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RELIGIOUS CHANGE AND THE RECREATION OF COMMUNITY IN AN URBAN
SETTING AMONG THE TZOTZIL MAYA OF HIGHLAND CHIAPAS, MEXICO

by

KATHLEEN SULLIVAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1998

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Acknowledgments

This dissertation, like so many others, is based upon many years in the field (1991-1996). When I first arrived in San Cristobal de Las Casas seven years ago it was after a long bus ride from Acapulco. I was tired and very hot, so the ride up through the winding peaks of Highland Chiapas was refreshing. As one approaches the Indigenous villages their differences in traditional clothing, Maya dialects, and the variety of artisan products are framed by corn fields, vast tracks of oak and pine forests that are being cut for firewood and lumber used to build houses. In the more recent years the presence of Judicial Police in their black pickups and military patrols brings a sense of order and security to some, but for most indigenous people and *ladinos* it promotes fear and tension. Yet it is the ever-growing suspicion of one's neighbors, coworkers, union members and even, the members of the church or temple that wears most upon everyone. Frequent roadblocks, protest marches, and missives from the Lacandon Jungle, i.e., sub-Commander Marcos, were just some of the social facts, along with people's memory of them, that filled the backdrop during fieldwork from 1995 through 1996. So much of what I experienced as a person was influenced by the social context of what we were living: a tense period of low intensity warfare. Several examples come to mind such as, being followed by an unmarked black van on several occasions; being under surveillance and photographed in public places, even when I objected; receiving threatening phone calls and a written death threat; as well as having my residence broken into and some of my belongings stolen or destroyed by fire. Certainly, all of this effected me and to some extent it has given me insight into what it is like to live in Chiapas today. Still Chiapas is experiencing some very exciting times because the civil society is expanding and the number of NGOs increasing while

participatory democracy is occurring at various levels. I wish to frame my research within the ambivalent Chiapaneco experience of which I was a participant observer as well as an observer participant. At times I was concerned for my own safety, yet more often for the safety of several of my informants, *compadres*, colleagues, friends, and acquaintances. The advantage I had was that I knew my status there was temporary and that I could leave immediately if necessary. The reader should also know and try to understand that I will return, for although it is chaotic in Highland Chiapas and one wonders if anyone can control the situation without a military coup, I trust that things will settle down. Following many of my informants I also have a dream that once again corn will be sowed and reaped by the same person; that forced migrations will stop and that an understanding can be reached between the 'traditionalists' of San Juan Chamula and the expelled. I also join the many "moral overseers" that I have come to admire in the hopes that the evangelical communities surrounding the city of San Cristobal will be transformed into enclaves of living Christianity.

The fact that I have finished my dissertation implies that I have socially incurred debts much greater than the ones I will owe to Sally Mae. The principal debt is of course to the many Chamula women and men who befriended me, my host families in Rincón de Witz and Mt. Zión, a large number of informants ranging from fictive kin to acquaintances and friends. Although many have given permission to use their names I have judged it more prudent to use pseudonyms for them and two sites of my research. Since I have an ongoing relationship with many of the people whose voices are present in this text, it is important to them that people here in the United States understand their life situations while still providing for their privacy. To all of the Chamulas who have crossed paths with me *koloval*, that is, thank you; to the

ladinos that I have interviewed or chatted with during my stay in your country *gracias tambien*.

None of my dissertation fieldwork would have ever been completed had I not been affiliated with CIESAS-Sureste. Anyone who is serious about doing anthropology in Chiapas knows the research center, Centro de Investigacion y Estudios Superiores de Antropologia Social - Sureste, located on the road to Chamula. I was lucky in that I had met Graciela Freyermuth in 1991 and through a letter from her I was later granted affiliation as a visiting investigator during 1995 and 1996. The coordinator of the center, Dr. Gabriela Cetina-Vargas has the vitality of a student, the insight of a senior professor and the openness of a culture broker. Both Gaby and her husband, Igor, along with Ron Nigh, Graciela Feyermuth, Raul, Lupita and Sarita facilitated my every need and this made my stay in Chiapas productive, as safe as possible and enjoyable. Another institution in San Cristobal, Instituto de Estudios Indigenas - Universidad Autonoma de Chiapas (UNACH) served as a resource library and Marie Elena Fernandez the current director could always orient me to any reference regarding the Chamula case. Ana Maria Garza and Juanita Ruiz were available to listen to 'my take' on certain events with the Protestant colonies and always helped me see the broader picture. To all of you it will mean a gathering at the Casa del Pan when I return to deposit copies of my dissertation.

Professor June Nash has been the adviser who is friend, colleague and mentor wrapped up in one. June introduced me to Chiapas in 1991 and has been invaluable in so many ways that words do not suffice. I owe thanks to my committee, Shirley Lindenbaum and Ida Susser for their encouragement and perspectives on the data that I had collected and the numerous

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The Graduate School and University Center has its own staff and over the years I have gotten to know many different people: President Frances Degen Horowitz, Barbara Heller and Bert Flugman at CASE, Director Ronald Hellman and Dr. Eugene Miller at the Bildner Center for Western Hemispheric Studies, the Honorable Seymour P. Lachman currently State Senator for the 21st District who was my boss while he was the Dean for Community Development, Dr. Michael Costelloe of the National Collaborative for Public and Nonpublic

Schools, Dr. Michael C.T. Brookes former director of The CUNY BA / BS Program and all their excellent and encouraging staff. During my six years at GSUC-CUNY several cohorts of anthropologists and a host of future academics from other disciplines have entered my life. Although I graduate I don't want to give the impression that it was easy. Those familiar with my history know that due to financial burdens I withdrew in 1991. I also was at the point of dropping out during the summer of 1994. It was for me the all time low because I internalized the lack of funding with academic achievement and, even worse, took it all personally. Then just to make matters worse I had signed up for and attended the session on writing a proposal for the Fulbright application. That was when I met Sharon Lerner. I can't express in words what her patience and encouragement meant to me. Thanks to her reading approximately twelve rewrites of my proposal to go study religious conversion in Chiapas and the Chamulan *expulsion* phenomenon, I not only stayed in graduate school, but received funding for both my research and write-up.

Among my peers at CUNY there are several colleagues who have stuck by me over the years. Pauline Herrmann was someone who shared a similar family background and cultural heritage with me. We were very close. I still miss Pauline and trust that she can see that I have finished, as I know she also would have completed her degree. Walter Bartolome, a friend who also worked among the expelled Chamulas, also died relatively young. Janet Page and Paul Reeves have always been there for me, along with Luz Martin del Campo and Jennifer Lutton. To each and everyone, thanks for the moral support.

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Table of Contents

Copyright.....	ii
Approval Page.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	x
List of Tables.....	xiii
List of Maps and Figures.....	xiii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Mapping Research Sites.....	22
Chiapas.....	22
San Cristobal de Las Casas.....	24
San Juan Chamula.....	27
Rincón de Witz.....	33
Mt. Zion.....	42
Chapter Two: The Political Structure of Chamula.....	50
The Cargo System.....	50
The <i>Caciques</i>	60
Conversion as a Response to Political and Moral Changes:	
Converts as “Moral Overseers”.....	67
Chapter Three: The Expulsion Phenomenon.....	82
The Chamulan Expulsions as <i>Cacique</i> Oppression.....	84
Land and the Profit Motive.....	86
The Democratic Process.....	90

Familiar Conflict and the Expulsions.....	97
Chapter Four: <i>K'op Riox</i> : The New Prayer.....	111
The Growth of Protestantism	112
Protestantism in Chiapas.....	112
Presbyterians in Chamula.....	114
Five Temples in the “Misery Belt”.....	117
1) The Presbyterian Founding Temple.....	118
2) The Seventh Day Adventist Temple.....	122
3) Assembly of God Temple.....	126
4) Independent Tzotzil Pentecostal Temple.....	132
5) The Aborted Pentecostal Mission.....	137
Religious Conversion.....	143
The Conversion Process.....	145
Religious Conversion Accounts.....	149
Chamula Conversion Accounts.....	152
Spiritual Motives for Religious Change.....	155
Seeking Sobriety and Finding the Lord Jesus.....	157
Political Motives.....	162
Serial Conversions.....	164
Chapter Five: The Role of Gender and Conversions.....	184
A Gender Myth: The Rooster Story.....	185

Balance / Imbalance.....	190
Shifting Gender Roles.....	194
Bleeding Less.....	198
Women, Alcohol and Conversion.....	203
Grandmothers as Protagonists of Change.....	205
Mateo's Conversion and Sobriety.....	207
Case Histories.....	213
Chapter Six: Assessing the Consequences of Conversion.....	233
Beyond a Cost-Benefit Analysis.....	234
Reassessing the Motives for Conversion.....	235
Reassessing Motives for Converting by Social Class.....	237
Social Class and the Expulsions.....	239
The Expulsions from Ik'alumtik.....	248
Indian Organizations within the Protestant Enclaves.....	254
Toward a Chamula Community Spirituality.....	264
Chamula Midwives.....	268
The Maya Value of Respect.....	272
Chapter Seven: Summary and Conclusions.....	281
Appendix.....	290
Glossary.....	290
Sbeik Jchanvunetik.....	294

Bibliography.....	296
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List of Tables

Table 1: Amount of Land per Household.....	38
Table 2: Occupations by Households.....	39
Table 3: Land Status Prior to Expulsion/Migration.....	87
Table 4: Households by Religious Affiliation.....	116
Table 5: Reasons for Religious Conversion.....	154
Table 6: Family Structure by Social Class.....	195
Table 7: Social Class at the Time of Expulsion.....	237
Table 8: A Comparison of Social Class Before and After Expulsion.....	239
Table 9: Indigenous NGOs Among the Expelled.....	256
Table 10: Length of Stay in Religious Affiliation.....	265
Table 11: Religious Practice Among the <i>Expulsados</i>	266

List of Maps and Figures

Map 1: The Highlands of Chiapas.....	2
Map 2: Chiapas: Regional Physical Features.....	21
Map 3: Tzotzil Evangelical Relocation Communities.....	26
Figure 1: Emotions and a Needs-Based Approach to Religious Change.....	161
Figure 2: Cycle of Serial Conversions.....	162

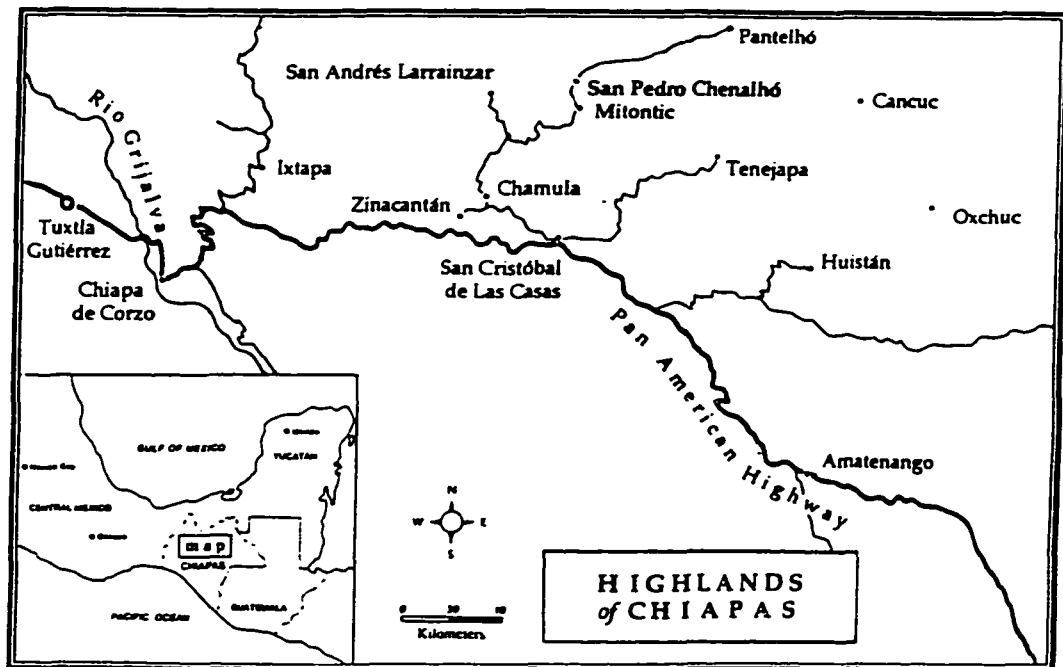
Introduction

Among the Tzotzil Maya of Highland Chiapas, Mexico (Map 1), the rate of religious change has increased steadily since the 1970s. The massive conversions to evangelical Protestantism indicate a fundamental reorientation of indigenous society that begs description and analysis. This dissertation analyzes the many triggering causes which motivate some individuals and families within the township of Chamula to convert from traditional Catholicism to evangelical Protestantism and how this is tied in with the elite's expulsion of non-*cargo* participants. It attempts to construct a model of conversion behavior which links the realities of social class, gender and power with the consequences of socio-religious change.

In particular, I propose two theses. First, I suggest that many *evangélicos*¹ (Sp., evangelicals, Protestants) were rallied not so much by the "call to follow Jesus," or even the effectiveness of the preachers. Rather, they responded to a spiritual energy which sprang from their sense of moral responsibility for the soul of their community and the preservation of the tenets of tradition. In this sense, *evangélicos* are the "moral overseers" attempting to return their community to the traditional values and morals of the culture. Secondly, a number of "converts" consider these experiences to be spiritual encounters when personally confronted with the rippled effects of three principle macro processes—migration, transformation of peasants into wage laborers and class formation. Therefore, what is labeled "religious conversion" may mask other processes that occur

1 All translations from Spanish (Sp.) and Tzotzil (Tzo.) to English are mine unless otherwise noted (see Appendix I).

Map 1
The Highlands of Chiapas



Source: *Women and Alcohol in a Highland Maya Town*, Christine Eber (1995).

when indigenous people leave traditional religion to become *evangélicos* and may explain the serial conversions that take place. Throughout the dissertation, ethnographic data is used to demonstrate the above theses.

I argue that religious change in Chamula is really a reinforcement of cultural codes still extant in indigenous communities of Chiapas. Because many Chamulas perceive a decline in traditional values, they seek to redress the disparities between the “ideal” and their current reality. This redress is not expressed so much as it is lived through the practice of evangelical Protestant values. Thus, as Chamulas become evangelicals, they assume the role of “moral overseers” creating, convert by convert, a restorative movement. A great deal of spiritual energy fuels this movement that frequently expresses itself in religious terminology. As Mayas sift through evangelical Protestant values, they identify with moral principles akin to their own spirituality, e.g., homogeneity, respect and harmony. These moral arbiters are agents of change, promoting the continuity of their urban community through selective adaptation of certain aspects of evangelical Protestant ideology and practice. This restorative movement allows the expelled converts to find safety under the “eyes of their ancestors” (Nash 1970) while they recreate “community” within the city and negotiate the terms of religious tolerance within the village.

This case study questions the adequacy of the catch-all term “conversion” to convey the situation in Chiapas because it obfuscates the multiple processes at work. Among the *evangélicos* in Mt. Zion, a *colonia* (Sp., squatter settlement, c.f. Rosenbaum 1993:179) of Tzotzil converts in San Cristobal where I did fieldwork, for example, one finds multiple explanations for the “conversion” of individuals from traditional

Catholicism to evangelical Protestantism. While some individuals may have experienced an authentic spiritual awakening, others may have embraced Protestantism as a means of assuring a spouse's sobriety; acquiring a new husband; finding acceptance within the newly exiled community, or experiencing "the better way." Therefore, to understand "conversion" among Chamulas, one must recognize the multiple factors involved in becoming an *evangélico*.

In addition to the above explanations for conversion, the experience itself of leaving traditional Catholicism to become an *evangélico* is intertwined with a number of macro processes which often occur simultaneously with the conversion experience and which frequently veil the religious experience itself. Alongside conversion, I have identified three other processes that often occur along with conversion and the subsequent expulsion of *evangélicos*: 1) the movement of rural producers into wage labor and artisan production; 2) migration from rural to urban settings; and 3) class formation and the subsequent intra-communal oppression of Indians. Throughout the dissertation, these processes are analyzed as they relate to and explain "conversion." Here I review each one briefly.

1) Changing Social Relations of Production

For centuries, the social relations of production progressed as peasants (rural producers) moved into wage labor and commercialized artisan production. The last twenty years have intensified that trend (Collier 1993; Eber 1995; Gossen 1974; Nash 1993; Wasserstrom 1983; Rosenbaum 1993; Rus 1994, among others). The prosperous years of the petroleum boom (1977-81) brought many Chamula peasants from the agricultural wage labor in Soconusco, among the coffee plantations, into construction

work either for state-funded projects or in the private development sector (Rus 1990; Collier 1993). The majority of Chamulas produce only 5 percent of their annual consumption needs on their plots of land (Wasserstrom 1983). They seek the best salaries for their labor and, in the late seventies, construction paid more than coffee.

According to Diane Rus (1990), Mexico's external debt crisis dealt these men a sudden blow in two ways: first, the construction projects disappeared; and, second, the unfortunate increase in Central Americans seeking refuge and employment did not allow the Chamula men to return in great numbers to the coffee groves in Soconusco. The result was unemployment with subsequent depression, drinking, domestic violence and a rise of single female parent households as many men abandoned the region. Some left the Highlands seeking work while others sought to escape a situation within which they could no longer identify themselves as *batz'i vinik* (Tzo., true men) who are capable of providing food for their families.

Simultaneously, a new economic sector developed in Chiapas: tourism. It was a result of the Cancun development and improved access to the Maya ruins. Indian women soon realized that, if their husbands could not make money, they could do so by selling crafts to tourists. The sudden intensification in the domestic mode of production, as commodities exchanged in the market netted more immediate income than cultivation, threatened to change the balance of power within families (Nash 1989:5 and 1995; Rosenbaum 1993; Rus 1990). Diana Rus (1990:8) calculated that the cost of materials and the hours of labor left a minuscule net profit for women. Even the most skilled weaver enters into the social relations of production with either a *Ladino* (Sp., non-Indian) shop owner or a cooperative in order to survive. Often to make ends meet,

women will produce crafts at home, make articles for one of the cooperatives, and sell in the streets (Sullivan 1992). The economic situation of the early 1990s forced more and more women to devote their time and energy to crafts which required less labor time (such as, wrist bands), with materials that cost considerably less, such as cotton (Rosenbaum 1993; Rus 1990; Sullivan 1992).

2) Rural - Urban Migration

Religious intolerance, political oppression, land seizures perpetrated by the *guardía blanca* (Sp., white army) employed by many cattle ranchers, landlessness and the seeking of wage labor all have exacerbated the movement of people from rural to urban settings in Highland Chiapas (Gossen 1989; Nash 1995; Perez Enriques 1993). In addition, individuals and entire families are expelled from their hamlets by village leaders because they have changed, or are thought to have changed, religious affiliation. There is also evidence of the strong alliances between the *cacicazgo* (Sp., Indian leadership, sometimes referred to as a “mafia”) and the state, whetted by the desire of some men in the hamlets to become *caciques* (Sp., ruling elites) at the expense of moral values relating to family, kin and ancestors.

The *expulsados*’ (Sp., the expelled) re-creation of community in San Cristobal is developed throughout the thesis. There are many similarities between the Protestant enclaves on the outskirts of San Cristobal and the hamlets of San Juan Chamula, particularly the primacy of the Tzotzil language. Chamula women dressed in traditional clothing are living symbols of cultural continuity. Other visible signs include sweat baths, small patches of corn and the sheep that are raised in some *colonias*. Settlement patterns also tend to mimic, whenever possible, those of the hamlet in their preference for

proximity to family and extended kin. Still, some differences transcend the spatial boundaries of township and city.

Because many Chamulas perceive a decline in traditional values, they have become “moral overseers” who seek to redress the disparities between the “ideal” and their current reality. This moral rectification is not expressed so much as it is lived through the practice of Protestant values. The differences between the urban and rural settlements are resolved at many levels within the Chamula diaspora. While many Chamula “converts” are motivated by a moral ascendancy which is sustained by a high degree of spiritual energy, this does not deny the existence of many others who have ambivalent experiences.

Although some Chamulas are willing migrants to the city, the majority are expelled. There is also a fluid population that comes into the city for a time, returning to the village as their socioeconomic conditions rise and fall. In addition, the population of the city of San Cristobal swelled with the arrival of frightened Indians from the conflict zones throughout the state of Chiapas after the Zapatista rebellion of 1994. Any sudden rise in population may cause tension and precipitate conflict over the distribution and delivery of public services. The existing infrastructures proved inadequate and many urban *colonias* organize around strategic efforts to obtain potable water, sewer systems, schools and paved roads. Some factions within the *Ladino* population argue that Chamulas “ruralize the city rather than assimilate to city lifestyles.” Within the context of this love-hate *Ladino*-indigenous relationship, the expelled frequently look to religious practice for ways to protect themselves from what Gutieras Holmes (1961) calls “dangers of the soul.”

3) The Dynamics of Class Formation

Chamula is not a homogeneous village, rather it is a stratified and complex society. Social class is defined by a combination of any two or more of the following: income, the ability to generate income, occupation, prestige and status. As we have seen above, most Chamulas are land poor. However, there are liquor-shop owners, transporters and money lenders who control the political-religious organization and who occupy the majority of the political administrative positions. These are the *caciques*. Differentiation is not as visible among women. Since many women earn an income through traditional roles of raising sheep and weaving, this gives an illusion of homogeneity. However, my research has shown that some raise their own sheep, weave and sell their own products while a growing number of women buy traditional clothing and artisan products for resale, lamenting the fact that they no longer have time to weave (Sullivan 1992).

In addition, in the early 1970s a growing "middle class," composed of truckers, small farmers, school teachers and merchants, successfully organized to oust the exploitative *cacique*, Salvador López Castellaños, seeking greater political representation through a democratic process. This event marked a watershed year for the *cacicazgo* since the oligarchy united to rig the elections replacing López Castellaños with their own candidate, Augustine Hernández López. Hernández López began "cleansing the village of all the Protestants who were accused of inciting the people" (Iribarren 1980). There is little doubt that López Castellaños was corrupt. While director of the Indian Worker's Union (STI), López Castellaños used his power and influence within the township for his own gain against the better interests of indigenous migrant workers. Still, Chamula politics transformed dramatically when he was sentenced to jail by the state in 1974.

Therefore, as the Catholic clergy assisted Chamulas in galvanizing themselves to end the oppressive reign of López Castellaños, perceived as the “bad Indian,” state representatives of the Institutionalized Revolutionary Party (PRI) supported the elite’s candidate, Hernández López, in his attempts to maintain control over the township in exchange for votes. It is as if a line were drawn in 1974 and every Chamula from then on would be suspected of being “*evangélico*” for the slightest form of dissent or disagreement.

Still, this growing wealthier group has not become crystallized since the majority of Chamulas continue to identify themselves as agriculturists. At the ideological level, any concept of class formation is denied yet, in reality, heterogeneity does exist. The corruption of some leaders and the co-optation of other *caciques* by the National Indian Institute (INI) in the 1950s and 1960s was exacerbated by the uneven rewards, kick-backs, and at times, unsupervised administration of funds characteristic in the distribution of developmental projects of the 1970s (Nash 1995:27).

The combination of these macro processes, i.e., the movement of rural producers into wage labor and artisan production, migration, class formation and intra-communal conflict, occurs simultaneously. Still, there are specific epiphanies (e.g., the election of 1974) that reveal to individuals the stark reality of their social context which threatens the harmony within Chamula. This environment of marked socioeconomic disparity is accompanied by a variety of triggering symptoms--illness, jealousy, alcoholism and domestic violence--that prompt many to look for a “better way,” one that is in line with their cultural ideals. Thus, what may appear as a conversion / expulsion experience may be the result of any one or more of these three factors.

There are two levels in this ethnography: the individual and the communal aspects of religious change. I focus upon the conversion processes, testimonials and conversion accounts in order to disaggregate motivations for adopting a new religion. Since my research is situated in the socioeconomic context of Chiapas, it attempts to promote insights into class dynamics, forces within the religious *cargo* system, and the processes promoting differential familiar prosperity. A cost-benefit analysis drawn from the case studies indicates that people are not limited to making “western” cognitive choices when they choose to become evangelicals or to remain Catholics. Rather, the overlapping complex processes of daily life promote choices that are later defined along religious lines. Therefore, the binary opposition models characteristically employed in studies of conversion are too neat and fail to describe the complexity of the Chamula conversion experience.

At another level, because Chamula evangelicals tend to convert as individuals whose very sense of “self” rests upon participation within a community, there is an essential dialectic between individual religious conversion and community construction. The correlation of multiple motivations with gender, social class and ideological orientation of a convert reveals a pattern of identification with core values that reaffirm the “ideals” of Chamula culture to which the *expelled* cling as they adjust to urban lifestyles. Religious affiliation is very important for indigenous communities because participation in economically and politically significant festivals is related to land ownership. Within the indigenous communities of Highland Chiapas, “conversion” frequently occurs in an environment of persecution. In addition, failure to participate in the *cargo* system almost always provokes expulsion from the village.

Still, many Chamulas currently living in the Protestant enclaves in San Cristobal were not *evangélicos* when they were expelled. Therefore, the dynamics of the expulsion phenomenon is essential to the community level of the analysis because it illustrates how political dissent, socioeconomic disparity and the “failure to follow tradition” play out in a climate of religious intolerance and oppression. This case study highlights the primacy of a “community” to identify and define religious “conversions,” rather than individual “converts,” proselytizers or evangelical ministers.

Through a comparison of two Chamula communities of Highland Chiapas, based upon twenty months of fieldwork (1995-1996), this thesis explains that conversion and expulsion are closely related although not always in a directly causal manner. It suggests that the processes involved in the massive social and political transformations engulfing Chiapas today are connected to the conversion phenomenon by multiple interactive factors and that no single cause can be ascribed to an entire population.

This dissertation examines religious change within the hamlet of Rincón de Witz, in the municipality of San Juan Chamula, Chiapas, Mexico. A secondary focus is Mt. Zion, one of the Protestant communities within the city of San Cristobal. Mt. Zion was formed by *evangélicos* -individuals and families- who were *expelled* from their village by *caciques*. Various studies have linked the motivating factors behind religious conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism² to either poverty, marginality, alcoholism, illness, or to attempts to avoid the expenses of, or the complete dearth of, the *cargo* system. My working hypothesis is that families of different social classes have different motives to

2 Following Bastian’s (1993) critique of the use of labels laden with European experience, the use of “Catholic” and “Protestant” are problematized here.

convert. These range along a continuum from transcendental (ideological-theological) to problem solving (economic, social, political) concerns. Religious change is, in many cases, a creative and multidimensional response to distress, crisis, oppression, marginality and disillusionment.

This dissertation is based upon fieldwork conducted over a six year period. While the bulk of my stay was concentrated during the months of January 1995 through July 1996, the thesis is also the end result of continued contacts with a number of informants. I began cultivating relationships with my two host families during the summers of 1991 and maintained contact during the summers of 1992 and 1993, in addition to spring 1992. Throughout my research I employed the anthropological methods of participant observation, informal and formal interviews. During the summer of 1991³ I conducted a census of the expelled artisans in the main plaza of San Cristobal. The summers of 1992 and 1993 were used to collect life histories and numerous conversion accounts. My doctoral dissertation fieldwork included a six month stay in the hamlet of Witz and five months of daily commuting to the colony of Mt. Zion. I continued to observe events, collect life histories, religious conversion accounts and religious genealogies for the remainder of the stay. I also conducted interviews and the socioeconomic surveys at dual sites while commuting from an apartment in the city of San Cristobal. This was necessary to assure confidentiality and it also prevented undue suspicion of my host families since many informants assumed that any information collected would be shared with them.

3 As a student chosen for summer fieldwork Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) financed by the National Science Foundation.

The opportunity to observe and record daily activities, community events, feast days, rituals and family celebrations was essential for understanding the social context within which “conversion” occurs. Reciprocating with my informants frequently meant assisting at a birth, providing medicine, paying an occasional electric bill, taking blood pressures, teaching someone how to read and assuming the responsibilities of *madrina* (Sp., godmother) for baptisms, weddings and graduations. The data from the socio-economic survey (30 households in Witz, 102 in Mt. Zion) were used to analyze the actual socioeconomic effects, if any, of “conversion” upon prosperity and of expulsion upon class differentiation in Mt. Zion. The life histories collected from persons occupying different social positions proved to be culturally rich and to demonstrate the between what “converts” hoped to obtain and what actually happens to them once they are expelled from their hamlets.

While analyzing the religious conversion accounts collected in 1993, I realized that more in-depth and comprehensive data were necessary. I therefore collected 16 (8 women, 8 men) religious genealogies from a representative sample of the population studied during 1995-1996. These religious genealogies provided historical information to trace the conversion processes within kin groups and to analyze how kin alignments may condition households for expulsion. The genealogies and life histories were also key to understanding the dynamics behind the high incidence of serial conversions.

There are a number of terms throughout the dissertation that must be clearly defined in the way in which I use them. These terms are:

- 1) *Evangélico* is the Spanish term for evangelical that most Protestants use to describe themselves (Eber 1995; Fortuny 1994 and 1988; Perez Enriques 1994; Rosenbaum 1993).

It is also, paradoxically, the word that many Chamulas who live in the outer hamlets use to label Progressive Catholics (see below). In Rincón de Witz the reason Chamulas give for using this term is that "they [the progressive Catholics] are trying to evangelize everyone."

2) *Traditionalist* is the term employed for the group of orthodox Chamulas⁴ who maintain the *cargo* system as well as the fictive closed community within the township of Chamula.

3) The *expelled* are the 35,000 or more indigenous people who have been expelled from their villages for religious, political or social reasons, or who have migrated to the city for any of the above motives over the past twenty years. Included in this number are some migrants who have assumed this label either as a shortcut for self-explanation or to benefit from the support systems available within the evangelical enclaves, such as one of the non-governmental organizations or state funding agencies.

4) *Progressive Catholic* is employed for those Catholics who are sacrament[al] in practice, who have some form of base community formation built on bible sessions that are run by catechists, who actively attempt to convert others to their branch of Catholicism and who were expelled from their hamlets for these reasons. No one whom I interviewed employed the term "Catholic Action" used by Eber (1995) in her study of Chenalhó. In addition, due to the differences between the Catholic Action experience in Guatemala (Warren 1978; Menchu 1984; Montejo 1993) and the situation within

⁴ Occasionally the press will use "traditionalists" to infer *caciques*, and although *caciques* tend to be traditionalists within the village setting, this thesis challenges this exclusive use of the term. Furthermore, as will become evident later, very few Traditionalists are *caciques*.

Chamula, I refrain from employing this term since it would be problematic.

5) *Temple* (Sp., *templo*) is the term used for a church of evangelical origin while church (Sp., *iglesia*) is employed in this context for a building used for Catholic purposes; the only exception to this is the Temple of San Juan in the village center of Chamula. Chamulas refer to their place of worship as temple and I respect this usage. In addition, since the term sect (Fortuny 1995; Eber 1995) is derogatory in the Catholic sense, I refrain from using it. Whenever possible denomination or temple will be employed.

6) *Religious "conversion"* implies: identification with a set of beliefs, a certain temple and its community; compliance with requirements of the religion; and cognitive change. I employ religious change in the title because it is inclusive of religious conversion and the change in religious affiliation that tends to remain at the level of identification according to my informants. Current literature and "converts" themselves frequently conflate the two terms, however, throughout the dissertation a number of voices illustrate the differences between these two processes.

This dissertation consists of seven chapters presented in three sections. The first part of the dissertation consists of three chapters and sets the stage for understanding the findings of the research through a geographical presentation of the research sites, the political structure of Chamula and the expulsions. Chapter One provides the geographical scene within the state of Chiapas, Mexico. It introduces the Highlands of Chiapas and my field sites: 1) the hamlet of Rincón de Witz in the Maya township of San Juan Chamula and 2) the urban colony, Mt. Zion, situated on the outskirts of San Cristobal.

Chapter Two presents the political structure within Chamula. It focuses upon the

caciques and the importance and vitality of the *cargo* system. I then introduce the thesis of converts as “moral overseers.” The development of the *cargo* system and the Chamula style of *caciques* are analyzed since they are key to understanding the elements that push some to “convert” and the events that lead others to be expelled. The concepts of “safety,” or “under the eyes of the ancestors” as many of the expelled express it, and “community” are developed because they are essential to understanding the Chamula perspective of “conversion.” Convert by convert, these moral overseers react to the moral and political changes within the township and to fear of the “evils of the soul” which prompt many Chamula converts to take the “better way.” Recognizing the moral principles of respect, harmony and homogeneity within evangelical Protestant virtues, a “convert’s” acceptance of the *k’op riox* (Tzo., literally word of God, translated as new prayer or new religion c.f. Rosenbaum 1993:198; Eber 1991:362-395) represents a resurgence of moral codes more than that of cognitive change.

Chapter Three documents the interplay between politics, religion and self-interest in the expulsion phenomenon. One cannot understand the complex processes of religious conversion without understanding the village culture in which “converts” live and the political and social factors that prompt the *caciques* to expel *evangélicos* and potential “converts,” that is, dissidents alike. While the next section develops the religious scene, it is necessary at this point to discuss the role of both the Catholic Church and the Protestant ministries in light of the persecution and expulsion of *evangélicos*. The focus here is on the dual aspects of evangelical Protestantism as the *caciques*’ justification for the expulsions and the popular expression for subaltern groups in an oppressive society (Bastian 1983:170; Martin 1990). This chapter also introduces the concept of

homogeneity among Chamulas as a prerequisite for social harmony. Homogeneity continues to be one of the primary cognitive principles influencing *caciques* and converts alike.

The following three chapters analyze religious change in Highland Chiapas. Chapter Four begins with the arrival of Protestant missionaries and traces the growth of Protestantism. In the case of Mesoamerica, religious conversion for indigenous peoples is a centuries old project that was never “completed” in its Catholic phase (Gossen 1993; Gossen and Leventhal 1989; Menchu 1984; Stevens Arroyo 1995; Stoll 1990; Warren 1978) any more than in its evangelical Protestant period. This chapter explores the concept of “conversion” from a community oriented point of view. Based upon case studies, I restrict the translation of *k'op riox* to “new prayer” since this approximates my informants’ use of the term. This perspective challenges western definitions of a turnabout or cognitive change, theories that are often based upon European experience.

In Chapter Four I also analyze the motives for changing religions and link them to significant events within the village and to the lives of individual converts. Considering the high incidence of serial conversions in Chiapas, I explore multiple patterns for religious switching. Based upon religious genealogies and life histories, the serial conversions of Lucia, Santos and Domingo support my hypothesis that through conversion “converts” attempt to gain *communitas*, i.e., a community modeled upon the “ideals” inherent in the moral code of *batz'i vinik*. These case studies exemplify how the overlapping complex processes of daily life promote choices which are later defined as religiously motivated.

Chapter Five examines the interplay between gender roles and religious

conversions. It explains the appeal of evangelical Protestantism for some women and questions the traditional assumption that organized religion always disadvantages women. While most Chamulas still aspire to normative gender roles, some contemporary women are expressing their creativity by conversion in order to redress the toll which alcoholism has taken upon their families. In relation to the theses, while Chamula women frequently “bleed less,” i.e., embody the high costs of expulsion, as “converts,” they also, in spite of some apparent ambiguity, are consistently protagonists of change: assuming the role of “moral overseers” for their family, kin and community.

Chapter Six provides a cost-benefit analysis of religious conversion based upon the socioeconomic survey. The quantitative data show that social mobility in Mt. Zion is related more to ties with political parties or labor unions than to ascribing to Protestant ideology. It proves that religious change has little effect upon prosperity at the household level. As an extreme example of the consequences of conversion I include the case of Miguel, one of the martyrs at Ik'alumtik, because his religious genealogy makes clear that religious affiliation is based upon historical and not theological differences. In addition, the qualitative data indicate a high incidence of traditional Chamula religious practices, especially those performed in the *sna* (Tzo., home, house), which foster continuity with the Maya past. I also employ “spirituality,” rather than, religion. I define spirituality as the kind of religion that is personal to the way people think, believe, feel and act, i.e., their worldview. “Personal” need not imply private, any more than it does individual, within the Chamula context. Therefore, for many “converts” it is a “community-based spirituality” (Díaz Stevens 1996) that informs religious change.

The Maya “sense of community” is discussed through the virtue of respect

because it permeates all the case studies as the desired core ethos. This chapter includes more examples of the *evangélico's* search for homogeneity and harmony, a search that supports the thesis that they are not responding so much to the “call to follow Jesus” or words of a preacher. Thus, the recognition of a causal relationship between an individual *batz'i vinik* or *batz'i ants* (Tzo., true woman) and the external influences of modernity, perceived to be “the real evil threatening communal harmony,” is what motivates many Chamulas to see the *k'op riox* as the “flowering path,” i.e., “the better way.”

The Summary and Conclusions sum up the evidence presented in the previous chapters. I have established the essential dynamic between individual religious conversion and community construction. It is now clear that the appearance of instability through repeated religious change is only the veneer. Deep down these “moral overseers,” who occasionally illustrate high incidence of religious switching, have only one goal. Their objective is to recreate a community united “under the eyes of the ancestors.” In this context, religious change represents a spiritual resurgence, expressing a convert's aspiration to live up to the “ideals” of her culture.

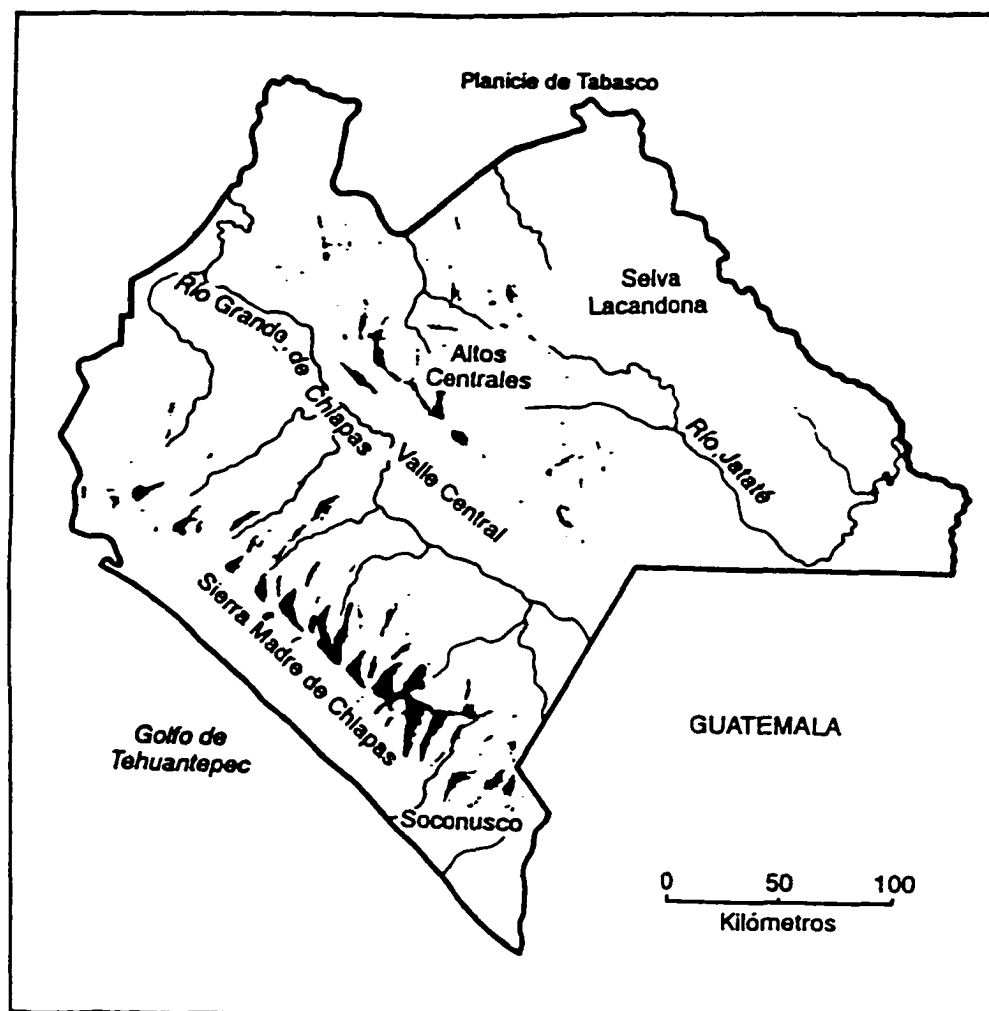
Finally, I suggest, based upon ethnographic data, that neither the motives for religious “conversion” nor the expulsion can be effectively analyzed without linking them to the socioeconomic conditions in the village and the particular needs of “converts.” In addition, the expulsion phenomenon illustrates the use of religion as a pretext to contain dissidence and exercise control. Therefore expulsion is not the same as migration. Migration leads to assimilation of indigenes. Most of the expelled do not integrate with *Ladino* (Sp., non-Indian) society despite proximity. Rather they live in a Chamula diaspora under the “eyes of the ancestors,” maintaining their ethnic identity as a

communitas in the urban context.

Throughout each of the following chapters, I organize and analyze data in terms of the two theses that run throughout the dissertation, namely, that some *evangélicos* “convert” from traditional Catholicism to evangelical Protestant religion as a way of preserving traditional tenets and the moral culture of their communities. Their “conversion,” therefore, is a form of social protest of the aberrations of power and control exercised in the religious *cargo* system and the *cacicazgo* that evolved in their township. Moreover, while adopting the *k’op riox* intimates sedition and an explicit rejection of the social, political and religious bases of Chamula society, religious conversion, in and of itself, does not necessarily equate casting aside the “ways of the ancestors.” Secondly, I attempt to sort out and describe the socioeconomic processes that are frequently masked or expressed as religious conversion.

Map 2

Chiapas: Regional Physical Features



Source: *A Rich Land, A Poor People: Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas*, Thomas Benjamin (1989).

Chapter One

Mapping The Research Sites

In order to understand “conversion” among the peoples in Chiapas, as well as the processes that are frequently masked as conversion, it is important to situate Chiapas, and especially my two research sites, both geographically and socio-politically. Historically, the politics of Chiapas have been determined in large part by its geography. The distance from Mexico City, its politics and funding have greatly influenced how the Chiapenecos thought of themselves vis-a-vis the nation. In this chapter I describe the location and composition of Chiapas, the Highlands of Chiapas, San Cristobal de Las Casas and San Juan Chamula. I then locate my two research sites, Rincón de Witz and Mt. Zion, within the larger areas. Finally, I discuss the social structure of Chamula, in particular the *cargo* system and the *caciques*.

The state of Chiapas (Map 2) is located in the southeast part of Mexico. It consists of 75,634 square kilometers divided into nine contrasting geographical zones: Central, Highlands, Frontier, Frailesca, North, Jungle, Sierra, Soconusco and Coast. Chiapas extends from the rich planes of Soconusco to the marginalized Sierra Madre, from the heat of central Grijalva, to the cold parts known as the Highlands, from the Lacandon jungle, next to the mountains and valleys of the North, to the plains of the Gulf.

Chiapas is a state of contrasts. Its variety in cultures and its complex history, the persistent economic inequality, its natural richness and its 3,203,915 (INEGI 1992) inhabitants make it difficult to view it as a unit. The best lands have been in the hands of 20 families. In 1992, it was the state with the most agricultural claims regarding

ownership title, which constitutes 25 percent of the total national land dispute claims pending.

Chiapas is the second-most productive state contributing to the national agricultural and animal husbandry production. It produces 55 percent of the electrical energy in the country, while 60 percent of their homes use wood and charcoal as the only source of energy. It is the second largest meat producing state, however it consumes less meat than any other state. Chiapas is also third in corn production and first in coffee, contributing to more than 35 percent of the national production. Yet 41.6 percent of the homes were without running water and 58.8 percent were without drainage in 1992 (INEGI 1992).

In the state of Chiapas, the Highlands has the third largest population density, mostly formed by the Tzotzil Maya ethnic group. From 1980 to 1990 the annual growth rate of the Chiapenecan population was 4.51 percent whereas the nation's annual growth rate was only 2 percent. Malnutrition in Chiapas is at 66.74 percent. By 1992, the 25 principal causes of mortality were labeled as illnesses belonging to marginal areas, that is, caused by extreme poverty and a lack of access to potable water and other essential needs supplied by the infrastructure. Contrary to national demographic patterns of population aging, in Chiapas the population is young. Forty-four percent of Chiapenecos are under 15 years of age, making this the state with the largest population of that age rank.

In 1990, the illiteracy rate nationwide among people older than 15 was 12.4 percent; in Chiapas it was 30 percent; Chamula 60 percent while in Mt. Zion it was 66 percent. In San Cristobal de Las Casas alone, 25 percent of its inhabitants do not know how to read or write. In 1990, 59 percent of the population in the state between the ages

of 6 and 14 did not have access to schools; 62 percent of Chiapanecos over 15 years of age had not completed the sixth grade, while 13.8 percent had graduated from elementary school, and only 22.8 percent had further studies. Among the economically active population, only 1.12 percent had a professional degree. These sad realities became common knowledge to many Mexicans thanks to the media coverage of sub-commander Marco following the Zapatista rebellion in January 1994. It was a rude awakening for the majority of Mexico, both civilians and politicians alike, to learn that the state of Chiapas had more socioeconomic conditions in common with its neighbor to the south, Guatemala, than it did with the central and northern part of Mexico.

The City of San Cristobal

The municipality of San Cristobal de Las Casas is centrally located in Chiapas, the *Mexico profundo* (Sp., deep Mexico⁵) characterized by unacknowledged cultures and profound marginality described by Bonfil Batalla (1996). The major cultural and governing center, San Cristobal de Las Casas, is also the commercial center for the Indians of the Highlands. The last two decades saw the city's population double as the poor came looking for employment, or came seeking refuge within the "*cinturón de miseria*" (Sp., misery belt) after being expelled from their land. According to municipal statistics, the indigenous population has increased by 12,000 since the 1994 Zapatista rebellion (Cuarto Poder 12:6:1996).

Founded in 1528, San Cristobal de Las Casas is a cosmopolitan city of 89,251 people according to the results of the 1990 census. The population increased to 100,000

⁵ The spanish translation 'deep Mexico' is literal. The intention of Bonfil Batalla was to draw his readers to the subtext of Mexico's culture, i.e., the true and enduring aspects of

by 1995 (INEGI 1996).⁶ San Cristobal was the first city founded by the Spanish in Mexico and the second city in the continent. According to historian Andres Aubrey (1991), the primacy of the city's founding, and its ability to survive were not acquired with social privileges, nor with favors from the national government, but conquered with the effort and creativity of the city's poor. Even after four hundred and sixty years, the poor of San Cristobal are still one of the driving forces for change within the municipality.

Until 1946, San Cristobal was still *finis terrae*, the end of the Pan-American Highway which was not extended into Guatemala until the 1970s. Bartra's (1975) description of peripheral zones fits this city located within the isolated Highlands of Chiapas. The Highlands served as a refuge region (Beltran 1967) with the accelerated development of hydroelectric power and oil in the 1980s. The city itself, populated primarily by *Ladinos*, has always been surrounded by barrios of Indians. Since its founding, the indigenous belt existed in a subordinate yet separatist relationship with the rest of the city's inhabitants (de Vos 1986:25). The proximity of the Indian belt to the marketplace and residential zones in the city continues to maintain tension with the *Ladino*⁷ population despite attempts to force the Indians further from the city. As a

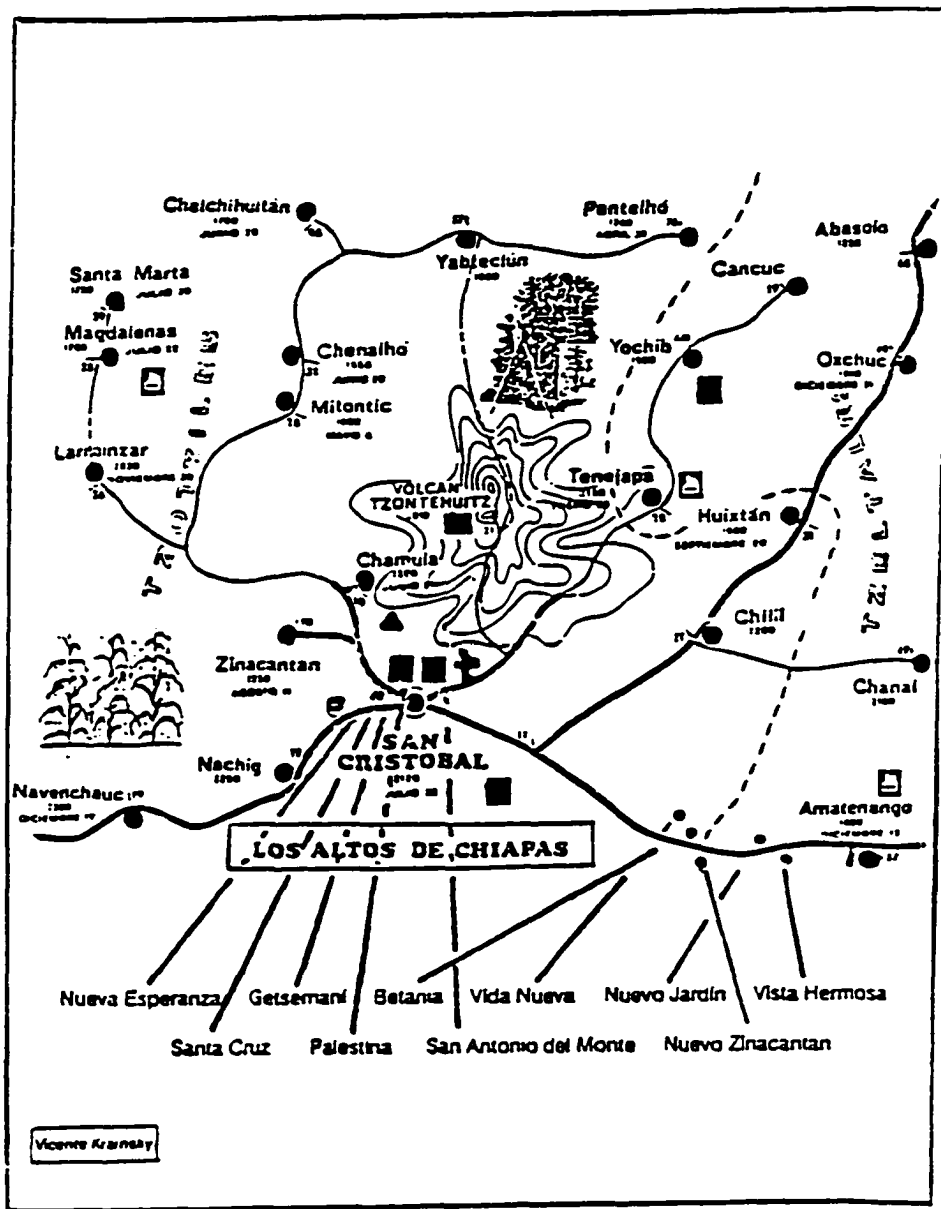
its precolombian heritage. It is in this sense that it is employed here as well.

⁶ This figure has been the topic of debate ever since its release. During interviews the consensus was that the city has between 120-150,000 inhabitants. Underestimating the city's inhabitants has many possible political ramifications. Although several local demographers were of the opinion that the decade from the 1980s-1990s when no growth was apparent in statistics was due to over-estimates by government officials.

⁷ Mariano Lopez M. had the following to say about *Ladinos*: *Many years ago my father told me that the Ladinos had a dog for a father. A dog and a ladina had intercourse. They did it many times, and the woman became pregnant. When her son was born, he was*

Map 3

Tzotzil Evangelical Relocation Communities



▲ Rincón de Witz, Chamula hamlet ✝ Mt. Zion

Source: *The Dynamics of Persecution*, Vernon Jay Sterk (1992)

the first Ladino. And they multiplied. That is why Ladinos have no shame, why they embrace and make love by the side of the road, just like dogs.(Gossen 1974:303; Gutierrez-Holmes 1961:157)

colonial city, San Cristobal has been receptive to the indigenous population for their participation in the market while attempting to maintain some sense of separatism between the two ethnic groups: *Ladino* and Indian. In many ways the "misery belt" serves as a frontier because, despite the differences between the 'traditionalists' and the expelled, they are of the same race and ethnic group. The Protestant enclaves are geographically located in the northern section of San Cristobal and serve as a border, even a buffer zone, between the market and San Juan Chamula's closest hamlet, Milpoleta, which borders my rural research site, Rincón de Witz.

In order to understand the meaning of conversion among the Tzotzil Maya in Highland Chiapas, it is imperative to place the people in the political, economic, social and religious contexts of their community. The following section focuses on the two sites of this study, namely, the Maya township of San Juan Chamula and one of its smaller hamlets, Rincón de Witz. Several authors (Benjamin 1994; Collier 1994; Ewin 1994; Gossen 1994; Nash 1995, 1996; Rus 1995 among others) have already documented the socioeconomic and political situation in Chiapas today, whenever possible I refer the reader to them for more detailed descriptions. The particularities of the *cargo* system and the new breed of *caciques* in the Chamula will be discussed below because both phenomena are central to the processes of conversion of the *evangélicos*.

The Township of Chamula

San Juan de Chamula (Map 3) is located 5 miles to the northwest of San Cristobal de Las Casas, the commercial and cultural center of Highland Chiapas. Chamula is one of the largest Tzotzil speaking Maya municipalities in Chiapas today. The population is reported as 90,000 (INEGI 1995) although these figures are questionable. The population

count in Chamula is complex because the young girls are hidden from state and government officials (Modiano 1991). Since these invisible daughters participate in the domestic tasks as well as in artisan production, they are essential to the family's survival. If they are not registered, the parents are freed from the obligation of sending them off to primary school. Coincidentally, hiding daughters dissipates the pressures placed upon the *cacicazgo* by the Secretary of Public Education (SEP) to increase the ratio of girls counted in the *paraje* (Sp., hamlet) schools. As a result, many girls are simply not counted when SEP conducts its surveys in the hamlets.

