Performing the community: representation, ritual and reciprocity in the Totonac Highlands of Mexico

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GLOSSARY

ahijado/a  Godson / Goddaughter, term of reference
almud  half a hectare; 7 kilo; 1.6 liters (as dry measure)
alcalde mayor  the highest Spanish provincial official, formerly called corregidor
almuerzo  morning meal (around 11 o’clock)
altepelt  pre-Hispanic lordship of a basic socio-economic and political unit, turned into a pueblo de indios under Spanish rule
ancianos  elderly
atole  a beverage from Maya origin, either sweet (atole simple) made of masa with sugar or a bit sour (atole agrio) made of fresh maize (ejote)
ante-víspera  two days before a main ritual day, the day before víspera
bachillerato  senior high school
brazero  cooking place for firewood, a wooden container on legs filled with fine sand and covered with ashes, with three stones or a metal rack on top for the pots, pans or comal (see figure 7.1)
brujería  sorcery (T. skuwanan)
brujo  scorcerer (T. skuwana), who can be good (protect against and undo sorcery) or evil (bewitch or harm people) and is distinguished accordingly as brujo bueno (T. skuwana namakgtayayan or skuwana xatlan) or brujo malo (T. skuwana nixatlant or skuwana nitlanxtayat) A brujo can be female or male and is always ambivalent because she / he has the power to do both good or harm.
cabecera  town that heads a municipality and is seat of municipal authorities
cacique  pre-Hispanic lord, head of an altepetl by descent; under Spanish rule an Indian mayor, over time also an Indian power-holder or a local strongman in general
cafetal  coffee land
caida de cuajo  see cuajo
calzón (de manta)  traditional Totonac trousers of white cotton that men wear with a white blouse

1 The following books have been especially helpful in compiling this glossary: Callejo 1999 (religion); Davidson 2000 (food); Mompadré and Gutiérrez 1976 (dances); Nutini 1980 (compadrazgo). For wild life see annex 4, medicinal plants annex 5, and cultivated and wild plants annex 7. T. refers to Totonac.
Candelaria  
Candlemas, 2 February. Procession with the Infant Jesus dressed in new clothes and carried by the madrina from her father’s house (the mayordomo) to church and back again home in the evening, where it will stay until 24 December.

cargos civiles  
a hierarchical system of civic duties that cover a variety of activities for the benefit of the community, with the mayor and council at the top

cargos religiosos  
a hierarchical system of religious duties for the organisation of local Catholic church affairs and rituals, with the chairman and fiscals at the top

ceras  
large adornments of moulded beeswax figures and flowers on a bamboo structure, covered with brightly coloured foil, carried in the processions of the feasts of Santiago and San Miguel, and placed in the church next to the statues of Santiago, San Miguel, and the Virgin during the days of feasts.

chilmole  
thick stew of fried beef

chilposontle  
sauce with beef or pork in hot water with chilpotles, cinnamon, small tomatoes, and curley dock (with beef) or purslane (with pork)

clausura  
special ceremony during which a diploma of kindergarten, primary, or secondary school is handed to the children graduates

collectores  
collectors of money for main annual public celebrations

comal  
flat and round plate of clay or metal to cook tortillas (see figure 7.1)

comida  
main meal, in afternoon (around 4 o’clock), also called cena, though this is an additional evening meal for those who can afford it (around 8 o’clock)

compadrazgo  
ritual kinship between parents and godparents of a child

compadre  
co-father (godfather and father of godchild). Term of reference for ritual kinship between men

compadres  
general term of reference for ritual kinship

comadre  
co-mother (godmother and mother of godchild). Term of reference for ritual kinship between women

comisiones  
organisers of a particular feast, in Nanacatlan the patron feast (Santiago) and San Miguel

Corpus Christi  
God’s Day, early June (on a Thursday, 60 days after Easter, 10 after Pentecost), with a procession in the village. Also called Corazón de Jesus.

