

A Book Proposal

ON BEING MAYA AND GETTING BY:
ECO-SYSTEM AND HERITAGE POLITICS IN A YUCATAN TOWN

By: Sarah R. Taylor

60,000 words

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Synopsis

Most scholars stand on one side or the other when it comes to the costs and benefits of tourism. ON BEING MAYA AND GETTING BY moves beyond this by delving into a discussion of how a local, indigenous population must negotiate and manage this force regardless of our assertions about its pros and cons. Tourism has arrived: ON BEING MAYA AND GETTING BY is one destination's story of what happened next.

What this book provides that has been missing from the literature is a detailed case study of a community-based development project from its inception and from the multiple perspectives of participants, dissidents, and those who maintain an indifferent attitude to the development of tourism in this community. This is a rare gem in the literature on tourism development.

Instead of being a fixed spectrum upon which tourists, archaeologists, ethnographers, and others place and re-place Mayas depending on their progress toward modernity, ON BEING MAYA AND GETTING BY positions the folk-urban continuum itself as the fluid component. Ethnographers in Mesoamerica are famously concerned with duality, with the folk-urban dichotomy being but one example. In the context of tourism studies, the front stage/back stage contrast is incorporated into the dichotomous nature of our work as well. The fluidity of a continuum recognized to be a sliding scale of sorts elicits a different identity—as in identifier—depending on both the placement and the agent doing the placing. When a Yucatec Maya man is charged with organizing a traditional Maya rain ceremony, in the act of reaching down and replacing his rubber flip-flops with rope sandals he is sliding the continuum beneath his feet and setting it to “folk.” When the funding agency asks him to coordinate a group retreat, he picks up his day planner and his cell phone and turns the continuum up to “urban.”

The village of Ek'Balam is located approximately 300 meters from the ceremonial center of the archaeological zone by the same name. The ruins at Ek'Balam are some of the most impressive pre-Columbian stuccoes found in the Maya World. In 1994, the archaeological zone

opened to the public, and since then this village of around 350 residents has experienced numerous changes. While residents have always had ties to the regional economy, the opening of the archaeological zone represented their first extended engagement with the tourism industry. A major agent of change in Ek'Balam is a community-based tourism project, funded primarily by an agency of the Mexican government. In 2001, they began searching Mexico for good locations to implement community-based development projects. Ek'Balam became their pilot project, and since then *proyectos* (projects) have come and gone as quickly and as often as tourists.

This is a study of how a group of people negotiates and maneuvers through a web of social programs, tourists, and the like to live their daily lives. In this milieu, potentials for development are everywhere. On the backdrop of the constant rotation of state and federal programs implemented to aid Mexico's poor, indigenous, rural citizen...its peasants...tourism arrives as the new "*proyecto*" (project). With this arrival comes a shift in the way that mundane aspects of life are viewed and carried out. It is at this interface that transnational ideologies of ecological conservation and sustainable economic development complicate the local level conflict between tourism and tradition. Given these conflicts, can community-based tourism be a viable avenue to sustainable development? Using this community-based tourism project in a Maya village in Yucatan as a case study, this monograph focuses on the strategies used by residents to incorporate tourism into everyday life along this continuum.

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Chapter Summaries

This book is divided into four sections: 1) an introduction to the study and the research site and a review of relevant anthropological work in Mesoamerica; 2) a discussion of community-based development and its relationship with tourism; 3) local land tenure systems, politics, and history, and the use of Maya identity in the development and promotion of tourism initiatives; and 4) a discussion of volunteer tourism, heritage, and ecology. Each part of the book begins with a day-in-the-life narrative based on one family's lived experience. The Ay Balam family provides a metaphor for understanding everyday life and the ways in which residents weave tourism, performance, and identity into it. The introduction and four subsequent sections visit the Ay Balam family over the course of time, in Summer 2004, Winter 2007, Summer 2009, Summer 2010, and Winter 2011. This structure provides the reader with a sense of the change through time that this longitudinal study reports on, with 2004 being the year that the CBT project first opened to the public.

Chapter 1, **A Day in the Life** (8500 words), introduces the Ay Balam family as guides for our tour of Ek'Balam. This chapter serves as an introduction to the book and the topics presented. Chapter 2, **Arrival Stories** (6500 words), provides a history of arrivals in Ek'Balam. This includes a village history contextualized into the regional socio-political history of eastern Yucatan. The community of Ek'Balam arrived in their current location in 1970, yet the village site has a long history of occupation. This chapter discusses this history, from its location just outside the urban center of the city of Ek'Balam in the Terminal Classic period (700-1000 CE), to its time as the *encomienda* of Tiquibalon in the early colonial period (circa 1700 CE), and finally to its modern day designation as a Pueblo Maya, in hopes of attracting tourists to the village.

Chapter 3, **Anthropology in and of the Maya World** (6000 words), discusses the trajectory of the anthropological fascination with Mesoamerica in general and the Maya World specifically. The long history of occupation of the Maya World by archaeologists and ethnographers created a legacy within which today's Mayanists must work. This necessitates an understanding of the historical and political forces that shaped the study of Mayas, both past and present. Early studies of the Maya were mainly concerned with the ruins of the pre-Columbian society, and were initially undertaken by explorers sent under the auspices of colonial government posts. As archaeology developed as a science, the ancient past of Mesoamerica

became an important focus of numerous scholars.

Most of the ethnographic literature from the Maya World consists of community studies, making this a particularly important body of literature for this study. This topic is presented in the second section. Chapter 4, **Imagining Community** (6500 words), deals with the history of community studies in the Maya World and discusses some of the major themes found in this literature. Chapter 5, **Objects and Subjects of Development** (5500 words), builds on the discussion of community as an object of study by explaining its current positioning as an object of development and the economic processes surrounding the development of the Yucatan Peninsula as an international tourism destination.

The third section is a presentation and analysis of the bulk of data generated by this research. Overall, the section provides an argument for how the four arenas of history, economy, ecology, and identity coalesce through a series of interactions within Ek'Balam and between these hosts and their many guests to create and maintain an ecosystem of authenticity. Even more than the ongoing interest in community within Mesoamerican studies, the concept of identity receives an extraordinary amount of attention. In this ecosystem of authenticity heritage is both tangible and intangible, and that to understand its design, creation, and maintenance we must define the people and the place. In Chapter 6, **Land Reform, History, and Change** (7000 words), I present the place and its role in the process. This chapter includes a discussion of local land-use decisions and household income strategies in the context of regional history and changes to the Mexican system of land tenure, in order to provide a complete picture of the economic shifts that have shaped the present. Chapter 7, **Life Along the Continuum** (7500 words), further contextualizes the discussion of engagement with identity politics and the anthropological study of indigeneity in the Maya World, with Ek'Balam as the case study and stage for the theatrics of Maya Identity.

The concluding section consists of a discussion of volunteer tourism as a phenomenon and examines the way that interactions surrounding this phenomenon are shaped by the factors outlined in Part III. Chapter 8, **Politics and Ethno-ecology** (5000 words), presents a discussion of the way that ecology and the natural world are part of the tangible heritage; however the way that the land is used plays a role in the intangible heritage of a household. Various maps provide views of Ek'Balam throughout the chapters. All of these maps are the product of a mapping project conducted by community members and myself between 2010 and 2012. The maps

culminate in a map of the ecosystem of authenticity as imagined by residents of Ek'Balam. The **Conclusion** (4500 words) returns to the notion of the fluid nature of categories of indigeneity, authenticity, and community. For the federally funded development agency, the use of “community” provides a cultural and racially bounded entity to target for development. The agency avoids unwieldy aspects by shunning the responsibility for designating exactly which residents will be developed; instead, it will be left in the hands of the community. For the individuals and households, claiming membership in the community, and even further calling the community a Pueblo Maya, is an essential strategy. By claiming this identity, individuals are able to use their indigeneity to attract support in the form of funding for their CBT project, labor from voluntourists interested in community development, and income from tourists hoping to partake in a different, authentic, and sustainable form of tourism. By claiming this identity, they can be Maya and get by.

Manuscript Logistics

The manuscript is approximately 75,000 words, including notes, references, and an index. At this time, the manuscript is complete and ready for review. Ideally, I envision this book as a trade paperback. This will make it more accessible to its potential audience. This manuscript includes 28 figures. The list consists of maps, kin charts, and graphs, all of which are black and white. I hold the rights to all figures, including the maps, so gaining permissions will not be an issue.

ON BEING MAYA AND GETTING BY is based in part on my doctoral dissertation; however, it has been extensively revised to appeal to a wider audience. I was fortunate to have a committee that was unanimously supportive of an unconventional format for my dissertation. That is, they were happy to see theory intertwined with my findings and key pieces of relevant literature, and did not insist that I follow the more traditional format to include a chapter on methods, a chapter for the literature review, and so on. In order to revise this manuscript for publication, I removed the unnecessary details about my methodology and the fieldwork process. I also removed the large sections of literature review. What remains is a judicious review of relevant literature on each topic, as it pertains to my findings. My committee similarly encouraged the narrative style and the human story elements of this manuscript. These were strengthened and amplified during the revision process, and result in a highly readable and engaging manuscript.

Marketing and Promotion

Market

ON BEING MAYA AND GETTING BY is an ethnographic monograph that will appeal to a variety of readers. It is written and structured in such a way that it can be assigned in upper-division undergraduate courses and graduate seminars in Anthropology, Tourism and Heritage Management, Latin American Studies, and Development/Globalization. At approximately 225 pages of text, ON BEING MAYA AND GETTING BY is an accessible ethnography for classroom use. The clear divisions within the manuscript's structure lend it to use throughout the term rather than to be taught all at once. This further expands its potential for adoption.

Outside of the classroom, this book will gather a wide readership. Scholars working throughout Mesoamerica will find the research and analysis useful, and individuals working in tourism and development will be similarly interested.

Competing Books

- a. Loewe, Ronald *Maya or Mestizo: Nationalism, Modernity, and Its Discontents* (2010 University of Toronto Press)
Maya or Mestizo is a recent addition to the ethnographic literature on Yucatan. Loewe's contribution to the discussion of the regional political economy is important, however the city of Maxcanu (Loewe's field site) is not directly involved in the region's booming tourism trade, and thus ON BEING MAYA presents an economic discussion of the industry and its role in local economy.
- b. Brulotte, Ronda *Between Art and Artifact: Archaeological Replicas and Cultural Production in Oaxaca, Mexico* (2012 University of Texas Press)
This book represents an up to date discussion of the role of the market, tourism, and images of authenticity in and around Monte Alban, Oaxaca. Brulotte's book is an extension of the large literature on crafts in Oaxaca. While similarly dealing with tourism in an around an archaeological zone, ON BEING MAYA offers an analysis of the creation and maintenance of authenticity through tourism performance.
- c. Breglia, Lisa *Monumental Ambivalence* (2006 University of Texas Press)
As an ethnographer working near an archaeological zone, there are clear correlations between *Monumental Ambivalence* and ON BEING MAYA. Breglia's work reports on the political forces driving changes within Chichen Itza, whereas ON BEING MAYA examines the role of the archaeological site as an attraction in the everyday life of the neighboring village.
- d. Castellanos, Bianet *Return to Servitude* (2010 University of Minnesota Press)
Return to Servitude is an important new addition to ethnology in Yucatan. Castellanos traces the lives of women domestic workers as the move between their home

communities and their workaday life in Cancun and along the Mayan Riviera. This is an interesting extension of Alicia ReCruz's *The Two Milpas of Chan Kom* (1996 State University of New York Press), which focused on male migrants. Migration is certainly an interesting aspect of tourism development in the region; however, ON BEING MAYA focusses on one potential sending community's active attempts to create adequate livelihoods in their own village in order to discourage their young people from leaving for the coast.

- e. Little, Walter E. *Mayas in the Marketplace: Tourism, Globalization, and Cultural Identity* (University of Texas Press 2004)

Mayas in the Marketplace was an important publication for Mayanists and tourism scholars alike. Little's presentation of the economic, political, and performative constraints surrounding the production and sale of textiles in Antigua is thoughtful and thorough. ON BEING MAYA builds on the foundation he laid for understanding tourism as performance, while adding ecology and strategic conservation as a new component to the equation.

Promotion

I am a regular attendee and participant at academic conferences organized by multiple professional organizations each year, including the American Anthropological Association, the Society for Applied Anthropology, and the Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology. Through service work within these organizations, I have created a strong network of other scholars. Additionally, early parts of this research have been presented in papers and posters over the last six years. My visibility as someone who is actively engaged in research on tourism and development in Mesoamerica will help me to promote ON BEING MAYA AND GETTING BY.

Potential Reviewers

Ronda Brulotte
Richard Wilk
Cameron Walker
Alicia ReCruz
Tim Wallace
Ellen Kintz
Betty Faust

Sample Chapters

This prospectus includes various samples from the manuscript. The first is the introductory chapter, “A Day in the Life.” This sets the tone for the remainder of the book by introducing some of the central characters on a typical evening in 2004. This narrative device proceeds through the manuscript, and is a way of marking both the passing of time between 2004 and 2012, and the many changes that residents are experiencing in their everyday lives. The second chapter included here is Chapter 7, “Life Along the Continuum.” Finally, the five “Day in the Life” narratives that are woven throughout the manuscript are excerpted here.

A Day in the Life: Summer 2004

The sound of barking dogs, startled from their sleep and roosters crowing is heard throughout the night. Roosters do not wait until daybreak to crow, and instead are clocks that mark the passing hours. When the sun does rise, new sounds begin to drown out the roosters: a cacophony of gobbling turkeys, sleepy children stirring, men whistling to their dogs to head to the *milpa*, and radio programs. On Saturday mornings, the radios blare especially loudly, as people enjoy the four-hour Mayan language program broadcast from the local station. Smoke seeps out of kitchens and into the air, slowly at first then more quickly as the cooking fires get going. Women are stoking them to heat water for Nescafe or Chocomilk, after which they will heat up some of last night’s tortillas or, on some days, they will pull down the bag of assorted *pan dulce* (sweet bread). On Tuesday and Saturday nights, a vendor from the *panadería* (bakery) comes through Ek’Balam honking his horn and selling baked goods. A weekly purchase of *pan dulce* is stored out of reach of the animals in the hanging rack that, for a brief period of its existence, was the front guard of an oscillating fan. Everything has a use here, regardless of what the manufacturer’s suggestion was. Fan guards double as hanging racks for storage out of the reach of small children and animals, and as grills to place over the fire. Their shape conveniently

mimics size and shape of the *comal*, balanced on the three rocks of the fire and used to cook tortillas. In the small homes that are prone to mild flooding, nothing can be stored on the ground, and there must indeed be a place for everything. The thatch roof provides many opportunities for storage, aided by long iron hooks that hang at various lengths and hold burlap sacks, pots, buckets, and cardboard boxes.

A lazy Saturday spent with the family in the summer of 2004, and the whole house is in high spirits. I took the day off from my usual roaming around the village to talk to people and did not leave the house and yard but a few times. The children are animated and fooling around, playing between their two languages and only letting me in on the Maya when they are satisfied that I have searched my tiny vocabulary and cannot find the word. Doña Gomercinda and Don Lucas keep up an occasional dialogue between themselves while still listening to everything we are saying.¹ Doña Gomercinda, my ever-present translator and source of all knowledge, interjects with explanations in Spanish when she sees that I have been left behind by the rapid fire of short syllables and the raised voices that are reserved for antagonizing a sibling.

Eugenio, the eldest child at seventeen, is home from Temozon for the weekend and is spending a rare evening in the house. He attends high school in Temozon and lives with his aunt, Doña Dona, only returning to the village on weekends. If he stays on this path, he will be the first young person from Ek'Balam to complete his education through high school. If a student wants to continue beyond the 6th grade, they must leave Ek'Balam for Santa Rita, Aktuncoh, or Temozon. For study beyond the 9th grade, Temozon is the closest option.