The word "family" does not exist in Tzotzil. The Chamula social unit is the *sna* (Vogt 1969, Gossen 1974) which is Tzotzil for his/her house. This domestic group is made up of married couples and their children. The *sna* is the major sphere of social interaction and economic cooperation. This extended domestic group lives on inherited land and participates in local fiestas and rites of passage; they are a patrilineal and patrilocal society. Kin terms, such as "daughter," "son" and "sister" are extended laterally throughout a hamlet; *compadrazco* (Sp., godparenthood), the fictive kin relationship created through baptism also extends the social network of reciprocity. The domestic group has the greatest responsibility for the children's socialization (those who attend school receive a wider sphere within which to socialize); it shares the burden of a curing ceremony, blessing of the corn fields, and several of the annual fiestas (Gossen 1974:32).

The Chamulas are land poor. When they live in *parajes* they raise sheep, grow corn, squash and beans. The subsistence activity for the men consists in cultivating the corn fields. Because 77 percent possess only a fraction of the fourteen hectares required

to be self sufficient (Bartra 1975; Wasserstrom 1976), the men supplement farming by seeking wage labor. While fulfilling domestic chores and caring for the children, many women are also connected to the market economy through the production of artisan products. An ever increasing number of Chamula women spend their day in San Cristobal selling edibles or artisan products in the market (Barrios 1991; Rus 1990). According to Diana Rus (1990), Chamula women produce items that, although less time consuming, are made of increasingly cheaper materials that result in little or no profits. The women who remain in the village hamlets socialize at the waterhole, during feast days and during family visits.

Gender inequality is highly structured in Chamula. It penetrates the daily activities and is reinforced ideologically through the humoral system introduced by the Spanish. This system relates women to the lower portion of the hot-cold scale: the moon and the earth as recounted in oral tradition (Gossen 1974; Rosenbaum 1993; Nash 1997). I cite here only two examples of how this affects village behavior:

- 1) When the domestic group goes out of the household they walk in single file: the husband leads both his wife and children;
- 2) A woman does not wear shoes because shoes are viewed as material objects that interfere with a woman's contact with the earth.

One explanation for women walking barefoot is that they can not afford shoes because the money that might have been spent on footwear was used for *pox*⁸ (Tzo., rum

⁸ *Trago* (Sp., a shot of alcohol) within the Chamula municipality, as well as in many of the Highland townships, is almost exclusively restricted to *pox* (pronounced *posh*). This drink is employed in ceremonies both of the fiesta and curing types, as well as the endless social events where participation in drinking is socially required of the individual (Eber

liquor). Among the women in the hamlet of Rincón de Witz the opinion is that men walk first because it is easier for them to walk more quickly. As Maria puts it: "Juan can out run me because I have a child on my back and am often with child." As for the small dirt foot paths, there is only room for single file and despite hiking boots I had a difficult time climbing up and down the trail. After spraining my left ankle in the rainy season, I can understand why some Chamula women do not wear shoes. As Veronica tried to explain, "If you take off your shoes then your toes will grasp the mud as you climb up and down the path. You will not fall."

Chamula has collected quite a name as the most conservative of the highland indigenous communities. Non-Indians must catch the last tourist van out of the township because it is strictly forbidden for *kaxlanes* (Tzo., non-Indians) to spend the night in the ceremonial center. Most tour guides warn the visitor to Chamula that "no photography of any kind is allowed in the temple of San Juan or of any of the office holders during the Carnival celebrations." Accounts circulate of tourists who attempted to photograph Chamulas and ended up without their precious film, their cameras or just struck in the head by a tomato.

Many customs and traditions live on in Chamula. The traditional agricultural way of life still has not lost its value. Women continue to enjoy some esteem and appreciation for their ability to weave traditional clothing. Despite the high numbers of men who buy

1995; Nash 1970; Rosenbaum 1993; Siverts 1967). The *caciques* have the monopoly on the sale of pox, which is a homemade brew of fermented corn and sugar, a specialty of the hamlets of Cruzton and Romerillo. Within the Maya tradition liquor is considered to be a gift of the gods (Nash 1967:192), and due to its warming effect it is easily associated with the humor system as adopted by the Chamulas of hot and cold food categories. Pox, corn, sun and hot are linked together (Gossen 1974:311).

flour tortillas in the city close to their place of work, a woman's ability to make "really good tasting [corn] tortillas," ground and pressed by hand still greatly enhances her chances at marriage. Furthermore, women who wear the traditional woolen skirt and embroidered blouse are greatly appreciated by their husbands. One forty year old male informant describes that when returning home from a long day on a construction site in the city, he perceives his wife as being equivalent to "coming home to a safe place where our ways are the ways of our ancestors." The symbolism of traditional clothing is often associated with cultural continuity.

Although the market economy, the Coca Cola concessions, INI (Sp., National Indian Institute), the schools, the mass media - especially, radio and television, DIF (Sp., Integral Family Development), *Sna Jolobil* (Tzo., House of Weavers) and other smaller weaving cooperatives have influenced some change in Chamula, the majority continue to embrace their traditional lifestyles and aspire to the idealized gender roles of the *batz'i vinik*, *batz'i ants*. In addition, most Chamulas attend the annual celebration of *K'in tajimoltik* (Tzo., the Festival of Games, or Carnival) and participation in the *cargo* system still involves the service of more than 2,000 people. Among the Tzotzil speaking Maya, Chamulas stand out for reinventing in 1900s (Rus 1994) what anthropologist Eric Wolf (1966) calls the "closed community." Yet the past two decades reveal that the rising numbers of village dissidents have prompted the expulsion of more than a third of its population. Another 20,000 live outside the village municipality on *ejido* (Sp., communally owned land) properties dispersed throughout the state, some even as far away as Las Margueritas in the Lacandon jungle (Garza 1993; Santana 1995; Earle 1990 among others). There are approximately as many Chamulas outside the village as in the

ninety hamlets that comprise the municipality of Chamula.

No "closed community" (Wolf and Hansen 1972) exists today because all have been affected by capitalism and the world market in varying degrees (Nash 1993; Collier 1993). However, as will be demonstrated through the results of the 1991 and 1995 surveys, a "closed corporate community" ideology does exist both in the *parajes* and among the expelled city dwellers. In addition, a brief visit to the village of Chamula confirms the existence of boundaries at various levels and Chamulas continue to orient themselves from the ceremonial center. Origin myths indicating separateness of a community need not deny the village's integration within markets and other commercial activities (Nash 1995). The different Chamula settlements outside the township resemble a diaspora more than a pattern of rural urban migration (Gossen 1984), although not without some community restructuring (Sullivan 1995).

Lumiltik is the Tzotzil name for Chamula's ceremonial and municipal village center. This central organizing space is generally referred to as *mi'chik banamil* (Tzo., earth's umbilicus), the exact spot on which their patron Saint Juan founded the village. Chamula is not a homogeneous village but a stratified, complex and densely populated society. The population density was calculated in 1990 at 147 per square kilometer, as compared to the national average of 41.25. There are liquor shop owners, transporters and money lenders who control the political-religious organization and who occupy the majority of the political administrative positions. The *caciques*⁹ belong to this tightly knit

⁹ See Jan Rus's (1994) detailed account of the construction of *caciques* as well as Piñeda's (1993) study on the role of bilingual teachers in the concentration of power and Arias's (1994) case study of Chenalhó.

class of elites. A small group of rich farmers¹⁰ rents land and hires farm hands while the majority of Chamulas diversifies their livelihood just to survive. Among women, differentiation is not as visible. Since many women earn an income through traditional roles of raising sheep and weaving, this gives an illusion of homogeneity. However, research has shown that some women raise their own sheep, weave and sell their own products while a number of women buy and resell (Sullivan 1992), lamenting the fact that they no longer have time to weave.

Rincón de Witz

Within the township of Chamula is the hamlet of Rincón de Witz which consists of only 130 households. Rincón de Witz is the site in which I conducted a major part of my research. It is important therefore to describe briefly the location, social structure and life in this hamlet. Although the ceremonial center of Chamula is five miles from San Cristobal, Witz is little more than a mile, or 2.7 km., from the market. It sends a representative to the ceremonial center every three years and rotates the responsibilities for civil and religious positions with two neighboring hamlets, Pajalton and Sacramenton. My host family there consisted of a couple with two sons, seven daughters, one daughter-in-law and a granddaughter. They are among the working lower class. Juan Ruiz owns a total of 4 *hectaria* (Sp., 400 square meters), only 1 of which is farmable land while his wife has an inheritance of 1 *hectaria* in Pajaltón which they farm about a quarter to one-third of, due to its extremely hard earth.

¹⁰ For example, Salvador Lopez Tuxum was the Secretary General of the Indian Workers Union (STI) during the 1950s. Lopez Tuxum currently owns four plantations with more than 2,000 acres of land, the concession rights for Pepsi, Coca Cola, Superior Beer, in addition to two stores, several trucks, and a prosperous banking business 'a la Chamula'

Juan, a man in his fifties who lives in Witz, has had an interesting life. Juan began life in extreme poverty. Throughout his twenties he spent the majority of months out of the year in the coffee groves. During this time he frequently drank, was abusive to his wife and his oldest son, and consumed much of the money through healing ceremonies for his constant coughs and fever. With the petroleum boom, a friend helped Juan find a job working as an aid to an electrician in the state capitol, Tuxtla Gutierrez. This job meant catching the truck at three in the morning every Monday and then returning late on Saturday night. Still, he earned money and when there was rain, they were allowed to rest. He stayed there more than five years until he learned through his *compadre* (Sp., godfather) of a *gringa* (Sp., white foreigner) in San Cristobal who wanted a gardener. He began working part-time and eventually got a full-time position.

Neither of Juan's two sons have been so lucky. Salvador, although bright and enthusiastic, has not been able to find a position as a caretaker. Mateo, even if he were to find one, is not dependable enough to maintain it. During my fieldwork, Salvador worked in construction while Mateo was always looking for something that would not involve too much physical labor. Now that he is married, Salvador no longer contributes his wages to the household, since he is saving to build a house near his parents and needs the cash to buy things for his wife and baby.

Juan's father had no land and so migrated from his native hamlet, Minas, to Rincón de Witz, about thirty years ago with his three sons. Juan's father bought a plot to which he later added, measuring an acre before his death. Juan's wife, Maria, is from the neighboring hamlet, Pajaltón, and as her inheritance has more than an acre. However,

(Rus *ibid.*) where interest rates fluctuate from 5-10 percent (Ruiz 1995).

this land is very difficult to cultivate and less than a quarter of it has ever been sown before. Juan considers himself a farmer who follows tradition, a *batz'il vinik* (Tzo., true man). This expression means a true man, however, it is really what Juan describes as a good- provider, an honorable and respectful man. Juan is proud to tell that he has served in the *cargo* system three times as a *max* (Tzo., monkey) and is now on the waiting list to be the *mayordomo* for the patron Santa Rosa.

Juan's oldest brother lives within fifty feet of his house and, despite the proximity and blood ties, they have not spoken to each other in nearly two years. This distance is due to a nephew's wife who falsely accused Juan of making "evil eyes of desire at her." The accusation was brought before the hamlet's *principale* (Sp., a *cargo* holder and respected elder) one Sunday in the ceremonial center and Juan was punished with a \$250.00 *pesos* (Mexican currency, exchange value during fieldwork fluctuated between 6-7.7 *pesos* to \$1.00US dollar) and was required to have a healing ceremony to cleanse his mind of "lusting after his nephew's wife." Two months later, Juan's wife Maria, had to repeat the healing service since she was suffering from severe headaches due to internalizing the consequences of Juan's being suspect in the hamlet. While Juan denies the charges, he and his family were willing to assume the cost of the healing ceremonies in the hopes that harmony with his own brother would be restored. To date this has yet to occur.

In reality, Juan is a farmer in name only, since his presence is limited to the first day of sowing corn. By fulfilling the ritual blessing Juan can assure the ancestors' good will toward his corn field through the family's respect for their deceased relatives and for the spirits in the earth, wind and water. Juan leaves the care of the *milpa* (Sp., corn field)

to his wife and his six daughters, securing occasional work from his two sons on Sundays. Juan is a day laborer and because of his full-time job as gardener and property manager, he has the economic means to participate in the *cargo* system. While Juan is occupied in the city of San Cristobal "making money" (Collier 1993), his wife Maria is offering incense and prayers to the rain angel, to the gods for health, to the ancestors for peace in the hamlet and remembering to pay her respects to *Me'tak'in* (Tzo., the mother of money).

Rincón de Witz is one of the hamlets that does not expel *evangélicos*, or at least this is what everyone there says. Of the 130 families, 36 households or 28 percent have left because they converted to Protestantism. When I compiled the data and shared it with Juan, he was shocked at the number of "converts." Moreover, since 1967 it has been the custom to label all *evangélicos* "*tuzas*" (Tzo., groundhogs) reminiscent of the K'ox myth (Nash 1970:198-200; Pérez López 1995 among others). This is a creation story about the child K'ox who, while out with his two older brothers, stumbles upon some honey. Since K'ox is too small to climb up and get any, he asks his brothers to throw him some honey, yet each time they only pass him bee's wax. K'ox takes the wax and fashions *tuzas* that ate the roots of the tree where his brothers were eating honey. The tree eventually falls, killing both brothers. K'ox then places tortillas upon their eye lids and turns them into domestic and wild animals. Since the *tuzas* are credited with destroying the tree, interpreted by many in the hamlet to mean Chamula traditions, when someone calls an *evangélico* a "*tuza*" it is meant as a derogatory label. Many people who attempt to settle disputes within the hamlet peacefully draw the line when it comes to these *tuzas*, for as Mariano Mendez puts it, "Since they stand for destroying all that we hold in our

heart.” *Tuza* then is tantamount to a destroyer of culture.

Interestingly, the first *evangélico* to leave Witz was a hymn writer and singer named Domingo Tuza. Mario, an unusually well-informed cultural broker, is adamant that Domingo was a “destroyer of culture because of his animal spirit reflected in his Indian name, Tuza (as the *tuza* that K’ox made). The *tuzas* in the myth ate the root of the tree just as Domingo Tuza and his family would do to the roots of our tradition.” I then asked this same informant how it could be that something K’ox made himself be labeled destructive? Mario had no response. A few weeks later he suggested that perhaps since I was an anthropologist I was missing the point. “How so?” I countered. “Our way of life has always been Catholic and these *evangélicos* have disowned the ways of our ancestors and their inheritance [land].” Others in Witz are not so certain. In fact, the lack of consensus about expelling *evangélicos* perhaps kept Witz from violently expelling any of its own.

The *evangélicos* in Witz knew that, if they stayed, the group of *caciques* from Milpoleta, another nearby hamlet, assisted by one of Juan’s compadres in Rincón de Witz, would either burn their houses or perhaps try to kill them. If one enters the hamlet from the dirt path that cuts across the hills from the northern highway of San Cristobal, one necessarily has to cut through Milpoleta. The other way out is to walk from Witz to the ceremonial center and there catch a small minivan to San Cristobal. However, if one is friendly with the evangelical communities, a walk through one of the colonies on the hill will lead to Sacramenton and continue through Pajaltón before arriving home in Witz.

The *evangélicos* who left Witz peacefully were able to keep their inheritance land in most of the cases. After the Zapatista rebellion, many began returning to sow corn,

care for the crop and then harvest it. In Witz no one bothered them. Most people in the hamlet wanted them to stop trying to convince people that the saints had to be burned, that the religious *cargos* were not to be respected, and that the PRI is the worst political party for Chamula.

TABLE 1: Amount of Land per Household in Rincón de Witz, Chamula
in 1996

N = 30

Amount of Land	# of Households	Percentage
none	7	25
<.25 hectaria	18	59
>.25 - .5 hectaria	3	10
>.5 - 1. Hectaria	1	3
> 1. Hectaria	1	3

Source: Field Data.

TABLE 2: Occupations by Households, Men, Women and Children in Rincón de Witz,
Chamula 1996
N=30

Occupations as Reported by Informants during Socioeconomic Survey.

OCCUPATION	Number of HOUSEHOLDS	Number of ADULTS		Number of CHILDREN	
1. Salaried Labor	2	3 M	4 F		
2. Transport	3	4 M		2 M	
3. Wage Labor	21	34 M	2 F	4 M	3 F
4. Witz Cornfield	30	18 M	27 F	20M	18 F
5. Fields outside Witz-usually wife's	3	2 M	3 F	2 M	2 F
6. Seasonal Finca	11	18 M	6 F	8 M	4 F
7. Horticulture	10	16 M	5 F	4 M	2 F
8. Tenant Farming	16	20 M	2 F	6 M	2 F
9. Two or More Occupations 3-8	28	79 M	108 F	46M	31F
10. San Cristobal Market-produce	4	1 M	4 F		4 F
11. Raise Chickens	28		3 F	3 M	22 F
12. Tend Sheep	18		22 F	2 M	16 F
13. Weaving to Clothe Family	24		28 F		6 F
14. Selling Wool	6		6 F		
15. Artisan Production	27		20 F		44 F
16. Peddling	6		2 F	2 M	24 F*
17. Midwife	2		3 F		
18. Traditional Healer (<i>Ilol</i>)	3	2 M	2 F		
19. Baby Sitting	27		8 F	1 M	18 F
20. Wash & Cook	30		19 F		28 F
21. Makes Tortillas	26		22 F		20 F
22. Cut & Gather Firewood	27	4 M	8 F	3 M	16 F

Source: Field Data

*Only a weekend activity for 20 of the young girls.

Compared to what these men report as their status in 1996, Table 1 indicates that very little has changed over the last two decades. According to Wasserstrom (1983:201), the average parcel size in the 1970s for Witz was 0.34 hectaria, with an annual yield of 475.8 kg. per hectaria. Any gains that my host family enjoys are due to his stable and well paying job with a *gringa*. His *jefa* (Sp., boss) also facilitates no-interest loans in the form of salary advancements which have been used to purchase a sewing machine, small plots of land adjacent to his home and a small house in the ceremonial center.

A review of Table 2 shows the major occupations per 30 households in Rincón de Witz collected during the Spring of 1996. While some had made a substantial increase in wage earnings during the late 1970s and early 1980s, this reflects the increased construction related to the petroleum boom. Currently, the majority of the households have at least one person working as a wage earner. Those families with sons over 14 have more than two wage laborers outside the hamlet.

Meanwhile, women and daughters have become the farmers in addition to increasing the household production of artisan products or selling edibles in the market. The main difference is that very little of what they now sell in the market comes from their own gardens, since the land is very unproductive. Just as more and more *evangélicos* are buying and reselling artisan products, so also many Chamula women, from the outlying hamlets and the Protestant enclaves alike, are buying produce for resale in the market in San Cristobal. The major drawback is that produce frequently spoils whereas artisan products can be stored without risking loss. In addition, some women simply have no means of selling their artisan products once they are crafted. According to estimates made by Eber and Rosenbaum (1993:174-175) of the approximately 125,000

economically productive indigenous women in Highland Chiapas, only 10 to 15 percent participate in cooperatives. Thus, these artisan producers frequently send their products along with relatives who migrate seeking wage labor in Cancun, Tapachula or Mexico City. Aside from the cut a woman owes the seller, this precarious access to the tourist market proves unreliable due to the number of emergencies that the migrants themselves encounter; such as their great distance from the village and the long wait before being reimbursed for the sales.

In general, the situation of nearly every household in the Witz survey was heavily dependent upon the labor of children. Table 2 also shows the contributions of children, both boys and girls, in almost every aspect of the family's business, farming and the day-to-day chores of fetching water or wood, doing laundry and cooking, not to mention babysitting a younger sibling. In addition, a growing number of children are becoming involved in artisan production, particularly of belts and friendship bracelets, that are either sold to a relative within the city or directly to tourists on weekends. In exchange for "making money" several parents allow these young entrepreneurs to attend an occasional movie or to play some video games while in San Cristobal.

The *compadrazgo* (Sp., ritual godparenthood) ties which exist within the hamlet of Witz are not dissolved once a person has migrated to the city. Many of the *evangélicos* maintain contacts with both kin and fictive kin derived from Catholic baptism. Since the expelled are banned in many instances from returning to their hamlets, many use the San Cristobal market as a place to meet. Occasionally there is intermarriage among the second generation of *evangélicos* with children of Traditionalists within Witz. If a daughter marries a Traditionalist, they usually establish their home on her parent's hamlet

property since the house is already built.

Wide variation exists in the levels of religious intolerance as well as the rules for land tenure for migrants to the city among the hamlets. In addition, many local *caciques* have not been successful in dominating the hamlets, while others have focused their attention on the ceremonial center, reasoning that the hamlet was too small to worry about. On the other hand, these *caciques* and aspiring *caciques* are not interested in farming. For some it is because they have had civil positions for many years and are much more interested in "making money," while for others, it is simply that farming is very hard labor with minimal returns. Additionally, the educational system has fostered the value judgment among students that farmers are lower class. Before providing some descriptive accounts of these *caciques* and the disintegration of homogeneity within Rincón de Witz, I introduce here Mt. Zion, my second field site.

Mt. Zion.

The Northern Highway of San Cristobal has become the Protestant enclave (Map 3). It is about a ten minute walk from the market past INI and the third class bus station that services Bochil. The view of the pine and oak trees that once surrounded *Jovel* (Tzo., valley) or San Cristobal is now replaced with shanty settlements in 1994 that have also invaded the other side of the highway. Situated on the side of a hill, Mt. Zion consists of four hectares, three of which are for housing while one is designated as a reserve (CNDH 1995). Mt. Zion has three main streets and six side streets on which are 400 lots of approximately 10 by 20 meters. It is home to 320 families housed on 284 lots (Sullivan 1996). Mt. Zion is one of the 16 colonies that make up the Protestant

enclave where the *evangélicos* set up temporary dwellings upon arriving in the city of San Cristobal. Ninety percent of the residents in these colonies are from Chamula. These colonies are also referred to as the “misery belt” since it surrounds colonial San Cristobal with a band of extreme poverty. Many women and children, residents of the “misery belt,” usually spend their day selling artisan products in the main plaza of the city or near the entrances to the comfortable three and four star hotels that welcome tourists.

Ownership is often contested because some people have more than ten lots in their name, as for example Domingo “Mingo” Lopez Angel, a spokesperson for the expelled community through CRIACH. In other cases, women own the land although the titles were placed in the name of their sons. Still, other owners have seized property closer to the market on flat terrain, and so they no longer technically live in Mt. Zion. They then seek to rent out their homes to Traditionalists who are delighted to have the convenience of a local home while selling in the market for long hours six days a week.

Mt. Zion is the site of many manifestations, political rallies and strikes because CRIACH has its office there. “Mingo” Lopez Angel also lived there until he became a State Senator and moved to the other side of the highway where he is having a larger home built. Many *Ladinos* fear Mt. Zion because of its political activities and because of the local folklore created around the Chamulas who live there. This fear is not entirely unfounded since several people have been unlawfully detained there. Some examples are: the six men working for the Federal Commission of Electricity were held captive in a prison cell in 1995; the thieves caught stealing during 1991; and the driver of the police van that rammed into a taxi cab belonging to UNAL, instantly killing the driver in 1996. The term “Chamula” generates a macabre fear among most *Ladinos*.

Mt. Zion is a hub within the enclave for several reasons. First, there are a number of taxi cab drivers who have CB radios. Many of these are members of CRIACH and have a strong identification with "Mingo." These drivers know what is going on and rely upon a system of mutual support facilitated through their radios for their own safety. Secondly, there are also a growing number of highly politically conscious groups. Among these are the Lombardistas (UNAL); market sellers who are indebted to CRIACH's lobbying for their booths in the market; and some school teachers actively engaged in their unions. Furthermore, a large percentage of Chamulas living there are either distant relatives of Domingo Lopez Angel, members of his Seventh Day Adventist Temple, or from Ik'alumtik, his hamlet of origin.

Mt. Zion was founded in 1986 (Fernandez Liria 1993; Lopez Angel 1996; Ruiz 1997) and the land was purchased or financed by individual *expulsados* and a joint venture between the Agrarian Reform Commission and negotiations spearheaded by the Organization of Indians of the Chiapas Highlands (ORIACH), Committee for the Defense of Evangelicals of Chiapas (CEDECH), the evangelical churches, and Developmental Programs of Chiapas (PRODECH) from a private land owner (Lopez Angel 1996).

Mt. Zion had the first wing of the primary school completed by 1988 and was accepted into the "normal" educational program. Parents wanted their children to attend the city's "normal" educational system and resisted being assigned to the bilingual education program of indigenous zones. The school is now complete with ball court, bathrooms, kindergarten and kitchen. There is even a PRI office and a jail. There are seven temples in this colony: 2 Seventh Day Adventist - one of which is registered, and one mission; 2 Independent Tzotzil Pentecostal, one established and one mission; 1

Assembly of God mission; 1 Jehovah Witness mission; and 1 Presbyterian mission.

After the Zapatista rebellion, money flowed out of Mexico City into what were identified as several "hot spots" within the state of Chiapas (SEP 1996). While the municipal presidents of San Cristobal had started in the late 1980s to provide electricity, water and sewer services, as well as paved streets, for some of the colonies, much remains to be done. In the case of Mt. Zion, federal monies paid for a huge staircase that goes from the first street, Zapata, up to the school at Ignacio Allende. Federal funds also financed a secondary school. The number of small convenience stores in this colony has declined from 18 in 1993 to 12 in 1996 since four of my informants had been robbed either while at the temple or in the market. Unfortunately none could recover enough from their losses to reopen.

The Pérez Gómez family hosted me during fieldwork in Mt. Zion. This family defies the stereotype of male dominance in Chamula society and represents a growing tendency of changing family structure within the "misery belt," i.e., a family headed by a single women. Maria is the matriarch of this complex and extended family that covers four lots of land and crosses over into two separate *colonias*. Maria is 48 years old and a widow. She is proud of the fact that none of the 296 infants, nor any of their mothers, that she assisted, died during childbirth or within the immediate 48 hours.

Still, Maria's heart is hurting these days because, although she can assist women at the time of birth, she is powerless when it comes to diarrhea and malnutrition. Her oldest daughter, Teresa, lost the last two babies during the first month of life because of fevers. Infants in Mt. Zion do not always figure into the statistics because many are not registered until they are a couple of months old. Nobody more than Maria's immediate

family knows that the second infant was born and died within a week of birth, except the pastor who prayed over the small white coffin, sending it on its way to the cemetery.

Maria lives near the Calle Central and her house is one of many that has a beautiful view of San Cristobal. The scene is one that any architect would envy and would perhaps want to capture with glass windows and high cathedral ceilings. It was the search for "peace of soul" that first brought Maria to Mt. Zion. Although there is a steep climb to return home, she has no plans of returning to her native hamlet in Milpoleta, Chamula.

Maria's conversion account is based upon health problems that "the *ilol* (Tzo., seer, or native curer/diviner) could not cure." Maria suffered from severe stomach cramps that came in clusters over a five year period. One day a woman from her hamlet, who was a Presbyterian proselytizer, prayed over her and before leaving gave Maria some medicine that cured her. It was then that, out of gratitude to this *hermana* or "sister in the faith," Maria assisted at the temple with her new friend in the Lord Jesus. During the service Maria learned that Jesus cures the bodies of those who follow him. After three years of instructions in her new faith, Maria was relatively in good health and ready to convert.

A few days later someone in her hamlet denounced her as an *evangélico* and she was expelled along with all her family. Fifteen years later she still attends the Presbyterian Founding Temple located in Nueva Esperanza. There is a Presbyterian mission within Mt. Zion, however, Maria does not consider it a good thing to have religion and politics connected as it was in the township. Maria owns the land on which her home rests, as do her four daughters and one of her sons. The youngest son is

fourteen and he still lives with her. One daughter lives adjacent to her house while the other two married children live across the street. The other two daughters live in different *colonias* within the Protestant enclave until a lot or a house becomes vacant in Mt. Zion.

Juana, the oldest of Maria's children, is a single mother with four children. Juana was my assigned chaperon while I was getting used to life in Mt. Zion. Juana buys and resells artisan products in the city from 2:00 p.m. until 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. Although Juana has had three husbands, she "still misses having a man in the house, especially at night." She also prefers "being alone to being abused or mistreated." Juana denies that anyone has ever hit her, and she is quite clear about "never supporting a lazy or drunken husband." At present Juana is apprenticing to be a midwife with her mother, while struggling to learn Spanish in order to communicate better with tourists. It is precisely through her dealings with tourists that Juana can support a family of five, as well as meet the cooperative payments and utility bills.

Just because the majority of the people in Mt. Zion are evangelical Protestant converts does not mean that they live in the ideal evangelical setting with the love of the Lord Jesus shining throughout. Jealousy and envy are far from eradicated among the expelled. Quite the contrary, they are all too present, as recent studies bear witness (Barrios Ruiz and Pons Bonals 1993; Garza 1992; Fernandez Liria 1992; Sullivan 1995). For example, Juana became the object of false accusations of robbery related to the sum of money designated for the purchase of the water pipes in Mt. Zion. The fact that she has been released from jail did not free her reputation from the gossip surrounding these charges. As Rosenbaum's (1993:65-84) study on gender paradigms shows, single women are frequently perceived by both men and women as being dangerous, evil and powerful.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not comment on the hike that is required to reach the school or the cross-street Ignacio Allende. It is steep, and although stairs facilitate the climbing, many men, women, and I still prefer to climb on a curve and so pass through Santo Domingo into Getsemani to reach Mt. Zion. As one climbs up, the view is spectacular: spread below your feet is the entire city of San Cristobal. One can appreciate why it was called *Jovel* since the zócalo is in the middle of a small valley and the city has grown in ripples around it. A vast track of pasture land with a few horses grazing on it separates Mt. Zion from the market and the encroaching city. This property belongs to INI. Dominga, a midwife and a fervent Presbyterian, herself a mother of four, and a recent widow explains that,

they [government] wouldn't even let us have flat land when we were expelled over eight years ago. The people at National Indian Institute said, 'climb up there if you will and we'll negotiate the sale of the property for you.' And to think that all these years I have been climbing up here with wet laundry, food, water and firewood. But now Jesus has seen our affliction and has answered our prayers....we have water, we have electricity and we live in peace with all our brothers and sisters in the Lord. And my son is old enough now to help me "make money," so that I can thank Jesus for these blessings and help others as well.

It is easy to see that Mt. Zion represents a "hot point" in Chiapas for a number of reasons: its dire poverty, high under- and unemployment, the level of organization within such groups as ORIACH, CRIACH and UNAL and the diversity of religions, political parties and civil organizations. Mt. Zion, the urban colony of San Cristobal, and the Chamula hamlet, Rincón de Witz are the two poles of contrast in this study. It will

become evident that life in the city for many Chamulas is similar to life in the distant hamlets, particularly since many of the aspiring *caciques* migrated with them and many traditional practices prevail. Because some Chamulas sought release from the social pressure associated with ceremonial consumption of liquor and the onerous expenditures in the religious *cargo* system, the next chapter describes this system. It also traces the specific development of the Chamula *cacicazgo*. Finally, since much of the growth of evangelical Protestantism in Chamula is a form of social protest to the aberrations of power and control exercised by the political structure, Chapter Two presents religion as a means of popular expression in this oppressive society.

Chapter Two

The Political Structure of Chamula

This chapter completes the description of the research sites laid out in Chapter One by setting the stage for understanding the socioeconomic and political scene within which conversion occurs. It begins by describing the *cargo* system and the *cacicazgo*. There have been quite profound changes in both political structures. *Evangélicos* perceive these changes as disruptive to Chamula's social harmony. I therefore shift the focus toward converts as "moral overseers" because this is key to our understanding of both the climate of persecution within which *evangélicos* convert and to the complexity of the expulsion phenomenon in Chamula. Finally, this chapter ends by situating the aberrations of power and control in Chamula within the framework of oppressive societies. This perspective reveals religious conversion as a convert's option for expressing dissent. The democratic process is essential to understanding of both the conversion and expulsion phenomena because this new religious diversity within the township provided new forms of alliances, associations and dissent that further challenge the authority of the Chamula *cacicazgo* and the validity of the current *cargo* system.

The *Cargo* System

An analysis of religious conversions among the Highland Chiapas peoples must begin with a detailed description of the *cargo* system since conversion was often a reaction to corruption in the traditional system. The word *cargo* (Sp., burden) refers to the economic and social debts an office holder accrues while cultivating devotion to a saint.

Ethnographers have recognized the key place of the civil-religious hierarchy within indigenous communities and their relationships with the national community (Gossen 1974; Nash 1970; Vogt 1970; Wolf and Hansen 1974; Wolf 1969). The traditional form of the system consists of a hierarchy of ranked offices that together comprise a community's public civil and religious administration.

The civil offices articulate the community with the regional and national political systems, while the religious *cargos* are associated with the worship of the local saints (and generally are only tenuously linked to the external church hierarchy). Individuals or couples representing different households ascend this ladder of service during their lifetimes, alternating back and forth between civil and religious posts. Only very few men with the resources and the longevity make it to the top post of *mayordomo* (Sp., caretaker of the saint's devotion), the pinnacle of this system. A *mayordomo* joins a select group of *principales* (Sp., elders), who often are very influential in local politics. A central feature of the system is the private sponsorship of feast days in honor of the saints at the expense of religious *cargo* holders.

Present day *cargo* customs differ from colonial practice in Mesoamerica (Chance and Taylor 1985) and Chiapas (Wasserstrom and Rus 1993; Piñeda 1993; Rus 1994; Perez Enriques 1993; Nash 1970). The earliest form of the *cargo* system was a civil hierarchy that emerged in the sixteenth century and was comprised of the political offices making up the municipal *cabildo* (Sp., town council).

Up until the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries religious offices in indigenous towns were centered in *cofradías* (Sp., brotherhoods), religious sodalities founded to organize support for the cult of local saints and to pay for its expenses

(Chance and Taylor 1985; Wolf and Hansen 1973). The civil-religious *cargo* system first emerged in the late eighteenth century and proliferated during the nineteenth century due to expropriations of *cofradía* property by the church and prohibition of communal support of religious fiestas by some Spanish political officials. According to Chance (1990), these pressures brought about a shift from collective to household fiesta sponsorship. Simultaneously, as the colonial status differences between indigenous nobles and commoners were being dismantled, there was a growing concern in the villages that each household should help shoulder the burden of maintaining the saints. The historical outcome of these factors was the traditional form of the civil-religious *cargo* hierarchy (Chance and Taylor 1985).

Most current civil-religious hierarchies, when confronted with state interference, retrench and transform themselves into religious hierarchies that emphasize local ritual matters (Chance 1990; Gossen and Leventhal 1989). Communities that do so give up some of their political autonomy, yet retain strong local identities (Cancian 1967; Collier 1993; Gossen and Leventhal 1989; Warren 1978). Failure to do so may result in a collapse of the *cargo* system. Let us now examine the social structure within Chamula.

The political organization within Chamula is divided among four groups of offices which direct the political and religious life:

- 1) The municipal elected body is prescribed by the Mexican constitution, the Constitutional Town Council. Although these are elected positions, they are occupied by the candidates selected by the oligarchy. This is a three year paid term and the leader is the municipal President. This council has 12 members who are bilingual and literate. The President of the Constitutional Town Council is also the President of the Regional

Town Council, thus linking the two governing bodies.

2) The governing body is composed of sixty-three members who enter the hierarchy as representatives of their hamlets. These men speak mostly Tzotzil and are assisted in their office by young men who are bilingual *escribanos* (Sp., scribes). The civil officials of the Regional Town Council carry silver-tipped batons to signal that religion sanctions their authority. In their ritual prayers, Chamulas say that these officials “govern beneath the hands and feet of San Juan” (Rosenbaum 1993:156). As office holders these men are available every Sunday for advise, dispute settlements or favors. This traditional hierarchy probably resembles the old system of government among indigenous peoples in the area before the intervention of national and state controls in local affairs (Rosenbaum 1993:155; Pozas 1959:136). During their tenure they reside within the ceremonial center of San Juan and are compensated by a small salary for their services.

3) The religious hierarchy is composed of seventy-one offices, the most important being the steward, standard bearer, “passion” and *nichim* (Tzo., flower) who serve two year terms, while all others serve one year within the *cargo* system (Wolf and Hansen 1972). During their tenure the high office holders reside within the ceremonial center of San Juan. Far from their respective hamlets, office holders sell *pox*, Coca Cola, beer, candles and flowers to sustain themselves and their family. This usually begins at least a year before assuming a *cargo* and continues while they serve in this office. The office of *mayordomo* (Sp., caretaker of a saint) permits the individual to sell liquor as soon as he is accepted onto the waiting list. Today the deities are “fed” and kept content by *cargo* holders and thus do not consider destroying the modern world (Rosenbaum 1993:156).

4) The last group is diverse in function (e.g., the gruel and tortilla makers), duration and gender; it does not require residence within the ceremonial center, nor is this a year round commitment (Gossen 1974:33-5).

As Rosenbaum (1993:154) points out, Chamulas continue to define both civil and religious service as assisting the deities in the fight against the forces of chaos and evil in order that light, life, and order may prevail in the universe. Thus, while the economic situation of many Chamulas is precarious, many today still “seek the privilege to spend their last peso and borrow perhaps thousands more to sponsor the religious celebrations with food and drink which gladden the saints” (Linn 1976:1). Furthermore, as the very people who “helped the deities carry their burden” in civil and religious *cargos* prove to be corrupt, greedy leaders, the “moral overseers” respond by embracing evangelical Protestantism in the hope of protecting the “soul of their community.”

A brief overview of this elaborate system of political and religious hierarchy is essential to understand the present power structure, and the exploitation of the peasant farmers with and without land by the *cacicazgo* (Sp., ruling elites). The *cacicazgo* represents a group of indigenous leaders or chiefs who monopolize the political and economic resources within their jurisdiction. Since the *cargo* system and the *caciques* are linked in all aspects of life within the township, it is important to be familiar with the development of this new breed of *caciques* in order to understand their role in the conversion and expulsion phenomena (see below).

While the majority of all that occurs year-round in Chamula is centered around the *cargo* system, particularly the feast days of Carnival and San Juan, many attend these festivities without being involved in the *cargo* system. With the exception of Baptism,

many Chamulas from the more distant hamlets never enter the temple until they assume an office within the *cargo* system. Still, the combination of these religious and political offices solidifies the elite's control of municipal candidates who in turn need to be capable of making and maintaining strong alliances with PRI party officials at the state level (Piñeda 1993; Rus 1994).

Although the state provided the impetus for shaping the reformation of the political structure within the township of Chamula and has intervened when necessary to assure their candidate's tenure and the municipality's stability, these *cacique*-Presidents could not operate without the support of the elders. The traditional elders, some *ilols* (Tzo., "seers" or traditional healers) and many residents of the more distant hamlets considered these Presidents to be *kaxlan* (Tzo., Castillian speakers, or non-Indian), i.e., outsiders or *Ladinos*. Therefore, what I call the "resistance from the periphery" threatened to undermine the indirect rule that was set up with the state's intervention in the township. This is why the *caciques* who were elected as municipal presidents began (in the early 1970s, following the example of Salvador López Tuxum) to place themselves on the waiting lists for the office of *mayordomo* to keep peace with the elders from the hamlets (Wasserstrom and Rus 1993). These *caciques* could also begin to sell liquor and accumulate wealth. However, while the second generation of *caciques* also has become involved in the *cargo* system they do so for different motives.

The second generation of this new breed of *caciques* enjoys the wealth accumulated by their fathers, so selling liquor is not necessarily a priority with them. These *caciques* own perhaps a Coca Cola or beer distributorship, several trucks and a number of taxis. They seek to be *mayordomos* to legitimize the accumulation of wealth

and power through service by assuming a *cargo*, i.e., “sharing the burden of the saints.” This office is also sought to protect one from the evils, especially illness and jealousy, that frequently befall the wealthy. Thus, despite having a comfortable lifestyle that frees these second generation *caciques* from the need to grow their own corn, wealth has brought them its own set of ills and one’s personal safety becomes a major concern. One such example from the cohort of the second generation *caciques*, that is often given by informants, is the son of the owner of the Coca Cola concession. This young man contracted a brain tumor and, after having a section of his brain removed and undergoing chemotherapy, died while in the prime of his life.

This section sought to shatter any romantic notion of the present day *cargo* system in Chamula as a means of practicing reciprocity or redistribution. Still, it is evident that the religious *cargo* system is alive today. Being in “the service of a saint” continues to be something that Chamulas aspire to and annually draws scores of followers behind each *mayordomo* along with crowds of observers on Carnival and other feast days.

Among the various indigenous townships in the Highlands, Chamula stands out for its unique form of *cacicazgo*. Comparing aspects of the *cacique* dynamics and the *cargo* system within Chamula to the changes within Zinacantan and Chenalhó is essential for understanding why the overwhelming majority of the *expulsados* are from Chamula. Neighboring Zinacantan is located approximately 7 miles northwest of San Cristobal, and in 1990, had a population of 22,209 (INEGI 1992). The socioeconomic leveling mechanism of the *cargo* system within Zinacantan has been frequently used to justify the accumulation of wealth and therefore the disparity that is markedly noticeable (Cancian 1965, 1983 and 1990). This contrasts with the *cargo* system in Chamula because, as

early as the 1940s, assuming a *cargo* was the very means for accumulating wealth (ibid.). Rather than justifying the accumulation of wealth the Chamula *caciques* monopolized the production of liquor, candles and transportation, eliminating opportunities for others to move up the ladder. As *cargo* holders these *caciques* sought to strengthen political ties with the state government and alliances with local representatives of the PRI.

With the emergence of new relations of class, younger Zinacantecos no longer depended on the old meaning of *cargo* service for advancement. Collier (1989) finds that instead of taking *cargos* in the ceremonial center, they do so in their hamlet. Because entry-level hamlet *cargos* are inexpensive, youths no longer accumulate debt and elders do not acquire followings. Nor do they need to, for in a class system, one's economic power "speaks for itself," enabling one to hire others' labor outright. However, the trend in Chamula remains orientated towards *cargos* within the ceremonial center. As Gossen (1986:228) points out, Chamulas have countered the threat of cultural and sociopolitical disintegration by maintaining a fanatically centralized political and religious organization and by taking drastic measures to discourage dissidence. Thus, as Earle (1990) argues, despite the corrupt, opportunistic behavior of the municipal presidents (which Chamulas themselves recognize), the Chamula people have been able to contain to some extent the more aggressive penetration of state and religious institutions.

While the vitality of the *cargo* system is evident in Chamula, a decline in participation in the *cargo* system is also noted in Chenalhó by Eber (1995) who studied the system in that township. The fall in participation among Pedranos is attributed more to the rise in Protestantism than the establishment of a class system. San Pedro Chenalhó had a population of 29,796 in 1990 (INEGI 1992). It is a little further from San Cristobal

de Las Casas, 22 miles, than Chamula or Zinacantan. However, the changes in *cargo* service are pertinent to understanding the dynamics within the hamlet of Witz. Chenalhó's stand on alcohol is full of contradictions as women are the ones who sell pox and are subsequently organizing to control excessive drinking among the men (Eber 1995:15-35; 231-243). As Eber (1995) notes, cooperation frequently occurs among Pedranos across religious lines. For example, in the struggle against alcohol consumption, Progressive Catholic catechists and evangelical Protestants in Chenalhó are united against Traditionalists. With regard to the payment of fiesta or *cargo* system contributions, Catechists and Traditionalists agree that the *cargo* system is essential for village cohesion. Protestants, however, view these contributions as a religious tax imposed upon them for practices they no longer follow.

During the 1988 election for mayor, a school teacher who favored the Protestant's non-participation in the *cargo* system, ran as a candidate. The Catechists sided with the Traditionalists because they shared a common desire for village cohesion and total participation in the *cargo* system. This gave the victory to the opposition, resulting in an intensification of the cleavages already existing in Chenalhó. *Evangélicos* expected retaliation in some form and assumed that they would be pressured into paying the cooperation fee, if not also required to assume a *cargo* service.

Their fears had some foundation. For example, in 1957 a Traditionalist assassinated a Presbyterian man, and was incarcerated ten years for his crime. Also, despite warnings from authorities in San Cristobal, in 1965 Traditionalists attempted, unsuccessfully, to expel Presbyterians, blaming them for hunger and suffering (Pérez Pérez 1991; Sterk 1993). Still, as Eber points out, the potential for different groups to

coexist in Chenalhó seems unique among neighboring Highland townships¹¹. Perhaps this is partly because both communities have an overlapping of interests regarding drinking, and cooperation with Catholics is not entirely rejected by the Protestant community. Chenalhó does not have the type of *cacicazgo* that exists in Chamula; it is also a bi-ethnic community where *Ladinos* and *Pedranos* coexist. The *cargo* system is in itself less elaborate and not as well attended as that of Chamula, and therefore, less of a burden for those who assume a service.

Thus, the *cacicazgo* in Chamula has several distinguishing traits when compared to Zinacantan and Chenalhó. Most significantly, the Chamula *cacicazgo* has successfully forged alliances with the ruling political party over decades. These alliances reinforce the *cacicazgo*'s control over Chamula society to the measure that the *caciques* are capable of delivering votes for the PRI each election, to the detriment of the expelled. This is not to deny the presence of some disinterested leaders. Two examples are Ceferino Gomez who was instrumental in making the agrarian reform a reality in Amatenango del Valle and Manuel Arias who promoted progress through literacy and land ownership in Chenalhó (Nash 1995:26). Even the notorious *cacique*, Salvador López Tuxum, was frequently at odds with traditionalists over issues regarding the use of federal development funds within the municipality for specific infrastructure projects, i.e., water reservoirs (Arias 1994). Also, even though state intervention has brought about the separation of the civil and religious systems within Chamula, the majority of people still insist on leaders taking

¹¹ At the time of this writing, more than 45 killed and 25 people were injured in a massacre that took place in Acteal, Chenalhó on December 22, 1997 (La Jornada 1997:12/24:1-2;4). The reason cited was a political dispute between followers of the EZLN and the PRI. The alleged responsible party was the Mayor Jacinto Arias Cruz.

up a *cargo*.

This section sought to situate the present *cargo* system in Chamula within the context of other neighboring townships as a means of illustrating its distinctive aspects. The Chamula *cargo* system is vibrant today. Despite the severe measures, i.e., the expulsions, taken by several municipal presidents, the ceremonial center of Chamula continues to attract religious observers and *cargo* participants from the far corners of the Lacandon jungle and from the growing number of *colonias* spectators. Since the *cargo* system and the *caciques* are linked in all aspects of life within the township, it is important to review here the development of the new breed of *caciques* in order to understand their role in the conversion and expulsion phenomena.

The *Caciques*

The *cacicazgo* represents the institutionalization of the *caciques*, a group of ruling elites. The *caciques* are indigenous leaders who monopolize the political institutions by restricting appointments to members from within their own group, limit access to the economy by controlling transportation, liquor and candle production, the distribution of federal developmental funds and construction contracts. In many ways their social structure resembles that of organized crime, in fact, several authors have compared them to the mafia (Gossen 1974; Iribaren 1980; Morquecho 1990; Perez Enriques 1994; Sterk 1993). The present form of *caciques* was crafted over a period of decades (Enriques Perez 1993; Piñeda 1990; Rus 1994) from the bilingual scribe-principals servicing the traditional elders within the municipality. In order to understand the power of the *caciques*, I review events in the 1930s to show how the state, wealthy *Ladinos*, the

unions, political parties and INI contributed to the current *cacicazgo*.

The new breed of *caciques* was initially hired as a group of bilingual union organizers. These young bilingual Indians would cement the Tzeltal and Tzotzil communities to the political party Mexican Revolutionary Party, as the PRI was known in 1937, through the Indian Workers Syndicate (STI). Jan Rus (1994) credits Erasto Urbina with the split between the civil - religious *cargo* system. In 1938 Urbina named bilingual scribes from his pool of union organizers to be the aide to the traditional monolingual elder or municipal president in each highland township. The bilingual aide dealt with the state officials as they already had with the STI while the elder climbed up to his position through the religious *cargo* system. Consequently during the 1940s indigenous communities suddenly found themselves being commandeered by the state and PRM party as part of what was proclaimed as their common struggle against exploitation (ibid:16).

Still, these new leaders, nicknamed "*los muchachos de Erasto*" (Sp., Erasto's boys), were still perceived as not quite legitimate by the rest of the elders in the village, since their appointment to the community's "real" leadership was based upon - an outside - government decision. The central complaint being that these "new presidents" had not worked their way up the ranks within the *cargo* system. In 1942, Salvador Lopez Tuxum volunteered to serve in an elaborate and expensive *cargo* service in 1944, after which he would finish his year as municipal president in 1943. Lopez Tuxum's gesture in accepting a *cargo* was also accompanied by the newly authorized liquor sale for current *cargo* holders and those on the *cargo* waiting lists facilitated by the state Department of Indian Protection (DPI) of which Urbina was the Director (ibid:18). Thus, when López

Tuxum assumed office in 1943, he was Chamula's sole municipal president (Rus and Wasserstrom 1980:472-75).

By the mid-forties the PRM had become the PRI and the closed communities of the highlands were integral parts of the local political machine. Despite a period of the ruling party's overt hostility towards Indians, e.g., the attempt to levy a tax upon Indians in the market at San Cristobal in 1946, or the failed state venture of regaining control over the liquor production in 1949 (later called the Rum War), the Indian townships did not revert back to closing in upon themselves as they had done prior to the 1930s (Rus 1994).

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s then, Chamulas fluctuated between a separatist and subordinate (Warren 1978) perspective of themselves and their municipality. The *cacicazgo* effectively employed a separatist vision when promoting the need to control the production of *pox* in terms of "tradition:" it was a religious matter that needed to be dealt with through its own religious sanctions (Rus 1994). At the same time their decision to remain PRI party loyalty served to solidify the bonds between the village and the reformist state. This left Chamulas subordinate within the Mexican political system, yet they still bargained collectively with other highland townships to protest policies that they found oppressive. One example was the protest of 1946 to object to the proposed excise tax about to be levied upon indigenous market vendors in San Cristobal. The protest was successful and the tax was dropped.

During the 1950s and 1960s, several new wage earning positions were created by state and federal interventions within the village. These included: the further training of bilingual teachers by the newly founded offices of INI during 1951-52; an expanded

number of positions with the opening of a new primary school in the community and the rural health clinics; and managers for the new cooperative stores in the ceremonial center, offering an alternative to the overpriced rural stores run by *Ladinos*. The combination of these new means of "making money" and the pressure put upon scribe-principals that were school teachers by INI to interfere in political issues and family decisions, (i.e., forcing parents to send their girls to school), served only to further disrupt the decision making processes in the village.

In addition to this, payoffs were frequent between wealthy *Ladinos* and Indian leaders. Rus (1994:31-32) describes one transaction between Hernan Pedrero and Jacinto Robles with Lopez Tuxum. Pedrero and Robles financed López Tuxum's first truck as he resumed his post as secretary general of STI. This certainly suggests bribery, especially since Pedrero and Robles owned a plantation in the valley north of the central highland. Pedrero and Robles were known for being two of the most exploitative landlords in the region, yet, despite complaints to the STI, they (Pedrero and Robles) appeared to be immune to government investigation, suggesting they had syndicate protection. Other wealthy *Ladinos* followed suit, helping scribe-principals buy land, acquire trucks and become soft-drink and beer distributors.

The end result of these events was a change in the meaning of native leadership and tradition. Before 1936 the structures of the "corporate community" had served to preserve a safe haven from *Ladino* control and exploitation. In the second half of the 1950s those structures were being co-opted by the state and incorporated into its system of control in such a way that much of the time they actually served the state's interests, *as against* those of the Indians. As Rus points out (ibid.), tradition had done a flip-flop.

And what we see is that throughout the fifties and even into the sixties the *Ladino* leaders were actually keeping the Indians in "their place," i.e., subordinate (Warren 1978), through the scribes-principals who personified a very efficient form of "indirect rule." At the same time the presence of INI's "*Indigenismo*"¹² program actually served to solidify the tradition within indigenous communities when it was defined by the scribes-principals. Any perceived threat to the *cacicazgo*'s power would merit an intervention on the part of the state, i.e., INI (ibid:37).

As lifestyles improved for the *caciques* great numbers of Chamula men sought wage labor outside the township. While many did find work, others began to confront their inability to fulfill their role as man-the-provider. Under- and unemployment has pushed some men into alcoholism. For many others, the "*ganas de mandar*" (Sp., desire to give orders) rather than take them, has placed their wives and daughters into the subordinate roles they (the men) assume daily in wage labor outside the hamlet. As some men acquire the more dysfunctional aspects of *machismo*¹³, the glorification of virility, the gender complementarity within Chamula cultural codes slowly shifts to give way to abusive relationships.

In a class system where "making money" is replacing the need to acquire prestige

12 Early *Indigenismo* implies integration or the assimilation of Indians into Mexican society, through involvement in federal economic and developmental programs (for a brief summary on *indigenismo* in Mexico see Friedlander 1986:363-367).

13 Following Brusco (1996:81-92) I recognize that *machismo* is best understood not as a static role but as a transitional one reflecting the enormous social change, including proletarianization and increasing economic insecurity, that has occurred in Latin American society over the period of thirty years that the term has been used. *Marianismo* is the female counterpart of *machismo*. A husband's arrogance and intransigence are neutralized in the household by the self-abnegation and submission of a wife (Brusco 1995; Ehlers 1991; Jaquete 1973; Stevens 1973).

through service, the real losers are women. As Rosenbaum (1993) shows in her study among Chamula women, even if a husband acquires several trucks and makes many times more money than anyone in a particular hamlet, the domestic sphere sees no direct benefit. For example, in Rincón de Witz, there is one wealthy individual who, as of 1996, has four trucks, though no one else in the neighborhood has any. Yet his wife, Teresa, still needs to gather firewood, to cook on an open fire situated in the middle of the kitchen floor, to wash all the clothing by hand and to grind the corn for tortillas.

