinterested in the musical attraction. I noticed the singer addressing the crowd as "la raza," and several times greeting people from San Cristobal and Larráinzar. It was an attraction by Mestizos for Mestizos.

Once the dust settled, the *baile* finally began with an hour delay. Mestizos managed to lay out their chairs and tables as planned. But when people stood up to dance, something novel happened: there were two distinct groups of dancers. Each group danced a different style, although following a single rhythm. The Mestizos from more traditional families danced as they usually do: women and men in pairs, holding each other's hands or waist, giving small but steady steps and swinging their hips at the pace of the drumbeat. The other group were the teenagers with indigenous background who had been taking dance lessons at the Casa de Cultura for about a year. They danced in a more self-aware, calculated manner, sometimes doing extravagant flips and whirls—which they clearly had practiced beforehand. They often seemed out of step when compared with the more 'natural' dancers from the traditional Mestizo families.

The differences between dance styles caused miscoordination. Couples from each side began to elbow each other, intruding into the other groups' personal space. As the night went on, alcohol intake surged, as usual. Technobandas in Chiapas usually start playing slow tunes—between 80 and 100 beats per minute, but as the night progresses and band members get drunker, the songs become faster, reaching up to 150 beats per minute. That was when brawls between groups began to break out. In the remainder of my field notes, I document the identity of the people who took part in those fights. The fights took place between men of indigenous and descent and those from the more traditional Mestizo families.

Some of the Mestizos drank more heavily than usual, perhaps to cope with the chair incident earlier that night, which perhaps they saw as a humiliating defeat. But recall, also, that a few months earlier Abel Villafuerte, who was one of the central participants in this fiesta, had just been barred from running for office by Tzotzil traditionalists. Many saw this evidence that Mestizos were being discriminated against. They talked about being stripped of their political rights. But—as I remarked in my field diary—there was nothing they could do to reclaim fiesta space. Any response could cause the conflict to escalate, and escalation could certainly result in their permanent expulsion from the town. I ended my diary entry remarking that "at the end, Abelito and his brother, along with two other guys wearing cowboy hats [relatives from other towns] hugged each other in a circle and exchanged words of encouragement, possibly to reaffirm solidarity ties." There was not much Mestizos could do besides that.

The next day, I went to the central plaza to watch the Banda Machos concert. For the first time, Mestizos did not get together to watch the show from the rooftop of the Posada Anabel (owned by Abel's family). As Banda Machos played 'Sangre Indígena' and other nativist songs, Mestizos stayed focused on their work, serving customers of their restaurants and ignoring everything that was happening outside. No one wanted to talk about what had happened on the previous day. Because of the conflict over chair space, the Committee of Festivities decided to pay the cover band for another night of *baile*, which started right after the Banda Machos concert. Perhaps this was a means of compensating those who had spent 200 pesos for a reservation but had not enjoyed the party. This time, however, the Committee furtively set up tables and chairs early in the afternoon to claim fiesta space before anyone could object to the event. To my knowledge, no fights broke out during the second night of *baile*.

These events narrated above and in previous sections show how some Tzotzil youth have pursued a Mestizo lifestyle, seeking to erase long-established stereotypes. For instance, some have taken dancing lessons and revendicated the right to participate in Mestizo events. Some Mestizos, too, have sought to break ethnic barriers by volunteering to sponsor Tzotzil fiestas. Nevertheless, the boundaries separating both groups have not disappeared; instead, they might have been strengthened during these events. While members of both groups have signaled a desire for conciliation, there are structural factors that cause intergroup friction to emerge over time. Such are, for example, 1) Tzotzil traditionalists banning Mestizos from political offices, 2) Mestizos seeking to keep Tzotzil away from their fiesta space, or 3) Mestizos boycotting a concert by a *banda* with its pro-indigenous songs. Most of these conflicts happen silently, given the existence of politeness norms discouraging people from talking about ethnicity explicitly. These unspoken animosities can accumulate over time, culminating in punctuated conflicts such as the fight over fiesta space above described. When conflicts such as that happen, the actors who were seeking

intergroup conciliation (Abel, the Tzotzil youth who took dancing lessons and pursued a Mestizo lifestyle) are launched back in their initial structural positions and intergroup boundaries become reified. This is the mechanism by which group boundaries in Chiapas remain stable over time despite their apparent malleability.

While the boundaries persist, the power relations between groups can shift from one generation to the next. As we saw, younger Mestizos have complained of discrimination and now see themselves as an ethnic minority—which is evidenced by the fact that since 2012 some Mestizos have been discouraged from running for high municipal offices. In the next part of the chapter, I use economic games to index prosocial norms among Mestizos and Tzotzil, using intergenerational comparisons to understand how this shift has affected cooperation between and within groups.

3. Experiments in Cooperation

After the events that I described in the earlier section, I spent six months in the Cabecera doing ethnographic fieldwork and running an experimental study that questioned whether changing power relations between Mestizos and Tzotzil influenced how groups cooperate. The study addressed two questions: 1) what are the social/contextual factors that drive people to consider ethnic categories when cooperating? And 2) cognitively, how categorization and essentialism influence willingness to cooperate? I used methods adapted from a study by Gil-White (2004), who used behavioral games to measure prosociality among two groups of Mongolian pastoralists. Gil-White found that ethnic boundaries *increase* people's prosocial attitudes toward out-group members, though his sample size was too small to be conclusive. In a related experimental study, Habyarimana et al. (2007) detected a tendency among Ugandan groups to exclude and punish out-group individuals while favoring ingroup peers.

I predicted to find ingroup favoritism among Mestizos and Tzotzil. I hypothesized that generational changes in power relations (younger Mestizos losing power to younger Tzotzil) would result in a decline in ethnic favoritism in younger generations (given informants' reports that ethnic conflict in Chenalhó had been solved and was now a matter of the past). The experiments show, however, that the latter hypothesis was only partially confirmed. Although ethnic favoritism had decreased among younger Tzotzil, it has increased among younger Mestizos.

To quantify the effect of changing intergroup relations on cooperation, I adapted experiments by Gil-White (2004), who showed groups of polaroid photographs to Kazakh and Torguud pastoralists in Mongolia and asked them to play the ultimatum game against a group of 20 pictures of individuals from the other group. The design of the study was as follows:

1) First visit: we explained the study, obtained informed consent, and took each participant's photograph.

2) Second visit (two weeks later): we asked participants to play the Dictator or Ultimatum games (in random order) in the in- or out-group condition (the condition was randomized).

3) Third visit (two weeks): we conducted another round of Ultimatum and Dictator games in the remaining condition (in- or out-group) and present a randomly assigned ultimatum game offer from out- or ingroup participants.

4) Fourth visit: we presented each participant with a final in- or out-group Ultimatum game offer. We then conducted a social network task and a household survey to collect demographic and socioeconomic data. Some participants (depending on their availability) undertook another round of experimental games for a new allocation study (see Chapter 3).

Unlike Gil-White's Mongolian setting, Mestizos and Tzotzil live together in the same area (the Cabecera), and most participants knew (or were acquainted with) each other, which allowed us to collect social network data between participants. I explain the experimental games we used below.

g) **Ultimatum Game (UG)**. The UG is a two-round bargaining game in which a first player (the proposer) is presented with a sum of money (here, 100 pesos) and allowed to offer part of the money to a second player (the responder). If the responder accepts the proposer's offer, both receive their designated stakes. If the responder rejects the proposer's offer, neither player gets any money.

h) **Dictator Game (DG).** The DG game is a single shot game in which a player (the proposer) receives a certain amount of money (here, 50 pesos) and is asked whether he/she wishes to give part of the stake to a random anonymous player (the responder). As the proposer cannot be punished by the responder, he/she is allowed to take whichever percentage of the stake he/she wants.

UG and DG have been used to index prosocial tendencies in hundreds of experimental studies. Because in the DG the proposer cannot be punished and only gives money away willingly, its results have been interpreted as a measure of altruism, prosociality, or generosity (terms which are generally considered to be synonymous) (Fehr and Schmidt 1999; Fehr and Fischbacher 2003; Engel 2011). More recently, however, some have argued that DG expresses social norms of fairness rather than genuine altruistic inclinations (List 2007; Bardsley 2008). The UG involves strategic thinking as the proposer tries to predict the responder's expectations to minimize his/her chances of being punished and losing the

entire stake. Initially, the UG was interpreted as evidence for a universal human predisposition to cooperate. However, after Henrich (2000) and Henrich et al (2004; Ensminger and Henrich 2014) showed that UG results can vary considerably across cultures, the UG has been interpreted as an index of cultural norms of fairness.

UG and DG, along with other experimental games, have been consistently used to detect the existence of implicit norms guiding cooperation and to measure the degree to which people are willing to allocate resources and punish unfair behavior at their personal expense (for descriptions and discussion, see Henrich et al. 2004; Chuah et al. 2005). As their cross-cultural applicability remains difficult (Chibnik 2005; Baumard and Sperber 2010), a side-goal of the research was to improve the intelligibility of the experiments for our Chiapas setting. Following Gil-White (2004), I used photographs of groups of people to introduce an 'ethnicity manipulation' to dictator and ultimatum games. For each proposer, a research assistant and I laid out 8 pictures of in- or out-group members and then explained the games' rules (DG or UG, in random order). To make sure proposers understood the experiment, we asked each to explain the games' rules back to us before instructing them to make an offer. To minimize interviewer effects, we told participants that proposals would be anonymized and kept secret from the interviewers. For the UG, we asked proposers to insert offers in an envelope, which we kept sealed until delivering it to respondents. We used numerical codes to identify the envelopes with UG proposals and to randomly match proposers with respondents.

Sampling strategies varied for each population. For the Tzotzil, we selected 32 households randomly from different neighborhoods of the Cabecera. Because the Mestizo population is smaller, we ended up visiting every Mestizo household in town. We found 28 Mestizo heads of household willing to participate in the study and used self-reported identity to determine people's ethnic affiliation. All participants in the experiments were male. The study was not concerned with gender identity, and heads of household in Chenalhó are almost invariably male. Given the small sample sizes, restricting participants to males was also a way of minimizing variability and making results easier to interpret. One of the 60 participants (a Mestizo) did not have time to follow up, so we dropped him from the games (though we eventually reached back to him in 2014 to conduct the household and social network surveys). The total number of participants, thus, is 27 Mestizos and 32 Tzotzil. Each played the ultimatum and dictator games twice (in the in- and outgroup conditions), resulting in 236 observations.

The household survey was based on the questionnaires and variables established by the Roots of Human Sociality Project (Ensminger and Henrich 2014). We collected detailed information on household wealth (a list of productive assets owned by all members of the household), head of household income

(from wages, commerce, rent, farming, or other sources), caloric consumption (intra-household food allocation), and demographic information of all household members. The questionnaire also included a section where we asked participants about their history in the cargo service and their participation in the *compadragzo* system (which I discuss in chapters 4-6).

As I discussed earlier, we conducted a social network survey by presenting participants with pictures of other community members. For each picture, we asked several questions[31] regarding the relationship between the respondent and the depicted participants. I used the responses to measure the frequency of interaction, kinship ties, mutual social knowledge, and construct measures of 'fame' (how well-known a participant is to others). As explained earlier (1.5), I used the answers from questions 4-5 to construct frequency of interaction and kinship networks, and with that data, I obtained several network centrality measures.

3.1. Prosociality and Ethnic Favoritism

Results for the Dictator Game confirm the existence of ethnic favoritism in both groups. I summarize the results in Table 2.3. Mestizos gave more (.296) when playing against other Mestizos and gave less when playing against Tzotzil (.122). Similarly, the Tzotzil gave more in the ingroup condition (.312) and less in the outgroup condition (.087, F = 21.580, p < .001). There were no significant differences between the way Mestizos and Tzotzil played the games, and results were determined mainly by game conditions (ingroup vs. outgroup). Figure 2.5 shows histograms with the distributions of offers for all games, conditions, and participant groups. As we can see, Mestizo and Tzotzil offers tend to mirror each other. When playing the DG in the outgroup condition, offers of both groups are highly left-skewed.

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[31] 1) Do you know this person (yes/no)? 2) Do you know his/her name (yes/no)? 3) Do you know where he/she lives (yes/no)? 4) How often do you talk to each other (never/every year/every month/every week/daily)? 5) Are you both related? If yes, how? 6) Is this person Indigenous (yes/no/mixed)? 7) Does he/she speak Spanish (yes/no/some)? 8) Does he/she speak Tzotzil (yes/no/some)? 9) What is his/her nickname?

Table 2.3: Ultimatum and dictator game results in the in- and outgroup conditions

	Ultimatum game				Dictator game			
	Tzotzil		Mestizos		Tzotzil		Mestizos	
Condition	Offer (SD)	Parity	Offer (SD)	Parity	Offer (SD)	Parity	Offer (SD)	Parity
Ingroup	.398 (.151)	.47	.390 (.157)	.41	.312 (.184)	.16	.296 (.208)	.18
Outgroup	.402 (.153)	.47	.406 (.203)	.33	.087 (.092)	0	.122 (.092)	0

While detecting ethnic favoritism in the DG is not entirely surprising—given the many studies showing that intergroup bias is a widespread phenomenon[32]—the results favor the interpretation of dictator games as a measure of altruism. Since players give different offers depending on who they are playing against, which suggests that they are not blindly following conventional norms of fairness but instead are giving higher portions to people with whom they are more likely to empathize—that is, members of the same ethnic group. As Table 2.3 shows, both Tzotzil and Mestizos only did equal splits ('parity') when playing the DG against ingroup members (.16 for Tzotzil, and .18 for Mestizos). When playing in the outgroup condition, no proposer did equal splits. This suggests that the skewed DG offers reflect a sense of inequality between proposers and respondents. When the proposer plays against co-ethnics, he is more likely to see himself as equal to other participants, thus making an equal split.

An alternative interpretation to DG results is that because most participants knew each other and had stronger ties with ingroup members, ingroup favoritism could be explained as a function of social distance rather than ethnicity. I tested that hypothesis by running linear regression models with DG offers as the dependent variable. As the dependent variables, I used game condition (ingroup vs. outgroup dummy variable) measures of social distance (average frequency of interaction between proposer and respondents shown in the pictures) and kinship distance. In all models, game condition trumps social distance measures as the best explanatory variable for game results. People tend to give lower offers when playing with out-group members regardless of the social distance—either measured through kinship or friendship ties—between them. I show regression results in Table 2.6, Section 3.3.

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[32] See Glaeser et al (2000).
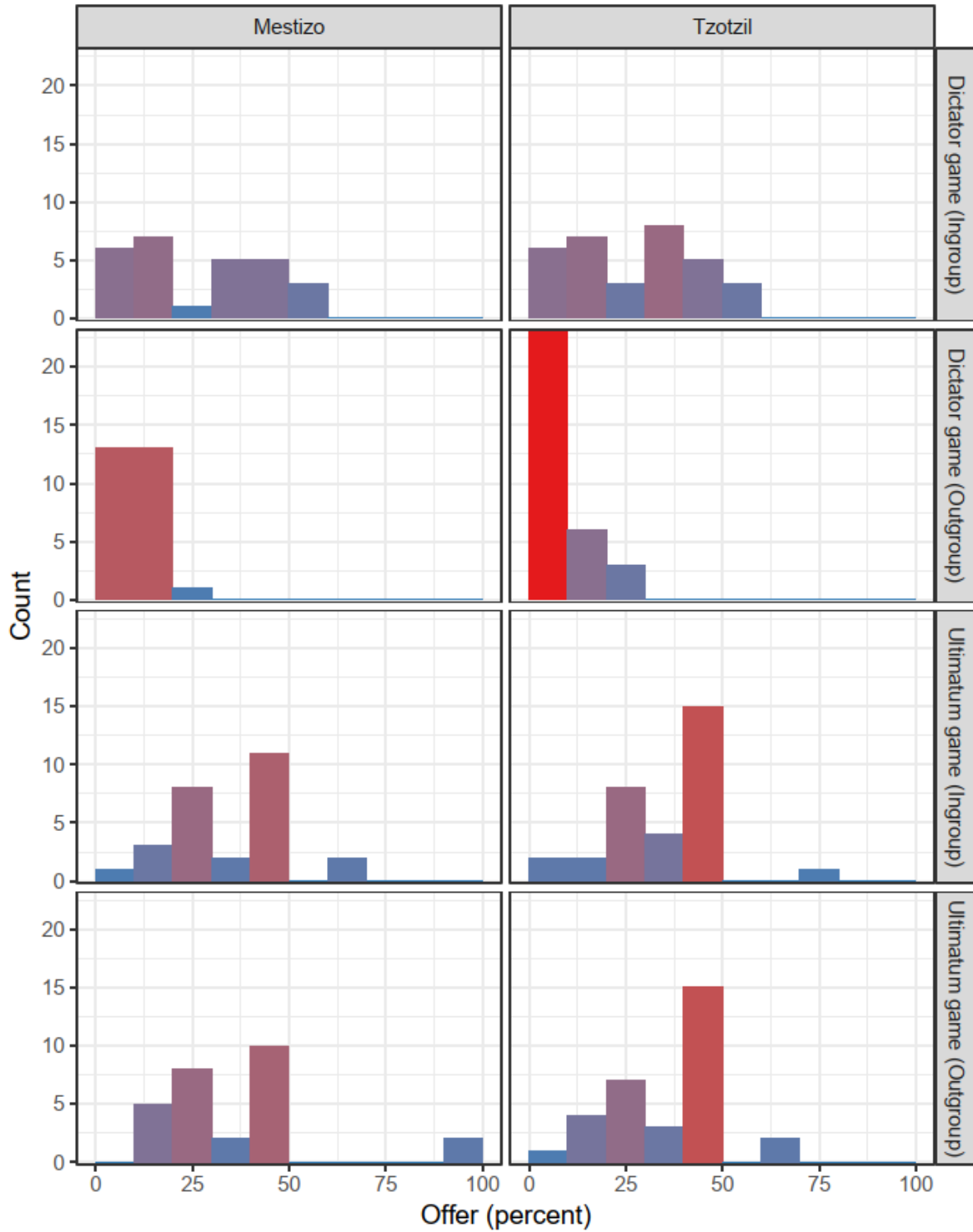
Figure 2.5: Distribution of Ultimatum and Dictator game offers by group and game condition

Ultimatum Game offers show a remarkably different pattern when compared with Dictator Games. As Figure 2.5 shows, ethnicity (of either proposer of respondents) did not affect UG offers. The modal offer for the UG was the 50-50 split. Equal splits accounted for 47% of offers by Tzotzil proposers and 41% and 33% (in- and outgroup) of offers by Mestizo proposers. This confirms an old finding of studies comparing DG with UG results: that proposers are more prosocial when respondents are allowed to punish them (Frey and Bohnet 1995; Charness and Gneezy 2008).

Several studies have debated what drives proposers in the UG to give high offers. One possibility is that empathy (or perspective-taking) may translate into higher offers (Page and Nowak 2002; Takagishi et al. 2014). However, empathy does not seem to matter for our UG results (as it did for the DG) given the absence of ethnic favoritism and that people are more likely to empathize with ingroup members. In his study of Mongolian pastoralists, Gil-White (2003) argued that proposers gave high offers because 1) they feared being punished and 2) they were concerned about their reputation. For our study, only fear of punishment appears to be a determinant of UG offers. As we saw, most DG offers to out-group members were zero or near zero, which suggests that reputation was not a concern among participants. While investigating other possible determinants of UG offers, I discovered that age and bilingualism levels were the strongest predictors of offer size. I discuss this relationship in Section 3.3, where I discuss how game results appear to reflect intergenerational changes in Chenalhó.

Given these differences between DG and UG, which game is a more reliable index of cooperativeness? In my view, the UG is a better measure for Chiapas as it is based on more realistic assumptions about the nature of cooperation. Because Mestizos and Tzotzil live together in the Cabecera—sharing backgrounds, histories, and reputation systems—both groups can punish each other for behaving unfairly in real-life exchanges. Punishment-free decision-making events such as the DG seldom occur. The fact that Mestizos and Tzotzil behave similarly in the UG suggests that both groups share similar expectations of fairness: both tend to believe that offers 50% lower are more likely to be punished. This similarity in game behavior likely results from the fact that both groups have engaged in relations of cooperation for centuries. Both groups have a shared understanding of each other's understandings of 'fairness' as they have engaged in commercial exchange for a long time. As I discussed in Chapter 1, Henrich et al. (2010) showed that market integration is the most crucial predictor of offers in the UG across societies. Both Mestizos and Tzotzil (from the Cabecera) are undoubtedly market integrated as they have used some form of currency as a medium of exchange for centuries.

3.2. Reluctance to Punish

An unexpected outcome of the UG was the almost complete absence of punishment. I call this trend 'punishment avoidance.' Responders only rejected 5 of the 118 offers (4.2%). Of the 5 rejected offers, 3 offers were made by outgroup, and 2 were by ingroup members. 3 of the rejecting responders were Tzotzil, and 2 were Mestizos, and the rejected proposals averaged 25% of the stake. We recorded the explanations of all responders. Responders who rejected UG offers seem to be motivated more by a mixture of spite and concerns for fairness. I reproduce below the explanations of those who rejected the proposals.

1) "I'll reject so they won't make much more money than me (Tzotzil, rejected a 20% offer)."
2) "I'll reject so that the game becomes more equal (Tzotzil, rejected a 30% offer)."
3) "That's it! They didn't give much, so I'm rejecting (Tzotzil, rejected a 20% offer)."
4) "I believe that they [the proposers depicted in the photos] might have money. They are in a good economic position and are young (Mestizo, rejected a 25% offer)."
5) "All of them are in a good economic position and are not even sending one-third of the pile. Had they sent 40 or 45, I would have accepted. (Mestizo, rejected a 30% offer)."

After delivering the offers, we asked responders what their minimum acceptable offers (MAO) would be. Surprisingly, 59% of responders said that their MAOs would be zero and that they would not punish proposers under any circumstance. The average MAO was 7.7% of the stake. I found no significant effect of ethnicity (of proposers or responders) on the distribution of MAOs, as shown in Figure 2.6.
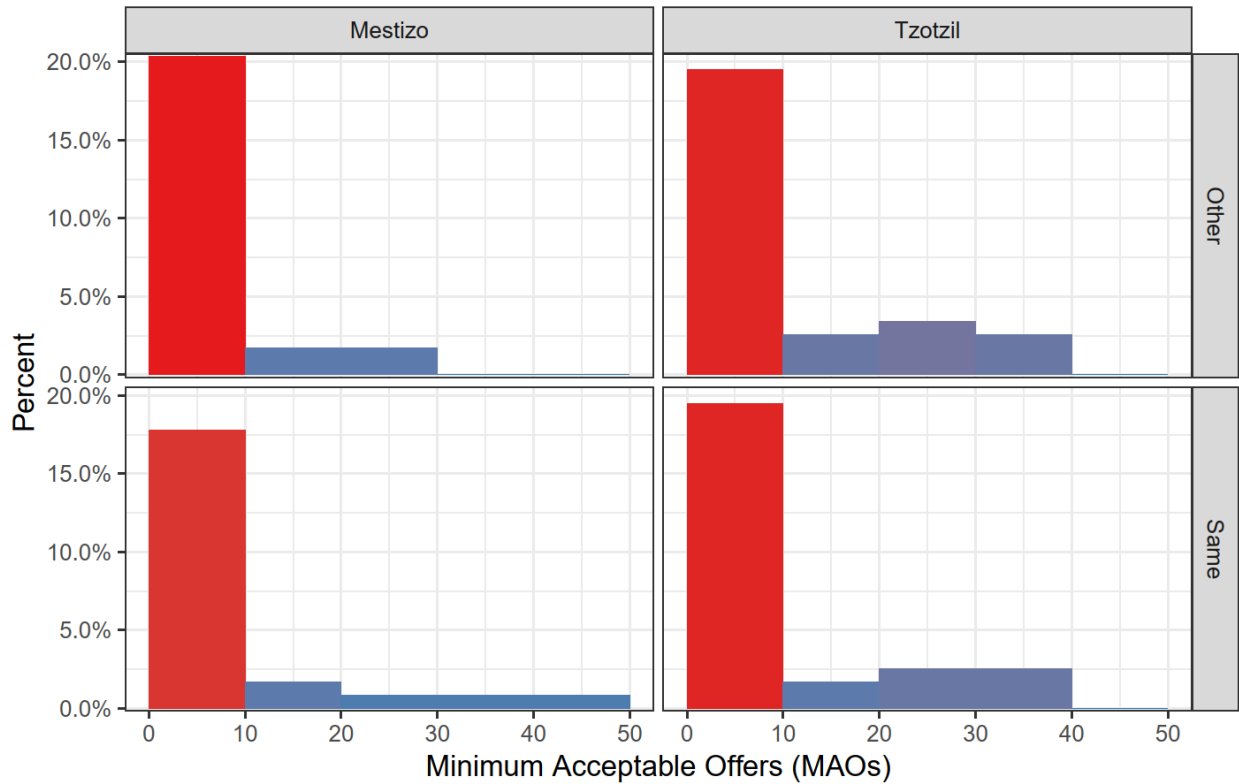
Figure 2.6: Distribution of MAOs by group and game condition

What explains the near absence of altruistic punishment in Chenalhó? The first possibility is that social distance may have affected people's willingness to punish. As I discussed earlier, the games we used in this study were not entirely anonymous, and proposers and responders almost always knew (or were acquainted with) each other. However, studies on the effect of social distance on UG offers are still inconclusive, and it is not yet clear whether the willingness to punish proposers increases or decreases with greater social distance.[33]

However, a more plausible explanation has to do with the size of the Tzotzil and Mestizo communities studied here and the existence of consensual reputation systems among both groups. This explanation was formulated by Henrich et al. (2010), who showed that population size is the best predictor of MAOs (among the variables available to them). They argue that as populations grow, face-to-face reputation systems become obsolete. While in small-scale societies reputational loss works as a form

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[33] While one study shows that social distance decreases offer acceptance rates (Yu, Hu, and Zhang 2015) another shows the opposite effect (Kim et al. 2013).

of punishment, large-scale and more diffused groups need to develop punishment mechanisms to replace the role of reputation systems. Several small-scale societies studied by Henrich et al. show equally low acceptance rates in the UG as I found in Chenalhó.[34] Their explanation works for our setting. The Mestizo population of Chenalhó is about 200, and the over 100 Tzotzil communities in Chenalhó have a median size of 191. As I show in Chapter 3, Mestizos and Tzotzil in the Cabecera share a single reputation system. Using a cultural consensus analysis, I show that they agree with each other when ranking community members based on prestige. It is then plausible that Tzotzil and Mestizos in Chenalhó avoid punishing because they share a single reputation system. Since an agreed-upon reputation system could inhibit antisocial behavior, there is no need for individuals to perform altruistic punishment.

To summarize game results: the DG shows significant ethnic favoritism (or nepotism) among Tzotzil and Mestizos. This degree of ethnic bias is remarkable given those ethnic boundaries tend to be fluid and, in part, defined by cultural traits. On the other hand, UG results show that when groups can punish each other for selfish (or spiteful) behavior, proposers become remarkably more prosocial, and the effect of ethnicity on offers disappears. The uniformity in the UG strategies between groups likely stems from the fact that Mestizos and Tzotzil interact frequently and have for centuries engaged in exchange relations. As both groups inhabit the same place and cooperate regularly, people have a consensual understanding of what constitutes minimum acceptable offers to in- and outgroup members. Because they share a single reputation system, they have not needed to develop peer-to-peer mechanisms to punish unfair behavior.

3.3. Intergenerational Changes

Earlier, I discussed how power relations between Mestizos and Tzotzil have changed over the past five decades. I showed that younger Mestizos see themselves as increasingly disempowered and outnumbered in Chenalhó, while the Tzotzil have taken control of the town's political offices. To what extent are these changes reflected in our experimental game results?

To illustrate how prosocial behavior is affected by intergenerational changes, I plot UG and DG offers against the age of proposers in Figure 2.7. For Tzotzil participants, offers tend to decrease with age.

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[34] Mongolian pastoralists, Orma and Sangu (Kenya), Mapuche (Chile), and Tsimané (Bolivia) have rejection rates between 0 and 10% (Gil-White 2004; Ensminger 2004; Henrich and Smith 2004; Gurven 2004).

For Mestizos, we see the opposite trend: offers increase with proposer age. The effect of age is more pronounced in the UG.
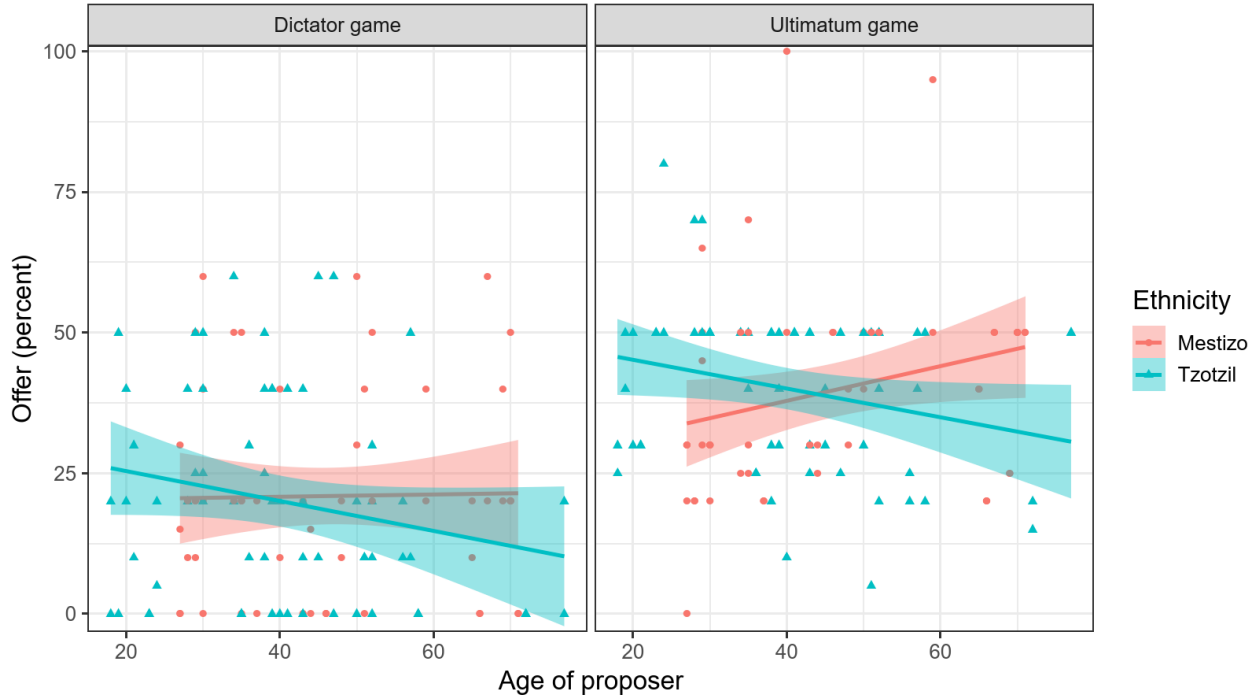
Figure 2.7: Age of players and Ultimatum and Dictator game offers

To test for statistical effects, I split participants into two generations, younger (18-40 y/o) and older (41-77 y/o) using a 'natural breaks' partitioning method. I then ran a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with three factors: 1) generations (old vs. young), 2) ethnicity of proposers, and 3) game type (UG vs. DG). The MANOVA suggests an interaction between generations and proposer ethnicity ($F = 3.827$, p-value = .05). To make these generational effects clearer, I show the average offers for each game by ethnicity and generational group in Table 2.4. Ethnic favoritism in the DG tends to be greater among older Tzotzil and younger Mestizos. The same symmetric pattern seems to be determining UG results, with older Tzotzil and younger Mestizos making lower offers than other younger Tzotzil and older Mestizos.

Table 2.4: Ultimatum and dictator game offers by generation and ethnic group

	Generation (n)	UG (Ingroup)	UG (outgroup)	DG (ingroup)	DG (outgroup)
Tzotzil	Younger (18)	.414	.433	.344	.233
	Older (14)	.379	.361	.271	.10
Mestizos	Younger (12)	.367	.35	.317	.242
	Older (16)	.41	.45	.28	.247

Table 2.5: Comparison of some demographic variables of Tzotzil and Mestizo generations

	Generation (n)	HH size	Education	Daily Income	Wealth	MI	Godchildren	Cargos	Fame	Bilingualism	Prestige	Cooperativeness
Tzotzil	Younger (18)	6	7.17	139.39	237,567	.571	1	1.55	.446	.826	.092	.223
	Older (14)	5.71	3.64	128.20	213,607	.605	6.14	5.57	.573	.751	.309	.344
Mestizos	Younger (12)	5.58	15.33	278.09	1,023,241	.946	6.5	1.75	.65	.672	.175	.438
	Older (16)	3.69	8.94	315.20	1,082,350	.909	24.37	4.94	.847	.825	.422	.574

A possible explanation for the generational differences is that Mestizos and Tzotzil have, over the past four decades, transitioned their minority/majority group status. I use the term 'minority' as groups that perceive themselves as receiving unequal treatment and being targets of discrimination, and whose lower status is involuntarily marked or ascribed (Wirth 1945; Wagley and Harris 1958). As I have discussed throughout the chapter, younger Mestizos frequently talk about being discriminated against and being deprived of political rights, suggesting that they are transitioning from being the majority to minority groups in Chenalhó. Conversely, younger (and urban) Tzotzil now see themselves as the unmarked local majority. In his classic discussion of closed corporate communities, Wolf (1957) argued that some peasant groups close themselves and cut ties with the outside world to defend against dominant groups. Perhaps younger Mestizos in Maya towns are now closing themselves in reaction to their loss of power after shifting from being the dominant group to the ethnic minority.

To explore the hypothesis above, I looked for variables that follow the same symmetrical inversion between Mestizo and Tzotzil generational groups. In Table 2.5, I compare some demographic variables between younger and older Tzotzil and Mestizos. The variables I compare are household size, educational attainment (in years), daily income (in Mexican pesos), wealth, market integration (percentage of calories from purchased food items), number of godchildren, cargos served, fame, bilingualism, and prestige (obtained through a ranking task explained in Chapter 3). As we can see, there is little data to suggest that Mestizos are losing grip on their socioeconomic dominance. Young Mestizos continue to be far more affluent than young Tzotzil when we use wealth (the sum of the cost of all assets owned by a household) and daily income to compare socioeconomic status between groups. Prestige tends to be positively correlated with age; nevertheless, the prestige gap between older Mestizos and Tzotzil remains intact among the younger generations. The educational gap between groups has also been transferred to younger generations. Both groups continue to practice distinct livelihood strategies across generations, which Mestizos being more market integrated (purchasing most of their food) while the Tzotzil derive a higher percentage of their calories through subsistence farming. If Mestizos are indeed becoming a minority, their new status does translate into socioeconomic variables. We could then frame Mestizos as a *psychological minority* as their change status stems from a (real or perceived) loss of political rights.

There is evidence to show that younger Mestizos are becoming more closed to Tzotzil influence, while younger Tzotzil take the opposite route. One of the few variables that follow the distribution of UG and DG offers is the level of bilingualism of proposers. Bilingualism is increasing among younger Tzotzil and decreasing among younger Mestizos. Importantly, my measure of bilingualism is not based on self-

reported language proficiency but on the average ratings obtained in the social network task (each participant's Tzotzil and Spanish skills was rated by the other 60 participants in the study). Figure 2.8 (left) depicts the relationship between bilingualism ratings and age by study group.
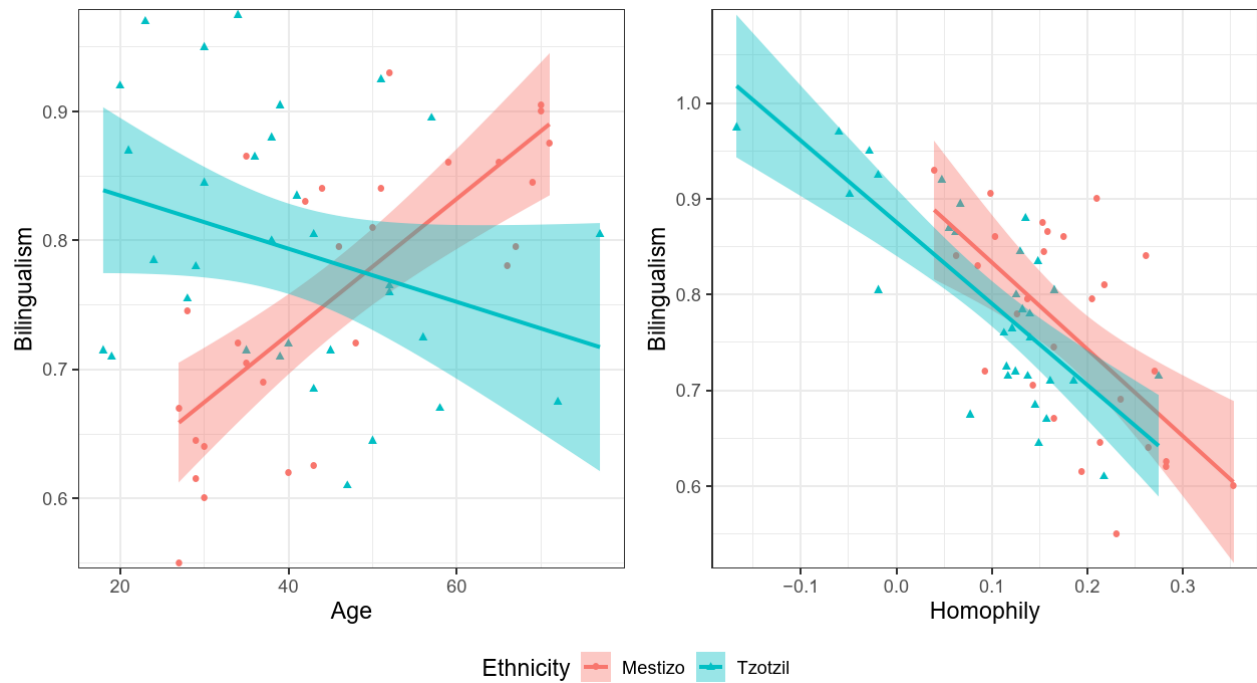
Figure 2.8: Bilingualism, age, and homophily among Tzotzil and Mestizos

There are several possible explanations for why bilingualism is falling among Mestizos and increasing among Tzotzil. First, Tzotzil youths are more likely than their parents to have been brought up in urban or semi-urban environments with access to TV and radio in Spanish. Second, younger Tzotzil (at least in the Cabecera) have higher educational attainment than their parents, and middle- and high-school in Chiapas are largely monolingual Spanish (since the decline of INI bilingual education programs (from the 1970s onwards), schools in the Cabecera have been less concerned with teaching lessons in Tzotzil). Third, younger Mestizos now spend more time outside of Chenalhó—attending college, for instance. Since many Mestizos see no viable future in Chenalhó and plan on moving to larger Spanish-speaking cities one day, they see no reason to learn Tzotzil.

At the same time, there are more incentives for Mestizos to learn Tzotzil today than there were in the past. As I mentioned earlier, many government jobs in Chiapas now prioritize candidates that can speak an indigenous language. Also, the proportion of Tzotzil speakers in the Cabecera today is far more significant than 40 years ago. If there are more Tzotzil speakers to interact with, why are not Mestizos not

learning Tzotzil during childhood? The answer might be that, indeed, they are shifting group status from ethnic majority to ethnic minority. As Figure 2.8 (right) shows, bilingualism is negatively correlated with homophily—i.e., a preference to interact with ingroup members. To measure homophily, I used data from the social network task and subtracted outgroup interaction from ingroup interaction rates (positive values = higher homophily). The correlation is clear (r = -0.686, p-value < .001) and shows that bilingual individuals are more likely to interact with outgroup members. A question of causation then needs to be addressed: are people less likely to interact with outgroup members because they cannot speak their language? Or did they fail to learn the out-group language because they were not open to interacting with those who say it? While I cannot address this question of causality statistically given the limited size of the dataset, I noticed, ethnographically, that younger Mestizos rarely seek to interact with Tzotzil speakers. When they do so, they do it in Spanish. Older Mestizos, on the other hand, learned always conduct commercial exchanges in Tzotzil.

As discussed earlier, many Tzotzil say that the 'bad' Mestizos left the town in the 1970s and only the 'good' ones stayed. This raises the possibility that intergenerational differences in language proficiency and game offers might be due to survivorship bias. Perhaps the 'good' Mestizos who remained were those who could speak Tzotzil and were, therefore, better integrated with Tzotzil people. Conversely, older Tzotzil tend to be suspicious of Mestizos, which might be due to their experience and conflict with moneylenders and alcohol traders before their expulsion in the 1970s. It is difficult to test for survivorship bias as I have no way to compare Mestizos who live in Chenalhó today with those who left in the 1970s. Still, we have data on how 'cooperative' participants are seen by others, which we obtained using a ranking task (described in Chapter 3). In Table 2.5, I show the mean 'cooperativeness' scores for both groups and across generations. Older Mestizos are seen as the most cooperative people in town, which, at first, suggests that a selection effect might have biased our sample. However, cooperativeness scores are not correlated with game offers or bilingualism levels. This is evidenced by the fact that younger Mestizos—who were less prosocial and had lower bilingualism rates—are nevertheless seen as more cooperative than younger Tzotzil. While it is true that Mestizos are seen as cooperative people, cooperativeness does not explain why prosociality declines among younger Mestizos and increases among younger Tzotzil.

To give a clearer picture of what determined game results, I regressed all offers (n = 236) against the main explanatory variables discussed in this section: game type (UG = 1, DG = 0), game condition (ingroup = 1, outgroup = 0), ethnicity (Tzotzil = 1, Mestizo = 0), age of proposer, bilingualism (0-1), cooperativeness (z-scored), homophily, social distance (average frequency of interaction between

proser and responders) and kinship distance (idem, but using kinship network data). As Table 2.6 shows, most variables (except for social and kinship distance) are clearly correlated with offers. Offers tend to be higher for the Ultimatum Game and in the ingroup condition. Ethnicity has a small but negligible effect on game offers. As we saw, Mestizos and Tzotzil's behavior tends to be similar when we control for group condition and game type. Bilingualism, cooperativeness, and homophily are positively associated, while the proposer's age is negatively associated with offers. As I discussed earlier, neither kinship nor social distance affects offers, which shows that ingroup favoritism in the DG is driven by ethnic differences rather than friendship or kinship ties between participants.

Table 2.6: Regression models of UG and DG offers

	Dependent variable: Offers	
	(1)	(2)
Game (UG = 1)	19.486*** (2.046)	19.492*** (2.037)
Group (Ingroup = 1)	9.375*** (2.724)	9.661*** (2.037)
Ethnicity (Tzotzil = 1)	6.373* (2.867)	6.309* (2.720)
Bilingualism	54.091*** (14.536)	54.056*** (14.473)
Homophily	46.766* (18.038)	46.098** (17.714)
Age	-0.262** (0.082)	-0.260** (0.080)
Cooperativeness	5.740*** (1.569)	5.765*** (1.535)
Social distance	0.551 (2.110)	
Kinship distance	-0.376 (6.720)	
Constant	-25.361 (13.974)	-24.737 (13.700)
Observations	236	236
R2	0.399	0.399
Adjusted R2	0.375	0.380
Residual Std. Error	15.711 (df = 226)	15.645 (df = 228)
F Statistic	16.680*** (df = 9; 226)	21.619*** (df = 7; 228)
Note:	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

To summarize, Ultimatum and Dictator Games provide different measures of prosociality (or cooperation). Results of both games are associated with age. However, this association follows the opposite direction for Mestizos and Tzotzil: for Tzotzil participants, prosociality falls with age, while for Mestizos it increases with age. I have argued that this pattern reflects the intergenerational changes in power relations discussed throughout the chapter. Mestizos, who used to be the ethnic majority, now

constitute a minority group. While young Mestizos are still dominant in socioeconomic terms, they see themselves as discriminated against for losing some political rights. Earlier, I used the phrase 'psychological minority' to characterize Mestizos' situation given that they still have more power according to several measures. In his original definition of 'minority groups,' Wirth (1945) noticed that minorities are groups who "regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination." Minority status, thus, is not always contingent upon socioeconomic variables but can be a matter of self-perception. Seeing their right to take public offices and to participate in politics curtailed over the past four decades, younger Mestizos now see themselves as targets of discrimination. They became more self-absorbed, homophilic, less inclined to interact with Tzotzil speakers or learn their language. Mestizos became more partial and are more likely to favor their own group to the detriment of others as measured through behavioral game offers. With the new minority status came a decline in trust and openness to outgroup members. Prosociality, then, is affected—among many other factors—by a group or an individual's relative position within social hierarchies.

3.4. Fairness and Rhetoric: Explaining Allocations

Upon conducting Ultimatum and Dictator Games, we asked proposers and responders to explain their decisions (without revealing how much money they had offered). After transcribing and categorizing the explanations, I noticed the existence of patterned differences in how Mestizos and Tzotzil explain money allocations. Mestizos tend to refer to the socioeconomic status of other players. They often compared other player's status to their own and justified allocations by making reference to one's 'needs.' Those who need more money, deserve to receive more. A few examples:

1) "Ellos necesitan más que yo. Tengo sueldo de gobierno y tengo dinero. Debo ayudar. Unos son pobres y necesitan y otros ni tanto." (They need more than I do. I have a government wage and money. I need to help. Some are poor and need it, others not so much.)

2) "Los conozco todos. Todos tienen. Tienen restaurant, mecánica. ¡Todos! Como no van a saber quién soy, me quedo con todo." (I know them all. All of them have [money]. They have a restaurant, an auto repair shop. All of them! As they won't know who I am, I'll keep the whole stake.)

3) "Algunos tienen buena posición económica, estable. Algunos están más pobres. A final de cuentas, alguien más va a regalar otras cantidades." (Some have a stable economic position. Others are poorer. After all, someone will give me money too.)

Notice that the Mestizo remarks can explain both selfish and altruistic money allocations: while (1) cites his relative lack of needs as a reason to give money, (2) cites the affluence of others as a reason to keep money. In a few cases, as in (3), the remarks on the socioeconomic status of other players are combined with comments expressing faith in reciprocity, as in "I will give because someone will give me something too."

The Tzotzil, on the other hand, justify allocations by referring to their desire to give. They often use the term *slekil konton*, "the goodness of my heart," to convey the idea that their will to give is inherent to their character (and thus independent of their socioeconomic status relative to other participants). Examples:

4) "Jun konton… Ta xkich' k'uxbinel, jech ak'o jk'uxubin li yane." (I am of one heart. I carry compassion, so give my compassion to the others.)

5) "Ja' jech'o. Slekil konton." (That's all. It's the goodness in my heart.)

6) "Slekil konton ta jk'elan." (From the goodness of my heart I will give a gift.)

7) "Ta xkotkintik krixchanoetik, ta jk'an ta jkelanbe, k'u cha'al sman jun resku." (I know all these people, I want to give them a gift, and perhaps they will buy a soda [with the money].)

8) "Ta xkotkin satetik. Ja' jun tajimol. Ta xuch' jun refresko." (I know their faces. This is a game. He will [e.g., I want him to] drink a soft drink.)

Notice, as shown in (6) and (7), that some Tzotzil also refer to game offers as a 'gift.' They do so by using the verb *k'elan* (to gift), which is distinct from *ak'* (to give) in that it implies giving something out of generosity, in a disinterested manner. Some participants also expressed the desire to give money to others so that they could buy sodas (*refresko*), as shown in (7) and (8). In recent decades, soda drinks—especially Coke—have replaced liquor (*pox*) as the standard item used for gift-exchange. As I discuss in Chapter 6, exchanging bottles of alcohol is a custom that goes back at least to the 1940s, when alcohol was used as a complementary currency when money was scarce.

I classified explanations for the 236 games in 6 categories: *Fairness*, *Generosity*, *Need-based*, *Reciprocity*, *Strategy*, and *Unclear*. In Table 2.7, I lay out the categorized frequencies of explanations given by DG and UG proposers. 'Need-based' are explanations that make reference to participants' relative socioeconomic status as discussed earlier. 'Generosity' is a category for explanations that make reference to participants' inherent desire to give. As the table makes clear, most explanations (47%) given by Mestizos fell into the 'Need-based' category, while just 8.6% of Tzotzil answers fell into the same

category. 'Generosity' were the most common explanations for the Tzotzil, accounting for 39% of the total.

Table 2.7: Types of explanations given by UG and DG proposers

	Game	Fairness	Generosity	Need-based	Reciprocity	Strategy	Unclear	Total
Mestizo	DG	5 (.092)	10 (.185)	34 (.630)	1 (.018)	2 (.037)	2 (.037)	54
	UG	11 (.204)	14 (.259)	17 (.315)	2 (.037)	10 (.185)	0 (0)	54
	Total	16 (.148)	24 (.222)	51 (.472)	3 (.028)	12 (.111)	2 (.018)	108
Tzotzil	DG	4 (.062)	26 (.406)	10 (.156)	5 (.078)	6 (.094)	13 (.203)	64
	UG	11 (.172)	24 (.375)	1 (.016)	4 (.062)	20 (.312)	4 (.062)	64
	Total	15 (.117)	50 (.391)	11 (.086)	9 (.070)	26 (.203)	17 (.133)	128

The explanations that I classified as 'Fairness' make reference to equality or justice. Groups did not differ in how they evoked fairness when explaining allocations. Some examples of 'Fairness' explanations:

9) "Pues porque yo pienso que es justo. Si recibe, los dos vamos a ganar lo mismo." (I think it's fair. If both receive, we both win the same.)

10) "Para que el gane y yo gane también dividí. Para que sea un beneficio para mí y para él." (So that he and I both win. So that it's a benefit for him and for me.)

11) "Ko'ol chitajin xchi'uk." (I play with them in equal terms.)

12) 'Strategy' explanations were those in which proposers explained that they would give a certain amount of the stake to maximize their chances of winning. Unsurprisingly, this type of explanation was more common in the Ultimatum Game. Examples:

13) "Que también él se animara porque se le doy una cantidad que no le gusta, rechaza. Quiero ganar yo. Que le conviena." (I want him to be motivated because if I give him an amount that he doesn't like, he will reject [the offer]. I want to win. So it [the proposal] must be convenient to him.)

14) "Para que spas aceptar. Por eso ta jk'elanbe jaybuk. Para que mu xch'ay y mu xich'ay ek." (So that he accepts [the offer]. That's why I am gifting him some amount. So neither he nor I will lose."

Reciprocity explanations are those in which proposers express a belief in universal or immanent reciprocity—the idea that those who give something will receive it back, even when doing it anonymously:

15) "Lo que me regalan tengo que regalar también. La necesidad que tengo, creo que él tiene la misma necesidad." (What they give to me, I have to give back. I believe that he has the same needs that I have."

16) "Bal to jutuk xa. Si les regalo unos 20, que tal si ellos me regalan también." (This already helps a bit. If I give them some 20 [pesos], maybe they will provide me with something too.)

What explains differences in how Tzotzil and Mestizos justify or explain allocations? Recall that UG and DG offers did not differ between groups. While both groups behave similarly in our experimental games, the way they describe and justify their decisions varies drastically. There is a contradiction, then, between how people allocate money and how they explain their allocation decisions.

To demonstrate how game explanations can be decoupled from actual decisions, take the case of Marcos, a 40-year-old Mestizo schoolteacher who participated in the study. When Marcos played the Dictator Game in the outgroup condition, he offered 20% of the pile. He explained that he had decided to give money to help other (Tzotzil) players because they were relatively poor:

17) De las personas que conozco, hay unos de escasos recursos y otros que tienen. Si el dinero va a un pobre, le va a servir." (Of those who I know, there are some with scarce resources and others that have some [money]. If the money goes to a poor one, it will help him.)

When Marcos played the DG in the ingroup condition, however, he gave 40% of the pile. Apologetically, he told us that he did not give more because other (Mestizo) participants were relatively wealthy and would not need more:

18) "Porque la mayoría tiene dinero. Solo hay una persona que puede necesitar, pero como no puedo elegir quien, no le puedo regalar más." (Most of them have money. There is only one person who might need it, but since I cannot pick him [the one who will receive the offer], I cannot give him more.)

Despite evoking need-based fairness to justify his proposals, Marcos gave more money to wealthier players who were Mestizos like himself and less money to poorer ones (Tzotzil). This suggests that there is a decoupling between decision-making and the rhetoric that people use to explain, justify, or rationalize their decisions.

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Do these rhetorical differences express deeper cultural values? Or do they simply reflect differences in speech styles between groups and bare no relation with cultural notions of fairness? One possibility is that the differences in our participants' explanations are determined by lexical constraints in Tzotzil or Spanish. For instance, Tzotzil lacks certain words for comparing relative socioeconomic status. It makes no lexical distinction between 'to need' and 'to want': both verbs are translated into Tzotzil as *k'an* (nominalized as *k'anel,* i.e., ill/need/affection). Tzotzil has no word for 'poor.' While the word *me'on*, 'orphan,' is sometimes used as a substitute for the Spanish 'pobre,' 'poor,' that translation is not strictly literal. For that reason, many Tzotzil speakers prefer to borrow the 'pobre' from Spanish instead.

The hypothesis that game explanations are shaped by linguistic or ontological differences can be be put to trial by examining how some bilingual Tzotzil speakers explained their offers in Spanish. Some examples:

19) "Hay que compartir dependiendo del corazón de la persona." (We must share depending on a person's heart.)

20) "Es para compartir con los demás. Para que sepan que hay bondad en el corazón de los demás." (It's to share with others. So they know that there's kindness in the heart of others.)

21) "Compartí mi regalo porque tengo la voluntad de compartir. Si no regalo, no recibo nada. Si regalo, me va tocar algo bueno también. Así pienso." (I shared my 'gift' because I have the will to share. If I don't give gifts, I receive nothing. If I give gifts, I will get something nice too. That's what I think.)

As (19) to (21) show, even when speaking Spanish Tzotzil participants use the 'heart' metaphor and refer to their inner desire to give 'gifts' to others even. This suggests that differences in game explanations may not be just due to linguistic constraints but rest on cultural assumptions of what constitutes 'fair allocation.' And rather than being a lexical omission, the lack of a word for 'poor' in Tzotzil may reflect a distinct ontology of 'wealth.' Groups practicing particular livelihood strategies may hold different understandings of 'wealth' or 'resources' (e.g., Tucker et al. 2011).

I dedicate Chapter 3 to analyze differences in how Mestizos and Tzotzil reason and talk about economic allocations. To advance some of the chapter's conclusions, differences in how people explain UG and DG allocations are not just the expression of rhetorical styles. They reflect preferences for equity in allocation problems. While these preferences do not always correspond to individual decisions, they play a pivotal role in shaping decisions made collectively in communal assemblies.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on the relations of cooperation and competition between Mestizos and Maya. I spent the earlier section of the chapter challenging the view that Mexican ethnic groups should be framed as social classes. I showed that power relations between groups are anything but stable by describing the process through which Mestizo middlemen who live in the Maya communities came to see themselves as an ethnic minority. That process began with the expulsion of traders and moneylenders in the 1970s and continued until the Ejido San Pedro occupation in 1994.

To strengthen my case, I discussed the issue of ethnic passing and essentialism. If ethnic groups in Mexico were tantamount to classes, we should expect that passing would be more widely accepted, being analogous to upward mobility in stratified societies. The evidence from Chenalhó suggests that such is not the case. Both Maya and Mestizos essentialize ethnic markers and ethnic affiliation, and 'passing' is only permissible when a person's ancestry is unknown to other group members. I drew evidence from an experimental study (adoption task) social network analysis, and ethnographic cases of Mestizos trying to pass as Maya to obtain political power but failing to build consensus over the status of their new ethnic affiliation.

In Section 2, I discussed how the deep history of economic relations between Spaniards (and Spanish-speaking Mestizos) and Maya has shaped some of the symmetrically opposite cultural traits that distinguish groups. I hypothesized an iterative model for the emergence of ethnic differences, with what I called the 'cat-and-mouse game.' The model assumes that ethnic differences emerged through centuries of repeated interaction between Spaniard tax/tribute collectors and Maya farmers. While the former became progressively better at surveilling commercial relations and uncovering Maya resources, the latter group improved their strategies to conceal wealth from tax collectors. I showed that some present-day symmetric differences between ethnic groups—hospitality practices, treasure tales, and ceremonial and casual dance styles—can be explained as the result of centuries of iterative encounters between groups within a context marked by resource competition. I discussed how this deep history of competition manifests itself through certain key events involving competition for municipal offices or the use of public space for public fiestas.

In Section 3, I used behavioral games to abstract and quantify cooperation between and within groups. Dictator Game results showed a strong tendency for ethnic favoritism among Mestizos and Maya. The effect of ethnicity disappears in the Ultimatum Game, in which receivers can punish proposers. The remarkable differences between game results suggest that Mestizos and Tzotzil can quickly shift between ethnic favoritism (DG) and prosociality across groups (UG) when social institutions allow for the

punishment of selfish or spiteful behavior. In other words, while Mestizos and Tzotzil tend to favor ingroup members equally, they easily shift to being prosocial with outgroup members when playing a more regulated bargaining game. I interpreted these results as reflecting the competitive networks of exchange that have linked both groups for centuries. As these groups exchange with one other frequently, they have developed a good understanding of each other's fairness expectations. Game results also show that prosociality—indexed by game offers—declines among younger Mestizos but increases among younger Tzotzil participants. This inverse intergenerational shift prosociality may reflect changing power relations in Chenalhó. As Mestizos lost political power and became a minority group (within the town), they became more closed to outside influences, less willing to cooperate with outgroup members, and less likely to learn Tzotzil as a second language. I ended the section discussing differences in how groups explain or justify game offers differentially: while Mestizos tend to evoke need-based fairness, the Tzotzil refer to their inherent generosity and their desire to give 'gifts.' I will continue to discuss these differences in how people rationalize economic allocations in Chapter 3, which examines how preferences for fair distribution influence the way communities allocate common resources.

CHAPTER 3. REASONING ABOUT INEQUALITY: HIERARCHIES AND THE STRUCTURE OF EQUITY NORMS

I concluded Chapter 2 discussing differences in how Mestizos and Tzotzil explain their offers in 2-person experimental games. Recall that Mestizos tended to justify explanations by referring to the socioeconomic status of participants. Tzotzil, on the other hand, refer to virtues of self and others. But while game explanations appear to indicate the existence of different conceptions of fairness driving economic allocation, I found no differences in how participants from each group played the games: the distribution of offers of Mestizos and Tzotzil was the same. Why do groups explain economic allocation differently? Investigating what these differences mean—and whether they reflect different ways of managing shared resources—became the topic of my subsequent work in Chenalhó.

This chapter examines differences in how people in the three communities studied explain and justify economic allocation. I show that such rhetorical differences express equity norms—who should receive priority in the allocation of scarce goods. But these equity norms are not just abstract rules that people are instilled with. Instead, they tend to reflect the social structure of the groups to which people belong. I show that residents of a Rural Tzotzil community—a group predominantly ranked by prestige— tend to make reputation-based allocations, rewarding individuals who contributed to the welfare of the community. Urban Tzotzil, on the other hand, are more likely to make need-based allocations, reflecting the decline of prestige rankings and the increasing importance of socioeconomic inequalities in determining how people rank others in urban contexts. Changing equity norms reflect a shift from a reputation-based economy into a monetary one.

Section 1 of the chapter describes how Tzotzil prestige hierarchies work. Maya groups are often portrayed as socially egalitarian—a view that is poorly supported by data. I discuss experimental and ethnographic data showing that people in Tzotzil communities rank each other by prestige, and prestige hierarchies fundamentally determine who receives priority in allocating common resources. I also examine quantitative data showing that Tzotzil communities have no interpersonal dominance hierarchies, a feature that has profound implications in how these groups make collective decisions—in particular, decisions regarding how common resources should be distributed.

In Section 2, I examine some of the implications of the lack of dominance hierarchies. Being unable to make executive decisions, Tzotzil leaders tend to use their influence to minimize political dissent within their communities, which is the only way by which they can retain power. These leaders may seek to promote horizontal decision-making through communal assemblies, which is the only way by which they can influence group decisions without exerting dominance over others. This explains why

many communities tend to be politically homogeneous, with local agreements that prohibit their members from joining competing religious or political groups. I discuss an ethnographic example of expulsion that took place while I worked in a Rural Tzotzil community. I argue that communities organized by prestige and lacking dominance hierarchies do not scale well, being prone to break apart upon reaching a certain number of members. Thus, understanding the social structure of these groups is crucial in explaining the community fissioning and religious/political expulsions that have taken place over the past decades in Chiapas.

In Section 3, I report the results of an experimental game indexing differences in equity norms between Rural Tzotzil, Urban Tzotzil, and Mestizos. Results show that reputation-based allocation declines with urbanization and a shift from smallholder agriculture to a market economy. As Tzotzil-Maya grow and become more urban, prestige gives way to socioeconomic status as the primary measure of interpersonal differences. This change affects how groups make collective decisions and manage common goods.

1. Equitable Distribution

1.1. The Egalitarian Model

There is an enduring myth that pervades almost everything told about the Chiapas Maya: that the Maya are social egalitarians. The myth is an insidious one, reappearing from time to time in the ethnographic literature and being occasionally reproduced by non-scholars. Tzotzil-Tzeltal smallholders—the tale goes—believe that resources must always be divided evenly, and everything they do is geared toward minimizing social and economic inequalities. This egalitarian drive also determines how communities make decisions, following ancient, communal, and horizontal self-governance traditions (Ronfeldt et al. 1999, 147). However, the egalitarian story is often met with a contradictory fact that cannot be overlooked: that Maya groups are structured by elaborate civil-religious hierarchies—also known as the cargo system. Some have tried to explain away the existence of these hierarchies as a sort of leveling mechanism. Oddly, a noted anthropologist once posited that the civil-religious hierarchies found across Chiapas are "founded upon an essential value of the Tzotzil-Tzeltal society: egalitarianism" (Favre 1973, 108).

It is difficult to pinpoint the egalitarian model/myth's origins since it likely predates formal ethnographic research in the area. The model was already present in the writings of one of the earliest scholars to conduct a study among the Tzotzil: Mexican anthropologist Ricardo Pozas, who lived in Chamula (Tzotzil) in the 1930s to conduct a survey of land inheritance systems (cf. Pozas 1945). One of

Pozas' findings was that the Chamula held an unshakable belief in absolute equality. The kinship structures that could allow for inequality—clans and lineage systems—had long disappeared in this part of Mexico, being replaced with a more straightforward principle of allocation: that any given good (land, food, water) should always be distributed evenly between everyone.

Pozas (1959, 68) illustrates Chamula egalitarianism with an anecdote:

> A man and his wife were traveling; each received a gift, an orange; the woman kept her orange and the man peeled off his and cut it in two parts, one for him and the other for his wife. When they were done eating, the woman gave her orange to the man, who peeled it off and cut it into two parts. This custom of dividing everything one has or obtains to eat equally between family members is so determinant that, when it is violated, it triggers a quarrel.

Pozas seems to be drawing our attention to the fact that, instead of each eating their orange, husband and wife decided to split each orange in half and distribute the halves evenly. Pozas also notices that the ceremonial distribution of food and drinks in fiestas (*pukel*) is always done evenly. He explains that egalitarianism in Chamula originates from a combination of an ancient 'egalitarian' clan system and resource scarcity—a theory to which I come back in Chapter 4.

The egalitarian model is also supported by anecdotal evidence that the Maya abhor social disparities. Some early anthropologists—Pozas amongst them—noticed how envy and witchcraft accusations go hand in hand in Maya villages. Witchcraft among the Maya has, for a long time, been described as a 'leveling mechanism,' i.e., an institution that functions to minimize power imbalances by channeling envy into punishment. Other leveling mechanisms have been proposed: assassinations, taxation, and cargo nominations (M. Nash 1960; J. Nash 1985), all being a reaction against increasing social inequalities. Following such views is Foster's (1965) theory (discussed in Chapter 2.2.2) that peasants see goods as limited and believe that the enrichment of one causes the impoverishment of others. This drive for egalitarianism is often cited as the reason why Maya people shun those who stand out in their village, a cultural trait that inhibits innovation and creates a state of perpetual conformity (J. Nash 1985, 68). As the theory goes, by exacerbating wealth inequalities, modernization and growth propel the stubbornly egalitarian Maya into witchcraft wars to restore equality and harmony within their communities.

It is true that Tzotzil-Tzeltal people tend to see social harmony as a desirable outcome—an outcome even more so desirable by local *caciques* seeking to suppress dissent, as we will see later. It is also true that social change can bring disruptions and distress, as I exemplify in this and subsequent

chapters. But are these disruptions the consequence of moral egalitarianism? Is there a cognitive/cultural bias toward egalitarianism leading Maya people to revolt against the social inequalities and modernization? The explanation I advance here is a bit more nuanced: the rejection of inequalities is not driven by egalitarian views but by how people conceptualize 'fair distribution.'

To put it simply, social inequality per se is not always a problem for the Chiapas Maya. People are willing to tolerate disparities that are supported by justifying narratives. With modernization, the stories traditionally used to justify inequalities become obsolete, and communities undergo a period of rethinking which forms of social difference are acceptable and which are not, leading to intergroup conflict over resources.

Some inequalities are part of life. People accept them without ever raising issue. For instance, although people see men and women as of clearly unequal status, they seldom mention gender disparities, which they regard as natural. Other social inequalities are supported by narratives about who deserves to get what and when. Take, for instance, marriage inequality. Men often describe wives as productive assets—for many, marriage is an economic matter (see Chapter 4). In most Tzotzil communities, some degree of polygyny is tolerated. Of course, that does not mean that any man can marry as many women as he wishes. To marry multiple wives, a man needs to maintain a socially recognized record of meritorious achievements. He must obtain *prestige*. By doing so, he immunizes himself against criticism (or envy) from other men in his community who could otherwise claim that having more than one wife is 'unfair.' It should be evident that gender relations in Maya villages are anything but egalitarian.

What can we say about the distribution of resources? Do Maya people really believe, as Pozas claimed, that resources should always be partitioned evenly? Let us have a closer look at Pozas' observation:

1) A man and his wife receive an orange each.

2) The man splits his orange in half, keeping half for himself and giving the other half to his wife.

3) Upon eating his orange, the man splits his wife's orange in half and again distributes both halves evenly.

The first thing to notice is that the allocation procedure was not egalitarian as the woman did not participate in the decision-making process. Why did the man choose to split both oranges equally? Pozas' story provides no information on merit that could justify an uneven distribution. The Chamula couple received the oranges as a gift. Since they did not have to work to obtain oranges, neither husband nor wife could claim a larger share based on merit. Moreover, oranges are unstandardized goods—some oranges can be larger, sweeter, or riper than others—so it is likely the couple received oranges of uneven quality. Perhaps the man could have taken a larger piece of the oranges for himself to match his higher status or

greater caloric needs. But had the man seized the fruit that was gifted directly to his wife, she would likely have accused him of theft. Hence, in the scenario described by Pozas, the only logical way to distribute the oranges equitably was to split each fruit evenly.

The egalitarian model is primarily supported by anecdotes such as Pozas' orange-splitting story. One could argue that such weak evidence might not even deserve the kind of scrutiny above. Still, as I show in Chapter 7, the egalitarian model has been enormously influential in shaping the way we understand the Maya and other native groups in Mexico, sometimes shaping how governmental and private organizations implement social programs among these groups. The egalitarian model's assumptions certainly deserve a second look.

Contrary to Pozas' view, the rule of equality in distribution is not imperative for the Maya. In Chenalhó, that rule is usually applied under two circumstances: 1) when people lack information that could justify an unequal allocation—i.e., they cannot rank the recipients of allocation in terms of social status, merit, or need. 2) When distribution occurs between people who are closely related by kinship and thus regarded as equals. Although people often describe egalitarian distributions as ideal, common goods can be allocated unequally. Unequal outcomes are justified by narratives about who deserves what and who gets priority over whom in certain circumstances. 'Fair division,' for the Chiapas Maya, is not only about equality, but also about equity: the moral notion that people should receive rewards proportional to their needs, merit, or status, among other priority rankings.

1.2. Equity and Inequality in Food Distribution

Some ethnographic examples may be helpful to illustrate the role of social status and class in guiding distribution. Recall that in the 1930s Pozas noticed that the ceremonial distribution of food and drinks in fiestas (*pukel*, or 'even distribution') is done evenly. I can confirm Pozas' observation. Today, people in Chenalhó say that each fiesta attendant should, in theory, receive the same amount of food. But is distribution egalitarian *in practice*?

Below I reproduce an excerpt from my field diaries describing how people allocate food ceremonially. The event took place in a school classroom of Linda Vista (Rural Tzotzil) after a meeting between local cargoholders, municipal authorities, and two Mestizo contractors. The latter had visited the community to negotiate the construction of a new school building—a story on which I elaborate in Chapter 7. For now, let us pay attention to how the community distributed food that day:

> The men entered the room in order of status—*pasados* [prestigious elders] first,
> followed by municipal officials, engineers [government contractors], and local civil

cargoholders ranked by importance and/or seniority. I sat between the municipal officials and cargoholders. Younger men who were willing to watch and help but were not currently serving cargos were the last to sit. Children stayed outside, although some roamed the table asking adults for treats but seldom got any attention. As usual, women stayed in a wooden shack [the kitchen] next to us, some preparing the *caldo* [chicken soup] while others waited. Two women came to serve us food, one on each side of the table. They served us in order of importance: *pasados* first, followed by municipal officials, local cargoholders and me, and younger men. The *pasados* and municipal officials received the meatiest and larger parts of the chicken, while the rest had to be content to take whatever was left. The tortillas were *manbil* [purchased, rather than handmade]. Clearly, the elders were allowed to take as many tortillas as they wanted from the common stack while others rationed their portions. After we were done eating, the Mayol*es* [traditional policemen] came in to distribute pox [liquor], again from higher to lower ranking, and saying that we should drink *oxib kopas* [three shots] each. Obra [a high-ranking municipal official] told me that three was the number prescribed by *smantal riox* [God's commandment]. I drank the three shots while others cheered me while I got tipsy. After the men were done drinking, they left the meeting room. I went outside and made self-deprecating jokes about how I would go back to the US and write in my dissertation about the time I spent drinking with people in Linda Vista. Teenage males, women and children—in that order—went inside [the dining room] to eat.

The description above is a fair representation of the usual ceremonial 'script' in rural Chenalhó (in urban areas, these ceremonies tend to be less ordered). Ceremonial feasting such as I described above can happen either during patron saint fiestas or when authorities meet. When we ask people how they distribute food, they respond *ko'ol ta jchapankutik* ('we resolve things evenly'), or *ko'olunkutik* ('we are equals'). More eloquently, some may say *mu'yuk boch'o ta mas, mu'yuk boch'o ta menos* (no one is better or worse than others). It is clear, however, that distribution happens unevenly, with men receiving priority in order of prestige, while women and children wait for their turn to eat in the kitchen. While on the discourse level each person should receive equal portions, in reality some receive priority over others. The notion that prestigious men should be prioritized in food allocation has existed for a long time in Chenalhó, as evidenced by a similar observation by 1940s ethnographer Calixta Guiteras Holmes (1946, 39).

Let us contrast the Tzotzil practices described above with how Mestizos distribute food during their fiestas. The diary entry below is a description of a Mestizo fiesta, the Anuncio de San Pedro, which happens every June.

> They served two types of *caldo* [for Mestizos, beef soup]. One was just some brown, viscous stuff, maybe a blood stew made from leftovers, and it was served to lower-class men, with whom I was sitting. The man sitting next to me showed me parts of the slaughtered bull's mandible, with its teeth intact, in his bowl. He didn't seem happy about it and complained that he only got tongue in the first serving. I counted at least three men who refused to eat their meat. Clearly, several of them looked disappointed. The other *caldo* looked much better. It had potatoes, chayote, and cabbage in it. The beef seemed to be *pancita* [tripe]. I took advantage of being an outsider and asked people to serve me the good looking *caldo*. It tasted okay. I wondered if the rough-looking *caldo* was supposed to be served to men while the good one was to be served to women, but I saw the young [and upper class] Mestizos like Roberto eating the same potato/chayote *caldo* I was eating. Some [low status] men over the other *caldera* [cauldron] offered me whatever leftover *caldo* they were drinking. I thanked them, and politely declined their offer.

Mestizos are primarily stratified in social classes, as we saw in Chapter 2. Consistently with that form of stratification, they allocate food following class lines. Class-based stratification is distinct from the prestige hierarchies that rank Tzotzil society. For Mestizos, social class is determined by a combination of occupational status and educational attainment.

Mestizos do not necessarily determine class membership based on how 'respected' someone is. I knew most of the Mestizos who received the rougher soup made from offal. Although most had weak *compadrazgo* ties to the upper-class families, they did not belong in the establishment. These lower-class families frequently rely on upper-class ones for casual employment by providing specific services (painting or cleaning houses, repairing shoes or clothes, landscaping). Despite speaking predominantly Spanish and identifying as Mestizos, some of them have mixed Tzotzil ancestry. The relationship between upper and lower classes usually has a paternalistic tone: to upper-class Mestizos, serving offal soup to those in need is a form of mandatory charity—an idea that is likely disseminated by the local Catholic priest. When I asked Mestizos to explain how they distribute food in fiestas, their answer was no different than one given by the Tzotzil: "evenly."

I have illustrated two distinct forms of distributive equity: reputation-based (Rural Tzotzil) and need-based (Mestizo). The difference between groups is not an absolute one, but rather a matter of degree. Tzotzil people understand need-based equity. Sometimes they make need-based allocations, although at a lower frequency than the Mestizos. Similarly, Mestizos are capable of understanding reputation-based allocation, although considerations over need tend to predominate for them. Both groups are organized by multiple overlapping hierarchies—which sometimes go by the term 'heterarchy.' I will call these hierarchies *vectors of difference*: they are gender, reputation, wealth, class, and ethnicity. Tzotzil and Mestizos differ in how they use these vectors of difference when ranking or making inferences about members of the community. For the Tzotzil, gender and reputation are the most salient forms of social differentiation. For the Mestizos, the primary vectors of difference are wealth and gender. With the decline of the traditional Tzotzil reputation system, need-based fairness emerges as a replacement for reputation-based fairness. The rest of the chapter will provide different types of evidence—both quantitative and qualitative—for these assertions.

If we are to pinpoint differences in how Maya and Westerners conceive of 'fair'—or equitable—distribution, we must examine the narratives that people use to justify inequality in allocation. It is the narratives that people elaborate and tell and not how they conceptualize 'equity' or 'fairness' that differ across cultures. In rural communities, prestige hierarchies still predominate over socioeconomic ones. People rank each other in terms of prestige before ranking them in terms of wealth. It follows, then, that people in rural communities tend to use prestige hierarchies when making or justifying unequal distributions. As modernization begins to disrupt prestige hierarchies, the discourse of fairness changes, with reputation-based narratives being replaced with need-based ones.

Need-based equity should be immediately recognizable to a Western reader: since the mid-20th century, most tax systems worldwide include progressive rules that seek to enact some form of need-based redistribution. This modality of fairness echoes the Marxian adage "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need." Reputation-based equity, however, might appear more mysterious for Western readers. It might be useful, then, to clarify how the Tzotzil reputation system works. It works by distributing prestige unevenly—that is, proportionally to how much each community member has contributed to the welfare of others.

1.3. The Tzotzil Reputation System

For the Tzotzil, prestige is a general measure of how much an individual or a household has contributed to the community. Having prestige is having *power*—although not the type of coercive power found in dominance hierarchies. Prestige confers the power to influence others through suggestion,

persuasion, and drawing aspirations from others. Following Henrich and Gil-White (2001), I draw a distinction between *prestige* and *dominance* hierarchies. Prestige, in the sense I use here, is no different than our common-sense definitions of *reputation* or *social status*.

Henrich and Gil-White state that people in the West can gain prestige by having skills or showing competence in something (for instance, physicist Stephen Hawking obtained prestige from showing competence in theoretical physics; p. 167). However, among Rural Tzotzil, acquiring competence or skills would not be a reliable way to earn prestige. Given the absence of labor specialization—nearly every member of Linda Vista lives off farming—having competence in something other than agriculture would matter little to the welfare of others. In Tzotzil communities, prestige is the socially recognized record of prosocial actions that an individual or household has performed during their lifetimes. The surest way to obtain prestige, thus, is by displaying altruism.

People employ two main strategies to show altruism and gain prestige: 1) giving or reciprocating gifts, and 2) sponsoring expensive fiestas and performing costly rituals. In Chenalhó, reciprocity is never imperative. As we saw in the experimental games in Chapter 2 (3.4), people rarely mention the principle of reciprocity when justifying economic allocations. Since there are no institutions that enforce reciprocity, one may get away with not returning ordinary favors or gifts. Hence, failure to reciprocate a gift does not necessarily entail a loss of prestige—not, at least, in the short run. This system contrasts with the more complex reciprocity networks found in other Mexican groups such as the Mixtec of Oaxaca, where communities impose stricter penalties for those who fail to repay gifts and where fiesta financing depends on people complying with reciprocal obligations (Monaghan 1990).

The lack of formal institutions enforcing reciprocity leaves ritual sponsorship and food distribution as the main routes for obtaining prestige. Giving out food is such an essential part of Tzotzil economies that people sometimes use the expression *ʔak' ve'lil* (to give food) as a metaphor for 'generosity.' It is only by displaying generosity that one achieves the kind of status that produces future social gains. Prestige grants a person certain *rights*; for instance, the right to accumulate wealth, land, or spouses. There are indications that this form of reputation based on prosocial acts might be a universal feature across rural societies. For instance, in rural Tamil villages in South India, those who are known as 'generous' have the strongest support ties, while people who are known as 'influential' do not (Power and Ready 2018). The Tzotzil make the same distinction between 1) reputation built on acts of altruism (like ritual sponsorship) and 2) reputation that stems from one's competence in something (e.g., being a good orator, or a good musician, etc.). It is only the former kind of reputation that produces long-term social returns.

Tzotzil ritual sponsorship is regulated by the cargo system, which I introduced in Chapter 1. Recall that the cargo system is an institution that rotates communal offices. People who are appointed to serve religious offices must sponsor an expensive patron-saint fiesta. In exchange for taking that burden, they gain prestige. Since there is a limited number of yearly fiestas, the cargo system keeps prestige issuance scarce, at times forcing people to compete to serve expensive offices. It is common knowledge that to build prestige, one must serve cargos. (I could show this quantitatively, as the number of cargos an individual serves is positively correlated with their reputation).

The Tzotzil expression that most closely resembles the word 'respected' is *ich'bil ta muk'*— which literally means 'taken with greatness.' Mestizos use the more familiar Spanish term *respetado*, which, like its English equivalent, is semantically narrower than the Tzotzil term. Translating the verb *ich'el ta muk'* ('to respect') without misrepresentation can be challenging, as some Tzotzil-Tzeltal scholars have shown.[35] The verb carries the connotation of something that cannot (or should not) be inherited from birth, being, instead, achieved throughout one's life by serving the community. From an emic perspective, prestige is <u>acquired</u> rather than <u>ascribed</u> status. Notice the difference: a) 'Alice is respected,' versus b) 'Beto is taken with respect.' In Tzotzil, there is no straightforward translation for expression (a). One says *ta xich'tik Xun ta muk*, or 'John is respected by [3rd person plural],' instead of 'John is [inherently] respected.'

This view of social status is both descriptive and normative. For people in Chenalhó, prestige is the product of one's lifelong contribution to the community, and inheriting prestige from birth is both unlikely and morally reprehensible. This repudiation of ascribed status may not be a native feature of

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[35] *Ich'el ta muk'* has been described by native Maya scholars as a key culture concept among Tzotzi-Tzeltal groups (Bolom Pale 2010; López Intzín 2015). The expression *ich' that muk'is* polysemic and difficult to translate accurately. *Muk'* means, in different Tzotzil dialects, 'big' or 'large.' The meaning of *ich'* is broader: as a verb, it can mean 'to take', 'to receive', or 'to carry', depending on the context in which it is used, or depending on whether it is coupled with directional adverbs such as *batel* (away from) and *talel* (towards the subject). Verbs based on the root *ich'* convey the idea of receiving something from someone, in opposition to the root *ak'*, to give, or to act upon something. To complicate translation further, Tzotzil has only one general adverb, *ta*, which can mean *with*, *to*, *of*, *from*, *in*, *on*, *toward*, etc. Initially I interpreted *ich'bil ta muk'* as 'carrier of greatness', believing that the adverb *ta* meant 'of'. But as I learned better, I noticed the existence of a large gamut of expressions coupling *ich'* and ta where ta means 'with' and that can be easily translated to English as 'take with'. For example, *ta xkich' ta kwenta* appears to be a direct translation from the Spanish *tomar en cuenta,* which is equivalent to the English 'take it into account'. Thus a more precise translation of *ich'bil ta muk'* would be 'taken with respect' or 'taken seriously', depending on the meaning that is attributed to *muk'*.

Maya society; it originated instead during the colonial period when the traditional patrilineal structure collapsed under the influence of the Spanish missions (I return to this in Chapter 4).

Despite these linguistic features of Tzotzil, could prestige be, indeed, impossible to inherit? A classic study by Cancian (1965:114-6) showed that the Tzotzil from Ziancantán who spend more on fiestas tend to be more prestigious and wealthier and pass along their wealth and status to subsequent generations. Cancian showed that some families tended to take more prestigious and costly cargos across generations, with sons following the same cargo careers as their fathers. This suggests that prestige is not distributed equally based solely on merit and that, despite the general condemnation of inherited status, people tended to take offices of similar status as the ones taken by their parents. Cancian's data, however, did not allow him to discern the mechanism by which status and wealth were transmitted across generations. Cancian suggested that the choice of spouse could be the probable status-inheritance mechanism. However, the data provided by him in support of this theory would be considered weak by today's statistical standards.

One way to make inferences about prestige inheritance mechanisms is by looking at differences between how prestige and wealth are distributed in Tzotzil communities. Across societies, incomes and wealth tend to be distributed in a fat-tailed, skewed manner, following Pareto or log-normal curves—also known as "the rich get richer" distributions (Limpert, Stahel, and Abbt 2001; Clementi and Gallegati 2005). This, of course, is true only in the absence of wars, catastrophic events, or the related implementation of strictly redistributive fiscal policies (Scheidel 2018). Although there is no established consensus on the mechanisms that create log-normal distributions,[36] wealth inequality likely persists because capital can be accumulated and inherited through subsequent generations. Capital can be accumulated, and, over generations, it can be reinvested to generate compound returns ("money begets money"), which results in the income and wealth differences we see across societies.

The Chenalhó household data shows that wealth, income, and land distribution follow log-normal curves just like any market-based economy. Although the Mexican government enacted agrarian reform in the 1930s, land continues to be unequally distributed today. George Collier (1990) recorded changes in the distribution of land in Apas (a community of Zinacantán) from the 1930s to the late 1980s. He noticed that after land reform, land distribution became less skewed. Fifty years later, the distribution curve had returned to where it was before the land reform. Collier's analysis shows that without distributive policies enforced exogenously (by the Mexican government), land ownership becomes unevenly distributed over

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[36] Some have shown that log-normal distributions can be achieved through different stochastic processes. Others, such Piketty (2017), have argued that inequality persists due to the distribution of capital being more skewed than the distribution of incomes.

time. Markets in Chenalhó are barely regulated. Although selling land to outsiders is prohibited, the market within the town is fully monetized. Because of that, wealth distribution in Chenalhó is uneven, following a log-normal curve, since uneven distribution is probably a universal feature of market-based allocation.

If prestige can be transferred from one generation to the next similarly to how wealth is inherited, we should expect prestige to follow a log-normal distribution in Tzotzil communities. This, however, is not the case. Figure 3.1 shows Lorenz curves comparing the distribution of prestige in out three study groups with the overall distribution of wealth in Chenalhó. To obtain prestige ranking scores, I used the results of ranking tasks in which we asked people to rank-order photos of community members based on how respected they are (see Section 1.4 for details). To plot wealth per capita distribution, I used results from our rural/urban household survey (N = 186). I measured wealth per capita as the sum of all assets belonging to a household divided by the number of household members.
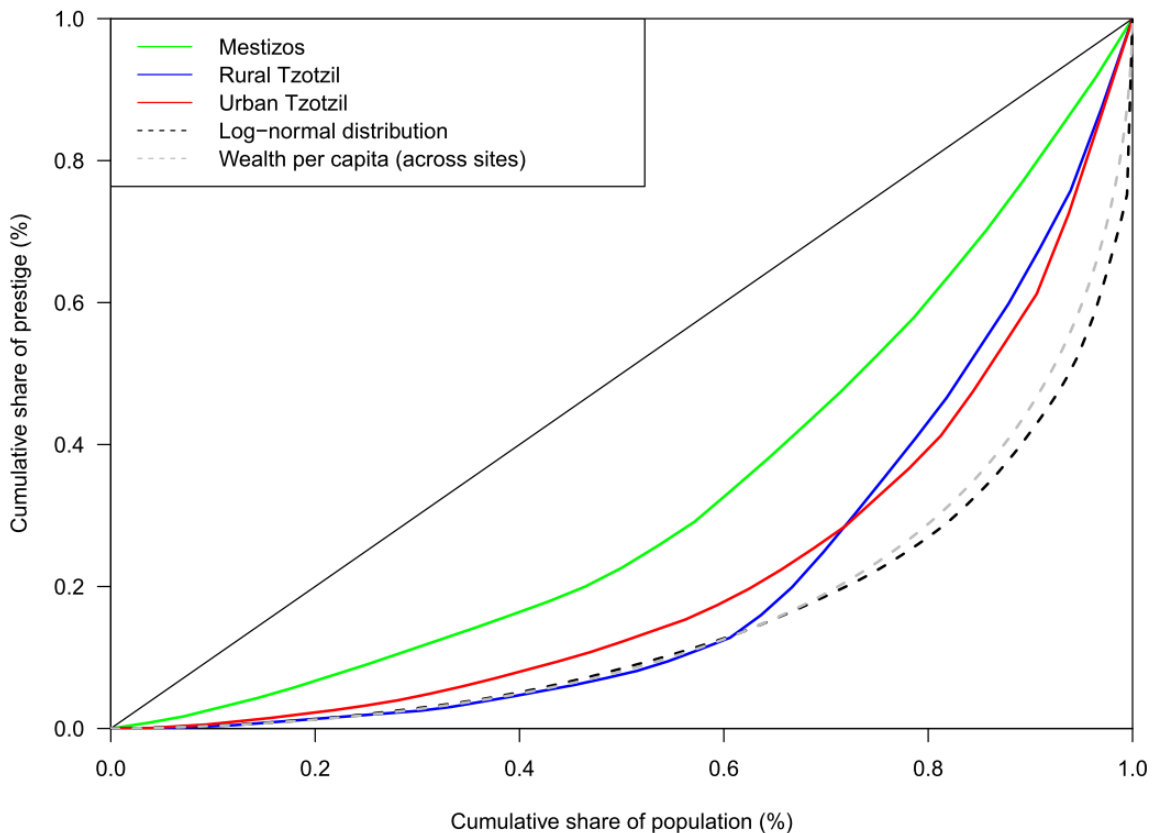
Figure 3.1: Distribution of prestige in the three study groups

As Figure 3.1 shows, wealth in Chenalhó resembles a log-normal distribution. Notice how the wealth curve nearly overlaps with a log-normal curve (with alpha = .5).

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Prestige is unequally distributed among the three groups, but in a less skewed manner than wealth. Prestige does not fit a log-normal distribution. Prestige is more uniformly distributed among Mestizos than among rural and Urban Tzotzil (Gini coefficients: MES = 0.34, RT = 0.583, UT = 0.564; K-S test p-values < 0.001). For all groups, prestige is more uniformly distributed than wealth in Chenalhó (Gini = 0.694; p-value < 0.001). As I discuss in the next section, prestige hierarchies are less relevant among Mestizos, evidenced by their lower consensus scores when performing the prestige ranking task.

Although prestige is unevenly distributed in Tzotzil and Mestizos communities, its distribution is more uniform than wealth. The logical conclusion from this is that the processes by which individuals obtain, retain, and transfer prestige are of a different nature than those regarding wealth. This might be due to wealth being easily quantified with money, which allows the value of different assets to be measured under a single metric. Measuring the value of prestige can be challenging, although it is possible to do so nevertheless. People in Chenalhó have good knowledge of how much it costs to sponsor fiestas. They can estimate accurately the amount of money they need to obtain a certain level of prestige. As I show in Chapter 5, the cost of fiestas is a frequent topic of gossip. When we ask people how much each fiesta costs, they mostly agree with each other, which shows that they can calculate the value of prestige in monetary terms.

The likely culprit driving differences in the distribution of prestige and wealth is inheritance. While physical assets can be easily transferred from one generation to the next, prestige requires each individual to prove their commitment to the community by serving cargos. Unlike physical assets, prestige is not easily transferable. Although reputation can be earned, it cannot be transferred from parents to their children without the existence of a well-established status ascription system (such as a lineage or clan system). This explains why prestige is more uniformly distributed than wealth. The uneven distribution of prestige can be caused by several factors, e.g., the unequal distribution of social skills, natural stochastic processes, or the winner-takes-all effect.

Some sociologists have used the concept of *capital* to describe different forms of social status. For instance, Bourdieu (1984; 1986) famously distinguished cultural, social, and economic capital. By doing so, he sought to draw attention to the fact that non-monetary status (reputation) can be converted into financial capital and generate returns. This insight had been developed before in Bohannan's (1955) analysis of Tiv exchange. While Bourdieu's terminology might accurately reflect modern French society's distinction hierarchies, it is not useful for describing social hierarchies among small-scale groups such as Tzotzil communities. The organizational structures within Tzotzil communities are simpler than that of modern Western societies, which have a multitude of coexisting reputation systems (for instance, universities have their mechanisms for producing and distributing prestige, being mostly independent of

folk reputation systems). Conversely, in communities such as Linda Vista, there is only a single reputation system: the prestige hierarchy, which ranks households based on their contribution to the community. Thus, there is no need to distinguish between categories of capital when studying small Maya groups.

Framing prestige as 'capital' could also convey the idea that prestige is a transferable property. As we saw, the main difference between money and reputation is that the former can be easily transferred from one person to another. At their core, naturally existing reputation systems are peer-to-peer structures that incentivize individuals to behave according to a community's standards. If reputation were to become monetized and easily transferable from one person to another, these systems would cease to perform their function, and reputation would become indistinguishable from currency. The distinction between *currency* and *reputation* has become more evident in recent decades with the rise of electronic cash and online reputation systems. To function appropriately, online reputation systems (for instance, eBay's seller ratings or credit scores) cannot allow users to purchase or transfer their reputation. This, of course, has not stopped some users from cheating online systems. For instance, there has been an emergence of reputation 'farms' that use various strategies to artificially improve a user's influence in online commerce platforms and social networks (Ikram et al. 2017). Another issue with artificial reputation systems is inflation—that is, the devaluation of reputation caused by the unregulated issuance of user ratings, positive scores, reputation points, etcetera (Filippas, Horton, and Golden 2018).

Under normal circumstances, reputation inflation is not a problem for Tzotzil communities. As we saw, Tzotzil groups keep prestige issuance in check by keeping reputation-producing opportunities scarce. By setting a fixed number of fiestas, the cargo system limits how much prestige a community can produce and distribute every year. One of the reasons why public rituals appear to be universal across human societies is that ritual compels people to perform hard-to-fake displays of commitment to their group, thus solidifying group ties (Atran 2002). The cargo system successfully performs that role in Tzotzil communities. Since cargoholders must perform their ritual service in public, they must subject themselves to the scrutiny of the entire community, which rigorously evaluates whether the cargoholder's intention to serve others is genuine or not, making the system tamperproof. Thanks to public scrutiny, it is impossible for cheaters to artificially inflate their prestige levels, which keeps reputation inflation under control.

Another crucial difference between artificial reputation systems and Tzotzil prestige hierarchies is that the former produces and distributes reputation in a centralized way. For instance, most electronic credit score systems are managed by a central authority which sets the standards determining how credit scores are allocated. In contrast, in Tzotzil communities prestige is produced and allocated not by a single

individual or group, but the entire community together, without anyone being in charge. The downside of decentralization is that the Tzotzil tends to be less scalable than artificial electronic systems. While credit scoring companies can determine the creditworthiness of millions of people simultaneously, Tzotzil reputation systems can, at best, track the reputation of about three hundred individuals (I will come back to the factors limiting the scalability of Tzotzil reputation systems in Section 2.2 of this chapter).

Like everything in Tzotzil society, this folk understanding of prestige—while still widespread—is changing in urban areas. One of the factors driving that change is the permeation of Western legal notions such as natural/universal rights—the idea that every person has the same rights regardless of their reputation. Another factor is modernization and the shift from rural to market-based livelihoods, which tend to undermine prestige hierarchies and the social institutions built upon them, replacing them with class-based forms of organization. One aspect of Tzotzil society that does not seem to be changing, however, is the absence of dominance hierarchies. In the next section, I discuss the difference between prestige and dominance and review data from Chenalhó that suggests that Tzotzil communities lack consensual interpersonal dominance hierarchies.

1.4. Absence of Dominance Hierarchies

A crucial—although rarely discussed—aspect of Tzotzil groups is the absence of dominance hierarchies. In this region, we find what Boehm (1993) term 'reverse dominance hierarchies'—an inclination for the numerical majority to punish individuals or groups who attempt to exert dominance over others. I have found two types of evidence for reverse dominance hierarchies among the Tzotzil. The first is quantitative: when we asked people to rank other community members in terms of dominance, we failed to detect agreement on their responses. The second line of evidence comes from ethnographic observations—in particular from watching how communities deal with attempts from prestigious individuals to exert coercion over others—cf. Chapter 7 (2.5) and Section 2 of this chapter.

Boehm characterized societies with reverse dominance hierarchies as 'egalitarian'—a view which I do not share. As I stated earlier, the Tzotzil are not egalitarian, but simply rank themselves primarily in terms of prestige rather than dominance. Prestige hierarchies alone can have profound effects on creating wealth disparities. In Tzotzil prestige hierarchies, the people at the top are never allowed to give orders to people at the bottom; they can only exert power through influence. They can persuade or inspire others, but never issue orders. Low-prestige individuals—who are usually young—are expected to <u>listen to</u> but not <u>obey</u> prestigious elders. This dominance void has far-reaching consequences: unable to form vertical chains of command, Tzotzil communities often struggle to make decisions on issues regarding common goods provision. Another result is that communities split apart when some intractable problems emerge,

which is likely due to the lack of dominant leaders who could mediate between conflicting parties. Finally, people sometimes fail to handle issues that require supra-community coordination—e.g., building or maintaining irrigation systems, dealing with environmental hazards, etc.—more on this in Chapter 7.

Following the economic experiments discussed in Chapter 2, we conducted a series of interviews asking the people to rank-order photos of other community members according to four criteria. The goal of this experiment was to detect differences in how people from different communities use social rankings to allocate resources or taxes (results in 1.4). For now, we can use the consensus scores of the social ranking tasks to understand what types of hierarchies matter to people in Chenalhó. We resampled 29 Urban Tzotzil and 15 Mestizo households from participants of the economic experiments described in Chapter 2.3. In a subsequent field season, we interviewed 33 Rural Tzotzil from Linda Vista (all male). In each interview, we asked participants to rank-order photos of other community members based on four criteria:

1) Wealth: 'Who are the wealthiest?' (*kulej,* in Tzotzil, *rico*, in Spanish).
2) Prestige: 'Who are the most respected?' (*ich'bil ta muk'*, in Tzotzil, *respetado*, Spanish).
3) Dominance: 'Who are the most feared?'(*xi'bil*, temido).
4) Cooperativeness: 'Who are the ones who cooperate or help others the most?' (*boch'o mas ep ta xkoltavan*, or *quienes son los que más cooperan o ayudan a los otros*).

Given that Urban Tzotzil and Mestizos inhabit the same urban area, we asked them to rank order the photos of all 60 participants together, mixing people from both groups. In the Rural Tzotzil site, we used the pictures of the 33 local participants. These tasks resulted in four informant-by-informant matrices with ordinal variables corresponding to the ranking levels in which respondents placed other participants. Since not all participants performed these tasks, we used the cultural consensus model (CCM) to extract answer keys that were later used in the analysis of the allocation game (Section 3 of this chapter).

Table 3.1 shows the results of consensus analyses comparing the three study groups across tasks. High consensus scores indicate the information regarding a social ranking is more salient. Low consensus scores suggest either a lack of agreement or irrelevance of the ranking in question.

Table 3.1: Consensus score for the social ranking tasks

Rankings	Group	N	Factors	Ratio	Competence	Consensus
Wealth	Rural Tzotzil	32	24.16/1.62	14.93	0.87	High
	Urban Tzotzil	29	20.07/1.16	17.36	0.83	High
	Mestizos	19	14.20/0.64	22.25	0.87	High
Prestige	Rural Tzotzil	32	19.81/3.21	6.171	0.78	High
	Urban Tzotzil	28	11.63/2.25	5.18	0.64	Moderate
	Mestizos	15	6.60/1.60	4.12	0.63	Moderate
Dominance	Rural Tzotzil	19	4.60/ 3.03	1.52	0.44	None
	Urban Tzotzil	21	5.93/2.69	2.20	0.51	None
	Mestizos	13	7.03/1.57	4.52	0.72	Moderate
Cooperativeness	Rural Tzotzil	30	20.01/1.79	11.20	0.81	High
	Urban Tzotzil	29	9.44/3.45	2.74	0.52	Low
	Mestizos	15	7.45/0.89	8.37	0.68	Strong

Participants tend to agree on most rankings ($1^{st}/2^{nd}$ factor ratios > 3, mean competence scores > 0.5). Across groups, the highest consensus scores were, by far, for the wealth ranking (ratio $1^{st}/2^{nd}$ factor > 14). Wealth differences are salient in all groups—and more so amongst Mestizos (ratio = 22.25). The analysis reveals moderate consensus across groups for the prestige and cooperativeness rankings. Prestige ranking scores are highest among Rural Tzotzil and lowest among Mestizos, supporting the view that prestige hierarchies lose importance with the transition from an agricultural to an urban livelihood (this finding is also supported by the allocation games described later in this chapter).