Dinner this evening consists of a family favorite, *ensalada* with salted pork. Temozon is locally famous for its smoked meats, sausages, and salted pork, and a trip through there is

¹ Residents use the prefixes 'doña' and 'don' to refer to all married women and men, respectively. An honorific in reference to elderly people, it remains in common use in rural areas in Yucatan.

generally not complete without purchasing at least a half-kilo of *salado*. Part of the animation of the children is due to Eugenio's presence and a great dinner, while the other part is because the long school year is finally over. This means that the hot and sticky days are filled with slingshots, corn sack shrouded forts, *chacara* (hopscotch) and a mountain of dirty clothes for Doña Gomercinda to wash every few days. The end of school means that Angel has more time to devote to his work at Eden Oasis. Joan keeps him and a handful of other young boys busy with gardening tasks and other odd jobs. While Joan is a controversial figure among some groups in the village, the Ay Balam family has a close relationship with her. Doña Goma works there as well, washing towels and linens three times a week. For his twelfth birthday, Angel saved up his earnings and Joan matched what he had to buy a new bicycle. Angel plans to go on to secondary and high school. Rosa, the oldest daughter, took the opposite route and left school after finishing sixth grade. She is thirteen and content to have time to help her mother around the house, perfect her weaving techniques, and work from time to time in the kitchen of the community's tourism project. The two younger boys, Federico and Nacho, are the hams of the family and keep everyone entertained, be it intentional or otherwise. They go everywhere together but are very different from one another. Each one has attributes that are almost the opposite of the other. Federico is already suave at just eleven, and an eager entertainer while Nacho is practical and gruff; a typical nine-year-old boy. Seeing them walk together, arms thrown casually over the other's shoulder and so complementary of each other that they sometimes seem like one boy, it is impossible for me to think of anything other than the Hero Twins of Maya mythology. The youngest child is Maria de la Cruz and she is the littlest child with the biggest personality. I think often about how much I will enjoy seeing her as a young woman. At six years old, she is sassy and sweet—though never at the same time—and quite seriously tells you that it is cold if you

comment on how hot the afternoon is.

The kitchen house can hardly contain all of the energy of the family, and the boys float in and out, as they eat, joke, and then go into the main house to watch whatever is on the new color television that they have just finished paying off. Like them, the smoke from the cooking fire drifts lazily out through the separated poles of the curved walls and up through the thatch roof and into the night air. The only constants during the meal are the patting sound of Rosa and Doña Gomercinda making perfectly round tortillas at a small table next to the fire, just as fast as the boys can eat them, and Don Lucas seated at the larger table eating and conversing in his unique way of part Maya, part Spanish, all the while glancing at Doña Gomercinda to fill in the spaces between.

Don Lucas was born in Xkumil and moved to Ek'Balam with his family as a young man. His was one of the first families to make the move in 1969, and seven of his eight siblings still live in the village. He is a tall man, with a long, regal profile. His skin is very brown, and his thick black hair is just showing the first signs of grey near his temples. I spend much time observing Don Lucas, and find that he spends just as much observing me. He notes every blister, bite, and scratch and he fusses at Doña Gomercinda when she does not notice or if she does not tell him when I am ill and not eating much. Don Lucas is an *ejidatario* and is one of the *socios* (associates) of the CBT project. He enjoys most of the work that he does for the project and trusts in the prospect of his participation being a good choice economically. The only part about it that he does not enjoy is when guests arrive during his shift as *velador* (night watchman). Every twenty days, it is his turn to spend twenty-four hours at the Cabañas. He does some gardening and takes care of any tasks that need to be done. He is also in charge of checking in any guests who arrive. Don Lucas, like all of the other twenty-three *socios*, does not speak

English. His Spanish, like twelve of the other *socios*, is broken at best. When guests do arrive, he has a difficult time communicating with them and attending to their needs. This interaction is uncomfortable and even embarrassing for him and translates from the guests' perspective as poor customer service. Still, he maintains that this project will improve and says that he wants to keep participating so that once business does improve, his children will be able to work there. Like all of the other families involved with the community-based tourism project, the Ay Balam household looks forward with great enthusiasm to the potentials it holds. "They say it will be like a new Chichén Itza, with gringos coming from all over the world to see the ruins," Lucas explains. This is a statement heard regularly around the village. Everyone is waiting with baited breath for the onslaught of tourists, for better or for worse.

Once everyone has finished their food, Eugenio leaves with his brothers not far behind. They will follow him on their bikes as far as he will permit, after which they will join the rest of the young boys playing soccer and riding their bikes around the plaza. Doña Gomercinda, done making tortillas and satisfied that everyone has had enough to eat, comes and joins us at the large green plastic table. She and Rosa are always the last to eat, though Don Lucas lingers at the table or in the hammock until they finish. I sit with him on this night, enjoying the conversation we have all settled into now that the younger children have left. Doña Goma is entertaining us with a story about a family who came through that afternoon on the village tour. Joan started offering tours of the village to her guests last winter, and Goma's house is one of the main stops. According to her, they had the biggest gringo baby she has ever seen. She often remarks on how big the children of tourists are. The first question she asks in most encounters is how old the children are. Now that summer vacation is here, there are always children running in many directions. She calls one over who is the same age to compare their size. When she inquires

about this, she generally draws the conclusion that the gringos are able to take better care of their children because they are wealthy. Her first reaction when a family comes on the tour is to touch the children and to tell them to sit beside her if they seem uncertain. This is what she would do with any child, and so seems the logical response to making a timid child comfortable. She has learned however that often times the parents are the ones who seem uncomfortable with this. They want to keep their child as far away as possible from the cooking fire, and they are not accustomed to strangers touching their children. Doña Goma equates this with her feelings about photography. She has observed over the past few years that tourists take photos of children. She worried at first, and often still does, that they were so interested in the children because they want to steal them. She deduced that they gave the photos to perspective adoptive parents. Joan has tried to quell some fears about photographs, but there is still a level of discomfort. For Doña Goma, it is subsiding in part because she has more interactions with tourists than many other women do in Ek'Balam. Between her work at Joan's and the village tour that stops at her house, she interacts with tourists on a regular basis. Some days she talks about telling Joan that she cannot host the tours anymore. Often times she devotes hours to getting ready just in case there will be a tour the next day. Guests in Eden Retreat's fourth year are still sporadic, so Joan can rarely give Goma much advance notice. This leaves her to fret about the ash and soot on the ceiling and the lack of adequate furniture to accommodate the gringos.

Once Goma has finished eating, she begins to put the food up in small pails that hang from the thatch on long hooks and stacks the dishes on the table to wash in the morning. Always the last to bathe, she pours hot water into a bucket and disappears into the bathhouse. All of the children and Don Lucas have taken their baths and left a pile of dirty clothes in the bathhouse. She calls out to no one in particular: "Very nice! Now I'll spend all day tomorrow washing

clothes and there will be nothing to eat!” This elicits a response from Cruz and Nacho who have returned from playing and are settling in their hammocks. Nacho grumbles that he will kill a *paloma del monte* (mourning dove, literally ‘dove from the forest’) with his slingshot and cook it himself. Cruz, overtired from the day, begins to cry and say that she will be hungry tomorrow and calls for her mother to please come to bed. Everyone sleeps in the one-room thatch house next to the kitchen. Hung from the beams are four brightly colored hammocks. Goma and Cruz sleep in one, Lucas and Federico in another, and Nacho, Beatrice, and Angel in a third. The fourth hammock is mine, and as much as I argue that I would be happy to sleep in the kitchen, everyone insists that there is plenty of room. Finally, Doña Goma finishes her bath and comes into the house. Lucas closes up the kitchen and turns off the lights, then shuts the back door of the house but does not tie the rope to secure it. Federico has returned, but Angel is still out riding his new bike. Eugenio is out with friends and will probably not be back for some time.

Once Lucas is satisfied that everything is in its place, he turns off the light and settles in to watch television with the rest of us. The television rests on a shelf near the ceiling where everyone can see it, and we all drift off to sleep watching the dramatic, opulent lives of characters in the current *novella* (soap opera).

Introduction

In the center of the Yucatan Peninsula lie the ruins of Ek’Balam, translated from Yucatec Maya as black or star jaguar.² In 1994, this archaeological site joined the other 46 zones in the region open for exploration by the tourists that arrive in Campeche, Yucatan, or Quintana Roo each year. These three states make up the Yucatan Peninsula. The Mexican state of Quintana Roo,

² The Cordemex Dictionary is the authority for translation between Spanish and Yucatec Maya. It is translated there as black or dark jaguar (Vásquez, Manzano, and Sansores 1980). All translations from Spanish to English are my own.

home of Cancun and the Mayan Riviera, receives about one third of all foreign tourist expenditures in Mexico, and since 1970, this state has had a higher rate of growth than any other part of México. Cancun is the tourist emporium located on the northeast tip of the Yucatan Peninsula. Since its creation in the 1970s, it has become a destination famed for its white beaches, turquoise sea, and 280-kilometer coral reef. For guests it offers, “good and predictable hotels, an exotic ambiance of margaritas and mariachis, lush tropical forests, and Maya ruins” (Pi-Sunyer, Thomas, and Daltabuit 2001). More than 2 million visitors enter the Maya World through Cancun annually, 60 percent of whom are North Americans. The final destination of the majority is the Mayan Riviera, which refers to the Cancun-Tulum corridor stretching approximately 80 miles from the northern tip of the peninsula south to community of Tulum. This government-planned and internationally funded destination marked a shift in the way that Mexico conducted and managed tourism.

The country had long been the object of the touristic imagination, particularly for North Americans; however, with the creation of *Fondo Nacional del Fomento al Turismo* (National Tourism Development Fund, or FONATUR) the Mexican government established its first foray in the governance of tourism (Castañeda and Burtner 2010; Cheong and Miller 2000; and others). In some ways, this was an obvious extension of the existing role of the federal government in the promotion and management of heritage. Since 1939, the *Institutio Nacional de Antropología e Historia* (National Institute of Anthropology and History, INAH) has governed the nation’s patrimony in the form of archaeological zones.

A major tourist corridor cuts across the peninsula, connecting Merida, the state capitol of Yucatan, with the resorts of Cancun and the Maya Riviera (Figure 1).

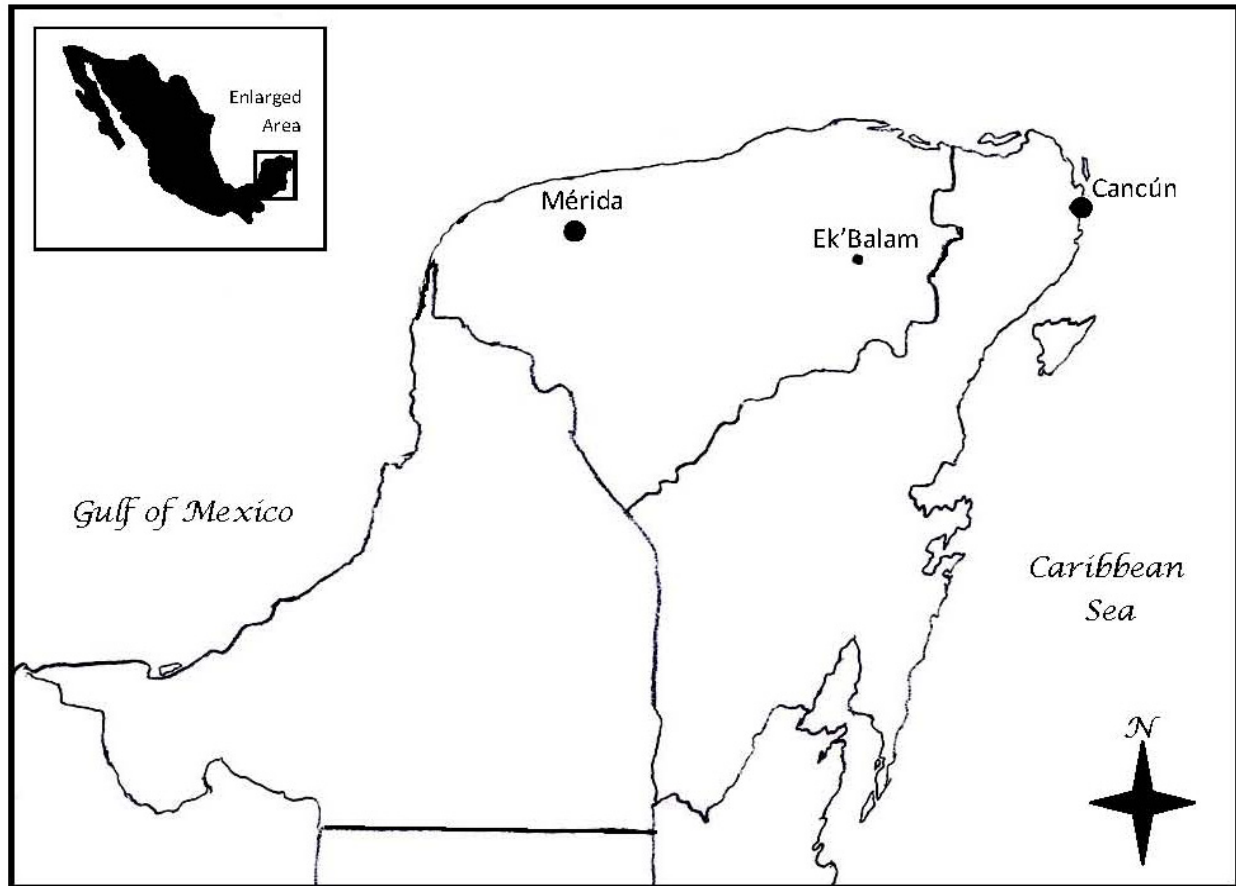


Figure 1. Main tourist corridor through Yucatan

These two cities represent very different ends of a tourism continuum. On one side is the culturally vibrant colonial city that boasts a remarkable history since its founding in 1542. On the other are the white sand beaches of the Maya Riviera. The process of back filling and construction that created the resorts effectively swept away the coast's history, leaving only a few archaeological sites in an otherwise safe and sterile destination. In the space between these two extremes are villages, cities, archaeological zones, haciendas, forests, and the million Yucatec Maya who live on the Peninsula (INEGI 2010). Located in the literal and figurative middle of this continuum is Ek'Balam.

The ruins at Ek'Balam are some of the most impressive pre-Columbian stuccoes found in

the Maya World, and their excavation and subsequent opening of the site to visitors was a welcome addition to INAH's holdings. One of the most important attractions at Ek'Balam today is the Acropolis. This structure is one of the largest monuments in the Northern Maya Lowland region. More importantly, it is open for climbing and exploration. When the famous Castillo at Chichén Itzá closed in 2005, Ek'Balam's Acropolis became one of the two remaining pyramids for visitors to climb within day-trip range of both Merida and Cancun. The growing popularity of this site and its reputation among travelers as the alternative Chichen are what attracted me to the area in 2004. Travel to Ek'Balam is safe and easy, a characteristic of the region that adds to its allure for tourists. A comfortable, two-hour bus ride takes the visitor from their hotel in Merida or Cancun to the colonial city of Valladolid. There they exit the bus station and are greeted immediately by taxi drivers who will chauffeur them to Ek'Balam and bring them back about two hours later for around 30.00USD (300.00MX)³. This leaves them plenty of time to explore the archaeological site, climb the pyramids, and perhaps purchase some souvenirs. The drive to and from the archaeological site is pleasant and comfortable. A main highway heads north from Valladolid and passes through the town of Temozon, providing a glimpse of daily life. Ten kilometers north of Temozon a highway turns east and leads directly to the archaeological zone. What most visitors do not realize is that locals still call this the "new road." Before its completion in 2003, the road to the ruins took a much different route (Figure 2).

³ The exchange rate varied during the phases of this research between 1.00MX:10.00USD and 1.00MX:14.00USD.