Like most Chamula women, Teresa did not benefit from any of the electronic or gas devices that would assist her as wife and mother. Although her husband has dedicated himself to the hamlet civil positions, i.e., Committee for Portable Water, Education and Health, and has served both as a policeman and the Chief of Police in the ceremonial center, she has yet to accrue any prestige that might be forthcoming if they held a religious *cargo* as a couple.

At another level, domesticity is devalued through the process of proletarianization. As value is transferred from an item to its exchange value within a market system, women's work is at a disadvantage. Since domestic labor is not remunerated, the majority of women's work is performed outside of the new "making money" system. In addition, if a woman happens to share her husband with a second or even a third wife, for several are actually cohabitating within Rincón de Witz, the first wife resents her current situation and frequently fights with the other spouses her husband has collected along the way. If the woman persists too long or too forcefully, she may be run out of the hamlet, as was Pascuala Perez. Pascuala admits,

I could not stand the way things were going and when Juan began to hit me

because the second wife was complaining of me...then my world fell apart. Better to leave than suffer this; but no, Juan had to humiliate me in front of everyone by dragging me to the ceremonial center and accusing me of being an evangélico. All this just to justify running me out of my house...The Lord can not bless such a thing. I have not converted and I am not sure that I ever will. The only sure thing now is that Juan will roam the universe after he dies as I surely will do and we will not be united, for we have not yet served a cargo...he knows this in his heart of hearts. And should he wish to serve then they will have to come and find me, for in our hamlet it still holds that one needs to serve the office of mayordomo with your first wife...only the first wife, for she is the true wife.

One of my informants told me that Pascuala's husband had been asked to fill in for a mayordomo who fell very ill. The elders in the hamlet stressed that if he accepted it would have to be with Pascuala as his real partner at his side. At one level, the elders condition shows the respect that many still have for marriage and what happens to a couple who do not serve a *cargo*, they roam the earth indefinitely. Unfortunately, as time approached for the feast of St. Rose, the requirement was dropped because no one else had the economic means to assume the office on such short notice.

This chapter has set the stage for the ethnographic study of religious conversion. By situating the research sites geographically within the context of Chiapas, the Highlands of Chiapas, the township of Chamula and the city of San Cristobal one can better understand the effects of the macro processes upon individual "converts" and families. The proximity of Chamula, and Witz in particular, to the marketplace within the city of San Cristobal has facilitated migration to the city in search of wage labor, and

increased access to health care, education and housing. In addition, the discussion on the *cargo* system and the present form of *caciques* in Chamula illustrates how intertwined these two structures are within the municipality. Together with the social context of the research sites, the *cargo* system and the *cacicazgo* are critical socio-political elements for our understanding of the complex phenomenon behind the expulsions of *evangélicos*. In light of this discussion, it is understandable that the presence of intra-communal corruption, exploitation and oppression of Indians by *caciques* is perceived by many proselytizers to be fertile ground on which to sow the seeds of the *K'op riox*, a “better way.”

Conversion as a Response to Political and Moral Changes:

Converts as “Moral Overseers”

The structural changes in the *cargo* system that reduce the authority of religious leaders to ceremonial rituals, along with the formation and corruption of the new breed of *caciques*, mark profound social transformations in the township of Chamula. However, this section shows that the actors in Chamula have any number of ideas as to what appropriate behavior is and the permissible range of behavior varies in each setting, i.e., the ceremonial center and the distant hamlets. Neither the *cargo* system nor the *cacicazgo* are presented here as totalizing institutions, for wide variation continues to exist within Chamula today. If anything, the differences between the center and the periphery were exacerbated by the growing socioeconomic inequalities that marked the past forty years. Within this context religious conversion needs to be seen as a response to political and moral changes and the converts as “moral overseers” who perceive the

disharmony within the township as directly related to their intermediaries, i.e., *caciques*, straying from the “ways of the ancestors.” This section sets forth the moral principles that the *evangélicos* saw lacking in many leaders within their community.

Several studies have looked at social change and religious conversion. Within indigenous communities in transition various motives have been identified as factors that, in part, prompt some members to convert from Catholicism to evangelical Protestantism. Among the diverse factors researchers have identified in indigenous societies undergoing transition as contributing to religious change are poverty (Annis 1987; Gimenez 1988; Morquecho 1989; Sterk 1993), marginality (Gill 1990; Rostos 1993), alcoholism (Brusco 1995; Eber 1995; Golden and Metz 1991; Kearney 1970; Nash 1960; Watanabe 1992), landlessness (Perez Enriques 1993; Morquecho 1989; Watanabe 1984), illness (Rostos 1993; Rosenbaum 1993) and attempts to avoid the expenses of the *cargo* system (Arias 1991; Cancian 1989; Collier 1989; Earle 1990; Rus 1994). Chamula is similar to case studies of other indigenous societies since many of the above named variables exert an influence upon the members as they struggle to either redefine their experiences or to attempt to make sense of the changes their community is undergoing. Here I focus upon the study that June Nash (1970) conducted among the Tzeltal speaking Maya of neighboring Amatenango del Valle. Amatenango is located 25 miles southeast of San Cristobal and approximately 30 miles from Chamula. Nash’s study is particularly pertinent here for there are several similarities between the patterns of social spaces, beliefs and responses to change between the two townships. In addition, she illustrates that Amatenangeros validated their behavior based upon the belief that they were doing as the ancestors did, i.e., they were living “in the eyes of the ancestors” (ibid:xvi). My

findings support Nash's work for it aptly explains the moral codes that prompts Chamula *evangélicos* to adopt the *k'op riox*.

The "safety" and continuity of one's community is dependent upon persistence in the "pattern of social space defining domains of good and bad spirits and the appropriate behavior to each as specified in myths and rituals...It also provides a ground plan for the system of social control and security exercised by the old gods and their human intermediaries" (Nash 1970:xvi-ff). The "safe space" that provides security from evil is very important to both traditionalists and the *expulsados* who now live outside the township.

The landscape of Chamula is defined by municipal boundaries set up by the colonial system and redefined over the centuries by the state. Still, boundaries are also set by ethnicity and the once corporate community. Chamula had symbols that kept the evil at bay, that is, outside the township. Annual rituals in the ceremonial center restored the balance and protection of the saints / protectors. Some of the visible markings in the landscape are Calvary, the three crosses at the water sources, the Temple, the crosses marking the three barrios of San Pedro, San Juan and San Sebastian, and the Sacred Mountain. In addition, all living creatures serve as reminders of the link between spirits (Vogt 1990), e.g., sheep who are images of San Juan, the Good Shepherd; traditional woolen clothing is the fruit of a woman's weaving and the design itself is inspired by the gods through her dreams; and corn is created in the image of Jesus (Gossen 1993:394) while liquor is a gift of the gods (Nash 1970:208).

Among the expelled Chamulas, many of the practices from the township persist, despite religious "conversion." For example, many women who are converts to

Protestantism have expressed relief when some departed loved ones are now in the cemetery in San Cristobal. They do not believe that the *mi'chik banamil* (Tzo., earth's umbilicus), that is, the village's central organizing space, has moved just because they were expelled from Chamula; rather, they feel the safe space has expanded. They now feel more secure "in the eyes of their ancestors" (Nash 1970). The men and women who had migrated with them and died, now make with their *ch'uuletik* (Tzo., spirits or souls) a safe space for their kin. United with the ancestors these strange urban settings become less profane and more *evangélico*. As Lupe, a fourteen year old whose 44 year old mother died in January 1995 from pneumonia complicated by diabetes, puts it,

I miss my mother...she suffered much especially these past two years. But I know that now she will help protect me as she has become a totil me'ıl (Tzo., Fathers-Mothers, that is, an ancestor) that can see me and this comforts me, my younger brothers, and my grandmother. We are no longer alone here, we have ancestors to watch over us. Mt. Zion is now a home for us and every day that another person dies it is not so very sad because life is made of birthing and dying, and while "under their eyes" the pak'inte (Tzo., demon) and other evils will not come to harm us.

Thus, many *evangélicos*, through the respect they show their *totil me'il*, challenge the spatial-temporal orientation towards a territorial-based village as restricted to the symbolic landscape in Chamula. Converts orient themselves through a body symbolic of unity and life that can expand through death. Moreover, while the landscape that served to mark the boundaries of Chamula has changed through migration to the city, some are still visible from Mt. Zion. One example is Tzontehuitz (Tzo., the Sacred Mountain).

Other symbols have been reinterpreted as the following quote from Dominga Dominguez illustrates:

We have and have not left Chamula. The moon and the sun still shine upon us. We bow to the sacred mountain every morning. We are grateful for the gift of corn, every day that we pass a milpa and my grandchildren are taught to respect every cob and kernel for it is the image of Jesus, just as the sheep remind me of St. John, the Lamb of God. To become an evangélico is to have our eyes opened, that is, we see that a moral standard is essential to a life of harmony.

Dominga's insight is the fruit of 20 years of prayerful reflection upon her situation as both a Presbyterian convert and an *expulsado*. Although her assessment can not be applied to everyone in Mt. Zion, it is certainly representative of many. Dominga is just one example of a "moral overseer." As the case studies will show, personal histories influence a convert's focus upon harmony, homogeneity or respect more than social blameworthiness. In addition, Chamulas on both sides of the rural-urban border have the notion of a collective salvation: "among Indians, men and women might attain salvation only if their villages outlived individual members, only if their descendants lit candles for them and wept over their graves on the Day of the Dead" (Wasserstrom 1983:77). Furthermore, while some researchers describe the hopes of many evangelical pastors, that is, that converts replace the idea of a collective salvation for a personal one in the Lord Jesus, this has not been the case among Chamula converts.

The *caciques* adopted the ideology¹⁴ of INI that progress could be achieved within

14 This ideology reflects the 1970 form of *indigenismo* that is modeled after Guillermo Bonfil's critique of the assimilationist model. The new position saw Indians as survivors

a pluralistic state, respectful of the indigenous “traditions,” while on-route toward development. However, a basic contradiction involved the *cacicazgo*’s reformulation of “tradition” for their own personal gain and the social fiction of homogeneity that would maintain the township under the protection of the saints / protectors. As the “moral overseers” assigned significance to past events within the township (corruption, exploitation and expulsion) they became aware of the dissonance between the way things were done by the *caciques* to maintain social control and high levels of illness, disputes and expulsions. Thus, converts concluded that the *cacicazgo* were not only ineffective intermediaries for the gods but also were unacceptable role models of *batz’i vinik*.

A line had been drawn and it was based upon moral principles rather than competing groups (e.g., traditionalists versus *evangélicos* and progressive Catholics; new breed *caciques* versus the traditional elders; or those backed by the PRI versus supporters of the PAN or PRD) within Chamula. The more profound demarcation was the *evangélicos*’ insistence that following the customs of the ancestors meant the moral codes underlining tradition. If these were followed, even by adopting a “new prayer,” then the ancestors would keep the boundaries intact and protect them against external encroachment. This explains why the different religious affiliations are not, in and of themselves, obstacles to homogeneity for Chamulas.

As the next chapter will illustrate, converts as “moral overseers” did not accept the *caciques*’ validation of their behavior in terms of existing values of tradition. The real divide continues to be expressed in ethnic terms and, in many ways, the *caciques* are

of their own resistance and the goal was to train Indians to be their own anthropologists. Each Indian group should have its own council to look after its own cultural affairs

depicted as acquiring negative *Ladino* qualities, i.e., selfishness, individualism and a demeaning and disrespectful attitude toward Indians. As Juan Perez sums it up,

they [the caciques] think that by wearing the chuj (Tzo., traditional woolen overcoat) and setting up the crosses for a mayordomo's feast day in front of one's home can disguise who they are but, the ancestors know. And we have begun to recognize their ways. The caciques are Ladinos persecuting us for following the ways of our ancestors, for respecting each other and for our concern for the good of the community. We know that they have made a pact with the Earth Lord who controls all wealth..

It is by now quite clear that while the threat of expulsion fails to maintain conformity, the fear of spirits does control behavior in both the township and the urban colonies in the Protestant enclaves. Based upon the *expulsados'* assessment of the situation with the township, the lack of homogeneity, harmony and respect justifies religious "conversion" as a moral awakening. This moral revival focuses on the concepts of *lekilal* or *utsilal* (Tzo., harmony) and *bisel ta vinik* (Tzo., respect) or *ta jkan ta jki'x batik ta muk* (Tzo., I want respect¹⁵). Harmony is more than *co'olotik* which is a way of saying in Tzotzil that we are in agreement because it is based upon balance at the three levels: family, hamlet and township. Jealousy and envy are tremendous threats to this delicate harmony since any disruption may cause physical, emotional or psychological harm to an individual. In an extreme case the person may even lose her *ch'ulel* (Tzo., soul). If a person's biological or social spheres are out of balance, the equilibrium may be

(Warman, Nolasco, Bonfil, Olivera, and Valencia 1970 cf Friedlander 1986:363).

returned through an *ilol* (Tzo., traditional healer, shaman); however, as Gary H. Gossen has shown at the township level, the Festival of Games, Carnival, restores the cosmic order (Gossen 1974, 1986).

Respect, perhaps more than any other virtue, promotes and maintains a sense of community. Respect for the elders is related to the *cargo* system and, although this may not apply in the same way within the city as it does in the village, several pastors have implemented some variations on it to foster respect for any *hermano*, particularly if he has more years in the faith, the temple or in age than the younger converts or second generation of *expulsados*.

Respect extends to the deceased and this is why so many “converts” continue to bow in reverence to the Sacred Mountain, the dwelling place of the ancestors turned deities. Recall Lupe’s description of being safe in the city now that she is “under the eyes” of her deceased mother. The recollection of ancestors and expanding the safe space within the urban setting represent a continuity with social patterns modeled after tradition.

Homogeneity is the ideal of every *batz’il vinik*. One strives to be as similar, as much as possible, to his neighbors in all spheres (i.e., religion, political parties, syndicates, and even blood and ritual kinship ties). Although there are exceptions, such as my host family in Mt. Zion, Guadalupe’s case is closer to the norm.

Occasionally, mothers are heard shooing children away from the far right corner of the room, where the household altar traditionally was placed. When I asked, why it was important for the children not to play there, Guadalupe Perez, a Seventh Day

15 The women at Sbeik Jchanvunetik also use *ich’el ta muk’* to mean *dignidad* (Sp., dignity).

Adventist, responded,

We may be poor, perhaps I don't give what I should in the temple either. But we was raised to respect things and places...over there [she is pointing to the far right corner of her home] is the memory of my ancestors. Before I had an altar and on it were the pictures of our family saints. I spent many happy hours there asking for their help. They do not forget me, and how could I then remove them from my mind?

As I sipped the cup of lemon tea she offered me, I asked her whether being an evangelical changed her devotion and practice of prayers. Guadalupe replied,

As an evangélico nothing needs to change for it is the same God whether we call Him Jesus Christ, the Savior, the Good Shepherd, Saint John or the Universe...The trouble is that many Chamulas still do not know this, and that is why we fight, we hurt each other. If only one would take the time to see that in the hamlet, or here in the colony we are the same, our customs are equal...What changes is that we go to different temples, and this the caciques will not allow...

While Guadalupe sustains the physical or spatial arrangements in her household as she did in Chamula, she also appears to construct a cultural continuity within the various religions that she has practiced. Guadalupe was a *martoma* (Sp., wife of the saint's caretaker) in the traditional *cargo* system with her husband. After her husband married a younger woman, she felt more at ease spending time with her own sister, Roxa in the city. After several month-long stays, during which time she attended the Presbyterian temple with her sister and her family, Guadalupe also converted. Interestingly enough, when she was able to buy a small piece of land next to the Seventh Day Adventist temple,

Guadalupe felt the need to be like her neighbors and so she converted to Adventism. Although not frequently discussed when descriptions of identity occur, the ideal for Chamulas today still remains homogeneity.

Guadalupe's experience is also similar to what occurred in 1992 in Ranchería Sinai, a small Protestant enclave in the municipality of Teopisca. The residents decided by consensus that it was better to divide the community along the highway into a Presbyterian section and a Pentecostal one. Anyone who did not want to move her household to the side of her respective temple, converted to the local religion. There are only some 300 families in Ranchería Sinai, yet the issue of like-mindedness, and the avoiding of factions for Chamulas in particular, is an area of concern.

I know six extended families in Ranchería Sinai and all of them converted from Presbyterianism to Pentecostalism by an accident of geography. Two households believe that it was better since everyone around them is once again the same, while the remaining four families stressed the fact, that had this not occurred, the contributions for the two temples would have been too costly for any one household.

When I asked Dominga Hernández and Xun Laux, her husband, both of whom were active proselytizers of Presbyterianism, why they felt it was necessary to support both temples, if one could only attend one at a time, Xun explained that,

The people here want to get along, we are good Christians. Yet there are some who have discovered that by being in charge of a temple can lead one to a better life style, this is not good. Let me just say that we have some brothers who see service to the Lord Jesus as many in Chamula understood the task of caring for San Juan or Santa Rosa. They forget it is a service, not a time to become a

political candidate, or become rich. Our young people [i.e., second generation] have begun now to be pushy and demand...It was not this way before, and if one wants to live in peace one looks for the path that Jesus chose...I know that my wife and I need to continue as we were raised. What our parents and grandparents taught us was good, we can not survive as a people if the young forget our ways.

At this point I asked him about the challenges of the second generation maintaining the moral values of the *batz'i vinik* to which Xun replied:

Sometimes I think the children that were born in exile are not our children but children of the dogs [Ladinos]. It was not our fault that the caciques ran us out of Chamula. How can we help them to respect the ways of our Fathers and Mothers when they don't understand the life we lived in the hamlet?...We do not seek to be expelled from here either, but if some of the new caciques decide, what then can we do? It is not through weakness that we give in, it takes me strength not to fight them with my fists, but to resist with incense and prayer. There is no other way to keep us safe from evil's harm as a people.

The example of Ranchería Sinai clearly shows how behavior is based upon the belief that *evangélicos* are doing as the ancestors did (Nash 1970). While many diverse factors enter into the decision to change religious affiliation, a great many are informed by Maya moral codes. Making some domestic spaces sacred and feeling safe in the city under the eyes of one's ancestors are continuities with tradition that are found among other religious practices performed by traditional and progressive Catholics as well as evangelical Protestants.

In summary, the geography of the research sites and the political structure of

Chamula's *cargo* system and *cacicazgo* are the basis for comprehending the complex process of the massive religious conversions and expulsions. I have shown the changes within both the civil-religious and political structures and the moral consequences of being a society in rapid socioeconomic transition. While I have touched upon the issue of conversion as a response to political and moral change, it is essential to our understanding of the political structure to discuss the new religions, that is, evangelical Protestantism and the new Catholicism, as popular expressions against the elements of oppression.

In oppressive societies, religion is frequently an arena in which people organize and learn the skills necessary to participate in a democracy. In Chiapas, both the Catholic church and the evangelical Protestant churches provided opportunities such as literacy, Bible classes, leadership training, and grassroots organizing in which local people experienced democracy firsthand. Although neither local church directly provided significant financial assistance to the people, the churches suggested and enabled people to apply to developmental organizations for aid within and outside of the country. Sometimes assistance as simple as providing an address and a phone number for agencies, providing a typewriter or computer to write grant proposals and supplying legitimacy to applicants were means of assisting people to begin to help themselves. As Bastian (1983:170) argues:

In the measure that the State prohibits the free formation of political organizations, the only possible popular expression that subsists is the religious: opposite the control of the political structure, are the religious agencies that become the principal mode of expression for subaltern groups.

Thus, several anthropologists (Earl 1990; Rosenbaum 1993) stress that religious conversion in the Chamula context means a great deal more than just changing religions: because of the close tie between religion and politics, conversion implies sedition and an explicit rejection of the social, political, and moral bases of Chamula society. I depart from this thesis because the ethnographic data clearly shows that “moral overseers” react to the *caciques*’ straying from the “ways of the ancestors” by converting. Therefore, evangelicals are not rejecting the social, political, and moral bases of their society, rather they are denouncing the pact some leaders have made with the Earth Lord. Yet since converts lack political power beyond their community, they have limited options to remedy the situation within the township.

Despite the strong anti-clerical movement in the early decades of the twentieth century, there is no doubt that today Mexico remains a predominantly Catholic country. The use of the word “church” implies the Catholic Church and most things pertaining to religious matters are imbued with Catholic values, rather than Christian values. Still, the new religious democracy that Martin (1990) describes has opened up new forms of association and dissent. For example, while the Catholic Church was the first to organize the expelled through the Human Rights office that served to officially document and report the expulsions, the Civil Society expanded with groups, such as ORIACH, CRIACH, CHILTAK and UNAL, among others which have begun to document and to lobby for the right to religious freedom. The Evangelical churches have mobilized at the state and federal levels requesting funds from the National Presbyterian Church and from the United States to buy property and subsidize the installation of electricity and water tanks for the expelled as in Betania, Nueva Esperanza, Paraiso, Mt. Zion and Mazariegos,

while the Catholic Church helped by mediating the construction of 100 houses by Habitat in 1996 in Mt. Zion and the hamlet of Arvenza I, Chamula.

The Evangelical community also has CEDECH, Confraternice and the Ministerial Alliance which assists the expelled communities. Each temple also helps to support the many poor “widows” and orphans and to provide biblical instruction. The most recent association is a political one founded in July of 1995, the Evangelical Political Association of Chiapas (APECH). With some encouragement from the federal government, APECH “encourages members of the evangelical community to assume their duty as Christians and citizens for the benefit of all” (Tovilla 1995:2). The sudden popularity of APECH has roots in the Mexican Bishops denouncing of the government for its role in the rise in poverty levels.

The Catholic Church during 1996 criticized the government in a document produced by the Second Diocesan Assembly of the Archdiocese of Mexico (CEM 1996). The Mexican bishops denounced the failure of neo-liberal economic policy, confirming that the “tequila crisis” of December 1994, resulted in the worst economic situation since the depression of 1929-1932. This savage recession provoked in 1995 a reduction of 8.9 percent of the PIB per inhabitant, that in turn increased to 14.4 percent the population in extreme poverty.

In summary, both evangelical Protestantism and Progressive Catholicism have been instrumental in providing the means for Chamulas to acquire the necessary skills for their new roles as catechists, proselytizers, and leaders. These skills overflowed into the social and political spheres and converts constituted a challenge, if not a threat, to the authorities within the township and the *Ladino* leadership within the city of San

Cristobal. Therefore, as this recent religious democracy combined with a growing diversity of political parties--PAN, PRD, PFCRN, PT¹⁶—it was frequently met by the *caciques* (who are affiliated with the PRI) with intolerance that manifested itself rather violently. Moreover, as the next chapter will show these factional divisions are mirrored in kin, denominational, gender and power groups in Chamula society.

The next chapter explores the expulsion process in Chamula. While prayer and ritual continue to provide some sense of security within the township through the repetition of religious ceremonies, the ability of the *caciques* to control the people rests upon their alliances with state and PRI party officials to look the other way while they expel dissidents. The expulsions are therefore essential to our understanding of the social context of religious “conversion.”

¹⁶ Partido de Accion Nacional, Partido Revolucion Democratico, Partido Frente Cardenista de Reconstruccion Nacional, Partido de Trabajo.

Chapter Three

The Expulsion Phenomenon

Central to the analysis of conversions among the Chamulas are the expulsions of *evangélicos* from the township. The phenomenon of expulsion is a complicated one because it involves issues of power and social control on the part of the *caciques* and religious issues relating to conversion and the desire “to live in peace” on the part of the converted. In particular, attempts by women to convert husbands and sons, who become *evangélicos* and give up alcohol, tend to impact negatively upon the *caciques*’ sale of *pox* within the township as convert’s abstain from participating in drinking rituals. At the same time, the interplay of other processes is frequently labeled conversion. As a way of sorting out these issues, this chapter first describes the history of the expulsions, projected numbers of people involved, reasons for expulsion, and the intervention of different institutions over the years.

All societies maintain order by positive and negative forms of social control. While rewards are used to reinforce positive behavior, examples of negative types of social control include imprisonment, corporal punishment, community service, monetary fines, and ostracism. Banishment, i.e., expulsion, has long existed in instances of severe punishment and remains in practice today among certain societies and nations that enforce exile in extreme cases. In the township of Chamula ostracism is employed in its extreme form by expelling members from their hamlets, often in a violent manner, and depriving them of their inherited land. Beyond just losing one’s right to a corn field,

expulsion bears upon the safety of individuals and families and cuts one off from the ancestors, whose spirits protect those who follow their ways.

Expulsions have long occurred in Chamula¹⁷, although usually in very isolated instances. For example, after the Cuscat rebellion (Bricker 1981:124; Rosenbaum 1993:26; Rus 1989) followers were expelled from Chamula in 1870 (Gossen 1986). However, the past three decades have seen an escalation in both the numbers of expelled and the frequency of such events. Since the early 1970s, more than 35,000 *evangélicos* have been expelled in the Highlands of Chiapas, 90 percent of whom are from Chamula. The magnitude of expulsion cases is extreme when compared to a trouble maker or two being banned from a neighboring hamlet that three informants reported hearing about over fifty years ago. The majority of the expelled have sought refuge on the fringes of San Cristobal in what is called the “misery belt.” While expulsions of this religious nature initially were focused upon *evangélicos* during the late 1960s and early 1970s, it is now common to see traditional Catholics among the expelled. Expulsion has become a way for the *caciques* to control the municipality, yet at the same time it has developed into a scapegoat mechanism. Some *caciques* vent anger and jealousy by merely labeling a Chamula an “*evangélico*.”

This chapter provides three explanations for the Chamula expulsion phenomenon. The first views the expulsions as the result of the *cacicazgo*'s oppression. From this perspective, intolerance in Chiapas is derived from a civil religious hierarchy that sees religious conversion away from traditional Catholicism as a threat to its hegemony.

17 Ramon Rubin (1993) records the story of an infertile Chamula woman expelled from her hamlet by her husband in the 1920s.

Secondly, some cases appear to be explained by the profit motive, that is, the *caciques'* use of religious intolerance to justify seizing the land of the expelled. The third explanation postulates the expulsion phenomenon as a consequence of a democratic process that was started in the township of Chamula during the early 1970s. The National Action Party (PAN) with the support of priests and nuns from the Catholic diocese of San Cristobal, began to attack the *cacicazgo*, but they unwittingly also undermined many traditionalists' loyalty to Catholicism. I provide interview accounts that contrast the official *caciques'* presentation and the current one, where brothers are now scapegoating brothers to claim rights to inherited land. On the basis of the evidence, I conclude that both explanations are mutually self-enforcing. This is to say, that the Catholic effort at reform tried to undermine the power of the *caciques*. The *caciques*, in turn, used this attempt at reform by the Catholic Church as an excuse to consolidate their own power by expelling vocal members of the opposition by claiming that they were evangelicals. The *caciques* also seized the expelled dissenters' property. In sum, a theological dispute provided the opportunity for a land grab. However, the desire for more land would have gone unrealized without the validation of a theological dispute. This pattern is repeated in the hamlets within families, when familiar conflict feeds into the expulsion phenomenon in the hopes of acquiring the *expulsado's* land.

The Chamula Expulsion as *Cacique* Oppression

The *caciques* of San Juan Chamula have expelled thousands of inhabitants for not remaining faithful to "tradition." By this they mean supporting fiestas, consuming *pox*, and consulting shamans in cases of illness among other behaviors. Converting to evangelical Protestantism is usually given as the reason for expulsion, along with other

reasons offered by village officials. Several scholars who have studied the expulsions (Morquecho 1989; Perez Enriquez 1990; Wasserstrom 1976) see the religious aspect as a veil to cover political differences between the victims and the *caciques*. However, for many others, this religious intolerance is understandable since change in religious affiliation is a threat to indigenous social and political order (Arias 1991; Earle 1990:135) through the disruption of the *cargo* system. It is perceived that any form of external interference violates the village's autonomy, and jeopardizes its cultural survival (Arias 1991). More recently, Jacinto Arias (1994:398) has changed his view of the conversion-expulsion phenomenon:

There are Indians who find refuge in the feast days, rituals, customs and traditions that were handed down to us from our ancestors; no less Indian are those who in the search for making sense of their existence have turned their eyes to the teachings of Protestantism.

The Center for Human Rights' Fray Bartolome de Las Casas (Derechos Humanos 1991) has determined that over 15,000 Indians have been expelled. The Center for the Defense of Evangelicals in Chiapas (CEDECH 1993) says there are closer to 25,000 *evangélicos* who have been forced to seek refuge in the city, while the Regional Indian Council of Highland Chiapas (CRIACH 1995) claims there are more than 35,000 who have been expelled. Both the Catholic Center for Human Rights and the National Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CNDH 1994) state that the reason the state and federal governments do not assist the expelled to return to the land, which is rightfully theirs, is because the *caciques* assure political success in the elections for the PRI, the current ruling party (Deschamp 1989). The PRI, in effect, contravenes the

guarantees of freedom of religion in Article 24 of the 1917 Mexican Constitution:

Every man is free to profess the religious belief that most pleases him, and to participate in the ceremonies, acts of cults particular to the church or temple, and even in his own home (CNDH:1996:iii).

Maria Isabel Enriques Perez (1990) also found a link between the PRI, the *cacicazgo* and the government. The nature of these alliances determines whether the expelled return to their land or not. Where the link was weak, as in Chenalhó, the local leaders were obliged to readmit the expelled members. On the other hand, where there was a strong reciprocal political commitment, as in the Chamula case, the expulsion was not revoked. I arrived at this conclusion by examining the dates in which the most numerous expulsions occurred. From the government's point of view, expulsions are more tolerated in the year prior to federal and/or local elections, or within months of an election (as the following years indicate for Chamula: 1974, 1982, 1984, 1988, and 1990).

Land and the Profit Motive

We have shown that the expulsions demonstrate the power of the local *cacicazgo*, who appear to be beyond the law. This power is in part directed toward acquiring land. Expulsion has become the single most significant solution to the land shortage within the Chamula municipality. Historically, the problem of land is the most crucial political issue within Chiapas, and persists today (Harvey 1994; Kovic 1995; Marion 1995; Nash 1995; Perez Enriques 1993; Wasserstrom 1976 and 1983; among others). Some researchers consider that the land shortage in Chamula puts pressure on the *caciques* who in turn utilize expulsions as a quick solution. The indiscriminate nature of the expulsion of both Catholics and Protestants by the *caciques* supports the land problem thesis (Kovic

1995; Cruz and Kovic 1994; Ruiz 1991). However, there is a flaw in this argument. For even though some *caciques* did profit initially from seizing land, many of the converts to Protestantism had no land before they were expelled. Many more of the expelled preserved their land because family members have watched over their *milpas* for them by harvesting their crops and by delivering some of the produce to them in the market. The argument that profit alone motivated the expulsions is further weakened by the frequency with which converts were able to sell their possessions before leaving the hamlet during the 1980s.

The profit motive as an explanation for the expulsions thus has two factual problems: first, some of those expelled had no land, which means no gain was derived for the *caciques*; and second, because some of the expelled were allowed to sell their land before leaving Chamula, the *caciques* also failed to benefit from this group.

TABLE 3: Land Status Prior to Expulsion / Migration As Given by *Evangélicos*
N=200*

Land Status Prior to Expulsion / Migration As Given by <i>Evangélicos</i>		
Land Status	Number	Percentage
None	60	30%
Seized By:		
A) <i>Caciques</i>	60	30%
B) Relative or Would-be <i>Cacique</i>	10	5%
Land Sold To:		
A) Kin or neighbor	12	6%
B) Would-be <i>cacique</i>	6	3%
Land Still in Use:		
A) Converts Harvest Their <i>milpa</i>	16	8%
B) Kin Harvesting for them	36	18%
Total:	200	100%

Source: Field Data.

*This number represents the 98 respondents answering this question of the 250 conversion accounts collected between 1991-1993 and the 102 from the 1995-96 survey.

Table 3 shows that 30 percent of the evangelicals interviewed had no land prior to

migrating to San Cristobal. Since the use of *milpas* rests upon direct kinship ties with the former user, many from the distant hamlets do not consider inheritance land to be individually owned. There are no wills and usually no change in titles following the death of a parent. Therefore, unless someone sells a plot of land and follows through with a title change at the ceremonial center, the next of kin simply assumes the use of an evangelical's inheritance land once he leaves the hamlet. Moreover, as Domingo Ramos explains, "we only learned about human rights and individual *milpa* ownership while processing our claims at the Center for Human Rights." Although not entirely happy with the financial arrangements, the nine percent who sold their inheritance land did receive at least some compensation. Not to be underestimated are the 26 percent who still maintain the use of their inheritance land, i.e., eight percent harvesting corn themselves while another 18 percent rely upon relatives to do so for them. This latter category illustrates the willingness and ability of some kin in the more peaceful hamlets to bypass the intolerant decisions from the ceremonial center.

Some of my interviewees did confirm the profit motive for the expulsions. I asked traditionalists, "Do you think it is right to expel the *evangélicos*?" The majority said that it is wrong because "we are all the same *raza* (*Sp.*, *race*)." But like Domingo Perez, a fifty year old from Rincón de Witz, they saw greed and political power as the primary factors influencing the *cacicazgo*:

If we continue to expel for religion as we do for politics, then where will it all stop? I may be called a traitor to my people and there is nothing I can say to defend myself. It is a frightening thing because the caciques have gone too far, they have become wedded to the PRI people in Tuxtla at our own expense. Now

they do whatever dance the party tells them, whether we agree or not. This is not how our principales [elders] would do things years ago. But then, neither our young people nor our leaders are the same. Money is all they want. Money is the god now, not San Juan, not the Good Shepherd, not Saint Rose. If one has money then one can buy anything and anyone.

The Committee for the Expelled Chamulas has denounced the *caciques'* excuse for the expulsions, namely, conversion to Protestantism, since they do not "follow tradition." Control as a means of enhancing one's "making money" is also offered as a cause of the expulsions:

The caciques want to have total control of our people, above all of the parajes (Sp., hamlets), in order to continue "making money" with their businesses: alcohol, candles, beer, soft drinks, money lending, and fines. And those of us who no longer want them to mistreat and humiliate us, they threaten, persecute, imprison, force to sign documents, impose upon us against our will and beyond our financial means religious cargos...(CDAPE de Chamula, Oct.12, 1982).

While the last chapter showed the specific characteristics of the Chamula *caciques* and their historical development, capitalistic relations, i.e., "making money" have also penetrated the most religious and private relationships within the municipality. The level of violence, corruption, force, degree of exploitation and monopoly of the *caciques* resembles the structure of organized crime. Several investigators have compared the *caciques* to mafia members (Gossen 1974; Irribarren 1980; Perez Enriques 1994; Sterk 1993). Jan Rus (1994:3) offers a sophisticated version of the power and greed arguments that also indicate the state-*cacique* alliances apparent in recent years:

The anomaly of the state enforcing "native traditions," against the natives themselves to maintain order, has forced many Maya peasants to search outside of their communities for alternative ways of organizing themselves.

Evidence also exists to support the presence of several factions among the *caciques*. For example, the *cacicazgo* was willing to give up one of their own, Salvador López Tuxum, into the hands of state officials in order to satisfy the Catholic Church's outcry against oppression in Chamula. All of the above serves to demonstrate the presence of socioeconomic stratification, factions and tensions within Chamula, destroying prior idealized presentations of this complex society.

The Democratic Process

The movement towards democracy in Chamula ignited when the priests, nuns and catechists of the diocese of San Cristobal identified the *caciques* as oppressors, even naming some of them towards 1969. One such example is the following:

[M]ay it come to pass that this visit [from the President of the Republic] will help the Chamulas to develop as human beings and understand how to free themselves from multiple illnesses, that they free themselves from the misery and the exploitative caciques (Boletín Misión Chamula, 1970).

This statement followed the *caciques'* declared opposition to the Chamula Mission. An evangelical effort on the part of priests and religious of the diocese, founded in 1966 by Bishop Samuel Ruíz and headed by Father Leopoldo. The Catholic Church's Mission to Chamula was in direct response to the social justice doctrines of Vatican II. Father Leopoldo oversaw the catechetical campaign and several developmental projects. Together with his staff, Fr. Leopoldo spared no effort in order to bring Chamulas into

what was described as the “new Catholicism,” i.e., progressive Catholicism. When the Chamula Mission announced the establishment of the Bank of Credit with competitive interest rates and minimal equity requirements, the Progressive Catholic Chamulas denounced the 10 to 15 percent monthly interest that the *caciques* charged their own brothers (Iribarren 1980). This savings and loan bank started with 123 members and began charging low, competitive interest rates with relatively little equity requirements. In 1980 the mission’s Bank of Credit had more than 1,500 members. The bank empowered many people in the distant hamlets, and some in the ceremonial center, who were at odds with some *caciques* to begin their own cooperative.

The Catholic Church’s Mission in Chamula began collecting testimonies against Salvador López Tuxum with the intention of striking down the top *cacique*. In 1972 Salvador López Tuxum was finally arrested¹⁸. However, attacking the leader failed to address the system of *cacicazgo* which proved to be equally exploitative. The *caciques* had already aligned themselves with the PRI party and enjoyed control of the municipality through appointments to the civil posts within the ceremonial center. In an attempt to overthrow the *cacicazgo*’s control of the township in the 1973 municipal presidential election, progressive Catholics put forth a candidate named Domingo Díaz Gómez, of the hamlet Yolbon. Domingo was a graduate of the catechetical and leadership courses offered by the diocese from 1972 to 1974. The campaign was intense, and while Father

18 After serving two years in a federal prison, López Tuxum now lives on the fringes of Barrio San Ramon in San Cristobal. His front yard proudly displays blue painted ceremonial crosses that mark his service as *mayordomo*, while the backyard faces an Assembly of God Temple. The irony of his demise lies in that almost everyone hated him for diverse reasons: Catholics labeled him an “oppressor,” *evangélicos* knew him their persecutor and many traditionalists perceived him as “a threat to our way of life.”

Leopoldo wrote the content of the slogans and speeches, Sister Miriam made the posters and fliers which she and the young catechists then distributed to the hamlets (Iribarren 1980). Although Díaz Gómez was anti-PRI and anti-*cacique*, as a progressive Catholic he was also anti-evangelical.

Evangelicals would have been natural allies of the Catholic campaign to undermine the *caciques* and the PRI. Indeed, the Evangelicals were also concerned about a more representative form of leadership within the village as a means of assuring their own safety and of promoting religious tolerance. At that time they had no political activity of their own. The *caciques* also presented a candidate, Agustín Hernández, who defined his position within the lines of tradition. Hernández was from a long line of *cacique* families and he strongly promoted the PRI. As Alfredo Pérez of Sacramenton said, "The first thing he said when campaigning in our hamlet was that he was on the side of those who sell *pox*, those who assume *cargos*, those who respect fiestas" (cf. Iribarren 1980). Hernández went even further in the ceremonial center as he promised "to cleanse the village of all *evangélicos*." Because of these statements, evangelical Protestants could support neither the PRI candidate nor the Catholic oppositional office seeker.

Even though Díaz Gómez had acquired 3,000 pre-candidate ballots, the PRI party candidate won the 1973 election. The amount of energy and risk expended while promoting Díaz Gómez called for heroic efforts from many Chamulas. The final results of the open election favored the PRI candidate because the Catholic Church was either not willing or was unable to join with the Protestants at that time. The outrage expressed within the village by the Independent party, which claimed electoral fraud, reached Tuxtla Gutierrez, and Mexico City (CNDH 1990; Perez Enriquez 1994; Iribarren 1980).

This prompted a massive persecution not only of *evangélicos* and progressive Catholics, but anyone associated with the Independent party who had sought alliance with the PAN party. Even those who had become associated with the Savings and Loan Bank were targeted because they infringed upon the usury of the *caciques* (Iribarren 1980). Suspicion reigned across political and religious spheres pitting relatives and neighbors against each other. Frequently the minor disagreements at the hamlet level were handled by labeling someone an “evangelical,” which almost guaranteed that the person would be expelled from the municipality of Chamula.

The threat was twofold. First, the decentralization of worship risked placing the existing *cargo* system in economic disarray, while second, the *cacicazgo*'s lost control over the election process through the installation of the newly arrived PAN office and a growing number of Independent voters. New cleavages surfaced, setting the stage for political religious factionalism. The *caciques* dealt with the small chapels built in the distant hamlets of Baptista Chica, Majomut, and Yaálboc by burning the chapels. In 1967 the elders and many people, both converts and traditionalists alike, in the hamlets of La Candelaría and San Antonio de las Rosas faced the threat of massive expulsions. Instead of destroying their local communities these two hamlets opted to incorporate their *parajes* as *barrios* into the municipality of San Cristobal. The *caciques* in the ceremonial center threatened to expel those who refused to cooperate with contributions to the *cargo* system and to the fiestas. The real concern was the decline in sales of candles and liquor, attributed to *evangélicos*' rupture with traditional healing rituals and their new found sobriety. Still, for the *cacicazgo* the greatest fear of all was losing control of the elections. Without the ability to bargain for benefits with PRI votes, the *caciques* would

be at a definite disadvantage.

The Catholic Church was attempting to gain power in the municipality of Chamula not only through political action, but also through developmental programs such as sewing workshops with new machines and the pig project. The pigs were targeted by the traditionalists because they claimed that an odor surrounded the ceremonial center where the animals were being raised. Folklore¹⁹ credits San Juan with the founding of Chamula in the area of the ceremonial center. San Juan is said to have drained the water that was in the center of Chamula. San Juan has since taken his position in the form of a snake on the outside of the temple from which he continues to protect the township. It is also common belief among many traditionalists that San Juan was so disturbed by the odor of the pigs that he fled to the mountains (*El Tiempo* 1986). His flight from the center of Chamula was interpreted as jeopardizing the safety of the entire municipality for a township without a patron saint is open ground for illness, disasters and all sorts of evils. The pigs thus became the symbol that the *caciques* used to legitimize their condemnation of the members of the Chamula Mission. Father Leopoldo and the Clarist nuns were expelled from the township in the late 1960s by the *caciques*. The Catholic Church opposed this decision and denounced the banning of priests and religious from Chamula. Some catechists of the Progressive Catholic group voiced their opposition to the expulsion of the Chamula Mission. They, in turn, were expelled for supporting the clergy. Bishop Samuel Ruíz countered with the excommunication of the township, withholding sacraments except for last Rites, which are given in cases of imminent death.

19 Several of my informants related similar accounts of the founding of Chamula and the flight of San Juan after the pig project was begun in the ceremonial center.

Several times the village leaders requested a priest for the celebration of their feast days and for baptism, promising to stop the expulsions. However, all these promises were eventually forgotten as the number of those expelled increased. Finally, in 1984 the Chamulas opted for a Mexican Orthodox Bishop. Expelling Rev. Leopoldo became a watershed for an anticlerical campaign. The flow of animosity continues today and Samuel Ruíz remains the main target. This anticlerical movement also served to unite PRI-supporting Chamulas with others in the state who opposed the Bishop of San Cristobal. Ten years later the Apostolic Nuncio, Geronimo Prigione, granted permission to Bishop Franco to incorporate the township of Chamula into the Diocese of Tuxtla Gutierrez.

In the early 1970s the rising new middle class united with the help of the Catholic clergy, nuns and catechists to oust the exploitative *cacique* Salvador López Castellaños, nicknamed Tuxum. It also sought greater political representation through democratic processes. The year 1974 marks the largest number expulsions from Chamula as an effort of the new President, Augustín Hernández López, to cleanse the village of all the "Protestants who are inciting the people" (Iribarren 1980). Veron Sterk (1993) indicates that there were no expulsions from 1969-1971 due to the help of Manuel Castellaños Cancino, a lawyer at INI who enforced the law of freedom of religion (Sterk 1993:217-218). The federal government's orders against religious persecution were respected in Chamula until a new directorship was set up in INI, formed by Angel Robles and Pablo Ramírez. These two lawyers failed to enforce the law protecting *evangélicos* and also reversed the legal enforcement policies that had held the persecution in check. Thus, in 1972 the expulsions proceeded with such force that more than 600 Chamula converts

were expelled within one week and were literally dumped in San Cristobal.

By 1974, 26 of the then 70 existing *parajes* had expelled people for being of the wrong religion, political party, or just for opposing the *caciques*. The expulsion policy can be explained because the government shifted its position from one of maintaining order and control, to one of political interest for the PRI party. This permitted *caciques* to expel all opposition indiscriminately since fear of expulsion would deter many Chamulas from joining another political party. So, although the most significant *cacique*, López Tuxum had been arrested, and served time in jail for his abuse of fellow Chamulas, the bulk of the newly fashioned *caciques* were once again reassured by the *laissez-faire* attitude adopted by the INI lawyers. The leaders who were trained within the Catholic catechetical sessions, the leadership training, the independent political party movement, the newly committed PAN members, as well as a host of *evangélicos*, were expelled. Their common cause of seeking religious tolerance, if not justice, solidified bonds between progressive Catholics and evangelical Protestants once they took up residence in the “misery belt.”

This is not to say that there are no factions within the Protestant enclave, for there are several cleavages that continue to deepen. Among 35,000 persons, it is hardly possible for any single one to claim to be spokesperson for all. Each elected official’s jurisdiction ends with the municipal boundary of his *colonia* and to date there is no representative for the urban indigenous communities within the municipality of San Cristobal. The coalition building across denominational lines that exists in the Protestant enclaves is an important consequence of the abuse of power by the *caciques* as will be developed later. Just as the divisions within the Chamula communities in the urban

setting multiply, a similar process has been developing within the hamlets. While the divisions in the urban setting gravitate toward political or labor union affiliation, hamlet-based factions tend to develop along kinship lines, thus dividing families. Familial conflict feeds into the expulsions as brothers pit themselves against brothers in hopes of gaining control over inheritance land.

Familial Conflict and the Expulsions

The pattern of using a theological dispute to cover greed is also found within families. The killings of expelled Chamulas that occurred in Ik'alumtik in 1993, examined below, entailed one brother who shot and killed his own brother, sister and brother-in-law. This specific case was not simply about land acquisition, but about sibling rivalry and the power exercised by thugs who controlled the hamlets by manipulating the precepts of tradition. The bonds which held even the poorest of family units together have dissolved in many cases. Moreover, an increasing number of men have children with more than one wife and often, greed will motivate half-brothers to settle scores. These aggressive half-brothers seek acceptance through holding office in the newly established civil hamlet positions. They resent being rejected by their parent's second marriage partner and the second set of siblings. Thus it is nothing to run a half-brother out of the hamlet or even to kill him for inheritance land that may be no more than one-eighth of the requirement for self-sufficiency.

The hamlets tend to mirror the abuse of power committed by the *cacicazgo*. Many aspiring *caciques* seek out opportunities to advance themselves at the expense of others. Unfortunately, many *evangélicos* adhere to the messages they receive at the temples: "Rejoice in the Lord for he has found you worthy to suffer in his name."

Preaching does not inspire *evangélicos* to stay and fight for their inheritance land. The current *caciques* threaten to seek out and to kill those who report their expulsion to any authority. And, as shown in the case of Domingo in Ik'alumtik, the *caciques* do not arrest murderers who do their bidding. Rather, the Chamula township now serves as a haven for criminals wanted for capital crimes.

One can easily understand the fear that some *evangélicos* live with even after migrating to the city. When one feels threatened by a relative, it may be that the safe decision is to leave and migrate to the city. Evangelicals do not stay around to protect themselves and their land. Within the last two years, especially following the formation of the Plural Commission to study the Chamula Case, *evangélicos* have left upon the first threat. Moreover, they even avoid reporting their expulsions to CEDECH, CRIACH and CNDH out of fear because violence migrates with the expelled, especially when it is spread along kinship lines.

The fighting among family members is just another sign of the social disarray within Chamula society. A market mentality has changed their perceptions of the benefits and responsibilities entailed in kinship ties and social networks, creating chaos²⁰. If a solution is reached in the near future and the *caciques* in the ceremonial center stop expelling village members, there is no certainty that the hamlets will follow suit.

As violence increases in intensity, neighbors and kin become the scapegoats for the venting of personal grudges through violent acts (Galtung 1975, 1990; Haas 1990; MacGregor and Rubio 1994; Rupesinghe and Rubio 1994; Vanden 1990; Warren 1993).

20 This is not meant as a statement in support of the moral economy of peasants. Chamulas decision-making is a blend of the rational and moral.

As the oppression spreads and mutates, the instigators and perpetrators are less and less educated. In the 1990s, many of the people in the hamlets do not know how to read, and the risk of being manipulated is extremely high.

As an extreme example of lawlessness due to greed, I include here an account of the Mendez brothers in Rincón de Witz whose struggle for political control actually led to an attempt to kill the President of Chamula. Witz is a 60 minute walk from the center of Chamula, and more than 80 percent of the men work outside the municipality as wage laborers. The Mendez family consists of five brothers who have been somewhat educated, by Chamula standards, i.e., up to the sixth grade. Through their connections in the municipal center they have served in various positions ranging from supplemental Municipal President, to Chief of Police, Advisor to the Municipal President, Potable Water Committee Chief, and Public Works liaison, among others. One of the brothers, Salvador, worked for a bank in town and confiscated property from people who defaulted on loans, while another, Manuel, worked in one of the Indigenous Writer's Groups, *Sna Jtz'ibalom* (Tzo., The House of Writers). Manuel was also a field assistant to anthropologists.

This account concentrates on the actions of the older brother, Salvador, while he was serving as Chief of Police in the ceremonial center of Chamula during 1995. Salvador had arrested unjustly a young woman and kept her overnight in jail. At three in the morning he asked the guard for the keys to the cell stating that he had to ask the prisoner some questions. Upon entering the cell of the young woman, he raped her.

When the woman was released the following morning, she returned home to her hamlet and complained to her father. Her father brought the case before the municipality

demanding compensation for his daughter's loss of virginity while in prison for no legitimate reason. After hours of debate it was decided that Salvador would be punished by asking him to leave his post as Chief of Police. A small fine was also charged and this was remitted to the municipality; no amount ever was paid to the father of the woman, or to the victim.

During the campaign for Municipal President in 1995, the candidate for the PRI party was a school teacher, Enrique Lunes Patistan. Lunes Patistan refused to let Salvador Mendez run on his ticket as Principal Advisor. Lunes Patistan was quoted as saying to Mendez, "What you did to the woman when you raped her was an abuse of authority and I can not have someone like you in the municipal palace" (Ruíz López 1996). Despite the opposition fueled by Mendez, Lunes Patistan won the election.

During the fall of 1995, prior to his installation, President Lunes Patistan served on the Plural Commission for the Chamula Expulsion Case²¹. In the capacity of President elect he signed the truce which afforded a state pension to the six widows of the massacre that occurred in Avenza I during that same year. In Chamula, common knowledge held that the murderers were *evangélicos*. The truce agreement was distributed as a press release from Tuxtla Gutierrez shortly after being signed.

Salvador Mendez used his contacts in the banking system to acquire the press release and ran off photocopies which he distributed to the 96 hamlets with the help of his brothers. When Mendez arrived at Rincón de Witz he told the women to receive the

21 Towards the end of 1995, the state government decided to form a Plural Commission with the representatives from the major political parties to study, mediate and hopefully arrive at a peaceful agreement between the traditionalists and the expelled. Lopez Angel

letter for their husbands. Mendez misled the women by saying that it proved that the elected President Lunes Patistan had agreed to let all 35,000 of the expelled return to Chamula at their expense, that is each household would be asked to give up some property to allow the expelled to resettle in Chamula. My host family was surprised that anyone could agree to such a thing without consulting with the hamlets. Furthermore, the Mendezes pointed out that Lunes Patistan's signature was on the second page and that he had accepted a bribe of more than \$50,000.00 pesos (Sp., Mexican currency value ratio at time of field work was \$6.5-7 pesos to US\$1.00) from the state to do so. All the hamlets were in an uproar and agreed to attend a town hall meeting the next day.

Once everyone arrived, the President elect was formally accused by the Mendez brothers. Everyone of the more than 750 men present began shouting that it was unfair to have made that decision without the township's consensus process. Salvador then suggested that his brother, Mariano, take the position of President while he would be the Principal Advisor. At that, the people from Witz protested and the others began to question why they were not in agreement with their own neighbors. Suddenly Lunes Patistan grabbed a microphone and asked, "How many of you have actually read this treaty agreement?" Only four hands were raised and so the President elect proceeded to read it in Spanish, and then he translated it into Tzotzil. After he finished he briefly explained that he had never agreed to let all the expelled return, nor had he accepted money for signing his name to the truce.

Simply put, he had signed so that the widows could receive compensation at the

refused to serve on it since seven other peace treaty signings since 1984 were never honored.

suggestion of the governor. He asked the crowd to judge, "Was what I did wrong as far as you see it? Are we not out to find a peaceful solution without any more bloodshed?" The people then agreed with him and all of the Mendez brothers were placed in jail for inciting the people.

Before the crowd dispersed Lunes Patistan spoke to his fellow Chamulas as a teacher,

Learn to read this way you will not be so easily swayed and misled by the first one who claims something is true or not true. When given a flier, read it or have one of your children read it to you (Ruíz López 1996).

This incident, however, did not go away because Salvador sought revenge. One day, as the President was returning home in a white pickup truck from visiting one of the hamlets in the periphery, he was brutally attacked by gun fire. A bullet entered his ear, several bounced off the car, and shattered the windshield. Luckily no one was killed. The newspapers and rumors initially reported that the *evangélicos* were to blame, and they arrested a dupe on trumped up charges. It was only in Rincón de Witz that any real connections could be confirmed about the involvement of the Mendez brothers. Salvador had a nephew do the dirty work for him. It was this same person who fired a gun at Lunes Patistan. Even after being arrested, the sniper failed to implicate Salvador Mendez.

