

Maya Cosmopolitans: Engaging Tactics and Strategies in the Performance of Tourism

Sarah Taylor
Department of Anthropology, AS 237
University at Albany, SUNY
Albany, NY 12209
staylor@albany.edu

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Abstract

Maya heritage is embraced throughout Yucatán as a crucial component of tourism promotions. This, coupled with an emphasis on multiculturalism, makes the state itself a local actor in the marketing of Maya identity through the creation and funding of community-based tourism projects. This article takes as its point of departure Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) discussion of the shifting role of the state in shaping "local communities," referencing a Maya village in the Mexican state of Yucatán as the context. The aim is an understanding of the articulation of local tactics to conceal cosmopolitanism while remaining competent in the eyes of funding agencies and the strategies employed by the state that reinforce the importance of performance for tourists. The desire on the part of state creates situations in which individuals are expected to exist in concurrent states of authenticity and modernity; as both traditional and cosmopolitan.

Introduction

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 for them 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 paper 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. The promotion of tourism at archaeological sites brings into question issues such as politics of patrimony and the management of ruins, as well as the present-day negotiations surrounding land rights in archaeological zones and the internal and external forces involved (Breglia 2006) and the intersection of heritage, tourism, and identity in and around the archaeological zone (Castañeda 1996, 2003). New emphases on multiculturalism and neo-liberal development models (Loewe 2009) in the state and federal promotions of tourism in México and the Yucatán Peninsula in particular complicate the view of Maya identity either as a colonialist construct (Castañeda 2004, Hervik 1999, Restall 2004) or as a continuation of cultural traits from the pre-Columbian period.

Ferguson and Gupta (2002), following 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 article 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

Ek'Balam, Yucatan is a village in the center of the Yucatán Peninsula with a population of approximately 300. What makes this village different from others in the region is its proximity to the archaeological zone of the same name. In 1994, the archaeological site of Ek'Balam was opened 300 meters from the village of the same name. This gave tourists the opportunity to see some of the most impressive pre-columbian stucco work found in the Maya world.

Understandably, these ruins quickly became a very popular attraction. In response to this influx of tourists, the *ejidatarios*—land owning men—of the village have constructed and opened a community-based tourism project. In 2001, they received the first grant from the *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas* (CDI) or the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Villages, and in 2002 they received a second grant from the *Comisión Nacional Forestal*, or the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR). The stated goal of the project was to develop lodging and an eco-tourism destination to cater to the increasing number of tourists. Their project consists of eleven cabañas, each accommodating four to eight guests for lodging and a main kitchen and dining area. The grounds and structures are inviting, but the project is only marginally successful at attracting business and has had about 1000 guests in the eight years since they opened.

Archaeological zones in the Maya World have been important attractions since before the tourist era began. The nearby ruins of Chichén Itzá have been part of the public imaginings of “Maya Yucatán” since the widespread popularity of John Lloyd Stephens’ “Incidents of Travel in Yucatán” (1843), which introduced the world to the ruins through Frederick Catherwood’s detailed illustrations. The ruins at Ek’Balam have a much different history than the more famous sites surrounding them; however, because of the unique artifacts found there they are quickly gaining popularity. One of the comments made by nearly every tourist who visits is about their delight at being able to climb the pyramids and walk around all sides of the site. This difference has been growing slowly but steadily, and was punctuated by the closing of the towering El Castillo structure at Chichén Itzá in January 2006 in an attempt to stop the damage caused by the thousands of visitors who climb it daily. Now Ek’Balam is the closest site to Cancún that has an impressive, climbable pyramid.

Yucatán's tourism promotion agency, *Secretaría 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 Yucatán" (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.

In 1990, John Urry introduced the concept of the "tourist gaze" to the field of tourism studies, and it has greatly influenced subsequent studies (Perkins and Thorns 2001:186). Urry defined this idea as a departure from Foucault's "medical gaze" as presented in *The Birth of the Clinic* (1976). 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.

The idea of “performing tourism” is discussed by increasing numbers of scholars engaged in the study of tourism. Walter Little focused on the public performances for tourists in Guatemalan marketplaces (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.

All of this brings us to the ever-elusive question of authenticity. Is there a difference between traditions that are maintained in relative isolation from tourists and those that are performed specifically for tourists? Does the authenticity of one render the other in-authentic? Conflicting views on these questions are found in the literature on tourism (Medina 2003:354). According to Dean MacCannell (1976), authenticity that is staged ceases to fall into the category of an authentic cultural expression. Erik Cohen (1987) disagrees and discusses a new category for such “performances; “emergent authenticity.”