corregidor  
provincial Spanish official with administrative and judicial power. Called alcalde mayor after the first codification of laws for the Spanish American territories (1542-43)

costumbres  
local customary ritual practices learned from the ancestors
criollos  local varieties of maize
cuajo  coagulation, stoppage, illness of children, also called caída de cuajo
cuartillo  quarter of a hectare
cuentos y chistes  stories and jokes, locally used for myths that can be true or not true (anymore).
curandero  traditional healer (T. macuchina) who can treat one or several ailments, but who does not have the power of a sorcerer to do harm or undo sorcery.
doblar  breaking and bending of maize stalks halfway up the stem to dry the maize cobs.
dueños  owners or supernatural custodians of natural elements, animals, or crops (T. xmalana, see also Patron)
ejído  land reform of the Mexican revolution with hereditary land rights for the landless of collective tenure and management.
elote  fresh maize cob
espanto  see susto
empacho  stomach problems of children resulting in diarrhoea
enchilada  wrap tortilla filled with salsa, egg or other ingredients
enojo  anger, also called coraje, a frustration resulting from the inability to change a situation, that causes the death of a person
evangelicos  followers of new Protestant denominations such as Pentecostals and Baptists
encomienda  obligatory services or tribute of a territory to a Spanish holder called encomendero
Españoles  dance from the Totonac zone representing the meeting of the Spanish conqueror Cortés with the Aztec emperor Moctezuma resembling the dances called Moros y Aztecos and Tocotines
faena  communal labour
fiesta  feast of the Patron saint, in Nanacatlan of Santiago on 25 July
fiscales  officials of religious cargos, fiscals
gorditas  thick tortillas, made from masa mixed with ground beans, avocado leaf, and chiltepin. Also called tlacoyos.
hacienda  large estate with fixed ownership
historias  locally used for stories about the past (T. likatzin) considered to be true
Hojs-Kaxi  lit. Squash-head, a human transformed into a mythical being who comes to attack the village
huacal  carrier net (see figure 3.1) with a mecapal containing 240 mazorcas or 4 reales. Used by women to carry babies.
huaraches  sandals for men and boys of leather with a rubber sole of car tire
Huehues
Náhua| word for elderly, a dance representing the dead during *Todos Santos* by Tepehuas and Huastecos. There is also a version called *danza de los viejos* (dance of the elderly). The dancers are masked and half are dressed as women. In Nanacatlán it is a happy dance performed Saturday before Easter (*Sabado de Gloria*).

Jesus el Nazareno
statue of Jesus carried during several processions of *Semana Santa*.

jícara, xical
dried and hollow squash used as musical instrument or as bowl (for tortillas), cup or spoon (in the past often the only utensils).

Judíos
dancers during *Semana Santa*, representing the aggressors against Jesus.

kichkemil
short transparent white poncho that women wear over an embroidered blouse, with a white skirt and a red woven belt. Traditional Totonac style.

kuxta (T.)
animal-soul, also called *doble* (double), a person’s co-spirit of the animal to which one is identified and one of the two souls of a person (see *listakna*).

lavar los manos
ritual washing of hands.

likatzin (T.)
stories that are real, referring to *historias* as well as *cuentos y chistes*, though the latter have (nowadays) a more ambivalent meaning.

limpia
ritual cleansing.

listakna (T.)
spirit-soul that exists before a person is born and after a person has died; one of the two souls of a person (see *kuxta*). After death the spirit-soul returns home every year during *Todos Santos*.

madrina
term of reference for godmother. Also: female ritual sponsor or official, in Nanacatlán during Christmas, when a girl is the main person (called *madrina*) but her father is the sponsor (called *mayordomo*).

mal aire
malicious air, illness caused by a poisoning of the spirit-soul by the soul of a deceased or by a brujo.

mal de ojo
evil eye, illness of children because their spirit-soul has wandered off with another person.

Mañanitas
early morning celebration song and birthday serenade to women, also sung for the Virgen de Guadalupe on 12 December.

mano vuelta
reciprocal labour exchange with the obligation to feed the workers and to return the same kind of labour.