This case is not typical in that few local or hamlet civil leaders seek office positions within the ceremonial center. Yet it shows how easy it is to stir up an angry crowd and manipulate Chamulas when literacy rates are so low. For example, in Witz the 1995 list for government subsidies for buying fertilizer per acre consists of nearly seven

pages of recipients, yet only 14 people signed it. All the rest used finger prints. The National Institute for the Education of Adults (INEA) reports literacy rates as low as 34 percent in Chamula, 40 percent among the expelled communities in San Cristobal and estimates that more than 50 percent of those who say they can read are functional illiterates. It is in this sense that I link education with the ability to manipulate Chamulas. At another level, the example of the Mendez brothers shows how some families bond together to gain power and mutual benefits. Still, even well established *caciques* are far from being omnipotent. The ability to expel was challenged on certain occasions by state officials and representatives of the Catholic and evangelical Protestant churches.

The role of the Catholic Church during the expulsions of Protestants is an interesting one as was shown above. Moreover, despite the Catholic Church's role of human rights reporter, which for many years focused upon the expulsions, nothing really changed as regards to the expelled. However, considering that there are some 35,000 evangelical Christians in the Protestant enclaves, one wonders why the evangelical Protestant ministries failed to rally national and international agencies in order to stop the wide spread religious persecution.

Various Evangelical ministries within Chiapas were aware of the extensive religious persecution of their members, and those that are linked nationally informed headquarters at various intervals. Although murders and massive expulsions topped the news lists and at times pleas did receive some help, no organized response was made. It took more than twenty years for the Tzotzil churches to get help from the national churches, specifically to lobby for legal defense of their congregants. There are several reasons for this apparent lack of commitment on the part of the hierarchy.

According to Sterk (1993:280-291), there are four factors explaining this lack of involvement: 1) the Presbyterian national churches initially felt that the persecution of Christians in Chiapas was an isolated issue that needed to be resolved locally; 2) since the expulsions had to be negotiated with the *caciques*, this diminished the hopes of negotiating at a national level; 3) many churches had no experience dealing with persecution and were not at all organized to respond to it; and 4) the assumption that since local missionaries were working closely with the local churches they should be the most capable of meeting their needs. It is also true that the political climate was not conducive to Protestants making waves on the national scene, until now.

In 1992, President Salinas pushed changes to the Mexican Constitution through the legislature²². These Constitutional reforms awarded judicial status to the Catholic Church by allowing it the freedom to legally acquire and to own necessary goods for its functioning, to exercise its evangelical mission, to intervene in education with Catholic programs and to have access to public communication. According to García Ugarte (1993:19),

[f]rom a secular position, the pretensions of the autonomy and independence of the Catholic Church, as an institution, are critical not only because they affirm her primacy²³ over the civil society and politics but also, in her self affirmation,

22 The articles 3, 5, 24, parts of II and III of 27, and 130 deal with judicial status, expression of rites and recruitment of members. See Garcia Ugarte (1993) for an excellent analysis of the changes in the constitution, as well as the key players. This section is indebted to the latter's work for orienting its layout and informing much of the content on the links between Prigione and the state.

23 For example, in a document released by the Mexican Bishop's Conference (CEM) in 1987, concerning the pastoral challenge of the sects or new Religious Movements on reads: "we can not be content with simply condemning and combating the sects, or

political democracy and social tolerance are denied.

Neither the government nor the Catholic Church became more tolerant or democratic after the decree on religious tolerance was passed. Since neither the state nor the Catholic Church constitutes the basis for a democratic society, the vertical decisions that were made in *Los Pinos* (Sp., the pine trees, i.e., the Presidential Palace) had much to do with the personalities present. Among the invited were the Apostolic Nuncio Prigione, former President Carlos Salinas Gotari, Archbishop Suarez Rivera, Mexico's representative before the Holy See, Augustine Tellex Cruces and Jose Cordoba Montoya, Salinas's chief of staff.

Salinas's national plan of economic development was in preparation for the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) and required increasing the socioeconomic and political inequity that already had plagued Mexico for centuries. The necessary changes depended upon the success of privatization and agrarian "reforms," especially regarding the sale of *ejido* lands. The success of these economic changes within the politics of neoliberalism was endangered by the need to cut state expenditures on the welfare of the Mexican people (health, education, communication, housing and social security).

In order to do this, Carlos Salinas wanted some of the bishops silenced, particularly those who were the "followers of Liberation Theology." In exchange, the Catholic Church would receive juridical status, if the church would channel the Episcopal political decisions, while Mexico would reestablish diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Monsignor Geronimo Prigione and Archbishop Suarez Rivera, president of the Mexican

making sure that they are prohibited or expelled, or rescuing people against their own will."

Bishops' Conference (CEM), became the spokespersons for the "official" church, despite the unconformity of several bishops and religious leaders. Salinas called upon the voices of these officials to summon the traditional Catholic values—charity, compassion, and sacrifice, among others—to calm the "hunger and thirst for justice: of those that live in extreme poverty." While the National Program of Solidarity (PRONASOL) strengthened presidentialism.²⁴

The real risk was the national decline of the PRI's monopoly over the political party system, and the Free Trade Act itself. In Chiapas the risks extremely were high. A deal made by Prigione and Salinas, played out at the suggestion of Jose Cordoba Montoya, was to remove the Bishop of the Diocese of San Cristobal, Samuel Ruíz García. Rosa Rojas (1996:138) reports that Prigione said,

The Mexican government has imposed and the Church's leadership has accepted to remove Samuel Ruiz from the diocese that he has ruled for over thirty years. This decision stems from governmental needs and not from the ecclesiastic headquarters, much less from the social and Indian pastoral duties that Don Samuel practices.

Bishop Ruíz posed a threat to the changes to be made by Salinas that governor Gonzalez Garrido commissioned.

Patrocinio Gonzalez Garrido won the election as governor of Chiapas in 1988. Gonzalez Garrido's term in office was unique for the state of Chiapas since it had a

24 The term Presidentialism is frequently used as a spin off on federalism, i.e., the concentration of power within the central governing body. In Mexico at that time, to consolidate power during the PRIs virtual monopoly was within the reach of the president who named not only a good number of governors, but also, his successor.

loosely constructed organization and orders from Mexico City where power was concentrated in the hands of the president. Governor Gonzalez Garrido was not a part of the traditional power that had governed this southernmost state for generations. His main objective was to put into place the basis for neoliberalism. For this it was necessary to break up the social movements and the pastoral work of the Diocese of San Cristobal. In order to control opposition to these changes Garrido modified the state Penal Code, making blockades and riots criminal offenses. The governor also targeted peasant and Indian organizations in an attempt to co-opt the leaders and manipulate the social movements. Many of these NGOs were formed following the 1974 Indian Congress. These were supported morally by the Diocese through leadership training that was offered for catechists, as well as the demands for social justice that were verbalized during the Indian Congress. Thus, the Mexican government was astute to guarantee religious democracy as a means to balance the influence of the Catholic clergy through the occasional and always controlled display of favoritism towards the evangelical Protestant churches.

In summary, the aim of this first part of the dissertation was to introduce the research sites and to situate them within the sociopolitical context of Highland Chiapas. Together these three chapters make five points. First, any number of socioeconomic and political factors may concur when a traditional Catholic becomes an evangelical Protestant. Secondly, even though the *caciques* bend the definitions of "tradition" to suit their own agendas, this usually occurs within the limits proscribed by politicians of the ruling party, the PRI. Thirdly, although many *caciques* appear to be motivated by greed, this factor alone fails to explain why they would expel the landless. Fourthly, the

proximity of Chamula, and Witz in particular, to the market within the city of San Cristobal has facilitated migration to the city in search of wage labor, and increased access to health care, education and housing. A high level of frequent contacts with the city greatly increases the odds that a family may seek “a better way,” particularly when they have kin living as *evangélicos* in San Cristobal. Finally, among the 35,000 indigenous people within the Protestant enclaves there are a number of traditional Catholics, as well as some progressive Catholics and others who profess having “no religion” who were either thought to be, or claimed they were, *evangélicos* while in prison or shortly after being expelled from Chamula.

In particular, this chapter has described the three common explanations for the expulsions. The *cacicazgo's* oppression and the profit motive are factors as is the democratic process (the pivotal event being the municipal election of 1973) that both the evangelical Protestant Ministries and the Catholic hierarchy which contributed to and supported in a variety of manners. Initially, the *caciques* posed as defenders of traditional Catholicism, however, they gradually shifted their position to one that colluded with the PRI following the involvement of the Catholic hierarchy in the elections of the early 1970s. Complicit in the transformation of Chamula's official stance on what being a traditional Catholic means today, i.e., pro-nuncio and anti-Bishop Samuel Ruíz, are several *caciques*, state and PRI party officials. In addition, Monsignor Prigione, a staunch Salinas supporter, wanted the “Bishop of the Indians” not only silenced, but also, removed from his diocesan seat (Rojas 1995).

The 1990s has seen the persecution of evangelical Protestants, expressed in terms of defending “tradition,” that is, not following the ways of the ancestors, refusing to

participate in the *cargo* system, abstaining from ritual drinking, not seeking out *compadres* (Sp., godparent) and refusing to pay the contribution tax. However, the majority of *evangélicos* I interviewed stated that they had complied with all the demands made upon them by the *caciques* and they were still expelled. Therefore, the two causes, greed and politics, use religious conversion to evangelical Protestantism as a mask for the abuse of power. A similar pattern is repeated at the level of kinship competition for land. The social and political orders have equally degenerated into the naked use of force for selfish ends, allowing people to literally “get away with murder.” In a climate of social chaos where power is frequently abused for personal gain and violence is escalating, the decision to “convert” cannot be viewed merely as a rational choice or a theological decision.

In addition, the breach with “tradition,” the rupture with the past and the rejection that many expelled Chamulas experience merits further explanation. There is no doubt that conversion implies change, yet the Chamula concept of “conversion” challenges commonly held definitions. All too frequently differences based upon theology and historical circumstances are stressed by social scientists overlooking the similitude within a “*batz'i vinik* spirituality” that informs both the traditional Catholic and the evangelical Protestant religions. Moreover, the Chamula concept of *batz'i vinik*, or true man, while very traditional is also utilized by the expelled to mitigate the rejection by the community for their new religion, political dissent or other forms of association. The *expulsados* perceive the *caciques*, for the most part, as failures since they do not follow the moral principles of a *batz'i vinik*.

Moreover, expulsion and the seizing of one's inheritance property was not

interpreted as a communal rejection of themselves or their new beliefs and practices by most of the “converts” whom I interviewed. Rather the expelled like many living in the hamlets, consider the *caciques* to be abusive, aggressive individuals who place “making money” above the welfare of the township. Since the *caciques* do not follow the ways of the ancestors, the expelled can therefore disassociate themselves from the *cacicazgo* without feeling rejected by their fellow Chamulas. The next section consists of three chapters that further develop the religious scene in Chiapas. The following chapter describes the growth of evangelical Protestantism in Highland Chiapas and develops the positive meaning that many *evangélicos* attach to religious change.

Chapter Four

K'op Riox: The New Prayer

The next three chapters continue the description of the Highlands of Chiapas with a focus on the religious scene as it relates to religious change. While Chapter Two touched upon the new religions as a venue for protesting the oppressive regime of the *caciques*, this section seeks to further develop the individual and the communal aspects of religious conversion. Chapter Four discusses the introduction and growth of evangelical Protestantism and the conversion experience of Chamulas. It demonstrates how conversion for many *evangélicos* is an attempt to restore moral codes by returning to a life “under the eyes of the ancestors.” Chapter Five focuses upon the role of women in the conversion among Chamulas. Chapter Six analyzes the consequences of religious conversion.

The aim of Chapter Four is threefold. First, it introduces the Chamula concept of “conversion” that defies commonly held definitions. Secondly, in the chapter I analyze motives for conversion as given in the respondents’ conversion accounts. Third, I discuss the high incidence of serial conversions. The analysis of motives over time suggests that when a convert’s primary motivation for change is linked to a negative emotion or a need that remains unsatisfied, or reappears, she enters a cycle of congregational switching or serial conversions. The three case studies included here illustrate that while each account of serial conversions appears to be very practical, i.e., problem solving, in orientation, the converts are really seeking a reinforcement of the cultural codes that served them well in the past. In this sense converts are the “moral overseers” of traditional values and ways.

This chapter begins with a brief description of the arrival of Protestantism in Chiapas and its diffusion in the township of Chamula. It then provides a comparison of five evangelical Protestant temples within the *colonias* of San Cristobal before relating the reasons that some converts give for seeking out or adopting the *K'op Riox* (Tzo., literally word of god, although translated and used in the literature for new religion, i.e., evangelical Protestantism or progressive Catholicism, (Rosenbaum 1993; Eber 1995) yet many *evangélicos* insist in that *k'op riox* stands for new prayer more than new religion). The conversion accounts have been categorized and placed along a time frame linking some of the motives for religious conversion to socio-political changes within Chamula. This is not to imply that these social factors are necessarily the catalysts for religious change. The larger concerns--alcoholism, illness, poverty, landlessness and disillusionment with either *shaman*, *caciques* or the *cargo* system--are however factored into the decision making process at some level.

This chapter also stresses that people are not limited to making "western" cognitive choices when they choose to become Evangelical Protestants or to remain Traditional Catholics. Rather, the overlapping complex processes of daily life promote choices that either converts or their pastors later define along religious lines. The qualitative data illustrates the limitations of binary opposition models since they fail to describe the complexity of Maya conversion processes in Highland Chiapas today.

Protestantism in Chiapas

The interaction of the struggle for land, religious dissension, and political challenges to the ruling party in Mexico set the stage for the Protestant penetration in this

formerly Catholic region. Catholicism, introduced by Spaniards during the colonization of Mexico (Ricard 1966), developed into a uniquely Mexican folk religion as it mixed with Indian religions to form a new, syncretistic popular belief system which emphasized miraculous saint-patrons, the ritual cycle of the fiestas, and the political and economic ties of the *cargo* system.

Increasing numbers of Protestants came to Mexico during the Mexican American War of 1845 when the United States found Protestant influence useful in undermining Mexican resistance to U.S. imperialism (Perez Perez 1991). According to historian Jean Pierre Bastian (1994) the arrival of Protestantism dates to the time of the conquest in the sixteen century.

Protestants began to penetrate Chiapas in 1910 in three distinct waves of action (Ruíz García 1989). In the first place, after the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, Mexico was divided up into proselyte territory. Chiapas was entrusted to the Presbyterians who arrived in 1920. Secondly, despite the beginnings of revolutionary government, Protestants were allowed to operate freely. Between 1949 and 1960 there was an increase of 3,000 temples with at least a hundred non-Catholic denominations. Finally, this was followed by a major invasion not only of Protestantism, but also of spiritual movements such as Buddhism, New Age and Amer-Indian religions.

In 1902 a group of North American Presbyterians based themselves in the state of Tabasco, eventually sending missionaries to Chiapas in 1920 (Ruiz 1989; Sterk 1993). The Summer Institute of Linguistics²⁵, a Bible translation program that also evangelized,

25 According to David Stoll (1990:17) the Summer Institute of Linguistics was one of the two largest evangelical missions to native peoples. The New Tribes Mission NTM

arrived in 1938 and began expanding among indigenous communities in Chiapas (Stoll 1990:84-87). While mass conversions occurred in Oxchuc in the 1940s, it was nearly thirty years before there were any "converts" in Chamula.

Presbyterians in Chamula

Presbyterians first arrived in Chamula in 1963 with the help of Miguel Kaxlan and his son Manuel (Gossen 1989). As early as 1964 the first house services were held in the ceremonial center at the house of Tumin Nachij (Sterk 1993:17). Four members of the Caxtuli' family were the first to attend. Sterk evangelized in the hamlet of Joltsemen which is where, in 1965, the traditionalists attacked one of the evangelical's homes, burning it to the ground. Several converts perished in the fire while two young girls escaped from the house with severe burns, only later to be attacked with axes and shot. According to the evangelical community, it was a miracle that these girls survived (Steven 1968; Gossen 1989; Gossen and Leventhal 1989). The general outrage was such that, following this brutal massacre, the evangelicals received from the District Attorney in San Cristobal a document attesting to their rights as citizens.

During 1966-1967, evangelization spread throughout several other hamlets. The *caciques* soon realized that despite the town's reaction by burning houses, Protestantism was still growing in membership, so they wrote up an order of expulsion. The *caciques* publicly read their decree, recalling the Crier that appears during Carnival mimicking the

had some 2,300 members who went to some 200 language groups throughout the world. The other was the Wycliffe Bible Translators, whose 6,000 members had entered 1,100 language groups around the world. To avoid Catholic and anticlerical opposition, Wycliffe went to the field under the name of SIL. By claiming to be primarily a scientific research organization, it was able to obtain official contracts and cultivate government authorities, whose support usually protected it from expulsion.

Spaniards who read their decrees prior to conquering the village (Gossen 1986). The *caciques* denounced any intention of respecting the document that the evangelicals had received from the District Attorney.

Within two years they had nearly 200 followers from family and friends of the Tumin Nachij extended family were perceived as a threat to the centralized form of worship within Chamula. Their homes were burnt, several converts were killed, and for fear of their lives they fled to the city of San Cristobal (Gossen 1989; Sterk 1993). Among the injured were two small girls, cited above, who suffered severe burns on their bodies. The Christian community saw these young souls as martyrs for the cause of the Lord Jesus, giving courage to many as the persecution within the village continued. This contrasts with the peaceful conversion process in Chenalhó. The Presbyterians arrived in Chenalhó in 1953 and their followers built their first chapel in 1965. Today there are thirty Protestant chapels in Chenalhó.

In 1986 the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Cristobal counted: 1,099,164 inhabitants; 879,332 were Catholics, and the other 20 percent were either Protestant or did not profess any belief (Perez 1990:139). Protestantism has been growing rapidly throughout Latin America (Gill 1990; Brusco 1986; Annis 1987; Stoll 1990; Willhems 1967; Nash 1960; among others), as it is in Mexico's southern region (Gimenez 1989; Morquecho 1990; Arias 1991; Rosenbaum 1993; Rostos 1993; Eber 1995). The rate of increase throughout the state of Chiapas over the past two decades is significant: in 1970, 8 percent of the population was Protestant; in 1980, 11 percent; and in 1990, 16 percent. The evangelical population in Chiapas has grown 118 percent in the last decade (CNDH 1996:13). Fewer than seven years ago when Gimenez (1989) did his study of religion in

the southern states of Mexico there were 1,442 temples within the state of Chiapas. According to the Committee for the Defense of the Evangelicals in Chiapas (CEDECH 1996), today there are at least 3,000 temples in the state of Chiapas. These temples are as diverse as the pastors who lead the faithful in prayer. The five largest of the twenty-nine religions in Gimenez's (1989) study were Seventh Day Adventist or Sabbaticals (284 temples), Presbyterians (257), Pentecostals (117), Evangelicals (57), and Baptists (53).

TABLE 4: Households by Religious Affiliation as Reported by Respondents in the Survey in Mt. Zion 1995-1996.
N = 102

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION (RA)	RESPONDENTS	HH mean	% same RA
Traditional Catholic	3	6	100%
Presbyterian	27	8	85%
Seventh Day Adventist	18	6	98%
Pentecostal	8	9	77%
Independent Pentecostal	26	9	82%
Jehovah Witnesses	2	5	100%
Progressive Catholic	3	5	100%
Non-Practicing Catholic	2	6	88%
Non-Practicing Evangelical	11	5	45%
Atheist	2	7	56%

Source: Field Data.

Table Four provides the religious composition of the expulsados who participated in the random household survey that I conducted between December 1995 and January 1996 in Mt. Zion. While Presbyterians and Independent Pentecostals are the most numerous of the sample, they respectively have a 15 and 18 percent defection rate within their own households. As will become evident below, many people base their decision to change religions upon the moral codes of homogeneity and harmony. Therefore, the

importance of having just one religious affiliation within a household can not be overstated. In contrast to the Presbyterians and Independent Pentecostals, the traditional and progressive Catholics alike, along with the Jehovah Witnesses have 100 percent compliance within the same denomination. While in and of itself, this does not infer longevity within the religion, it does at this point indicate some ability on the part of the parents to socialize their children into their religion, or lack thereof. Chapter Seven will further develop the significance of religion in Mt. Zion as it presents the consequences of conversion and expulsion.

In order to understand the structure of evangelical temples and what they mean in the lives of the *evangelicos* who attend them, I studied five different temples in the Protestant enclave. Rather than focusing upon systematic differences among the temples, I present these case studies to document the range of worship styles and behaviors among the *evangélicos*. The challenging piece of this research project was deciding how to represent them with minimal risk to the persons involved. For this reason I have had to change certain of the descriptive features. With some informants I shared a meal, while others I accompanied to the Baptismal services in Pujiltic, served as *madrina* (Sp., godmother) for two weddings, and assisted at the temple presentations of four newborns.

While each pastor is working for his particular temple's mission, each one differs somewhat in his approach towards his congregants. How each pastor interprets his mission to the congregation varies even within the same denomination, as do the personalities of the pastors involved. The particular focus here is to evaluate how the pastors receive members of their temple when they seek assistance from him, as well as how moral messages are related to the faithful, either through individual contact with the

pastor, observing his behavior or by his preaching.

Finally, I consider the dissonance between what the particular denomination or religion preaches and how it is interpreted in daily life by the pastor, key to our understanding of how real people are experiencing and attempting to cope with their expulsion or migration. The temples described below are Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventist, and three Pentecostal Temples: an Assembly of God, an Independent Tzotzil Pentecostal Temple and the Pentecostal Gate of Heaven Mission.

1) The Presbyterian Founding Temple

The Presbyterian Founding Temple in Nueva Esperanza is the largest of all the temples within the Protestant enclave. It can seat more than 1,000 people comfortably although many more crowd in on feast days, special celebrations or dedications. The present pastor is a Chamula, José. He lives with his family and his mother one block from the temple. José is a man of God, he lives simply and worries about expanding the temple through the progress of his missions. He was trained over a three-year period as a minister. As a Chamula, he speaks Tzotzil, and many monolingual women prefer going to his temple because the services are in *batz'i k'op* (Tzo., the real language, i.e., Tzotzil).

The temple is national and continues to maintain ties with both the Mexican headquarters in the Federal District and Tápachula, as well as with the United States which sent the first missionaries to Chiapas in 1920. From the beginning, the ministry has had to deal with an environment of persecution that still exists in Chiapas. The offices of Committee for the Defense of Evangelicals of Chiapas (CEDECH) also offers bible courses for the Tzotzil Ministry on such topics as, "The Suffering Church," "Human Rights and the Expulsions," "Comforting those in the Valley of Tears," and "Organizing

to Prevent Human Rights Violations."

I situate Pastor José somewhere between the ministry of preaching to the needy (Sterk 1993) and offering solace to those in suffering. While at the podium, he encourages the women to pray and this usually takes the form of ritual weeping. The congregation sings, although the hymns lack vitality. At times one gets the impression that the words are merely mumbled, as if hardly any one memorized them correctly. Few of the first generation²⁶ can read, and even if they did read in Spanish, many may never learn to read in their mother tongue. José calls upon the congregation as a whole to maintain order in the colony, to watch out for the sick, the widows and orphans, to protect their neighbor's property and to not tolerate alcoholism.

José is pleasant and receptive, his mother is warm and friendly and his wife is hospitable. Yet neither of these significant women play any role in the life of the temple. They do not organize prayer services, nor do they lead in singing, and they are not active in the Bible School either. Perhaps because neither is fluent in Spanish, although this by itself would not deter one from teaching others to read in Tzotzil. The main issues here are Chamula gender relations (see Chapter Five) within the temple and high rates of illiteracy. The children are encouraged to stay in school. The objective seems to be that they stay occupied and out of trouble, more than advancement that may come through education. Seating in the temple is largely segregated by sex; children, however, may mingle with either parent.

²⁶ I distinguish my use of "generation" from its use here along descent lines. as perhaps an age difference. Although many times age is evident as a factor, "first generation" implies the first to have been expelled, not necessarily born.

When women are “widows²⁷” José is the first to help them. When there is no money for surgery or medicine, he asks the congregation to assist them. The dead are always provided a funeral, and this of itself is a big concern for Indians in the city. Within public preaching and individual encounters with Pastor Jose, it is quite clear that respect for one’s parents and elders is still a moral value. Close to this is the tradition of ancestor worship, now described in terms of “respecting one’s ancestors.”

In this temple there are a number of daughters who are over 25 and single. Several voice their reasons for not taking a husband and frequently this relates to having grown up in an alcoholic home. As Juana López puts it,

Better to be alone then to suffer as my mother did. Now I can help my parents with money and have my younger brothers and sisters to play with while I still have time to pray in the temple.

These young women work in the market, the *zócalo* (Sp., main plaza), as vendors, store front sellers and some as domestics. Each contributes to her household of origin economically and with domestic chores. Family values are stressed within the temple. If a woman marries a man within the temple before the community, the odds are, if they remain within the colony of Nueva Esperanza, that the husband will respect her as his wife. He will also fulfill his duty as man-the-provider towards his wife and their children.

Since the woman will be contributing a substantial amount to the family income, her status is respected more perhaps than in the hamlet. In this colony women also assume more of a responsibility with the education of their own children. This is still

²⁷ Women among the expelled community adopt the civil status of “widow” if their husband leaves them or vice versa. The reasons range from religious motives to not

considered to be part of their traditional role as mother, only it has been expanded to include the educational needs of their children. Both parents are active in the meetings that the teachers call throughout the academic year. Although usually only the men voice their concerns, the women are committed to dressing their children appropriately, supplying them with school supplies and money for snacks whenever possible. Fathers buy sports uniforms and equipment for their sons and play an active part in the graduation and award ceremonies, cheering on their children. Teachers, parents, civil representatives from the colony and the pastor work as a team toward raising retention rates and academic standing.

Of the 27 Presbyterian respondents in my sample of the survey done at Mt. Zion 80 have been in the temple for more than 5 years, and 75 percent have been there nine years or more. Among the Presbyterians, 85 percent of their households remain within the same religious denomination into second and third generations. As a group, the Presbyterians are active within the temple, particularly regarding attendance at religious services which was measured at 92 percent, while 75 percent reported contributing with ten percent of their wages.

Equally interesting for those who profess the new religion is the fact that 100 percent have the midwife pray over their new infants, 92 percent revere their ancestors, and 84 percent continue to bless themselves when they leave home, the colony or the city. While only a little less than half have home altars, 96 percent report dreams that orient decisions in their daily lives. Finally, 63 percent of the respondents maintain sacred spaces within the household and still bow to the Sacred Mountain as they leave their

settling for second wife status (see Chapter Five for more details).

homes each morning.

2) The Seventh Day Adventist Temple

The pastor of the Seventh Day Adventist Temple is Juan and, although a *Ladino*, speaks fluent Tzotzil. Although small, the temple sits about 350 comfortably, it is unpretentious with no adornments or elaborate designs. This appeals, of course, to the poor because they can relate to stepping in the mud as they go to the bathroom behind the temple, or sitting somewhat crowded on a bench, because the congregation at times swells to more than the temple can accommodate comfortably.

The initial part of each service involves the congregation. The pastor takes the part of a master of ceremonies introducing choir members who go up to the podium to sing a hymn for the Lord. Here the emphasis is on group efforts rather than solo songs. Particular praise goes to duets, trios and groups that learn a song by heart, practicing several times during the week and then performing for the Lord and the community on Saturday morning. The pastor encourages young women to do this, because as he states, "this keeps their minds on the things of the Lord."

The services at this temple last between four and five hours. The majority of time is spent on short readings from the Bible that are broken down by the pastor to reveal their meaning and hymns. The services that I attended usually had two testimonials of women who had been ill and now were feeling much better. None of the women actually spoke except to thank the Lord Jesus and the congregation for their support.

This temple is also a Bible school and the pastor places heavy emphasis upon education. Juan is a teacher by profession and uses a blackboard when he preaches. Towards the end of the services, which are held early Saturday mornings, attendance is

taken and recorded as in elementary school. Every four or five rows is assigned to a committed young man who then does roll call and collects the tithing according to the index cards he receives. Seating in this temple is by families and when the roll is taken, the family is requested to account for the absence of a loved one. When a whole family is missing, someone is assigned to track them down and ask, "Why did you not attend the service this Sabbath?" Before closing the service, the number of attendees is announced and compared to the number present the week before. The pastor then either congratulates or admonishes the faithful who are taught the value of the following dictum: "a community that prays together, stays together."

Juan uses a much more delegating management style than the other pastors in the sample. He has the optimal number of male participants during the services, even if they are only taking attendance, collecting the contributions or controlling the crowds of congregants. Recently, Juan has begun to survey the area surrounding the temple, because some young men stand outside to accompany or at least talk to the young women when they exit the services. At times, a woman would be approached by a man while going to the bathroom that is located behind the temple.

Seeking to avoid scandal, Juan delegated the responsibility to several older women who keep vigil at the entrance to the women's bathroom while one or two young men guard the area surrounding the temple. There are very serious social consequences for a woman if she speaks to a man while outside the home that will be discussed in the following chapter. For many of the first generation migrants, speaking to a man is unacceptable *mujer ta fuera* (Sp., literally, a woman of the street) behavior. For the second generation, however, it is friendly conversation that may help them discern

whether they want to marry the suitor. In addition, many of the young women who have been selling artisan products in the *zocálo* are more comfortable at speaking to tourists and *Ladinos*, men and women alike. An expelled woman's quest to fulfill her role as mother and home keeper has expanded to include paying utility bills, attending juntas, arranging for replacement in communal works by renting a man's labor, and more recently learning to speak Spanish, even becoming literate. When a woman can not assume these expanded tasks personally she delegates them to her daughter.

In conversation with Juan, the main problem is the extreme poverty in Chiapas and among Indians in particular, and its cause is the lack of education. The Adventists and Presbyterians alike have found what Robert Wuthnow (1987:145-214) calls their "ecological niche" within the elements of relative deprivation. By speaking to the needs of the people, the Presbyterian and Adventist²⁸ ministries are apparently the most tolerant of the inconclusive and even conflicting dynamics of the shifts in ideological-cultural identities (Gimenez 1995; Fortuny 1995). As a pastor and teacher, Juan feels strongly,

That since children don't finish more than one or two years of primary school, we have children marrying children. Then as parents they find that they are still without any skills to find a better paying job and forcefully they end up migrating to tierra caliente (Sp., literally hot land) to farm someone else's corn field. This leaves the family broken. Many times the woman needs to stay here while the husband is absent for months at a time. When the women make money selling

28 For an alternative view of the Adventist see Marion's (1988) case study of their activities among the Lacandon. Her findings show how the food restrictions altered the tribe's fishing production at the same time that it promoted dependency upon canned

their artisan products to tourists, many would pay the transportation fees for the husband to come home from time to time. This is no longer possible. Women suffer, men suffer, and so do their children.

He also says, "that many who claimed to be Adventists, and were not, have given the temple a bad name." Juan has been successful in keeping his flock together, although he finds it difficult to tend to so many poor people. In addition, he has had to send many of the ill to the hospitals and clinics, since he has no means of assisting so many who are desperately sick and undernourished.

During my fieldwork, a friend, Maria Santis Gomez, had her seventeenth child and I was present at her infant's presentation in the Adventist temple. I was curious to hear what the pastor thought of a migrant share cropper who, after 16 children, all of whom are girls, makes yet another attempt at having a son. When I posed this question to Juan, he answered,

I have known this couple for years and they never have changed their ways. Here is a man who does not encourage any of his children to stay in school. We know that primary school is free, I even believe that his two oldest do not even speak Spanish. This is wrong. It is not fair to any of the children, and in the long run there will only be more suffering for all of them. I feel sorry for them, the woman is of great faith, yet her husband never comes. He always says to tell us that he is in tierra caliente, but I know that he frequently is drinking a beer over in the restaurant below "Mingo's" first house. Some people fool me but I always tell

foods. Simultaneously the presence of antibiotics and other wonder drugs brought about the decline in use of traditional herbal healing methods.

them that the Lord sees everything.

The Adventists have a higher rate of family members within the same denomination than Presbyterians, Pentecostals, the non-practicing Catholics and *evangélicos* or the professed atheists in the sample. The sample showed that 98 percent of the household attended the same temple. Only the Traditional Catholics, Jehovah Witnesses and Progressive Catholics had higher rates since they had one hundred percent of the household in the same religious affiliation. There are higher numbers of Progressive Catholics in San Antonio del Monte while the Jehovah Witnesses tend to be in Santo Domingo and Getsemani.

In religious practice the Adventists rank 85 percent or higher on Baptism, services, tithing and Bible classes, while equally high are practices such as bowing to the Sacred Mountain, dreaming, midwife's blessing of newborn, ancestor worship, reverencing corn and respecting sacred spaces.

3) Assembly of God Temple.

The pastor of the Assembly of God Temple seeks to bring the voice of the Lord to those who do not even know they are seeking him. Pastor Mario is a Chol Indian, originally from Salto de Agua, a small town near Palenque, Chiapas. Both Mario and his wife, Maria are full time evangelizers. Although they do not share equally in the preaching, Maria coordinates the services among the women's group every Thursday.

Mario's temple is small. It can hold 450 people easily yet it is hardly ever full, except when a visiting American preacher comes from Tuxtla Gutierrez. The congregation sits segregated by sex as in the Presbyterian temple. I found the singing here quite good as far as level of participation. Many of the congregation bring in their

own hymnal or bible to the services. The congregation is mixed, there are some *Ladinos*, and indigenous peoples from Huixtan, Chenalhó, Chamula, Zinacantan, San Andrés Larraínzar, and some Chols from Salto de Agua.

The services focus on the interpretation of the scriptures that are used for each celebration. Those who bring the bible have all had Bible instruction and read well, in Spanish and Tzotzil. Many more men are literate than women in the first generation, however, among the second the inverse is true.

Most of the Chamulas in this temple came from one of three hamlets, Joltzémén, Yaálboc and Milpoleta. The majority of the men of the first generation earn a living in construction. One company in particular is completely evangelical and at times employs up to 30 or more from the expelled community. During the oil boom these people had plenty of employment working for the municipality first, and then later among their own communities. Since February of 1995, there has been a real economic slump. In order to seek work, more than 15 men migrated to the United States in vans that took them from Nueva Esperanza.

Several of the second generation have completed secondary school, some preparatory or high school, and at least 20 have gone on to some form of training. I suspect that this has some relation to the mixture within the congregation. The Chamulas represent about a third while in the other temples they are the majority. More than in any other temple that I have included, one can find here employees that work for INL, the health department, the education department, whether as teachers, secretaries or other positions, as well as waiters in restaurants, stores, and pharmacies. Another more recent trend is the group of police cadets, now numbering at least five from this temple. As of

1996, three have already been assigned a navy blue pickup truck for their own use in patrolling the area.

The contradiction within Mario is that he spends so much of his energy promoting youths, encouraging them to advance themselves through education; but when in the pulpit, he preaches that the world is soon coming to an end. The young people in the Youth Group can all recite quotes from the scriptures, and frequently try to convert even a casual acquaintance to the knowledge of the end of the world. Yet these very young adults are working their way through school. "To what end," I ask? Whenever I have discussed this with them, they responded with phrases such as Martha Hernández's,

Well it doesn't mean we should remain still, what if the world ends in a way that is not destructive? I mean if it just ends as we know it, and changes into another level of existence.

If someone seeks help in Mario's temple, depending on the case, his wife will orient the person just as likely as he will. If illness is the problem, then perhaps they will be referred to an *hermano* who works either at the Country Clinic, the local hospital or the emergency room in the center of town. As much as possible, the *evangélicos* tend to seek each other out and try to do business transactions along temple lines. They use a phone book similar to yellow pages of all the evangelical businesses in Mexico.

Mario and Maria live simply. They have the family burden of a loved one imprisoned unjustly, and much of their modest income is used traveling to visit the poor in jail, and helping their own family members to stay in school. Here is where Mario perhaps excels by example, more than by what he preaches. As a pastor of a National Pentecostal Assembly of God Temple, Mario also instills a sense of assimilation within a

multicultural Mexican state into the services. Mario stresses the cultural diversity of his congregation and the Christianization of differences, i.e., “though many we are one in Christ.”

He encourages the second generation to attend prayer meetings and other church related activities in Tuxtla Gutierrez, Tapachula, Rancho Nuevo or Peje de Oro. All of these activities praise the Lord Jesus in Spanish, described as the unifying language of the Assemblies of God. Since Mario makes a concerted effort at linking his congregants to the larger regional Assembly of God activities, as well as fostering unity through religious services held in Spanish, his temple is the most effective in assisting the Indians who attend toward assimilation.

While similarities are stressed, Mario also tends to overlook important differences among his people. And for many Chamulas who have been so violently expelled from their homeland, to be denied a sense of an ethnic community united in Christ leaves some unsatisfied. As this forty year old father of three confided,

I work hard every day among the Ladinos. On Sundays I would like to hear more hymns in my own language, it is also good for my children, so that they will not forget or feel ashamed to speak our language. It is true that we are all Christians and I don't have a problem with that. It's just that praying in Tzotzil is what really speaks to me.

The educational system seconds assimilation by students' acquiring Spanish. Many of Mario's congregation attend secondary school, while some even go on to acquire technical training. Schools are institutions that teach conformity. Teachers instill national ideals and virtues. Although some pluralistic aspects of Mexico are mentioned

in school, as a whole the indigenous heritage is treated as something from the archeological past, i.e., dead Aztecs, lost Mayas and extinct Lacandonos.

Mario is humble, sincere and completely dedicated to the Lord as he is towards the temple's active Youth Group that meets on a weekly basis. This group has elected officers and these positions are open to men and women. They organize their own activities, staff the Bible School at the temple as volunteers and have retreats every six months. This is the key to socializing the second generation into active commitment to the temple as a community. It also reinforces the value of education for young women as well as young men. During the youth gatherings, it is common for those in school to counsel others to attend part time if they are working, or to stay in school if they have not finished yet.

There is also an active office of the National Institute for the Education of Adults INEA, that focuses on literacy and primary school certificates. It is housed at the temple site. This gives adult education more prestige while providing the necessary chaperons that dispel the fears of parents to let their daughters attend classes. The presence of so many women of different ethnic backgrounds also promotes their mobility through educational achievement.

When women "marry correctly," that is, within the auspices of the temple, then their husband who is already socialized through the youth group will probably respect her. As a husband he will see his wife as an individual who can contribute with her ideas, education, and income, and he will form with her a more equitable and balanced relationship. For a Chamula woman this is no small achievement. More than any other temple, Mario's has a very supportive ascetic campaign that serves to domesticate men.

Similar to what Brusco (1995) found among Evangelicals in Bogota, Colombia, the Pentecostals under the spiritual leadership of Mario find that the asceticism required of *evangélicos* (no drinking, smoking, or extramarital sexual relations are allowed) redirects male income back into the household, thereby raising the living standard of women and children. This benefit, as Brusco points out, helps explain the appeal of evangelicalism for women and shows that organized religion does not always disadvantage women.

In addition, these supportive ascetic campaigns provide alcoholics with recovering alcoholic buddies who serve to bring the weaker member of the temple into full communion through sobriety. In this process men are also provided with an acceptable alternative to the more dysfunctional aspects of *machismo*, the glorification of virility. Both within the sermons at the services, and on one-to-one encounters, Mario stresses the issue that man-the-provider is a wonderful role allotted to an *evangélico*. And since many of the people network heavily for construction and service jobs within the brotherhood of congregants, under- and unemployment are less of an issue at Mario's temple. This in turn explains in part that, while a number of the Chamula women work in the market, fewer than one-third sell artisan products to tourists.

The sample of Pentecostals shows that fewer than 50 percent contribute to the temple by tithing their wages; they give something, but not 10 percent. Seventy-five percent fast while an equal number bow to the Tzontevitz (Tzo., Sacred Mountain). One hundred percent of the sample revere corn, and 50 percent respect sacred spaces within the household, while 90 percent have the child blessed by the midwife, whether the infant was delivered in one of the hospitals or at home.

4) An Independent Tzotzil Pentecostal Temple.

Pedro's temple is the liveliest of all those that I studied. It is colorful on the outside, painted white with pastel blue, pink, green and yellow trimmings while the inside has a blue floor and blue stained windows. It is lively because the music and singing is the best in the Protestant enclave. Pedro has a *mariachi* band that has put hymns to music and plays during the intermission of his services. The lead singer is from Paraíso, the colony surrounding the temple and he gives the local news to the faithful before Pedro closes the service.

Being situated on the very edge of the highway, Pedro's temple frequently attracts people from other colonies; however, the service is conducted as if only people from Paraíso were there. Pedro runs a one man show. Occasionally there will be a reading by an assistant or someone will come up with a guitar and accompany him singing; but most of the time Pedro sings for more than five hours non-stop. Behind him on the platform are five to seven elders, one of whom is the treasurer. One of his assistants is in charge of crowd control and goes up and down the aisles with a long thin stick. He taps upon the shoulder children who are making noise and also taps the bench when he wants people to move in more to make room for others in the congregation. One gets the impression that he is herding sheep²⁹.

This is the only temple that permits ritual dancing. Pedro says nothing when the women and young girls get excited and begin to shift their body weight from side to side,

²⁹ Sheep are an integral part of the traditional Chamula way of life. They provide wool for traditional clothing and could be a source of meat, however the animal is considered sacred. The connection between the Lamb of God, the Good Shepherd and San Juan are amply explained in Barrios and Pons (1993) and Ramon Rubin (1993).

raise their feet as they cross their lower extremities in opposite directions to the tilting of their head, while lifting up their arms as if making a wave. This form of dancing is similar to that of the women who sponsor the office of the Eucharist within the *cargo* system. Some of the younger women of the second generation admit it is the only chance they get to dance and they enjoy every minute of it. There is no taboo here on makeup or jewelry, and this contrasts with all the other temples, where, if not openly banned, it is frequently discouraged since it is perceived as "a worldly thing to do."

Not only do the women dance in Pedro's temple, his assistant Salvador Díaz does the Chamula *max* dance. This is a very slow moving walk that depicts the steps of creatures from the beginning of time. In the Chamula version of the creation myth echoing that in the Popul Vuh the monkeys were made by God before man. During the carnival each year as well as for other fiestas within the *cargo* system, men dress up as monkeys. This costume is a combination of a French soldier from Maximilian's army with open sandals and the fur of a real monkey. The sunglasses they wear are a more recent addition (for more details see Bricker 1978; Gossen 1986). They provide the music for the fiestas and walk in lines of four or five around the main plaza in the ceremonial center. As they walk it is as if their feet are extremely heavy and they are just learning how to take steps. If you observe the *max* in Chamula and then come to watch Salvador, they are doing exactly the same steps. Although the rhythm of the hymns is somewhat modernized with the use of electric equipment, there is still the pausing and tone references that exist in the monkey's rendition today.

More than any of the other pastors, Pedro redistributes money to his congregation. Despite his generosity, many of his congregants complain that he meddles in their

personal life. Pedro owns the titles for most the land on which his faithful live; he is currently selling properties behind his house and on the far side of the highway. His temple pays for the electricity for all of Paraíso, and for anyone's funeral, surgery or medical treatment. At the first service of every month he reports publicly the amount received, spent and deposited into the temple's savings account. He specifies how much everything in the temple cost, how much the city and state taxes were, and the profits from the temple's tortilla store.

Pedro is unique in having a college degree. He also has a sincere desire to help the poor within his care. He visits a group of "widows" daily in the homes that he has set up not too far from the temple. Since they are now together, they can collaborate to watch each others' children, if one or the other has an emergency or finds employment. Yet for all that he does do, his wife Louisa is what many Chamula women consider a "thorn in their sides."

Louisa is not from Chiapas; she met Pedro in college in Mexico City. They married and then they moved to San Cristobal. Although she has learned Tzotzil, and this is much to her credit, Louisa is condescending towards the women and frequently dictates her very high moral standing to women who have not been as fortunate as herself. It is not uncommon to see through her body language of what she disapproves, or that she is annoyed by Chamula women. Speaking as the Pastor's wife, she has described to me "how dirty and disheveled the Chamulas are, and how backwards and illiterate they remain, despite all the opportunities in the city."

Louisa's personal life affects her treatment of the women, and therefore, to some extent, her husband's ministry. Her own son dropped out of school because he got a girl

pregnant, and then married her. Part of Louisa's growing resentment is linked to the fact that she now has a 17 year old daughter-in-law and grandson living with her, while she herself is pregnant! This resentment is probably unconscious on her part because she is certainly committed to the Lord, yet she is projecting the image of an "unforgiving Jesus." Louisa condemns pre-marital sex both in words and through her facial expressions that some single mothers read as judgmental and unnecessarily harsh (e.g., Christina's account on page 235). Her disapproval of illegitimacy in turn excludes some infants from presentation in the temple, because adults need to register the child with her during the week prior to the service. Although no papers are required other than a birth certificate, Louisa usually asks to see the marriage certificate of the parents. Many single mothers prefer not to deal with Louisa since they can not produce a marriage certificate and this confirms their "shameful civil state." Thus, Louisa's attitude towards unwed mothers frequently pushes parents, grandparents and other kin away.

Pedro recently lost one of his assistants to another temple. This was probably the result of Pedro's management style. From Pedro's point of view he earns his income by conducting them. However, the lack of participation on the part of members, especially youth may impact socially on the second generation.

There is also a level of millennialism that enters into Pentecostalism. Although Pedro, as an individual, admits that he may not be convinced the world will end in the year 2000, many of the speakers that he invites to his temple are of this persuasion.

Pedro is a born leader and does a tremendous amount of good in his temple; however, as he has told me more than once, he is tired. He has worked for more than 15 years and has completed the construction of the temple. Pedro doesn't want any more

changes. And he even wants to start to cut back somewhat, so that he can enjoy his grandchild. So unless he can learn to delegate some responsibility, which implies trusting another's capabilities, then whatever he cuts back on will simply be eliminated from what the temple itself offers the faithful.

Pedro is certainly a successful social worker, as his "widows" will attest. Yet on the score of women who are in a bad relationship, who have been caught in adultery, or are single mothers, he represents a God who does not treat these women lovingly. Even more, if the women complain that their husbands are unfaithful, abusive or just not supporting them to raise their children, he stresses that the vows they made are more sacred than anything. Each woman is then encouraged to pray for her husband, forgive him if necessary and move on.

During services only minimal scripture is cited, perhaps three verses of a psalm, and the message is usually "forgive and God will forgive you." When he speaks on such themes, he turns his body towards the women who make up more than 75 percent of his congregation. The context of forgiveness for Pedro is domestic violence, alcoholism and philandering, when not simply taking another wife. Women in Pedro's temple are instructed to "forgive your husband because your marriage was blessed in the temple."

As pastor he also calls upon the women "to forgive your husbands' sins because your marriages were witnessed by the entire congregation." By appealing to an individual's sense of "self" rooted in community, many abused women remain in relationships at tremendous human cost for the sake of the congregation which, for some, has replaced their entire social network within the village.

This is not to say that break-ups do not occur, for they do. Still, their numbers are

minimal. So for a Chamula woman, particularly one who is of the second generation, to marry someone from Pedro's temple is considered to "be risky since Pedro will marry you and always counsel you to forgive your husband at all costs." Some women think it to be just as precarious to marry a non-practicing evangelical or a traditional Chamula.

Many men are pleased with Pedro's stand on marriage and claim that it is nothing new since "when we were promised to each other in the hamlet, it was understood that our relationship was forever." However, divorce, separations, polyandry, polygamy and prostitution occur within the township of Chamula and the urban colonies, even if some fail to own up to it.

Compared to other temples, this one has the newest members. All the congregants have been at Pedro's temple fewer than five years. There is still a high rate, 82 percent, of family members in the same temple. Yet only a little more than half of the congregants attend religious services regularly. This is in part due to a high number working in either the coffee groves or in the corn fields far from San Cristobal. And although women find Pedro to be overly forgiving of their husbands, he is equally as strict. This temple appears to have the largest number of poor households of all the temples. Within their households, more than 90 percent participate in most of the domestic forms of religious practices: bowing to the Sacred Mountain, blessing oneself, the midwife's blessing of the newborn, and considering corn to be sacred.

5) An Aborted Mission.

The Mission of Pentecostal Gate of Heaven Temple lasted fewer than ninety days from August until October 1995. It began after a dream informed Pastor Domingo that he was to start a mission among the poor of Mt. Zion. He left Pujilic where he was cutting

sugar cane. He arrived in San Cristobal in August of 1995 just when Pedro was on vacation in Mexico City. Domingo spoke to Pedro's assistant, Salvador, and he agreed to let him come on Sunday, as a speaker at the service. Domingo, twenty years younger than Pedro and very charismatic, even able to speak in tongues, impressed the congregation. He explained that he had a dream in which:

Jesus appeared as both a grown man and a young child. Jesus, the adult, was dressed in a long white tunic and called me by name. Jesus told me that he needed to send me to the poor that were suffering in Mt. Zion.³⁰ After this, Jesus pointed to a flag and said that there in the distance is the sign that his kingdom is coming. The people under this yellow banner assure us peace if we accept it. The child Jesus was holding up this yellow flag that had three black letters on it.

Domingo introduced Juan Perez, whom he had saved from drinking, along with his grateful wife and their oldest daughter, Christine Díaz. Domingo had Christine read from the Bible and then, in front of everyone, he scolded her for wearing earrings. He used her to summon a call to orthodoxy and went so far as to call the congregation,

To repent[ence] because here right before you is just one more reminder of how this poor 12 year old has taken on the ways of the dogs [alluding to Ladino ways]. Jesus sent me here to help you change your ways. The baby Jesus is coming and on his carriage is a flag and this flag is yellow and has three letters on it [the PRD has the same color scheme and three letters, elections were to be held at the end of the month]. It comes as a warning because right after that the

great war will begin. And will you be ready? Will Jesus find you ready? I hope and pray my brothers and sisters that he will.

The women from the first generation of expelled Chamulas and all the men, young and old alike, were shaking their heads, in agreement. Their daughters, sisters and wives had taken on *Ladino* ways. Christine had passed beyond the red of embarrassment and was now on her knees begging for forgiveness. She was hiding her face and tears with her hands. After the service the new pastor collected more than 20 pairs of earrings that he later sold. Domingo's wife, Juana, explained that this money made it possible for them to rent a room in the house where they were staying.

The next Sunday, a week before Pedro would return, Domingo preached for more than twenty minutes and then, fell into a sort of trance. After awhile he began speaking in tongues. This is unusual for San Cristobal and especially within the Protestant enclaves. The few times I have witnessed someone speaking in tongues in a Pentecostal temple, they were either from Guatemala or Mexico City.

Afterwards Salvador mentioned the plans for starting a mission so that things could return to orthodoxy. "We would be poor and the temple would likewise be simple, yet see how the Spirit of the Lord is with this brother. Praise the Lord, Alleluia!" Salvador called on the faithful to consider this new mission which would be high up on the hill of Mt. Zion near the school. It would save the people from climbing up and down, as well as providing a place of prayer in that section of the colony where liquor is once again being sold at the expense of the downfall of many *evangélicos*.

30 I was curious how Mt. Zion was so prominent in his mind. But I later learned that not only had he met Salvador's cousin at one of the PRD meetings, but that his wife's sister

It became clear that Salvador was leaving Pedro's temple with him, and that both would then be working full time for the Lord. Domingo mentioned that they would be holding a special mission that evening by using the temple's microphones and speakers so all the residents of Paraíso could listen. This lasted about an hour because that was all it took for Alfredo, the pastor of another Pentecostal temple in Tlaxcala, to round up the colony's representative and several volunteer policemen to halt the event.

After a brief discussion, Domingo was hauled off to jail where he spent the night. Alfredo was acting on the principle of territoriality. Domingo came without papers to plant himself in Pedro's temple, attempting to draw members from that congregation while the pastor was on vacation. Besides, he placed one of the boom boxes below Alfredo's living room.

The following day Domingo was released. No charges were pressed, however, although he was banned from ever living in Paraíso. Domingo now knew that he needed some papers to legitimize himself. So off he went with Salvador who knew where to go in Tuxtla to register the mission. When Pedro returned on Friday, he was informed by Alfredo of what had occurred. Then on Sunday he learned that Salvador had completely left to join the new mission. When I asked Pedro about this, he dismissed it as just another form of growth, "nothing to worry about, it happens all the time. There are many more souls here than all of us can minister to anyway."

Domingo then began having services in the house of Salvador who actually lived on the hill up in San Juan Bosque, adjacent to Mt. Zion. Salvador's house was very small and we sat on a few benches and chairs. The entire congregation consisted of 27 people,

also lives across the street from Pedro's tortilla store.

although Domingo assured me that there were really more than 40. There were an equal number of men and women, a number of young toddlers and infants, and no older children nor teenagers, except for Christina and Luz.

Christine was incorporated into the service in this small makeshift temple, and she stood rather timidly towards the front of the small house, wearing neither earrings, nor makeup, and with her head covered with a blue shawl. Christine and Luz Martinez sang a hymn, somewhat off key, to begin the service. Then Domingo began to teach us a verse from the scriptures, "to all who receive Him, to those who believed in his name, He gave the right to become children of God" (Juan 1:12). In a rhetorical account premised on repetition, the sermon went on for more than an hour. After the homily Domingo and Salvador taught the people who spoke Spanish, while Christine and Luz worked with the women in Tzotzil. Domingo speaks Tzeltal and although similar, he is not proficient enough to preach in the Tzotzil dialect.

Domingo is a very personable man and, since he has many charismatic ways, he wins people over easily. His career began as a progressive Catholic, he became a catechist at seventeen, and was trained in the leadership courses that the archdiocese runs within Indian communities. For three years Domingo was active in the PRD party and learned the ins and outs of politics and speech composition. He went to Tuxtla several times to hear the speakers.