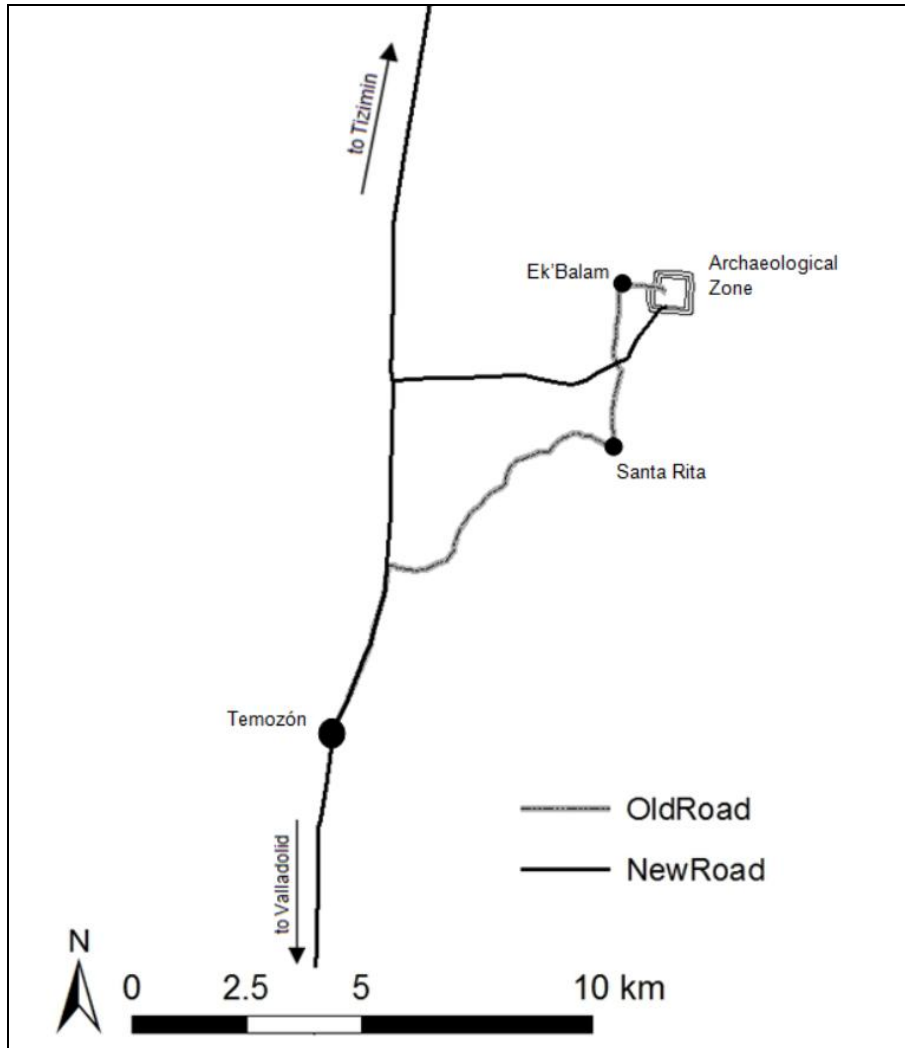


Figure 2. Access to archaeological zone.

Until this time, the entrance to the archaeological zone was located just outside of the village of Ek'Balam, approximately 300 meters from the ceremonial center of the archaeological zone. This village of around 350 residents has experienced numerous changes since the initial excavation of the archaeological zone. While residents have always had ties to the regional economy, the opening of the archaeological zone represented their first extended engagement with the tourism industry. A major agent of change in Ek'Balam is a community-based tourism project that, until the completion of the new road in 2003, was located just outside of the

entrance to the site (Figure 2).

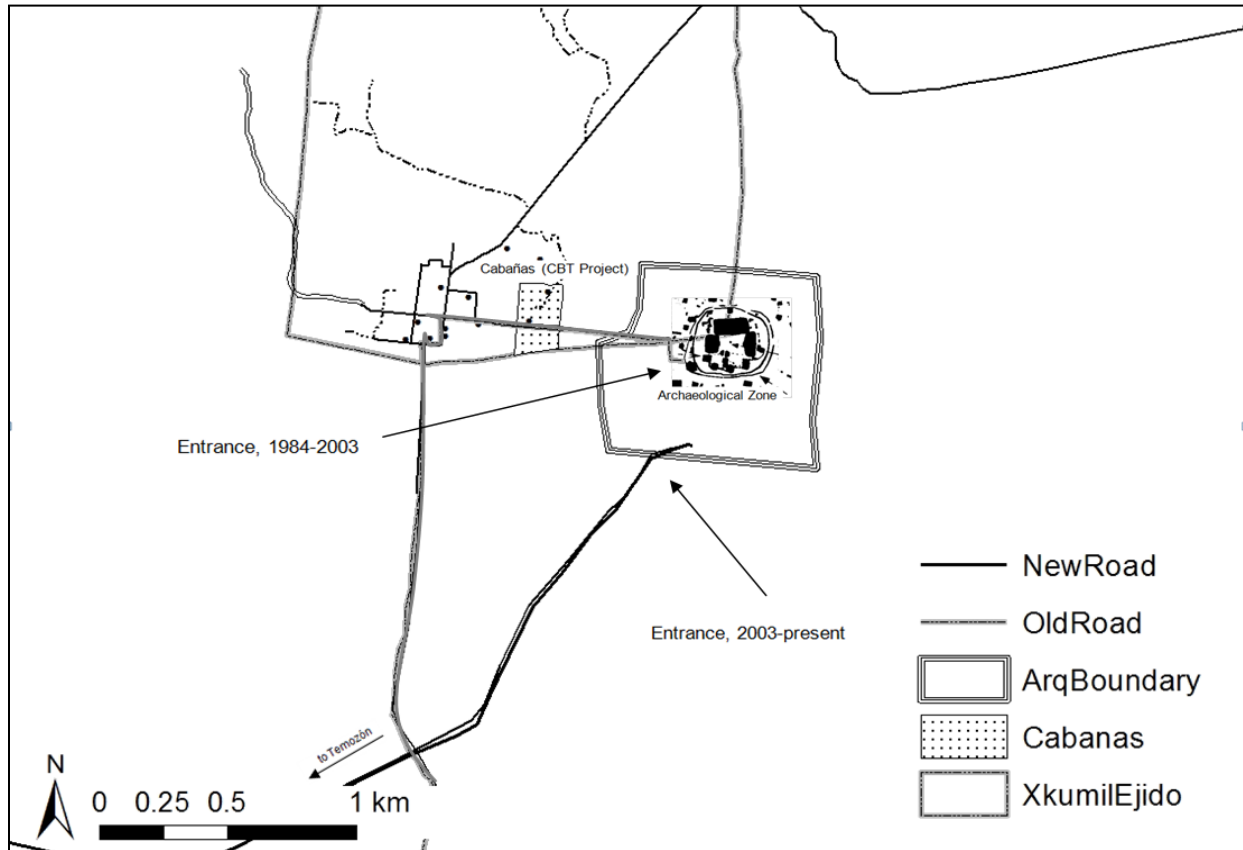


Figure 3. Location of initial entrance to arch zone.

The *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* (National Commission of the Development of Indigenous Villages, CDI) is the primary sponsor of the community-based tourism project in Ek’ Balam, known to residents as “the Cabañas.” In 2001, they began searching Mexico for good locations to implement community-based development projects. Ek’ Balam became their pilot project, and since then *proyectos* (projects) have come and gone as quickly and with nearly as much increasing frequency as tourists. Philanthropic groups or regional nongovernmental organizations design some, but the majority of them are projects that come from the state and federal level. Among the many “friends of Ek’ Balam” are the federal agencies of CDI, the Department of Forestry (CONAFOR), *Secretaria de Desarrollo Social* (Secretary of Social Development, SEDESOL), *Secretaria de Turismo* (Secretary of

Tourism, SECATUR), and *Distribuidora e Impulsora Comercial de la Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares* (Distributor and Compulsory Sales for the National Company for Popular Subsistence, DICONSA). There are nongovernmental organizations, such as the *Red Indígena del Turismo Ambiental* (Indigenous Network of Ecotourism, RITA) and Maya Tours. Mexican nonprofits Terra Maya, Aldea Maya, and the *Cuerpos de Conservación de Yucatán* (Conservation Corps of Yucatan, CCY) are active there. The Foundation for Developing Sustainable Societies (FDSS) and a handful of active evangelical missionaries come from the United States. A U.S. student group, Engineers for a Sustainable World (ESW) recently began a project, and there are students from the nearby Universidad del Oriente working on their social service requirement. Volunteers in the *Viajeros Solidarios* and *Campamento* programs are nearly ubiquitous, and a Maya Spirituality group hosts regular events. Alternative and eco-tourists round out the list of visitors to Ek'Balam. Increasingly, this tiny town is bustling with the many projects going on at any given time.

The interface between transnational ideologies of community and conservation as imagined by non-locals or “friends of Ek'Balam” and the actual practices of conservation and community-based tourism on the part of locals is a major component of this research. With the introduction of volunteers and other visitors who do not fall wholly within the category of tourist in Ek'Balam, the host-guest relationship becomes even more complex. Through interactions between locals and visitors it is possible to see the ways in which residents perform indigeneity based on their perceptions of the desires of the individuals and agencies. While some scholars have focused on the volunteer motivations and the ways that non-local agents (volunteers, project staff, etc...) use stereotypes of traditional indigenous culture to impose their objective of sustainable community development, I am more interested in understanding how locals leverage

their knowledge of these stereotypes to gain and maintain external aid and the tourist dollar. Residents construct these purposeful strategies in order to meet the perceptions and desires of visitors. Specific concepts underlie this symbiotic relationship, such as community, conservation, and development; yet the many stakeholders define and employ them in very different ways.

The Pity of Modernity

The first thing one learns about the typical visitor to Ek'Balam is that they are not, regardless of how it may appear, a tourist. In fact, they are working hard to inform themselves about their destinations and the people and experiences they will encounter there. Many of them are paying for their stay with both currency and labor. They are willing to pay more and forego many luxuries in their quest for authenticity of experience. What is the benchmark of this authenticity? No tourists allowed. Dean MacCannell also recognized this sentiment, and wrote in *The Tourist* (1976) that, "it is intellectually chic nowadays to deride tourists" (1976: 9). An apt illustration of this sentiment is expressed by MacCannell's citation of Claude Lévi-Strauss' statement, "travel and travelers are two things I loathe—and yet here I am, all set to tell the story of my expeditions" (1976: 9). The discourse surrounding tourist perceptions of other tourists always contains something about "the beaten path," which is avoided by all. The following excerpt from an interview with a husband and wife staying in Ek'Balam illustrates this desire for an experience that the typical visitor perceives as different or more authentic.

D: Another thing that was really great was to bring [our son] to a place like this that was really untouched and not spoiled by commercialism, and surrounded by a village of native people so that he could get a real sense of what the natural beauty of the place was like and what the real sense of it is without the gift stores, the tour busses, without all of that and without it being touched. To get a feel of what the area is like.

J: Yeah, we're not real tourist folks. We prefer to be in a village or to be with a family, or to be in a place like this here where we're still part of it. If you're going to go to the jungle, there is no sense in staying in a resort where they close the gates and say, "don't

go outside because the people are bad” and you have to stay there and spend your money there. Instead of a pool, I would rather swim in a *cenote*, you know?
[Transcriptions: 2007-0627(22:07)]

Residents of Ek’ Balam are familiar with the sentiments expressed here. Repeated tourist encounters, CDI staff members visiting and advising the project, and the media, with which residents are highly engaged, regularly reinforce the desires that these and most other visitors bring with them. Strong images and associations are contained and transmitted in narratives such as this. The idea that Ek’ Balam is “untouched and not spoiled by commercialism,” and the association of “native people” with “natural beauty” are just a few of the ideals and expectations into which residents mold themselves as part of touristic performance.

This book provides an understanding of how a group of people negotiates and maneuvers through this web of social programs, tourists, volunteers, and the like to live their daily lives. In this milieu, potentials for development are everywhere. On the backdrop of the constant rotation of state and federal programs implemented to aid México’s poor, indigenous, rural citizen...its *campesinos*...tourism arrives as the new “*proyecto*.” This research did not produce a picture postcard of a day in the life; rather I focused on the active processes in which residents choose to participate. Instead of selecting the way that residents are affected by the arrival of tourism as the object of study, I present a story about this arrival onto the already lush landscape of everyday life. With this arrival comes a shift the perception and execution of numerous aspects of everyday life. Suddenly, heritage is all around. Homes have become cultural markers and the forest is an attraction. The ubiquitous nature of heritage has created in Ek’ Balam a drive to provide the authentic: to create an ecosystem of authenticity.

Ecosystem of Authenticity

Anthropologists have employed the concept of an ecosystem in their work in varying

ways. Early uses from around the 1960s are attributed to both a rejection of the earlier environmental determinism and the use of biological concepts to take some of the burden off of the concept of culture (Morán 1990:3). The resurgence of interest in ecosystems as a framework for anthropological inquiry views ecosystems:

...as complex adaptive systems that possess intriguing structural qualities, such as resilience, hierarchy, scale, nesting, dissipative structures, and autocatalytic design, and descriptors of dynamics, such as nonlinearity, irreversibility, self-organization, emergence, development, directionality, history, co-evolution, surprise, indeterminism, pulsing, and chaotic dynamics. (Abel and Stepp 2003:12)

I present this lengthy definition knowing of course that an ecosystem can be more simply defined; however the cacophony of characteristics that Abel and Stepp conjure in their definition lends itself to the metaphorical way that I use the concept of an ‘ecosystem of authenticity’ throughout this book. The earliest definition of an ecosystem is a “system in which there is constant exchange between organisms, but also between the organic and inorganic” (Tansley 1935:299). Lush forest, barren *milpas*, conservation initiatives, and archaeological remains all define the ecosystem in which residents of Ek’Balam reside. It is home to people who are in constant negotiation with the idea of authenticity and who have an array of notions about how to generate and maintain it. As we will see through their stories, providing an authentic Maya village is dependent on multiple factors; houses should look a certain way, individuals should dress a certain way, men should farm their land and actively conserve the parts they are not farming, women should grind corn on a *metate* and weave hammocks. The list of correct behavior is long, and the task of following these prescriptions for authenticity is a conscious,

active choice made by residents every day.

While the notion of an ecosystem is of something inclusive, it can be broken down into two parts: the physical surroundings and the people who inhabit them. As such, my research took a two-pronged approach. I first set out to understand how households in the community balance economic strategies that prioritize tourism—such as handicraft production, biodiversity conservation, and the provision of accommodations—with traditional economic strategies for land-use, which is mainly production of maize for subsistence. The second task was to understand the relationship between economic and ecological decision-making processes and the local social structure of kinship, specifically with regard to its correlation with a household's ability to benefit from local tourism development.

It is at this interface that transnational ideologies of ecological conservation and sustainable economic development complicate the local level conflict between tourism and tradition. Given these conflicts, can community-based tourism be a viable avenue to sustainable development? This book presents a discussion of the strategies employed by residents to negotiate the design and management of a community-based tourism (CBT) project in the midst of everyday life. Residents turn to markers of indigeneity in response to external demands, including maintenance of an image of rurality, increased valuation of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and staged ritual performance. Because the degree to which an individual engages these strategies is dependent on their social position within the community, the choice to incorporate them into everyday life is a political one. The positioning of conservation as an economic strategy for some households further politicizes these negotiations.

The inextricable relationships between land-use, conservation, a community's resources, and external institutions that politicize these relationships are paramount to my research (Escobar

1998). Early studies of natural resource management and decision-making focused on men as the land managers (Paulson, Gezon, and Watts 2005); however, my household-scale research accounts for women. This is particularly important because of the shifting economic role of women due to the increasing touristic value of handicrafts (W. Little 2004; Taylor 2008). In the 1980s the household was converged upon, perhaps as a last attempt at structure before the post-modern movement shifted the discipline's focus to individuals, self, and what Bourdieu calls "an explosion of narcissism sometimes verging on exhibitionism" (Bourdieu 2003:282). Since then, there has been a spectrum of studies of the relationship between the household and the outside worlds. Inherent in these is debate over the inside-outside dichotomy. On one hand, Tracy Ehlers presented the household as insular and closed, and as having a high level of separation from the outside world (2000). At the other end of the spectrum is Walter E. Little's research in Aguas Calientes, Guatemala. There he found the household to be open and public, even presenting an influential argument for the household as a stage for performing tourism (W. Little 2000). June Nash's research occupies the middle ground between these two (Nash 2001; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983). The household is usefully understood as a productive unit, though this too has varied in the literature. Alice Littlefield's study of the hammock industry in Yucatan (Littlefield 1978) positioned the household as an engine of economic production, while Richard Wilk's *Household Ecology* (1997) presents the household as the center of ecological production. In both cases, the household is a tool that facilitates analysis on multiple levels, including gender, economy, and resource management.