Neither urban nor Rural Tzotzil participants agree when solving the dominance ranking task ($1^{st}/2^{nd}$ factor ratios = 1.52 and 2.2, respectively). Failure to find agreement in ranking tasks might mean that: 1) the cultural domain at hand is not relevant to informants; 2) there are subgroups of informants in the sample, and each subgroup has its own model of dominance hierarchies. I tested hypothesis (2) using the residual agreement method, which postulates that subgroups exist when there is higher within-group than between-group residual agreement (Boster 1986; Medin et al. 2006), but the analysis yielded no support for the existence of subgroups in the samples. In fact, a significant number of participants (13 of 32 rural and 8 of 29 Urban Tzotzil) could not perform the task, saying that they could not rank-order other community members based on dominance. Some informants explained that they are "all equal" in that respect, while others said that "no one is more feared than others in our community." Mestizo participants, on the other hand, did agree when ranking others in terms of dominance (ratio = 4.52, mean competence = 0.72), which shows that lack of consensus on that task is a peculiar Tzotzil trait.

A possible objection to these results is that asking people to rank in terms of perceived fearsomeness may not be the most appropriate way to elicit dominance hierarchies. Notice, however, that Mestizos did agree when solving that task. At least for that group, the method worked to detect a relevant cultural domain. Alternatively, we could have asked participants to describe who has the 'authority to command whom' or who 'must obey whom.' Phrasing the question like that, however, would likely have primed our informants to sort others in terms of prestige. People in Chenalhó say that 'the elders must be heard.' In an interview setting, this notion could be conflated with, 'the elders must be obeyed.' Fear is the emotion that unambiguously distinguishes dominance from prestige hierarchies. Fear expressions are mutually intelligible across cultures and, among primates, they indicate relative status (D. E. Brown 1991; Moore et al. 1999; Preuschoft 1999; Cheng et al. 2013). Thus, asking participants to rank-order others based on fearsomeness might be the only way to draw a distinction between prestige and dominance hierarchies when eliciting social hierarchies.

The consensus analysis results above, coupled with the fact that several participants could not answer the dominance ranking task, suggests that Tzotzil communities have no agreed-upon interpersonal dominance hierarchies. These results are significant since the idea that dominance hierarchies exist in every human society and fundamentally shape individual outcomes has become remarkably popular in recent decades, even being propounded in a bestselling self-help book (Peterson 2018). Given the popularity of this view, it may be worthwhile to point out that the Tzotzil-Maya who participated in this study cannot agree on how dominant the people in their community are. However, to reiterate an earlier point, the absence of dominance hierarchies does not mean that Tzotzil groups are egalitarian. Tzotzil agree when ranking people based on prestige. Prestige inequality alone, thus, is sufficient to compose a hierarchical order and to foster inequality in resource allocation. We will return to this point in part 3 of this chapter.

Finally, these results also highlight a new application of the Cultural Consensus Model: to detect the existence and measure the saliency of social hierarchies. To my knowledge, this was the first time the CCM was used for that end (I collected these data in 2012-2014). Further studies might determine whether the method can be used to compare the saliency of social hierarchies cross-culturally.

2. Politics Without Dominance

I have argued that Tzotzil communities are not egalitarian but ranked according to prestige, which is an agreed-upon index of how much an individual or household has contributed to the community. I also showed evidence suggesting that people in these communities cannot rank each other in terms of dominance. To what extent does this configuration affect political institutions and behavior in Chenalhó?

In this section, I discuss three characteristics of politics in Tzotzil communities, all of which are the outcome of Tzotzil forms of organization (i.e., prestige rankings coupled with the absence of dominance hierarchies):

a) **Leaders seek to maximize cohesion.** Being unable to make executive decisions, Tzotzil leaders can only use their prestige to influence others. But to influence others successfully and retain some degree of social control, they must suppress dissenting factions within their communities. Thus, Tzotzil leaders seek to maximize cohesion instead of some other measurable output.

b) **Limited scalability.** Groups organized by prestige hierarchies do not scale well as their organization depends on people sharing in-depth knowledge of each other. As communities grow in size, the odds of interpersonal conflict emerging increases. Since there are no dominant leaders to settle conflicts, communities tend to break apart once they bypass the 300-member mark, giving rise to a pattern of migration and dispersed settlements.

c) **Biased consensus-making through communal assemblies**. Tzotzil communities make collective decisions through direct communal assemblies which allow for the participation of all heads of households. While this consensus-making procedure has been characterized as a form of 'direct democracy,' collective decisions can easily be influenced by factions of high-prestige individuals. Prestigious factions know that they can use collective assemblies to retain power, so they actively seek to promote that method of decision-making.

2.1. 'Kind' Leaders: Maximizing Social Cohesion

The absence of clear dominance hierarchies leads us to the question of what makes for successful 'leadership' among the Tzotzil. In groups organized primarily by prestige hierarchies, do people converge toward leaders with a set of character and psychological traits that differ from leaders in Western societies? The short answer is *yes*—but there are a few caveats. Psychologists have identified two basic dimensions of social cognition: warmth and competence; across cultures, every person or every character trait is judged primarily on one of those two dimensions (Cuddy et al. 2009; S. T. Fiske 2018). For the Tzotzil, both warmth and competence are desirable traits. However, in comparison with Western societies, Tzotzil give greater primacy to warmth over competence when choosing a leader. While doing social ranking interviews, I often asked participants to explain why certain community members are more respected than others. The most cited characteristics of (male) leaders were:

1) Generous—i.e., has 'goodness in his/her heart' (*oy slekil yonton*).

2) Knows how to speak (*lek sna' xlo'ilaj*).

3) Can organize others (*xu' yu'un schapanvan*).

4) Reasonable or intelligent (*ta xak' srazon*)

Although I did not quantify those traits, they are nearly the same as the ones listed by Cancian (1975, 85) in an earlier study in Zinacantán (Tzotzil-speaking), which suggests that little has changed in how communities nominate leaders since the 1970s. Being generous (trait 1) is the most important quality of a leader, falling under the 'warmth' dimension. Knowing how to speak, organize others, and being reasonable (traits 2-4) fall under the 'competence' dimension. Notice, however, that the types of competence valued in a Tzotzil leader refer to <u>social</u> competence. 'Knowing how to speak' in communal assemblies, or knowing how to organize (settling conflicts, bringing people together) are critical social skills for leaders whose job is to mediate interpersonal affairs. Competence in skills that are not social is usually irrelevant for Tzotzil leaders. When people describe a leader as *intelligent*, they use the phrase *ta xak' srazon*—literally, 'he/she gives reasons,' which refers to the act of delivering reasonable arguments during communal assemblies. Intelligence, thus, must be employed for a social purpose.[37]

Under normal circumstances, a 'tough' (dominant) person would have little chance to rise to a leadership position in a Tzotzil prestige hierarchy.[38] Above all, Tzotzil leaders are esteemed and regarded as compassionate (*lek yonton*, 'good hearted') people. Socially skilled and kind, they take the perspective of others and argue in favor of decisions that best contemplate the overall desires of people from different factions of the community. They seek to bring people together or promote reconciliation, maintaining a sense of—sometimes illusory—harmony.

Leaders do not make executive decisions but work to facilitate collective decision-making. They seek to maintain a healthy state of social cohesion, which allows the community to build consensus during the communal assemblies. The differences between this sort of leadership and that found in Western societies (culturally defined) are thus evident. Although warmth is also an essential trait in

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[37] In Chenalhó, I met several highly intelligent men who, for being timid, were afraid of attending communal assemblies. It is not uncommon for some men to hide during assemblies; some prefer to pay the fines charged to those who fail to attend community events (see Chapter 5.1 for an example). These men usually have a low chance of obtaining prestige and climbing the traditional social ladder. One who fails to show warmth or who cannot speak in public lacks the most elementary skills required for leadership.

[38] Perhaps this could change in a context of warfare. Terror management theory predicts that people will elect strong leaders when faced with violent threats. For instance, American voters were more likely to value traits associated with 'strong' (i.e., dominant) leadership when faced with the threat of terrorism (Merolla and Zechmeister 2009).

Western democracies,[39] Western leaders are more likely to take executive roles. Managing organizations structured hierarchically, they seek to maximize measurable outputs (e.g., a country's GDP or a company's profits). Tzotzil leaders, on the other hand, take a more hands-off approach to leadership, only seeking to maximize stability and social cohesion. They are not expected to improve or grow their communities; instead, they leave any decision regarding community improvements to be debated and voted by all members in communal assemblies.

This hands-off attitude is exemplified by Javier, a man who served as Linda Vista's *Agente* from 2013 to 2015, and Andres Pérez, the community's *cacique* (portrayed in Chapter 1.2.2). In late 2014, near the end of his 2-year mandate, Javier had become the most respected man in the community after the *pasados* (traditionalist elders), as evidenced by the ranking task results in the previous section. Linda Vista, however, was starting to break apart. Amidst municipal election campaigns, some members of the community were seen participating in meetings of the Verde, Mexico's Green Party. Verde, which at that time held the state governor's seat, began to distribute food baskets in the town and ask people to sign up for the party in exchange for that 'favor.' According to people in Chenalhó, this was the first time a party other than the PRI used food distribution to campaign for the municipal seats. Unsure about how to deal with the situation, Javier—whose mandate was about to end—called for a communal assembly to debate whether the single-party norm should be maintained and how dissenters should be dealt with.

In the first meeting, Javier declared the community's archive of *actas*—reports from previous meetings—had mysteriously disappeared, and that the community would have to vote to uphold its most essential norms. When discussing the single-party norm, Javier addressed the issue of political dissenters by seeking to depoliticize the community. Instead of promoting the PRI's political agenda—which few understood or cared about—he sought to portray Linda Vista as a politically 'neutral' organization. In his view, the single-party norm existed to reduce the potential for conflict and fragmentation. To illustrate his point during a community meeting, Javier drew an analogy between marriage and community cohesion, suggesting that political dissent would cause the community to break apart. "If a man is a member of one party and his wife joins the opposition, what happens to the marriage?" he asked rhetorically, "the marriage becomes sick and ends. To stay together, a man and a woman must want the same thing." Upon Javier's recommendation, the community voted to uphold the single-party norm.

On another occasion, speaking privately with me, Javier recounted how he and others in Linda Vista had always sought to accommodate dissenters "regardless of their party affiliation." He recalled that

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[39] Across societies, people are faster to judge warmth over competence, an effect which has been described as the 'primacy of warmth' (S. T. Fiske, Cuddy, and Glick 2007). A study found that warmth takes precedence in candidate evaluations in the United States and England (Laustsen and Bor 2017).

in the 1990s, amidst the Zapatista and Acteal conflicts, he hosted refugees affiliated with civil organizations such as Las Abejas in his house. He did so even though those refugees' values were clearly at odds with Linda Vista's norm to expel anyone associated with any kind of civil organizations. To navigate prestige hierarchies, leaders must avoid taking sides. They seek to quell political dissent, heal divisions, and promote harmony.

Despite upholding the single-party norm and pressuring dissenters to comply with it, some Linda Vista members continued to be seen attending Verde meetings in early 2015. By then, Javier had been succeeded by his younger brother Miguel (whose nomination I describe in Chapter 5.1). After concluding his tenure as *Agente*, Javier was nominated as candidate for vice-mayor for the PRI. From February to June, the community held more assemblies to try to dissuade Verde dissenters from receiving food baskets. To describe the six-month decision-making process would take considerable space. To summarize, after holding three assemblies and still failing to convince dissenters to give up receiving the food baskets from Verde, the new *Agente* requested the intervention of the community's *cacique* and founder, Andres Pérez.

As we saw (Chapter 1.2.2), Andres Pérez is the most prestigious man and only person to have held state-level political offices in the community. He spends most of his time in the Cabecera, only appearing in Linda Vista to attend ceremonies or critical political events. To deal with Verde dissenters, Andres called for a different kind of communal assembly. He arranged for PRI's mayoral candidate to visit the community and asked every community member—including women, who are usually not allowed to participate in political events—to attend a general meeting at the community's gymnasium. A *banda* group showed up playing polka-like songs. Alcohol, sodas, and chicken soup were distributed freely, and several men quickly became drunk. Women and men sat on separate sides of the gymnasium. The women never spoke during the three hour long assembly. Most of them just looked down and listened the entire time, while some worked on their textiles while the meeting went on.

After introducing and endorsing the PRI candidate, Andres gave a speech extolling the virtues of peaceful and harmonious living. "The community is sick, and it needs to take its medicine. Otherwise, it will break apart," he warned. To harmonize the community, Andres recommended that all members would have to agree to belong to a single party. As usual, there was no political content in Andres's speech—he did not spend much time discussing the PRI's proposals for the community. The focus of the speech was on 'not letting the community break apart' (*mu svok' schak sba*).

Unfortunately, that was exactly what happened. The community broke apart. Three men stood during the meeting and complained of being unfairly treated for taking advantage of the resources that Verde had been distributing to other communities. One of them stressed that he knew he had political

rights (typically, he used the Spanish word *derecho*) guaranteed by the Mexican constitution. While watching the meeting, I sat next to one of these men, a Protestant convert who goes by the nickname Guzmán. He elbowed me and exclaimed, "are you listening to what they are saying? They are going to kick us out. Take note of what is happening [pointing to my notebook]!" The dissidents refused to comply with Andres's recommendation. They said that they were ready to face the consequences of standing with Verde. Like Guzmán, they were, for the most part, converts to Protestantism who lived in the outskirts of the community and had weak kinship ties to the core faction.

Unable to convince dissenters to give up on Verde, the community voted to expel them. But how can a group expel some of its members when no one can legitimately command others? The group found an ingenious solution to that problem. They placed a notebook on a table and asked every member who wanted to pledge allegiance to the PRI to sign up for their household. Those who did not sign up were considered out.

The six-month process was protracted and full of drama, and no one took the decision to expel dissenters lightly. In subsequent weeks, I spoke with those who promoted the expulsions. They were severely upset with the outcome of the meeting. Some had begun to drink to cope with feelings of guilt. I frequently heard the word *sujelal* (lit. 'pushing,' or 'pressure'), and there was a sense that the prestigious clique in the community had manipulated (*ta stij*, 'to fiddle,' 'to manipulate') the whole process. The men who were expelled appeared adamant and showed no regrets. But even they could not point out who had been responsible for the expulsions. Although everyone took part in the process, no one could be held accountable for it. <u>In a group organized primarily by prestige hierarchies, responsibility tends to be diffused.</u> Since individuals cannot make executive decisions, pinpointing who is behind collective decisions can be challenging.

Lacking coercive power due to the absence of dominance hierarchies, Tzotzil leaders can only use prestige to influence others. Because no dominance hierarchies allow them to make top-down decisions, they have no choice but to take up the role of mediators who seek to maximize social cohesion instead of some measurable output. To do so, they must suppress any competing forms of group affiliation. Political ideology matters little for leaders who exert power through prestige. In fact, the least ideologically charged a party is, the better it works to maintain internal social cohesion.

It was precisely this ability to relinquish ties to political ideology and to adapt to local customary laws that allowed the PRI to expand its networks of clientelism throughout rural Mexico and rule the country uncontested for much of the 20th century. In recent decades, however, the political arrangement between the PRI and local caciques began to fall apart as the country shifted toward political pluralism (Pineda de la Cruz 2012). This recent change has created a new source of stress for small communities.

For the first time, many must decide whether they want to remain loyal to a single party and preserve social harmony or risk splitting apart over political rivalries.

Small Tzotzil communities such as Linda Vista are bound together by the notion that social harmony must be preserved at all costs. But where does this emphasis on social harmony come from? It comes from a political order in which there are no clear dominance hierarchies and in which leaders must dissuade others from joining competing groups to retain power. Because Tzotzil leaders derive their legitimacy from their higher prestige, they see themselves as the only people who can maximize social cohesion within their communities. To do so, they elaborate regulations that prohibit community members from joining political or religious groups. Thus, to understand why communities break apart and expel dissenters, we must grasp how prestige hierarchies work and why they persist over time.

2.2. Limits to Scale: Community Fissioning

Linda Vista is not the only community to prohibit its members from being affiliated with competing groups. This type of arrangement is widespread in Chiapas. It was even more so in the 1970s when the Maya towns witnessed a surge in religiously motivated expulsions. Back then, seeing the rise in conversion to Protestantism, many communities voted to prohibit their members from participating in church events. The prohibitions led to a wave of religiously motivated expulsions that peaked in the late 1980s, but that is still ongoing today to a lesser degree. Until 1998, Linda Vista also forbid Protestants from joining its ranks. That norm, however, was overturned after a prestigious member—a man with a lengthy history of service and who had affinal ties to the community's core faction—joined a newly built Pentecostal church and became a preacher. Today, people no longer deem affiliation to Protestantism a threat to community cohesion. Nevertheless, converts tend to be marginal, living in the geographic outskirts of the community. Most have lower prestige than traditionalists since they reject taking the expensive religious cargos. Still, even converts pay the tax for financing the traditional prayers to the mountains called *mixa*; refusal to do so usually results in expulsion.

There is a substantial body of studies on religious expulsions in Chiapas (Tickell 1991; J. Nash and Collier 1995; Pérez Enríquez 1998; López-Meza 2002). These studies notice that the main factor leading to expulsions is the Protestants' refusal to drink alcohol. Locally made liquor (*pox*) has been an integral part of religious ceremonies for a long time (Eber 2000). Religious conversion in Maya communities is not always driven by disagreement over canonical beliefs. It is, primarily, an expression of dissatisfaction with a community's established order, and such divisions often overlap with partisan rivalries (Cantón Delgado 1997; Freyermuth 1999). The refusal to drink alcohol effectively cuts a household from participating in the cargo system; cargo service is a form of taxation. Refusing to take

communal offices, thus, is like refusing to pay taxes. It can justify punishment and, in some cases, expulsions.

But aside from the refusal to serve cargos, there is a more fundamental—and overlooked—reason why Maya communities in Chiapas break apart so frequently. The reason is that prestige hierarchies do not scale well, which limits how much communities can grow. We might call this the *problem of scalability*.

A useful concept to understand community fissioning is that of *scalar stress* proposed by Johnson (1982). Johnson showed that as groups become larger, the probability of interpersonal conflict increases exponentially. The more members in a group, the greater the number of possible pair relationships between individuals there is, which makes information exchange more complex and creates disagreement and fissioning. Johnson described a few different solutions to the problem of scalability, all of which involve the development of some form of dominance hierarchy (or, in his words, 'control-hierarchy'). As an index of hierarchical complexity, Johnson used the number of types of political offices existing in the group. For densely populated and societies divided in small polities, Johnson hypothesized the emergence of multiple simultaneous hierarchies (a heterarchy), with 'big men' playing the role as mediators between large-scale and local decision-making units, as the solution for the problem of scalability. Another solution is the development of status ascription, mainly through systems of inheritance. As societies grow, status ascription, kinship, and inheritance work to stabilize interpersonal status differences, thus minimizing the chance of decision-making conflict.

The caciques in Chiapas fit well into the 'big man' leadership archetype described by Johnson. Like Andres Pérez in Linda Vista, these leaders mediate between state and community-level governance, using their reputation to influence local communities to comply with state-level arrangements. But as the story of Linda Vista's expulsions told above shows, even caciques lack the power to enforce decisions and norms directly. At most, caciques can suggest people comply with certain norms. They may use patron-client networks and kin ties to influence—but never impose—collective decisions. Hence, while caciques work to connect state and local-level governance, they alone fail to solve the problem of scalability.

The other solution to the problem of scalability suggested by Johnson is status ascription. Status ascription, however, is also not a viable solution in Chiapas. I dedicate Chapter 4 to explain this point. To summarize, pre-conquest status Mayan ascription systems relied on patrilineal kinship structures in which a person's status was inextricably tied to his/her lineage. However, most Mayan patrilineal kinship systems were erased by missionaries during the colonial period. The erasure of Mayan kinship carved the way for cargo systems to emerge as the preeminent institution for producing and distributing social status.

As we saw earlier (1.3), prestige in Tzotzil communities is a form of achieved—rather than ascribed—status.

The absence of dominance hierarchies creates a problem for Maya communities. As their populations grow, it becomes crucial to establish new offices (cargos) specializing in different aspects of governance. However, because there is no permanent government or bureaucracy to create these offices by fiat, a community's ability to expand the size of its 'government' tends to be limited. Communities create new offices through communal assemblies in which all members must vote. As we will see later, decision-making through communal assemblies is a protracted process that entails high transaction costs. As a result, the complexity of Tzotzil social organization often lags behind population growth. To illustrate, imagine a Tzotzil community with 100 members and ten political offices. Twenty years pass, and now the community has grown to 200 members but just 15 offices. Because the number of members increased at a rate twice as high as the number of offices, officers now must serve a higher number of members per capita, which can cause greater social stress. This difficulty associated with creating new offices among Tzotzil communities was first identified by Cancian (1965) in his study of Ziancantán's cargo system.

Another problem is that prestige hierarchies require a high degree of shared interpersonal knowledge to function properly. Earlier, I defined prestige in Tzotzil communities as an index of each household's contribution to the welfare of the community. For prestige hierarchies to exist, community members must agree when ranking each other in terms of prestige, knowing exactly how much each household contributed to the community in the past. When Tzotzil communities grow, their members lose track of each other's contributions to the collective welfare, which can lead to a decline of the prestige hierarchies. Traditional reputation systems can only persist in face-to-face groups that are small enough to allow their members to possess shared histories and in-depth knowledge of each other's background. As Dunbar (1998) pointed out, there are also cognitive limitations to how much a person can know about other group members. Based on the correlation between brain size and group size in primates, Dunbar stipulated that face-to-face societies would have a maximum membership of around 150. Groups exceeding that size would be more likely to break apart, instigating migration and resettlement.

Unlike other primates, humans can use technology to expand the reach of interpersonal information at higher scales. Some people in Chenalhó had been using two-way radios (walkie talkies) for years as an alternative to face-to-face communication, although the impact of that technology on expanding the size of communities was minimal. In 2015, cellphones became operational in Linda Vista, and I was able to watch closely how the community reacted to the new technology. Although mobile coverage was still unreliable and slow, people immediately understood the importance of cellphones in

helping the community to stay informed and, those who could, rushed to purchase one. Before the arrival of mobile networks, it was challenging for cargoholders to notify the 51 households about community events. Usually, the designated tax collector would visit each home individually to charge fees and inform them of meetings or cargo nominations. Another strategy was to use a speaker system. Standing on the top of the community's school, the Auxiliar—a mixture of town crier and vigilante—holds a horn loudspeaker connected to a microphone downstairs, where the *Agente* notified the community about the date of the next assembly (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: A cargoholder issues a call to a communal assembly (Linda Vista)

It is doubtful whether the method of making announcements above is effective. With a map of the community, I estimated that at least of 30 percent of the community members lived in areas beyond the reach of the sound waves produced by the speaker. Many families lived in distant places, sometimes hidden behind mountains that can only be reached by walking through trails for up to half an hour. Once a man who lived on the outskirts of the community told me that others were trying to ostracize him by not letting him know about communal assemblies. Internal regulations dictate that members who fail to attend communal assemblies must be penalized with a fee. Having the technology to reach out to all members

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makes a difference in allowing for greater scalability in groups that can only rely on face-to-face communication.

Such was the reality for most of Chenalhó's 110 communities until 2015, before the dissemination of cheap cellphones. Most people could only rely on face-to-face communication, which can be a factor limiting the scope of information transmission, leading to fragmentation. Based on the 2010 census data, the <u>median</u> community membership stood at 194— not much higher than Dunbar's number. Aside from the Cabecera, there are five communities in the town with over 1,000 members, which inflates the <u>mean</u> membership to 291. Large communities, however, are outliers; they are locally known as 'colonies' of ethnic Tzeltal or Chamula. Some see themselves as independent from Chenalhó and have unusually complex internal organizational structures, sometimes being divided in *barrios*, or neighborhoods. When we exclude large communities from the Chenalhó sample, the median number of members per community falls to 171. This low median membership indicates that prestige hierarchies and limitations on how much a community can share social knowledge might be a factor determining the average community size.

We can formulate two hypotheses to test whether there are any factors, such as Dunbar's number, limiting the growth of communities in Chenalhó. If shared knowledge limits community size, we should find that: 1) the average community size remains stable over time as populations increase. This would happen since once communities hit a 'ceiling' on how many people they can accommodate, they would split into smaller units or expel excess members. Alternatively, in a weaker of the hypothesis, we may find that 2) average community membership increases at a slower pace than the total population of a town.

Given the absence of reliable historical sources for Maya communities, testing the above hypotheses can be challenging. But it is possible to use census data to track community fragmentation patterns since the 1950s. The problem with census data is that, before the 1990s, only municipal-level information was reported. Still, since Tzotzil and Tzeltal towns tend to be similar demographically— densely populated, decentralized, and fragmented in small polities—data from several towns might be useful to shed light on what is going on in Chenalhó. I selected a sample of 20 Chiapas towns that have a settlement of Tzotzil or Tzeltal speakers (excluding municipalities founded in the past three decades by migrants). For each, I compiled census data indicating the number of communities, total population, and the number of households from 1950 to 2015. With that data, it is possible to plot the ratio of inhabitants or households to communities over time. To report the results with greater clarity, I categorized the towns in three groups, Tzeltal (Tze), Tzotzil (Tzo), and Mestizo (Mes), based on the percentage of speakers of

Mayan languages in each town.[40] Tzotzil and Tzeltal towns tend to be similar demographically, so I plot average values (means and medians) for each category (Figure 3.3).

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[40] I classified as 'Tzotzil' and 'Tzeltal' the towns that are nearly linguistically homogeneous, with over 90% of inhabitants speaking primarily a Mayan language. Tzotzil towns are Chalchihuitán, Chamula, Chenalhó, Huixtán, Mitontic, Larráinzar, and Zinacantán. Tzeltal towns are Amatenango, Chanal, Tenejapa, and Oxchuc. The 'Mestizo' category includes towns that include substantial populations of Tzotzil or Tzeltal speakers but are linguistically heterogeneous: Bochil, Bosque, Chilón, Las Ross, Ocosingo, Pantelhó, Simojovel, Yajalón, and Venustiano Carranza.
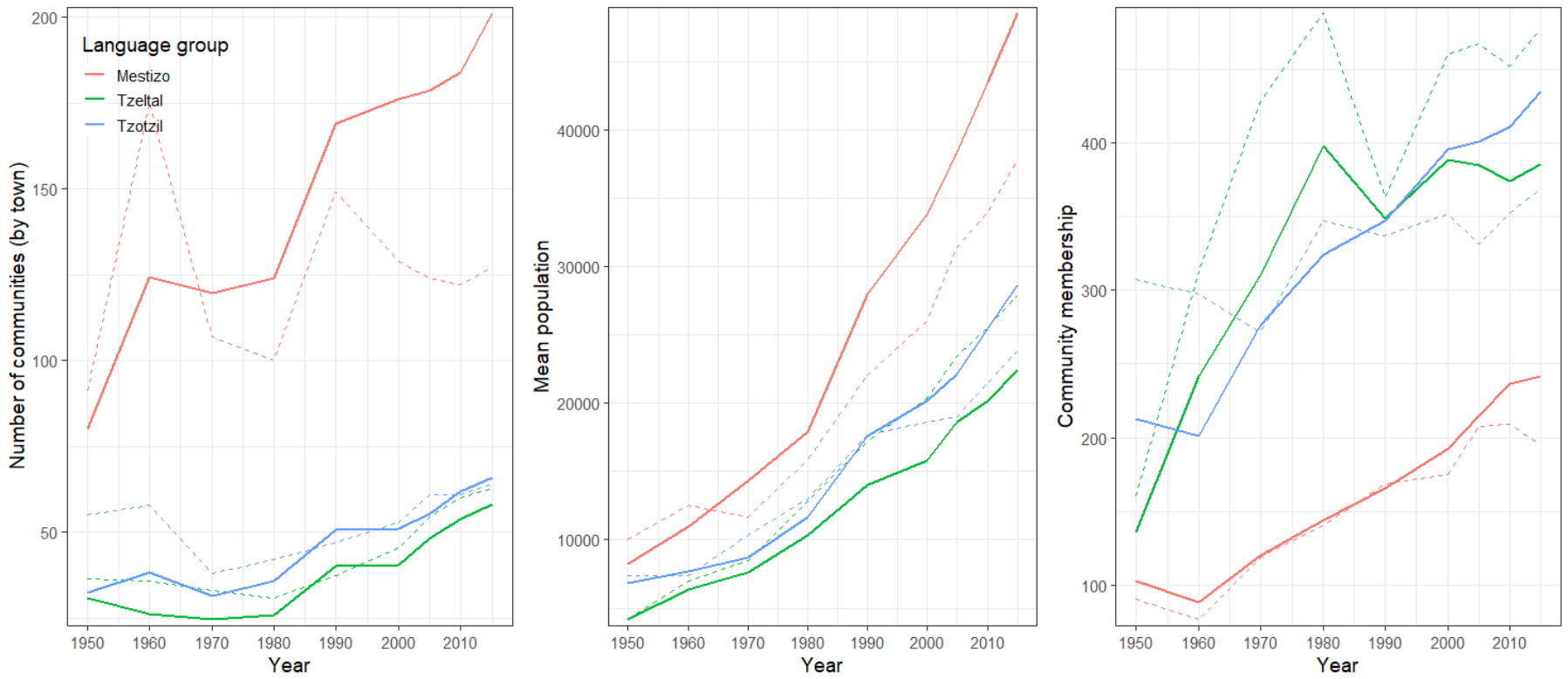
Figure 3.3: Average no. of communities, population, and community membership in 20 towns

The first thing to notice is that 'Mestizo' (or ethnically heterogeneous) community membership tends to be half of that in Tzotzil and Tzeltal towns (right-hand graph). This is due to two reasons: 1) Mestizo towns tend to be in large lowland regions that, until the 1970s, were sparsely populated; 2) Maya and Mestizos have different definitions of 'community.' On the latter point, it is essential to know that most Mestizos tend to cluster in urban centers (*pueblos*), and, when they settle in rural areas, they tend to live in small ranches that are populated by just a just few families. Maya towns, on the other hand, tend to have small urban centers and more densely populated rural communities. Communities are bound together mainly based on common land ownership and kinship ties—a point which I develop in Chapter 4.

From 1950-60 to 2005-15, mean community membership has nearly doubled across all groups, increasing by 96% (Tze), 81% (Tzo), and 130% (Mes) on average. The first and more obvious conclusion that we can draw from this is that Dunbar's number alone is not a factor limiting the growth of communities. This is not surprising since not every Tzotzil-Tzeltal community may be organized by prestige hierarchies or fully dependent on face-to-face interaction. As in Chenalhó, other towns have seen a rise in quasi-urban clusters. Still, the populations of these towns grew twice as fast as community membership, increasing by 333% (Tze), 244% (Tzo), and 451% (Mes) during the same period. Mestizo towns grew at a higher rate due to migration from highland to lowland areas. Migration was particularly common from highland Tzotzil and Tzeltal towns to the Lacandon jungle, beginning in the 1950s and peaking in the 1970s (de Vos 1988). Migrants settled predominantly in towns with large areas such as Ocosingo and Chilón, which were the municipalities that saw the highest population increase during 1980-1990 when the government began to formally recognize these new settlements.

Towns in the sample became more fragmented over the past six decades, seeing their number of communities increase by 112% (Tze), 46% (Tzo), and 142% (Mes). With census data, it is possible to estimate that the yearly rate of change growth in the number of communities follows a similar curve for Tzotzil and Tzeltal towns: stable from 1950 to 1970, and increasing, 1.9% yearly afterward on average. An ANOVA comparing group means (Tze n = 28, Tzo n = 49, Mes n = 63) shows no clear differences in the rate of growth of communities through time (mean Yr change = 0.012, F = 0.118, p-value = 0.889). The number of communities in Mestizo towns also grew during the same period, however I cannot distinguish between increases caused by the creation of new settlements in lowland areas and population growth.

Tzotzil and Tzeltal communities have had negative net migration rates since at least the 1940s, sending migrants to Mestizo cities or lowland jungle areas at an increased rate. Villafuerte Solís and García Aguilar (2014) show that select highland Tzotzil towns saw a net migration of -1.5 (1940-50), -

1.22 (1950-1960), and -2.47% (1960-1970). It is safe to assume, thus, that these towns lose a minimum of one percent of their population every year to outmigration. Despite the high levels of outmigration, population growth was rapid across groups. The mean yearly population growth from 1950-2010 is 2.3%, and an ANOVA shows that there are no clear differences across groups (Tze= 0.028, Tzo = 0.023, Mes = 0.023, F = 0.993, p = 0.373). The same is true for community membership growth, which across groups increased by 1.3% yearly (Mes = 0.014, Tze = 0.0152, Tzo = 0.011, F = 0.209, p-value = 0.811).

In sum, census data show a picture of high fissioning, with a majority of people born since 1950 leaving their native communities either to migrate to cities or to found new settlements or communities. From 1950-2010, the population of Maya towns (Tzotzil, Tzeltal, and heterogenous) increased rapidly (2.3% yearly) despite having a high negative net migration rate. In part, Maya towns responded to that population pressure by becoming increasingly fragmented, creating new communities at a rate of 1.9% per year, while community membership increased by 1.2% a year. If we assume a -1% net migration rate (a low estimate based on Villafuerte Solís and García Aguilar 2014), roughly one-third of every person born since 1950 migrated to another municipality. Of those who did not migrate, half went on to found new communities within their native towns. Community membership increased about twofold in Chiapas, which shows that there is no absolute ceiling—such as Dunbar's number—preventing communities from growing. Still, the total population grew at a faster pace than community membership (t = 4.815, df = 139, p-value < 0.0001), confirming our hypothesis 2, that there are limits to how fast these communities can grow.

Does this mean population growth <u>determines</u> fissioning in prestige-ranked groups? As Neves (1995) points out, fissioning cannot be explained by a single demographic variable. In Chiapas, expulsions are well documented, and usually have been explained as the result of conflicts between religious converts and traditionalists. When it comes to social phenomena, multiple causes can lead to the same outcome. I have collected stories of communities that broke apart due to disputes over taxation (such as Linda Vista), debt, kinship rivalries, water scarcity, land conflict, among other causes. These are some of the <u>proximate causes</u> of fragmentation. If we are to understand a phenomenon's <u>ultimate causes,</u> we must also investigate ecological and demographic factors such as land scarcity and population. As Johnson (1982) pointed out, population increases lead to a rise in scalar stress, which in turn raises the probability that a variety of conflicts—the proximate causes—emerge, causing fragmentation. Hence, population growth should be understood as the ultimate cause of fragmentation. Religious and political conflict, taxation, and water scarcity are some of its proximate causes.

Groups organized by prestige hierarchies lack top-down chains of command and dominant leadership roles that make it possible for them to scale up. Once they reach a large size, they naturally

tend to break apart. To explain the expulsions and fragmentation that have taken place in Chiapas since the 1970s, thus, we must ask what the "pull" factors that allow for greater scalability are. Although I have stressed dominance hierarchies as the main obstacle to scalability, others exist, such as communication technologies, literacy, and lineage systems for managing communal lands. Given the lack of stable power structures in Chiapas, thus, it should not be surprising that Maya communities break apart. What is surprising is that some of these communities have managed to grow far more than most. It is remarkable that five of Chenalhó's 110-plus communities have grown past the 1,000-member mark. Future research needs to focus on identifying the governance structures that allowed these five communities to grow more significantly than others.

2.3. Communal Assemblies

Another feature of prestige-ranked Maya groups in Chiapas is their method for making collective decisions and establishing consensus. As I introduced in Chapter 1, collective decisions are always made in assemblies in which every community member participates. There are no leaders with legitimacy to make decisions on their own, as we have seen. Instead, prestigious elders with a track record of community service bring up subjects and ask others to debate and vote. These assemblies are known as *tsobajel* ('gathering'), and elders address community members as *viniketik antsetik ta koman*, literally, 'men and women in common,' or 'commoners.' At least on the surface, all are encouraged to participate in the decision-making process. But, as usual, reality is full of nuance. Every community has organized political factions whose members have enough clout to direct collective decisions in their favor, and prestige levels determine how much weight one's voice has.

Until recently, there were few studies on collective decision-making in Maya communities (classical ethnographers tended to focus on their religious, ritual, and economic aspects). Things changed since the 1994 Zapatista rebellion. As the international community flooded Chiapas in its aftermath, many noticed that Zapatista rebels held communal assemblies and asked for the input of all group members when making collective decisions. The Zapatistas called these events *Encuentros*—a Spanish translation of the *tsobajel*. The Encuentros have been widely showcased as an example of a successful form of non-hierarchical consensus-making. In recent years, international movements such as Occupy took inspiration directly from the Zapatista *encuentros* while experimenting with more inclusive forms of direct democracy (Nail 2013). Some have mistakenly described communal assemblies as a Zapatista invention, when they clearly precede the 1994 rebellion (e.g., Miller 1965; Köhler 1982).

Despite their ubiquity, communal assemblies do not follow pristine and ancient Maya traditions. In their current form, assemblies date back to the Mexican revolution, when the original Zapatistas sought

to give more autonomy to small rural communities (Warman 1980, 104). They also emerged as a method for managing the *ejidos*, the communal land tenure system devised in the aftermath of land reform (see Chapter 4). As Graeber (2007, 362) points out, the *encuentros* among modern Zapatistas are an amalgamation of elements from contemporary social movements and preexisting norms. The rules guiding these assemblies are never set in stone, and there is always room for improvisation.

Communal assemblies in Chenalhó are just like that: improvisational. For over a year, attending and recording these events was a major part of my fieldwork. Locals often describe the assemblies as a form of *usos y costumbres*, or 'customary law.' However, aside from a handful of stable norms, there is almost nothing 'customary' about such events. The assemblies are open-ended meetings where community members discuss issues afflicting the community and bargain for a solution. These events are barely scripted, often unpredictable, and allow for great spontaneity. In assemblies, nothing is definitive, everything is negotiable, and people can make up or revise laws as they go. Through watching these events, I learned that *usos y costumbres* does not refer to a specific set of rules and regulations, but to whatever broadly defined practices distinguish local from state decision-making. The concept of *usos y costumbres* is employed strategically to protect local practices from state intervention and to reaffirm indigenous autonomy.[41]

The script behind assemblies is simple. The meetings take place in a school's conference room. Sitting in the front, between other civil cargoholders, the *Agente* (community headman) begins by introducing the topics of discussion—known as *puntos*—for the day and then opens for opinions. The *pasados* (prestigious elders), who always sit in the front, facing cargoholders, are the first to raise their hands and speak, while other community members wait for their turn. After hearing a few different views, the *Agente* enumerates three alternatives—which are usually proposed by the *pasados*—and asks for the community to choose one of them, which they do by using a combination of voice vote and show of hands. After the community is done discussing all the *puntos* for the day, the *Agente* concludes the assembly. When the decisions made during a community are exceptionally impactful, the community's

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[41] Some Tzotzil forms of exchange and conflict settlement can be at odds with national government laws. As an example, there is the practice of petitioning government contractors for gifts before closing a deal. While this type of deal making makes perfect sense within the local prestige economy (as I explain in 4.3), it could be seen as bribery or embezzlement at a national level. Some marriage practices such as bride price payment (which I discuss in Chapter 4) or the more lenient parenting methods in Tzotzil communities are also frequently questioned by Mexican lawmakers or Mestizo journalists. Still, since the Mexican constitution includes a clause recognizing and protecting *usos y costumbres*, by labeling certain practices as such, people can protect local autonomy from state intervention.

escribano (scribe) redacts a meeting report (*acta*) to formally record the decision made that day. In some communities, such as Linda Vista, women are excluded from the meetings and men are expected to be heads of households. In the Cabecera, women are allowed to attend to represent a female-headed household. Aside from this basic script, everything is unpredictable. *Usos y costumbres*, then, does not refer to a body of laws, but rather to a simple formula that facilitates and (roughly) regulates collective bargaining.

The Tzotzil communal assemblies illustrate a fundamental problem with direct and inclusive decision-making. The more open and unstructured decision-making is, the greater the transaction costs are. Communal assemblies in Chenalhó can last from five to ten hours—sometimes even longer than that (I once saw a meeting take two whole days in a community in the Cabecera). The 'leaders,' or civil cargoholders, are never in charge. The Agente (headman) only plays a weak moderator role, while other cargoholders sit silently unless asked to speak. Although the opinions of the *pasados* have a greater weight, they are not allowed to deliberate anything in public. Since this form of consensus-making invites full participation, it is impossible to predict how long a community will take to make decisions.

Aside from gender restrictions in some communities, there are no pre-established social, temporal, or spatial limits to participation in communal assemblies. Anyone—even when drunk or for other reason incapacitated—can object to decisions made at any moment, leading the discussion to stray. Meetings are permeated with breaks and digressions, as status-conscious elders display their 'superior' wisdom; as drunk men burst into the conference room screaming gibberish; as dogs howl; as people leave the room in droves for a bathroom or soda break (see Chapter 5.1 for an example). Most decisions can be renegotiated at any moment, so communities can always debate whether norms established weeks or months before should be struck down. From an outsider's perspective, the process might appear inefficient or even dysfunctional. An example of a decision which entailed high transaction costs, as I discussed earlier, is how Linda Vista dealt with political dissenters. For months, community members were stuck with the unsolvable problem. For months, they held meetings that lasted a whole day but still could not find closure. In the end, they decided to take a course of action which, oddly, no one seemed to be in favor of: to expel three families from the community.

Another example is how communities negotiate taxation. Four times I watched Cabecera and Linda Vista members clash over how and whether to finance certain secular fiestas. Some fiestas, such as Independence Day and Mother's Day, are not included in the traditional civil-religious system but are suggested by the teachers who work at local schools. Since there are no pre-established norms specifying how these fiestas should be funded, each year the communities must meet to decide whether and how to conduct them. When Linda Vista met in 2015 to decide whether to host an Independence Day celebration

(mandatory for most schools in Mexico), the community held an assembly and asked its members to vote four times. 1) Should we perform the fiesta this year? 2) How should we pay for it? (Alternatives: by collecting tribute, by petitioning a sponsor, or by using money given by a contractor.) 3) How much tribute should we charge? (20, 25, or 30 pesos per household). 4) Who should collect the tribute? (School committees, religious tax collectors, or community members themselves.) The decision required all heads of households to attend the meeting, which lasted a whole day. Deciding on this one fiesta took almost three hours—and that was just one of the four *puntos* for the day. Each question needed to be independently debated and voted, and there were never pre-established paths of action to choose. The voting alternatives were suggested by the *pasados* and debated by the crowd. When the community had to vote for how much tribute to collect from each household, they chose the lowest alternative of 20 pesos. Each time I watched community members vote on how much tribute to charge, they always chose the lowest alternative. Clearly, people always want to pay as little as possible for secular fiestas. So one wonders why they even bother voting instead of just assuming that people will pick the lowest amount proposed.

If communal assemblies are so time-consuming and inefficient, why do they persist? What drives the resistance against less direct forms of decision-making? In the Cabecera, there has been a move toward giving more decision-making authority to cargoholders (in Chapter 7.1.3, I describe the development of the community's incipient 'bureaucracy,' which likely results from its larger size in comparison to rural communities). Still, the Cabecera continues to hold communal assemblies frequently, and its decision-making structure looks nothing like that of a modern state.

The persistence of assemblies is due to the consistent rejection of dominance hierarchies and distrust of the 'executive' type of leaders which I discussed earlier. There is also a strong sense of individualism in Tzotzil society which would draw the envy of classical liberals, and which is more challenging to explain. People consistently refuse to let groups represent themselves unless they participate in the consensus-making process. Another factor, which would be ignored by scholars focused solely on economic costs, is that assemblies do more than just facilitate consensus-making; they are also spaces of conviviality and venues for entertainment. For people in these communities, attending assemblies is akin to participating in a sports event (I come back to this in Chapter 5.1.1). The assemblies, thus, perform multiple functions: they entertain and bind together community members who are not always tied by kinship.

But we must be cautious not to romanticize Tzotzil consensus-making as a form of unbiased democracy. In an earlier description of communal assemblies in Chalchihuitán (a Tzotzil town north of Chenalhó), Köhler (1982) remarked that consensus-making was not democratic, and that prestigious

elders deliberated every 'collective' decision before the assemblies. In Chenalhó, I saw a comparable scenario. Despite allowing for total inclusion of heads of households, Tzotzil consensus-making is far from egalitarian and prestige hierarchies matter in determining how much of a voice a community's members have during the process. Alongside communal assemblies there is a complex circuit of political meetings that *pasados* and civil cargoholders use to influence community deliberations. Attendants of these meetings debate and rehearse certain decisions before the general communal assemblies. *Pasados* and cargoholders usually meet privately, without notifying the community. Table 3.2 provides a list of types of municipal and community-level meetings that I attended in Chenalhó.

Table 3.2: Types of political meetings taking place at the municipal and community level

Level	Type of meeting	Attendants	Location	Purpose	Frequency
Municipal	Between municipal pasados	Former mayors, religious experts, high-ranking former religious cargoholders, PRI representatives	Varies	To debate and make decisions regarding municipal politics; to discuss topics related to the PRI.	Monthly
	Between Agentes	Agentes and Auxiliaries from every community	Casa de Cultura	To hear announcements and debate decisions made by the municipal administration.	Monthly
Community	General assembly	All heads of household (mostly males)	School conference room	To debate and vote on issues regarding local communities.	Monthly
	Between community pasados	Former Agentes, high-ranking former religious cargoholders	Varies	To debate and make decisions ahead of the general assemblies.	Weekly
	School committee	Members of the school committee	Community classroom	To discuss issues related with schools and raising funds for secular fiestas.	Weekly
	Patronato de Obras	Agente, members of the Patronato	House of the Agente	To raise funds for construction works for the community.	Biweekly
	Other Patronatos (water, electricity, etc)	Agente, members of the Patronato	House of the Agente	To raise funds for construction works for the community.	Biweekly
	Oportunidades	Oportunidades welfare program recipients (mostly women), Agente, and other civil cargoholders	School conference room, town hall.	To discuss issues related to the administration of government cash handout programs for women.	Monthly

Some people in Chenalhó describe the secret meetings held by *pasados* as a form of *usos y costumbres*. These secret meetings were mentioned by anthropologist Calixta Guiteras-Holmes in her 1940s ethnographic report of the town (Guiteras Holmes 1946, 70). According to her, the pasados met in secret in order to prevent the Secretario—who back then was always Mestizo—from interfering in decisions regarding the welfare of indigenous people. Many decades later, the secret meetings continue to take place, even though secretarios are now Tzotzil. Although these meetings tend to be private and unannounced, I managed to attend several of them in the Cabecera, when a cargoholder whom I befriended began to leak the appointment dates and locations to me. The pasados were kind (as Tzotzil leaders must be) and let me sit through the meetings without ever questioning my goals or trying to limit what I could write about. Still, it was clear that they would rather keep outsiders unaware of what they discussed.

At the time, there were two ongoing disputes between the community's cargoholders and the organization of local schools. The Benito Juarez middle school, which belongs to the Cabecera, had just hired a new principal. Many school principals and teachers in Chenalhó are Mestizos who reside in larger cities (such as San Cristóbal de las Casas) and accept assignments from the state government to work in the Tzotzil town. Upon receiving her new position, the school principal noticed that the parents of the children enrolled at the school did not participate in the school's organization. Most of that work was done by the ten members of the school committee (Comité de Educación) who are appointed by the community through the general assemblies following 'customary' law. The new principal believed that leaving school matters to cargoholders was an inefficient way to manage the school. She told me that "the school committee members are not motivated to work for the school since most of them do not have children enrolled there… In places where I worked previously, it is the parents who decide how to run the schools, and not someone appointed by the community who has little interest in running the school." She began to hold meetings between parents without asking the pasados or cargoholders for permission. The pasados saw her actions as an attempt to seize power from the community and acted to deter the new principal.

At the same time, another conflict erupted over Chenalhó's only preschool, or *kinder*, located near the center of the Cabecera. Aside from the teachers who worked at that facility, there was never anyone in charge of maintaining the small and underfunded school. In 2015, a group of mothers of the children enrolled there decided to form a committee to petition municipal authorities for funds to repair the facility. The preschool committee, initially composed of three women and a man, was not elected through a communal assembly as parents believed that the preschool did not belong to any particular community. For several months, the committee worked unnoticed. But when their grant request was

approved, a dispute over who had the authority to control the school ensued. In Chenalhó, when a contractor is hired through a construction grant, he is expected to give a gift (in cash) of 10 to 15% of the total budget back to the community. The money can be used to sponsor the building's inauguration ceremony or some other festivity. The gift promised by the contractor to the preschool was substantial (30,000 pesos) and, as usual in Chenalhó, it became the object of a fierce dispute (as I describe in Chapter 7.1.3, contractor gifts to communities are often accompanied by accusations of embezzlement).

The contractor also asked the committee for the school building's floor plan and a title deed proving that the school belonged to the municipality. Isabel, the president of the preschool committee, and who was also a lawyer, could only find an old document, undated, whose floor plan had incorrect dimensions. The contractor refused to accept this document and told her that she needed to update it with the actual dimensions of the land. Isabel then began to work on updating the documents. However, when she requested the signatures of the Cabecera's *Agente* and municipal authorities, she drew the attention of the *pasados*, who began to interrogate whether she had the authority to take such measures. Some accused her of trying to name herself as the owner of the preschool building, which supposedly belongs to the community. The pasados then began to question the legitimacy of the preschool committee, whose existence they had thus far been unaware of. They claimed that the preschool belonged to the Cabecera, and that its committee would have to be nominated by all community members, following the traditional vote through a general assembly, rather than by the school's parents. Some argued that receiving gifts from contractors is a form of *usos y costumbres*, and as such the practice requires supervision from traditionalist elders.

The pasados feared that the actions of the new school principal and the preschool committee could move decision-making away from the communal assemblies. Despite allowing for direct participation, communal assemblies are a controlled setting in which traditionalist elders feel comfortable performing, speaking far more often and eloquently than other community members. Everyone I spoke with agrees that the opinions of pasados count more than those of others, even though they have no formal authority to legislate or issue orders. The pasados, thus, exert what Wolf (2001a, 384) called "tactical" power: they control, by influence, the setting in which collective decisions are made. For them, the school principal and the preschool committee were 'unelected' officials. For officials to be considered legitimate, they must be nominated through a communal assembly—that is, the nomination must take place within the pasados' scope of influence. Attempts to give decision-making power to state officials or school parents constituted a threat to the traditionalists' control over the community.

There was also gender and ethnic dynamics at play as the events unfolded. Both the middle school's new principal and president of the preschool committee were women who could not speak

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Tzotzil fluently. Their ethnic background was ambiguous, and despite Isabel claiming to have indigenous ancestry, people labeled her and others as non-indigenous. At that time, an indigenous female candidate, Rosa Pérez Pérez, was running a campaign for mayor (which she would later win, triggering years of conflicts between traditionalists and reformists). Some of the *pasados* were deeply concerned about this 'intrusion' of women into local politics. They frequently characterized women as incompetent when dealing with political issues involving *usos y costumbres*. For the pasados in the Cabecera, the growing acceptance of women into local politics posed an existential threat. Traditionalist elders had made their names by navigating a system that explicitly prohibited women from taking certain roles of power. The fact that the new school principal was not from Chenalhó also instilled fears—deeply rooted in colonial history—that an outsider would try to interfere in local autonomy. During the fateful mayoral election, gender divisions, ethnic rivalries, and an ingrained fear of external intervention came to intersect, triggering a bold reaction from the traditionalist faction.

To maintain control over the schools, the pasados, sometimes accompanied by civil cargoholders, held several private meetings in which, among other topics, they planned on how to persuade the community to give up on the idea of parents managing schools independently. The whole process took months, and it would require more space to describe in detail. Pasados usually met two or three times ahead of assemblies to talk about what they planned on saying during the general community meetings. They simulated if-then scenarios and anticipated what they intended to say during the assemblies. Through these meetings, they slowly crafted a strategy to convince the community to side with them and prepared to debate against dissenters. And during the process, with the recent introduction of mobile phones, anonymous chains of messages slandering opposition politicians and accusing the preschool committee of stealing the contractor's gift began to circulate virally.[42]

The pasados and cargoholders sought to introduce the community to the issues in an assembly in a way that would compel commoners to side with them. In a communal assembly, the community voted to repeal the preschool committee that had been nominated by parents, replacing it with a new 3-member committee which was to be nominated with the supervision of the pasados. The man picked by the pasados to be president of the new committee had a history of cargo service. The community also voted to disavow the decisions made by the school principal's group of parents, reaffirming the autonomy of the

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[42] A long text spread through a mobile application (WhatsApp), accusing the female mayoral candidate of corruption and racism and mentioning that Isabel had stolen half of the contractor's gift given to the preschool committee. This was the first time the internet was used to slander political candidates. Before the arrival of cellphones, people used to photocopy and distribute short, one-page libels with information on the candidates they sought to oppose.

school committee cargoholders nominated through assemblies. Instead of removing power from the established school committee, they raised its membership from 10 to 12 to match a recent increase in the number of households belonging to the community. But the pasados also gave a concession to those who wanted to see greater participation from parents in decisions regarding the schools. They decided that some—but not all—of the school committee members would have to have children enrolled at the schools. They also allowed for single mothers to be nominated to lower rank positions such as *vocal* ('honorary member').

The consensus produced through communal assemblies is not free of bias. Tzotzil-Maya communities are not egalitarian and voting in assemblies is never done anonymously. Since there are reputational differences distinguishing community members, some people's voices matter more than others. Communal assemblies are but a simple and unregulated method for direct decision-making. Because they are unregulated, their internal dynamics tends to reflect the power structures within communities. The outcome of the decisions made through assemblies tends to favor a clique of established traditionalists who, despite having no formal authority, can easily employ their influence to steer the collectivity in their favor.

Although I am not the first to notice that high-prestige individuals in Tzotzil communities tend to make decisions that favor themselves (see also F. Cancian 1965; G. Collier 1989), previous observers have tended to portray the decision-making in these communities as egalitarian. Instead, I argue that prestige hierarchies matter in shaping collective decisions. The reproduction of these social structures depends on maintaining collective decision-making decentralized, unregulated, non-anonymous, and direct. Ironically, it was by protecting inclusive decision-making that traditionalists have continued to exert control over political affairs in Chenalhó.

The *pasados* often portray themselves as people who are in charge of protecting *usos y costumbres*, or 'customary law,' even though that term refers to an open-ended and highly improvisational consensus-making *process* rather than to a consensual set of laws. Traditionalists are fully aware that they can use communal assemblies to influence decisions. They focus predominantly on affecting decisions that concern who gets to be nominated to positions of power. By naming like-minded allies, they make sure that their factions maintain control over local politics and that prestige—and not dominance—remains as their primary index of power. In the next part of the chapter I show quantitative evidence of how prestige affects crucial resource allocation decisions—for instance, who gets to receive priority in resource distributions, or who gets to take less communal burdens? I also discuss how fairness conceptions are changing as prestige hierarchies become less important in urban and market integrated areas.

3. From Reputation- to Need-based Equity: Experimental Allocation Games

As we saw in Chapter 2.3, Mestizos and Tzotzil gave different explanations for their offers in the Dictator and Ultimatum games. Recall that Mestizos tended to justify explanations by referring to the socioeconomic status of participants ('I gave such amount because other participants are poorer/wealthier than me'). Tzotzil participants, on the other hand, referred to virtues of self and others ('I gave such amount because I have/they have a good heart'). While game explanations appear to indicate the existence of different conceptions of fairness driving economic allocation, I found no differences in how participants from each group played the games: the distribution of offers of Mestizos and Tzotzil was the same.

The results revealed a discrepancy between discourse (how people justify or explain their allocation decisions) and practice (what percentage of a stake people decide to give away in an experimental game). If game explanations bear no resemblance to actual behavior, what are they an index of? In this section, I use modified allocation games to answer that question. I show that differences in how Tzotzil and Mestizos explain their decisions reflect distinct cultural notions of equity—i.e., who should receive priority when a group distributes a common resource. Comparing third-party allocation game results between Rural Tzotzil, Urban Tzotzil, and Mestizos in Chenalhó, I show that Tzotzil notions of equity are shifting from reputation-based to need-based with urbanization and a shift to a market economy. This shift is explained by a decline in the importance of prestige hierarchies in urban areas. Although equity norms may not affect individual allocation decisions (such as those indexed by Ultimatum and Dictator games), they constitute the narratives by which people judge resource allocation outcomes involving third parties. In other words, while equity norms do not affect decisions where a player is a potential recipient of the allocation process, they determine whether the player accepts or rejects allocation outcomes.

We resampled the randomly selected Mestizo (MES) and Urban Tzotzil (UT) participants from the experiments described in Chapter 2.3. Resampling participants from the previous study was a choice of convenience as we already had social network and other data for those households. Participation depended mostly on each subject's availability. 28 Urban Tzotzil and 23 Mestizos agreed to participate in the present game. In the Cabecera, we conducted the study in the end of 2012. In each visit, we conducted the allocation game (described below) followed by the social ranking tasks described earlier (Section 1.4). In a subsequent field season (summer of 2013), we interviewed Rural Tzotzil (RT) from Linda Vista using the questionnaires described in Chapter 2.3, and we made several visits to each participant. After a communal assembly, we recruited 33 volunteers and took pictures of each. Two weeks later, we visited

each household to conduct household and social network surveys, the allocation game described below, and social ranking tasks (explained in 1.4)—in that order.

To measure equity norms, I developed an allocation game which excludes the participant from the allocation process. I call this game simply Resource Allocation Game (RAG). We presented participants with a sequence of random pairs of photos of other community members. For each pair we asked: "if you had to divide 50 pesos among these two people; how much would you give to each?" We did not provide any additional information about the allocation recipients. For Urban Tzotzil and Mestizos, we repeated the same question 58 times. For rural participants, we repeated the question 32 times. After the game—as I discussed in Section 1.4 of this chapter—we asked participants to rank-order photos of the other community members based on wealth, prestige, dominance, and cooperativeness (in random order).

The goal of the experiment was to explore the extent to which social rankings, kinship, and friendship (measured as the frequency of interaction), explain inequality in allocations. Differently from 2-person games used in behavioral economics, the RAG excludes participants from the pool of recipients, compelling them to act altruistically. This allows the ability to better separate the influence of social rankings and the several possible factors that can influence a person's decision to act selfishly[43] and can be confounded with cultural determinants in comparative studies. In the RAG, players cannot engage in self-interested maximization, which eliminates that ambiguity.

The game also uses the social context as experimental stimuli; the pictures of other community members that we show during the experiment and the social rankings represent a sample of the community in which participants live. This makes the experiment contextually relevant, addressing a common criticism of the use of decontextualized experiments in anthropology (Chibnik 2005). Using social context as stimuli also solves a methodological problem with using games for cross-cultural comparisons: in societies with low literacy rates, people can have trouble understanding abstract anonymous games. The RAG proved to be simple and easy to explain to participants; none, regardless of age or schooling level, had trouble understanding the game once we presented them with pictures of other community members.

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[43] For instance, hunger and reminders of resource scarcity can make people less altruistic (DeWall et al. 2008; Petersen et al. 2014; Roux, Goldsmith, and Bonezzi 2015)—although there are exceptions to that (Häusser et al. 2019).

3.1. Resource Allocation Game

I use mixed effects models to analyze the results. The dependent variable is the difference between the proportion of money apportioned to each subject depicted in the photos used as experimental stimuli (e.g., Photo 1 percentage minus Photo 2 percentage [-100, 100]). The independent variables are: 1) difference between photo 1 and 2 social rankings (*wealth*, *prestige*, and *cooperativeness*) determined with the cultural consensus analysis, and 2) difference of frequency of interaction (*freq_int*) and kinship ties (*kinship*) between participant and photos. I converted the independent variables to z-scores. I exclude dominance rankings since there was no consensus among Urban and Rural Tzotzil when solving that task (see 1.4).

I use multilevel models as the data includes repeated measurements (each person played several random games). We cannot assume—as OLS models would have—that decisions were independent of each other. The data is structured in three levels. **Level 1**. Decisions nested in subjects (N = 3648). **Level 2**. Subjects nested in communities (N = 75; RT = 27, UT = 27, MES = 21). **Level 3**. Communities (N = 3). The models I use are supposed to be parsimonious: I chose the independent variables before I ran the experiments. My goal here is not to select the variables that make for the best predictive models, but rather to use regression to compare coefficient strengths across groups.

To decide for which variables to use random effects we can use the variance scores for subjects (level 2) and communities (level 3) using a random slopes model. As Table 3.3 shows, for subjects and communities, variance scores are high for *wealth* and *prestige* but low for the other variables. This indicates that subjects and communities tend to be consistent toward allocating resources based on wealth or prestige. The remaining variables are more randomly distributed and less affected by subject and community clusters.

Table 3.3: Between-group variance in the Resource Allocation Game

Groups	Name	Variance	Std. Dev
Subject:Community	Wealth	105.867	10.289
	Prestige	51.113	7.149
	Cooperativeness	1.696	1.302
	Kinship	4.687	2.165
	Freq_Int	20.959	4.578
Community	Wealth	333.368	18.258
	Prestige	135.536	11.642
	Cooperativeness	20.880	4.57
	Kinship	0.403	0.635
	Freq_Int	4.819	2.195
Residual variance		571.8849	23.914

The models include fixed effects for *cooperativeness*, *kinship*, and *freq_int,* and random effects for wealth and prestige. Since I only surveyed three communities, I exclude level 3 from the analysis and run separate 2-level regression models for each group studied. I use random slopes and fixed intercept models since we presented players with the same set of randomly chosen photos (mean values of all variables do not differ from subject to subject, so the intercept variance is low). To specify it formally,

$$Split_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Kinship_i + \beta_1 Freq\_Int_i + \beta_1 Prestige_{ij} + \beta_1 Wealth_{ij} + \beta_1 Coop_{ij} + u_{0j} + u_{1j}Prestige_{ij} + u_{1j}Wealth_{ij} + e_{0ij}$$

As the questionnaire included random questions (participants had to allocate money between randomly chosen players), the Cultural Consensus Model cannot be used to measure agreement between informants. To address that issue, I use the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) as an index consensus. The ICC is a measure of the proportion of variance in the dependent variable versus the total variance. An ICC of zero indicates that there is no variance <u>between</u> communities, while an ICC of 1 indicates that there is no variance <u>within</u> the responses of each subject. Two Mestizo, one Urban Tzotzil, and five Rural Tzotzil participants responded that they could only make equal splits regardless of the identity of the recipients. I excluded their responses from the results as there was no variation to be explained. Although it is interesting that a few participants seem to be egalitarian in principle, the number of participants who answered this way is too low to be explained statistically.

Table 3.4 shows the results of multilevel models for Rural Tzotzil, Urban Tzotzil, and Mestizo participants. *Wealth* and *Prestige* were the most important variables explaining allocation results across

groups. *Wealth* is negatively associated with allocation sizes, while *Prestige* is positively associated, which shows that need- and reputation-based fairness is well understood and regarded as relevant across communities. Groups vary widely in the frequency with which they make decisions based on one or the other ranking. People in all communities tended to make need-based allocations. For all groups, *Wealth* was a negative predictor of allocations (p-value < 0.01). But the *Wealth* component was higher for Mestizos (-26.84), lower for Urban Tzotzil (-17.21), and lowest for Rural Tzotzil (-5.27). *Prestige* was also clearly correlated with allocations for the three groups studied (p-value < 0.001 across groups). The prestige coefficient was higher for Rural Tzotzil (15) and Urban Tzotzil (12.36) and lowest for Mestizos (9.26).

Table 3.4: Resource Allocation Game results by community

Predictors	Rural Tzotzil			Urban Tzotzil			Mestizo		
	Estimates	SE	p-value	Estimates	SE	p-value	Estimates	SE	p-value
(Intercept)	1.59	0.87	0.068	-0.77	0.60	0.197	0.68	0.75	0.368
Wealth	-5.27	1.90	0.006	-17.21	2.29	<0.001	-26.84	3.53	<0.001
Prestige	15.00	3.14	<0.001	12.36	2.98	<0.001	9.26	2.59	<0.001
Cooperativeness	-7.73	2.64	0.003	-1.83	4.17	0.661	1.99	3.24	0.539
Freq. Interaction	2.64	0.96	0.006	1.14	0.42	0.007	2.32	0.57	<0.001
Kinship	1.21	1.69	0.474	3.42	2.17	0.116	-2.69	1.64	0.101
Random Effects									
σ^2	630.97			539.20			659.28		
τ_{00}	64.52 $_{Subject}$			115.29 $_{Subject}$			177.65 $_{Subject}$		
τ_{11}	43.89 $_{Subject.Prestige}$			50.53 $_{Subject.Prestige}$			83.67 $_{Subject.Prestige}$		
ρ_{01}	-0.54 $_{Subject}$			-0.10 $_{Subject}$			-0.14 $_{Subject}$		
ICC	0.10			0.19			0.23		
N	27 $_{Subject}$			27 $_{Subject}$			21 $_{Subject}$		
Observations	864			1566			1218		
Marginal R^2 / Conditional R^2	0.052 / 0.149			0.247 / 0.389			0.360 / 0.507		

Kinship was not correlated with offers (people did not favor their relatives). Frequency of interaction, on the other hand, was positively associated with offers across groups, i.e., people favor their friends or those who they interact with more frequently. The effect of *Freq_int*, still, was far lower than that of *Wealth* and *Prestige* (*Freq_int* coefficients for RT = 2.64, UT = 1.14, MES = 2.32, p-value < 0.01). *Cooperativeness* was only clearly associated with allocations among Rural Tzotzil participants (coef. = -7.73, p-value < 0.01).[44] We maintained both variables in the models because they correspond to different modes of allocation. People can draw a distinction between cooperativeness and prestige when solving allocation problems. In the Rural Tzotzil site, participants sometimes justified unequal allocations by stating that those who "like to help others," or who "live to give," should receive less. This exemplifies how cooperativeness-based allocation works—those who are seen as altruistic are receive smaller shares because they better tolerate losses. This differs from reputation-based allocation, in which those who are respected for having served the community should receive larger shares as a reward.

When comparing relative weights of *wealth* and *prestige*, we find that prestige diminishes with importance due to increasing modernization (ratio of *wealth* to *prestige* coefficients: RT = 0.35, UT = 1.39, MES = 2.9). As Tzotzil populations become increasingly urban, they progressively abandon prestige hierarchies and shift toward using wealth as their primary vector of difference. To illustrate the differences between the three groups studied, I ran a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) on the regression coefficients of all 75 participants, finding two main components that explain 70.6 and 29.4% of the variance. Figure 3.4 shows a multidimensional scaling chart that maps participants in relation to the first and second components of the model (each dot represents a participant). The first dimension corresponds to need-based allocation (*Wealth* coefficient). Notice how Rural Tzotzil participant tend to cluster positively within the first component, while Mestizos have negative first component eigenvalues. Urban Tzotzil participants are scattered throughout the chart and are indistinguishable from the two other groups. The second-dimension accounts for reputation-based allocations. Rural Tzotzil tend to have negative 1st dimension scores, while the others are more likely to have positive scores. The chart sheds light onto how behavioral variation is distributed across groups. There are no clear boundaries separating the behavior of the three groups studied, and behavioral variation exists within a continuum. While Rural Tzotzil and Mestizo participants tend to be more clustered and in opposition to each other, Urban Tzotzil are widely distributed. Urban Tzotzil are the most diverse participants in the study—the group is largely

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[44] Across groups, cooperativeness rankings tend to be positively correlated with prestige rankings, which could cause multicollinearity and inflate R² values. I tested for multicollinearity using the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF). VIF ranged between 2 and 3, indicating moderate but not severe multicollinearity.

composed of migrants from different communities in Chenalhó who have varying levels of bilingualism (an index of acculturation).
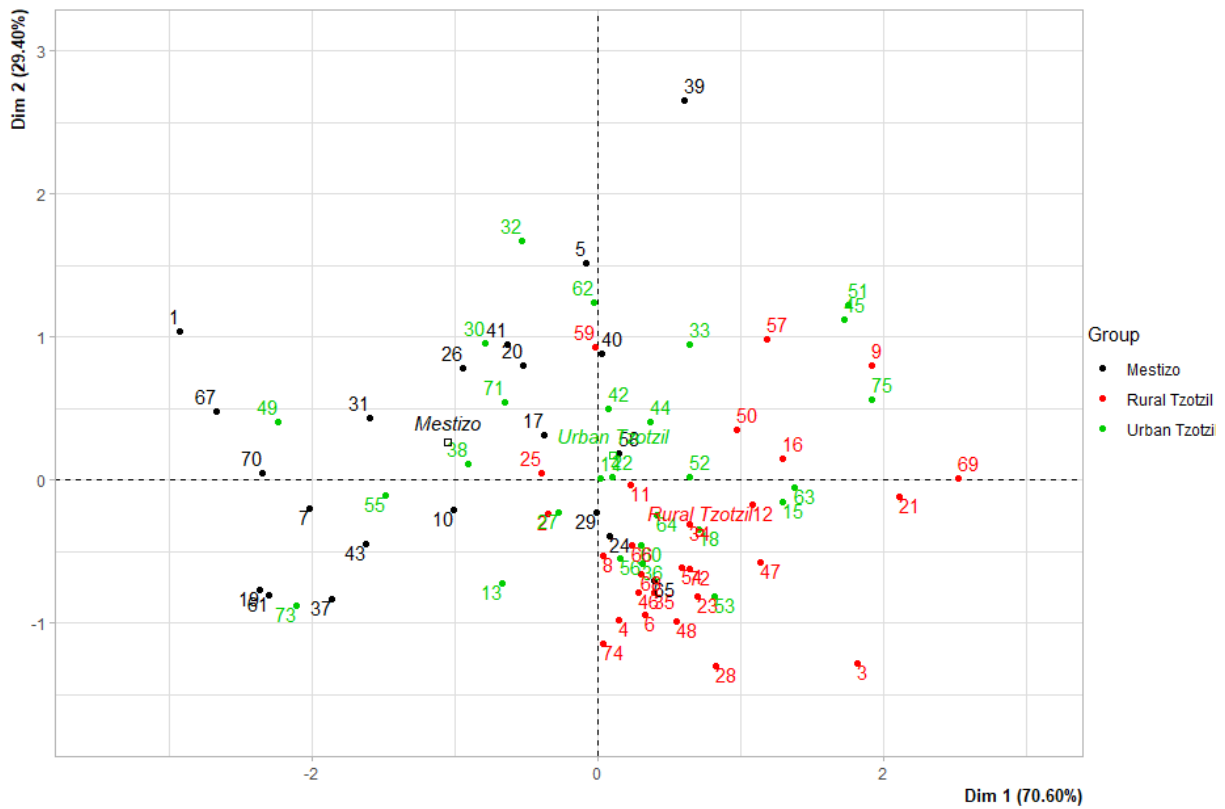
Figure 3.4: Distribution of participant coefficients in relation to 1st and 2nd factors of a PCA

In sum, the allocation game results show a diminishing importance of reputation-based allocations with urbanization. The results explain why Mestizo and Tzotzil explanations for Ultimatum and Dictator games differed, as we saw in Chapter 2.3.5. Mestizos, who referred to relative socioeconomic status when explaining their decisions, have a need-based conception of equity according to which a good must be transferred primarily to those who need it the most. Tzotzil, who cite virtues of self and others when explaining allocations, share a reputation-based understanding of equity—those who are more prestigious must be prioritized in resource allocation. Urban Tzotzil, when compared with their rural counterparts, are more likely to allocate money on a need-basis, which shows that the changing social structure of these communities, with the decline of prestige hierarchies in urban areas, changes the way they conceptualize equity in resource allocation.

To return to the question I posed earlier: if equity notions do not determine individual behavior in 2-person games (Ultimatum, Dictator games), do they influence resource allocation processes at all? I will

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argue that the equity notions that the RAG measures should not be understood as mental models that directly determine people's behavior. Rather, it would be more productive to frame equity notions as rhetoric—as narratives that people evoke when communities get together to decide how resources should be distributed.

During the communal assemblies discussed earlier in the chapter, members of communities gather to solve fair division and commons management problems. There, they evoke notions of equity to argue for (or against) or justify certain distributions of common goods. While equity notions do not affect individual decisions, they can shape the bargaining process through which communities make decisions regarding collective affairs: *who should receive more resources*?, *who should pay more taxes and take more burdens*?, and *in what order should resources be distribute*d? Equity, thus, influences *collective* decision-making—the processes through which people come to an agreement over how resources should be distributed and how laws guiding resource allocation should be instituted. Those ideas are crucial in determining the outcome of political processes.

3.2. Tax Allocation

The results of the RAG above raised the question of whether equity notions are culturally dependent or could vary according to the type of resource being allocated. As we saw, with increasing urbanization and a shift toward a market economy (represented by the Rural Tzotzil–Mestizo continuum), the reputation-based equity notion is replaced with a need-based one. To what extent this shift depends on the resource (money) and the type of problem (how to distribute rewards) used in the previous experiment remains an unsolved question. To address that question, I developed two additional allocation games. In the first game, we asked participants to allocate taxes (how much everyone should pay for a fiesta). In the second game, we asked participants to allocate cargos (who should be nominated for a certain cargo). In this section, I discuss the results of the tax allocation game. I will come back to the cargo allocation game in Chapter 5.4.1. As we will see, both games confirm that shifting notions of equity affect the distribution of different types of goods in different types of allocation problems.

About a year and a half after running the RAG, we went back to the Cabecera and Linda Vista and resampled the pool of participants who agreed to participate in the previous study. This was, again, a choice of convenience as we already had household and social network surveys for these participants. We found 25 Rural Tzotzil, 22 Urban Tzotzil, and 4 Mestizos willing to participate. The number of Mestizo participants is lower since by then I was doing ethnographic fieldwork in the rural site. Being aware of my renewed research focus, and after going through the series of conflicts with Tzotzil described in Chapter 2, Mestizos were more reluctant to give interviews. Another issue was that Mestizos are the

smallest group in the sample. Some of those who had participated in earlier studies were now working or studying in larger cities and could hardly be found in Chenalhó.

The methods used were was essentially the same as the RAG, though this time we asked a different question. We presented participants with 64 randomly chosen pairs of photos of community members. For each pair, we asked, "The community needs 100 pesos to finish raising funds for a fiesta. How much should each of these people contribute?" As I discussed earlier (2.3), in Chenalhó, most community-level taxes are used to fund either fiestas or religious ceremonies. Hence, framing taxes as fiesta funding proved to be the most sensible way to ask people to allocate taxes. As in the RAG, the tax allocation data is structured in three levels. **Level 1**: decisions nested in subjects (N = 3089). **Level 2**: subjects nested in communities (N = 51; RT = 25, UT = 22, MES = 4). **Level 3**. Communities (N = 3). I use 2-level mixed-effects models for each group and compare coefficients across them. The dependent and independent variables are the same as the ones used in the RAG models.

Table 3.5 shows the results of the tax allocation game. *Wealth* was, again, clearly correlated—positively—with allocation outcomes for all groups (p-value < 0.001). The *Wealth* coefficient is lowest among Rural Tzotzil and highest among Mestizos (coef. RT = 14.65, UT = 17.07, MES = 29.06). *Prestige* was negatively associated with allocation results for Rural and Urban Tzotzil (coef. RT = -9.46, p-value < 0.001; UT = -7.14, p-value = 0.025), but notice that the p-value is barely significant in the latter group. Among Mestizos, prestige was not associated with allocations. But the Mestizo results should be approached with caution. The small number of Mestizo participants caused the models for that group to have low variance scores and a singular fit. Like RAG results, *Cooperativeness* was only clearly associated with allocations among Rural Tzotzil participants (coef. = 11.23, p-value < 0.001). *Freq_int* did not affect the outcome variable this time.

Table 3.5: Tax Allocation Game results

Predictors	Rural Tzotzil			Urban Tzotzil			Mestizo		
	Estimates	SE	p-value	Estimates	SE	p-value	Estimates	SE	p-value
(Intercept)	-0.26	0.78	0.738	0.18	0.64	0.776	-1.45	1.96	0.460
Wealth	14.65	2.11	<0.001	17.07	2.48	<0.001	29.06	5.33	<0.001
Prestige	-9.46	2.60	<0.001	-7.14	3.17	0.025	-2.34	5.41	0.666
Cooperativeness	11.23	2.32	<0.001	1.85	4.51	0.682	-0.37	8.57	0.966
Freq. Interaction	0.34	0.83	0.684	0.41	0.45	0.361	0.75	1.25	0.552
Kinship	0.11	1.51	0.942	5.14	2.22	0.021	2.98	4.60	0.518
Random Effects									
σ^2	948.93			508.10			859.46		
τ_{00}	87.98 Subject			111.43 Subject			0.00 Subject		
τ_{11}	11.59 Subject.Prestige			42.64 Subject. Prestige			37.64 Subject.Prestige		
ρ_{01}	0.66 Subject			-0.22 Subject					
ICC	0.12			0.18					
N	25 Subject			22 Subject			4 Subject		
Observations	1583			1274			232		
Marginal R2 / Conditional R2	0.222 / 0.318			0.267 / 0.401			0.529 / NA		

The results of Tax Allocation and Resource Allocation games tell a similar story. Relative weights of *Wealth* and *Prestige* show that prestige diminishes with importance with increasing modernization (ratio of *Wealth* to *Prestige* coefficients: RT = 1.55, UT = 2.39, MES = 12.42). The results for Mestizos—despite the small sample size—indicate a preference toward allocating taxes based on one's ability to pay—wealthier individuals, who can afford fiestas, receive higher taxes, while those in need pay less. Rural and Urban Tzotzil also allocate taxes based on the ability to pay. Along with wealth, we find a clear effect of prestige in determining results for Tzotzil groups, with people allocating fewer taxes to prestigious members of their communities.

To what extent do equity norms affect the development of institutions in each community? I will come back to this question in Chapter 7, with examples of how Tzotzil prestige hierarchies shape decision-making regarding common resources. Regarding taxation, Linda Vista has reputation-based exceptions. The community allows elders to waive certain taxes and skip communal assemblies without having to pay the fees charged to those who fail to participate in mandatory communal events. Taxes tend to fall more heavily on young and low-prestige men. I once saw the community approve a law according to which every teenage man who decides to enroll in high school and move temporarily to the Cabecera must pay a 7,000 fine (roughly the same amount a young man must spend to finance a low-ranking cargo). During an assembly, the pasados argued that some young men were using education as an excuse to skip their mandatory community service, and this was taking money and time from other community members. The community approved that norm unanimously.

As I show in Chapter 5, cargo allocation, which is a form of taxation through mandatory service, follows the same patterned differences across groups. In Linda Vista, the more burdensome and expensive cargos tend to be given to young men, while in the Cabecera they are allocated based on ability to pay. Taxes in the Cabecera are charged equally, and there are no formal rules allowing those in need to waive their payments. But that flat tax can be negotiated under certain circumstances. I once spent a whole day following the Cabecera's tax collectors as they visited community households to collect money for a fiesta. Some community members managed to defer the payment of the tax by arguing with the tax collectors that they were undergoing financial stress. Whether they just postponed taxes or managed to waive them altogether is not a question that I can answer with the data I have. Still, when asking for leniency, people in the urban area use need-based logic instead of reputation-based logic.

4. Conclusion

Maya communities have often been described as egalitarian, being driven to split common goods equally. I sought to replace that model with a more nuanced approach, according to which resources are

allocated according to equity norms. Equity norms are not about egalitarianism. Rather, they are used to justify and explain the unequal distribution of resources based on what I called vectors of difference. In Rural Tzotzil communities organized by prestige hierarchies, individuals with a history of serving the community receive priority—or reputation-based equity. As the comparison with Urban Tzotzil and Mestizos shows, this is changing with urbanization and market integration, with reputation economies becoming less central and losing space to socioeconomic status and need-based equity norms. I depicted these changes both with quantitative and qualitative data.

I spent the earlier part of the chapter explaining how the Rural Tzotzil reputation economy works and how prestige hierarchies are their primary vector of difference. This is a topic that so far had been neglected and poorly understood. Perhaps this neglect is because measuring reputation quantitatively can be challenging. In the earlier part of the chapter, I proposed a method to do just that. I used ranking tasks asking participants to rank one another based on different social indices. I then used the cultural consensus model to compare agreement across groups and generate answer keys. With these samples, it was possible to construct a realistic model of the prestige hierarchies structuring Tzotzil and Mestizo groups. This method, coupled with the contextual allocation games described in the latter part of the chapter, can be used to make cross-group comparisons and be fruitfully applied for future comparative research. The methods allow for comparing preferences for equity norms across societies without losing contextual information that could be relevant in interpreting results.

An unexpected result of the ranking tasks was that Tzotzil communities lack interpersonal dominance hierarchies, a phenomenon that had not been demonstrated in previous studies of Maya communities. The lack of dominance hierarchies and the overdependence on prestige for structuring these groups has many implications for how we understand Tzotzil politics. It explains why Tzotzil leaders seek to minimize dissent within their communities by compelling their members to approve norms that prohibit competing group affiliations. It explains why communities fission so frequently, as prestige hierarchies depend on high levels of shared social knowledge to exist. It also sheds light on why traditionalist elders seek to preserve decision-making through communal assemblies—a decision-making method that is susceptible to being influenced by prestigious leaders.

One variable which I did not consider when examining Tzotzil social structures was kinship, which will be the topic of the next chapter. I will argue that Tzotzil patrilineal kinship was largely erased during the colonial period. This decline of traditional kinship systems which allowed social status to be transferred from one generation to the next explains the emergence of the cargo system as the primary way to produce, regulate, and distribute prestige among Tzotzil groups. I examine the cargo system more thoroughly in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4. KINSHIP AND THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSFER GAME

In the previous chapter I examined differences in how Tzotzil (urban and rural) and Mestizos solve problems of fair division in experimental games. I showed that differences in notions of equity may explain the emergence of institutions for resource allocation within communities. The present chapter focuses on the problem of intergenerational transfer (or inheritance): how families (or lineages) allocate property and social status across generations. Inheritance can be framed as an iterative fair division problem. In each generation, a scarce privately owned good (property or status) needs to be split up and allocated between a certain number of descendants of a family (or lineage). There are multiple ways to partition and transfer property—systems of partible inheritance, primogeniture, or ultimogeniture, for instance, have been widely described by anthropologists. The longitudinal outcomes of these systems, however, are still poorly understood. Here, I focus on the interrelation between changing inheritance patterns and land distribution.

Among the Maya of Chiapas, the inheritance of property—land, primarily—is inextricably tied to kinship gender relations. To understand shifting patterns of inheritance, thus, we must examine how kinship and gender have changed in Maya communities. I will approach the problem in three ways: ethnographically, synchronically, and diachronically. In the first section, I discuss an ethnographic example that shows how gender, kinship, and marriage norms in Linda Vista (the Rural Tzotzil community) are a part of a single system that is geared toward solving problems of land inheritance. In Section 2, I expand the approach to change employed so far and compare kinship terminologies, marriage patterns, and social inequality among the three groups I researched (Rural Tzotzil, Urban Tzotzil, and Mestizos from Chenalhó). In Section 3, I discuss changing Maya kinship from a historical perspective, focusing on the role of the Catholic church in erasing Maya kinship systems and the effect of agriculture in strengthening patrilineal descent.

1. Through the Patriline

The story I narrate here begins during my first trip to Linda Vista in the summer of 2011. I spent that summer doing surveys on spatial cognition in Chenalhó. Being incompetent in Tzotzil, I struggled to conduct meaningful participant observation. I did interviews accompanied by a translator, Samuel, 18, a local teenager who could speak limited Spanish. I tried but could not build rapport. Even with a translator, it quickly became evident that—without knowing Tzotzil—I would not overcome the social barrier that separated me from the people I was trying to study.

The deep social distance between males and females in Linda Vista contributed to the barrier between anthropologist and natives. Some women in the community seemed to panic at the mere sight of foreigners—foreign men, in particular. When interviewing women, we would frequently run into "methodological issues" whose importance only those who have done fieldwork would be able to appreciate. In one case, Samuel and I approached a household to ask for permission to conduct a survey. Shortly after knocking at the door, we saw two women run away into the woods. Were the women trying to hide from us?—I wondered. I asked Samuel to reach out to them and explain our surveys. "And please tell them we come to no harm," I added, swearing the Hippocratic Oath. Samuel walked into the woods and explained that we "just wanted to ask some questions about places and distances." Much to my surprise, the teenager succeeded in bringing the women back—even with that vague and less than adequate explanation. One of the women, Marcela, 22, consented to be interviewed. Sitting on a small wooden chair, she faced away from us, hiding her face behind her long dark hair. We explained the task in more detail, following our protocol. However, Marcela could not refrain from trembling with anxiety the entire time. She was so frightened that she could barely speak or keep focused on our questions. Unsure of how to respond to this novel situation, I, too, became anxious and lost focus, influencing others and leading to a generalized loss of face as the coordination ties between speakers unraveled. After thanking Marcela for her willingness to participate, I canceled the interview, and we moved on to the next household.

Situations like the above happened repeatedly during that summer. Although Linda Vista is just an hour and a half drive away from a city (San Cristóbal), working there at first entailed overcoming what I could hesitantly call a culture 'shock.' We managed to collect some data that gave us a glimpse of how isolated the community was. In a survey, we asked people to report when was the last time they had visited a list of different places (including San Cristóbal). It struck me some young women[45] had only been to cities once or twice in their lives. Two women in their mid-20s had never left Chenalhó. Men, on the other hand, traveled more often and learned conversational Spanish along the way. This apparent difference between the mobility patterns of males and females made me rethink my understanding of cultural *isolation*. Here, isolation had nothing to do with spatial distance; instead, it was the consequence of strict gender norms that restricted female mobility. As we will see later, those norms are, in part, held and enforced by females.

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[45] Younger females tended to be more isolated and monolingual than older ones. This might be due to the fact that the few Mestizos that had owned land in that area were expelled in the 1980s (see Chapter 2.1). Moreover, since almost everyone in the community has some land, people are not obligated to leave in order to make a living. One can live off subsistence farming their entire life without ever having to look for temporary jobs outside.

One family, however, was unusually open to outsiders. Luis,45, the household head, was well-regarded locally: he was the only person in the community to have served as *Agente* (headman) twice. Luis enjoyed talking to foreigners and sought to befriend me by asking for electronic paraphernalia from the United States. His wife, Martha, 40, also was curious about us. Instead of running away, she would welcome us to her house. Martha was the only person I ever saw watching Mexican TV in Linda Vista (she seemed to enjoy watching soap operas, which often portray an upper-class Mexican lifestyle that to most Maya people is still far from attainable). The couple had three children: Ermelindo (18), Julia (16), and Erasto (13). Julia, the middle child, was unusual among local females: she always wore pants and a t-shirt and sometimes wore make-up. Julia frequently asked us questions—in broken Spanish—and seemed to enjoy watching her parents respond to our surveys. Years later, I learned that Julia was the only female in the community who refused to wear the traditional Chenalhó *huipil* and skirt. Remarkably, Martha, who was monolingual and traditionally clad, approved of her daughter's willingness to stray away from tradition. Although mother and daughter were clearly different in habit and style, they seemed to agree that Julia would be better off in the *kaxlan* (Mestizo) world. In one interview, I heard Martha encourage her daughter to leave the community: "there is nothing for you here, just leave, try to do things I could never do."

As is typical among ethnographers, I tended to neglect Luis's family, perhaps because they were just too familiar to me. It did not occur to me that Martha wanted her daughter to leave. Why would any woman *not* want to leave? Hence at that time, I was more concerned with building rapport with more unwelcoming 'informants.'

One day in August, 2011—at the end of that field season—would change my perception of Luis's family. On a typically rainy afternoon, I decided to take a break at Chóforo's house (and store), located next to Linda Vista's school (where we had been 'camping'). Mariano, my research assistant, joined me shortly after. Chóforo was a physically large man in his 40s. Perhaps jokingly, he tried to look like a stereotypical Mestizo revolutionary, cultivating a large handlebar mustache that made him look like Pancho Villa. Lacking anything better to do, Mariano and I sat there, drinking sodas and hearing Chóforo laugh at his own self-deprecating jokes (for instance, he joked that since he was a *kaxlan* he did not need to attend meetings or discuss community politics). We then saw Julia and her older brother Ermelindo, 18, walking toward the trail that led to their house. The two teenagers greeted us, and we saluted them back. A minute later, a truck stopped on the other side of the road. Upon seeing the vehicle, Julia and Ermelindo turned apprehensive. A man began to shout angrily from the back of the truck. Julia shouted back at him. Inside the truck were two young men, Eduardo, 19, and his older brother Gabriel, 24. I had visited the two brothers in the previous week, and I knew they were Julia's neighbors.

Eduardo was clearly inebriated. Gabriel was drunk too, but not as much as his younger brother. The two waddled toward Julia and Ermelindo in a menacing way—Eduardo first, Gabriel after him. Eduardo began to shout a stream of expletives at Julia, and she responded accordingly. A shouting match ensued. Although my knowledge of Tzotzil was limited, I could understand the insults that they used in Spanish. Eduardo voiced words used to denigrate women (*puta*, *pendeja*, *perra*). Julia responded with more general, less gender-specific swearwords (*chinga tu madre*, *pinche*, *pendejo*). (In Chenalhó, people often prefer to use profanity in Spanish as it is considered less insulting than Tzotzil profanity. It is taboo for men to utter certain curse words in Tzotzil near women, even during a hostile exchange like this.)

The quarrel went on for a couple of minutes. It was amusing—if not comical—to watch the two brothers struggle to retain control over their drunk bodies. Chóforo seemed amused too and stopped what he was doing to watch the conflict. Eduardo, who seemed increasingly angry at Julia and her brother, lifted his t-shirt to show his torso—perhaps an attempt to intimidate others by 'power-posing.' Ermelindo, who was skinnier and shorter, responded to Eduardo's intimidation by giving a few steps back. Noticing Ermelindo's hesitation, Eduardo grew increasingly confident, slowly approaching his opponent and making ominous fighting poses.[46] I had seen a few drunken debates before, and this one did not seem particularly novel.

The shouting match escalated into something more severe as the men began to trade punches. Without much effort, Eduardo—who was larger and far stronger—threw Ermelindo to the ground. The two struggled on the muddy dirt road for a while until Eduardo grabbed Ermelindo in a chokehold. What happened after that was difficult to watch: Eduardo sought to asphyxiate Ermelindo by pushing his face against a pool of mud. By then, a small crowd—of mostly children—had gathered to watch the fight. Julia seemed stunned. While Ermelindo gasped for air, I asked Mariano if we should intervene. Chóforo heard my question and laughed, perhaps to hide his anxiety: "don't worry about it, they need to solve the problem between themselves" (laughter, I later learned, is a common way to respond to intractable conflicts in Chenalhó). No one seemed particularly concerned while Ermelindo gasped for air.

Fortunately, Luis appeared out of nowhere, putting an end to the fight. The young men stood up and pulled themselves together while Luis proceeded to scold the teenagers. Eduardo lowered his head,

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[46] As mentioned earlier, no one but Martha watched Mexican TV in Linda Vista when I did fieldwork (this might have changed now). Men would sometimes get together in someone's house to watch bootleg DVDs of Chinese Kung Fu or American ninja movies from the 1980s. People paid little attention to these movies' plots, as they could not understand what was being said. The fighting scenes were by themselves amusing enough to draw people's attention. Another local predilection was American wrestling (from the WWE, often narrated in English). Bootleg DVDs could be purchased in Linda Vista's biweekly market or in San Cristóbal de las Casas.

looking aghast. Gabriel tried to respond to the scolding but seemed too drunk to formulate any meaningful argument. Eventually, Luis, who was wearing heavily beat-down jeans, pulled his pockets inside-out—from which only dust came out—perhaps to signal that he did not have any money.

Could the fight have been motivated by money? After the group dispersed, I asked Chóforo to explain what had happened. Chóforo's answer, however, was hardly convincing: he told me that Gabriel had loaned money to Ermelindo a few months earlier, and now the latter had been avoiding his creditor's insistence in collecting the loan. I doubted that this was the full story. Given Julia's role in it, there was clearly a more complex gender dynamic at play. While trying to learn more about the event, however, I realized how difficult it is for people in Linda Vista to talk about gender issues: most people take gender divisions for granted, seeing them as natural and thus immutable. Gender is not an issue that people are willing to discuss or problematize.

Lacking sufficient information, I elaborated my own conclusions about the event. Linda Vista—I reasoned—was suffering from social 'anomie,' overrun by alcoholism and unemployment among young men. For these men—I thought—delinquency was the only path. The future of the Chiapas countryside seemed bleak.

Years later, however, I would learn that—contrary to first impressions—Linda Vista was not an 'anomic' community. It was a calm and even inviting place for Chenalhó standards. Several families in the community were refugees—that is, people who joined Linda Vista after being expelled from other communities. My earliest impressions were perhaps influenced by the fallacious view—commonly held by urban Mestizos and naïve scholars—that violence in rural areas in Mexico results from lack of opportunities (often described as a 'lack of things to do')—a view which is based on the widespread assumption that rural groups are inherently impoverished for having a less complex division of labor. I learned, instead, that there were plenty of things to do in Linda Vista—as there have always been, for millennia, in rural Maya communities. Moreover, contrary to what I first thought, alcoholism was not a significant issue in Linda Vista—not, at least, when compared with neighboring hamlets. In 2011, Eduardo was one of the few commoners who drank heavily—and he had a few reasons to do so, as I explain later.

In the summer of 2013, I went back to Linda Vista. My research had changed, and I was interested in conducting the behavioral economics study described in earlier chapters. In a communal assembly, I gathered volunteers to participate in that study. Eduardo was amongst them. Following the methods described in the previous chapter, I took pictures of each volunteer and visited their homes a few times in the subsequent weeks. However, I failed to interview Eduardo, as he seemed permanently drunk during that summer (I once found him passed out next to the road that leads to his house, with half of his

face covered in mud). It would take another two years to learn about what had been troubling him and what motivated his aggression toward his cousin, Ermelindo.

1.1. The Pariah

I was not aware during my earliest field seasons, but Julia was slowly becoming an outcast in Linda Vista. The community did not take well her refusal to obey traditional roles. Surprisingly, the move to ostracize Julia was initiated by other women in the community.

Sometime between 2010 and 2014, Linda Vista joined Prospera, a Mexican government welfare program. According to the program's rules, any woman is entitled to receive *canastas básicas* (staple food baskets) periodically—as long as they managed to keep their children enrolled in school. During the same period, the government began to host a medical clinic for women and children in the neighboring community of Xunuch. Every month or so, nursing students from high schools and colleges would show up and spend a couple of days performing their *servicio social* (social service) at the clinic, examining women and giving out essential medications for free.

One of the goals of Prospera is to give more autonomy to women. I talked to some government officials who worked in the program in the Cabecera, who told me that the main challenge the program faced was preventing men from taking their wives' welfare checks and using the money in a self-interested way. According to the officials, some men enrolled their wives in the program just to resell some of the food basket items (milk, in particular) received for free from the government. Giving resources directly to women was, for the government, a way of encouraging females to take a leading role within their households and participate more actively in family decisions. The program is supported by a large body of research that shows that women's empowerment leads to more equitable intrahousehold allocation of resources (food), thus improving children's nutritional outcomes.

Following the governmental agenda, Prospera and the clinic provided a venue for Linda Vista women to meet and organize. For the first time ever, women now had common resources—the food baskets—to manage and share. For the first time, women had a public space in which they could see and talk to each other away from their husbands' supervision.

To discuss Prospera's issues—how to receive the *canastas básicas*, how to know when the clinic is being hosted, etc.—women in Linda Vista began holding bimonthly assemblies. I had seen female-only Prospera meetings in the Cabecera. Still, I was not aware that women in Linda Vista were doing the same until one day in the spring of 2015, when I serendipitously stepped into one of these events. That day, I had been following the Patronatos de Obra—watching how they worked and trying to help them. The Patronatos informed me that there would be a Prospera gathering in the afternoon. At first, they

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discouraged me from attending the event, saying, "the assembly is just for women… there is nothing to see there [*muy'uk k'usi te ta xvil*] we only have to go because it's our obligation, don't even bother showing up." Of course, I ignored the Patronatos*'* advice and went there anyway.

The assembly was brief and took place in the school's conference room. Before the event started, I helped the Patronatos with *canastas básicas*. First, we put the food together in piles, one for each attendant (the food included corn flour, beans, milk, cookies, among other items that were not necessarily scarce in rural areas); then, we placed each pile within a black plastic bag. The women sat on the conference room's wooden benches as they arrived, facing us—Agente, Patronatos, and I—who sat in the front. Interestingly, I noticed early on that Julia failed to attend the meeting.

Women's assemblies—I came to learn—are much briefer and to the point than the highly entertaining and prolonged meetings held by men (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 7). After 30 minutes of discussing dull logistical issues regarding the *canastas básicas* and how to deal with government IDs, the meeting was over. I wondered if my presence had inhibited the women—even though, by then, I had talked to most of them and could converse in Tzotzil. To minimize anxiety, I focused on my notebook and avoided eye contact the entire time. The *Agente* and Patronatos did the same (avoidance of eye contact is a polite way of showing respect in Tzotzil communities; social distance creates an expectation of deference displays).

After the meeting was over, some participants began to pick up their food baskets and leave. However, a group of about 20 women stayed until the very end. The group surrounded the *Agente* and started to express their grievances against none other than Julia. I knew most of these women—I had interviewed several of them and spent time with their husbands and male relatives. Most lived at the community's central area: they were part of the 'core' clique—families that were considerably wealthier and more prestigious than the ones in the periphery to which Julia belonged.