Domingo was impressed to see how some party people were convincing, while others were not. He lived with a young woman for a little more than a year and when the first child was born he was forced to seek a higher income. He began to cut sugar cane, met several Guatemalans who were Pentecostals and converted to their religion. He

found the effusion of the Holy Spirit most attractive and felt empowered at their prayer services.

While he was attending the temple services, he met Juana and within a short time they married. Domingo dismisses his first relationship as not being sanctioned by the temple, i.e., part of his former life. He sees no need to support either his child or the child's mother. Domingo admits that he felt a calling to the priesthood, but also wanted to have a family. Becoming a pastor seemed like the vocation for him, and it was later confirmed by a dream.

After everyone in the small house had recited the verse from John, Domingo pulled out one of the chairs and sat down facing us. He proceeded to ask each of us what we thought the passage meant. After all commented on the love of God and forgiveness, Domingo said that in our daily lives it means just what his dream did. By way of explanation he continued to speak for more than an hour on the values and benefits of organizing now for the changes that have to take place in the country.

All of this was obviously being transmitted throughout the two colonies, San Juan Bosque and Mt. Zion, by the boom boxes placed on the roof of Salvador's house. I admit being nervous when it occurred to me that perhaps we were being observed as we either entered or left Salvador's house because of the political content of the preaching. Finally, Domingo concluded that to be successful the Zapatistas can not die of hunger. So each and everyone who is old enough to vote, should then vote for the political party that the flag indicates with its three black letters on the yellow rising sun (a reference to the PRD logo). As a closing remark he linked the rising sun to Maya cyclical cosmology, adding that we were at a time of a new *k'in* (Tzo., sun or day), and all the disorder would soon be

ended.

Domingo represents a trajectory of syncretism at various levels, perhaps even co-existing religions as Otto Maduro aptly puts it (1996). Since Domingo can be rather evasive when prodded for answers, I am still uncertain as to whether he is a member of UNAL, or not. Since this civil association looks for ways to infiltrate and UNAL has already admitted their ties to the PRD, questions remain.

There are several facts about Domingo's failed mission that raise questions about his sincerity. For example, when he was arrested by authorities in both Paraíso and Mt. Zion, it may have been prompted by someone who felt threatened, as may well be the case with Alfonso. Domingo's falling ill while breaking rocks to lay a foundation for the temple in Mt. Zion may have been the result of poor body mechanics. Yet the return to Pujiltic so that he could rest does not justify his spending all the money he had collected for the construction on his recovery, more than \$7,500.00 MN, the equivalent of \$1,000.00 US dollars.

The man he rescued from alcohol has relapsed and the temple which Domingo said he would start never materialized. The land on which the temple was to stand was placed in his name where only his humble home now rests. These issues raise the question of his sincerity in wanting to start a new temple.

Religious Conversion

Historically, conversion has been central to the growth of religion, particularly of world messianic religions (Ricard 1986; Hefner 1993). This dissertation relates conversion narratives to a trajectory of the historical changes developing in Chamula as it

is propelled into a postmodern world in which old structures become fragmented. This approach allows us to see how religious conversion accounts reflect the social context within which the convert was immersed at the time of conversion.

Many of the newly converted Chamulas were living in an environment of persecution at the time of their conversion (Sterk 1992; Perez Lopez 1993; Morquecho 1993). For others, prison or being expelled became the means of finding the *k'op riox*. One example that illustrates this is the account given by a Seventh Day Adventist, Domingo Perez, a 32 year-old street sweeper in San Cristobal,

We were put in prison in Chamula because my parents refused to pay the contribution for the flowers in the Fiesta of Carnival or Crazy February, as we call it...while we were in prison the leaders came and asked us if we would pay the fee but my parents stood their ground and said, "No." That night in prison we were cold and hungry. A voice came from under the window...reading a passage from the psalms and the Word of God...we were chosen by Jesus Christ and this is why we were put into prison. My mother started crying and fell to her knees. My father went over to the grill on the window and asked the man for food for his wife and children, there were three young ones with us. The man went away and returned with water and food. Then he passed a Bible to my father with the name of a school teacher in San Cristobal who was an hermano (Sp., brother, however in this sense it means a member of the same religion) and was to be our contact when we were expelled; he found us a place to live.

Domingo's account illustrates that many of the expelled were not *evangélicos* when they were accused of being of the *K'op riox*. It is also clear that the label "convert"

needs to be used with some caution because it may only signal affiliation with a religious group for the purposes of finding a place to live. Still, even among those who adopted the “better way” as a means to an end (shelter, assistance or acceptance into a community) some have experienced a profound religious conversion along the way.

The Conversion Process

To say that conversion is a process does not deny the presence of sudden, life-altering conversions in the style of Paul who was knocked off his horse on the way to Tarsus (Acts 9:1-19), because in the indigenous village of Chamula some conversion accounts do reflect this pattern. They are, however, exceptions, while a slow conversion process extending over three, five or even ten years, appears to be the norm. As Sebastiana Guzman, a 65 year old Chamula widow from the hamlet of Milpoleta explains,

Conversion is a long time coming to one's heart. I was slow at understanding what the preachers said. Both my husband and son were drunk all day, and so poor was I that I went to sell belts and bracelets, so that I and my daughter-in-law could eat and together feed the grandchildren. Besides, our customs and traditions do not change overnight. I became an evangélico perhaps in 1971 although I was not baptized until ten years later, and still, there are many things in me that are not perhaps all Presbyterian...the Lord Jesus knows and gives me the strength to keep his way.

However, because this case study attempts to assess how religious conversion, denominational switching, and the layering of religious beliefs and practices are occurring, and even, coexisting among Chamulas today, a holistic approach to the

problem necessarily includes participant observation, in-depth interviews and life histories that seek to compliment the survey data and conversion accounts.

In examining a conversion account, it is essential to know one's own biases. Writing to art historians of Mesoamerica, James Elkin (1994) defines several areas or spaces of juxtaposition where biases perhaps privilege one view more than the other. June Nash (1993:121) warns that our research may be affected by our 'western' mode of thinking that tends to accept:

[O]nly a single, hierarchically defined system of ideas. Indigenous thought is capable of entertaining coexistent and apparently contradictory worldviews. The identifications made between figures and concepts in the two systems [indigenous and colonial] are only superficial categories, and as one becomes familiar with the culture, people deny the fit.

Many theories of conversion that are prevalent in the social sciences today have a western bias that emphasizes cognitive, rational, unilinear processes (Beckford 1978; Danzger 1989; Gill 1990; James 1958; Scott and Lyman 1968; Staple and Mauss 1987; Rostos 1993 among others). In addition, the crisis of identity (Berger and Luchman 1966; Devereux 1975; Gimenez 1994; Holzner 1978; Mead 1934) and our preoccupation with unencumbered selves³¹(Bellah et al 1985) are legacies of 'western' thinking that equally have the potential to cloud the formulation of research problems and their subsequent analysis. Religious identification may be only a veneer and should not be interpreted as conversion, any more than the increase in membership within any religious affiliation

³¹ See Di Leonardo (1991) for her work among Italian-Americans as a critique of Bellah's unencumbered selves as a misrepresentation of multicultural America.

denotes *ipso facto* a “change in direction” or a rupture from one’s past belief system. The rhetoric of change needs to be linked to commitment, that is, praxis.

As the different case studies illustrate, we need to be cautious about counting numbers as “conversions,” whether the source of the data is census tabulation or even survey. Conversion may be no more than change in religious affiliation for social or political motivations (see below), which the following testimonial demonstrates.

The caciques were expelling people in our hamlet all the time. Almost every day a family had to leave. I think that someone was jealous of my husband; he was doing very good in the trucking business. We were saving to buy another truck and the elders came to force on him another cargo, this one of mayordomo. He had just finished being a max last year and that cost us about six months wages. My husband fled the hamlet and ran his used clothing business out of Tapachula and Guatemala. Soon after he fled we were picked up and placed in jail...I cried with all the other women, it was terrible. Several people with us explained that “we should not despair. That we were going through a trial by fire and that Jesus would help us.” Once we were expelled everyone assumed that we were evangélicos. As they started feeding us and sharing their homes with us, we just followed along. Today I am an evangélico because my husband’s success in business brought the evil of jealousy upon us. We attend services because it is expected of us, not that I believe things differently. As a “widow” I can not risk being without a community of hermanos to support us.

The whole issue of identity may also reflect more the quest for a community spirituality, a revitalization of moral principles than the ethnic practice of religion. For

example, the category of non-practicing Catholic is an oxymoron in the theological sense of commitment, yet in today's society many Catholics are expressing their religious identity as non-practicing Catholics. This self-assumed label reflects the need to belong to a particular heritage, allegiance, or community.

Among the Chamula testimonials that I collected, although many recount individual responses to the Savior, these decisions are almost always made as a consensual household process. Thus, religious change tends to occur along previously established networks, i.e., family units, kinship lines, political or union affiliation and territoriality (Gimenez 1988; Fortuny 1988). Some converts simply accepted their new religion because others in their family had "converted," as was the case for 17 informants or 5 percent of the sample. One example that illustrates this is Juan Calixto's family:

We became evangélicos since my father was ill. It was a sudden cough that got worse with a fever. His brother had been a very successful ilol in our hamlet and so my mother sent me to get him one day at the market. He prayed over my father and called upon all of us to stop resisting the power of the Lord Jesus. When my father recovered on the second day we had a big meal and invited everyone close to us. Then my father spoke for us that we should all take up the K'op riox for there was no longer any doubt that Jesus is the strongest healer and also our Savior. Together we are six siblings, two grandchildren and my parents who were saved that day. It is not good to divide a family. As uncle Jose says, "your faith is only as strong as the links in your family." He is right and so it was not long before my father's two brothers were also sought out to join us here in San Cristobal.

Furthermore, when Chamulas are asked about their religious affiliation or identity, almost invariably they answer in the first person plural, “we are Chamulas” or “we are Presbyterians.” Thus, while much of the Protestant influence has been linked to individuality, it is still unclear, after three decades of evangelical missionary activity in Highland Chiapas, to what extent, if any, certain ideologies and symbols have entered into the Chamula worldview, or for that matter, into the personal belief system of any particular convert. Before analyzing the major categories of the motives for conversion, I shall review some of the literature regarding conversion accounts.

Religious Conversion Accounts

Religious conversion accounts are particular genres that employ the ideology and idioms of the new religious affiliation (Beckford 1978). A conversion account is a kind of mytho-history in which various competing cultural models operate at once. During the telling of accounts, models are conflated and often revised in much the same way as Paul Atkinson (1994) describes for story telling. Thematic analysis sorts out the competing models of gender, family and personhood embedded in each conversion account. According to Scott and Lyman (1968), an account is a statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior³².

There are two types of accounts: justifications and excuses. Religious conversion accounts approximate justifications when one accepts responsibility for an act in question, but denies the pejorative quality associated with it. Vocabularies of accounts

³² Scott and Lyman (ibid:46-7) apply this both to the behavior which is the actor's or that of others, and to the instances in which the proximate cause for the statement arises from the actor or from someone else. This definition includes non-vocalized but linguistic explanations that arise in an actor's mind when he questions his own behavior.

are likely to be routinized within cultures, subcultures, groups and even in circles in which they are employed. For the purposes of this study, a convert would be accountable for changing religions, yet denounce the *caciques'* condemnation and their own subsequent expulsion. When "moral overseers" appeal to the moral principles of a *batz'il vinik* as defined by *evangélicos* they can dismiss the *caciques'* actions as being against tradition while they justify their behavior in adopting the *k'op riox*.

According to William James (1958:162) conversion means "that religious ideas, previously peripheral in [a person's] consciousness, now take central place, and the religious aims from the habitual center of [one's] energy." There is a great deal of energy involved in the Chamula conversion process. Marty Martin (1993:12) reminds us,

when a number of people devote their lives to ideas that help make sense of their world, respond to the sacred or seek the transcendent or find God, undertake the rites of passage through life with religious ceremonies...they are expending energies.

This flow of energy is dynamic and, throughout my fieldwork, I have witnessed diverse manifestations of it. When behavior is adopted through the internalization of Evangelical Protestantism or integrated with the individual's existing values, then one can document a commitment to the *k'op riox*. In other words, according to Obeyesekere (1981) it becomes part of a personal system, accepted into an individual's cosmovision or world view. Still, we need to bear in mind the differences between what someone thinks, says and does (Harris 1977).

Snow and Machalke³³ (1983) have expanded their inquiry of religious conversion accounts to include various "rhetorical indicators" of the convert's experience: 1) the adoption of a master attribution scheme; 2) biographical reconstruction; 3) the suspension of analogical reasoning; and 4) the embracement of a master role. Yet these indicators also fail to differentiate between religious conversion and change in religious affiliation, as well as the intensification, as for example, the 'born again' or Charismatic phenomenon within Christianity (see also Stapels and Mauss 1987 for a further critique).

The first two indicators—the adoption of a master attribution scheme and a biographical reconstruction—support Beckford's (1978) analysis of conversion accounts of the Jehovah Witnesses. Beckford notes that a convert's personal experience tends to shift with retelling, that is, the reconstructions³⁴ of the "conversion account" resemble the official version of the movement's organization, even reflecting the changes that the Watchtower experienced overtime. Accounts, then, frequently mirror more than just a person's perception of their own actions, for they utilize the language adopted within the religious affiliation. Additionally, Herbert Danzger (1989) notes that congregants tend to label some conversion accounts authentic and others inauthentic. This also means that the same account may be acceptable in one religion, and yet rejected in another (Scott and

33 Their study of conversion fails to differentiate between intensification and commitment within the same religion, and change in religious affiliation or conversion as Staple and Mauss point out (1987).

34 Reconstructions of one's personal experience are not specific to conversion accounts, they are ubiquitous. For example, after a tragedy or a rite of passage the rendition will differ one month, one year or ten years later. Education is also a factor influencing our accounts of a tragedy, such as, a terminal or debilitating disease since people afflicted with multiple sclerosis, AIDS or cancer often intensify medical terminology as their disease advances. Our context changes, as do we, and what we once deemed important in an account may no longer seem relevant to us today.

Lyman 1968). Thus, when experiencing serial conversions, a convert would need to reconstruct the account after each change in religious affiliation.

Peter Stromberg (1990:42) explains the sense of self-transformation in a convert. Ideologies, he says, create a language that can resolve problems of meaning. Ideology here would be the same as theology, differing from one denomination to another. Stromberg does not imply that problems are resolved once and for all. In fact, the discourse of a convert reveals that self-transformation is an ongoing process wherein the ideological-theological language is used to express and come to terms with persisting emotional ambivalence.

While words may, and often do, describe what one is experiencing, occasionally the accounts become prophetic in that they bring to fruition as they are pronounced. As one begins to believe in the terminology employed within a conversion account, one may begin to experience some spiritual energy. Even if a religious change does not result in accepting some theology into one's personal system of beliefs (i.e., there is no cognitive change), the person is usually influenced at some level by either a spiritual encounter or the consequences of adopting a new religious affiliation.

Chamula Conversion Accounts

The sample of Chamula conversion accounts is drawn from 250 conversion accounts collected between 1991 and 1993, and an additional 102 accounts from the household survey conducted between December 1995 and January 1996. It is hard to classify the motives for religious conversion. For instance, the majority of converts gave "faith in the Lord Jesus" as the reason. This I perceive as a rehearsed answer. But through participant observation one has the opportunity to follow up on the accounts and

verify the respondent's explanation by specific religious practices and the humdrum of daily life. For example, going to the temple, tithing, bowing to the Sacred Mountain, ancestor worship, and the presentation of newborns by midwives to the universe, are practices that demonstrate religious behaviors.

Participant observation enabled me to assist at births, baptisms, weddings, graduations, funerals, masses, prayer services, family meals and innumerable cups of lemon tea and soft drinks. In addition, by tracing the genealogies of religious conversion processes within households I was able to cross reference the reasons "converts" gave for changing religions. I have classified the motives that my informants reported in their conversion accounts into spiritual, social and political categories. The spiritual motivations consist of religious experiences, spiritual conversions, justifications based upon faith or belief of any kinship member, sudden and unexplainable healing or cures, revelations, dreams and other reported epiphenomena.

Social motivations are based upon the theory of social cohesion that dictates if any individual or group felt that they belonged then this sense of community would hinder a person from seeking religious change within the Chamula context of religious persecution. These reasons include jealousy, false accusations, financial bankruptcy and revenge. Some examples are change in religious affiliation following a recent divorce, rape or the failure to accept a marriage proposal, official complaints filed against a member of the *cacicazgo*, failure to make payments on one's debt and a sudden rise in fortune. "Quick money" is still perceived by many Chamulas to be taking from the community apparently in agreement with Foster's (1956) theory of "limited good." In addition, I have also included health related issues here that are directly connected to

either an *evangélico's* bringing the family into his home, feeding them, getting medicine for the sick person and praying for their recovery.

Finally, under the political category I have placed affiliation with the PAN, lobbying for the removal of López Tuxum, union participation, refusing to pay the contribution tax or to accept a religious *cargo* when related to *caciquil* oppression.

TABLE 5: Reasons Respondents Gave for Religious "Conversion."
N=352³⁵

Spiritual Reasons	Social / Health Reasons	Political Reasons
18% (63) faith reasons, i.e., they had come to believe in Jesus	30% (106) reported an incident of alcoholism; 6% (21) illness related	10% (36) although originally expelled due to unresolved differences with the <i>caciques</i>
13% (46) disillusion with <i>cargo</i> system or shaman	4% (14) their husband took another wife	8% (28) became evangelicals soon after being expelled
14% (49) related a dream that led to <i>k'op riox</i>	3% (10) missed their relatives who converted	as of 1996, only 3% (10) remain evangelical
	2% (7) most did it- seemed the right thing to do	7% (25) disillusionment with religion in general
Total: 45% (158)	Total: 45% (158)	Total: 10% (36)

Source: Field Data.

The motives *evangélicos* give for changing religions (Table 5), not necessarily converting, can be categorized as follows:

- 1) 45 percent of the motives fit into the spirituality category:
 - A) 18 percent reported reasons related to issues of faith;
 - B) 13 percent stated disillusionment with either the *cargo* system or *ilols*; and
 - C) 14 percent related the change came through a women's dreams - only one man

³⁵ Sample consists of 250 conversion accounts collected between 1991-1993 and 102 testimonials from the survey conducted between December 1995 and January 1996.

reported a dream as the basis for his conversion;

2) 39 percent stated a social or health issue:

A) 30 percent reported alcoholism was the motivating factor for seeking change, and in three out of four cases it was the mother-in-law who initiated the conversion process at the household level. For many of these cases health was an issue for either a spouse or a child. In another 21 cases or six percent of the accounts, an improvement in the health condition of a family member triggered a change in religions.

B) 9 percent stated a social reason:

i) 4 percent reported that the husband took a second wife;

ii) 3 percent missed relatives who had converted, and so changed religions themselves; while another

iii) 2 percent could not pinpoint any one reason except that everyone around them was now *evangélico* and it seemed the right thing for them to do; and finally,

3) regarding political reasons, 10 percent stated that they were expelled because of their unresolved differences with *caciques*; of these, eight percent had changed religious affiliation to Evangelical Protestantism, yet today only

A) 3 percent remain evangelical; while another

B) 7 percent are still disillusioned with temples, pastors and religion in general.

Spiritual Motives for Religious Change

The second most frequent reason for converting is related to something spiritual, representing 45 percent or 158 cases within the sample. "Faith in the Lord Jesus" and

“achieving salvation or peace” are at the top of the list. And many interviews were truly spiritual events that moved me quite deeply. One particular elderly woman who lives in conditions of extreme poverty with only a twelve year old granddaughter to care for her is a modern day version of the patience of Job. Maruch is nearly sixty-four years old, blind in one eye and suffers from a right side paralysis from a stroke nearly ten years ago. Still, Maruch hobbles around her small one room house constructed of plastic, tin and some wooden beams.

To meet Maruch is to experience the awe of the divine: she slowly raises her eyes to speak of Him who now provides her *raison d’etre*. Maruch does not doubt for a minute God’s divine plan for her and her people. Over the past six years that I have known her, she has become physically more fragile and yet bolder in her testimonies about the love of the Lord Jesus. Maruch also changed religions because her husband and eldest son were severe alcoholics who used to beat both her and her daughter-in-law respectively. Maruch’s motives for conversion are similar to those reported by many other women.

Further questioning, however, often reveals that the spiritual search was initiated either by illness or alcoholism. This occurs usually by the spouse of someone who is chronically or gravely ill, and this will involve the temporary migration of at least some of the family to the city³⁶, while treatment is being followed. In the case of alcoholism,

36 Sterk (1993:252-277) has a good account of territorial saints and the increased conversions in *tierra caliente* precisely because the evil or dangerous spirits are out of sight once one is out of the village. While this may have been the case when he was working in among the Tzotziles in the coffee groves, I have not found this to be so among the Chamulas. While many cases of illness are remedied within the city, the rationale is more for the proximity to medical care and treatment. Also, as will be explored in the next chapter once a relative dies and is laid to rest in the cemetery they consider themselves to be safe “under the eyes of their ancestors.”

the mothers-in-law are key figures in the process as will be seen below.

Seeking Sobriety and Finding the Lord Jesus

Alcohol-related experiences were the most significant motivating factor (Table 7). Similar to cases in Chenalhó (Eber 1995) and Colombia (Brusco 1996), conversion to Protestantism helped Chamula women and children obtain a husband's sobriety, at least for a time. In two out of three of the accounts, i.e., seventy cases, representing 66 percent of the sample, the husband would relapse in fewer than two years even after converting.

Occasionally, a woman would no longer encourage her husband to stay in the house with her, while some even persuaded the man to leave Mt. Zion, as happened in twelve cases. This is more likely if the plot of land belongs to the woman herself or is in her son's name (Sullivan 1992, 1995). More frequently, though, the man simply returns to his hamlet, pays a fine and then reclaims his inheritance land if he had some, as the men did in twenty-eight of the cases studied.

A pattern arises from this analysis that in part explains serial conversions. Serial conversion describes the incidence of two, three or more consecutive changes in religions. Among many Chamula converts when the primary motives, such as illness, alcoholism and oppression by the *caciques*, go unmet, or resurface, a "convert" renews the search for either a transcendental explanation or undertakes the journey towards a positive venue.

Among the cases of a husband's relapse into alcoholism, in fifty-nine households this led their wives and children to change their temple affiliation. The households, that switched from either Presbyterian to Pentecostal or from Pentecostal to Jehovah Witness or Adventist, represent 85 percent of those who connected their adoption of the *k'op riox*

to seeking relief from alcoholism. Changing worship sites or religious affiliation was an end product of the woman's search for someone who was either a stronger healer, or for a temple or religion that had been successful with another woman's husband's sobriety. Among the case studies in this chapter, Lucia's case is an excellent illustration of how this plays out. The remaining 30 husbands who relapsed into alcoholism despite their converting have been "forgiven" by their wives who, as fervent evangelical women, follow the advice of their pastor, at least for now.

Of the 106 who reported an incident related to alcohol, 50 percent also had another health related issue. Either they, a spouse or a child suffered from headaches, a "burning stomach," "sadness" or "thin blood." Another three percent related a severe illness that afflicted one of their children and defied the remedies and prayers of the local shaman. Although it is often the case that the illness will dissipate once the family relocates to the city, many women and children within the Protestant enclaves continue to be plagued by the consequences of malnutrition, inadequate living conditions and moderate to severe levels of poverty.

Among the *evangélicos* who associated their change in religions to alcoholism, 60 occurred in the decade 1965-1975, another 23 between 1976-1985 and 20 between the years 1986-1996. Recalling in Chapter One the historical development of Chamula's specific type of *cacicazgo*, the high occurrence of alcohol related conversions in the late 1960s and into the mid-1970s reflects the strict enforcement of ritual drinking as part of tradition. Many of the ruling elites controlled the monopoly of pox production and distribution. However, separate trends occurred in the early 1970s which when combined reduce the justification for adopting Evangelical Protestantism because of alcohol

dependency.

First, the introduction of the soft drink concessions within the village enables many who chose not to drink to participate in buying another kind of bottle. At the same time Coke, Pepsi and eventually Rey, encouraged the consumption of drinking warm soda at curing ceremonies, since it produced a burp that became synonymous with the flight of illness from a person's body. These concessions brought an enormous amount of money to the younger *caciques* who acquired these concessions. Also since soft drinks are marketed to children, as they enter and leave school, there are more opportunities for sales within the ceremonial center, where the largest primary school is located.

Another influence upon the alcohol related conversions was the ever increasing adoption of "pouring off the *pox*." When served rum during the feast days and rituals, a person would pour it into either a bull's horn, or a plastic container. For many Chamulas what might appear to be "saving face," that is, drinking as much as the feast's host, is really driven by the moral value of homogeneity. This core value dictates that one not stand out or be differentiated from others in any way. Yet some of the traditional elders saw how the evangelizers were recruiting women into their *k'op riox* by promising them that their husbands or sons would stop drinking. These elders began to worry about the long-term effects of conversion - expulsion upon their own hamlet's future.

One such case is Juan Shilón Guitarra's uncle, Sebastian Perez, who served for a second time as mayordomo for San Juan in 1994-1995. During Sebastian's first office as steward of San Juan in 1977, he began to wonder if all the women who had abusive husbands would want to leave Pajalton. As he puts it,

There is nothing to do or say if the mother of your children is headstrong about

drinking. Especially if the woman has been beaten more than a few times. My wife threatened to leave me four times. In 1973 Dominga said that she could get a pastor to back her, offer her land in the city and that she would take my youngest children...I did not want this to happen, without one's wife you can not even accept a cargo for we know we are meant to serve the saints together...We went to a healer and we both got cleansed. It did us good, but as the feast of St. John approached, Dominga warned me that she would tell all of her relatives if I became bolo (Sp., drunk) to the point of falling down, or aggressive towards her as in the past. We agreed that my little daughter Pascuala would come and pour off the pox into a plastic container. This worked for me and later as I heard from other men their problems, the women are correct. We can drink but we should not beat anyone. The monkeys have a bull's horn that can be used for this same purpose. If it were not for this, then I would not have been able to get the 16 men I have now in my service...It is not fair that others come to instill our women with ways that contradict our customs, we do not want to see our children leave us. Our ancestors are not pleased to see so many living outside the village. If I ever see someone going house to house, I suspect they are evangélicos, and tell them they are not wanted here in our hamlet.

This is not to say that drinking is no longer a social problem among Chamulas, because it is a significant one, both within the township and the Protestant enclaves in San Cristobal. The point here is to illustrate that some hamlet religious leaders recognized that some Protestant pastors were recruiting through a needs-based approach and decided to do something about it. These cargo leaders offered "traditional"

alternatives (i.e., “pouring off”) to the evangelical value of alcoholic abstinence as a way of solving intra-familiar problems related to alcoholism without resorting to religious conversion. Evangelizers actually focused upon the families of alcoholics, a legitimate discontent among certain women. Sebastian and Dominga were able to work it out, my hosts in Witz also do the “pouring off,” since Juan can not tolerate *pox*.

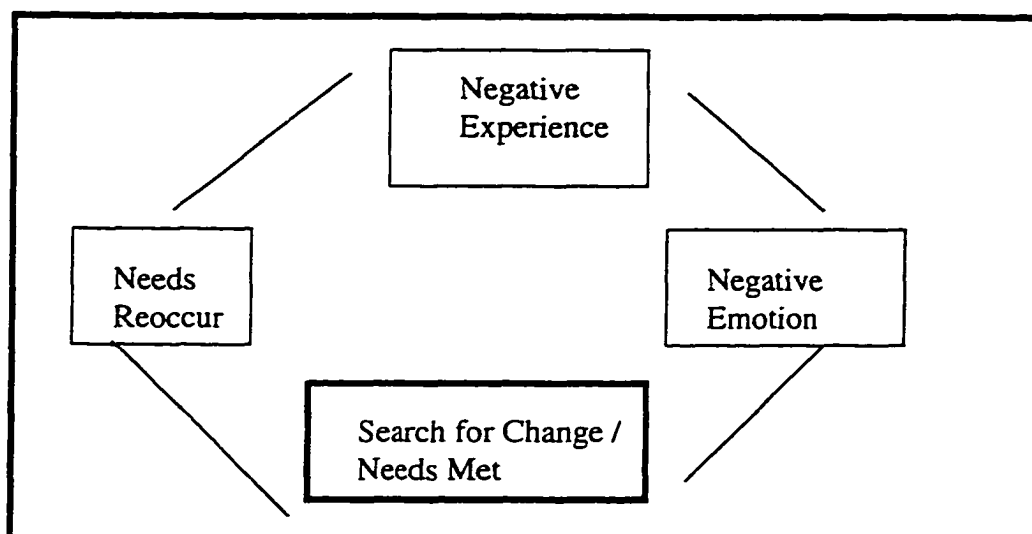
Because Juan’s daughters precipitate his needs by collecting the overflows from the monkey’s horn, he has successfully served as a *max* on four separate occasions. Furthermore, although the women in the hamlets of Pajaltón and Rincón de Witz have not organized to protest the abuse of alcohol, as some of the women in Chenalhó (Eber 1995) have done, this does not mean that some of them have not received some relief, and occasionally, even a man’s sobriety.

Figure 1: Emotions & A Needs-Based Approach to Religious Change

Negative → Experience: from at-risk factors	Negative → Emotion: sad- ness / depression	Search for → Change: not inevitably religious	Needs Are Met: new religion adopted in gratitude
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Source: Field Data.

Figure 2: Cycle of Serial Conversions



Source: Field Data.

While the respected elders in the hamlet of Pajaltón correctly recognized the success of the needs-based approach in proselytizing, they could not always deter family, kin and neighbors from adopting the *k'op riox*. I have presented a wide range of reasons for changing religions. After a pressing need is met (Figure 1) some Chamulas convert out of “gratitude to the Lord.” Yet even when a need is met, it does not assure longevity in any religion. The recurrence of the same need will sometimes prompt “converts” to enter into a cycle of serial conversions (Figure 2), as will be discussed in the section on the case histories of three *evangélicos*.

Political Motives for Adopting the *k'op riox*

Among the many informants whom I have interviewed only thirty-six respondents, 10 percent of the sample, reported “converting” for political reasons. The reasons given included disagreements or unresolved conflict with *caciques*, promoting the PAN party or independent candidate in the early 1970s and failure to vote for the PRI

candidate. Many of the Chamulas expelled for political reasons eventually became *evangélicos*, as was the case for twenty-eight respondents or 8 percent. However, in 1996 only 10 claimed to be evangelicals while twenty-five or 7 percent profess disillusionment with religion in general. Of the different conversion accounts within the political category the following one shows how some men came to be *evangélicos*:

We were asked by one of our cousins to back the independent candidate for the election in 1973. We did not know him but we were told that he would help us get a loan for a truck so that we could bring the people from our hamlet to and from the market. We never expected charity, it would be a loan, but at least a just one. So we helped by handing out fliers at the marketplace in San Cristobal. Nothing really happened until the election was claimed to be a fraud. Then things got crazy and we were accused of being evangélico. We weren't at that point, however, the hermanos were really nice to us and so we felt they were making up for our kin and compadres in the hamlet, we joined their temple, the Presbyterian temple. I got a bus route that I share with my brother. Ten years later my wife died. I remarried to a woman who is a fervent Pentecostal. It is all the same to me so I became a Pentecostal and convinced my children to do the same. It is better to not be divided because of religions or politics. Jesus has been good to us. We do not plan to go back to Chamula. Our life is here now.

Thus, while the spiritual, social and political motives for conversion vary greatly it is quite clear that spiritual energy is being dispersed among the expelled. The examples that I have included also show that many people are responding to spiritual, health, social, alcoholic and political issues frequently find the Lord Jesus. Still, following the meeting

of a specific need, some Chamulas reported converting out of “gratitude to the Lord.” Yet as the cases of Lucia, Santos and Manuel will show, even when a need is met, it does not assure longevity in an religious affiliation. The recurrence of the same need will sometimes prompt “converts” to enter into a cycle of serial conversions (Figure 2).

Serial Conversions

A series of two, three or more “conversions” within a life time is rather unusual. Moreover, when the phenomenon described appears to follow the given definition of religious conversion (i.e., cognitive change, identification with belief and some degree of conformity) then these changes merit mapping in the form of religious genealogies as a means of further analysis. The religious genealogies refer to the tracing of initial contacts and influences at the time an informant reports a “conversion” as part of the individual’s spiritual or religious heritage. These religious genealogies help highlight the links between the series of “conversions” that each of the three life histories, included below, experienced. I have selected these case studies because they exemplify my findings and are the basis for the thesis of “moral overseers.” Thus, while Lucia looks in different temples for an idealized “*batz'i vinik*” husband, Santos seeks to restore the social imbalance which is causing his illness and Manuel longs for a community free of oppressors, that is, one that is homogeneous.

Case One: Lucia and Her Abusive Husbands

Lucia Mendez is a 48 year-old woman originally from the hamlet of Minas, Chamula. She has five children and is currently living with her 36 year-old sister, Pascuala. Lucia is among the few expelled Chamula women who dress only in *Ladino*

clothing. When Lucia was fifteen, Mateo Benial from Pajalton asked her to elope with him. As Lucia puts it,

I was only young, what did I know? It sounded good to me to have my own home, not to have to do so much work for my step-mother. So I said yes. I didn't know Mateo, only that he and I went to the same [elementary] school.

But Lucia and Mateo did not have their own home until she had two children, a boy and a girl. In 1968 Mateo had saved enough to build a one room adobe home about six yards from his parent's house. That was when Mateo started drinking excessively. The drinking resulted in domestic violence. As Lucia explains,

Every waking hour was spent wondering why God was punishing me? What had I done wrong that Mateo should hit me on the head so hard...How can I avoid provoking his anger? I had borne him healthy children, I helped in the corn fields, I was weaving him a chuj (Tzo., traditional man's outer garment made of wool)...then Mateo began to pass out. He fainted almost every time that he drank. He wasn't working anymore, he borrowed money from his father for the pox. I thought that he would die. And what would I do with two small children, no land, and no work?

In 1970, Lucia along with her mother-in-law brought Mateo into the city looking for a stronger medicine than what they had tried in the village. They had already spent more than three month's wages on healing ceremonies, to no avail. Once the truck arrived in the market area, they lifted Mateo out of the truck and began to solicit assistance to get him to a doctor at one of the local pharmacies. That was when Mateo's mother met up with her *comadre*, Lorenza Laux, who diagnosed the need for a stronger

healer or, for certain, Mateo, her godson, would die. Lucia remembers crying,

I began to weep loudly and then Lorenza spoke such beautiful words to me, "Your suffering is not without merit, the Lord Jesus has good things in store for you my child. You have done the right thing in bringing your husband to the city. Now you must believe that Jesus has the power to heal him." I didn't answer anything, I was afraid that I would forget what she had just said, no one had ever spoken to me so kindly before. And by just speaking I might not be able to carve those words into my heart forever.

After living with Lorenza for six weeks, both Mateo's and Lucia's health improved. They had plenty to eat, no work to do except to attend the prayer services in the temple. Before returning to the village, both Lucia and Mateo made a commitment to become Presbyterians. Their lives had been changed somewhat for the better. So every Sunday they made the trip to Nueva Esperanza to attend the temple; then they would stay and share a meal with Lorenza and her family. They told those who asked in the village that they were joining Mateo's madrina for a meal.

One day in late November of 1970 the entire family, Mateo's and his parents as well, was rounded up and thrown into the Chamula jail for three days. After being publicly shamed in the ceremonial center for not following tradition, they were advised to leave immediately or suffer the consequences. Not knowing where to go, they returned to Lorenza's house. Eventually, they were sent to Mazariegos, land owned by two evangelicals, where Mateo built a small house of wood with a tin roof with the help of several other recent converts. Lucia describes this part of her life as:

Living in peace. Everyone was so poor, yet we were content. We had witnessed

to our faith in the Lord Jesus and He found us worthy of suffering in His Holy Name...Our third child was born in Mazariegos and we called her Rutie after one of the women in the Bible .

In 1974, Mateo who had found work selling vegetables in the market, began to drink again. His old violent habits returned. Soon Lucia resorted to covering her head with a shawl to hide the black and blue marks on her forehead and arms. It seemed as if each week there was less and less money to buy food, and almost every day Mateo's temper would flair up again. During the summer of 1975 Lucia decided to go to the coffee groves to fix food for her younger brother and the men in his group.

While in Soconusco, they were both approached by a group of Pentecostals and Lucia began to weep daily at their prayer meetings, hoping that Jesus would help her just as the Presbyterians had years ago. After the harvest Lucia changed temples in San Cristobal as well. She spoke to Pastor Pedro and he found her a small wooden house on the side of his own home where several "widows" had already settled. In this way, Lucia left Mateo and the Presbyterian temple taking her three children with her.

Ten years later, Lucia is much better off economically because her son is now old enough to return alone to the coffee groves. Her daughter is fifteen and has begun to sell artisan products in the zócalo along with Rutie, the youngest. Lucia found work in the new housing units around Tlaxcala. Lucia washes laundry for a number of *Ladino* women who are state employees, either teachers or university professors. She gets paid by the piece and at times is given extra food or clothing for her own family.

Lucia married Juan Perez in 1985. Juan was a recent widower. His wife died during childbirth. He was rather well off economically. They had met at the temple and

he asked her to be his wife. They had a big wedding celebration that consisted in inviting everyone from the temple to a meal of chicken, rice and potatoes. Juan had three children plus the infant. He also owned a grocery store on the second cross street in Mt. Zion which is why Lucia and her children moved up there. Lucia was quite happy caring for the baby and tending the store while Juan commuted to and from the city on different painting contracts. In 1986 Lucia had her fourth child, a son whom they named Juan after his father.

Juan was a provider who made good money. All was well until 1987 when Juan was injured in a car accident. He broke both legs and his left arm along with fracturing several ribs. He had no insurance and although the bills were expensive, it was not until Juan was released from the hospital, that Lucia realized just how sad and depressed he had become. For nearly six months Juan was unable to walk and so Lucia returned to washing laundry.

Juan began to drink and manifested two of the more negative aspects of *machismo*, the glorification of virility: jealousy and fear of betrayal. He became suspicious that perhaps she was seeing another man. Juan in his *celos* (Sp., jealousy) visualized Lucia receiving payment for sexual favors; he rationalized that she was now able to support herself, not through her honest labor, as a prostitute. There was no basis to his claim and Lucia tried to prove it to him. Before she could reassure him though, he beat her terribly, pulling out a lock of her hair. Lucia ran weeping to Pastor Pedro who counseled her to forgive her husband, which she did. Unfortunately for Lucia this scenario was repeated many times. However, the night she discovered that Juan had stolen the money she was saving for an emergency, she decided that she would move out.

How and where would she go were the big questions.

Not finding any support within her own networks because they were based upon her husband's kin, she began to look outside of her community. So Lucia asked one of the *ladina* women for whom she worked and this lady helped her to find a room to rent and a few more households to do laundry for, so that she could make ends meet. Lucia continued to attend Pedro's temple until she had a confrontation with her husband's sister. One day as Lucia sat near the creek that runs through the land owned by INI, she met Lorenza Laux again. Lorenza asked her how she was doing and why she had stopped attending the temple. Lorenza told her,

Come with me, Lucia I am going to another Presbyterian temple mission close to my home. No one will know you there and you will find peace.

And so finally in 1989, Lucia returned to another Presbyterian temple where she has remained a "widow" up until the time of the interview in 1995. The common thread throughout Lucia's life has been the search for peace, to avoid abusive husbands who were alcoholics. Each time the cycle of domestic violence repeated itself, Lucia tried to get religion to solve her problem. At times it succeeded as in 1970, 1975 and again in 1988. When no answer to her prayers was forthcoming, as when the traditional healers failed to alleviate the problem in the hamlet, or the Pastor insisted that she forgive her husband and remain in an abusive relationship, Lucia opted for change either by switching religions in gratitude for curing her husband or using religion to justify leaving Mateo. Her case is similar to Santos Jimenez's conversion experiences as it relates to the search for health.

Case Two: Healing Santos

Santos Jiménez is a 28 year-old man originally from Yaálboc, Chamula. He was born weak, as he puts it, and did not learn to walk until he was nearly four years old. Santos is a small man in stature and body frame. When only six years old he was struck with a very high fever and nearly died. The fact that he is living he owes to his father who brought him to the market one day in 1973. They were going to sell some vegetables they had grown so that his father could buy a chicken and hopefully cure him. But as Santos says,

God wanted something else. My father bought me some fruit at one of the stands and I began to eat a mango when all of a sudden my tongue swelled up and tears rolled down my cheeks. Then everyone began to notice that I could hardly breath. My father thought that I would surely die. But just then one of the hermanos came from behind the counter where oranges are sold and laid his hands on my head. Everyone told me that I fainted. The next thing I remember is that when I woke up we were surrounded by women and each was weeping and praying for me...My father was so grateful that he and I decided to become Pentecostals.

Santos and his family were expelled in 1980 and although they had accepted the Word of God, no one returned to the temple unless they happened to be in the city on a Sunday. Fear of expulsion kept many people's beliefs a secret. Once expelled however, they needed to find a place to stay and so they followed all the other Evangelicals and looked for the Presbyterian Foundation Temple. Their basic needs were met and then they were sent to a Pentecostal pastor for future assistance. In 1985 Santos had found work with another member of his temple as a waiter in the zócalo area. He enjoyed his

work, especially since he wore black pants and a white shirt with shoes. There were a lot of tourists coming into San Cristobal while more restaurants and hotels were being constructed. Then in 1987 Santos again fell ill, this time with cholera. He was lucky that he had the proper medicine and oral hydration packets from his friends at the restaurant. Later that same year, Santos married the young Chamula woman, Maruch, discussed earlier.

In 1988 their first son was born only to die two days later of cholera. Santos could not forgive himself, nor Jesus, for letting this happen to him. He stopped going to the temple and the following year he got another high fever and turned yellow. When he was diagnosed with hepatitis, the owner of the restaurant asked him not to return. Santos was unemployed and remained very ill. A neighbor told Maruch that he could get free treatment through the referrals at the Church of San Francisco.

Following the instructions given by one of the Clarist nuns, eventually Santos recovered. Later he was hired as a gardener to tend their property. This was steady work that he knew how to do, and with time, Santos became a progressive Catholic. When I asked Santos what he made of all these illnesses and the changes in religions he answered,

If God our Father wants to speak to me through my body, I can not stop him. He chose me to see his hand each time he cured me. Now I see that the other temples were just not strong enough to keep me well, although they could cure me for awhile. Sister Maria understands me, she is kind and her medicine is strong. If she can give up her family and serve her God, he must be really better than I had thought. I never knew what a Mass was and had only been baptized; now as I

prepare for my Confirmation, I will get the strength directly from the Holy Spirit.

I am a Catholic just as in Chamula, however now I have the help of the Sacraments and the priests here in the city.

Switching denominations for Santos was negotiated as a means of seeking health in a fashion similar to Lucia's search for a peaceful life free of the consequences from alcoholism. The next case is of Manuel López Santis whose spiritual journey follows a similar vein, yet for Manuel the common denominator in the series of religious change is the word "oppressor."

Case Three: Manuel's Escape from Oppression

Manuel López Santis is a forty-seven year-old man originally from the hamlet of Baptista Chica, Chamula. Manuel's entire life has been split between politics and religion. He was active in the political campaign for the PAN party during the 1973-1974 elections for mayor of Chamula. What follows are his reasons for joining a political party in opposition to the PRI,

It was clear from the time that I was growing up that some people controlled everything. They were not willing to give anyone else access to the monopolies they had so we had no choice but to introduce another option. The priests and catechists introduced the idea and for awhile we all believed them until we saw that they just wanted to control the village themselves without the caciques meddling in their affairs. No, they would not have that if we could help it. I first became an Adventist because my mother was one in secret and it seemed all right to me. Why would I want to be a Traditional Catholic if the caciques were such? Look how they treated everyone. All I wanted was to have a loan to get a van or

a taxi and make some money. But no, they just laughed at me. Once I was expelled things were very different. It meant going to the temple regularly and the pastors even wanted to control us as the caciques did.

At this point I asked Manuel to explain just what he meant by the pastors who wanted to control them as the *caciques* did. He then continued,

Do you not know about all the money that the pastors receive all the time from all over Mexico and the United States on our behalf, to help us rebuild our lives once we are expelled? We never see the bulk of the money since the pastors keep it for themselves. They even have a large sum of money in a bank account that gains interest which the pastors use for their own houses. I do not make these things up; there are people who can prove this to you. The pastors are the caciques in the city. They want to get money from us on the pretext of religion and this is why I left the temple. I had even been a pastor myself. But no more, there are not going to be any more caciques here. We have a right to have free access to what we need to have decent lives. The government ought to help us, the Catholic Church did not really help us, so we must help ourselves. This is what UNAL does, it wakes us up and we finally see clearly who we are and what can be ours again.

As a consequence of breaking with the PRI party and his campaign activity for the opposition's candidate for Mayor, Domingo Diaz Gomez of Yolbón, Manuel was expelled from Chamula in 1974. Still inclined to political activity, he remained active in ORIACH, then CRIACH, and eventually UNAL. Manuel had been a Traditional Catholic until his mother converted to an Adventist temple in 1970, then he also became one. In

1980 after completing his training, he was ordained a pastor.

However his stay at one of the Adventist temples was not without problems. He was asked to leave the temple he had originally joined because most of the *Ladinos* objected to his political intentions in the temple. Manuel moved to another Adventist temple closer to his home in Mt. Zion. By 1988 he no longer saw any use for religion.

In 1992 Manuel joined UNAL which, with its marxist overtones, wiped out all religious beliefs from him. As each new encounter with an oppressor occurred, Manuel disassociated himself from the religious affiliation of the oppressors. Despite the fact that Manuel failed to produce documentation or other informants to support his claim about the evangelical Protestant pastors, it may possibly be true, though I strongly doubt it.

On the other hand, one can see the influence of UNAL in his description of oppression. While the Catholic Mission in Chamula had done a fairly good job at labeling the *caciques*, and Salvador López Castellaños in particular, as “oppressors” it was the Lombardistas that helped Manuel recognize the pastors as “oppressors of their congregants.”

These three cases show that if a person has had among the motives for changing religions some significant need that either remains unchanged or returns (an abusive husband, ailment or an oppressive existence), then the “convert” will undertake a similar journey once again in an attempt to address their needs stemming from alcoholism, illness or oppression. Poverty and landlessness have also triggered some serial conversions, as we have seen in the case of Christine’s father, Juan Perez, who left Pastor Pedro’s temple to join Domingo’s mission. Although his wife had dreamt that Domingo would come, she also wanted Juan to remain sober. Yet Juan’s decision to follow Domingo to the new

temple was based upon the cement floors in Pedro's temple. Juan felt that Pedro's temple had made more socioeconomic progress than he had been able to within his own house.

These accounts contrast with the dynamics of proselytizing that Nash (1960) noted in Guatemala. In the Highlands of Guatemala the evangelical groups were preaching to the "converted" and drawing members from one another. At some level, the switching observed among the Chamulas produces this affect. However, to the extent that it is motive-oriented, i.e., the individuals seek out a new prayer or stronger healing god, the Chamula serial conversions are quite distinct.

It is the hope of these neophytes to Evangelical Protestantism that the Lord Jesus will maintain them in "good health, harmony and peace of heart." Furthermore, the pattern of religious change and congregational switching indicates that unless a "convert's" significant needs are met satisfactorily, what I have documented here will be just another stage along an even longer line of serial conversions. Because the reasons my informants give--poverty, landlessness, illness, envy, debt, unresolved issues with a *cacique*, and disillusionment with the *cargo* system--persist as "risk factors," or needs awaiting a permanent solution, none of these variables account for conversion *sui generis*. It would also fail to account for the Chamulas who have one or more of the same "risk factors" yet fail to change religions, for example, my host family in Rincón de Witz.

A more adequate hypothesis is that religious change will occur when the Chamula world view fails to explain one's experience in its personal, communal or transcendental aspects. Because many Chamulas stated that they had converted for a motive connected to more than one "risk factor," one needs to avoid a reductionist's presentation of their accounts. Moreover, although alcoholism is frequently cited as the motive behind

religious change, in actuality for some it is “in gratitude for the gift of sobriety” that religious conversion occurs while “being dry” eludes others whose search for a cure leads them from temple to temple.

Similarly, in the cases of illness it was “an expression of thankfulness to a deity” that prompted many to adopt the religion within which health or balance was restored. Thus, congregational switching in this context does not represent a rupture with theology, doctrine, a particular pastor or the sense of community. When Lucia, Santos and Manual switched over and over again, they do not perceive this as religious change. The three life histories indicate that switching is no more than experimenting--working out the kinks or testing the waters--with *k'op riox*, restricting the translation to a “new prayer,” not a new religion. The limited scope of meaning in the phrase *k'op riox* really illuminates how minimal the extent of change actually may be for many Chamulas. It also allows for mistakes. As Lucia used to say, “I messed up again, but next marriage Jesus will hear me pray in my heart and direct a true man toward me.” Thus, adopting a new prayer is a method of religious practice utilized in their quest for a true *batz'il vivik*, holistic health that comes from living in harmony and a homogeneity free of oppression.

At another level, the “sense of community” is key to explaining why only some of the poor, alcoholic, ill or landless within Chamula switch religions more than twice. The particular aspects of this communal sense are evidenced through respect, ancestor worship, bowing to the sacred mountain, *compadrazco*, accepting the role of *max* in the *cargo* system and the offering of a newborn to the universe and the community which is performed by the midwife. When one or more of these practices that are derived from the Chamula sense of community are present, then despite a sudden cure, or sobriety, or

freedom from oppression, the odds are that neither change in religious identification nor “conversion” will occur. Otherwise, one would be at a loss to explain the case of my host family in Rincón de Witz.

Certainly my host family in Witz has felt the oppression of the Mendez brothers, the envy of their nephew’s wife, the socially related illnesses, alcoholism and even incidents of domestic violence over the years. However, they have not changed religions because the Chamula worldview still makes sense to them. The Shilon Guitarra family continues to have a social network of support within their hamlet; this is true of Juan’s compadre for example, and along kinship lines, as is the case of Maria’s uncle, the mayordomo of Pajaltón.

I argue, then, that to focus solely upon the motives, even while they may be contextualized as to the changes over time within the hamlet, risks not identifying the determining factor. For until an individual Chamula, or her family, has reached the turning point, then and only then, will something new be sought as a means to finding a solution.

This also applies in the cases of expelled Chamulas, whose initial motivation for religious conversion may have reoccurred in the form of an illness, battered wife syndrome, alcoholism or poverty, remain in the same temple. Longevity within the denomination may signal the satisfaction of a need(s). Yet when the need(s) reappears, if the *evangélico* has found a “sense of community” in the temple that provides moral, spiritual and perhaps economic support, there is no need to undertake another quest for a “new prayer.”

In summary, this chapter has examined the motives that some Chamulas have

expressed for changing religions, and particularly for adopting the *k'op riox*. I have compared five temples within the "misery belt" in order to show how the personalities of the pastors influence the length of stay of some of congregants. A brief review of Table 5 shows the salience of alcohol-related conversion (more about this will be discussed in Chapter Five). The social context of these "conversions" is confirmed by the relationship between the decline in numbers of conversions related to alcohol after the introduction of the soft drinks and the wider acceptance and practice of "pouring off the pox" within the more distant hamlets.

The three life histories make evident that sometimes a "convert's" distress propels one into a cycle of change. Sometimes the cycle of religious switching becomes the means for justifying a decision to either leave a husband or avoid an oppressor, be s/he a *cacique*, pastor or relative. At other times, the cycle seeks to satisfy a need as in the case of Santos's search for healing, and the change in religion is more an act of gratitude to the "God who cures" and serves as a sort of health insurance. Yet, the motives must also be weighted with the "risk factors" within the village at the time of choosing another religion and this needs to be the case in the urban setting as well. In-depth interviewing is essential for revealing the nuances between those "converts" who, upon confronting a similar "risk factor," decide to switch denominations and those who remain within the same temple.

I was unable to discern any changes in the accounts that reflect shifts in the mission statements as Beckford saw among the Witnesses. Perhaps this is due in part to the diversity of religions present in Chiapas today and the degree of permutation among Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism. However, some Chamula conversion

accounts were employed as justifications for change. These are indicative of the transformations in the broader society as far as they influence the daily lives of the residents of San Cristobal.

There are three stages or progressions in the Chamulas' use of *k'op riox* to warrant some course of action. The first dominated during the 1960s and 1970s when evangelical Protestantism was used to justify the rupture with leaders who were perceived as oppressors. The second is the use of a cultural identity as justification for returning to ethnic celebrations within Chamula. *Evangélico* participation in the *cargo* system began during the 1980s but has become more visible since the Zapatista rebellion of 1994. Beginning in the 1990s, the third justification situates evangelical Protestantism as the "niche" the "moral overseers" employ to reinvent a Chamula spirituality based upon their moral principles of tradition. This latter development shifts the "niche" from a need-based approach which targets Chamulas as potential converts to the *k'op riox* itself. Here we see that the case of religious change among Chamulas is not so much a case of religious affiliation, as in institutional religion, but a religious identity that is a personal spirituality based upon the core values associated with the ideals within *batz'il vinik/antz*.

This process of religious change is tantamount to the way Chamulas take a religion and use it as a "new prayer," a new expression to revive and safeguard their cultural values. In many ways religious change is another cycle in the expression of their own form of spirituality which will be further discussed in Chapter Five. Before ending this chapter I want to add my own account, that is, my experience of "being converted" while in Chiapas because it clarifies their use of this concept.