The construction and maintenance of this ecosystem of authenticity is a contentious process that necessitates an examination of the groups involved. As we will see throughout this study, things are not always as they seem. This Maya community is not a discrete unit, but is

instead a group of households with disparate views on many things, not the least of which is what is authentic. For many, authenticity includes structures, attire, and food ways. For others authenticity is primarily a way of interacting with the natural environment. This group sees agriculture as the seminal marker of being an authentic *campesino*, and feels that the other things are less foundational. Still others imagine authenticity represented through the built environment, and want to transform Ek'Balam into an ideological extension of the monumental center of the archaeological zone.

The variation in the prescription for being Maya and the construction of authenticity presented a methodological conundrum. After only a short time in Ek'Balam, it became clear to me that the primary organizational structure in the community was kinship. I learned quickly that every resident was a member of one of seven kin groups, and that each of these groups had been in existence in the community since 1939 when they began the petition for their *ejidal* land grant. I found myself in exploring a web of social and familial relationships, economic strategies, and varied resource management that were connected by a place. The emphasis on neoliberalization and global flows of goods and people is a crucial point of inquiry for our discipline today. These forces are perhaps most visible in Mexico in the wake of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and in the age of such heavily contested U.S. immigration policies. Further, tourism studies are fraught with pitfalls that can only be understood if we consider movement across political and, increasingly, virtual borders. Nonetheless, I present an interpretive ethnography that is a tale about people who are rooted in a place. Some now find this model outdated, however I argue that in looking at development initiatives that attempt to position this community in varying locations along the folk-urban continuum and the active compliance and resistance to this on the part of residents, interpretation is the most effective way

to hear the many voices that make up this ecosystem. In a time of multi-sited inquiries, I present a community study. During this post-post-modern era of individual mobilities, I examine not the tourists who are arriving, but the Mayas who never left.

Organization of the Book

Rafael: “What book is that, the one you are reading?”

Sarah: “This? It’s a dictionary, a Maya-English dictionary.”

Rafael: “Ahh, I thought it was a book like the ones the gringos always look at.”

Sarah: “What book is it that they always look at?”

Rafael: “*Quien sabe?* [Who knows] But they’re big and always have lots of maps. Maybe if we had some maps more *gringos* would come here.”

[Transcriptions 2004-0812 (2:01)]

According to most residents of Ek’Balam, *gringos* love maps⁴. They spend much of their time reading from large books and looking at maps. Locals use maps in the specific context of land dealings, but apart from this, most residents have never seen a map. Maps occupy a very special place in the anthropological process. In early ethnographies from around the world, the map of the village or region was one of the first pieces of information given to the reader. Maps remain an important component of many more recent monographs on Mesoamerica as well. Tourists have a different relationship with maps. One of the most important qualities that attract visitors to Ek’Balam is its location “off the beaten path.” Interestingly, these very books provide a map to aid the traveler in leaving the so-called beaten path without getting lost.

Maps of Ek’Balam are just that: visual representations of the archaeological

⁴ The slang term ‘gringo’ (or ‘gringa’ in its feminine form) are used almost interchangeably with ‘foreigner’ in Ek’Balam. In other parts of Mexico they have a negative connotation, but in Ek’Balam they are used as simply a classificatory term.

zone's monumental center. The cartographer never panned to the west or zoomed out from the focus at the base of the Acropolis to include a modern Maya settlement in the representation of an ancient Maya city. The content of the archaeological site map is logical, as a map that delineated the roads and major points of interest in the modern settlement of Ek'Balam would be. When I set out to meet Rafael's request for a map, we sketched the roads first. Things were complicated when we started adding features and gaining volunteers with varied opinions on what a good map of the village should really convey. The list of crucial attributes grew and changed depending on whom we encountered. Ultimately, it became clear that this map was as much a visual representation of residents' ideologies as it was a delineation of the physical features of the village. The same list of correct behavior that dictates how individuals and households must present themselves to tourists slowly manifested in the various iterations of the map. What we had at the end was not a map of the village of Ek'Balam, but instead a map of residents' vision of Ek'Balam's ecosystem of authenticity.

To some travelers, a destination with no map is a touristic dream come true. Upon arrival in Ek'Balam though, even the most seasoned traveler feels lost. If they are guests at the CBT project, they feel removed from the town. Guests at any of the hotels are unsure of walking around the village in the evenings because they really do not know what is out there. They saw the main road into town, made a quick right turn, followed by a left and another right, and arrived at their destination. If, as in the case of Antigua, "the preponderance of maps undermines the tourist experience," what does a dearth of maps mean for tourists in Ek'Balam (W. Little 2004:67)?

The remainder of this chapter is a map, so to speak, to serve as a guide to the sections that follow. This book is divided into four sections: 1) an introduction to the study and the research

site and a review of relevant anthropological work in Mesoamerica; 2) a discussion of community-based development and its relationship with tourism; 3) local land tenure systems, politics, and history, and the use of Maya identity in the development and promotion of tourism initiatives; and 4) a discussion of volunteer tourism, heritage, and ecology. Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the methods used in this study and of the units of analysis. Chapter 3 discusses the trajectory of the anthropological fascination with Mesoamerica in general and the Maya World specifically. The long history of occupation of the Maya World by archaeologists and ethnographers created a legacy within which today's Mayanists must work. This necessitates an understanding of the historical and political forces that shaped the study of Mayas, both past and present. Early studies of the Maya were mainly concerned with the ruins of the pre-Columbian society, and were initially undertaken by explorers sent under the auspices of colonial government posts. As archaeology developed as a science, the ancient past of Mesoamerica became an important focus of numerous scholars.

Most of the ethnographic literature from the Maya World consists of community studies, making this a particularly important body of literature for this study. This topic is presented in the second section. Chapter 4 deals with the history of community studies in the Maya World and discusses some of the major themes found in this literature. Chapter 5 builds on the discussion of community as an object of study by explaining its current positioning as an object of development. The economic processes surrounding the development of the Yucatan Peninsula as an international tourism destination were a part of a larger shift toward neoliberalism seen throughout Latin America and even the world (Clancy 2002; Warren and Jackson 2003; Van den Berghe 1994).

The third section is a presentation and analysis of the bulk of data generated by this

research. Overall, the section provides an argument for how the four arenas of history, economy, ecology, and identity coalesce through a series of interactions within Ek'Balam and between these hosts and their many guests to create and maintain an ecosystem of authenticity. Even more than the ongoing interest in community within Mesoamerican studies, the concept of identity receives an extraordinary amount of attention. In this ecosystem of authenticity heritage is both tangible and intangible, and that to understand its design, creation, and maintenance we must define the people and the place. In Chapter 6, I present the place and its role in the process. This chapter includes a discussion of the village's history in the context of regional history in order to provide a complete picture of the economic shifts that have shaped the present. Chapter 7 further contextualizes the discussion of engagement with identity politics and the anthropological study of indigeneity in the Maya World, with Ek'Balam as the case study and stage for the theatrics of Maya Identity. The concluding section consists of a discussion of volunteer tourism as a phenomenon and examines the way that interactions surrounding this phenomenon are shaped by the factors outlined in Part III. Chapter 8 presents a discussion of the way that ecology and the natural world are part of the tangible heritage; however the way that the land is used plays a role in the intangible heritage of a household. Various maps provide views of Ek'Balam throughout the chapters. All of these maps are the product of a mapping project conducted by community members and myself between 2010 and 2012 in response to Rafael's statement that maybe a map was what had been missing. The maps culminate in a map of the ecosystem of authenticity as imagined by residents of Ek'Balam.

Ek'Balam, Pueblo Maya

I have spoken at length with each of the last five municipal commissioners and they all have explained that now Ek'Balam is a pueblo Maya. What remains unclear is what this actually

means to them. What does it mean to the general population? Further, how is a household's decision to participate in tourism or not a factor in the meaning they give to the village's status as a pueblo Maya? The reason I ask these questions is that "Ek'Balam has something special going for it" as Joan, the proprietor of Eden Retreat, would say. Joan was the first foreigner to start a business in the village, and she has seen many changes in her ten years there. She periodically wonders aloud at the sheer volume of people coming great distances to do something they see as helpful for the community. "Why Ek'Balam?" she often asks me, thinking I may have an anthropological theory that could help explain this phenomenon. If we were to ask one of the local politicians, they would say that it is precisely because it is a Maya village. It is a *Pueblo Maya*.

The use of identity as a strategy for attracting tourism and, perhaps more importantly, external aid and development initiatives, is nothing new. Similarly, the performance of this leveraged identity for economic gain from tourism is not a novel occurrence. Scholars of tourism have discussed this at length since the beginning of this specific field. This, then, is not a story about identity, though identity plays a crucial role here. Nor is it a story about performing tourism, though it contains many scenes of performances in front of tourists. This is a story about 350 people who happen to speak Yucatec Maya and, as it happens, live 300 meters from an impressive terminal classic archaeological site located only 15 kilometers north of the major highway that connects the tourist destinations of Cancun to the east and Merida to the west. It is about the daily choices that residents made over the past ten years that have shaped the development of tourism in their community. These choices include negotiations with federal funding agencies, regional nongovernmental organizations, foreign and national entrepreneurs, tourists, volunteers, and each other. The latter category of negotiations is the one that deserves

the most attention, because this is what happens daily and the results of these negotiations determine how a household will engage with external actors. Residents conduct these negotiations over the cooking fire, in the fields, and on the way to grind the day's corn.

The negotiators are members of this community only as far as it is geographically bound. That is, they all live within the seventeen square hectares, or 42.01 acres,⁵ defined as the urban area of Ek'Balam. Beyond that, the utility of the term "community" as a defining factor wanes. What is more useful in understanding the intra-community relations are kin groups and households. The use of community as a definitive category is common throughout ethnographic work, and particularly stands out in Mesoamerica's ethnological record as being the most prevalent unit of analysis from the 1930s through the 1970s. The early organization of rural dwellers throughout the Mesoamerican countryside may have spurred this. The community is similarly conceived as a framework for and object of development, as will be discussed in later chapters. For the purpose of this study, I limit the use of community to references to the community-based tourism project and instead refer to residents, households, and families made of extended kin groups.

Recent literature on tourism has called for a change in the way we present research. Many previous studies have focused on the impact of tourism on a local population. This study avoids employing "impact" as a framework for understanding tourism in Ek'Balam to the greatest extent possible; however because something like agency is difficult—if not impossible—to quantify, we must recognize that while residents are autonomous actors working within a politicized system (Stronza 2001) they are also beholden to the factors that are out of their control. They happen, for instance, to speak Yucatec Maya and live 300 meters from the

⁵ 1 acre is equal to 0.4 hectares. Acre is the unit used throughout the book.

archaeological site of Ek'Balam.

Chapter 7: Life Along the Continuum

While the presence of millions of tourists in the Maya World certainly complicates the debate over what exactly we mean by “Maya,” it is one that has been going on since long before Cancun was transformed from sand spit in the Caribbean to the world-class destination it is today. The interest in and importance of heritage in the context of a tourism-driven economy does necessitate the identification of heirs, and thus the use of identity politics to determine the modern-day Maya heirs of Maya culture. The scholarship on identity in the Maya World can be roughly divided into two sections: constructivists and essentialists (Medina 2003:352). Essentialists argue for cultural continuity between ancient and modern expressions of Maya-ness. For them, a Maya person living today is a clear descendant of a resident of one of the hundreds of ancient Maya cities throughout the region.

Another version of this debate is presented by Fischer (2001), who separates essentialism from anti-essentialism. He defines essentialism as “analysis that is simplistic or universal in its assumptions” (2001:9). He goes on to give the Redfieldian propensity for the use of trait lists, which essentializes individuals and groups by reducing the diversity of lived experience to mere categories. In contrast, the anti-essentialist approach is summed up in his assertion that “what we know about the Maya, or any other group, is ultimately distilled from what we know about particular individuals, a knowledge that is as best incomplete” (Fischer 2001:10). The constructivist and anti-essentialist arguments surrounding Maya identity are broadly a critique of the notion that the modern and ancient Maya shared cultural traits. Peter Hervik refers to this notion as the reification of daily life through ethnographic work in Yucatan (1998).

To move past a discussion of Maya as an essential identity, Loewe suggests that the

political syncretism of *mestizaje* become the foundation for analysis, in order to understand “how ethnic groups relate to one another structurally as well as symbolically” (Loewe 2010).

Similarly, Florencia Mallon (1995) discusses how a nationalist ideology is developed both from the top down (i.e. concepts of how to deal with indigenous populations) and from within these populations (i.e. what it means for a resident of a rural village to be a proper citizen?).

Among residents of Ek’Balam it is common knowledge that tourists do not come all the way to this small village only to be shown blenders, t-shirts emblazoned with sports team logos, and other signposts of all things modern. This undesirable presence is mentioned with such frequency by visitors that locals joke about what has come to be known as “the pity of modernity.” This is not of great interest in and of itself. For years travelers—be they tourist, anthropologist, or otherwise—have sought the experience of the “Other.” What is of interest however is the level of cognition that the “Other” has of this phenomenon. Multiple strategies are employed at the household level to perform tourism (Little, 2004, 2000; Edensor, 2001; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Annis, 1987), and having this knowledge is seen by residents as simply savvy business sense. Clearly, if someone is paying for a tour of a Mayan home you need to provide exactly that. It is here that the ideas of modernity, authenticity, tradition, and cosmopolitanism become fluid and difficult to identify as discrete characteristics within an individual and a community.

This chapter takes as its point of departure Ferguson and Gupta’s (2002) discussion of the shifting role of the state in shaping “local communities” (981). This is based in part on the realization that states are not simply “functional bureaucratic apparatuses, but powerful sites of symbolic and cultural production that are themselves always culturally represented and understood in particular ways (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:981). It is this production of cultural

symbols that makes the state socially effective. These concepts are particularly useful in understanding what I have come to refer to as “government sponsored Maya-ness.”

Across the Yucatan Peninsula, state governments as well as agents of the federal government have embraced the ancient Maya heritage as their most important (and profitable) characteristic. More importantly, the state has identified the indigenous past as the tangible remnants of it as national patrimony. Ferguson and Gupta (Ferguson 2002), following Foucault (Foucault 1991), discuss the concepts of verticality and encompassment in the context of the new wave of NGO’s as purveyors of development. This is an apt lens with which to examine the situation in Yucatan, where in many cases the state itself, which has historically been the top of “top-down” development, is instituting community-based tourism projects. This shifts the approach on the part of the state, but the effect on the actual projects and the communities charged with managing them remains unclear. What we find is a situation in which the local is the symbolic seat of power in the project, but the state is still guiding the cultural production aspect in order to maintain its social effectiveness.

The aim of this chapter is an understanding of the articulation of local tactics to conceal cosmopolitanism while remaining competent in the eyes of the funding agencies to build and manage a tourism project, and the strategies employed by the state that reinforce the importance of performance for tourists. These development endeavors problematize concepts such as verticality, encompassment, and governmentality. The desire on the part of state agents to designate and market “local” leads to situations in which the individuals defined as such are expected to exist in concurrent states of authenticity and modernity, as traditional and cosmopolitan.

Authentic Mayas

“*Cruzita, ven aca para poner tu traje* (Cruzita, come here and put on your costume)!” shouts Doña Gomercinda across the yard. Maria de la Cruz is stubbornly hiding in the bushes to avoid putting on her child-size *huipil*. She has her hair in a beautiful up-do thanks to her older cousin, and she is nearly ready for the big night. The *Fin de Curso* celebration is an important event that marks the end of the school year, graduation for the sixth-graders, and the beginning of summer vacation. The theme for 2004 is “The Magic of the Circus,” and Cruz will be playing one of the lions in the third grade lion tamers skit. Before her mother will let her put on her lion *traje*, or costume, there is another costume she must first don.