masa
maize dough.
mayordomo sponsor or principal official of a ritual or fiesta. In Nanacatlán there are mayordomos for Santiago, San Miguel and Christmas (see under madrina, the principal person during Christmas rituals)
mazorca dried maize cob
mecapal strap across the forehead and hanging over the shoulders, used by men and women to carry a heavy load on the back, such as bags, boxes, water containers, firewood (see figure 3.2)
mestizo Hispanic and national oriented people, also called gente de razón
metate grinding stone for maize dough
Mexicanitas Mexican folk dances
Mexicanos people of the Aztec empire, nowadays usually called Nahua's
(San) Migueles war dance with San Miguel fighting the devil, who is trying to steal his Marys or virgins. He wins with the help of Huehues, angels and a star.
milpa maize fields; maize stalk
mole famous Mexican dish of turkey, chicken, or pork in a sauce with chile ancho, chocolate and a number of spices
mole poblano popular version of (the state of) Puebla, from where mole originates.
morral shoulder bag used by men (see figure 6.2)
municipio auxiliar village belonging to a municipality, with its own mayor and village council (Junta Auxiliar)
nahuals shamans with the power to transform into non-humans (often the kuxta animal), and to return back to being human
Negritos dance influenced by the presence of black slaves representing the work on a sugar plantation or milpa and ending with the killing of a snake. For Totonacs the snake is a symbol of lightning, rain, and maize.
nicho wooden case with glass windows containing the image of a saint or of Jesus
nixtamal maize kernels cooked with calcium
novena nine evenings of prayers with a reciter in the house of a deceased
novia/novio fiancée/fiancé
padrino term of reference for godfather
paladear cleaning the mouth, a healing practice to cure susto by applying garlic to the uvula
panela clayed brown sugar
papá T. moon, month
patrón/Patrón employer, landlord / patron saint / see dueños
peon(es) day-labourer, also called *mozo*
peso Mexican currency
petate sleeping mat, usually used on top of a wooden platform on legs
piñata a colourfully decorated clay pot filled with sweets and attached to the ceiling. When the pot is swung on a rope, children are blindfolded in turn to try and smash it with a stick.
Posadas Lit. Hostels, nine days of processions before Christmas, with the statues of the Virgin Mary and Joseph to a different village house
preparatorio three years of junior high school, after secondary school
presentación presentation to church of a three year old child during a Mass upon request of the parents
pueblo de indios basic territorial unit under Spanish rule with an indigenous ruler (*cacique*) and a *cabecera* as main centre
Quetzales related to the Voladores this dance includes the rotation of dancers, wearing large brightly coloured circles on their head, with the help of a wheel several metres above ground. Is considered of Totonac origin, symbolising movement, and part of agricultural and solar rituals.
quincena elaborate celebration of a girl's fifteenth birthday
quintal weight measurement for coffee that differs according to the stage of drying and processing: one quintal is 245 kilos of fresh beans (*café ceresa*), 100 kilos of shelled, washed and one day sun-dried beans (*café oreada*), 57.5 kilos of dried beans (*café seco*).
real 60 *mazorcas*
refino rum, also called *aguardiente*, used during rituals and healings as a drink or as a liquid for cleanings and massages to which herbs may be added
regidor member of the village council
repartimiento labour duties (*repartimiento de trabajo*) or trade monopoly, with the forced buying of Spanish goods and selling of Indian products (*repartimiento de comercios*)
saccar piedras removing stones, a type of sorcery that uses small object to cause pain in the body and is named after its curing (to remove such objects)
salsa roja red spicy sauce of *chilpotle*, tomatoes and cumin-seed, for daily use
salsa verde green spicy sauce of green peppers, green tomatoes, cumin-seed, coriander or *guía de espino*, for daily use
San Andrés Saint Andrew, 30 November, village feast of Hueytlalpan
San Antonio  
Saint Anthony, 13 July, Patron of the domesticated animals kept around the house  

San Augustín  
Saint Augustine, 28 August, village feast of Zitlala  

San Bartolo  
Saint Bartholomew, 24 August, village feast of Xochitlan  

San Francisco  
Saint Francis (of Assisi), founder of Franciscans, 4 October, village feast of Caxhuaca  

San Isidro  
Saint Isidore, Patron of the bulls. 15 May a mass is held during which the bulls are gathered on the church square  

San Juan  
Saint John (the Baptist), Patron of the Sea and Water in general, 24 June. At midnight villagers try to find buried ancient money. The spots are marked by blooming flowers.  

San Manuel  
Patron of the Sun  

San Miguel  
Saint Michael, Patron of Thunder and Rain, and agricultural fertility, celebrated on 29 September. Probably related to mountain worshipping rituals during Tepeihuitl (thirteenth month of pre-Hispanic calendar, mainly October) related to agriculture/ harvest and the dead by drowning or through lightning. Village feast of San Miguel Atlequisayan and San Miguel de Cerdo. It marks the end of the patron feast rituals of Nanacatlán.  

San Sebastián  
Saint Sebastian, 20 January, village feast of Tuxtla  

Santa Carmen  
Saint Carmel, 16 July, marks the beginning of the patron feast rituals in Nanacatlán, with mass and a procession, during which the dancers participate, to the house of the mayor domo of Santiago.  

Santa María  
birthday of the Holy Mary, 8 September, village feast of Zapotitlán  

Santiago  
Saint James, Patron of Nanacatlán, 25 June. As patron saint of the Spanish monarchy, Spanish soldiers often called upon him during their battles. He therefore became known as powerful by the indigenous populations. Also village feast of Huitzilan.  

