ESPACIOS MAYAS: REPRESENTACIONES, USOS, CREENCIAS

Alain Breton, Aurore Monod Becquelin y Mario Humberto Ruz
editores

Centro de Estudios Mayas, IIFL, UNAM
Centro Francés de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos

México, 2003
ÍNDICE

Prólogo .............................................................. 9

Pierre Bercoulin
Introducción .................................................. 13

EL PAISAJE MAYA Y SU HISTORIA

Jean-Paul Métélié, Jean-Michel Carozza, Didier Galop y
Marie-Charlotte Arnauld
Lagos, bajos y paisaje en el Petén noroccidental: el inicio de una
investigación geográfica y arqueológica (La Joyanca) ....................... 23

Nicholas P. Dunning
Birth and Death of Waters: Environmental Change, Adaptation,
and Symbolism in the Southern Maya Lowlands ............................. 49

Vernon L. Scarbrough
Ballcours and Reservoirs: The Social Construction of a
Tropical Karstic Landscape .............................................. 77

Norman G. Hammond y Gair Tourtellot III
Viewsheets and Watersheds: Topography and Cosmology in
the Planning of the Classic Maya Cityscape of La Milpa, Belize ....... 93

Carmen Varela Torrealla y Juan Luis Bonor Villarejo
Cronología y función de las cuevas en el área maya:
espacio ritual o profano ................................................. 111
James E. Brady
La importancia de las cuevas artificiales para el entendimiento de los espacios sagrados en Mesoamérica ........................................ 143

William F. Hanks
“Reducción” and the remaking of the social landscape in colonial Yucatán ......................................................... 161

Rodolfo Lobato
“Por las veredas de los antiguos”. Las nuevas comunidades mayas de la Selva Lacandona y el control del espacio .................. 181

Philippe Descola
El paisaje maya y su historia. Comentario ........................................ 199

LO NATURAL Y LO SOCIAL: MARCADORES Y CATEGORÍAS DEL PAISAJE

Virginia E. Miller
Human Imagery in the Architectural Sculpture of the Northern Maya Lowlands ......................................................... 209

Fabienne de Pierrebourg
La vivienda maya, entorno natural y mundo natural: un enfoque etnoarqueológico ......................................................... 235

Colette Grinevald (Craig)
El mundo jakalteko visto a través de los clasificadores nominales ...... 261

Anath Ariel de Vidas
Luces del pasado, lugares del presente. La repartición de los espacios entre los teenek de Veracruz ........................................... 287

Juliette Roulet
Espacio ordenado, espacio dilatado: metamorfosis del día a la noche ... 303

Aurore Monod Becquelín y Alain Breton
¿Cuál espacio para los kabinal de Bachajón? ......................................................... 327

Valentina Vapnarsky
Recorridos instauradores: configuración y apropiación del espacio y del tiempo entre los mayas yucatecos ........................................ 363

John B. Haviland
Dangerous Places in Zinacantec Prayer ........................................ 383

Scott Atran
A Garden Experiment in the Maya Lowlands ........................................ 429

César Itier
Las categorías del paisaje maya vistas desde los Andes. Comentarios ... 453

LOS HABITANTES DEL PAISAJE

Claude-François Baudez
Las aguas terrestres entre los antiguos mayas: representaciones y rituales ......................................................... 463

Robert M. Laughlin
The Golden Bough ........................................ 489

Lourdes de León Pasquei
Ta xtal xa xch’ulel: “Ya viene el ‘alma’”, El miedo en la socialización infantil zinacanteca ........................................... 499

Michel Boccara
Vivir es hacer. Volverse “viantepásado” o el dominio del espacio transcíncial ......................................................... 533

Perla Petrich
Topología nocturna en los pueblos mayas de Atitlán ........................................ 577

Pedro Pitarch Ramón
Dos puntos de vista, una sola persona: el espacio en una montaña de almas ......................................................... 603
DANGEROUS PLACES IN ZINACANTEC PRAYER

John B. Haviland
Reed College (Portland, Oregon) / (c) 1986-87

THE CONSTRUAL OF SACRED / DANGEROUS / POWERFUL spaces in contradistinction to domestic / unmarked / safe places in Zinacantan, Chiapas, México, is perhaps most accessible to consciousness (and hence investigation) in the context of shamanistic curing. The conceptualization of these spaces is directly, if somewhat esoterically, manipulated in curing prayer, which employs images dichotomous in both form and meaning to track the progress of a ceremony across physical and ritual landscapes. Certain types of Zinacantec curing rely directly on transitions between spaces: the highly constrained domestic space, or the over-structured interior of the church, vs. the caves, stones, waterholes, and milpa edges where soul-danger lurks and can be redressed. Transitions across such boundaries are necessary for cure, but they are themselves potentially harmful and thus produce profound ambivalence, expressed in both word and deed by curer, patient, and helpers alike. Indeed, central parts of curing performances seem explicitly designed to counteract the dangerous places where the performance must by necessity take place. I will present discursive and gestural exhibits, extracted from recordings of several Zinacantec curing ceremonies, to argue that it is principally through language (in a broad sense, including highly structured ritual speech and its gestural and corporeal accompaniments) conjoined with other communicative action that Zinacanteces seek to control the world and protect themselves during their passages across dangerous places.
Places as metaphors

The following lines are drawn from a reenacted prayer by the late Domingo de la Torre of Zinacantan, Chiapas, a prodigious Tzotzil poet. They evoke a somewhat dark side of the veneration of the candles offered by a new house owner (Laughlin 1980: 212). The prayer represents part of a ceremony to install a new house with a soul, and to secure its boundaries by soliciting the protection of gods, spirits, and ancestors alike. Here, the owner asks to be protected against obliquely mentioned but quite specific human dangers.

(1) Laughlin 1980: 212
Tzauke, jōt,
Tzauke, kāyval!
Ma'uk to jō ti jun ba vitze, ✶
Ma'uk to jō ti jun ba sżeleje, ✶
Ma'uk to jō ti jun ba sžaleje, ✶
Ma'uk to jō ti jun ba sžaleje, ✶
May I not yet reach the mountain-
top, ✶
May I not yet reach the hilltop, ✶
May I not yet clothe myself with
dirt, ✶
May I not yet clothe myself with
mud, ✶
May I not yet amuse my father,
May I not yet amuse my mother,
May my father not yet laugh,
May my mother not yet laugh,

Take heed, My Father,
Take heed, My Lord!
May I not yet reach the mountaintop,
May I not yet reach the hilltop,
May I not yet clothe myself with dirt,
May I not yet clothe myself with mud,
May I not yet amuse my father,
May I not yet amuse my mother,
May my father not yet laugh,
May my mother not yet laugh,

Like their cousins elsewhere in Maya country, Zinacantecs pray in the formally parallel lines characteristic of all Tzotzil ritual speech (Gosen 1983). Typically, as in the fragment quoted in (1), lines of prayer come in matched pairs, with exactly identical environments framing a conventional pattern of words or short phrases, which in turn encapsulate a standardized, sometimes oblique, "stereoscopic" image (Fox 1974, 1977). Thus, the injunction tza-uk-e which Laughlin translates as 'take heed' (from an archaic root tza evidently denoting 'intelligence, skill, craft' [Laughlin 1988]), is a frame which pairs with the conventional doublet for addressing male deities: J-TOT / K-AJVAL, 'my father / my lord'. In a massively parallel construction, the house owner follows this opening formula with a string of negative injunctions, asking for divine intervention to avoid the demise (frame: ta j-ča o ti jun ba-), "I will reach the top of..." and doublet: VITZ / STZELEJ, "a mountain / a ridge" -that is, explains Laughlin, the graveyard; frame: ta j-k'u- m o ti- , "I will wear...", and doublet: LUM / ACH'EL, "dirt / mud" -that is, when I am buried) planned by J-TOT / ME, "my father / my mother" -that is, my enemy, thereby "amusing him" (frame: ta x-k-ak'be elav-), 'I cause amusement to...' my enemy) / "making him laugh" (frame: ta s-tze in o- , 'he laughs because of it...').

Several formal characteristics may be observed in this fragment of elaborately structured speech. First, the doublets and frames are highly conventionalized. (The pair LUM / ACH'EL conventionally denotes exactly the "dirt / mud" under which one is buried, and by extension, ones very body). But they are also syntactically flexible. (In death one can -k'uit in this, that is "clothe oneself" in it, as in this prayer. But one can also simply find oneself ta yolon lum / yolon ach'el, 'under dirt / under mud'.) Importantly, the imagery of the parallel constructions is ordinarily indirect, underspecified, and consequently semiotically malleable. One does not name the enemy who plots witchcraft: he or she is instead merely jun j-tot / jun j-me, 'one father of mine / one mother of mine', and thus a kind of distanced kinsman, whose evil intentions do not reflect overtly stated reciprocal animosity on the part of the speaker. Similarly, although it is, as Laughlin points out (1980, fn. 29), ta jun ba vitz / jun ba sželej, 'on a mountaintop / on a hilltop', where Zinacantecs typically place their cemeteries, as I shall argue in this paper, this is not all that Zinacantec ritual speech locates in such exposed, salient, and dangerous places. The properties of referential ambiguity and semiotic flexibility that characterize all

127 I have altered Laughlin's orthography slightly to make it consistent with current Tzotzil practical orthography which includes the following digraphs: čh = IPA tʃ; ż = IPA tsʃ.