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, 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. 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” (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, this paper argues 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 (Fieldnotes 2004_06-17)

I was familiar with the two rituals he mentioned, because not long after my arrival in Ek'Balam in 2004, I was invited to the annual *Ch'a Cha'ac* ceremony. The *Ch'a Cha'ac* 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. This is an especially crucial time for residents of Ek'Balam; 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 Cha'ac* sometime in the first two weeks of July. During my second stay 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 Yucatán (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 scene is lit by the strobe-ing of 60 flash bulbs, 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 house, I asked what “real” Maya was. Doña Lupe 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 *huipile*. Maria de la Cruz, the youngest daughter, added that she thought that Maya meant both being a *mestiza* (a woman who still wears a *huipile* daily) and speaking Maya. Lupe quickly saw the contradiction in this and exclaimed that if she made me a *huipile* to wear that I would be *sac 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 *huipile*, and the actual Maya women were not because they spent the ceremony working in the kitchen. A simple *huipile* 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 Jose, 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. From the point of view of the development agency, this is positive; this is progress.

Subsistence agriculture is not rational from a neoliberal economic standpoint. What we see repeating here in the relations between state agencies and residents of indigenous communities is really the classic “economic man” discussion as laid out by Frank Cancian: He asks, “are peasants able to be economic maximizers or are they unable to maximize because they are bound to traditional production strategies” (Cancian 1972:1)? This question has been posed, answered, re-phased, and even discarded, however we have not actually moved as far from it as we would like to believe. Guillermo de la Peña (1981) questions some of the models of modernization, unilineal change, and the peasantry that have been presented with regard to this question. He argues that, “the national economy—more precisely, the process of capital accumulation—has entailed the existence of ‘non-modern’ sectors, articulated to ‘modern’ organizations” (1981:26). 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 uncosmopolitan 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” (1984:36). In contrast, a tactic is “a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus” (1984:37). 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)” (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 Yucatán 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 Yucatan 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 (2004).

The Pity of Modernity

The first thing one learns about the typical tourist in Ek’Balam is that they are not, regardless of how it may at first appear, a tourist. In fact, they are working hard to inform themselves about

their destinations and the people and experiences they will encounter there. 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. 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 is perceived as different or more authentic by the typical tourist in the village.

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?

The sentiments expressed here are not unknown to residents of Ek’Balam. They are, in fact, regularly reinforced by their repetition in the context of tourist encounters, by CDI staff visiting and advising the project, and by the media (with which residents are highly engaged). 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.

Conclusion

The Yucatec Maya in the states of Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo have long had the attention of anthropologists. In the last 50 years, they have caught the attention of tourists as the Maya Riviera was developed into a world-class destination. Now in the México of multiculturalism and neoliberal governance, indigenous groups, have become the focus of the state in a new way (Gledhill 2004). The maintenance of this focus however is dependent on their actions as proper citizens and, as Castañeda has termed them, as “heirs of heritage” (Castañeda and Mathews, in press). Implicit in the mandate to participate in development, requires being “bound to a restricted notion of indigeneity and community that effectively keeps their demands at a safe distance” (Overmyer-Velasquez 2007). This indigeneity is itself tied up in tourist expectations, which in turn guide the decrees of external institutions. The mandate is, above all, to be Maya.

This discussion of cosmopolitanism, performance, and governmentality in the context of rural tourism development provides ethnographic evidence that frames negotiations with tourism and touristic performance. As previously discussed, they are forced into a space between cosmopolitan and indigenous, tradition and modernity, in which they must cater to very different demands. Residents are constantly producing and reproducing their identity as Maya and indigenous while flexing their knowledge of touristic desires and good business sense in order to create and maintain a successful engagement with the tourism industry. I argue here that this is a product of the alternative development strategy of community-based projects, and can be found in many similar contexts outside of Ek’Balam, and even Mexico. The movement of the

government to an encompassment model complicates their interactions with residents and blurs the expectations they have for the projects they fund. Moving fluidly between a hands-off, “if you build it they will come” form of governmentality and a high-involvement directive to “be as Maya as you can be” is but one of the strategies possessed by government funders. The response to these strategies at the local level, as we have seen through the examples provided here, is the creation and employment of the multiple tactics necessary to perform tourism.

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