I have the camera out and will take many pictures for different families over the course of the evening. Doña Gomercinda sees this and decides that I should have a picture of Cruz in her traditional *huipil*, even though this is clearly something the child rarely wears. Later I asked Cruz why she disliked wearing her *huipil* so much, and she answered “*Las abuelitas andan de mestiza, pero yo no lo quiero... ¡no soy abuela!*” (The little grandmas go as *mestizas*, but I do not want to...I’m no grandma!).⁶ *Anda de mestiza* is the common way to refer to a woman who regularly wears a *huipil*, and translates literally as “one who walks as a *mestiza*.” The literal translation of the term *mestiza* is “mixed blood,” and in many parts of Latin America it is used to refer to individuals descended from Spanish and indigenous family lines (Loewe 2010). In Yucatan, *mestiza* refers to women who wear *huipiles*. Both her maternal and paternal grandmothers wear *huipiles* every day. It has been only in the last forty years that women have made the shift from these loose-fitting, embroidered dresses to the modern *catrín*-style skirts and

⁶ For a detailed discussion of social categories in Yucatán, please see Ron Loewe’s *Maya or Mestizo: Nationalism, Modernity, and its Discontents* (University of Toronto Press, 2010) or Peter Hervik’s *Maya People Within and Beyond Boundaries: Social Categories and Lived Identity in Yucatán* (Routledge, 2003).

dresses favored by younger women. While Cruz would never wear her *huipil* on a normal day, there is always one that fits her stored up in the thatch for special occasions. She had been taught at this young age that when tourists want to take photos, it is a picture of a small *huipil*-clad Maya that they want to capture.

Change and continuity are common themes in Ek'Balam when the topic of tourism arises. Many people discuss the economic changes that households are undergoing, while others talk about the things in the village that should remain the same. There is a push for maintaining a level of authenticity in Ek'Balam. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the way that authenticity is designed and maintained is a subject of constant debate. The museum project in the summer of 2009 was the first time that I witnessed extensive debate over authenticity, but since then it has permeated many aspects of daily life in Ek'Balam. Prior to 2005, there were some households who had chosen the more modern and expensive blockhouses over the traditional thatch houses found in the village, however these were very expensive. The construction of a block house was a display of wealth. In 2005 the CONAFIT program brought block houses to nearly every lot in the village to help rebuild after hurricane Wilma. The result is that while most lots still have at least one thatch structure, almost all of them have a block house. There are advantages and disadvantages to the new style of construction. In the summer the houses are extremely hot, but in the winter they help keep out the cold, wet night air. There is a consensus that they are the nicer option, and many families prefer the blockhouse as the primary living area.

From the outside, the houses have changed the appearance of the village. This is undesirable according to some residents, including the leaders of the Cabañas. In order to combat the modernization of Ek'Balam, the leaders tasked some volunteers with creating an urban plan

that would restore the authentic look of Ek' Balam. Figure 4 is a map of the proposed plan for the village. The highlights of the plan are a proposal to create a thatch awning in front of every blockhouse and the construction of a ball court in the center of town.

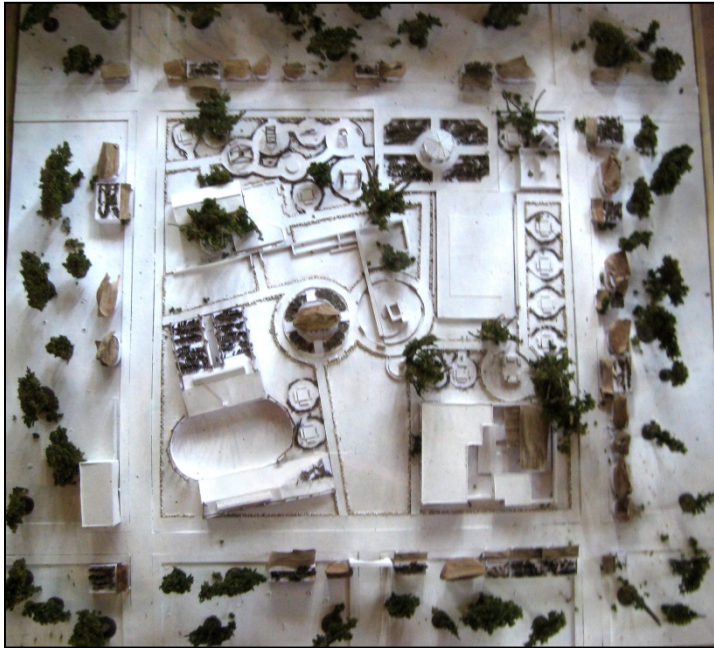


Figure 4. Proposed urban plan

Some residents link the changes in the village directly to the arrival of tourism in the region, such as this relation of the effect of the young people traveling to Cancun for work. Don Felipe explained:

In reality, ourselves as Mayas...it is a shame to see that in other places our traditions have gone into the past, when we were the owners, the originals. We should continue conserving our past for our children so that in their time, it will not be lost—our customs and traditions are the most essential to our life. Our people are beginning to see what has changed. The people of before dressed like this normally, in the Yucatecan way with their white shirt and pants and their little sandals like these and their little hat. But today

very few of us use these sandals. It embarrasses them to wear these sandals. We are not now like the people from many years ago. Our ancestors, our grandparents, they wore clothes like this, but today the men, our sons, do not want to put this on. ~Don Felipe
[Transcriptions 2004-0729]

I must remark here that there was a “Disney-esque” feeling to this conversation. Sitting in the yard of a new blockhouse with a man who previously lived in Cancun for fifteen years and now runs the taxi service in Ek’Balam, I was filled with the sense that tourism has made these vanishing traditions profitable. Would he, or anyone there, be expounding the value of conserving these old ways if they could not be marketed touristic performance? When defining authenticity, as we saw in the case of the museum debate, how far back should the village reach?

Yucatan’s tourism promotion agency, *Secretaria de Turismo del Estado de Yucatán* (SECATUR-Yucatán), relies heavily on the popularity of archaeological zones and Mayan culture in its promotions, as is apparent from a visit to its website “Maya Yucatan” (www.mayayucatan.com.mx). The importance of satisfying the tourist gaze is communicated to residents of Ek’Balam in multiple ways, including interactions through the village tour and strong suggestions from the main agency sponsoring the community tourism project (CDI) regarding the presentation of Mayan culture through employee dress codes and staged ritual ceremonies. This marketing strategy on the part of the government and tourism industry has elicited an interesting response among the residents of Ek’Balam. In a manner quite similar to what Walter Little found in his work in Aguas Calientes, Guatemala (2001), rather than dismiss the interest of tourists in their lifestyle, residents have embraced their notoriety and are engaged in a near-constant performance of tourism.

John Urry introduced the concept of the “tourist gaze” (1990) to the field of tourism studies, and it has greatly influenced subsequent studies (Perkins and Thorns 2001:1986). Urry defined this idea as a departure from Foucault’s “medical gaze” as presented in *The Birth of the Clinic* (2003). According to Urry, the tourist experience is created in large part by gazing at environments that are somehow different from those found in the tourist’s everyday surroundings. If touring is a process of gazing at whatever is encountered, then the construction of these encounters is the defining force underlying what (or who) is the recipient of the tourist gaze (Urry 1990:1). The idea of individuals residing in a tourism destination as passive subjects of a tourist’s gaze assumes that these individuals have neither agency in the process nor cognition of their role. Because we know this to be a false assumption, the concept of the engaged performance of tourism as the response to the gaze is more useful.

Increasing numbers of scholars discuss the concept of performing tourism. Walter Little focused on the public performances for tourists in Guatemalan marketplaces (W.E. Little 2003), and found them to be much more than sales strategies. He refers to the process of building rapport with tourists for the purpose of making a sale as performance, in part because they are not building long-term relationships and the encounters are therefore temporary (2003:530). Tim Edensor looks to Erving Goffman’s (1959) discussion of the roles we play in everyday life in both the “front stage” and the “back stage” (Edensor 2001:60). He explains this dichotomy as follows:

“the nature of the tourist stage contextualizes performance: whether it is carefully managed, facilitates transit and contains discretely situated objects (props); or whether its boundaries are blurred, [and] it is cluttered with other actors playing different roles” (Edensor 2001:63).

From this description of the process, we can see that the “actors” are not just performing tourism, but are also performing “otherness.” To further the metaphor, let us look to Disneyland as a destination. All employees there are “cast members,” and as such are in a state of constant performance from when they step through the door in the tall wall that separates the theme park (front stage) from the outside world (back stage) until they leave for the day. Their expressions, costumes, and often times even mannerisms, correspond to the particular “land” in which they work. It would be jarring to see a pirate in Tomorrowland. This, according to Crang, is but one example of the “meaningful settings that tourists consume and tourism employees help produce” (Edensor cf Crang, 2001:69). When applied to the situation in Ek’Balam, the residents are the “cast members” and the places in which and upon which the tourist rests their gaze comprise the “front stage.” The implications for these encounters are many, but it is when the lines between “front stage” and “back stage” are blurred that these become problematic.

The village tour offered through a hotel in Ek’Balam is a popular activity that many guests say is the highlight of their vacation. The tour consists of visits to three houses in the village to see different women performing daily tasks. At Doña Gomercinda’s house, the guests learn how she prepares the corn and grinds it on the metate. They are then able to try their hands at tortilla making and eat fresh, hot tortillas before moving on to the next stop. From Doña Gomercinda’s house the tour moves on the house of Doña Ana where visitors can watch her embroidering *huipiles*, children’s dresses, and napkin sets on her treadle sewing machine. The last stop on the tour is the house of Doña Gloria where she gives an impromptu weaving demonstration and lets visitors attempt to weave a few rows of the hammock on her loom.

Doña Gomercinda’s house is a favorite stop on the tour because of the high level of

interaction involved in the tortilla making demonstration. Guests are fascinated by the *metate* she uses to grind her corn and amazed when they attempt to grind the corn and realize the amount of strength it takes. They inevitably ask how much corn she grinds each day and how long it takes her. With a twinkle in her eye, she explains that to grind enough corn for the 400 or so tortillas consumed daily by her family of eight takes about four hours on the *metate*. By this time the muscles in the visitor's arms are aching and they may have pinched a finger or two between the stones, but they never turn around to see the metal hand crank secured to one wall of the kitchen house and wonder at how much more efficient that tool would be. The *metate* belonged to Doña Gomercinda's great-grandparents and she says that she remembers her mother using it from time to time, but she has never once ground corn on it for anything other than this tour. When the visitor's move on she will wash the *metate* and return it to the corner of the kitchen where it will stay until the next tour comes through, after which she will proceed to grind the day's corn in the shiny metal grinder that is one of her most prized possessions.

The example above of Doña Gomercinda's tortilla-making performance would fall squarely into MacCannell's conception of "staged authenticity" (1976:91). He argues that encounters such as this contain "a kind of strained truthfulness [that] is similar in most of its particulars to a little lie" and that "social structure itself is involved in the construction of the type of mystification that supports social reality" (1976:93). If this "mystification" is deliberate, then one must recognize the role that the "cast member" (Doña Gomercinda, in this case) plays in the process. Knowledge of what the tourist expects to see and experience in this encounter is required to successfully set the stage and provide an adequate feeling of authenticity, thus making her possession of this inter-cultural awareness a display of her cosmopolitanism.

Maya Cosmopolitans

In order to discuss ideas such as cosmopolitanism in the context presented here, it is important to first look for definitions of this concept. Pollock et. al. (2000) define cosmopolitanism as much as they define its opposite, that is, they tell us what it is not: it is not a known entity to be traced from the Stoics through Kant as attempted by Harvey (2000), nor is it a concept that has been fully realized. What it is, according to Pollock et. al., is something that has an inherent need to remain undefined, because “specifying cosmopolitanism positively and definitely is an uncosmopolitan thing to do” (2000:577). One solid place on which to stand is that social, cultural, and historic forces such as nationalism, globalization, and translocation are managed by the adaptive strategy of cosmopolitanism.

In his 1990 article on cosmopolitans and locals, Ulf Hannerz defines the concept loosely as simply people who move about in the world, however in a stricter sense he sees it as the “coexistence of cultures in the individual experience” (Hannerz 1990:239). The context of a rural village in the midst of tourism development offers an interesting dynamic to his discussion of what it means to be cosmopolitan. Given the tone and trajectory of the article, he was speaking about Western travelers, and the distinction was even made between the cosmopolitan and the more pedestrian “tourist,” with whom cosmopolitans abhor to be confused. Yet his argument goes on to discuss cosmopolitanism as more than a state of being, but also as a competence achieved by the individual. He described this competence as “a personal ability to make one’s way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting, and reflecting” (Hannerz 1990:242). In essence, Hannerz is defining cosmopolitanism as a state of awareness of and engagement with the ‘Other’ *vis a vis* a constant maneuvering through “a particular system of meanings and meaningful forms” (1990:243). Therefore, I argue that cosmopolitanism as an

adaptive strategy is employed at the local level, not by tourists hoping to be redefined as sophisticated travelers through interaction with the ‘Other-Maya,’ but by residents of Ek’ Balam (re)defining themselves as sufficiently ‘Maya’ for consumption by the ‘Other-tourist.’ Further, the exercise of cosmopolitanism as an adaptation can be viewed as a tactic used by residents to maintain engagement with the state for continued support of their community-based tourism project, while concurrently yielding to the state’s strategies for touristic performance.

“...it wasn’t very Maya”

To understand how cosmopolitanism plays out in the touristic encounters at the local level, I would like to offer an ethnographic example from Ek’ Balam. In the summer of 2004 I asked Don Felipe, one of the men running the community-based tourism project, about the plans they had to cater to tourists and what sort of things the community hoped to offer:

It would be best if we could have some activities in the afternoons, like walks with [tourists] through the jungle to teach them what we know. We could organize a *hetz-mek*, it is a ritual that we do when a boy is four months old. We do it because when he grows he will work the *milpa*, which has four corners. For girls it is at three months, like the three stones around the fire. The tourists are all very interested in things like this. We could also have a *Ch’a Cha’ac* so that they can see how we care for our *milpas*. The INI [CDI] tells us that this will bring more guests here because there are not many places that still have their traditions where the tourists can go to see things like this. It would be good if we could organize things like this for the visitor to see. ~Don Felipe

[Transcriptions 2004-0617]

This aspect of performance for tourists is found in other parts of life in the village as well, including traditional rituals and ceremonies. Not long after my arrival in Ek’ Balam in 2004, I

was invited to the annual Ch'a chaak ceremony. This is a ceremony that has been held every year dating before the arrival of the Spaniards. Chaak, the god of rain, is the patron of this event. However, he shares the day with the Virgin Mary.

The Ch'a chaak ceremony takes place in the middle of la Canícula, a period of drought before the heavy rains, which usually lasts from the middle of June through the middle of July.⁷ This is an especially crucial time for the residents of Ek'Balam who are still farming; the corn has been planted and is growing, but remains small and vulnerable to a severe lack of water. The eventual yield of the *milpa* depends on the rains coming before the ground has dried completely. For this reason, it is necessary to hold the Ch'a chaak sometime in the first two weeks of July.

Two groups are involved in the preparation and execution of this important ceremony; the men who run the ceremony and their wives. One *ejidatario* is designated as the *dueño*, or the sponsor of the ceremony. This is a large commitment financially, as it is his responsibility to provide the cleared land on which the ceremony is held and to pay the *h-men*, or holy man. Each man who participates is expected to be able to bring *masa*, the ground corn used to make tortillas, and a chicken as offerings to Chaak. The *dueño* of the ceremony in 2004 was Don Lucas, the father of the Ay Balam family.

The ceremony began at seven in the morning with the making of the sacred wine and the construction of the altar. The *yax'mesa*, or green table, is at the center of this and many other Mayan rituals. Made of a table with four intersecting arches in the cardinal directions, it represents a portal between earth and sky through which the various gods can be contacted. Juan de la Cruz Pech was the *h-men* who ran the ceremony, and he welcomed me when I arrived. Between each of the four phases of the ceremony, he stopped to explain some of what they were

⁷ For more on this phenomenon see ReCruz, 1996.

doing, as everything was carried out in Maya and in 2004 I knew approximately five words in Maya.

After the ceremony, I had many questions as to the way in which this has changed over the years. Though I was familiar with some of the central aspects of the ceremony, such as the construction of the *yax'mesa*, I had expected to see the majority of the male residents still who were still farming in attendance, save for the handful of Seventh Day Adventists. Once the day got underway, I realized that there were only nine men participating this year. I later inquired about this in a conversation with Don Rafael. He explained that many of the religious ceremonies are lacking in attendance, if even held at all.