128 I will call the repeated context of parallel lines the frame, and the paired varying phrase the doublet, although frequently parallel lines come in sets of three or more.
Zinacantec ritual speech are the tools I wish to bring to bear on the notions of space and place in contemporary Mayan societies.

The conventionalized, multivalent, and flexible poetic imagery of Tzotzil prayer provides a unique key to Zinacantec conceptualizations of space, geography, and the dangerous places that surround us here on earth. If it is largely through interactive discourse that Zinacantec, like everyone else, learn the conceptual parameters of their world, the crystallized stereoscopic images of ritual frames and doubles may be seen as the meta-tools of cultural discourse, distilling out exactly those elements of the world we create through talk with the greatest semiotic potency. We may learn a good deal about the conceptualization of the universe by directly interrogating our informants; but our informants themselves learn about the universe in large part by listening to and interpreting the powerful, if often opaque, words of their own ritual specialists, in shamanistic prayer and elsewhere. My aim in this paper is simple, and largely descriptive: to enter Zinacantec geography through this back door of ritual language, in which things are never quite what they seem, and places never quite where they seem. How are the spaces of the Zinacantec world portrayed in prayer?

Let us consider the image conjured by the doublet VITZ / STZELEG, 'mountain / ridge', or its close relative VITZ / CH'EN, 'mountain / cave'. Let us pass from simulated prayer\(^1\) to the genuine article, prayer recorded over the last 30 years\(^2\) in the moment of their actual performance, at various points scattered across the Zinacantec landscape. Here is a fragment of prayer in a cornfield (recorded in the central lowlands of Chiapas in 1982) designed to protect young and vulnerable maize plants from devastating winds and rain.

\[
\begin{align*}
(t) & \text{r8208b452-4th cross} \\
ta & yu ba vitz / ta yu ba stzeleg \leftarrow \\
chajta & ta k'oponel \leftarrow \\
chajta & ta yu ti'inel \leftarrow \\
yu'un ti yu avalabe / & yu'un ti yu anich'nahe \\
k'u yepal stz'unoj / & k'u yepal yavoj \\
taxojable / tanak'ubale & \\
ch'ul vinajeletik / & ch'ul balamiletik \\
ch'ul reyetic / & ch'ul anjeletik \\
ch'ul yaxal lumal toketik / & ch'ul ik'al lumal toketik \\
\ldots & \\
tzauke mu jinesbiluk / & \\
tzauke mu vuk'esbiluk & \\
mu & ta k'a'epuk / mu ta ik'ubaluk \\
taxojabile / & \\
mo & bu ta ba vitz / \\
mo & bu ta ba stzeleg \leftarrow \\
tal & ti jun ik' tale / ti jun sik tale \\
pero & mo'oj sheeta tal un / \\
pero & mu xanebuk tal un \\
k'opon abaik un / & ti'in abaik un \\
ch'ul vinajel / & ch'ul balamil
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
on & the humble mountaintop / on \\
on & the humble ridgeltop \leftarrow \\
& I will reach you by word / \\
& I will reach you by mouth \\
for & your humble child / \\
for & your humble offspring \\
whatever & he has sown / whatever he has planted \\
your & sunbeams / your shadow \\
& holy heavens / holy earths \\
& holy kings / holy angels \\
holy & blue fog / holy black fog \\
lumal & toketik \\
\ldots & \\
& may it not be thrown down / \\
& may it not be blown down \\
& may it not be rubbish / may it not be fitl \\
your & sunbeams \\
if & there be on a mountaintop / on a hilltop \\
should & one wind come / should one cold come \\
but & may it not find a path to come / \\
find & a step to come \\
speak & to each other / talk to each other \\
& holy heaven / holy earth
\end{align*}
\]

\(^1\) Laughlin remarks that despite the fact that his compadre performed the fragment in a *remanente* of the ritual, he was brought to tears by the performance, which uttered with a speed and fluency that seemed "beyond human possibility" (1980: 26).

\(^2\) My ongoing field research in Zinacantec, which began under the auspices of the Harvard Chiapas Project in 1966, has over the years had support from the National Science Foundation, NIH, Australian National University, the National Geographic Society, Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, and Conacyt (México), which supported major parts of current research as part of the project *Archiwos de los Idiomas Indígenas de Chiapas*, under grant R30877-H.
The image of the mountaintop / the hilltop is invoked twice, but now not as
an ominous indirect reference to death. Instead, both the divine addressee
whose intercession is being requested, and apparently also the very corn
crop in need of protection, are located on the same ba vitz / ba szelej,
‘mountaintop / hilltop’. The image of the cemetery on an exposed mountain
peak is replaced (if not entirely supplanted) by a different image that merges
the mountaintop shrine – access point to divine attention – with the vulnera-
able, exposed field of young corn. Later in the same prayer, the shaman
makes it plain that his addressees – variously invoked in the prayer with a
series of doubles: holy heaven / holy earth, holy kings / holy angels, holy
grey [lit., blue / green] fog [lit., clouds of the earth] / holy black fog, lords of
heaven / lords of earth, black mirrors / white mirrors – are themselves “seated
“on the mountaintop / on the hilltop”. Divine forces of nature, with
powers both to nurture and to destroy a corn crop (and by extension a corn
farmer), are located in a place whose imagery is unmistakable in Chiapas:
the mountaintop swiftly fading from view before rapid, rolling banks of
thundercloud.

(3) explicitly locating divinities: t8208b452
xanavanik un / beinanik un
k’opon abaki un / ti’ in-
ayjval ch’ul vinajloxuk /
ayjval ch’ul balamilojux
→ chotojloxuk ta yu ba vitz /
choloxukta ya yu ba szelej
ayjval ch’ul lumoxuk /
ayjval ch’ul osiloxuk
yaxal lumal totekix /
ik’akil nenetik / sakikil nenetik
 walk! / set out!
speak to each other! / talk to each
other!
your are lords of holy heaven /
lords of holy earth
you are seated on the humble
mountaintop /
seated on the humble ridgetop
you lords of holy soil /
you lords of holy land
black fog
black mirrors / white mirrors

In a similar vein, the same doubler appears again in the following sequen-
tially from a house dedication prayer recorded in 1984.

(4) t843a480, MK at Nabenauk house
tzauk une jot / tzauk une kajval
take heed my father / take heed my
lord
vo’oxux totiloxuk /
you are the fathers
→ nichim ch’ul ba vitzetik /
flowery holy mountaintop /
nichim ch’ul ba szelejetik
flowery holy ridgetop
nichim ch’ul reyetik /
flowery holy rings /
nichim ch’ul anjeletik
flowery holy angels
ta avokik un / tak’obik un
at your feet / at your hands
tavalabik un / tani’ch’tabik un
your child / your offspring
chijlanik un bi / jojlanik un bi
enclose us / surround us
slekilal ti ta ch’ul ke’iben tajel /
come watch well for me /
slekilal ti ta ch’ul’ilben tajel
come see well for me
over all semiotics of space in the powerful though oblique language of Tzotzil ritual.

**Kuxul balamile, the earth is alive**

To judge by Zinacantec discourses, the world is filled with places that are kuxul, "alive", the haunts of the forces of the earth and its Lord. The metaphor of "live places" is ubiquitous. Laughlin (Laughlin 1977: 289, tale 87) recounts the tale of an extremely poor youth who is so desolate that Our Lord takes pity and bestows magical wealth on him. It is precisely at a place where the earth is "alive" that the boy is accosted by a supernatural stranger who bears the wealth-giving gift:

(5)

\[ \text{Vai i `un, yu` nan kuxul ti balamile mo mi yu`van k'uxubaj ta yo`on ti kajvalikte, lok`a la tujun vinc.} \]

\[ \text{"K'u chapas, kere, k'u y`un toj abol abae?"} \]

Maybe because the earth was alive or because Our Lord took pity on him, a man came out. "What are you doing, son? Why are you suffering so?"

The earth inherits "life" from (or perhaps passes it along to) the "living" inanimates to be found in such "living" places: crosses, bells, and buried treasure. On my first visit to Muxul Vitz, a mountain sometimes on the circuit of major curing ceremonies passing through the cabecera of Zinacantan where a large hole in the earth can still be seen near the mountain top crosses, I was told about a giant bell, frightened away by the imprudence and shamelessness of a woman who squatted near the edge of the hole being dug to expose it. The cross, I was told, was alive. On a much smaller scale, a compadre from Sek`emtitl once revealed to me the me` tak`in, "treasure, lit., mother of money", he had dug up from behind his ejido dwelling. It was a small earthen pot, fashioned in the shape of a frog, and he took the fact that it had been revealed to him as he was hoe-

ing his field as evidence that the earth in that place was also "alive".