Taking turns, the women lashed out at Julia, adding to each other's grievances and trying to persuade the *Agente*—and perhaps themselves—that Julia's deviant behavior was beyond repair. Their main point was that Julia had been disrespecting local gender norms: chiefly, Julia—now in her early 20s—still refused to dress like everyone else and wear Chenalhó's traditional *huipil*. They also resented the fact that Julia took (supposedly) obscene pictures of herself with a cellphone. I took note of some of the things they said:

"She is a *puta* (whore); she shows her body."

"She wears pants like a man."

"She takes pictures with her cellphone and tries to look *sexy*." (borrowing the word 'sexy' from English; they were referring to the fact that Julia took 'selfies' with her phone and shared them with someone)

"She came to the *clínica* yesterday. We wanted her out, but she stayed, and even took more photos [selfies?]."

The group's more vocal member concluded by telling the *Agente*: "either you straighten her up [*tukibtas*], or we will have to do something about it [i.e., expel her]. We cannot tolerate this anymore."

The *Agente* listened quietly, again avoiding eye contact and staring into the middle distance. He refrained from commenting on Julia's behavior, aside from saying, "I'm aware of it, and I'll see what I can do." He did not seem enthusiastic about tackling a problem that mostly concerned women. The three Patronatos, too, showed little interest in being involved in Julia's bashing.

Before the Prospera meeting, I had never heard men gossiping about Julia (or any woman in particular). As stated in Chapter 1, I spent considerably more time conducting participant observation among males than with females—an unavoidable limitation for a male ethnographer researching a gender-segregated group. Based on my experience with Linda Vista men, I can draw two generalizations on gender relations in the community. Unavoidably, my ethnographic generalizations are at risk of being overly subjective, as they are based on my personal experience while working in Linda Vista.

Firstly, when men talk about women, they tend to use abstract terms, referring to them either as relatives or objects for trade, sex, and marriage. When sober, men refrain from expressing their opinions about women who belong to their community. I believe this is because malicious gossip could offend a woman's male relatives and cause conflict. In a group where most people are related by consanguinity or affinity and where gender divisions are strict, gender-based gossip could be self-defeating. Thus, it makes sense that the *Agente* and Patronatos stayed silent and preferred to avoid taking sides when dealing with the conflict over Julia's refusal to wear a *huipil*. However, refusal to take sides does not mean that these men approve of Julia's rejection of gender norms. Men may see women as productive 'assets' since they contribute significantly to household incomes and farming. Textile sales are an essential source of income in Linda Vista. From a purely economic standpoint, males might seek to enforce traditional gender restrictions to exert control over female production of textiles (among other goods).

Second, although men in Chenalhó commonly objectify women, it would be too simplistic to frame gender relations as a monolithic hierarchy with men at the top and women at the bottom. There is no clearly identifiable 'patriarchy' forcing women to abide by tradition and wear *huipiles*. Men frequently talk about women reverentially, referring to them as 'our mothers' and 'our sisters' whose work is indispensable for the wellbeing of all. While overly reverential behavior may be an expression of the

acute gender-based distances,[47] it may also reflect an emic, non-hierarchical understanding that everyone—regardless of gender—has an essential role in maintaining the community's welfare. As Julia's case shows, gendered norm enforcement can originate from the women in the community. Rather than being the product of a simple gender-based hierarchy, gendered oppression is also enmeshed in relations of class and status distinctions within the community (as I noticed earlier, most women who sought to ostracize Julia belonged to the community's better-off families). Ironically, the Prospera program, which was devised to empower women, provided women with the organizational structure that allowed some families to enhance social control over others. Enhanced social control led to greater enforcement of strict gender-based regulations and the punishment of a deviant person.

About four months after the Prospera meeting, as I was preparing to return to the United States, I saw Julia in the Cabecera holding a baby (in her arms, without using a traditional baby carriers). As usual, she was dressed in Western clothes—wearing pants and a sleeveless top—and had colored her hair brown. Julia's lighter skin tone, along with her newly dyed hair, rendered her indistinguishable from the many Mestiza mothers who live in the Cabecera. Evidently, she had been trying to integrate into Mestizo society. I asked Julia what had brought her to the Cabecera. She told me that she was with her boyfriend Diego, using the Spanish loan word *novio* ('boyfriend,' as Tzotzil lacks a vocabulary for distinguishing pre-marital from marital romantic relationships). Months earlier, the couple rented a house in the town's center. Diego, who was also from Linda Vista, received the cargo of Mayol—the town's traditional police, and every Mayol has to live in the Cabecera temporarily until their service is done. Diego was challenging to reach, and I only talked with him once; I knew he had avoided previous cargo nominations and failed to attend community meetings. I had seen him paying the fines charged to those who refuse to serve cargos or fail to participate in communal assemblies. Julia told me that Diego wanted to leave the community, so he accepted his nomination to Mayol in a heartbeat. Traditionally, a nomination to Mayol was a form of punishment (Guiteras Holmes 1961, 82–83). For Diego, the cargo gave him a chance to leave his community behind. Julia, too, seized that opportunity and joined Diego the Cabecera after their baby was born. Their union was never officiated through a marriage ceremony. They were the only couple I knew of that had skipped the traditional courtship procedure and the bride price payment that is still performed in rural areas in Chenalhó.

Let us return to the fight between Eduardo and Ermelindo that happened years earlier. I cannot be sure whether Julia's refusal to abide by traditional norms motivated Eduardo's aggression toward her and

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[47] For a thorough examination of the relationship between politeness and gender distances among the Tzeltal-Maya town, see Brown (1979).

her brother. Several years passed between the fight and my realization that Julia was an outcast among females in the community. Moreover, as I stated earlier, it was difficult—if not impossible—to get Linda Vista people to talk about gender issues. When it comes to gender relations, formal interviews are seldom useful instruments for uncovering the truth. Through long-term participant observation—watching a fight, attending the Prospera meeting, coming across Julia in the Cabecera—I realized the importance of gender-based social distance in determining relations within the group. Eduardo's use of gender-related slurs in Spanish, coupled with Julia's independent and rebellious stance against traditional norms, indicates that gender was a factor motivating the fight.

Over time—and also by serendipity—I came to know more about Eduardo. During his late teenage years, Eduardo struggled with alienation and rejection. When I witnessed his fight with Ermelindo, Eduardo was trouble finding a spouse. He did not own property or land, without which a man cannot get married and produce children. In Chenalhó rural areas, marriage still marks the distinction between children and self-sufficient adult men. Failure to marry can condemn one to a life in exclusion, being ineligible for receiving cargos and respect. However, Eduardo's plight would change dramatically, thanks to the support of his father, as we discuss in the next section.

1.2. A Young Man's Plight

After repeatedly failing to get Eduardo to answer our survey, I was about to lose hope. Nevertheless, I decided to reach out to him one more time when I returned to Linda Vista in late 2014. Eduardo was the only participant that we still needed to interview for our 2013 study. I told Mariano, my research assistant, to keep an eye on him. One day, Mariano told me Eduardo was sober. We then strode to his house for an interview.

Eduardo seemed fine. He had just built a new house (made of brick and concrete) and set up his own shop (where they resold snacks, soda drinks, and ice pops). Eduardo's life had taken an expected turn—for the better. He was now married and had two children (3 and 2 years old). He stopped drinking and even toned down his menacing attitude, abandoning the menacing beanie he wore in previous years. Elena, his wife, seemed busy: she was stacking up fresh produce against their shop walls. The couple had their own land now. Although their plot was small (just 8 *tareas*), it was located near the lowland community of Cruzton, where the weather is warmer, and farming is more productive. The couple harvested tomatoes, squash, and peaches and planted some avocado trees. Once a week, Elena would travel to the market in San Cristóbal to sell produce. Before that interview, I had greeted Elena twice in the San Cristóbal market, still unaware that she had married Eduardo.

I committed a *faux pas* after our survey: I assumed that Elena was Eduardo's sister. They looked alike, and I recalled hearing Eduardo address Elena as *vix* (sister) years earlier. After interviewing Eduardo, I asked, "can we interview your sister now?" Mariano facepalmed and nervously scolded me, stating Elena was Eduardo's wife and that they belonged to the same household. Eduardo did not seem offended, however, and elegantly pretended not to notice my misstep. I decided to end the interview and planned on coming back later to try to converse with Eduardo again, perhaps in a more informal setting.

Two days later, while trying to reach Linda Vista's most distant households, I became lost in the trails that connect Yaxalumil's highland (cold) and lowland (temperate) zones. For over two hours, I walked through the forested trails, aimlessly climbing and descending the steep mountains in search of geographical cues that could lead me back to Linda Vista. This incident would become the subject of gossip and mockery by Linda Vista people in the coming months. Eventually, I decided to climb to the very top of the mountain, from which I would, perhaps, have a top-down view of the area to find my way back. As I arrived at the top of the mountain, exhausted, I saw what appeared to be three human graves in the middle of a forested area. The graves were unmarked—there were no plaques or crosses to memorialize the dead. Still, someone had recently covered the burials with oak tree leaves and lined up small yellow flowers and burned incense, following a U-shaped pattern, on their top. It was mid-November, and I recalled that people had just celebrated the Day of the Dead (*Todos los Santos*) weeks earlier. I followed a trail of discarded incense, candles, and flowers, hoping that it would take me back to an inhabited zone.

The trail led me to what I recognized as the backyard Mol Ts'unun—a man in his late 70s and one of Linda Vista's ʔiloletik, curers. Mol Ts'unun was Eduardo's grandfather and the patriarch of the *Ts'unun* ('hummingbird') lineage. Ts'unun's sons and grandsons built their houses surrounding the patriarch's home. The area—of about three hectares—is located at the top of Linda Vista's highest mountain, about 100 meters above the place where I had seen Eduardo fight with Ermelindo's years earlier. It is can only be accessed via trails, which sometimes get flooded during the rainy season. The household compound is known by some as *yav Ts'unun* ('the place of the Ts'unun'). In vain, I searched for Mol Ts'unun. I found his house empty and shut. I found, however, that Sebastián, one of Mol Ts'unun's eldest son and Eduardo's father, was home. As I had never talked to him, I took the opportunity to ask him to participate in a household survey.

Sebastián was 49. When I arrived (by chance) at his house, he had been estranged from his two wives. The few lived in a three-house compound located next to Mol Ts'unun's house. The wooden and earthen-flooded houses faced one another in a triangle; the family's children played in the yard between

them. Sebastián warned me his wives were "not talking to each other" (i.e., they had been fighting), so I would not be able to interview the three together.

It is not uncommon for polygynous relationships to be marked by tension in Tzotzil communities. Knowing that most married Tzotzil men are entirely dependent on their wives for food, I asked Sebastián, "how do you eat? Do you cook your own food?" He responded that every morning one of his wives would place a plate of food in front of his door. He then pointed to an empty plate on the floor and chuckled at his own misery. Two months had passed since he last talked to either one of his wives. His face looked droopy and tired, perhaps thanks to his sporadic drinking. Sebastián had some European features—green eyes, light skin, and a balding hairline—and he could be related. from his mother's side, to one of the Mestizo ranchers who owned land in the area until the 1980s. Perhaps to conceal his baldness, he wore a heavily worn-out and floppy fedora hat.

The compound family produced a total of 15 children—7 of whom still lived at home. Although they were poor and lived off subsistence farming, together, they owned considerably more land than most people in Linda Vista: 3 hectares split into two plots (two hectares in Linda Vista and one in Cruztón). Their land was enough to feed everyone. Still, I wondered how Sebastián—who had no property aside from land—managed to marry twice in a community where marriage can be costly. Could his European features be considered attractive to local women? During our interview, I realized that local marriages are not so much determined by attractiveness but rather by one's position in the local kinship structure. Sebastián's wives (37 and 41-years-old) were sisters. The marriages were arranged between lineages, and the polygynous union was a sororate.

Most marriages in Sebastián's lineage were arranged—I later found out. Every male in the patriline can use that name although, formally, they also have Spanish patro- and matronymics, following the common Mexican naming practice. Although Tzotzil surnames are inherited from father to sons, when speaking Spanish, people usually refer to those surnames as *apodos*, 'nicknames.' This shows that only the inheritance of Spanish surnames is mandatory for people in Chenalhó today.

Some 1960s ethnographers to describe the Tzotzil naming as a disappearing 'remnant' of clan and lineage systems among the Chiapas Maya. But if these systems were disappearing in the 1960s, one would expect them to have been completely wiped out today, replaced with the more widespread Mexican naming system (an inheritable patronymic followed by a matronymic, following the practice inherited from Spain). This, however, was not what happened; today, in rural Chenalhó, Tzotzil patronymics such as Ts'unun still seem to matter in organizing lineal descent. Though not officially recognized, the so-called *jol sbi* ('the head of the name') is essential in determining inheritance rights and guiding marital

strategies in the community. Land preferentially inherited through the male line, and widowed females may remarry a man with the same patronymic as their deceased husband.

When I asked Sebastián about Eduardo, he told me that his son had been in trouble in years past. Eduardo petitioned a teenage girl for marriage, but she rejected him. The adolescent could be Julia, but I could not verify this. Julia's father, Luis, is Sebastián's half-brother, making Julia and Eduardo parallel cousins (although not full-blooded first cousins). Since parallel cousins belong to the same patriline, it is unlikely that a marriage between the teenagers would be approved by their families. After being rejected, Eduardo fell into a downward spiral. In Sebastián's words, his son 'got hot' (*ik'ak'ub*—to get angry or 'hot-blooded'). He was having a hard time finding a spouse.

Preferentially, a man must be married to a woman who 1) belongs to a distinct patrilineage, 2) is a member of the same community, and 3) whose father own land within the community's boundaries. In a community of less than 100 households such as Linda Vista, Eduardo's number of potential spouses was limited. Eduardo's main challenge was his lack land, without which a man cannot succeed in finding a marriageable partner. Marriages must be sanctioned by the bride's father. Since every married man with children in Linda Vista owns land, it is unlikely that a man would approve of his daughter marrying a landless (and lower status) partner.

Eduardo had two options to get around this limitation: he could either raise enough cash to buy his own land or petition his father for a piece of his plot. The first alternative is rarely considered as opportunities for work in the community are limited (e.g., I knew of a 12-year-old who migrated to the Cabecera seasonally to work in construction). Nevertheless, even those who start to work early are unlikely to raise enough cash to afford a significant amount of land and a marriage petition (not to mention a potential first cargo nomination, which almost always follows marriage).

The more viable strategy for acquiring land is to petition one's parents (usually the father) to bequeath part of their property pre-mortem. This process renders the son completely powerless and dependent on his parents' willingness to approve his choice of marriage partner. Usually, parents will favor marriage arrangements that obey the lineage exogamy norms and within-community endogamy discussed earlier. When a son refuses to choose a partner within those limitations, his parents may simply decide not to transfer him any land, which can trigger a difficult bargaining process. The son starts to petition his parents to inherit the land that he considers his by rights of descent.[48] The process may last for

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[48] The process of bargaining for pre-mortem inheritance was also described in Zinacantán by Collier (1975, 64) and in Chenalhó by Pérez Pérez and Jacorzynski (2019).

years and is marked by loud quarrels between family members and sometimes fights and months-long binge drinking sessions by the petitioning son.

As in the case of Eduardo, conflict almost always ceases with the son accepting marital arrangement proposed by his parents and inheriting some of their land pre-mortem. However, some men may decide to never marry—a decision which has serious consequences for their ability to obtain prestige, as discussed below—while others migrate to a larger city to escape from the dependence on land ownership. Dependance on land inheritance, then, is a mechanism that facilitates the reproduction of inheritance, marriage, and kinship systems, as it coerces youth to comply with traditional norms, which is a condition for inheriting their parents' property.

During the protracted bargaining process, parents consider it their duty to 'assist' their sons and daughters in making the 'right decisions'—that is, to help their children inculcate the logic of kinship. The Tzotzil vocabulary to describe the educational process is nothing but amusing, and a thorough analysis would require additional space. In short, parents say they seek to 'tame' their children's 'soul' (*ch'ulel*) into arriving and staying their children's bodies, following the belief that the ability to make 'reasonable' choices (that is, to be obedient or tame) is not inherent to the subject, but rather arrives from the external world (de León Pasquel 2005). I frequently heard parents use the expression *oy xa xch'ulel* ('he/she already has a soul') to distinguish between their grown-up children (those who are married and live on their own) from dependent ones.

As a teenager, Eduardo was neither popular nor sociable; he was one of the few men in Linda Vista who did not have a nickname (*ixtol bi*). In the community, nicknames are a reliable index of popularity (or network centrality) among males. No one seemed to know the answer when I asked others what Eduardo's nickname was. Those who tried to guess incorrectly said his nickname was *Ts'unun*—the name of the patriline. Eduardo, however, could accurately recall the nicknames of others, showing that he tried to integrate with the group, but failed. I never saw playing basketball with men from the central clique. During communal assemblies, he would stand astray, sometimes drunk. This was how, in his late teenage years, Eduardo adopted a bully-like attitude that was odd in Linda Vista. He then began to drink heavily, perhaps to overcome introversion. The most severe challenge that Eduardo faced, however, was lacking land or money. Without land or money, one cannot succeed in finding a marriageable partner. In Linda Vista, people distinguish between two forms of initiating a marriage: one can petition a wife (*jak'bil nupunel*, or 'petitioned marriage') or offer the woman's father a bride price payment (*manbil nupunel*, 'bought marriage'). To successfully petition a wife, a man is required to own land. He needs to show that he has the means of providing for a family. Bride price payment is mandatory for both *petitioned* and *bought* marriages. However, the cost of petitioned weddings tends to be lower since the

groom might prove his worth through other means (for example, by performing bride service—see Section 3.3). Men in Linda Vista often asked me if I had petitioned or bought my wife. It was complicated to explain I had done neither.

Men who lack the means to petition or buy a wife have four options. First, they may 'capture' a wife—a phenomenon described in the 1970s by Stross (1974) in Tenejapa. I am not aware of any cases of marriage by capture in Linda Vista. There are reasons to believe marriage by capture rose in the 1970s due to the rising cost of bride price and declined afterward (I compiled data on this from historical records, although the number of observations is too low to draw a firm conclusion).

Second, men may become celibates (voluntarily or not) and stay home with their parents. I knew a few cases of celibates in Linda Vista and the Cabecera. For example, Alberto, 33, returned home to live with his parents after working for two years in a northern Mexican city in his 20s. He told me he did not enjoy working under the hot weather, and the dust from the dry desert was a health concern. Alberto had no plans of petitioning a wife or leaving the community. Though he was friendly with me, he clearly did not integrate well with males of his age group (all married and with children). Alberto bitterly criticized those better-integrated males, perhaps responding to criticism directed against himself. This attitude was uncommon among the celibates I knew. To my knowledge, there is no specific term for 'celibate' in Tzotzil, although I have heard men may using the term *pots'ob* (impotent) to demean them.

A third option is to marry widowed or so-called 'abandoned' women. Some women are said to be *komtsanbil*—lit. 'left.' *Komtsanbil* women can be stigmatized by men, who say it is a woman's fault if she was abandoned by her husband (i.e., she failed to prove her worthiness as a spouse). I often heard men describe women as a type of 'investment' that generates 'returns' through labor (food, textiles, and children).[49] When a man abandons his wife, others may reason that the woman had ceased to produce those returns or be useful for her husband, leading to her being stigmatized. Linda Vista, I only met one adult man who did not own land. At the age of 35, he made a living off clearing other families' farms. He charged 30 pesos for a day of labor (about half of what farmworkers got paid in the Cabecera in 2015). His wife was 18 years his senior. The couple lived with het daughter and granddaughter. (I do not know if the marriage were determined by a pre-existing relationship between their lineages, but this is a likely possibility since Julio's paternal surname matches that of Rosa's deceased husband.)

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[49] A similar observation was made by Calixta Guiteras Holmes in the 1940s when discussing what happens to women who do not get married. "If a woman does not marry, she remains living where she has always lived, if not in her parents' house, in the house of one of her siblings. A woman is never a burden, but a great helper, except in cases where she is useless for whatever reason" (Guiteras Holmes 1946, 56).

Finally, a fourth alternative is to migrate to large cities and forsake traditional norms, living anonymously in a Spanish-speaking or mixed neighborhood.

In his late teenage years, Eduardo was close to choosing between one of the above alternatives. It not uncommon for men to marry between the ages of 16 and 18 in Linda Vista. I saw young men in that age group getting married while doing fieldwork. As a 19-year-old, Eduardo could not afford rejections. The solution to his problem was proposed by Sebastián in late 2011, after the fight. Sebastián arranged to marry his son to his half-sister's daughter. He then transferred part of his land in Cruztón to Eduardo, so his son could start a family. After marriage, Eduardo continued to drink, but over time his addiction waned. Sebastián's arrangement worked; his son had 'cooled down.'

Let us highlight and keep in mind a few important points from the story above:

1) Land ownership and kinship structure were crucial in determining who one's preferable marriageable partners were.
2) The actors involved had no choice but to participate in the institution of marriage and abide by strict gender norms. Julia, who refused to do so, became an outcast.
3) The pre-mortem transfer of land from father to son was a pre-condition for Eduardo to find a spouse. Eduardo's wife, on the other hand, did not need to own land before marriage.
4) Eduardo married his cross-cousin. The union did not violate incest norms and perhaps was even considered a commendable arrangement.

In the next section, we discuss the implications of 1-4 to how land is inherited in rural and urban areas in Chenalhó. Later, we discuss how such marriage and inheritance practices have changed historically and are changing today.

2. Facets of Change

2.1. Terminological Changes

As we saw in earlier chapters, we conducted social network interviews in the Cabecera and Linda Vista. As part of the task, we asked each interviewee how they related to other participants. Unexpectedly, patterned differences in kinship terms used across sites emerged from these interviews.

When describing relations between non-kin, Tzotzil speakers in the Cabecera defaulted to using Spanish loan words—for instance, terms such as *conocido* (acquaintance), *amigo* (friend), *vecino* (neighbor), or *primo* (cousin). Tzotzil does not have equivalent words for describing relationships between non-kin. The closest translation to 'friend,' for instance, is *chi'il*, which literally means 'that

which goes along with,' or 'companion'—a term that can also describe relationships between inanimate objects.[50]

In Linda Vista, only a few informants used Spanish loan words. To qualify relations between non-kin, the usual practice there was to use terms of address. Every non-kin are described as older/younger brother/sister if they belong to the speaker's community. For instance, suppose Beto and Alice are not consanguineous relatives, but they live in the same community. When Beto is asked 'what Alice is to him' (*k'usi avutoj*?), he responds by using the term of address for older 'sister' (*mu'yuk k'usi kutoj, ja' jvix no'ox*—i.e., 'she is nothing to me, she is just my older sister'). Since our task required us to distinguish between consanguineous and non-consanguineous social network relationships, we had to find a way to make that distinction in Tzotzil. It is possible to do so by using the terms *mero* ('real,' as in *mero bankil*, 'real older brother') and *nam tal* ('distant'). When translated into English, expressions such as 'real sister' and 'distant sister' may sound bizarre, but they make sense within the Tzotzil terminology.

At first, I interpreted those differences as a reflection of each community's social structure. Perhaps the use of terms of address in Linda Vista was the expression of a strong sense of community cohesiveness (similarly to how college fraternity members in the United States call each other 'brother'). I predicted that kinship terms would covary with community size. In smaller communities, people would be more inclined to refer to non-consanguineous kin as 'brothers' and 'sisters,' reflects greater social cohesion in tight-knit groups.

The reality, however, is more complicated. Kinship terminologies are linguistic conventions that are internalized during childhood. These terminologies do not necessarily reflect the group's social structure, but rather early linguistic exposure. Ethnographers have documented small and cohesive communities of Mam and Tojolabal farmers that have shifted entirely into using Spanish kinship terms (Medina Hernández 1973), which shows that community size does not determine how people use terms of address. Until the 1960s, ethnographers of Chiapas described the use of terms of address for non-kin as a pervasive cultural trait in Tzotzil and Tzeltal communities, which until the 1960s had remained relatively isolated from Spanish speakers. Since Mam and Tojolobal are smaller linguistic communities and the speakers of those languages tend to live in Spanish-speaking areas, they have been, historically, more inclined to borrow from Spanish. Hence, the use of Spanish loans is likely a recent phenomenon in urban

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[50] For example, if we park three cars together, we may say that they are *chi'ilik* (companions). Here, *chi'il* is being used to denote that cars are grouped in the same place. When Tzotzil speakers describe inanimate objects as 'companions,' they are not expressing animistic views of the world. Rather, they are simply using a term that has broad connotations and which cannot be easily translated into Indo-European languages.

centers, which reflecting increasing bilingualism and, perhaps, the influence of schools in changing conceptual systems in those areas.

A more intriguing hypothesis is that kinship terminologies may reinforce existing social structures. The most crucial difference between Linda Vista and Cabecera terminologies is the existence of terms for cross-relatives (cousins and uncles) in the rural community. Terms for cross-relatives reinforce lineage-based incest taboos by marking some relatives as marriageable vs. non-marriageable. More specifically, terms for cross-<u>cousin</u> may strengthen marriage practices such as cross-cousin marriage and sororate (which I exemplified earlier).

While conducting social network interviews in Linda Vista, I made a serendipitous 'discovery': some respondents used terms such as *vom* (mother's brother) and *ichok'* (paternal cross-cousin). I had learned Tzotzil in the Cabecera (where people use a bilateral terminology) and studied the language with dictionaries[51] compiled in towns where terms for cross-relatives have disappeared, so I did not know what these terms meant. I filled out the forms in Tzotzil and marked the odd kinship terms with a question mark. My research assistant, born and raised in the Cabecera, was equally confused about what those terms meant.

Fortunately for us, terms for cross-relatives were previously documented in Tzotzil towns in at least three studies.[52] In the 1940s, Guiteras Holmes (1966) recorded differences in kinship terminologies in three neighboring communities: Chalchihuitán, Northern Chenalhó, and Southern Chenalhó. The region referred to as 'Northern Chenalhó' in Guiteras Holmes' study refers to what today is the center of Chenalhó—the area where communities surrounding Yabteclum, such as Linda Vista, are located. The 'Southern' part of Chenalhó identified by Guiteras Holmes refers to the Cabecera, located next to the southern border with Chamula. To illustrate, Figure 4.1 reproduces a map elaborated for an earlier study on the perception of dialectal boundaries in Chenalhó. In that study, our informants identified the center of the town as the area in which people spoke the 'purest' and most 'correct' form of Tzotzil in the municipality (Hertzog and Ross 2017).

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[51] The two best known Tzotzil dictionaries were compiled in Zinacantán (Laughlin 1975) and Larráizar (de Delgaty and Sánchez 1978). It appears that Tzotzil speakers in both municipalities today use a bilateral kinship terminology that lacks a distinction between cross- and parallel relatives.

[52] In Chenalhó, kinship terminologies were documented by Guiteras Holmes (1966) and Arias (1974), and in Chalchihuitán, by Hopkins (1969).
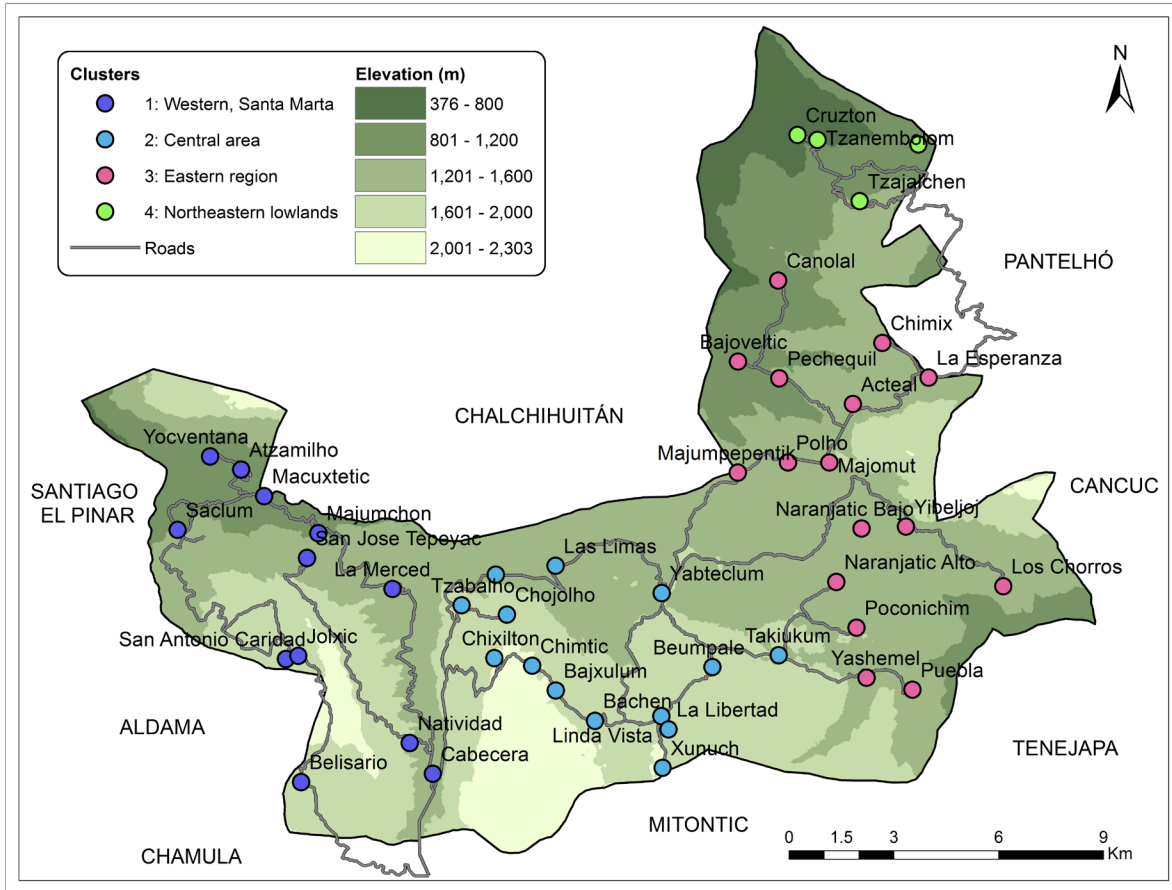
Figure 4.1: Perceived dialectal divisions across 46 communities in Chenalhó

In the 1940s, Guiteras Holmes found that Tzotzil speakers in Chalchihuitán (located north of Chenalhó) retained an Omaha-type kinship terminology that merged terms for parallel cousins with siblings and had different terms for paternal cross-cousins and maternal cross-uncle. To the south of Chalchihuitán—in what today is Chenalhó's center (communities marked with blue circles)—Guiteras Holmes documented a similar kinship terminology that retained terms for cross-cousin (*ichok'*) and maternal cross-uncle (*vom*). However, the Chenalhó vocabulary had lost a few features of Omaha-type terminologies (for instance, it lost terms for maternal cross-cousin, which in Chalchihuitán were merged with mother's sister and father's brother). In the Cabecera, Guiteras-Holmes documented a bilateral terminology that lacked terms for cross-relatives and resembled the one from Chamula. Terms for cousins were merged with terms for siblings, and there was no longer a distinction between cross- and parallel

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uncles. To illustrate, I elaborated simplified[53] diagrams of the three terminologies in Figure 4.2 (reconstructed Guiteras Holmes 1966; Hopkins 1969; Arias 1974).

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[53] I excluded terms for ego's cousin's children, which also vary across groups following an Omaha-type pattern in Chalchihuitán. For the more detailed terminologies, see Guiteras Holmes (1966), Arias (1974), Hopkins (1969), and Romney (1967).

(A) Chalchihuitán

jmol tot   jyame'   jyame'   jmol tot

jun me'   jun tot   jbol   jvix   jtot   jme'   jwom   jchich   jun me'   jun tot

jvix   jbankil   kichok'   kichok'   jvix   Ego   jbankil   jwom   jun me'   jbankil   jvix

(B) Chenalhó center
(Linda Vista)

jmol tot   jyame'   jyame'   jmol tot

jun me'   jun tot   jbol   jvix   jtot   jme'   jwom   jchich   jun me'   jun tot

jvix   jbankil   kichok'   kichok'   jvix   Ego   jbankil   jbankil   jvix   jbankil   jvix

(C) Chenalhó's Cabecera
(and Chamula)

jmol tot   jyame'   jyame'   jmol tot

jun me'   jun tot   jun tot   jun me'   jtot   jme'   jun tot   jun me'   jun me'   jun tot

jvix   jbankil   jvix   jbankil   jvix   Ego   jbankil   jbankil   jvix   jbankil   jvix

Figure 4.2: Transition from lineal to bilateral kinship in Tzotzil communities (male ego)

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The use of terms for cross-relatives in Linda Vista shows that the differences in kinship terminologies recorded by Guiteras-Holmes still exist.[54] However, I lack quantitative data to compare kinship terms across generations, and I cannot tell how widespread the use of words for cross-relatives is on that site. Whether the use of those terms is more frequent among older adults or widespread across generations remains to be seen.

What explains the existence of different kinship terminologies within the same ethnolinguistic group? Guiteras Holmes argued that terminological differences reflected distinct levels of acculturation and exposure to Spanish. At that time, Chalchihuitán was the least 'acculturated' Tzotzil community, as evidenced by a high percentage of monolingual Tzotzil speakers. Noticing that Tzotzil speakers in Chamula—a town located next to a Mestizo city—used a bilateral terminology[55] that mirrored that from Spanish, Guiteras Holmes argued distance from Spanish centers likely explained levels of acculturation in kinship terms. The central part of Chenalhó—where Linda Vista is located—represented a linguistically hybrid zone, retaining some aspects of Chalchihuitán (lineal) and Chamula (bilineal) terminologies.

Guiteras Holmes' explanation assumes that there was cultural continuity between Tzotzil speakers from central Chenalhó and Chalchihuitán. It presupposes that speakers from both areas were in constant contact and that the 'gradient' of terminologies varies across space, becoming increasingly unilateral with distance from Spanish-speaking centers. In reality, Chalchihuitán and Chenalhó have always had high endogamy rates, and marriage between groups is rare. It is unlikely that people from those towns were frequently in contact with each other due to the strong sense of ethnic membership present in both groups.

In an earlier study, I showed that people in Chenalhó identified Chenalhó's center as linguistically 'pure' since, in part, the site had never been home to *fincas* (foreign-owned plantations) and the locus of migration from Tzeltal (Hertzog and Ross, 2017). I also recorded residents of the community of Yabteclum (located at the center of Chenalhó) telling stories about a *reducción* that was built and abandoned after a few decades due to epidemics, possibly during the 18th century. Thus, when compared with surrounding areas, Chenalhó's center appears to have remained immune to the influence of *fincas* and the Church. The preservation of aspects of the traditional Omaha-type kinship system may be due to the region's relative isolation during the colonial period.

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[54] In the Cabecera few still use terms for siblings to name their cousins. Instead, the more common practice is to name cousins as 'primo' (a Spanish loan word) or, in Tzotzil, as mother's (or father's) daughter (or son). There is more variance in terminologies, likely since in the urban area there are more migrants originating from different parts of Chenalhó.

[55] Previously documented by Pozas (1959).

In the next section, I address whether differences in kinship terminologies between Linda Vista and the Cabecera are associated with differential marriage patterns and inequality in land distribution.

2.2. Marriage Patterns

Kinship terminologies that distinguish between cross and parallel relatives are usually associated with systems of female (daughter or sister) exchange between lineages (Murdock 1949). Among the Maya, the evidence for such systems has been mixed. In the lowlands, preferential cross-cousin marriage and sisters' exchange was documented among the Lacandon (Baer and Baer 1949; Duby and Blom 1969, 288). In the highlands, the genealogies collected by Guiteras Holmes in Chalchihuitán show the existence of irregular exchange of spouses across generations (Hopkins 1969, 101). Among the Tzeltal of Oxchuc, Villa Rojas documented marriages between cross-cousins and described such arrangements as 'normal' (1946, 178). In the 1940s, Guiteras Holmes quoted a Chenalhó informant suggesting that cousin marriage was a preferred arrangement: "one always asks for a bride who is a relative, although with a different surname… Everyone here marries their first cousin" (1946, 254).

However, in none of these accounts cousin marriage appears to be enforced or institutionalized by rigid norms. Based on my own observation, in Chenalhó, marriage with cross cousins—or other non-incestuous relatives—is seen as a convenience rather than an obligation. In this type of marriage, a father seeks to marry his son to one (or more) of his sister's daughters. Because the father's sister belongs to his patriline, the arrangement is convenient. It maintains the alliance between the lineages intact and expands the territory associated with the patriline if the bride—for whatever reason—inherits land.

Cousin marriage has been described as a strategy for reducing land and capital fragmentation in agricultural societies (Goody 1976; Akbari, Bahrami-Rad, and Kimbrough 2016; Bahrami-Rad 2019). In the process of succession, a family unit must split the land between their descendants. If land is scarce and fertility rates are high, partible inheritance causes land fragmentation over time as plots become smaller in each successive generation. Bahrami-Rad (2019) discusses some institutions that have evolved in different contexts (and across time) to manage land fragmentation. First, land does not need to be divided in equal parts. Primogeniture—found in East Asia and Northwest Europe—eliminates the need to partition land, as it preserves plots unaltered. Using cross-cultural data, Bahrami-Rad shows that societies with partible inheritance norms tend to develop a preference toward cousin-marriage, which emerges as a solution to land fragmentation. Patrilineal societies where females are allowed to inherit property have a greater propensity toward cousin marriage and arranged marriages. Women are preferentially married to cousins belonging to the grandfather's lineage to keep land within the patriline, preventing fragmentation and reducing conflict during succession. The best-known examples of this phenomenon come from

societies that obey Islamic law, which traces descent patrilineally and prescribes partible inheritance to males and females. These societies tend to have arranged marriages between cousins and less gender equality (Bahrami-Rad 2019).

In contexts where land is inherited by males only, cousin marriage happens at a lower frequency, and there is more gender equality. These groups may develop lineage exogamy norms to reduce excessive inmarriage rates. Still, cross-cousin marriage may emerge as a convenience to minimize land fragmentation. Such is the case of Tzotzil and Tzeltal communities, where partible inheritance to males only (or with a preference for males) has been the norm (Laughlin 1969; Esponda Jímeno 1994a). Some of these groups have norms of partial ultimogeniture. In rural areas in Chenalhó (as in most Tzotzil towns), the youngest son (*kox*) is expected to care for his elderly parents until their death. In compensation, he receives the plot of land where the family's house is located (*yav na*, lit. 'place of the house'). However, land that is used for agriculture is always distributed in equal parts, preferably among male descendants. In exceptional cases, females may inherit the land (for instance, in the absence of competing male siblings). Parents have full control over who their daughters will marry. They may use bride price and bride service institutions as a means of exerting that control.

One notable exception to the Tzotzil and Tzeltal pattern has been documented. The town of Chamula has had partible inheritance norms to both males and females since at least the 1940s. Pozas (1945; 1947) showed that land fragmentation was, already then, a significant problem in the town. It was common for Chamula individuals to inherit three or more plots, often located within distant communities, from their parents (1947, 68). These plots could be remarkably were small, sometimes measuring between 5 to 10 square meters. Pozas observed that Chamula's descent system had already undergone substantial change during the colonial period. Although patrilineal descent was still important, the prohibition to marry someone with the same Tzotzil patronymic (which indicated a vestigial clan organization) was on the verge of disappearing (Pozas 1959, 44).

Moreover, unlike neighboring groups, Chamulas used a bilateral kinship terminology that lacked terms for cross-relatives. Cousin-marriage was considered incest since terms for cousin were merged with terms for sibling (1959, 48). Besides *barrio* and town endogamy and 'clan' exogamy, Pozas failed to identify non-localized marriage patterns. In Chamula, market allocation was not a viable mechanism for consolidating plots due to moral norms that discouraged the commercialization of land. Unable to buy or sell land, some Chamulas tried to exchange parcels with their neighbors, often unsuccessfully (Pozas 1947, 68–75). Increased land shortage and fragmentation caused many to migrate to cities in search of non-rural employment. To Pozas' observations I would add that it was due to land fragmentation that Chamulas developed a wide gamut of non-farming subsistence strategies uncommon among neighboring

groups (such as animal husbandry, crafts, and a well-developed tradition of commerce which is still evident today).

Pozas' observations were confirmed by later anthropologists, who often described Chamula as the most impoverished Tzotzil town due to overpopulation and land scarcity. However, no other scholars discussed the link between partible inheritance and land fragmentation in the town. Instead, Collier (1975) argued that the decline of patrilineal kinship in was the result of—and not the cause—of land scarcity. We will retest Collier's hypothesis Section 3.3. For now, regardless of the direction of causation, both Pozas and Collier agreed that kinship and land inheritance systems evolve together and reinforce each other. In highland Maya societies, kinship systems could not be separated from institutions to solve land and capital transfer problems.

In Chenalhó, marriage and inheritance systems have been characterized by the following traits:

1) Patrilineal descent and localized lineages (Guiteras Holmes 1961, 70).
2) Temporary patrilocal residence.
3) Lineage exogamy.
4) Within-town and within-community endogamy.
5) Within-*calpul* endogamy.
6) Partible inheritance of land by males only (id., 38).
7) Partial ultimogeniture.
8) Bride service as a pre-requisite for some marriages;
9) Bride price payment (id., 128).

Except for trait 4, all these practices still exist to a certain extent in rural communities such as Linda Vista. Some details, however, have changed considerably. First, many Tzotzil lineal patronymics have fallen in disuse, except among a few localized lineages in rural areas (for instance, Ts'unun mentioned earlier). The use of the Spanish formula *first name + patronymic + matronymic* has become nearly universal, likely due to the influence of government programs that require recipients to own government IDs. Nevertheless, lineages still exist even where Spanish surnames are frequent—at least in rural areas. A tendency toward patrilocal residence is still pervasive in Chenalhó (see Section 3.3 below). Young speakers in urban areas sometimes say that the lineage patronymic (*jol sbi*) is a 'nickname' (*ixtol bi*) and translate the term for 'lineage' (*uts' alal*) as *família* in Spanish. These speakers seem to be unaware of the principle of patrilineal descent and understand *uts' alal* as meaning *nuclear* or *extended family*, reflecting the naive bilateral understanding of 'family' in Mexican society.

In Chenalhó's rural areas, land is still preferentially inherited by males, who almost always petition their parents for a plot before marriage (as in the case of Eduardo seen earlier). Female

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inheritance is now tolerated in some communities. Women have begun to petition their parents for land, although these petitions are often unsuccessful.[56] When a pre-mortem dispute over inheritance erupts, women have little chance of winning since land transfers depend on the father's approval. In areas where patrilineal descent is still strong, fathers will tend to bequeath land to men only, as they need land to find a spouse. Women can be more successful in acquiring land in the case of their father's sudden death (in which they may evoke Mexican laws of intestacy and claim their share in the succession process).

Let us compare marriage patterns between the three groups studied here. We can use our survey data to infer marriage patterns since we asked participants to name their parents' community of origin. With this data, we can compare the frequencies of within-community and within-town endogamy. I predict that we will find higher endogamy rates in the rural site (Linda Vista) and decrease endogamy rates among Urban Tzotzil site and Mestizos. I classified marriages between our participants' parents in five categories: 1) Different municipalities: when parents were born in different municipalities (e.g., the mother was born in Chenalhó, the father in Chamula). 2) Distant communities: when both parents were born within Chenalhó, but in communities from different geographic clusters. 3) Large city: when parents were born in large urban areas (San Cristóbal de las Casas) and migrated to Chenalhó. 4) Neighboring communities: when both parents were born in distinct communities existing within the same geographic cluster. 5) Same community: both parents were born in the same community within Chenalhó.

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[56] Pérez-Pérez and Jacorzunski (2019) provide a detailed account of the process of partitioning and transferring land pre-mortem between one's sons (*spukbeal osil snichnabtak*) in a lineage of the community of Chibtic. They show that women began to petition parents for land after the family established a system of *cooperaciones* in which each son or daughter gave periodical contributions in money to help maintain their parents.
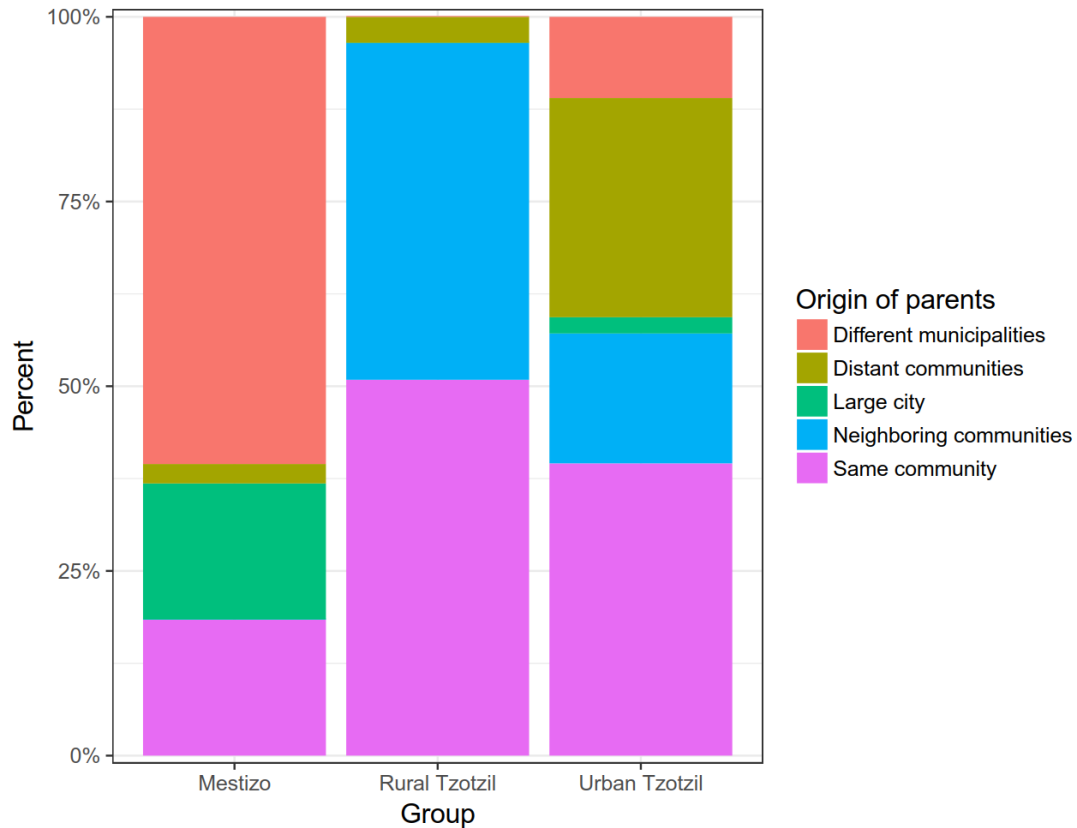
Figure 4.3: Marriage patterns in the three study groups

Figure 4.3 shows the distribution of marriage patterns among Mestizos (n = 38), Rural Tzotzil (n = 57), and Urban Tzotzil (n = 91). Endogamy is greater in the rural site and appears to decrease with urbanization and adopting a Mestizo lifestyle. Rural Tzotzil are almost exclusively endogamous, with 96.4% of marriages occurring between members of the same community or neighboring communities. This conforms to the marriage patterns documented by anthropologists during the 1940s to 1960s (G. A. Collier 1975, 80). As we saw in Chapter 1, Linda Vista was established by people from preexisting neighboring communities, in particular from Xunuch and Yaxalumil. In two exceptional cases, women migrated from communities in Mitontic (a neighboring town) to marry men from Linda Vista. These communities use the same water spring as Linda Vista and surrounding hamlets. Because they share a water source, men from Mitontic sometimes serve the cargo of Patronato de Agua in the Sociedad del Agua (a supra-community organization created to solve conflicts over water). Thus, shared water sources might be another determinant of marriage and residential patterns in rural areas (as Vogt 1969 observed in Zinacantán).

Urban Tzotzil show a mixed marriage pattern, with 56% of marriages between people from the same or nearby communities. The decrease in endogamy likely reflects 1) a decreasing dependence on land, and 2) survival bias, as the Cabecera was, in part, populated by migrants from rural communities.[57] Urban Tzotzil also show a higher incidence of marriages between different Tzotzil-speaking municipalities or between communities within Chenalhó populated by neighboring ethnic groups (such as the former fincas Belisário Dominguez and La Merced, and Tzeltal-speaking communities such as Los Chorros and Puebla).

Among Mestizos, just 18.4% of marriages were between members of the same community. Those few endogamous marriages almost always occur between Mestizo families from the Cabecera. The absence of endogamy among Mestizos is due to several factors. First, most Mestizos are merchants or government workers who do not depend on farming and migrate often. Mestizo marriages can also be qualified as endogamous, but endogamous within the ethnic group, rather than the community. Chenalhó's Mestizo population is small, limiting marriage possibilities with co-ethnics in the town and forcing them to look for marriage partners outside of the municipality. For Mestizos, marriage between cousins is incest. Like the Tzotzil, Mestizos follow patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence: men stay with their parents and bring their wives from other municipalities. Thus, a typical marriage pattern is for Mestizo men to marry women from other predominantly Spanish-speaking settlements within mixed-ethnic towns (for instance, Pantelhó or Comitán). These outward-oriented marriages form the basis of a supra-municipal kinship network. It is common for affinal family members of Mestizos to visit Chenalhó during their *fiestas* (e.g., *Anúncios* or Carnival, see Chapter 2 and Chapter 5).

Our data suggest that social change and urbanization is associated with a decline in within-community and within-town endogamy. That decline is, in part, due to the less strict marriage norms in the urban environment. As land ceases to be necessary, lineages dissolve or become less localized, leading to a decline in parental control over female descendants. With urbanization, land fragmentation is no longer a concern that influences marital arrangements or inheritance claims. However, the data does not allow for distinguishing *spatial homogamy* (marrying someone who lives nearby, regardless of their group affiliation) from community endogamy (marrying a member of the same community or *calpul*). The tendency toward endogamy in the rural site likely reflects a higher incidence of arranged marriages between lineages owning plots of land in each other's vicinity. As we saw earlier, these marriages can

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[57] Notice that we sampled marriages between the <u>parents</u> of our participants. Since the average age of Urban Tzotzil is 42 years old, it is unlikely that recent migrations driven by conflicts in the 1990s have influenced marriage patterns in our data.

take place between first degree cousins. I did not quantify the frequencies of such arrangements besides the ones I observed ethnographically. More data is needed to understand whether endogamous marriages are motivated by kinship norms or spatial homogamy.

2.3. Land Tenure Systems

Chenalhó has seen successive changes in land tenure systems, often imposed from the outside. In the 19th century, large portions of the town's territory were sold to foreign landowners, a process that affected most Tzotzil and Tzeltal groups in Chiapas. In the early 1900s, there were 8 foreign-owned fincas in Chenalhó, which accounted for about half of the town's territory (Garza Caligaris 2002, 74). Fincas were located in between Tzotzil and Tzeltal settlement clusters (seen earlier in Figure 4.1). The geography of the fincas still reflects, today, the perception of Tzotzil dialects within the town (Hertzog and Ross 2017). In the 1930s, the government began to execute land reform, expropriating *finca* lands and converting them into *ejidos*. The government also began to issue land titles to farmers, which facilitated the issuance of credit (see Chapter 6).

Ejidos are communally owned lands mixing elements from the Aztec *calpulli* and Spanish communal land systems. Many studies have examined the origins of the system and its changes over time; what is essential for us is that the *ejido*—as originally conceived by its proponents—was at odds with native Maya land tenure systems. First, ejido members were expected to work and manage common lands together, regardless of kinship or class distinctions. Second, to prevent fragmentation, ejidos could not be partitioned during succession. Instead, the property could only be inherited by one descendant (usually, the eldest male) of the title owner. Third, ejido members were not allowed to sell their land under any circumstance. To transfer land ownership, one needed approval from all other members of the ejido.

Despite initially using land reform laws to reclaim and redistribute *finca* lands, Chiapas Maya communities progressively abandoned *ejidos* due to their strict norms of inheritance, which forbid the partitioning of land (Köhler 1975, 67–68). Over time, many *ejidos* in Chiapas were replaced with a tenure system called *comunidades agrarias*. While *comunidades agrarias* retained some of the communal aspects of *ejidos*,[58] they were given more flexibility and autonomy to merge state and local tenure systems.

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[58] Members of *comunidades agrarias* cannot receive federal land titles individually or sell their land without approval from their community members. In contrast, today's *ejidatários* can own individual land titles, although they have to abide by federal regulations to maintain legal ownership of their lands (Morett-Sánchez and Cosío-Ruiz 2017).

To illustrate the present-day distribution of land-tenure systems in Chenalhó (as recognized by the Mexican Registro Agrario Nacional), let us examine a map of types of land tenure in Chenalhó (Figure 4.4), which I devised using publicly available data compiled by the Mexican National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI). As we can see, areas that until the 1930s were fincas in the eastern part of the town are now either ejidos or comunidades agrarias. Former fincas Caridad, Macuxtetic, San Francisco, and Natividad are now either ejidos or comunidades agrarias, There is one large comunidad agraria located in the northwest, where Santa Martha (a distinct ethnic group, known Xolotepec in pre-Columbian times) is located. To the south of Linda Vita (indicated by a red arrow) lies the Ejido La Libertad (for a detailed description of the changes from fincas to ejidos and comunidades in Chenalhó, see chapter 2 of Garza Caligaris 2002).

The Mexican government distinguishes between two types of settlement: urban and rural, both of which are signaled in Figure 4.4. Rural settlements (in orange) are defined as any population nucleus with non-urban characteristics. These areas are not associated with any specific land tenure system, although Mexican law recognizes their existence to acknowledge potential land claims. Communities are more likely to be formally recognized as rural settlements when they belong to more fragmented towns—i.e., towns that give more autonomy to communities (such as Chenalhó and Tenejapa the map shows).
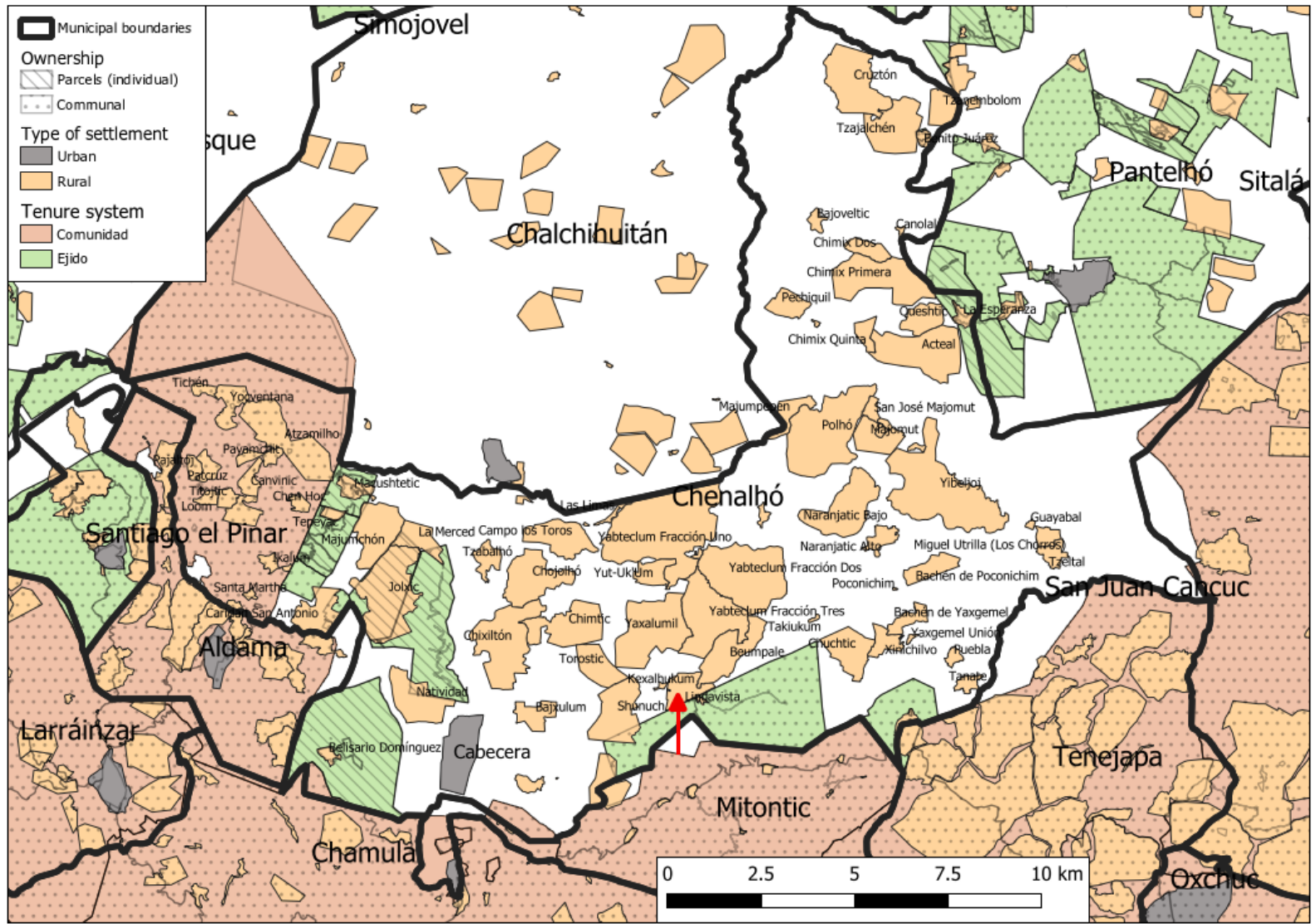
Figure 4.4: Distribution of land tenure systems in Chenalhó and surrounding towns

As Figure 4.4 shows, when compared with neighboring municipalities, Chenalhó and Chalchihuitán were less affected by ejidos and comunidades agrárias. The unmarked areas (in white) in Chenalhó are simply known as the 'Comunidad Agrária Chenalhó.' These areas are managed locally by the municipality's Comisariado de Bienes Comunales and do not have to follow federal regulations imposed on ejidos or communities across Mexico. Notice that the center of Chenalhó—which is mostly covered by rural settlements associated with local communities—has neither ejidos nor comunidades agrarias. This is because the central region was never seized by fincas. Land in the center of the town did not have to be redistributed during land reform, as I discussed elsewhere (Hertzog and Ross 2017).

Because the center of Chenalhó was less affected by *fincas* or *ejidos*, land tenure and management have remained in the hands of local communities, which have a strong sense of autonomy. Although the municipality (through the Comisariado de Bienes Comunales) may intervene to solve land disputes upon request, it cannot impose tenure regulations or succession norms. Thus, localized lineages are still crucial in determining the distribution of land in those areas. The norm of partible inheritance with a preference for males was not affected by inheritance restrictions imposed on land reform beneficiaries. Marriage to close kin and spatial homogamy are still strategies for minimizing fragmentation. In sum, land tenure and management in these areas remain intertwined with kinship systems that pre-date Spanish influence in the region, evidenced by the persistence of kinship terminologies that distinguish cross- from parallel cousins.

The above-described differences in land tenure and kinship systems within Chenalhó led me to consider the following hypothesis: that land could be more equally distributed and less fragmented in areas where it is managed and transferred following kinship-based systems (central Chenalhó and Linda Vista). Where fincas and *ejidos* disturbed native tenure systems, land distribution today is more unequal and fragmented. The rationale behind the hypothesis is that Maya kinship tenure systems may have evolved over millennia to equilibrate the supply and demand for land while minimizing conflict over succession. The continuous disruption of native land tenure and management systems may have left an institutional void in some communities, evidenced by the erasure of unilineal kinship systems and a shift to partible inheritance to males and females in some towns, such as Chamula (described earlier).

Some studies have shown the 1930s land reform in Chiapas failed to produce durable outcomes, questioning the ejido system's long-term efficacy in reducing land distribution inequalities. For instance, Collier (1990) studied the longitudinal effects of land reform in Apas (a hamlet of Zinacantán). He compared land distribution for the years 1939 (before land reform) and 1940 (after land reform). He showed that land inequality fell after the government issued ejido titles, as the revolutionary government had intended. However, this decline in inequality was only temporary. As Figure 4.5 shows, by 1989 land

distribution in Apas had returned to pre-reform levels. While reformists succeeded in expropriating land from foreign owners and returning it to the indigenous population, *ejidos* provided no durable mechanism by which land could be partitioned equitably over time. Today, most land in Zinacantán is allocated either through the market (between Zinacantecos) or through inheritance, following a partible inheritance by males and females.
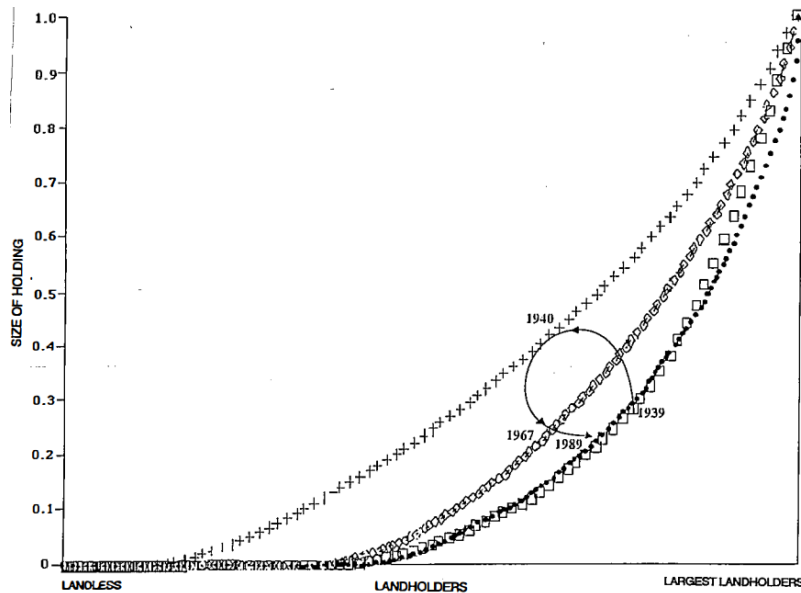
Figure 4.5: Changing distribution of land in Apas (Zinacantán), 1939-1989 (Collier 1990)

Let us try to replicate Collier's analysis using our dataset from Chenalhó. Figure 4.6 compares the distribution of land, wealth,[59] and incomes between Rural Tzotzil (Linda Vista), Urban Tzotzil (Cabecera), and Mestizos in Chenalhó. Although Collier does not provide GINI coefficients, we can use a visual inspection of Lorenz curves to compare land distribution in Apas across time with present-day Chenalhó.

Across groups, land, wealth, and income follow log-normal distributions (unsurprisingly). The left-hand chart (Figure 4.6) shows less inequality in land distribution among Rural Tzotzil from Linda Vista. Notice that the land distribution curve from Linda Vista falls between the curves from Apas in 1940 (following the execution of land reform) and 1967 (Figure 4.5).

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[59] I calculated wealth as the sum of the property owned by all members of a household. Income is the sum of wages, salaries, sales of produce, profits (from commerce) and rents earned by the household head.

Land inequality is more significant among Urban Tzotzil and extreme among Mestizos: about 5 percent of Mestizos own over 80 percent of the land within the group. While most Mestizos do not own any land (besides their house lots), a few own large land plots in the *ejidos* surrounding the Cabecera, which are far more extensive than the average Tzotzil plot (see Chapter 2.1 for discussion on the Ejido San Pedro).
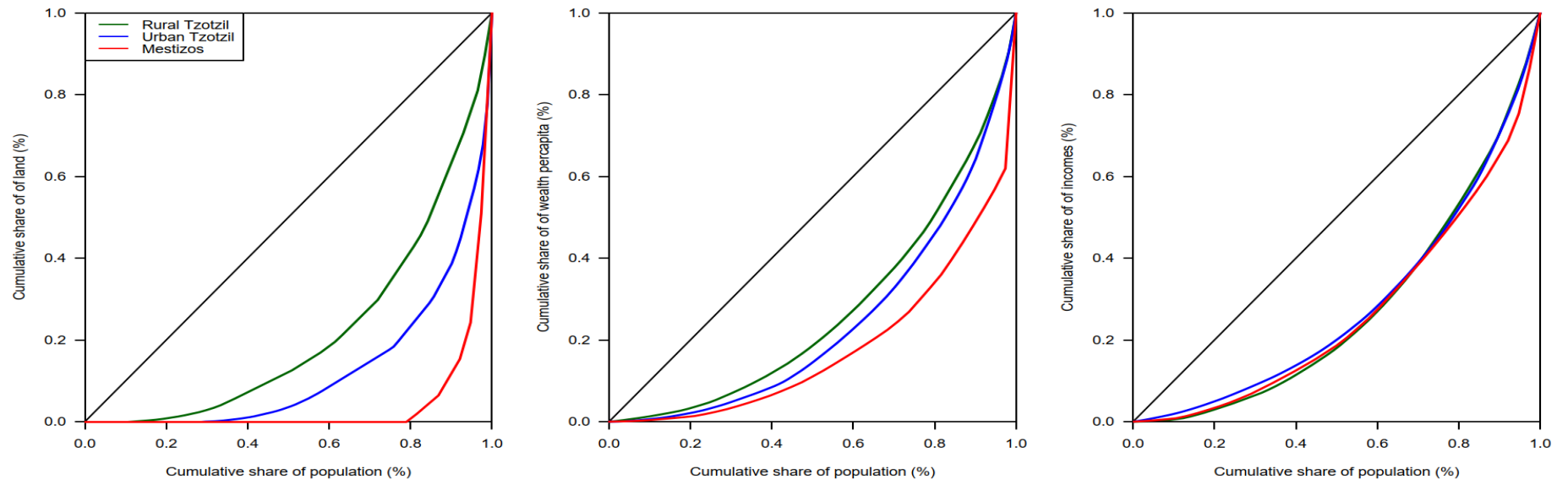
Figure 4.6: Distribution of land, wealth, and income among the three study groups

A possible explanation of differences in land inequality across groups is that inequality is a feature inherent to urban environments, where the division of labor is more complex. However, as the right-hand chart shows, there is no difference in the distribution of incomes across groups. While we find differences in wealth distribution (middle chart), those differences are due to land inequality since land prices are one of the components that I used to calculate wealth. When land is removed from our wealth estimations, the differences between urban and Rural Tzotzil and Mestizos disappear. Another possible (and more plausible) explanation concerns the role of migration in maintaining land distribution equitable in the rural site. Because employment opportunities (aside from agriculture) are limited in rural areas, those who fail to inherit land may migrate to urban centers, where they become landless. Our data, however, rejects that hypothesis. I found no clear difference in the average amount of land owned by migrants and non-migrants in the Cabecera.

To summarize, the data above suggest that land may be distributed more equally in communities which allocate and manage land following traditional kinship and marriage arrangements. Such is the case in central Chenalhó's rural areas, where Linda Vista is located. These areas were less affected by land tenure systems (*fincas*, *ejidos*) imposed by outsiders. However, more data is needed to test the effect of migration on the distribution of land in those areas.

3. Erasing Maya Kinship

The comparison between Linda Vista and the Cabecera suggests a picture of changing kinship systems from unilateral to bilateral. In unilateral systems, descent is transmitted either patrilineally or matrilineally, while bilateral descent is transmitted through both father's and mother's lines. Patrilineal descent, I argued, likely evolved to solve problems of succession—in particular, patrilineal kinship provides a solution to land fragmentation over time and reduces conflict over (and the costs of) land allocation.

My discussion about the influence of unilateral kinship on land allocation, however, is at odds with much of the literature on Mesoamerica. The scholars who have attempted to generalize what prototypical 'Mesoamerican kinship systems' look like have always emphasized the nearly universality of bilateral systems in the region (Romney 1967; Nutini 1967). Studies on social organization have stressed the role of spatial units such as *barrios* and *calpules* in structuring Mesoamerican societies. These spatial units can be loosely tied to bilateral family groups, often ranked in classes. This structure differs little from that found in contemporary European societies, where location and class are more important determinants of marriage patterns than kinship units such as lineages or clans. Another important subject of study has been the institution of the ritual kinship system known as *compadrazgo*. Although

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widespread in Mesoamerica today, *compadrazgo* is an entirely foreign system introduced by the Catholic church in the region.

Mesoamerican kinship has been described as bilineal and loosely patrilocal. Romney (1967) remarked that "the area is devoid of any special highly institutionalized kinship behavior patterns such as mother-in-law avoidance or strong joking relations. There are no reports whatsoever of either matrilateral or patrilateral cross-cousin marriage" (as we discuss later, there are kinship-based joking relations in Chenalhó today). Group membership is mostly determined by place. Tax (1937; 1942) noticed that indigenous groups in Guatemala were organized around a territorial and administrative unit, the *município*, rather than seeing themselves as related through a common ancestor. Foster (1961; 1963) argued that locality, rather than descent, was used to determine kin membership in the Mestizo village of Tzintzuntzan. Just as municipalities were defined as spatial units, smaller forms of organization such as the family were influenced by the principle of common location. In these bilateral systems, people have less awareness of their genealogies and focus on present extended family ties instead: "the extended family is noncorporate, highly informal, and rarely consists of more than three generations. Its most common form, as a residence group, is a married couple, their unmarried children, one or two married children, and grandchildren. More distant relatives in both paternal and maternal lines are recognized, although the degree of acknowledged relationship becomes fuzzier with increasing distance" (Foster 1961). Foster argued that this pattern was endemic to Mesoamerica, and contrasted it with the better studied African descent systems described by Fortes (1953), where consanguinity determined the existence of lineages and clans and shaped inheritance and marriage patterns. To compensate for the lack of corporate lineal or clan groups, people maintain extensive networks of fictive kinship ties through the compradazgo system, which allowed family alliances to be more dynamic. As Foster remarks, compadrazgo ties are voluntary ('dyadic') contracts based on the periodic exchange of gifts; if one of the partners in the 'contract' ceases to reciprocate, the tie disappears.

The Maya of Chiapas—Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Ch'ol, Lacandon—are among the few Mesoamerican groups that have retained some traits of pre-Columbian unilateral terminologies. Perhaps because Mayan populations inhabited inhospitable 'regions of refuge'—as Aguirre Beltrán (1973) argued—they were the least affected by colonial influence. Everywhere else, native kinship systems were erased and replaced with a structure mirroring that of the European family (a point made by Wolf 1955, 456). There are reasons to believe that unilateral systems were widespread in Mesoamerica before the conquest, although the subject has been poorly studied.

If Mesoamerican groups are almost universally dependent on (scarce) land, and if unilateral kinship helps to solve problems of land allocation, we should expect to see a more widespread

distribution of unilateral kinship in pre-Columbian times. Hopkins (1988) examined all existing ethnographic and historic data on kinship among Maya groups and concluded that the ancient Maya kinship system likely resembles the Omaha-type ones that still exist among the Tzotzil from Chalchihuitán described above. The 16th-century description of Yucatec Maya marriage practices made by Diego de Landa clearly matches that of a patrilineal descent system with lineage exogamy and cross-cousin marriage.[60]

Evidence for unilateral systems becomes scarcer outside of the Maya area. This relative scarcity may be because Mayan groups in Chiapas were disproportionally better documented by decades of research from the University of Chicago and Harvard University scholars. In contrast, data on kinship terminologies from non-Maya groups tend to be less reliable. For instance, Foster (1949) compared kinship vocabularies from 12 Mixe-Zoque groups (including 3 Zoque groups from Chiapas). He found that all 12 terminologies were bilateral but hypothesized that they had changed during the colonial period due to the church's influence. In a less known—but more detailed— study, Báez-Jorge (1975) found variations of Omaha-type terminologies among two Zoque communities of Chiapas. Those terminologies are remarkably like the Tzotzil and Tzeltal ones discussed earlier.

What explains the differences in the data collected by Foster and Báez-Jorge? Foster collected much of his kinship vocabularies among the few Zoque speakers who lived in urban centers (such as Tuxtla Guitérrez, the capital of Chiapas) while ignoring less acculturated populations. Some of Foster's data was provided by other researchers, while the rest was, in the author's words, "taken 'on the fly'" (Foster 1949, 334). Foster's vocabularies, thus, do not contemplate the full linguistic spectrum of Mixe-Zoque groups. Those groups had unilineal kinship systems similar to that of the Maya in the past, as evidenced by Báez-Jorge's study. This finding is significant since, although Zoque and Maya are unrelated linguistically, they inhabit similar climactic zones, have similar population profiles and

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[60] "They are careful to know the origin of their lineages, especially if they come from some house of Mayapan. The names of the fathers remain always with the sons and not with the daughters. They always call their sons and daughters by the name of the father and mother. In this way, the son of Chel and Chan is called Na-Chan-Chel, which is to say the son of such ones, and this is the cause that those of one name are said to be relatives and are treated as such and for this, when one arrives in some place where he is unknown and is in need, he immediately makes known his name and if there is any one of this name he is immediately received and treated with all kindness and thus no man or woman marries with one of the same name because it is for them a great disgrace. If one married one's brother's wives, it was considered bad. They do not marry with step-mothers, nor their wives' sisters, nor their mothers' sisters, and if someone did so it was considered bad; with all the other relatives on the mother's side they could marry, even though they were first cousins" (in: Beals 1932, 471–72).

settlement patterns, and use the same subsistence strategies (slash-and-burn smallholder agriculture). As Maya and Mixe-Zoque groups have dealt with land scarcity and land allocation problems for centuries, they might have developed, independently, similar kinship and descent systems. During the colonial period, these systems changed differentially, some shifting to bilateral, while others—predominantly Maya—retained some of their previous unilateral characteristics.

3.1. Institutional Replacement

The shift from lateral to bilateral descent systems among Maya groups remains unexplained. Guiteras Holmes (1966) and Metzger (1959), who documented the changes in kinship terminologies among Tzotzil and Tzeltal groups, speculated that the change was due to "acculturative pressures" leading to a replacement of kinship structures, land tenure systems, and a rise in rates of bilingualism. Similarly, Nick Hopkins states that "the shift to bilateral is a result of contact with the dominant Spanish-speaking population" (personal communication).

The above view of acculturation, however, leaves several questions unanswered. For instance, why have kinship terminologies changed in some places while other essential features of Maya languages have remained intact? As we will discuss later, while the Tzotzil spoken in Zinacantán has remained mostly unchanged over the past three centuries, there is historical evidence that Zinacantecos forgot their terms for cross-relatives and replaced the traditional terminology with a bilateral terminology that mirrors that of Spanish. Similarly, as I noticed earlier, the kinship terms used by the remaining Mam-Maya speakers of Chiapas have been replaced by Spanish ones (Medina Hernández 1973, 171). As some have observed, Mayan languages tend to change selectively, with some linguistic domains being more susceptible to change than others.[61] Thus, to explain Mayan kinship changes, we must specify the exact mechanism that caused terminologies to change while leaving other features of these languages intact.

Although the presence (or absence) of terms for cross-relatives is a reliable indicator of the strength of descent-based forms of organization, the shift from lateral to bilateral cannot be simply characterized as 'language change.' Instead, I describe the weakening of descent-based systems as a process of institutional replacement. As we saw, descent-based institutions provide a solution to resource allocation problems (e.g., how to partition land); hence, their decline has broad consequences for Maya

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[61] For instance, numeral systems and logical connectives tend to be the first linguistic features to be replaced by Spanish loans among bilingual speakers. As Crump (1978) argued, Mayan numeral systems tend to disappear due to the introduction of money (paper money, in particular), which compels native populations to count and calculate in high quantities (thousands) that were uncommon in traditional markets.

groups. The decline also coincides with the introduction of exogenous institutions (by the church or the state) that provide solutions to the same problems, albeit producing different outcomes. To explain the process of change, we need, first, to reduce it into its components. I will focus on the better documented Maya kinship systems rather than generalize kinship in Mesoamerica.

Table 4.1 summarizes the main characteristics of unilateral to bilateral descent among the Maya of Chiapas.

Table 4.1: Shift from descent-based to place-based forms of organization in Chiapas

	Descent-based	Place-based
Kinship terminology	Omaha-type[62]	Bilateral
Descent and residence	Patrilineal and patrilocal	Bilineal and ambilocal
Inheritance	Partible inheritance to males only, partial ultimogeniture	Partible inheritance to males and females
Group membership criteria	Consanguinity, descent	Place of birth or residence, fictive kinship
Marriage/land ownership strategy	Cousin marriage, arranged marriages	Spatial homogamy, class/ethnic endogamy
Marriage taboos	Lineage exogamy	Extended family exogamy, class/ethnic endogamy
Ethnic identity	Blood essentialism, less tolerance to ethnic 'passing'	Fictive kinship networks, more tolerance to ethnic 'passing'
Knowledge of genealogies	Deep, ancestors evoked to determine land ownership	Shallow, focus on living relatives
Religious practice	Ancestor cult	Veneration of deities (saints)
Social status depends on	Lineage or clan membership, land ownership	Participation in the cargo system, ritual kinship networks
Status attainment	By ascription	By achievement
Political units	Patrilineages	Communities, *parajes*, municipalities, *comisariados*
Partner choice in marriages	Made by ascending generation patrilineal relatives	Made by ego

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[62] Hopkins (1988) makes a persuasive argument that ancient Maya kinship likely followed an Omaha-type structure found today among some Tzotzil, Tzeltal, and Ch'ol groups. However, Hopkins' argument was challenged by Esponda Jímeno (1994b), who found terminologies among Ch'ol groups that did not conform to Omaha or

The general pattern of change is that kin-based structures (lineage, clan) are replaced by territorial units and corporate groups: *municípios*, *parajes*, *agencias*, *calpules*, waterhole groups, workgroups, etc. (Vogt 1961; Miller 1964; Hunt and Nash 1967). Patrilineages cease to be critical social units for managing land and consequently become weaker or disappear. Marriage norms become more flexible, and parents lose control over their children's partner choices. Preferential cross-cousin marriage disappears, giving way to spatial homogamy and class (or ethnic) endogamy.

In unilateral systems, knowledge of genealogies was necessary to claim nobility status and make or verify land ownership claims (as rights over land are determined by descent group affiliation). An ethnographic example of this phenomenon comes from the Tzeltal town of Oxchuc, studied by Siverts (1969a). Oxchuc was divided into 13 clans, each associated with a patronym and subdivided into several localized lineages. To claim land ownership, Oxchuqueros only needed to possess the lineage or clan patronymic. However, in the 1950s, the traditional naming system was falling into disarray, and there was confusion over how to precisely delineate spatial boundaries associated with each clan. Some clans were disappearing and being replaced with spatial organizational units. Oxchuqueros were losing knowledge of their genealogies, and therefore there was increasing disagreement over how to solve land disputes. Siverts describes how two clans in Oxchuc disappeared after their members relocated to another clan neighborhood due to a storm. This suggests that clans were being replaced by communities, which are civil/political associations brought together by spatial proximity rather than descent (1969, 100-112). As knowledge of genealogies ceases to be necessary, it is replaced with a focus on networks of consanguineous or ritual kin (Foster 1963). Ancestor cult—a common religious practice in societies with strong lineal descent systems—is progressively replaced with the veneration of deities (here, Catholic saints).

The most significant changes associated with the decline of descent-based systems concerns the transmission and production of social status. In the traditional systems, social status—like land—can be transmitted through descent and is tied to land ownership. Traditionally, descent groups that owned more land and occupied larger territories were ranked above other groups. Status was transmitted through descent as children inherited the lineage membership at birth. Inherited rank and nobility classes, however, disappear throughout indigenous Mexico during the 19th century, likely due to the influence of Spanish liberalism during Mexican independence (Carrasco 1961; Guardino 2005). As descent-based structures declined, Maya groups were left with a lack of social mechanisms to transmit or inherit social

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bilateral types. Given the lack of quantitative information on the distribution of kinship terminologies among the Ch'ol, the debate cannot be currently settled.

status. For that reason, as discussed in Chapter 3, some of these groups have been described as 'egalitarian,' having developed the elaborate prestige economies and redistribution systems described by early ethnographers (e.g., Wolf 1957; M. Nash 1958).

In response to the decline of status-inheritance mechanisms, Maya groups adopted two institutions for producing social differentiation:

The cargo system. As discussed in Chapter 3, cargos systems function to produce and distribute status. Guardino (2005) shows that the rise of cargos in an Oaxaca village coincided with the abolishment of hereditary distinctions by liberal politicians, suggesting that status ascribed by descent and status achieved through service are mutually exclusive. I elaborate on this argument in Chapter 5, which shows that cargos are less important among Rural Tzotzil—who have retained lineage organizations—than their urban counterparts.

Compadrazgo. As the importance of kinship units in maintaining solidarity ties diminishes, the compadrazgo system emerges as a functional replacement to lineage organizations. This replacement is evidenced by a study of compadrazgo in Apas (Zinacantán) by Uribe Wood (1982) that found that families that relied less on consanguineous kin tended to rely more on ritual kin. This suggests, again, that ritual and consanguineous kinship are mutually exclusive institutions. Compadrazgo, when introduced, replaces descent-based organizations.

Cargos and compadrazgo emerge as institutions for producing and allocating social status (or prestige) unequally. In other words, these systems serve to create and justify inequalities in social status, as Cancian (1965) pointed out for the cargo system. I will dedicate Chapter 5 to Chenalhó's cargo system and develop this argument. I discuss the association between compadrazgo and status later in this chapter.

In the next two sections, address the following question: *why have some Maya communities retained unilateral descent systems while others have shifted to bilateral*? I propose two mechanisms driving differential change: 1) the uneven action of the Catholic church, which actively sought to erase native kinship and marriage systems during the early colonial period, and 2) the differential reliance on agriculture, which is associated with a strengthening of patrilineal descent.

3.2. Role of the Catholic Church

The first historical mechanism I propose for the decline of Maya lineal descent is Dominican and Franciscan friars' action during the early colonial period (16th to 18th centuries). During that period, the church sought to discourage native populations from perpetuating the marital practices of polygyny, cousin marriage, sororate, arranged marriages, and the payment of bride price. This insight is taken from Schulz (2017) who, using cross-national data, found a robust association between the duration of the

Western and Eastern church's ban on consanguineous marriages predicts the distribution of kinship terminologies with distinctions for cross- and parallel cousins (as well as other variables, such as cousin marriage rates, nepotism, and urbanization).

In Mesoamerica, the early colonial period is vital for several reasons. Chiefly, in the 16th-century, the Catholic Church was grappling with changes brought about during the counter-reformation—specifically the ones established during the Council of Trent[63] (1545). The effect of these counter-reformation changes is evident in Fray Antonio de Remesal's *Historia general de las indigenas* (1619), which includes lengthy discussions on how the norms recommended by Council of Trent should be implemented among the natives of Chiapas and Guatemala. The majority of Remesal's recommendations are centered around marriage[64] and baptism (Remesal 1932, 325–26; 438–42). Kinship terminologies, then, do not change due to simple 'contact' with non-indigenous populations. Rather, Catholic priests may have consciously planned these changes during the early colonial period.

The first line of evidence for the church's role comes from colonial translations of liturgical texts into Mayan languages. For instance, there is the *Cuaderno de lengua Tzendal*, a manuscript written in 1798 by an anonymous friar (transcribed by Ruz 1989). The document contains instructions to Catholic priests on performing weddings and baptisms, conducting prayers, and teaching about the Church commandments in Tzeltal. Instructions are first laid out in Spanish, followed by Tzeltal translations. To officiate a wedding, a priest would begin by asking the groom and the bride about whether they were in any way related by ritual (*compadrazgo*) or consanguineal ties:

"Is there any impediment with that man/woman that you are going to marry? Is he/she your godfather/godmother? Is he/she your relative or another arrangement?"

The priest then turns to the witnesses to confirm that the couple is not related:

"Do you know if they [the couple] are related by blood, baptism, or confirmation?"

The following two questions appear to address the then widespread practice of sororate:

"Do you know if the man has sinned with a relative of the woman, or if the woman [has sinned] with a relative of the man?"

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[63] I thank Ted Fischer for drawing my attention to the Council of Trent.

[64] Throughout his book, Remesal describes examples of how indigenous people reacted to the newly imposed prohibitions against 'clandestine marriages' or the practice of 'having many women.' For instance, he tells the story of an indigenous woman who petitioned a priest to allow her to stay married to a polygynous man; after priests rejected the petition, the woman committed suicide by hanging (Remesal 1932, 38). The more liberal Dominicans—especially those based in Ciudad Real (San Cristóbal)—would often point to cases such as this when arguing for a more lenient approach to evangelization (cf. Remesal 1932, 326).

"Do you know if this man has contracted marriage with a female relative of this woman?" (translated from Ruz 1989, 388–89)

Similar translations of Church ritual texts were made for Tzotzil (n.d.) in Tojolabal (1775), also transcribed by Ruz (1989, Tzotzil: p. 56, Tojolabal: p. 236). Those texts, which seem to follow Remesal's recommendations, show how Catholic priests took pains to enforce the Council of Trent's resolutions, and ensure that Maya populations understood the Church's incest prohibitions. The texts on baptism ceremonies also show how carefully priests sought to inculcate native populations with the importance of fictive ties of compadrazgo—a novelty for Maya peoples, whose incest prohibitions obeyed, until then, the structure of localized patrilines or, in some cases, spatial unities of Aztec origin such as the *calpules*. One might speculate that by enforcing the compadrazgo, the Church may have sought to replace consanguineous kinship systems with more abstract forms of organization that it could hold under its control (see Mintz and Wolf 1950).

The second line of evidence of the Church's role in changing kinship terminologies comes from colonial dictionaries and grammars of Mayan languages authored by Catholic friars. Ruz and Aramoni (1985) notice the great care in which two friars in Copanaguastla (a 16th-century convent) documented Tzeltal terms for kin. The Copanaguastla dictionary of Tzeltal suggests that friars researched and sought to understand native kinship systems and marriage practices before replacing them with Spanish equivalents. Terms for kin also receive a good deal of attention in a 16th-century Tzotzil grammar (Ruz 1989, 135–37).

Colonial dictionaries not only provide insight into how exactly kinship systems changed (Tenner 1978; Robertson 1987), but they can also be used to understand whether changes affected ethnic groups differentially. For instance, when Dominicans arrived in Zinacantán, in 1545, they found that Luismé Tzon—the town's Alcalde—was willing to collaborate with their effort to abolish polygyny, a widespread practice among local elites (Viqueira 1999, 321). Because Zinacantecos tended to be friendly toward the Spaniards, it appears that the Zinacenteco kinship system shifted from unilateral to bilateral much earlier than in other groups. A 1616 Dominican dictionary of Tzotzil spoken in Zinacantán registers terms for cross-cousin (*aljun*, *ichok'*) and cross-uncle (*hom*) (Laughlin 1988, 3:706, 754). However, those terms for cross-relatives are absent from the 1688 *Arte de la lengua tzotzlem o tzinacanteca*, a treatise on Tzotzil written by a Franciscan friar stationed in Huitiupán. In the *Arte*, cross-cousins are defined as *snichon juntot* (literally, 'my uncle's children'), while parallel cousins are *ich' melel jbankil* ('my real-older brother') (see Ruz 1989, 135–36). Today's Zinacantecos have shifted to a bilateral kinship terminology that resembles the Spanish one (Vogt 1969, 227). A dictionary of contemporary Tzotzil from Zinacantán (Laughlin 1975) contains no mention of cross-relative terms, suggesting that these terms were forgotten

long ago. The example from Ziancantán suggests that towns that were home to Catholic convents or parishes during the early colonial period were more likely to undergo permanent changes to their kinship systems, which could potentially explain the differences that exist today.

Not all Maya groups received their own parishes. Towns such as Chenalhó or Tenejapa would not be home to a Catholic parish until the 19th century. During the early colonial period, some towns remained outside of the Church's scope; these towns would usually be assigned to a parish located within a neighboring group. Chenalhó, for instance, was assigned to the Dominican convent of Chamula (a 25.5 km distance) during the 17th and 18th centuries (Viqueira 1997). Towns that lacked their own parish did not have a permanent resident priest to officiate a wedding or perform baptisms. Thus, a Chenalhó couple wishing to marry by the Church had to either wait for a priest to visit or travel about 21.5 km to the convent in Chamula. Similarly, the Tzeltal-speaking town of Tenejapa was at first (17th c.) assigned to Huixtán's parish (a 13 km distance). Because Huixtán is an area dominated by Tzotzil speakers, it is unlikely that the local priest had enough knowledge of Tzeltal to officiate marriages between Tenejapanecos, which might explain why the town was reassigned in the 18th century to the newly built parish of Oxchuc (also a Tzeltal-speaking town).

As Viqueira (1997, 72-73) explains, Dominicans used various criteria to partition indigenous territory in ecclesiastical provinces: for instance, they mapped linguistic and ecological zones and paid attention to the distance from trade routes. Profit was perhaps the major incentive guiding the establishment of convents: those who failed to produce economic benefit (by exacting tribute) were more likely to be abandoned over time. Jungles and highland areas—the Tzeltal zone, in particular—did not seem to attract the attention of Dominicans and, as a result, as many have pointed out, these areas remained less influenced by missionization. The differential impact of the Church may explain why, for instance, Tenejapa retained its Omaha-like kinship terminology until the present day[65] (Haehl 1980).

To test whether kinship terminologies changed during the early influence of the Church, I examine the relationship between distance from towns to parishes and kinship terminology type. Suppose early activities of the Church were responsible for erasing native kinship systems. In that case, we should find that the higher the historical distance from a town to its parish(es), the more likely it is to preserve a unilateral (Omaha-type) kinship terminology.

To test the above hypothesis, I use data compiled by Viqueira (1997, table 8), who lists 150 towns in Chiapas and the location of their respective parishes for the years 1656, 1659, 1665, 1712, 1772, 1774, and 1778.I found data on the kinship terminologies of 35 of those towns with speakers of an indigenous

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[65] A recently compiled Tzeltal dictionary suggests that the system is still alive in the town (Polian 2016).

language (Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Ch'ol, Lacandon, Zoque) at the time it was documented by an ethnographer. I also found kinship terminologies for three localities (Chanal, Salto de Agua, and Northern Lacandon villages) that do not appear in Viqueira's dataset (since they did not exist or were not recognized as towns in the 17th-18th centuries). Following previous studies, I classified each group's kinship terminologies into one of the following categories: 1) Omaha-type, 2) Transition, and 3) Bilateral (B. Metzger 1959; Guiteras Holmes 1966):

1) Omaha-type (n = 9): a system which sorts relatives according to their lineal affiliation, merging siblings with parallel cousins and women in the patriline, while making a distinction between patrilineal and matrilineal collaterals (Hopkins 1969; 1988, 104).

2) Transition (n = 10): any terminology that retains some characteristic of Omaha-type systems but does not match all the criteria above, which suggests that it could be undergoing a shift to bilateral descent as in central Chenalhó as discussed earlier (and in Guiteras Holmes 1966). For instance, the kinship terminology of the Tzotzil of Pantelhó is almost bilateral; however, while it has lost terms for cross-cousin (*ʔichok'*) and maternal cross-uncle (*vob*), it still draw a distinction between cross and parallel cousins by merging uncle (*jun tot*) and aunt (*jun me'*) to designate *father's sister's children* (Köhler 2007, 390).

3) Bilateral (n = 18): terminologies that use the same terms to designate patri- and matrilineal relatives, the best examples being the ones from the Tzotzil of Zinacantán and Chamula (Pozas 1959; Vogt 1969).

Table 4.2 shows the list of all towns/ethnic groups surveyed, along with their linguistic affiliation, type of kinship terminology, and church exposure score. To calculate exposure to the Church, I used the formula $ln(\frac{time\ associated\ with\ parish}{distance\ from\ parish})$ (I use *ln* to normalize the distribution of scores). An analysis of variance shows a clear relationship between church exposure scores and type of kinship terminology (Bilateral = 0.826, Transition = 0.539, Omaha = 0. 446, F = 7.078, p-value = 0.003). Today, groups that use bilateral terminologies were almost twice as much more exposed to Dominican and Franciscan parishes than those that retained full or partial unilateral descent systems. Although church exposure played a role effecting change to bilateralism, the data show no clear difference in church exposure between Transition and Omaha-type groups.[66]

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[66] This result highlights the obvious problem with classifying Chiapas' unilineal systems that are not fully Omaha as 'transition.' Although it is plausible that the pre-conquest Maya kinship systems leaned toward Omaha-type (Hopkins, 1988), there is no good evidence supporting the inference that today's non-Omaha unilineal systems

The kinship systems dataset supports our hypothesis that early church exposure is associated with a change from unilateral (patrilineal) to bilateral descent, as Schulz (2017) demonstrated. Although our dataset is small, to my knowledge Chiapas is the only region in the world where such a variety of kinship terminologies has been documented within a small number of languages.

To summarize the characteristic of such change:

1) Terms distinguishing cross-relatives (cousins, uncles/aunts, and collaterals) are erased and replaced by bilateral terms mirroring Spanish ones.

2) In formerly Omaha systems (such as Zinacantán), the terms for cross-cousin disappear, either being replaced with terms for siblings (previously used to designate parallel cousins) or the Spanish word for cousin, 'primo/a.'

I argued that these changes were enforced by Catholic friars seeking to abolish the practices polygyny, cousin-marriage, and sororate, all of which are associated with a patrilineal descent structure which still exists among some groups. These friars understood that cross-relatives terms may both <u>reflect</u> and <u>reinforce</u> practices such as lineage exogamy and cross-cousin marriage. The change from unilateral to bilateral descent among the Maya has important implications to our understanding of land allocation in Chiapas. Among the Maya, patrilineal descent likely evolved to solve the problem of land fragmentation and land transfer. In communities entirely dependent on agriculture, land ownership is inextricably tied to social status and wealth. For smallholders, preventing fragmentation is a matter of survival.

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descend from Omaha-type. While surveying the literature, I found more than three different accounts of Ch'ol kinship from the same area (the Tulija valley, which was largely unaffected by early missionization). Some of these terminologies fail to conform to Omaha-type. Hence, it is debatable whether Ch'ol transitioning terminologies were, in the past, Omaha, or were of a different type altogether (see Esponda Jímeno 1994b). Moreover, in a Ch'ol community of Palenque, Hopkins (personal communication) found between-informant differences in kinship systems: older informants tended to relate an Omaha-type terminology, while ladinoized (bilingual) and younger informants used bilateral terminologies, with some borrowing terms for cousin (primo) from Spanish. More data is needed in order to better classify the variation in kinship terminologies in the Ch'ol area.