There are changes in the faith of people here. Before, all believed in the ceremonies.

Now there are many religions and it is like politics. Before this time of rain the people said, "we need the rain," now it has come to grow their *milpas*. They say, "Thank God," but who among them was there at the Cha Chaak? God sent the rain because we asked for it. We spoke the name of Chaak. There are almost no people who still believe, they think they can speak directly to God. The ceremony that we had 15 days ago celebrates being Maya. There is another ceremony called *lo-ca-pal*. It is a new benediction for the land. You do it for the *milpa* too. We do it every two years to renew the land and the animals. Usually it is about 20 people. But now, no. The last time we had this was 4 years ago. They are going to be lost, because how will the children know about them.

There are many changes. ~Don Rafael [Transcriptions 2007-0718 (01:12:47)]

During my second summer in the village (2007), I expected to attend the ceremony again, and was interested to see how the levels of participation had changed over the three years since

my first stay. In the month of June, I began to inquire about the date that the *Ch'a Cha'ac* would take place. Each of the individuals I spoke with was hesitant to give me a time, and instead told me to ask someone else. By July there was little pretense about holding the ceremony at all, and I was told that there would be no *Ch'a Cha'ac* this year. According to many residents, this is the first time that a summer has passed without being punctuated by this important event.

Similar to the encounter at the house of Doña Gomercinda that was recounted earlier, these conversations with Don Felipe reveal a person who is completely aware of the expectations and desires of the tourist and is able to cater to them through the selective presentation of “traditional” rituals. At the same time, he recognizes the importance of demonstrating this competency to CDI without letting it come through in the performance for tourists. In order to accomplish this he, and other residents, employ the tactics at their disposal. These tactics are informed by the daily tourist discourse about what they expect to see, desire to experience, and do not want to know.

In the summer of 2009, a *Ch'a Cha'ac* ceremony was again held in a clearing on the outskirts of the village. The following is an ethnographic account of this event and an analysis of what it illuminates with regard to understanding touristic performance and cosmopolitanism. The scene is a clearing in the woods on the outskirts of a small Maya village, in the summer of 2009. There is a *hmeen*, or spiritual healer, in the center of the clearing whispering an eclectic mix of prayers to *Cha'ac*, the god of rain, Jesus, and Maria. He kneels at a table made of leaves and branches that is the altar for many Maya rituals. The *yax mesa* or green table has leafy branches that arch over it and attach to each corner, resembling the arch of the sky and the celestial realm. Surrounding him are just-dead chickens, an aluminum tub of wine made from the *Balche* tree, buckets of *masa*, and *jícaras* to drink sweet *atole*.

The importance of the ceremony and the role of the *hmeen* have been well documented by generations of anthropologists in the region, and as an ethnographer I am quite taken by this scene. This was previously an annual event, but due to many changes within the community the last time that a *Ch'a Cha'ac* ceremony was held in the village was during my first summer there in 2004. The experience of being invited to observe something that I had heard of through the pages of ethnographies by the likes of Redfield and others was amazing to me. I was, admittedly, a tourist of sorts. A guest among hosts, an “anthropologist-Other.” I suppose that they could have done anything and I would have thought that, regardless of what I expected, it was very “Maya”.

Returning to 2009, let us redirect our gaze from the center of the clearing to the edges. Standing, sitting, mingling, and crouching to get the best view are approximately 60 people, consisting of tourists, volunteers, project staff from a federal development agency, state and local politicians, representatives from the state secretary of tourism, and of course me, the “anthropologist-Other.” What we are witnessing is an event co-sponsored and organized by the Conservation Corps of Yucatan (an NGO), the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Villages (CDI), and members of the civil association in the village that manages a community-based tourism project. The volunteers had just spent the last month working on various development projects in the village through CCY’s program. The politicians were invited by SECATUR (*Secretaria del Turismo del Estado de Yucatán*) to see how regional community-based tourism projects are run. The tourists were simply guests staying at the community-run hotel, fortunate to have arrived when they did.

The strobe-ing of 60 flash bulbs lights the scene, and there is an excitement radiating from the crowd. I am thinking that this is going quite well and that the various delegates will be

very pleased. This sentiment is shared by the president of the civil association, who thinks that they have really nailed what it was that was requested: a traditional Maya rain ceremony. The women in the kitchen cleaning and cooking the chickens killed during the ceremony feel the same. They tell me that the old tradition was to have the *Ch'a Cha'ac* overnight, lasting from about 10:00pm until dawn the next morning. It had been many years since they had done one like that, but for this occasion they wanted to demonstrate *el verdadero, el autentico*.

The *Ch'a Cha'ac* ceremony ended at dawn, and everyone returned to their hammocks to rest for a bit before starting the day. As I walked home with the family I stay with, we discussed the level of maya-ness that was displayed and they explained to me how hard it had been to find a *hmeen* who would still perform an overnight ceremony. When I asked again why they wanted it to be overnight, they said that the guests in attendance were very important to the continued funding of U Najil Ek'Balam, the community-based tourism project in the village, and that they were clear about wanting this event to be *maya verdadero* (real Maya).

Once we arrived at the Ay Balam house, I asked what “real” Maya was. Doña Goma said that one way to tell a real Maya was from their attire, but then noted that if that were the case then she would not be Maya because she dresses *de catrin*, or in a modern style of skirts and dresses instead of a *huipil*. Maria de la Cruz, the youngest daughter, added that she thought that Maya meant both being a *mestiza* (a woman who still wears a *huipil* daily) and speaking Maya. Goma quickly saw the contradiction in this and exclaimed that if she made me a *huipil* to wear that I would be *sak maya* (white Maya) and if she learned English then she would be a *box gringa* (black or dark North American woman). We continued joking about how the women politicians who attended wore beautiful *ternos*, the dress version of the traditional *huipil*, and the actual Maya women were not because they spent the ceremony working in the kitchen. A simple

huipil can cost upwards of 500 pesos (50USD) because of the detailed embroidery. For most women, this is not the preferred attire for killing and cleaning chickens. I asked Cruz how we could identify a man as being Maya or not, and she explained to me that a man would be whatever his wife was, of course. At this Nacho, one of the family's sons, ran out of the kitchen house and then returned promptly with his father's machete tied to his waist with a rope and his tee-shirt turned inside out so that the Los Angeles Angels' logo was hidden. He began to pound his chest with his fist and said in his deepest voice, "*soy maya* (I am Maya)!"

We found out the next day that we were not the only ones who noticed these paradoxes. The final word from the esteemed attendees at the ceremony was not as positive as was expected. They wanted to know why none of the women in their beautiful *huipiles* were at the ceremony, and why the women in the kitchen were not wearing their "Maya dresses" while they worked. They were dismayed at having to stay up all night in order to see the whole ceremony, and the ones who returned to their rooms for a few hours of sleep during the night were frustrated by having missed part of the ceremony. In parting, the politicians thanked the leaders of the civil association for their trouble and stated that while the event went smoothly, "it wasn't very Maya" (Fieldnotes: 2009-0724).

This illustrates some of the disparate logics within which residents of Ek'Balam negotiate tourism and conduct their daily lives. Households in this community balance economic strategies that prioritize tourism with traditional economic strategies for land-use, and are all the while reminded that they should maintain a sufficiently "Maya" identity regardless of how the balance tips. Among the economic strategies that prioritize tourism are handicraft production, biodiversity conservation, and the provision of accommodations and other touristic services. Traditional strategies for land use are mainly *milpa* agriculture, producing maize for auto-

consumption. During this balancing act the idea that tourism is the new game in town is reinforced, and as *milpa* agriculture decreases some worry that it will soon be the only game in town. It is at this juncture that touristic performance, as a means to capital accumulation, becomes a form of governmentality.

Tactics and Strategies of Governmentality

Foucault defined governmentality as “how people govern themselves and others through the production and reproduction of knowledge” (Wearing and McDonald 2002:197). While the use of the concept by Ferguson and Gupta remains similar, they posit governmentality in the shifting context of the neoliberal economic project in order to develop their idea of transnational governmentality (2003:989). In Ek’Balam, governmentality can be seen as being enacted on two levels; residents distribute knowledge and how to best exploit the presence of tourists in their village by producing adequate levels of Maya-ness, and the funding agency, working on behalf of the federal government, governs residents by mandating the display of their Maya-ness for tourist consumption.

The shift on the part of the state from a position of verticality to one of encompassment, as both the top and bottom of development through the creation of agencies such as CDI, allows it to enact a different kind of governmentality. To be successful at gaining and maintaining funding, residents are expected to respond to this in multiple ways. However, their funding is on the line and they have little power over the way that they are governed through their tourism project, leaving them with only the tactic of being unc cosmopolitan cosmopolitans.

For de Certeau, the difference between strategy and tactic lies in power. He defines a strategy as “the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships” when a subject has a “base from which relations can be managed” (de Certeau and Rendall 2002). In contrast, a tactic is “a

calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus” (2002:37). Those using tactics are forced to act within boundaries delimited by either the law or by a foreign power.

Additionally, those using tactics do not have the advantage of viewing their “adversary as a whole within a distinct, visible, and objectifiable space” (deCerteau 1984:37). This is a useful lens through which the daily negotiations with tourism in Ek’Balam can be viewed and understood.

Conflicting State(s)

The difference between the strategies employed by the state and the tactics used by residents can be seen in all of the interactions that surround the development of tourism in Ek’Balam and other, similar destinations. It is the state that sponsors and markets Maya-ness (as a strategy for soliciting tourism), and the residents who determine just how they will enact this marketing tool at the local level. Juan Castillo-Cocom presents the shifting creation and modification of ‘Maya’ as descendant of royalty, proletariat, indigenous, and spectacle through the changing agendas of political parties. The PRI party, or *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party) “[The Maya] were a ‘problem’ for the PRI, that is, understood as something that eventually would be concluded or solved ‘properly’; while for the PAN they were an ‘issue’, because it is a final outcome that constitutes a solution (as of a problem) or resolution (as of a difficulty)” (Cocom 2005:147). The PAN response to the Maya “issue” was the creation of various pseudo-non-state agencies, such as INDEMAYA (the Institute for the Development of the Maya Culture of the Yucatan State) in 2001, and CDI (the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Villages) which replaced the National Indigenous Institute (INI) in 2003. CDI’s Mission and Vision are to:

Guide, coordinate, promote, support, promote, monitor and evaluate programs, projects,

strategies and actions to reach the public and sustainable development and full exercise of the rights of indigenous peoples and communities in accordance with Article 2 of the Constitution of the United Mexican States. Work with indigenous peoples and communities to define their development projects in a framework of equity and affect the formulation, implementation of public policies to their benefit, living in social and economic conditions similar to the national average and have full enjoyment of their rights and respect for diversity.

Agencies such as CDI and INDEMAYA are examples of NGOs that “are not as ‘NG’ as they might wish us to believe” (Ferguson and Gupta 2002:993). While they are state agencies, they work to create local or grassroots support through their emphasis on community-based development initiatives, affording them an image of being hands-off. This complements the regional sentiment of separation from the national government that is found in Yucatán by casting the image of an NGO over these agencies. Following Das and Poole’s discussion of the margins of the state, I argue that the foray of the Mexican state into the business of indigenous development effectively blurs these lines (Das and Poole 2004).

Pueblo Mágico as Cultural Capital

In 2001, the Mexican Secretary of Tourism (SECATUR) initiated the *Pueblos Mágicos* (Magic Villages) program in conjunction with state and local governments. They define these as places “with symbolism, legends, history, important events, day-to-day life – in other words, ‘magic’ in its social and cultural manifestations, with great opportunities for tourism” (SECTUR 2012). The goal of this program is to revalue and recapture the culture and tradition of these villages that have

“always been in the collective imagination of the nation as a whole and represent fresh and different alternatives for local and foreign visitors. More than a rescue, is a tribute to those who live in these beautiful places throughout Mexico and have guarded for all of us the rich culture and history they contain” (SECTUR 2012).

Izamal was inaugurated as the tenth Pueblo Mágico in 2002, and currently there are 50 Pueblos Magicos throughout Mexico. In 2010, the new municipal commissioner in Ek’ Balam, Don Alonzo, began talking with me about this program. He is a guide at the archaeological zone who went to Izamal for training. He came back excited about the prospect of Ek’ Balam becoming a Pueblo Mágico. Authorities consider five criteria when a village applies to the program: traditional architecture, emblematic buildings, festivals and traditions, production of artisan crafts, and maintenance of culinary traditions. Part of the catalyst for the new urban plan was the idea that if Ek’ Balam met these criteria they would be on their way to gaining this designation. The most interesting aspect of this process is the diachronic nature of the plans for authenticity. In thinking about the space that would be included as part of the Pueblo Magico ideal, the urban area is included along with the rest of the *ejido* and the archaeological zone. Figure 5 is a map of the key places that are part of this plan. In the south are the urban area of Ek’ Balam and the monuments in the ceremonial center of the archaeological zone. Included here as points on the map are the CBT project, the well and hacienda foundation in the center of town, and the ball court. In the north is the rest of the *ejido* and Hacienda Xkantoh. In the farthest north portion is the abandoned village site of Xkumil. Key points in this region are caves, *cenotes*, *milpas*, unconsolidated monuments, and reforestation areas. All told, the map contains features that span time periods from the Terminal Classic period (circa 1000AD), the early Hispanic

period (circa 1600), the hacienda era (circa 1850), post-Revolutionary land reform (circa 1930), to the present. Residents, however, are ambivalent about assigning periods to the map. They feel that without these designations the map creates a picture of the entirety of Ek'Balam's heritage. This map is an image of the ecosystem of authenticity.

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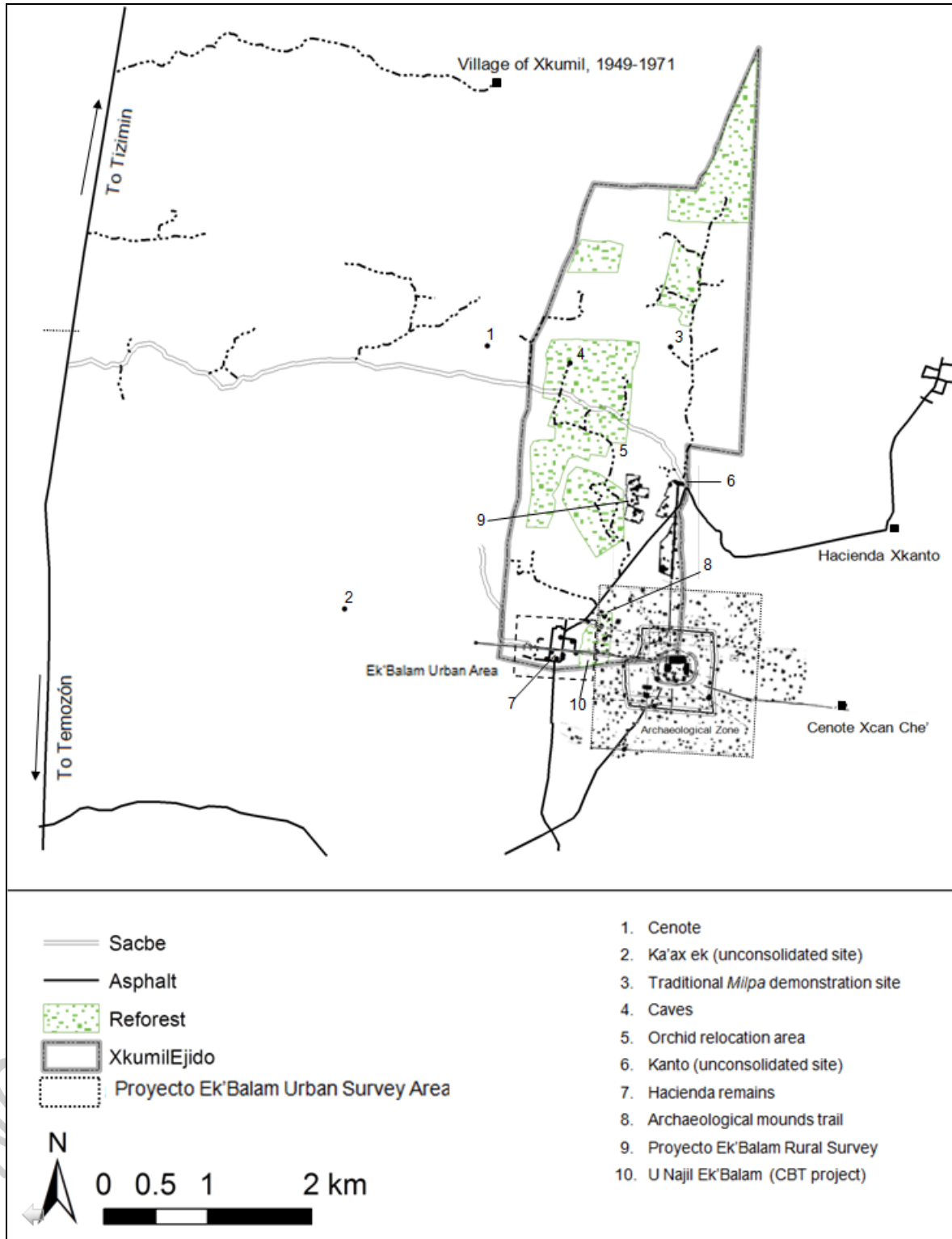


Figure 5. Ek'Balam's Ecosystem of Authenticity

In the minds of many residents in Ek'Balam, the ability to maintain this authenticity is dependent on their use of cultural capital and creation of symbolic capital. As *dueños* (caretakers) of this ecosystem, they are acting as stewards of all facets of their environment: cultural, ecological, and economic. They are fulfilling their role as “heirs of heritage,” and most importantly, they are Maya-enough.