Twenty-five years later, he still has the somewhat battered treasure with him in his Tuxtlal residence.

In Laughlin's tale 33, about a dangerous cave called avan ch'en, 'shouting cave' (1977: 149-151), a supernatural cross is said to have been "alive".

(6)

\[ Yech yal li vinik, iyichi`e lok`e xchi`u sm`e stak`in, ja` li krus, Krus Avajel sbi, vo`ne kuxul to`ox. \]

The man was telling the truth. He took [something else] out [of the cave] together with his treasure. It was the cross. It is called Krus Avajel [Gospel Cross]. It was alive once.

Later, a jealous priest took punitive action against this "living" cross: ismil ta k`ak`al vo`, "he killed it with hot water". In these discourses, features of living things such as deliberate movement, agency, will, and ultimately death are attributed to apparently inanimate things and the places they inhabit. Life is not the only property attributed to the balamile, 'earth'. Ordinary parlance incorporates the word balamile into a range of metaphors which conceptually enrich the raw material of space, starting with the earth on which we walk. (Indeed, the important distinction between what happens, say, in dreams and what happens in "real life" is that the latter takes place ta sba balamile, 'on the (sur)face of the earth'.) Thus, for example, when plants and forests grow, one says ich`i ti balamile, "the earth grew". When the weather turns harsh, the entire balamile can serve as the grammatical subject of the resulting ambient predicate adjective: kepel li balamile, 'the earth dried up / stopped raining'. Prosperity, in the peculiar modern form of increased settlement, the proliferation of schools, clinics, roads, and so on, can also be characterized by saying ipol ti balamile, "the earth multiplied". Grammar, again, endows the 'earth' with properties much like those of living organisms.\[132\]

\[132\] These expressions are drawn from transcripts V9306NH and T97I5A01. Although beyond the scope of this essay, other grammatical reflexes of relatively high animacy (see
Espacios mayas: representaciones, usos, creencias

In ritual speech, the doublet *vinajel / balamil*, ‘heaven / earth’, can stand for the entire universe in its dual aspect, both heavenly and earthly. When invoked in prayer, the universe so characterized is paired with other doublets which reflect the same duality in various interlinked pairings: *rey / anjel*, ‘king / angel’; *chon / chuak*, ‘animal / thunder’; *chon / bolom*, ‘animal / jaguar’, and *tok / chuak*, ‘cloud / thunder’. Heaven, the domain of kings and angels, is the origin of clouds and thunder; thunder, in turn, is linked via the *yajval balamil*, ‘lord of the earth’, to powerful earthly beasts, most notably snakes and jaguars, as well as to both life giving and potentially destructive rain. Consider, for example, the following extract from a new house dedication prayer, in which protection is sought from all the forces of heaven and earth:

(7) t843a480: *sk’inal na*

ch’ul nombre de dyos jesu kristo
k’usi yepal jtor / k’usi yepal kajval

holy name of God, Jesus Christ,
how much, my father / how much, my lord

... k’u yepal ch’ul vinajel /
ch’ul balamil ❖
ch’ul rey / ch’ul anjel
ch’ul chon / ch’ul chavuk

*yajval ch’ul vinajel /
ch’ul balamil ❖
ch’ul rey / ch’ul anjel
ch’ul chon / ch’ul chavuk

*yajval ch’ul vinajel /
ch’ul balamil ❖
ch’ul rey / ch’ul anjel
ch’ul chon / ch’ul chavuk

Balamil, the literal source from which all things Zinacantecos grow, is addressed directly with the Tzotzil imagery of beauty and respect, for example in the following extract from a cornfield dedication ceremony. Cultivated land is described as previously “lying down”, that is, asleep until planted and sowed by man (‘your child / your offspring’) in order to produce corn (‘your beam of light / your shadow’).

Aissen 1997) having to do with constituent order and verbal voice can also be observed in clauses involving *balamil* as a nominal argument.

133 Note that both words are loans from Spanish.

Dangerous Places in Zinacantec Prayer

(8) t8202b140: *sk’inal cobtik*: the land was previously “asleep”

chotoloxuk / vutz’uloxuk

you all are seated / you all are settled
ey every holy day /
ey every holy night
every day, every night
here on the lying land /
here on the lying earth
however much he has planted / he
has sown
of your sunbeam / of your shadow
your child / your offspring

The lords of earth and sky are likened to a beauteous and fertile valley. They are called down from their mountaintop abodes to enter into conversation and thereby agree to protect the cornfarmer’s crops.

(9) t8202b140 continued

yajval ch’ul vinajel /
yajval ch’ul balamil
julp ch’ul osil / julp ch’ul balamil

lord of holy heaven /
lord of holy earth

holy valley of land / holy valley of
earth

you all are seated on the mountaintop / you all are seated on the
ridgetop

k’opon abai bi / ti’in abai bi

speak to one another / talk to one
another

ch’ul rey / ch’ul anjel
ch’ul chon / ch’ul chavuk

holy king / holy angel
holy animal / holy thunder

The images can also be inverted. In curing prayer, the epithet *balamil* is frequently attached to the lowest of the low, the forces and impulses of evil that produce witchcraft and illness, or the basest nature of man and beast. When, in conversational Tzotzil, one laments one’s uselessness (from disease or other incapacity, for example), one may characterize oneself as *yech ta balamil*, ‘just this way, on earth’, or, like my aged blind
compadre, kukul ta balamil, 'groping about on earth.' The frames of prayer link the word balamil with witches, in typically ironic and indirect images:

jun balamil utz / jun balamil kolo'e
 ti' balamil jve'ele /
ta balamil juch'vo'e, kajval

one earthly good / one earthly evil
the eater on earth /
the drinker on earth

The disease one suffers as a result of the efforts of witches is also linked explicitly to the earth.

ti balamil ip e / ti balamil k'ux une
the earthly illness / the earthly pain

Finally, the metaphors for humility in a shaman's self-references place him or her squarely on the ground:

I am the dog of the land / I am the dog of the earth
your earthly fool / your earthly idio

In ritual speech, then, the verbal resonances of balamil, the earthly plane on which all space is grounded, thus endow the earth itself with a specific semiotic ambivalence: it is the locus of life itself, source of all sustenance, it is also rite with danger, and its power tends to suggest evil and malevolence.

Illness, danger, and geography

My primary ethnographic material for this paper is shamanistic prayer supplemented by the more prosaic conversational currency of Zinacantec daily interaction. In particular, I have been immersed in the prayer of j'icol, 'seer, or shaman', during curing ceremonies, a profusion of po-

134 T971?b1.

ally structured ritual language collected in many years of serving in Zinacantec curing ceremonies as both patient and helper. What does "place" have to do with the practices and speech of curers, or with illness, health, and the restoration of physical well-being in Zinacantec life?

Let me quickly rehearse certain central aspects of Zinacantec cosmology that bring these things together, as revealed principally by Tzotzil discourse about curing. First is the idea of the yajval balamil himself, the 'lord of the earth', a fat, non-Indian man with the trappings of a wealthy patron or landlord whose dominion includes the land, the water, the elements, and the animals and plants of the natural world. This Earth Lord is always present in the minds of Zinacantecse whenever the earth itself looms large in their thoughts. My comadre Petul tells me of his travels as a very young child, leading a mule team past the mysterious hole in the ground at Toch' whence wisps of steam could be seen wafting skywards in the early morning. The adults would offer the following explanation.

(10) toch'
yajval balamil sta'aj sve'el sta'aj skajvel xi li moletik une
"It’s the Lord of the Earth, cooking his food, cooking his coffee", the old people would say.

We have already met the frames of prayer that normally invoke the Lord of the Earth.

(11)
yajval ch'ul balamil / lord of the holy earth /
yajval ch'ul vinajel / lord of the holy heaven
yajval ch'ul lum / yajval ch'ul osil / lord of the holy dirt / lord of the holy land
yajval ch'ul ch'en / ch'ul vitz / lord of the holy cave / lord of the holy mountain

Why should one pray to such a figure? Those places where the "earth is alive" are both places where the actions of the Earth Lord are most to be feared and expected, and also where redressive action to placate him can
be taken. What is perhaps most commonly feared, in the normal course of life, is the illness known by the very name balamil—often taken to be the consequence of xi'el, 'fear', in which a sudden fright can cause parts of one's soul to become detached and to remain at the site, to kom•ta balamil, 'remain in/on the earth'. In (12) P and X discuss a frightening encounter the latter once had on the path. P asks whether X got sick as a result.