Table 4.2: Kinship terminology and church exposure in 37 Chiapas towns, 1659-1778

Town	Lang	Termin.	Exp	1659 (dist km)	1665 (dist km)	1712 (dist km)	1772 (dist km)	1774 (dist km)	1778 (dist km)
Aguacaten.	Tzeltal	Bilateral	.51	Teopisca (10.31)	Teopisca (10.31)	Teopisca (10.31)	Teopisca (10.31)	Teopisca (10.31)	Teopisca (10.31)
Magdalena	Tzotzil	Transition	.44	Chamula (14.52)	Chamula (14.52)	Chamula (14.52)	Chamula (14.52)	Chamula (14.52)	Chamula (14.52)
Amatenango	Tzeltal	Bilateral	.64	Teopisca (5.72)	Teopisca (5.72)	Teopisca (5.72)	Teopisca (5.72)	Teopisca (5.72)	Teopisca (5.72)
Ayutla	Zoque	Bilateral	.00	Ayutla (0)	Ayutla (0)	Ayutla (0)	Ayutla (0)	Ayutla (0)	Ayutla (0)
Bachajón	Tzeltal	Omaha	.50	Chilón (11.08)	Chilón (11.08)	Chilón (11.08)	Chilón (11.08)	Chilón (11.08)	Chilón (11.08)
Cancuc	Tzeltal	Omaha	.79	Tenango (11.43)	Tenango (11.43)	Tenango (11.43)	Cancuc (0)	Cancuc (0)	Cancuc (0)
Chalchihuitán	Tzotzil	Omaha	.36	Chamula (21.05)	Chamula (21.05)	Chamula (21.05)	Chamula (21.05)	Chamula (21.05)	Chamula (21.05)
Chamula	Tzotzil	Bilateral	1	Chamula (0)	Chamula (0)	Chamula (0)	Chamula (0)	Chamula (0)	Chamula (0)
Chanal	Tzeltal	Omaha	0	None	None	None	None	None	None
Chapultenango	Zoque	Omaha	1	Chapultenango (0)	Chapultenango (0)	Chapultenango (0)	Chapultenango (0)	Chapultenango (0)	Chapultenango (0)
Chenalhó	Tzotzil	Transition	.36	Chamula (21.51)	Chamula (21.51)	Chamula (21.51)	Chamula (21.51)	Chamula (21.51)	Chamula (21.51)
Chilón	Tzeltal	Bilateral	1	Chilón (0)	Chilón (0)	Chilón (0)	Chilón (0)	Chilón (0)	Chilón (0)
Copainalá	Zoque	Bilateral	1	Copainalá (0)	Copainalá (0)	Copainalá (0)	Copainalá (0)	Copainalá (0)	Copainalá (0)
Guaquitepec	Tzeltal	Transition	1	Guaquitepec (0)	Guaquitepec (0)	Guaquitepec (0)	Guaquitepec (0)	Guaquitepec (0)	Guaquitepec (0)
Huitiupán	Tzotzil	Bilateral	.99	None	Huitiupán (0)	Huitiupán (0)	Huitiupán (0)	Huitiupán (0)	Huitiupán (0)
Huixtán	Tzotzil	Bilateral	.75	Huixtán (0)	Huixtán (0)	Oxchuc (14.55)	Oxchuc (14.55)	Oxchuc (14.55)	Oxchuc (14.55)
Lacandon	Lacandon	Omaha	0	None	None	None	None	None	None
Larráinzar	Tzotzil	Bilateral	.50	Chamula (10.89)	Chamula (10.89)	Chamula (10.89)	Chamula (10.89)	Chamula (10.89)	Chamula (10.89)
Masoja (Tila)	Chol	Transition	.45	Tila (13.61)	Tila (13.61)	Tila (13.61)	Tila (13.61)	Tila (13.61)	Tila (13.61)
Mitontic	Tzotzil	Bilateral	.51	None	Chamula (10.32)	Chamula (10.32)	Chamula (10.32)	Chamula (10.32)	Chamula (10.32)
Ocotepec	Zoque	Transition	.58	Tapalapa (7.55)	Tapalapa (7.55)	Tapalapa (7.55)	Tapalapa (7.55)	Tapalapa (7.55)	Tapalapa (7.55)
Oxchuc	Tzeltal	Omaha	.95	Huixtán (14.48)	Huixtán (14.48)	Oxchuc (0)	Oxchuc (0)	Oxchuc (0)	Oxchuc (0)
Palenque	Chol	Transition	.20	None	Tumbalá (44.72)	Tumbalá (44.72)	Tumbalá (44.72)	Tumbalá (44.72)	Tumbalá (44.72)
Pantelhó	Tzotzil	Transition	.19	Chamula (34.14)	Chamula (34.14)	Chamula (34.14)	None	None	None
Petalcingo	Tzeltal	Transition	.58	Tila (7.37)	Tila (7.37)	Tila (7.37)	Tila (7.37)	Tila (7.37)	Tila (7.37)

Table 4.2: Kinship terminology and church exposure in 37 Chiapas towns, 1659-1778

Town	Lang	Termin.	Exp	1659 (dist km)	1665 (dist km)	1712 (dist km)	1772 (dist km)	1774 (dist km)	1778 (dist km)
Pínola	Tzeltal	Bilateral	.77	Pinola (0)	Pinola (0)	Soyatitán (9.5)	Soyatitán (9.5)	Soyatitán (9.5)	Soyatitán (9.5)
Rayón	Zoque	Bilateral	.64	Jitotol (22.2)	Tapilula (5.39)	Tapilula (5.39)	Tapilula (5.39)	Tapilula (5.39)	Tapilula (5.39)
Salto de Agua	Chol	Omaha	.00	None	None	None	None	None	None
San Luismé	Tzotzil	Bilateral	1	San Luismé (0)	San Luismé (0)	San Luismé (0)	San Luismé (0)	San Luismé (0)	San Luismé (0)
Santa Marta	Tzotzil	Transition	.41	Chamula (16.76)	Chamula (16.76)	Chamula (16.76)	Chamula (16.76)	Chamula (16.76)	Chamula (16.76)
Sibaca	Tzeltal	Transition	.65	Ocosingo (5.42)	Ocosingo (5.42)	Ocosingo (5.42)	Ocosingo (5.42)	Ocosingo (5.42)	Ocosingo (5.42)
Simojovel	Tzotzil	Bilateral	.69	None	Huitiupán (4.2)	Huitiupán (4.2)	Huitiupán (4.2)	Huitiupán (4.2)	Huitiupán (4.2)
Tenejapa	Tzeltal	Omaha	.42	Huixtán (13.17)	Huixtán (13.17)	Oxchuc (17.25)	Oxchuc (17.25)	Oxchuc (17.25)	Oxchuc (17.25)
Teopisca	Tzeltal	Bilateral	1	Teopisca (0)	Teopisca (0)	Teopisca (0)	Teopisca (0)	Teopisca (0)	Teopisca (0)
Tila	Chol	Transition	.99	None	Tila (0)	Tila (0)	Tila (0)	Tila (0)	Tila (0)
Tuxtla Zoque	Zoque	Bilateral	1	Tuxtla (0)	Tuxtla (0)	Tuxtla (0)	Tuxtla (0)	Tuxtla (0)	Tuxtla (0)
Yajalón	Tzeltal	Bilateral	.99	None	Yajalón (0)	Yajalón (0)	Yajalón (0)	Yajalón (0)	Yajalón (0)
Zinacantán	Tzotzil	Bilateral	.88	Zinacantán (0)	Zinacantán (0)	Ixtapa (19.64)	Zinacantán (0)	Zinacantán (0)	Zinacantán (0)

Because the dataset I compiled is small, I did not attempt to control for competing variables (for instance, distance to colonial centers, climatic zones, altitude, or differences between Franciscan and Dominican parishes) that could explain the current variation in kinship terminologies. Another potential problem with the analysis is that I did not include information on church exposure data from the 19th century. Events such as the Tzeltal Rebellion of 1712 may also have had a lasting effect on preserving Omaha-type systems among Tzeltal Groups. Thus, the above results should be interpreted as a signal of the Church's role in changing kinship systems. In the next section, I examine whether the reliance on agriculture among indigenous groups played a role in helping maintain patrilineal systems in Chiapas.

3.3. The Persistence of Patrilocality

During much of the time I did fieldwork in Linda Vista, Samuel—the pseudonym of a young man who worked with me as a translator in 2011—lived with his parents. Samuel was the eldest son of Sak' Mol ('white elder'), former *Agente* and father of six. One day, in 2015, I came across Samuel at the center of the town. He was stacking firewood in front of a house located near Chenalhó's Ayuntamiento. I asked him what had brought him there (as it is not common to see people from Linda Vista in the town's center). As Samuel explained, he was working for his future father-in-law, who had recently bought a house in the Cabecera. In other words, he was performing bride service. He told me he planned on living in his father-in-law's house for a few months until the bride's father approved the marriage. "What will happen afterward," I asked, "are you moving to the Cabecera permanently?" Samuel was not sure about what would happen, but he told me that if there was an opportunity to stay, he would. After all, the town's urban part seemed to have a broader range of employment opportunities. The teenager had no plans to attend the local high school (like many men and women in Linda Vista, he had dropped out of middle school). Given his limited Spanish knowledge, I doubted that he would quickly adapt to living in the town's urban area.

I do not know what happened to Samuel—I have not had the opportunity to ask him since then. If his father-in-law approved his marriage proposal, it is unlikely that Samuel stayed in the Cabecera, not only because it would be difficult to adapt to an urban environment but also because of newlywed couples' social expectations. In Chenalhó, the more common residential pattern is patrilocal: after marriage, a couple moves to the groom's father's house, where they may stay for few years until they build their own house and start a nuclear family. Usually, the new home is built next to or within the groom's father's household compound. This pattern, identified as *patrineolocal residence* by Nutini (1967), is widespread in Mesoamerica. When a man is seen living in his father-in-law's house, people assume that he is there temporarily to perform bride service. Eventually, after marriage is consummated,

the man is supposed to take his new wife back to his father's house or household compound. Like Samuel, many highland Maya men still perform some form of bride service today, although the practice is no longer seen as an obligation (as described in Laughlin 1963; J. F. Collier 1968). In addition to performing bride service, men may also pay the bride price (usually a cash payment to the bride's father), still a widespread practice in Chenalhó, as we discuss in the next chapter.

In rural groups, patrilocal residence may be a function of patrilineal descent—i.e., both cultural traits tend to coexist. A patrilineal system where land is the most important inheritable property creates strong incentives for a newlywed couple to settle within (or near) the husband's family household. Men try to stay close to their father's territory to maximize their chances of inheriting land. This happens because—as exemplified by Eduardo's plight for land—land inheritance in rural areas often takes place pre-mortem, following disputes between sons and father.

Among the Maya, usufruct is one of the most important criteria backing land ownership: if Samuel moves to the Cabecera, he might signal that he is unwilling to work his father's land, thus losing the right to inherit property to his younger brothers who stayed in the hamlet. In rural areas, competition for land tends to happen between male siblings, since land is preferentially transferred to males, on whom the continuation of the patriline depends. Women have little chance of winning pre-mortem disputes over inheritance because land transfers depend on their father's will. Fathers tend to prioritize men, who need to own land to find a spouse. A woman can either obtain land through marriage or wait for her parents' death and use the Mexican legal system to claim her part.

The insights above were first outlined by Collier (1968; 1975), who studied land inheritance and kinship in Zinacantán. Collier compared the relationship between land scarcity and the strength of traditional kinship structures among six Mayan groups (two from Guatemala, three from Chiapas, and one from Yucatán) and noticed a curvilinear relationship between patrilineal descent and demographic density. He concluded that land scarcity was an essential determinant of patrilineal descent. When land is abundant, there is no need for male siblings to compete to inherit it, thus weakening the patrilineal system. As land becomes scarcer, male individuals begin to cluster within the patrilineal territory to increase their chances of receiving land. In contexts of acute land scarcity, however, patrilineal descent ceases to be necessary, as people are forced to give up agriculture and seek non-rural occupations, which reduces the tension associated with competition for land inheritance. Such was the case—Collier argued—of Chamula (discussed earlier) and Amatenango, two highland Maya groups in Chiapas known for their uncommon reliance on animal husbandry, trade, and crafting. Figure 4.7 (from G. A. Collier 1975, 77) illustrates Collier's curvilinear model.
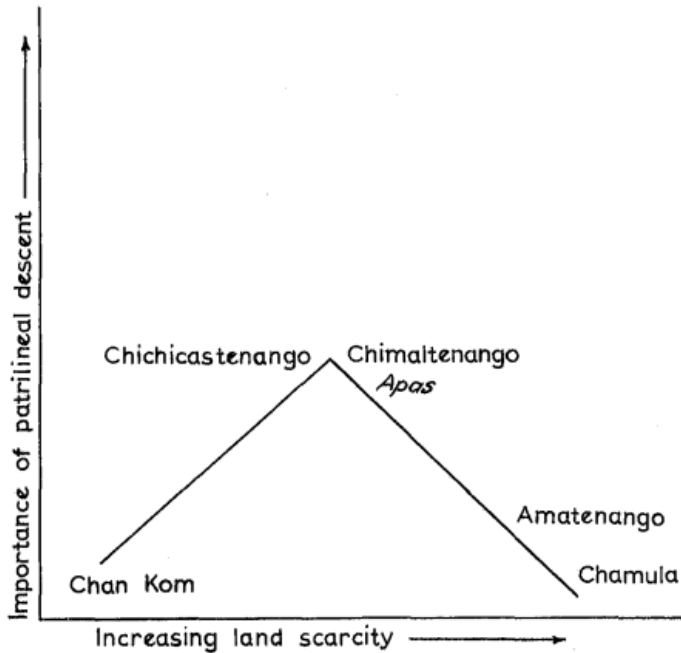
Figure 4.7: Collier's curvilineal model of patrilineal descent

Collier's model offers a dynamic explanation of why Maya descent systems change over time and vary across groups. In this view, patrilineal descent will persist insofar as the right incentives for maximizing land inheritance remain in place. As I argued earlier, patrilineal descent systems evolve to solve problems of succession in societies where land inheritance is essential. Collier's model provides interesting—and testable—predictions that relate to our earlier argument. However, the model ignores the historical factors—such as differential exposure to the church—that, as I showed earlier, may influence the persistence or decline of kinship structures. The obvious problem with Collier's model, as specified initially, is that it lacked quantitative support since not much quantitative data was available to anthropologists in the 1960s.

In trying to find a way to test Collier's predictions, I devised a way to infer post-marital residence patterns from census data. Our Chenalhó household surveys (described in previous chapters) included a section on household composition. We asked basic demographic questions to household members, including how they relate to each other. Using that data, I elaborated three criteria for inferring patri- and matrilocal residence (Table 4.3). A household is likely patrilocal when the head of household is male and one of the co-residents is his daughter-in-law (who likely moved in, perhaps temporarily, with her husband's family after marriage). When the head of household is female, a father- or mother-in-law as a co-resident is an indicator of patrilocality. Table 4.4 shows the criteria I used to classify each of the 186 households in our sample as patrilocal, matrilocal, or nuclear.

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Table 4.3: Criteria for inferring postmarital residence patterns from census data

	Patrilocal residence		Matrilocal residence	
No.	Head of household	Co-resident	Head of household	Co-resident
1	Married/widowed	Daughter-in-law	Married/widowed	Son-in-law
2	Married M	Father/mother	Married F	Father/mother
3	F	Father-in-law/mother-in-law	M	Father-in-law/mother-in-law

When I applied the criteria on Table 4.3 to the my own household census data, I found a predominance of patrilocal over matrilocal residence in Chenalhó. Table 4.4 shows the percentage of neolocal, patrilocal, and matrilocal households for our sample of Urban Tzotzil, rural Tzotzil, and Mestizo households. The ratio of patri- to matrilocal households is 4.14: while 15.6% of the households that participated in the study show a patrilocal composition, only 3.8% appear to be matrilocal. Unsurprisingly, most households in Chenalhó are nuclear (80.6%) since in patrineolocal systems a married couple is expected to eventually move out of the husband's father's home into a neolocal one.

Table 4.4: Residential patterns in Chenalhó inferred from household data (n = 186)

	Nuclear	Matrilocal	Patrilocal
Mestizos	30 (78.9%)	1 (2.6%)	7 (18.4%)
Rural Tzotzil	48 (84.2%)	2 (3.5%)	7 (12.3%)
Urban Tzotzil	72 (79.1)	4 (4.4%)	15 (16.5%)
Total	150 (80.6%)	7 (3.8 %)	29 (15.6%)

I found no clear differences between our three study groups. Against my initial expectations, Rural Tzotzil households are slightly more neolocal than urban ones. This difference might be due to the greater availability of land and the lower construction costs in rural areas, making it easier for a couple to transition from the husband's father's house into a neolocal residency. Another counterintuitive result is that residence among Mestizos also leans toward patrilocality, even though no Mestizo in our sample relies on agriculture. It should be noticed, however, that descent among Chenalhó's Mestizos is also patrilineal, with males sometimes taking priority over females in succession (the two single female Mestizo heads of household I interviewed told me that they inherited less property than their male siblings). Thus, the same incentives that drive Tzotzil toward patrilocality may also be at work for Mestizos.

Our surveys confirm that residence in Chenalhó is predominantly patrilocal (not exactly a surprising finding). Unfortunately, our dataset from Chenalhó is too small and lacks enough intergroup variation to test Collier's model.

To circumvent these problems, I repeated the same analysis using a much larger dataset: microdata from the Mexican censuses of 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2015. The data, standardized by IMPUMS International,[67] comprises 2,669,085 individuals (in 559,473 households) from 118 municipalities in Chiapas. I consolidated the individual respondent data into households and use family composition to classify households as either neolocal, patrilocal, or matrilocal (following the criteria outlined in Table 4.3). With the resulting household dataset, I calculated the percentage of patrilocal and matrilocal households in Chiapas' 118 municipalities.

As a measure of patrilocality, I will use the ratio of patrilocal to matrilocal households in a municipality (in short, *patrilocal:matrilocal*). To my knowledge, this measure has not been used in studies of kinship.

A preliminary examination of patrilocal:matrilocal in our dataset shows that the measure is reliable for detecting the strength of patrilineal organizations: indigenous municipalities largely outranked Mestizo ones. Chanal—a highland Tzeltal town—has the highest patrilocal:matrilocal ratio: 12.62 (i.e., in Chanal there are 12.62 patrilocal households for every matrilocal one). This finding matches ethnographic observations made in 1960s by University of Chicago researchers who described Chanal as the most conservative Tzeltal town, preserving all social features of the (so-called) traditional Tzeltal patrilineal descent system.[68] Conversely, Tuxtla Gutiérrez—Chiapas' Mestizo capital and its most urbanized area— has a patrilocal:matrilocal ratio of 1.08. A ratio near 1 indicates an absence of gender-based post-marital residential patterns.

To test Collier's hypothesis, I compiled demographic, social, economic, and land tenure variables[69] that could be determinants of patrilocality for Chiapas' 118 municipalities. I tested the effect

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[67] IPUMS International.

[68] The features listed by Chicago scholars include: linear features in kinship terminology, cross-cousin terms, patrilineally inherited name-groups, name-group exogamy, name-group responsibility for murder vengeance, tendency for men's work groups to be composed of patrilineally related males, dominant pattern of patrilineal inheritance of house sitios, and dominant pattern of patrilineal transmission of land holdings. See volume I of University of Chicago (1959), fig. 43b.

[69] A) Demographic variables: total population, demographic density, birth rates, mortality rates, mean household size, and mean population size of localities (i.e., communities). B) Economic variables: GINI index pof social inequality and mean income. C) Social variables: type of kinship terminology (Omaha, Transition, or

of those variables using stepwise regression analysis with the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) to select the best fit models for explaining patrilocal:matrilocal.

First, we should notice that demographic density (the variable chosen by Collier as the main and determinant of patrilineal descent) is not a good predictor of patrilocality. We find no clear correlation between demographic density and patrilocal:matrilocal ($r = -0.156$, $p = 0.091$). Demographic density is also uncorrelated with the incidence of land conflict[70] in Chiapas' municipalities ($r = 0.072$, $p = 0.436$). An examination of scatterplots shows no indication of a curvilinear relationship between both variables. Thus, there is no empirical support for Collier's model, as depicted earlier.

Nevertheless, Collier's underlying intuition—that patrilineal descent is associated with greater dependence on land—is well supported by the data. The best predictor of patrilocal:matrilocal was the percentage of a muncipality's population working with agriculture (*% rural work*). Table 4.5 shows the results of OLS models with patrilocal:matrilocal as the dependent variable. The table starts with the model selected through stepwise regression (Model 1) and shows that the effect *% rural work* remains robust as other variables are removed in effect size order (models 2-6).

Since average income by municipality (*log income*) is negatively correlated with *% rural work* ($r = -0.9$), one could raise the question of whether it is poverty—rather than dependence on agriculture— that determines patrilocality. A well-established body of research has shown that low socioeconomic status groups in Mexico (as in elsewhere) tend to have larger families and are more likely to inhabit extended family households. Since the family is the basic unit of social solidarity, increases in family size may be seen as adaptations to adverse conditions (Lomnitz and Pérez-Lizaur 1984). Strict gender roles may also be an adaptation to poverty, leading to patrilocal residence patterns. The hypothesis that poverty is a determinant of patrilocality can be ruled out statistically. When we include *log income* and *% rural work* in the same model, *log income* loses significance—see Model 1 (Table 4.5). Also, models 1-4 include a variable for *family size* (the average number of household members related to the household head by municipality), which allows controls for the effect of extended families on patrilocality.

Bilateral), percentage of speakers of indigenous languages, percentage of monolingual Spanish speakers, and percentage of individuals affiliated with religious groups (Catholics, Protestants, non-affiliated). D) Territorial variables: total municipal area (in hectares), land conflict (the percentage of people living in communities with conflicts over land), land fragmentation (municipal area divided by number of plots), percentage of municipal area of land-tenure systems (*ejido*, *comunidad*, *parcelas*, *asentamiento*, *comunal*, and *urbana*). The data were compiled from a variety of governmental sources.

[70] Measured as the percentage of a town's population living in a community with ongoing conflict over land as of 2010.

Table 4.5: Correlates of patrilocality in 118 municipalities of Chiapas

	OLS Models (patrilocal:matrilocal)				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
% Rural work	4.296 (1.109)***	4.795 (0.681)***	4.680 (0.697)***	4.768 (0.719)***	6.798 (0.556)***
Omaha (dummy)	1.722 (0.405)***	1.762 (0.396)***	1.908 (0.403)***	1.828 (0.414)***	2.104 (0.436)***
Family size	1.109 (0.289)***	1.084 (0.258)***	1.037 (0.264)***	1.113 (0.271)***	-
Farmworkers/ha	0.000 (0.0001)**	0.0005 (0.0001)***	0.0003 (0.0001)**	-	-
Fragmentation	-0.023 (0.009)*	-0.026 (0.009)*	-	-	-
Fertility rate	-1.136 (0.599)	-	-	-	-
Log income	-0.453 (0.367)	-	-	-	-
Intercept	2.039 (3.626)	-4.188 (0.976)***	-4.207 (1.001)***	-4.322 (1.032)***	-0.287 (0.332)
R2	0.746	0.739	0.725	0.707	0.667
AIC	374.767	376.309	381.329	387.784	402.013

As Table 4.5 shows, land fragmentation also appears as a clear factor driving patrilocality. There are several ways to measure land fragmentation. Because I used publicly available data, I had to use a less than perfect measure: I divided the number of plots (private or communal) by total area of each municipality[71] (lower values indicate higher parcelization). This finding offers additional support to Collier's hypothesis, as greater fragmentation may drive competition for land, which incentivizes males to stay within patrilineal territory. Another variable associated with patrilocality is the ratio of farmworkers to hectares of arable lands (*farmworkers/ha*)—a measure of land scarcity that only considers populations that depend on land. Together, these three variables *(% rural work*, *farmworkers/hectare*, and *fragmentation*) suggest that patrilocality is stronger where people depend on land and where land is scarce to farmers.

Interestingly, the relationship between *patrilocal:matrilocal* and *% rural work* is not linear. As dependence on agriculture increases, rates of patrilocality increase forming an L-shaped curve. I depict this phenomenon in Figure 4.8 (to make the chart more intelligible, I used a logarithmic scale for *patrilocal:matrilocal*, or y-axis). One possible explanation for that phenomenon is that, In Maya groups with greater dependence on agriculture, patrilocality becomes normative. In other words, residence patterns shift from <u>descriptive</u> (what people do) to <u>injunctive</u> norms (what people ought to do).

Earlier in this chapter, I described cousin marriage in Chenalhó as a 'convenience' or a strategy for minimizing land fragmentation. Among Tzotzil people in Chenalhó, to my knowledge, there are no injunctive social norms that prescribe patrilocality, although most couples move to the groom's father's house after marriage. Patrilocality is an adaptation to facilitate land transfers within the patriline. We might speculate that in other municipalities—such as Chanal, which has the highest patrilocality rates— these marriage arrangements may follow injunctive norms, that is, patrilocality is prescribed to all marriages, regardless of the existence of conflicts over succession.

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[71] A better measure of fragmentation should account for the number of plots owned per family (more plots = more fragmentation) and the distance between each plot. See King and Burton (1982) for discussion.
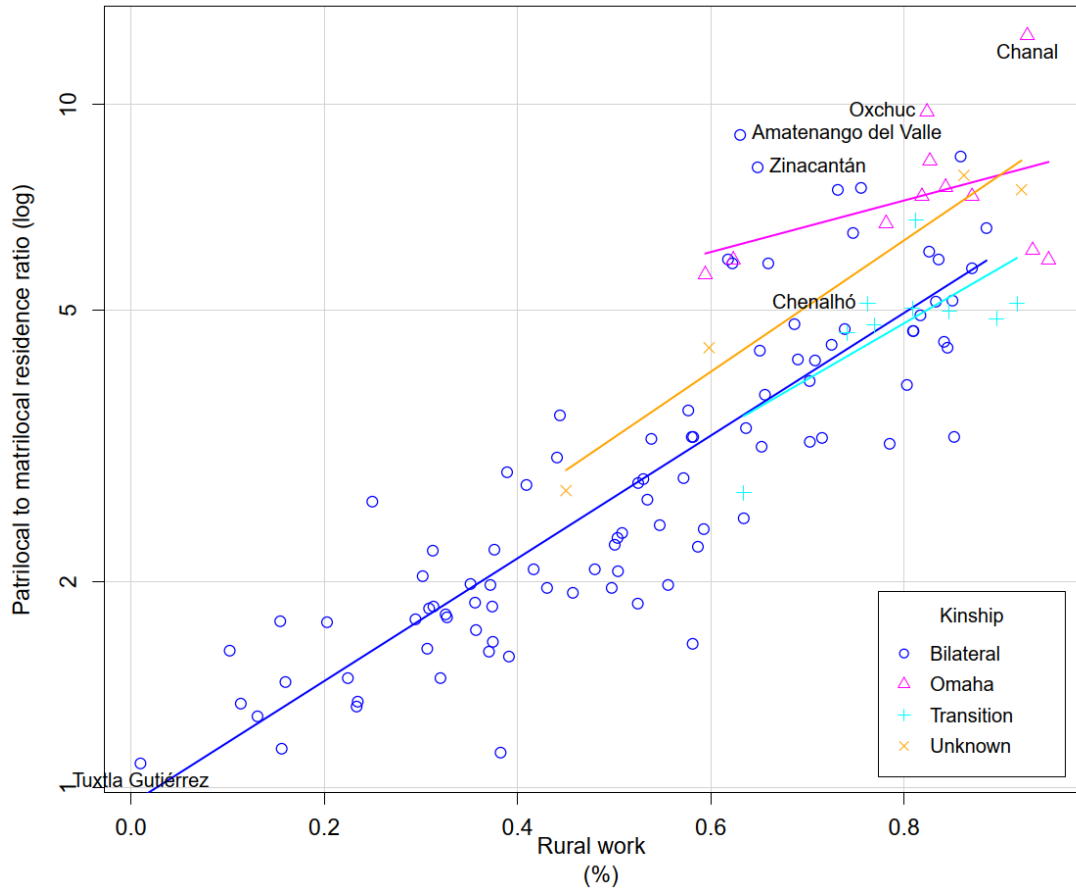
Figure 4.8: Correlation between rural work and patrilocality in 118 Chiapas towns

It is impossible to detect the existence of injunctive norms of patrilocal residence in the 118 municipalities in my data. Still, I created dummy variables to classify each municipality according to the type of kinship terminology used. I used the same tripartite classification employed earlier (bilateral, Omaha, and transition). As Figure 4.8 shows, municipalities with Omaha-type terminologies (when documented by anthropologists) tend to have higher rates of patrilocal residence. The Omaha-type dummy variable was a clear predictor of patrilocality in all six regression models in Table 4.5.

Groups with Omaha-type terminologies may be more prone to develop injunctive norms of patrilocal residence, cross-cousin marriage, and lineage exogamy. As I discussed earlier, kinship terminologies that have terms for cross-relatives may reinforce marriage and residence patterns, as they mark relatives by lineage membership. An individual brought up speaking Tzotzil or Tzeltal as his or her primary language (in areas where kinship terminologies obey an Omaha-type pattern) learns to distinguish between lineal and non-lineal kin intuitively. As a result, injunctive norms of marriage and patrilocal residence are more likely to emerge in these areas.

Additional evidence that injunctive norms are associated with high patrilocality rates comes from the municipality of Maravilla Tenejapa, located in a warm lowland area near the border with Guatemala. Most of its population descends from Tzeltal speakers from the highlands who have been settling in that region since the 1970s. The town has a ratio of patrilocal-to-matrilocal ratio that resembles that of Tenejapa (7.34 and 7.52), suggesting post-marital residence patterns have remained stable in this population after they migrated to a different ecological zone with less land scarcity. To be clear, there is no absolute relationship between languages, kinship terminologies, and injunctive norms of residence. Zinacantán, which, as I remarked earlier, has shifted to a bilateral terminology, still has a high patrilocal-to-matrilocal ratio (8.09). Some areas formerly populated by Mam and Coxoh speakers[72] have high patrilocality rates, even though they are occupied mostly by Spanish-speakers today.

To summarize, I showed patrilocality is driven predominantly by dependence on agriculture, land scarcity, and fragmentation. Because patrilocality can be used an index of patrilineality, is it safe to assume that lineal forms of organization are stronger in areas with a higher patrilocal-to-matrilocal ratio. Thus, patrilineal organizations emerge and persist as adaptations to problems that arise in rural groups. Maya groups that have remained dependent on agriculture were more likely to preserve traditional kinship, marriage, and inheritance systems. Our data show that as dependence on land increases, patrilocality increases non-linearly, likely because groups with speakers of Maya languages (with Omaha terminologies) develop injunctive patrilocal residence norms. For these Maya groups, patrilocality ceases to be a strategy for attaining land or a form of adaptation to land scarcity. Instead, patrilocal residence becomes normative and is enforced under any circumstance. The findings give partial support to Collier's patrilineal descent systems model—though I showed that the relationship between land and descent systems does not resemble a U-shaped curve.

4. Conclusion

The study of kinship systems has been neglected in anthropology over the past decades. In this chapter, I sought to show that the topic still has relevance today. Building on recent comparative studies from economists, I drew a nexus between kinship, inheritance, and land tenure systems in Chenalhó.

I found that the rural and urban Tzotzil communities here studied using different kinship terminologies. I argued these differences reflect an ongoing process of erasure in which the traditional lineal system is being replaced with a bilateral one. I identified the origins of this process in the arrival of the Catholic missions in the early colonial period. I showed data suggesting that Chiapas indigenous

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[72] La Independencia, La Trinitaria, El Porvenir, Bejucal de Ocampo.

groups that were more distant from and less affected by missionization are more likely to have preserved their lineal kinship systems. However, these data are still preliminary, and more research needs to be done on the subject for us to draw firmer conclusions.

The final part of the chapter delved into the role that kinship systems play in regulating land inheritance and potentially preventing fragmentation. I used census microdata to identify residence patterns and investigated the correlates of patrilocality. Patrilocal residence was predominantly associated with dependence on rural work and the presence of Omaha kinship systems. The data showed that kinship and agriculture are inextricably linked, likely because patrilocal residence and patrilineages emerge in response to conflicts over land succession. Again, further studies need to be done with larger datasets to confirm those findings.

CHAPTER 5. THE CARGO MATCHING GAME

Cargo systems are tax systems. It is not with money, but by performing communal service that Maya people pay their dues to their communities. Like most tax systems, cargo systems distribute collective burdens unequally. There are only so many cargos a community can split between its members, and only a small group of people get to receive the most prestigious and expensive offices.

Most Tzotzil and Tzeltal-Maya communities lack stable (i.e., written) legislation determining who gets to serve which cargos, when, and why. Because of the lack of a stable legislative framework, the decision of how to nominate cargoholders is usually made in the 'free-for-all' assemblies described in Chapter 3; every year or so, commoners gather to nominate and vote for the next term's officers.

These communal assemblies are only loosely structured, being organized and moderated by transient officials with no executive power. Cargo nominations can be a complicated, protracted process that can last a whole day. The stakes can be high during these events. A nomination to a prestigious cargo might open doors to a lucrative career in politics; a nomination to an expensive cargo may sentence one to a lifetime in debt. Because community regulations are flexible and contestable, every collective decision made during assemblies can be subject to bargaining. Communities must allocate taxes with no written tax code, bureaucrats, or technocrats occupying positions of authority. Such is the problem faced by hundreds of Maya communities on a seasonal basis.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, cargo systems emerged as a replacement for traditional Maya kinship and inheritance systems. The erasure of descent-based systems left Maya communities with an institutional void, lacking clear norms for guiding how communal burdens, social status, and common goods should be distributed. I frame the cargo system as a self-organizing matching market, a horizontal, loosely institutionalized market for matching commoners to communal offices. I argue that cargo systems spread among Mexican indigenous groups because they provided a solution to a fair-division problem created by the colonial erasure of Maya kinship systems: *who gets to receive common burdens, when, and why*? To approach Chenalhó's cargo system, I examine how communities make decisions regarding the allocation of common burdens. I focus specifically on the role that notions of fair distribution play in shaping those decisions, comparing differences between how rural and urban communities distribute their offices.

In Section 1 ('Giving Burdens'), I present an ethnographic description of a communal assembly in which Linda Vista members nominate their *Agente Municipal* (community headman). My goal is to situate the reader in one of the many communal assemblies I attended, introducing some of the recurrent decision-making dilemmas that people in Chenalhó face. In Section 2 ('Rethinking Cargos'), I discuss

how cargo systems can be framed as self-organizing matching markets and how such theoretical reorientation can improve our understanding of decision-making in non-hierarchical groups. In Section 3 ('Conceptual Organization'), I use formal methods to compare how people in rural and Urban Tzotzil communities categorize and rank cargos. In Section 4 ('Decision-making: Collective and Individual'), I use an experimental allocation game to model collective and individual decision-making regarding cargo allocation. I show that while equity norms influence collective decisions, individual preferences for cargos can be explained by a rational-choice framework in which people seek to maximize spending and prestige gains at a minimum effort.

1. Giving Burdens

In October of 2014 I attended my first communal assembly in Linda Vista. By then, I had already lived in Chenalhó for over a year. People knew who I was in the community as I had worked there for two field seasons. Still, I needed to obtain formal permission to attend assemblies in the coming year.

People can debate sensitive political issues during these meetings. It would not be appropriate to just show up without formal permission. I wanted to understand whether experimental game results from earlier chapters had anything to do with real-life decisions made during these communal assemblies. I had spent the previous week doing household surveys with my research assistant, Mariano Ruiz, who helped me obtain a temporary permit from the community's Agente (headman). Whether the community would allow me and Mariano to stay any longer had yet to be decided.

The communal assembly took place on a Friday afternoon and lasted from 12 to 7 PM. As usual, people gathered in the primary school's conference room. Among the topics of discussion for that day were the visit of Mexican government officials, the election of the new Agente, and the disappearance of the community's *actas* (meeting proceedings, as described in Chapter 3.2). Dawn broke early that day. It was another cold and foggy day—typical for late October. Many of the conference room's glass windows were broken. There was no clear separation between the inside and outside of the building. Children would often stick their heads inside to hear what adults discussed. Stray dogs would walk in and out of the room, sniffing people's feet while being virtually ignored. Halfway through the meeting, the fog made its way into the building, creating a dreamlike atmosphere. It was hard to see anything past thirty feet— except for the occasional flashes of light caused by the *pasados* lighting their cigarettes.

I counted about seventy heads in the room. In Linda Vista, women are not allowed to attend communal assemblies (except on rare, special occasions; see Chapter 3.2.1). As usual, the commoners (*viniketik ta koman*, 'men in common') sat on wooden benches, aligned in rows, facing current officers (cargoholders). The cargoholders sat behind a table; collectively, they were addressed as the *mesa* (table).

The *Agente* (community headman) sat in the middle of the *mesa*. To his right sat the *Escribano* (scribe), Maestro Enrique, who would relentlessly draft *actas* with his typewriter each time the community voted. Next to him sat the three *Patronatos de Obra* (construction board trustees) in order of importance. To the Agente's left sat the three *Comités de Educación* (school committee members) and the two *Auxiliares* (police officers).

The Auxiliares were not allowed to sit during the meeting. They had work to do. Every hour or so, an old man who goes by the moniker Mol Pale ('elder priest') would break into the conference room and drunkenly scream incomprehensible gibberish. Whenever that happened, the Agente would ask the Auxiliares to drag the man out of the room. The commoners would then cheer and laugh, shouting 'heehaw' and stomping their feet, making the school's delicate glass windows tremble.

Mol Pale's family—I would later learn—had been expelled from the nearby hamlet of Beumpale (from which his nickname derives). Mol Pale was the father of Bis Pik', a young man known for his impulsive behavior and crass sense of humor. At the young age of 33, Bis Pik' could boast that he was about to 'acquire' his third wife from Tenejapa, a neighboring Tzeltal town and exotic, distant land in the eyes of Linda Vista's commoners.

To gain acceptance in Linda Vista, Mol Pale and Bis Pik' gave what they could: entertainment. One day I saw Bis Pik' spend twice an average monthly income on canned beer, an expensive delicacy for local standards. He would offer beer to anyone who walked across Linda Vista, including the anthropologist. Bis Pik' was not serving any cargo and there was no formal pretext for being generous. As usual, people said he gave gifts 'from the goodness of his heart.' Offering drinks was crucial for Bis Pik' to build alliances in his new community. No wonder Mol Pale was drunk that afternoon. People seemed entertained by his erratic appearances. As some said, he was 'giving a show' (in Tzotzil, *ta xak' yelov*, lit. 'to give one's appearance').

People discuss serious politics in communal assemblies. But another aspect of these events—which I came to appreciate as I attended more and more of them—is that they are a venue for men's entertainment. Assemblies are spaces where men can let themselves loose, allowing themselves to drink a bit more than usual and be more playful, telling childish jokes and saying obscenities that could not be uttered near women and children. As I continued to attend assemblies for over a year, it became clear that these men were having a great time. This seemed true even when the community, a year later, had to make the difficult decision to disaffiliate families that refused to comply with its one-party norm (Chapter 3.2). The more relaxed attitude in Linda Vista's meetings may have to do with the stricter separation between women's and men's spaces. Compared to Linda Vista, the meetings in the Cabecera—which women can attend—seemed dull and bureaucratic. Perhaps men in the Cabecera were concerned about

what women could think about them. Perhaps they were more prone to restrain themselves when in the presence of women.

The other venue for men's entertainment in Linda Vista is the basketball court. Elderly men, however, seldom appear there. It is only during communal assemblies that one can experience the full spectrum of social hierarchy. Because assemblies have good attendance, they present an excellent opportunity for men to display their character in public. This leads some men to engage in self-presentation—the careful and self-conscious performance of their public *persona*. In the assemblies, men can accentuate the character traits that mark them as unique individuals.

Thus, Mol Pale, who is usually good-humored and joyful, becomes clownish and erratic. Mol Gutiérrez—a middle-aged man known for his extraordinary intelligence and wisdom—sits the entire time looking at the floor; with his eyes closed, he takes deep breaths and sometimes scratches his head, as if he was trying to grasp the precise meaning of every word uttered and counter every argument made. When Mol Gutiérrez asks for permission to speak, commoners know that a highly controversial but carefully crafted opinion is on the way. Teenagers and men in their early twenties always sit in the back of the room, to the left of the *Agente*. These young, low-status men often seem alien to everything that happens. They show little interest in participating in the ongoing debates. They behave childishly and never seem to take anything seriously, which often irritates older men. For example, to annoy the thirty-year-olds sitting in front of them (the anthropologist included) these young men would sometimes throw pieces of paper at the back of their heads. I knew these people and I knew that this was not their typical behavior. I had interviewed and spent time with many of them. Their overly playful attitude during communal assemblies was mere exaggeration; an over-presentation of character exacerbated by the social hierarchies that are in full display during these meetings.

One man's head was particularly targeted by the flying pieces of paper thrown from the back of the room. His name was Lorenzo 'Fox.' He was nicknamed after the former Mexican president Vicente Fox. Lorenzo was, indeed, presidential. At the age of 32, he was by far the most circumspect among the younger men in the community. He almost never smiled, and had trouble playing along with the 20-year-olds sitting behind him. Fox was always concerned about something—either the future of his three children or the community. He could not handle small talk. Back then, Fox was the only man I knew in Linda Vista who had lived in the United States. People praised his experience abroad, and often cited his knowledge of the *Norte* (as of 2019, he is back in the United States, along with others). During communal assemblies, Fox's steadiness of character would become more evident as he presented an exaggerated version of himself. That afternoon, Fox sat in the row behind me. I turned back and, looking at his perfectly combed hair covered by small pieces of paper, I thought he could be a good fit for taking the

office of Agente. But perhaps he was still too young for that. During the previous week, Mariano and I had visited dozens of households, asking people to play an experimental game where they had to 'vote' on how to allocate offices between community members. By a large margin, Fox was the participant who received the most votes for Agente in the game. Would Linda Vista nominate him for Agente? It would be interesting to see if game results would reflect real decisions.

1.1. A Game with Winners and Losers

In many ways, community meetings in Linda Vista felt like a sports match. But unlike basketball, in assemblies it is impossible to tell the audience apart from the players. Every participant is both a spectator and a player in the collective decision-making game. Not only are assemblies highly entertaining, but they also produce 'winners' and 'losers.' I learned about this the hard way. That afternoon, I became one of the 'losers' of the day.

Every time a community gathers, new expenses are created. Those expenses need to be taken by someone. Food and drink are essential for an event that can last a whole day. That day, the community had enough food for everyone. They had kept several *costales* of *galletas* (large sacks filled with cookies) that a government contractor donated for *Sk'in Me'el* (Mother's Day fiesta). However, there was nothing to drink, and someone would have to pay for that. Early in the meeting, the community decided to pass that burden to me. With the help of the Auxiliares, I ordered three boxes of sodas—mostly Coke,[73] at their request. The Auxiliares placed the soda boxes in the middle of the conference room, where they stood until the Agente called a break three hours into the meeting. Before the break, the community voted to allow me to do my research, but with one condition: I would have to give a donation to fix the conference room's broken glass windows. It was a modest sum of money. Although I accepted their request with no hesitation, I worried that this could become a routine. Would I have to buy drinks and give donations in every communal assembly? Were these people trying to take advantage of me? Did they think I was rich? I could not afford to lose any more money.

My worries, it turns out, were unjustified. The commoners were just following local norms of hospitality, according to which a person who arrives at a community has to offer something to gain prestige and acceptance (Chapter 2.2.1). After that meeting, I continued to visit Linda Vista for well over a year. Never again was I asked for any contributions. In another assembly, the community decided that the three Patronatos de Obra would have to share the soda expenses to compensate for their incompetence

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[73] In the 1980s, Coke became a substitute for *pox* since both drinks share some similar properties—above all, their 'warmth' and healing properties.

(they had failed to petition contractors for construction funds). In yet another, commoners voted to pass the tab to *cacique* Andres who had missed previous meetings. Still in another meeting, commoners asked the contractors who were interested in building the new school building to pay for the Coke (Chapter 7.1). Once there was an assembly where no one purchased any drinks. That was the shortest event I attended during fieldwork.

How do people decide who pays for food and drinks? Interestingly, there are no clearly established rules on how these expenses should be allocated. Everything is always subject to bargaining. Commoners are never sure if there will be enough food and drinks when they come to these assemblies. This is a problem that emerges spontaneously. It is difficult to explain how these things even come up. When there is a potential sponsor for food and drinks visiting the community—say, a newcomer, a wealthy person, or an anthropologist—commoners seize the opportunity to request a donation. They do so without having any previous expectations that such a request could happen. These burdens are always distributed 'fairly'—that is, in a way that pleases most commoners and minimizes the chance of future conflicts.

Fairness is a consensual narrative that emerges from bargaining. It is a folk heuristic for understanding and explaining decision-making. For the commoners, it would be unfair to repeatedly assign a burden to a single person. Thus, they rotate food and drink expenses regularly. Together, they keep an oral ledger that contains information on how much each person has contributed to the collective welfare of the community. This rotation of burdens is done in the absence of any explicitly acknowledged institution or norm. I was never asked to pay for Coke again during my stay. Linda Vista's commoners would never give the same burden to a single person over and over; that would go against their moral intuitions of what is 'fair.'

When I say that communal assemblies are like a game, I mean it in a literal sense. I am not using game theory as a metaphor. To be clear, people think of assemblies as games. The same expectations that men must attend to in a basketball match also apply for communal assemblies. People come these events with the expectation that 1) there will be entertainment, 2) participants will put on a performance, and 3) some will win, some will lose.

1.2. The SEDESOL Officials

I was not the only 'loser' that day. There were several others. Two Mexican government officials—a young woman and a man—who worked for the SEDESOL[74] visited Linda Vista that

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[74] Secretaría de Desarrollo Social, now known as Secretaría de Bienestar (Secretariat of Welfare).

afternoon. They seemed amused with the misty weather and muddy soil. They took pictures of the mountainous landscape as if they were on an expedition through a wild, idyllic, unexplored—and inexistent—Mexican countryside.

The officials had come to introduce the program *Comedores Comunitarios* (communal restaurants). I had already seen that program in action in another community (Ojo de Agua, near the Cabecera). Essentially, the government sends a truck full of canned food, milk bottles, and bags of beans, wheat, and corn flour. The food is packaged by big conglomerates with ties to the government (such as MASECA and La Costeña). The government distributes that food to poor rural communities. For a community to receive food, though, it must accept the program's main condition. The community must set up a restaurant open for all. The community names some officers (mostly women) to run the restaurant and make meals twice a day for every community member who is willing to pay a small fee. The government fixes the price of every meal. The restaurant is supposed to run at a maintenance cost.

Javier—the Agente—invited the SEDESOL officials into the conference room after commoners finished discussing the issue of the *actas*. The way Javier introduced the officers added to the surreal atmosphere of the event:

"These are officials from Mexico… as you know, the Mexican government is responsible for building roads, setting up electricity cables, and sending money for construction."

Linda Vista is anything but an isolated community. At that moment, however, I realized how little contact some of these men had with the Mexican government (or perhaps with any outside Spanish speaker). The Agente asked the SEDESOL officials to explain the program to the community. The officials did not know Tzotzil, of course, so they spoke Spanish. Maestro Enrique—the scribe—translated everything that they said to Tzotzil in real time.

After the officials were done with explaining, the commoners began to debate whether it was a good idea to accept the program. They began by questioning the logistics of the program. How often would they receive food? How much food would they receive?

The officers responded that food would arrive every two months, depending on how the program goes. This was followed by nods and facial expressions of disappointment. No one seemed to believe what they saw as more promises. Some men showed skepticism about the program: what was the point of this? Were officials trying to conceal their true interests? Did the government expect the community to give something back? Why in the world would anyone give food for free to a small community of *campesinos*?

The SEDESOL officials stated that there were no hidden interests behind the program. The program was designed to improve nutritional standards in the community. That was all. Their job as

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government workers was to connect the community to the resources that the government made available to anyone interested. One man laughed and said, "lack of food is not a problem here, we have enough to eat… what we need is a new school building, will they give us any money for that?"

Suddenly, the discussion shifted to Tzotzil. Maestro Enrique could no longer keep up with translating everything, so he gave up. The SEDESOL officials watched everything befuddled. Alvaro, a man in his 30s, raised his hand and asked for permission to speak. He said that it would be inappropriate for women to cook food for any man other than their husband. Other men agreed. Some doubled down, saying that women were supposed to stay at home, cooking for their families—not working for some communal restaurant. The program did not make much sense for the local reality. I could see how, in a community where all marriages are sanctioned by the payment of bride price and bride service, men would be unhappy with such an arrangement. If a man 'buys' a wife (in their words), who he sees as a form of 'investment' (again, their choice of words), why would he let his wife produce food for free for an unprofitable restaurant?

Mol Gutierrez asked for permission to speak. Silence followed. He stood up and said:

"Mol *Agente*, Comités, Patronatos [addressing commoners formally] … There is only one thing I want to ask. Do the *estimados* Mr. and Ms. Official have anything to give us right now? I'm not asking for anything. I don't want anything for myself. I just want to let them give something if they want, something from the goodness of their hearts. It could be anything, really. Whatever they want to give."

Everyone turned to the SEDESOL officials. They eagerly waited for an answer. It was over three hours into the meeting. The commoners were getting hungry. I must admit I was hungry too. I could not stop thinking about the Coke and the cookies that awaited us during the break.

Maestro Enrique translated Mol Gutierrez's question into Spanish. The officials now looked perplexed. They struggled to explain that they had nothing to give to the community at that moment. Once—and if—the program received approval from the government's upper echelons, the first food truck would arrive in two months. The officials were still unsure about how much food would be sent and whether things would work out exactly the way they planned.

While I lauded the officials' honesty about the limitations of the program, the commoners seemed disappointed. They began to exchange looks of skepticism, as if they were saying "it's just more of that old talk." Maestro Enrique pointed at the door and asked the SEDESOL officials to leave: "pueden retirarse, por favor" ('you may now leave, please'). The *Maestro* then looked at me and, making the 'eating' gesture (waving his fingers at his mouth), declared:

"Hay que darnos un dulce." ("You've got to give us some candy.")

That was how the SEDESOL officials became the next losers of the day.

1.3. Candy, Coke, and Cookies

A communal assembly produces two kinds of losers. The first are those who lose money but manage to gain acceptance—as I fortunately did. The other kind of losers are people who keep their money but end up being sanctioned (read: expelled)—like the SEDESOL officials. Those who manage to stay receive prestige, which helps them in the long run. After the Agente called for a break, every man in the conference room lined up to shake hands with me and effusively show gratitude for the Cokes I bought. There, at that very moment, the commoners produced prestige, and I received it.

Prestige, as I discussed in Chapter 3, is a form of non-transferable capital. When strangers (government officials, anthropologists) arrive in a community, they have none of that capital. There is no previously shared history between the newcomers and the commoners. The commoners expect the stranger to signal a willingness to obtain prestige. However, to get prestige, one must let go of something. In Tzotzil, the metaphor used to express acts of altruism is to "give food" (ʔak' ve'lil), which was translated into Spanish by Maestro Enrique as *dar dulce*, "to give candy." To gain the right to stay in a community, a newcomer must give some 'candy.'

A person can improve their reputation by showing competence in something (say, being a skilled musician). However, competence-based prestige is not what grants someone permission to stay in a Tzotzil community. When deciding whom to give prestige to, people search for signs of altruism that are costly and hard to fake. Obviously, the SEDESOL officials were not interested in gaining long-term acceptance in Linda Vista. They played but a transient role; they had only come to introduce a new government program and planned on leaving shortly afterward. The community and the national bureaucracy operated under a different set of expectations. The commoners noticed that the SEDESOL officials' were not willing to commit to staying for the long-term. Since the officials showed no interest in giving 'candy,' the community had no choice but to dismiss them.

How does the system of requesting 'candy' in exchange for prestige and the right to stay work for the commoners themselves? Every community member is expected to give something sporadically to gain—or maintain—their right to belong in the group. They do so by serving cargos. Cargos fall into the same category as candy, Coke, and cookies.

I was about to learn more about cargos after commoners returned from the break. The last *punto* (topic) to be discussed that day was the election of the new Agente. Someone would be named for the highest office in the community. Strangely, that person would end up becoming the greatest 'loser' of the day.

1.4. No Sense of Honor

I had high expectations before watching the election of the Agente. I believed most commoners would consider it an 'honor' to be elected to such a 'high' office. This point was made many years ago by Bricker (1966), who found parallels between the contemporary notion of 'cargo,' or *la carga* (the load, the burden), and some ancient Maya stelae that portray people carrying heavy loads. Perhaps the ancient Maya used heavy loads as a metaphor for talking about the act of taking sacred responsibilities. Bricker concluded that a sense of collective responsibility for the commons had existed for a long time among Maya communities. This sense of shared responsibility could explain why cargo burdens are assigned to individuals rather than shared between community members.

When the Agente announced that it was time to elect his *k'exol* (substitute), about ten men stood up and left the room. I heard a man say he had to urinate (the polite way to say this in Tzotzil is *ta jnak' jba*, literally 'I will hide'). I could sense increasing tension in the air. Most men became silent and avoided eye contact with others, staring blankly at the walls or the floor. Could they just be tired? By then, it was already six hours into the meeting. Intriguingly, however, the much older *pasados*, sitting in the front of the room, seemed anything but fatigued. They appeared to be enjoying the moment, squinting their eyes and scanning the room for potential nominees.

It was foggy inside. It became difficult for the pasados to identify those sitting in the back of the conference room. Some of the men who left the room to go to the bathroom never came back. Some stood by the door, others watched everything from the outside. Were these men trying to hide? Through the broken glass windows, they whispered and exchanged information about what was going on inside.

A pasado asked for permission to speak. He nominated a man in his 40s named Lucio. I did not know Lucio back then. For reasons unknown to me, he was not present at the meeting, so I paid close attention to what others said about him. The commoners, one by one, started to lash out at the nominee:

"I know Lucio… he is good for nothing [*mu k'u xtun*, 'serves no purpose'] … when you need him, he is never available to help. I went to his house to ask for a favor, but he didn't try to help me. Instead, he tried to convince me to buy his merchandise."

Another one spoke:

"Yes, that's right. When I served as Comité, Lucio would come to my house, asking for favors all the time. I did my part, then we gave Lucio himself [the cargo of] Comité. I sought him at his home, but he wasn't there. I sought him again, nothing. Third time, nothing. Then one day I found him hanging out with the boys at the *kiosko*. I asked him why I couldn't find him anywhere. He played innocent [*la smak' sat*, lit. 'he closed his eyes']."

This went on for a while. No one appeared to have anything positive to say about Lucio. I was struck by the brutal honesty with which these men expressed their mutual grievances in front of the entire community. How did they manage to live together while openly expressing contempt for their fellow commoners?

What would happen if Lucio heard about what others said about him during the meeting? Would he not want to defend his name? Would he not worry about having his reputation tarnished like that? The pasado who nominated Lucio tried to support his nominee, saying Lucio was a good speaker and a savvy negotiator (the typical competence traits expected from local leaders). However, the pasado failed to shield his nominee from the main criticism that others directed at him: Lucio was unreliable, deceptive, and self-interested. Although he was competent, he lacked a genuine propensity for altruism.

Mol Ok'il ('Elder Coyote') asked for permission to speak. I knew Mol Ok'il. He was a respected pasado in Linda Vista. I had been to his house and recorded his stories. He had served important cargos such as Regidor *municipal*. He also briefly served as Presidente, following a complicated chain of events triggered by the Acteal conflict of 1997. But like some other elders, he was aloof and somewhat indifferent to what happened in the community (an attitude which younger men often interpret as a form of arrogance, as I discuss later). Stuttering and seemingly bewildered, Mol Ok'il proposed a nomination:

"Well, there is this man… I don't remember his name... Humberto, maybe? Or maybe Tono? Who knows? I think the boys call him 'Fox' or something. He would be a good Agente. Is he here?"

Others helped Mol Ok'il: "yes, his name is Lorenzo, he's right there" (pointing to Fox, who was sitting behind me).

"This is it,"—I thought, "this is Fox's opportunity to show how great of a leader he is. Let us watch him embrace this nomination and show to the community what a responsible leader looks like."

Fox's response, however, was the opposite of what I expected. He stood up and raised his head, moving his shoulders back. With his entire body flexed, hands in his pockets and, as usual, without gesticulating, Fox unleashed a rapid stream of consciousness, angrily accusing others of conspiring to take advantage of him. I did the best I could to write down what he said:

"Why are you doing this to me? Aren't you aware that I just got nominated to *Patronato de Agua* by the *Sociedad*?... I'm not available now. Did you forget that I already passed as Patronato de Obras? Then I did Fiesta de Niño. I spent thirty thousand pesos! Who told Mol Ok'il to nominate me?... Who is doing this to me?... I have three children; one was just born. I can't take cargos anymore… I will not take another cargo now, or ever."

Oddly, the community seemed satisfied with Fox's response. I was disappointed. Why would Fox not take *la carga*, the burden, and sacrifice for his community, as I had read before going to the field? For

the commoners, Fox had a reasonable excuse to skip the nomination. Months earlier, Fox had been named to Patronato de Agua, a much less important cargo that is given by the Sociedad del Agua, an association of people from neighboring communities that share water from the same spring.

A former Agente nicknamed 'Hueso' ('Bone,' perhaps because of his protruding cheekbones) commented on Fox's refusal to serve. He reminded the commoners that "some of us have served cargos in the community while serving as Patronato de Agua at the same time." Fox's alibi was not strong enough to exclude him from the nomination. After a brief discussion, the community decided to keep him on the ballot. Upon hearing the collective decision, Fox shook his head, disconsolate.

The Agente announced that it was time for the third and final nomination. A man in his 30s who goes by 'Charlie' (perhaps due to his uncanny resemblance to Charlie Chaplin) asked to speak. He was not a pasado.

"I want to nominate the Agente's younger brother. He seems to be making money. I noticed that he just bought another car. He also has a good heart and likes to help. He is a reasonable orator [*lek ta xak' srazon*, lit. 'he knows how to give reasons']."

Some people nodded. They seemed to agree with the nomination. The nominee was Miguel, 36, who was doing well economically indeed. Miguel had just bought his second car and renovated his house, located at the 'center' of the community. He had seven children and his marriage seemed stable. He kept a low profile and, consequently, no one had any complaints against him. His investment in coffee in the previous years had paid off. He also earned good money by driving people (including the anthropologist) to and from Linda Vista to Yabteclum and other communities.

Wealth per se is not a requirement for *Agenteal*—the cargo of Agente. Still, for younger people, wealth signals competence and intelligence—especially when it is built from a profitable investment in agriculture, as crops are visible to everyone in the community. There were rumors that Miguel's family's association with the PRI had helped to enrich them. I could not verify such claims, and only a few people seemed to give them credit.

But where was Miguel? People looked around and realized that the nominee had not come to the meeting. It did not matter; his name stayed on the ballot anyway. It was now time to vote. Those who had not received a nomination seemed relieved. The men who were standing outside came back in the room and sat down.

Following what is usually described as 'customary law,' the Agente announced the name of each nominee one by one; people voted by raising their hands and hollering.

"First nominee: Lucio." Only one man raised his hand (the pasado who brought up Lucio's name). The commoners laughed and stomped their feet.

"Second nominee: Lorenzo Fox." I counted about ten votes.

"Third nominee: Miguel." Most commoners raised their hands, some shouting 'heehaws.'

"Alright, *pasados*, Comités, Patronatos, *escribano*, and commoners," interrupted the Agente, "Miguel will be my substitute. Auxiliares, would you please go to his house to inform him that he was nominated?"

As the Auxiliares left, several others—the younger Comités and Patronatos—went along, some goofily crying, "I will go too!" They seemed excited to watch the formal announcement taking place. In the meantime, the Agente proposed to hold a vote to decide how much the cargo nominees who rejected nominations would be fined. After a brief discussion, they decided between charging either 5,000, 6,000, or 7,000 pesos. The community chose the latter amount.

The room was then overtaken by the strident sound of Maestro Enrique's typewriter as he furiously transcribed the collective decree.

After about 10 minutes, the Auxiliares returned with news: they could not find Miguel anywhere. Not even Miguel's wife knew where he was. She believed he had gone to Tuxtla Gutiérrez. In any case, Miguel's nomination had already been decided and there was no going back. Either he accepted to serve, or he would be fined 7,000 pesos. The Agente announced that the meeting was over, and the commoners headed home.

What can be learned from the decision-making process described above? During the entire meeting no one expressed the slightest desire to take the office of Agente. Instead, everyone seemed to abhor the idea of serving others. Not even Fox, who seemed to be the most conscientious among younger commoners, showed any deference to community ranks. In Linda Vista, an Agente must serve for two years. It is the scarcest cargo in the community. At random, a household has a chance of less than half percent to receive that office. Why would people refuse to take the community's scarcest and most prestigious office?

To me, at least, Agente seemed like a big deal. I had met many former Agentes from Linda Vista and the Cabecera. They were respectfully addressed as *pasado Agenteetik* (former Agentes). Most former Agentes, it seems, have benefitted economically from the office. This happens because Agentes play the role of mediators, helping to settle conflicts between community members and connecting the community to municipal authorities. Every two weeks or so, Agentes from all communities descend from the mountains to the Cabecera to participate in a general municipal assembly. Those meetings present an opportunity for community leaders to build ties with political parties and high-rank municipal officers.

The rumors about Miguel's family were, in part, true. His older brother, Javier—Linda Vista's Agente from 2013-2015—clearly benefitted from his time in office. Javier is charismatic and highly

esteemed by fellow commoners. When Javier served as Agente, he took the opportunity to connect with the PRI leadership. In 2015, he was named the PRI's candidate for *Síndico Municipal* (vice-mayor)—an impressive achievement for a man with almost no formal education from a small community. Moreover, he had never served municipal-level cargos. Though the PRI lost the election, Javier became famous in the entire municipality. Serving two years as Agente paid off immensely for him. Why would others not want to do the same? Could they not see that all former Agentes were far better off than most people in the community?

During my long stay in Chenalhó, I never saw anyone expressing a sense of honor for taking cargos. I did witness some men brag about how much they spent in fiestas or how they learned, on their own, to survive the hardships imposed by community service. Bragging about spending, however, is not the same as expressing honor. It is just a way of reminding others about who deserves recognition.

Honor stems from a sense of collective liability for individual actions. If a person violates a norm or fails to perform as expected, their family or community may be punished somehow (shamed, ostracized, expelled, etc.). To prevent collective affliction, an individual feels compelled to take responsibility for others. Kelly (2000) defined this sense of collective liability as 'social substitutability,' that is, the idea that any individual (within a kin group or community) may be punished for the actions of members of his or her group.[75]

While watching communal assemblies in Chenalhó, I was frequently awed by the inexistence of a sense of collective liability. If a cargoholder refuses to serve a cargo, no one else but him is punished. Not even Miguel's wife wanted to stand by her husband when he disappeared amidst his nomination. Had Miguel run away in fear of taking office, his wife and her children would likely not have to bear the consequences of his misdeeds. There was no shame in being married to a man who evaded collective responsibility. Miguel's family could, instead, come forth publicly and try to dissociate from him, as I saw happening on different occasions. They could blame Miguel—and no one else—for his poor moral discernment.

In Chenalhó, the responsibility for a misdeed falls upon individuals, only rarely spreading to the collectivity. In many ways, this mirrors the 'rugged individualism' that Tax (1956) described long ago in Panajachel (Guatemala). The origins of this *hyperindividualism* may lie in the erasure of Maya kinship systems, as we saw in Chapter 4. Kinship was, in large part, replaced with territorial units ('municipality') and local associations ('paraje') that today matter little to most people in Maya communities.

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[75] Modern states built upon societies with strong honor systems commonly develop kin punishment laws (present-day North Korea and Nazi Germany, for instance).

Hyperindividualism was likely exacerbated by the 19th century abolishment of distinctions based on noble birth (see Guardino 2005).

Some of the behavior of the commoners described above now begins to make sense. Why would Fox show any willingness to take communal duties in the absence of collective liability? When a cargoholder fails to perform his duties well, the community does not take the slightest responsibility for his failure. While cargoholders are supposed to take communal duties, communities will never stand behind them. They are on their own. Although cargo service might be rewarding, it entails a risk that few want to take—or perhaps admit that they want to take, as we will see later.

As a community, Linda Vista produces a weak sense of common belonging. Its communal assemblies are no doubt entertaining. But it is during these events the enormous latent fissions within the community come to light. There are class divisions in the community; some families are more prominent than others. There are also intergenerational and status differences—the pasados are clearly the more influential people. Pasados may harass less prestigious men with burdensome nominations and fees. At that time, Linda Vista was about to reach its breaking point. Eight months after this meeting, some families would be expelled due to a political conflict (Chapter 3.2).

1.5. Reluctant Acceptance (Countersignaling)

I woke up the next morning inside the conference room. Mariano and I always camped on benches in the school while staying in Linda Vista. It was Saturday and we had not planned on doing surveys that day. We would have breakfast with the Agente and then find someone with a car to drive us back to the Cabecera. I was hungry—the cookie with Coke dinner from the night before had not been filling. While Mariano packed up his clothes, I headed toward the Agente's house to eat.

To get to the Agente's house, I had to pass in front of Miguel's house. They were neighbors. From a distance, I saw the silhouette of a male—obscured by the fog—chopping firewood on Miguel's front porch. Could that be Miguel's eldest son? As I approached the house, I realized—to my surprise—that the man chopping firewood was Miguel himself. An awkward conversation then ensued.

"What were you doing in Tuxtla yesterday?"—I asked.[76]

"Tuxtla?" he inquired, surprised.

"Yes. Didn't you go to Tuxtla yesterday?"

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[76] *K'usi la'ay pas ta Tuxtla volje*? Generally, in Tzotzil it is not considered intrusive to ask others to explain what they are doing, to report where they go, or ask why they travel to certain places. Questions such as "what are you doing?" and "where are you going?" can take the function of greetings.

"No, I stayed here yesterday."

"Right here in your house all day?"

"Yes. Why?"

He seemed surprised.

"I thought you had travelled to Tuxtla. Have you heard of what happened yesterday?"

"No. What happened?"

"They gave you *Agenteal*."

Suddenly, it seemed as if Miguel realized that I had attended the communal assembly and knew about his nomination. Miguel turned evasive as if he had just been caught in a contradiction, losing his gaze in the picturesque chain of mountains that we could see from his front porch. The conversation resumed seconds later once he came back from that meditative state.

"Yes, I've heard about that," he said.

"Are you okay?" (i.e., 'is your heart content?')—I asked.

"Yes, my heart is content, there is no problem."

"So, are you going to take the nomination [work]? Are you going to do [sic.] Agente or not?" (*Ale, mi chavich' ti abtele? Mi chapas Agenteal o mu'yuk?*)

"I don't think so," answered Miguel, "I don't have time for that, and I don't want to do it" (*Muy'uk jna'. Mu xak' tiempo, oy k'usi yan ta jpas, mu jk'an.*).

I was surprised that Miguel had decided so quickly to reject the nomination, but he seemed to be capable of affording the 7,000 pesos fine, so I believed him. I asked him if he could drive us to the Cabecera in the afternoon, to which he agreed. I planned on asking more about his nomination later.

If Miguel stayed home during the assembly, why did the Auxiliares say that he had traveled to Tuxtla? I will never know for sure what happened, but Miguel probably stayed home during the meeting. He was hiding.

Hiding from cargo nominations is not unusual in Chenalhó. I had seen something similar years earlier, in 2012, when I lived in the Cabecera for a semester. I spent time taking Tzotzil lessons with Alejandro, a friend who had worked with us as a research assistant years before. Alejandro and I used to meet on his front porch to talk for an hour or two every day—I would ask him how to conjugate verbs or say things in Tzotzil while taking notes. One day in July, I visited Alejandro in the afternoon, as usual. He asked me to come inside his house instead of sitting on the front porch. The weather was clear. It did not seem like it was going to rain. Why could we not stay outside? I asked Alejandro if there was anything wrong with him. At first, he hesitated to explain what was happening, but I insisted. Eventually, he said he thought he was going to receive a cargo nomination that day. As a parishioner at the local Catholic

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church, Alejandro had been spending some time among Catholic Mestizos. That day, people had gathered to decide who would be the next year's sponsor of Anuncio de Jesús de la Buena Esperanza—an expensive ladino fiesta. Instead of voting, ladinos use a lottery system to choose who the *Capitanes* of their fiestas will be (the family responsible for hosting a fiesta writes down the names of three people in small labels, then they place the labels in an urn and ask a child—who is blindfolded—to pick one of the names).

Alejandro believed that his name had been placed in the urn for next year's Anuncio. He had no evidence for that, however. He simply intuited (or 'felt,' *a'ay*) that a woman who disliked him would try to 'punish' him by including his name on the ballot. During the Tzotzil lesson, at least three people came by, looking for Alejandro. He instructed his daughter to tell visitors that he was out of town. In the end, he did not receive the dreaded nomination. Had he been chosen to sponsor the Anuncio, he would have had to borrow exorbitant amounts of money to sponsor the fiesta.

1940s reports from Chiapas are replete with anecdotes like the one above. The practice of hiding from cargo nominations is usually described as a type of ritualized 'pretend rejection': after a man receives a nomination, he refuses to take the cargo several times before giving in. Some hide inside their homes, while others run away from authorities in broad daylight, 'giving a show' for all to see. It is acceptable—or even expected—for an adult man to hide or run away from the duties imposed by his community. As we saw, there is no sense of 'honor' attached to cargo service. Honor is not an indispensable component of local ideals of masculinity.

The practice of resisting cargos was described by Tax, in 1942, in Zinacantán. When a man receives a nomination for *Mayordomo*, he "rejects [the cargo] three times until he finally accepts it" (Tax 1947, 83). Cámara described the practice in more detail (for Mitontic):

> The *mayor* [policeman] takes to the house of the nominee the ticket which gave him his nomination. The person [nominee] does not know anything about what happened. It is a surprise for him, but not really a surprise since it is already expected that one year or another they will come to give his nomination. At first, the nominee will deny and say that he does not have money, but the issue is indisputable. The cargo has to be accepted. The individual who was nominated can, if he wishes, go to work at the fincas, pretend that he is sick, or something else, and evade the nomination, but even if he did so, he would be listed as an individual who has not fulfilled [his obligations], and in the next opportunity they would again give him a nomination. It is very difficult to escape from that (Cámara Barbachano 1945a, 63).

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I call the practice of resisting and accepting cargos <u>reluctant acceptance</u>. Everyone knows that there is no way to escape a cargo nomination. Yet, instead of stoically accepting their fate or twisting this as something positive (e.g., displaying 'courage' to take collective responsibility), people resist any nominations as much as they can. And they do so publicly and loudly. Resistance is part of an expected public performance.

It is impossible to know for sure whether a reluctant nominee is following a ritualized script or genuinely trying to evade serving the community. To my knowledge, no one escapes from cargo nomination. I asked people about this many times. I heard about cases where the nominee agreed to pay a fine to skip service.[77] By default, however, everyone expects that nominees will accept their nomination by force.

In Chapter 7.1, I describe how people engage in ritualized bargaining when petitioning wealthy individuals for resources. Cargo nominations, too, follow a type of ritualized bargaining. However, differently from bargaining for Coke, candy, and cookies during assemblies, the outcome of the cargo nomination bargaining ritual is always the same: the cargoholder must accept his nomination.

If people know that cargos are inescapable, why do they try to resist? An early answer was proposed by Guiteras Holmes: "many are afraid to accept a cargo without resistance because 'envy' from their fellows befalls upon them, causing sickness and harm. [Manuel] Arias himself relates the illness of one of his children to his cargo as Presidente" (Guiteras Holmes 1946, 72). In other words, if a person demonstrates an eagerness to accept an office and gain prestige, perhaps he or she would be seen as overly ambitious—or an aggrandizer—and thus be targeted by envy. Envy is described as a common cause of disease in Chiapas (D. G. Metzger and Williams 1970). It makes sense that people would want to shield themselves from such affliction.

Many of these folk medical beliefs have changed since Guiteras Holmes did fieldwork. Today, fear of envy may not be as important as it used to be. I rarely heard any mention of envy from Tzotzil people; oddly, Mestizos were the ones who talked about it frequently. Still, Guiteras Holmes may be right in pointing out that reluctant acceptance has something to do with social comparisons.

Perhaps reluctant acceptance is a way of concealing one's desire to get ahead of others. To use a concept from signaling theory, displaying resistance might be a form of <u>countersignaling</u>—that is, to signal humbleness by refusing to accept an important position (Feltovich, Harbaugh, and To 2001;

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[77] Usually, these are men who committed to working in lowland plantations, migrate to the U.S., or who must attend school outside of the community. I also know of a case where a cargoholder could waive service after his wife died. Since only married men are eligible for service, death of a spouse is perhaps the only acceptable excuse not to serve.

Araujo, Gottlieb, and Moreira 2007). Recall that the absence of collective liability makes cargos seem like a risky deal. From an emic perspective, resisting nominations is a logical response to what people deem an 'unfair' deal. Resistance, then, is both the culturally expected response to a nomination and a way to disguise one's intention to become prestigious.

Why do people need to countersignal when receiving a cargo? The answer lies in the contradiction between what people say in public about cargos and their more realistic assessment of the long-term outcomes of community service. Despite the negative discourse about cargos, people know that service pays off in the end. Worse than being named as Agente would be to never receive an important position. Later in the chapter I discuss how some men are repeatedly named for low-prestige civil offices and never move upward in the hierarchy. Some of these men see repeated nominations as a form of punishment. While people describe Agente as an overly burdensome position, a nomination to that office also proves individual competence to the community. Reluctant acceptance, then, results from the contradiction between the social expectation to resist nominations and a desire to take prestigious positions. Showing a willingness to take office would be tantamount to disclosing one's ambitions.

Until the 1970s, the cargo system was the single most important source of prestige in Chenalhó. Although things have changed substantially, cargos are still an integral part of reputation-building for most people in the town. That is true even for some communities of Protestant converts where the idea of earning prestige through mandatory service persists despite their members having given up religious rituals. People can witness the effect of cargo service in their daily lives. Everyone knows that pasados are influential because they have served cargos in the past.

With our household dataset, it is possible to quantify the long-term effect of cargos. Table 5.1 shows the expenses, earnings, and importance of cargo careers of 202 households (which combined served 619 cargos). The table divides cargos based on the order in which they were served. Notice how as a cargoholder advances through the system, cargos become increasingly more prestigious and expensive. This confirms the notion that the system of offices is laddered. The ratio between money spent and prestige earned remains stable through a cargoholder's career. However, after a Tzotzil household serves its fifth cargo, the household is rewarded with a profitable position. On average, the 6th cargo served by households tends to incur greater earnings than losses. Those cargos are usually remunerated municipal level positions.

Table 5.1: Order of service, prestige obtained, and average money spent on cargos

	Averages	N	1st cargo	2nd cargo	3rd cargo	4th cargo	5th cargo	6th cargo	7th+ cargo
Rural Tzotzil	N cargos	197	57	44	30	24	16	12	14
	Cost		$6,685	$7,163	$9,678	$13,133	$16,284	$22,198	$3,888
	Earnings		$2,243	$2,209	$1,422	$9,514	$1,692	$57,022	$454
	Importance		0.234	0.248	0.322	0.371	0.358	0.473	0.294
	Age when served		24.036	29.977	34.433	38.000	39.813	43.917	49.714
	Money:Prestige		-189.840	-200.149	-256.710	-97.499	-407.373	735.803	-116.702
Urban Tzotzil	N cargos	311	94	64	49	38	27	17	22
	Cost		$8,146	$9,705	$8,781	$10,573	$18,734	$8,733	$5,779
	Earnings		$2,545	$1,359	$2,113	$371	$5,987	$10,984	$4,332
	Importance		0.225	0.280	0.298	0.318	0.388	0.340	$5,886
	Age when served		29.138	33.969	39.122	41.132	43.296	46.412	48.818
	Money:Prestige		-249.215	-298.241	-223.735	-321.130	-328.204	66.184	-0.002
Mestizo	N cargos	111	31	21	15	12	11	10	11
	Cost		$15,523	$32,730	$6,174	$19,412	$33,762	$5,858	$14,659
	Earnings		$0	$1	$0	$0	$0	$0	$2,872
	Importance		0.255	0.277	0.309	0.285	0.324	0.277	0.272
	Age when served		33.742	35.286	37.733	44.000	45.636	49.700	55.091
	Money:Prestige		-608.795	-1,179.604	-199.776	-680.804	-1,043.096	-211.770	-432.705

For Mestizos, there is no clear relationship between the order of service and earnings. Mestizos consistently lose money when they serve cargos since they were traditionally barred from taking profitable positions. Throughout their cargo careers, Mestizos continuously serve low prestige offices, never climbing the civil-religious hierarchy. When Mestizos serve religious cargos, they do so either as a response to criticism or envy (if they are becoming too rich) or to gain political support before running for office in the municipal elections (see Chapter 2.2.3).

Prestige still produces the long-term payoffs that one ethnographer documented in the 1960s (Cancian 1965). Serving cargos increases one's chance of becoming rich in the future. But notice how the system only rewards the more tenacious individuals who never quit. To reap what they sow, Tzotzil people must endure a succession of extraordinary hardships. and only a few succeed in doing so.

Like everything else, this might be changing. As I show in Chapter 6.2.1, educational attainment is more clearly correlated with wealth today than it was in the 1960s, when formal schooling was just beginning to take hold. Traditionalist elders now compete for influence with schoolteachers who built their reputation in the secular education system. But as we saw in an earlier chapter, traditionalists still enjoy a great deal of control over how prestige is produced and issued during communal assemblies (Chapter 3.1.4). Hence, there is no reason to believe that cargo service is going to be replaced with a secular hierarchy anytime soon. If what I proposed in the above pages is correct, reluctant acceptance will exist as long as cargos remain a significant source of prestige in Tzotzil communities.

1.6. Language, Coercion, and Coping

Two hours had passed since I spoke with Miguel. Recall that he told me he would never and under no circumstance accept the nomination for Agente.

Miguel drove us to the Cabecera. During the trip, he and Mariano spend most of the time talking about coffee varieties and prices—the usual local obsession among Tzotzil farmers. I tried, but I had a hard time following their quick-paced conversation about a topic I was not familiar with. At some point, Miguel asked Mariano if he had attended the communal assembly the night before.

"Yes, I was there but not the whole time," answered Mariano, who went on to ask Miguel precisely what I wanted to know:

"So, are you going to take the cargo [of Agente]?"

Miguel's response now changed. To Mariano, he implied that he would take the nomination because there was no other choice.

"There's nothing I can do. If you don't do [the work], you pay seven thousand [pesos]" (*Mu k'u xkutik. Mi mu chapas, chatoj siete mil.*)

I cannot know for sure why Miguel changed his mind in the space of two hours. Perhaps Mariano's presence might have influenced his response. Or could he be following the usual script of ritually resisting nominations? I wondered if Miguel had started to cope with the inevitability of serving the cargo. The newly elected Agente could certainly afford to pay the 7,000-peso fee. However, paying a fee could incur reputational losses by signaling an unwillingness to cooperate with the community. Perhaps Miguel had begun to accept his fate, coping with the fact that taking the cargo was the least costly long-term path. More plausibly, perhaps he knew all along that he would eventually give in and accept the nomination.

Miguel used a fascinating Tzotzil expression—*mu k'u xkutik* –, which literally translates as 'we cannot tell". The expression uses the verbal root *ut*, which appear in various verbs such as to 'tell,' 'scold,' 'poke,' 'harm,' 'criticize,' 'relate,' or to 'annoy,' among others. *Ut* appears in verbs that convey ideas about <u>interfering with something</u>. When *ut* is used as 'to tell' in a negative statement, it implies a relationship of power and control. Thus, *mu k'u xkutik*, could be understood as "we cannot tell [others what to do]." The verb *ut* can also be used to "quote" conversations of others in a more neutral way. For instance: *ta xtal vo', xut* ('it is going to rain, he told [someone]'). However, when *ut* is used for quoting, it does not connotate inequality between speakers.

I discuss the verb <u>*ut*</u> because it exemplifies a fundamental difference between the way Tzotzil and English (or Spanish) convey notions of coercion and obligation. I spent a lot of time asking people to play experimental games (such as those discussed in earlier chapters). Before each interview, I had to explain the rules of the games participants were going to play. I soon realized that Tzotzil does not distinguish between verbs 'must' and 'can.' When explaining game rules, I could not say "you *must* do something" in a way that was unambiguously distinct from " you *can* do something." I could not communicate the idea that certain norms must be obeyed. In Tzotzil, the semi-grammaticalized verb *xu'* (or *yu'*) can either mean 'must' or 'can.' For example, *xu' chapas kanal* can mean either "you can win" or "you must win," depending on the context. Imagine trying to explain the rules of an abstract allocation game in a language that does distinguish 'must do' from 'can do.' There was a risk that participants would understand that they only needed to follow the game rules if they wanted to do so.

Every grammar is, to some extent, limited. But contrary to what some believe, there is always a way to circumvent grammatical limitations and convey any idea in any language. While explaining allocation games, instead of saying "you must do something," I could say *ak'o sts'ik avokol* ("resist acting in vain," or "don't even bother") to make my sure interlocutors understood they had no choice but to follow the rules of the game. However, this type of grammatical construction is not as common—and did not sound as straightforward—as the English 'you must.' A simpler solution to the problem was—

perhaps inadvertently—developed by bilingual Tzotzil speakers in recent decades. Some began to borrow the Spanish *tiene que* (must). Using *tiene que* is particularly common among Tzotzil schoolteachers, perhaps because teachers must ensure that students comply with their instructions (a nonobvious demand in a society where seniority and traditional prestige still matter immensely). It is common to hear schoolteachers say things like *tiene ke chapas avabtel* ("you must do your work").

There are many other examples of how Tzotzil speakers borrowed expressions from Spanish to solve the ambiguity between 'can' and 'must.' One common expression *ta persa*, which likely stems from 'a la fuerza' (by force). One can say *ta persa chapas avabtel,* "by force you will do your work." An even more common borrowed noun is *mantal* ('order'), from the Spanish verb 'mandar' (to command). The noun *mantal* can be converted into a verb in the forms of *ʔak' mantal,* "to give an order" and *ʔich' mantal,* "to receive/comply with an order." *Ta persa* and *mantal* were probably incorporated into the Tzotzil lexicon in the early colonial period.

While learning Tzotzil, I was struck by the absence of concepts that specifically convey ideas of social coercion. Concepts such as 'must,' 'command', and 'by force' are trivial to speakers of Spanish or English. What explains their absence in Tzotzil? One explanation is that such absence reflects the loose and transient social hierarchies within Tzotzil communities, as discussed in earlier chapters. The conceptual void could reflect an ancient, idyllic, egalitarian *communitas*, uncorrupted by the introduction of social roles and hierarchies by Spanish colonists.

A more interesting explanation—which I prefer to emphasize here—is that much of the discourse on coercion relies on implicit, unspoken knowledge about who is in power and what duties must be assigned to every community member. There is no need to distinguish between 'can' and 'must' in small Tzotzil communities since everyone has full knowledge of each other's obligations. When every commoner knows exactly what others expect him or her to do, it is widely understood that something needs to be done 'by force,' so there no need to state it. Before Tzotzil speakers borrowed notions such as *mantal* (order) from Spanish, they likely talked about power relations with the verb *ut*, to tell. If Beto 'tells' Carol something, that means Beto has power over Carol. Before colonialism, there was no need to distinguish between 'telling' and 'giving an order,' since the context provides enough background knowledge to inform speakers about who is in command.

If 'to tell' is equivalent to 'to give orders,' how do people express relations of compliance and obedience? Usually, the verb *ʔa'ay* ('to listen,' or 'to feel') plays that role. For example, *Carol mu sk'an xa'ay Beto*, "Carol does not want to listen to Beto," can also mean "Carol refuses to obey Beto." Again, there is no grammatical distinction between 'obeying' and 'listening;' the verb *ʔa'ay* can mean several different things, depending on the context. That distinction is made by speakers who share background

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knowledge about the topic of the conversation. By borrowing concepts of coercion from Spanish, bilingual speakers remove some of these ambiguities in communication, making the discourse on coercion less context-dependent and more abstract.

Not only do people lack a specific vocabulary for talking about coercion, but it is rare to hear people talking about coercion at all. In part, that silence could be a means of disguising one's ambitions, discussed earlier. Perhaps there is an unspoken rule that discourages people from power relations. Or could the absence of public discourse on coercion result from the structure of the Tzotzil language? As we saw (Chapter 3.2), Tzotzil communities seem to have no consensual dominance hierarchies. When I asked people about what cargos they planned on taking in the future, I often heard the expression *ja' k'usi xi ta be*, which means "whatever is said along the way." Like "we cannot tell," that expression is used to convey the idea of powerlessness in the face of social coercion. It seems to be a pattern that people avoid talking about coercion. Instead, they just cope silently.

Two weeks after the meeting described above, I traveled back to Linda Vista. As soon as I arrived, a friend told me about the news: Miguel had accepted his nomination. No one was surprised at all. Like every previous *Agente*, Miguel resisted, coped, and then gave in—for the most part, in silence.

2. Rethinking Cargos

2.1. A Self-organizing Matching Market

Before going to the field, I was advised that Mesoamerican civil-religious hierarchies were an outdated subject. In the 1960s and 1970s, the topic generated an enormous amount of interest. In the mid-1980s, without a bang, cargo systems disappeared from mainstream journals. Although some anthropologists continued to mention cargos in footnotes while directing their ethnographies to other topics, the system of roles itself ceased to be a topic of research. To passing readers, it may seem as if cargo systems ceased to exist or be important to communities in Chiapas since no one talks about them anymore.

My field experience proved otherwise, as exemplified by the stories told above. People in Chenalhó—men especially—talk about cargos all the time. Much of what 1940s ethnographers documented about the region is still intact:

1) Communities nominate their officers in horizontal assemblies.
2) Elders (*pasados*) tend to be disproportionally influential during these events.
3) People resist and then accept nominations.
4) Everyone must pass through the system.

5) Those who refuse to serve can be expelled.

6) Some cargos are religious, others are civil.

7) Cargos become increasingly prestigious as one moves upward in the hierarchy

In Chenalhó, most people seem to despise cargos. But many– even though they rarely admit it—are highly motivated to rise through the ladder of offices and become recognized as *ich'bil ta muk'* (lit. 'taken with greatness,' see Chapter 3.1.3). Community assemblies can last for hours, sometimes a whole day. Much of that time is spent discussing who gets to receive cargo nominations, who tries to evade cargos, and how the community can properly enforce nominations. People routinely debate what constitutes a well-performed service and who deserves recognition for it. Men are always addressed by their current or former cargo titles: 'mol Agente,' 'pasado Regidor,' etc. In Linda Vista, I saw the community institute a rule that any man who chose to pursue high school education would have to pay a fine, as elders believed that young men were using schooling as an excuse to waive cargo duties. For most people, serving the community was more important than individual pursuits. Since my earliest field seasons, it was clear that it would be impossible to understand collective decision-making without paying close attention to this system of offices.

If cargo systems are still important in Mexico today, why did they disappear[78] from the ethnographic literature? In part, its disappearance resulted from normal academic burnout: as scholarship grew, it became increasingly difficult to discover anything new and exciting about the topic. However, the more important reason was that studies of civil-religious hierarchies became, in a way, self-fulfilling prophecies. The 1960s and the 1970s saw a barrage of studies that attempted to predict what would happen to hierarchies in different parts of Mesoamerica. Over time, anthropologists began to agree that cargo systems were bound to disappear, being replaced with secular institutions inspired after nation-state bureaucracies. Some argued that the system of nominating officers to perform unpaid labor would be, over time, replaced with a modern-style fiscal system (Dewalt 1975). Instead of forcing households to work against their will, communities would begin to raise funds from taxation and use those funds to hire professional laborers on a merit-basis. Similarly, the individual-sponsorship would be replaced with a cost-sharing model, where participants contribute in equal parts to the ceremonial resource pool (see review in Chance 1998).

In his study of Zinacantán, Cancian (1965) showed that the number of cargos could not increase at the same rate as the population. The supply of offices, then, would be outmatched by increasing demand from prospective cargoholders, leading the system to collapse, or perhaps be replaced with more

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[78] With one notable exception (Forero, Lara, and Korsbaek 2002).

secular institutions. Cancian reasoned that if civil-religious hierarchies were important in establishing a sense of collective identity, communities would, over time, become more fragmented with the decline of their cargo systems. Predictions such as those were, in part, correct. Beginning in the 1970s, cargo systems in Chiapas began to lose importance and, as predicted, communities started to break apart. Later, Cancian (1992) described some of that process as a 'decline of community.' Thus, the diminishing interest in cargo systems results from the fact that anthropologists in the 1980s, seeing a decline in those traditions, reasoned that they were bound to disappear. There was no reason to spend research funds and effort in studying disappearing traditions.

However, history does not always march in a straight line; it often rambles unpredictably. As I show in Chapter 6, the decline of cargo systems in Chiapas was only temporary. After two decades of decline, cargo expenditures began to rise again in the mid-1990s following the Zapatista rebellion and the stabilizing of the Mexican economy. Interest in the system was renewed, and some defunct offices were brought back to life. To compensate for demographic growth, small communities began to devise their own systems of 'civil' offices. While these offices did not require explicit religious commitment, they incorporated folk beliefs and rituals. Civil offices already existed in the 1960s, though ethnographers at that time focused exclusively on the ones that carried religious obligations. In my view, such omission was unwarranted. As Haviland (1977, 115) showed, already in the early 1970s community civil offices were an important source of status, especially amongst men younger than 50 who had not had a chance to participate in the traditional system. Today, people in Chenalhó see both civil and religious cargos as part of a single coherent system. That system continues to integrate Chenalhó's diverse 110 communities into one hierarchy. It does not make sense today (and perhaps it never did) to single out municipal religious offices and exclude civil ones done within communities. A proper study of cargos needs to focus on relevant emic categories. As I later show, civil offices are as relevant as religious ones used to be in the past in Chenalhó.

A rethinking of cargo systems is past due—not only because the topic is appealing to me, but also because it is not possible to understand politics and decision-making in Maya communities without dealing with those civil-religious hierarchies. To study cargo systems, two main approaches have been developed. First, the synchronic approach, initiated by Cancian (1965), examines the supply and demand dynamic of offices using data from contemporary populations. Scholars may analyze (a) how prestige is produced and distributed (Haviland 1977); (b) whether cargos function to redistribute wealth, created reciprocity networks, or increase inequalities (Dow 1977; Greenberg 1981; Brandes 1981; Monaghan 1990); (c) the relationship between religious service and social control (J. Nash 1985; Brandes 1988); (d) how cargos relate to the construction of ethnic categories or gender roles (Mathews 1985; Rostas 1986;

Rosenbaum 1993); and (e) and how cargo rituals express and reproduce cultural values (Hrdy 1972; Linn 1976; Dow 2005).

A second approach, the <u>diachronic</u> one, is best exemplified by Rus and Wasserstrom (1980). This approach takes a deeper historical look at cargo systems and how they relate to changing social contexts. For instance, some studies have focused on (a) distinguishing Native American from colonial elements in cargo rituals (Carrasco 1961; Bricker 1981; Calnek 1988); (b) the constitution of cargos systems alongside *cofradías* during the colonial period (Chance and Taylor 1985; Monaghan 1996; Guardino 2005); and (h) the effects of modernization, economic growth, and secularization on cargos during the twentieth century (Dewalt 1975; W. R. Smith 1977; Friedlander 1981; Chance 1998). The present chapter is a diachronic analysis of Chenalhó's cargos. Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 analyze changes in Chenalhó's cargo systems and its effects on the economy and relations of cooperation within communities following a diachronic approach.

To rethink cargos, I borrow a theoretical framework from economics: matching theory, which studies how mutual relations among agents, institutions, and indivisible goods or social roles emerge. Some topics studied by matching theorists include college admissions, marriages, military conscription, adoption, organ donation, foreign worker visa programs, and job allocation systems. At stake is the question of what determines who gets priority when a scarce and indivisible thing (positions, organs, children, visas, etc.) needs to be allocated. The ultimate goal is to design algorithms that improve allocative efficiency in matching markets. To what extent do cultural norms affect the resolution of matching problems? In a cross-national comparative study, Elster (1992) showed that cultural notions of fairness ('local justice') play a key role in determining how groups, governments, or corporations solve matching market allocations. For example, while China offered exemption from military duties to men without siblings, the United States offered an exemption to fathers. The reason for those differences is that in China men are expected to take care of their parents and grandparents, while in the United States they are supposed to prioritize their children.[79] Thus, cultural expectations of who receives priority and how duties are fairly distributed can influence institutions at a national level. However, as Elster also showed, fairness is not the only criteria used to solve matching problems; notions of merit and efficiency are equally important.

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[79] Recently, the Chinese government passed a law called "Protection of the Rights and Interests of Elderly People," which forces young adults to visit and take care of their parents and grandparents. The law was passed to counter the growing trend of fathers who refuse to care for the elderly and prefer to invest in their children, a trend which is seen as a consequence of globalization (E. Wong 2013).

Let us conceptualize cargo systems as *matching markets* (Gale and Shapley 1962; Abdulkadiroglu and Sönmez 2013). Every year, a community needs to reallocate *c* cargos to *n* households. The number of households always supersedes the number of cargos available in a community. Cargo allocation, thus, is an n-player cooperative game of fair division (similarly to resource allocation games discussed in Chapter 3.3). However, differently from fair division games discussed in Chapter 3, cargos are indivisible goods (unlike money, taxes, water, or construction materials, which can be divided). Like jobs or college vacancies, cargos are conventional social roles that can be instituted or terminated by a community at any given time.

Unlike most allocation problems discussed by matching market designers, cargo allocation lacks a central decision-making authority. While access to higher education is determined by rules established by college admissions committees, there is no clear group of decision-makers behind cargo allocations. As discussed in Chapter 3.2, groups of elders (*pasados*) tend to have the upper hand during communal assemblies, being more likely to influence nominations. However, even the decisions made by elders in private need to be approved following decentralized procedures within communities. A Tzotzil person with an economics degree specializing in market design would fail to devise an algorithm to improve cargo allocation. Decisions regarding who gets to serve what cargo and when cannot be controlled by any given individual in a community.

Cargo nominations take place within the same assemblies where people discuss issues related to resource allocation. This is not by coincidence but by design. Maya people see labor as a type of 'resource.' The allocation of labor, thus, follows the exact same procedures used to distribute any common resource (natural or otherwise). People vote in mandatory and horizontal assemblies. This conception of labor as a resource was shaped during the colonial period, when credit was scarce and currency was subject to periods of devaluation. In that context, labor could be used as a medium for paying for goods, services, or loans, or to reciprocate gifts. In the absence of currency (or grains) Maya people could repay debts incurred through the *repartimiento* system by working for the colonists. This was true both for highland or lowland Maya groups. Even before the conquest, it seems that labor reciprocity networks were important to cement ties between people from sparsely settled communities subdivided into lineages. I will return to the issue of money scarcity in Chapter 6.3.

Today, people can still settle debts with work, although this happens much less frequently.[80] Sharing labor within rural communities is still common, as they often convene their members to perform

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[80] In Chenalhó, the cost to hire someone to clear a *tarea* (0.062 ha) of land is widely known (as of 2015, about 60 pesos in urban areas and 40 pesos in rural communities). If, say, Beto owes 500 pesos to Alice, Alice can

komon abtel (common labor) as a substitute for paying taxes in cash (Chapter 7.2.2). Bride service, which is still performed in some places, is seen as a way for a man to compensate his father-in-law for sanctioning a marriage.

From now on, I will frame Chenalhó's cargo system as a self-organizing matching-market. In this system, decisions are made horizontally and spontaneously as communities can change allocation norms and the number of cargos at any given time. In Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, I discuss what leads communities to create or terminate cargos, and how the ratio between cargos and candidates has been stable over the past four decades despite population growth. Studies of matching markets focus on more vertical decision-making in which allocation is determined by some person or group with authority (colleges, hospitals, etc.). In Tzotzil communities, every candidate for a cargo is also a decider who participates in the nomination process. This complicates the relationship between collective and individual decision-making. The fact that in Chiapas decisions are made in a decentralized way makes the study of decision-making more challenging and perhaps more interesting.

2.2. Cargos and The Roots of Cooperation

In Chapter 4, I argued that cargo systems evolved to fill a void left by the erasure of native kinship systems in Mesoamerica. During pre-Columbian times, communities distributed status and wealth through lineages. The colonial erasure of kinship left no durable institutions for producing and distributing prestige. Cargo systems rose to fill that gap. Their 'function' is to produce and distribute prestige <u>unequally</u>. Over time, cargos acquired an additional function as they became deeply rooted in the social contract that binds Tzotzil communities together. Cargo systems now constitute the foundation of cooperation in Maya communities.

Cooperation has costs. For a group to maintain durable cooperative ties, it needs to appoint mediators who act to solve collective action problems. The cargo system is an institution that regulates the allocation of those costs. Some cargoholders aid in the settlement of conflicts between individuals or households. Other cargos act as mediators between the community and the outside world. For instance, the sole purpose of the office of Patronato de Obras is to petition authorities or wealthy individuals for construction funds (Chapter 7.2.3 for examples). Some officers may be in charge of collecting taxes or policing the community. Cooperation generates demand for labor. Cargo systems regulate that demand by appointing officers to mediate personal disputes.

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ask Beto to clean 8 or so *tareas* of her land in order to repay his debt[80]. Payment can be subject to negotiation and sometimes people pay in *costales* of corn instead of using money.

The second source of demand for cargoholders' labor is the sacred deities (or saints) that inhabit churches or chapels. Deities are also essential for maintaining cooperation: from the Tzotzil perspective, they need to be taken care of to reduce a community's chance of misfortune. For every church or chapel that is built, communities create two cargos. In Chenalhó, these are called Alperes and Martoma—the first sponsors costly fiestas for the deities, while the latter oversees the church or chapel. Appeasing deities is one of the requirements for maintaining a 'healthy' community—a community bound by enduring and harmonious ties of cooperation. When Tzotzil speakers talk about social issues, they use the same conceptual framework for talking about health and the human body. For example, when conflict erupts in a community, people may say that *oy schamel jparajee* ("our community has a disease"). It is the role of cargoholders—civil or religious—to help 'heal' community 'diseases,' keeping people together in 'harmony.' Traditionally, deities could be used as a heuristic tool for explaining misfortune. People could explain a bad harvest by referring to an unhappy deity rather than witchcraft, relieving community members from the onus of blame, though this type of explanation is being replaced with more secular heuristics. Religious cargoholders mediate between the community and the supernatural, facilitating the exchange between both.

For community members to stay together and reap the products of cooperation, these burdens must be distributed equitably. As we saw in earlier chapters, communities may hold different ideas of what constitutes equity (or fairness) in common resource allocation. In Linda Vista, an equitable allocation prioritizes high-status members of the community; in the Cabecera, it gives priority to members in need. Notions of fairness guide the allocation of common resources and burdens. As I show later in this chapter, fairness notions also influence who gets to receive cargos and who does not.

Finally, cargos also generate ties of cooperation by compelling people to work together toward the same goal. Traditionally, that goal was to sponsor fiestas. Cancian (1965) showed that people rely on their extended family and fictive kin to conduct expensive ceremonies. Relations of cooperation often resemble credit networks. As I show in Chapter 6, borrowing and lending (money or goods) are, in a way, a form of constructing ties of cooperation. We will return, in that chapter, to how these cooperation networks expand and contract over time.

2.3. Weaving Family Ties

In 2015 I followed a man—whom I call Juan Pérez, 45—while he served as a *Paxon*, the sponsor of the Cabecera's Tajimolktik (the yearly carnival). Paxon is one of the most expensive cargos in Chenalhó, costing between 70,000 and 100,000 pesos in a year. Juan had a humble background. He had no formal education, could not speak Spanish, and was physically handicapped. He lived in a small

wooden house with his wife and two children (besides, he had 2 adult children from a previous relationship). His income was average for Chenalhó's standards. He owned 3 hectares of land where he harvested coffee, fruits, beans, and corn. He worked sporadically as a *barrendero* (street cleaner) for the municipal government. Most of his land was located within the Ejido San Pedro (Chapter 2.1), where land values have increased drastically over the last twenty years.

Assuming that Juan's household expenses were minimal and that his coffee output was optimal, I estimated that he would have to save money for at least three years to sponsor Paxon. In 2014, however, at least 80% of the coffee harvested in Chiapas was decimated by a plague known as *la roya*. To sponsor the fiesta, Juan had to sell part of his land.

He also had to harness additional support from his extended family. Unlike many Tzotzil people who live in the Cabecera, Juan never made any attempt to integrate within the Mestizo world. In fact, he seemed to distrust Mestizos and outsiders. He did not rely on loans from Mestizo moneylenders. Juan's deceased father was a famous Tzotzil traditionalist who had 12 children. His numerous siblings varied widely in educational and economic outcomes. While Juan had never attended school, one of his older siblings had become a college professor. Some moved to larger cities, while others stayed in Chenalhó, living in rural hamlets. Because of such wide social differences within a single family, the meaning of traditional cargos varied from sibling to sibling. Juan's younger brother, Mario, saw religious cargos as a waste of time and resources. But for Juan's college-educated sister, cargos were an anthropological curiosity. For Juan, cargos were an inevitable, sacred duty.

To sponsor Paxon, Juan had to weave together a diverse family. During carnival, as he performed his service, I noticed that Juan was being helped by at least 15 women from his extended family: 5 sisters and an even larger number of nieces, cousins, and in-laws. The women began to prepare food a week before the *fiesta*. During this period, they rarely appeared in public, being, for the most part, confined in private spaces, taking care of food production. Most gave little importance to religious cargos. Regardless, they helped the cargoholder to make the fiesta come to fruition.