Many of my informants fail to distinguish between change in religious affiliation

and religious conversion. Even after the distinction is explained, they still employ the concept "conversion," although no apparent shift in ideology - theology and no cognitive change or practice has occurred. It is also evident after extended fieldwork that there is a range of meanings assigned to the word "conversion." A similar process is taking place in the state of Chiapas regarding the use of the word "democracy." For many people this concept simply means having the possibility to vote in a free election. Certainly this is a part of the concept that we call democracy, i.e., a government by the people, but there is much more to participatory democracy than just voting.

To explain the dissonance between even one pastor's definition of "conversion" and mine, I include here the account of my "conversion" which occurred one Saturday evening in San Cristobal:

I was in the fifth row on the right hand side of the temple Assembly of God in La Isla between two of my friends, Martha and Rosa, who had invited me to their temple's annual Mission Service. We began praying at 5:30 P.M. and it was nearly 8:00 P.M. when the pastor asked for all the new people to stand up. [This is nothing unusual in itself for many temples do this and at times one is requested to state where you are from, your name and then you are welcomed.] So as I stood along with perhaps fifteen others we were asked to come up to the front before the podium, which I did. Then much to my surprise the pastor continued with, "Thanks be to God, you have been converted! Jesus has saved you! Everyone, brothers and sisters in the Lord, congratulate these new members, welcome them into the fold and let us together pray over them."

We continued to pray for about five minutes, everyone as they will, most of

the women wailed, as is their custom, the men raising their right arm as if to salute the flag, and the kids covering their faces as they prayed in Tzotzil, Tzeltal and Spanish. I prayed also as it was near Christmas. I asked God to enlighten me so that I could explain to those who may ask me later, that I had not been converted in 1995. For I was born and raised a Catholic and have never changed my affiliation, although in Chiapas I have admired the Christian aspects of community that the Chamulas have in many of the temples they attend.

Then it dawned on me that the concept of "conversion" was being misused or misrepresented, and so of course, many people perhaps learned that they were converted in this fashion or manner. (Fieldnotes, December 9th, 1995).

In brief, one can conclude from the pastor's use of the concept "conversion," that religious conversion is somewhat similar to Paul's spiritual transformation prompted by the action of something external to himself. It is not as dramatic as the process that converted Saul into Paul. Still, there are elements in the conversion processes in certain temples within Highland Chiapas where perhaps the labeling, or [mis]use, of the concept is exactly what Stromberg (1990) identified as the sense of self transformation. It is clear that the concept of "conversion" can resolve problems of meaning. It is an example of language as a planting of a faith seed through ideology - theology within a person from an external agent or intermediary, i.e., the pastor or catechist. Some people do internalize this label, conform to its social implications, and eventually, experience shifts in their personal belief system, in ways similar to opinion change via radio's political propaganda, or commercial advertisements.

And yet, on the other hand, the *Chamula* perspective on conversion contrasts with

the internal change in direction as experienced within the Catholic tradition. The most noted examples of an individual's soul changing from within are the conversion accounts of Paul and Augustine. Perhaps it is the "western" stress on an individual as the agent of change that creates a bias towards any one individual convert's action, where it appears to eclipse the roles of intermediaries.

For Saint Paul it was divine intervention that knocked him from his horse while on his way to Tarsus to persecute Christians. As the scales fell from his eyes Paul began to see Christianity clearly for the first time. The somatic manifestation of temporary blindness corresponded to his own inability to recognize each and every Christian as Christ. Saint Monica was instrumental because she dedicated her life to prayer and sacrifice that her son Augustine might leave his sinful ways and respond to divine grace, that is, convert in his heart of hearts to God's love. While a few Chamulas have had experiences similar to Paul and Augustine, the majority are repeating the ritualized accounts they acquire through the temple to justify religious change. This very process acts to confirm their "conversion" long before it actually occurs, when and if it ever does.

Finally, to the extent that a convert's motivation points to her problem solving efforts--to deal with the overlapping processes of her daily life--then religious change is invariably linked to the temporal benefits promised to those who believe. This phenomenon also rests upon the presentation of religion within a needs-met-approach of the larger evangelization campaign that attempts to find an ecological niche for itself within a target population, i.e., Chamulas. In recent years this niche has been usurped by the moral arbiters, themselves, in their quest for universal harmony through the restoration of their cultural mores and traditional way of life.

To the extent that Lucia's search for respect--as both a wife and mother can be attained through her husband's sobriety supported by a pastor who condemns alcoholism, domestic violence and debauchery--is grounded in a sense of belonging within the new community of Christian brotherhood. Then, even if her husband relapses, no further serial conversions will occur.

Thus, convert by convert, religious change in Chamula is really a reinforcement of cultural codes, and converts are protagonists who promote the continuity of their urban Maya community usually along the lines of traditional gender roles. Still, the ideal of "man-the-provider" and "woman as mother, home keeper and weaver" are increasingly incongruent with lifestyles in the Protestant enclaves. Many Chamula women endure psycho-somatic manifestations of a growing insecurity and social imbalance prompted by shifting gender roles. The following chapter examines the role of women in the conversion process: as converts and protagonists for religious change among family and kin. It also explores their ambivalence as they earn more money than their husbands and yet long to spend time at their loom in order to clothe their family in traditional clothing.

Chapter Five

The Role of Gender and Religious Conversion

This chapter traces the role that women play in the conversion of Chamulas into evangelical religions through four case studies of women. It illustrates that while women appear to be choosing sobriety, health and community acceptance by their conversions and those of their husbands, the underlying pattern of serial conversions is based upon cultural codes, that is, they aim to acquire a sense of respect, community and balance through their conversions. The chapter continues the theme of converts as “moral overseers,” with a special focus upon shifting gender roles. The chapter begins with “The Story of a Real Man” which is an insightful narrative depicting the Chamula understanding of gender roles. It also provides clues about the motivations women and men have to change religions.

In analyzing these motivations, I hope to avoid the temptations of transplanting a white, middle class, western woman's concerns about how women negotiate power into the Chamula context. The evidence in this chapter shows that Chamula women want “respect,” not power per se. They utilize the concept of balance, derived from Chamula cosmology, to explain order in their world view. For the expelled, their lives are “an improvisory art that explores the creative potential” (Bateson 1990) of living Maya who preserve the spirit of their traditions and customs that fit their new lifestyles, while implementing changes in meaning and practice.

The Rooster Story

This section opens with a Chamula creation myth I recorded while in Mt. Zion from Maria Laux. It bears upon the man's prerogative to keep secret his affairs outside the house. This fable condones wife beating and discourages curiosity in women. As Maria warms herself by the fire she begins,

The following story was told to me by my maternal grandmother Dominga, who heard it from her own grandmother in the hamlet of Yaalhoc, municipality of San Cristobal. We are also from San Juan Chamula. It is called:

"The Story of a Batz'il Vinik" or as women name it, "The Man and the Rooster"

There was a man who went to walk in the forest and there he encountered a snake hanging in the tree. The snake spoke. He said, "Please take me where there is water because I am very thirsty," said the snake.

And the man answered this way, "I say no, because you are going to bite me."

And the snake said, "No I am not going to bite you."

And the man said, "Well then I am going to bring you to the water," and the man took the snake. They went and they arrived at a place where there was water.

And afterwards the snake said, "Bring me three leaves from a tree," that is how he said it to the man.

And the man obeyed the snake and soon brought the leaves to the snake. The snake pulled off the first leaf and chewed it. When he finished chewing it, the snake said to the man, "Eat this."

And the man said, "No, I do not want to."

And the snake said, "If you swallow it, you will hear what all the animals speak,

and understand them perfectly," he said to the man.

And after he swallowed it, the snake said to the man, "It is good that you have swallowed it, but if you tell what you hear as the animals speak you will surely die," he said to the man.

And afterwards the man went to his house and when he arrived at his house he began to speak with his animals, like the cat, the rooster and also the dog, all that he had in his house.

And afterwards his wife asked, the woman said to her husband, "Tell me if you hear everything as the animals speak."

And the man answered, "Bring me a piece of paper and a pencil," that is what he said to his woman. And the woman went to bring him the paper and pencil, and so she went away content [happy that she would soon know the secret to understanding the animals]. And when she brought the paper, the man started to write, right there at the table. And very close to the table was a dog. And the dog became sad because if the man tells this to the woman, he is going to die.

But after the rooster arrived to ask for his food and the dog said to the rooster, "You are eating and you are content. Do you not know that the master is going to die?" said the dog.

And the rooster answered, and he said, "Why does he want to die? He should do as I do, I beat my wife and after awhile we are content again. If he would learn as I did that if you hit your wife enough, she will never again ask you a question," said the rooster.

And so the man listened as the rooster explained everything, and when he finished

writing he then told his woman to come to him. The woman gladly went towards him and soon was close to her husband, and he began to hit her. He beat her many times and then the woman said, "Never will I ask you anything again."

And here ends the "Story of the Real Man and the Rooster."

After she finished, my grandmother then said, "and so to this day, young girls are instructed by their mothers to not ask questions of their husbands."

Having lived in the hamlet of Rincón de Witz for seven months, I had witnessed Mateo, a young man, 24 years old, explode when one of his sisters asked him where he had been during the day. Mateo is somewhat a different kind of person and so I dismissed it perhaps as his own personal quirk and did not count it as a gender specific event. Yet one day in May, when Pascuala asked her new husband, Salvador [who is Mateo's brother], what he did at work that day, I began to see the connections between this narrative and a woman's understanding of gender roles. Salvador has always come across as a cool 22 year-old who smiles frequently, and has an outgoing personality. Still he became enraged and told Pascuala sternly, "don't you ever question me again; who do you think you are anyway?"

Since this seemed out of character, I planned to ask Pascuala's advice on the matter, if I could do so without making her feel uncomfortable. The next morning, almost two hours after the men had left for work and the girls had left to tend the sheep, four of us (Pascuala, Rosa her mother-in-law, Vaxkil, and myself) sat around the fire eating our mid-morning breakfast on appropriated chairs usually reserved for the men. It was the highlight of a woman's day because we would all bring anything that gave variety to the daily diet, such as spinach, leeks, onion, cooking oil, or some cherished fruit.

Rosa, who was the matriarch in my host family, often said: "I need to have something to keep this body going, and after all, the men are going to buy something extra for themselves to eat while in town." The difference was that the men frequently bought meat, either in the form of a soup, tamale or plain chicken, beef or pork. This particular day we were having a version of potato and leek soup and it was very good. The atmosphere appeared normal and as I was serving them a cup of peach tea, one of the niceties that friends sent as gifts to the field, I ventured to ask whether it was proper or not for a woman to question a man about what he does outside the house. Rosa answered:

One can ask what one wills, but he doesn't have to answer and we know this. Yet sometimes men are more guarded about their affairs and this is correct since we deal with the house and they do things in the city. What would I understand anyway from what Juan might tell me? I do not even speak Spanish well enough.

I then said "what do you mean by he doesn't have to answer and we know this? How does a woman begin to know that a man does not have to answer her when she asks him a question?" Vaxkil, the oldest daughter, looked up at her mother as if waiting for an answer, yet none came. After a few more moments of silence, Pascuala said:

I know my mother told me that men do the things outside the house and women the stuff inside. We do not like them to question us on how we do our work, nor do they about theirs. But even if that is the way it is...one can always talk at times about what happens in the city and this is why we like the radio. If we hear something has happened then we tell our men when they return what we heard...and they explain what really happened to us. I miss not going into the city

for that reason. I used to sell my artisan work myself and enjoyed walking around the market. There people sell many things but they discuss much more than the prices. They tell each other the news from home, the gossip from the paraje and exchange messages from relatives and kin who will perhaps be passing by at another moment or on another day. I have many good friends and relatives that live in the city, some are evangélicos, others are not. It would be nice to see them but there is always the danger of being accused of being of k'op riox. It is safer to get news about them...

A main issue here is that a woman who is a victim of domestic violence may not have access to the market, school, or temple, and therefore is basically isolated from a means of seeking a change. When in the village, someone from the woman's kin or social network would take her side in a domestic dispute. Even during the big feast days, such as Carnival and St. John, if a man is drunk and beating his wife, the police will be dispatched to throw the man into jail until he sobers up. When a Chamula woman lives within the city and has been cut from her former network, her condition is perhaps even more isolated in this respect, but her options are greater. And as we have seen for Lucia, some turn to *Ladinos*, or as Juana, from my host family in Mt. Zion, sought help from a tourist, while for many others religion offers a "better way." Even when this occurs and the woman can strike a balance with her husband about the shifting gender roles, it is usually done within the framework of complementarity within traditional gender roles.

Unfortunately, Pascuala and I did not return to that particular conversation for a long time since a visitor came along. One day after the celebration of Carnival, or Crazy February, was over and we were once again settled into our daily routines, Rosa went to

the city with Juan. I was at home with only Vaxkil and Pascuala. We were busy cleaning the wool, carding and spinning it. Then, as if out of the blue, Pascuala said:

I asked my mother how we know not to ask so many questions of our men and she said, "It is because of the creation story of the 'Chicken who could talk.'"

Pascuala said that she vaguely remembered it but couldn't tell me really how it was, but that the next time she met with her mother, she would ask her to tell it to her again. When Martha gave me the text on "The Story of a *Batz'il vinik*," i.e., "The Man and the Rooster" I was excited to read it to Pascuala and see if she had heard a similar version. When she confirmed it along with many other women informants, I realized that the story played a central part in these women's lives.

Balance - Imbalance

Balance is an organizing principle in the lives of many indigenous Mesoamericans. Rooted in the social fabric of their daily existence is a person's ability to get along with family, kin, hamlet and village members could be measured by one's harmony or lack thereof. Chamulas consider themselves to be the center of the cosmos (Gossen 1989) and responsible for the equilibrium within their township, its spirits, and soul. The Chamula concept of balance resembles what López Austin (1984:353) has documented for the Nahuatl:

When man is conceived in the center of the cosmos, born in the culmination of equilibrium in the five points of earth, a being is created in which all the components of the universe flow. If then the highest level of equilibrium is given, the concept of individual had to respond, in terms also of balance, the unequal biologically and socially: sex, age, social status, position within the group and

between groups, friendly exchanges, temperament, and variations in health.

The balance is associated with complementarity. For example, in the case of biological imbalance if one becomes ill with *calentura* (Sp., fever), something from the cold or female classification system would restore somatic balance. Although in Amatenango the balance of the sun and moon is crucial (Nash 1970, 1997), balance or equilibrium for Mayas, in particular for Chamulas, is generally less stressed in the literature, which often speaks of order as contrasted to chaos (Gossen 1974; Gutieras Holmes 1961; Vogt 1990; Rosenbaum 1993 among others). Order implies an Alpha and an Omega, a beginning and an end, or a built-in system of hierarchy. When one focuses upon balance there are more possibilities since being first is not the issue, rather it is dependent upon a relationship that is complementary and interdependent.

Some Chamula women relate their post-expulsion experience as "living in a broken world" (Garza 1992), while others stress that now their life is out of balance, and therefore, unnatural. For these reasons illness, sadness, and hunger are common in the households among the Protestant enclaves. Balance is necessary at all three levels: the *teklum* (Tzo., village), the *sna* (Tzo., household), and *vinik* (Tzo., individual). The person is described as having a body, mind, heart, and *ch'ulel* (Sp., spirit or soul) according to anthropologist Calixta Gutieras-Holmes (1961:229). A person's *ch'ulel* sits in the entire body of a person and from the moment of birth the parents worry about the infant's body and soul. Their duty as parents is to protect their child and especially, during the first two to three weeks of life vigilance is required so that the soul does not separate from the body (Arias Perez 1993:7). Beyond having a *ch'ulel*, each one has an *swayohel* (Tzo., animal spirit) that can roam from one body to another and has the

potential to cause another human being harm and even, death.

If a person's biological or social spheres are out of balance, the equilibrium may be returned through an *ilol* (Tzo., traditional healer, shaman). Every year in Chamula, the Festival of Games restores the cosmic order to the municipality (Aguilar Penagos 1990; Gossen 1974, 1986; Perez Lopez 1990; Pozas 1987). The *cargo* system is a vehicle for social movement. It engages a civil religious hierarchical structure based upon services rendered to various saints. Although a couple assumes a religious service together, the person who participates in the ritual during the *cargo* exercise is principally the man who has the public role during the festivities. Still, at the level of the household, a woman *cargo* holder needs to organize the cooking, purchasing, and attention to the altars. Neither of these tasks are possible for the woman herself unless she has a rather large social network from which she can draw assistance for each of the feast days in any *cargo* holder's year of office (see Rosenbaum 1993).

The dynamics of gender are played out in Chamula as a balance between the categories "hot" and "cold." Gender roles become complementary when the hot/cold categories remain in balance, a metaphor for social equilibrium. The major differences among Chamulas in gender relations are maintained by imposing the category of heat. The hot Sun, *Totik* (Tzo., Our Father, as in God or Creator), corn, and men are set apart from their counterparts cold, moon, *Metik* (Tzo., Our Mother, as in Goddess or Creatrix), beans and women. It is the concept of balance rather than the western view of poles pulling individuals in opposite directions. For example, in the nearby town of Amatenango del Valle, it is said:

[W]e think of the moon as the force that generates cold. If only the moon existed,

we would all die, frozen by the cold. Well, if only the sun existed, and not the moon, who knows but what we would all die, burned to a crisp. And so there is this belief that these two worlds give us an equal temperature (Nash 1993:124).

Brenda Rosenbaum (1993) also describes complementarity associated with the balance in gender roles, i.e., man-the-provider brings food and clothing into the household, while the woman cares for the children and sheep, cooks, weaves, cleans and fetches water and firewood.

Although wide variation exists among indigenous villages, Maya women are the bearers of tradition and are socialized to monolingual discourse in the domestic economy. While some indigenous women have joined together to demand the right to participate in politics, to have access to credit and a plot of land, or to marry the partner of their choice, for many others the weight of "tradition" is heavy. The following text is part of the Zapatista Women's Revolution:

We want our customs and traditions to be respected, those that the community sees as good for women, men and children. We were always taught to stay behind, not to protest, to be quiet, to put up with things, not to complain, not to participate. But now we do not want to remain behind...(Ojarasca 1994:35).

In the specific context of Chamula, the male role as protector and provider frequently is threatened by the very work a wife does to fulfill her role. The tension of this contradiction all too often results in alcoholism and wife abuse (Freyermuth and Fernandez 1993; Eber 1995; Rosenbaum 1993; Sullivan 1992). After six months in the hamlet of Witz, I appreciated the hard work of women, men, and children.

Shifting Gender Roles

As more and more men and their sons seek wage labor at greater distances from Chamula, the center of their universe, gender roles are shifting rapidly. As George Collier (1993) has described for neighboring Zinacantan, men are now seeking to "make money" rather than providing food. When this happens men tend to spend their wages on new electronic devices, new foods or invest in either transportation, i.e., a van or truck, or letting the money grow through a system of lending money to other more desperate Zinacantecos.

Among the expelled communities of Chamulas who live along the *periferico* (Sp., highway) north of San Cristobal, gender roles are less clearly defined than in the village. One significant reason for this lies in the high percentage of single female headed households within the Protestant enclave, 43 percent as shown in Table 6 (see below page 193). As a single mother, one is confronted with the daily task of providing for one's children, the expenses of the plot of land on which the house is set, paying contributions and utilities, and searching for something to give in the temple. Many women complain that they find they are without a day's rest and with nostalgia recount how many hours they would pass in front of their loom, in front of the hearth or fire, or praying near the altar as the children slept. When Chamula women say they are living as converts in a "broken world" they are expressing the fact that order and balance are now missing from their lives.

TABLE 6: Family Structure by Social Class in Mt. Zion derived from responses to survey conducted between 12/1995-1/1996.

N = 102

Family Structure and Employment Status of Households in Mt. Zion by Social Class		
Lower Class N 59 (58%)	Middle Class N 37 (36%)	Upper Class N 6 (6%)
6% (6) Married, both parents work in wage labor & artisan production & sale	13% (13) Married, in 10 families both parents work in wage labor & peddling, while in 3 only men work	4% (4) Married, in all 4 only the husbands work
N 31% (30) Single Parent Households: 31% (30) female-peddler 1% (1) male-construction	N 12% (12) Single Parent Households: 4% (4) widows-artisan 8% (8) living with unmarried sons-artisan	N 0% Single Parent Households, however, 2% (2) have taken a second wife. Husbands work, second wife does laundry & cooking.
11% (11) SPHH* are "widows" abandoned by their husbands; widow and children peddle artisan products	4% (4) SPHH who are recent "widows," with unmarried sons who support them; women are peddlers	
11% (11) SPHH women are peddlers, husbands migrate outside Chiapas, but do send minimal \$ twice / year	8% (8) SPHH who are "widows" since husbands relapsed into drinking and returned to village; artisan production & sale	

Source: Field Data.

*SPHH-Single Parent Household.

For many women in the Protestant colonies the gender role of man-the-provider no longer fits their husbands or the fathers of their children. In the census I did in 1991 among the zócalo artisan vendors, I found 56 women, or forty-nine percent of the sample, were single parents; while 20 women, or eighteen percent had husbands who were unemployed. A total of 76 women, or sixty-nine percent, were the sole providers of their families (Sullivan 1992), while for many other families, the women remain major contributors to their household incomes and temple tithing through the sale of artisan products (see Region II in Barrios Ruiz and Pons Bonals 1993; Rus 1990; Aubry 1991). In 1995 twelve more women from the 1991 sample were either divorced or abandoned by their husbands. Due to the decline in tourists after the Zapatista rebellion in 1994, sales

dropped to ten percent of what they were between 1991-1993, and subsequently twenty women returned to living with a man again. All twenty women already had another child or were expecting one by the time of the 1995-96 survey. Currently, the number of single mothers working as artisan vendors from the zócalo sample has declined from 76 to 48 women, as compared to 64 women, 65% percent of the Mt. Zion sample, as shown above in Table 6.

Women continue to be ambivalent about the shifts in gender roles brought about by conversion and their subsequent migration to the city. Some women like earning money, finding it useful to own the land they are now on despite the fact that the titles are more often than not in a son's name. These women pay their own cooperation fees and utilities, and although many are merely physically separated from their husbands, they describe themselves as "widows," as noted above. Yet, other women are not quite sure that women "making money" is such a good thing.

Some women feel uncomfortable bearing all the responsibility. The shattered and out of balance cosmos is where the shifts in gender roles cause disquiet among women and men alike. Neither is quite sure how to define what each should do or be responsible for anymore. Men continue to describe themselves as agriculturists despite the fact that they are landless and have not sowed corn in more than a decade, and aim at being *batz'íl vinik*.

Expelled Chamula women continue to see themselves as mothers and caretakers of their children as do their relatives who remained in the village (Rosenbaum 1993). Thus, evangelical women are not about empowering themselves to take on new roles within society, rather the *k'op riox* assists women and men to become agents of change

within their traditional roles, i.e., mother, wife and homekeeper. Just as Brusco (1995:3) points out, evangelical Protestantism “elevates domesticity, for both men and women, from the devalued position it occupies as the result of the process of proletarianization.” The “moral overseers” recognized the potential to restore the traditional order or harmony within their community, lost through the irresponsible actions of the *caciques* and the ambitious would-be *caciques*, through the practice of evangelical Protestant asceticism.

Chamula women respect the role of their husbands to provide. The *zócalo* vendors tend to underscore their gains in their own households for two reasons. On the one hand, it serves to protect their earnings from their husbands who may drink it or spend it without consulting them. At another level, many women do not wish to appear threatening to a man by perhaps earning more money than he does. Even when comparing sales among themselves, they consistently report less in order to buffer themselves from envy. Women in Chamula are able to keep the money produced from the care of sheep or the sale of their artisan products. This money is primarily designated for investment in reproduction, that is, used to care for the animals or to buy more materials for their crafts.

However, while in the hamlet I did observe women taking money from their earnings to buy candles, flowers and incense for the home altar; sweets or potato chips so that the younger child will stop interfering with their weaving; condiments and oil for cooking; as well as popsicles during the summer months. Ever increasing amounts are used towards food expenditures (Rus 1990), particularly as husbands migrate further and further from the village in search of wage labor.

While this adds to the complex reality of pooling of resources within households,

it also indicates the presence of an on-going gender-based struggle for power³⁷ of who controls the resources within the household. The struggle is equally great among households with non-working husbands and households where both parents work. The zócalo women always say that it is a question of balance and respect. If the man respects his wife, there is balance, and balance has the ability to (re)organize their "broken world."

"Bleeding Less"

The anomaly of women's earnings affected some of the zócalo vendors' perception of their basic physiological function as women. While they were "making money," several of the women artisan vendors complained of "*al ch'ich'*" (Tzo., bleeding less). After I questioned them about what were the specific physical alterations in the patterns of menstruation, such as the length of menses or the amount of discharge, the women were surprised to realize that they were not "bleeding less." Practically no changes could be discerned from the discharges, length of onset, or other observations short of laboratory results, such as the analysis of hormone levels. The women's perception of what should be happening to them physically had changed though, and this is what I explored in focus groups (Sullivan 1993).

Bodily functions are problematic to Chamula women, just as they are to women throughout the world:

I know no woman-virgin, mother, lesbian, married, celibate-whether she earns her keep as a housewife, a cocktail waitress, or a scanner of brain waves-for

³⁷ Although power is laden with 'western' capitalistic connotations and is perhaps correct in the sense of control over money or income, we need to problematize its use in this

whom her body is not a fundamental problem: its clouded meaning, its fertility, its desire, its so-called frigidity, its bloody speech, its silences, its changes and mutilations, its rapes and ripening (Rich c.f. Martin 1987).

Expelled women express their experiences through bodily readings, that is, recording a major life altering event, such as expulsion, not just in their memory but in the Maya view of persona: body, mind and spirit (Gutierrez Holmes 1961; Gossen 1974). They express its ramifications cyclically, through the somatic metaphor of menstruation itself. Women express consistently their nostalgia about the loss of the familiar, their hamlet, their house, their *milpa* (Tzo., corn field), their *borregos* (Sp., sheep), their kin and social ties through "bleeding less." A pattern of expression that women share only with those in whom they have confidence, gives their narratives words to internalize loss. These women are expressing both the stress and ramifications of expulsion, seen as bodily loss. Here "bleeding less" appears to be a symbol of their expulsion experience and the embodiment of the losses they continue to suffer.

Through the analysis of their narratives it also becomes evident that "bleeding less" is a personal statement among women in the expelled communities, making public their profound loss. Perhaps these women choose to communicate in feminine discourse because 'their men' are: 1) frequently absent from the household; 2) no longer contribute to the family income because they are under- or unemployed, even perhaps unwilling to do so; or 3) have become the human instruments imparting the very suffering that causes women to "*bleed from the heart and [therefore each month] to bleed a little less,*" as Veronica Perez puts it.

case.

The experience of expulsion is more than just a fantasy psychosomatic condition where women only perceive themselves to "bleed less." Their complaint approximates what Linda Green (1994) has noted with the Guatemalan women she studied. The women in the Highlands of Guatemala had headaches and chest pain that were related in onset to the death of a family member, witnessing either an episode of violence while living in a low intensity warfare, or other war related atrocities.

As the women in the altiplano of Xe'caj, Guatemala share their sufferings, their understanding of their predicaments takes on a more social dialogue that offers hope for the future (ibid:249). The zócalo vendors are women who act as shock absorbers as they adjust to being street vendors with expanded gender roles of earning money for basic subsistence needs in urban settings. These Chamula women use their own bodies as buffers, as Veronica explains how her own body is "*a trapo (Sp., rag) absorbing what is spilt [or the excesses]*" to return the balance again. The translation of their personal costs of expulsion are intimately feminine, and deeply rooted in the cosmic image of the balance inherent in the human body.

These expelled Chamula women express the stress and strain thrust upon them from all the socioeconomic, gender role and religious changes they are experiencing in terms of "bleeding less." I became acutely aware of this when I accompanied four artisan vendors to the United States on a Cultural Market Tour in 1995. We walked daily from where we were lodged in downtown Manhattan to the Custom House of The National Museum of the American Indian - Smithsonian Institute. As we approached the museum every morning the women from Pantelhó, Chamula, and Tenejapa would stop at the bronze bull that is in front of the museum to rub the testicles in much the way that people

in our country rub a rabbit's foot for good luck. Juana who is from Tenejapa pointed out that since "money was hot, there was no better way to attract more of it than to touch the large testicles of the bull" within the Wall Street district housing the stock market. Although this drew several looks of astonishment from passers-by, the women claimed very positive results from this ritual, and each has a copy of the requested group picture next to the bronze bull.

The shift in gender roles experienced by Chamula women causes disquiet among women and men alike and stems from the shattered and out of balance cosmos. Neither gender is quite sure how to define what each should do or be responsible for anymore. Although nothing is crystallized yet, they try to recuperate their shattered lives. Men express this when they continue to describe themselves as agriculturists, despite the fact that they are landless, have not sowed corn in more than a decade, and still aim at being *batz'il vinik* whose ideal occupation remains farming. When women are overexposed to "making money" they tend to internalize this association with male gender roles. They may then report that they are "bleeding less" as a means to restore the cosmic balance within their own body.

Verbalizing their menstrual concerns provides Veronica and other zocálo vendors with an understanding feminine audience, opens up prospects for social dialogue, and facilitates the formation of social networks through the creation of new "fields of confidence" (Green 1994). These new social networks cut across urban colonies, economic conditions and status as well as a variety of religious expressions ranging from traditional Catholic to fundamental Protestant.

Chamula women, particularly within the Presbyterian and Adventist Churches,

have been very influential in the conversion processes of their husbands, their children, and most notably, their daughters-in-law. Many of these conversions deal with the social aspects of illness, that is, harmony at the familiar, kinship and township levels. Thus, when women and men experience conversion as a cure for headaches, alcoholism or a fever, their search for wellness needs to be understood in a holistic sense. Before presenting the case studies of conversion it is essential to briefly review here some of the Chamula beliefs regarding illness.

The Tzeltal and Tzotzil have a predisposition to think of bodily illness as a manifestation of total health in terms of social relations and being in tune with nature (Barrios 1993; Collier 1976; Fernandez Liria 1993; Garza 1993; Gossen 1974; Gutieras Holmes 1965:128; Holland 1993; Nash 1967 among others). The vicissitudes of daily life threaten the well being of many Indians in Highland Chiapas with the "loss of soul." Even though many indigenous people have adopted the use of modern medicine (e.g., analgesic, anti-dysenteric or antibiotic drugs), they continue to circulate within a panorama of illnesses, spirits and witchcraft where a "blow from the gods" will cause sudden death (Gutieras Holmes 1965:128; Villa Rojas 1990:317). Moreover, the word *chamel* (Tzo., illness) is a derivative of the verb "to die" and pain is viewed as being a step closer to death. Illness is inflicted upon a person to destroy the body (Gutieras Holmes *ibid*:122). Common illnesses (headache, swelling, fever, dysentery) continue to be perceived in Chamula as the partial loss of soul. Another explanation offered is that an animal spirit has left the corral (Vogt 1970) or that one's soul was taken away by a stronger animal spirit (Collier 1976:150; Gossen 1974).

Among the *evangélicos* within the Protestant enclave, while some converts report

“enjoying health thanks to the Lord Jesus,” illness actually overshadows the “curing” aspects of the *k’op riox* for many others (Fernandez Liria 1993). Anna Maria Garza’s (1993) research within the “misery belt” shows a high incidence of infant morbidity and mortality that clearly belies the claim that “illness has ceased to form part of the lives of those who convert” (Ibid:64). In addition, Walda Barrios’ (1993:13-16) study of the Protestant enclave illustrates that when Chamulas convert their new faith takes the form of an “antidote against illness” (Ibid:15). Several of the case studies that follow will illustrate how some converts consider faith to be an effective remedy. The remainder of this chapter focuses upon the changes in gender roles brought about by conversion because they serve as windows into the household where the tensions between wife and husband are played out in urban settings. These tensions are frequently manifested through psychosomatic illnesses, e.g., headache, digestive problems, weakness and “bleeding less.” For some expelled Chamulas alcohol becomes an urban anesthesia in an attempt to temporarily numb their ambivalent feelings over changing gender roles and a growing nostalgia for the “ways of the ancestors.” An unemployed spouse’s abuse of alcohol will lead many women to turn toward, that is, convert to, the Lord Jesus for assistance. Therefore, conversion is encapsulated in the people’s desire for things to either return to the way they were in the hamlet, or to remain the same in spite of migrating to the city.

Women, Alcohol and Conversion

Women often take the initiative in the conversion process and influence their husbands to change religions. Frequently, such religious change relates to women’s

desire that their husbands and or sons give up alcohol, a requirement of most evangelical religious groups. Conversion, therefore, is closely related to the problem of alcohol consumption.

Rethinking the evangelical process (Garrad-Barnett and Stoll 1993) and its effects on gender highlights the central position of women (Brusco 1993) in the conversion process. Several anthropologists use the social marginality model to understand how and why women are attracted to Protestantism in larger numbers than men. Elizabeth Brusco (1993) calls this the "bridge club" while Suzanne Rostos (1993) uses the expression "girls club," yet these terms fail to capture the associations Chamula women find in an evangelical temple within the "misery belt."

Even though many Chamula women sometimes find solace and moral support from meeting other women in sex-segregated temples (Martin 1990), the idea of a "club" still leaves women in the periphery of political and economic life (Brusco 1993). "Club" also limits the moral support to some form of organization, however for many women the help and solace they receive comes to them along kinship lines and neighborhood or religious affiliations.

One of the most significant reasons given for changing religions was alcohol-related. There are many contradictory aspects to alcoholism, as Christine Eber (1995) shows in her work on women and alcohol in Chenalhó. Just as in Chenalhó, it is most often the Chamula women who sell the alcohol, either in paraje or in the urban colonies. However, many women themselves are alcoholic, who just like men, often drink excessively on feast days, while others literally drink themselves to death.

When a Chamula man drinks, a chain reaction is started within the household. A

woman may allow the man to drink just to keep peace, even though he takes money that could have been spent on food for the purchase of alcohol. Domestic violence is frequent and women are just as violent as men when alcohol abuse is concerned. There are interesting accounts of men who encountered women who greeted them at the door of their homes with machete in hand announcing that "they would cut them [the husbands] up into pieces, when they fell asleep during the night." Needless to say, a man does not stay long in a relationship such as that, yet women endure for more abusive relationships than men.

Grandmother as Protagonists of Change

Grandmothers emerge as leading figures in the Protestant community. They are usually around forty to fifty years of age and have acquired respect for their age and life experience. Usually their social networks are quite extensive, fostered with care over many years through *comadre* relationships. Those ties are also related to a long number of services within the "*cargo*" system, as Rosenbaum (1993:147-175) describes effectively for a Chamula woman named Antel. This need not depend on the level one has reached within the *cargo* system itself, for whether one is in charge of the flowers for a saint, the wife of a *max*, the one in charge of the water or even the washing of the saints clothing, no one really acts alone. Among the circle of women at each *cargo* function there is a certain camaraderie that reigns.

As a grandmother, one can travel more or less without restrictions. The basis of this freedom is rooted in a woman being post-menopausal. As a Chamula woman reaches the age when she no longer is menstruating she poses less of a threat, that is, the threat of being impregnated by someone else other than her husband. At the same time an older

woman is not viewed as suspect by other younger women since the odds her she will not attract their husband away from them. In addition, as an older woman a grandmother has somewhat passed the restrictive phase of her feminine nature placed upon her by the hot and cold system of classification. Her menses will no longer risk spoiling seed, flowers or a *milpa*.

Usually older women tend to visit their relatives more, take up an additional amount of time either as weavers or artisan producers, and enjoy more frequent trips to the market. In addition, if grandchildren migrate in search of work, the grandmother may be asked to assume the *puesto* (Sp., booth) in the market in either the village center or San Cristobal. The latter usually exposes them to more outside information and allows for continued contact with relatives in distant places.

Evangelical women who have reached this stage in life are thus free to proselytize in the hamlets of San Juan Chamula mainly because no one sees them as a threat. This continues until they start to have an effect upon their own husband's or a son's drinking habits. The convert's refusal to drink alcohol upset the *caciques* who own the rights to produce and sell *pox*. Yet, among the social reasons offered for expulsion, several men have stated that they were expelled by the *caciques* only because they had been informed by their drinking partners of their sobriety and subsequently accused of being evangelical.

The situation was frequently that a grandmother would convince her daughter-in-law to seek out a change in religions, similarly as Brusco found among Colombian women (1996), Cadena (1995) among Chicanos, and Eber (1995) among Pedranos. Then once the women were either ready to convert or change religions, they proceeded to work upon their husbands, threatening to leave them and move to the city if they did not change

their ways. The boomerang effect hit other drinking partners through the lines of communication that trickled down from their own mothers.

These women were suffering as they watched their grandchildren go malnourished and poorly clothed. The mothers and wives of these men were persistent because alcohol had made family life unbearable, as the men themselves will attest after converting. Chamula women knew that they were risking expulsion by stopping their husbands from drinking, yet they still do it. Not having lived in their situation perhaps prompts us to raise the question why. However, by listening to the case of Mateo Lopez's conversion, one grasps some sense of just how chaotic life was for them in Joltzimen, Chamula.

Mateo's Conversion and Sobriety

Mateo is now settled in San Cristobal and is a full-time carpenter by day and a preacher in the evening. A quiet and reserved man, Mateo comes across as a humble person who knows that he is a recovering alcoholic, and a man who needs the grace of Jesus to keep him strong. Converted over twenty years ago, Mateo was a close friend of Miguel Kaxlan who was brutally murdered in the early 1980s.

Mateo has remained a fervent, active proselytizer for the Presbyterian National Church in Nueva Esperanza. Mateo frequently retells his conversion account:

We drank all the time. I never knew how to work in the city without having something to drink before returning home. It was a difficult time for everyone. I beat my wife often. Once I hit her so hard that she began to drink to forget all her pain. The children cried often, it seemed they were always sick. My mother used to get upset about it, but I was her oldest son and she respected me.

One day, however, my wife had drunk so much that she fell ill. My mother

then pushed me to bring her to town to look for a cure. When we arrived in San Cristobal I was not certain as to where to take her, and I met one of the hermanos. He was kind enough to me, his name was Domingo. He took us to his house and his wife helped take care of my wife. We stayed with them three weeks and the only thing the man asked me to do was to pray with him for her recovery. That following Sunday he took me to the temple with him and there we listened to Miguel Kaxlan talk about what meeting the Lord Jesus had done for him and how it had reconciled him to his family. And there next to him stood one of his sons...Then I realized just how much I was causing my wife and family to suffer through my drinking...I began to cry...after a long time in prayer Domingo brought me home and encouraged me to read the Bible and find the word of God to comfort myself and to strengthen me against the ways of evil³⁸...

With the scriptures I found something that helped me believe...I wanted to believe because I envied the way that Domingo and Miguel and the others lived. It seemed good to me then and I know for a fact that it is good still today... After my wife recovered I asked her pardon just as if she were to deliver another child, although she was not with one at the time. I then asked my mother to come one Sunday with us to the temple to pray and she came. It was not long, perhaps six months later when the caciques were told that I and three of my brothers were surely evangélicos. They started to threaten us. I worked in the city anyway, and I knew the hermanos would help us. I was not afraid. We were given twenty-four hours to leave and so we did. I saw no need to fight, it is not our way. Jesus has

38 Here Mateo quotes from his Bible the following verses Matthew 28:30; 7:7; and 6:19.

given us life and his love is enough for all of my family.

When I interviewed Mateo's mother, Veronica, she more or less concurred with his account. The only real exception was the time frame. Veronica explains that several years of severe drinking, that went from binges to a daily habit with rising incidents of domestic violence, culminated with her daughter-in-law's total collapse. Listen to her describe the drinking in her own words:

Mateo is my oldest son and when he married Dominga I was neither sad nor happy. Dominga was a good worker, she weaved well, she had the house clean, but when she began to sell pox everything fell apart. At first I thought that she just never liked me much. I tried to not get her upset even when they lived with us for three years. It was only when I would hear Mateo screaming at her that some of the liquor was missing, what was she doing with it? Then I realized that there might be a problem. As the months passed Dominga drank more and more. Then when Mateo would come home and not find the meal ready, they would fight. Both of them were hurting. One day at the waterhole, I asked her what had happened to her eye, it was swollen and black and blue. Of course she was upset. Dominga cried and said she wanted to kill herself. I said, "No, one must not talk that way. What would happen to the children? You have three small children and I can not raise them, I am too old. You must look for a way to make peace again with Mateo. We will pray at the altar, come let us return to the house." I was really scared and what could I say, I thought to myself. I only knew of two other women who had family members recover from drinking, and both lived in the city. If it meant finding a cure, I decided I should do it. The next week I went to the

market and met with my cousin who is a Presbyterian. Her daughter married a man named Domingo who is known and respected for his ability to heal. I pleaded with her to make contact for me.

The next time I went to the market I stopped at her table and she told me that if I could convince my son to bring Dominga to the city, then Domingo would be on the look out for them. I felt so relieved. If something good was to come from this I promised God that I too would change. After Dominga was cured and once I went to the temple with my son the text that most helped me was John 1:12 "But to all who received Him, who believed in His Name, He gave power to become children of God." When I retell this it is as a dream, yet for those of us who have lived through it, we know that Jesus gave us the power to become children of God...I am grateful for this and now we live in peace, the chaos and all the yelling of before, it is all gone...this is a miracle.

The similarity of Veronica's account is seconded by what Dominga offers for her motivation to convert:

I was so sick, partly because I was drinking all the time and also I was not happy. My husband was drunk nearly everyday and when I did not please him, he would beat me. I don't blame him for hitting me, it was terrible. My house was in disorder, the children were never well fed nor clean. When my stomach started bleeding from all the pox I had consumed, it was a blessing really. I never disliked or really liked Veronica before, yet it was she who saved my life...I know that now.

Being an evangélico gave Mateo a way of finding peace, it restored order

into our house, we no longer go hungry and we never fight or yell at each other. This a what God has now given us through the Presbyterian religion, I would not change, ever again. We are in peace, we have respect once again for each other. I know that God loves me and this is good...this is what religion is for... and this is why we are Presbyterians.

Between the different and yet similar accounts, it is quite clear that evangelical Protestantism offers prosperity in the sense of a renewed commitment by the couple towards the well-being of the family, just as Brusco (1996) points out. One poster used by a United Pentecostal Church in Colombia read, "You can have a happy house - attend!" (Brusco 1996:134). If giving up alcohol is supported by the *k'op riox* as in the Chamula case, a woman regains respect from her husband, while the wages lost to alcohol consumption are returned as food for the table, then an increase in familial prosperity results.

One of Mateo's drinking buddies eventually converted after nearly five more years of drinking. Once Mateo had the opportunity to chat with him, Juan explained that it was his own mother who got on his case. Juan explained that,

My mother was certain I would die and leave her with my wife and five children. They would all starve, and she knew from other women who sold their vegetables in the market that Mateo had recovered well. It took her three years to convince me that I could make the change. My wife was as thin as could be then and I was still stubborn. My mother explained everything so that I could see that praying was not a weakness, nor was refusing to drink. Once I started to attend the temple, I realized just how much strength I needed from the Lord to stop drinking.

Here all these years I was making Enrique Lunes rich by buying pox from him, when I should have been feeding my family...The Lord has been good to me, I am still in good health, I have nine children and four grandchildren now.

Chamula women frequently network among themselves to convince a man, whether a son or a husband, to change his ways. In a sense they also facilitate his "saving face," i.e., allowing him to blend in with the cultural norms of his peers by articulating sobriety in terms of gender roles. Furthermore, an *evangélico* will justify, as did Domingo Santis, in his conversion account that "faith in the Lord Jesus" is an acceptable reason for a "*batz'il vinik* to break away from alcohol and fulfill his duty as man-the-provider."

This is not to give the impression that whatever women want they get; this is far from the reality since there are many single mothers who now are heads of their households. Still, women can and do achieve changes both within their households and the community. The primary goal, though, is not some strategic or feminist's objective. It is rather rooted in the woman's role as mother, and this prompts her to protect her children, or grandchildren as the case may be, rather than to seek some remedy for whatever afflictions she herself may, and often does, endure.

The weekly religious services also serve as a catharsis for many suffering women. Within some of the Protestant temples, the pastors reaffirm a woman's right to respect. Usually this respect is expressed in terms of her as mother of a man's children, and not her inherent right to respect as a human being. Also the above overview of the temples touched upon some gender issues such as access to participation, education and an acceptable venue for switching husbands while crossing over denominations.

Case Histories of Chamula Women Converts

The following four case studies illustrate the interplay of gender, power and religion. The first is of Ruth and Naomi, a mother and daughter-in-law who fulfill what the scriptures say regarding "Your God will be my God." The second is a brief account of Dominga Dominguez, a Chamula visionary and her brief prominent role in the Protestant enclaves. The third relates the ordeal that Rosa Gomez experienced in her brief twenty years of existence, while the final case describes Christina's marriage to a military soldier stationed in Rancho Nuevo.

A Chamula Example of Ruth and Naomi

Martha is a sixty year-old great-grandmother who converted to Protestantism along with her two daughters-in-law, Maria Ruiz and Maria Lunes. They left Chamula in 1982 and have suffered extreme poverty since arriving in San Cristobal. All three women are widows, and when Martha recounts her conversion, one can not doubt her sincerity. Martha was born in El Pinal, Chamula and was selling vegetables in the market for at least twenty years. It was during her comings and goings that she became aware of *k'op riox*. Even after she converted, it took her several years to convince her daughters-in-law that the new way was a better way. The two Marias were afraid to leave Chamula since they made a living by selling liquor and candles which they made themselves in the hamlet.

Yet when the youngest, Maria, was gang raped in the woods while out collecting firewood, everything seemed to change very suddenly for all of them. Within a week of the rape, one of the local *caciques* ordered them to pay fines for not attending the juntas in representation of their dead husbands, and claimed they owed their portions of the

cargo contribution or fiesta tax. Martha says that the cacique wanted their land for his own son who was having his first child within the next month or so. Since they could not pay the money, they were continually harassed whether they were on their property or on the dirt path going to the ceremonial center.

The younger Maria left the hamlet for about two weeks to visit her cousin in the colony of Paraíso. There her headaches suddenly left her and she began attending the Presbyterian temple with her cousins. When she later returned to the hamlet, the cacique began to threaten her and accused her of being an evangélico. Maria answered:

What if we were evangélicos? What would you do to me or to any of us that you have not already done? You have no respect for anyone, you are evil and life is not meant to be this way.

Later, when she told Martha what had happened, all of the women were afraid. That night Martha had a dream:

I was walking down a path but this path was not in the hamlet because the road was surrounded on either side with houses in bright colors. And each house has a yard in front of it with beautiful flowers that the people did not have to pick to sell in the market. They had the flowers to remind them that the Lord is good. A voice came to me that said, 'You will soon come to know my way and not to be afraid. I know my sheep and my sheep know me. Trust in my ways. I am sending you someone who will show you where this path is found.' After that there was a bright light from above that covered my shoulders and greatly relieved me of the pain and swelling [arthritis].

The next morning Martha knew what they had to do. So when the *cacique*

returned to bring them to the center for accusing them of being *evangélicos*, Martha did not resist. She and the two Marias and their nine grandchildren climbed into the open back truck and began a new life. Whenever I sit with Martha, whether the general intention is to visit or to interview, I always feel as though I am at a prayer meeting. For as much as these three women have suffered, there is not a trace of bitterness in their souls. Martha is forever praising the Lord as are her daughters-in-law. There are no regrets for the choices they have made, nor are there any words wasted on nostalgia for the hamlet, the Chamula lifestyle, or life as they knew it before.

Certainly, the warmth and peace that I have witnessed in these women, who are always hungry for there is never enough to eat, leaves me convinced that something very spiritual is happening here in Chiapas. All three of these women are Maya contemplatives. Their faces light up when they speak of Jesus, and since none of them can read, I was a welcomed guest if I would read a Scriptural passage or two for them. Their favorites were Juan 5:11; Luck 5:12-16; James 5:14; Juan 11:32-42; and Exodus 20:1-26. Most of these retell miracles of Jesus, and the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt is very popular among the expelled.

Although they frequently ask me to read to them, they know the passages by heart. These women can spend up to six hours in the temple praying to the Lord, not just for themselves and for their children, for they also include the oppressive *caciques*. For as Martha says, echoing the very words that Jesus said while hanging on the cross, "they know not what they do."

Dominga Dominguez's Visions

Most of the women in the Protestant enclave have had ordinary lives, except for

an unusual conversion experience. Still their lifestyles have not changed dramatically nor are they prominent members of any temple. The exception to this is Dominga Dominguez, a fifty-three year old visionary and member of the Assembly of God temple. Dominga has produced several tapes of her visions in which she narrates her miraculous healing and the messages from her "savior to all who believe that Jesus is Lord." Dominga lives one street away from Mt. Zion, in a colony called Santo Domingo. She lives with her husband, Domingo, and together they sell oranges in the market in San Cristobal. Dominga was bed ridden for over fourteen years until Jesus appeared to her in a dream:

Everything was calm and I was still in bed and suffering. Then Jesus came to me in a long white robe. I recognized him. I was looking up at him when he beckoned me to him and I got up from bed and followed him, as if I had never been sick. We left my house and walked awhile. We passed several houses. They were all painted bright colors and each house has flowers in the front yard. No one is in their home because everyone has gone to the temple for the service. Jesus smiles as he sees the people praying. He took time to bless all the people in the temple.

Then I see one man and a woman who are dressed in black, everyone else is wearing white robes. Jesus spoke to me for the first time. He asked me, "Do you know why these two are dressed in black?" I could only say, "No." Jesus told me that they were not true evangelicals because their hearts did not belong to him. As he spoke, they both withdrew from the temple and as they entered the heat of the sun, they began to shrink until there was nothing left of them. Jesus told me not be frightened, but to trust in his ways, to believe in his word, to love

him...then Jesus was gone and I was once again back in bed. The only thing different was that I had no more pain and could move. I called my husband. He came and together we cried as I stood up and moved around...Jesus cured me to show that his word can heal souls.

Although her miraculous cure brought some attention from her neighbors and relatives in Santo Domingo and congregants in the Assembly of God temple, any undue attention to her persona was dismissed by her pastor as inappropriate. Jesus after all was the one who cured her. It was Domingo who actually made the contacts with several of the Guatemalan *hermanos* during a visit they made to their temple, "no prophet is accepted in his own country." The Guatemalan group was interested and decided to have Dominga record her dream on cassette tapes. Dominga has recorded two separate tapes of her miraculous healing and visions of Jesus and sold over 1,000 copies in Tzotzil.

I had heard that Dominga had had a dream in 1992 just before the confrontation between the Traditionalists and the evangélicos in Mt. Zion in April 1992 (Rosenbaum 1993:180; Darling 1992). This confrontation was prompted by the expelled from Mt. Zion kidnapping and abusing a judge from Chamula in retaliation for the Traditionalists jailing several *evangélicos* a few days earlier before expelling them. The Traditionalists responded by calling upon all the hamlets to congregate and go in trucks to Mt. Zion, where they planned to free the judge. When the trucks arrived from Chamula each side initially threw stones at each other. Later the fighting degenerated to consist of machetes and guns. The entire incident lasted several hours with a death toll of eight and many injured. Because Dominga had recorded several visions, my original hypothesis for this research project sought to situate the Chamula conversion process within revitalization

movements (Wallace 1956). However, the energy generated as a result of listening to her tapes lacks temporal focus since it remains spiritual or moral in direction and fails to be channeled into a revitalization movement. At times of intense social crisis, societies as diverse as the Sioux through its Ghost Dance Movement in the confrontation with the United States Calvary at Wounded Knee in 1890 (Kehoe 1989), and the mystic warriors of the battle-ravaged regions of northern Mozambique, who displayed on their chests the scars of "vaccination" against bullets in 1990 (c.f. Comaroff 1992:3), adopt a more nativistic and militant form of resistance.

The trauma of loss provoked by expulsions stimulated a similar move for vindication. This is illustrated in one of Dominga's visions that refers to the land shortage in Chamula,

Jesus came for me and we walked again outside my house. After a few minutes he showed me the evangélicos who were preparing for Baptism. They were dressed in their long white robes and soon would be boarding a bus for Pujiltic to be born again in the river. Again Jesus asked me a question, "Do you know that I bless those who follow my ways?" I responded, "Yes, I know." Then Jesus continued, "If you believe in your heart of hearts that I fulfill my word, then you will not fear anything." We then walked further. There were many other people who were not dressed in white. They were very sad. Jesus smiled on them also. He blessed them. As he blessed them, one of the hermanos came and started showing them plots of land on which they could build houses. Jesus then said, "the land is to be respected and nothing would stop them if their faith was strong. No harm would come to anyone if they protect what I have given to them. Because God the

Father wants it to be so." Then I saw that everyone got into a junta and soon the Traditionalists came and although fighting occurred, the hermanos were unharmed. Because of this Jesus smiled and the newly arrived now had white robes, just as those in the temple did...Land is given from father to son and on it our ancestors rest, Jesus will help us if we believe in his word. If we protect our customs and respect our mother, the land which feeds us.

Throughout my fieldwork I wondered what influence, if any, did Dominga's vision have upon the confrontation between Traditional Catholic and Evangelical Protestant Chamulas that left eight dead and fifty injured (Rosenbaum 1992:180)? Did her dream encourage the women to take the stones and throw them at the traditionalists? Did her vision of the expelled *evangélicos* dressed as a "white robed army" add religious overtones to a political fight? Much to my surprise, of all the people (102 households in the 1995-1996 survey) interviewed, only five women reported that they had heard of her.