(12) t8814a
p: bueno
  lek lakol un
  muk' laa-
  xi' lek likol, muk' bu
p: mi laxi' o jutuk
  mi lakom ta balamil ←
  x: mu'yuk xixi'←
p: muk' laxi='
  x: =mu'yuk xixi'←
p: eso
  x; eje
  kuch'oj jutuk pox

p; OK
  but did you recover alright?
didn't you...?
  x; I recovered, I didn't...
p; were you frightened a little?
did you remain in the earth?
x; I wasn't frightened
  p; you weren't frightened?
x; I wasn't frightened
  p; so
  x; right:
  I drank a bit of cane liquor

In a more sinister vein, one may fall ill not simply because one has through fear, "remained" ta balamil, 'in the earth', but because one has been actively "sold to the earth". The idea of chonvan ta balamil, 'selling [people] to the earth', involves metaphors of ghastly cannibalism on the one hand, and of ordinary commercial transactions on the other. In (13) the curer uses an anti-witchcraft doublet (TT 'LAJES, 'bite / eat-finish') to ask for protection against the former.

(13) pecure05
ma'uk nox xkak'betikotik ti k'u chisti'otikotik / chislausotikotik
We will not let them bite us / eat us (and finish us off).

The verbs used to describe what happens when a soul is dealt to the East Lord, whether out of revenge or simply for monetary reward, makes p; Manuel Arias also died from being sold
x; well, then
p; he died sold
and he went to the earth
I went to see him with my mother
He was her younger brother
Manuel was just grabbing the walls of his house
The curer came
"It's 'earth'," said the curer.
"Earth. Sold to the earth", said the curer.
"Nothing we can do, he's been received", he said.
"I seem to have been received", said the sick man.
The deceased.
"You have been accepted, Manuel.
"You will die."
"Ah, let me go.
"Never mind.
"I have seen who it was who gave (i.e., witched) me", he said.
He had recognized who it was.
The deceased had seen that he'd been given (i.e., witched).
A shaman trying to cure witchcraft often attempts to reverse it—to send the symptoms back to the initiating witch:

(15) kalvaryo01
yu'un me mu to xak'ik ik k'ope /
let them not yet cause words /
yu'un me mu to xak'ik i lo'ile
let them not yet cause gossip
yu'un me mu to xak'ik beik elay /
let them not yet cause enjoyment /
yu'un me mu ta xak'ik beik tze'il
to the earthly good / to the earthly evil
ati balamil utze / ti balamil kolo'e
may his eyes be covered /
ta smake / o sat uke /
ta smake / o sha uk uno
may his face be covered
li' me sapan stuk uke /
here shall he himself wear it on his back / on his side
li' me xonok muk uke

Despite the fact that the patient's enemy—his 'earthly good / earthly evil' is anticipating 'words / gossip' (that is, talk about the demise of the patient) which will cause 'amusement / laughter', the shaman asks that the witch's 'eyes / his face' be covered and that the witch himself 'wear on his back / wear on his side' the same malady which has been sent to afflict the patient.

Zinacantecs think of some places as especially dangerous, perhaps because being kuxul, 'alive', they are impregnated with possibilities for soul-loss. Zinacantecs take special care of their children (and themselves) around waterholes, mountaintops, and other steep places such as caves and cliffs. Caves are the special haunts of witches, and although some caves are known as places of great power to cure illness, many more are thought to be visited only by people with malevolent intentions. Mar' k'anob pertonal skwenta chamal un. 'I, parte.'135 "These are not places where one can ask for pardon in order to cure illness. No, these are for OTHER things"—that is, for causing rather than curing illness. Curative prayer has the ready-made doublet (VITZ / CH'EN, 'mountain / cave') for such witching places, as in the following line from an anti-witchcraft ceremony, where the shaman asks the deities whether an enemy has approached them with a soul for sale.

(16) petucure05
mi o bu ta jun vitz / mi o bu ta jun ch'en
Did it happen on one mountain / did it happen in one cave?

Other shamanistic ceremonies are specifically designed to fix the boundaries and thus protect the interiors of spaces where human beings spend much of their lives. Chobotik, 'cornfields', still the prototypical workplaces of most Zinacantecs, are by their nature perilous, outside the bounds of house and yard, and linked semantically to the te'tik, 'forests', in which they nestle. The forest, for Zinacantecs, is the prototypical wild place, and the fact that milpas are carved from the wild produces the juxtaposition which most characterizes this primordial workplace: familiar, cultivated, and yet not quite tame, not quite home.

Similarly, waterholes on which both man and plant depend are dangerous enough to merit their own forms of address, for example, in dedication rituals such as k'in krus, the festival of the Holy Cross in the month of May.136

(17) t8202b140: land and water
chotoloxuk ta skotol ti ch'ul k'ak'ale / you all are seated every holy day /
chotoloxuk ta skotol ti -
ch'ul muk'ta ninab vo' / you are seated on every holy —
ch'ul b'ik't ni niab vo' / holy great spring /
ch'ul ninab vo etik / holy small spring
ch'ul ninab nabetik:
holly sources of water /
holly sources of lakes

135 In earlier times, in Nabenchan, the Zinacantec village I know best, k'in krus ceremonies were often organized by lineages which shared a common waterhole (called "sna" by Vogt 1969). These were occasions both to bless waterholes and to give them yearly maintenance. Now that water is piped into most Nabenchan houses, and few families share responsibilities for maintaining wells, the ceremony has become both more general in focus and less communal in its social organization.
In *k'in krus* ritual, shamans often make a special plea to the Earth Lord to withdraw from cornfarmers' paths the snakes that are his most feared emissary.

(18) *kkurus2b*
mu k'u spas uk un /
mu k'u snuptan uk un
mi oy ti yu latz'unobe /
mi oy te yu lavovole

chak'ejobon ecb'el sbe /
chak'ejobon ecb'el xane
ta jot o osil / ta jot o balamil

mu sibnasbiluk spat /
mu sibnasbiluk yu xokon
tavalabe / taniich' nab

In the same way, shamans ask the Earth Lord to moderate the winds and storms that threaten to rob his children / offspring of the legitimate product of the sweat of their brows / their faces.

(19) *t8208b452*
leki'il me makik un /
leki'il me vetz'ik un
ta ba viztuk me / ta ba stzelejuk me
ti jun ik'e / ti jun sike
yu'un laxojobalike /
yu'un lanak'obalike
yu'un i svokolie / yu'un i yikit'i'ike
yu'un i xchik'ike / yu'un i ya'lelelik
lavalabe / lanich'nabe kajval
sta to ti jjepe / sta ti i jk'ete

cover well / put well away
may it be on the mountaintop / one the ridgetop
the one wind / the one cold
for your sunbeam /
for your shade
for their suffering / for their trouble
for their sweat / for their juices
your child / your offspring, my lord
may they find a handful / may they find a fistful

(20) *t8208b452*—4th cross at Nvo Guerrero
ch'ul yajval ch'ul lum /
ch'ul yajval ch'ul osil
ch'ul yaxal lumal tok /
ch'ul ik'at lumal tokitik
ch'ul muk'ta ninab vo'etik /
ch'ul bikt it ninab vo'etik ch'ul nina
buctik
k'u yepal un jot / k'u yepal un kajval
maltabil ta axojobale /
malatibil ta anak'ubale
mu jinesbiluk / mu vuk'esbil(uk)
y'a'lel yu abaiik / ya'lel yu asatik
sjaxobil avokik -
leki'il va'luk / leki'il tek' luk
taxojobale / t.anak'ubal-
ch'ul ba vzetetik / ch'ul ba stzechetik
ch'ul reyetic / ch'ul anjeletrak

holy lord of holy earth / holy lord of holy land
holy blue fog / holy black fog
holy great spring / holy small spring holy source of lakes
how much, my father / how much my lord
your sunbeams will be irrigated / your shade will be irrigated
may they not be blown down / may they not be blown over
the drops of your brow / drops of your face
the cleanser of your legs —
may they stand well / may they be well upright
your sunbeam / your shadow
holy mountaintop / holy ridgetop
holy kings / holy angels

Not only wind and rain, but also earthquakes and other disasters threaten the well-being of humans. Shamanistic prayer addresses such natural forces directly. Shamans link the quadrilateral bounding of humanly occupied spaces with the cardinal directions that bound the earth itself. A cornfield has its four sides, each protected by the watchful gaze of the deities.

(21) *t8208b452*—4th cross at Nvo Guerrero, cornfield ceremony
klopon abaiik ta chan jehel
anichim ba /
klopon abaiik ta chan jehel anichim
sat

speak to each other at the four sides of your flowery face /
speak to each other at the four sides of your flowery visage
ti yajval ch'ul vinajeloxukte / for you are the lords of holy heaven
 ti yajval ch'ul balamiloxukte you are the lords of holy earth

In much the same way, the chanib eskina, 'four corners', that enclose a new house during its dedication ceremony represent the bounded, protected universe in microcosm. A space as consecrated by prayer has a typical, quadrilateral geometry.