Santiago Mayor  
the most important huge statue of Santiago, behind the church altar  

Santiago Menor  
smaller statue of Santiago carried in the processions for Santiago and San Miguel, always together with a statue of San Miguel and the Virgen de Mayo.  

Santiagueros  
war dance which is mainly performed in the Northern Sierra of the state Puebla staging a war between Santiago and ‘the king’ Pilate. A variant of the more widespread dance Moros y Christianos introduced in Mexico by the missionaries to christianise the indigenous war dances.
| **Santo Domingo** | statue of Jesus on his donkey, used on Palm Sunday (Domingo Ramos) |
| **Santo Entierro** | statue of Jesus in a glaze coffin, carried in the main procession of *Semana Santa*. Does not exist within Catholic liturgy. |
| **Santo Patron** | Patron Saint of a community or profession |
| **Santos Reyes** | Twelfth night (6 January) |
| **secundario** | three years of secondary school, after primary school |
| **Semana Santa** | Holy or Passion Week, extensively commemorated in Catholic Spain and Latin America between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. It takes place during the first full moon after the spring equinox with Easter Sunday as the first Sunday after full moon (between 21 March and 25 April). |
| **sitio** | premises, yard (with house) |
| **skuwana (T.)** | sorcerer or *brujo*. *Skuwana namaktayayan* or *skuwana xatlan* is a good sorcerer or *brujo bueno*, and a *skuwana nix-atlan* or *skuwana nitlanxtayat* is an evil sorcerer or *brujo malo*. |
| **sopa** | thick soup of pasta, rice, vermicelli, or vegetables |
| **susto** | fright, a state of shock due to the absence of the animal-soul (*T. listakna*), often caused by the anger of one of the Patrons of the natural elements. *T. pikuan* (to be frightened) or *thlaw-an* (moving, travelling). |
| **tacahuele** | marriage proposal, consisting of four visits of the parents of a prospective groom to the parents of a girl, and visits to godparents and grandparents, with food gifts after an agreement has been reached. |
| **taco** | fried *tortilla* with a topping of salsa and fresh herbs or cheese |
| **tamales** | several kinds of steamed and mostly stuffed maize dough portions (usually rectangular), wrapped in maize husk or large leaves (see recipe 7.1) |
| **Tejoneros** | dance generally related to animals or the changing of humans into animals (nahualismo). In the Totonac Sierra the dance shows the discovery of maize, a visual expression of the myth. |
| **temazcal** | steam bath |
| **tenamaztle** | three stones on the fireplace to hold the cooking pots and pans or *comal* |
| **tenate** | bag used by women (see figure 6.1) |
| **tierra fría/calentie** | higher mountain slopes / lower mountain slopes |
| **tierra templada** | temperate zone (between higher and lower mountain slopes) |
| **tixmole (tesmole)** | beef tea with *chipotles* |
Todos Santos
All Saints and All Souls Day, on of the most important celebrations in the annual cycle of popular Catholicism throughout Mesoamerica. 1 and 2 November food offerings are made to the death, in Nanacatlán also 31 October and 8 November.

tortilla
maize pancake

totopa
hard toasted tortillas that keep well for a long time

trapiche
tread-mill for crushing sugarcane

Virgen Asunción
Assumption of the Virgin, 15 August, village feast of Ixtpec

Virgen Dolores
Nuestra Señora de Dolores or Our lady of Sorrows, whose statue is carried in Nanacatlán during the processions of Semana Santa as the Mother of Jesus. Her day of 15 September is not celebrated in the village.

Virgen de Guadalupe
Virgin of Guadalupe, 12 December, Patron Saint of Mexico. In Nanacatlán she is also protector of villagers working and living in Mexico City.

Virgen María
also Virgen María (VM) de Natividad, see Santa María

VM de Concepción
The Immaculate Conception (also: La Purísima/Inmaculada Concepción), 8 December, village feast of Concepción (Ignacio Allende) and Zongozotla. Her statue is carried during the Posadas.

Virgen de Mayo
Mother of Jesus, honoured in the month of May with daily prayers. Her statue is carried in the village processions of Santiago and San Miguel.

víspera
the day before (a main ritual day)

Voladores
Spectacular flying dance around a pole between 20 to 35 meters, from which the dancers descend circling hanging on top attached to a rope. It is generally considered to be of Totonac and pre-hispanic origin, although there are no definite proofs. Its meaning has become lost but was related to the Mesoamerican calendar and solar rituals. The dance has become commercialised in various tourist centres such as Cuetzalan, Papantla, and outside the Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City.