Juan's cargo service worked to expand (or maintain) a complex network of mutual obligations between various first and second-degree kin. The cargo set the foundation from which people with diverse backgrounds could cooperate and exchange favors. However, the system of offices is complex, and not all offices perform the same functions or provide the same degree of prestige as Paxon does. In the next section, we will take a closer look at Chenalhó's civil-religious hierarchy.

3. Conceptual Organization

The goal of this section is to provide a detailed description of the cargo system in Chenalhó. I will examine, using formal methods, how offices are categorized, how they are ranked in terms of importance, and what are the responsibilities associated with each office. Such a description is necessary before we proceed with the analysis of how offices are allocated. Although Guiteras-Holmes's 1961 ethnography already provides some information on this issue, much has changed since then. It is difficult to estimate exactly how many offices exist in Chenalhó today since political hierarchies have become increasingly decentralized. Many local communities have developed their own civil-religious hierarchies. Although these local officers are named locally and act independently, community-level offices often emulate those from the municipal center (more on this in Chapter 7).

3.1. Folk Categories of Work

To start, we explored how people categorize offices using a pile-sorting task. First, I extracted a list of the most frequently mentioned cargos from a previous survey (in which I asked Tzotzil and Mestizos in the Cabecera about their history of service—see Chapter 2.3). To that list, I included several types of Alperes (patron-saint fiesta sponsors) based on the work of Guiteras Holmes (1961, 100), resulting in a set of 48 offices. The list also includes a few offices that are not traditionally considered part of the cargo system (such as schoolteacher, school supervisor, or *ejidal* commissary). The offices selected here do not constitute an exhaustive list and should be considered a sample of Chenalhó's cargo system.[81]

We interviewed 24 males in the Cabecera, asking them to sort cards with the names of those 48 offices into groups, based on their similarity.[82] After concluding the task, we asked each participant to give a brief description of each group of cargos. A cultural consensus analysis shows that participants' responses were strongly in agreement (mean competence = 0.82, eigenvalue = 16.64, eigenratio = 12.93), which shows that knowledge of cargos is widespread and salient. Figure 5.1 shows a taxonomy of cargos built from participant responses.[83]

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[81] The list does not include: 1) certain administrative municipal offices, such as the Secretario Municipal de Obras (commonly known as *Obra*), the archivist, or the municipal treasurer; and 2) offices within the Comités or Patronatos, which can vary widely from one community to another.

[82] We used the phrase *bu ta schi'in sbaik* (lit. 'where do they go together?')

[83] Created using a Ward's method-based hierarchical cluster analysis.

Function	Date (est.)	Cost/profit	Import.	No.	Cargos
Saint overseer	1940s	$600	0.22	1	Martoma de Rosario
Main church overseer	17th c	$2,400	0.20	1	Martoma de San Pedro
Cemetery chapel overseer	17th c	$1,700	0.20	1	Martoma de Santa Cruz
Patron saint sponsor	17th c	-$20,000	0.33	1	Alperes de Santa Lucia
Patron saint sponsor	17th c	-$20,000	0.34	1	Alperes de San Martin
Patron saint sponsor	17th c	-$30,000	0.33	1	Alperes de Santa Cruz
Patron saint sponsor	17th c	-$20,000	0.34	1	Alperes de San Agustín
Patron saint sponsor	17th c	-$18,000	0.32	1	Alperes de San Nicolás
Patron saint sponsor	17th c	-$16,000	0.33	1	Alperes de San Francisco
Patron saint sponsor	17th c	-$24,000	0.32	1	Alperes de Santo Cristo
Carnival sponsor	> 17th c	-$72,500	0.64	4	Paxon
Patron saint sponsor	1940s	-$25,000	0.32	1	Alperes de Rosario
Patron saint sponsor	17th c	-$22,500	0.35	1	Alperes de Guadalupe
Patron saint sponsor	17th c	-$22,500	0.33	1	Alperes San Sebastián
Patron saint sponsor	17th c	-$20,000	0.32	1	Alperes Santo Domingo
Patron saint sponsor	17th c	-$14,000	0.29	8	Capitan Tradicional
Patron saint sponsor	17th c	-$28,000	0.35	1	Alperes de Buena Esperanza
Police (secular)	2000s	$42,600	0.00	15	Alguacil
Police chief (ritual)	18th c	$42,000	0.15	1	Mayol Martoma Rey
Police (ritual)	18th c	$36,000	0.04	15	Mayol
Judge	16th c	$84,000	0.81	1	Juez Municipal
Conflict mediator, ritual	16th c	$60,000	0.72	1	Primer Alcalde
Conflict mediator, ritual	16th c	$60,000	0.70	1	Segundo Alcalde
Municipal mayor (exec.)	19th c	$360,000	1.00	1	Presidente Municipal
Vice-mayor, conflict res.	19th c	$218,000	0.91	1	Síndico
Traditional government	19th c	$96,000	0.66	1	Secretario Municipal
Chief elder/counselor	19th c	$48,000	0.71	1	Suplente Tradicional
Ritual counselors	16th c	$48,000	0.74	1	Primer Regidor
Ritual counselors	16th c	$52,000	0.65	7	Regidor
Tax collector	16th c	$0	0.18	~105	Krincipal
School management	1970s	$0	0.28	315	Comité de Educacion
Community policemen	1990s	$6,000	0.08	~210	Auxiliar de Agente
Community headman	1960s	$12,000	0.64	105	Agente
Collect resources	1990s	$0	0.26	~315	Patronato de Obras
Water management	1960s	$0	0.24	~150	Patronato de Agua
Electricity management	1990s	$0	0.21	~150	Patronato de Luz
Street management	1970s	$0	0.22	~30	Patronato de Calle
Mestizo tax collector	1940s	$0	0.23	10	Junta de Festejos (Jovenes)
Mestizo fiesta organizer	1980s	$0	0.28	10	Junta de Festejos
Mestizo fiesta sponsor	1940s	-$60,000	0.39	1	Capitán de San Pedro
Mestizo fiesta sponsor	1950s	-$50,000	0.33	1	Capitán de Buena Esperanza
Land management	1960s	$0	0.65	3	Secr. Bienes Comunales
Ejido management	1930s	$0	0.70	3	Comisariado Ejidal
Land management	1960s	$0	0.72	1	Pres. Bienes Comunales
School teacher	1930s	$72,500	0.48	77	Maestro de Escuela
School principal	1970s	$72,000	0.57	6?	Jefe de Zona Escolar
School supervisor	1970s	$90,583	0.58	6?	Supervisor Escolar

Figure 5.1. Taxonomy of cargos in Chenalhó

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As the taxonomy shows, people's most basic conceptual distinction is that between religious and civil offices. At the top are religious, usually expensive offices practiced by indigenous people; at the bottom lie the more secular offices, which are usually less expensive and associated with Mestizos. This finding is in agreement with previous ethnographies in Chiapas showing that people make a distinction between *nichimal abtel* ('flowery work,' or religious service) and *abtel patan* ('tax work,' or civil service) (Guiteras Holmes 1961; Arias 1990). However, during my fieldwork I rarely heard participants use the term *nichimal abtel*, which suggests that the term is falling into disuse in Chenalhó. Instead, people refer to all offices only as *abtel* (work). The term *abtel patan* tends to be employed when people refer to community-level offices, such as Comité de Educación or Patronato de Obras. Referring to community-level offices as 'tax work' is likely a recent development that, again, may have to do with the increasing decentralization of power in the municipality (today, people are only required to pay taxes to local communities following local norms and regulations).

The taxonomy on Figure 5.1 shows that religious offices are divided in two subcategories: a) church overseers, and b) fiesta sponsors. Civil offices are divided into five subcategories: c) municipal government, d) community government, e) Mestizo cargos, f) land management, and e) educational offices. Below I provide a brief description of each category of offices, which will be necessary for the discussion on how offices are allocated later in this chapter.

Church overseers: Martomas (from *mayordomo*) are officials chosen to oversee churches and the deities housed within them. The *cargo* likely dates back to the 16th-century arrival of the first *reducciones* in Chiapas. Guiteras-Holmes describes the existence of three Martomas in Chenalhó, each associated with a specific deity in the Cabecera (Santa Cruz, San Pedro, and Rosario—the latter being instituted in the 1940s). However, small hamlets today also name their own Martomas to supervise smaller chapels.[84] In the past, Martoma used to be considered a moderately expensive office, but today expenses are considered minor when compared with fiesta sponsorship positions. Martomas usually reside in a church or chapel for a year, during which they are tasked with protecting the temple and collecting money from donations to purchase candles, incense, and flowers.

Fiesta sponsors: Alperes (from the Spanish *alférez*) are offices whose contenders have to sponsor one of the several patron saint fiestas in Chenalhó. Guiteras-Holmes lists fourteen Alperes in Chenalhó, though I learned that some of these offices are duplicates, have been renamed, or no longer exist. Also, over the past five decades, many communities have built their own chapels, each housing a different saint and having their own Alperes and Martomas, making it difficult to estimate exactly how many of those officers exist in the town. For instance, the cargo of Alperes de San Pedro Mártir (not included in the list) was created in the 1990s, following the construction of Linda Vista's chapel. As we can see in Figure 5.1, most Alperes do not vary in terms of importance, although costs differ significantly depending on how highly regarded the deity that it honors is.[85] The Capitanes Tradicionales help the Alperes in some fiestas. Another important cargo in this category is that of Paxon, the sponsor of Chenalhó's carnival (Tajimoltik, 'festival of games'). The Paxon is the second-most expensive and prestigious religious office, considered less important than the Alperes de San Pedro. All fiesta sponsoring offices have 1-year terms. Although fiestas usually last from two to three days, the Alperes are required to participate in rituals throughout the year (Arias 1990).

Municipal government: This category includes various offices associated with Chenalhó's municipal political body, located in the town hall at the Cabecera. Some of these offices—e.g., Regidor, Alcalde, Juez—date back to the creation of the first colonial *cabildos* in the 16th century (Calnek 1988, 29), although their functions and election procedures have changed considerably. Offices such as

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[84] For instance, the chapel located between Linda Vista, La Libertad, and Yaxalumil . Martoma de San Pedro Martir.

[85] Due to an error I did not include in the list the Alperes de San Pedro, which is the most important and expensive Alperes in Chenalhó. We should expect it to be as important and expensive as Paxon (the sponsor of Chenalhó's carnival.)

Presidente (municipal mayor), Regidores (the traditional councilmen), *Juez* (judge), and *Síndico* (vice-mayor) were instituted, erased, and reinvented by Mexican authorities at different periods. In theory, such offices are supposed to respect federal regulations; in practice, changes proposed at the federal level are often met with great resistance for jeopardizing 'traditional' forms of governance. For instance, a 2014 gender equality law reserving 50% of federal and local offices for women was met with disdain in most Chiapas indigenous municipalities. I heard from numerous people that appointing four female Regidores would be out of the question. Conflicts between federal and local institutions have existed for a long time, as Prokosch (1969) showed.

Some conflicts concern how officers are appointed. For instance, while the federal government mandated the ballots for the election of Presidente since the Mexican revolution until the 1960s, Presidentes were elected following a traditional 'plebiscito' procedure, where people (mostly *pasados*) meet and vote by raising their hands.[86] This has changed, and since the 1980s, ballots have been widely used. While Regidores of the PRI are chosen by *pasados,* in recent years this has changed with the strengthening of opposition parties (such as Verde and PAN). Now Regidores are appointed by prospective candidates of each party, a change which has led to heated debates between traditionalists associated with the PRI—who defend customary law—and opposition party candidates, who believe that *pasados* affiliated with the PRI should not interfere with within-party nominations.

The Mayoletik (the traditional policemen), have so far remained immune to attempts to modernize Chenalhó's decision-making procedures. Candidates for Mayoletik are first named by local communities and then elected in municipal-level meetings between *pasados*. After electing the Mayoletik, the *pasados* introduce the new officers to Agentes Municipales in a large meeting at the Cabecera, and ask Agentes to approve their decision (which, to my knowledge, they always do). Traditionally, both Regidores and Mayoletik are expected to be rotated on a geographic basis (a system which likely evolved to appease conflicts between hamlets and kin groups). As we saw, with the growth of political partisanship, this may change for the Regidores who get nominated. Some municipal offices today are seen as more 'traditional' than others: for instance, I heard many stories about the *Alcaldes*—officers who aid the Juez in homicide cases and conduct autopsies—who are often described as seers with superhuman psychic powers who have to follow strict taboos (see also Arias 1990, 145). Another example is the

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[86] Prokosch (1969) shows that these decisions were, for the most part, done in meetings between *pasados*. An exception was Oxchuc, which in 1956 elected protestants for the Ayuntamiento (Oxchuc was exceptional for adopting certain changes twenty years before other municipalities—more on this in chapters 6 and 7). Muncipal *plebiscitos* are still held today, but they take place during the election primaries, when party members choose their candidates.

Suplente Tradicional, a highly prestigious counseling office that is usually reserved for an elder who has passed a significant number of religious cargos.[87]

Other offices, such as the Presidente Municipal, have become indistinguishable from municipal mayors in Mexico. I saw the unfolding of three municipal elections during my fieldwork (2010, 2012, and 2015). In short, the Presidente is seen as an 'executive,' playing the role of a mediator between local and federal authorities (thus, speaking Spanish fluently and being able to 'pass' as a Mestizo during trips to Mexico city are seen as desirable qualities for a Presidente). The Síndico, on the other hand, is seen as a more paternal leader whose role is to mediate between the municipal administration and Chenalhó's diverse and fragmented communities. One of the Síndico's duties is to receive petitions for resources by Patronatos de Obras from different communities. For a Síndico, being 'good-hearted' (generous) and politically neutral are essential qualities, while Spanish competence is not a requirement. This category also includes Chenalhó's two police forces (the *Alguaciles* and the *Mayoletik*), which also originated due to tensions between traditional and modern forms of organization. While Presidente and Síndico follow 3-year terms (in accordance with Mexican law), more traditional offices such as Regidor, Mayol, and Alcalde usually follow 1-year terms, thus being decoupled from elected officers.

Community government: This category includes diverse civil officers nominated within local communities. Most of these offices gained prominence after the 1970s, as highland Maya towns became politically decentralized. As we saw earlier, the Agente is a community's headman (a leader with no executive powers). Usually appointed by vote, an Agente may serve terms ranging between 1 to 3 years. The office of Auxiliar (community police officer) was created in the 1980s to assist Agentes. Usually, each community names 2 Auxiliares. Today, Auxiliares have taken the role of local security officers, and the over 200 Auxiliares constitute a decentralized police force in Chenalhó (more on this in Chapter 6).

Perhaps the most important offices within communities today are the Comité de Educación (school committee) and Patronato de Obra, Patronato de Agua, or Patronato de Calle (construction, water, streets councils). The first take care of the organization of schools. To communities, school buildings have become analogous to what the Ayuntamiento (town hall) is for the municipal administration. Hence, it is not unusual for Comités de Escuela to perform political tasks that are not necessarily related to schools (see Chapter 7.2.2 for discussion). The Patronatos oversee petitioning municipal authorities for construction funds or representing the community in disputes over water or other resources. The Patronato de Obra is the most common office, existing in nearly every community in Chenalhó, while

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[87] The Suplente Tradicional receives a wage from the municipal administration. I have heard that a Suplente Tradicional nomination is a form of retribution to elders who spend most of their wealth in expensive fiestas..

Patronatos de Agua and de Calle tend to be present only in larger communities.[88] Finally, the *Krincipal*(*etik*) (from the Spanish 'principal') are tax collectors. In the past, the Krincipal mediated between the municipal administration and communities and were tasked with visiting communities to exact taxes or make announcements (Guiteras Holmes 1961, 65). The municipal Krincipal disappeared in the 1970s but was then reinvented within some communities, such as the Cabecera.

Mestizo cargos: The Mestizos of Chenalhó have their own set of cargos, consisting of three annual fiestas (two *Anuncios* and a Christmas celebration) and several minor offices of the *Junta de Festejos* (council of festivities). As I mentioned in Chapter 2, an interesting feature of Chenalhó's Mestizo cargos is that some emulate the model of individual sponsorship common among highland Maya groups. This is true for the Anunciode San Pedro and the Anunciode Jesus de la Buena Esperanza, each sponsored by a Mestizo *Capitán*. The Capitanes of the Anuncios are among the most expensive cargos in Chenalhó, and appointments are usually involuntary and happen by vote after each fiesta. Each Anuncio precedes an indigenous fiesta by a week—hence there is coordination and competition between Mestizo and indigenous offices. According to a Mestizo elder I interviewed, Anuncios were created to show indigenous people that Mestizos could also sponsor expensive fiestas. Since the 1980s, with the decline of the Mestizo population, some indigenous individuals have been appointed Capitán. Mestizos say that this is only true for indigenous families known to attend the Catholic masses in the Cabecera and speak Spanish. The Junta de Festejos offices usually do not incur expenses. They are volunteers who collect taxes for minor festivities and distribute invitations for the *anúncios*. Mestizos commonly serve the Junta de Festejos several times before being nominated to sponsor one of the Anuncios.

Land management: These offices were created in the 1930s during the implementation of land reform post-Mexican revolution. Traditionally, the offices of *Bienes Comunales* and *Comisariado Ejidal* were assigned to deal with conflicts over ejido lands. Today, Bienes Comunales has become a branch of the municipal administration tasked with mediating conflicts over land (for instance, the conflict over certain areas at the border between Chenalhó and Chalchihuitán). Bienes Comunales offices tend to be burdensome, as they are not remunerated and may last for up to three years. As a result, these offices have become increasingly prestigious and sought by wealthy men searching for status. The *Comisariado Ejidal* exists at the community level; it is equivalent to Agente to communities that are *ejidos*, such as the Ejido San Pedro (Chapter 2.1).

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[88] For example, Linda Vista does not have a Patronato *de agua*, as the community shares its water source with neighboring hamlets (La Libertad, Yaxalumil, Beumpale). There is, however, a supra-community organization called *sociedad del água*, which sometimes names people from Linda Vista and neighboring communities to serve as Patronato de Agua.

Educational offices: while doing interviews on cargo careers, people who have worked in the school system always described their profession as a type of 'cargo.' Schoolteachers often told me that their job provided a valuable service for the community and at the same time prevented them from serving more traditional religious fiestas. Intrigued by such responses, I added Schoolteacher, School Supervisor, and Chief of Education to the set of cards used in the present interviews. As we can see from Figure 5.1, educational offices were only marginally related to other cargos, being at the opposite end of religious patron saint festivals.

3.2. Ranking Cargos

Like in any other system of status-producing social roles, cargos are ranked in a hierarchy of importance. Earlier, in Figure 5.1, I included 'importance scores' for each office included in our set of 48 cards. Those scores were obtained through ranking interviews: between 2012 and 2014 we interviewed 47 males from the Cabecera (urban) and 17 from Linda Vista (rural), asking them to rank-order the 48 cargos from the most to the least 'important.' (The best translation to 'important' in Tzotzil is *tsots' ta sk'oplal*— literally meaning 'more forcefully talked about.') The results show an interesting picture of how the meaning of the cargo system is changing and reiterate some of Cancian's (1992) observations from Zinacantán.

The scores in Figure 5.1 shown earlier are the answer key obtained with a cultural consensus analysis. Table 5.2 shows the consensus scores obtained in different groups of participants. We found weak agreement across research sites (eigenratio = 3.1, mean competence = 0.625, n = 64). This low agreement, however, is not explained by urban-rural differences; if we examine consensus scores on each site individually, low agreement persists. For example, we found no agreement among Linda Vista participants (eigenratio = 1.63; second factor scores are low, which indicates the absence of subgroups). This result indicates a lack of familiarity with the municipal or local cargo system hierarchies in Linda Vista. This lack of familiarity with cargos makes sense given the stronger emphasis on kinship in the community. As I discussed in the previous chapter, kinship status transmission is strong, the cargo system becomes less important as an institution for allocating prestige.

Table 5.2: 'Which are the most important cargos?' ranking task consensus scores

Populations	n	1st/ 2nd factor	Eigenratio	Mean competence	Consensus
Rural	17	5.172/3.165	1.633	0.5	Weak
Urban	47	22.941/5.902	3.887	0.679	Moderate
Protestants	15	8.444/1.332	6.338	0.627	High
Non-Protestants	49	21.616/5.902	3.663	0.637	Moderate
Overall	64	27.955/9.017	3.1	0.625	Moderate

What explains the weak levels of agreement among Urban Tzotzil? To answer this question, I searched the data for subgroups of respondents. Among urban respondents, 12 had 2nd-factor scores higher than 0.3 (of these, 5 have near-zero 1st factor scores and high 2nd factors). This was strong evidence for the existence of a subgroup. Contrary to the most common pattern of answers, participants in this subgroup tended to rank paid administrative cargos (such as Presidente and Síndico) as the least important in Chenalhó, while ranking expensive religious offices as the most important. One of these participants was Mol Hernández, 76, an elder who served as Paxon in the early 1970s—a time when some cargos could cost up to twenty times an average income. In an interview, Mol Hernández insisted that paid offices should not be considered important and that "only cargos that matter are those in which people spend money… when people receive money to serve an office, they are stealing from the community." Mol Hernández's views represent an old conceptual model, built during the 1950-1960s 'cargo bubble,' when people competed in spending money in religious offices, believing that one could only build prestige by distributing wealth (see Chapter 6).

If Mol Hernández's views represent a more 'traditional' pattern of responses, is there a subgroup of respondents that shows an opposite pattern of answers? When we examine the answers of Protestants (across urban and rural sites), we find that they perform in direct opposition to traditionalist elders, ranking civil offices as the most important in Chenalhó, while placing expensive religious cargos at the bottom of the hierarchy. Protestants also had higher agreement scores than other groups (eigenratio = 6.34), indicating consistency across respondents. These results are not unexpected since the rejection of religious service and alcohol consumption have been the main drivers of conversion to Protestantism in Chiapas. Protestants tend to compensate for their rejection of religious service by taking a higher number of civil office appointments. Hence it does not come as a surprise that they rank civil offices as more important. In Linda Vista, Protestants tend to have higher second-factor scores than the Cabecera's Protestants, indicating clearer disagreement with the majority group of traditionalists.

The existence of subgroups in the data explains the low agreement levels in the cargo task. It also shows that religious affiliation at times can be a better explanatory variable than community membership. Interestingly, most participants' responses from either rural or urban sites are closer to Protestants than to traditionalist elders. The modal response across sites was to alternate between the municipal civil hierarchy (Presidente, Síndico) and religious offices (Paxon, Alperes). Still, the average person in Chenalhó is more secular than traditionalist elders, tending to converge toward the Protestant model. The traditionalist model, on the other hand, tends to be held by older participants like Mol Hernández, which indicates that it is being replaced by a more secular view of cargos (2nd-factor scores are negatively correlated with the age of participants; $r = -0.32$, $p = 0.03$).

3.3. Conceptual Salience

What is the prototypical concept of a 'cargo?' This question is important in examining how people allocate communal duties. We cannot presume that every respondent has complete knowledge of all types of offices. In the absence of complete knowledge, people will use their prototypical concept of 'cargo' to make inferences about the allocation of offices for which their knowledge is incomplete.

For instance, suppose we ask Beto, a fictitious Tzotzil man, about how the office of Patronato de Calle should be allocated. Beto does not know enough about that office to make a clear allocation decision. However, Beto can infer that Patronato de Calle might be similar to Comité since both are community-level offices (the latter being more prototypical, thus being used as a basis for inference by induction). Also, the extent to which some cargos are more salient is a measure of how much people know about these offices.

Prototypicality can be measured using a free listing task in which informants are asked to list items belonging to a certain domain. Prototypical concepts are easier to recall—i.e., more salient—and thus are more likely to be mentioned first. We conducted free listing tasks asking people to give a list of types of cargos (*abtel*) performed within the municipality and within communities. 20 participants from Linda Vista (Rural Tzotzil) and 36 from the Cabecera (urban site, including 4 Mestizos) participated in the task. During this same interview, we conducted two other free listing tasks whose results we discuss later in the chapter.

The instructions we used were as follows: **(a) Community level salience:** "what are some of the 'cargos' [*abtelal*] that people can serve in the communities?[89]"; and **b) Municipal level salience:** "what

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[89] In Tzotzil, *k'usitik xu' abtelal ta jpastik jech ta jujun comunidad*?

are some of the 'cargos' [*abtelal*] that people can serve in the Cabecera of Chenalhó?"[90] To avoid priming respondents, we referred to cargos by the ambiguous term *abtel* ('work')—that is, without qualifying service as *nichimal* or *patan* (religious or tax-work). Table 5.3 and Table 5.4 show the results for each free listing task for rural and urban respondents. To analyze the free lists, we use two metrics commonly used by anthropologists: the sum of each item's salience score and Smith's S.[91]

Table 5.3: Salience of community-level cargos

Rural Tzotzil			Urban Tzotzil		
Cargo	Salience (sum)	Smith's S	Cargo	Salience (sum)	Smith's S
Comité de Educación	15.07	0.793	Comité de Educación	28.653	0.796
Patronato de Obras	13.759	0.724	Agente	21.114	0.586
Auxiliar	9.358	0.492	Patronato de Obras	19.621	0.545
Agente	8.713	0.459	Auxiliar	10.561	0.293
Campo	3	0.158	Trabajos comunales	5.348	0.148
Patronato de Agua	1.919	0.101	Velador	4	0.111
Fiesta de Niño Dios	1.9	0.1	Campo	2.708	0.075
Trabajos comunales	1.888	0.099	Krincipal	1.655	0.046
Alperes (unspecified)	1.77	0.093	Maestro de escuela	1.6	0.044
Virgen de Guadalupe	1.457	0.076	Albanil	1	0.028

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[90] *K'usitik xu' abtelal ta jpastik jech ta slumal Chenalhó?*

[91] Salience is calculated as the inverse number of an item's order divided by the total number of items listed by an informant. For instance, if an informant names 5 items starting with *Agente*, the salience score of *Agente* would be 5/5 = 1. The following item's salience would be 4/5 = 0.8. To calculate the sum of salience, we simply add up the salience scores of an item for all informants. Smith's S is the average rank of an item across all lists weighted by list lengths, number of informants—see Smith and Borgatti (1997) for a discussion.

Table 5.4: Salience of municipal-level cargos

Rural Tzotzil			Urban Tzotzil		
Cargo	Salience (sum)	Smith's S	Cargo	Salience (sum)	Smith's S
Presidente Municipal	21.193	0.589	Presidente Municipal	12.101	0.605
Sindico	16.355	0.454	Sindico	9.250	0.463
Regidor	15.762	0.438	Regidor	7.846	0.392
Mayol	14.110	0.392	Mayol	7.479	0.374
Tesorero Municipal	11.689	0.325	Primer Alcalde	5.020	0.251
Juez Municipal	8.213	0.228	Alperes (unspecified)	4.832	0.242
Secretario Municipal	7.997	0.222	Paxon	4.498	0.225
Primer Alcalde	7.649	0.212	Juez Municipal	3.627	0.181
Paxon	7.386	0.205	Comisariado	3.339	0.167
Alperes (unspecified)	7.095	0.197	Tesorero Municipal	3.229	0.161
Alguacil	7.094	0.197	Alguacil	3.161	0.158
Suplente Tradicional	5.568	0.155	Suplente Tradicional	3.080	0.154
Capitan tradicional	4.333	0.120	Comité de PRI	2.652	0.133
Director de Obras	4.299	0.119	Capitan Tradicional	2.595	0.130
Martoma	2.527	0.070	Campo	2.000	0.100

For municipal-level cargos, the differences between urban and rural respondents were small. As we can see in Table 5.4, for people in both sites, the municipal cargos of Presidente, Síndico, Regidor, and Mayol were the most salient. Religious offices were mentioned much less frequently among participants from both sites, which shows that religious service no longer provides the template from which other service types are modeled. It is interesting to notice that the order of salience for municipal offices tends to follow the town's hierarchical structure, from the most to the least powerful offices: Presidente > Síndico > Regidor > Mayol—which suggests that formal chains of command are more important at the municipal level.

In contrast, the salience of community-level offices is not influenced by their hierarchical structure. Table 5.3 shows that Comité de Educación was the most salient community-level office among rural and urban respondents. Among urban respondents, Comité is followed by Agente, Patronato de Obras, and Auxiliar. Rural respondents recalled offices following their inverse order of importance: Comité > Patronato > Auxiliar > Agente. Hence it appears that hierarchies are not relevant at the community level, as they do not affect a cargo's salience. What explains these results? First, many people see community-level offices as equally unprestigious and burdensome. Although an Agente is seen as

more important than a Comité, service as Agente alone is unlikely to permanently place an individual at the top of the prestige hierarchy of his or her community. As I discussed earlier, service as Agente can help people in rural communities build ties to municipal authorities. Nevertheless, the prestige earned with that office tends to be seen as ephemeral compared with other cargos.[92]

Secondly, another explanation for the lack of effect of hierarchies is that community officers have little decision-making power, acting more like mediators between conflicting parties and between the community and the municipality. The salience of community offices may be influenced by people's expectations to serve them. Many people in Chenalhó never serve municipal cargos or high community offices such as Agente. Instead, they commonly rotate between low-ranking community offices, sometimes taking each office more than once. For instance, I once interviewed a man from the community of Usilukum who had served as *Patronato de Luz* (a low prestige community office) four times; he believed that his repeated nominations were a form of punishment for his outspoken criticism of prestigious community members. I discuss how they build expectations about service later in the chapter.

In sum, at the municipal level, a cargo's salience score is proportional to its place in the hierarchy. Community-level offices, on the other hand, are unlikely to be affected by hierarchies. These findings simply reflect the inner structures of municipal and community ranks. In short, hierarchies tend to be more vertical in the municipality and more horizontal within communities. These findings are important in light of the differences between how the municipality and communities solve conflicts (discussed in Chapter 3) and the increasing decentralization of power since the 1970s (Chapter 7).

3.4. Cost Awareness

The amount of money one spends, earns, or borrows while serving a cargo is a popular topic of gossip among Tzotzil groups (Haviland 1977). It is through gossip that a person's reputation is constructed and maintained—a process which has deep economic consequences for these communities. In Chiapas, status tends to be monetized: people can recall how much money they spend on specific fiestas, sometimes even decades after serving. The cost of sponsoring a fiesta is a direct reflection of one's status. It is not unusual to hear people brag about how they outspent other cargoholders.

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[92] I spent much time with former Agentes Municipales in Linda Vista—including men who had served that office twice. During that time, I never saw these men being treated with deference by others for having served that office. I also never heard gossip about someone having served as *Agente* (although I did hear some individuals being mentioned reverentially as pasado Regidor, pasado Presidente, and pasado Alperes). It was difficult to reconstruct the history of Agentes in Linda Vista, as it seems most people forget about who served the office after a decade or so. In the Cabecera, Agentes are considered more prestigious because of the community's larger size.

In some cases, when a fiesta fails to meet expectations, people might try to conceal expenditures to save face. I can exemplify this with an anecdote. Once Mariano (my research assistant) and I were approached by a drunk man who invited us to drink *pox* (liquor). The man explained that he would be that year's Alperes de San Sebastian and had started celebrating two weeks before the fiesta. I accepted the man's offer but Mariano refused to drink, explaining that he had health issues and was advised by a doctor to avoid alcohol. As it often happens, the man seemed insulted with Mariano's refusal to accept his offer. He let us know that his *pox* was *bats'i pox*—the most expensive and pure variety of the distilled sugar cane drink—and insisted that we should join him. Unfazed, Mariano continued to turn down his invitations. After several minutes, the man gave up and changed the topic of our conversation. He recalled that Mariano's brother-in-law had served as Alperes de San Sebastián five years before and had failed to provide enough food and drinks during the event. This was supposed to be cause for embarrassment for the fiesta sponsor and his extended family. It became clear that the man was using this information to humiliate Mariano. Moreover, he seemed to be able to accurately recall the amount of money that Mariano's brother-in-law had failed to spend in order to successfully sponsor the fiesta. With that, the man managed to coerce Mariano into accepting his liquor and signal deference to him.

In the past, the amount of money spent in a cargo was necessarily proportional to the prestige earned by its holder. Today, the relationship between expenditures and prestige has become more complicated. The prestige incurred by offices can also be proportional to how well remunerated they are. This change began to take place in the late 1970s when some officers started to receive small monetary compensations from the municipal administration. The first offices to be remunerated were civil and based at the town center, such as Presidente and Síndico. Salaries for those offices were generally low and failed to cover the costs that the service incurred. After the Zapatista rebellion (1994), the budget of Mayan towns in Chiapas grew considerably due to the appeasement policies implemented by the Mexican government. As a result, some traditional and civil offices also began to receive wages (more about this in Chapter 7.1.5).

Many people saw these changes as a necessary step toward modernizing Chenalhó's bureaucracy. Offering wages to cargoholders was not only a way of compensating people for their expenses, but also a means of replacing the existing system with a merit-based bureaucracy. However, such a merit-based system never came fully into fruition, as proposed changes were frequently countered by a powerful coalition between traditionalist elders and PRI politicians. Spending money remains an important source of prestige. Still, receiving a nomination to a well-paid and merit-based (at least in theory) municipal office such as Tesorero (treasurer) or Auxiliar de Obra*s* can also boost one's reputation. To be clear, social change in Chenalhó defies modernization models that posit that the introduction of a meritocratic

system eliminates the need for costly religious service (Dewalt 1975). What I saw in the field was a more complex picture: people held conflicting views over what constitutes 'honest' (that is, truly altruistic) community service (see Chapter 7.2.2). At times, these conflicting views give rise to interpersonal conflict—for instance, in cases where traditionalists with a history of spending money in religious fiestas questioned the validity of the prestige obtained with paid service.

We explored people's knowledge of costs and earnings of cargos by conducting a survey on cargo expenditures. We asked people to estimate the costs and wages of 53 cargos in Chenalhó. We used the list of 48 offices listed earlier with five new additions.[93] The goals of the survey were twofold: 1) to measure whether people agree on the costs and earnings of offices, and 2) to obtain an estimation of people's perception of costs associated with each office (i.e., a 'cultural answer key' of costs and wages). We conducted the survey together with the free listing interviews described earlier. Hence, the number of participants was the same: 20 men from Linda Vista and 36 from the Cabecera (including 4 monolingual Spanish speakers). Given the importance of cargos in Chenalhó, we expected to find high agreement for this survey. Figure 5.1 (the cargo taxonomy shown on page 287) shows the median difference between wages and expenses for each office (that is, the net profit of cargos). Table 5.5 shows the results of consensus analyses of cargo cost and cargo wage surveys by respondent groups.

Table 5.5: Consensus analysis of reported costs and earnings of 53 cargos

	Respondents	n	1st/ 2nd factor	Eigenratio	Competence	Consensus
Cargo Costs	Rural	20	8.933/4.312	2.071	0.594	Low
	Urban	36	22.110/2.951	7.491	0.77	High
	All	56	29.344/6.530	4.493	0.685	Moderate
Cargo Wages	Rural	20	17.395/0.598	29.069	0.933	High
	Urban	36	28.353/1.806	15.698	0.884	High
	All	56	45.496/2.527	17.997	0.898	High

As expected, I found agreement across urban and rural respondents. Agreement was particularly high when we asked participants about cargo wages (eigenratio = 18, mean competence = 0.99). This is not surprising since nearly all participants said that religious offices do not get paid to serve, thus answering '0' when asked about those offices' wages. Participants tended to agree less when asked about the costs of cargos. Agreement was lowest among rural participants (eigenratio = 2.07, mean competence

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[93] I added *vocal de bienes comunales*, *tesorero municipal*, *capitán de los* Alguaciles, *secretario municipal de obras*, and *archivista*. The later two are relatively new civil offices created in the 1990s.

= 0.59), which again indicates that the cargo system is less important in the rural area due to the greater role that kinship plays in distributing social status there (Chapter 4). Another reason for the low agreement scores among rural respondents is that most of the offices that we asked them about are performed at the municipal level. For some rural respondents, municipal offices are a distant reality. Instead of aiming at the more expensive municipal *Alperes,* many men from Linda Vista strive to serve as Alperes de San Pedro Mártir—a local fiesta dedicated to the saint housed in a chapel located between Linda Vista and the surrounding communities.

If we examine the competence scores of rural and urban participants together, we find a subgroup that accounts for almost 20% of all participants. 10 of the 56 participants had 2nd-factor scores higher than .5, meaning that they agreed with each other while contradicting the predominant model. People in this subgroup tended to take into account the living costs of remunerated offices (such as Síndico and Presidente). At the same time, most respondents said that these offices did not incur any costs, only profits. This subgroup also tended to underestimate religious offices' costs, giving unrealistic evaluations that leaned toward the lower end.

Participants who disagreed with the predominant cargo costs model tended to be socially marginal, with weak ties to past and present cargoholders. Some of these participants were too young to have served cargos, hence they lacked expertise. Others had avoided service for a variety of reasons. It might be useful to depict who the people who avoid cargos and lack knowledge of the system are:

1) two bi-ethnic (Spanish speaking) men from the Cabecera who had never served cargos nor been members of a community. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, bi-ethnic individuals tend to have peripheral positions in the Cabecera's social networks. Months after answering this survey, both men were forced to join Benito Juarez—the main community in the Cabecera—following a municipal decree that mandated every person in Chenalhó be affiliated with a community; a few months later, one of these men was appointed to serve as Comité).

2) A Pentecostal preacher from Linda Vista who had only served a low-rank office (Patronato) and made clear that he no plans of ever accepting nominations to religious offices (he and his family were expelled from the community 8 months after answering the survey—as seen in Chapter 3.2).

3) A former Presidente from Linda Vista who had an extensive career in the cargo system but had not taken any office since the late 1990s (his estimations of costs seemed outdated).

4) Two 18-year-olds from Linda Vista who had not served any cargo when they answered the surveys (though they were appointed to serve as Patronato and Comité the following year).

5) A 31-year-old unmarried man from Linda Vista who was stigmatized for living with his parents and often demonstrated contempt toward other members of the community.

6) a 21-year-old man from Linda Vista, son of a former Presidente, who became wealthy after receiving a truck from his father, which allowed him to monopolize the transportation line connecting Linda Vista to Yabteclum. This man had weak ties to older Linda Vista members: one year after we did this survey, I learned that he had purchased an expensive plot of land in the Cabecera and built a house there; he told me he had no plans to serve cargos in his community of origin.

What do these people have in common? They all happen to be in a position that allowed them to bypass the traditional expensive cargos. They tend to be socially marginal. Of the 10 respondents in this subgroup, 6 were from Linda Vista.

Inevitably, a question emerged while we conducted these surveys: to what extent do people's perceptions of cargo costs reflect actual expenses? One could argue that instead of asking people to estimate costs, a better approach to estimating costs would be calculating the amount of food and religious paraphernalia spent in each fiesta. In his work in Zinacantán, Cancian (1965, 81) combined both approaches. For some cargos, Cancian relied on item-by-item lists given by informants who appeared to be more 'reliable' (i.e., better educated and fluent in Spanish); for others, he recorded values as reported to him by his informants, without adjusting costs for the effect of inflation (p. 83).

I conducted a lengthy survey on cargo expenses recorded by anthropologists, which I detail in Chapter 6.2. To anticipate results, an anthropologist's account is unlikely to be more accurate than his or her informants' estimations. Take, for instance, a study by Ricardo Pozas (1947, 391), who in 1943 tried to reconstruct the budget of a Paxyon (a carnival sponsor in Chamula). After adding up the expenses for various items purchased for the fiesta (food, baskets, liquor), the Mexican anthropologist concluded that a Paxyon spent a total of $835.50. Pozas then interviewed a *Yajotikil*—one of the ritual experts responsible for guiding cargoholders on how much to spend and how to conduct fiestas. The elder estimated that a Paxyon cost $2,000—more than double the amount that Pozas had calculated. Which estimate was more accurate, the one made by Pozas or by the elders? The diaries of another anthropologist from that time, Calixta Guiteras-Holmes, provide external validation for the elders' knowledge: in 1944, she interviewed a man from Chamula who was preparing to spend $2,500 as Paxyon—an amount close to that reported by the Yajotikil two years earlier. Anthropologists are often unaware of the entirety of expenses required to serve a cargo, often focusing on beverage and firework expenses and ignoring the fact that cargoholders have to rent their ceremonial outfits and hire helpers of all kinds.[94] In contrast, ritual experts such as the Yajotikil are tasked with giving prospective cargoholders a precise estimation of how much money is

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[94] For instance, Siverts (1973) tried to estimate cargo expenditures in Oxchuc by adding up the amount of money spent on liquor barrels, corn bushels and the money spent on salt, meat, sugar, incense, and fireworks. He admits, however, that most of the food and costume expenses were left unaccounted for (p. 165).

necessary for a successful fiesta; failure to provide an accurate budget could result in serious reputation losses for both cardholders and ritual experts.

In Chenalhó, ritual experts are known as *Ok'es Nom*. The Ok'es Nometik ('town criers') are a group of musicians and elders who participate in every fiesta and learn the details of each by merely being there, watching and advising cargoholders year after year; these officers receive lifetime appointments. There is no reason to suppose that the Ok'es Nometik exert any influence on the cost of fiestas.[95] A more interesting question—which cannot be answered with the current data—would be to what extent ritual experts' knowledge influences cultural agreement on costs. Because we sampled households randomly, no Ok'es Nom participated in the cargo costs survey.

To summarize, people in Chenalhó agree on the costs and earnings of cargos, although agreement on costs is considerably lower in Linda Vista. Low agreement scores reflect a lack of familiarity with cargos. Lack of familiarity is more common among respondents who are socially marginal or have weak ties to past and present cargoholders. We found the existence of a subgroup of respondents who underestimated the costs of religious service and overestimated the costs of remunerated offices.

These results suggest that people's estimations of expenses tend to be accurate. By using the Cultural Consensus Model, we might be able to obtain estimates that are more reliable than the ones made by anthropologists and ritual experts. In the next section, I use the results from the cargo cost surveys above to explain how people allocate cargos in an experimental game.

4. Decision-making: Collective and Individual

4.1. Distributing Burdens Collectively

We now turn to how communities make decisions on how to allocate cargos and whether individual agency can influence the allocation process. As we saw, cargo nominations are complex, acephalous processes. Decisions can involve entire communities with no stable hierarchies or executive roles. Elders certainly exert a significant influence in collective decisions. But like everyone else they lack formal authority to make decisions regarding matters that affect other community members.

I approach these questions by complementing ethnography with formal methods and behavioral games. To study collective decisions, I designed an experimental game where participants were asked to

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[95] In Zinacantán, ritual experts are known as *moletik* (lit. 'elders'). Trosper describes the moletik as former cargoholders and musicians who learn by participating in fiestas, and remarks that "the moletik do not control the price or the expenses of the cargos although they do manage the system" (Trosper 1967, 87).

allocate a set of cargos of pairs of other community members. To study individual preferences for cargos, I designed two free listing tasks: first, we asked participants to name cargos that they intended to serve in the future. Second, we asked them to list cargos that they like.

If we rely on ethnography alone, it becomes difficult—if not impossible—to disentangle the role of individual preferences and strategies from collective decisions made during the communal assemblies. I designed the cargo allocation game to address whether (and to what extent) notions of fairness influence how communities allocate burdensome offices. As discussed in Chapter 3, people in Linda Vista and the Cabecera employ different procedures to determine who gets priority in the allocation of resources and burdens (taxes). In Linda Vista, prestige takes precedence over need: high-prestige individuals tend to be prioritized over low-prestige ones, being more likely to receive resources and less likely to receive burdens. In the Cabecera—and especially so among Mestizos—need is more important than prestige; the poor receive priority when people allocate resources, while the rich are more likely to receive burdens. Among Urban Tzotzil, prestige influences allocations, but to a much lesser extent than in Linda Vista.

If notions of fairness influence the allocation of cargos, the same patterns discussed in Chapter 3 should be replicated in the present experiment. Participants in Linda Vista will be more likely to make reputation-based allocations, while those in the Cabecera will prioritize individuals in need. People in Linda Vista should be less likely to allocate costly cargos to high prestige participants. In contrast, people in the Cabecera will be more likely to give costly cargos to wealthy individuals who can afford them.

The cargo game followed a formula similar to the one discussed in earlier chapters: participants were shown successive pairs of photos of community members and asked to 'vote' for a person to be nominated to an office. For each round, we asked: 'given the two individuals shown in the pictures, to whom would you give cargo X?' We repeated this question 84 times, using a random combination between pictures of individuals and cargos in each round. The people shown in the photos were the same who agreed to participate in previous tasks. As part of the larger study introduced in previous chapters, we collected information on 1) how participants rank each other in terms of wealth, prestige, dominance, and cooperativeness, and 2) how they relate to each other in terms of kinship and friendship (or *social network distance*, measured as the average reported frequency of interaction between two participants); for those results, see Chapter 3.1.4. The game was conducted in 2014 in separate visits to participant's houses. We interviewed 31 people (heads of household) in the Cabecera (24 Tzotzil and 4 Mestizos) and 30 from Linda Vista (Rural Tzotzil).

The games resulted in a dataset with 4,872 decisions (84 for each participant).To analyze these data, I use a similar mixed-effects model as the ones used in Chapter 3.3. But differently from those, the model below does not include random effects from *Wealth*. A preliminary analysis showed that the

between-subject variance for $Wealth$ was low when people allocate cargos, hence there was no reason to add random effects for it.

$$Cost_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Kinship_{ij} + \beta_1 Freq\_Int_{ij} + \beta_1 Prestige_{ij} + \beta_1 Wealth_{ij} + \beta_1 Coop_{ij} + u_{0j} + \\ + u_{1j} Prestige_{ij} + e_{0ij}$$

$Cost_{ij}$ is the costs and earnings associated with each cargo chosen at random for each game. These costs were obtained using a cultural consensus analysis on the cargo costs survey described earlier (Section 3.4). Because cargo costs can vary widely, I used natural logarithms to normalize their distribution, and then standardized costs between 0 and 100. The independent variables $Prestige_{ij}$, $Wealth_{ij}$, and $Coop_{ij}$ are, respectively, the difference between the *prestige*, *wealth*, and *cooperativeness* ranking scores between subjects depicted in the photos used as experimental stimuli (all rankings were converted to z-scores). $Kinship_{ij}$ and $Freq\_Int_{ij}$ are the difference between the kinship and frequency of interaction between the respondent and participants depicted in the photos shown. For more information on how these rankings were obtained, see Chapter 3.

As stated earlier, I included random effects for Prestige. I run separate models for each study group; each model has random effects for *Subject*. Table 5.6 compares the results across groups.

Table 5.6: Experimental allocation of costs of cargos

Predictors	Rural Tzotzil			Urban Tzotzil			Mestizos		
	Estimates	Std. Error	p	Estimates	Std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p
(Intercept)	1.03	1.23	0.403	2.07	1.26	0.101	-10.62	3.03	<0.001
Wealth	0.99	1.27	0.436	2.05	2.08	0.324	12.82	7.91	0.105
Prestige	-25.00	3.88	<0.001	-2.89	5.87	0.622	5.09	7.75	0.512
Coop.	35.13	3.60	<0.001	27.06	8.99	0.003	3.04	13.14	0.817
Kinship	0.41	0.75	0.579	2.93	1.46	0.046	-3.89	2.41	0.107
Freq. Interaction	1.93	1.48	0.192	-0.57	1.09	0.600	1.03	2.46	0.675
Random Effects									
σ^2	3422.01			3186.32			3067.60		
τ_{00}	27.27 $_{Subject}$			64.36 $_{Subject}$			61.18 $_{Subject}$		
ICC	0.01			0.01			0.01		
N	30 $_{Subject}$			24 $_{Subject}$			4 $_{Subject}$		
Observations	2520			2016			336		
Marginal R^2 / Conditional R^2	0.067 / 0.073			0.049 / 0.056			0.081 / 0.088		

As in the previous games, variance was high and intraclass correlation (ICC) were low in all models. But notice that the ICC was even lower than the experiments reported in Chapter 3.3. This means that participants tend not to be consistent with one another; each person uses different strategies across iterations as the game progresses. This is not surprising given that we used random combinations of photos and cargos as stimuli and given that the number of questions asked to each participant was low (84). Nevertheless, participants were—to a small extent—consistent in their answers, which is evidence by the fact that there are differences across groups. Another reason for the low ICC scores is that the present task introduces much more 'noise' when compared to previous experiments. Participants were asked to allocate a diverse set of cargos—some of which are barely comparable (e.g., schoolteacher and Alperes). One possibility to deal with such noise would be to filter the dataset, removing civil or paid cargos that do not match the traditional notion of *abtel* held by Tzotzil people. However, since this would add complexity to the analysis and to the presentation of results, I will only present an analysis of the complete dataset. I chose to present the simplest models possible.

As we discussed in earlier chapters, concepts of 'fair allocation' differ between rural and Urban Tzotzil—the earlier are more likely to make decisions based on social status, while the latter prioritize need. Results for cargo allocation games are partially consistent with tax and resource allocation games reported in Chapter 3.3. Rural respondents show a preference for making reputation-based distributions, while the effect of prestige declines for Urban Tzotzil and Mestizos. Among Rural Tzotzil, prestigious individuals were far less likely to receive nominations to expensive offices (ß Prestige = -25, p < 0.001). Prestige is not clearly associated with Urban Tzotzil and Mestizo allocations.

For Rural and Urban Tzotzil *Cooperativeness* was the variable more clearly associated with the allocation of cargo costs (ß *Coop*. RT = 35.13, UT = 27.06; p-value < 0.005). Hence, when Tzotzil allocate cargos, they prioritize people who they regard as prosocial or 'generous'—i.e., those who have a reputation of 'spreading their wealth' (to use a local expression). Differently from game results in Chapter 3.3, *Wealth* did not clearly influence allocations, which rejects my initial hypothesis that Urban Tzotzil would allocate cargo costs to wealthy people who can afford them. Still, notice how the coefficients for Wealth are higher among Urban Tzotzil (2.05) and Mestizos (12.82) when compared to Rural Tzotzil (0.99). Notice that, for Mestizos, the p-value for their *Wealth* coefficient seems to be approaching statistical significance (0.105). Since we only interviewed 4 Mestizos, a larger sample would likely have shown a clear relationship between *Wealth* and allocations.

To summarize, Rural Tzotzil give expensive offices to people seen as cooperative and low-prestige. The effect of prestige falls with urbanization, and Wealth, among Mestizos, seems to be the predominant criteria for determining who gets to take cargo burdens. These results match, in part, those

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from previous chapters. Equity norms influence the distribution of cargos, although this relationship is not as clear as the one we found when we asked people to allocate money and taxes (Chapter 3.3).

A field anecdote might illustrate how people alternate between allocating cargos based on *Cooperativeness* and *Prestige* in the Rural Tzotzil site. While conducting games interviews in Linda Vista, I noticed that people allocated expensive fiestas to the (prestigious) man who back then was serving as Agente. I asked people to explain why some people should receive certain cargos instead of others. People often told me that the Agente 'had a good heart,' 'liked to spend,' or 'loaned money when you needed it.' Despite being prestigious, this man was more likely to receive costly offices than others. But not all prestigious men in Linda Vista are also seen as cooperative. Some elders, while respected for their history of service, are also described as uncooperative (*stoy sba*, 'puts himself above others') or reclusive or stubborn (*muk' xa'ay*, 'does not listen'). This is a common pattern. One of these cases is a man in his 60s who owns a large store (for Linda Vista's standards) and is married to a woman in her 30s. People often made negative gossip about this man: for instance, I heard that he was greedy and refused to pay some of the mandatory taxes, that he seldom participates in public events, that he is ill-tempered (*chopol yo'on,* 'has a bad heart'), and that he disavowed paternity of his eldest son (who also lives in the community). Despite having a bad reputation as a cooperator, this man was frequently described as 'respected.' His prestige was not only the consequence of his age, but stemmed from his past history of serving important cargos such as Regidor and Alperes, which granted him the status of *pasado*.

In Linda Vista, people draw a clear distinction between *character* and cargo *career*. To gain respect, one only needs to show competence to serve the community. As discussed earlier, having good character, and being seen as cooperative is instrumental for receiving nominations for prestigious offices. However, once a man achieves a certain degree of prestige and becomes a *pasado*, he can relinquish his reputation as 'cooperative' and begin to act in a more self-interested way. As I mentioned in previous chapters, Linda Vista's *pasados* are often allowed to skip community meetings or taxes. In other words, the community gives a 'pass' to those who achieve a high status. Incidentally, the three men who received the least nominations for cargo in the allocation game were *pasados* that match the 'respected but uncooperative' profile. This reiterates a point I made earlier: that prestige is a form of non-transferable capital that people can accumulate and that grants them certain rights.

These results show that when communities allocate cargo burdens, they employ the same notions of fairness that influence collective decisions regarding the distribution of resource and taxes. People tend to use the same rationale for solving fair division problems regardless of the type of resource at play. For Rural Tzotzil, these notions of fairness rest on the community's prestige ranking. The degree to which a person is considered 'respected' determines the likelihood that he or she will be appointed to serve

mandatory and burdensome offices. Among Urban Tzotzil, prestige is losing importance. This does not mean that all cargos are allocated based on fairness. Some, such a schoolteacher and Comisariado, tend to be allocated based on competence (those who are formally educated and fluent in Spanish were more likely to receive such nominations). A more detailed analysis of the cargo allocation would require more space and hence it is beyond the scope of this work.

A final note of caution might necessary. The results above do not replicate the complexity of decision-making processes that takes place when communities meet. As I discussed in earlier chapters, experimental allocation games can be a useful as a means of indexing individual <u>preferences</u> for equitable distribution. Collective decisions are complex and are not necessarily the outcome of aggregate individual preferences. Equity preferences are just one amongst many factors influencing decision-making in Tzotzil communities. Other factors include, for instance, social networks, differential social capital, and individual background and agency (which I discuss in the next section). As I mentioned earlier, we conducted these interviews a week before Linda Vista held the meeting to choose the new Agente, which allowed us to test whether our allocation game predicted the election of officers. In the game, the person who was most frequently named for Agente was Fox—one of the men who was nominated for the office (but recall that he escaped the nomination because he was already serving a cargo). In the game, the man who was elected as Agente also received a high number of nominations, although most of the cargos that he received were for lower civil offices, rather than Agente.

4.2. To Sway a Crowd

Cargo nominations, as we saw, are collective decisions. But to what extent can individuals influence their odds of receiving cargos? Could people somehow strategize and manipulate the collective decision-making process as to help themselves to receive a desired nomination? In this section, we approach these questions.

The role of individual agency in determining nominations tends to be either overlooked or overstated in studies of cargo systems. In settings where people are expected to volunteer to serve, anthropologists tend to focus on individual choice. Such was the case of Cancian's (1965) study of Zinacantán, which was done at a time when people were entering their names into waiting lists and waiting up to 20 years to serve expensive offices. As I show in Chapter 6, when the demand for offices is high, and the supply is low, people may compete for nominations and volunteer to take cargos, causing their costs to go up. Competition for offices, however, is not the norm in Chiapas, and according to the historical data I gathered, it only existed only from 1940 to the 1970s.

When the supply of offices outweighs the demand—which is usually the case—people tend to avoid volunteering for service. When this happens, communities usually take steps to enforce nominations. Enforcing nominations is a difficult process that can jeopardize relations of cooperation and cause communities to break apart. Usually, a group of respected elders (the *pasados*) takes command of the process and tries to influence how offices are distributed. The pasados use their influence to decide who gets to be nominated to which office and apply sanctions to those who refuse to serve.

However, even in times when cargo service must be enforced, individual agency can influence who gets to be nominated by the elders. For example, a man can increase his chances to receive a nomination by increasing his public exposure (e.g., by showing up at meetings, speaking eloquently in public, and building a reputation of being 'reasonable,' cooperative, fair, and impartial). Paradoxically, a man can also increase his odds of being nominated by trying to hide or skipping community meetings—as we discussed in the case of Linda Vista's Agente earlier. When such is the case, however, the community may punish the reluctant person with a burdensome, less desirable nomination.

Today, most nominations are enforced in Chenalhó. Volunteering for service is accepted, although people seldom do it. As we saw in Chapter 2, in recent years it has become more common for Mestizos to volunteer for religious offices (which is happening because Mestizos have more disposable income on average; see Chapter 1.2.3). In Tzotzil communities, every household must participate in the cargo system at some point. In 2015, the obligation to serve was formalized in municipal law stating that every household in town had to be affiliated with a community. The law was designed to discourage 'freeloading'—that is, to prevent people from owning property in the town without paying their fair share with service. In the absence of municipal or federal taxation, people owe taxes exclusively to their communities. Hence, community membership is necessary for taxation to take place.

Before 2015, I knew several households that avoided joining a community precisely to avoid being taxed with burdensome cargo nominations. One of these households is the one head by Eugenio, 56, a retired Mestizo schoolteacher. Although he lived in Chenalhó his entire life, Eugenio took a long time to join a community. In the 2010s, he joined Tejeria, a community located to the south of the Cabecera. He did so because he had bought a small plot of land near the community; it is generally a good idea to belong to a community located near one's land. However, Eugenio was never active in his community. He skipped meetings and paid fines to avoid cargo nominations. As a schoolteacher, he could argue that he had no time to perform community service (active schoolteachers are often allowed to skip community service until they retire). In 2015, Eugenio joined the Cabecera's largest community. He had no other choice. His house and store were located near the Benito Juárez school. The new law authorized the Ayuntamiento municipal to confiscate the property of households that were not affiliated with any

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community. It also advised people to become affiliated with communities that were located near their property—a means of increasing taxation over people who owned more than one plot of land. After the law passed, people started to gossip about who would be the first family to be expelled from the town. Eugenio's three younger brothers, along with other Mestizo families that did not belong to any community, topped the list. All these families would eventually join the Cabecera community with Eugenio.

After joining the community, and perhaps expecting to receive a nomination, Eugenio started to put on an unusual performance for a Mestizo. In public meetings, he began to influence the community to give him a favorable cargo nomination. Generally, it is common for teachers (or former teachers) to receive the office of Comité de Educación (*komiteal*)—a dull and burdensome 1-year mandate. I spent considerable time with the Cabecera's Comités and described some of their work in Chapter 3.2. Recall that Comités not only have to deal with issues related to the management of schools (mediating between teachers and parents, organizing graduation ceremonies), but also have to perform manual labor (e.g., fixing school facilities) and collect taxes/donations to finance secular fiestas required by schools. The cargo is burdensome and receives extraordinarily little respect. A Presidente of a Comité can easily work up to 40 hours a week in his cargo—sometimes half of that time during weekends. Comités routinely spend their money on transportation and food. For Eugenio, that was clearly not a desirable option. Still, the nomination seemed inevitable given his background as a former schoolteacher. Eugenio could not afford a nomination to a religious office. In 2014, he had to sponsor the expensive Mestizo fiesta of Anuncio de San Pedro, where he spent about 120,000 pesos—a high amount of money which prevented him from taking another expensive office.

Perhaps Eugenio could serve as Agente, Auxiliar, or Krincipal. Agente, however, would never be entrusted to a new community member. Moreover, his odds of receiving Agente were low (about 0.3%), given that only one Agente is allocated to the community's 329 households every year. Receiving a nomination to Auxiliar was also out of the question—as we will see later, Auxiliares have taken the role of policemen. Hence, its incumbents are expected to be younger than 40. A nomination to Krincipal (tax collector) was unlikely for a Mestizo since the cargo requires some familiarity with Tzotzil rituals and prayers. Aside from Comité, there were only two options for Eugenio: Patronato de Agua and Patronato de Obras. The earlier position was created in late 2014, and its three incumbents had just been nominated. The Patronato de Obras election, however, would be due soon.

Patronato de Obras is the only civil cargo that has no pre-determined term length. In the Cabecera, the five Patronatos have only one task to accomplish: to secure construction funding for the community (e.g., money to build a gymnasium, a new school building, etc.). Once Patronatos secure

those funds, they can ask the community to replace them with new incumbents (*k'exoletik*). How Patronatos raise money is a problem that they need to solve on their own. They may petition municipal authorities, candidates for Presidente, or wealthy individuals (more about petitions in Chapter 7). It usually takes about a year and a half for Patronatos to succeed. If they fail to obtain funds during that time, people begin to feel impatient and verbalize complaints during community meetings. In 2015, I saw people in Linda Vista vote to fine its Patronatos de Obra for taking much longer than expected to receive funds for a new school building. The community decided that the incompetent officers would have to pay five boxes of soda to the community. Without flinching, the Patronatos respected the decision and paid the fine.

If we assume that Eugenio sought to maximize the amount of prestige for the least effort possible, Patronato would be a more interesting nomination than Comité. Patronatos work less. They usually meet once a month, while Comités may hold two or more meetings a week (some of these meetings may last as long as five hours). From watching and being with these officers for a year, I estimated that Patronatos work less than ten hours a week—against up to 40 weekly hours by Comités. Finally, there are less Patronato positions (5) than Comités (13), making the earlier office scarcer and thus more prestigious. When a Patronato secures funding for a school building, he may brag about his feat as long as the building stands. In other words, the prestige acquired by a Patronato is more durable since it materialized in public construction.

When Eugenio joined the Cabecera, I was struck by his behavior in community meetings. He performed as if he was a candidate for an office—although it was not clear what office he was trying to obtain. He enthusiastically talked (mostly in Spanish, sometimes in broken Tzotzil) about changing the community, making things happen, bringing resources, getting construction done, and establishing a more effective administration. Sometimes he would get emotional, gesticulate, and change his voice tone—mannerisms which would never be acceptable for a Tzotzil man. He frequently bragged about his connections to wealthy people. Once he was applauded (albeit hesitantly) after one of those lengthy speeches. For a man who avoided joining a community and serving cargos for most of his life, that performance seemed bizarre. Had a Tzotzil man behaved like Eugenio, he would probably have been shut down and ostracized by the elders, who would see his behavior as overly expansive and disrespectful. Mestizos, however, can be tolerated when acting that way. Eugenio's eccentricity and his pidgin Tzotzil ramblings seemed to impress—or perhaps amuse—his Tzotzil audience.

2015 was a turbulent time in Chenalhó due to rising partisanship and the elections for municipal mayor. At that time, Eugenio and his brothers, who used to be affiliated with the PRI, publicized their allegiance to Chiapas Unido, a new party seeking to challenge the nearly century-old PRI rule in the state.

The candidate of Chiapas Unido was Martin Cruz, a wealthy Mestizo who had formerly served as Presidente municipal for PRI (as we saw in Chapter 2.2.3). Perhaps Eugenio's performance was a means of promoting the Chiapas Unido candidate, but this is unlikely. Promoting opposition parties within communities would be a perilous move. Moreover, as the elections began to cause turmoil in the town, the community established that debates regarding the election for Presidente had to be left out of general assemblies. Although Eugenio spoke publicly about his allegiance to the Chiapas Unido candidate, he was careful enough not to start delicate political debates. Once, he announced that supporters of Chiapas Unido would hold a separate meeting to organize a fundraiser for their candidate. That was just as far as he could go in bringing up politics during community meetings. Informally, supporters of Chiapas Unido began to see him as an organizer and called him 'Comité de Chiapas Unido,' even though the community never held a formal vote to create such office. At that time, supporters of the Partido Verde also came up, informally, with their own Comités.

It seemed that Eugenio was chasing a nomination for something, though at that time I could not tell what exactly he wanted. Was he thinking about being Presidente in the future? After several attempts, I finally managed to interview him in his home in May (2015). Eugenio, however, was not willing to disclose his intentions. Behaving like a pre-candidate for an office, he avoided questions and responded in monotone, short, 5 or less word sentences. He repeated several times a vague discourse about how corruption and bribes are endemic in the town, and how (unspecified) things need to change; he dutifully avoided addressing specific events or people related to the municipal elections.

In June, the community held an assembly to—among other things—choose the five new Patronatos de Obra. A *pasado* named Eugenio for Presidente of the Patronato, the highest status Patronato position. He was elected quickly and unanimously. Afterward, I asked some people in the community why they voted for Eugenio. I heard that Eugenio 'spoke well,' was reasonable, was well connected and thus could be more successful in petitioning wealthy people—like Martin Cruz—for resources. He appeared to be an articulate and well connected man in a good position to secure access to resources. Eugenio's public performance was crucial in securing that nomination. Had he avoided public meetings, his story would have been very different. He would likely have been punished with a nomination to a low-status position within the Comité de Educación. In fact, another Mestizo, Juan Carlos, 40, who had also avoided cargos his entire life and joined the Cabecera community at the same time as Eugenio, was nominated as *Vocal* of the Comité de Educación—the lowest status cargo in the community. Differently from Eugenio, Juan Carlos showed no interest in speaking in public during meetings. He would arrive late and leave as early as possible, always sitting on the back of the room. As we can see, Juan Carlos' evasive attitude did not prevent him from receiving a cargo.

Given the inevitability of cargo nominations, individual agency and performance may draw the line between a 'good' and a 'bad' outcome. From the perspective of a soon-to-be cargoholder, the question is how to maximize one's chances of receiving a desirable nomination. Failing to comply with community regulations, behaving in an anti-social manner, hiding from public events, or being involved with factional disputes can result in undesirable nominations to burdensome or unimportant positions. But by signaling a mixture of prosociality and competence—and perhaps by putting on act or pulling a few strings—a prospective cargoholder may sway the crowd to his favor and secure a nomination to a less burdensome, more prestigious position.

4.3. Modeling Agency

The reader may have noticed that the story of Eugenio above rested on the assumption that people are rational maximizers, that is, when choosing a cargo, people will try to maximize their returns in prestige for the least effort possible. My assumption of rationality was not exclusive to Eugenio: the fact that he was a Mestizo and a former teacher had nothing to do with the way he navigated through the cargo system. Rather, any person in Chenalhó facing those same circumstances—having to choose between Comité and Patronato—and having a minimal knowledge of those offices would lean toward the latter office. Being more burdensome, less prestigious, and less scarce, the cargo of Comité in the Cabecera is less desirable than Patronato, even though these offices tend to be ranked together in terms of importance (see Figure 5.1 on page 287). This would be true, of course, only if we assume that everyone in Chenalhó holds the same conceptual model and knowledge of cargos.

In reality, information is never distributed evenly. Some people have more nuanced knowledge of the differences between cargos, which could influence their preferences and perhaps give them an edge when competing over scarce positions. Several factors could determine one's level of expertise with cargos. As I mentioned earlier, network centrality seems to one crucial factor. Socially marginal people with fewer ties to former cargoholders tend to have less accurate knowledge of fiesta costs. But we also saw that respondents tended to agree, overall, when responding to our surveys about cargos. It is fair to say, thus, that most people in Tzotzil communities have a basic—and usually reasonably accurate—knowledge of the cargo system. Let us assume, at least theoretically, for now, that this basic knowledge is uniformly distributed.

I am not the first to describe preferences for cargos as rational. Cancian (1965) analyzed waiting lists of cargos in Zinacantán and showed that there was a close correspondence between a cargo's prestige and how many people had volunteered to serve it. However, the relationship between preferences and prestige was not linear and depended on the status of the volunteer. Zinacantecos preferred cargos

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described by Cancian as 'prestige bargains'—that is, cargos that were not the most prestigious but that offered a good amount of prestige—relative to a person's status—for less money. Haviland (1977, 236) criticized Cancian by noticing that there were situations in which people preferred to serve more expensive offices as long as the office allowed them to farm while performing their duties. This was the case for cargos that only required sponsoring a saint-patron fiesta (such as Alperes in Chenalhó) which usually takes less than a month to prepare. While cargos such as Regidor or Mayol are less expensive than Alperes, they force its incumbents to work full-time and live a whole year in the Cabecera, which prevents them from farming and having an income during the year of service. Haviland's argument does not rule out Cancian's notion that preferences for cargos are rational; Haviland only introduced a new variable driving people's preferences: how much time is required to spend in office. Needless to say, time commitment can be quantified and seen as a type of cost, and Haviland's observation that people try to minimize time commitment is compatible with a rational choice model.

Nearly every ethnography today pays attention to how individual agency influences trajectories and outcomes. No social system is perfectly coercive—all leave some room for individual agents to act and change theirs and other's outcomes. This has become a truism in anthropology. However, few ethnographies have tried to build formal models of agency. This lack of formal models is because ethnography is a research method that invites inductive reasoning—i.e., people collect disparate facts and then formulate theories to explain patterns observed in the field.

Here, I outline a simple model of people's preferences for cargos using a deductive approach. I will build a model that attempts to explain observed preferences for cargos amongst those who participated in our surveys.

Unlike Cancian, I did not have access to waiting lists in Chenalhó (waiting lists ceased to be important in the 1980s, for reasons I discuss in Chapter 6). To elicit preferences for cargos, we used free listing tasks. First, we asked people to name the offices that they believed they would take in the future (either by volunteering to serve or by receiving a nomination from the community). Then we asked them to list the cargos that they 'liked' (*kupin*) the most. Doing these interviews proved to be challenging. As we saw earlier, people have good reasons to keep their preferences secret—e.g., to avoid envy or being seen as an aggrandizer. In the first free list, some participants responded that they did not think about which cargos they would serve in the future, using expressions such as *ja' k'usi xi ta be* ('it is what is said along the way'). When this happened, we insisted and asked people to at least try to guess what they believed they would be named for. Still, of the 56 participants we interviewed, eight said that they could not answer our question; six responded that they had no intention of taking cargos and only wanted to work for themselves. The second free list failed spectacularly: almost half of the people surveyed (25)

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answered that they did not like any cargo. This was clearly not a subject that people wanted to—or could—talk about.

Nevertheless, we can use the first free list to have a sense of what people's preferences for cargos are. Table 5.7 shows the results.

Table 5.7: Free listing task results ('which cargos do you think you will serve in the future?')

	Cabecera			Linda Vista		
Rank	Cargo	Salience	Smith's S	Cargo	Salience	Smith's S
1	Patronato de Obras	11.583	0.463	Comité de Educación	6.667	0.392
2	Comité de Educación	10.083	0.403	Patronato de Obras	6.667	0.392
3	Alperes (several)[96]	7.750	0.310	Paxon	3.667	0.216
4	Auxiliar	4.667	0.187	Alperes (several)	3.583	0.211
5	Agente	3.667	0.147	Mayol	2.500	0.147
6	Capitan Tradicional	2.750	0.110	Auxiliar	1.333	0.078
7	Oficina de la presidencia	1.000	0.040	Suplente Tradicional	1.000	0.059
8	Regidor	1.000	0.040	Presidente municipal	1.000	0.059
9	Paxon	1.000	0.040	Capitan Tradicional	0.833	0.049
10	Alcalde	1.000	0.040	Agente	0.667	0.039
11	Mayol	1.000	0.040	Regidor	0.500	0.029
12	Suplente Tradicional	0.750	0.030	Patronato de Luz	0.333	0.020

Results show that most people expect to serve Patronato de Obras or Comité de Educación. Cabecera informants lean toward the earlier, while Linda Vista informants show an equal preference for both. This is not surprising since these are amongst the most common cargo today—almost everyone has to pass through them at some point. However, what about Patronato de Agua, a common office that was only mentioned by one respondent? And what explains the fact that Alperes, Agente, and Paxon appear at the top of the list? All these offices are scarce, burdensome, and expensive. Perhaps these offices are more salient than others, and thus are easier to recall. However, as we saw earlier, offices such as Mayol and Regidor, which were not mentioned as much, also have high salience scores. Hence the free listing results need to be explained by other factors aside from the supply and salience of offices.

Consider the information from previous surveys. For each cargo, we know: 1) its earnings and costs and 2) how it ranks, in terms of importance, relative to other offices. Both measures were obtained through a cultural consensus analysis of interviews with multiple participants from both rural and urban

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[96] To simplify the analysis, I combined different types of Alperes (fiesta sponsors) into a single category.

sites. I also collected information on how scarce each office is and how long their term lengths are. We can use this information to build a utility function for each office. Based on the assumption that preferences for cargos are rational, we calculate a 'score' (utility) for each cargo. Then, we can rank our dataset of 48 cargos by utility scores and compare results to the free listing table discussed above. Let U_c be cargo utility function

$$U_c = f(E, C, T, R_c, R_i, P)$$

Where E is the amount of money (in pesos) <u>earned</u> in an office during a year of service; C is the <u>cost</u> (in pesos) of a cargo during a year of service; T is the <u>term</u> length[97] of an office (in years: 1, 2, 3…), R_c is the importance <u>ranking</u> score of a <u>cargo</u> (a scalar from 1… N ranks, with lowest values being highest ranking office, e.g., Presidente), R_i the status ranking of a given household i, and P is the probability that a household will randomly receive the office in any given year. To calculate P:

$$P = T^{-1}\left(\frac{N_c}{N_i - N_c}\right) \quad (1)$$

Where N_c is the number of existing positions for each office (which, for community-level cargos, can vary from one community to another). N_i is the number of households affiliated to the communities I studied in 2015 (329 for the Cabecera, 83 for Linda Vista, and 7,286 for Chenalhó as a whole, a number which will be for municipal offices such as Presidente or Regidor). Community-level offices have the highest P of all cargos. When we rank-order cargos based on P, we obtain, For Linda Vista: 1) Patronato de Obras, 2) Comité de Educación, 3) Patronato de Agua, 4) Patronato de Luz, and 5) Auxiliar. For the Cabecera: 1) Comité de Educación, 2) Patronato de Obras, 3) Patronato de Agua, 4) Krincipal, and 5) Auxiliar. Unsurprisingly, the lowest P cargos are those served at the municipal level, such as Secretario or Juez municipal. Thus, P alone fails to explain the cargo preferences that we detected with the free listing task. Other variables—such as C and E—need to be included in our model.

My model will not assume that people prefer to reduce costs when serving cargos. Instead, let us assume that people try to maximize both prestige and costs. This assumption is based on Cancian's long-term study of waiting lists, which showed that people in Zinacantán consistently competed to serve the most expensive cargos in the town (F. Cancian 1986). Although this assumption may be counterintuitive to Western readers—who expect rational people to minimize costs—, it makes sense for Tzotzil communities. The rationale behind this is that cost reduction is a risky long-term strategy. As we saw (3.4), a cargoholder who fails to meet the expectations of costs associated with an office risks suffering

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[97] I excluded offices that have no pre-determined office length from the analysis (such as schoolteacher and school supervisor).

reputational losses. The risk of losing reputation by serving a cargo is inversely proportional to its cost and required effort. A cargoholder would prefer to serve Alperes de San Sebastián ($22,500) than Alperes de San Francisco ($16,000); he/she would also prefer to serve once as Paxon ($72,500) than serving as Alperes twice (~$40,000). Although Paxon is one of the most expensive cargos, the risk of losing prestige over it is lower since the fiesta is more difficult to sponsor, and therefore it results in fewer reputational losses when failure occurs. Moreover, when a household serves as Paxon, it decreases the probability of receiving another expensive office (such as Alperes) in the future. For a prospective cargoholder, thus, the more rational long-term strategy is to take the most expensive and prestigious cargo as soon as possible in order to avoid several nominations to low-ranking offices in the future. Important fiestas also draw more attention and sympathy from the community, which can instigate greater solidarity and reduce the chance of failure.

When Cancian did fieldwork in Zinacantán, all cargos were costly. Things have become more complicated today. Many cargos are also 'profitable'—that is, cargoholders may receive a stipend from the Ayuntamiento to serve. The model assumes that people prefer cargos with higher earnings. In theory—other things being equal—a household would prefer Mayol ($36,000 yearly) than Agente ($12,000) as Mayol is better remunerated. In practice, other things are not equal. Only households at the bottom of the social ladder (or in severe poverty) would prefer Mayol over Agente. This is because the latter office is considered far more prestigious and hence a better long-term investment. Thus, a proper utility function needs to include information about the ranking (in terms of importance) of cargo. Let us define a cargo's desirability, D, as:

$$D = P\left(\frac{(E + C)/R_c}{T}\right) \qquad (2)$$

In this equation, cargoholders attempt to maximize earnings, costs, and prestige; results are weighted by the probability of a household receiving an appointment at random (P). We divide the sum of earnings and costs ($E + C$) by the prestige ranking of an office (remember: higher ranking scores indicate lower prestige; a cargo with $R_c = 5$ should be read as 'fifth level cargo'). Cargoholders also seek to spend less time in service (T). In other words, households seek to minimize effort: a short and prestigious position that allows one to earn or spend as much money as possible would be more desirable. When we rank cargos by this measure, using rankings and cost estimations from Linda Vista and the Cabecera separately, we obtain the ranking in Table 5.8. Notice how results are beginning to resemble our participants' preferences (Table 5.7).

Table 5.8: Simulated ranking of the 10 most desirable cargos

Ranking	Linda Vista	Cabecera
1	Agente	Patronato de Obras
2	Patronato de Obras	Regidor
3	Regidor	Agente
4	Alguacil	Alguacil
5	Comité de Educación	Paxon
6	Mayol	Mayol
7	Alperes	Alperes
8	Paxon	Patronato de Agua
9	Auxiliar	Presidente Municipal
10	Presidente Municipal	Auxiliar

D ranks cargos based on their absolute desirability, ignoring factors such as the social status of the individual who holds these preferences. Notice, in Table 5.8, that Presidente appears as the 10th most desired office. Presidente ranked as a desirable office since it is, by a large margin, the most profitable of all cargos. Nevertheless, very few people in Chenalhó are in a position that allows them to consider running for that office. The probability that a household has of receiving that office by chance is minuscule (4.57×10^{-5}). A better utility function needs to weigh a cargo's desirability by the relative status of the individual chooser. For example, a highly reputable household with a lengthy cargo career will prefer cargos higher in the ranking of offices (e.g., that have a low R_c). In Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, I showed the results of a task in which we asked people from Linda Vista and the Cabecera to rank-order other people in the community. I used the cultural consensus analysis to generate an 'answer key'—that is, a modal answer based on the overall pattern of responses. Let us define the prestige score of our participants as R_i. I used the same method—ranking tasks—to obtain R_i and R_c. Hence, we can add both variables to our utility function.

The formula below defines a cargo's relative desirability, $\overline{D}$. It is assumed that a household is more likely to prefer a cargo when the absolute difference between R_c ad R_i is low (i.e., a household will prefer cargos that approximate its level of reputation).

$$\overline{D} = \frac{D}{|R_i - R_c|} \tag{3}$$

The above equation is likely the best we can do—for now—to model cargo preferences. Does $\overline{D}$ predict the results of our free listing task discussed earlier? Unfortunately, I do not have R_i scores for every person who participated in the cargo free listing task (we conducted these interviews in separate

fieldwork seasons and used random sampling in each task). Still, it is possible to use the above formula to simulate how desirable cargos would be for households of different status groups. Let us define six status groups: high status (a), high status (b), middle status (a), middle status (b), low status (a), and low status (b); R_i = {1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6}. Table 5.9 and Table 5.10 show results.

As I discussed in Chapter 3.1.3, prestige in Chenalhó is unevenly distributed. About 30% of people in the town receive over 70% of all the prestige. Thus, most participants fell within the low-status A and B groups.

The first thing to notice is that Patronato de Obras appears to be desirable across all status groups. Comité de Educación, in contrast, is desirable only to low status individuals—and particularly so in Linda Vista. In theory, a Patronato de Obras does not receive a wage or must commit to spending his money while in office. Most participants told us that Patronato does not incur any significant expenses or earnings. In reality, Patronatos can claim for themselves a percentage of the money that they collect for construction (see examples in Chapter 7). Some informants took those bribes into account when answering the cargo costs task. As a result, our cultural consensus analysis ranked Patronato as a lucrative office. The model explains why older and reputable informants such as maestro Eugenio and some pasados—would prefer to receive an appointment to Patronato instead of more prestigious and traditional offices such as Alcalde or Paxon.

The model also explains why Alperes, an expensive office, appears as a highly desirable position for low-status individuals. According to the model, Paxon and Regidor (the traditional councilmen) would be more desirable for mid-to-high status households. In Linda Vista, Agente is by far the most desirable office across groups. Compared to other offices, Agente is more prestigious and receives a higher wage. Given the smaller size of the community, Agente is an attainable position for most households. The model also shows why some civil offices (Patronato de Agua) or religious ones (Martoma) were seldom mentioned by participants—these require a high amount of time commitment with few expenses and without returns in prestige.

The model I proposed here is far from perfect and does not replicate free listing results exactly. To improve it, we would need a measure of how much effort people must invest in each office. As I do not have these data, my model assumed that a cargos term length was equivalent to the effort spent in office. Nevertheless, the model proposes an explanation as to why people in Chenalhó expect to serve a combination between civil (Patronato, Comité), religious (Alperes, Paxon), and traditional government offices (Regidor, Mayol). These offices, at first, may appear unrelated: some are scarce, while others abound; some are expensive, while others are remunerated; some require participation in religious rituals,

while others do not. In common, they all fit the notion that people try to maximize expenses, earnings, and prestige at the lowest effort within the realm of possibilities open to them.

In the model above, I used certain assumptions about human rationality to replicate the results of a free listing task that measured people's interest in cargos. I showed that people prioritize cargos that are prestigious (as expected) and expensive (counterintuitive). I also showed that people's preferences may depend on their relative ranking within their communities. While prestigious people are more likely to prefer upper cargos that match their status, low-prestige people prefer mid-level cargos. These results are not entirely conclusive since I lack data on each cargo's required effort levels. Nevertheless, the point of this exercise was to show how we can use data obtained with formal methods (free listing, ranking tasks) to make realistic predictions about people's preferences under a rational-choice framework.

Table 5.9: Predicted cargo preferences relative to status group (Cabecera)

Rank	High status (A)	High status (B)	Middle status (A)	Middle status (B)	Low status (A)	Low status (B)
1	Presidente Municipal	Agente	Primer Alcalde	Suplente Tradicional	Patronato de Obras	Alguacil
2	Agente	Regidor	Agente	Agente	Agente	Comité de Educación
3	Regidor	Patronato de Obras	Regidor	Regidor	Alperes	Patronato de Obras
4	Patronato de Obras	Juez Municipal	Paxon	Paxon	Comité de Educación	Mayol
5	Sindico	Sindico	Primer Regidor	Patronato de Obras	Mayol	Agente
6	Paxon	Presidente Municipal	Patronato de Obras	Alperes	Junta de Festejos de J	Auxiliar
7	Comité de Educación	Paxon	Segundo Alcalde	Segundo Alcalde	Alguacil	Patronato de Agua
8	Alguacil	Primer Alcalde	Alperes	Comité de Educación	Regidor	Regidor
9	Alperes	Comité de Educación	Comité de Educación	Alguacil	Capitan Tradicional	Alperes
10	Mayol	Alguacil	Alguacil	Mayol	Martoma de Rosario	Patronato de Luz

Table 5.10: Predicted cargo preferences relative to status group (Linda Vista)

Rank	High status (A)	High status (B)	Middle status (A)	Middle status (B)	Low status (A)	Low status (B)
1	Presidente Municipal	Regidor	Regidor	Regidor	Alperes	Patronato de Obras
2	Regidor	Agente	Segundo Alcalde	Patronato de Obras	Anuncio de Jesus	Patronato de Agua
3	Patronato de Obras	Patronato de Obras	Paxon	Agente	Patronato de Obras	Mayol
4	Agente	Paxon	Agente	Paxon	Capitan Tradicional	Alguacil
5	Paxon	Primer Alcalde	Primer Alcalde	Alperes	Comité de Educación	Auxiliar
6	Primer Alcalde	Presidente Municipal	Suplente Tradicional	Patronato de Agua	Patronato de Agua	Alperes
7	Sindico	Sindico	Patronato de Obras	Segundo Alcalde	Regidor	Martoma de Santa Cruz
8	Segundo Alcalde	Segundo Alcalde	Comisariado Ejidal	Primer Alcalde	Agente	Krincipal
9	Alperes	Primer Regidor	Primer Regidor	Alguacil	Anuncio de San Pedro	Regidor
10	Alguacil	Suplente Tradicional	Secretario Municipal	Mayol	Alguacil	Junta de Festejos de J.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I framed the cargo system as a self-organizing matching market. I argued the system emerged to solve a fair division problem created by the decline of traditional kinship and inheritance systems in Chiapas. As lineage-based status transmission systems declined during the colonial period, communities were left without institutions for allocating status while maximizing fairness. The cargo system provides a response to that problem: it allows burdens and social status to be distributed fairly (that is, in a way that satisfies most individuals involved in the decision-making process).

Since Tzotzil communities lack a hierarchical decision-making structure, every collective decision regarding cargo allocation is subject to negotiation in horizontal assemblies. In the first part of the chapter, I provided the ethnographic description of one of these assemblies in which people in Linda Vista nominated an Agente Municipal—the community's highest office.

In the second part of the chapter, I used formal cultural analysis to compare how people in rural and urban communities classify and rank municipal and community-level offices. By comparing rural and urban communities, we can approach social change with synchronic data. I showed that, counter to initial expectations, people in rural communities have less agreement over how to classify cargos, which likely stems from the greater importance of traditional kinship and inheritance system in determining who gets to receive social status.

In the third part of the chapter, I attempted to model collective and individual decision-making. Results from a cargo allocation game show that the same notions of fairness (or equity) that determine the allocation of resources and taxes also influence the allocation of cargos. We found that while the Rural Tzotzil community tends to assign more expensive cargos to low-status individuals, among Urban Tzotzil and Mestizos expensive cargos tend to be allocated to wealthy individuals. I also showed that by assuming that individuals attempt to maximize prestige and expenditures, it is possible to model individual preferences for cargos.

Because Tzotzil communities are autonomous, they are not required to pay federal taxes. In the next two chapter, I approach cargo systems as a form of taxation which combines modern social roles (offices) with the (likely pre-Columbian) idea of paying taxes through labor. As in any fiscal system in modern societies, participation in cargos is what binds Tzotzil communities together. Chapter 6 shows that a sudden increase in cargo costs triggered by Mexican credit programs (1940-1970) led to a temporary strengthening of the cargo system.

CHAPTER 6. NATIVIST CYCLES: RITUAL COSTS, DEBT, AND THE REINVENTION OF TRADITIONS

In the previous chapter, I explored individual and collective factors determining who gets to serve cargos (and when) in different communities of Chenalhó. As we saw, decision-making regarding cargos is influenced by a combination of individual strategies seeking to maximize prestige and notions of equity that shape collective decision-making.

In this chapter, I take a historical overlook at cargo service in Chenalhó and other Chiapas Mayan towns. Using data from individual histories of cargo service and historical accounts, I show that, across Chiapas, ritual costs increased from 1940 to 1970 and declined afterward. I argue that changing ritual costs act as an incentive for people to forget or reinvent traditional offices that entail high costs for their incumbents. I call the fluctuations in interest toward traditions 'nativist cycles'—a notion that should provide an alternative to linear models of social change.

I explain the rise and fall of ritual costs and the consequence of several governmental programs that injected credit and liquidity into Maya economies. To understand how these programs affected these economies, I review some of the colonial factors and circumstances that shaped Maya financial practices in Chiapas—chiefly, I highlight the problems of money and credit scarcity caused by the colonial system of controlled market allocation (the *repartimiento*). From the 1930s onward, Mexican government programs sought to address such centuries-old issues by providing easy access to credit to its indigenous populations, a move which inadvertently resulted in a strengthening of traditions and growing indebtedness. I show that these changes can be measured by tracking the cost of religious fiestas sponsored by cargoholders and interest rates on informal loans over time.

1. Returns to Tradition

1.1. Chenalhó's Three Police Forces

The walls of Farmacia Pérez are covered with military memorabilia. The pharmacy—a two-story building located in the Cabecera of Chenalhó—is a popular destination among people from small hamlets who are looking for *inyecciones*.[98] The photos on the pharmacy's wall tell the story of its owner, Agustín,

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[98] Injections of supplements or antibiotics, an expensive but widely sought medical practice in Chiapas. The practice of injecting patients with supplements became widespread in the 1950s as the Instituto Nacional Indigenista

38, one of the many children of Mol Pérez, a famed *kabilto vinik* (prayermaker) from Linda Vista. In one of the pictures, young Agustín poses in front of an armored jeep, wearing a camouflage suit. In another, he smiles while holding a rifle amidst what appears to be a jungle. On a small wooden table, lies a wooden statue of the Mexican Eagle, along with other Mexican nationalist paraphernalia, perhaps placed there in honor of the institutions that helped him build a reputation as a 'strong man.'

Despite his modest origins, Agustín ascended rapidly through Chenalhó's ranks. As a teenager, he left Chenalhó to join the Mexican military. After he was discharged, he opened a pharmacy in the Cabecera, where he took several prestigious civil and religious *cargos*. Today, he and his siblings own a chain of pharmacies and are a respected lineage in the town. They routinely take offices associated with the local PRI leadership. I sought Agustín several times over the years to hear his views on issues taking place in Linda Vista and the Cabecera. As a political insider of both communities, he gave helpful insight into the mechanics of rural vs. urban politics in Chenalhó.

In Tzotzil communities, certain people act as mediators between local and national society. Agustín exemplifies this type of actor. With first-hand experience of the Mexican state, they use their elite status to replicate governmental structures within the local level. In such a manner, in 2002, Agustín played a critical role in moving reforms that sought to modernize Chenalhó's law enforcement organization. He was in the military during the 1990s—Chenalhó's most turbulent period, marked by the Zapatista rebellion, the Acteal massacre, and other conflicts. During that period of instability, he developed an appreciation of modernist notions of discipline, order, and dominance. He began to believe that Chenalhó's conflicts could only be pacified with better surveillance and the use of force. Such views, however, directly contradict traditional Tzotzil conflict resolution, which discourages the use of dominance in favor of dialogue (see Chapter 3, 2.1).

Despite those views, Agustín is nevertheless a traditionalist. He served prestigious religious *cargos* such as Paxon—the sponsor of Chenalhó's carnival. In a manner typical of traditionalist *pasados*, he sometimes refers to people involved in civil organizations as *jsa'-k'opetik*, 'trouble-seekers,' a term which refers to people who disrupt social harmony (and may hurt their own reputation while doing so). In 2002, Agustín found an opportunity to put this mixture of modern and traditional ideas into practice. After his older brother Andres Pérez (the founder of Linda Vista) won the municipal mayor elections, he began to advise Chenalhó's administration on how to make law enforcement more effective.

(INI) administered basic nursery courses to indigenous men known as *promotores culturales,* or cultural promoters (Harman 1974).

I asked Agustín about a photo hanging in his pharmacy's wall in which six men wearing uniforms and brandishing batons pose for a picture inside a gymnasium. He said that the photo registered the moment when he "helped to create Chenalhó's first professional police force." "Those men were the first Alguaciles, whom I helped to train back in 2002," he explained. As of today, the Alguaciles have grown to a body of 16 police officers who work mainly night shifts and are headquartered in the Cabecera. Aside from wielding batons, these officers wear standard blue uniforms that resemble those of police officers from other towns in Chiapas. The leader of the Alguaciles, known as *komandante*, must undergo tactical training in San Cristóbal de las Casas. He must then transfer the knowledge he acquired to his fellow officers.

Although Alguaciles are supposed to serve for a year, the customary rule of yearly officer rotation is not always enforced for them. I have met Alguaciles who could stay in office for several years on a merit basis. Alguaciles receive a monthly wage from the municipal administration. They can be deployed to any community using a pickup truck and attend calls over domestic violence, livestock theft, or to imprison drunkards.[99] Like other municipal officials, they are not allowed to intervene in conflicts between communities or with a political or religious nature.

By establishing a remunerated and professional police force, Agustín sought to emulate the standards, methods, and organizational structure of law enforcement organizations from non-indigenous towns. Before the creation of civil offices, policing was either done informally by community 'helpers' (*jkoltavanej*) or by a small group of municipal officers known as Mayol(etik) (from the Spanish *mayor*). Since most conflicts were settled within communities, people only requested the intervention of the municipal officers as a last resort.

The traditional municipal police officers, the Mayoletik, still exist today. They perform a variety of secular and religious duties. They must live in the Cabecera for a year, although they sometimes travel to rural communities to make arrests, enforce cargo nominations, or to charge fees. "Mayol" is a common office among Tzotzil groups—aside from Chenalhó, it exists in Zinacantán, Chamula, and other neighboring towns. The office likely dates to the 16th-century establishment of colonial extraction systems such as the *encomienda* and *repartimiento*, in which officers known as *Alcaldes Mayores* surveilled indigenous areas and collected tribute. Until the 1960s, Mayol was Chenalhó's least prestigious cargo. It acted as a gateway for introducing young men to the town's civil-religious hierarchy. Serving as Mayol

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[99] *Ta yich' k'elel elek' yak'ubel nax ak'ubal*, 'they watch for drunken thieves early at night,' in Agustín's words.

was a prerequisite for advancing to more prestigious and expensive positions. Aside from policing,[100] the Mayoletik have other—more esoteric—responsibilities, such as reciting the *riox*, a class of protective prayers aimed at shielding the town from external threats. This ritual role, which was described in early accounts of Chenalhó, remains unchanged today. It is not uncommon to witness the *Smatomaril*[101]—the leader of the Mayoletik—perform a *riox* at dawn. Facing the town hall, the officer repetitively recites sacred prayers of petition, punctuating every iteration with the Tzotzil-Maya version of the sign of the cross.

Agustín cites a rise in burglaries and livestock theft in the Cabecera in the early 2000s as the event that drew people's awareness of the alleged inefficiency of the traditional police. At that time, the burglaries became the subject of several municipal assemblies for debating strategies to mitigate rising urban crime. Agustín took advantage of these meetings to argue for professionalizing the police. Before presenting his ideas to civil authorities, however, he mustered support from the traditionalists who had been the principal supporters of his brother's mayoral campaign. He consulted with *pasados* in private, asking them whether it was possible to modernize Chenalhó's police while at the same time preserving *usos y costumbres*. He knew that *pasados* would likely oppose parts of his plan. Traditionalist elders tend to react strongly against any proposed changes to how cargos are allocated (I gave an example in Chapter 3.2.3). Cargo nominations, as we saw (Chapter 5), are almost never done on the basis of merit or efficiency. Instead, concerns over fairness, need, or social status tend to take precedence in determining who gets to serve what office. To professionalize the police, Agustín would have to convince the *pasados* to change the traditional cargo nomination procedure. The new police officers would have to be chosen based on their ability to enforce the law. They would need to receive tactical training and would have to be fit and strong enough to deter deviant behavior. Such criteria, however, were foreign to how police officers had been traditionally selected. To convince *pasados* to change them would be an uphill battle.

To avoid friction with traditionalists, Agustín could have proposed to increase the number of Mayolal positions—a move which would have kept the traditional police force intact while improving its ability to surveil Chenalhó burgeoning population. Instead, he opted to push for more drastic changes. Like many in Chenalhó today, Agustín is skeptical of *usos y costumbres* (customary laws). He described the Mayoletik as unprepared and inefficient, wasting time with work that was not directly relevant to law enforcement. "The traditional police had to walk on foot. They used to carry firewood, pick up trash and

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[100] Cancian (1965, 38) described the Mayol as being "responsible for sweeping the town hall and for doing errands for both the civil officials and the *moletik* [elders]… They also act as policemen. The cargo requires almost no expenditures, and service in it may hurt rather than enhance a man's position."

[101] From the Spanish *Mayordomo Rey*.

put it in the garbage trucks," he told me. "During traditional fiestas, they had to recite the *riox* [prayers of petition]… they did not receive a wage back then, so they had to stockpile corn and beans [before taking office]… It was a lot of work; they wasted a lot of time. Come Saturday and Sunday, the Mayoletik had to go to the markets to ask for tribute because during those days there were more merchants there." Although Agustín saw traditional offices as necessary for maintaining social stability, he did not regard them as infallible. When I asked Agustín what constituted an 'efficient' police force, he recalled his experience in the Mexican Army during the Zapatista rebellion, citing the military intervention as an example of how force can be used to settle conflicts quickly. By evoking his experience in the army, he reaffirmed his status both as a security expert and as a mediator between the national government and the Tzotzil town.[102]

Although the *pasados* supported Agustín's goal of tackling urban crime, they suggested that some aspects of the traditional cargo system would have to be maintained in the new police. First, the new officers would somehow have to be rotated, allowing for people from all communities to have a chance to serve. Second, the pasados argued that there was no reason to invent a new police force from scratch. Instead, Agustín could simply revive the "ancient" office of Alguacil and modernize it. According to the *pasados*, the ancient Alguacil were officers known for being "young, strong and able to carry heavy loads over long distances." Agustín estimated that the 'ancient' office disappeared "90 to 100 years ago, maybe even before that." With the support of the *pasados*, Agustín petitioned the municipal administration and obtained funds to buy police uniforms and a truck. He trained the first six new police officers to ensure that they would perform professionally.

Why did the pasados insist on naming the officers as Alguacil? When I asked Agustín about this, he admitted not being genuinely interested in knowing about the 'ancient' cargos mentioned by the pasados. His main goal was to professionalize the police and, to do so, he had to make concessions to traditionalists. Taking the name of a defunct cargo was one of these concessions. Agustín was by no means motivated by a desire to revive ancient traditions. The new officers were supposed to perform like modern police and obey a dominance hierarchy that was markedly different from that of *usos y costumbres*. The new police force would have to remain secular to function efficiently, existing separately from the traditional cargo system.

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[102] Army veterans have performed the role of mediators between state and indigenous communities since at least the Mexican revolution (Warman 1980, 144).

1.2. When Modernization Backfires

One way to understand the creation of the Alguaciles is to frame it as part of a militarization process. From such a view, the logic of military—with its hierarchical chains of command and notions of efficiency, discipline, and order—somehow managed to infiltrate a Mayan group known for its strong sense of autonomy. More strikingly, the militarization process did not have to be propounded by an external force. Instead, it was the subject of emulation by prestigious members of the native population. This was my initial interpretation of Agustín's story.