(22) t843a48 Earthquakes—house dedication

svik'obil tu yu satike / awakening place of their humble
 skukobil ti yo'. eyes / resting place –

ali ta yu xmale / ali ta yu sakube at dusk / at dawn
 ali ta yu k'ak'ale / ali ta yu ak'ubale in the day / in the night
 yu'un avalabik un / for your children /
 yu'un anich' nabik un for your offspring

mu me xach' a'bekon ti spat e / do not throw away their back /
 ti yu xokone their lowly side

mu me jipbiluk tal yu xmal un / may they not be discarded at dusk
 mu me jipbiluk tal yu sakub un may they not be discarded at dawn
 yajval ch'ul vinajeltik / lord of holy heaven /
 yajval ch'ul balamileltik lord of holy earth
 mu me xbak' tanche ch'ul / may your flowery face not move
 mu me xbak' ti yu-
 chan jech ti chotlebike / chan jech siv saktik.
 chan jech ti svot'lebike chan jech ti svik'obil satike /
 chan jech ti skukobil ji yu' on chan jech ti skukobil (il yo' on)

o'lol ch'ul k'ok / o'lol ch'ul yut na

o'lol svik'obil sat / should he walk / should he travel
 o'lol skukobil yo'on ch'ul un / ch'un chmy un should he go down / should he go up
 ti yu avalabe / ti yu anich'nabe

center of the holy fire / center of the house

center of the awakening place / the resting place
of your child / of your offspring

As this last prayer suggests, in addition to the four corners or boundaries, houses also have o'lol, 'middles', considered by Vogt (1976) to be the most vulnerable spot in the house since it is far from the ritually secured corners. Those things to which prayer ascribes an o'lol or 'center' include, in addition to the earth and heavens themselves, the hearth and house (o'lol ch'ul k'ok / o'lol ch'ul yut na), the eating place / drinking place, the place of sitting / kneeling (chotlebike / svot'lebike), and the place of rest (o'lol svik'obil sat / o'lol skukobil yo' on).

Being away from home, on the road, is fraught with danger, and travelers are especially vulnerable. In recent times, as Zinacanteces and other Tzotzil speaking Indians from Chiapas have made their ways across borders and even oceans in search of work, shamans and patron saints are kept busy guarding their sons and daughters far from home.\(^{137}\) Of course it has long been true for Zinacanteces that productive life requires travel, captured in such doublets as be / xan, 'path / pace', tek' / xan, 'step / pace' –references to the (once) standard mode of travel on foot— and yal / muy, 'to descend / to ascend', bat / eeb', 'go / pass', and li / totz', 'start out / leave' (lit., be lifted off) home (conceived of as a place to which one sticks, like a tortilla to a hot griddle), verbs that capture both the traveler's varied trajectories across the territory, and a certain reluctance travelers may feel to set out at all. In a curing ceremony for a senior ritual advisor, who is referred to indirectly as ba'yi ch'ul xanavel / chitnel, 'the first holy walker / the first holy traveler' (because of the ritual circuits and cycles of visits over which he must preside), the shaman asks his divine addressees to protect the patient as he moves across the landscape. He refers to the patient's movements, in both ritual and everyday life, as follows:

(23) m145-48

k'usi chanav, k'usi chbein
k'usi chyal un / k'usi chmy un

should he walk / should he travel
should he go down / should he go up

\(^{137}\) Before a recent journey between Chiapas and the United States, I asked a Chamula compadre who is also a powerful curer to accompany me on a visit to the San Juan church in the cabeceras of Chamula. He spontaneously improvised a series of prayers to protect me "wherever I traveled / walked, whether on bus / train, car / airplane".
The road or path on which one moves is itself presented in prayer as an inherently dangerous, exposed place, where one's troubles may be on public view, and where, likewise, the evil activities of a witch or other wrongdoer can be recognized and exposed. The dangers of the public eye, fixed on the path, are neatly encapsulated in the etymology of the doublet: be / ileb, 'path / place of seeing'. In the following fragment of an anti-witchcraft prayer, the shaman asks that the witch's prayer be silenced as he walks the public paths, where he is, that is, exposed to public view.

(24) petecute04
mabtik ak te / ra ileb
mi ye / ti sti' e kajval

may it be blocked on the path / on the place for seeing
his mouth / his lips, my Lord

On the other hand, judging by the imagery of place in prayer, even staying at "home" is in itself no protection from danger. The standardization of doublets of prayer characterize home as bounded by its corners and its roof (ba te / ba texa, 'top of the rafters / top of the tiles'), as a place to guard ones possessions (na / k'ileb, 'house / place of wealth'), as a place to rest in comfort (choteb / wotz'leb, 'place to sit / place to be bent over') or to take nourishment (ve'eb / uch'eb, 'place to eat / place to drink'), and as a set of linked domestic spaces (o lol yat na / o lol amak, 'middle of the interior of the house / middle of the yard'). As we have seen in fragments of prayer, home is secured by shamanistic ritual designed to seal it intruders of all sorts. Yet encounters with such demons as jëk'alek, 'blackmen' (see Blasfer 1972, Laughlin 1988) show that one can be a target while at home as well. My goddaughter Mal had gone only a few meters from her house one dark night when a supernatural blackman came bursting through the fence around her yard, striking her dumb and leading to a prolonged illness.

(25) Video 93.06, 47:18:19, cepmalps.trs
352 ch; we heard something while we were squatting
356 there was a strange noise down by the house

It went like this
(knock knock knock knock knock)

m; Just like that, a knocking sound
378 ch; I didn't pay much attention
380 but just a moment later...
381 m; I didn't pay attention either
383 I just heard the noise

"Where is that coming from?", I thought.

At that moment my brother Mariano's child was crying
"Why perhaps the baby got frightened", I thought
I thought maybe that woman had frightened her child.
"Perhaps she's come out to comfort it", I thought.

There was a knocking sound.

I turned around this way to have a look.

That's when I heard it come with a crash!

It came right up to the tree.

We have a gate there

= Our gate is there

It banged its arms on it

It did this to the plank fence. ((spreading it wide))

It's awful belly was white

And the rest of it was black

I screamed

Though I wasn't aware of screaming.

In their narrative about this encounter Mal and her husband paint a picture of the enclosed domestic space—the house, the yard, the sitio enclosed by fence, the gate, a familiar tree, the nearby yards of the neighbors—and juxtapose this image with the violation of the space by the demon who bursts upon the scene.

To summarize: in this first part of the paper we have seen how the stylized Tzotzil of Zinacantec ritual portrays geography, both quotidian and sacred. This geography starts with the notion of balamíl, the earthly surface upon which human lives are played out, but imbued with a life of its own, the ability both to nourish and to destroy the people who dwell...
upon it. Fragile souls may become detached from bodies and remain trapped on the balamitl, as a result of fright or from the malice of others. The balamitl is also the domain of the Lord of the Earth, whose creatures both feed and assail humankind, and whose appetite for souls to work his subterranean fields is voracious.

Prayer further distinguishes and attributes powers to specific aspects of the surface of the earth. Mountains and caves are places of special access to the beings, both well- and ill-intentioned, that inhabit earth and heaven. Forest and waterhole are similarly singled out for respectful treatment and care, as domains of the Earth Lord. Cornfields—carved from this domain—also require special protection, among other things against the destructive forces of the earth itself: devastating winds, earthquakes, thunder and lightning, all of which receive conventional ritual doublets and frames in prayer. Finally, even the most domesticated of spaces—paths trod by human beings, houses and yards where they dwell—receive special ritual attention, crystallized in the stacked images of parallel language.

The physical terrain of a curing ceremony

Let me now turn to the specific use of space in the process of shamanistic curing itself. Once a sick person or his or her relatives decide to mount a major curing ceremony—known variously as, among other things, -ich'il, 'receive a "seeing"', -il, 'to oneself a "difficulty"', or -ich' jok'atel, 'receive "hanging"' (that is, a ceremony in which a sacrifice is offered at a mountain shrine), costly and elaborate preparations must be made for a ritual which may last many hours and involve visits to several churches, crosses, and coves across the terrain of Zinacantan and sometimes beyond. The shaman, once contracted, must make a series of geographical decisions—which sites to visit—along with a set of calculations about candles, flowers, sacrifices, food and drink to be dedicated at each place.

Work on Tzeltal prayer (Breton and Becquelin Monod 1989, Monod and Becquelin 1993, 2000) long ago demonstrated that shamanistic prayer itself can recreate a virtual sacred geography of a community. When the curer recites the names of saints and shrines that circumscribe (or expand) a ritual space he or she reproduces in words the ritual circuit traced either in fact or in principle by the curing party. Although I have never encountered such an elaborated spoken map in prayer in Zinacantan, there are similar manifestations of a virtual, imagined geography in Tzotzil curing, with a few twists.