Towards the month of June 1996 as I was reviewing some of my data, I began to wonder whether there was a seal of silence on Dominga. After all, Miguel Kaxlan had met a terrible ending, so was the lack of visibility really a safety devise? I decided to ask Dominga and her husband for advice on how to interpret this. They both agreed that her visions were given for religious purposes, not to influence *evangélicos* to fight back. Not sufficiently satisfied, I returned to Dominga Perez, a midwife with whom I have had a long-term relationship, and asked her what she thought. Dominga, who has a copy of the audio-cassettes of the visionary Dominga Dominguez's cure and dreams, simply said:

I was there when the traditionalists came, and although the tapes of Dominga's visions did not encourage me to throw the stones, I felt that Jesus was saying,

“Stay and protect your land, I will help you.” The dream helped me remain. I did not run away as did so many. Nor did we hide for days or weeks as did some neighbors. Jesus gives us a white robe to wear if we choose to accept it. He gives us power as children of God...no rock, no bullet, no cacique can harm us.

Perhaps this explains exactly what the vision did for some people. Only 1,000 audio-tapes were sold throughout Chiapas and Guatemala and no one kept track of how many locals, i.e., expelled Chamulas, bought them. Although Dominga was invited to speak at services in both the Presbyterian and Pentecostal temples, some converts perhaps consider her miraculous healing to be just a testimony, as Guadalupe Gomez put it, “shared for the purposes of praising the Lord Jesus and edifying *los hermanos*.” For her part, Dominga Dominguez is not at all concerned that the majority of the *expulsados* know nothing of her “calling as a visionary.” Dominga feels that the message she communicates is “from God.” Therefore, it is not restricted to Chamula *evangélicos* and “goes out to all *hermanos* in the faith.” Still, Juan Sanchez explains the visionary’s apparent anonymity with the dictum, “no prophet is accepted in his own country.” According to Juan, “the tapes sold better in Guatemala since no one there bought their oranges from Dominga in the market.” Thus, despite elements in Dominga’s audio-tapes, specifically Jesus’ promise of protection to those who respect the land he gave them, that have the potential for a revitalization movement, nothing has materialized along these lines. The reasons for this are twofold. First, many *expulsados*’ still perceive religious conversion to be an effective “antidote for illness,” and if forfeiting their inheritance land is the price a convert needs to pay, many willingly assume this consequence. Secondly, the spiritual energy within the overseers’ moral ascendancy movement is not directed

toward a specific oppressor, per se, as much as it seeks to enhance the soul of their community through the restoration of corporeal balance and social harmony. *Evangélicos* perceive internalizing the moral tenets of Chamula society as the path to the latter goal. The case studies I include are examples of how individual converts channel their spiritual energy. While Dominga's testimony is more dramatic than Martha's and her two daughters'-in-law accounts, there also appears to be a tremendous amount of concern for the value of respect in the next case study.

Rosa's Quest for a Divorce

Rosa Gomez is a beautiful twenty year-old whose three front teeth are covered with aluminum caps framed as they are by an all-engaging and quite contagious smile. Rosa and I have been friends for over six years. I was her godmother at her religious wedding ceremony in the summer of 1993 and I sheltered her from an abusive husband in 1995. Rosa was expelled along with her mother at the age of ten. Her mother was very demanding and verbally abusive, so much so that at the age of eleven she decided to elope and move in with her husband-to-be, Salvador, a young boy of thirteen. By the age of twenty Rosa had four children, ages eight, six, four and two.

Rosa and I had made an appointment one Monday morning that she failed to keep, and so I proceeded to her house. I was only mildly concerned that she had not notified me in advance that something had come up. Little did I suspect that I would find her on the floor of her home, unconscious and bleeding from a head injury. Her husband had literally pulled out about two inches of her hair, hit her over the head with a beam as thick as a baseball bat, and had broken two of her fingers by slamming them in the doorway.

All this happened because on Saturday night Rosa did not come home from the

market. As she explains:

It was all my fault and I can understand how upset Salvador is with me. But he didn't have to hurt me this way. And Josefina is to blame for all of this since she told everyone about what happened with Juan. You see, Juan is the man from Milpoleta who took Josefina and me for a few beers around five o'clock on Saturday in his white truck. There is no harm in having just a few beers. Besides, he talks very nicely to me. We had met several times in the market before, and I always just laugh when he tells me how beautiful I am [she makes the effort to giggle, however the pain she is in does not permit it]. So after the beers he drove us home, Josephina jumped out first from the back seat, and as I tried to get out of the front seat, Juan locked the door. I was startled! It is a truck with automatic locks. I pleaded with him to open the door, and even started to cry for Josefina to help me to open the front door. But Juan drove away in a hurry, and I found myself behind the hill where the church of Guadalupe stands. Once there he promised he would marry me, he spoke so nicely and touched me so softly...He laid with me and I enjoyed it. Sebastian had never lain with me in such a way...

When he finally brought me back it was early morning on Sunday. As I entered the house I expected only to get my stuff, and to return to the market where Juan promised to meet me [which he wasn't for he had no intention of marrying her, as was later made quite clear]...Sebastian was waiting inside with the pastor, Josefina's father and two of the colony's [civil] representatives. It was terrible! Everyone began to hit me, to insult me; my husband tore off my woolen skirt and I stood there in front of my own children, naked...I was then told

to leave the colony and warned never to return, not even to visit my children. After I pleaded with them to at least let me get dressed, the pastor spoke to Sebastian and everyone withdrew except my husband. It was then that he vented all his anger upon me. He has always been jealous to an extreme, but this time it was too much. Look how he beat me...

After three weeks of living with me, Rosa recovered enough to visit a lawyer at the Women's Group. Three months later, Rosa divorced her husband and, surprisingly she left him with all four children. Her point was that they were never to have any financial support unless Sebastian kept them, regardless of what the state decides at Family Court.

In addition, the last time that she visited her children, the oldest son, Juan, at eight was already ashamed of her for her adultery and the disrespect she had shown to his father. Six months after her divorce, Rosa was living in a small room with a woman from Tenejapa and dating a man from Milpoleta named Javier. Gentle and respectful, Javier promised a life more in accordance with Rosa's needs. Within a year of her divorce, Rosa and Javier were living together; their wedding is planned for the summer of 1997.

This whole experience caused Rosa to question the role of religion in her life. During the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Rosa entered the church there and decided that she would become a Catholic. This she did during mass at the Cathedral:

I went in and left three flowers and a candle to burn near the Cristo Caído (Sp., Fallen Christ). His eyes were so much like mine after my husband beat me -- he would understand my needs. I felt that everything would be all right once again. Javier accompanied me, and since this was a mass that the Bishop was saying, we

were labeled Zapatistas...But we are not Zapatistas and even if we were, it makes no difference because the Bishop said the cathedral was now an Indian church...that made me think well of being a Chamula, and everyone there from the television thought my blouse and skirt were beautiful...

Four months later Rosa and Javier became Presbyterians at the request of her cousin. It was not normal for people in the expelled community of Mt. Zion to be shifting from Protestant to Catholic as Rosa did, and she admitted:

My desire to be Catholic came from seeing the Indian Juan kneel before the Lady of Guadalupe. He looked as if he respected this woman and I wanted respect. Is this such a hard thing for men to understand? When I sell in the zócalo, I see people from all over, from Mexico City, Italy, Spain, Germany and even the United States. All of these people walk holding hands with each other; not that I like to hold hands in public because this is what Ladinos do. But when the man holds the woman's hand and looks at her with respect, or sees that her chair is pulled out for her before she sits down in a restaurant, and lets her get into a taxi first, this means that he respects her...Javier will have to respect me because I refuse to live with a man who will beat me, never again. To have left Sebastian I left my children and this is bad. Yet to raise them in extreme poverty is not good either. It does not let me fulfill my duties as a mother. But with Javier I will have another chance...when I visit with my children I can give them some extras that Sebastian doesn't. For example, the new dress for Maria, the shoes for Ana, the candy for the boys, all of these gifts make them look forward to seeing me. It is buying them maybe, but I do not care, they are told enough about how evil I

am by Sebastian and the pastor...But I am not evil and when I was baptized again as a Presbyterian, all my sins were washed away. So if Jesus can forgive me, why can not the pastor or my husband or the people in Mt. Zion? It still makes me sad to think of these things...it is not right the way we as women are treated.

Rosa speaks for herself and communicates clearly her search along religious lines for a man who will respect her.

Christina's Husband, the Army Sergeant

Christina's husband is a sergeant in the Mexican Army and he is ashamed of her Indianness. She needs to hide it from everyone. She also hides it from her family. Christina has been disowned by her father, and her mother chooses not to associate with her. Her one friend is the *ladina* for whom she works. Christina had sex with Juan while she was sixteen and, fortunately for her, he assumed his responsibility.

Juan is from Ocosingo, a mestizo although he speaks perfect Tzotzil, and for this reason was placed in the radio station at the army base in Rancho Nuevo. He was originally a Pentecostal and went to Mexico city to study at UNAM for about a year. His father then experienced hard times, and Juan joined the army. After boot camp he was sent to Chiapas.

While cruising the *zócalo* in March 1994, he met Christina. She fell for his advances and he bought a lot of belts from her. After awhile he asked her to go home with him and his friend. Christina accepted only because Ruthie was with her. They had some beers and then they had sex. Both Ruthie and Christina became pregnant.

Christina insists that she did it willingly since she liked Juan and thought he was a

nice person. Ruthie, however, was raped. At the time Ruthie was only 12 going on 13, and when it became apparent that she was pregnant, the colony of Paraíso had a public shaming of her condition. She was sentenced to three days in jail, and then Ruthie was to remain in her home until the infant was at least two months old. Both Christina and Ruthie delivered boys.

In Christina's case, she felt that she could do without her family, and since she never really committed to being an *evangélico* because they scolded her for her earrings, curls and lipstick, the initial break was not too bad. Ruthie, however, suffered enormously. Her father beat her and the pastor of the Pentecostal temple exposed her sin to the *colonia's* representative who in turn informed the community. To date, neither infant has been presented in a temple or baptized.

Christina initially came to my place to discuss how she was doing with the baby. She had not counted on her family casting her out of their life entirely, and since this was her first infant, she had many questions and doubts. Christina was dressed as a *ladina* and had cut her hair. This was to please her husband, although they are not married legally, just living together. She came also to ask advice about the pros and cons of being married legally.

When I asked whom she was thinking of marrying, she replied, "the sergeant." I was somewhat surprised at her response and so she said, "Juan is his name, but since he got promoted a month ago, I have to call him sergeant." I asked her how they got along and she explained that it really wasn't bad because he had his own house, and only came home from the base every two weeks for two to three days. So when he comes, he expects everything to be ready, and he is very jealous, so she can't leave the house at all

those days.

Still the saddest thing was the way she described the Christmas party on the base in 1994. She went with a dark blue skirt and a white blouse and had combed her hair straight back. Once she arrived at the party the women of the other soldiers began to look at her, and she felt different. Then someone asked her, "What kind of Indian are you?" Christina answered, "I am an *evangélico*." This brought laughter to the woman, but to Christina it brought shame. When Juan came and heard what had happened, he yelled at her for wearing long hair. Now that Juan is a sergeant, it is important that she be the sergeant's wife.

Christina no longer goes to the base, but waits upon his friends when they come to town with him. She cried when she cut her hair in order to please him. Now she is afraid that it will never grow back. She asked Juan, "What difference could it make for someone to know if she was an Indian or an *evangélico*?" Juan said that his boss doesn't think that "Indians are to be trusted." Besides, while at the university in Mexico City, he learned that "Indians are backward and stubborn people." Christina thinks Juan wants a *ladina* wife and that is why he will not marry her at the municipality. If she married him and then he wants a divorce, her fear is that he will kill her first.

Since she has been living with Juan, Christina has not stepped into a temple. Yet during the spring of 1995 she returned to the Pentecostal temple, only to listen to the service, to sing once again the hymns that she loved to sing, and to feel not so very alone.

With some tears Christina continues:

Jesus will help me find some friends for I am lonely enough to die. Juan does not respect me, yet I hope he is pleased with the baby...The other day he brought

home two friends and I had to sleep with them also. This is not good, the Lord would not want this. I still have faith, but the pastor's wife [the above mentioned Louisa in Chapter Four, see pages 132ff] looks at me with disdain, I am condemned in her eyes. I am being punished for my sins. I weep at night when he [Juan] is not here. My mother will not even look at me, and I dare not speak to my father. I am hoping that my sister can come one day and visit me. Then I can share my sorrows with her and maybe keep another zócalo vendor from believing what the soldiers say...they lie, they do not tell the truth, they just want to sleep with women and if they can find young girls, even better...I do miss the temple because there we heard Tzotzil and everyone knew everyone. Now look at me, not even my family wants to know me. And although I pray from time to time I want to pray with my own...

Perhaps Christina exemplifies the attraction of temple services, such as are held among Independent Tzotzil Pentecostals, where one can recapture a sense of dignity and respect for one's ethnicity and cultural background. Although Christina did not express any clear idea regarding her ethnic identity, she still felt the need to be among her own and to feel accepted at least at some level. Many of the indigenous evangelicals feel that "our traditional ways" are being scratched away on a daily basis due to the many non-Chamula contacts during any given week. Although treated severely for her mistake, Christina longs to be forgiven and once again accepted by her community.

In conclusion, the exploration of gender as experienced within the Chamula context of the paradigm of balance reconfirms that the experience is situational. The concept of power and the roles of women and men need to be separated from our

'western' concepts as well. For many women in the urban *colonias* their world after expulsion was self-described as living in chaos, i.e., a "broken world." At times this balancing takes a toll on a woman's body and she may even complain of "bleeding less."

Particularly helpful is Mary Catherine Bateson's (1990:9) concept of life as,

an improvising art that explores the creative potential of interrupted and conflicted lives, where energies are not narrowly focused or permanently pointed toward a single ambition.

Bateson's (1990:9) notion of "emergent visions" aptly described the act of conversion for many of these women. Bateson argues that life is an "improvising art" whereby individuals improvise and channel energies in numerous directions and often inconsistently in an effort to have their lives make sense. Conversion, likewise, for Chamula women is often not a linear or totalizing process. The day to day complex realities of their lives frequently prompt religious solutions to their problems.

In summary, then, women are pivotal to the conversion process both in personal accounts and as members of households. Thus, as Brusco (1995:3) points out, some of the essential explanations for religious change emerge by maintaining a focus on gender relations and domestic organization regardless of the arenas being considered. Still, my findings depart from Brusco's (1995) in several ways. First, the case study of Chamula converts is much more ambivalent than her research in Colombia. Secondly, the post-conversion prosperity at the household level that Brusco (1995) identifies is simply not as wide spread within the "misery belt." Moreover, whenever a certain measure of prosperity is present it tends not to be directly linked to the conversion process itself as will be shown in the next chapter. Finally, my research contributes to the gender-

conversion dynamic by highlighting the importance of the total belief system of the Tzotziles. Religion and health are interrelated areas of a Chamula convert's life. Both the holistic understanding of illness as being linked to social harmony, and the concept of a "soul" that defies confinement to a body, sufficiently checkmate "western" views on disease, healing and religious conversion. Thus, conversion for illness need not be a unitary motivation. Finally, when Chamulas accept the *k'op riox* as an "antidote" they probably still believe in witches, spirits and the ancestors. Even though their lips profess that "Jesus is Lord" many *evangélicos* persevere in their belief in witches and admit that "their consciences belong to the ancestors" (Fernandez Liria 1993:54). Therefore, adopting the *k'op riox* is not synonymous with change (cognitive or otherwise) for as I have shown many people merely want things to remain the same, that is, to return to "the ways of the ancestors."

Evangélicos, both women and men, channel their energy towards a perceived advantage in the never-ending cycle of Maya cosmology. A sense of social space (Martin 1990) rooted in land becomes zones of expanded safety under "the eyes of the ancestors" (Nash 1970). This is part of the Chamula distinctiveness, despite the high level of external migration (Vogt 1990; Gossen 1989). The dynamics of Chamula conversions are more than just privileging the religious as they channel their energies in the unending cycle of Maya time.

Chamulas are reconstructing their own biographies as an "improvising art." Convert by convert they cling to the cultural ideals they learned "under the eyes of the ancestors" as they forge a collective history in urban settings. They remain followers of the moral values of the *k'op riox* that reinforce the Chamula moral principles of

homogeneity, respect and harmony. In light of the ghost dance (Kehoe 1989) and other revitalization movements (Camaroff 1991) Dominga Dominguez's case is significantly different because the moral focus of the Tzotzil movement remains a spiritual renewal. Thus, while proselytizing does exist, there is, to date, no evidence of the moral overseers mobilizing people in a concerted effort to achieve structural change. The various indigenous organizations (CHILTAK, ORIACH, CRIACH and OPEACH) have taken up the struggle for religious tolerance by directing their attention to the traditionalists, in general, and the *caciques*, in particular. Keeping the religious separate from the political has perhaps enabled the moral overseers to spread their message of harmony without undue suspicion on the part of Mexico's judicial branch. While moral overseers do not pose a threat to the PRI's rule of the land, another consequence is that evangelical converts, as *expulsados*, fall short of stopping further expulsions from Chamula. As a result the spiritual energy, that fuels conversion as a restoration of the "traditional way of life of the *batz'i vinik* and *batz'i ants*," is not employed in lobbying for their constitutional rights to freedom of religion. Moral ascendancy, therefore, proves to be a two edged sword: enabling the moral overseers to attract those suffering from social illnesses to its movement, while internalizing, if not dissipating, the spiritual energy it produces before any practical or strategic changes can take place.

The next chapter offers a cost-benefit analysis of religious change in Chamula. It assesses the socioeconomic situation of the expelled through survey data and four case studies. It also presents data on domestic religious practice and attempts to balance our understanding of the conversion process by moving beyond syncretism to a discussion on concurrent pluralism. The concept of social blameworthiness is introduced and examined

in light of a community-based spirituality.

Chapter Six

The Consequences of Religious Change

The previous chapters have developed the motives for religious change and how these differ by gender and social class. The goal of this chapter is twofold. At one level the task is to examine the costs and benefits of the conversion/expulsion phenomenon upon individual converts and their families. At another level it will show how the moral principles of respect and social blameworthiness continue to unite a community marked by increasing socioeconomic disparities. The data on the continuity of religious practices within the household suggest that as the expelled recreate a community within the Protestant enclaves they do so within the moral framework of Chamula spirituality.

The first section of this chapter poses and answers two questions. First, was accepting the *k'op riox* worth more than the consequences of religious change? Here the focus is obviously the aftermath of expulsion. However, since religious change takes place within a climate of persecution, I also include here the murders committed at Ikalumtik. To die for one's beliefs is the ultimate sacrifice a convert makes. The case of Miguel Mendez, an acclaimed evangélico martyr, whose death follows his conversion to Catholicism, highlights the complexity of the processes of religious change. Despite renouncing Protestantism, Miguel was laid to rest by the evangelical Protestants.

Secondly, can any socioeconomic progress be assessed among those who ascribe to evangelical Protestantism? This section attempts to tease out the costs and benefits of changing religions among the Chamulas. The data are compiled from 102 households that were randomly selected for the survey conducted between December 1995 and January

1996. The survey provides a comparison between the household's socioeconomic status before and after expulsion or migration. The four case studies enhance these data, adding new variables that may influence a household's prosperity.

The second section examines religious practice both from the institutional perspective and from that of popular religion. Given the high incidence of Maya religious practices, the subtext of Chamula traditional Catholics and evangelical Protestants is remarkably similar. Are we examining a new form of syncretism or is this what Otto Maduro (1996) calls "concurrent pluralism"? The concept of concurrent pluralism is employed by Maduro (1996) in an attempt to capture the coexistence of various belief systems within either a person or a people without assuming syncretism, that is, change(s) as a result of the mixture of different cognitive and religious concepts. The aim is to expand the concept of the *ch'ulel* (Tzo., soul or spirit) of the Maya communities within the "misery belt." Despite envy, jealousy and factions, a tremendous amount of energy, albeit spiritual energy, is expended to rebuild a sense of community, based upon the ideal model of homogeneity. This usually occurs along kinship and denominational lines, and almost always, under the "eyes of the ancestors."

Beyond a Cost - Benefit Analysis

One of my first inquiries when designing this research project was, why would a woman or man convert to a new religion if they knew that they would be expelled because of this change? It was only after living among Chamulas that I reread and reflected once again upon what David Levine (1989) had written regarding the base-communities (CEBs) in Latin America. As Levine points out, poverty or marginality do

not of themselves provide people with additional insight into life. Nor does the fact that one chooses to convert imply that the converts do not sufficiently weigh their risks. For as many that converted (35,000), most do not (at least, 90,000 inside Chamula). Of those who did assume the *k'op riox*, the majority of them thought that they could continue the appearance of being Traditional Catholics in the hamlet, while spending their Sundays praying to the Lord.

Reassessing Motives for Conversion

What made the new converts willing to risk so much? To answer this question, one must return to the reasons informants have for conversion (see Table 5 in chapter 4, page 150). The answer to this question is twofold. On the one hand, many *expulsados* were disillusioned either with the *cargo* system or the shamans. This accounted for forty-six respondents, or 13 percent of the sample. Seeking to avoid a "culture of drinking" prompted one hundred and six people, or 30 percent of the sample, to look for a change. Upon further probing, 145 respondents, 41 percent of the sample, revealed that there is a latent sense of rebellion "against an oppressive authority" at a deeper level. In other words, the search for *k'op riox* frequently leads these latter respondents to disassociate themselves entirely from the *caciques*.

Others began the search because of a longing for the transcendental. As Juan López, a student of the Bible puts it,

the very thing that one has problems understanding, such as suffering, has meaning for the evangélico...if he recalls the Lord's words and relies upon the message of salvation. To know that what I and my family have gone through is not in vain, this is a comfort to me.

Although Pascuala presents another aspect of the transcendental, it is not opposed to Juan's view,

I want to hear something that brings me to a higher land. If the Lord does not expect perfection of me, it still helps me to have Him there along with so many testimonies as presented by the hermanas and hermanos in the faith...these people for love of Jesus and his name continue to suffer. As I walk back from the zócalo at night it is often dark and often cold. If I can recall what the pastor read on Sunday, or the words from one of the hymns, then my walk does not seem quite so long. As the Lord told us, his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. The child on my back does not weigh me down as I begin to climb step by step up the hill...I offer Jesus my burden, and as the pastor says, we can be holy women if we want...

As Juan and Pascuala, and so many others have found, their faith has restored meaning to their existence. If life as one knows it "ought to be" within one's world view just doesn't measure up to "reality," then chances are one will look for a new prayer, a "better way."

Another interesting element in the cases of the Chamula conversion accounts is that 49 people, or 14 percent of the sample, reported that a dream had initiated the conversion experience. Dreams serve many purposes, although in many of these accounts it is a shortcut to justifying one's actions³⁹. Usually a divine being, be it Jesus or an angel, came and told a man or woman to become an *evangélico*. This implies that one is

39 For example, several women taking literacy classes in *Sbeik Jchanvunetik* (Tzo., The Ways of Learning, A.C. see Appendix 3) had been stopped by their husbands. Yet after each reported dreams of "being at a desk and learning how to read the Bible" or "writing one's name on paper" their husbands would allow them to return to class.

merely obeying God, a higher power, and this, in some sense, releases the person of any responsibility for the decision to convert.

Reassessing Motives for Converting by Social Class

Let us now return to the issue of cost-benefit analysis in order to measure changes in social class from the time of expulsion until January 1996. As Table 3 in Chapter 3 page 83 showed, the overall majority of the *expulsados* were lower class Chamulas, fifty-eight households, or 57 percent of those surveyed. While thirty-seven households, or 37 percent, were middle class, only seven households, or 8 percent, belonged to the upper class.

TABLE 7: Social Class at Time of Expulsion / Migration Along with Reason for Expulsion as Reported by Respondents to the Survey in Mt. Zion 1995-1996.

N = 102

Lower Class 57% (58)	Middle Class 37% (37)	Upper 8% (7)
Reasons for Expulsion: Religious Related. 32% (33) evangelical 12% (12) only labeled evangelical	Reason for Expulsion: Religious Related. 10% (10) evangelical 8% (8) only labeled evangelical - no conversion occurred	Reason: Religious. 2% (2) evangelical
Reasons for Expulsion: Socially related: 18% (18) envy 7% (7) financial debt to <i>caciques</i>	Reason for Expulsion: Socially related: 8% (8) envy 3% (3) good health	Reason: Social: 0
Reasons for Expulsion: Political: 0	Reason for Expulsion: Political: 5% (5) PAN party 2% (2) PRD party	Reason: Political: 6% (6) PAN
Total: 57% (58)	Total: 37% (37)	Total: 8% (8)

Source: Field Data.

There is little evidence of prosperity among many families, for even as one can observe in Table 7, of the 8 percent who arrived as upper class, 5 percent of them are now in the lower class. The reason is simple for the upper class. Because although they had

served as *mayordomos* in the *cargo* system, they not only lost land and possessions but also their entire social networks when they were expelled. Out of respect for their prestigious status in the village, each of these families acquired booths or tables in the market where they now sell fruits or vegetables. However, they earn very little and have within the past ten years or so, been pushed aside in the *colonias* by the rising “*nuevo riche*” who assume the influence only money can buy.

Although relatively few in number, the new rich are aspiring *caciques* who enjoy a privileged lifestyle in comparison to the vast number of expelled. And as was noted above, despite the economic success of these men, their wives hardly benefit at all. Although the house may still be large and of strong construction, there are no washing machines or stoves in the kitchen. Occasionally, these men recruit free labor by taking on a very young second wife who becomes the slave of the first one. While not happy with this arrangement, the first wives tolerate it. The new wife usually was acquired from a very poor village family and works hard. The primary wife appreciates the help and recognizes that the situation is temporary. She knows that as “the young girl settles, her eyes will wander the *colonia* for a younger mate.”

As for the 8 percent of the middle class who are new to this category, they are either sons of representatives of CRIACH and UNAL or teachers. There may have been an additional 11 percent within the middle class were it not for the drop in artisan sales. The artisan vendors are suffering due to the decrease in tourists following the Zapatista rebellion and the subsequent increased military presence with the state.

Furthermore, an additional 12 percent are only surviving because their older sons are able to support them; these very households risk being in the lower class, possibly as

early as a year or two from now. These sons will want to marry, and then the competition for a limited source of income will begin between the young man's family of origin and his own family. Another aspect of social class and the Chamula experience relates to the reasons given for being expelled.

Social Class and the Expulsions

Table 8 draws a comparison of the data in Table 7 (page 244) on the social class of respondents at the time of expulsion and their current social class in Mt. Zion.

TABLE 8: A Comparison of Social Class Before and After Expulsion As Reported by Respondents to the Survey in Mt. Zion 12/1995-1/1996
N = 102

Respondents Social Class with Description of Changes when and if Mobility occurred.		
Lower Class (57%)	Middle Class (36%)	Upper Class (6%) "nuevo riche"
18% (18) came to city poor: 12% (12) landless 6% (6) <.25 ha & unemployed	8% (8) new status as: cab (5), bus (1) drivers; teachers (2); (5) are sons of UNAL or CRIACH reps.	4% (4) made up of cab owners, UNAL and CRIACH representatives
5% (5) arrived as upper class; 4% (4) were <i>cargos</i> holders	4% (4) SPHH who are "widows," with unmarried son's support	2% (2) market transportation
3% (3) came as middle class in 1974, disputes with <i>caciques</i>	8% (8) SPHH since husbands to village	
11% (11) SPHH were abandoned by their husbands	16% came with jobs painters, peons, bricklayers; truckers	
11% SPHH vendors, husbands migrate, but send minimal \$		
31% (30) SPHH female; 1% (1) male	12% (12) SPHH: 4% (4) widows, 8% (8) living with unmarried sons	0 SPHH; however, 2% (2) have taken a second wife

Source: Field Data. Legend: SPHH=Single Parent Household; UNAL=Lombardistas; CRIACH=Regional Counsel of Indians of Highland Chiapas.

This table shows the social class consequences of expulsion. It also combines the information from Table 7 in order to facilitate the analysis. In general, two major

findings challenge widely accepted theories of conversion and expulsion: 1) while the land-grab theory and the *caciques'* greed may have influenced some to seize a convert's land, it fails to explain what motivated the expulsions of the majority who were members of the lower class with only minimal or no land holdings; and 2) although many adopted evangelical Protestantism as "an antidote" to alcoholism, that eventually produced sobriety at least in the short term for most, conversion as a "drying-out" mechanism undoubtedly influenced many women yet part of their motivation was invariably linked to prosperity. Yet there is little evidence that sobriety results in household prosperity as many wives and grandmothers hoped as a result of sober husbands. The major explanation for the lack of prosperity, as the case studies show, relates to the larger socioeconomic processes in Chiapas today such as unemployment. Still, despite a "successful conversion," a sober husband, many evangelical women remain unsatisfied and continue searching for an idealized version of man-the-provider.

The majority of the *expulsados* were lower class when they left Chamula and their principal reason for conversion was religious; either they were evangelicals or were suspected of being so. Envy was reported in 18 percent of the cases, while 7 percent reported indebtedness to a *cacique* claimed their property as payment on a defaulted loan. Among the middle class, only 10 percent had actually adopted the k'op riox when expelled, while 8 percent were accused of changing religions or of not following tradition. Another three respondents stated that they had good health and because they were not sick, they were suspected of using non-traditional healers. The political affiliations were 5 percent PAN and 2 percent PRD respectively.

The members of the upper class were either expelled because of their new

religious beliefs, as in 2 percent of the sample, or because they belonged to the PAN party, as was the case for six respondents. Dominga Dominguez and her husband fit this category. They lost everything once expelled, yet the expelled community, out of respect for them as former *cargo* office holders, gave them a booth in the market through the organization CRIACH. Also since all of the respondents in the upper class had served some *cargo* office, their following within the hamlet probably exempted them for the socially related causes for expulsion, i.e., envy and financial debt owed to *caciques*. Thus, conversion did not provide the prosperity at the household level that some women and men expected.

I will now describe some concrete examples of how certain networks did help some evangelicals get ahead in the city, while others remain in poverty. One-third of the men expelled had a job within the city before they were run off their land in their respective hamlets. These people were usually construction workers or transportation employees, who even though they did not own a van, taxi, bus or truck, were already either driving or loading and unloading something in the market, running illegal immigrants from Tapachula to Mexico City, or bringing goods across from Guatemala for resale. The timing of their arrivals in the city is key to understanding how some, with no more than the same level of skills and experiences as other poorer expelled, were able to construct their own houses. Let us examine the cases of four families that arrived in San Cristobal over a fifteen year period. Each of the male heads of these families worked either in construction, craftsmanship or transportation.

Case One: Manuel

Manuel is a construction worker who has twelve children, of which the oldest

seven are all male and the youngest a daughter who married at the age of 16. She now lives next door to them with her husband and seven children. Manuel converted because his own mother was after him since he was drinking terribly. He finally gave in, met with an evangelical pastor, and converted to the Assembly of God temple in La Isla.

Manuel arrived in San Cristobal at a time of economic growth within the state of Chiapas due to the petroleum boom of the 1980s. He was already working for a contractor in the city, and with all the added work, he and his sons put together money for a truck and some of their own equipment. Within two years they had built houses for each man in the family in addition to overseeing and constructing houses for other evangélicos. In addition, he was employed by the different ministries to build several of the temples in the Protestant enclaves as well as offering bids for part of the school projects, and other parts of the infrastructure.

The gendered composition of Manuel's children favored his entrepreneurial endeavors as did the life cycle of his family. Had his sons been five to ten years younger, then things would not have been as opportune for him. He would have had to pay salaries to others and perhaps one could not trust that the work would be done as well. Manuel has been lucky, he counts his blessings and looks forward to seeing the younger children marry and raise children also.

Case Two: Pedro

Juana's father, Pedro, is a carpenter. Pedro also had a terrible drinking problem. His mother-in-law was influential in bringing him to the Lord. Today they are Presbyterian, and he volunteers in the temple at the weekday services. Pedro was able to survive when expelled because he had a good job as a carpenter with a *Ladino* man who

had several steady clients. When he was expelled, the losses were the corn fields that basically his wife had to sow, clean and reap as best she could with four young children.

Now in the city they are doing well. All of his eleven children are healthy. No one has married yet, although there are three single daughters over 23. The father does not openly discourage marriage, yet the young women recall their mother crying from the mistreatment she received when Pedro was drunk. Their mother told them over and over again, "Better to be alone, then to suffer as I do now." The oldest is in charge of the kitchen, she cooks all the meals and prepares the midmorning break for her father. The second daughter has a place in the market down the street from her mother.

Pedro's wife, Dominga, has always worked in the market, so for her too the expulsion did not affect their "making money" as much as it did many others. Mother and daughter sell fruits and vegetables. Juana, the third oldest, is a vendor in the zócalo and also works at *Sbeik Jchanvunetik*, an educational support program. This women's organization offers bilingual literacy workshops for the women street vendors through INEA and private funding. Pedro is proud of his daughters and recognizes that they are managing well now. The family just finished building a cement block house with six rooms. The second story is reserved for some of the daughters when they are married, if they choose to stay with them.

Case Three: Domingo

Domingo is a taxi driver who heard the word of God about five years ago. He came to the city because he could not bear the drinking behavior in his hamlet. In addition, his older half brothers used to make fun of him, and call him a woman because he would not drink. Now he is an Adventist and is an active member of UNAL, the union

that represents his taxis affiliation, the *Maya Ik'* (Tzo., Black Maya).

When I first met Domingo it was because he was interested in one of the young women who was attending Sbeik's literacy workshops. He was persistent, and thinking that I was her patron, he requested that I let him at least talk to her. Of course, this never happened; instead he was referred to her father, who in turn said maybe in two years. Domingo then backed off, and eventually met and married an informant of mine, Josefina. Domingo was somewhat surprised that I was invited to the wedding but was gracious, and we had several conversations after that.

For such a young lad, I wondered how he was able to finance the cab that he was driving. Domingo explained that one of the leaders of CRIACH is his mother's brother. This particular official received several taxi concessions during the elections of 1992 as a pay-off, some say, from the PRI. Others insist that the CRIACH leaders have many more titles to taxis. Domingo pays his uncle a percentage of his income towards the car, and keeps the rest for gas and his salary. A very good living for a lad of nineteen!

It was all rather short lived because he was killed in a car accident later that same year, 1995. Since my return to the States I have learned that Josefina has remarried and is now expecting a baby. Domingo's obvious economic success was due to the kinship ties that linked him to one of the most influential people in the colony of Mt. Zion. If it had not been so, a young man without having finished the sixth grade would find it difficult to make a living, much less raise a family in San Cristobal.

Case Four: Sebastian

The last case is that of Sebastian, a man of 22 who runs illegal migrants from Central America, mostly Indians from Guatemala although a few are from Nicaragua and

San Salvador, through Tapachula up to Mexico City. Sebastian is from Milpoleta and, although he now lives in the city with his wife, he frequently returns to the hamlet. He is in good standing with the *caciques* there because he is generous with his vans and generally cooperates in whatever anyone asks of him.

Sebastian and his brother Juan work for a *Ladino*, yet the three vans they operate are in Sebastian's name. He married one of my informants, Rosa, and they did very well until he was arrested in July of 1996 for trafficking with undocumented foreigners. At the time of the seizure, Sebastian was not even near the border, but since the vans were registered in his name, the Immigration Police tracked him down and put him into jail. Luckily for him, he had more than \$45,000.00 MN in the bank to pay for a good lawyer. Unfortunately for Rosa the house he had promised her could no longer be purchased.

After three months in prison and being fined nearly \$75,000.00 MN, Salvador was released. However, despite all that he suffered in prison, he returned to the same job with an increase in pay because of the greater risk. I don't think that Rosa completely understands the gravity of the problem. If caught, he could end up permanently in prison. While Sebastian was in prison, Rosa filed a petition for missing persons through the help of CEDECH, since she did not know what had happened to him. She turned to the temple for consolation. Upon his release, the two of them planned to marry as Pentecostals. Rosa refuses to move to Milpoleta and so Sebastian is making every effort to buy her a house in one of the colonies so that she will be happy.

Sebastian has more images of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the saints displayed in his van than any other seller in the market. Sebastian proudly explains that each time he makes it safely to Mexico City he stops at the shrine and buys an image to paste onto the

dashboard. Realistically speaking, Sebastian is treading on very thin ice.

His connection to the *Ladino* (it would be dangerous to even speculate who he is, since he is a high government official), dates back to when Sebastian was a boy. At eleven he would go to the market with his mother to help sell charcoal. During the deliveries to several houses for the big buyers, he met his future patron. When I asked what he thought about smuggling in people from San Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua to Mexico, Sebastian answered,

Well that's just it, they aren't coming into Mexico; they are passing through Mexico to go to the United States. That is why we always try to send them with someone that speaks Tzotzil. If the immigration police catch them in Mexico City, then the Chamula answers in Spanish and he acts as if he is translating to the others in Tzotzil. Once we were stopped and I did it, and just as my boss said, they let us go. People respect Chamulas in a way outside of Chiapas that doesn't happen here in San Cristobal. We are really not breaking any Mexican laws, as long as the illegals do not stay here. And why obey the U.S. government?

These four cases reveal the interplay of a family's time of arrival in the city, its gender composition, life cycle, and the networks or connections a male head of household has in securing or maintaining a means of "making money." Manuel, Pedro, Domingo and Sebastian are agents that are determining their own existence within specific socioeconomic constraints that respond to larger market phenomena. For many, religion orients their lives and helps ease the adjustment to city life. Several others find that linking themselves to *gringos* (recall Juana and Juan above), foreign anthropologists, tourists or anyone with the financial means or influence to assist them are relationships

that need to be cultivated as they make their life in the city.

As for the two story concrete houses that one can observe scattered through out Mt. Zion, this does not connote typical migrant's or convert's progress. It is not that someone came perhaps ten years ago, and through hard labor, perhaps due to the Protestant work ethic or the desire to "make more money," now has a cement home. Rather, it is a signal of one of the following: affiliation in a political party, be it PRI, PRD or PAN; syndicate membership, STI, CTM, CROM or one of the many taxi unions, such as *Maya Ik'*, or Zapatista Union; or being an elected representative of CRIACH, ORIACH, UNAL, ADEPCH or CEDECH. When these organizations petition the federal government for developmental funds their members are given construction materials with significant discounts, occasionally the material is delivered at no cost.

Women are left entirely out of the networks because no woman participates in anything relating to politics, except to vote. While there are some women who teach, work as domestics, or perhaps in an office for INI, the Health Department, in a cooperative, the majority are artisan producers and / or sellers. Because 43 percent of the households are run by single parents (only one has a man as household head), frequently, as I have shown, these women seek help from pastors, *Ladinos* and *gringos*.

Just as change is affecting the fabrics of daily life, intensified by the expulsion experience for those now in the urban setting, so too for Juan and his family in the hamlet of Rincón de Witz, illness, envy and other evils disrupt what they still perceived, despite evidence to the contrary, as a peaceful place to live. Imbalance and chaos are not territorially limited to the township, any more than the advancement of capitalism and its attendant evils are to the city. How each household unit and the individuals in it attempt

to buffer themselves from these changes in gender roles and positions in the hamlet depends upon the level of satisfaction within the community, the *cargo* system and the rest of the Chamula tradition as defined by the *caciques*.

The Expulsions from Ik'alumtik

The case of the large numbers of *evangélicos* expelled from Ik'alumtik, Chamula in 1993 and the death of Miguel in the conflict represents a dramatic case of fate that awaited the expelled. Although an extreme case of violence, what occurred in Miguel's case epitomizes the dissonance between the hierarchy's and a convert's perspective of religious conversions. While there is no doubt that Miguel accepted the full consequences of adopting the *k'op riox*, as this section shows he was not murdered for religious reasons.

From July to October 1993, more than 580 people from 20 hamlets were expelled from Chamula. They took the offices of *Asuntos Indigenas* (Bureau of Indian Affairs) and remained there demanding their safe return to their respective hamlets and punishment for the responsible *caciques*. The facility they occupied was the old PRODECH center and it was totally inadequate for the four hundred plus people housed there. During their stay two new born infants died because there was no access to medical help.

Negotiations began immediately with the local authorities, the National Commission for Human Rights CNDR, bishops, priests, politicians, even the President of the Republic, but no solution was in sight. The *expulsados* even requested United Nations' recognition as a refugee situation, a request which was denied because they were

within their "own country." So on July 5th, 1994 the expelled kidnapped the then Municipal President of Chamula, Domingo López Ruíz, who went to the Holy Land to meet the Holy Father earlier that same year.

In response, on the 6th of July, 1993, 3,000 Chamulas in more than 80 trucks descended upon San Cristobal "to rescue their President and to finish off with the expelled" (Ruíz López 1995). The expelled defended themselves and one of the TV cameras focused on one Chamula as he withdrew an uzi, an automatic firearm, from beneath his *chuj* (Tzo., a traditional woven overcoat). In this confrontation, two people died and another was badly injured later (Rosenbaum 1993). One month later, August 11-18, 584 people returned to their hamlets in Chamula at their own risk, according to the government. Still, this all happened very close to the federal elections and was organized by a group of Zapatista Chamulas who had left San Juan on January 1, 1994.

Since the 8th of September it was known that the *caciques* of Chamula were preparing an attack on Ik'alumtik. Some say that Governor Robledo's people had delivered 400 guns. CEDECH warned the CNDH and made a scandal out of it. Everyone seemed to quiet down by the 11th of September. Unfortunately on the 19th, four people were murdered in cold blood. Three of these were members of the same family, Miguel⁴⁰ Mendez Santiz, his wife Veronica and her brother.

Mendez Santiz had a series of "religious conversions." I interviewed his mother

40 Not to be confused with Miguel Kaxlan another martyr. Kaxlan was a prominent figure during the post-1965 evangelical movement (Eber 1996; Gossen 1989; Rosenbaum 1993; Sterk 1993 among others). Kaxlan was tortured and brutally axed to death in Chamula. Some of his body parts were found in Rincón de Witz. While a few would argue that he was the object of hatred from within and outside the evangelical community

in her home in Mt. Zion. She explained Miguel's genealogy of religious conversion or changes in religious affiliation and her explanation for the killings:

Miguel became a Presbyterian in 1980 and moved to Nueva Esperanza with the Pastor who converted him, Salvador López from the Founding Temple. He was only 12 years old and sold oranges in the market with an uncle of his who was from the hamlet of Majomut. A few months later the whole family came and remained for about six months. Although they had stopped drinking, both of Miguel's parents missed the pox almost as much as the money they made from its production and sale. Miguel returned to Ikalumtik with his parents. His mother would walk daily to Piotik where the liquor factory was located.

About five or six years later, Miguel married a girl by the name of Veronica Diaz from Ik'alumtik, and Miguel began to drink. As he got more and more ill, Veronica brought him to the temple in Nueva Esperanza so that the hermanos could pray for him. As the scriptures say, "If anyone among you is ill, take him to the elders and have them lay hands upon them to heal them" (James 3:16). Believing that the evangelicals had a stronger medicine to cure her husband in the name of the Jesus, Veronica trusted that her husband would become sober.

In 1990, one of Veronica's three children got an eye infection and they brought the child to his great-aunt, Dominga, a midwife in Mt. Zion. Dominga, the matriarch of my host family, took care of the child and during the next few weeks also took Veronica to the temple to pray for the fevers that she, Veronica, suffered

for his political activity (Gossen 1989), among the *evangélicos* today he is highly revered for his faith and suffering.

from periodically. Veronica converted heart and soul to Presbyterianism. She returned and started preaching in the hamlet of Ik'alumtik. Her husband, Miguel, was subsequently charged \$100.00 pesos for her proselytizing activity. So they decided to live their faith quietly.

In 1992, Miguel was accused by neighbors of being an evangelical for two reasons: first, he was frequently absent on Sundays when the evangélicos have services and this was notable since they were holding several local meetings on those days; and second, his children were never in need of a traditional healer, or shaman. Still, even after paying the fine, nothing more really happened, until 1993, when Miguel's mother becomes a Pentecostal and invited her children to attend her baptism in the river near Pujiltic, Municipality of Las Rosas. Miguel was moved by the singing and the ceremony. His family also joined the Independent Tzotzil Pentecostal temple in Paraíso. That same year Miguel's two brothers, Domingo and Pedro, were elected civil representatives in the hamlet. They began to fine Miguel on a weekly basis for being late for meetings that they called to order earlier and earlier each week. Finally Miguel refused to pay the fines and was expelled along with his nuclear family. Miguel moved up to the PRODECH facility along with the other 580 people.

During the 11 months of Miguel's exile he moved into the Seventh Day Adventist Temple because he felt he could relate to Domingo López Angel. Yet, towards the beginning of March 1994, he was touched in a very dramatic way by the catechist from San Antonio del Monte and he became a Catholic. Up until the time that he was killed, Miguel attended Mass every Sunday at the Cathedral.

At this point in the interview with Miguel's mother, I asked, "What had Bishop Ruíz said at his funeral?" His mother cried and said, "Well the Bishop never knew he had become a Catholic." I responded, "Why not? Didn't the catechist tell the Bishop that your son had become a Catholic?" "No," she replied.

Somewhat confused, I sought clarification and ventured, "Well, what sort of ceremony did they have when Miguel became a Catholic?" His mother said that he simply walked into the Cathedral one day and left a few flowers down on the table with the Fallen Christ. Then she said, "The whole family knew he had done this. And Miguel knew, so why tell the catechist or the bishop?"

According to his mother, Miguel had had a series of conversions before the age of 26. At one level, for a Chamula Catholic there is only one sacrament, namely, Baptism not seven (Baptism, Penance, Eucharist, Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders and the Sacrament of the Sick). Daily religious practice consists of household prayers and rituals, all performed without a priest. In the absence of any instruction, the shift from traditional Chamula Catholic to Pentecostal is not very difficult. As Miguel's mother, Maria put it:

There really is no difference between being "Catholic," "Evangélico" or whatever...The priests, bishops and pastors may say what they will, but Miguel was my son no matter what they say about him. The churches and temples all ask us to pray. And this as a Chamula I have always done in my home with incense and candles. Perhaps the caciques, pastors, and the Bishop try to make it too complicated. They invent rules again and again. Were we the same religion then we would be expelled not for our beliefs but for some other reason...Miguel did not change at all no matter where he went to pray.

Maria confirms that for many Chamulas changing religions signifies changing prayers. Religious differences are perceived less theologically than historically. This does not make it any less religious, either in the minds of individual adherents or in the local "stories" that each group constructs to explain its niche in society. Being of another side than the *caciques* is the historical trait that differentiates people along religious lines. At another level, Miguel's death shows the extent to which an aspiring *cacique* will go in order to achieve power and wealth. Miguel opened the door of his home to speak with his brothers who said they needed to discuss something with him. There were no guns in Miguel's household. Miguel was shot several times point blank while he was unarmed. It was his own brother Domingo who pulled the trigger. Almost immediately his brother Pedro shot and killed his wife, Veronica and her two brothers. His mother attributes this to greed over their inheritance. As his mother explained,

Miguel stopped drinking and that was good, so why did his own brothers have to kill him? To take the inheritance, that's why. Both Pedro and Domingo are greedy, they wanted the liquor factory for themselves and in reality it is still mine from my first husband. But one can not fight evil for they have never respected me as a mother. Still that does not justify the fact that they killed so many innocent people in the same family. They are just imitating what they see the caciques doing in the ceremonial center of Chamula...I pray for them, what more can I do. They have the factory, they have my husband's land and the three houses we had built. They are not satisfied, they are bullies. May the Lord forgive them for they never knew how to be batz'il vinik.

There is a certain irony in Miguel's being buried by *evangélicos* while he was a

member of the Catholic Church. Yet from Maria's perspective it didn't matter what church group buried him. The issue was that he had been killed by his own brother for greed. Neither Pedro nor Domingo are *batz'il vinik*, i.e., they do not honor the way of the *batz'il vinik / anzetik*. Religion as an institution fades in significance to a spirituality that informs the moral principles of "true men / women."

Indian Organizations within the Protestant Enclaves

Another consequence of the expulsions is the formation of various organizations that sought to meet the needs of the expelled. While the proliferation of these organizations favors civil society and Mexico's prospects for democracy, several of the splintering groups have roots in the natural cleavages (based upon kinship, territoriality and religion) that migrated with the expelled. This section shows that, as distinct indigenous organizations--CDAPEC, ORIACH, CRIACH and OPEACH--began to spring up and multiply, the state channeled federal developmental funds to favor those who were partisans of the PRI. This in turn promoted envy and in-group fighting that in turn led to splintering and eventual formation of yet another non-governmental organization (NGO).

The members of the different Evangelical churches did not, however, protest in any organized fashion until 1982 when the Committee for the Defense of the Threatened, Persecuted and Expelled of Chamula (CDAPEC) was formed. Since that date any prior convenience the government derived from allowing expulsions on the pretext of religious conversion ceased; land grabs could no longer be a solution for locking in PRI votes in the municipality of Chamula.

The Organization of the Indians of the Chiapas Highlands ORIACH was formed

in 1980 as the expulsions continued and has united both expelled Catholics and Protestants against the village of Chamula in claims presented to both the state and federal governments. ORIACH is a voluntary social grassroots organization, and in this sense an NGO⁴¹, that documents the expulsions, records other abuses and reaches out towards the *campesinos* (Sp., peasant farmers) in the state of Chiapas. Since its founding ORIACH linked itself with the web of human rights' organizations at the local and national levels, for example, Human Rights Center "Fray Bartolome de Las Casas" in Chiapas, and the National Commission of Human Rights CNDH with headquarters in Mexico City. ORIACH continues to document the expulsions and has conducted surveys to assess their losses and the motives for the expulsions. ORIACH has several ties with the National University of Chiapas UNACH. With the assistance of several professors, their archives contain a wealth of information regarding the expulsion phenomenon throughout Chiapas (Morquecho 1989; Perez Enriques 1993).

Since 1981 there had been some inner fighting among the group, originating in the departure of the group's assessor and later requiring the replacement of its officers. The new leadership consisted of Domingo Díaz Perez, Pedro Jimenez Guitérrez, Juan Díaz de la Cruz, and Angel Shilón de la Cruz. Many say that the real dispute was along political party lines, since some of the members were for the PRI, others PRD or the Cardenistic FCRN political party. Those in disagreement with ORIACH's new

41 Cernea (1988:21-34) points out that there are many more types of NGOs than just the production oriented and economic ones. NGOs involved with involuntary resettlement of peoples demonstrate the most potential not only in emergencies, but also in development-induced relocation. Whenever international NGOs become involved in such projects they inevitably link with, or assist locals to organize, a grassroots organization. If successful, there are definite improvements in the standards and conditions of resettlement.

leadership founded the Regional Counsel of Indians of Highland Chiapas CRIACH. Through CRIACH's leadership, the expelled negotiate with the state for compensation of their losses, that the expulsions cease and for those of the expelled who want to return to their hamlets a guarantee of tolerance. As will be seen in Chapter Five the murders in Ikalumtik, obtaining the *caciques'* permission to return without some form of protection on the part of the government (army or state police) does not guarantee a peaceful coexistence between traditional Catholics and evangelical Protestants.

CRIACH appears to have been more effective than ORIACH in interactions with government bodies (national and local) which they attempt to influence, and interactions with large international development agencies and organizations. The major shift has been in changing the word organization to counsel, which some members say reflects the shift from a social organization to an effective NGO that can lobby for the socioeconomic and religious needs of its constituents through politics. This transformation has been gradual and not without some conflict. Still, the leadership of CRIACH has demonstrated a sophisticated organizational structure and some success in the political sphere.

In the last senatorial election they successfully promoted their representative, Domingo López Angel. He is an effective spokesperson for CRIACH who is frequently cited in the media; as President of CRIACH, he complains of being misquoted and falsely accused by local news reporters.

Table 9: Indigenous NGOs Among the Expelled with Party Affiliation as Reported by Respondents in the Survey in Mt. Zion 1995-1996.

Year	NGO	Membership	Other Affiliations
1982	CDAPE	Ecumenical Chamula	PRI, FCRN, PAN

Year	NGO	Membership	Other Affiliations
1981-2	ORIACH	Ecumenical Tzotziles & Tzeltales	PRI, PAN CNC
1982	CRIACH	Ecumenical Indigenous & Campesinos	PRD, PAN, FCRN, UNAL
1996	OPECH	Evangelical Chamulas in village & city	PRI, PRD

Source: Field Data.

Much of the infrastructure within the Protestant enclaves was a result of a collaborative effort on behalf of the expelled. Several of the Protestant ministries, a few local elected officials, and the small-scale day-to-day protests for potable water, schools and affordable housing conducted by the leadership and members of ORIACH and CRIACH created new leaders and *caciques*. Currently, CRIACH has somewhat replaced ORIACH in prominence, at least within the news. Many of the Evangelicals maintain dual membership, unwilling to risk exclusive affiliation with either NGO. As Salvador Perez, a street sweeper, told me,

One can not live in Mt. Zion and not belong to CRIACH for Mingo himself lives there...He [Mingo] has people everywhere. They owe him for their land, for their taxi cabs, for their jobs, for their tables in the market...My wife also belongs to his wife Maria's artisan cooperative, "The Ways of Our Fathers Our Mothers"...Even though my wife doesn't have time to weave, my two daughters make the crafts for Maria to sell in Mexico City. We are grandparents, after all our sufferings, we do not want to be expelled from our colony.

While Lòpez Angel was successful in being elected to the state senate, this was the result of the organizational structure and financing of UNAL. Today he remains

president of CRIACH amidst growing challenges from rival fractions. The most recent is the Organization of Evangelical People of Chiapas OPECH, founded by the brothers Collaso, within the "misery belt" with some initial financing awarded by the federal government.

OPECH is the first organization to incorporate evangelicals across the Chamula township-urban colony boundary. Through the leadership of Manuel Collaso OPECH also recognizes the advantage of defining itself along evangelical lines since at least for now the current tendency within the PRI is favoring Protestantism over Catholicism. The members of OPECH stand a better chance at securing developmental initiatives to expand small business--trading across township lines--in the market in San Cristobal, than other indigenous NGOs or cooperatives for example in the area of the EZLN.