When scrutinized, however, the story of the Alguaciles reveals a more complicated reality. Agustín's goal of professionalizing the nascent police force has only met partial success. Since their inception, Alguaciles have devolved into officers who closely resemble the Mayoletik—the traditional ritualized police. Today, one can hardly tell the difference between the two police, aside from the obvious fact that the Alguaciles tend to work night shifts. While living in Chenalhó, I noticed a stark contrast between the way Agustín described his new police force, and how Alguaciles worked. It was not uncommon to see Alguaciles reciting the petitionary prayers that were supposed to be exclusive to the Mayoletik. I saw the Alguaciles participating in fiestas and performing traditional religious roles. Both traditional and professional police seem o intermingle frequently. Agustín's plan to institute a fully secular police force has fallen short if its original goals.

What prevented the new police from remaining secular? To answer this question, we must examine the history of Alguaciles more closely. First, Alguaciles did not disappear "90 to 100 years ago" as Agustín believed. According to Köhler (1990, 36), the office existed until the late 1960s. Guiteras-Holmes—who did fieldwork in the 1940s—described Alguacil as the least prestigious cargo in Chenalhó. The duties of an Alguacil were to police the town, to deliver messages, and to carry heavy loads for high-status elders (Guiteras-Holmes 1961:83). The office terrified young men for being exceedingly burdensome. Those who were nominated for it were routinely ridiculed by their peers and humiliated by elders. People commonly saw an appointment to that office as a form of punishment.[103]

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[103] As Guiteras-Holmes states, "I heard of several young men who had been disrespectful to their fathers-in-law, and were appointed alguacil as a form of punishment; this appointment also aimed to teach them to behave as a Pedrano should, for to be in the company of the authorities who possess wisdom and patience is regarded as one way to learn the virtues of discretion, moderation, dignified deportment, truthfulness, and self-control" (Guiteras-Holmes 1961, 77). It is important to notice that *alguacil* appointment did not carry the same ritual obligations associated with upper offices. Unlike the Mayoletik, Alguaciles did not have to undergo seasonal rites of passage marking the beginning and the conclusion of their terms and were exempt from taboos that all other officers had to respect (Guiteras-Holmes 1961, 83-87). Generally, offices that are less ritualized tend to be seen as less important;

In the late 1960s, younger generations began to reject cargo appointments. That period marked the peak of a nativist trend which started in the 1940s. Being the lowest and least desirable cargo in Chenalhó, Alguacil was bound to disappear at a time when people had begun to evade any kind of community service.

Incidentally, the new police force created by Agustín appeared at a time of growing nativism marked by the reestablishment of ethnic identities among the Chiapas Maya. This new nativism, which began in mid-1990s—post-Zapatista rebellion—had roots in the urban Cabeceras, where most religious fiestas take place. Decision-making in Chenalhó has, over the past five decades, become more decentralized, with small rural communities now managing their resources autonomously. It was during this period that a third police force appeared in Chenalhó: the *Auxiliares*.

Auxiliares were civil cargos created in the 1970s to help *Agentes* (community headman) to manage local affairs. Over time, these officers began to the take policing duties within communities—most of which tend to be far away from the Cabecera and outside of the reach of the municipal police. Today, there are over 200 Auxiliares in Chenalhó. Each community names two officers. Their terms range from one to three years, depending on local regulations. Auxiliares are the main police force in Chenalhó, vastly outnumbering the 30 or so Alguaciles and Mayoletik based in the Cabecera. The Auxiliares are nominated by their own communities—a process which municipal authorities cannot influence by any means. Because Auxiliares meet most of the demand for policing in Chenalhó, people in small communities rarely need to request help from the municipal officers. Auxiliares do not receive tactical training of any kind. The office requires no expertise in law enforcement. Whether these officers are qualified enough to provide safety is up to their own communities to judge.

A casual visitor to the Cabecera of Chenalhó will see the Alguaciles as typical police officers. Wearing uniforms and riding on the back of a blue truck, they employ tactics acquired through formal training. On the surface, it may appear that these officers are becoming increasingly militarized over time. However, a deeper look shows that not much has changed since the 1940s, when policing was done by 'helpers'—or *koltavanej*—chosen by local communities. Just like the Mayoletik, today's Alguaciles can spend time helping with rituals and reciting prayers. Policing is not their sole activity, as it had been originally intended. This return to tradition happened because most policing is now done by the Auxiliares—the untrained officers appointed within small communities. The Auxiliares supply most of the policing that Chenalhó needs. Thanks to the rejection of dominance hierarchies, the decentralization

an office's prestige is in large part built during the public performance of sacrifice that is expected from officeholders.

of policing, and to a rise in indigenous nativism in post-1994 Chiapas, the municipal forces—Alguaciles and Mayoletik—were able to return to their traditional ritual roles. Perhaps the simple fact that *Alguacil* was named after an 'ancient' cargo may have driven these officers to reinvent traditional duties. While on the surface the appearance of these officers has changed, the structure of policing in Chenalhó has remained resilient.

1.3. Nativist Cycles

The story above shows how frameworks such as *modernization* and *militarization* can convey a misguided sense of unidirectionality and irreversibility to processes of social change. In Chiapas, the interactional patterns and roles that form *usos y costumbres* exist in a state of constant decay and reinvention. June Nash, who saw the Tzeltal of Amatenango abolish and reinstate the cargo of *Alférez* in just about a decade, described such a phenomenon as the "pragmatic reworking of traditions" (Nash 1985:335). Nash noticed that traditions can be abolished or reinstituted by the conscious actions of individuals or groups, often for purely practical purposes.

People may decide to terminate a cargo when a community runs out of resources or willing candidates to perform the office. This phenomenon was documented in Amatenango (by June Nash) and Sibaca, a Tzeltal community in Ocosingo (see Zabala Cubillos 1992). Communities can also decide to reallocate resources from rituals to activities seen as more beneficial. A story I heard from a man from Yabteclum (Chenalhó's central area) helps to illustrate how this happens. Years ago, one of the communities of Yabteclum voted to cancel the collection of taxes to fund the *mixas* (rainmaking ceremonies performed three times a year). Religious taxes are seen as heavy burdens in some communities. In recent decades, converts to Protestantism have challenged the efficacy of rainmaking rituals and asked to remain exempt from religious taxes. Two years after Yabteclum abolished its *mixa*, however, the community was hit by drought and a poor harvest. In an assembly, community members voted to reinstate the annual rituals, alleging their cancelation had angered the mountain spirits responsible for making it rain. After experimenting with abolishing one of its oldest traditions, the community decided that reverting to its original state was the safest way to go.

Some anthropologists have framed the replacement of traditional institutions with secular ones as an aspect of progress (e.g., Miller 1965). 'Progress,' however, also implies that steps toward the universal goal of modernization are irreversible. The reality is that traditions can be terminated and reinstated regularly, and the histories of these reinventions can be quickly forgotten. Some studies of highland Maya communities take the 1960s—the decade in which Maya ethnography established itself as a discipline— as a starting point for their analyses of change. For instance, Cancian (1992) describes the period from

1960-1987 as the 'the decline of community' in Zinancantán, a time marked by the progressive abandonment of the cargo system, increasing social stratification, and economic diversification. Such views take 1960s observations as a model of what highland Maya culture once was (or should be) in its pristine state. However, in the 1960s, Tzeltal and Tzotzil communities were at the peak of a nativist trend triggered decades earlier, when post-Mexican Revolution reforms began to be implemented in the region. When we examine the bigger historical picture, the fervently nativist and tight-knit Mayan communities of the 1960s represent a rather exceptional situation in the history of Chiapas. Although this exceptional rise in nativism was noticed by some (Vogt 1969, 605), it was seldom discussed in most ethnographies of that time.

The notion that change in Maya communities is unilineal and irreversible must be scrutinized rather than assumed. An alternative way to understand change is to see it as an alternation between cycles of nativism and secularization—i.e., periods marked by the strengthening of traditional institutions and ethnic identities followed by periods of increasing disinterest in tradition and the emulation of exogenous institutions.[104] The story of the Alguaciles can be understood within this framework. The late 1960s, when the cargo of Alguacil disappeared, represent the peak of a nativist cycle in Chiapas. During that cycle, people in Tzeltal and Tzotzil communities sought to outbid each other to perform costly religious service. This competition to spend caused ritual costs to skyrocket between 1940 and 1970. In the 1970s, Chiapas communities were struck by inflation and economic crisis. Unable to afford expensive cargo nominations, the younger generations began to reject cargo nominations, seeking alternatives for acquiring prestige outside of their communities. Their refusal to sponsor expensive religious rituals caused ritual expenses to plummet in subsequent decades.

In the next section, I will focus on the economic factors driving the 1940-1970 nativist cycle. I will show that it is possible to measure the strength of nativism by quantifying ritual expenditures over time. To do so, I use a variety of sources—both oral and historical—and adjust historical values for the effect of inflation. As we saw in Chapter 5, the decision to accept or skip a *cargo* nomination predominantly involves economic considerations. I argue that rising nativism in highland Maya

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[104] As I argued in earlier chapters, the distinction between 'civil' and 'religious' traditions in Chiapas has been largely overstated by ethnographers. In reality, I documented occasions in which so-called 'civil' officers emulated the behavior of religious ones. A cognitive task showed that the distinction between 'civil' and 'religious' cargos is not relevant from an emic perspective (Chapter 5). This lack of clarity in the distinction between traditional and secular institutions is the historical consequence of what I call nativist cycles. In these cycles, periods of secularization are often followed by a push back in which the newly created 'civil' institutions are reshaped and conform to more 'traditional,' pre-existing structures.

communities from 1940 to 1970 was triggered primarily by two interrelated variables: 1) increasing financial liquidity and 2) greater availability of credit. Both factors were the direct result of Mexican government programs that began in the 1930s. In the next section, I will focus exclusively on these two variables, using ethnographic examples to illustrate how changing ritual costs affect the trajectories of certain individuals. Aside from economic variables, certain policies can also affect nativist cycles (for instance, some post-1970s governmental policies incentivized decentralization and changed the nature of cargo service in Chiapas). I will leave the discussion of such policies for Chapter 7.

2. The 1940-1970 Reputation Bubble

2.1. Broke Elders

I mentioned in previous chapters that the household survey we conducted in Chenalhó included a section where people were asked to list every cargo that they had served. For each cargo listed by the participant, we asked: 1) what year was the cargo served, 2) how much money the household spent or earned with service, and 3) for how long the household served the office. The primary goal of the cargo questionnaire was to use cargo service as an index of household status. The secondary objective was to attempt to reconstruct historical changes in ritual spending.

Concerning the latter goal, I predicted that we would find that cargo expenditures had increased since the 1950s. I presumed that economic and population growth would result in growing ritual costs. Chenalhó's population has more than doubled since the 1950s, while the local economy has expanded drastically during the same period. I reasoned that when disposable incomes are high, conspicuous consumption should increase, driving ritual costs up. Similarly, population growth would result in a greater number of participants in religious ceremonies, adding to total ritual spending. It was unclear, however, whether survey responses would accurately reflect historical changes. Since we asked participants to recall past spending, I expected answers to be biased. The Mexican Peso's volatile inflation rates could easily affect how people recall past expenses. While doing the surveys, thus, we emphasized that we wanted to know how much participants spent at the time they served a particular office. Nevertheless, it seemed unlikely that respondents could accurately recall expenses from several decades ago. At best, our questionnaire would produce a biased approximation of historical spending.

Upon a first analysis of the data, it became evident that older respondents tended to overestimate cargo expenses made in the 1970s or earlier. One the participants who reported high cargo spending in the 1970s was Mol Hernández, a 76-year-old traditionalist who lived the Cabecera. He reported spending 53,000 pesos as Paxon, the sponsor of the *Tajimoltik* (Carnival) in 1973. At that time, the average annual

income in Chenalhó was about 3,000 pesos. Using the Consumer Price Index (CPI), I adjusted reported expenses for the effect of inflation and concluded that Mol Hernández's 1973 expenditure was equivalent to 276,919 pesos in 2015. Today, service as Paxon entails a cost between 70,000 and 100,000 pesos. Mol Hernández reported spending almost three times that amount to sponsor a fiesta four decades ago when average incomes were far lower than they are today. At first, I ruled out this and other reported expenses as anomalies likely resulting from recall bias. However, a comparison between reported and historical spending revealed that participant answers may, in fact, be accurate.

Mol Hernández's trajectory in the cargo system provides an excellent example of the historical spending pattern, so it might be worthwhile to examine his biography more closely. I interviewed him a few times during my earliest field seasons. People in Chenalhó would often tell me that I should talk to him since he was a respected traditionalist with knowledge of ancient Tzotzil myths. When I interviewed him, Mol Hernández owned no property, having long ago bequeathed his house to his daughters. He looked like and lived as a hermit—long gray beard, and always walking barefoot and wearing the same ragged clothes. Intentionally or not, he cultivated the image of an ascetic. This type of asceticism is not unusual among male traditionalists of his age group, many of whom spent much of what they ever earned in sponsoring religious rituals.

When I asked Mol Hernández about his high cargo spending, he explained that "the only cargos that matter are those in which people spend their money and give everything back to the community." He saw remunerated municipal and civil offices as inherently corrupt: "the Presidente, the Síndico, and the Tesorero—and all those others who receive money to take office—are stealing from the people," he told me. His views echo those of a group of dwindling traditionalists who refuse to acknowledge the authority of municipal civil officials. For them, the only pure form of labor is that which entails costs, while self-interested work is tantamount to theft.

Could Mol Hernández's report of cargo spending from decades ago be accurate? His first job was building roads for the INI. He recalled working on the construction of the 40 km road that connects Chenalhó to Pantelhó. The development of the road began in 1956 when he was just 20 years old. The road was finished in 1965. After that, he continued to work for the government until the 1970s, when the INI began to rethink its programs for modernizing indigenous areas. In 1961, the INI paid road workers a national minimum wage: 12 pesos a day—or twice as much as what farmworkers in Chiapas received back then.[105] A full-time road worker (working 254 days a year) had an annual income of about 3,048 pesos. If we assume that inflation and wages were constant, it would take about 18 years for Mol

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[105] See Stauder (1961, 38, 51).

Hernández to raise enough money to afford to serve as Paxon. Considering that he worked at least 17 years for INI before taking office, he may indeed have been able to raise 53,000 pesos for the cargo. To do so, he would have to save every paycheck received from the government. It is not implausible that he may have raised additional funds from cultivating corn in lowland areas or working at fincas. Affording Paxonal, then, was difficult yet possible. Still, it seems unlikely that someone would save almost the entirety of their income for nearly two decades just to spend everything in a single fiesta.

Another possibility is that Mol Hernández took loans to finance his fiesta. In the 1970s, it was normal for cargoholders to borrow money. In Zinacantán, Cancian (1965, 100) estimated that 50 percent of the money spent by cargoholders was borrowed. Until the 1960s, most loans to cargoholders were free of interest. People saw cargos as a sacred religious obligation that everyone had to bear with. It was considered immoral to exact profits from religious officers (Trosper 1966; 1967). A report by a student of the Harvard Chiapas Project describes how a Zinacanteco managed to finance a 3,000 peso low-level cargo (Kapitan) in 1968. The cargoholder worked rented land in a lowland area, selling charcoal and working at fincas while saving all his income for five years. It took another three years of savings just to pay off his remaining debt (Baird 1973, 8). In total, it took eight years of work for this cargoholder to afford one of the least expensive religious cargos in Zinacantán, costing about a fourth of the town's most expensive office (Mayordomo Rey). It was through this mixture of saving money for years and borrowing that cargoholders managed to afford expensive fiestas.

Some 1960s observers reported that individuals with a religious background—traditionalists, prayermakers, and curers—were more likely to borrow money than others. Such was the case of the *ʔiloletik* ('seers'), the traditional Tzotzil-Tzeltal curers (or shamans). In a study of shamanism in Zinacantán, Fabrega and Silver (1973) showed that the *ʔiloletik* were more likely to serve religious cargos, even though their incomes were significantly lower than the average. They hypothesized that curers had better access to credit and could get loan extensions. Moneylenders, who like most people feared witchcraft, tended to be more lenient regarding loan issued to curers. Curers, therefore, had greater access to credit, which allowed them to spend more money on cargos than most people.

I encountered several curers that meet the above profile in Chenalhó. Despite living with almost no income, they boasted lavish cargo careers. One of them was Antonio Ts'unun, 75, the patriarch of the Ts'unun lineage from Linda Vista—which I described in Chapter 4. Like most people in the community, the six Ts'unun households own, on average, 0.3 hectares per capita of land. This allows them to cultivate just enough corn and beans to subsist. Most Ts'unun seldom leave the community to search for temporary jobs in big cities. Their incomes fall below the community average. Still, Mol Ts'unun reported spending 10,000 pesos as Alperes de San Sebastián, a municipal religious cargo, in 1973. That amount would be

equivalent to 52,249 pesos in 2015—twice as much as the 22,500 pesos required to serve the same office today. In 1975, Mol Ts'unun served as Regidor, now spending 15,000 pesos—the same as 58,387 pesos in 2015. Today, Regidores receive a wage that covers most of their expenses, so the cargo only entails time expenses.[106] If in 1975 a farmer's annual income was about $2,500, Mol Ts'unun had to save money for at least 10 years to afford both offices. Without the help of credit, this would be an unlikely feat.

Another curer is Juan Ak'te', 52, who in 2015 lived in the Cabecera. Ak'te' began his cargo career in 1978, spending 24,000 pesos (52,394 pesos in 2015) as Alperes de Guadalupe. After that, he served as Alperes another three times, which is unusual in Chenalhó (most people—if ever—will only serve as Alperes once in their lifetime). I met Ak'te' in 2011 and talked to him frequently. For years, before his disappearance (too long a story to tell here), he lived with almost no money, moving from house to house in the Cabecera, unable to afford rent and living off donations from his curing ceremonies. How Ak'te' managed to support his two wives and 11 children while serving as Alperes four times is still beyond my comprehension. I heard from a Mestizo moneylender that he owed money to several people. In 2011, just a few days after we first met, Ak'te'asked me for a loan—a request to which I politely declined. I kept interviewing him in subsequent years, but he never again asked for money and was always friendly (he even let me record one of his healing ceremonies). Somehow, it seems that Ak'te' managed to get away with borrowing substantial amounts of money. This illustrates the upside of having a reputation as a traditional curer. Curers can be feared for their supernatural powers, which can also be employed for witchcraft. In 2015, Ak'te' disappeared from the Cabecera, feeding rumors that he was running away from creditors and taking ceremonial funds with him.

A comparable case is that of Mol Kura, 58, a *pasado* and prayermaker from Linda Vista. Kura served as Alperes Ch'ixtetik (1978), Paxon Ch'ixtetik (1985), Regidor (1998), as well as three unimportant civil offices. Kura timed his cargo service well: compared to the people discussed above, he spent less money overall. He served as Paxonal in the mid-1980s—when interest in cargos reached an all-time low—spending only 160,000 pesos (which, due to the 1980s devaluation of the peso, would be worth 18,591 pesos in 2015). In 2003, his life took an unexpected turn: Linda Vista elected him as Agente. As a former Regidor, Mol Kura felt insulted with the nomination to a less prestigious civil office.[107] He decided to fight the community—a story which I heard from Kura himself and others. People

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[106] To compensate for the fact that Regidores must spend a year away from their land and live in the Cabecera, they can farm the *komon osil* (communal lands) while in office. Thus, the cargo no longer incurs significant expenses.

[107] Traditionalists often see *Agente* as an unimportant and burdensome position, though this view is changing among younger people.

say that, as Agente, Kura would appear drunk and ill-tempered in communal assemblies, giving orders, picking fights, and 'refusing to listen' to other people's problems. Kura, however, says that the community was taking advantage of him and that it was simply not fair for a prestigious man to have to serve as Agente. Six months after Kura's nomination, the community voted to remove him from office. A while later, he was nominated for *Alcalde*, a prestigious municipal cargo, an appointment which, unfortunately, he had to refuse when his wife passed away (only widowed men are the few who can legitimately reject cargo nominations). In the years I did fieldwork, Mol Kura rarely talked to people in the community, only appearing in public when attending important meetings. Aside from owning a small house and three hectares of land, Kura did not accumulate nearly as much property as some of his contemporaries. Despite his high prestige, he remained financially 'broke' as old age dawned.

Many other traditionalists elders were broke. I could go on and discuss similar cases, but space is limited here. These men spent lavishly in fiestas throughout their lives, even though they could barely make ends meet. Unlike Agustín—the wealthy military veteran discussed earlier—most traditionalists are not tied to secular institutions (e.g., political parties, civil organizations, the government). Most spent less than 6 years in school. Throughout their lives, their primary aspiration was to achieve recognition by spending in fiestas and 'giving food' (that is, being altruistic) to others.

Are these men poor because they spent everything they had on cargos? Was the cargo system an obstacle for them to accumulate wealth? According to Cancian's study of Zinacantán (1965), the answer to those questions would be 'no.' Cancian showed that instead of being a redistributive institution, the cargo system was a means of perpetuating wealth within upper-class families. The Zinacantecos who served more cargos were more likely to accumulate wealth and transmit their property and prestige to their children. As we saw in Chapter 5.1.4, Cancian's effect also exists to some extent in Chenalhó. After serving four or more expensive cargos, people are more likely to be rewarded with a remunerated office. However, this is only true for people who manage to persist in the system and take several offices in a row. This is not the reality for the elders discussed above. After taking a series of expensive and prestigious offices, these men simply quit the cargo system. They refused to take civil positions—recall how Mol Kura fought against his nomination as Agente. Like Mol Hernández, they tend to see civil offices as an insult to their reputation. They preferred to remain poor—or, to put it more accurately, rich in prestige, but destitute financially.

It is possible to reexamine Cancian's effect by using a simple regression analysis of our household survey (n = 186 households). I constructed a model with households' total wealth (the log sum of all its assets in pesos) as the dependent variable. What variables best explain total wealth—is it cargo service, prestige, education, or other variables? To explore that, I used as independent variables, age (of

head of household), years of schooling, number of children of household head, the total amount of money spent in cargos per household (in 2015 pesos), affiliation with a Protestant church (0/1), study group dummy variables (Rural Tzotzil, Urban Tzotzil, and Mestizos). The results are shown in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1: Regression model of total household wealth as the dependent variable

Coefficients	Estimate (Std. error)	t-value	p-value
Is Mestizo (intercept)	10.616 (0.528)	20.094	<0.001
Is Rural Tzotzil (dummy)	-0.426 (0.299)	-1.424	0.156
Is Urban Tzotzil (dummy)	-0.580 (0.264)	-2.194	<0.001
Education years	0.108 (0.0237)	4.542	<0.001
Children	-0.007 (0.035)	-0.215	0.830
Is Protestant (dummy)	-0.247(0.210)	-1.176	0.241
Age	0.021 (0.008)	2.465	0.015
Cargo expenditures	0.000 (0.000)	2.443	0.015
			$R^2 = 0.313$

Wealth covaries mainly with educational attainment and group membership. Wealthier households are those who spent more years in school and are Mestizos. They are not indigenous people living in urban areas. Age and cargo expenditures had a small positive effect on wealth ($p = 0.015$). I repeated the analysis using annual household incomes as the dependent variable, and the results were mostly the same: cargo spending had a weak relationship with incomes. Group membership and education years were the best explanatory variables. What matters here is that education and ethnicity are better predictors of wealth and that cargo service is not crucially linked with wealth disparities.

The model above highlights the fact that cargo spending is not always proportional to a household's wealth. This is the key to understanding how cargos affect individual outcomes. Let us recall the decision-making rationale behind cargo nominations (Chapter 5). What determines who gets to serve what offices and when? Some households may volunteer to take cargos when they have surplus money to burn. Such is the case of today's wealthier Mestizos, who volunteer for indigenous fiestas as a means of gaining political supporters (see Chapter 2.2.3). Others receive nominations against their will. These nominations are determined by collective notions of equity (need/ability to pay-based, reputation-based equity, etc.). People such as the traditionalist elders portrayed previously seek nominations even when they have no surpluses to spend. To afford service, they may take seasonal jobs, save money for years, or borrow money. They may use land or other property as collateral when asking for loans (see example in Chapter 5.1.4). It is these people who dilute the correlation between wealth and cargo spending. As a

result, statistically, wealthy and poor households end up spending similar quantities of money on fiestas. For most low-income Tzotzil smallholders, cargos can be burdensome and potentially cause one to acquire serious debt. For this section of the population, cargos can, indeed, be a financial hindrance—but some of them gladly volunteer for cargos anyway. But for the smaller strata of wealthy Mestizo and Tzotzil households that have enough surpluses to sponsor fiestas, cargos are relatively less burdensome. These more affluent households can even take advantage of cargos to gain political influence.

From the 1950s until the 1970s, low-income smallholders actively sought to receive cargo nominations that cost multiple times their average incomes. Why did they do so? The explanation I propose is that between 1940 and the mid-1970s, the cost of cargos relative to incomes increased drastically. In the late 1950s, when Cancian conducted his study in Zinacantán, cargos were burdensome. Still, they were affordable to most farmers. Average incomes had been rising thanks to government wages and high corn prices. Most farmers could sponsor an expensive fiesta after saving money for a few years. In the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, however, the cost of cargos relative to incomes skyrocketed. The real cost of cargos was about three times higher than present-day expenses. Cargos, then, began to hinder mid-to-low-income families. If serving cargos in the 1950s was a viable means of reinvesting surpluses into one's reputation—as Cancian showed—serving cargos in the 1960s became a recipe for financial ruin. Mandatory religious offices were, by then, unpayable. This is why the traditionalist elders discussed above are impoverished today. They joined the cargo system precisely when the cost of fiestas hit an all-time high. They acquired lifelong debts to sponsor fiestas, which in subsequent years would lose much of their value (both in monetary as well in reputational terms).

It is impossible to know for sure whether Mol Hernández really spent 53,000 pesos as Paxon in 1973. His reported spending might be biased for a variety of reasons (self-aggrandizement, memory decay, etc.). Still, given how well the cargo system has been documented by anthropologists, we can use historical reports to reconstruct variation in costs and compare that against our participant recalls. I searched for cargo costs in hundreds of pre-1990s ethnographic reports from Chiapas and built a large dataset with cargo expenditures over time. The historical trend tends to match participant recalls from Chenalhó. For instance, in 1972 a Paxyon of Chamula (also a carnival sponsor) was expected to spend $55,000 pesos, or 348,785 pesos in 2015 values (Linn 1976, 418). This surpassed the expenses reported by Mol Hernández in Chenalhó. Participant recalls can, thus, be accurate since ceremonial spending is meaningful to most people. For the sake of comparison, consider how Americans can remember their wedding expenses years or decades after the ceremony took place.

In the next section, I review how I quantified historical cargo spending. I show historical data that confirms Chenalhó's participant recalls and provide evidence that ritual spending increased from 1940 to

1970 and declined afterward. The question that I address, then, is what caused this rise and fall of ritual costs?

2.2. Quantifying Ritual Costs

Cargo nomination is a complex process (as we saw in Chapter 5). People can volunteer to serve. In the absence of volunteers, a community will nominate a man (head of household) in a communal assembly. Communities can sanction those who reject nominations by charging them fines or sometimes jailing or expelling them.

Early ethnographic accounts of Chiapas suggest a significant change in how Tzotzil and Tzeltal communities nominated cargoholders. Until the 1940s, most cargo service was mandatory, and few were the cases in which people volunteer to serve. Cancian, who collected oral histories from older informants in Zinacantán in the 1950s, states that, in the early 20th century, cargos were matched to candidates by a group of elders (*moletik*) who decide without the input of other community members. At that time, people who refused cargo nominations were threatened with imprisonment (F. Cancian 1965, 174). Resisting cargos was common, as shown in 1940s reports of cargo nominees fleeing from authorities in Mitontic, Zinacantán, and Chamula (Cámara Barbachano 1945a, 63; Tax 1947, 83–84; Pozas 1947, 323).

Early reports also show that people in various communities began to volunteer for service in the mid-1940s, indicating a shift in the supply and demand dynamics of the cargo market. In 1944, Manuel Arias Sojob, a well-known Tzotzil traditionalist from Chenalhó, remarked that "the old custom of resisting and then accepting [cargos]… was coming to an end." He added that people had recently begun to request to serve cargos, and that resisting a mandate by the town's elders was no longer part of the local tradition (Guiteras Holmes 1946, 70–72). In 1970, a student of the Harvard Chiapas Project recorded an a Chamula man explaining that people had begun to volunteer to serve cargos 20 years before the interview when economic conditions began to improve and everyone became "a little richer" (Epstein 1970, 5).

By the 1950s, the market for cargos had become 'congested.' The number of candidates willing to serve superseded the number of offices available. People responded to this congestion by establishing waiting lists: a household willing to receive an office had to be added to a queue and wait, sometimes up to 20 years, for its turn to serve.[108] Waiting lists begin to appear in most towns during that time (see Rus and Wasserstrom 1980, 475). Cancian (1965) saw waiting lists as a response to population growth: since the number of cargos could grow as fast as the population, people now had to compete for scarcer offices.

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[108] Waiting lists were studied in detail in Zinacantán (Vogt 1969, 259; F. Cancian 1974; 1986).

Queueing candidates was a way to regulate competition to spend. Some noticed that Zinacantán's economy was also growing fast (e.g., Vogt 1969); however, only a few considered that economic growth could have stimulated people's willingness to sponsor fiestas (see Trosper 1967).

Cancian (1965) argued that such changes were caused by high population growth rates. More candidates per cargo also meant that people now had to compete for offices, which led prospective cargoholders to sponsor increasingly expensive *fiestas* to outcompete their predecessors. Cancian predicted that if the number of offices created could not keep up with population growth, the rising costs associated with service would inevitably result in the abandonment of traditional offices. They would be replaced with a more dynamic (i.e., modern) system for allocating roles, duties, and prestige. With the benefit of hindsight, I will re-examine Cancian's main hypotheses: 1) that rising ritual spending is a function of population size, and 2) that increasing costs would lead people to abandon the office allocation system. I use data on cargo costs ranging from 1940 to 2015. Part of these data was collected by me in Chenalhó. The other part is from a survey I did on historical ethnographic reports. First, I show that the rates of increase in ritual costs and population size are not correlated. Second, I argue that rather than weakening the cargo system, increasing costs strengthened traditional religious fiestas from 1940 to 1970. As cargos became more expensive, they became more attractive to prospective officers willing to earn increasingly valuable prestige. At first, these conclusions might sound counterintuitive, but they should become clear later.

To what extent are ethnographic accounts of increasing ritual spending during the 1960s supported by data? To answer this question, I surveyed historical cargo costs in publications, reports, and the field notes of Chiapas observers from 1930 to 1994. I found information on the costs of 207 cargos for 17 Tzotzil and Tzeltal towns. I provide a list of all cargos and the sources of the information in the Appendix. I used the consumer price index (CPI), to adjust costs based on inflation, using 2015 values as a reference (see Appendix for explanation). This historical sample is not random; some municipalities and time periods are better represented than others.[109] Still, this dataset is the most exhaustive that exists.

Table 6.2 shows average real and nominal costs (in Mexican Pesos) across municipalities ranging from 1935 to 1994. Real costs refer to the cost of offices adjusted for inflation (using 2015 pesos as a reference). Nominal costs refer to the cargo expenditures recorded by ethnographers at the time they

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[109] Municipalities that were better studied by anthropologists are overrepresented in the sample: for instance, 56 of the 121 cargos are from Zinacantán. Other municipalities that are overrepresented are Chamula, with 67 offices, Oxchuc, with 16, and Chenalhó, with 17 offices.

conducted fieldwork. For the rest of the chapter, I will denote real costs (in 2015 pesos) using brackets (e.g., "in 1973, a Paxon spent $53,000 [$252,850]").

Table 6.2: : Mean cost of cargos in the ethnographic record, 1935-1994

Period	Real costs	% change	Nominal costs	% change	N
1935-1939	9,400	-	200	-	3
1940-1944	7,947	-15%	230	15%	35
1945-1949	14,111	78%	660	186%	5
1950-1954	22,388	59%	1,861	182%	17
1955-1959	26,517	18%	2,888	55%	20
1960-1964	35,044	32%	4,198	45%	35
1965-1969	59,575	70%	8,333	99%	6
1970-1974	30,400	-49%	4,722	-43%	61
1975-1980	26,452	-13%	19,582	114%	5
1981-1985	9,369	-65%	9,500	-51%	4
1986-1990	6,690	-29%	293,371	2988%	7
1991-1994	86,700	1196%	442,286	51%	7

From 1940 to 1969, the real cost of cargos increased sevenfold (on average, a 41% increase every five years). During that period, populations in highland Maya towns only doubled. In 1970-1974 cargo costs fell by 45%. The data for subsequent years is scarce (16 cargos from 1975 to 1990). In 1970-1980, cargo costs appeared to increase. Still, that increase is due to a single outlier: the cost of Chamula's Paxyon—the most expensive and prestigious cargo of all municipalities—continued to rise well into 1979, declining afterward. Because the cost of Paxyon from 1979 is an outlier, I excluded it from the table (see Figure A1, Appendix). For all other towns for which data exists, the general trend is of steady cost declines beginning in the mid-1970s.

To illustrate those cost changes, in 1943, a Paxyon in Chamula spent $2,000 to sponsor the town's carnival—an amount equivalent to $66,354 in 2015 (Pozas 1947, 392). In 1968, the same office cost $20,000 [$145,779], a threefold increase in real costs (Gossen 1974, 13). In 1972, a Paxyon spent $55,000 [$329,963]—an increase of over 100% in four years (1976, 418). In 1979, the cost of that office had skyrocketed, being $500,000 [$909,467], an increase of 176% in 7 years. At that time, according to one observer, many Chamulas had recently begun to convert to Protestantism and reject cargo appointments (Anderson 1988). In 1994, following more than a decade of decline in cargo systems in Chiapas, the cost of Paxyon had fallen 77% from the previous observation 15 years earlier, now costing

just $35,000 [$210,311]. The expenses of Chamula's Paxyon likely increased until the late 1970s because carnival sponsors in Chamula had, since the 1940s, been allowed to trade liquor to finance their service (Pozas 1947, 362; J. Rus 1995a, 274). In the remaining Tzotzil and Tzeltal towns, the cost of cargos begins to decline in the early 1970s.

For most towns, it is difficult to track costs after 1975 due to a lack of ethnographic data for that period. Nevertheless, it is possible to do so by using the Chenalhó sample of 202 households (619 cargos served from 1955 to 2015). Figure 6.1 shows changes in real cargo costs from 1940 to 2015 combining the historical data with data from the household survey that I did in Chenalhó (n = 823). Notice how mean cargo costs begin to climb in 1940, peaking in 1965-69 and declining rapidly afterward. By the mid-1990s, cargo costs had recovered to their 1940s level.

We may call the rise in cargo costs from 1940 to 1970 a form of 'prestige inflation.' Cargo service was the main source of prestige for Tzotzil and Tzeltal people at that time. The cost of cargos, thus, represents the cost of acquiring prestige. When cargo spending goes up, prestige becomes more expensive. Another way to look at this phenomenon is that prestige can appreciate—that is, those who served fiestas in the past, see the value of their reputation go up as fiesta spending increases.
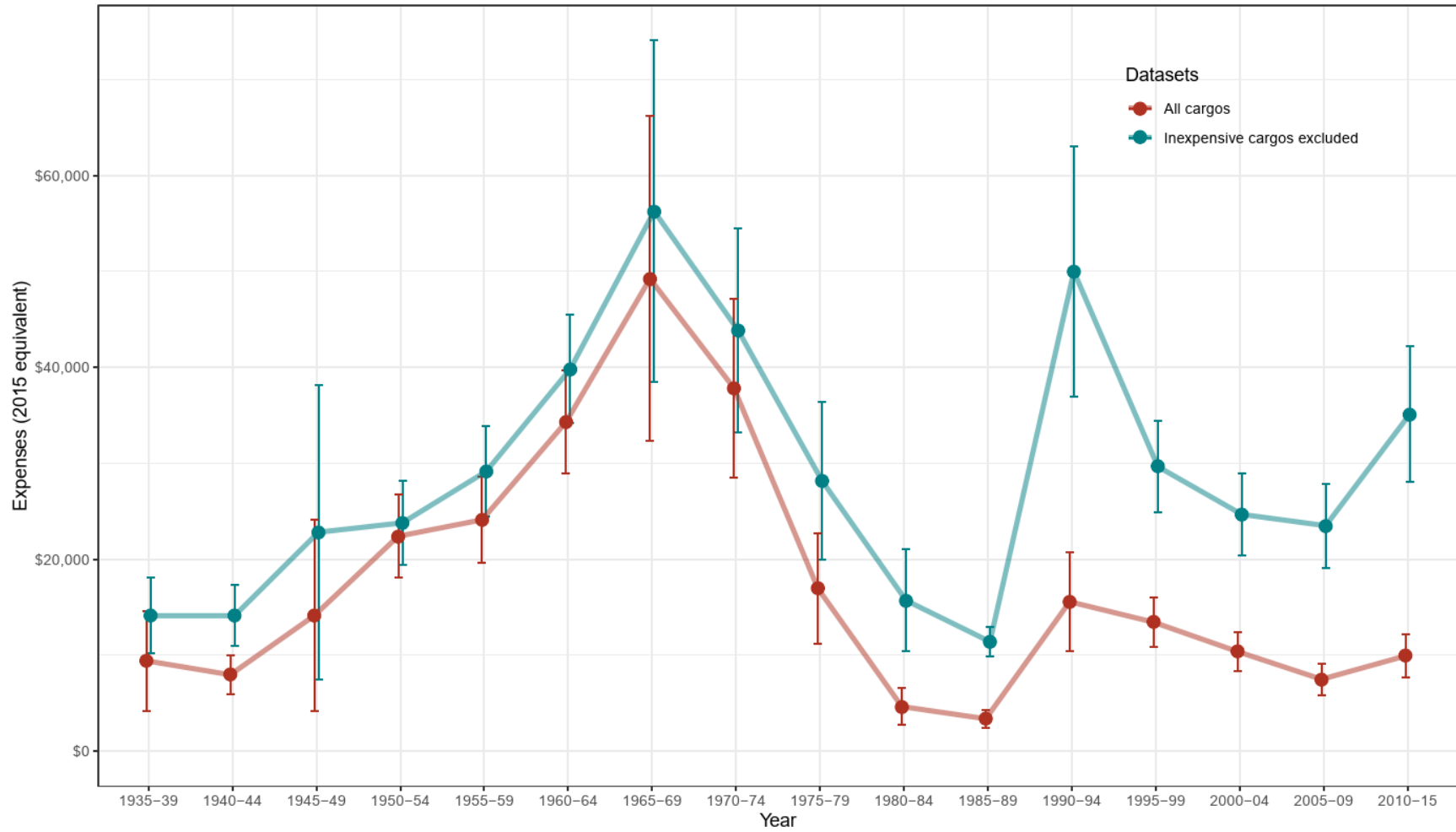
Figure 6.1: Average cargo expenses in 17 Tzotzil and Tzeltal municipalities, 1935-2015

Prestige inflation was pronounced in Chenalhó. In 1944, the cost of serving as Paxon was about 300 pesos [$7,732] (Guiteras Holmes 1946, 93). In 1953, the same office had risen to $3,000 [$40,054], a fourfold increase in nine years (Narváez Palacios 1999, 96). As we saw, in 1973 Mol Hernández's account spent $53,000 [$276,919], a sevenfold increase since 1953. Similarly, in 1944, an Alperes San Sebastian was required to spend $200 [$5,155] (Guiteras Holmes 1946, 93); as we saw earlier, Mol Ts'unun spent 10,000 pesos [$52,249] on that same office—a tenfold increase in just about three decades. In Chenalhó, cargo costs increased even for Regidores—the traditional government's councilmen. In contrast with the offices of Paxon or Alperes, the performance of Regidores is not evaluated based on how much money officers spend, but also on how effectively they perform rituals and mediate disputes. Based on the figures given by Guiteras Holmes (1946b), I estimate that a Regidor could not have spent more than $400 [$10,309] during a year of service in 1944. By the 1970s, those costs had risen dramatically: one participant reported expenses of $10,000 [$43,325] in 1974, while Mol Ts'unun reported spending $15,000 [$58,387] 1975.[110]

As I discuss later, money was becoming more abundant in highland Maya communities, thanks to government programs that issued risky loans to smallholders and bought corn at fixed prices. As the competition to serve offices increased, prestige became scarcer (and thus more valuable), while money had become more abundant. Given such context, it is no wonder that highland Maya people began to volunteer to serve offices that could cost up to ten times an average annual income. They saw cargo service as a way of exchanging money for more prestige—e.g., a means of trading a depreciating asset for an appreciating one. Rather than being a deterrent for community service—as most scholars of the region have claimed—increasing costs acted as an incentive for people to seek cargo nominations. As the number of candidates per office increased, so did the willingness to spend, a process that made cargo costs escalate until reaching unsustainable levels in the 1970s.

2.3. Alternative Explanations

What caused cargos cost to increase from 1940 to 1970? One possible explanation is that better-documented municipalities—Zinacantán, Chamula—could have attracted more attention from outsiders due to the growth of tourism and anthropological research in the 1960s. Increased attention from outsiders could have reinforced identity signaling, initiating a process of 'ethnogenesis.' Participation in *fiestas* in Chiapas is a way of marking one's ethnic identity. A related hypothesis is that the construction of roads

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[110] Mol Ts'unun likely spent more because he was not from the Cabecera, hence he had to rent or borrow a place to live for a year.

may have allowed people to attend festivals in neighboring municipalities (for instance, hundreds of people from Chenalhó travel to Chamula every year to visit the Fiesta de San Juan). Building roads was an essential component of the INI's modernization program for Chiapas (Lewis 2018). This is confirmed by longitudinal data on road construction in highland Chiapas. During the 1960s, the development of paved roads increased threefold to 20 Km/year before falling to less than 5 Km/year in the mid-1970s (Aguirre Beltrán, Villa Rojas, and Romano Delgado 1976, 247–51).

If the above hypotheses are correct, there should be steeper cost increases in more 'central' or larger towns. The data, however, show no indication of such a trend. Cargo costs increased in Chalchihuitán (often described as the most isolated Tzotzil community). In 1946, an Alperes spent $100 [$2,008]; in 1970, that office cost four times more: $1,250 [$8,782] (Köhler 1982, 128; Guiteras Holmes 2002, 52). In Mitontic—one the smallest Tzotzil towns—the cost of Alperes also increased fourfold, from $128 [$3,421] in 1944 to $2,000 [$13,758] in 1970 (Cámara Barbachano 1945a; Nigh 1976, 119). Similarly, in 1958, in Amatenango, the office of *Alferez* cost 3,000 pesos ($29,338) (Nash 1964, 352). In a rare—but not unheard of[111]—turn of events, in 1966, Amatenangueros abolished that office, citing its excessive economic burden as the cause of conflict between *calpules* (moieties). The office was reinstated in 1971 after a severe drought led people to 'reflect upon their haste in doing away with the fiestas' (J. Nash 1985, 195, 333). Nash recounts that after the reinstatement of Alferez, its cost rose rapidly: 'when I returned to Tzoʔontahal for a brief visit in 1982, I was told that the Alferez celebrations for the four patron saints continued. But the costs, like everything else,[112] had increased ten-fold' (Nash 1985, 334).

For seven towns, I found two or more records of costs for a single office. I used those records to estimate annual growth rates of costs. Prestige costs rose in almost all Tzotzil and Tzeltal municipalities, regardless of their size or centrality. Annual growth averages 5.83% across towns. Chalchihuitán had the second lowest growth rates (3.53%), which could support the centrality/size hypothesis. However, Chalchihuitán was also one of the towns with the lowest rates of annual population growth rates (0.82%, 1946-1970). I found no correlation between population and cargo cost growth rates (r = -.07). Oxchuc had

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[111] People of Sibaca, a community of Ocosingo, responded to increasing cargo costs by changing the way fiestas were financed. In the late 1950s, the community decided to abolish the individual financing of fiestas. They instituted an annual tax to collect resources for cargoholders, diffusing the costs to the entire community, a resource collection system that is commonly used by Mestizos (see chapters 2 and 5). At that time, Sibaca was a mixed community where Spanish speakers predominated over Tzeltal speakers, while a large part of the population had converted to Protestantism (see Zabala Cubillos 1992). Pressure from Mestizos and Protestants may have influenced the decision to terminate individual mandates.

[112] Nash refers to the cost of bride-price, which increased concomitantly to cargo costs.

the lowest cost increases despite having the highest population growth rate (7.5% annually, 1944-1954). The Oxchuc data, however, is the least reliable in the sample. Several factors could explain Oxchuc's exceptionality: the town was the first to participate in INI programs and to experience mass conversion to Protestantism. It was also a testbed for INI development programs (Corbeil 2013), and the first Chiapas indigenous town to undergo political reform, with the implementation of democratic elections and the rise of a two-party system (Siverts 1960). In the 1950s, Oxchuc was impacted by changes that, for other towns, only began to unfold during the 1970s (see Appendix for further discussion).

Another hypothesis is that cargo costs increased due to competition between 'big men' (*caciques*). This explanation was proposed by Pitt-Rivers (1964, 284), who suggested that Zinacantán's fiestas were more expensive due to greater competition for status. Competition for status can, indeed, cause ritual costs to escalate over time. A well-documented example of this phenomenon are the Moka ceremonies, in Papua New Guinea, where big men tried to outcompete their opponents by offering gifts and sponsoring ceremonies to outcompete others (Strathern 1971).

It is possible to test the competition hypothesis for Chiapas by examining changing cargo costs in Tenejapa—located to the east of Chenalhó—, where religious ceremonies were sponsored by teams of dozens of *Capitanes* and *Alfereces* who shared fiesta expenses equally[113] (Cámara Barbachano 1966; Medina Hernández 1991). Offices in Tenejapa were not rotated every year; instead, people were encouraged to specialize in a specific role and repeat the same performance year after year, while the number of fiesta participants could vary depending on people's willingness to spend (Cámara Barbachano 1945b). This system closely resembled the old *cofradía* way of financing patron saint fiestas. In the late 1970s, however, Tenejapa ended cost sharing and shifted to the more common individual sponsoring model (Rostas 1986).

If cargo costs increased due to intra-community competition, we should find no increase in expenditures in Tenejapa. Truman (1981, 225-226) tracked the cargo costs in Tenejapa for the years 1944, 1950s, 1970, and 1974. Using that data, I calculated aggregate expenditures[114] for each cargo. I show the expenditures in Table 6.3.

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[113] An exception is the office of Mayordomo de Natividad (Hala'metik), which was the most expensive office in Tenejapa (Cámara Barbachano 1945, 305). Although all Alperes contributed with an equal amount of money, the first and second *alpérez* tended to spend more (though Cámara does not specify how much more).

[114] $aggregate\ expenditures = number\ of\ participants\ \times\ individual\ costs$. Real expenditures were adjusted to 2015 pesos using the Consumer Price Index. For the 1950s expenditures reported by Truman, I used the CPI value from 1955. Since expenditures of mayordomos were similar (except for the more expensive mayordomo

Table 6.3: Aggregate expenditures (in Mexican Pesos) of religious cargos in Tenejapa, 1944-1974

Cargos (Alfereces)	Nominal expenditures				Real expenditures			
	1944	1950s	1970	1974	1944	1950s	1970	1974
San idelfonso	4,200	25,200	69,900	112,500	108,249	264,177	491,110	487,405
Carnival	6,300	54,000	188,000	200,000	162,374	566,094	1,320,867	866,499
Santa Cruz	700	2,900	4,400	6,000	18,042	30,401	30,914	25,995
Santissima Trinidad	700	2,900	4,400	6,000	18,042	30,401	30,914	25,995
Sacramento	400	2,000	4,000	6,000	10,309	20,966	28,104	25,995
Santiago	1,400	8,850	15,400	12,000	36,083	92,777	108,199	51,990
Natividad	1,000	7,500	17,500	15,000	25,774	78,624	122,953	64,987
Santa Lucia	500	2,300	4,200	6,000	12,887	24,111	29,509	25,995
Mayordomos (avg)	240	2,400	9,600	24,000	6,186	25,160	67,449	103,980
Mayord. Natividad	300	2,400	20,000	28,000	7,732	25,160	140,518	121,310
Change (avg)	-	602%	205%	23%	-	185%	105%	-24%

Tenejapa saw a six-fold increase in fiesta expenditures between 1944 and 1970. The compound annual growth in costs was 5.36% - high, but slightly lower than the average of 6.63%. As in other Tzotzil and Tzeltal towns, by the 1970s, Tenejapa's cargoholders were giving signs of exhaustion: real expenditures fell by 24% between 1970 and 1974. Fiesta expenditures continued to fall after that. Based on data by Rostas (1986), it is possible to estimate fiesta spending after Tejenapanecos replaced the cost-sharing model of sponsoring fiestas with individual sponsorship (I provide these values in the Appendix).

2.4. Prestige, Forecasting, and Reputation as an Asset

The data discussed above show that fiesta spending increased from 1940 to 1970 in nearly all Tzotzil and Tzeltal municipalities documented by anthropologists, regardless of the size of their population or their geographic centrality. The increases occurred even in municipalities were fiestas are sponsored by non-competitive groups of cargoholders. In the mid-1970s, cargo costs begin to decline rapidly in all towns. Because these changes were a supra-municipal phenomenon, they can only be explained as due to some exogenous variable—that is, variables that affected all Tzeltal and Tzotzil groups during that period.

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of Natividad), I report average values for these offices. Truman does not specify the number of participants for alférez in the 1950s and 1970, so I assumed that participation rates changed linearly between 1944 and 1974.

Without quantifying cargo costs, Rus and Wasserstrom (1980) also noticed a strengthening of cargo systems after 1940. In the same vein, they proposed a regional explanation for the phenomenon. They argued that in the aftermath of land reform, Chiapas' lowland plantations had to respond to labor shortages. Seeking to maintain a seasonal inflow of workers from the highlands, the state promoted groups of local leaders within indigenous communities, instructing them to bolster cargo systems to increase social inequalities. While Rus and Wasserstrom cite examples from Chamula and Zinacantán—whose workers were in demand in lowland plantations—it is unlikely that government officials saw smaller towns such as Mitontic and Chalchihuitán as an essential source of labor. Moreover, fiesta spending also increased in Tenejapa, where cost-sharing of fiestas could not have exacerbated social hierarchies.

The explanation that I propose involves a more general relationship between the availability of money and credit and people's willingness to invest in prestige. I argue that fiesta spending went up due to an increase in the supply of money caused by the introduction of government credit in Maya communities. As money entered these communities, many people had to decide for the first time how to invest cash surpluses. Investment opportunities, however, were limited. The newly issued banknotes were seen as too unreliable for storing value after successive waves of hyperinflation decimated the value of the peso during the Mexican revolution. Not only did Maya people see the Peso as inflationary, but they also had little faith in papers issued by Mestizos. Land was not a viable investment since kinship regulations restricted land sales within Mayan towns. In the 1940s, for instance, Pozas (1959, 111) noticed that Chamulas could not price their land because land had never been commercialized. Besides, Mexican law prohibited *ejidatários* (land reform beneficiaries) from selling land plots. Thatched-roof houses depreciated quickly, were also unsuitable for investment.

Livestock was perhaps the most common form of investment in the highlands. An observer once noticed that owning animals was comparable to "having money in a bank."[115] 1940s reports are full of examples of people 'flipping' animals for a profit: for instance, one could buy and fatten a small pig and resell it for a profit to a Mestizo butcher months later. Such a modality of investment is still widely practiced in Chenalhó, as I witnessed multiple times.

After livestock, cargos emerged as a form of investment. As Cancian (1965) showed, by serving cargos one could acquire prestige, which produced long-term returns. In 1946, Guiteras Holmes described

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[115] "Bulls are rather like money in the bank in Yalcuc [Huixtán]. When a man builds a new house or takes on a cargo, he has a bull butchered, turning it into 800 pesos" (Bahr 1962, 135).

the financial strategies employed by Chenalhó's new 'rich': "a rich man spends his money on good clothes and buying meat. The richest, who are just a few, have 80 or 100 pesos. With that, they buy more animals. Even a man who is rich still must work, and so he 'asks for a cargo, or work, to spend that money'" (1946, 46). At that time, people had begun to discourage each other from saving (or hiding) money: "the majority of Pedranos asks for a cargo; no one buries their money; when they have enough to live comfortably within their cultural standards, they get money, and save it little by little to ask for a cargo' (id., 71). For centuries, burying money had been a way of hiding wealth from colonial tax collectors. In the 1940s, following land reform, that practice was becoming obsolete. People could—and had incentives to—invest their cash surpluses.

Not only did highland Maya people see cargos as a form of investment, but there are indications that they saw prestige as an increasingly scarce and appreciating 'asset.' The cost of cargos—and, consequently, the cost of prestige—was the subject of speculation and forecasting. In Maya communities, people are keenly aware of cargo costs, which are a frequent topic of gossip. In the 1940s, Guiteras-Holmes noticed that people in Chenalhó "worry enormously about the money they spend, and they track exactly what they give and what they receive... They also worry and take into account how much it costs for a disease, for petitioning a wife, for a religious or political cargo, and the prices for selling their wheat, their pigs, a calf, how much clothes cost, etc." (1946, 53). While searching for cargo costs, I found a plethora of similar descriptions of Tzotzil and Tzeltal people closely tracking the cost of alcohol, crops (Eber 2000, 69), wages (Rhett 1991, 52, 98), and bride price (Reed 1973, 23–24; J. Nash 1985, 336). Religious fiestas, weddings, and healing and funeral ceremonies entail significant life cycle expenses that people strategically forecast, and which constitute a common topic of conversation and gossip.

To what extent did people attribute cargo cost increases to the effect of inflation? Tzotzil people are keenly aware that the purchasing power of the peso fluctuates over time. This awareness of price fluctuations stems, in part, from the centrality of corn and coffee prices to smallholder subsistence. However, research on inflation perception shows that people tend to underestimate the effect of inflation when reasoning about prices from ten or more years before the present (Ranyard et al. 2008, 382), which may have exacerbated the perception of cargo cost increases. For instance, a Zinacanteco household that spent $450 [$18,424] as Mayordomo Rey in 1942 saw the nominal value of the prestige acquired while in office appreciate by a factor of 31 in just two decades. In 1961, that same household may have reasoned that spending $450 on a cargo that was now worth $14,295 [$119,597] turned out to be a good 'investment' (Tax 1947, 82; Cancian 1965, 81).

In the 1940s, people in Chenalhó began to notice that some items used for fiestas (chiefly, alcohol and fireworks) were becoming more expensive.[116] Some started to borrow money to afford those cargos. As the supply of money grew (for reasons I discuss later), it became easier to find willing creditors. To borrow money, one only had to offer a gift of liquor and make a formal petition. To repay their debts, borrowers could sell their livestock investment or transfer ownership of their land. Guiteras-Holmes describes such borrowing practices: "they ask for money for a cargo from a relative or a friend. If they ask for $20.00, they give a liter of liquor, $40.00, two liters of liquor. When they return the money, the same gift is given. The money is returned when you 'sell a coch' [i.e., liquidate a pig], and if the person who asked [for a loan] dies before returning it, [one says] 'you have some land there,' to those who are being charged." (Guiteras Holmes 1946, 50).

Seeing nominal cargo costs rise, prospective cargoholders likely forecasted that prestige would continue to appreciate in the future. Cargo service was mandatory in most Tzotzil and Tzeltal communities—every household served at least one office. Participation in the cargo system was (and still is) a requirement for being affiliated with communities. Cargoholders, thus, had two alternatives. They could either 1) spend money on fiestas immediately, or 2) postpone service and end up paying more later. Since rejecting cargos was not an option for Tzeltal and Tzotzil people, alternative (2) was the obvious choice for most people. The perception of rising costs, thus, acted as an incentive for people to volunteer to serve. Knowing that there was no escape from nominations and seeing the cost of fiestas increase, people began to request to serve cargos. Some would go as far as to bribe elders to raise their positions on waiting lists (Cancian 1965, 177).

One of the hallmarks of speculative 'bubbles' is that the changing price of an asset acts as an incentive for people to spend money expecting future returns. The period from 1940 to 1970 in Chiapas has many characteristics of a bubble. We may thus call it a *reputation bubble*. The period saw drastic increases in liquidity and easier access to credit, which incentivized people to borrow money to reinvest in prestige, causing the cost of fiestas to soar. While some sought to spend money to minimize future losses, others, perhaps, expected 'returns' in the form of increasingly scarce prestige. To understand why cargo costs began to rise in the 1940s, it is necessary to describe the historical and economic context before that decade in more detail.

Before the 1940s, Maya financial behavior can be characterized by skepticism toward Mestizo/ladino money. Historical data show that before 1940, Maya groups had a strong tendency to hide—rather than flaunt—wealth. This behavior was, in large part, the product of centuries under a

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[116] See Guiteras Holmes (1945, 43, 135, 2002, 174).

colonial system where resources tended to flow from indigenous peripheries to Spaniard centers. Within the larger historical picture, spending lavishly in cargos is in fact abnormal behavior for the Chiapas Maya. In the 1930s, the land reforms promoted during the Cardenas administration effected deep changes in the colonial extractive system (J. Rus 1995a). Another factor, which has remained understudied, was the drastic increase in liquidity and credit brought by rural credit banks and the introduction of government minimum wages. I will focus on these economic changes in the next section.

3. On Maya Finance: Adaptations

Historically, Mexican indigenous communities had a contentious relationship with Mexican currency, initially using gold and silver as a means of hiding wealth and later distrusting newer denominations issued by the government. Until the 1940s, credit (as money loans) in indigenous communities was severely limited by currency scarcity and the absence of reliable credit institutions. Informal credit systems took the form of (illiquid) relations labor exchange. Because currency was scarce, merchants often had to shift to barter or use maize, cacao, or collectible (unstandardized) goods as media of exchange or measures of value.

In the 1940s, indigenous communities were flooded with until then unseen amounts of cash. This change is usually attributed to a sharp increase in commodity prices and increasing exports of agricultural goods during World War II, which contributed to the growth of the Mexican economy as a whole (G. A. Collier and Collier 2005, 31). Another factor, which remains unstudied, was the establishment of government programs that issued high-risk loans to smallholders and purchased corn at prices higher than those offered by the market. It was thanks to these programs that indigenous communities began to accept paper money as a medium of exchange, overcoming some of the liquidity problems caused by overdependence on metallic currencies. Increased monetary liquidity increased the velocity of commerce, encouraged rent-seeking, and—more importantly—made informal lending easier. During this period, the informal networks of credit that sustained cargo service (described by 1960s ethnographers) began to expand.

3.1. Hiding Money (and Other Capital Preservation Strategies)

The Tzotzil word for 'money,' *tak'in*, originally meant 'metal.' The lexical equivalence between the *function* of money (as a medium of exchange) and its *substance* (metal) has given rise to some anthropological debates. Crump (1978) argued that equating cash with 'metal' was a means of establishing money as an exogenous commodity, as both metal and money had been introduced by the

Spaniards. Aguirre Beltrán (1957, 98) posited that indigenous people conceived of money as a commodity with 'real content' rather than as a medium of exchange.

The reality, however, is that the money/metal equivalence has clear historical roots. Until the 1940s, Maya in Chiapas and Guatemala tended to reject all forms of paper money, using metallic coins as their sole medium of exchange. What is more, the currency used by Maya people often differed from the one issued by the state. When Frederick Starr conducted an expedition in Chiapas in 1901, he noticed the absence of a universally accepted currency.[117] The explorer also witnessed Mayan women and children wearing necklaces made of a miscellanea of coins minted across countries and historical periods (Starr 1908, 353). At a time when *finca* workers earned less than a quarter of a peso a day, Starr estimated that ornamental gold coin necklaces worn by women traders "must be several hundreds of pesos" (Starr 1902, 2:15). Until the 1940s, wearing necklaces made of gold and silver coins from Guatemala and Mexico was still a common practice in Chenalhó, Chamula, and Tenejapa (Guiteras Holmes 1946, 33; Pozas 1959, 147; Cámara Barbachano 1966, 3:117). In the 1960s, coin necklaces had disappeared from everyday use. Nevertheless, they commonly adorned the images of saints and were used by cargoholders in ceremonial occasions.[118] The ritual of counting and replacing coins from those necklaces had become an essential part of religious fiestas (Guiteras Holmes 2002, 84; 1945, 121; Vogt 1993, 123; Early 1966).

Early ethnographic accounts of the Maya of Guatemala and Mexico are replete with examples of how people actively sought to collect and hide metallic currency, independently of its place of origin or denomination. This type of behavior—which is strikingly different from the lavish fiesta spending observed in the 1960s—evolved during the colonial period as an adaptation for preserving capital in a context of illiquidity (money scarcity) and financial uncertainty. For Maya smallholders, uncertainty was a regular part of life due to their reliance on agricultural output, which can vary according to environmental factors beyond human control. But the colonial period introduced a human-made factor

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[117] "Mexican paper money is useless between Tuxtla Gutierrez and Comitan [south of San Cristóbal]. In the latter city it may be exchanged for silver, but with difficulty. From here on we found no copper in circulation, and before reaching Comitan we had begun to receive Guatemalan silver in our change." (Starr 1908, 51).

[118] Sometimes coin necklaces were a mandatory piece of a cargoholder's ceremonial outfit. In Tenejapa, in the 1940s, an *alférez* paid about five pesos for a coin necklace purchased in San Cristóbal—an amount equivalent to ten wage days at that time (Cámara Barbachano 1945a, 389). After serving an office, cargoholders held onto these necklaces since they tended to appreciate over time. Sometimes they lease the necklaces to prospective officers. Until the 1960s, coins were also widely used as offerings to deities and placed next to the dead in mortuary rites (Pozas 1947, 487; Menget 1968). In Zinacantán, coins were still being used in healing ceremonies as a tool for absorbing illness from a patient's eyes (Fabrega and Silver 1973, 245).

that exacerbated that uncertainty. Chiefly, Maya populations came to rely on currencies issued and controlled by the colonizers. Preference for scarce metallic currencies and the ornamental use of coins was the native response to the problem of how to store, hide, and transport value while living under constant confiscation.

While some of the native currencies (corn, cocoa, cloth) could be, to some extent, supplied by Maya themselves, the colonial metallic currencies were subject to periods of scarcity beyond their control. Currency scarcity has its roots in the *repartimiento* system.[119] In this system, crown officials known as Alcaldes Mayores monopolized trade between indigenous pueblos by coercing them to sell and purchase bulk goods at prices set arbitrarily. Under coercion, the Maya had few options but to sell their produce at rock-bottom prices only to rebuy them later. When money was scarce, they paid for these goods with labor. Decades of exploitation by repartimientos had the effect of preventing Maya people from consistently storing essential goods. In times of scarcity—such as the 1770s famine that struck Chiapas and Yucatán—Mayan groups had no alternative but to rebuy they own produce, at hyperinflated prices, from repartimiento storages (for Chiapas, see Wasserstrom 1983, 43; For Yucatán, Farriss 1984, 185–86). As Wasserstrom (1983, 48) relates, Maya people often reacted to the repartimiento cartel by speculating prices. To do so, they created secret trade routes beyond the scope of the Alcaldes Mayores, seeking to sell their goods directly to urban markets. The Alcaldes responded by creating, over time, a sophisticated system for controlling the production, trade, and distribution of indigenous goods. At first, they used the church's already in place colonial apparatus, commissioning priests to inspect for hidden/undeclared produce (Wasserstrom 1983, 49). Priests, who profited from trade commissions (Viqueira 1995, 115), had enough power to command Maya towns to expand the production of agricultural goods to meet the Alcaldes' demand. As I discussed in Chapter 2.2.2, this increasingly complex surveillance apparatus is expressed today in the treasure tales that Maya and Mestizo tell in Chiapas.

Although currency scarcity was a colonial problem, it was particularly acute in Chiapas and Guatemala. For that reason, cocoa beans remained as the primary medium of exchange in highland

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[119] The system, which lasted over two centuries (16th -18th c.), became the cornerstone of the economic order of Chiapas and was indispensable for supplying Spaniard settlements with basic goods and produce. From the indigenous, Alcaldes Mayores purchased produce (maize, cocoa, beans, chile, wheat) as well as cotton, cloth, dyes, and tobacco; they then stored or resold these goods to different pueblos, often turning a profit of well over 100% their initial investment (Nigh 1976, 77). In exchange, indigenous people received valuable steel tools but also superfluous goods such as socks and hats (Viqueira 1997, 60). Some Spaniards saw *repartimientos* as beneficial to native populations for their role in 'distributing' goods across different regions (Torres-Freyermuth 2012). The system, however, retained the functions of the older *encomienda* system of forced labor and taxation.

markets until the 1860s—an oddity at a time when most markets in Mexico had shifted to metallic currency (Favre 1973, 54). The preference toward scarce forms of currency was exacerbated by periods of hyperinflation driven by the *repartimiento* system, which Spaniards used to manipulate the prices of all goods produced in the colony. Holding onto metals—copper, silver, gold—was a way to hedge against the inflation of non-metallic products. These adaptations began to disappear after the Mexican Revolution when the Bank of Mexico launched standardized banknotes (Kemmerer 1940, 135). As I discuss below, the new standard currency made its way into indigenous communities through credit and corn-burying programs implemented from the 1940s onwards. By force or necessity, paper money entered indigenous communities, solving chronic problems of illiquidity and lack of trust that dating back to the colonial period.

3.2. Borrowing to Repay Loans

Borrowing and lending at interest are practices that run deep among the Chiapas Maya. It is impossible to talk about Maya 'ontology' without referring to concepts associated with credit or reciprocity systems.

For instance, a colonial Tzotzil dictionary contains a rich financial terminology, indicating the existence of complex credit practices in the 17th century. The dictionary lists terms such as *pakojbey* ("to pay a debt with a loan"), *chaybey* ("debt free"), and *cha'ox toj toj* ("to pay in three installments") (Laughlin 1988). An early description of Maya credit practices appears in Fray Remesal's *Historia general de las Indias Occidentales* (1619). The fray relates the arrest of Zinacantán's Alcalde, Luismé Tzon, and explains that the Alcalde had to borrow money from his relatives to afford his bail. Remesal then makes a generalization about Maya credit practices:

> …así es la costumbre de 'los indios; heredadas del tiempo de su gentilidad, que
> cualquier gasto extraordinario que a uno se le ofrezca, no ha de poner nada de su casa,
> sus deudos lo pagan todo, aunque sepan venderse. Cuando quiere hacer casa, todos se
> la hacen, si quiere juntar para casar un hijo, o para comprarle de vestir y libro para
> llevarle a vivir con los Padres, hace un convite a todos sus conocidos, y ellos le
> ofrecen, no solo lo que gastó en la comida, sino todo lo que para su hijo ha menester
> (Remesal 1932, 130).

"Debts pay everything," Remesal says. In other words, Maya people borrowed all the money they needed when faced with expenses (Remesal cites building a house, paying for weddings, buying clothes, etc.). People did not maintain savings—perhaps because it was impractical or risky to do so. Instead, they

pooled labor and recruited family, kin, or friends when necessary. By exchange of favors, people created strong solidarity ties from which people could obtain credit in the form of labor or currency. As Remesal states, those invited for a wedding petition were expected to bring enough gifts that cover the entire ceremony's expenses and more.

Credit networks are likely ancient among the Maya. Much of the borrowing and lending exchanges could be done without money by exchanging of favor or transferring debts. Because metallic currency was scarce, people often paid for goods and services by transferring credit from their debtor. For instance, suppose Alice owes money to Beto, and Beto owes money to Carol. Beto could pay his debt to Carol by transferring Alice's debt. Alice can then pay Carol by working for her. No money needs to change hands for this type of transaction to take place. It is for that reason that the colonial Tzotzil dictionary published by Laughlin contains the verb *pakojbey*—translated as 'to pay a debt with loan.' *Pak* is the Tzotzil root for 'reciprocal exchange' (see Chapter 7.2.4 for an example of its contemporary use). Perhaps a more accurate translation of *pakojbey* would be 'to pass along a reciprocal favor.' Today, the verb *jeltasan*—literally, 'to exchange repeatedly'—is used today to characterize the practice of borrowing money to repay a loan. Notice how the connotation of reciprocal exchange was lost since the 16th century. This is likely the result of the monetization of reciprocity systems over the past centuries.

Aside from these interpersonal credit networks, the other colonial sources of credit were fully controlled by the Spaniards. Farriss (1984) discusses the case of the *cajas de comunidad*, which were native resource pools (granaries, most likely) used by the Maya to hedge against periods of famine. During the colonial period, the *cajas,* were periodically expropriated by the crown's Treasury under a "paternalistic principle that the Indians could not be trusted to judge their own best interests" (Farriss 1984, 364). Being unable to control their own resources and have reliable access to credit, Maya communities developed a system of labor pooling in which household members in a community are periodically assigned to perform collective tasks.[120] In periods of currency scarcity, *alcades mayores* took advantage of these labor pools by demanding the repayment of debts with labor (Wasserstrom 1983, 64).

In the 17th century, *cajas de comunidad* were incorporated by Catholic *cofradías.* Farriss (1984) argues that *cofradías* emerged as an adaptation to colonial rule, as they tended to be more autonomous than *cajas de comunidad* and were able to generate and distribute resources without interference from royal officials (Farriss 1984, 266). Some *cofradías*—especially those of lowland areas—were able to amass large quantities of capital (cash, land, and livestock or cattle) and offered loans to large

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[120] In Yucatán, that system is known as *fagina* (Redfield and Rojas 1962), while in Chiapas it is known as *komon abtel* (communal labor). See Chapter 7.2.2 for a discussion of communal labor in Chenalhó today.

landowners. Others, such as the *cofradías* from highland Chiapas, played an essential role as microlenders, issuing small loans in cash to Tzotzil and Tzeltal farmers with a 25% yearly interest rate (Palomo Infante 2006). Although *cofradías* were, in part, managed by natives, it was the Catholic priests who controlled and kept track of such loans.

A final source of credit was the private loans provided by Mestizo peddlers. Because of the lack of liquidity of the Chiapas economy, prices of manufactured products and produce could vary widely from one place to another (as I discussed in Chapter 2.1.2). Illiquidity was deepened by the lack of roads and means of transportation: up until the 20th century most produce was carried by indigenous carriers, which decreased the velocity of commerce compared with other regions in Mexico. These price differences offered a strong incentive for Mestizo peddlers to profit off arbitrage. During the 18th and 19th centuries, many of these of ladino peddlers began to settle within indigenous towns (in the areas surrounding churches today known as *Cabeceras*). Mestizo peddlers also played the role of credit providers to credit-scarce indigenous communities. Today, this system of informal credit remains intact, even with the arrival of microcredit banking to some municipalities (see Chapter 2.1.2).

In the late 19th century, Mexican intellectuals came to identify credit and currency scarcity as the main culprits for the chronic state of deprivation of its rural and indigenous communities. In the following decades, after the Mexican Revolution, they sought to address these problems by experimenting with radical economic reforms, whose unintended consequences for the Chiapas Maya are reviewed in the next section.

4. The Indebtedness Problem

Early *Indigenista* intellectuals identified credit scarcity and usurious creditors among the causes for the chronic underdevelopment of indigenous populations. The work of Molina (1909) on 'territorial credit' was influential during the Mexican revolution. Molina argued that land reform was necessary to expand credit issuance as peasants were considered ineligible for loans for lacking property that could be used as collateral. Thus, to solve credit scarcity, the government could issue land titles. The state could also give out loans, taking risks that private banks refused to take. Loans could be given credit societies instead of individuals, creating a decentralized system for enforcing repayments.

Currency and credit scarcity peaked during the Mexican Revolution when the Mexican Central Bank was used during recurrent periods of hyperinflation that rendered the peso worthless on three separate occasions (N. Maurer 2002). In response, in the 1930s, the Cardenas administration began to put such ideas into practice, founding the Banco Agrário and the Banco Ejidal. At first, in the 1920s, most loans went to credit societies in the north, which were considered less risky (Mottier 2017). Erasmus

(1961) documented the effect of credit programs among northeastern groups such as the Yaqui, who by the 1950s had fully incorporated credit societies into their governance structure. After the introduction of credit, the Yaqui began to spend more in traditional fiestas, leading to a strengthening of ethnic identity. In Chiapas, however, subsidized credit arrived in the mid-1940s, but adoption was slow among Maya groups. This was due to the lack of familiarity of indigenous farmers with the government's bureaucracy and the high costs of transportation from indigenous areas to cities (F. Cancian 1972), as well as the widespread rejection of the new paper money issued after the revolution, which lasted until the 1940s.

Initially, the government sought to discourage the issuance of loans to individuals, prioritizing local credit societies instead. This was not only seen as a way to mitigate risk for the government but also as a means of transferring the control of credit to farmers themselves, thus preventing the reappearance of colonial systems of debt bondage (*enganche*, *tienda de raya*, etc.). Credit societies also provided an answer to an age-old dilemma faced by Mexican reformists: that land reform beneficiaries had no legally recognized property but land to offer as security. To obtain a loan, a credit society only needed to invest a certain amount of cash. How the collateral money was raised and how loans were allocated and recovered were questions left to the credit society to solve, following local arrangements (Osorio et al. 1974, 757). Another reason for issuing loans to credit societies instead of individuals was that land reform recipients (*ejidatários*) were prohibited from selling or mortgaging their land—another measure to protect peasants from predatory lenders (Sanderson 2013, 110; Warman 1980, 147). The government saw itself as "promoting social and moral progress of ejidatarios" (Mottier 2017, 318).

From its onset, subsidized credit programs faced many challenges: chiefly, rates of recovery were consistently low. A brief experiment with the *Banco Nacional de Crédito Agrário* (BNCA)—founded in 1926 to issue short-term loans to commercial smallholders—highlighted some of these issues: during its first years in operation, 83% of the loans issued by the bank went to large landowners. Government officials blamed the lack of success of their programs on a 'cultural problem'—that is, "the traditional individualism and the lack of a spirit of cooperation" of indigenous farmers (Osorio et al. 1974, 758). To address these issues, in 1936 the government created the Banco Nacional de Crédito Ejidal to issue credit exclusively to *ejidatários*. Also, between 1942 to 1947, the government approved a series of reforms to restrict the autonomy of credit societies. These reforms, however, were short-lived: in 1955, the government doubled down on decentralization, revoking the 1940s reforms and removing restrictions to the creation of credit societies. This led to a rapid increase in the number of active credit societies in the country, from 304 in 1943 to 1,054 in 1957. If removing restrictions to credit societies was a way of increasing short-term loans to (high risk) smallholders, the government failed to establish a structure for supervising such programs and collecting repayments. Understaffed, underfunded, and ridden with graft

and corruption, government banks consistently lost money in loans whose rates of recuperation oscillated between 60 and 80% during the 1950s and 1960, as we can see from Figure 6.2.
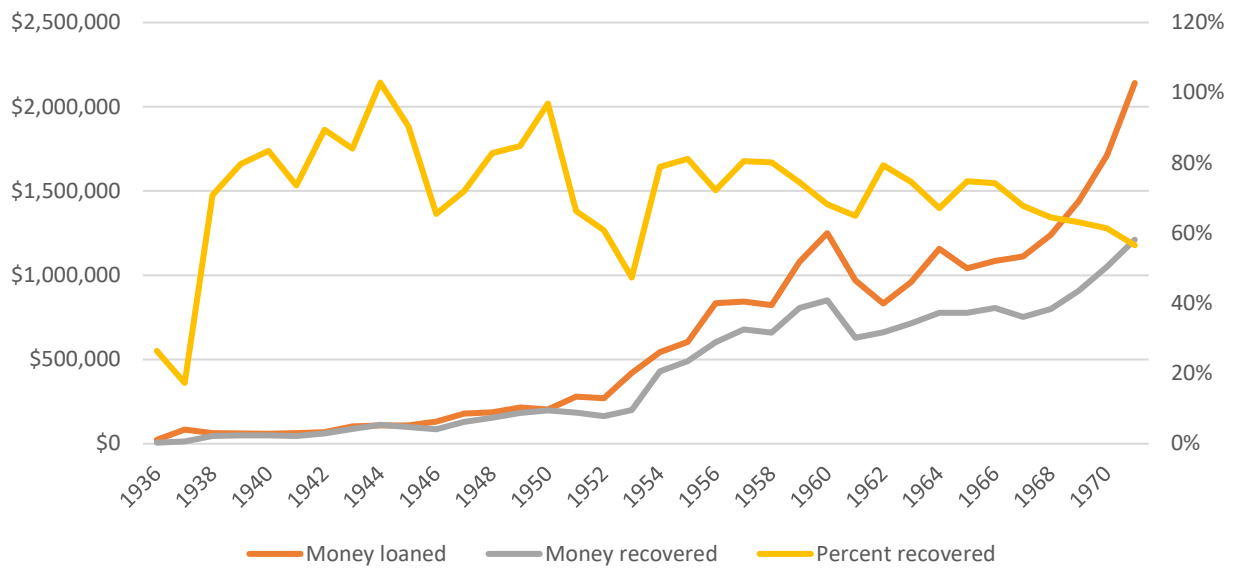

Figure 6.2: Rates of recuperation for the Ejidal Bank in Mexico, 1936-1971

As we can see from the chart, rural credit rose rapidly following the creation of the Banco Ejidal. The Banco Agrícola was reactivated in late 1940s, following the 'success' of the Banco Ejidal. From 1948 onwards, the portion of credit allocated to the rural sector increased from 1 to 2 percent a year, peaking in 1964 before declining. Loans offered by private banks to farmers followed a similar curve (Hewitt de Alcántara 1976, 60). Government banks were funded by private capital, including American companies (Mottier, 2017). As Hewitt de Alcantara discusses, the primary beneficiaries of such programs were the private businesses that provided agricultural inputs to smallholders. All this happened during an unusual period in Mexican history known as *desarrollo estabilizador* ('stabilizing development'), characterized by low inflation and high GDP growth rates.

4.1. Subsidized Credit in Chiapas

Following the national trend, subsidized credit arrived in Chiapas through decentralized credit societies. Despite being planned top-down by the federal government, these credit societies were designed to blend in with local norms for managing credit among the hundreds of ethnic groups that composed the Mexican countryside. As we saw, among the Chiapas Maya, credit systems had been shaped by centuries

of money scarcity and full dependence on market exchange. In subsequent decades, thus, these centuries-old highland Maya credit practices would slowly merge with federal regulations.

The cargo system was central to Maya economies. As we saw, fiesta sponsorship was the primary force driving the demand for credit. Hence, the arrival of credit societies in Chiapas resulted in a unique blend of government institutions with a centuries-old competitive ritual system. Below, I describe how people in Tzotzil-Tzeltal towns reacted to newly established credit societies. The discussion is based on data I found scattered through rarely cited ethnographic reports from that time. While the government sought to quell the demand for credit in Maya villages by providing readily available cash, Maya people responded by devising various strategies to obtain more and more credit to finance increasingly costly fiestas. Over decades, these people would become increasingly indebted, both to the government and to each other. They became dependent on a system that was never sustainable and whose collapse would generate significant social distress among Chiapas Maya groups.

Before the arrival of government banks in Chiapas, Maya credit practices in reflected the general state of illiquidity in their economies: money played a secondary role as a medium of exchange. Money loans were repaid with goods or services of the same value. Eggs, liquor (*pox*) bottles, or meat could be used to make payments (Guiteras Holmes 1946, 20). Liquor was widely used to pay rent (of land and houses) by cargoholders (Guiteras Holmes 1946, 47; Cámara Barbachano 1945b, 243) or given as a gift by borrowers requesting loan extensions (J. F. Collier 1973, 220). To finance religious ceremonies, officers could borrow money and use it to buy pigs, firewood, and liquor and then repay the loan with gifts in kind.

The system of repaying money loans in kind allowed creditors to take advantage of price fluctuations and transform loans into investments in commodity futures. Money scarcity caused prices to fluctuate widely, following the annual harvest cycle. The amount of money in circulation was highest after the harvest season, which caused the price of all traded goods to go up temporarily. For instance, in Ocosingo, prices could increase by 100-300% during the rainy season (Zabala Cubillos 1992, 50). Forecasting variation, one could offer a six-month money loan in the dry season, expecting to receive repayments in kind when prices had doubled. Consequently, farmers were more likely to accept payments in corn when the corn price was low, hoping to resell the grain after harvest when prices were higher. For Zinacantecos, investments in corn futures were akin to 'loans' that had to be repaid in kind (Trosper 1967).

Those who had capital to invest could also profit from trading corn and other commodities, buying large amounts at low prices to resell after harvest. These traders were known as *acaparadores* (best translated as 'immoral hoarders'). They were often despised in indigenous communities, being seen

as "wicked people, taking advantage of the poor, helpless, unfortunate peasants" (Stern 1962, 4) a stereotype which likely originated during the colonial period when Alcaldes *mayores* controlled most trade. Reflecting this folk perception, anthropologists of the INI saw *acapadores* as an obstacle to the development of indigenous communities. Aguirre Beltrán identified them as ladinos who took advantage of periods of scarcity to resell produce to farmers and offer usurious loans. Credit scarcity, for him, was one of the marks of 'regions of refuge,' thus the role of the INI was "to create bridges between underdeveloped communities and institutions in charge of providing credit, so that credit can reach indigenous and ladinos." To build those bridges and eliminate middlemen, the government began to set up 'decentralized' agencies that offered credit to farmers and bought produce at fixed prices, thus eliminating the seasonal (and geographic) price volatility that incentivized for-profit trading (cf. Aguirre Beltrán 1976, 36–37). The goal of the INI, thus, was to replace all traders with government-managed warehouses that offered unlimited liquidity to farmers, buying all corn that was offered to them at fixed prices. (Notice the remarkable resemblance between the INI's management of trade and the colonial *repartimiento* system described earlier.)

The activities of the Banco Ejidal and Banco Agrícola in Chiapas were deeply influenced by the INI's stance against *acaparadores*. Aside from offering loans and farming equipment on credit, Ejidal and Agrícola Bank agencies were put in charge of managing the purchase, storage, and redistribution of produce. Until 1954, the Ejidal Bank in Chiapas accepted loan repayments in corn to minimize the possibility of default (Stern, 1962). Corn was stored in warehouses provided by the ANDSA (Almacenes Nacionales de Depósito, S.A.). Initially, bank agencies were established in Mestizo cities,[121] far beyond the reach of indigenous farmers. Ironically, this provided a profit opportunity for *acaparadores*, who could purchase corn from farmers in the highlands at low prices to sell in bulk to receiving centers in ladino cities in the lowlands.

Unacquainted with the government's bureaucracy and unable to afford the transport of produce to cities, indigenous farmers were, at first, slow to adopt such programs. To increase rates of adoption, the government built a network of receiving stations where farmers could quickly dispose of their produce, bypassing middlemen. Receiving centers were placed at the entrance of towns known to have a mixed ethnic population—perhaps a measure to facilitate the mediation between ladino and indigenous worlds. In one of these centers, in Venustiano Carranza, officials hung a sign saying "farmer, if you have a corn harvest, do not sell it to middlemen or *acaparado*—write to any of our offices mentioned with your name and address and how many tons you wish to sell that it will be bought at warranty prices" (Díaz de Salas

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[121] Tuxtla Gutierrez, Villaflores, and Tapachula.

1991, 158). The INI also took the initiative to educate the indigenous population on economic issues. In 1954, they launched the Teatro Petul, an itinerant hand puppet show designed to promote cultural modernization. Among other things, the Teatro instructed native populations on how to fight against *acaparadores* and how to receive credit, invest, and pay back loans (Lewis 2018, 140).

Awareness of credit programs grew in the late 1950s. By the mid-1960s, those programs had taken off among the Maya: in 1966, 98% of Zinacanteco farmers had seen or known about the nearest receiving centers (in Nachig, 49% of farmers had sold corn to them). To facilitate marketing, many farmers moved to lowland areas near buying centers (F. Cancian 1972, 82, 126). The receiving centers provided instant, unlimited liquidity to farmers, buying grains at fixed prices in all four seasons—an unprecedented development for an economy shaped by a history of currency and credit scarcity. As a result, centuries of predictable price volatility suddenly came to an end.

If at first greater liquidity led corn prices to stabilize, it also caused inflation to creep in: between 1962 and 1965, the price of Corn in Chiapas increased by 22%. To stabilize prices, authorities in San Cristóbal opened their own outlets to resell corn below the market price (id., 118-9). Unsurprisingly, that measure had no lasting effect on inflation as the price of products are influenced by national and international markets. Still, the government continued to set up semi-autonomous warehouses and bank agencies throughout the country up into the 1970s, injecting massive amounts of cash in the economy of rural areas, causing the prices of corn and beans to increase, respectively, 70 and 16 percent between 1954 and 1964 (Hewitt de Alcántara 1976, 91). For the government, buying high and selling low was, of course, unsustainable. Nevertheless, the programs continued to work, almost always at a deficit.

As government credit became ubiquitous, increasing liquidity transformed Tzotzil and Tzeltal economies. In these communities, informal credit networks developed concomitantly to government investment. Thanks to increasing liquidity, indigenous farmers had more money in hand that they could invest. But, as we saw, there were few safe assets in which they could invest that money. Some invested in prestige by serving cargos. Instead, others invested in prospective cargoholders by offering them loans at varying interest rates—a practice traditionally reserved for Mestizos. As a result, informal credit networks grew concomitantly to fiesta expenditures, forming a feedback loop that escalated over time (See Figure 6.3).
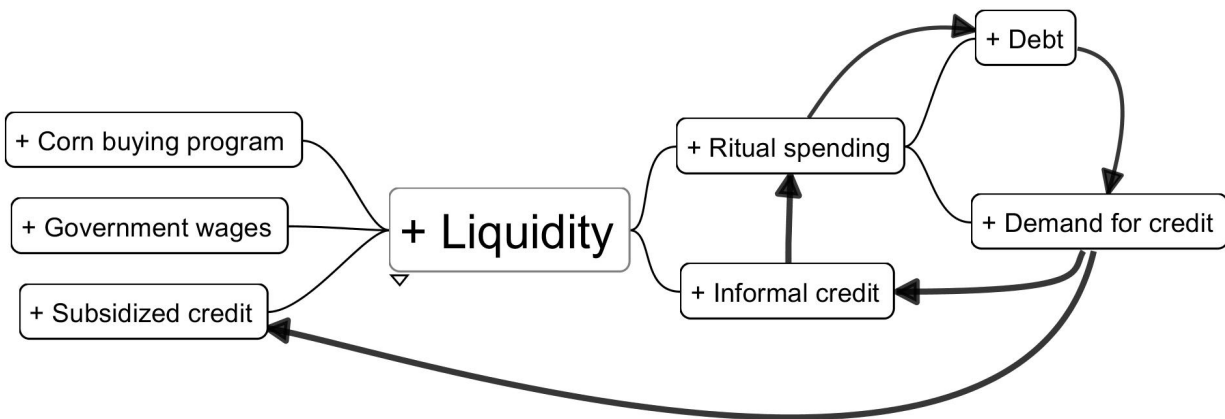
Figure 6.3: The credit-ritual spending feedback loop

Few anthropologists at that time—aside from Cancian (1972)—studied the activities of government banks in Chiapas, perhaps because the corn receiving centers were placed in Mestizo centers, outside of the scope of Mayanists. Still, there is enough information scattered through 1940-1970 reports that allow us to reconstruct the impact of government credit indebtedness in Maya communities. In 1945, in Chenalhó, credit issuance was regulated by interpersonal knowledge and strong kinship bonds and mutual obligation. "The money is always returned," wrote Guiteras Holmes (1946, 37). "There is trust, as one who can repay and knows how to work." But in the 1960s, however, a much different picture emerges from historical accounts. By then, obtaining credit had become a trivial issue. Borrowing money was now an indispensable part of traditional religious service. A substantial part of the Maya population was in debt, and most would never be able to repay loans given by their neighbors and family.

In theory, government banks were supposed to control credit allocation and ensure that borrowers invested their loans productively. In practice, corruption ran rampant as people devised numerous ways to bypass government checks. The field notes of Díaz Salas (1991) and Stern (1962) describe the inner workings of these banks. After a farmer requested a loan, the government would send an inspector to estimate the farmer's potential corn output. Government officials used that information to determine how much money the farmer safely could borrow. Once the loan was approved, the inspector issued an order to deliver (*orden*) which obliged the farmer to repay the loan with a determined amount of corn after harvest. Upon repayment, bank officials would grade the quality of the farmer's corn and issue recommendations to increase his productivity, sometimes lending him hybrid (more productive) seeds. Aside from restricting future loans, there was little that banks could do little to sanction farmers who

defaulted. While the Banco Agrícola asked farmers to provide collateral (a land title or cash payment), the Banco Ejidal could issue security-free loans to credit societies (Stern, 1962, 4).[122]

Government officials devised numerous schemes to profit off the system, frequently demanding *mordidas* (bribes) from farmers who failed to comply with their policies. In the simplest arrangement, government officers would issue cold hard cash and pocket a cut of 10 pesos for every 100 loaned (Stern 1962, 7). Farmers quickly learned to use bribes to manipulate government officials in every step of the process. For instance, they used bribes to receive higher evaluations for their corn, to obtain delivery order documents, or to skip mandatory inspections (idem). A paperwork market then emerged. Those wishing to unlock access to government credit could buy, sell, or even loan (at interest) the delivery orders, promissory notes, and land titles required to obtain loans or sell corn. In a case described by Stern, a farmer obtained a bank loan from the bank and used the money to purchase corn from other farmers to resell it to the bank. In another case, a man who owned land but did not cultivate it managed to get an *orden* from an inspector; the man then sold the *orden* to a trader, who then bought corn futures from several farmers and, after harvest, sold the corn in bulk to the government (Stern 1962 cases I to VI). Farmers could also pay *mordidas* to make officials buy their corn without any documentation or improve their corn ratings (Díaz de Salas 1991, 152, 199).

Investing in corn futures became immensely profitable for those who knew how to navigate through the government bureaucracy. Trosper (1967, 35) documented the case of a trader who bought corn futures of 22 households in his hamlet. After harvest, he immediately sold the corn in bulk to a receiving center, doubling his initial investment. Corn futures provided guaranteed returns as sellers no longer needed to find buyers and banks offered prices above market value. To reduce transportation costs and increase profits, Zinacantecos began to buy land near government warehouses—a rational response to changing economic incentives (Cancian 1972, 123).

Land titles had been a prized commodity since the earliest days of land reform. In the 1940s, Men who could speak and write in Spanish played the role of intermediaries between indigenous communities and the government. By controlling access to land titles, some of these men became powerful *caciques* (Siverts 1965; Edel 1966). After the arrival of credit banks, land titles acquired a new function: they now granted access to Banco Agrícola loans. A gold rush for land titles ensued. Stern documented cases in which *ejidatários* sharing communal lands used each other's land titles when applying for loans. For non-*ejidatarios*, it was possible to borrow, rent, or steal other people's titles and offer them collateral when

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[122] Although the law established a minimum membership of 5 for credit societies, in Chiapas the government allowed for "societies" with just two members (see Stern, 1962).

asking for loans. The government had no way to verify a title's true owner (Stern, op. cit). In 1967, a Zinacanteco was caught trying to use a title of communal lands to obtain a loan, causing outrage in the town (G. A. Collier 1975, 144).

Over time, the practice of offering land titles as collateral spread beyond government-farmer relationships. In Amatenango, Nash observed that "one Ladino held title to land worth 1,000 pesos for a 50-peso debt and threatened to foreclose" (1985, 93). Even anthropologists could not escape the land title fervor: Díaz de Salas describes how an informant offered him a land title in exchange for a 100 peso loan (1991, 93). Some noticed that indigenous people treated land titles as 'sacred objects': "they are never shown to strangers and are hidden or reluctantly disposed of when new titles nullify the legal value of previous ones" (Hunt and Nash 1967, 270). In hindsight, indigenous people had good reasons to hide land titles from strangers, as they feared having their titles stolen. Moreover, old titles could still be used as collateral when requesting loans as government officials had little interest in verifying their validity.

4.2. Interest Rates and the Dawn of Rent-seeking

As we saw earlier, borrowing more to repay loans was not a new practice among the highland Maya. When money was scarce, people could transfer their debts from one person to another. When requesting loans, they would bring a gift of liquor to their creditors. In the 1960s, with the rise of fiesta costs, this system had changed dramatically. Maya people were now emulating the government's credit system. They began to use each other's land titles to collateralize loans, while charging interest had now become commonplace. The old practice of lending money and receiving payments in kind or labor had disappeared, being replaced with loans with high monthly interest rates (not compounded). Rent-seeking was no longer restricted to Mestizos, and a new class of Maya moneylenders emerged, giving rise to a complex network of informal loans. It is possible to reconstruct changing interest rates on informal loans with data scattered through ethnographic reports from the 1940s onwards.

In 1944, a liter of liquor (*pox*) was a perfect substitute for money, costing exactly 1 peso (which explains why liquor seems to be used as a form of currency in ethnographic reports from the 1940s).[123] Guiteras Holmes observed that in 1945 people in Chenalhó would give a gift of a liter of liquor to a creditor when requesting a 20-peso loan. For a 40-peso loan, two liters of liquor had to be given. In 1945, thus, liquor gifts amounted to paying a 5% interest rate upfront. The term lengths for these loans were variable. Borrowers had no monthly obligations and could offer additional liquor bottles when requesting loan extensions (J. F. Collier 1973, 220).

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[123] Pozas (1947, 222).

In the early 1960s, ethnographers continued to document examples of borrowers giving liquor bottle gifts when requesting loans.[124] By then, however, interest paid in liquor had increased: borrowers were now expected to give a bottle of liquor (costing between $6 and $7.50) for every $100 borrowed (Vogt 1969, 113, 121). In addition to that initial gift, most borrowers were now required to pay monthly interest fees.

Before the arrival of government credit, loans to cargoholders were usually interest-free, based only on the expectation of long-term reciprocity. If any, interest was charged only to non-kin (F. Cancian 1965, 101). The situation changed in Amatenango, where the Banco Ejidal arrived years earlier: Nash reported that after the arrival of banks, "the rate on loans made within the pueblo has risen from 2 or 3 pesos a month for 100 pesos to 5 pesos, thus equalizing the rate that was charged in the neighboring Ladino town. The same rate is applied between relatives as non-kin" (Nash 1985, 91). Charging interest became a generalized practice in the 1960s. Trosper (1967) collected quantitative data on loans in Zinacantán, where much of the population was in debt, sometimes with more than 20 loans in and out per family. Interest rates were inversely proportional to social distance. Zinacantecos were less likely to charge interest from relatives, cargoholders, and people from their own community. Loans that were used for productive means (such as investing in corn seeds) had higher interest rates. Still, Trosper documented odd cases such as 1) a woman who loaned money to her nephew at 2% monthly interest; 2) a man who borrowed money from the government and used it to give out 5% monthly interest loans to people in his hamlet; and 3) a cargoholder who was in debt but continued to borrow in order to loan out more money and profit from interest (Trosper 1966, 29, 37, 100).

The INI saw the rise of interest rates as a problem. INI officials offered legal support to indigenous debtors who felt exploited by usurious loans, advising them that legal interest rates should not exceed 9 percent[125] annually (J. F. Collier 1973, 48). Unsurprisingly, the INI's efforts were fruitless since most loans were given informally, outside of the control of the government. Federal laws seemed like a distant reality for most Maya people.

The INI also failed to realize that rising interest rates reflected the growing risk of default in population that was struggling with debt. The greater the risk, the higher were the interest rates. This is evidenced by the fact that, in Zinacantán, people who were seen as risky borrowers were charged even

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[124] The practice of giving drinks when petitioning someone is alive today, although soft drinks or other types of alcoholic beverages can be used in place of *pox*. For instance, I watched Linda Vista cargoholders gift a bottle of rum when requesting that a man sponsor a school graduation ceremony.

[125] Interest rates: 12% to individual borrowers, 9% to *sociedades* with 2 to 10 societies, and 8% to larger *sociedades*.

higher interest rates of 10 to 15% a month—more than the more common 5% a month (Trosper 1967, 99). As we saw earlier, in 1972 Chamula had the most expensive religious offices in Chiapas: a Paxyon de San Juan cost 55,000 pesos (eighteen times an average household income at that time).[126] As everywhere in Chiapas, Chamulas paid for religious festivals largely on credit. However, credit no longer ran through ties of kinship and mutual obligations as it used to. Instead, it was offered by loan sharks at exorbitant interest rates of 60 to 120% annually. Studying cargoholders from Chamula, Linn remarked that "it is possible for people to accrue debts, never paying back." As loans grew more sumptuous, paying interest with gifts or liquor bottles was no longer viable: "opportunities to repay in goods and services are rare, and may be unacceptable in repaying money loans: seldom does repayment take the form of labor" (Linn 1976, 419). Interest rates continued to rise, peaking at 15-20% in the 1980s (Collier 1990, Rus and Collier 2003).

Interest rates on informal loans tend to reflect risk levels for creditors; they rise in response to growing defaults. Rising default rates posed a serious problem to indigenous communities, which lacked institutions and authority roles to legislate on this issue. Once again, communities responded by emulating the structure of government banks. The system of offering gifts (liquor bottles) to establish trust between creditor and debtor or to stall payments was replaced with formal, contract-based loans. The mayor of Zinacantán received the authority to confiscate and liquidate a defaulter's property to settle their debts. Zinacantecos also began to keep a record of disputes over loans, issuing deeds of trust (*actas*) that mandated the repayment of loans at a certain date (Collier 1973, 221). In Chamula, Rus (2010) described some moneylenders as playing the role of 'banks.' These individuals became so influential that municipal authorities began to enforce the foreclosure of homes in cases where borrowers had given used titles as collateral.

These foreclosures would trigger a wave of expulsions that resulted in the fissioning of many already fragmented communities (see discussion on community fissioning in Chapter 3.2.2).