There are, first, long sequences in prayer in which the shaman calls out the names of saints and sacred shrines (the verb in Tzotzil for such naming is ti, 'beat, strike, play'), involving them in the action of the moment. Audiences to such prayer are not always able to follow the logic of the progression, in the context at hand. For example, the following extract is from a ceremony to secure a new corn crop against wind; it was performed far from Zinacantan, at a small ranch called Nuevo Guerrero near Villa Flores, in the central plateau of the Grijalva Valley where a group of Zinacantecs had established farming operations over several years. The curer invokes a progression of saints, some of whom are familiar to Zinacantecs in their highland home, others who relate specifically to other lowland ranches where Zinacantecs have farmed. The curer thus both appeals to the guardian deities of Zinacantan itself, in various manifestations, and at the same time acknowledges local places and their patron saints.

(26) t88b45–4th cross at Nvo. Guerrero
ch'ul rey / ch'ul anjel / ch'ul-komon me xak'opon abaikt
xchi'uk i ch'ul sinyor sansalvarol /
jon / xchi'uk i ch'ul sinyor sansalvarol kajal
xchi'uk i ch'ul sinyor san mikel /
xchi'uk i ch'ul sinyor san Manye
ch'i'uk i ch'ul me santamaria jme /
santamaria jkaxayil
ch'i'uk i ch'ul santo meriko jor /
meriko kajal
komun k'opuk bi / komun ti'uk bi

holy king / holy angel / holy-skape together
with holy Sir St. Salvador, my father / with holy St. Salvador, my lord
with holy Sir St. Michael /
with holy Sir St. Manuel with Virgin St. Mary, my mother / St. Mary, my lady
with the holy Doctor my father / Doctor lord
May the words be shared / may the mouth be shared
Here the curer invokes the power of quite specific saints, in this case, as it turns out, exactly the saints that this shaman keeps and consults at his own personal household altar. That is, he starts with his own divine familiars, starting his homage with those closest to him personally.

\[\text{chi'uk i ch'ul kalvaryo ta o'lol ch'ul vinajel / chi'uk i ch'ul pagre eterno jtor} \]
\[\text{chi'uk i ch'ul vaxakmen to o'lol ch'ul vinajel / chi'uk i ch'ul vaxakmen ta o'lol-chi'uk i ch'ul santo (???) komun k'op un / komun ti'uk} \]

\[\text{chi'uk i ch'ul sinyor sanvisente jtor / sinyor san visente kajval vaxakmen jtor / vaxakmen kajval...} \]

With holy Calvary in the center of holy heaven / with the Holy Eternal Father, my Lord with the holy creator in the center of heaven / with the holy creator in the center of — with holy St. (???) may the words be shared / may the mouth be shared with holy St. Vincent my father / Sir St. Vincente my lord Creator my father / creator my lord...

The shaman proceeds to name several generic saints, finally invoking the saint for whom the distant place where they currently find themselves is named: St. Vincent.

\[\text{chi'uk i ch'ul sinyor iskipula jtor / iskipula kajval santorenso / santorominko tzauke ch'ul marya rosaryo / marya kantelaria nichimal ch'ul jmanganey / nichimal ch'ul jtojvanej santo ta trapich jtor / santo ta trapich kajval} \]

The shaman goes on to name the most important patron saints of Zinacantec, their home community—the Señor of Esquipulas, St. Lawrence, St.

Dominic, the Virgins of the Rosary and Candelaria, and Christ himself—before again returning to local patron saints. The logic, if one is to be discerned, seems to be that of a mnemonic test: all saints, far and near, that may be relevant to the task at hand—protecting a young cornfield from wind and storms. The shaman must identify the supernatural protectors of local space, and \[\text{tij} \] them along with the protectors of home, in an apparent mixed sequence.

By contrast, in the following extract from a curing prayer performed at a roadside cross called \[\text{ch'ul ton, 'holy rock'}, \] to the west of Zinacantec center on the path that leads from the sacred salt wells of Atz'alam to the cabecera, the shaman anticipates exactly the shrines which she will shortly visit as the curing ceremony proceeds. She invokes the deities of those sites in the valley of Zinacantec (the cross atop Calvary—the last stop of the curing party in Zinacantec Center—and the chapel of the Sr. de Esquipulas) to await her arrival.

\[\text{(27) ch'ul ton} \]
\[\text{ch; ta to la me jkejan / ta to la me jpatan} \]
\[\text{ti ta kalvaryo ch'ul vinajel / ti ta kalvaryo ch'ul balamile;} \]
\[\text{ti ta sakil ch'enal ch'ul vinajel / sakil ch'enal ch'ul balamil} \]
\[\text{ti ta sinyor iskipula trapich jtor / ti ta sinyor iskipula trapich kajval} \]

I will make (my patient) kneel / I will prostrate (her) at Calvary, holy heaven / at Calvary, holy earth at the white cave, holy heaven / holy earth before Sr. Esquipulas of Trapich father / before Sr. Esquipulas of Trapich, lord

There is awaited my earth / there is awaited my mud Whenever I arrive kneeling / whenever I arrive prostrate

There may also be retrospective acknowledgement of the shrines visited on a curing circuit. For example, on arrival at the house of the patient, after a grueling 36 hours trek from shrine to shrine, the shaman in the following extract recapitulates the major sites she has visited, or passed near...
marya sisil jme'—
* ich'o
/marya sisil jkaxayil
Mary Cecilia mother
[drink!]
/Mary Cecilia lady

(At the point in the prayer marked with *, the shaman briefly breaks frame and answers another participant who has toasted her, using the standard response ich'o, 'drink!', but barely missing a beat in her parallel recital of the relevant saints and their shrines.)

bik't sisl jme' / bik't sisl jkaxayil
Small Cecilia mother / Small Cecilia lady

sakil ch'enal ch'ul maretik /
White Cave holy seas /
sakil ch'enal ch'ul lorya
White Cave holy lords

k'usi ti nopolis / k'usi ti p'isoble:
What has been decided / what has

ch'ul nek'eb vitzal jme' /
Holy Shoulder Mountain mother /
ch'ul nek'eb vitzal jkaxayil
lady
ch'ul jch'abjej-chon /
Holy guardian of animals /
ch'ul jch'abjej-osil
holy guardian of earth

A different strategy is available to relate a curing circuit to the sacred geography. The curer in the following extract mentions a series of sacred sites in the cabecera of Zinacantan that would be relevant to this particular patient; then she acknowledges, with a somewhat extemporized doublet (shown with an arrow on the transcript), that in this particular ceremony she intends to visit only a few ("only one / only two") local crosses. She thus acknowledges a site which she plans to omit from a given ceremonial circuit, simply by incorporating it into her prayer.

(29) v9522037
na jojal yij / na joj k'on
old Crow's Nest / yellow Crow's Nest

muxul jme' / muxul jkaxayil
Snub-nosed mother / Snub-nosed lady

ba ni'o jme' / ba ni'o jkaxayil
Top Spring mother / Top Spring lady

410 411
Spacios mayas: representaciones, usos, creencias

mu xa bu atek'el / mu xa bu axanel
alavatinajebe / alatzebinajebe kajval
alatz'elik / alavich'onik kajval
li' no me june / li' no me chibe

You will not be stepped on / not be walked
Your washing place / Your shampooing place, lord
Your edge / your front, lord
Here only one / here only two
[shrines]

A curing ceremony is thus conceptualized, via prayer, as a journey from one sacred place—abode of a powerful force—to another. The house of the patient, starting and ending point of the curing circuit, is sacralized by the process of curing itself, especially via prayer. Indeed, the prayer emanating from the curer's mouth and embodied in his or her voice may represent the journey more faithfully or more fully than the physical body of the human participants as they trek across the face of the earth.

Virtual spaces

It is perhaps worth a short digression to examine the geography of virtual spaces, those which human beings cannot experience directly, because they are not found ta sba balamitl, 'on the face of the earth', the realm of the universe available to waking souls. As I have mentioned, however, these other spaces can be visited in the journeys of the soul called vayal, 'dreams'.

These other spaces are also represented graphically in prayer. Ancestral deities are said to keep the animal spirits, which correspond to and represent individual human beings, inside great corrals inside the mountains, topped by shrines. In prayer, these virtual spaces are referred to with the doublet yut mok / yut koral, 'inside the fence / inside the corral'.

ala ch'ul nak'ubale:
mi chavak'bon to ta yur amokik /
mi chavak'bon to ta yur akoral un
mi chavak'bekon to ta toyol /
chavak'bekon to ta kajal

your holy shadow?
Will you place her for me inside your fence / inside your corral?
Will you place her for me on high / above?

In parallel with earthly scribes, who keep important records (lists of prospective office holders, fiesta contributions, dates, offerings at church, and so on) ta sba balamitl, prayer invokes a divine scribe who keeps lists of mortal men. The doublets again combine Tzotzil roots with Spanish loans: un / lapis, 'paper / pencil', and libro / tz'ib, 'book / mark'.