Finally, OPECH membership tends to be not only PRI, but also anti-Mingo (see below). This contrasts with the members of CRIACH who identify more and more with the Zapatista movement, the PRD and UNAL. While increasing the number of NGOs among the expelled will in the long run encourage democracy, for now it appears to only exacerbate the cleavages within the Protestant enclaves. It also increases the odds that López Angel will not be reelected to the state senate, something that can only enhance the PRI's representation within the state senate. Another organization that is closely linked to many of the expelled is UNAL, most recently since it supported López Angel's candidacy for senator.

National Union of Lombardistas (UNAL)

UNAL was founded by Vicente Lombardo Toledano, a famous Mexican orator and member of the Communist Party, after the 1968 student massacre in Mexico City.

According to Oscar de León, the regional director for Chiapas, UNAL believes that the Mexican Constitution exists but it is dead because Mexicans are not aware of their rights. UNAL, as an organization, raises consciousness levels among the people working with students and at the grassroots level in different communities, organizing people whether they be the workers or the more marginalized peasant and Indian groups. Strategically, it has concentrated on transit permits and, when their requests are repeatedly denied, their members operate pirate vehicles, i.e., taxis, vans, and buses. This has caused havoc in San Cristobal, Tuxtla Gutierrez and Tapachula, especially when they call transit strikes or road blocks⁴².

UNAL has approximately 50,000 members in Chiapas who pay a minimum of \$23.00 MN a month for the services of the union. This translates into \$164,300.00 US dollars a year which is sufficient for a successful operation, whether public or covert. Their success lies in never joining any other movement, syndicate or protest as an organization. When they do attend, it is as individuals, not representatives of UNAL. After interviewing De León I was impressed by his erudite abilities, however, I felt that anything that López Angel had said was just a political account that assimilated the jargon of the union.

UNAL has been severely criticized and this may be good, for certainly the PRI can not be pleased with their activities. Even several within the archdiocese who support many of the activities of the organization question its agenda. One informant considers

42 On April 8th, 1998 73 vehicles were seized in a raid conducted by the military on three of the Protestant colonies. Currently Domingo Lopez Angel, Oscar de Leon and Manuel Callaso are in Cierro Hueco Prison in Tuxtla Gutierrez accused of selling drugs and trafficking fire arms.

that the members of UNAL are actually funded by the PRI and act as a covert counter-spy agency, identifying perhaps the real leaders within other groups, NGOs and agrarian cooperatives, among others. Besides the extension of its covert operation and the many terms that reflect socialist ideology, UNAL has mastered the art of infiltrating other organizations. To their credit they have helped many people to read while raising the consciousness levels of members and nonmembers alike. Let us now turn to the brothers Collaso and OPECH.

The Organization of Evangelical People of Chiapas

Mingo eats his people.

Mingo got a young girl of 15 pregnant. He even told the girl's father that it was not him but like the virgin, his daughter had a miraculous conception.

I begin this section with two of the many rumors one hears about Domingo López Angel, "Mingo." Of the many that I have heard, everyone without exception came to me from a resident of Paraíso, the rival colony of Mt. Zion, and home to Manuel Calixto. These quotes may be just negative political campaigns or even just people talking about the lives of the rich and famous. These rumors and casting of certain people into the "good Indian" or "bad Indian" position are perhaps tactics encouraged by the government as well. As this section will show, the expelled have never been all of one voice or one heart. Each year their numbers grow as the population increases and the expulsions continue.

CRIACH had been splintering as early as 1982 when ORIACH decided to distance itself from the more militant stand that Domingo López Angel took in what remained as CRIACH. Some members of CRIACH that I interviewed in 1996 suggested

that "Mingo" should withdraw from CRIACH and let the other evangelists speak for themselves because they want to have peace with the brothers of their own race. This group of evangelicals are on the side of their pastors, particularly Abdias Tovilla, who works as a lawyer at CEDECH and Esdras Alonso Gonzales, President of Alianza Ministerial. Both are pushing for the signing of a peace treaty with the traditionalists. Even Manuel Collaso, who is an important figure in the politics of the urban colony Paraíso, Juan Herédia, Juan Pérez Pérez from Mt. Zion and Hilario Shilón, who represents Nueva Esperanza, are in agreement that there needs to be peace among them since they are of one race. Even the Reverend Esdras Alonso is quoted as saying,

The bases are going to the dialogue even if López Angel doesn't. We [the pastors] respect their decision; they have changed their mind because before they said they would go to the table (Cuarto Poder 1996:3:11).

During the weeks that followed, throughout March and April of 1996, the local and national newspapers (Expreso, Cuarto Poder, and La Jornada) said that the dialogue was progressing. Still, it resembled the theater performance that occurs in San Andrés de los Pobres, or la Realidad. As the curtain opens one sees the table with representatives of CONAI, COCOPA, the EZLN, advisors and representatives of both the state and federal governments. Outside the theater are the peasants of Chicomuselo and Nicolas Ruíz, victims of violent evictions and even slaughter by the federal security police. Chamula is no exception to PRI theater productions, for even as newspapers were announcing the agreement for compensation to the twenty-five families expelled during 1995, people were being expelled from Chamula's hamlets. As solutions were being worked out in order to let the more than fifty children return to primary school in the hamlets of

Arvenza I, Arvenza II, and Ik'alumtik, once again expulsions from Chamula occurred.

Based upon my assessment of the interviews with Lopez Angel, UNAL has raised his consciousness level as regards the expulsions and he now sees the "bigger picture." What can one expect from another signing without any willingness on the part of the government to enforce the terms of the peace treaty? While these sessions were in progress a family of six was expelled from Ik'alumtik, three houses were burned to the ground in yet another hamlet. These people were threatened with physical harm if they did not withdraw peacefully.

Simultaneously, a woman's weaving cooperative, Sociedad de Artesania Zotjolobil, also in Ik'alumtik was robbed. Its President, Rosa Pérez Pérez, was run out of the village. López Angel announced that, "It is pure 'theater' what the government is doing as regards the problem of Chamula" (Aguilar 1996). A spokesman for CEDECH stated that Rosa Pérez Pérez is really guilty of stealing from the members of the cooperative. According to CEDECH, Pérez Pérez left the hamlet of her own free will and settled in Mt. Zion. However, during an interview with both she and her husband, they assured me that they were not only robbed and expelled, but the money that her husband had in a 90 day CD at a local bank was also seized by a *cacique*. Her husband owns a honey business that he started with the Savings and Loan Bank established by the Archdiocese, through the Chamula Mission, in the 1970s. Rosa's money was never paid to her as of yet, although when her case was tried in the ceremonial center, the judge sided with her and fined the *cacique* in question. Rosa Pérez Pérez has a promise of repayment for the sum of \$42,000.00 *pesos* (equivalent of \$6,000.00 US Dollars).

The local evangelical office, CEDECH, appears to be going through a process

similar to the test of controlling its members, as did the Catholic Church during Salinas' presidency. Salinas wanted the country to hear from the "official church," that is, the Bishop's Conference, as it encouraged moral virtues of long-suffering and patience in light of the socioeconomic effects from the preparations for the Free Trade Act. Perhaps the evangelical ministries are being put to the test of controlling evangelicals. Perhaps there is some complicity at some level with the state in the negotiations during the Plural Commission for the Chamula Case, that is, assuring that the commission get some results although López Angel protested the futility of another treaty signing. Still, the recent inauguration of an Ecumenical Biblical School, associated with the Red Agape (Sp. and Greek, for The Love Link), on the second floor of the Presbyterian National Foundation Temple in Nueva Esperanza raises some questions regarding this subject and even hints at co-optation.

The government has offered the Evangelicals land and materials for construction of an orphanage, as well as housing for the "widows." This offer was to be delivered during the summer of 1996. Personally, I do not see this as simple co-optation because the whole atmosphere of Chiapas has been historically one of religious persecution and it is difficult to reconcile the fact that they would settle for so little. I think CEDECH is wise in accepting whatever they can receive from the state government, for if the state fails to comply with the agreements, then the evangelical community will likewise be released from any social or political obligation incurred through the treaty as well.

It would be naive to think that the view of the state is so short-sighted. In fact, I believe that all of the peace offerings the state has recently generated have politics in mind, particularly in light of the Evangelical Political Party. I also think that the

Evangelical pastors control no more and no fewer of their members as regards voting practice than do the Catholic bishops.

This section has set the stage for understanding the social context of life in the urban *colonias*. It is now clear that fear has accompanied the expelled into the city as have several *caciques* and would-be *caciques*. Still, many converts continue to report that they “now live in peace.” As I interviewed different residents of Mt. Zion, most felt compelled to close the door during my visit since they did not want their neighbors to smell what they were cooking, to see who was visiting them, or even, suspect them of gossiping to me, a *kaxlán* (Tzo., non-Indian).

Although homogeneity remains the ideal virtue for community formation, most Chamulas recognize their community’s “reality”: a growing socio-economic disparity. This heterogeneity acts as a dual edged sword, for, on the one hand, it occasions considerable comfort for those who are better off economically, and to the first generation of expelled it is a sign of hope that they too may do well in the future. Yet, on the other hand, illness is a frequent psycho-social consequence of either jealousy or envy.

Towards a Chamula Community Spirituality

This section explores domestic religious practices and the Maya sense of community as its *ch’ulel* or soul. This form of community spirituality reinforces ethnicity, tradition and customs, while preserving the Tzotzil language among the Evangelicals. The spirit of the Maya diaspora in Mt. Zion consists in how a persistent strong indigenous culture pervades urban realities and evangelical Protestantism.

TABLE 10: Length of Stay in Religion by Religious Affiliation as Given by Respondents to the Survey Conducted in Mt. Zion 1995-1996

N = 102

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION	<1 Yr.	1-5 Years	5-10 Years	>10 Years
Traditional Catholic	0	0	0	3
Presbyterian	0	5	10	12
Seventh Day Adventist	3	9	5	0
Pentecostal	2	5	1	0
Independent Tzotzil Pentecostal	11	15	0	0
Jehovah Witness	2	0	0	0
Progressive Catholic	0	0	1	2
Non-practicing Catholic	0	0	2	0
Non-practicing Evangelical	0	0	4	7
Atheist	2	0	0	0

Source: Field Data.

Table 10 shows that fifty-four of the respondents in this sample have been members in a temple for a relatively brief period of time. Of these, forty-three evangelicals, or 80 percent of the sample, reported changing religions at least twice, while thirty-five converts, or 66 percent of the sample, had switched three or more times. This implies that certain people are changing religions while the vast numbers are remaining within the same faith. It also indicates that converts with instruction tend to persevere as have many Presbyterians since the 1970s.

TABLE 11: Religious Practice (Institutional and Domestic) Among Respondents of Diverse Religions in the Survey in Mt. Zion 1995-1996.

N = 102

Religious Practice	T N=3	Pres. N=27	A N=18	Pen. N=8	ITP N=26	JW N=2	PC N=3	NP ⁴³ N=15
Institutional								
Baptism (77)	3	18	16	7	15	2	3	13
Service (89)	0	25	17	8	24	2	3	2
Tithing (53)	0	20	16	4	12	1	0	0
Bible class (50)	0	6	15	6	18	2	1	2
Prayer meet (38)	0	12	9	3	10	2	2	0
Fasting (16)	0	3	2	6	2	2	1	0
Proselytize (14)	0	3	2	3	4	1	1	0
Popular								
Altars (33)	1	12	3	2	11	0	1	3
Bowing to Mt.(81)	2	17	15	6	25	2	2	12
Blessing self (84)	3	22	14	4	22	2	3	14
Dreaming(89)	2	25	17	4	26	2	3	10
Hymns (79)	0	26	15	5	24	2	1	6
Bible reading (55)	0	21	12	3	12	1	2	4
Midwife (93)	3	27	16	7	24	2	2	12
Monkey (13)	1	4	2	1	2	0	0	3
Ancestors(81)	3	25	15	5	20	2	1	10
Sacred Corn (97)	3	23	18	8	26	2	3	14
Sacred spaces (65)	2	17	14	4	14	1	2	11

Source: Field Data.

Legend: T=traditionalist; Pres=Presbyterian; A=Adventist; Pen=Pentecostal; ITP=Independent Tzotzil Pentecostal; JW=Jehova Witness; PC=Progressive Catholic; NP=nonpractitioner.

43 This category consists of 2 Non-Practicing Catholics, 11 Non-Practicing Evangelicals, and 2 Atheists, that is, T=15.

Still it is necessary to note here that, as is shown in Table 11, the majority of Chamulas, regardless of their religious affiliation, maintain certain religious practices. This is significant because, although many Chamula "converts" now describe former religious practices or rituals as cultural events, they are still constitute part of their historical religious genealogy. For example: 1) being a monkey at carnival may be justified as a cultural act, as was seen above; 2) bowing to the Tzontevitz (Tzo., sacred mountain) as part of Chamula reverence of the souls of the ancestors that rest in the mountains; 3) dreaming and blessing one's self before leaving home, hamlet or colony as part of their heritage; while, 4) ancestor worship; reverencing corn, whether on the stalk, cob, or as a kernel, as well as venerating sacred spaces in the household are expressed as demonstrations of "respect."

Furthermore, just because the Chamulas utilize the categories of religion and culture, it does not mean that they are convinced of the separateness that this dichotomy infers. All of this points to a subtext of Maya cosmology. In other words, whether one professes to be a Progressive Catholic or an Evangelical Protestant, many of the religious practices of Chamula tradition remain integral to one's daily life. Among Traditionalists, Progressive Catholics, Pentecostals, Jehovah Witnesses and Presbyterians 100 percent still have the midwife present their newborns to the universe. Even when the midwife does not deliver the infant, as in the case of a hospital delivery, she is still called upon by the parents to perform this traditional offering of the child to the universe for the continuation of the soul of the community.

Similarly, Independent Tzotzil Pentecostals follow this practice with 93 percent of them continuing the midwife's offering of their infants. Adventists maintain this custom

90 percent of the time, and for those who profess to be non-practicing, this practice is still as high as 85 percent! This is an example of religious plurality as practiced in the hamlet or periphery, or what Gossen and Leventhal (1989) call the domestic domain, the Little Tradition (Redfield 1941) that has been preserved over the course of five centuries. The primary concern of priests during the colonial period was baptism, which is still the *sine qua non* of Catholics. Meanwhile the Catholic hierarchy steered clear of midwifery and did not inquire into the rituals that the midwife performed, allowing it to continue.

Chamula Midwives

The Catholic hierarchy's perspective on issues of birth, blood and sex as taboos kept the priests from meddling with the Maya midwife's ritual⁴⁴ delivery of infants. They continue to offer each generation to the universe, the community and the deity that is of the midwife's affiliation (Landa [1496] 1976; Menchu 1986). In traditional Tzeltal religion, the path toward the "ministry of harmony" is initiated by the ritual that the midwife performs for a newborn. This consists of a prayer offered to God and to innumerable saints. According to Maurer Avalos (1993:241), the last couplet is a petition for protection from witchcraft, "Protect him from the enemies of his body, Protect him from the enemies of his blood."

I include here two offerings by Maya midwives in Mt. Zion. The first is from Pascuala, a fifty-four year old Presbyterian woman, who has delivered more than 320 infants,

Holy Fathers,

⁴⁴ The word ritual is correct here since midwives employ prayers, cleansing of the woman and infant, preparing the *temascal* (Tzo., steam bath) for the mother, burying the

*Holy Mothers,
Lord of the Universe,
Angel of the winds,
Saint John,
Saint Rose,
Lord Jesus our Savior,
receive this child that we offer to you.
We bring this infant before you,
before your face,
before your feet.
Bless this child.
Protect this child from evil.
Protect this child from jealousy.
Protect this child from ills of the body,
Protect this child from enemies of the blood.
Give it health to serve the temple,
to serve you oh Lord.
May his parents' spirit continue in him,
That he may follow the ways of Our Fathers
and Mothers and serve our community.
We thank you Lord Jesus.
We thank you God the Father,*

placenta, burning of several pieces of cloth and preparing the first meal.

Sun of the universe and Mother Moon together.

The second offering is from a Traditional Catholic midwife, thirty-eight year old Veronica, who although younger than Pascuala has delivered more than 200 infants,

Holy Fathers,

Holy Mothers,

Lord of the Universe,

Angel of the winds,

Saint John,

Saint Rose,

Saint Pedro,

Saint Sebastian,

receive this child that we offer to you.

We bring this infant before you,

before your face,

beneath your eyes,

before your feet.

Bless this child and protect it from harm.

Keep it safe from the enemies of the body,

from enemies of the blood.

Give it health to serve the community,

to serve you, oh Lord.

May his parents' spirit continue in him.

May he respect the ways of our ancestors,

And follow the ways of Our Fathers and Mothers.

We thank you Lord,

Good Shepherd,

and blessed Saint John,

Sun of the universe.

Both prayers or offerings are relatively similar, except for the invocations. Each midwife presents the infant to the gods, the ancestors, the spirits that dwell in the village or urban setting and the community of Chamulas. Just as Maurer Avalos (1993) pointed out for the Tzeltal, the Chamula midwives are essential “ministers of harmony” for the individual’s introduction to the community.

As Dominga Perez another midwife puts it,

We change the names of the gods we pray to as we offer the infant to the universe.

The pastors would have us use Lord Jesus and this is okay. The priest we can not say what he would want since he only baptizes the children two or three times a year. How the prayer varies does not matter as long as this offering places the new infant already introduced under the eyes of the ancestors who find him or her a safe space in which to live.

Today more than 90 percent of the indigenous births in the state of Chiapas (Garza 1992) still occur in the domestic space, “under the eyes of the ancestors” (Nash 1970). Siblings who witness this event are socialized to perpetuate it, when they themselves have offspring. This is not to imply that no changes have occurred over the 500 years since Diego Landa wrote his account of the Maya, for certainly there have been changes and variation among hamlets and villages. One small example is the traditional

gifts given to infants. Traditionally, a girl was given a small weaving instrument and a boy a miniature hoe. Now some of the children are given a miniature taxi cab, truck or bus, bible, article of clothing, tennis shoes, soccer ball or a doll.

The Maya Value of Respect

Among the villagers and *evangélicos* I have seen many examples of respect. This quality perhaps more than any other promotes and maintains a sense of community. Respect for the elders is related to the *cargo* system and, although this may not apply in the same way within the city as it does in the village, several pastors have implemented some variations on it to foster respect among *hermanos*. Also when one has a presence either within the religion or temple by length of stay in the faith or by merit of one's age, then respect is fostered by both the pastor and the elders of the faith community.

Respect extends to the deceased and this is why so many "converts" continue to bow in reverence to the Sacred Mountain, the dwelling place of the ancestors turned deities. Recall Lupe's description of being safe in the city now that she is "under the eyes" of her deceased mother. The recollection of ancestors and expanding the safe space within the urban setting are two of the spiritual benefits a Chamula receives from their sense of community.

The ideal goal of a Chamula is to become a *batz'il vinik* or a *batz'il antz*. This corresponds to what John M. Watanabe (1993:184) calls the "cult of the soul" that deals with the care and constancy the Chimaltecos in Guatemala take of their "moral way of being." Watanabe also likens the inextricable link between personal "sense" and public "sensitivity" to what Roy Wagner (1981:94) sees as the concept of "soul":

The definition of self...in tribal, peasant, and ethnic "differentiating" traditions is

that of an innate spark of conventional discernment, of moral "rightness" or humanity, called the "soul"...To put it simply, the soul sums up the ways in which its possessor is similar to others, over and above the ways in which he [or she] differs from them.

Just as the "soul" is a unifying and circumscribing factor among inhabitants of Chenalhó (Arias 1985; Eber 1995; Gutieras Holmes 1961) and the Chimaltecos that Watanabe (1993) studied, for Chamulas the concept of *batz'il vinik* or *batz'il antz* is their moral sensibility, while the *ch'ulel* of the community is synonymous with the souls of the ancestors, Our Fathers and Our Mothers. Harmony refers to living up to the moral codes of the ancestors and maintaining harmony between their spirits and one's own. In addition, Chamulas refer to "respect" as a quality that one extends to one's equal, "a true man, true woman."

We have already made reference to the importance of having a homogeneous community, with the example of Ranchería Sinai in Teopisca. Half the colony of Sinai decided to change religions in order to have only one religion on either side of the highway. Yet one's equal also implies a person that speaks the same language and dresses approximately in the same style. This is particularly visible in the case of a woman's traditional clothing and hairstyle, i.e., braids. Language for the Chamulas is something that was only acquired from the gods in the third creation. To speak Tzotzil equates more than just identifying with Indian as opposed to *Ladino* lifestyles. Tzotzil is also the language of the household and the very young are socialized in it to Chamula customs and traditions. In addition, Tzotzil is the predominant language within the temple services in the Protestant enclave, the exceptions being Pastor Mario's and the

aborted mission of Pastor Domingo.

Respect is also the quality that helps build community despite the presence of envy, jealousy, suspicion, socioeconomic inequality and the occasional abuse of authority. Within the household it is the single most wanted virtue that women seek in a husband, i.e., that he respect her as the mother of his children. To a Chamula woman this means that he refrain from hitting, pulling her hair, or the many other forms of domestic violence that occur in and outside the township. Economic support from a man who is a good provider is viewed by women to be an extension of this respect for her and their children.

There has also developed within the context of ORIACH, CRIACH, CEDECH and CNDH, courses on Human Rights Violations that have enlarged the concept of respect. Those who assisted at the classes began to understand inherent individual rights. Unless the government fulfills its obligations towards citizens to uphold their individual rights to freedom of religion, then *evangélicos*, as citizens, are not being respected in the full sense of the law. The logistics of this new side to the virtue of respect is still being assimilated at different levels. These courses on human rights have helped many to see how important politics and politicians are in their everyday lives. The human rights discourse has also reinforced the concept of a Chamula ethnic identity within a nation of many different cultures.

I am suggesting that the effect of some, or all, of the above mentioned influences upon a Chamula evangelical's growing expectations and understanding of respect increases the odds that the moral concepts--respect, homogeneity, harmony and social blameworthiness--play out slightly differently from life in the hamlet. Each Chamula in the Protestant enclave attempts to push the boundaries of her new existence in the city.

Still, while many experiment with family structure, i.e., married, single or “widowed,” and new occupations or *k'op riox*, the virtue of respect dictates that the “we” continue to take precedence over the “I.” For example, when SEP attempted to give several students in Mt. Zion scholarships many of the parents protested. Because some of the elders, i.e., “moral overseers,” recall the way bright young students were “bought” by the government to later become bilingual scribes and then *caciques*, the SEP scholarships are seen in a new light. These self-appointed moral arbiters seek to safeguard cultural codes from further corruption associated with government handouts. The commitment of the Chamulas to a sense of community can also be seen through a communal sense of guilt and “losing soul.”

A Death Threat

During my fieldwork I received a death threat⁴⁵ from Raúl Hernández, a brother of one of the teachers working in *Sbeik Jchanvunetik*⁴⁶ (Tzo., Ways of Learning). My role in helping set up this literacy program for expelled indigenous women was one of facilitator, grant writer and volunteer. I was active in assisting the women with the legal aspects and logistics of starting their own civil association. I also paid for the certificate training program for the first three bilingual literacy teachers that enabled the literacy workshops to begin. Two of *Sbeik Jchanvunetik's* founders and teachers, Martha Hernández and Juana López Díaz, also received death threats. Raul expected a finder's

35 A very graphic description of my threatened demise included among other things kidnapping, gang rape and dismemberment with an ax. My body parts were to be thrown in the zocálo.

36 *Sbeik Jchanvunetik* is an NGO that offers a support program for Indian women seeking an education. Founded by indigenous women in 1995, to date it has helped forty-two artisan vendors learn to read and write (see Appendix ii).

fee for his wife because she had introduced me to his sister, Martha Hernández. The decision to threaten to ax me to death and distribute my body parts all over the zócalo demonstrated how local acts of violence tend to mirror events that are escalating in both rural and urban settings in Chiapas. It also illustrates a shift in the power and manifestation of jealousy, that is, jealousy as a force capable of sending an illness which overtakes another's body has been restricted to an individual's threat of bodily harm directed toward others, that may or may not be carried out. Thus, this example shows a cognitive change in Raul's perception of evil as a source that formerly was spirit driven to one that he controls, or as his community put it, one that controls him as the medium.

Initially, I was fascinated by the concept of a "finder's fee." Raul's wife thought she was entitled to a percentage of Martha's salary since she had introduced Martha to me in 1991. However, the extent to which envy within family members, brother versus sister, was played out by threatening death unless some financial payment was made soon became the central issue.

At another level, to focus unduly upon this aspect of the death threat risks misreading the entire incident. In the evangelical community the issue was not so much jealousy as it was assuming communal responsibility for the threat of harm to another posed by one of its members. The day after we finally cleared the air over the threat, Raul woke up in a tremendous fever, shaking and unable to talk. He was rushed to the hospital where the doctors told the family that he would surely die. Once he was brought home to his bed, a vigil was kept around his house with women wailing and praying not for his recovery, but for the community's forgiveness.

As Martha's father, Enrique put it,

My son is weak and the evil spirit has taken over his body, I hope that he does not die but I cannot protect him. He has lost his soul and who knows if it will return to him...For many years he has scorned the ancestors and their spirits are not helping him now. If he should be spared then he will have to change his way and believe in the spirits who protect us. He will have to make amends to the Lord Jesus as well. One can not hide from evil, yet one can build a relationship with the ancestors that will provide the help a person needs...

The belief in spirit protectors is obviously still alive among many “converts.” I asked Enrique if his pastor knew about his belief in these spirits. He answered with:

The pastors do not always understand the spirits a Chamula carries with him after birth, nor do they encourage our young to respect the spirits to enjoy peace in the community. We are more than just people, we are the bodies and the carriers of souls. The body will die and be replaced...But the souls are never changing...they remain and if respected will protect us from envy, greed, suspicion, laziness and jealousy. If he dies then perhaps the harm will stop there, but it is not certain. I pray that Our Fathers and Our Mothers will forgive him and provide him a second chance as the Lord Jesus does, then Raúl may regain his soul and follow their ways.

Enrique captures the Chamula sense of soul and also makes the link between an individual and her community. This 52 year-old Pentecostal has integrated some phrases from evangelical Protestantism, yet the bulk of his explanation for his son’s sudden disease is a social illness which may affect the community as well. Raúl is the guilty one in his father’s eyes. Enrique did not make excuses for his son.

Once I was notified of Raúl's illness I went to see him and brought Tylenol and some oral hydration packets. The next day he was totally recovered, somewhat weak from not eating but fine. Perhaps it was a flu or some virus, however, the important issue was that Raúl recovered physically. Among the evangelical community the concern was more spiritual than physical.

The Community Asks for Pardon

Although the offender, Raúl, was warned by the civil authorities about his misjudged action, it was the Christian community that sanctioned him both within the sphere of the temple as well as in the colony. We all assisted at a special prayer service to make amends for the sins of *hermano* Raúl and to cleanse the community of its guilt. Towards the end of the service I extended my hand to him as a gesture of forgiveness which Raúl excepted. Still Raúl remained with his head lowered, avoiding eye contact with everyone.

The sermon during the service was delivered by Pastor Mario and dealt with the responsibility of each within the community to "respect others as the Lord respects each one within the temple." Several times women did the ritual wailing and we all joined in singing hymns that invoked the healing power of Jesus and his spirit.

These examples indicate ways in which the value of respect has shifted in its application, yet remains within the Protestant enclaves. The Chamula sense of spirituality is rooted in community. Just as Díaz Stevens (1996) points out for Latinos in the United States, popular religion is "community spirituality" since it builds community. The Chamula case is similar because the sense of "community" actually calls forth the individuality of the person. In addition, as Chamula Evangelicals, the brotherhood of

their new religion facilitates recreating “community” as it vindicates the core values of Maya culture, particularly as we have seen here, respect, social blameworthiness, harmony and homogeneity. These moral principles are the bedrock of the Chamula’s continued distinctiveness despite nearly three decades of evangelical Protestantism within the city limits of San Cristobal.

In summary, this chapter has presented the costs and benefits some Chamulas receive by changing religions. The cost-benefit analysis illustrates that although some do gain socio-economically by converting and migrating to the city, those who do are the minority. Most of the evangelicals who demonstrate any visible progress owe this more to their social status before expulsion or affiliation with either a political party, union or indigenous organization, than to the assimilation of the Protestant work ethic. When any monetary or social assistance was provided through an evangelical institution it was either only temporary or too meager to provide any lasting socioeconomic improvement.

Was conversion worth being expelled for? From the point of view of the 158 people who reported they converted for spiritual reasons, even when this came at great cost, the gift of faith was certainly worth it. As for the 106 women whose husbands gave up drinking, there is no doubt conversion was advantageous. This is not to say that, from time to time, the people did not feel nostalgia for all that was left behind as was described in Chapter Four, for many do still miss the hamlet, their kin and extended social networks, their flock of sheep and, especially, the family cornfield.

The ones who became evangelicals for reasons related to family or kin have the same social networks they did in the village. Kinship, for these converts, serves as a support system that effectively buffers them from the severe socioeconomic crisis that

many expelled families are experiencing intensely. As for the members of the different political parties, unions and civil associations, religious change has meant either stabilization of their class status or the improvement of it, so these few are not suffering financially for having been expelled.

Having reviewed the motives for religious change and the variety of reasons for which people were expelled, one can no longer restrict research to economic determinants in a cost-benefit analysis because some people are basing their decisions upon transcendental objectives. Overall, the energy expended on religious practice is positive energy (Martin 1993; James 1958), and therefore, people gain. Regardless of whether they internalize some ideology or identify with a new religion, as long as they attempt to conform to evangelical Protestant family values--sobriety, monogamy, brotherhood of believers, respect and clearly defined gender roles (man-the-provider and woman as submissive wife and mother)--a household will experience some level of prosperity, provided the head of household, man or woman, has a means of making a living.

For those women who do not have a husband, be they authentic widows or not, the temples as institutions attempt to buffer them from the severe economic problems of structural adjustment. Frequently, as one pastor puts it, "the Spirit merges with the spirits within *evangélicos*." Together they create a spiritual energy that motivates many expelled Chamulas to preserve customs and traditions with the Protestant enclaves, that as fourteen year old Lupe explained " have now become safe under the eyes of their ancestors."

Chapter Seven

Summary and Conclusions

Throughout this dissertation I have presented data to demonstrate two major theses: 1) that *evangélicos* are “moral overseers” attempting to return their community to the traditional values and moral principles still extant in indigenous communities within Highland Chiapas today; and 2) that “religious conversion” frequently masks other processes that occur when indigenous people leave traditional religion to become *evangélicos*. I will now summarize the data that relate to each thesis.

This dissertation describes a reinforcement of cultural codes within a community-based spirituality. Moving beyond syncretism, religious change within the Protestant enclaves is closer to what Otto Maduro (1996) calls “concurrent pluralism.” In many ways *evangélicos* practice popular religion as cultural identity and community spirituality. The key to the religious conversion phenomenon lies in Chamulas reinforcing their own cultural codes. Thus, the operative word here needs to be “spirituality” and not religion or religious. I define spirituality as the kind of religion that is personal to the way people think, believe, feel and act, i.e., their world view; keeping in mind that to a Chamula the concept of “personal” does not imply private, any more than it does individual.

The layering of traditional Chamula religious practices indicates continuity with the Maya past in evangelical Protestantism. In addition, the Chamulas’ sense of community spirituality is based upon homogeneity, respect and harmony and is perpetuated through the souls of the ancestors who rest in the Sacred Mountain and the cemetery. While some terms and words may change, the virtue of respect along with the

soul of the Chamula diaspora help many former agricultural farmers, traditional healers, weavers and shepherds make sense of their new lifestyles.

Several of the case studies illustrate how some “converts” report serial conversions resulting from the tensions inherent in the inconclusive praxis of evangelical Protestantism in the Chamula diaspora. Others, however, consider switching religions to be as simple and common as a midwife changing prayers, or a sick person testing the strength of the pastor, the Lord or the *k’op riox* itself to meet her current and pressing needs.

The ethnographic data point to an apparent lack of religious or institutional differentiation, i.e., between Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism among converts. As Fortuny (1988) and Gimenez (1994) point out, many evangelicals do not even know the religion they are affiliated with, nor the name of their temple, except to say that it is not Catholic. The majority of converts I interviewed fail to see the theological, doctrinal or even denominational differences between temples. While any Chamula’s knowledge of her temple’s mission and theology may be limited, this may depend as much on the lack of religious differentiation by theology as on inadequate instruction. Considering the ethnographic evidence in the study of “conversion” among Chamulas, the term *k’op riox* definitely refers to a new prayer, not a new religion. It is also quite clear that religious “conversion” is synonymous with a moral awakening, a resurgence of the “ways of the ancestors” for many *evangélicos*. Moreover, the particular focus (the inner soul) of the spiritual energy from this religious movement has prevented a revitalization movement from crystallizing, although evidence exists of strong potential, e.g., Dominga Dominguez.

Another key to the “conversion” phenomenon lies in Chamulas reinforcing their own cultural codes. Thus, the operative word here is “spirituality” and not religion or religious. I define spirituality as the kind of religion that is personal to the way people think, believe, feel and act, i.e., cosmovision; keeping in mind that to a Chamula the concept of “personal” does not imply private, any more than it does, individual.

Schotchmer (1993) employs three themes that are integral to Guatemalan Maya spirituality: peace with God, creatures and the human order. This resembles the Chamula desire for harmony or balance within the three levels of social order. Schotchmer shows how Maya Catholics see prosperity and security of one’s life as measured in good and adequate crops, peace in the home and hamlet, and absence of illness. Underlying the transition from Maya Catholic to Protestant, he (ibid:509) identifies the desire for spiritual certainty that renders belief both credible to the mind and reassuring to the heart. Schotchmer concludes that Maya Protestant spirituality consists in the posture of one’s heart-relationship with God. The result is peace and joy in one’s heart, rather than any external material prosperity.

From the different case studies of Chamula “converts” it remains clear that for many the overlapping complex processes of their daily lives promote choices that are defined along religious lines, only after-the-fact. Thus, while many appear to be choosing sobriety, health and acceptance what underlies all these serial conversions is the aim to acquire a sense of respect, community and balance or harmony. Because Chamula Evangelicals tend to convert as individuals, whose very sense of “self” rests upon participation within a community, there is an essential dialectic between individual religious conversion and community construction.

Thus, for Chamulas it is a “community-based spirituality” that informs religious change. In addition, adopting the *k’op riox* from an *evangélico’s* perspective is religious innovation, not rupture with the past. Identifying moral principles from their own value system within the *K’op riox* assures that it is rooted in Chamula conventions. It therefore reaffirms the mores which uphold and give meaning to tradition.

In this light any apparent ruptures with the past prompted by religious change prove to be insignificant. The expulsions and massive migration of evangelicals to San Cristobal equally have failed to effectively divide the community. The expelled and the traditionalists continue to deal with each other at the marketplace in San Cristobal, during the annual feast days in the ceremonial center and participation in the *cargo* system, weddings and other rituals. The Chamula concepts of “soul” and “community” clearly defy preconceived notions of “conversion.”

I argue that when “moral overseers” adopt the *k’op riox* they are motivated by their communal sense of responsibility for playing by the ancestor’s rules, that is, cultural survival through the vindication of their cultural codes. Thus, the recognition of a causal relationship between an individual “true man” or “true woman” and the external influences of modernity, “the real evil,” upon community’s balance, leads many Chamulas to see evangelical Protestantism as the new prayer, the universal antidote. The moral arbiters’ judgments of the oppressive regime of the *caciques* also depend, among other things, on their configuration of social roles, a spiritual connection with the ancestors/protectors and their concept of harmony or balance. By referring back to the “ideal,” a convert tries to adjust the reality to the ideal, and not vice versa, as the *caciques* had done.

In other words, when the *caciques* redefine “tradition” to suite their own interests, they cease being “true men” because their orientation shifts from community to self. The *caciques’* concept of “self” is restricted to their own corporal existence without any connection to the ancestors or spirits in the mountains. Furthermore, the *caciques* accumulate money and power at the expense of their *hermanos*, members of their same race, which causes widespread economic disparities and manifestations of social imbalance.

In addition, the *cacicazgo* attempts to redefine tradition by shifting the “ideal” to match the reality within the township, a reality that favors their own gain. One extreme example of personal gain is Ik’aluntik where an aspiring *cacique* kills his own brother for inheritance land. In this case the murder was justified by the criminal because of religious difference, even though, as we have seen, Miguel was no longer of the *k’op riox* when he was martyred.

A number of the expelled were motivated for social and political reasons which later were defined along religious lines by either the *caciques*, the *hermanos* or the local evangelical Protestant ministers. Within the conversion accounts of the Chamulas we see that beneath the more obvious pattern of serial conversions is a cycle of emotional change that is modeled upon the cultural codes within their own culture. Thus, for example, harmony that comes from respect within the complementarity of matrimony is what prompts Lucia to seek justification for husband-swapping through the sanction awarded by religious switching.

The appearance of instability through repeated religious change is only the veneer. Deep down these “moral overseers” have but one goal, namely, to return to traditional

Maya values. Lucia's objective is the search for the "ideal" *batz'il vinik*, i.e., the provider, the partner, the father of her children, while for Santos the recurrence of illness or (dis)ease need only be contextualized into the social aspects of health, as discussed above, to reveal his goal of situating his being within a balanced praxis of harmony. And finally, for Domingo, the code of homogeneity dictates that he continue his search for a community where all Chamulas are one, homogeneous, united "under the eyes of the ancestors," using the land for cultivating the cornfield, in harmony with one's family, kin and neighbors.

These seemingly unstable individuals are following the dictates of a personal spirituality more than responding to a meet-needs agenda as set forth in the mission statements of some evangelical Protestant ministers. In the absence of observable cognitive changes and conversions in the "western" sense of the word, the illusion of marked religious instability is, therefore, but an expression of cultural continuity.

Having examined the motivating factors behind religious change among the Tzotzil speaking Maya of Highland Chiapas, it is now clear that the motives vary widely by social class and gender. Religious change among the Chamulas can not be construed as *prima facie* religious conversion. A number of factors within the village have placed many traditional Catholics "at risk" of adopting the *k'op riox*. The length and scope of this project sought to avoid a simplistic correlation of conversion with socioeconomic criteria, as well as the attribution of motivations to whole populations.

Frequently poverty, marginality, illness, alcoholism, attempts to avoid the expense of the *cargo* system and disillusionment with one's cosmivision are factors that are related to religious change. While analyzing these factors, I have illustrated the diversity

of the conversion process, its marked instability, as well as the high levels of emotional and spiritual energy that are expended on a daily basis among Chamulas within the “misery belt” surrounding the city of San Cristobal. The different case studies have illustrated how a number of “converts,” when personally confronted with the day-to-day rippled effects of three principle macro processes (migration, class formation and transformation of peasants into wage labor), consider these experiences to be spiritual encounters. Thus, what is labeled “religious conversion” may mask other processes--corruption within the *cargo* system, intra-communal oppression of Indians and amorality of the *cacicazgo*--that occur when Chamulas leave their traditional religion to become *evangélicos*.

Although as scientists we are taught to look for explanations within tangible facts, the case of religious change among the Chamulas requires that we dismiss neither the transcendental nor their cultural codes. Many testimonials, conversion accounts and genealogies of religious conversion are constructed by many informants in such a way as to point towards a specific cause (i.e., religion as an “antidote” for alcoholism). By highlighting the convert’s use of religious terminology in an account, therefore, one concludes that she converted “in gratitude” for the spouse’s sobriety.

However, when the virtue of gratitude motivates religious change, it follows that with a recurring illness, a convert frequently seeks out another venue for restoring health or balance. I am not building a case for a rational choice model here, as others have done (Crandon-Malamud 1991; Stark, Fink and Iannaccone 1995; Iannaccone 1991; Rostos 1993; Martin 1990; Berger 1969). Neither rational behavioral models, nor supply and demand theories, address spiritual motives and emotions. While the model presented by

Stark, et. al. (1995) may work in countries that historically are Protestant and have been exposed to a market economy for extended periods, their hypothesis is far from universal, since it fails to account for the historical differences within Mesoamerica and Latin America. Participant observation leads me to conclude that since religious change is highly emotional and spiritual in the Highlands of Chiapas, there is no simple answer for the expenditure of spiritual energy among Chamulas.

Finally, I am suggesting that many *evangélicos* are rallied not so much by the “call to follow Jesus,” or even, the charisma of the preachers. Rather, they respond to a spiritual energy that springs from their sense of moral responsibility for the soul of their community and the preservation of the tenets of tradition. Among those *evangélicos* whose option for change is conditioned by the complex reality of their daily lives, although the motive is oriented toward sobriety, loneliness, illness or poverty, for many it undergoes several reinterpretations across religious or denominational lines. To a contemporary Chamula living in San Cristobal, however, there is no reinterpretation, only another *k'in* (Tzo., day) of reinforcing cultural codes. Therefore, *evangélicos* embrace the *k'op riox* not as a rejection of the social, political and moral bases of Chamula society, but as the means of returning to their traditional way of life. Consequently, evangelical Protestantism is a “new prayer,” in the sense that it expresses what Chamulas strive to live up to, i.e., the “ideals” of their culture. Furthermore, as some religious conversion accounts actually document, Chamulas adopt the *k'op riox* as an improvising art. In summary, as Sebastian Pérez puts it, “my faith is like the *milpa*, it needs constant tending to, so that the corn will become a rich harvest.” For many converts evangelical Protestantism is like caring for one’s inheritance land, that is, respecting the “ways of the

ancestors,” acknowledging the presence of their spirits and aspiring to the ideals of a *batz'i vinik / batz'i antz*.

Hence, the evangelical Protestant conversion process among Chamula women and men reveals a pattern of identification with core values that reaffirm the “ideals” of Chamula culture. Adopting the *k'op riox* is encapsulated in the newly acquired Indian or ethnic identity and the search for belonging. As I have shown above some evangelical temples have been rather successful at reproducing an ethnic church for the expelled. Changing religious affiliations is equally tied in with the pressing need for constructing a “safe space” from the “evils of the soul” within the city of San Cristobal. Finally, the future of this spiritual movement rests upon the moral overseers’ on-going re-interpretation of the evangelical Protestant message and the successful repackaging of Chamula traditional moral values (such as, respect, homogeneity, and harmony) into the spiritual quest for a community of brothers and sister in the faith.

Appendix I

Glossary

Ayuntamiento: Spanish (Sp.) for town council; replaced the term *cabildo* in 19th century

Chiapas in referring to municipal officers (Wasserstrom 1983:261).

Batz'i antz: Tzotzil (Tzo.) for true women.

Batz'i k'op: Tzo., true language.

Batz'i viniq: Tzo., true men.

Bolo: Tzo., drunk (Spanish equivalent would be *borracho*).

Cabecera: Sp., ceremonial and municipal center of Chamula; usually head village with several villages under its jurisdiction.

Cacique: Sp., at the conquest, the native ruler of a locality; later, its political leader or boss; *cacicazgo* plural for ruling elites.

Campesino: Sp., a person who works the land, a peasant.

Cargo: Sp., literally a burden, however in the religious sense it refers to *nichimal abtel* Tzo., work for the gods, such as the office of *mayordomo*, caretaker of the saint.

CEDECH: Committee for the Defense of the Evangelicals in Chiapas.

Crazy February: Carnival which precedes lent, i.e., Mardi Gras.

Ch'ich: Tzo., bleeding less.

Ch'ulel: Tzo., soul, spirit.

Concurrent Pluralism: Term used by Otto Maduro (1996) to capture the multiplicity of religions present among Latinos.

Confradad: Sp., religious brotherhood founded to honor an important patron saint, i.e., the cargo system; today largely replaced by *hermanos* among *evangélicos*.

CRIACH: Counsel of Representatives of Indians of Highland Chiapas.

Ejido: Sp., a grant of land made under the agrarian reform laws.

Escribano: Sp., scribe; in 20th century, a younger Indian appointed by state authorities to supervise the activities of other members of Indian *cabildos*.

Evangélico: Sp., an evangelical Protestant.

Finca: Sp., in colonial times, any rural estate; since the 19th century, this term has come to refer more specifically to cattle ranches or coffee plantations.

Gringo: Sp., white foreigner.

Hectaria: Sp., land measurement equivalent to 100 square meters.

Iloł: Tzo., traditional healer, shaman, clairvoyant.

Jovel: Tzo., valley, the term used by Indians to refer to San Cristobal de Las Casas.

K'ir: Tzo., day.

K'op: Tzo., word; when used with *riox* (Tzo., deity or God) it implies new prayer, however, many social scientists have assumed it to also mean new religion.

Ladino: a term used in place of mestizo to denote non-Indigenous people living in Mexico.

Max: Tzo., monkey; a significant figure in the Carnival and other religious feast days within the Chamulan culture.

Me': Tzo., mother; a female maker.

Me' tak'ir: Tzo., mother of money.

Mesoamerica: a cultural area extending approximately from the Panuca-Lerma drainage north of Mexico City through Central America to east of the Uluá River and Lake Yojoa where Aztec and Maya civilizations flourished before the Spanish invasion.

Milpa: Sp., corn field.

Municipio: Sp., municipality, the administrative and territorial jurisdiction usually consisting of a town center (cabecera) and outlying hamlets (parajes), which for the Mayas of Highland Chiapas also constitutes an ethnic community with distinctive dress, speech, and customs.

Nagual: Nahuatl, a person who transforms himself into an animal to harm others (the Tzotzil variant is naval).

Nagualismo: Nahuatl, belief in animal spirits, usually considered superstition by priests and pastors.

Nichim(al): Tzo., flower[y]. Glosses include: sacred (Arias 1985), beautiful (Laughlin 1975), and pretty (Holland 1963).

OPECH: Organization of the Evangelical People of Chiapas.

PAN: National Action Party.

Paxyon: Tzo., passion; the name of the highest officials of the Carnival.

Pox: Tzo., rum made from distilled sugar cane juice (Sp., *aguardiente*).

Progressive Catholic: Term used for the Catholics who receive all the sacraments, attend Mass, and are organized around a base community with the leadership of a catechist.

PRD: Democratic Revolutionary Party.

PRI: Institutional Revolutionary Party .

Pueblo: A legally recognized town chartered to elect its own council; although among Hispanics and Latinos it is not limited to a geographical space for it also means community of people.

ORLACH: Regional Organization of Indians of Highland Chiapas.

Riox: Tzo., deity, God.

Sna: Tzo., home, although it is employed as household.

Syncretism: the process of cultural/religious change in which elements from distinct traditions/theologies are combined to form a new culture unlike its antecedents.

Trago: Sp., a drink or swallow of liquor.

Trapo: Sp., rag.

Tzontevitz: Tzo., Sacred Mountain, also spelt as *Tzontehuitz*.

Peso: Sp., basic unit of Mexican currency or *moneda nacional (MN)*, that is, national currency (In 1996, the exchange rate was 7.3 pesos to one U.S. Dollar.)

Rincón: Sp., corner.

San Cristobal de Las Casas: the urban center of Highland Chiapas, about 5 miles from Chamula and an hour's walking distance from Rincón de Witz.

Traditional Catholic: The religion professed in San Juan Chamula consists of Baptism and protection of the patron saints within the cargo system.

Totil melil: Tzo., the father / mother(s), ancestor / protectors.

Vaxkil: Tzo., oldest daughter.

Witz: Tzo., Mountain, also the spirits that dwell in the mountain.

Zócalo: Sp., main plaza.

Appendix II

Sbeik Jchanvunetik

Sbeik Jchanvunetik (Tzo., The Ways of Learning) is an indigenous woman's non-profit organization that targets the artisan vendors of the main plaza in San Cristobal de Las Casas. *Sbeik* offers these vendors literacy workshops, tutoring, child care, adult educational program, the opportunity to pursue formal education through INEA-SEP or other institutions, workshops on women and children's health issues and human rights classes. *Sbeik* was founded in 1991 and yet only received legal status in 1996. The women of *Sbeik* attempt to answer through its activities the question posed by a Tojolobal Indian, Rosalia, "How much longer will we have to apologize for our inability to speak Spanish? Enough already, as an Indian woman, I am not to blame because I do not speak Spanish like one should." (*Tiempo* 1995:563:10).

The social impact of *Sbeik Jchanvunetik* for the school year of 1995-1996 was: thirty-four women became literate in their native language, Tzotzil, as well as Spanish; twenty-eight women finished primary school, and eleven of their children graduated from the Sixth grade; twelve women finished secondary school while four more are still studying; and sixteen women will start preparatory school soon. A total of 89 women have benefited from the scholarships at *Sbeik*; seventy-six children remained in school because this is a requirement for the women in the project; and fourteen preschool children and infants attended day care. To date they women have produced two photo-novels: 1) "The *Ik'al* (Tzo., Little Black One) and Childhood Diseases" which has sold more than 200 copies; and 2) "Our Ethnic Identity." The women who are photographers

have already won third place in a national competition and in the near future hope to produce a series on Education, Reproductive Health and Family Planning.

At the time of this printing the women are relocating their offices to a location in the colony of La Hormiga and may be reached through CIESAS-Sureste. Contact Person is Juana López Díaz, Vice-Presidente Sbeik Jchanvunetik, c/o CIESAS-Sureste, Carretera a Chamula Km. 3.5, Barrio La Quinta San Martin, San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas 29247, tel./fax 011 - 52 - (967) 86528; 85670.

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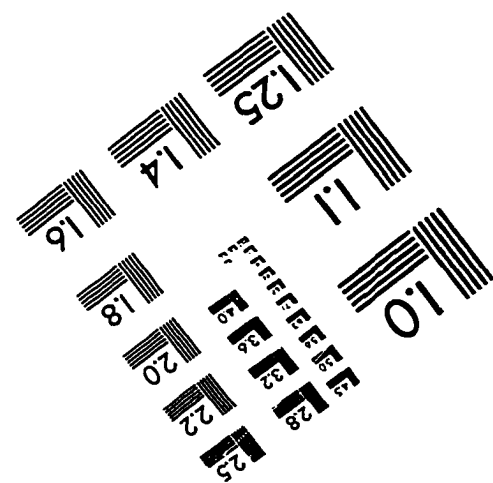
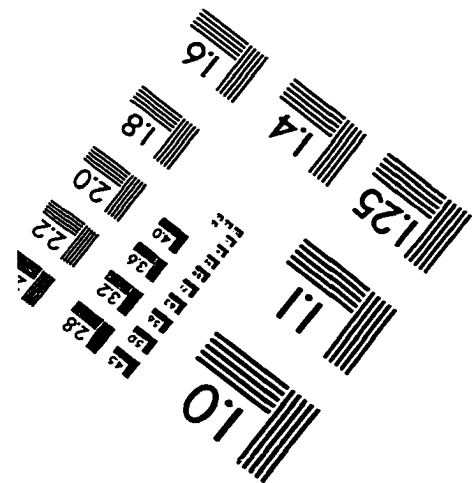
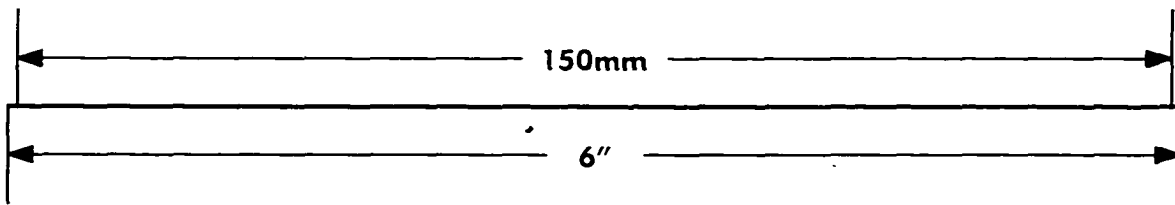
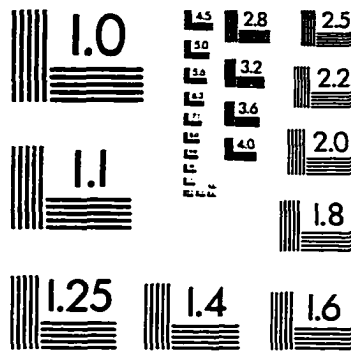
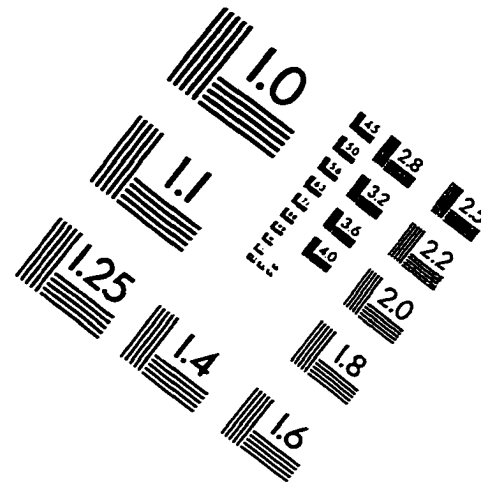
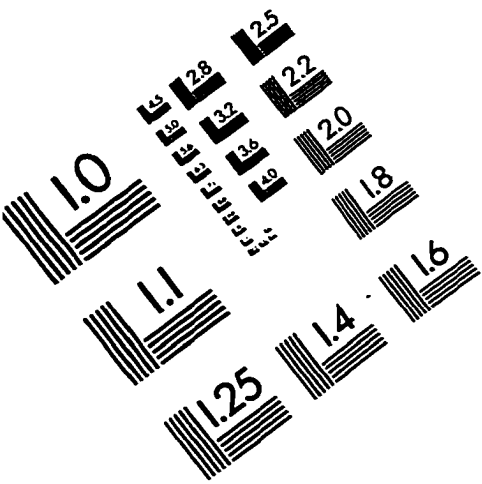
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