4.3. Burst of the Bubble

In the 1970s, a 'credit crunch' caused massive defaults. Multiple factors led to that crisis. The most probable causes were changes to governmental credit policies, a decline in the real price of corn, and nationwide inflation. Lewis (2018) details the story of how budget cuts and internal conflict led to a deterioration of the activities of the INI in Chiapas, driving the end of much of the programs that had injected cash in highland Maya economies. It is difficult to know, quantitatively, the exact impact of these

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[126] Figures available for 1970-1974 in Wasserstrom (1980, 25).

changes on informal credit systems. Again, the ethnographic record from the 1970s onward suggests that people started to default on loans that they had acquired while the cost of fiestas was going up in the preceding decades. As the inflows of money into smallholders economies came to a halt, people could no longer repay their debts, which triggered a wave of conflicts, expulsions, and community fragmentation that would culminate in the 1994 Zapatista rebellion. A second wave of fragmentation—post-1994—was likely caused by governmental policies that incentivized the decentralization of resource management in indigenous communities (and which is the topic of Chapter 7).

Until the 1970s, highland Chiapas economies fundamentally depended on the price of corn, whose price had been artificially inflated by government decrees. Corn had for centuries been used as currency (and it still is, to a smaller extent, today—for instance, people Linda Vista may pay their relatives with bags of corn). The price of corn, thus, determined a household's purchasing power. In the 1970s, the government began to undo the price increases established in previous decades. It intentionally let the price slide by 25% (relative to inflation) between 1975 and 1982 (Rus 2010, 30). The corn price (adjusted for inflation) continued to fall another 60%, hitting its lowest point in 2005. By then, corn money had lost much of its importance to more valuable cash crops such as coffee.

In Figure 6.4, I compare the changes in the price of corn with the minimum wages for Chiapas and Mexico. I adjusted those values for the effect of inflation using the Consumer Price Index (see Appendix). The minimum wages were set by the government and reported in the historical statistics volume by the INEGI (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (México) 2015).
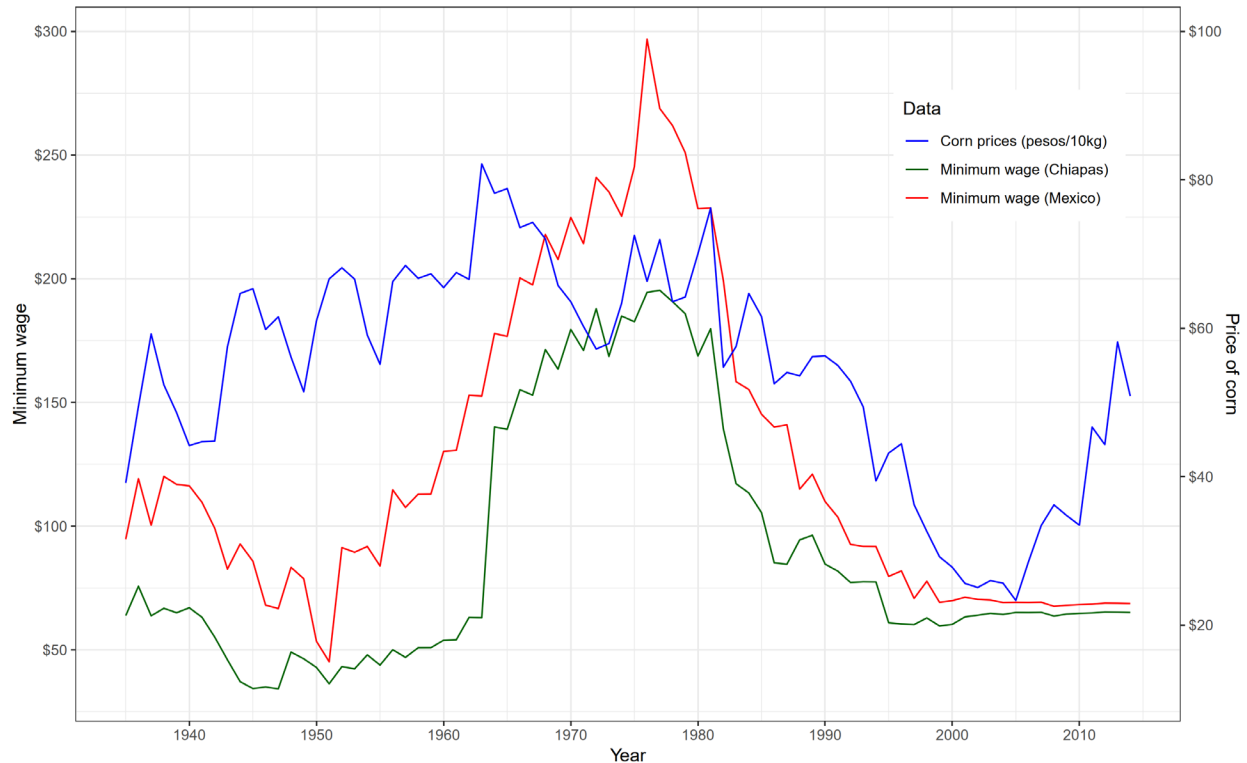
Figure 6.4: Real price of corn and minimum wages in Mexico and Chiapas (1935-2015)

With the introduction of INI programs in the 1930s, minimum wage policies began to play a role in increasing liquidity alongside the price of corn and subsidized credit. People such as Mol Hernández—who, as I discussed earlier, worked in building roads for the government—directly benefitted from minimum wage increases. Minimum wages (adjusted for inflation) increased steeply from 1950 to the mid-1970s. Along with the price of corn, they peaked and initiated a two-decade descent, which was aggravated by national hyperinflation in the 1980s. When this happened, cash flows to indigenous communities were drastically curtailed. The complex informal credit networks that had expanded in previous decades began to contract, leading to foreclosures and expulsions in most indigenous towns. People's inability to afford inflated cargos or repay debts led them to search for alternative sources of prestige (schools, political parties, or Protestant churches), triggering decades of religious and political conflicts. The 1980s was a period of profound economic transformations that forced smallholders to adapt by pursuing new livelihood strategies.

Although there is a lack of quantitative data on informal credit in the 1970s, the ethnographic record of that decade contains enough information to suggest that these economic changes led to a credit crunch in highland Maya communities. As the cost of cargos continued to rise, borrowing became a necessity of life since escaping cargo duties was impossible. Collier remarked that those who could not

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obtain loans from strangers or kin had no choice but to leave Zinacantán. Thus, maintaining a good reputation as a borrower (with a positive record of repayments) was a matter of survival (1973, 220). In 1969, Haviland made several recordings of Zinacantecos exchanging crucial information on each other's reputation and even quantified the phenomenon: borrowing and lending were the most frequently talked about subject in Zinacantán (Haviland 1971, 164). Gossip about loaning and borrowing reflects the Zinacantecos' worries about increasing default rates. By sharing information about lenders and debtors, Zinacantecos established an informal 'credit score.' This information channel could be used by lenders to assess the reputation of borrowers, thus minimizing the risk of default.

During this period, we see the emergence of alternative strategies for obtaining credit. Recall the case of Juan Ak'te'—the man from Chenalhó who I described as relying excessively on loans but somehow having his debts forgiven, perhaps because of his reputation as a curer/witch (Section 2.1). As I discussed, curers had more available credit for financing cargos. The Chiapas reputation bubble coincides with reports that the number of curers in different Maya towns was increasing. There are also reports from the same period that accusations of witchcraft were on the rise. This rise in shamanism and witchcraft accusations was a source of interpersonal conflict.

From the 1940s onwards, several ethnographies document an increase in the number of curers and assassinations motivated by witchcraft accusations for different Tzotzil and Tzeltal towns: Amatenango (J. Nash 1967), Zinacantán (Fabrega and Silver 1973), Oxchuc (Siverts 1981, 118), and Ocosingo (Montagu 1970). While each ethnographer gives a different explanation for that phenomenon, the growing demand for credit to finance cargo service—a factor which affected every Tzotzil and Tzeltal town—may explain the surge in interest in magic and healing at that time. By becoming a curer or a witch, one could more easily obtain loans to sponsor fiestas and postpone debt repayments. As default rates increased in the 1970s, so did witchcraft accusations. Observers report violence against 'witches'— that is, curers who defaulted on their loans. Vogt describes the events leading to the murder of a curer in Zinacantán: "[the curer] was in debt almost constantly, borrowed things without returning them, and begged or demanded drinks from total strangers." (Vogt 1969, 413). A graphic transcription made by Haviland (1971, 5–9) details the murder of a moneylender who was visiting a community to collect IOUs. In the transcription, Zinacantecos remark that that moneylender had begun to charge 20% monthly interest rates on his loans. The moneylender was also described as a witch who had violated sexual taboos.

Finally, in the 1970s highland Chiapas also saw a wave of conversions to Protestantism. Protestant missionaries had been working in the area since the 1940s. In their first twenty years, however, Protestant missionaries had little success in converting anyone, being consistently blocked by caciques or

met with indifference or disdain from the local population (as noticed by Rus and Wasserstrom 1982, 169; one noteworthy exception Tzeltal town of Oxchuc—see Appendix). Beginning in the late 1960s, conversion to Protestantism explodes in Chiapas. What caused this sudden change of heart? One possibility is that people converted to Protestantism to bypass the obligation to serve cargos or to obtain protection from moneylenders. Another—and more probable—hypothesis is that Protestant churches offered a means of securing land and credit to those who were persecuted. Some missionaries recommended the church take responsibility for buying land and creating new credit lines for their converts. For instance, Vernon Sterk, a missionary who served in Chiapas for over forty years, advised that when resettling persecuted converts, "the purchase of land, the fair distribution of plots, the administration and financial arrangements, and the repayment of loans and credits for land and housing materials all tend to become the role of the missionary in cooperation with indigenous leaders" (Sterk 1992, 174–75). Religious conversion, thus, may have provided financial payoffs to people struggling with indebtedness.

At the peak of a nativist cycle, the prospect for highland Chiapas populations relied entirely on promises of debt repayments. But for those debts to be repaid, there needed to be real and lasting economic growth. The INI's credit programs rested in part upon inflating the money supply to obtain short-term results. For credit programs to work, they would have to produce returns rather than defaults. At that time, any alternative allowing the Chiapas Maya to escape the debt/ritual cycle may have seemed attractive for them. Protestantism was perhaps the main alternative to the traditional way of building a reputation. Other options were the underfunded bilingual schooling system or migration. Nativist cycles work by inflating the cost (and value) of tradition. At first, inflation is attractive to those wishing to develop a career in the traditional reputation system. However, ritual costs eventually become unsurmountable, creating an incentive for new generations to pursue alternatives and modernize.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I developed the notion of 'nativist cycles' and discussed the main economic factors behind the phenomenon. I argued that increases in the supply of money (i.e., greater liquidity) and credit cause ritual spending to go up. As rituals become expensive and money abundant, people are incentivized to spend to avert future losses. Higher ritual spending results in a growing reliance on loans, which causes credit networks to expand while new money flows in. I showed that the cost of religious ceremonies among the Chiapas Maya does not move linearly but follows boom and bust cycles that are associated with levels of financial liquidity and credit. The causes of this phenomenon are no different from those driving the price movement of assets or securities and growth cycles in modern economies.

Increasing ritual spending motivated the surge of nativism among Tzotzil communities noticed in the 1960s by Vogt (1969, 605) and others. That nativist cycle coincided with the arrival of anthropologists from Harvard and the University of Chicago in Chiapas. It was during that time that most scholarly knowledge about the highland Maya was forged. Spending exorbitant sums of money in cargos was often portrayed as an endemic 'cultural trait,' being indispensable for binding Maya communities together. I argued, instead, that such behaviors were a historical anomaly. It was not by coincidence that anthropologists and money loans arrived together among the Maya: both were part of the same modernization project for the region. It is an age-old question whether anthropologists can dissociate their observations from the modernization processes they are a part of. Monetization or disturbances in the supply of native monies—almost always follow Western interference. These processes may have shaped the familiar portrait of non-Western societies as heavily ritualized and structured by competitive redistribution systems. Take, for instance, the case of the Moka exchange systems in highland New Guinea. Before the arrival of anthropologists (1950s), New Guinean shell economies suffered hyperinflation waves as miners and missionaries airlifted large amounts of pearl shells to the highlands. After witnessing their currencies' devaluation, highlanders began to invest in pigs and prestige, which retained value over time (Strathern 1969; Hughes 1978). The mechanism leading to ritualized exchange in New Guinea may have been the same as the one proposed in this paper. 'Prestige bubbles' may be more common than anthropologists have acknowledged.

Prestige in Tzotzil communities is an investment since it can be accumulated and exchanged for monetary and non-monetary goods (such as rights to accumulate wealth). If reputation can be 'bought' via the cargo service, then we can speak of a prestige-money exchange rate—that is, the amount of money an individual needs to spend to acquire a certain amount of prestige. The prestige-money exchange rate fluctuates over time: the price of serving a cargo in 2015 depends on how much other cargo holders spent in previous years. Each time a cargo is served, the collective consciousness of a community updates, through gossip, the cost of a fiesta in marginal increments. Over time, the community builds a narrative of what constitutes a well-performed (or paid) versus poorly executed service relative to the previous performances.

I showed that changes in the prestige costs can be recorded and charted using both historical data and participant recalls—the latter being more accurate than previously thought. The reputation bubble in Chiapas is crucial in understanding the changing dynamics of cooperation and innovation in the indigenous communities of Chiapas. From 1940 to 1970, the cost of religious offices in indigenous communities skyrocketed, following sudden increases in liquidity and credit initiated by the Mexican government. Instead of inhibiting cargo service, this increase in costs incentivized people to volunteer to

spend. Fiestas and religious ceremonies are an important way of marking and maintaining ethnic identity. The cargo bubble, thus, gave rise to a cycle of nativism in these communities. Traditional rituals became more ostentatious, strengthening local institutions.

The Tzotzil and Tzeltal towns sampled for this study are just a microcosm among the hundreds of Mesoamerican towns that practice some form of cargo system. Additional research is needed to confirm or reject the ideas I proposed here. A comparison between Mexican and Guatemalan Maya may shed further light on the influence of credit programs and land reform on cargo spending. In the coming years, remittances from migrant workers in the United States could once again increase the demand for costly religious cargos. Finally, while focusing exclusively on economic factors in this chapter, I consciously neglected specific political changes from the 1970s onwards, which influenced the cargo system by promoting the decentralization of power in Chiapas communities. These reforms and their effect on how the Tzotzil from Chenalhó allocate publics goods will be the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7. THE CHALLENGE OF AUTONOMY: DECENTRALIZATION AND PUBLIC GOODS PROVISION

In Chapter 3 (1.1), I argued that the egalitarian model—according to which Maya groups allocate resources based on norms of absolute equality—fails to accurately describe how Tzotzil communities manage common resources. Despite its inaccuracy, the model has had a significant impact in shaping how the Mexican government and private organizations devise social programs for its indigenous populations. In this chapter, I examine how people in Chenalhó respond to some of those policies at the local level. I show that, while some programs are built upon the assumption of egalitarian distribution, upon their implementation they are significantly reshaped to adapt to local prestige hierarchies.

Since the early days of the INI (Instituto Nacional Indigenista), Mexican government officials have sought to devise economic policies that build on pre-existing indigenous institutions. Because Mexican indigenous communities can be fragmented and diverse, these policies seek to strike a balance between allowing for top-down intervention and letting indigenous people maintain legislative autonomy. The establishment of decentralized credit associations—which I reviewed in Chapter 6—has perhaps been the most impactful of those programs.

There have been other programs which, given their omnipresence, every ethnographer who approaches indigenous groups in Mexico will inescapably come across. One of them involves issuing grants to cooperatives—a program that has existed, under various incarnations, since the 1950s (Romano Delgado 2003, 2:273). Other examples include the communitarian restaurants (see Chapter 5, 1.2) and a variety of construction grants which, since the 1970s, have had the effect of decentralizing decision-making in Chiapas. What some of these programs have in common is that they assume that public goods provision in indigenous communities is regulated by an egalitarian *ethos*. As I have shown in previous chapters, the empirical evidence from Chenalhó indicates otherwise. Despite lacking dominance hierarchies, Tzotzil communities are ranked hierarchically, with prestige playing a pivotal role in determining who receives priority in the allocation of resources and burdens.

This chapter is an unintended consequence of having spent considerable time following cargoholders and watching how communities make collective decisions within Chenalhó's communal assemblies. While doing fieldwork, I inevitably came across government and NGO actors who worked to implement social programs in rural communities. It is not uncommon to hear outsiders describe Tzotzil people as blindly following customary laws and being incapable of thinking independently from their group. In my view, this image of Tzotzil people as *hive-minded* stems from a simplistic understanding of

how power structures of these communities work. These misconceptions must be cleared if we want to facilitate dialogue between highland Maya groups and Mexican society.

To read this chapter, the reader must be grasp Tzotzil prestige hierarchies work (Chapter 3) and how the cargo system functions to regulate the Tzotzil reputation economies (Chapter 5). In Section 1, I examine how certain changes in how the Mexican government allocates resources to small communities have led to growing decentralization in decision-making in Chenalhó. I weight some of the positive and negative consequences of those changes. In Section 2, I turn to the role of Chenalhó's reputation economy and its prestige hierarchies in shaping how people respond to these decentralized programs at the local level. I focus on how prestige rankings can affect, for instance, cooperative financing programs. I also discuss petitioning ceremonies that have developed alongside increasing decentralization. To obtain resources, communities must petition municipal authorities for funds—a system which combines traditional and modern elements. I argue that to shed light on that system—and the problems and solutions that it has created—we must understand the of Tzotzil reputation economies work.

1. No Master Mind

Excerpt from a field diary, May 2015, Linda Vista:

> Walking uphill from the school, I came across a gathering of *pasados* sitting in Jacinto's store's kiosk: Miguel, Jacinto, and Luis, and Andres. I asked what the reason for the meeting was.
>
> "We are waiting for the *ingi* [engineer]," replied Andres.
>
> "Can I join your meeting?" I asked.
>
> "Yes, but can you repay your belly with soft drinks [*lek oy pero mi chapak ach'ut resku*]?" he asked.
>
> "Sure, maybe a box."
>
> "Heehaw!"—the group cried, tapping the concrete table. Their composure restored, Andres joked:
>
> "Have you found your wife in Chenalhó yet?"
>
> "Not yet." [joking]
>
> "Come on. What happened? Please find one soon. Let me know if you are looking for one."
>
> The *pasados* laughed at his joke. I headed for breakfast with Mariano, and then returned to the school to watch the meeting with the "ingi."

The exchange above took place as I approached a group of men (most of whom were *pasados*, or respected elders) early in the morning in Linda Vista. The men were sitting in front of the house of the community's former *Agente*, Javier. I reproduced the excerpt to illustrate the kind of routine interaction that takes place in rural communities—and to which I will come back later in the chapter. These informal exchanges are replete with banter, gift requests, suggestions of reciprocity, mocked marriage arrangements, and what Laughlin (1975) called 'Tzotzil male joking speech'—vulgar, sometimes explicit language, that only males are expected to use.

In earlier chapters, I made several mentions of the act of <u>petitioning</u>—a type of exchange of a more ceremonial character, but which also involves gift requests. Cargoholders often use formal petitions to obtain funds from government contractors, municipal authorities, or wealthy individuals. This was precisely what was about to happen that morning in Linda Vista. Andres—the man who addressed me—is the community's founder and *cacique*, and his presence that day indicated that something important was about to happen.

I headed to the school building to attend the meeting between cargoholders and government contractors. What took place there was a quasi-ceremonial bargaining event where the Linda Vista's Agente (headman) petitioned government contractors for a gift. I describe the intriguing event below. In the remainder of the chapter, we will try to make sense of what happened that day. We will strive to comprehend why people in Chenalhó frequently petition each other for gifts and how this relates to prestige hierarchies, social programs, and public goods provision in Chiapas.

1.1. "Without Pressure"

"Ingi" is short for *ingeniero*, or engineer. It refers to the contractors (*contratistas*) hired by the community to build two new classrooms for Linda Vista's primary school. Four months before, people in Linda Vista successfully petitioned the municipal mayor for funds to expand their school. The *ingis*/contractors were expected to arrive that day to discuss the details of the project.

The construction would generate temporary construction jobs for the community. Nearly every male resident had expressed interest in taking those jobs. To attenuate competition amongst them, they voted to rotate the jobs among all willing to work males. They were still unsure, however, about how much the workers would be paid. The contractors were coming to shed light on this and other issues.

While waiting for the contractors, I sat with Andres—the cacique—near the school building. Andres was serving as the Presidente de Comisariado de Bienes Comunales, a high status but unpaid municipal office in charge of mediating conflicts over communal lands. He told me about the land

conflict between communities from Chenalhó and Chalchihuitán—a conflict that dates to the 1960s and in recent years has motivated assassinations causing the displacement of hundreds of people.

The contractors arrived by truck, interrupting Andres's briefing. They were two Mestizo men— one in his mid-20s and the other in his 40s—both formally dressed. They were accompanied by three municipal officials. One of them was the *Auxiliar de Obras*—simply known as *Obra* in Tzotzil—an official who represents the mayor in intermediating construction deals in Chenalhó. The other two were Mayoletik—the traditional policemen—who had come to protect the contractors and assist Obra in distributing liquor (see the description of the *pukel* in Chapter 3.1.2).

Linda Vista's cargoholders came on foot, greeting the contractors as they arrived. The cargoholders were the recently nominated Agente Miguel (whose nomination I described in Chapter 5), the three Patronatos de Obra, and former Agente Hueso ('Bone'). A while later, the group was joined by Juan Vacax ('Cow'), who was serving as Comité del PRI (the community's PRI liaison).

Ordered by status, meeting participants entered the school building where communal assemblies usually take place. When the group sat to talk, a curious inversion of roles happened. The contractors sat behind the table that high-ranking officials use during assemblies. The cargoholders sat on the benches reserved to commoners. I sat behind them, as usual. Andres—the cacique—remained outside with the Mayoletik.

The contractors sat with their backs straight, hands on the table. Looking stern and dominant, they skillfully played the role of *profesionistas* (career men). The cargoholders played themselves, looking unofficial and less focused. The younger Patronatos cleared their throats and sputtered loudly on the floor. Some stretched their legs on the vacant conference room benches.

The older contractor began by clarifying how much workers would be paid:

"The *albaniles* (construction workers) will receive 200 pesos a day, while the *chalames* (apprentices) will receive 130 pesos."

The cargoholders were content with those wages. No one raised any issue. The contractor then began to read an item-by-item list of what they would need to build the new classrooms. Few paid attention to that part of the meeting.

After several minutes of repetitive page swapping and monotone reading, the older contractor closed his notebook and faced the cargoholders. He concluded,

"To sum things up, the new classrooms will cost around a million pesos. This includes the wages that we are paying you and construction materials. Is there anything else you that want me to clarify?"

The cargoholders whispered to each other. Juan Vacax—who had just arrived—and Hueso both whispered something in Agente Miguel's ear. Looking tense—or perhaps just bored—the low-ranking Patronatos left the room. Unfortunately for them, the meeting was about to get interesting.

Agente Miguel wanted to ask something. He attempted to face the contractors but could not sustain eye contact for long. His legs were shaking. It was clear that whatever he was about to say was making him nervous. Was he too inexperienced for what was about to happen? He took a deep breath and, starring at the floor, with a shaky voice, mumbled, in Tzotzil:

"I'm going to ask you something… It's not a lot, really. It's just a… little gift. Something for you to show your kindness. There won't be any pressure for you to give us anything. If you want to give, we will be happy with it. If you don't, no problem. You should give from the goodness in your hearts [*slekil avontonik*]."

The contractors acquiesced. After a short pause, Miguel continued, now with growing confidence:

"Here in the community we have the custom of holding a fiesta to inaugurate new buildings. We slaughter a bull and distribute meat to everyone. But to do that, we will need a contribution from you. But I am not pressuring you to give us anything… You must give from the goodness of your hearts."

Upon finally establishing eye contact with the contractors, Miguel concluded his petition:

"So, how much can you give?"

Juan Vacax translated Miguel's request to broken Spanish. The contractors faced one another. The older man did not seem surprised with the Agente's request. But the younger contractor seemed slightly irritated. They whispered to each other, seemingly discussing the Agente's request. Calmly, the older contractor then declared:

"I understand your request. We can donate a bull worth 15,000 pesos for your fiesta."

The cargoholders remained unfazed. The contractor's offer had clearly been disappointing. Considering the total construction budget, 15,000 pesos was, indeed, a low effort bid.

Former Agente Hueso asked for permission to speak. In his typically straightforward manner, he said, in Spanish:

"Listen. We can't afford a bull with 15,000 pesos. We know how much things cost around here. With that money we can at best buy a calf."

"A frail calf that is!"—added Juan Vacax.

Hueso scanned other cargoholders for an endorsement. They nodded. Emboldened, he asked the contractors to raise their bid:

"We will need at least 25,000 pesos. That's the minimum we need to buy a bull for everyone in the community."

The younger contractor was clearly displeased. Perhaps he did not foresee so much *pressure* from the cargoholders. Or could he be bluffing? Perhaps this was part of the negotiation process. He exchanged looks with his partner, shaking his head in disapproval. The men whispered a few words. They seemed be planning on how to respond.

"That's alright. We accept your request," said the older contractor. "We can give you a bull worth 25,000 pesos. But this is the highest we can go. As you know, this construction will cost us a lot of money and we have to make ends meet. We need to make sure we will have enough money to pay you for your work."

The cargoholders smiled. Agente Miguel looked at Hueso in search of approval. Hueso nodded. But the deal was not done yet. In Spanish, and in his usual theatrical style, Juan Vacax spoke:

"Allow me to interrupt, *Seniores Inginieros*, Obra, Agente, pasado Agente, and *antropólogo*. I have an objection to make," he said, addressing meeting attendants ceremoniously. "You know how kids are these days. Our fiestas are getting more and more expensive. A bull is not enough for us to hold a fiesta. The young ones want to play games and hold basketball tournaments. They want the prizes to be paid in cash. Everything is getting more expensive, as you know."

Others nodded. *Ja' jech*—"that's right." Juan Vacax continued:

"How about this: maybe, if you are really kind, you could raise your generous gift to 50,000 pesos. But only do this if your hearts so desire. I won't pressure you to give more. Give as much as your hearts want to give."

There was a long digression after Juan spoke. Other cargoholders jumped in, now speaking Tzotzil. They talked about what they would need to purchase for the fiesta—tournament prizes, animals, alcohol, fireworks, a *banda*, etcetera. Perhaps they would have to slaughter a pig and a few chickens. They recalled a fiesta done in the previous year and talked about fiestas done in neighboring communities. The logistics of organizing such events are complicated. Everyone seemed to converge on these issues. The contractors remained silent, watching the unintelligible chatter with amusement.

Obra—the only municipal official present—returned to speaking Spanish. Looking straight in the contractors' eyes, he said:

"*Señores Ingenieros*, as you saw, the esteemed Comité [Juan Vacax] asked if you could give 50,000 pesos to the community. What he said is reasonable. Fiestas cost a lot of money these days because kids want to hold tournaments and those things. Surely, I won't pressure you to fulfill his request.

As you know, I am not a member of this community. I'm just passing the Comité's message along. Anyway, maybe you could give them 50,000 pesos, if you feel like. What do you say?"

The younger contractor covered his eyes with his hand. He seemed outraged. He then glanced at his partner in disbelief, as if he was about to scream, "I can't take this anymore" and run away. But the older contractor remained cool and composed. With his right fist tightly closed, he slammed the table and said:

"We can give you 35,000 pesos. This is my last offer. It's all we can give you. Take it or leave it.¨

The tension in the room was suddenly dispelled. The low-ranking Patronatos came back in, seeming relieved. Perhaps this was not best offer that the cargoholders could get. Nevertheless, the money seemed good enough for what they needed.

"Thank you, this is very kind of you," said Agente Miguel. "We will take your 35,000 peso gift."

The cargoholders now looked jubilant. From their perspective, they had just managed to increase the contractor's gift by more than double. They stood up and, one by one, effusively shook hands with the contractors. Invigorated by their joyful mood, I thanked the contractors as well.

Smiling and calm, Obra stood up and congratulated the cargoholders:

"The meeting is over. As you saw, everything went well. I hope you noticed how kind these engineers were in giving you such a nice gift. Best all, there was no pressure from anyone. They decided to give at their own will!"

Ranked by status, meeting participants went outside to chart in front of the classroom where women were about to serve them a meal. (I described how that *pukel*—or feast—went in Chapter 3.1.2.)

1.2. A Contractor's Viewpoint

After the meeting was over, I introduced myself to the older contractor. His name was Marcelo. The younger man with him was his nephew. He was there to learn how his uncle worked.

Before I got a chance to ask Marcelo a question, he asked me,

"So, what did you think?"

"About what?"—I asked.

"About what you just saw there." With his thumb, he pointed to the conference room where he and cargoholders had just met.

"I thought it was interesting. Is this common around here? Had anyone ever requested from you a bull for a fiesta before?"

"Yeah… We figured it out," he answered, vaguely.

"What did you figure out?"

"How to close deals. We've been to dozens of communities around here. It's always like this. They are all the same. Tzotzil, Tzeltal… same thing everywhere." His index finger hovered through the horizon. "They ask you for a gift, and you're supposed to negotiate. Never reject a request if you want the deal to be sealed."

"Really?"

"Really. We have seen other engineers lose contracts over this. Some of them refuse to give a gift to the community. But we don't. We learned that this is how indigenous people negotiate. We follow their rules, and we have been successful in doing so."

By understanding how highland Maya petitioning systems work—and by playing along with their rules—Marcelo unlocked access to a vast trove of government construction funds. This became possible thanks to 1970s reforms which since then have increasingly decentralized public good provision in Chiapas.

1.3. Free to Choose

There has been a construction boom in rural Chiapas over the past five decades—and especially so since the winding down of the Zapatista conflict. The boom has been largely financed by government contracts. The money flows from the federal government or private organizations into the state governments, which then repass it to the municipalities. What happens to those funds then is only limited by one's imagination. The allocation process is highly decentralized, and decisions are put in the hands of small autonomous communities. These decisions are largely shaped by *usos y costumbes*, or 'customary law.' As we saw, what counts as 'customary' in Chenalhó is in fact a wide gamut of practices that can vary considerably across the town's 110-plus communities. Rather than referring to a body of laws, *usos y costumbres* characterizes whatever local norms differ from the ones used by the Mexican government (Chapter 3).

Some have argued that the increase in government spending after 1994 is part of a strategy to dissuade indigenous people from joining rebel movements such as the EZLN. In fact, the reforms that shaped the current construction boom date back to the 1970s, in the aftermath of the credit crisis that I described in Chapter 6. Cancian (1992) identified the PRODESCH (1971-76) and the CODECOM[127] (1980-82) as the programs which initiated decentralization of governance in Chiapas. The PRODESCH was state-run program that included a variety of investments in agriculture, health, education, and

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[127] PRODESCH: Programa de Desarrollo Socioeconómico de Chiapas. CODECOM: Convenio de Confianza Municipal.

urbanization. It offered fertilizer loans to farmers, grants for electrification and irrigation projects, funds for the construction of clinics and schools, among other subsidies. The CODECOM focused on improving living conditions by issuing construction materials (block) directly to communities. Both programs were part of a federal strategy for decentralizing decision-making which began in the 1960s and that is still ongoing today. After the Zapatista rebellion, funding for similar programs expanded rapidly, taking decentralization to unseen levels.

The PRODESCH triggered the decentralization process by providing construction funds for primary schools within small communities. The program's basic structure still stands today. The program established that any legally recognized community could receive school construction funds. Legal recognition was given by municipal authorities upon request from communities with at least 250 members. Upon attaining legal status as *parajes*, communities could then petition authorities for a variety of construction funds. The absence of durable dominance hierarchies makes Tzotzil communities more prone to breaking apart (Chapter 3.2.2). The PRODESCH's system of allocating funds created a powerful incentive to decentralization by rewarding newly founded communities with school construction funds.

In his study of Zinacantán, Cancian (1992, 121) noticed that schools provide the basis from which communities build their identities. Cancian's observation remains true in Chiapas today. The Cabecera's main community, for instance, is named after the school where its members hold communal assemblies—the Benito Juárez school. Schools are multifaceted facilities. Not only do they provide education to children, but also a space in which communities can establish their physical presence. They come with rooms and audio equipment that people can use to meet, make announcements, and hold fiestas. I once followed the creation of a community called Mesaton (or La Mesa, as it is formally known now). The community is in the outskirts of a mountain located northeast of the Cabecera's center. Before obtaining official recognition, most members of Mesaton belonged to the larger community of Usilukum. Still, they saw themselves as a distinct group. Most were monolingual Tzotzil speakers who thought that they were not being treated fairly by the larger and more ethnically diverse community to which they belonged. Beginning in 2012, Mesaton members sought to obtain formal recognition. They petitioned municipal authorities to officialize their status as a community. Although their first petition was rejected for lacking the minimum required number of members, the community eventually garnered enough people to obtain formal recognition. Just a few months later, the construction of the community's school began.

The CODECOM followed the same decentralized structure established by the PRODESCH (Cancian 1992, 46). To obtain construction materials, a legally recognized community first had to petition authorities. Upon the petition's approval, the community hosts an assembly to decide how to use the materials. Today, a new program, PROVICH (Promotora de Vivienda de Chiapas), has since 2009 done

the same job as the CODECOM, distributing construction materials directly to communities. Sometimes communities vote to use those materials for building a commonly managed facilities (e.g., storage buildings, school classrooms, basketball courts, etc.). Not infrequently, people vote to transfer construction materials directly to households, which are free to choose how to use them. It is common to see large piles of 'block' (cement hollow bricks) sitting in front of most households in most communities. Sometimes those materials are up for sale (the receiving families may prefer to hold cash instead of block). Some families store the materials for many years until they save enough money to afford cement and hire laborers to build a new home. Blocks became a type of currency—they were used to store wealth or could even to mediate exchange.

If the goal of the PROVICH was to allow people to replace their wooden or mud houses with more durable materials (concrete), the program appears to have been successful. In the years I worked in Linda Vista, at least a third of the community's wooden houses was replaced with roughly built—but sturdy and durable—concrete buildings. Other communities were following the same direction. This expansion of concrete housing was done with little interference from the Mexican government. But since these changes are often done with no central planning, they may cause problems usually associated with rapid urban sprawl.

It is not my intent to evaluate how successful these programs have been. A proper analysis of their efficacy would necessitate more quantitative data. Moreover, it is unclear what measure should be used to evaluate such programs. The officials who elaborate these policies do not seem to be striving for 'efficiency' as measured solely in economic terms. Rather, they are trying to strike a balance between developing indigenous communities while preserving their local autonomy. In other words, communities are supposed to develop on their own—and if they want to. This is a goal whose success cannot be evaluated only with standard economic indices. I simply want to highlight how PRODESCH, CODECOM, and subsequent decentralized programs have created the incentives for the emerging decision-making structures in present-day Chenalhó. First, the programs established incentives for households to join communities. It is only by being affiliated with a legally recognized community that a household becomes entitled to receive resources such as construction materials. Second—as the case of Mesaton shows—groups of households now have incentives to start new communities to receive funds for their own locally managed construction projects (schools, basketball courts, water tanks, etc.).

Thanks to the incentives established in the 1970s, two new types of actors have become increasingly prominent in shaping how resources are managed by communities: (1) government contractors, and (2) civil cargoholders.

Government contractors (*contratistas*) are Mestizo engineers hired independently by communities to execute a variety of construction projects. Every year or two, civil cargoholders from each community present a petition for a construction job to the municipal mayor (or candidate for mayor during election years). After receiving petitions from all communities, the municipal administration tries to allocate enough money fund the projects. The contractors can be chosen by referral—for instance, they can be affiliated with the PRI and indicated to a cacique by someone in the party leadership or within the municipal administration. In a rather interesting development, contractors have become an alternative source of funding for communities. Each time a contractor is hired, he or she is expected to give a gift of between 5 and 10% of the total construction budget back to the community that hired them. The community then holds an assembly to decide what to do with the contractor's 'gift.' Sometimes the money is used to finance a fiesta, as we saw in the case of Linda Vista. But equally often, the money is simply distributed between all households.

We saw an example of how gift petitions to contractors take place early in the chapter. Petitioning is a byproduct of prestige hierarchies. As I detail later in this chapter, the practice makes sense in the logic of Chenalhó's reputation economy. Petitions are made by civil cargoholders who are named by their communities to mediate between resource provision. They do so by listening to the community's needs and seeking potential sponsors to construction projects chosen in communal assemblies. Reflecting the general trend of decentralization, thus, civil cargos have become increasingly central in Chenalhó's resource allocation system. Because of decentralization, most cargoholders today are nominated by small communities. Every year or two (depending on internal regulations), each of the 110 communities holds a communal assembly to nominate its officers (I described one of these assemblies and gave an overview of the work done by community-level cargoholders in Chapter 5). Recall that community-level cargos are 'civil'—they usually do not require their incumbents to sponsor a religious ritual. The emergence of these cargos is a direct consequence of the decentralization process initiated by government in the 1970s.

The most common community level cargos belong to <u>school committees</u>—*Comité de Educación*—and <u>construction boards of trustees</u>—*Patronatos de Obras*. A person named to be a member of school committees or construction trustee boards receives the titles of *Comité* and *Patronato*, regardless of their ranking within each organization. These offices emerged to handle management problems created by the PRODESCH and the CODECOM, which allocated construction government funds directly to communities. To receive those funds, a community must produce and deliver a petition to municipal authorities. Producing petitions requires effort, literacy, and good connections. At first, Patronatos and Comités were created to supply that service to communities. Over time, the Comités began

to play a more central role by managing schools, which provide a space where communities establish their physical presence, and organizing new secular fiestas associated with the school calendar.

Some communities can have other, and less central, types of Patronatos that deal with problems related to water, electricity, or road maintenance. Other previously described community-level cargos include the *Agente* (headman) and the Auxiliares (the community level police—see chapters 5.2 and 6.1.1).

Over the past six decades, these community-level civil cargos have silently reshaped the nature of service in Chenalhó. On Figure 7.1, I show the changing proportion of cargos (by category) served between 1959 and 2015. The figure is based on the self-reported cargo service careers of 202 households (57 Rural Tzotzil, 109 Urban Tzotzil, 36 Mestizo). Since the data is based on how participants recalled the cargos that they served, the number of cargos in the dataset decreases as we move back in time. To categorize cargos by time periods, thus, I split all cargos into five categories, each with an equal number of cargos. For an detailed description of the categories, see "Folk Categories of Work" (Chapter 5.3.1).
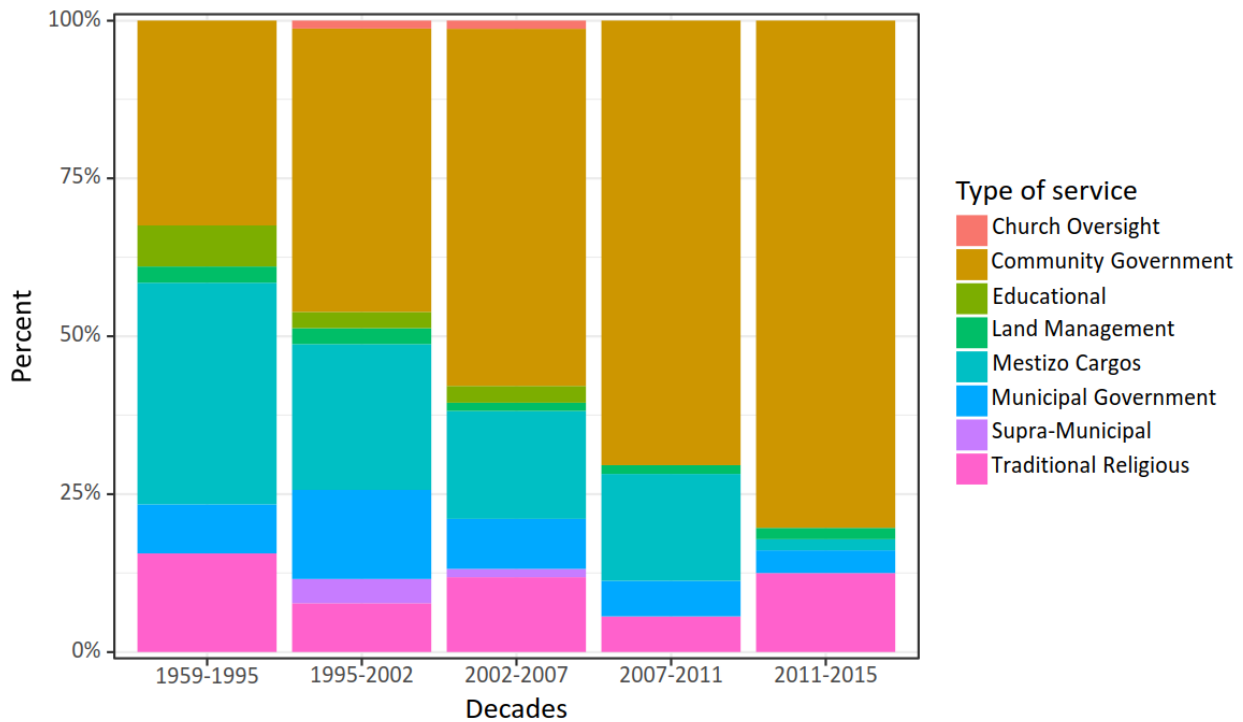

Figure 7.1: Changing nature of communal service in Chenalhó (1959-2015)

The figure shows how community-level cargos have been progressively replacing municipal, land management, and Mestizo offices. While from 1959 to 1995 community-level cargos accounted for only

27% of all offices served, between 2011 and 2015 they amounted to 77% of all offices. But notice that, contrary to the widespread perception that civil cargos are bound to replace religious ones (Chance 1998), the proportion of traditional religious cargos that require ritual sponsorship remained stable over time. It is municipal level and Mestizo cargos that have become increasingly rare over time. The decline of Mestizo cargos reflects the declining power of Mestizos (Chapter 2). The decreasing proportion of municipal cargos reflects the shift toward giving decision-making power to communities.

Decentralization, however, has produced unintended consequence. Chiefly, civil cargoholders cannot handle problems of coordination between communities. This can cause conflict and lead to environmental hazards.

1.4. Drawbacks of Decentralization

Decentralization has had two major drawbacks in Chenalhó. First, the municipality never has enough money to fund every petition for resources submitted by the communities. This can lead to long delays and trigger accusations of misuse of public funds between people from different communities. Second, in an increasingly decentralized political system, few are the authorities that can mediate conflicts between communities. As a result, some resource management conflicts implicating more than one community have become unsolvable. This happens because there are few structures which allow for coordination between cargoholders from different communities. As the municipal administration loses decision-making power, it has become challenging to establish a common agenda uniting the town's 100-plus communities. Lack of coordination can also lead to environmental externalities—as we will see later.

To illustrate how conflicts between communities take place, I once witnessed a protest by people from the community of Puebla, one of Chenalhó's few communities to have surpassed the 1,000-member mark. Many of Puebla's 1,369 members are Tzeltal speakers who do not trust the Tzotzil majority. Oddly, the community is subdivided into *barrios* (neighborhoods), a spatial unit which is only common in Mestizo cities.

In February 2015, protestors from Puebla invaded the Cabecera and took control of the town hall, where they camped for a few days. After waiting, in vain, for the municipal authorities—who fled in panic after their arrival—the protestors raided a meeting between *pasados* and municipal authorities. They tied and kidnapped Chenalhó's mayor and took him to Puebla, where he was subjected to a series of public humiliations (e.g., they dressed the mayor in women's clothes and forced him to beg for forgiveness). The protest was motivated by the municipality's failure to transfer money to finance the pavement of a road connecting Puebla to neighboring communities. The protestors accused the mayor of stealing those funds and prioritizing competing projects. But the protest was also a showdown of power

by one of the town's largest and ethnically distinct groups seeking to assert some degree of autonomy from municipal authorities.

Figure 7.2: The author speaking with Puebla protestors (photo by Marcin Jacek Kozlowski)

To find a solution the problem, Agentes from all communities gathered in the Cabecera the same day the mayor was kidnapped—a meeting which I attended. The Agentes universally condemned Puebla's actions. Some called for expelling the entire community from the town. Others retorted that there was no legal basis for pursuing that course of action. I left the meeting with the impression that there was nothing that could be done to prevent a similar conflict from happening again. And, indeed, not much was done in the following months beside some low-key attempts to settle the issue. The conflict was slowly forgotten as people's attention turned to that year's mayoral election. In the following years, several religiously motivated expulsions—well reported by journalists—took place in Puebla and, again, there was not much that the municipality could do to solve the problem besides asking for help from of external human rights organizations.

Communities are not always entitled to receive municipal funds. To obtain those resources, they must have their petitions fulfilled. Whether a petition is fulfilled or not depends on a variety of factors— for instance, how well connected are a community's civil cargoholders to the party in power, how

persuasive or reputable cargoholders are, etc. To succeed in petitioning, one must have certain skills—for instance, being able to produce well-written and formal-looking documents. Having clout helps immensely as well (a point to which I come back, with examples, in Section 2). Both the scarcity of public resources and the petitioning system instigate competition between communities.

Intercommunity comparisons play a crucial role in regulating this sort of competition. Communities constantly gather information about each other's decisions. This can lead them to emulate or oppose each other. Civil cargoholders know how much money other communities receive and what type of projects they have chosen to invest in.[128] In Linda Vista's communal assemblies, people frequently discussed how neighboring hamlets (such as Beumpale and La Libertad) used their construction budget and how successful they had been in raising funds with petitions. People in Chenalhó rank communities following a variety of stereotypes—this is a form of group entitativity. We once did a study asking people to rank communities based on a series of stereotypes. The results showed that people largely agreed when ranking other communities based on different criteria. Some communities have a reputation of being wealthier and better developed, while others are known as underdeveloped and/or aggressive.

Low-status communities tend to copy the petitions produced by high-status ones. Communities emulate each other, giving rise to patterned trends in construction across the town, which we may call *construction fads*. Some of the trending projects in the 2010s were basketball gymnasiums, school classrooms, public bathrooms, and water reservoirs. I saw at least 8 new basketball gymnasiums being built or expanded between 2010 and 2015 in different communities. One of the earliest gymnasiums was built around 2005 at the Cabecera's main community (Benito Juarez)—a community which is seen as high-status given its size, urban character, and political importance. In the following decade, smaller communities such as Linda Vista began to request funds to build their own courts or gymnasiums. They seemed to be copying the Cabecera's decision. Basketball courts have become widespread and are a fundamental part of the social life of these communities. These facilities are not just recreational, but also a public space for community events.

It might be worthwhile to ask whether this resource allocation process is efficient and better than more centralized alternatives. Most rural communities such as Linda Vista lack a basic sewage system and seem to be nowhere near implementing one. Waste disposal is a problem that each household must deal with individually. One could reasonably argue that since sewage systems enhance sanitation, they

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[128] Until 2015, this is was still done by word of mouth; Today, the municipality has begun to use social media to make public expenditures more transparent.

could result in greater welfare improvements than basketball courts. However, building a functioning sewerage would require supra-community coordination. A sewer network would have to crisscross different communities. For that to happen, officials from different hamlets would have to cooperate. Perhaps the sewer network would have to be planned and financed by a higher authority such as the municipal administration. But as we saw, top-down decision-making is unlikely to happen in Chenalhó. Most of the of the town's present-day road network was built before the 1960s, when the INI could plan and execute large infrastructure projects (Lewis 2018). With decentralization, grand projects such as those are no longer attainable.

The lack of central planning or intercommunity regulations has been the cause of recurrent environmental hazards. There are not many regulations limiting how much natural resources a family or a community can exploit, which can easily lead to abuse and mismanagement (federal regulations are largely ignored). In 2012, Don Reynaldo, one of the few Mestizos who still owned a plot within the Ejido San Pedro, decided to start a large sand mining operation on his land, located northwest of the Cabecera. Despite living in a city, Reynaldo owned property in Chenalhó, which he inherited from his parents and from which he decided to profit off. After learning that his land was rich in sand, he negotiated with a transportation company to ship up to ten truckloads of sand a day to San Cristóbal. Within a matter of weeks, the sand mining operation had dug up an enormous crater in what once had been a forested hill, exposing much of the land to erosion. The deserted area was could be easily spotted in satellite images.

Although most people in Chenalhó learned about the sand mining operation early on, many believed that there was nothing that they could do about it. Despite universally acknowledging the harmful effects of the sand mine, several people—including Mestizos and some with ties to municipal officials—told me the land was privately owned and it was up to its owner to decide what to do. It was only after the sand trucks began to damage the concrete roads in the community of La Tejeria that people decided to act. Members of that community captured one of the semi-truck drivers and summoned Don Reynaldo to their communal assembly. In the assembly, they charged Reynaldo a restitution fee to compensate for road damage. After paying 70,000 pesos to the community, Reynaldo continued with his mining operation for a while. The irreversible environmental destruction caused by it is still visible today.

Between-community conflicts over water—perhaps the most scarce and vital resource in the Chiapas highlands—are also typical (see Burguete 2000). It is not uncommon for several communities to extract water from a single source without any regulations dictating how much water each community can take—a perfect recipe for the 'tragedy of the commons.' In Section 2.2, I describe how such a conflict over water between several communities in the Cabecera ended up incentivizing the rise of a bureaucratic-like decision-making structure.

In some cases, neighboring communities have managed to establish joint organizations to manage certain resources. One example—which I cited in earlier chapters—is how Linda Vista along with neighboring communities—Beumpale, La Libertad, Yaxalumil—founded the *Sociedad del Agua* (Water Society) to deal with problems over their commonly managed water spring. Member of the Sociedad del Agua are nominated by their respective communities and must serve for two years. This type of organization, however, can also struggle to handle coordination problems. Linda Vista and the neighboring communities use a privately-owned spring located in a neighboring town (Mitontic). In the late 2000s, the communities raised money and paid the spring's owner for the right to jointly collect water for a period of ten years. In 2014, however, the owner of the spring decided to cut access to the water, complaining that the communities had been overusing his spring. Suddenly, the four communities' irrigation systems went dry. Members of the Sociedad del Agua gathered to solve the problem. After some bargaining with the spring's owner, they managed to negotiate a solution to the problem. They raised money for taxation and renewed the water contract for another decade. It was unclear, however, whether that spring would withstand another decade of unregulated extraction.

The main issue with such supra-community organizations such as the Sociedad del Agua is their members lack incentives to work together. As we have seen, civil cargos (such as Patronato and Comité) are unpaid and burdensome. These cargos also tend to be the least prestigious in the town. I have met people who bemoaned receiving an excessive number of nominations to those cargos. One man believed that his community was trying to punish him by giving him a series of low-ranking nominations (see Chapter 5). The Sociedad del Agua is one of the least prestigious cargos in Linda Vista, and most people would rather avoid taking that office if they could. With no financial or prestige incentives, civil cargoholders are solely motivated by community coercion.

One solution to the incentives problem, initiated by the municipal administration in the late 1990s, has been to give modest salaries to some community offices such as *Agente* (headman) and Auxiliar (policeman). But we will see below, these salaries are more of a 'symbolic' gesture than actual compensation. Inadvertently, the wages to civil cargoholders may have in fact accentuated the decentralization process even further.

1.5. A Resilient Structure?

By giving wages to some cargoholders, the municipal administration has sought to incentivize a more 'professional' attitude from the hundreds of officers that serve within communities. The salaries given to community-level officers, however, are low. Communal cargoholders see those payments as a symbolic gesture rather than an incentive to work. It is unclear whether this could change in the future.

Since these offices became remunerated in the 1990s, each municipal administration has increased their salaries progressively. Using the cargo career surveys with 202 households described in earlier chapters, it is possible to estimate how much wages have increased each year for some municipal and community-level offices. Figure 7.3 compares changes in the wages of two community-level cargos (Agente, Auxiliar) and two municipal-level ones (Presidente, Regidor). As we in the previous chapter, these data were reported by participants who recalled how much money they received (or spent) for each cargo they served. I adjusted the self-reported earnings for inflation using Mexico's Consumer Price Index (see Appendix: Tracking Ritual Spending Over Time).
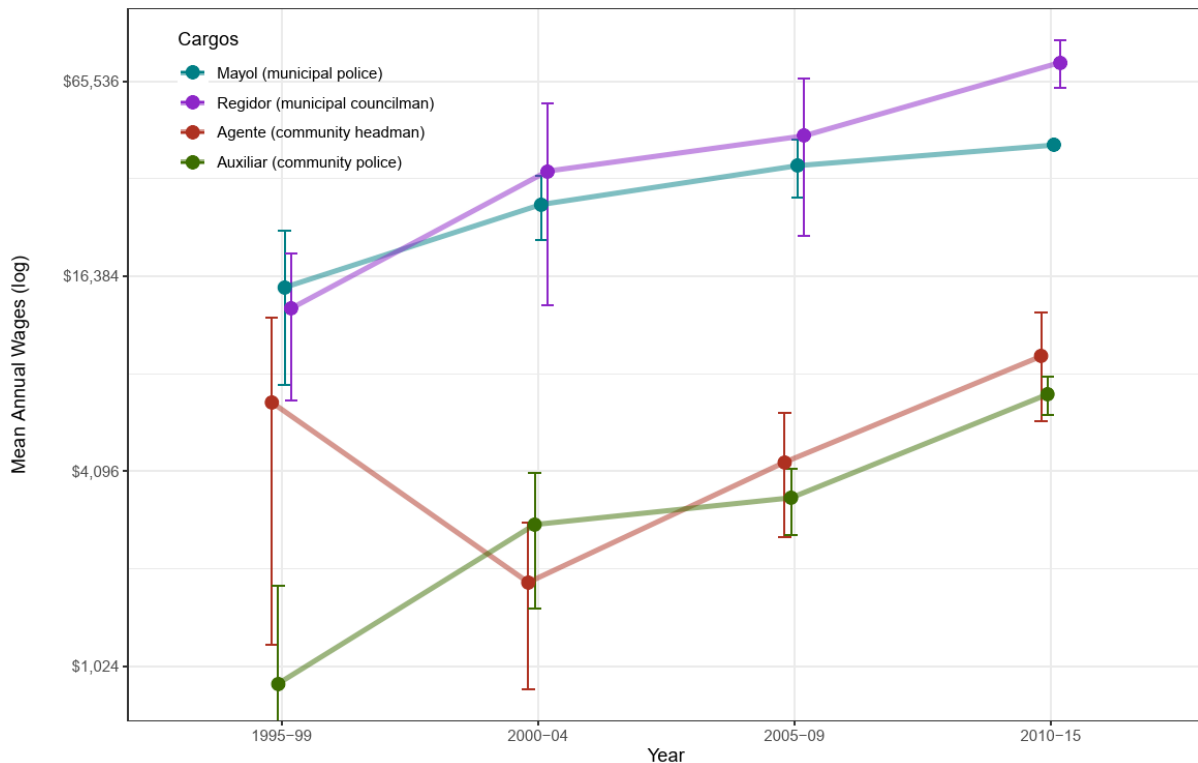
Figure 7.3: Changing salaries of municipal and community level civil offices, 1995-2015

As the chart shows, municipal cargos are far better remunerated than communal ones. In 2015, a Regidor (municipal councilman) earned about 8,000 pesos per month, while Agentes (community headmen), who today are so crucial in influencing decision-making, earned 1,200 pesos per month.

But this situation might change soon as wages for both municipal and community-level cargos have increased significantly since the late-1990s when they began to be instituted. Auxiliar (the communal police officer) has seen the highest annual wage increases of all cargos, which likely reflects the growing importance of officers nominated within the autonomous communities in maintaining order

in the town. On average, wages increased by 7% for Mayol (municipal police), 12.6% for Regidor, 4% for Agente, and 15% for Auxiliar each year. Wage increases for the police officers (municipal and communal) were particularly steep from 2000 to 2004, when Chenalhó saw a push for professionalizing its law enforcement (see "Chenalhó's Three Police Forces," Chapter 6.1). There is no clear difference between wages increases to municipal or community-level offices. Both went up, on average, about 9% annually since 1999 after adjusting for inflation.

When we consider the long span of history, performing unpaid service has always been the norm in Chenalhó. In the 1940s, an ethnographer described how people in the town downplayed paid work. At that time, none of the municipal offices was remunerated—except for a Mestizo *Secretario* (Guiteras-Holmes 1945). Communal service entailed sacrificing something. Self-interested work was seen as inherently immoral. Many still hold such views today. Recall the case of the 'broke elders' (depicted in Chapter 6.2.1) who spent everything they earned in costly communal rituals and showed no regret for having done so.

The extent to which this system of unpaid labor will remain resilient is open for debate. As I showed in Figure 7.3, at least two community-level offices (Agente, Auxiliar) have received wage increases over the past two decades. If their wages continue to rise at such rates, these offices might soon shift from being 'burdens' to well-paid 'professions.' But whether wages continue to rise will depend on Chenalhó continuing to receive an increasing amount of funds from the government every year. It was only after the municipal administration began to receive federal funds—in the 1990s—that paid offices became a reality in the Chenalhó (as well as other Tzotzil-Tzeltal towns in Chiapas).

There are reasons to believe that the unpaid labor system is more resilient than it seems. The system might continue to exist even though some offices are now being 'professionalized.' Although some municipal offices are now remunerated, they have become less central in determining decision-making in the town. Although wages increased, the number of municipal offices remained stationary despite population growth. At the same time, the number of community-level offices skyrocketed thanks to community fissioning and decentralization.

Moreover, most community-level offices—such as Patronato or Comité—are still unpaid. Despite accounting for over 70% of all offices today, these civil cargos are neither rewarded with money or prestige for their service. The result of decentralization, thus, is that Chenalhó's political system continues to be large part run by unpaid officers. What ethnographer Calixta Guiteras-Holmes observed at municipal-level politics in the 1940s remains true, to a great extent, within communities today.

The officers who make most of the decisions are no longer the municipal Regidores (councilmen) so often were featured in 1960s ethnographic descriptions of Chenalhó. Rather, decisions are now in the

hands of underpaid or unpaid community officers (such as Agentes, Comités, and Patronatos). These are the officers who are responsible for much of the political activity today. An ethnographer focused exclusively on municipal politics would erroneously conclude that cargo service has become more 'professional' since Guiteras-Holmes' observations. Under this surface of apparent change, lies a deeper and more complex reality. Thanks to decentralization, the basic political structure of Chenalhó has remained remarkably resilient. Cargo service continues to be largely 1) mandatory, 2) burdensome, and 3) under- or unpaid. The main difference between the 1940s and now is that most decision-making now takes place within small communities.

Since most political offices continue to be unpaid or underpaid, prestige remains as the currency by which cargoholders are rewarded and the cargo system continues to regulate the allocation of offices. In the next section, I analyze the role of prestige hierarchies (explained in Chapter 3) in determining how people respond to some of these new realities resulting from changes in how the government allocates resources to communities.

2. To Each According to Their Prestige

As communities have become more autonomous, and with the lack of supra-community rules and regulations determining how government funds must be spent, local reputation systems have played in regulating the allocation of resources. Let us examine how this plays out with an example: a government-sponsored consumer cooperative that, from day one, assumed the shape of a hierarchical organization.

2.1. The Hierarchical Cooperative

The idea that consumer cooperatives were well suited to promote economic development in indigenous communities dates back to a 1944 article by anthropologist Júlio de la Fuente (1944), who portrayed indigenous Mexicans as driven by a "spirit of cooperation"—a drive to prioritize working for the common good before private interests. As evidence, de la Fuente cited the institution of communal labor (*tequio*, *fagina*) and the cargo system (which he called *servicio*). If indigenous Mexicans share communal burdens equally—as de la Fuente argued—that is because they are driven to put the collective interests above individual ones. The Mexican anthropologist defined the goal of INI programs as "to use the indigenous institutions and cultural traits to develop within native groups new institutions that could result in economic improvement" (p. 749). By establishing consumer cooperatives in indigenous communities, thus, the government could harness their spirit of cooperation to foster more complex forms of manufacture, thus relieving indigenous groups from their overdependence on traditional subsistence

agriculture. Cooperatives could also supply Maya consumers with crucial manufactured goods that thus far could only be obtained through Mestizo middlemen (see Chapter 2.1.3).

The first consumer cooperatives appeared in Chiapas in 1953, when de la Fuente was appointed as the director of the Chiapas INI branch, the Centro Coordinador Tzeltal-Tzotzil, or CCTT (Köhler 1975, 170). The INI cooperatives were jointly owned businesses whose profits were supposed to be shared in equal parts between its members. To incentivize people to join the program, the INI established that cooperative members would be allowed to purchase its products at a discount. Part of the startup capital was provided by the government in the form of low-interest loans, while the rest came from individual member contributions.

From the start, the program suffered several setbacks. In many cases, founding members demanded to receive a share of the cooperative's profit that was proportional to their initial investment amount (id., 304). By Mexican law, half of the profits should be shared between its members, while the other half was to be reinvested in the organization. At first, INI anthropologists blamed the failure of some cooperatives on the native population failing to grasp the importance of sharing profits evenly. "The most difficult issue is to make cooperativists see that they should not obtain profits for what they do, but for what they consume in the cooperative," wrote an INI anthropologist at that time (Romano Delgado 2003, 2:278). Later on, anthropologist Romano Delgado, who ran the CCTT in 1954, blamed those problems on the 'incompetence' and 'dishonesty' of people in charge of the cooperatives.[129] Köhler (1975, p. 306) showed that nearly half of all cooperatives failed within the first five years of the program. One of the problems that the cooperatives faced was competition from family-run businesses, which could offer similar products at lower prices. Those businesses were at an advantage as they did not require its members to commit to a profit-sharing scheme and thus could exact profits proportional to the effort and capital that they invested. In response, the INI lifted the profit-sharing requirement (Romano Delgado 2003, 2:279), although, as Köhler showed, most people ended up preferring to run independent businesses nevertheless. This was not only because cooperatives were associated with the government—and thus not to be trusted—but also due to fairness concerns regarding the allocation of profits.

There is no empirical reason to believe that Tzotzil people would prefer to share an organization's profits in equal parts rather than sharing them proportionally to each participant's effort. In a society structured by prestige hierarchies, merit-based allocation should be a more intuitive notion of absolute

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[129] "Those in charge [Tzotzil and Tzeltal loan recipients] became used to gifting or selling some articles on credit to their family and girlfriends; they altered prices frequently and, by neglect, a large part of the merchandise was pasture for rodents, for lacking adequate storage. Those were loses that Centro [CCTT] had to absorb" (Romano Delgado 2003, 2:284).

equality. It is not surprising, then, that many Maya people rejected the cooperative model in the 1950s, as it disregarded their common notions of proportionality.

What was surprising was to notice that some of the issues documented in the 1950s still exist in cooperative programs in Chenalhó today. In 2015, through sheer luck, I followed the inauguration of a cooperative whose members happened to be friends or acquaintances of mine. The cooperative was funded by a grant from the SEDESOL in partnership with a philanthropic foundation from the United States (I omit details to preserve the anonymity of people involved). Since the 1940s, it has not been unusual for American foundations to sponsor—fully or in part—social programs in Mexico, in particular when these programs involve the issuance of credit, as we saw in Chapter 6 (see also Mottier 2017). The funds are passed from the private foundation or federal government to the local branch of the SEDESOL, which takes care of selecting grantees and distributing and monitoring the use of the money.

A year before, Manuel, 37, male, college-educated, and former high municipal official, submitted a grant proposal to obtain a large oven for a bakery that was to be administered as a cooperative. The SEDESOL program was dedicated to supporting female-administered cooperatives. Many developmental programs today are designed for female recipients—they are usually informed by studies showing that females benefit the most from government-funded programs and administer collective funds more responsibly. However, as we saw in Chapter 4, in Maya communities females lag behind males in educational attainment and are far less likely to have the means to obtain government grants. In rural areas, according to my own data, females spend less than half as many years in school as males. Being aware of the issue, Manuel recruited 10 female acquaintances—his wife among them—to be the cosignatories of his grant proposal. He wrote and submitted the grant proposal on his own, with almost no input from other cooperative members.

Upon being awarded the grant, Manuel and the other grantees made several trips to San Cristóbal to discuss issues regarding the cooperative with SEDESOL. They talked about how the cooperative was to be managed, how the funds were to be distributed, and together, chose the model of the oven that best suited the organization's needs. But here rumors of 'corruption' begin to tarnish the story. Two cooperative members told me that government officials largely overstated how much they spent on the oven and pocketed the excess over expenditures. One of them accused the government officials of cronyism, stating that the oven that they received had been sold by a friend of the officials. The oven seemed to have been previously used, and it was not of the same brand and model that the group had decided on. Being afraid of 'causing trouble'—in other words, antagonizing Manuel—the cooperative members initially avoided expressing their concerns to the group.

The cooperative members described these practices as a 'normal' part of the process of transfer of funds from one organization to another. Several times, while working in Chenalhó, I heard variations of a saying that summarizes the logic behind that practice of taking a cut of shared resources: *el que reparte, lleva la mejor parte*, or 'that who distributes keeps the best part.' It is hard to know whether accusations of improper use of public funds have any merit in Chenalhó. Taking a cut of funds is a descriptive social norm—a practice that everyone who occupies an administrative position or plays the role of mediator between state and federal spheres is expected to perform. At the same time, people understand that the unauthorized use of public funds is improper. That is, it violates the injunctive norm that one should not use public money for personal gain and can potentially harm others. This contradiction between what people <u>do</u> and what <u>they</u> <u>ought to</u> do is the source of the great uncertainty and distrust that permeates almost any transfer of public resources to private hands. This contradiction—to which we will come back later—might be a byproduct of the unfinished transition from customary to bureaucratic structures for resource management.

To run the cooperative, Manuel rented a house in the center of the Cabecera (where rent can be expensive). When the oven purchased with grant money arrived, the group met to discuss how the cooperative would be managed. To the incredulity of all, Manuel broke the agreement that the organization should be run horizontally, with equal participation of all. He appointed himself as the cooperative's 'president' and named his wife as its treasurer. He then assigned cargos to the other members based on their educational background. The women who were least formally schooled—mostly of whom were monolingual Tzotzil speakers—were named as *Vocal*, a title which translates as 'honorary member.' The *vocales* are usually the lowest position within school committee. They play no role in decision-making and have no responsibilities besides assisting those in the upper ranks. The cooperative has turned into a hierarchical organization that mirrored the structure of civil cargos that exist in Chenalhó's communities.

Instead of sharing the profits evenly, Manuel declared that he would pay wages to other cooperative members. He tasked the *vocales* with doing manual labor and cleaning the new building. He promised to pay them a minimum wage within two to three months after inauguration—contingent upon whether the business would turn out to be profitable—and assigned his wife with managing funds, disbursing wages, and commanding others. This frustrated other cooperative members who hoped that the new business would provide them with a secure source of income and that they would have a say in managing the organization. The members then asked the treasurer for an initial report of expenditures, but the treasurer refused to share information. Frustrated, four members quit the cooperative before its inauguration. The remaining ones left within the first week of operation, and the cooperative disbanded.

Manuel then put the oven up for sale and used the funds to open a restaurant in the building for which he had signed a lease.

I spoke with some participants of the cooperative to get some insight into why the business failed. Manuel believed that he was the only one with enough formal instruction to understand how a business should be managed. Also, he had secured those funds on his own, and only him was qualified enough to obtain a development grant. He accused other members of being unable to have a long-term view of the business and only thinking about reaping immediate rewards. He explained that it was vital for him to withhold the collective funds during the first initial months to ensure that the business would turn out viable. He also lamented ending up stuck with an expensive lease and was uncertain that his new restaurant would be profitable enough for him to afford the rent.

Other cooperative members accused Manuel of corruption—that is, using the cooperative funds to launch his privately-owned restaurant. "He lied and manipulated others for his own personal gain," one told me. "He is a politician [*político*], and one cannot trust people like that." When Manuel decided to retain the money for the cooperative, he justified his decision based on a logic proportionality: he was the best educated and highest status member of the group; he had invested the most time and effort into obtaining grant funds. Other cooperative members never accused Manuel of allocating resources unfairly. Lack of distributive fairness was not the reason they cited for disbanding from the cooperative. In fact, some members agreed with receiving wages instead of an equal share of the cooperative's profits. The main accusation against Manuel was that he withheld and potentially stole funds—a rumor that was substantiated by the fact that he gave his wife full authority to manage the cooperative and disburse wages to others.

It is not my intent to generalize from the story above. There have been cases of successful cooperatives in Chiapas—some of which can be easily found through the website of the same foundation that sponsored Manuel's cooperative. It is outside of the scope of this work to evaluate how successful cooperatives have been in promoting indigenous development, and perhaps the failure described here should not overshadow their overall result. I simply want to draw attention to the assumptions behind these programs, which allow us to better understand how certain policy decisions are made.

What data supports the notion that cooperatives are the best-suited business models for the Chiapas Maya? The evidence that I presented in earlier chapters shows that, contrary to what de la Fuente believed, Tzotzil people are not driven to split goods evenly. They are organized by prestige hierarchies that shape how they allocate resources. They have widely shared notions of equity, according to which collective rewards should be distributed proportionally to each person's contribution to the community.

Absolute equality may matter among other Mexican indigenous groups. But for the Tzotzil from Chenalhó, the evidence tells another story.

2.2. 'Merit' and the Rise of Tzotzil Bureaucracy

As we saw, anthropologist Júlio de la Fuente saw communal labor as an egalitarian institution: Mexican indigenous communities share work since they are oriented by collectivist values that place community leveling above individual needs. In this section, I develop an alternative view: communal labor is a convention born out of necessity to solve problems in small groups organized by prestige hierarchies. Rather than being an egalitarian institution, communal labor is the optimal way by which small communities with no cash reserves and few interpersonal expertise differences can sponsor certain public works. In urban areas, such as the Cabecera, communal labor is becoming less common, being replaced with a more 'bureaucratic' structure of sorts. This incipient 'bureaucracy' is based on the principle of merit-based allocation, according to which officials should be appointed and compensated based on their qualifications. By comparing rural and Urban Tzotzil, it is possible to shed light on how bureaucracies emerge in response to problems caused by increasing social complexity.

Communal labor is still widespread in rural Mexico (Magaloni, Díaz-Cayeros, and Euler 2019). Instead of hiring workers to perform a certain task, communities prefer to distribute work between its able members equally. In Chenalhó, the practice is known as *koman abtel* (literally, 'common labor'). There are essential differences between this form of labor and the work that <u>civil</u> cargoholders do. Communal labor is done whenever a community faces a problem that 1) concerns all households equally, 2) is labor-intensive, and 3) can only be solved through teamwork. The work done by civil cargoholders, on the other hand, tends to be focused on specific administrative or political tasks, and is less labor-intensive.

While I worked in Linda Vista (Rural Tzotzil), the community gathered twice to work collectively, first to fix a damaged road and then to repair the community's central irrigation pipeline. In both cases, all men—except for some prestigious elders who could skip service—met on a Saturday and worked until dawn to solve the problems at hand. The work was unceremonious and straightforward; it did not require great technical competence. Since most men in Linda Vista have worked in construction at some point in their lives, there was no reason to hire people to do the job. In a community of that size (88 households), it makes sense to call for communal labor, as it is the least costly strategy for getting infrastructural work done. As Romano Delgado (2003, 2:277) remarks, the Mexican government has, for decades, made use of communal labor systems—sometimes reimbursing whole communities for their service—to successfully build or repair small roads within indigenous lands.

Differently from Linda Vista, the Cabecera (urban community) never issued a call for communal labor while I lived there. I attribute this to the community's larger size and more complex organizational structure. Compared with rural communities, the Cabecera has a larger membership and increasingly autonomous 'bureaus' that exist to solve specific problems or to collect resources to sponsor public works. Also, since the community enjoys a closer relationship with the municipal administration, it can petition for a larger share of public funds than most rural communities.

To illustrate, let us examine how Cabecera officials handled a dispute over water and the role that the community's Patronatos played during that process. In 2015, the Cabecera's primary water source—a spring located in one of the mountains that surround the San Pedro valley—was starting to dry. Although the spring is considered a sacred place,[130] it was beginning to succumb to overuse for supplying water to seven different communities simultaneously.[131] Since the seven communities were managed autonomously, they lacked a joint organization to regulate the use of the spring. There were no rules determining how much water each community could use; in years prior, each had been draining as much water as they needed. Given the fast pace of population growth in the urban area, it was inevitable that the water spring would eventually be depleted.

To solve the problem, *Agentes* and Patronatos from all communities held a meeting and voted to regulate water usage and restrict access of the spring to additional communities. In a subsequent general assembly in the Cabecera, community members voted to build a new water tank to store enough water to supply households in times of drought. Cargoholders of the four communities located in the urban zone (Cabecera, Usilukum, Tejeria, and Ojo de Agua) ran a census to estimate how big the new water tank would have to be. Instead of issuing a call for communal labor, the communities pursued a different strategy to build the tank: they pressured their cargoholders—the Patronatos—to raise construction funds. The cargoholders then petitioned the municipal administration and some wealthy individuals—including some mayoral candidates—for money. In contrast with Linda Vista, the Cabecera handled the water scarcity problem by transferring much of the burden to its cargoholders; there was no need to call for communal labor.

What is more, as the process unfolded, the community created a new set of civil cargos: the Patronato de Agua , composed of three new officers dedicated to dealing exclusively with water problems. The idea of creating the new Patronato emerged during a meeting between *pasados* (elders) and

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[130] Some identify that spring as *ch'enal vo'* (lit. 'water from a cave'), the place after which Chenalhó was named.

[131] The communities collecting water from the spring were Cabecera, Usilukum, Tejeria, Ojo de Agua (located in the urban zone), and Tsabalhó, Campo los Toros, and Las Limas (located in rural areas).

civil cargoholders in March, which I attended. During the meeting, the *Agente* explained that he had sought, without success, support from the three municipal plumbers (*fontaneros*) who are usually tasked with solving irrigation problems in the urban part of the town. The *Agente* explained that the municipal plumbers were neither willing to help nor competent enough to solve the problem. A member of the Patronato de Obra also noticed that other communities also had been developing tax collection norms, charging community entrance fees and fines to members who skip the mandatory public assemblies. The *pasados* then reminisced about the time when they created Patronatos de Obra (construction board) to raise construction funds. One *pasado* noticed that some neighboring communities had already created cargos to deal specifically with water problems. Perhaps the officers—he reasoned—would have enough authority to collect taxes from community members to help fund the water supply system maintenance.

Creating new cargos implied a tradeoff. By establishing its own water management personnel, the Cabecera would weaken its ties to the municipal administration and lose the support from the administration's plumbers. Since the plumbers were deemed incompetent and apathetic by the *Agente*, the *pasados* reasoned that it would be worthwhile to go ahead with the new cargos. In an interview, the *Agente* told me that "the [municipal] plumbers have no interest in helping our community. The Presidente is the one who decides for them, so they never have time for us. So we reasoned the new Patronatos could compete with the plumbers and make decisions that favor us."

But there was another—and perhaps more important—factor outweighing the loss of support from the municipal administration. The new Patronato would be able to exact revenue from government contractors. About an hour into the meeting, Gabriel—a former *Agente* and one of the youngest *pasados* in his early 40s—explained that the new Patronato would be able to represent the community's demands to the municipal administration, giving a more official appearance to their petitions for municipal funds.

Gabriel reasoned that the community could use the new officers to bargain with contractors (*contratistas*) who usually donate part of the money that they receive back to the cargoholders who hire them. Smiling, he sought to persuade others that the contractors could generate revenue for the community and for themselves: "If we collect 10 million pesos for the construction, we could charge a 10% fee from the *contratista* and keep some of the money," to which others nodded in approval. But then he mused, "maybe we can even buy new trucks for all us."

Meeting attendees reacted to the suggestion of diverting public funds to "buy new trucks" with a mix of nervous laughter and "oohs." Oscar, a former schoolteacher and pasado in his 60s, seemed particularly disturbed by his counterpart's idea. He replied, "We could, indeed, collect money from the *contratistas*, but as we have always done, the money is supposed to go back to the community; we are not supposed to use the money to buy ourselves new pants [*vex*]." While older *pasados* seemed to agree with

Oscar, younger cargoholders remained indifferent, perhaps to avoid taking sides. As the discussion took place, pasados and civil cargoholders came to accept that creating the new Patronato de Agua was the right thing to do. One pasado suggested that they should take executive action and name interim Patronatos de Agua immediately, bypassing the general communal assembly vote—to which others agreed. They appointed Oscar as the acting president of the new Patronato.

About two weeks after the meeting between *pasados* and cargoholders, the community held a general assembly and elected the new Patronato's officers. Oscar remained as the Patronato's president. The community named a middle-aged Mestizo, Antonio, for one of the new offices. In private, Antonio told me that he only received the nomination because he owns a small water filtration and distribution business. "They think I know how to deal with water just because I sell it," he scoffed. Upon taking office, the three new cargoholders joined forces with officers from the other communities in the Cabecera that were affected by water scarcity, and, together, petitioned the municipal administration for construction funds. After bargaining, the four communities obtained about 3 million pesos to build the new water tank. The construction moved at a fast pace: most of the tank was concluded by May, when I followed the *Agente* and the new Patronatos on an expedition to Chenalhó's main water spring. The water tank was inaugurated in June, at the same time as the Mestizo fiesta of Anuncio de San Pedro went on.

Before the water tank's inauguration, the cargoholders petitioned the *contratistas* for a gift of 10% of the total construction budget. Here is where the story starts to get murky. Supposedly, following a decision made during a communal assembly, the *pasados* split the gift from the *contratista* into equal parts between every member of the community. The numbers, however, do not add up. If the water tank cost 3 million pesos, and if the 10% gift was divided equally between the four communities, each community should receive at least 75 thousand pesos. As the largest community, the Cabecera could, perhaps, have received a sum of money proportional to its size. But suppose—for now—that the Cabecera only received 75 thousand pesos. Considering that the community had around 370 households at that time, each family should have received a minimum of about 200 pesos if the gift was to be distributed to everyone evenly. This, however, is not what happened: each household 50 received only pesos. I can only speculate about what happened to the rest of the money. A first—and plausible—hypothesis is that the Patronato de Agua kept part of the money in its reserves to fund future water repairs. A second hypothesis is that the *pasados* and other cargoholders diverted the money to themselves. Both explanations seem valid, although I was not able to verify either.

It is not uncommon for civil cargoholders to keep part of the money that they raise for themselves. They rationalize this as a form of "compensation" for the services that they do for free. Legally, the practice exists in a gray area, as communities have no regulations determining how those

resources should be handled. Apart from gifts from contractors, some of that money comes from fees charged from community members. Another source of funding is the mandatory contributions that community members give to fund secular fiestas such as *sk'in me'el* (mother day's party) or Independence Day. These secular fiestas usually take place at the local school. Instead of being sponsored by a single cargoholder, the cost of those fiestas is shared equally between all households. While I followed the Comités and Patronatos, I heard no shortage of accusations of misuse of funds from a variety of people—including current and former cargoholders. Given the lack of a formal accountability system, it was always impossible to verify those accusations. On several occasions, I saw cargoholders using public funds to eat at moderately expensive restaurants and buy sodas—although to label this as "corruption" would certainly be a stretch. On one of these occasions, a Comité confided to me, "We've got to take something for us because we are doing this work for free… One also needs to eat." It is not far-fetched to assume, thus, that the accusations of misuse of public funds are, to some extent, true.

Civil cargoholders are coerced to work for free, so they feel entitled to keep some of the money that they raise for the community. Of course, this all is done in the shadows, and community members never get a detailed picture of the community's cash in- and outflows, which gives rise to endless rumors and accusations of misuse of public funds. Due to the lack of transparency, I have no means to estimate the proportion of funds that cargoholders keep to themselves. At the municipal level, there exists more transparency, although much still needs to be improved. I once attended a meeting between *Agentes* from the 100-plus communities that took place in the town's Casa de Cultura. The primary motivation for the meeting was that the mayor was supposed to divulge the municipal budget for that year. The budget was announced without much ceremony: the Mayoletik (policemen) simply hung a sign on the wall with the total of money received from the FISM[132] that year. The number looked impressive. It specified the total budget down to cents of a Peso: $141,366,325.20. However, little work was done to explain what would be done with that money on how funds of the prior year were spent. In recent years, the administration has sought to use social media apps (Facebook and Whatsapp) to divulge more detailed public expenditure reports. However, it might be too early to evaluate the effects of this new policy.

The cargoholders' practice of paying themselves seems to be more common in the Cabecera than in Linda Vista. In part, this is due to sheer size differences between communities and the distinct complexity of their bureaucratic structures. In Linda Vista, as we saw, there are just a few civil cargos, and those cargos tend to be used as a means of introducing young, low-prestige men to the hierarchy of offices. Linda Vista's civil cargoholders are not responsible for managing a significant amount of public

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[132] Fondo para la Infraestructura Social Municipal.

funds: they rarely hold their own separate meetings, and when they do so, they never make decisions on their own. Thus, when the irrigation system or roads need repair, the community issues a call for communal labor instead of asking cargoholders to deal with the problem. The community <u>does not require</u> an elaborate bureaucratic structure since communal labor works well enough to deal with basic infrastructural maintenance. Also, its members rank themselves primarily in terms of prestige, lacking interpersonal differences—in terms of competence, skills, and educational attainment—that could justify inequality in the distribution of public work. Communal labor, then, is a form of *adhocracy*—a spontaneous, temporary form of organization created to solve specific problems.

In the Cabecera, in contrast, we are beginning to see the emergence of a bureaucracy. Instead of calling for communal labor, the community puts more significant reliance on its 'bureaus' (the Patronatos and Comités), which specialize in collecting and managing resources for specific ends. The Cabecera is also starting to name officers based on whether they have the skills necessary to perform certain tasks (recall, for instance, the man who was named as Patronato de Agua for owning a water filtration business).

Another recent development is that schoolteachers are now being nominated for civil cargos which in the past were reserved for young, low-prestige men. This is happening for two reasons. First, people see teachers as more competent decision-makers, and thus better apt to take increasingly executive offices. Second—and perhaps more importantly—teachers can produce well-written petitions. In a bureaucracy where a central administration control access to an increasing amount of resources, being able to deliver well-written and authoritative petitions to politicians became an essential skill for obtaining construction grants. The Cabecera's cargoholders are also becoming more autonomous, handling specific repair tasks on their own—a process that slowly affects the way people decide who should take those positions. As communities get larger, the size of their 'bureaus' increases proportionally. For instance, in April 2015 the Cabecera voted to increase the number of Comités de Educación from 9 to 13 to match a recent surge in membership driven by a municipal law that dictated that everyone in Chenalhó should be affiliated with a community. As usual, the decision to increase the number of offices was first proposed by the pasados[133] and then approved in a general assembly. The *pasados* justified the increase by arguing that so that "everyone would have a chance to serve the community." As we saw in Chapter 5, along with the payment of taxes, community service is what binds Chenalhó's communities together.

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[133] They intentionally sought to maintain the number of offices proportional to membership size (I discuss this point in more detail in Chapter 5).

Just like in most modern bureaucracies, the burgeoning administrative structure of the Cabecera is being built upon the notion of 'merit.' Although notions akin to 'merit' are universally found across societies, the idea that civil officers should be rewarded proportionally to how much or how well they work is recent among the Tzotzil. To understand this, we must examine the distinction between merit- and reputation-based allocations. <u>Merit</u> implies task-specific rewarding: one has merit for performing specific tasks well. Merit can also be skill-specific: one has merit to receive an office for having certain skills required for the position. <u>Prestige</u>, on the other hand, is neither task- nor skill-specific, but rather a general measure of the contribution a person makes to the community. As the bureaucracy of Chenalhó's urban communities expands, community members begin to select cargoholders on a merit-basis (e.g., schoolteachers begin to receive civil offices for knowing how to handle paperwork) as their internal bureaus become increasingly specialized. As this process unfolds, cargoholders start to claim to deserve some form of compensation for their work. In other words, cargoholders now feel that they merit a larger share of the collective resource pie in exchange for the labor that they provide for free. Merit is also what motivates cargoholders to divert common resources themselves, leading to accusations of corruption and misuse of public funds. The notions of *merit* and *corruption*, then, develop concomitantly with the rise of bureaucracy.

There is a large body of studies theorizing the emergence of bureaucracies. It would be impossible to review that literature here, but scholars tend to converge with Max Weber's theory that bureaucracies develop in societies organized by dominance hierarchies (Weber 1946, 196–244). This, however, is not what we see in Chenalhó. If the observations above are correct, bureaucracy is developing in a more organic, bottom-up way, without the existence of a consensual dominance hierarchy. To break down the process in three stages:

1) At first, communities coerce public servants to work for free, rewarding them with prestige. To build and maintain public facilities, communities issue calls for communal labor.

2) Public servants become increasingly specialized, coalescing under 'bureaus' (Comités, Patronatos). They gain some administrative autonomy to manage some resource pools (e.g., construction funds) and maintain public facilities (e.g., repairing school buildings, irrigation systems, roads).

3) Communities begin to select public servants on a merit-basis (e.g., choosing teachers to serve an office because they can produce written petitions). Public servants then begin to divert resources to themselves and claim to 'merit' a larger share of the resource pie. Initially, this is done without communal approval, leading to accusations of corruption.

In sum, communities are devising their own bureaucratic structures organically in response to changing incentives—here, the funds made available by the municipal administration. There is no 'rational' form of dominance being elaborated from top to bottom, and officials are not (yet) appointed by a superior authority. I cannot predict what happens after stage (3), and I hesitate to do so as other scholars have unsuccessfully been forecasting the decline of the cargo system since the 1960s (as seen in Chapter 6). Generally, most agree that the cargo system will eventually be replaced with a modern style fiscal system, with involuntary service being replaced by a formal tax collection system administered by a central government (Chance 1998). With time, Tzotzil forms of governance might start to resemble the rational bureaucratic structures described by Weber. However, given the strong opposition against dominance hierarchies in Chenalhó, it is unlikely that this shift will happen anytime soon.

The most pressing issue in Chenalhó today is 'corruption'—which, as I discuss in the next section, is a slippery notion as Tzotzil communities lack agreement over what constitutes 'corrupt' behavior. In the coming years or decades, we might see an agreement emerge, and communities should attempt to deal with that issue by developing better systems of accountability.

2.3. Petitioning

I have sometimes referred to 'corruption' in quotation marks. As anthropologists know well, perceptions of corruption are relative. What the reader may see as corrupt behavior can take a different meaning in Chiapas. This does not mean, of course, that there is no emic notion of "corruption" in Chenalhó. Communities have procedures for allocating resources, which generally involve some type of communal sanctioning through public assemblies. We can, without risking misrepresentation, define 'corruption' as *personal appropriations of common resources that bypass consensual sanctioning procedures*. According to this definition, petitioning government contractors is not 'corrupt' behavior in Chenalhó as there are no community-level norms that prohibit that practice. To understand how people in Chenalhó see corruption, we must turn to the distinction between descriptive and injunctive norms.

When a civil cargoholder uses community resources for personal gain—as I described in the earlier section—it is never clear that something wrong or immoral is being done. The practice, almost always done covertly, is neither prescribed nor prohibited, and there are no laws that inhibit it. In the communities where I did fieldwork, there exist no written laws that recommend the prosecution of corrupt cargoholders. Although each Comité and Patronato includes a *Tesorero* (treasurer) who holds onto their cash reserves and—when asked to do so—reports expenditures, there is little accountability from community members. 'Corruption,' in the way I defined earlier, is a descriptive norm: people in positions of power are expected to take a cut of public resources. But corruption also belies the injunctive norm that

people should not divert commonly owned goods without communal approval. This contradiction between what people <u>usually do</u> versus what they <u>ought to do</u> leads communities to a state of chronic disagreement over how to handle alleged corruption cases. Whether a person decides to blow the whistle on someone acting 'corruptly' may depend on factors such as whether they—or their kin—benefitted or not from the act.

Petitioning contractors for gifts is a prime example of a behavior that may be seen as corrupt by some and regular by others. We saw an example of how these petitions happen early in this chapter. Readers may have felt that petitioning contractors for a bull could be legally questionable, being a *quid-pro-quo* or a form of clientelism. That would undoubtedly be a fair assessment—at least from a Western/Modern legal viewpoint. But in Chenalhó, people frequently describe this form of petition as *usos y costumbres* (customary law). Petitioning is an old practice Chiapas, appearing in the earliest ethnographies of the region. Some may frame it as a type of 'ritualized' exchange. I will argue that the practice makes sense within a reputation economy which rewards rational actors with prestige. Petitioning is a form of reciprocal exchange which has the function of producing and distributing prestige to those who engage in the practice. With decentralization, traditional exchange practices became embedded in the provision of public resources. This mixing between local/traditional and national/modern elements is instructive in understanding how relations of clientelism emerge.

In Chenalhó, people frequently discuss how and whether to petition contractors during communal assemblies. My field diaries are replete with descriptions of such events. While working in Chenalhó, I became accustomed to—and even learned how to respond to—petitions of different sorts. The petition to contractors described earlier in this chapter was not the only petition I witnessed. I watched the Cabecera's cargoholders petition wealthy individuals and Chenalhó's vice-mayor for donations. I followed Linda Vista's cargoholders when they petitioned a man in Yabtecum to sponsor a school graduation ceremony (*clausura*). I saw people petitioning government officials who visited Linda Vista to introduce a welfare program (described in Chapter 5). I was the subject of petitions myself when I asked different communities for permission to watch their assemblies.

Petitioning is regarded as an effective strategy for raising revenue for communities. Any money that communities receive to spend on infrastructure inevitably generates some income from the contractor gifts. This is true regardless of the scale or importance of the work that needs to be done. Even relatively unimportant maintenance work can generate revenue from petitions. I once saw Cabecera officials collect 4,000 pesos from a contractor they hired to build a simple chain link fence around the school. The community let the contractor pay the gift in two parts, and the school committee used some of that money

to pay their service-related trips. Within Chenalhó's communities, petitioning is an integral part of resource allocation, and no one questions its legality.

Generally, the petitioning process works in three steps:

1) A community's cargoholders petition municipal authorities or affluent individuals for construction funds.
2) After the municipality approves the funds, the cargoholders petition the contractors hired to build the public facility for a gift of 5-10% of the construction budget.
3) The community holds a general assembly to decide how they will spend the money that the contractor gave them.

Contractors, on their part, can use gifts to lock down lucrative government contracts by offering money to politicians in exchange for favors. Evidently, this is a form of clientelism. In recent years, construction companies have begun to give increasingly loftier campaign donations to politicians, which has led some people to question the legality[134] of the practice at the municipal level.

It is important to stress that this *quid pro quo* only exists at the municipal level. The main municipal official—the mayor—is elected by vote, according to federal law. To win elections, mayoral candidates must rely on contractor donations to finance their campaigns, which creates an opportunity for graft. The mayor can then use the office's greater executive powers to nominate certain officials and mobilize reciprocate campaign gifts by giving exclusive contracts to individuals or firms who contributed to his/her campaign. Within small communities, the reality is still different. As we saw, community-level civil cargoholders remain mostly unremunerated, being nominated through the traditional rotation system. Since they take transient offices with no executive powers, it can be difficult for contractors to influence their decisions. Moreover, when a contractor gives money to a community, he must do so in a public meeting, which can prevent him from establishing a dyadic patron-client relationship with influential local officials. Being free from electoral campaign money and relying exclusively on collective decisions allows communities to remain impermeable to the influence of exogenous actors.

Rather than a form of 'corruption,' communities see petitions can be a lucrative way to exact revenue from contractors and take a cut of federal funds without necessarily losing political control to

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[134] In 2015, the Verde's (Green Party) mayoral candidate Rosa Pérez Pérez ran a campaign on the promise of rejecting gifts from contractors. At one point during the campaign, the Verde's candidate for vice-mayor (*Síndico*) was forced to resign for allegedly closing deals with contractors without her knowledge. Rosa Pérez Pérez would become the first non-PRI candidate to win municipal elections in Chenalhó, triggering a cascade of conflicts that would last for the next five years.

outsiders. Clientelism, from the client's perspective, can be a strategy for securing resources (Hilgers 2009).

There are no pre-established regulations determining how a gift from contractors should be spent. As usual, everything is open for negotiation. As we saw, Linda Vista voted to use a contractor's gift to fund a secular fiesta. The Cabecera voted to split the money raised from the contractor who built a water tank evenly between all community households. When the amount of money raised is small, it is usually deposited in the money box (*caja de fondos*) of Patronatos or Comités for future use. One noteworthy aspect of petitioning is that sometimes people make what I call *ad hoc petitions*, of which I gave an example in Chapter 5.1.1.When faced with the prospect of an expense, people actively seek to petition someone who lacks prestige or has enough money to cover the bill.

I have heard people in small communities describe such petitions as *usos y costumbres* (customary law), a term which is often employed to characterize cultural institutions at odds with federal laws. Petitioning seems, indeed, to be an endemic and cultural practice, permeating different aspects of Tzotzil social life. While I cannot determine with precision how old the practice is, it already features in the earliest ethnographies of the Chiapas Maya, which hints that people have been using the petitioning system to request and allocate resources for a long time. In the 1940s, Guiteras Holmes (1946, 109) noticed that most Tzotzil rituals include prayers of petition in which the prayer-maker makes a formal request to a deity—a saint or a spirit living in a sacred place—in exchange for better health or positive economic outcomes. One of these rituals is called *mixa* (a term borrowed from the Spanish *misa*, or 'mass'), and it still is performed regularly in Chenalhó today. In the ritual, a group of prayer-makers (*kabilto vinik*) wanders around the mountains and visits certain sacred places to make petitions for rain, good harvests, and protection overall. The taxes used to fund those ceremonies is an important way by which communities establish a sense of common 'citizenship', as tax payment can be used to draw the line between members and non-members.

While I watched one of those *mixas*, it struck me that the linguistic register used in prayers resembled how people bargain at local markets. A transcription of a *mixa* made in Chenalhó (Arias 1990, 179–208) is a good illustration of this relationship between commercial and religious bargaining. The prayer begins with the petitioner enumerating his offerings (three candles, three pine leaves, three incense sticks, etc.). The petitioner then asks for forgiveness for his sins. He then reminds the deity that his fellow community members had to sell or exchange their produce to sponsor the ceremony—perhaps a way of

increasing the perceived value of his gifts.[135] The prayer ends with a petition (*kejal*, 'kneeling') for health and a plea for protection against diseases and pests that cause bad harvests. Stripped of its ceremonial tone, the *mixa* text sounds like a quid pro quo exchange: 'Spirit, I brought you these items, so I request that you give me something in exchange.' Given the antiquity of trade systems in Mesoamerica, it might not be a surprise to Mayanists that Tzotzil prayers share certain structures with commercial bargaining.[136]

Another type of petition—still widely performed today in rural communities—is the one used by men to propose marriage. Marriage petitions have been extensively described by ethnographers (Guiteras Holmes 1946, 263; Laughlin 1963; J. F. Collier 1968), so there is no need to spend much space on them here. Suffice it to say that marriage petitions also share common structures with prayers and market exchange—in essence, they are a sort of structured bargaining between a man and his future father-in-law.

Petitioning could be framed as a *schema* (or cultural model) that people used to structure exchanges across different domains of life (Strauss and Quinn 1997). Typically, scholars would identify the behavioral pattern and characterize it as a type of clientelism—a way of maintaining dyadic relations between individuals or groups of different status. However, a proper explanation of petitioning must not stop there. We might take a step further and ask what the persistent <u>incentives</u> that drive people to petition each other are.

Highland Chiapas is not the only place where we find a petitioning system. A better documented example is rural Chinese society, which for a long time has had a similar system of allocating public investment to the countryside. Still today—despite Communist rule—rural Chinese travel to Beijing to petition the government for resources (Li, Liu, and O'Brien 2012; Tao and Liu 2013). This similarity with Chiapas might not be fortuitous. Although the Chinese system today is far more centralized than that of Mexico, the cultural logic motivating petitioners in the two countries may be same. Petitioning is a byproduct of reputation systems based on prestige. The practice exists because prestige hierarchies create incentives that reward petitioners and those who fulfill petitions. Another feature in common between rural Chinese and rural Maya is the presence of leaders who seek primarily to maximize social harmony over other goals. As I discussed in Chapter 3.2.1, harmony ideology among the Chiapas Maya tends to be promoted by *caciques* who can only use prestige—and never dominance—to exert power and maintain

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[135] *K'usi laj sch'onik o june, kajval / k'usi laj yak'ik o june, kajval* ('Some things were sold for good, lord / some things were given for good, lord, see Arias 1990, 191 for the full transcript).

[136] It is not my intention to analyze the meaning of these exchange metaphors in prayer, but rather to draw attention to the ubiquity of the petitioning system. See Pitarch (2013) for a deeper analysis of markers and exchange metaphors in Tzeltal prayer and text.

control over their communities. Harmony ideology, thus, tends to emerge in groups ranked by prestige that lack clear dominance hierarchies. As we saw (Chapter 3.2.1), harmony ideology in Chiapas helps to maintain communities together even when their social divisions are marked by persistent inequities. The same seems to be the case for China (see M. Wong 2018).

In groups organized by prestige hierarchies, the payoffs to petitioning might be paid not in money, but in prestige—which might not be obvious to outside observers who have no knowledge of interpersonal prestige differences in each community. In the next section, I will elaborate on how prestige hierarchies create the right incentives for petitioning to emerge. I will argue that petitioning is part of a system of reciprocity that creates incentives for people to petition each other for gifts. That reciprocity system is an integral part of Tzotzil prestige hierarchies, and along with the cargo system, it establishes the necessary structures for producing and distributing prestige.

2.4. Reciprocity as Reputation Leveling

As we saw, among the Tzotzil there are two main ways to acquire prestige: 1) by handing out food through sponsoring expensive fiestas (the cargo system), and 2) by taking part in a reciprocity system. For this reputation system to work properly, prestige must remain scarce. If anyone could easily acquire prestige by sponsoring fiestas, the prestige created by such activity would inflate in value, and prestige hierarchies would cease to exist. (To draw an analogy with the US academia, if every American received a Ph.D., graduate programs would become obsolete.)

The primary solution to prestige inflation is provided by the cargo system, which regulates the issuance of prestige by keeping the number of prestigious offices and fiestas in check. I discussed this in Chapter 5. Recall that the cargo system limits the number of fiestas in a given calendar year, forcing aggrandizers to compete over scarce offices. As result of competition and scarcity, the prestige obtained through traditional service retains its, which basically allows the system to reproduce itself. Traditional prestige must remain valuable so that younger people have an incentive to obtain it. To create new sources of prestige, communities may institute new cargos (recall how the Cabecera created the Patronato de Agua, as we saw earlier). However, new cargos tend to be unimportant, never matching the traditional ones in value.