(31) petucure05
kajval / sinyor secretario
o'lol ch'ul vinajel / o'lol ch'ul gloria
ak'o ta avun / ak'o ta alapis /
ak'o ta alibro kajval / ak'o ta az'ib kajval

My Lord / Sir Secretary
In the middle of holy heaven / holy glory
Put in your paper / Put in your pen
Put in your book, my lord / in your writing, my lord

Ritual speech also incorporates a series of virtual places, names for which are productively formed from verb roots combined with the suffix -eb(al), which implicate a sacred geography rarely made explicit beyond the discursive realm of prayer. For example, from the standard doublet tzob / lot, 'gather / form a pair', which is used in a variety of morphological guises to talk about gatherings and groups of any sort, one can form the place-doublet tzoblebal / lotlebal, 'gathering place / meeting place', which denotes a virtual venue for the communal deliberations of various deities. Similarly, in the following fragment of anti-witchcraft prayer, the curer conjures the image of the enemy witch, who is in turn praying to ask that his or her victim be brought to an untimely demise. This death of the victim is conveyed by among other things a reference to a virtual journey to kajebal / k'otebal, 'ending place / arrival place'—that is, one final resting place, death.
Espacios mayas: representaciones, usos, creencias

(32) petucure03
ak'o chamuk mi xi / ak'o lajuk mi xi
“May she die”, have they said /
“May she end”, perhaps they have said

ak'o sk'u'un lum mi xi / ak'o sk'u'un ach'el mi xi
“Let her wear dirt”, have they said /
“Let her wear mud”, perhaps they have said

ak'u - ak'u batuk ta lajebal mi xi / (ak'u batuk ta k'otebal mi xi)
“Let her go to the ending place”, have they said / “Let her go to the arriving place”, perhaps they have said.

Many aspects of this virtual geography are expressed in prayer by reference to a virtual sacred anatomy, in which deities are possessed of virtual bodies and bodily needs. A patient is put into divine care by being dispatched verbally ta yolon yok / ta yolon sk'ob, “under the foot / under the hand”, of a relevant deity. He or she is presented to the deity’s attention appearing ta sba / ta sat, “before its face / before its visage”, or perhaps stz'el / ta yichon, “at its side / at its front”. The shrines themselves —scents of sometimes prodigious consumption of candles, flowers, food, and drink— are sometimes described as ‘the deities’, ve'eb / uch'eb, ‘place eating / place of drinking’.

(33) ob'ul ton
x'el an ti kunen k'o pe / ti kunen ti 'e
Where I walk / Where I travel

ti bu chixanave / ti bu chibeine
With the sick person / With the healthy person

jchi'uk i jchamele / jchi'uk i jlajele
Only thus has she found your eating place / your drinking place

Or they may be described as vayebal / ta lebal, ‘place of sleeping / place of stretching out’. (In [34], both the curer and her patient echo such a reference in their simultaneous prayer.)

(34) isaksmul
x; mu me xamajebkon un / mu me xavuthekun un
m; ti ch'ul vayebal une / ti ta ch'ul ta lebal une
m; ta ch'ul vayebal / ta ch'ul ta lebal

ta arz'el une / ta avichon une
m i oy to li jimu l une / mi oy to li jkolo' une

Curer: Do not beat her / do not scold her
Here in the holy sleeping place / in the holy stretching out place
Patient: In the holy sleeping place / the holy stretching out place
At your side / at your front
Have I still a sin / have I still an evil?

Or in a final bodily image, in cornfield ritual asking for divine guarantees of rain, the reference is to the gods’ atinajeb / tzebinajeb, ‘washing place / shampooing place’.

(35) kkusrec
mi li' to xul ta p'ajel yo
lavatinajebik / yu latzebinajebik

sjaxobil yu lavokik / sjaxobil yu lak'obik uk une:
mi kamak'lanas to ti bik'ite / michamak'lanas to ti muk'e
mi kamak'lanas to ti p'ejele / ti luchul uk une

Will drops still arrive at your washing place / at your shampooing place?
For rinsing your feet / for rinsing your hands
Will you still feed the small / will you still feed the large?
Will you feed the round / the perched?

Verbal geography: spoken representations of place in Tzotzil ritual speech

Let me turn, finally, to a closer examination of the representations of place in Tzotzil prayer. The semantics of Tzotzil, especially the deictic system, affords the curer a delicate instrument for tracking the movement of the curing party, and the stages of the ceremony, in both word and deed. That is, deictic elements which keep the ritual firmly anchored in an (albeit con-
Dangerous Places in Zinacantec Prayer

(37) v9521310: praying for Lol mi li' ta x'olin komel / li' ta la x'olin ech'el u jun chamele / ti jun lajele li ta sparte / li ta xokone

Will he recover to stay / will he recover to leave (from) the one sickness / the one injury on his back / on his side?

The place of the moment thus becomes the receptacle for the patient's unwanted illness. Reversing the image, in the following extract from a house dedication ceremony, it is the owners themselves who will remain 'seated / settled' in the place of utterance, the center of the new house.

(38) comit113 chanib eskina jot / chanib eskina kajval ch'ul balamil / ch'ul vinajel ch'ul rey / ch'ul anjel yajval lum / yajval osil kajval li' ta jchotan komel / ta yutz'an komel lavalabe / lanich' nab une kajval

c four corners, father / four corners, lord holy earth / holy heaven holy king / holy angel lord of earth / lord of land, lord here I leave seated / I leave kneeling your child / your offspring, my lord

Another topological motion verb is lok' , 'exit', whose semantics imply passage from inside to outside of a bounded space. In (39) the shaman conceptually laminates two spaces conceptualized as bounded; she prays that her patient not be ejected from either. The patient in question is the son-in-law of a Zinacantec who himself comes from another, somewhat poorly regarded Tzotzil township. Having married into the village, he has fallen ill, presumably because of the jealousies of his brothers-in-law. The curer prays for the man not to be expelled, in the first instance from the "corals" of the ancestral deities, but by implication, from the village as well.

(39) v9522037 mu xach'ayik lok'el / mu xatenik lok'el

Do not drive out / do not chase out

Several topological motion verbs are prominent in curing prayer. The first is kom, 'remain', which denotes the absence of motion and which is frequently anchored deictically by an explicit demonstrative (li', 'there', te, 'there'). Several prayer frames center on the root kom, and they emphasize that - while the circuit of curing (and of life) will continue - some things are to be left behind in the indicated space, most commonly ti jun chamele / ti jun lajele, 'the one sickness / the one injury'. Thus, while praying in the cave at Isak'tik, a curer beets her patient with pine boughs intoning the following lines:

(36) majisak'
pero li' chkom tave'ebe / tavuch'ebe: But here will stay at your eating place / your drinking place
li' ia xkom iipe / li' ia chkom i Here will stay one sickness / one pain, my lord
k'ux une kajval

stantly shifting) here-and-now are incorporated into prayer, providing a continually revised verbal map of the terrain as the ceremony proceeds.

Zinacantec Tzotzil makes use of a set of motion verbs that link topological configurations with deictically anchored perspectives and vectors. Productive morphology allows these verbs to appear in different guises, including auxiliaries and directionals, with the result that aspects of motion and direction can be incorporated into descriptions of many types of events and situations whose main verbs or predicates do not themselves encode direction or motion (see Haviland 1990). The resulting delicacy of deictic expression allows interlocutors to maintain a spatial perspective and to trace shifting deictic centers and transpositions (Bühler 1934, 1987; Hanks 1990, 1992) in a wide range of discourse contexts where such specialization is somewhat unexpected. Ritual discourse is no exception. Thanks to directional and auxiliary elements ubiquitous in Tzotzil grammar, prayer also remains deictically anchored, affording us a somewhat different view - with which I will end this exploratory essay - of the paths of curing and the geography of sickness and health, safety and danger in Zinacantan.
May she stay inside your fence / inside your corral
You have seen the suffering / the misery of your child / of your offspring

Deictically anchored motion verbs, used as auxiliaries and directional in curing prayer, provide a constant tension between two contrasting places, the two end points of a vector anchored at one end in the here-and-now (Tzotzil li, `here`) and at the other in some there-then (Tzotzil te, `there`). Individual roots differ with respect to the deictic orientation (toward or away from `here`) and to the focus on different parts of the vector (setting out vs. arriving).

For example, the root k’ot means `arrive there`. In curing prayer it frequently anticipates arrival at future places on the curing circuit, with promises of visits to be made, sacrifices to be offered.

The verb root tal means `come`. It expresses a vector oriented towards `here`, but focused on setting out in this direction, anticipating yet arrivage `here`. In curing prayer, frames involving this verb are appropriate to expressing motivations for ones visit to the present place. Such frames may describe the shaman’s or patient’s intentions or motives for visiting a given shrine:

The semantics of k’ot encapsulates the telos of curing: reaching certain places and thereby achieving certain states. Typical frames which incorporate k’ot refer to the arrival at a shrine for the sacrifice of a rooster (tejol / lok’ol, `replacement / substitute`, for the patient, which will tajin muyubaj, `play / rejoice`, that is, flop around after its neck has been wrung), or of the anticipated arrival of such offerings as candles (toj / kotel, `pine / candle`) and incense (pom / ch’ail, `incense / smoke`), considered food for the gods (Vogt 1976). They may anticipate the trajectory of the curer and patient, who will arrive at the new place kejel / patal, `kneeling / prostrate`. Or, such k’ot frames may introduce the image of a witch who is expected to head for some unnamed not-here to perform acts of evil.