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*Day-in-the-life Narratives**Summer 2004*

The sound of barking dogs, startled from their sleep and roosters crowing is heard throughout the night. Roosters do not wait until daybreak to crow, and instead are clocks that mark the passing hours. When the sun does rise, new sounds begin to drown out the roosters: a cacophony of gobbling turkeys, sleepy children stirring, men whistling to their dogs to head to the *milpa*, and radio programs. On Saturday mornings, the radios blare especially loudly, as people enjoy the four-hour Mayan language program broadcast from the local station. Smoke seeps out of kitchens and into the air, slowly at first then more quickly as the cooking fires get going. Women are stoking them to heat water for Nescafe or Chocomilk, after which they will heat up some of last night's tortillas or, on some days, they will pull down the bag of assorted *pan dulce* (sweet bread). On Tuesday and Saturday nights, a vendor from the *panadería* (bakery) comes through Ek'Balam honking his horn and selling baked goods. A weekly purchase of *pan dulce* is stored out of reach of the animals in the hanging rack that, for a brief period of its existence, was the front guard of an oscillating fan. Everything has a use here, regardless of what the manufacturer's suggestion was. Fan guards double as hanging racks for storage out of the reach of small children and animals, and as grills to place over the fire. Their shape conveniently mimics size and shape of the *comal*, balanced on the three rocks of the fire and used to cook tortillas. In the small homes that are prone to mild flooding, nothing can be stored on the ground, and there must indeed be a place for everything. The thatch roof provides many opportunities for storage, aided by long iron hooks that hang at various lengths and hold burlap sacks, pots, buckets, and cardboard boxes.

A lazy Saturday spent with the family in the summer of 2004, and the whole house is in
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high spirits. I took the day off from my usual roaming around the village to talk to people and did not leave the house and yard but a few times. The children are animated and fooling around, playing between their two languages and only letting me in on the Maya when they are satisfied that I have searched my tiny vocabulary and cannot find the word. Doña Gomercinda and Don Lucas keep up an occasional dialogue between themselves while still listening to everything we are saying.⁸ Doña Gomercinda, my ever-present translator and source of all knowledge, interjects with explanations in Spanish when she sees that I have been left behind by the rapid fire of short syllables and the raised voices that are reserved for antagonizing a sibling.

Eugenio, the eldest child at seventeen, is home from Temozon for the weekend and is spending a rare evening in the house. He attends high school in Temozon and lives with his aunt, Doña Dona, only returning to the village on weekends. If he stays on this path, he will be the first young person from Ek'Balam to complete his education through high school. If a student wants to continue beyond the 6th grade, they must leave Ek'Balam for Santa Rita, Aktuncoh, or Temozon. For study beyond the 9th grade, Temozon is the closest option.

Dinner this evening consists of a family favorite, *ensalada* with salted pork. Temozon is locally famous for its smoked meats, sausages, and salted pork, and a trip through there is generally not complete without purchasing at least a half-kilo of *salado*. Part of the animation of the children is due to Eugenio's presence and a great dinner, while the other part is because the long school year is finally over. This means that the hot and sticky days are filled with slingshots, corn sack shrouded forts, *chacara* (hopscotch) and a mountain of dirty clothes for Doña Gomercinda to wash every few days. The end of school means that Angel has more time to

⁸ Residents use the prefixes 'doña' and 'don' to refer to all married women and men, respectively. An honorific in reference to elderly people, it remains in common use in rural areas in Yucatan.

devote to his work at Eden Oasis. Joan keeps him and a handful of other young boys busy with gardening tasks and other odd jobs. While Joan is a controversial figure among some groups in the village, the Ay Balam family has a close relationship with her. Doña Goma works there as well, washing towels and linens three times a week. For his twelfth birthday, Angel saved up his earnings and Joan matched what he had to buy a new bicycle. Angel plans to go on to secondary and high school. Rosa, the oldest daughter, took the opposite route and left school after finishing sixth grade. She is thirteen and content to have time to help her mother around the house, perfect her weaving techniques, and work from time to time in the kitchen of the community's tourism project. The two younger boys, Federico and Nacho, are the hams of the family and keep everyone entertained, be it intentional or otherwise. They go everywhere together but are very different from one another. Each one has attributes that are almost the opposite of the other. Federico is already suave at just eleven, and an eager entertainer while Nacho is practical and gruff; a typical nine-year-old boy. Seeing them walk together, arms thrown casually over the other's shoulder and so complementary of each other that they sometimes seem like one boy, it is impossible for me to think of anything other than the Hero Twins of Maya mythology. The youngest child is Maria de la Cruz and she is the littlest child with the biggest personality. I think often about how much I will enjoy seeing her as a young woman. At six years old, she is sassy and sweet—though never at the same time—and quite seriously tells you that it is cold if you comment on how hot the afternoon is.

The kitchen house can hardly contain all of the energy of the family, and the boys float in and out, as they eat, joke, and then go into the main house to watch whatever is on the new color television that they have just finished paying off. Like them, the smoke from the cooking fire drifts lazily out through the separated poles of the curved walls and up through the thatch roof

and into the night air. The only constants during the meal are the patting sound of Rosa and Doña Gomercinda making perfectly round tortillas at a small table next to the fire, just as fast as the boys can eat them, and Don Lucas seated at the larger table eating and conversing in his unique way of part Maya, part Spanish, all the while glancing at Doña Gomercinda to fill in the spaces between.

Don Lucas was born in Xkumil and moved to Ek'Balam with his family as a young man. His was one of the first families to make the move in 1969, and seven of his eight siblings still live in the village. He is a tall man, with a long, regal profile. His skin is very brown, and his thick black hair is just showing the first signs of grey near his temples. I spend much time observing Don Lucas, and find that he spends just as much observing me. He notes every blister, bite, and scratch and he fusses at Doña Gomercinda when she does not notice or if she does not tell him when I am ill and not eating much. Don Lucas is an *ejidatario* and is one of the *socios* (associates) of the CBT project. He enjoys most of the work that he does for the project and trusts in the prospect of his participation being a good choice economically. The only part about it that he does not enjoy is when guests arrive during his shift as *velador* (night watchman). Every twenty days, it is his turn to spend twenty-four hours at the Cabañas. He does some gardening and takes care of any tasks that need to be done. He is also in charge of checking in any guests who arrive. Don Lucas, like all of the other twenty-three *socios*, does not speak English. His Spanish, like twelve of the other *socios*, is broken at best. When guests do arrive, he has a difficult time communicating with them and attending to their needs. This interaction is uncomfortable and even embarrassing for him and translates from the guests' perspective as poor customer service. Still, he maintains that this project will improve and says that he wants to keep participating so that once business does improve, his children will be able to work there. Like all

of the other families involved with the community-based tourism project, the Ay Balam household looks forward with great enthusiasm to the potentials it holds. “They say it will be like a new Chichén Itza, with gringos coming from all over the world to see the ruins,” Lucas explains. This is a statement heard regularly around the village. Everyone is waiting with baited breath for the onslaught of tourists, for better or for worse.

Once everyone has finished their food, Eugenio leaves with his brothers not far behind. They will follow him on their bikes as far as he will permit, after which they will join the rest of the young boys playing soccer and riding their bikes around the plaza. Doña Gomercinda, done making tortillas and satisfied that everyone has had enough to eat, comes and joins us at the large green plastic table. She and Rosa are always the last to eat, though Don Lucas lingers at the table or in the hammock until they finish. I sit with him on this night, enjoying the conversation we have all settled into now that the younger children have left. Doña Goma is entertaining us with a story about a family who came through that afternoon on the village tour. Joan started offering tours of the village to her guests last winter, and Goma’s house is one of the main stops. According to her, they had the biggest gringo baby she has ever seen. She often remarks on how big the children of tourists are. The first question she asks in most encounters is how old the children are. Now that summer vacation is here, there are always children running in many directions. She calls one over who is the same age to compare their size. When she inquires about this, she generally draws the conclusion that the gringos are able to take better care of their children because they are wealthy. Her first reaction when a family comes on the tour is to touch the children and to tell them to sit beside her if they seem uncertain. This is what she would do with any child, and so seems the logical response to making a timid child comfortable. She has learned however that often times the parents are the ones who seem uncomfortable with this.

They want to keep their child as far away as possible from the cooking fire, and they are not accustomed to strangers touching their children. Doña Goma equates this with her feelings about photography. She has observed over the past few years that tourists take photos of children. She worried at first, and often still does, that they were so interested in the children because they want to steal them. She deduced that they gave the photos to perspective adoptive parents. Joan has tried to quell some fears about photographs, but there is still a level of discomfort. For Doña Goma, it is subsiding in part because she has more interactions with tourists than many other women do in Ek'Balam. Between her work at Joan's and the village tour that stops at her house, she interacts with tourists on a regular basis. Some days she talks about telling Joan that she cannot host the tours anymore. Often times she devotes hours to getting ready just in case there will be a tour the next day. Guests in Eden Retreat's fourth year are still sporadic, so Joan can rarely give Goma much advance notice. This leaves her to fret about the ash and soot on the ceiling and the lack of adequate furniture to accommodate the gringos.

Once Goma has finished eating, she begins to put the food up in small pails that hang from the thatch on long hooks and stacks the dishes on the table to wash in the morning. Always the last to bathe, she pours hot water into a bucket and disappears into the bathhouse. All of the children and Don Lucas have taken their baths and left a pile of dirty clothes in the bathhouse. She calls out to no one in particular: "Very nice! Now I'll spend all day tomorrow washing clothes and there will be nothing to eat!" This elicits a response from Cruz and Nacho who have returned from playing and are settling in their hammocks. Nacho grumbles that he will kill a *paloma del monte* (mourning dove, literally 'dove from the forest') with his slingshot and cook it himself. Cruz, overtired from the day, begins to cry and say that she will be hungry tomorrow and calls for her mother to please come to bed. Everyone sleeps in the one-room thatch house

next to the kitchen. Hung from the beams are four brightly colored hammocks. Goma and Cruz sleep in one, Lucas and Federico in another, and Nacho, Beatrice, and Angel in a third. The fourth hammock is mine, and as much as I argue that I would be happy to sleep in the kitchen, everyone insists that there is plenty of room. Finally, Doña Goma finishes her bath and comes into the house. Lucas closes up the kitchen and turns off the lights, then shuts the back door of the house but does not tie the rope to secure it. Federico has returned, but Angel is still out riding his new bike. Eugenio is out with friends and will probably not be back for some time.

Once Lucas is satisfied that everything is in its place, he turns off the light and settles in to watch television with the rest of us. The television rests on a shelf near the ceiling where everyone can see it, and we all drift off to sleep watching the dramatic, opulent lives of characters in the current *novella* (soap opera).

Winter 2007

It is freezing tonight and everyone is trying to stay close to the fire. Eugenio is home, though shortly he will head out into the night to visit with friends and drink only as many beers as he can keep hidden from his mother and father when he comes in to sleep. He had been living with his aunt and attending high school in Temozon, but drinking got the best of him. This is an increasingly common pastime among the younger generation. No stores in the village sell alcohol however, so there is a common assumption among many families that living in Temozon increases the likelihood of young men learning to drink. Now Eugenio is working on the coast, in Playa del Carmen.

It has only been two months since 'Genio left home for the coast, and this leaves his mother quite worried for him. He realizes this, but sees migration as the only viable option for

him. He is not interested in farming, does not want to participate in the CBT project, and wants to earn money for his family.

The other children are excited when he is home and try to be as close to him as possible without annoying their big brother who now lives such a different life than they do. All are interested in his life there, though none shows interest in going themselves when they are older. They are young though, and this may change when it comes time for them to look for their own lives. Doña Gomercinda is aware of this, and will worry for them when the time comes as she now worries about Eugenio. As she says, you never know if he is healthy or sick, working or walking the streets. Cancun is a common option for young men in the village, and with every year, there are more and more heading to the coast to find work as masons, carpenters, and day laborers. This trend has multiple effects on the village. Some continue living in two places, with one foot in their traditional world and the other in the very fast-paced modern world of Cancun, while others make a complete move with their wives and children and return to their villages only occasionally.

Summer 2009

The air outside this afternoon is hot, dry, and relentless. It has not rained yet, and people are beginning to worry that the rains will not come in time. Doña Goma just returned from the Diconsa⁹ store with ten kilos of maize. There was not much of a harvest last year because of the lack of rainfall, so the Ay Balam family must purchase a large portion of their corn this year. Fortunately, Diconsa just announced that it would not raise the price of white corn this year as

⁹ The *Tiendas Comunitarias Diconsa* (Diconsa Community Stores) program aims to improve nutritional capacity in Mexico's rural communities of between 200 and 2500 residents. This program came to Ek'Balam in 2008, and has been very well received.

was feared. I ask Doña Goma how they are able to afford the maize, and she replies, “We can’t. *Estamos en crisis por la enfermedad que dicen* (We are in crisis because of the sickness that they are talking about).” It has been two months since the H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu) outbreak, and everyone is feeling the effects. Goma has not sold one hammock in two months and there have been very few village tours. They are cutting corners everywhere they can. She returned to Eden Retreat to ask Joan if she needs help with the laundry or cleaning, but Joan is barely able to stay open this summer and does not have the resources to take on any additional employees. Last week, she had to cut her staff to a bare minimum.

The house and yard are noticeably quiet these days. Eugenio is still in Cancun working, though there is not work for him every day and some weeks he does not work at all. This means he comes home less frequently and brings less money for the family when he does. Angel left last week for the coast to find work with his brother. Eugenio said that his boss was looking for additional people for a different job, so Angel will be able to make a little money. Don Lucas rides up on his bike to the Almendra tree where Goma and I are enjoying the shade. She is weaving a hammock with brown and olive green thread. Don Lucas thinks these colors are awful and tells her as much, but most women in the village maintain that having a military green hammock is the best way to make a sale. They know that gringos wear this color and that these are the most frequently purchased hammocks.

Don Lucas joins us and shares his news. He just returned from Temozon, where he went to work for the day fixing a roof. On the way home, he stopped at Doña Dona’s house to check on Rosa, their eldest daughter. Last month she eloped with a man from the village. This devastated both families, and created high tensions in the village. Teofilo, Rosa’s husband, is the son of Don Jose Cruz and Doña Filomena. Jose Cruz was one of the *socios* of the CBT project,

but dropped out of the project a few months ago. While Don Lucas is not one of the project's leaders, interactions between Jose Cruz and all of the remaining *socios* are tense. The Dzib Tuz family is large, and Teofilo's eldest sister is married to Don Lucas' younger brother. They have separated themselves from Lucas' family to such an extent that when his mother fell ill last winter, they refused to contribute money to her medical bills. When a young couple elopes, it creates a dramatic situation, suddenly joining two families who have had no time to consider the idea of the union. Rosa and Teofilo have been sent to live with Doña Dona for the time being while their parents cool off.