Most people in Tzotzil communities fail to fully participate in the system of fiestas, taking just one or two prestigious cargos in their lifetime. For those who fail to obtain prestige through cargo service, there is an additional route for obtaining prestige: to participate in reciprocity networks. As I discussed in Chapter 3.1.3, in Tzotzil communities reciprocity is not as impactful as cargo service in determining who gets to be 'taken with greatness.' There are no explicit norms that enforce reciprocal gift exchanges,

which distinguishes the Chiapas Maya from some indigenous groups in Oaxaca, where fiesta financing is done through a mixture of cost-sharing and delayed reciprocal obligations (Beals 1970; Monaghan 1990). Still, reciprocity can matter in the long run by allowing one to be in good standing with the community regardless of their degree of contribution to fiestas.

The type of reciprocity relations I am approaching here involves more informal requests than the petitions for resources mentioned earlier. To illustrate, let us read again the reciprocal exchange I described between me and Linda Vista's cacique which I described in the beginning of this chapter.

> Walking uphill from the school, I came across a gathering of *pasados* sitting in Jacinto's store's kiosk: Miguel, Jacinto, and Luis, and Andres. I asked what the reason for the meeting was.
>
> "We are waiting for the *ingi* [engineer]," replied Andres.
>
> "Can I join your meeting?" I asked.
>
> "Yes, but can you repay your belly with soft drinks [*lek oy pero mi chapak ach'ut resku*]?" he asked.
>
> "Sure, maybe a box."
>
> "Heehaw!"—the group cried, tapping the concrete table. Their composure restored, Andres joked:
>
> "Have you found a wife in Chenalhó yet?"
>
> "Not yet."
>
> "Come on. What happened? Please find one soon. Let me know if you are looking for one."
>
> The *pasados* laughed at his joke. I headed for breakfast with Mariano, and then returned to the school to watch the meeting with the *ingi*.

This type of exchange is typical in Linda Vista. It happens when 1) a low-status person, a stranger, or someone with weak kinship ties to a group asks others to join them in some joint activity, and 2) someone in the group—usually the highest status person—requests a gift from the person trying to join them.

Andres did not formally petition me the same way that cargoholders petition potential fiesta sponsors. Rather, he requested reciprocity by using the expression *pak ch'ut*, ('to reciprocate the stomach'). The expression is not only used to request reciprocal gifts but also when one wishes to declare his/her intention to buy food or drinks for others. When uttered in a group gathering, *ta jpak jch'ut* ('I will reciprocate my stomach'), would be tantamount to saying "I will pick up the tab" in a restaurant. The

phrase is sometimes accompanied by a gesture: the (male) speaker lifts his shirt and slaps his belly a few times, sometimes smirking. Others may respond with cheerful "heehaws" and displays of excitement.

People who utter the phrase and fulfill their promise and pay the bill are rewarded with instant prestige. *Pak ch'ut* is a more informal way to instigate reciprocity than petitioning. However, the interactional logic between both practices is the same—it is the level of formality that distinguishes them.

One way to understand informal gift requests is to frame them as a form of taxation. This was my initial interpretation as I noticed the pattern above. As we saw, the egalitarian model—discussed in Chapter 3.1.1—stipulates that smallholders are driven toward minimizing interpersonal wealth inequalities. One possibility is that informal gift requests function as a mechanism to level wealth inequalities. This ethnographic hypothesis, however, failed to stand the test of time, as I noticed that those who are targeted by gift requests are not necessarily wealthier than those who make the requests. For example, Andres is by far the wealthiest man in Linda Vista, and certainly wealthier than I am. It is doubtful that the richest person in the community would be driven to minimize wealth inequalities. Farmers know how much a box of soft drinks costs; they know that asking the anthropologist to spend a few dollars on Coke will do nothing to reduce wealth disparities between us.

An alternative explanation is that those who receive gift requests are people who lack prestige— we might call these people 'prestige poor.' If the practice functions to level anything, what it levels out is prestige, and not wealth disparities. First, Andres—high-prestige—gave me permission to attend a community meeting. He then requested that I—a low prestige outsider—give a reciprocal gift. When he did so, he presented me with an opportunity to improve my reputation. To play the reciprocity game successfully, I accepted his challenge and displayed altruism. In this form of exchange, what is at stake is not the monetary value of the gift, but the symbolic act of taking the test of altruism imposed by the group. The exchange functions to allow those that have little prestige to obtain some of it and build a reputation. (For another example of reputation leveling, see Chapter 5.1.2.)

Recall that prestige is a measure of how much an individual or household has contributed to a community. Generally, people tend to repudiate ascribed status (see Chapter 3.1.3). In a prestige hierarchy, no one is entitled to anything except prestigious elders who have served the community. Thus, any outsider will inevitably be regarded as low prestige, regardless of their place of origin or background. It is not only foreign anthropologists that are prime targets of gift requests and petitions, but also people from distant communities whose social status cannot be traced. Mestizos and migrants from neighboring towns are particularly harassed with gift requests. In Chapter 5.1.2, I gave an example of Mexican government officials receiving a gift request in Linda Vista. I will give further examples in the next section.

An additional aspect of the gift request practice is that the person who utters the gift request (Andres) can also gain prestige if the person who receives the request (the anthropologist) fulfills it successfully. This is the incentive that drives people to petition or request gifts from each other. When Andres asks a low-status person for a gift, he allows them to obtain prestige without having to serve a cargo, thus bypassing some costly requirements for building a name in the community. Since prestige is scarce and difficult to acquire, the mere act of allowing others to improve their reputation is seen as a form of altruism. Thus, people have an incentive to enable others to get prestige by way of issuing requests. But asking others for gifts can also be risky. Had I hesitated to respond to Andres affirmatively, he would likely have lost face and suffered a blow to his reputation. As a result, low-prestige people are discouraged from making gift requests as they can lose face when their request is denied.[137]

Finally, notice how at the end of the exchange, Andres, whose reputation as a polygynous man is well-known in Chenalhó, jokingly reciprocates my positive response to his request by suggesting that I should marry a local woman. By doing so, he initiates a reciprocity chain, which in Tzotzil is known as *pakulanejbail*, 'ongoing reciprocal exchange.' Every person in Linda Vista is immersed in a multitude of ongoing reciprocity chains. It is by successfully and repeatedly playing that reciprocity game over time that one acquires the baseline prestige levels that allow one to become accepted within a community, regardless of how successful or not one's career in the cargo system is.

Petitioning and gift requests are cultural schemas (or models). What makes these behaviors persist over time? I have sought to explain the mechanics petitioning in terms of an economy of prestige. This insight is supported by the results of the economic experiments in Chapter 3.3, which showed that prestige hierarchies are the primary vector of social difference among Rural Tzotzil. As we saw in Chapter 5.4.1, cargo allocation follows a similar logic as tax allocation—Rural Tzotzil prefer to give expensive and burdensome cargos to low prestige people instead of wealthy people.

Classic ethnographies of Chiapas are replete with accounts of elders harassing (or bullying) young or low-prestige men with burdensome cargo nominations.[138] The notion of reputation leveling above explains this type of behavior. In a society where individuals are ranked primarily according to

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[137] It is for the same reason that, as Brown (1980) showed, women in Tzeltal communities follow stricter politeness norms than man. Since women have less prestige than men and thus have more to lose from loss of face, they hedge against it by overusing politeness norms.

[138] Low prestige cargos are usually tasked with policing the town or running errands for elders. In Zinacantán, the lowest office was that of Mayor (Cancian 1965, 26), and in Chenalhó, Mayol and Alguacil (Guiteras-Holmes 1961, 82). See also Chapter 6 for a more detailed discussion on the changes in Chenalhó's traditional police offices.

prestige, people will seek to minimize prestige rather than wealth. Hence, instead of taxing the wealthy, a community may assign burdensome work to those who have low prestige. By doing so, the community gives an opportunity for low-prestige individuals to improve their reputation, incorporating them in its all-encompassing hierarchy.

In a reputation economy, prestige is the currency by which people are rewarded and incentivized to sustain certain behaviors over time. The system that compels people to informally request each other for gifts works within that logic. The petitioning system is a formalization of reciprocal relations. Petitions to contractors, wealthy individuals, and high-ranking officials are a more ceremonial version of informal gift requests. The reason why these petitions more formal is that they involve requests for larger sums of money and thus entail a greater risk of loss of face ("large stakes, big mistakes"). Turning gift requests into quasi-ritualized petitioning is a means of managing that risk, making the process of requesting something more predictable.

2.5. "Duly Signed and Stamped": Formal Writing as a Coercive Technology

As Urban Tzotzil communities become bureaucratized, petitions to government officials are now shifting to written form. As we saw, civil cargoholders—Comités, Patronatos—play key a role in elaborating those formal-looking documents. The rise of written petitioning, however, has had a major unintended consequence. With the development of Maya bureaucracies, legal writing has emerged as a coercive technology in Chenalhó. Writing allows individuals or groups to establish themselves as authorities and issue written executive orders, thus overcoming the principal limitation of groups organized by prestige hierarchies. Those who master the technique of producing formal-looking documents can enact petitions that have greater force than the traditional ritualized and oral ones.

In early 2015, I followed an attempt from respected pasados to expel members of an ethnic minority—the Chamulas—from the Cabecera (Urban Tzotzil). The story illustrates how written petitions work and what are the tensions associated with the practice. Instead of following the usual decision-making route of calling for a vote in a communal assembly, the pasados decided to create their own civil organization, which they used to give formal legitimacy to their requests to expel minority group members. Their attempt to expel Chamulas, however, was faced with great resistance. Instead of expelling the Chamulas from Chenalhó, the *pasados* were themselves voted out of their community.

Chamula is a Tzotzil town located to the west of Chenalhó. Its population and geographic area exceed that of Chenalhó twofold. Historically, Chamulas have struggled with a high population density and chronic land scarcity. Since the town is in one of the highest and coldest ecologic zones of Chiapas, agriculture there tends to be less productive when compared with its Tzotzil and Tzeltal neighbors.

Chamulas have tended to migrate to neighboring towns and cities and supplement their rural incomes with commerce (G. A. Collier 1975). Chenalhó's Chamula migrants—women especially—often wear a distinct outfit and speak a marked dialect of Tzotzil.

In recent years, some Pedranos became increasingly vocal about the few Chamula families that had recently established businesses in the Cabecera. The most common complaints against Chamulas have an economic pitch. Some people say that Chamulas are hoarding land within Chenalhó's territory, as land in Chenalhó is more abundant and cheaper than in some of its neighboring towns. Others complain that Chamulas "cheat" local markets by offering goods and services at lower prices than Chenalhó's shopkeepers. The latter criticism was voiced by friend and informant Alfredo, 39. A migrant himself from the state of Tabasco, he married a local woman in the mid-2000s and opened a blacksmith shop (*balconería*) in the Cabecera. In 2014, a Chamula migrant opened a competing blacksmith shop on the same street as Alfredo's and began to charge 800 pesos to make steel doors. This amount was significantly less than the 1,300 pesos charged by Alfredo for the same service.

Alfredo could not fathom how someone could provide the same service at such a low-profit margin. Approaching the situation from different angles, Alfredo hypothesized that the Chamula blacksmith was either skipping his cargo nominations or using his business as a front for illegal activities. At that time, Alfredo was affiliated with two communities in the Cabecera. He had to take cargo nominations from both. He had just finished serving as Auxiliar—the low-prestige community police— for the second time. Shortly after leaving that office, Alfredo was approached by the Mayoletik (traditional municipal policemen), who petitioned him to take a more expensive municipal cargo that involved sponsoring a costly fiesta. Alfredo complained that he was being overburdened with burdensome offices, which he attributed to the fact that he had not been born locally and could not speak Tzotzil fluently. He wondered whether his Chamula counterpart had found a way to skip his cargo nominations and take advantage of Chenalhó's growing demand for blacksmiths.

Commercial activity in Chenalhó is scantly regulated. Before 2015, the municipality rarely intervened in commercial disputes, which were mostly solved at the community level. Public markets are mostly managed autonomously. With the lack of a regulatory authority, Alfredo had no choice but to navigate through Chenalhó's prestige hierarchies for help. He issued a complaint of unfair commercial practices to the *pasados* (the group of prestigious elders who have served principal religious and civil offices of the Cabecera). Here is where the story takes an unexpected turn.

Three of the pasados with whom Alfredo spoke were also business owners: one owned several pharmacies, while the other two had a shoe store and a carpentry shop in the Cabecera. The trio were highly respected men in Chenalhó—they had served as *Agente* and taken expensive religious offices such

as Paxon. Two had served as Presidentes (mayors). They sympathized with Alfredo's complaint. They added that their own businesses were also being hurt by competition from Chamula migrants. They vowed to act and help Alfredo.

Most pasados, however, are not business owners. They tend to be *campesinos* (smallholders) who live off agriculture. Having spent much of their rural incomes in financing cargos, most live modestly (see "Broke Elders," Chapter 6.2.1). The *campesino* pasados hesitated to act on the Chamula migrants. They stressed that it is up to the communities to decide who gets permission to live in Chenalhó—communities must be able to decide everything autonomously. Without majority approval obtained through a communal assembly, there was nothing they could do about it. This hesitancy caused a rift between the pasados. The business-owning pasados—those who could benefit financially from expelling Chamulas—sided with Alfredo. The *campesino* ones sought to reaffirm the local autonomy granted to communities by *usos y costumbres*.

Faced with their counterparts' inaction, the business-owning *pasados* decided to pursue an alternative course of action. Instead of bringing the issue up in a communal assembly, they created a civil organization, which they named Organización para el Bienestar Social de Municipio de Chenalhó (Organization for the Social Welfare of the Municipality of Chenalhó—OBSMC for short). The OBSMC began to contact businesses in the Cabecera and nearby communities, asking whether they had been hurt by Chamula competitors. The organization grew fast. It attracted all kinds of small business owners—butchers, carpenters, shop owners, cab drivers, and more. The group began to schedule meetings in the community of Yabteclum—Chenalhó's second largest urban cluster. By doing so, the OBSMC sought to hide the purview of municipal authorities and alleged Chamula 'spies' who live in communities near the Chenalhó-Chamula border. Located precisely at the geographic center of the town, Yabteclum is regarded as a place of symbolic resistance against outsiders (Hertzog and Ross 2017).

After several meetings, the OBSMC decided on a course of action. They wrote an *Acta de Inconformidad*, or non-conformance report, a type of document which is becoming increasingly common as a way of expressing grievances toward individuals or groups and petition municipal authorities for action. The first page of the letter, addressed to the mayor of Chamula, and signed and rubber-stamped by members of the OBSMC and municipal authorities, reads as follows:

> Distinguido señor Presidente:
> Por medio del presente nos permitimos dirigirnos a usted, de la manera más
> atenta y respetuosa; con la finalidad de Remitirle el Acta de Inconformidad del Pueblo
> de San Pedro Chenalhó, Chiapas; debidamente firmado y sellado por los
> Representantes de la "Organización para el Bienestar Social de Municipio de

Chenalhó" y representantes de diferentes giros que existen en este Municipio, por los habitantes de diferentes comunidades del Municipio de San Juan Chamula, Chiapas, que dignamente usted representa, los que que han comprado casas habitación y terrenos en la Cabecera municipal y en las diferentes comunidades del Municipio de San Pedro Chenalhó, Chiapas.

Ante tal situación solicitamos su amable intervención y colaboración como Presidente Municipal Constitucional, para mandar a citar a las personas mencionadas el Acta de Inconformidad y comunicarle personalmente que solo tienen 30 días naturales para vender sus propiedades a mano de un ciudadano originario y becino del Pueblo de San Pedro Chenalhó, Chiapas. Se anexa el acta de inconformidad.

Sin otro en particular, aprovechamos la ocasión para enviarle un cordial saludo.

The letter asks the mayor of Chamula to collaborate with the removal of some Chamulas from Chenalhó. It declares that the Chamulas have 30 days to sell their property to locals and threatens to confiscate the property of those who fail to comply with that order. The second page of the document lists six people by name and, in a paragraph for each, describes the location and the kinds of properties they had bought in Chenalhó. Two of them owned farming land. One was planning on building a gas station in the Cabecera. The remaining three owned a restaurant, a shoe store, and a hardware store. The third page of the document lists signatures and rubber stamps of 16 small business representatives.

After mailing the expulsion request letter to the Chamula mayor, the OBSMC persuaded municipal authorities and Agentes to pass a law mandating anyone who was affiliated with one of Chenalhó's 100-plus communities to sell their property and leave. This new law not only targeted Chamulas, but also Mestizos—most of whom had been living independently of communities and hence had no obligation to serve Tzotzil cargos. In response to the new law, dozens of Mestizo households joined the Cabecera's main community *en masse* in early 2015, suddenly inflating the community's membership roll.

As we saw, cargo service is the main way one pays 'taxes' in Chenalhó. With increasing decentralization, most cargo nominations now happen at the community level. By forcing people to join communities, the municipality sought to address Alfredo's complaint that some outsiders were being allowed to evade service by remaining unaffiliated. Notice how this situation is the indirect result of the 1970s policies that I discussed earlier in this chapter. The 1970s policies had the effect of transferring decision-making power from the municipalities to local communities. As public goods began to be allocated directly to communities, tax systems, too, changed, becoming more localized and existing

outside of municipal control. In a system where taxes must be paid through communal service, one can easily evade taxation by not being affiliated with any community. As I discussed in Chapter 2.1.2, the possibility of evading taxes had been, so far, one of the main attractors for Mestizo families to settle in Chenalhó. Until 2015, most Mestizo families remained unaffiliated. Although this prevented them from receiving governmental aid (such as construction materials), it also allowed them to live tax free. This changed in 2015, as the municipal administration declared that community affiliation would now be mandatory for every resident of the town. Suddenly, Mestizos began to be nominated to civil cargos (Comité, Patronato) which thus far had been reserved for indigenous people only.

News of the impending expulsions spread faster than anyone could have predicted when someone forwarded the OBSMC's letter to officials at the CEDH and CNDH—the state's and nation's human rights commissions. Still, although that raised awareness of the situation, it did not discourage Chenalhó's municipal authorities from moving forward with the new legislation. What did deter them was the fact that some of the Chamulas who were being targeted by the law had served cargos in their community— and they could prove it.

Following *usos y costumbres*, some participation in the cargo system alone would be enough to grant the Chamulas the right to stay. One of these Chamulas was Lisandro, 45, who three years earlier migrated to Chenalhó with his wife and children. There, Lisandro bought a house and opened a shoe store. The family was native to a Chamula hamlet located less than a mile from the Cabecera.

Lisandro seemed like an unlikely target for an expulsion. He told me that in the months preceding these events, he had been named to serve Chenalhó's most expensive and prestigious traditional office: Paxon, the sponsor of the Tajimoltik (Carnival). Ironically, service as Paxon would allow Lisandro to qualify as a *pasado* himself. So why was he being chased out? Upon hearing about the OBSMC's intent to expel him, Lisandro paid a visit to some of the Cabecera's pasados—the *campesino* ones who had hesitated to participate in the OBSMC's meetings. The group held a secret meeting in which Lisandro explained that he deserved protection since he had fulfilled his cargo duties. The pasados acquiesced to Lisandro's request and agreed that his service as Paxon granted him immunity against the new law.

The *campesino* pasados also questioned the legitimacy of the process by which the law came to be executed by municipal authorities. The law had been formulated by what they saw as a 'clandestine' organization. According to *usos y costumbres*, municipal laws must first be devised by communities and then sanctioned by municipality. The OBSMC, thus, had no legal standing.

Lisandro and the pasados took the issue to a communal assembly in the Cabecera's main community (Benito Juarez). During the assembly, community members questioned why the law had been passed without their knowledge or consent. The pasados who founded the OBSMC retorted that they

acted in the interests of Pedranos and that the expulsions would shield local businesses against unfair competition from Chamulas. The community, however, remained unfazed. The attempt to expel a man who had served as Paxon was a serious offense. Not only did community members side with Lisandro and other migrants, but they also voted to exact a fine of 7,000 pesos from each of the founders of the OBSMC. They refused to pay the fine, however, stating that they had done nothing wrong, which led the community to vote for their expulsion. In subsequent months, the expelled pasados gathered about two dozen families and founded a new community in the Cabecera.

The story of the OBSMC and the expulsion of its founders from their own community illustrates two trends that have been taking place in Chenalhó in the past decades. First, the town is transitioning from formal—and previously oral—petitioning into a more paperwork-dependent system. Second, since there are clear dominance hierarchies, this new form of written petitioning has become riddled with uncertainty. There is a lack of clarity over who has the authority to make and execute formal written requests such as the one submitted by the OBSMC to the mayor of Chamula. Because of that uncertainty, formal writing has emerged as a means of establishing or verifying the authority of the person or group that makes a request.

Notice how the OBSMC letter uses the expression *debidamente firmado y sellado*, or 'duly signed and stamped,' to draw attention to its 'official' character. This is an expression that I heard in nearly every meeting I attended in the Cabecera, where most group resolutions inevitably culminate in a collectively signed *acta* (report) where the community (or cargoholders) relates what was discussed and determines a course of action. The *acta* must always be 'signed and stamped,' otherwise it will not be valid. While in Chenalhó, I was given permission to use the Cabecera's 'archive' (a collection of actas which the communities managed to keep over time). Some actas—for instance, the ones produced in assemblies between *Agentes muncipales*—can be accompanied by forty pages of signatures. They must be signed, stamped, or fingerprinted by each meeting attendee. It is not uncommon for civil cargoholders to have extensive collections of rubber stamps, which they can use to give a more formal appearance to different types of written documents.

What is odd about this infatuation with authenticating paperwork is that the person or group that produces a document does not need to have their authority accredited by a higher institution. Since there are no clear dominance hierarchies, communities have their own regulations for authorizing officers. Thus, there is no consensual way by which people from different communities can certify the authority of each other's officers, and as a result, people can, in effect, give themselves power by fiat. This is precisely what the OBSMC founded by the pasados did. Anyone can make stamps and—with enough training— produce formal letters that look authoritative. As I pored over dozens of documents in the Cabecera's

archive, it became apparent that the signatures and stamps have become more than a method for establishing trust between interlocutors. They are also a means of exerting coercion. The individual or group that produces these letters can use formality alone for building authority and then use that authority to give executive orders.

In a group that is transitioning from prestige hierarchies into the world of paperwork-mediated bureaucracies, formality is vital in determining how authoritative a source is. The more formal a document looks, the more likely it is to achieve its intended effect as written formality increases the *illocutionary force* of a communication act (Levinson 1983, 236). Before the introduction of paperwork, requests and petitions were always done verbally and in-person, as we saw in the example earlier in this chapter. In prestige hierarchies, authority is determined by a community's shared knowledge of each of its members' past contributions. Speech by prestigious individuals certainly has greater illocutionary force than that of low-prestige ones. Using certain politeness norms was a marker of status and inculturation and established trust between interlocutors.[139] The practice of overstating authority in formal documents, thus, reflects a transition from verbal politeness norms into text.

3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I approached some of the ways in which people in Chenalhó have responded to certain social policies at the local level. These policies have two main characteristics. First, they seek to expand government intervention while maintaining local autonomy. Second, the policies assume that indigenous groups are driven to minimize inequalities in the distribution of public goods.

In the earlier part of the chapter, I showed that these policies have been largely successful in promoting local autonomy. The expansion of governmental programs in Chiapas has been accompanied by increasing decentralization, with decision-making shifting from the municipality to small communities. Until the 1970s, governmental programs tended to be run by the INI and managed by municipal administrations. Today, the 100-plus communities in Chenalhó largely decide how to use government-provided goods on their own. I showed that this change was (and continues to be)

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[139] In Tzotzil, this lack of dominance hierarchies can even be expressed grammatically. Tzotzil makes no lexical distinction between 'can' and 'must do,' which can cause the act of giving commands to be sometimes an ambiguous and complicated endeavor (I examined this linguistic feature in Chapter 5.1.6). It is for that sort of ambiguity Tzotzil and Tzeltal have grammatical particles whose sole function is to hedge the illocutionary force of utterances during formal (polite) interaction. Particles such as *cha'a*, *o*, *june*, *bani* have no literal meaning, but allow a speaker to strengthen or soften a request, increasing or attenuating the coercive intent (for an analysis of such particles in Tzeltal, see Penelope Brown 1979, 238).

incentivized by governmental programs that transfer resources directly to communities while bypassing municipal control. This change, however, has entailed some trade-offs. Chiefly, it has become difficult to settle conflicts between communities. As the number of autonomous communities increases, the potential for conflict between them rises steadily. In this new decentralized political order, the new public officials—the civil cargoholders—are only authorized to work within their own communities. They continue to perform unpaid labor, thus lacking incentives to work. Municipalities also lack officials with the ability to settle conflicts between communities. This absence of a common authority has led to miscoordination. Small communities lack an agenda or rules and regulations in common, which can cause environmental mismanagement and the eruption of intractable intercommunity conflicts, resulting in further fragmentation.

In the second part of the chapter, I examined the role of prestige hierarchies in shaping public goods provision. To illustrate, I told the story of a cooperative that, instead of allocating profits equally between its members, became a hierarchical organization as soon as it went into business. I also described the effect of prestige hierarchies in determining the decisions of civil cargoholders to divert public goods to themselves for their unpaid service—a behavior which can lead to mutual accusations of corruption. I showed that this phenomenon occurs due to a change from unpaid/coercive labor into a more bureaucratic structure based on the notion of 'merit.' Finally, I analyzed the petitioning system in which cargoholders ask officials or contractors for gifts, a system which has, in recent decades, become an integral part of public goods provision in Chenalhó. I sought to explain petitioning not just as a form of ritualized behavior, but as decision-making that makes sense within a reputation economy that rewards individuals with prestige. Petitioning—I argued—builds on an existing reciprocity system which function to level prestige inequalities between members of a community. In recent years, written documents have replaced the role of previously oral petitions, which has allowed some individuals and organizations to use formal writing as a coercive technology.

CHAPTER 8. SOME BROADER IMPLICATIONS

In this study, I sought to draw a detailed picture of modernization in a Tzotzil town. Although much of my research has focused on a small setting, I have sought to produce knowledge which could help to inform our understanding of change in other settings in Mexico and the world. I summarize each chapter's key findings below, and later I consider some of the broader implications of the study.

In Chapter 2, we saw how the recent changes in Chiapas have reconfigured power relations between Tzotzil and Mestizos. I showed that changing power relations are expressed in the results of behavioral games that measure prosociality. As Mestizos lose political power and begin to portray themselves as 'minorities,' they become less prosocial and exhibit more in-group favoritism, while Tzotzil participants show the inverse pattern. These results show how behavioral game results can be influenced by a player's relative status position within his/her group. I sought to tell the story of changing ethnic relations in Chiapas by combining ethnographic, historical, and experimental data in a single narrative.

In Chapter 3, I showed that modernization is associated with changes in what people conceptualize as 'equitable division.' We asked people in Chenalhó to play a resource allocation game in which they are asked to split resources or taxes between other community members. As Tzotzil become more urbanized, they shift from allocating resources and burdens based on prestige to prioritizing to those in need. I showed that these changes reflect the decline of traditional prestige hierarchies and increasing wealth inequalities in urban areas. I develop these insights further below in a broader theory of the evolution of equity norms.

In Chapter 4, I delved into how kinship systems have changed in Chiapas under the influence of missionization. I showed preliminary data indicating that the areas within Chenalhó and Chiapas that were the least affected by missionization were the most likely to retain aspects of traditional Maya lineal kinship. I considered whether lineal kinship and land inheritance systems might play a role in reducing land fragmentation over generations. These findings build on recent cross-cultural studies suggesting that changing kinship systems might an important determinant of social change across societies.

Chapter 5, examined the allocation of religious and civil offices (cargos) in Chenalhó. Allocation experiment results showed that communities tend to allocate cargos following the same equity norms discussed in earlier chapters, reflecting the decline of prestige hierarchies in urban areas. Counterintuitively, prospective cargoholders seek to maximize spending rather than minimizing costs. I

showed how cargo allocation results from a combination of individual rational strategizing and collective decision-making.

In Chapter 6, I addressed the question of what motivates people to compete to spend time and resources in costly rituals. I did so by tracking changes in ritual spending since the 1930s in Chiapas and by showing that ritual spending and a strengthening of traditions went up following increases in credit and liquidity driven by governmental action from the 1940s onward. As credit became more readily available in Chiapas, informal credit networks began to expand, leading to a 'credit bubble.' The chapter shows that competitive spending can be driven by a dynamic akin to financial speculation in which people volunteer to sponsor rituals after forecasting future cost increases.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I approached some of the ways in which people in Chenalhó have responded to social policies that seek to expand government intervention while maintaining local autonomy. I show that prestige hierarchies tend to shape how these policies are received on the ground. Prestige levels can influence the allocation of public goods that, in theory, were supposed to be distributed equally. I show that the novel Tzotzil 'bureaucratic' institutions in urban areas incorporate many traditional exchange practices such as petitioning, gift exchange, and related politeness norms. These observations speak to larger issues regarding the role of anthropological research in informing policymaking, in particularly for programs designed top down that seek to preserve local autonomy and blend in with traditional norms and institutions.

The approach I used in the previous chapters rested on the anthropological tradition of examining one small-scale group holistically and from different angles. I conclude this work by attempting a few generalizations. First, I speculate over what we can learn, from the Chiapas example, regarding how equity and fairness evolve with increasing social complexity. Later, I discuss how the research methods developed can help social scientists understand how cultural categories and concepts inform decision-making.

1. Fairness and Equity: Evolving

The central theme of this dissertation was how norms of equity and fairness change in a context of social change. As I discussed in Chapter 1, I sought to measure these changes using contextually rich experiments in which people were asked to allocate resources, taxes, and burdens to members of their communities.

My starting point for this research were larger cross-cultural studies (Henrich et al. 2004; Ensminger and Henrich 2014) that found that fairness in economic exchange evolves with increasing

market integration and the adoption of world religions. Although my initial focus was to measure fairness norms (i.e., whether people split goods equally between strangers), I progressively shifted toward using experiments that index norms of *equity*—the extent to which people reward others based on the notion of proportionality. Equity decisions rest on assumptions about the merit, status, and need of other members of a community. To allocate a good equitably, a person must know something about the people to whom he or she is allocating the good. For instance, to distribute a good based on need, one must know how to rank others in terms of wealth. Thus, social knowledge and moral notions of equity are inextricably tied.

The equity norms I describe here are implicit and generally not acknowledged by the people who follow them. They could thus be seen as informal institutions (Boyer and Petersen 2012). As such, these norms are more likely to be transmitted inadvertently by example than by conscious pedagogy. In rural Tzotzil communities no one needs to instruct the youth to respect and prioritize prestigious elders. People experience reputation-based allocation in their daily lives, being constantly primed with subtle examples of how respected individuals must receive priority and be rewarded proportionally to their status. As a result, they tend to take the norm for granted and hence no one makes conscious effort to enforce it. This sort of informal institution is different from explicit allocation rules such as "women and children first," which since the 19th have been enforced by ship captains during maritime disasters. The reason why a captain needs to divulge and enforce this norm is precisely that women and children do not always receive priority in daily life. Social norms only need to be explicitly acknowledged and enforced when they contradict, to some extent, our shared experience (see also fn. 79) or when people are faced with a novel problem to which there is a previously agreed-upon solution (to cite a recent example, who should receive priority when distributing a vaccine to immunize against a new virus?).

Measuring implicit equity norms proved to be not as straightforward as measuring fairness. While the latter can be done with anonymous behavioral games such as the Ultimatum or Dictator games (commonly used by economists), equity refers to decisions that use people's knowledge of <u>social indices</u> (Binmore 2005, 179). As a result, replicating these decisions that involve equity considerations experimentally can be challenging. To do so, I had to devise a time consuming method which required us to collect social network data, information on interpersonal knowledge with ranking tasks, and using the Cultural Consensus Model to measure people's interpersonal knowledge and the strength of their network ties. We then combined all that information to design contextualized allocation experiments (Chapter 3.3). We were only able to collect these data because I stayed in Chenalhó for years doing ethnographic fieldwork, as I reserved enough time (months) to run experiments that require long-term presence in the field.

Based on findings from previous chapters, it is possible to outline a theory of how equity norms evolve with modernization and increasing social complexity. Admittedly, what I will propose here is only in part substantiated by data (which is limited to a single small town in Mexico). To have a better grasp of how equity changes with modernization in a general sense, we will need more cross-cultural data at a much larger scale. It would be difficult to scale up the methods I used given that they require long-term fieldwork. But notice that at least one recent study has proposed a simplified experimental method for comparing equity preferences across societies (Huppert et al. 2019).

Broadly, what I found in Chenalhó is that equity norms tend to reflect the social structure of the groups to which people belong. For instance, recall that rural Tzotzil distribute resources based on prestige. That happens because prestige is the primary social index in rural Tzotzil communities. Notice, however, that does not mean that such communities exclude other vectors of difference such as wealth or merit. As I showed Chapter 3.1.4, people in the rural community studied are capable of rank-ordering other community members based on how wealthy (or in need) they are. Still, game results suggest that considerations over prestige tend to predominate among most members of the rural community. With modernization, prestige hierarchies unravel and are replaced with a system of stratification based on wealth. This transformation causes people's preferences for equitable distribution to shift from prestige- to need-based, which is exemplified by differences between rural and urban Tzotzil and Mestizos in Chenalhó (Chapter 3).

Every society, regardless of scale or complexity level, can have multiple coexisting social indices (prestige, wealth, dominance, merit, and so on). However, I contend that one index will always predominate over the others as human cognition is limited and optimized to process one index or classification system at a time. There is substantial experimental evidence that people in class-stratified societies (which increasingly is the case of contemporary United States) can identify audiovisual class markers (clothes, accents, physical appearance, etc.) in milliseconds and use that information to make implicit judgements about others. These implicit and quickly executed judgements can influence attention, shape communication, activate social comparisons, and strengthen group boundaries (Dietze and Knowles 2016; Kraus, Park, and Tan 2017). Social cognition in class-based societies appears to be optimized to identify class markers. This type of knowledge, of course, is not innate but learned.

What would be the equivalent of class markers in a group organized by prestige hierarchies, such as rural Tzotzil? The answer is that social rankings depend on social knowledge. As I remarked earlier (Chapter 3.2.2), widely shared social knowledge is a prerequisite for prestige hierarchies to exist in small communities. In a society in which prestige trumps wealth as the main social index, people must keep track of each other's contribution to the welfare of the group. Across societies, visual status markers (e.g.,

body ornamentation, scarification, etc.) can help to signal social status and group membership to strangers. In Chenalhó's communities, however, there are no permanent status markers. The only status markers are temporary: the ritual outfits that religious officers must wear while they serve their cargos (for example, see Figure 2.2 on page 90). Visual biomarkers of aging may be used to infer prestige levels, although they are not infallible (see examples of elders lack prestige in Chapter 5.4.1). To tell apart who has prestige from who does not, one must live and participate in the community, watching rituals or obtaining information about prestige rankings through gossip (Haviland 1977).

The evolution of equity norms entails a fundamental shift from groups where interpersonal social knowledge is widely shared to societies where people interact with strangers on a regular basis. As human sociality expands in scale, social knowledge decreases, and people lose track of the social indices that inform their moral notions of equity. A modern city dweller must make decisions regarding who to prioritize when allocating resources, burdens, or attention daily. He or she must do this without having any background knowledge of the people with whom he or she interact with. But modernization does not completely replace equity with impartial notions of fairness. As Elster's (1992) survey of Western countries shows, notions of equity (or 'distributive justice') guides the allocation of scarce goods and burdens in institutions such as colleges, hospitals, or the military, fundamentally shaping people's life chances.

To distribute goods equitably without interpersonal knowledge, people in modern societies use group categories. With increasing social complexity, we see an expansion in the use of class, ethnic, or religious categories signaled either by visible group markers or behaviors that index a person's adherence to a group or moral system (McElreath, Boyd, and Richerson 2003; Matthews 2012). These group categories become a prerequisite for making inferences about out-group members. As human sociality expands to larger scales, religious or ethnic categories evolve to facilitate interaction between strangers (Purzycki et al. 2016). The spread of world religions—which tend to enforce norms of moral impartiality—has been associated with the expansion of global trade (Ensminger 1997; Henrich et al. 2010).

Notice that the three groups studied here inhabit a rural setting and, for the most part, interact with people face-to-face. The study participants generally knew each other. Hence, they could use interpersonal knowledge of status or wealth to allocate resources or burdens proportionally to those indices. However, with increasing social complexity and a growing reliance on interacting with strangers, personal knowledge is progressively replaced with abstract social categories such as class, race, or caste, which are indexed by markers of group membership (visual or behavioral). In complex societies, these groups categories become more cognitively salient as they provide the basis upon which people can make

equitable decisions. Categorization thus replaces the more nuanced personal knowledge that people acquire through living in face-to-face societies.

We can speculate that as group categories become more salient, they are more prone to being essentialized. Recall the discussion on ethnic essentialism in Chapter 2, where I showed that ethnic categories in Chiapas tend to be flexible and people are allowed to pass from one ethnic group to another (that is, as long as they are able to erase their family background over generations). Perhaps ethnic categories in Chiapas are flexible because in this region of the world most people live in predominantly rural areas interacting, for the most part, with known people on a face-to-face basis. Because people tend to interact with acquaintances, they can use personal knowledge to draw inferences and predict the behavior of others instead of relying solely on social categories. As a result, social categories might have diminished cognitive relevance in such settings (I refer to the concept of "relevance" as established by Sperber and Wilson 1996). When reasoning about social relations, thus, people in small-scale rural settings could be less likely to rely on category-based induction (Osherson et al. 1990) to draw inferences about others, relying, instead, on personal knowledge of individuals. And as these groups become more urban and anonymous, and social interaction more frequent, we shall see social class, racial, caste, and religious categories become more cognitively salient and take precedence in shaping social cognition.

Hence if we are to outline an evolutionary scheme of how equity norms evolve, we should focus on how primary social indices change with increasing social complexity and in larger organizational scales. At first, in face-to-face societies, equity norms shift from prestige to need-based allocation. This is what the behavioral game results in earlier chapters indicate is happening in changing rural Tzotzil communities. Prestige—defined as how much an individual or household has contributed to the group—is the primary social index in small-scale communities that rely on subsistence production and reject dominance hierarchies. With growing economic disparities, wealth becomes the primary social index guiding notions of equitable distribution, with need-based equity playing a role in minimizing inequalities. In a later stage—exemplified by modern Western societies—need-based equity is replaced with resource distribution based on class, caste, or ethnic (racial) categories, which become increasingly essentialized and cognitively salient as social complexity increases.

Although the process of change outlined above remains highly speculative, it seems to be the most plausible generalization I can make based on the data reviewed in previous chapters. Importantly, notice that as the process unfolds a social index never completely erases the dominant indices in the previous stages. As an example, when Tzotzil shift from making prestige- to need-based allocations, they still retain a cognitive model of reputation-based equity. What changes is the frequency in which people make certain distributions when having to split common resources. One way to understand how equity

norms change is by framing different evolutionary stages as shifting equilibria. Using game theoretical models, Binmore (2005) provides several examples of how such equilibria can change. For instance, in the "driving game"—the simplest example of a cooperative game—players can either choose to drive on the left or on the right side of a road. Equilibrium emerges spontaneously, as players coalesce into one side or the other of the road as they all seek to avoid accidents. When distributing collective resources in Chiapas, players use their knowledge of social indices to make 'equitable' allocation decisions. To make (or evaluate) such decisions, they use their mental representations of how their communities are ranked (in terms of prestige, wealth, or dominance). When a prestige hierarchy provides a relevant framework for making equitable allocations (as in the Rural Tzotzil community), players will tend to converge toward that solution. But with increasing wealth inequalities in urban areas, and through repeated collective decision-making events, that equilibrium shifts, leading players to prefer need-based distribution as their primary method for settling resource allocation conflicts.

In sum, I have sought to develop a model which explains moral choices (equity norms) as reflecting a group's hierarchical structure. I am certainly not the first to think along such lines. There is a long body of social theory—beginning with classical sociological theory—suggesting that a group's belief systems, behavioral patterns, or cognitive models may reflect its structure and, as consequence, it is only possible to understand cognitive change in relation to social change (Gellner 1978; A. P. Fiske 1992; Durkheim 2008). I have sought to supplement these classical theories with detailed data from economic games and cultural domain analysis in a small Tzotzil setting in Chiapas. The approach used sought to combine insights from game theory and cultural models theory. In the following section, I summarize how such approaches can be fruitfully combined to enhance our understanding of how culture influences decision-making.

2. A Note on Methodological Consilience

Anthropologists interested in the intersection between culture and cognition today tend to rely heavily on an intellectual tradition that goes back to French structuralism (Lévi-Strauss 1963; 1966). This approach, usually pursued by cognitive anthropologists, rests on framing cultural phenomena as models (R. G. D'Andrade and Strauss 1992; Shore 1996; Bennardo and Munck 2013). In short, cultural models are learned mental schema that shape how people interpret the world and act. To measure and compare cultural models, one can use some of the formal methods discussed thoroughly in previous chapters: ranking tasks, free listing, and pile sorts, among others.

Cultural model theory (CMT) was my starting point in doing this research, influencing much of what we saw in the previous chapters—both regarding theory and methods. Still, I have sought to add a greater emphasis on decision-making to that framework. I did so by borrowing insights and methods from economics and merging them with cognitive anthropology. Since these methodological innovations might be useful to other scholars, I conclude this dissertation with a brief discussion on how to merge CMT and game theory in the field. Behind this multidisciplinary attempt was a desire to respond to the criticisms (e.g., Aunger 1999) most often directed against cognitive anthropologists (myself included):

1) Why does CMT rarely tackle how cultural models shape people's day-to-day behavior?
2) Why do cognitive anthropologists seldom address questions of power?
3) Why do cognitive anthropologists pay so little attention to how categories and concepts inform decision-making?
4) Why not study change instead of using static constructs to describe cultural models?

Obviously, these criticisms are, in part, exaggerations (or sometimes even strawman fallacies). Cultural model theorists talk about all these things, although, let us be candid, describing and comparing cultural models always takes precedence over the other issues in their publications. The mixed methods approach I pursued here was geared toward answering each of the above criticisms.

The first criticism can be addressed by merging ethnography with formal methods (details in Chapter 1.3). This has proven to be no trivial task which entails rethinking the way we write our research results. At least in book-length works such as this it is possible to combine ethnographic narratives of events, biographical descriptions, and qualitative interpretation with quantitative analyses. While writing this research, I experimented with ways to make the transition between different styles of analysis seamless; time will tell whether the experiment succeeded or not.

A solution to the second criticism was laid out in Chapter 3. This dissertation did not shy away from talking about power. In fact, I used some of the formal methods from cognitive anthropology to measure social hierarchies quantitatively. For instance, I asked people to rank-order other members of their communities and used that data to explain their decisions in economic games. Cognitive anthropologists, thus, can use formal methods and quantitative data to take power into account.

However, there are multiple ways to define 'power,' and some anthropologists have proposed fairly nuanced typologies (Wolf 2001b). My discussion on social hierarchies (Chapter 3) built on the 'dual-heritage' theory, which asserts that there are two types of hierarchies in human societies: dominance as prestige hierarchies (Henrich and Gil-White 2001). Undoubtedly, the approach I pursued here could be accused of being too reductionist. Nevertheless, there is growing consensus that prestige and dominance

hierarchies are associated with fundamentally different processes of cultural transmission. If we regard anthropology as a science dedicated to explaining how culture spreads and changes (cf. Chapter 1.3.5), we must adopt concepts that enhance our understanding of how people internalize certain cultural representations or social norms. A typology of 'power,' thus, must be relevant to how we build models of cultural transmission. Dual-heritage theory seems to be well suited for that end.

Finally, game theory is the key to addressing the <u>third</u> and <u>fourth</u> criticisms. As should be evident by now, I took many insights from behavioral economics and game theory in the preceding chapters. Although I did not attempt to build formal game theoretical models, some key insights from that discipline informed the methods and statistical analyses I used and the way I understand the relationship between culture, cognition, and decision-making. Game theory can be used to model how cultural representations and decision-making change over time and reinforce each other. It allows us to make formal models of change in which social institutions emerge from the repeated actions and interactions of rational actors. Thus, it provides a framework that unifies the social sciences (Gintis 2009).

Merging Cultural Model Theory with game theory implied adopting methods from fields, using cultural domain analysis to explain how people make decisions in economic games. Generally, my approach employed formal methods to survey cultural domains (ranking tasks, free listing, pilesorts) and used the cultural consensus model (CCM) to measure agreement and aggregate group answers. I then I used the results from the cultural consensus analysis to explain how people make decisions in games. To schematize this method in three steps:

1. Using formal tasks, the researcher obtains information of how a group of people categorizes or ranks a certain cultural domain.
2. The researcher uses the CCM to determine the most probable cultural pattern for how the group responds to the categorization/ranking task.
3. The researcher then devises experiments that test predictions regarding how those cultural categories and rankings influence decision-making.

Building methodological consilience entails using a variety of methods to tell a coherent story with information obtained through different means. A fourth step to the scheme above would be to use ethnography illustrate or cross-validate the information obtained with formal methods. Of course, the question of whether subjective observations obtained informally can be considered scientific will continue to linger. Still, I hope this study will at least provide an example of how methodological consilience can be pursued.

APPENDIX: TRACKING RITUAL SPENDING OVER TIME

The following notes supplement Chapter 6, in which I quantified the cost of cargos over time for several Tzotzil-Tzeltal municipalities in Chiapas. I describe how I obtained the data, list the sources used and evaluate their reliability, and explain how I adjusted costs for inflation and calculated growth rates.

1. Historical Sources

Sampling. To build the historical cargo cost dataset I surveyed everything that was available to me that was written about Chiapas between 1940 to 1985. Some of these sources are well-known ethnographies of Tzotzil and Tzeltal communities (e.g. F. Cancian 1965), while others are less known field diaries or doctoral theses (e.g. Crump 1976; Díaz de Salas 1991; Zabala Cubillos 1992). I included expenses for every cargo I found, except for cargos that were reported as inexpensive. For instance, Cancian reports that the offices of *principal*, school committee, and Presidente in Zinacantán did not incur any expenses (Cancian 1965, 18-19); Cámara Barbachano (1945, 25, 64-65) describes several cargos from Mitontic as inexpensive. I chose to exclude inexpensive offices because they were hardly ever reported by anthropologists of the 1960s, who tended to focus on religious cargos that required officers to sponsor expensive patron-saint fiestas.

Sample Limitations. Towns that were better studied by anthropologists (Zinacantán, Chamula) are overrepresented in the sample. It is impossible to overcome this limitation unless new sources of data for underrepresented towns are discovered. In spite of that limitation, I was able to calculate annual compound growth rates for some of the underrepresented towns based off expenses for a single office that were reported twice (or more) by separate observers and at different times. Another limitation of the sample—which is stated in the main text—is that expenses for all cargos done from 1982 to 2015 are from household surveys that we (the author and a research assistant) conducted in Chenalhó during different field seasons (2012 to 2015). Again, this limitation cannot be overcome with the current data. I do not know of any other study that has systematically gathered historical data on cargo costs from other municipalities.

Coding the data. Some sources do not specify the year to which the cost of a cargo is relative to. In those cases, I used the year prior to that in which the source (ethnographer or student) made the observation. For example, Guiteras Holmes conducted fieldwork in Chenalhó in 1946 and collected information on the cost of four cargos. Having no information about the year to which those expenses refer to, I assumed that they refer to 1945 (i.e., Guiteras Holmes recorded the amount of money spent by

cargoholders in the year prior to her fieldwork). The footnotes for Table A2 include comments on further adjustments made for the same cargos.

List of sources. See Table A2 for a complete list of references for historical cargo costs used in the study.

Table A1: Number of cargos documented for each municipality

Municipality	No. cargos
Amatenango	1
Cancuc	3
Chalchihuitán	10
Chamula	67
Chenalhó	17
Chilón	2
Huixtán	1
Larráinzar	3
Las Rosas	2
Mitontic	10
Ocosingo	4
Oxchuc	16
Pantelhó	4
Simojovel	1
Tenejapa	8
Venustiano Carranza	2
Zinacantán	56
Total cargos	207
No. Towns	17

Table A2: List of sources for historical cargo costs (in Mexican Pesos)

Year	Nominal cost	Real cost	Cargo (original spelling preserved)	Municipality	Source
1957	3,000	27,359	Alperes	Amatenango	Nash (1964, 352; 1985, 195)
1943	40	1,327	Capitan de Sacramento	Cancuc	Guiteras Holmes (1945, 45)
1943	40	1,327	Capitan de Santiago	Cancuc	Guiteras Holmes (1945, 45)
1944	30	802	Capitan del Rosario	Cancuc	Guiteras Holmes (1992, 107)
1946	300	6,414	Alcalde	Chalchihuitán	Guiteras Holmes (2002, 52)
1946	100	2,138	Alferez	Chalchihuitán	Guiteras Holmes (2002, 52)
1946	400	8,552	Regidor	Chalchihuitán	Guiteras Holmes (2002, 52)
1970	1,600	11,007	Alkalte	Chalchihuitán	Köhler (1982,128)
1970	1,350	9,287	Alperes (average)	Chalchihuitán	Köhler (1982, 128)
1970	500	3,440	Kapitan	Chalchihuitán	Köhler (1982, 128)
1970	700	4,815	Martoma	Chalchihuitán	Köhler (1982, 128)
1970	2,000	13,758	Mayol Santo	Chalchihuitán	Köhler (1982, 128)
1970	2,500	17,198	Pashyon	Chalchihuitán	Köhler (1982, 128)
1970	2,000	13,758	Rerol	Chalchihuitán	Köhler (1982, 128)
1931	49	3,367	Primer gobernador	Chamula	Pozas (1959, 59)
1938	0	0	Escribano	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 19)
1940	200	9,621	Presidente Municipal	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 19)
1941	140	6,265	Presidente Municipal	Chamula	Pozas (1947, 339)

Year	Nominal cost	Real cost	Cargo (original spelling preserved)	Municipality	Source
1943	560	18,573	Alferez del Rosario[140]	Chamula	Pozas (1947, 361; 1959, 120)
1943	2,000	66,355	Pasión[141]	Chamula	Pozas (1947, 392)
1943	300	9,953	Shinolan (carnival character)	Chamula	Pozas (1959, 138)
1946	2,500	53,452	Pasion	Chamula	Guiteras Holmes (2002, 325)
1952	6,000	74,011	Paxyon	Chamula	Narváez Palacios (1952, 46)
1958	2000	17,654	Yalel skrusil	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 19)
1959	3,000	26,481	Presidente	Chamula	Favre (1965, 80)
1960	8,000	66,932	Alferez de San Mateo	Chamula	Favre (1973, 269)
1960	2500	20,916	Presidente Municipal	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 19)
1962	10000	82,587	Alferes San Juan	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 19)
1967	2,000	10,462	Primero Alcalde	Chamula	Crump (1976, appendix xi)
1968	20,000	145,779	Pasion	Chamula	Gossen (1984, 13)
1970	1,500	10,319	Abulahanto	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 16)
1970	1,000	6,879	Alkalte	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 12)
1970	2,000	13,758	Alperes Apox tol (San Andres)	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	3,000	20,637	Alperes Corazon	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	2,000	13,758	Alperes Guadalupe	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 16)

[140] Refers to Juan Pérez Jolote, who served Alferez Rosario in 1943.

[141] Pozas gives two estimations for the cost of Paxyon. First, he tries to estimate costs by adding up the cost of food, baskets, and drinks ($982.50, p. 391). He then quotes a ritual expert (*Yajotikil*) for the *pasado* Payxon, who says that in the previous year a Paxyon cost a total of $2,000. The later estimation is more reliable since it includes the cost of a bull that pasados must purchase after serving. In 1946, Guiteras Holmes (2002, 325) quotes an informant from Chamula who says that Paxyon cost $2,500.

Year	Nominal cost	Real cost	Cargo (original spelling preserved)	Municipality	Source
1970	8,000	55,033	Alperes San Mateo	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	3,000	20,637	Alperes San Pablo	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	3,000	20,637	Alperes Rosario	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	3,000	20,637	Alperes San Agustin	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	2,000	13,758	Alperes San Antonio	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	3,000	20,637	Alperes San Francisco	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	3,000	20,637	Alperes San Jose	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	8,000	55,033	Alperes San Juan	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	2,000	13,758	Alperes San Miguel	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	3,000	20,637	Alperes San Nicolas	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 16)
1970	4,000	27,516	Alperes San Pedro	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	3,000	20,637	Alperes San Sebastian	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 16)
1970	2,000	13,758	Alperes Santa Cruz	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 16)
1970	3,000	20,637	Alperes Santa Rosa	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	3,000	20,637	Anima (oxim vinik)	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	0	0	Cilonero	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 16)
1970	1,000	6,879	Kominarol (gobernador)	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 12)
1970	2,000	13,758	Komisario	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 16)
1970	3,000	20,637	Martoma Corazon de Jesus	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 15)
1970	4,000	27,516	Martoma Rosario	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 14)
1970	3,000	20,637	Martoma San Antonio	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 14)

Year	Nominal cost	Real cost	Cargo (original spelling preserved)	Municipality	Source
1970	6,000	41,274	Martoma San Juan	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 14)
1970	6,000	41,274	Martoma San Mateo (htotik)	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 14)
1970	4,000	27,516	Martoma San Sebastian	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 14)
1970	6,000	41,274	Martoma Santa Rosa	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 14)
1970	1,500	10,319	Mayol tajimol	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 16)
1970	500	3,440	Mayor	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 13)
1970	2,400	16,510	Me' Martoma sakramento	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 17)
1970	16,000	110,065	Nicim	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 14)
1970	1,000	6,879	Ortenario	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 16)
1970	20,000	137,581	Pasion	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 14)
1970	75,000	515,930	Presidente	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 12)
1970	1,000	6,879	Regidor	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 12)
1970	13,000	62,961	Segundo Pasion	Chamula	Crump (1976, appendix x)
1970	1,000	6,879	Sindico Reg.	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 12)
1970	1,500	10,319	Xinolan (carnival character)	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 16)
1970	1,500	10,319	Yalel skrusil	Chamula	Epstein (1970, 16)
1971	2,000	9,110	Alcalde Sindico	Chamula	Crump (1976, appendix xi)
1971	5,500	25,052	Alferez de San Juan	Chamula	Crump (1976, 215)
1971	2,000	9,110	Gobernador	Chamula	Crump (1976, 213)
1972	55,000	329,963	Paxyon San Juan[142]	Chamula	Linn (1976, 418)

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[142] Linn's figure for Paxyon was for 1972 (see p. 418). I assume that figures for other cargos (which she does not name) are for that same year.

Year	Nominal cost	Real cost	Cargo (original spelling preserved)	Municipality	Source
1972	20,000	119,986	Unspecified expensive cargo 1	Chamula	Linn (1976, 58)
1972	2,000	11,999	Unspecified inexpensive cargo 1	Chamula	Linn (1976, 58)
1972	3,000	17,998	Unspecified inexpensive cargo 2	Chamula	Linn (1976, 58)
1979	500,000	909,467	Pasion	Chamula	Anderson (1988)
1994	35,000	210,311	Pasion	Chamula	Romano Delgado (2004, 3:52)
1944	300	8,018	Alferez de San Pedro	Chenalhó	Guiteras Holmes (1946, 93)
1944	200	5,345	Alferez de San Sebastian	Chenalhó	Guiteras Holmes (1946, 93)
1944	100	2,673	Mayordomos	Chenalhó	Guiteras Holmes (1946, 93)
1944	300	8,018	Paxon	Chenalhó	Guiteras Holmes (1946, 93)
1946	0	0	Principal	Chenalhó	Guiteras Holmes (2002:222)
1953	0	0	Comité de Educación	Chenalhó	Narváez Palacios (1999, 44)
1953	3,000	37,731	Pasion	Chenalhó	Narváez Palacios (1999, 96)
1961	1,500	12,550	Alperes of Magdalena (now Aldama)	Chenalhó	Burnstein et al (1979, 164)
1974	165	682	Gobernador	Chenalhó	Köhler (1990, 29)
1974	265	1,095	Mayol	Chenalhó	Köhler (1990, 29)
1974	2,065	8,530	Regidor[143]	Chenalhó	Köhler (1990, 26)

[143] Köhler (1990:29) cites figures from a 1974 unpublished report done by German students who spent a day in Chenalhó. They found that Regidor in Chenalhó spent $2,000 in a year of service. However, it appears that the students asked informants about their living expenses, rather than the total yearly expenses associated with serving offices. Only three informants were interviewed. Just one of them was a Regidor. Two of my informants, who served as Regidor in 1974 and 1975, reported spending $10,000 and $15,000 respectively. At that time, the cost of serving as Regidor could vary considerably. The expenses of officeholders who lived in the Cabecera were much lower than those of people from rural hamlets since they did not need to pay for living expenses and could farm while in office (see also fn. 110).

Year	Nominal cost	Real cost	Cargo (original spelling preserved)	Municipality	Source
1987	360,900	7,864	Alperes Gualupe (Santa Martha)	Chenalhó	Brockmann (1991, 26)
1987	360,900	7,864	Alperes San Sebastian (Santa Martha)	Chenalhó	Brockmann (1991, 26)
1987	500,000	10,896	Alperes Santa Martha	Chenalhó	Brockmann (1991, 26)
1987	360,900	7,864	Kapitan Santa Martha	Chenalhó	Brockmann (1991, 25)
1987	50,000	1,090	Martoma (Santa Martha)	Chenalhó	Brockmann (1991, 16)
1987	360,900	7,864	Paxion (Santa Martha)	Chenalhó	Brockmann (1991, 26)
1976	2,000	5,682	Capitán (Bachajón)	Chilón	Breton (1984, 116)
1976	2,408	6,840.53	Capitán (Guaquitepec)	Chilón	Maurer (1984, 68, 185–86, 323)
1959	500	4,413	Carnaval of San Miguel	Huixtán	Bahr (1962, 133)
1958	4,000	35,308	High level Alferez	Larráinzar	Holland (1962, 119)
1958	1,000	8,827	Low level Alferez	Larráinzar	Holland (1962, 119)
1994	10,000	60,089	Alferez	Larráinzar	Gorza (2006, 203)
1960	746	6,241	Dia de Santo (Pinola)	Las Rosas	Hermitte (n.d., 5)
1961	1,500	12,550	Unspecified patron saint fiesta (Pinola)	Las Rosas	Hermitte (2004, 173)
1944	0	0	Alcalde	Mitontic	Camara Barbachano (1945a, 65)
1944	128	3,421	Alferez[144]	Mitontic	Cámara Barbachano (1945a, 63)
1944	0	0	Fiscal	Mitontic	Camara Barbachano (1945a, 25, 65)
1944	0	0	Gobernador	Mitontic	Camara Barbachano (1945a, 65)
1944	0	0	Mayor	Mitontic	Camara Barbachano (1945a, 64)

[144] According to Cámara Barbachano, there were 4 *alferez* who shared share the expenses of a bull ($200) and pay 14 pesos in fireworks and liquor each (total: $64/year for each alférez). Alfereces served two-year terms.

Year	Nominal cost	Real cost	Cargo (original spelling preserved)	Municipality	Source
1944	25	668	Mayordomo	Mitontic	Cámara Barbachano (1945a, 63)
1944	0	0	Mol koj	Mitontic	Camara Barbachano (1945a, 25)
1944	0	0	Presidente	Mitontic	Camara Barbachano (1945a, 65)
1944	0	0	Regidor	Mitontic	Camara Barbachano (1945a, 64)
1970	2,000	13,758	Alferez[145]	Mitontic	Nigh (1976, 119)
1955	200	2,036	Carnaval[146] (Sibaca)	Ocosingo	Arana (1964, 366)
1956	471	4,550	Capitan de San Juan (Sibaca)	Ocosingo	Zabala Cubillos (1992, 180, 535)
1956	471	4,550	Capitan de San Marcos[147] (Sibaca)	Ocosingo	Zabala Cubillos (1992, 180, 535)
1956	353	3,413	Fiesta de la iglesia[148] (Sibaca)	Ocosingo	Zabala Cubillos (1992, 535)
1941	200	8,950	Capitan de la procesion[149]	Oxchuc	Villa Rojas (1946, 361)
1942	125	5,118	Capitan de San Sebastian	Oxchuc	Villa Rojas (1946, 19)
1942	200	8,188	Capitan Mucul Ajau	Oxchuc	Villa Rojas (1946, 21)
1942	400	16,377	Kapitan Chultatic	Oxchuc	Villa Rojas (1946, 21)
1943	400	8,950	Capitan de carnaval	Oxchuc	Villa Rojas (1946, 381)

[145] Mitontic alfereces serve 2 year terms and spend $2,000 per term (Nigh 1976, 118-119). Nigh did fieldwork in 1970 under the supervision of George Collier (see p. iv).

[146] Fieldwork done in 1959-1960. Informant describes his past cargo career: 1) Alférez de la Iglesia, 2) Capitán de la Iglesia, 3) Capitán de la Iglesia, 4) Carnaval, 5) Mayordomo de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo, and Mayordomo de Nuestro Padre San Marcos (present). I assumed that he waited at least two years between serving each cargo.

[147] Zabala Cubillos reports costs of these cargos made 5 years before his fieldwork (1961). He reports $400 total but says that that amount does not include corn and beans expenses, which Cancian (1965, 82) estimated to be 15% of total expenses in Zinacantán (thus, $60 in Sibaca). In 1961, when Zaballa Cubillos did fieldwork, costs had fallen since people in Sibaca decided to start collecting taxes for financing the fiestas. See Zabala Cubillos (1992, pages 180 and 535) for discussion.

[148] Added 15% for corn and beans expenses, which he did not account for.

[149] From a 1942 diary entry quoting an informant who had served in the previous year.

Year	Nominal cost	Real cost	Cargo (original spelling preserved)	Municipality	Source
1943	300	9,953	Capitan Tatik Mucul Ajau	Oxchuc	Villa Rojas (1946, 398)
1954	1,113	12,974	Capitan Chultatik	Oxchuc	Siverts (1973, 165)
1954	863	10,059	Capitan Halametik	Oxchuc	Siverts (1973, 165)
1954	3,738	43,588	Capitan Halawinik	Oxchuc	Siverts (1973, 165)
1954	1,456	16,983	Capitan Metik rosa	Oxchuc	Siverts (1973, 165)
1954	1,181	13,776	Capitan Mukul ahaw	Oxchuc	Siverts (1973, 165)
1954	1,388	16,181	Capitan persenteson	Oxchuc	Siverts (1973, 165)
1954	1,581	18,441	Capitan Sakromento	Oxchuc	Siverts (1973, 165)
1954	1,469	17,129	Capitan Sanmikel	Oxchuc	Siverts (1973, 165)
1954	1,263	14,724	Capitan Sanpero	Oxchuc	Siverts (1973, 165)
1954	1,375	16,036	Capitan Sansawestyan	Oxchuc	Siverts (1973, 165)
1993	5,500	35,379	Anuncio Jesus de la Buena Esperanza	Pantelhó	Köhler (2007, 99)
1994	17,000	102,151	Anuncio Jesus de la Buena Esperanza	Pantelhó	Köhler (2007:99)
1994	6,500	39,058	Lokem paxyon	Pantelhó	Köhler (2007:81)
1994	22,000	132,195	Santa Catarina	Pantelhó	Köhler (2007:99)
1980	1,000	986	Mayordomo	Simojovel	Pérez Castro (1981, 184)
1944	375	10,022	Mayordomo de Natividad[150]	Tenejapa	Cámara Barbachano (1945b, 305, 334)

[150] Informants give different estimates ($500 and $200-300). I averaged those estimates. At that time, this mayordomo Natividad was the only cargo that was not financed collectively in Tenejapa.

Year	Nominal cost	Real cost	Cargo (original spelling preserved)	Municipality	Source
1979	29,000	37,137	Bankilal winik[151]	Tenejapa	Rostas (1986, 271)
1979	60,000	76,836	Presidente	Tenejapa	Rostas (1986, 271)
1979	4,500	5,763	Santa Lucia Martoma	Tenejapa	Rostas (1986, 271)
1980	10,000	9,862	Halame'tik	Tenejapa	Rostas (1986, 270)
1980	7,000	6,904	San Ciago Martoma	Tenejapa	Rostas (1986, 270)
1980	20,000	19,725	Wixil ants	Tenejapa	Rostas (1986, 271)
1986	60,000	3,389	Alcalde tradicional	Tenejapa	Pérez López and Gómez Ramírez (1986, 68)
1956	5,000	48,349	Alferez[152]	Venustiano Carranza	Díaz de Salas (1991, 85, 161)
1957	7,500	68,399	Alferez[153]	Venustiano Carranza	Salovesh (1971, 92)
1936	300	18,040	Mayordomo del Sacramento	Zinacantán	Tax (1947, 53)
1939	300	10,161	Mayordomo[154]	Zinacantán	Tax (1947, 60)
1942	0	0	Mayor	Zinacantán	Tax (1947, 60)
1942	700	28,660	Mayor de Salinas	Zinacantán	Tax (1947, 91)
1942	200	8,188	Mayordomo de la Virgen de Rosario (Salinas)	Zinacantán	Tax (1947, 91)

[151] Some cargos reported by Rostas were recorded specifically for the year 1980-81 (Rostas interviewed informants who were serving the cargos at the time she did fieldwork). Others were recorded for an earlier, unspecified date (thus, I entered 1979).

[152] On page 161: man declares spending $5,000 as alferez. On page 85, Díaz de Salas says that alferez "costs more than 1,000 pesos" but that no one had taken alferez during that year. Salovesh says alferez in Venustiano Carranza disappeared in 1957.

[153] Salovesh gives the expenses of Alferez in dollars ($600). I converted it to pesos using the 12.5 MXN-USD rate for 1958 (when he did fieldwork).

[154] Tax (et al.) quote a Presidente municipal (who served from 1942 to 1943) that had previously spent $300 as Mayordomo. Tax et al. also write that people usually waited from 2 to 3 years between cargos, sometimes more. At that time, a Presidente's term was 2 years, so I estimate that the informant served Mayordomo in 1939.

Year	Nominal cost	Real cost	Cargo (original spelling preserved)	Municipality	Source
1942	450	18,424	Mayordomo Rey	Zinacantán	Tax (1947, 82)
1942	225	9,212	Pasionero	Zinacantán	Tax (1947, 95)
1942	0	0	Pixkal	Zinacantán	Tax (1947, 94)
1942	0	0	Sacristan	Zinacantán	Tax (1947, 94)
1952	3,400	41,939	Alferez San Lorenzo (B1)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1952	547	6,742	Alferez Virgen de Soledad[155] (B7)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 81)
1952	1,000	12,335	Capitan de San Lorenzo[156] (A10S)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1952	2,266	27,952	Mayordomo San Sebastian senior[157] (A8S)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 81)
1955	4,800	48,871	Alferez Santisima Trinidad (B2)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1956	6,000	58,019	Alferez San Lorenzo (B1)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1957	1,061	9,672	Regidor Primero (C1)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 81)
1958	2,650	23,391	Alferez San Pedro Martir (B12)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1958	5,500	48,548	Virgen del Rosario (A2S)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1959	3,953	34,889	San Sebastian Junior (A8J)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1959	4,800	42,369	Unnamed expensive office	Zinacantán	Zabala Cubillos (1961, 157)
1959	1,500	13,240	Unnamed inexpensive office[158]	Zinacantán	Zabala Cubillos (1961, 157)

[155] Same issue as the previous footnote. Cancian gives a total of $829.40 pesos using 1960 prices. I adjusted values for the effect of inflation.

[156] "Less than 1,000 pesos spent in all."

[157] Cancian calculated a total of $3,341 for 1952. However, he incorrectly used 1960 prices of goods to arrive at that number (without adjusting costs for the effect of inflation). Hence I adjusted nominal expenses to 1952 values using the CPI.

[158] Zabala Cubillos worked in Zinacantán in the summer of 1959 according to Vogt (1994, 135).

Year	Nominal cost	Real cost	Cargo (original spelling preserved)	Municipality	Source
1960	9,000	75,298	Alferez de Santo Domingo (ASD)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1960	14,295	119,597	Mayordomo Rey senior (A1S)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 81)
1960	3,000	25,099	Mayordomo San Antonio (A9)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1974, 165)
1961	0	0	Presidente	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 18-19)
1961	0	0	Principal	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 18-19)
1961	0	0	Sindico	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 18-19)
1960	7,000	58,565	San Sebastian Senior (A8S)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1961	0	0	School committees	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 18-19)
1961	8,000	66,932	A4	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)
1961	6,000	50,199	A5	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)
1961	7,000	58,565	A6	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)
1961	2,500	20,916	A7	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)
1961	4,000	33,466	Alcalde Viejo segundo (D1)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1961	1,500	12,550	B10	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)
1961	1,500	12,550	B11	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)
1961	4,500	37,649	B3	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)
1961	2,000	16,733	B4	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)
1961	2,000	16,733	B5	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)
1961	2,000	16,733	B6	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)
1961	1,500	12,550	B8	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)
1961	1,500	12,550	B9	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)

Year	Nominal cost	Real cost	Cargo (original spelling preserved)	Municipality	Source
1961	50	418	Mayor	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 80)
1961	3,000	25,099	Mayordomo del Sacramento (A3)	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)
1961	14,000	117,130	Mayordomo Rey Junior (A1J)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1961	2,335	19,536	Mesonero senior (A7S)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 81)
1961	8,000	66,932	Pasionero[159] (A4)	Zinacantán	Lang and Hinz (2002, 242)
1961	3,000	25,099	Regidores (All C and D except D1)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1962	9,000	74,328	Alferez de Santo Domingo (ASD)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1962	6,000	49,552	Mayordomo Rey Senior (A1S)	Zinacantán	Cancian (1965, 83)
1968	4,000	29,156	Alcalde Viejo Primero	Zinacantán	Haviland (1977, 236)
1968	9,000	65,600	Alferez San Lorenzo[160]	Zinacantán	Vogt (1988, 161)
1968	3,000	21,867	Kapitan (Xak Toh)	Zinacantán	Baird (1973, 9)
1969	12,000	84,584	Alperes Santo Domingo	Zinacantán	Haviland (1977, 236)
1972	1,500	8,999	Martoma Santa Krus (Xak Toh)	Zinacantán	Baird (1973, 9)
1990	3,000,000	27,717	Mayordomo Sakramento	Zinacantán	Rhett (1991, 87)

[159] Lang and Hinz estimated costs for all of Zinacantán's cargos based on Cancian's cost scale (F. Cancian 1965, 84). I only included cargos whose nominal cost was not mentioned by Cancian and that were estimated based off 1961 expenses.

[160] Vogt describes events that took place in 1968. However, he might have used Cancian (1965) as a source since Cancian also reports a cost of $9,000 for that same office in 1962.

Inflation Adjustment. To adjust cargo costs for the effect of inflation, I used data from the Consumer Price Index (CPI) published in the website[161] of the Instituto Nacional de Geografía y Estadística (INEGI). The INEGI has tracked the national CPI since 1969. For years prior to 1969, I used a historical price index for Mexico City from 1930 to 1978 (available in Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (México) 2015 section 18.5). The difference between the indices for Mexico and for Mexico City was small. I averaged indices when they overlapped (from 1969 to 1978). I used 2015 as a basis for calculating inflation in previous years. Table A3 shows the year-by-year values equivalent to 100 pesos in 2015. The formula used to adjust for inflation was: $Standard\ cost = historical\ cost \times (2015\ CPI/Historical\ CPI)$. Costs from the years preceding 1993 were divided by 1000 since on January 1st, 1993 the Mexican government introduced the Nuevo Peso (which removed three zeroes from the peso after its devaluation in the late 1980s).

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[161] https://www.inegi.org.mx/programas/inpc/2018/

Table A3: Consumer Price Index values used in the study

Year	CPI	Year	CPI	Year	CPI
1930	0.0017	1960	0.0120	1990	10.8238
1931	0.0015	1961	0.0120	1991	12.8580
1932	0.0014	1962	0.0121	1992	14.3931
1933	0.0015	1963	0.0124	1993	15.5458
1934	0.0016	1964	0.0130	1994	16.6420
1935	0.0016	1965	0.0131	1995	25.2903
1936	0.0017	1966	0.0134	1996	32.2969
1937	0.0020	1967	0.0135	1997	37.3735
1938	0.0021	1968	0.0137	1998	44.3283
1939	0.0021	1969	0.0142	1999	49.7890
1940	0.0021	1970	0.0145	2000	54.2497
1941	0.0022	1971	0.0155	2001	56.6386
1942	0.0024	1972	0.0167	2002	59.8673
1943	0.0030	1973	0.0210	2003	62.2479
1944	0.0037	1974	0.0242	2004	65.4791
1945	0.0041	1975	0.0268	2005	67.6614
1946	0.0047	1976	0.0352	2006	70.4039
1947	0.0049	1977	0.0391	2007	73.0504
1948	0.0052	1978	0.0458	2008	77.8192
1949	0.0055	1979	0.0550	2009	80.6001
1950	0.0063	1980	0.0714	2010	84.1478
1951	0.0078	1981	0.0919	2011	87.3612
1952	0.0081	1982	0.1827	2012	90.4785
1953	0.0080	1983	0.3302	2013	94.0742
1954	0.0086	1984	0.5256	2014	97.9136
1955	0.0098	1985	0.8606	2015	100.0000
1956	0.0103	1986	1.7707		
1957	0.0110	1987	4.5890		
1958	0.0113	1988	6.9596		
1959	0.0113	1989	8.3305		

2. Reliability of Sources

Most sources quote cost estimations made by informants—some of whom were ritual experts. In other sources, the ethnographer herself attempted to calculate costs by estimating the amount of goods consumed during fiestas. I view the earlier sources (native informants or ritual experts) as more reliable than the latter. Cancian (1965, 82) has the most reliable estimations of cargo costs in our sample since he did both things (he obtained cost estimations from informants <u>and</u> validated those estimations by outlining item-by-item budgets of consumed goods).

Below I list some characteristics of what I consider a 'reliable source:'

1) Specifies who made the estimation (an informant? a ritual expert? the anthropologist?).
2) Relies on estimations by ritual experts or cargoholders.
3) Attempts to break down the costs of a cargo (i.e., draws up a budget).
4) Can be cross-validated by different sources (see the example from Chamula below).
5) Specifies the year to which a cargo's expenditures refers.

Example of a reliable source: Chamula. In 1944, anthropologist Ricardo Pozas attempted to estimate how much a *Paxyon* (Chamula's carnival sponsor) spent in a fiesta. He summed up the cost of different goods (baskets, alcohol, food) purchased by a cargoholder and arrived at an estimated $832.50. Pozas then asked a ritual adviser (*yajotikil*) to make his own estimate of how much a Paxyon spent in total. The *yajotikil* estimated a total of $2,000 [$53,452], which, at that time, was far higher than cargos done in any other documented town (including Zinacantán). There are several reasons to believe that the ritual adviser's estimate is more reliable than Pozas'. The expert took into account costs that Pozas was unaware of (e.g., the price of a bull that the former cargoholder is expected to purchase a year after leaving office). The *yajotikil's* estimate can be cross-verified with an independent observation by Guiteras Holmes. Guiteras Holmes describes in her 1946 field diaries talking to a man from Chamula who was preparing to spend $2,500 [$53,452] to serve as *Paxon* (Guiteras Holmes 2002, 325). Notice how the cost of *Paxon* adjusted for inflation is precisely the same in 1944 and 1946, while the nominal increased by $500 (a 25% increase in just two years). Guiteras Holmes and Pozas' interviewed different informants; hence there is no reason to believe that they relied on the same source of information.

As indicated in the main text, I also found the cost of Paxon for 1952, 1976, 1979, 1994. Figure 1S plots the cost of this one cargo over time. Notice how it follows a curve like the pattern described in the main text. The case of Chamula exemplifies how estimates by anthropologists tend to underestimate cargo expenditures as they do not have complete knowledge of all the expenses required to sponsor a fiesta.
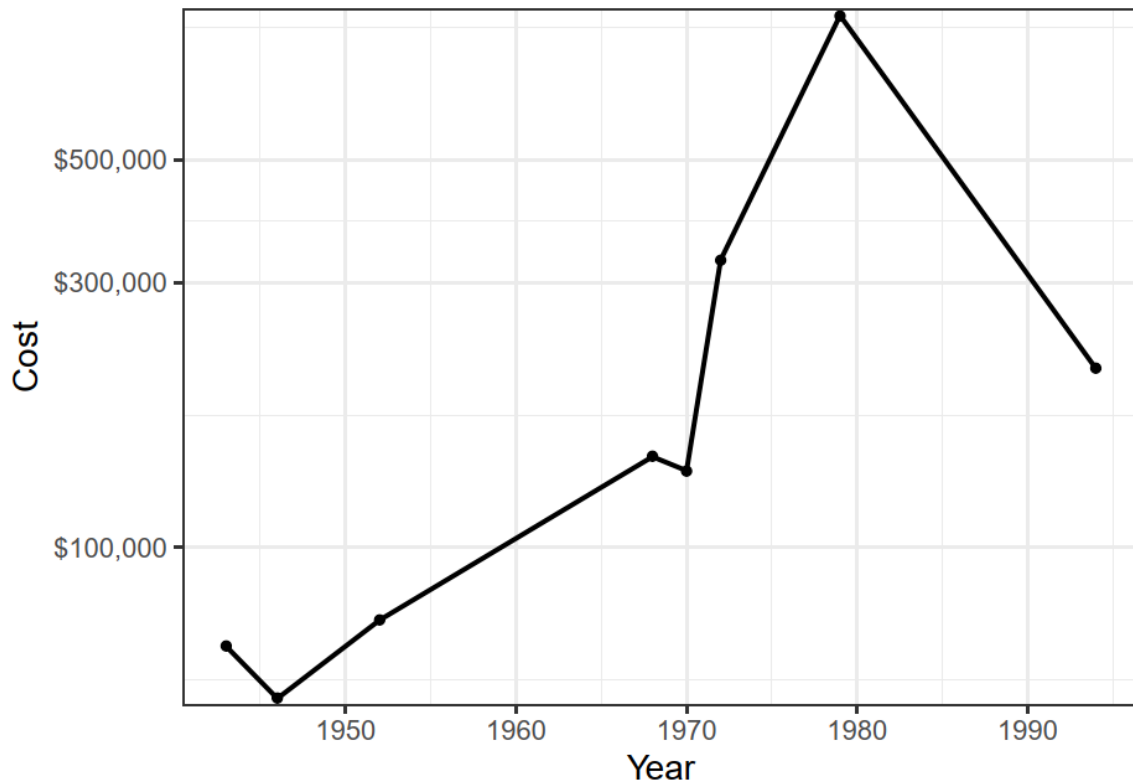
Figure A1: Real cost of Paxyon in Chamula, 1944-1993

Example of an unreliable source: Oxchuc. The data on Oxchuc cargos is the least reliable in our dataset. A simple budget for Oxchuc's cargos appears in Siverts (1973, 165). Siverts included expenditures in pesos along with the number of jugs of liquor and corn *bahk'* (units of 400 corncobs) necessary for each fiesta, adding, "it is established beyond doubt… that most of the food and the costume constitute additional expenses" (id). Based on the data collected by Cancian (1965), I estimated (conservatively) that the expenses unaccounted for by Siverts correspond to 20% of the total cost of each cargo. Siverts presents no information about his interviewees, how he collected that information, and to which year those expenses refer. To estimate total cargo costs, I used as a reference the prices of alcohol and corn from Tzeltal towns as reported by other anthropologists at that time.[162]

Siverts reports information on cargo costs in a report of interviews done in 1964. However, there are reasons to believe that information on cargo costs was gathered during his first field season in 1954. According to a missionary of the Summer Institute of Linguistics who lived in Oxchuc at that time, most

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[162] For the cost of a *garrafón* (demijohn) of *pox*, see Metzger (1964, 44). To estimate the cost of corn I average prices from Cancian (1965) and Villa Rojas (1946) and adjusted them for inflation using the CPI.

people in Oxchuc abandoned the cargo system in the mid-1950s (Slocum 1956). Oxchuc was the first municipality to witness mass conversion to Protestantism and (practicing) Catholicism. The town was also a testbed for INI development programs (Corbeil 2013), and the first indigenous town in Chiapas to undergo political reform with the establishment of elections through a two-party system (Siverts 1960). In the mid-1950s, the community elected a group of Protestants to the *ayuntamento constitucional*, which put an end to the traditional government council (*k'aytnab*). There are other indications that Oxchuc underwent great changes to its cargo system in the mid-1950s. Before the election of Protestants for the Ayuntamiento, Siverts documented a wave of assassinations of traditional officers motivated by witchcraft accusations (Siverts 1981, 118). In 1956, the decline of alcohol consumption due to the end of fiestas was causing ladino liquor sellers in Oxchuc to go bankrupt (Siverts 1969a, 184).

In 1964, June Nash interviewed an informant from Oxchuc about drinking patterns and ceremonial courtship in the town. The informant told her that courtship and alcohol consumption had ceased in Oxchuc: "we left that all behind; we are free; we are no longer afraid" (J. Nash 1973, 99). In response to Nash, Siverts remarked (in a footnote in her article) that even with those changes, "the drinking pattern [in Oxchuc], as an intrinsic part of ceremonial life, was kept intact—at least in the form of a generally shared cognitive system" (J. Nash 1973, 99). Siverts suggests that people could remember cargos and drinking ceremonies, even though they had ceased to practice these traditions. Thus, Siverts likely collected information among elderly informants who recalled expenses from at least ten years before the interviews. Another reason to believe that Siverts interviewed elders is the use of units of 400 corn cobs, *bahk'* (or *zontle*), which by the 1960s had fallen into disuse in Chiapas. Every ethnography of Tzeltal and Tzotzil groups of the 1960s report that indigenous farmers had shifted to Spanish numerals (for counting numbers higher than 100) and measures (*almudes*, *fanegas*)—a shift that was likely caused by an increasing dependence on paper money (Crump 1978).

3. Compound Annual Growth Rates

For seven municipalities, I was able to find two or more sources with estimations of expenses of the same cargo at different times. Using that data, I calculated the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of cargos with repeated observations. To calculate CAGR, I used the equation below (commonly used in accounting):

$$CAGR = \left(\frac{Cost\ 1}{Cost\ 2}\right)^{\frac{1}{\#years}} - 1$$

'Cost 1' refers to the cost of the first observation, 'Cost 2' to the cost of the last observation; #years is the number of years that passed between the first and the last observations.

Table A4: CAGR estimates and current population size of seven municipalities

Town (period)	CAGR	Population				
-	-	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980
Chalchihuitán (1946-1970)	3.53%	1,996	2,769	2,940	2,996	5,564
Chamula (1944-1972)	5.69%	16,010	22,029	26,789	29,357	31,364
Chenalhó (1944-1973)	8.92%	5,289	7,481	10,553	13,522	18,400
Mitontic (1944-1970)	5.50%	3,572	3,880	4,677	3,339	4,913
Oxchuc (1941-1954)	1.25%	2,987	5,412	12,579	17,993	24,879
Tenejapa (1944-1970)	5.58%	5,378	7,750	9,768	12,930	20,642
Zinacantán (1936-1961)	8.24%	4,509	6,312	7,650	11,428	13,006
Average/total	5.83%	39,741	55,633	74,956	91,565	118,768
Pop. change %	-	-	40%	35%	22%	30%

Except for Oxchuc, cargo costs increased significantly across all towns at an average of 5.83% annually. Table A5 shows CAGR for the 24 cargos with repeated observations, along with the corresponding population growth rates for their respective towns during the first and last observations. As stated in the main text, I found no indication of a relationship between CAGR and population growth rates for the same period (r = -.07). Since this is a small dataset (n = 24), we cannot rely on statistical test results. Still, a near-zero correlation is a good indicator for the lack of a significant relationship between two variables.

It is difficult to assess the reliability of the census data for those years. Some towns, such as Mitontic and Chalchihuitán, show low to negative population growth rates between 1950 and 1970, which is odd given the general growth trend across Chiapas. In other towns, the population doubles (Chenalhó) or triples (Oxchuc) during the same period. These differential growth rates could be due to several factors: 1) the census counts might be inaccurate (in which case nothing can be done to correct the data), 2) land scarcity leading to migration from small towns to larger ones, or 3) changes in the territorial limits

of towns made by the government, which could have caused entire communities to shift affiliation from one town to another.

In 1940, the Mexican census registered 4,069 for Zinacantán, 16,010 for Chamula, and 1,996 for Chalchihuitán. In 1970, these municipalities' population had increased to 11,428, 29,357, and 2,996—an increase of 181% for Zinacantán, 83% for Chamula, and 50% for Chalchihuitán (INEGI 1944, 1971).

Finally, the data show a positive correlation between population <u>size</u> (rather than growth rates) and cargo expenditures ($r = .29$). This is not surprising, as fiestas in larger towns have a larger number of guests and thus are expected to produce higher expenditures. Consider the case of Chamula, for instance. In the 1940s, Chamula's cargos already cost 2 to 4 times more than smaller municipalities (see **Table A2**). That difference between Chamula and other towns was kept stable over time. Thus, it seems correct to say that population size covaries with costs, but not with growth rates. While larger municipalities tend to have more expensive cargos, we find no correlation between population and cargo cost growth rates between 1940 and 1970.

Table A5: Compound annual growth of cargo costs and populations for 7 Tzotzil and Tzeltal towns

Town	Cargo	Obs	Year	Cost	Cost (2015)	Change	CAGR	Pop.[163]	Pop. (Yr Growth)
Chalchihuitán	Alferez	1	1946	100	2,138			2,460	
	Alferez	2	1970	1,350	9,287	334%	6.31%	2,996	0.82%
	Alcalde	1	1946	300	6,414			2,460	
	Alcalde	2	1970	1,600	11,007	72%	2.28%	2,996	0.82%
	Regidor	1	1946	400	8,552			2,460	
	Regidor	2	1970	2,000	13,758	61%	2.00%	2,996	0.82%
Chamula	Paxyon	1	1943	2,000	66,355			18,418	
	Paxyon	2	1946	2,500	53,452	-19%		19,621	
	Paxyon	3	1952	74,011	74,011				
	Paxyon	4	1968	20,000	145,779	173%			
	Paxyon	5	1972	55,000	329,963	126%	5.69%	29,758	1.73%
Chenalhó	Alperes de San Sebastian	1	1944	200	5,345			6,166	
	Alperes de San Sebastian	2	1973	10,000	47,708	793%	7.84%	14,985	3.11%
	Paxon	1	1944	300	8,018			6,166	
	Paxon	2	1953	3,000	37,731	371%		8,403	
	Paxon	3	1973	53,000	252,850	570%	12.64%	14,985	3.11%

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[163] Figures estimated from the Mexican censuses of 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, and 1980, assuming linear changes between each census.

Town	Cargo	Obs	Year	Cost	Cost (2015)	Change	CAGR	Pop.[163]	Pop. (Yr Growth)
	Regidor (own estimation[164])	1	1944	200	5,345			6,166	
	Regidor (Köhler 1990)	2	1974	2,000	8,530			15,473	
	Regidor[165] (informant recall)	2	1974	10,000	41,305			15,473	
	Regidor (informant recall)	2	1975	15,000	56,011	780%	7.27%	15,961	4.49%
Mitontic	Alferez	1	1944	150	4,009			3,695	
	Alferez	2	1970	4,000	27,516	586%	7.69%	3,339	-0.39%
Oxchuc	Capitan Mukul Ajwal	1	1942	200	8,188			3,230	
	Capitan Mukul Ajwal	2	1954	1,181	13,776	68%	4.43%	8,279	7.51%
	Kapitan Chultatik	1	1942	400	17,900			3,230	
	Kapitan Chultatik	2	1954	1,113	16,377	-21%	-1.92%	8,279	7.51%
Tenejapa	Alferez San Idelfonso	1	1944	4,200	112,250			6,327	
	Alferez San Idelfonso	2	1955	25,200	256,571	129%		8,759	
	Alferez San Idelfonso	3	1970	69,900	480,847	87%	5.75%	12,930	2.79%
	Alferez San Idelfonso	4	1974	112,500	464,684	-3%		16,015	
	Carnival	1	1944	6,300	168,375			6,327	
	Carnival	2	1955	54,000	549,795	227%		8,759	
	Carnival	3	1970	188,000	1,293,264	135%	8.16%	12,930	2.79%
	Carnival	4	1974	200,000	826,104	-36%		16,015	

[164] Regidor is necessarily less expensive than Paxon ($300) and most alperez cargos, so it is unlikely that a Regidor spent over $200 at that time. As Guiteras Holmes remarks, wealthy individuals had at best $100 in savings.

[165] To calculate CAG for Chenalhó's Regidor I average Köhler's estimation with my informants' recalls (all of which refer to 1974-1975).

Town	Cargo	Obs	Year	Cost	Cost (2015)	Change	CAGR	Pop.[163]	Pop. (Yr Growth)
	Alferez Santa Cruz	1	1944	700	18,708			6,327	
	Alferez Santa Cruz	2	1955	2,900	29,526	58%		8,759	
	Alferez Santa Cruz	3	1970	4,400	30,268	3%	1.87%	12,930	2.79%
	Alferez Santa Cruz	4	1974	6,000	24,783	-18%		16,015	
	Alferez Santissima Trinidad	1	1944	700	18,708			6,327	
	Alferez Santissima Trinidad	2	1955	2,900	29,526	58%		8,759	
	Alferez Santissima Trinidad	3	1970	4,400	30,268	3%	1.87%	12,930	2.79%
	Alferez Santissima Trinidad	4	1974	6,000	24,783	-18%		16,015	
	Alferez Sacramento	1	1944	400	10,690			6,327	
	Alferez Sacramento	2	1955	2,000	20,363	90%		8,759	
	Alferez Sacramento	3	1970	4,000	27,516	35%	3.70%	12,930	2.79%
	Alferez Sacramento	4	1974	6,000	24,783	-10%		16,015	
	Alferez Santiago	1	1944	1,400	37,417	51%		6,327	
	Alferez Santiago	2	1955	8,850	90,105	141%		8,759	
	Alferez Santiago	3	1970	15,400	105,938	18%	4.08%	12,930	2.79%
	Alferez Santiago	4	1974	12,000	49,566	-53%		16,015	
	Alferez Natividad	1	1944	1,000	26,726			6,327	
	Alferez Natividad	2	1955	7,500	76,360	186%		8,759	
	Alferez Natividad	3	1970	17,500	120,384	58%	5.96%	12,930	2.79%
	Alferez Natividad	4	1974	15,000	61,958	-49%		16,015	
	Alferez Santa Lucia	1	1944	500	13,363	-78%		6,327	

Town	Cargo	Obs	Year	Cost	Cost (2015)	Change	CAGR	Pop.[163]	Pop. (Yr Growth)
	Alferez Santa Lucia	2	1955	2,300	23,417	75%		8,759	
	Alferez Santa Lucia	3	1970	4,200	28,892	23%	3.01%	12,930	2.79%
	Alferez Santa Lucia	4	1974	6,000	24,783	-14%		16,015	
	Mayordomos (average)	1	1944	240	6,186			6,327	
	Mayordomos (average)	2	1955	2,400	25,160	307%		8,759	
	Mayordomos (average)	3	1970	9,600	67,449	168%	9.62%	12,930	2.79%
	Mayordomos (average)	4	1974	24,000	103,980	54%		16,015	
	Mayordomo Natividad (Hala'metik)	1	1944	300	7,732			6,327	
	Mayordomo Natividad (Hala'metik)	2	1955	2,400	25,160	225%		8,759	
	Mayordomo Natividad (Hala'metik)	3	1970	20,000	140,518	458%	11.80%	12,930	2.79%
	Mayordomo Natividad (Hala'metik)	4	1974	28,000	121,310	-14%		16,015	
Zinacantán	Mayordomo del Sacramento	1	1936	300	18,040			7,650	
	Mayordomo del Sacramento	2	1961	3,000	25,099	39%	1.33%	8,028	0.19%
	Mayordomo Rey	1	1942	450	18,424			4,870	
	Mayordomo Rey	2	1960	14,295	119,597	549%	10.95%	7,650	2.54%
	Mayordomo San Sebastian	1	1952	2,202	27,952			6,580	
	Mayordomo San Sebastian	2	1960	7,000	58,565	110%	9.69%	7,650	1.90%
	Pasionero	1	1942	225	9,212			4,870	
	Pasionero	2	1961	8,000	66,932	627%	11.00%	8,028	2.67%

4. Tenejapa Cargo Costs

Until the mid-1970s, Tenejapa's cargo system still followed the cost-sharing model of fiesta finance. In that model, fiesta expenses are divided in equal parts and distributed to community (or *cofradía*) members (Medina Hernández 1991; Cámara Barbachano 1945b). This was true for most cargos, with one exception: according to Cámara Barbachano, the first Mayordomo de Natividad (or Hala'metik, the most expensive office in Tenejapa) tended to spend more than less important mayordomos (1945b, 305, 334). Unlike most cargo systems in Chiapas, Tenejapa's cargos were not rotated on a yearly basis; rather, people were encouraged to specialize in a single ritual role and perform it year after year. Cost sharing ended in the 1970s when the community decided to shift to the individual sponsoring model (see Rostas 1986).

Cost sharing was established by the Catholic *cofradías* in the 17th century; eventually, in the late 19th century, most highland communities shifted to the individual sponsorship model that exists today (J. Rus and Wasserstrom 1980; Brandes 1981). For reasons unknown to the author, Tenejapa retained the *cofradía* model until the 1970s. In the 1940s and 1960s, Cámara Barbachano and Medina Hernández described hundreds of people participating in fiestas (all participants received the titles of *alférez* or *mayordomo* and were seen as cargoholders, although there could be ranked distinctions among of them). In the 1970s, the community shifted to individual sponsorship and renamed the cargo of *alférez* to *kaptan*. This shift was likely motivated by a decline in the number of participants in fiestas. As Rostas (1986, 308) remarked, "over the years, the number participating has fallen considerably. According to Medina (1965:325), in Lum, there were up to 200 *kaptanetik* to each side instead of the 15 or 16 that I witnessed."

Truman (1981, 225–26) compiled information on the (per capita) costs and number of participants for Tenejapa's cargos for the years 1944, 1950s, 1970, and 1974. For *alférez*, Truman lacks data on the number of participants in the 1950s and 1970. I estimated the missing data assuming linear change between 1944 and 1974. Since Truman does not specify which year exactly her 1950s observations refer to, I used the 1955 CPI to adjust costs for inflation.
Table A6 shows variation in total costs (per capita cost multiplied by the number of participants) for 1944 to 1974.

Table A7 shows the variation in the number of participants and per capita costs of the fiestas done by the *alférez* (later renamed to *kapitan*; I did not include mayordomo fiestas in the table since the number of mayordomo roles was fixed until the shift to individual sponsorship in the late 1970s). Finally, Table A8 includes 1980 data (from Rostas 1986) for two cargos. Notice how total real costs continue to fall in the 1980s, after the community shifts from a cost-sharing to an individual sponsorship model.

Table A6: Total nominal and real costs of cargos in Tenejapa, 1944-1974

	Nominal costs				Real costs (2015 pesos)			
	1944	1950s	1970	1974	1944	1950s	1970	1974
Alferez San Idelfonso	4,200	25,200	69,900	112,500	112,250	256,571	480,847	464,684
Alferez Carnival	6,300	54,000	188,000	200,000	168,375	549,795	1,293,264	826,104
Alferez Santa Cruz	700	2,900	4,400	6,000	18,708	29,526	30,268	24,783
Alferez Santissima Trinidad	700	2,900	4,400	6,000	18,708	29,526	30,268	24,783
Alferez Sacramento	400	2,000	4,000	6,000	10,690	20,363	27,516	24,783
Alferez Santiago	1,400	8,850	15,400	12,000	37,417	90,105	105,938	49,566
Alferez Natividad	1,000	7,500	17,500	15,000	26,726	76,360	120,384	61,958
Alferez Santa Lucia	500	2,300	4,200	6,000	13,363	23,417	28,892	24,783
Mayordomos (average)	240	2,400	9,600	24,000	6,186	25,160	67,449	103,980
Mayordomo Natividad	300	2,400	20,000	28,000	7,732	25,160	140,518	121,310
Change (average)		602%	205%	23%		168%	107%	-26%

Table A7: Number of participants and individual cost of Alférez cargos in Tenejapa

	Number of participants				Nominal cost (per capita)				Real cost (per capita)			
	1944	1955	1970	1974	1944	1955	1970	1974	1944	1955	1970	1974
San Idelfonso	120	168	233	250	35	150	300	450	935	1,527	2,064	1,859
Carnival	140	180	235	250	45	300	800	800	1,203	3,054	5,503	3,304
Santa Cruz	35	29	22	20	20	100	200	300	535	1,018	1,376	1,239
Santissima Trinidad	35	29	22	20	20	100	200	300	535	1,018	1,376	1,239
Sacramento	20	20	20	20	20	100	200	300	535	1,018	1,376	1,239
Santiago	70	59	44	40	20	150	350	300	535	1,527	2,408	1,239
Natividad	50	50	50	50	20	150	350	300	535	1,527	2,408	1,239
Santa Lucia	25	23	21	20	20	100	200	300	535	1,018	1,376	1,239

Table A8: Total cost of two cargos in Tenejapa, 1944-1980

Halame'tik (Natividad)			Mayordomo Santa Lucia		
Year	**Nominal**	**Real**	**Year**	**Nominal**	**Real**
1944	300	7,732	1944	200	5,155
1955	2,400	25,160	1955	2,400	25,160
1970	20,000	140,518	1970	9,600	67,449
1974	28,000	121,310	1974	24,000	103,980
1980	69,000	76,587	1980	36,000	46,102

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