I suppose someone has arrived kneeling
If someone has sought with his head with his heart
If someone has called on your head / your heart
If someone has arrived crying / if someone has arrived banging, my lord

The verb root tal means `come`. It expresses a vector oriented towards `here`, but focused on setting out in this direction, anticipating yet arriving `here`. In curing prayer, frames involving this verb are appropriate to expressing motivations for ones visit to the present place. Such frames may describe the shaman’s or patient’s intentions or motives for visiting a given shrine:

The semantics of k’ot encapsulates the telos of curing: reaching certain places and thereby achieving certain states. Typical frames which incorporate k’ot refer to the arrival at a shrine for the sacrifice of a rooster (tejol / lok’ol, `replacement / substitute`, for the patient, which will tajin muyubaj, `play / rejoice`, that is, flop around after its neck has been wrung), or of the anticipated arrival of such offerings as candles (toj / kotel, `pine / candle`) and incense (pom / ch’ail, `incense / smoke`), considered food for the gods (Vogt 1976). They may anticipate the trajectory of the curer and patient, who will arrive at the new place kejel / patal, `kneeling / prostrate`. Or, such k’ot frames may introduce the image of a witch who is expected to head for some unnamed not-here to perform acts of evil.

I suppose someone has arrived kneeling
If someone has sought with his head with his heart
If someone has called on your head / your heart
If someone has arrived crying / if someone has arrived banging, my lord

The verb root tal means `come`. It expresses a vector oriented towards `here`, but focused on setting out in this direction, anticipating yet arriving `here`. In curing prayer, frames involving this verb are appropriate to expressing motivations for ones visit to the present place. Such frames may describe the shaman’s or patient’s intentions or motives for visiting a given shrine:

The semantics of k’ot encapsulates the telos of curing: reaching certain places and thereby achieving certain states. Typical frames which incorporate k’ot refer to the arrival at a shrine for the sacrifice of a rooster (tejol / lok’ol, `replacement / substitute`, for the patient, which will tajin muyubaj, `play / rejoice`, that is, flop around after its neck has been wrung), or of the anticipated arrival of such offerings as candles (toj / kotel, `pine / candle`) and incense (pom / ch’ail, `incense / smoke`), considered food for the gods (Vogt 1976). They may anticipate the trajectory of the curer and patient, who will arrive at the new place kejel / patal, `kneeling / prostrate`. Or, such k’ot frames may introduce the image of a witch who is expected to head for some unnamed not-here to perform acts of evil.
Come surround us / come enclose us!

He (the patient) has come to be watched / has come to be seen

Several of these lines can be seen in the context of a curing prayer offered inside the church of San Lorenzo, the patron saint of Zinacantan.

She is suffering at dusk / suffering at dawn
She has come with worried head / she has come with worried heart
She is suffering, she is in pain
She has come broken / she has come falling apart
She has come saying “ay” / she has come saying “uy”

The root yut, ‘arrive here’, is somewhat the reverse of k’ot, focusing on the endpoint of a vector that ends in the here-and-now. In curing prayer, frames built around yut suggest the immediacy of arrival, and the power of the current place. Thus, for example, when the shaman arrives at the final stop of her circuit—her patient’s house—in the following fragment, she emphasizes that she has returned, and that she now approaches the house cross, on bended knee, to make the final offerings on her patient’s behalf.

I have come back / I have returned
Under the feet / under the hands
of Mary Rosario / of Mary the ladina
Will it be well received / will it be well
thought of Her lowly pine / her lowly candle?
For that alone am I arrived here
kneeling / am I arrived here prostrate
Espacios mayas: representaciones, usos, creencias

cosmological frames and doublets both encapsulate standardized concepts
in the matrix of social activities where prayer occurs, and also permit a
semiotic flexibility to apply the genre in new ways. I have tried to exploit
both the standard and the creative here.

As with most of our analytical categories, space and place are largely
projected onto the world via the interactive discourses that constitute the
bulk of social life. Zinacantec, of course, talk about space all the time
and the semantic resources that ground this talk have been the subject of
considerable previous research. I have chosen to look at place as depicted
in Zinacantec ritual language first because shamanistic prayer focuses
explicitly on place and the physical terrain of the community, and because
the language juxtaposes conventionalized stereotopic imagery—encapsu-
lapping cultural stereotypes of kinds of places, and ways of talking about
them—with semiotic malleability in the creative tailoring of ritual talk in
the precise moment of its production.

What emerges is a view of space and place suffused with a profound
ambivalence, an ambivalence that underlies much of Zinacantec cosmo-
logy and in turn grounds Zinacantec theorizing about illness and health.
A place may be at once nurturing and dangerous, a site both for perform-
ing and for reversing witchcraft, a house one to inhabit in peace and
which one guards ones wealth in, or in which to tremble in fear and love
high and low as the walls collapse. The dangerous mountaintop / hilel
is at once an exposed graveyard, a vulnerable cornfield, and the abode
of gods, ancestors, and the Lord of the Earth with his snakes, clouds, and
thunder following close behind. The earth itself, balamit, where all the
places humans live are to be found, exhibits the same ambivalence: source
of wealth and sustenance, but infinitely dangerous and potentially host
subject to exploitation and use, but treacherous and vengeful.

The method, I submit, also recommends itself. Prayer is the most
specialized of speech—so specialized, indeed, that by Zinacantec theory
cannot be learned, but must instead be bestowed directly on its prac-
tioners by divine inspiration, normally in a dream. Its semantic tools
have been honed by centuries of poetic tradition, and they thus dissect the
world into its most carefully worked bits and pieces. Prayer is also the most
vicious talk imaginable: it is pure performative, unalloyed speech.

Dangerous Places in Zinacantec Prayer

first and foremost doing things with words. In curing, it conveys the
desires and tracks the actions of its protagonists. Therefore, just as a curing
party makes its way deliberately across the landscape, so too does prayer
follow the spatial progress of the ceremony, giving us an elaborate if
sometimes oblique verbal map of the sacred geography of the process of
the cure. Prayer also affords us glimpses of those virtual spaces which
are beyond the reach of ordinary powers of perception, acting thus as a
unique lens on aspects of Zinacantec geography not otherwise accessible.
It is also through prayer that Zinacantec guarantee the irrelevance of
place, and secure the protection kajvalik, 'Our Lord' (if not of the Lord
of the Earth), in whatever place they may find themselves, whether near
or far:

(47) cb'il ton
bu xixanav / bu xitzunet
ilon to me un / k'elon to la me un
... x'el an ti kuren k'op / x'el an ti
kuren ti
ti bu chixanave / ti bu chibeine
jor / kajval

wherever I travel / wherever I am
huddled
continue to see me / to watch me
... thus are my few words / thus is my
little mouth
wherever I travel / whatever my path
my father / my lord

References cited

Aissen, Judith

Blaffer, Sarah
Breton, Alain et Aurore Becquelin Monod

Bühler, Karl


DuBois, John W.

Fox, James J.


Gossen, Gary H.

Hanks, William F.


Haviland, John B.

Haviland, John B. and Leslie K. Haviland

Haviland, Leslie K. and John B. Haviland

Laughlin, Robert M.


Laughlin, Robert M. (with John B. Haviland)
A GARDEN EXPERIMENT IN THE MAYA LOWLANDS

I. Introduction and Overview: The Garden Experiment

Using a variation on an experimental paradigm from biology, we distinguish the influence of certain socio-cultural factors (cognitive models, social networks) from economic, demographic and ecological factors (sources and level of income, family and population size, habitat and species) in environmental management and maintenance. In a "garden experiment," when members of a species have different phenotypes in different environments, samples are taken from both environments and replanted in only one. If the differences still exist, they are likely genetic (two genotypes); if not, then they are probably environmental (one genotype producing two phenotypes). Similarly, plausible evidence for the importance of culturally transmitted factors on behavior is data showing that groups of people who have different social histories and collectively identifiable mental make-ups behave differently in the same physical environment.

Physical and psychological measures show that three groups living off the same rainforest habitat manifest strikingly distinct behaviors, cognitions and social relations relatives to the forest. Only the area's last native Maya (Petén Itzá') reveal systematic awareness of ecological complexity involving animals, plants and people, and practices clearly favoring forest regeneration. Spanish-speaking immigrants prove closer to native Maya in thought, action and social networking than do immigrant Maya (Q'eqchi'). There is no overriding "local", "Indian" or "immigrant", relationship to the environment.