With the three eldest children gone, only Federico, Nacho, and Maria de la Cruz remain. Federico is fifteen now and is working with one of the groups in the volunteer summer camp. This summer the Conservation Corps of Yucatan (CCY) is holding their first summer camp program. There are 35 college students from all over Mexico, South America, and Spain in the village for this three-week program. They are divided into teams, and take turns working on the four community development projects initiated for the camp: adobe stoves, nature trails, a community museum, and an art project for the children. Each team has children of the CBT project's *socios* on it as part of the participatory nature of the program. Federico and his friends love it! It was not initially designed to attract only the young men in the village, but because it is inappropriate for young women to run around the town with strangers none of the *socios* let their daughters join the teams. Since the camp started two weeks ago, Federico only comes home to eat and to bathe. Two nights ago, he spent the whole night with the volunteers at the *comisaría* in the center of town. All of them are camping out there, and their local teammates are spending increasing amounts of time with them. His parents were upset, but they see how much he is enjoying himself and so let it be. Whenever someone asks where Federico is, Don Lucas replies

that he is at the party. “*Ek’Balam siempre está de fiesta ahora* (it is always a party in Ek’Balam now).”

Nacho on the other hand is uninterested in anything that has to do with the Cabañas, the volunteers, or tourists in general. This is the first time that the two boys are not spending most of their day together. Nacho brushes this off though, and talks about how happy he is to work in the *milpa*. The crisis forces Lucas to take any *chamba* (odd job) that comes up, so Nacho has been responsible for much of the agricultural work this season. He is as worried as his father is about the lack of rain.

It feels as though the heat is making each day longer and more difficult. Many households are in the midst of conflicts, which is all the more apparent because Don Lucas is currently serving as the town sheriff. In the last two weeks, someone coming to him about a conflict or altercation has awaked the household in the night many times. The crisis caused by the “*enfermedad que dicen* (the sickness they are talking about)” extends beyond financial woes and into the social life of the village. There are numerous allegations of *brujería* (witchcraft) being made against the Dzib kin group, and this has everyone on edge. One member of the Tuz kin group died quite unexpectedly in May, and another young man is gravely ill. Some residents whisper that Hilario Dzib Tuz is a *Way Miis*, and place the blame on him for these afflictions. The story of the *Way* is common throughout Yucatan. In short, the *way* is a human who can take the shape of various animals in order to conduct various nefarious activities in the night. In the case of Don Hilario, he is accused of taking on the form of a *miis* (cat) in order to move unseen through the night and enter houses of the Tuz kin group.¹⁰ Others believe that the entire kin

10 Ron Loewe provides a detailed discussion of this story in his article “The Wisdom of Way Kot: Art, Rhetoric, and Political Economy” (Loewe 2008).

group is at fault, and swap stories about sighting his grandmother with playing cards or other items associated with black magic, and of the unexplained vigor of her flowers in this time of drought. *Chisme caliente* (hot gossip) rises up from all corners of the village and blows around on the hot, dry breeze.

The contrast between the animated activities of the volunteer camp and the strained interactions among many residents is striking. I comment on this and Don Lucas tells me that it is *la canicula*. This is high summer when the ground is nearly bone dry. These are the dog days. *La canicula* makes everyone a bit harried as they hope for rain. The prospects are not good, according to him, because for the fifth consecutive summer the village will not hold a *cha' chaak* ceremony to call down the rains.

The heat is keeping everyone from being industrious, and we are all content to keep our activities confined to the shade of the Almendra. Nacho unties a bundle from the back of his bicycle and lays it out on the ground. He returned just before lunch from spending all morning in the *milpa* collecting the vines he is now untangling. He and Don Lucas set about cutting them to various lengths, and Doña Goma instructs me to go get my camera and my notebook. She is sure that I will want to take pictures and write about this. Don Lucas is teaching Nacho how to make a *xux*, which is a large cylindrical basket used for harvesting maize. It is carried on the back by a tumpline across the forehead. Nacho is animated and clearly waited some time for his father to teach him this craft. Not all men still make their own baskets, and it is a point of pride for Don Lucas to teach his son this craft. Doña Goma wonders if tourists would buy smaller versions of these baskets. Nacho responds “What tourists? *Ya no hay gringos aca* (there aren’t any more *gringos* here)!”

Summer 2010

Late afternoon under the Almendra tree outside of the block house, and most of the Ay Balam family is sitting around and visiting. Sundays are days for relaxing, and even Doña Goma is passing the time weaving and leaving the laundry for tomorrow. The talk around the house all afternoon has surrounded the “discovery” of an unconsolidated mound in the path of the nature trail. This summer’s volunteer camp is continuing work on the nature trail project started last year, and yesterday their work landed them at the edge of a large platform. Conflating anthropologist and archaeologist, the team leader came immediately to the house to find me, thinking that they had in fact discovered a previously unknown structure. Much to their delight, it was decided that a ceremony should be held to appease the *alux* (guardian spirit, *duende* in Spanish) guarding the mound and to cleanse any evil winds that may have been released by disturbing the structure.

This morning, the twenty-eight volunteers, Don Marcelo, Don Rafael, and I met at the site. The volunteers were walking along the trail from the Cabañas to the structure, and the three of us were coming from the village via the baseball field. On the walk there, Rafael explained to me the ceremony and expressed excitement in being able to perform it for the volunteers. I asked Marcelo if they would be doing this were it not for the volunteers. He replied that they would still make an offering if they disturbed a *mùul* (mound, archaeological ruin); but that it would not be very elaborate. Presumably, they would not be bringing their anthropologist and her video camera to document the event.

When we arrived, both men gasped. The sight of the twenty-eight volunteers and the numerous children who they had invited visibly upset them. Children are particularly susceptible to the evil winds, and are not permitted near monuments. I was aware of this concern, but

thought that it was a relic from a different time. Children accompanied me on numerous occasions to the archaeological zone, and the Ay Balam family and I visited Chichén Itza in 2007. No one had mentioned the danger this posed for the children to me before this morning. The two men scolded the children in Maya and they quickly dispersed. It was clear to the volunteers that they should not have brought the children, and the ceremony began with a somber hush over the crowd.

Now we are all discussing the ceremony as we wile away the afternoon enjoying *Charritos* (a popular puffed chip snack) with jalepeños and Coke. Doña Goma explains to me that the ruins in the archaeological zone are not the same as those found in the forest. They have been climbed, excavated, and reconstructed, and are visited by hundreds of people each week. “*Ya casi no tienen sus duendes* (They hardly have their guardians anymore).” It seems they have become disenchanted from the perspective of residents, and that the monuments themselves, much like the perception of their role as sites of heritage for the modern Maya, move through phases of enchantment and disenchantment. In contrast, the unconsolidated mounds in the forest are still enchanted places that move between being partially controlled by people (*milpa*) and being wild places controlled by unseen forces (*monte*). The original village site is a wild place that everyone has been talking about. We are preparing for an expedition there in only a few days. What began as a request to include the original village, Xkumil, in the mapping project has turned into a major event. About 20 men are now on board, most of whom have never visited this town where many of their parents were born.

Winter, 2012

The first days of the New Year are the *xok k'in* (counting days), that predict the weather for the rest of the year. The first through the 12th each represent a month, counting forward from January on the first. The 13th through the 24th are the months in reverse order. The six days between the 25th and the 30th each represent two days, and the 31st is the *gran final* (big finish); every hour beginning at 12:00am represents a month, first counting forward to 11:59 am, then backwards from noon to 11:59pm. The ability to predict the weather is important here, as it is for any farmers. The men carefully observe the weather during the month and discuss it at length in the evenings in conversations on the plaza and around the dinner tables.

Don Lucas spends much of dinner this evening going over the weather patterns of the first part of the *xok kin* with his four sons and his son in law. They have been out to the *milpas* nearly every day for the last week. Lucas says that he needs to see how much rain falls on his fields, because sometimes the amount of rain there will differ from the village. Teofilo, Rosas's husband, agrees and asks how the rainfall has been on Lucas' milpa. He is working both his father's and his brother's, which are in very different parts of the *ejido* from Lucas' parcel. Rosa and Teofilo 'escaped' (eloped) in June 2009. She is now twenty and has recently given birth to their second child. For the first part of their relationship, they lived with his family just down the street, as is customary. Since Sandra was born, they have been living at the Ay Balam house, and show no signs of leaving. The family has accepted Teofilo for the most part, though Eugenio still tries to rile him up when they are drinking.

Eugenio joins the conversation with questions about how much is left in the fields to harvest. Eugenio moved home from Cancun in September. He said that there was very little work there and he missed his family. Some work became available at the archaeological zone

replacing the huge palapa that covers the stuccoes, so he was happy to take it. The family is large now, and has spread out to fill all of the houses. After the hurricanes in 2005, the government program CONAFIT brought cinderblock houses to Ek'Balam and most other villages in the region. They finished the construction in 2006, but it remained mostly empty until 2009 when they finished the concrete floor and the stucco in the walls. Now both the blockhouse and the thatch house are full. The kitchen is jam packed with Goma and Lucas, Rosa, Teo, and their two babies, the four boys, and Cruz. We all eat in waves, with each one vacating the table when they finish. Cruz fills bowls and makes sure there are enough tortillas on the table.

Angel is also home from Cancun and alternates between helping his father in the milpa and doing odd jobs around town. He graduated from secondary school in Temozón in 2009, and planned to go on to high school. He took the exams and registered to begin in September. The summer of 2009 was a difficult one throughout Yucatan. In May the H1N1 (swine flu) epidemic broke out, which deterred most tourists from travelling in Mexico. At the same time, those who did generally spent less because of the economic crisis. This affected even households that still farmed, because that winter there had been an infestation of worms in the milpas, decreasing the harvest to nearly nothing. Angel decided that school was just too expensive and told his parents that he would not go. Instead, at only 17 years old he joined Eugenio in Cancun.

Federico and Angel sit side by side and periodically burst into laughter. They are half-listening to the conversation about the recent weather, and half-exchanging insults with each other. Federico is still in school and is as suave as ever. He loves to sing and desperately wants to learn how to play the guitar. He is convinced that being a musician is the way to a girl's heart. His preoccupation with girls at the age of seventeen is normal, but Goma still worries that he is going to run off or "get into trouble" with one of the volunteers with whom he is always

spending time. When the volunteers come either in large groups or individually through one of the Conservation Corps of Yucatan's programs, they work with the children of the CBT project's *socios* on whatever project it is that they are assigned. Lucas is one of the eleven remaining *socios*, so his sons are often invited to work with the volunteers. Federico jumps at these opportunities and talks to me at length about how smart and pretty the female volunteers are. Unfortunately, these interactions have also left some young men with irreparably marred reputations. The volunteers go home, but the young men who were seen spending so much time with them are seen as being unfit for local girls to date and, potentially, marry. This situation has damaged relationships between some families as well. When a girl's parents deny a young man the privilege of visiting their daughter, his family often takes great offense to this because it is a reflection on how they raised their son. Luckily, Federico has not yet gained this reputation, but he tells me that it is only a matter of time.

In contrast, Nacho has no interest in the volunteers or the CBT project in general. Both he and Eugenio encourage Lucas to quit the project because they think that it is a waste of effort and resources. At sixteen, Nacho still spends his days going to school, helping his father in the fields, and improving his aim with the slingshot. He is still gruff, and is much more serious than his brothers. He does not care for dressing up, and refuses to use the hair gel from the big tub that his brothers use daily. He says that when he is in the forest it does not matter what he looks like and that is where he wants to spend his days. The times that he softens up are when he is playing with his niece and nephew, Sandra and Nestor.

Maria de la Cruz has made sure that everyone has enough to eat and is now back to taking care of Nestor. His uncles were feeding him, but have announced that he is a disaster and are happy to give the job back to their littlest sister. Cruz is a young woman now, at thirteen and

a half. She is in sixth grade and will graduate from primary school this summer. Like her sister, she refuses to commit to secondary school. Her teacher and her parents hope that they can change her mind as the time draws closer, but her siblings know how stubborn she can be and doubt that she will. What Cruz does look forward to are the afternoons that she spends with her nephew. Since he was born in March, 2010, she has been his primary caregiver. At the time, Rosa and Teofilo were living with his parents and Cruz woke up early each morning to pick up Nestor from their house and bring him back. She would feed him and get him dressed before school started. Doña Goma cared for him until classes ended at noon. Cruz would come running home and go directly to him. Now, at nearly two years old, he calls Cruz ‘mama’ and calls Rosa by her name. When Nestor comes up in conversation, most of the women around town comment on how Cruz just instinctually knew how to care for him. They speculate that she is touched with the gift of being a midwife. Doña Goma’s sister, Doña Dona, is the last local midwife that residents use. Most women go to the hospital now to give birth, even though it is very expensive. Ever since Beatrice became pregnant and began being cared for by her aunt, Cruz has shown an intense interest in midwifery. Many residents are pleased to see this, because she is the first young woman to show any interest for learning the trade. Dona is 65, and believes that in two or three years she will be too old to continue delivering babies. Between caring for Nestor, school, and helping Doña Goma with housework and weaving, it is hard for Cruz to imagine time for anything else. For now, Cruz’s response is “*quien sabe!* (who knows!).”

As always, the boys drift in and out of the kitchen. When everyone is done eating, only Lucas, Goma, Teofilo, and I remain. They are teaching me more about the *xok kin* and explaining how these predictions can alter their planting schedule. Last year they had the first good harvest in four years, and they are hopeful that this one will be the same. Doña Goma meanwhile puts up

the leftovers and heads to the bathhouse. Tonight, as on all other nights, she is the *xtu'p* (the last one) to bathe. She likes to wait until after she finishes cooking because it gets so hot next to the fire. On this night, she will wash the dishes instead of leaving them for the morning. She is expecting a tour at 8:30am and wants to be prepared. The tours have become second nature to Doña Goma and the family, and she has been teaching gringos to make tortillas for more than eight years now. She enjoys joking with them about how many tortillas she needs daily, and how long it would take if she had to rely on their help. I sat in on the tour a few days before, and noticed that she smiled for the camera and directed them to take advantage of various photo opportunities before she moved onto the next part of the process. I ask her about this as we finish up the dishes, and she says that the photos do not bother her any more. She marvels, "How many places in the world has my face been? I never would have thought that people from all these other countries would know who I am."

With that, she laughs and dries her hands on her nightshirt. "*Tak a wenel, xunan* (you should sleep, xuna), you have to go to the milpa with Lucas tomorrow, right?" I agree, and remind her that she has a big day tomorrow as well. First, a group of seven will arrive at 8:30am for the tour, and then she has to go to Temozón to visit Dona Doña. The next stop is Valladolid to make a payment on a loan, and then home to make lunch. In the afternoon, there is a meeting with agents from SEDESOL checking up on the garden project. Finally, in the evening, she is hosting a volunteer who is here working on the nature trail project. When I finish this long list, she jokes that everyone comes to Ek'Balam to work on a different project, but managing the requirements that come along with each group seems to be her project.

Most everyone has settled into his or her hammock to watch television. Half of us are in the blockhouse and the other half in the thatch house. Both houses have televisions, but the

blockhouse now has satellite cable. Everyone has been enjoying this for the past three months. Eugenio pays for it, because he says that his younger brothers, sisters, niece, and nephew can learn from it. The Discovery Channel ushered in 2012 by airing and re-airing a series called “2012: The Maya Prophecies.” We are enjoying the episode about the crystal skulls tonight, and they are filling me in on some of the episodes that I have yet to see. Teofilo rolls over in his hammock and asks me “what do you think, Cuma? Will the world end in December like they say? Do you believe it?”

I reply “*min crextik* (I don’t believe it)! But plenty of people are wondering about it.”

To that Eugenio exclaims, “Maybe they will all come here to find out! That would be a lot of tourists!” The advertisement is over and the show starts again. We all return our attention to it, and fall to sleep thinking of crystal skulls, apocalypse, and hammock sales.