CENTEREDNESS AS A CULTURAL AND GRAMMATICAL THEME
IN MAYA-MAM

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I look at selected Maya-Mam anthropological and linguistic data and suggest that they provide evidence that there exist overlapping cultural and grammatical themes that are salient to Mam speakers. The data used in this study were gathered largely via ethnographic methods based on participant observation over my twenty-five year relationship with the Mam people of Comitancillo, a town of 60,000 in Guatemala's Western Highlands. For twelve of those years, my family and I lived among the Mam, participating with them in the cultural milieu of daily life.

In order to help shed light on the general relationship between language and culture, I discuss the key Mayan cultural value of centeredness and I show how this value is a pervasive organizing principle in Mayan thought, cosmology, and daily living, a value called upon by the Mam in their daily lives to regulate and explain behavior. Indeed, I suggest that centeredness is a cultural theme, a recurring cultural value which supersedes social differences, and which is defined for cultural groups as a whole (England, 1978). I show how the Mam understanding of issues as disparate as homestead construction, the town central plaza, historical Mayan religious practice, Christian conversion, health concerns, the importance of the numbers two and four, the notions of agreement and forgiveness, child discipline, and moral stance are all instantiations of this basic underlying principle.

I also suggest that centeredness, in addition to being a pervasive Mam cultural principle, is also a grammatical theme, what Hale calls a "lexico-semantic…motif which functions as an integral component in a grammar" (1986: 234). This grammatical theme is instantiated in large measure, by the formal notion of origo, the "space-time-social centre" of the world (Levinson, 1983, 64). I show that the idea of spatial centeredness (or recenteredness (Hanks, 1990)) as a grammatical theme is evidenced in the Mam lexicon, as well as in aspects of the morphology, syntax and narrative discourse structure of naturally occurring Mam texts.

These Mam data show that language and culture are interconstitutive (Enfield, 2000), structured and structuring cultural practice via the grammatical structures habitually employed.

Dedicated to the Mam people

Noqit ax Qman kyuk'i'y kykyaqilxa

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My wife, Nancy, has been my partner in all this and my best friend. Her work among the Mam and the love they express to and for her continue to be a blessing and motivation to me. While in Guatemala, she gave birth to our three precious children, now young adults, and she went on to home school them for many years. She and they are the source of deep joy and perspective.

I also thank the many people who supported our work among the Mam for so many years by their visits, their financial partnership, their friendship and their prayers.

Most of all, I thank God for the privilege of knowing each of the people I've mentioned here and countless others who I've been blessed to cross paths with during the trek which has become this dissertation.

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PUBLICATIONS

Research Publication

1.   Wesley M. Collins, Codeswitching avoidance as a strategy for Maya-Mam
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FIELDS OF STUDY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	absolutive
AUG	augmentative
DIM	diminuitive
DIR	directional
DUB	dubitative
EMPH	emphatic
ERG	ergative
EX	exclusive
HAB	habitual
INF	infinitive
NONFUT	non-future
PAST	past
PAS	passive
PERF	perfect aspect
PL	plural
POS	possessive
PROG	progressive aspect
PUNCT	punctual
REC	recent completed aspect
REM	remote completed aspect
SG	singular
SPEC	specifier

ORTHOGRAPHY EMPLOYED

Examples throughout this dissertation are in practical orthography with the exception of <xh> which is explained below. Assume Spanish pronunciation for all vowels with the following proviso: Although the Mam do not write vowel length, I have written it here to distinguish the directionals (which contain short vowels) from their corresponding intransitives (which may contain long vowels). The following consonants are pronounced as in Spanish: ch, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, w, and y.

The consonants <j> and <q> are uvular fricative and uvular stop respectively; <xh> is an alveopalatal fricative, while <x> is the retroflexed version of the same; <tx> is retroflexed alveopalatal affricate (backed <ch>); <ky> is a palatal stop; <tz> is an alveolar affricate. the consonant <b'> is an implosive bilabial stop.

Consonant plus <'> (glottal stop) are glottalized consonants (ch', k', ky', q' t', tx', tz'). A vowel plus glottal stop is considered a complex vowel and is written a', e', i', o', and u'.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Centeredness as a cultural and grammatical theme

My friend, Eugenio,[1] came to my house one morning and told me that he and I

shared a problem. I asked him what our problem was, and he said that our families were

off balance. He didn't actually articulate this shared problem…he gestured it. He said

that our families were like this, at which point he extended his arms to each side of his

body and tilted his head to the left, lowering his left arm while raising his right. When I

asked him what he was talking about, he said that neither he nor I had *jun qxel* 'a

replacement.' I queried further, to which he replied that we each had a wife and daughters

(my wife and I had two daughters at the time; he and his wife had four), but neither of us

had sons to "take our place" in the world after we were gone. He went on to describe

how typical families have a father, a mother, daughters and sons. A family without either

sons or daughters, or a mother or a father is like a dog with only three legs, he explained.

It just can't function properly without all four.

I didn't realize it at the time, but Eugenio was offering me a glimpse into the way

he and his people conceive of the world—where life is a series of relationships that

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[1] In this dissertation, everyone's name has been changed.

1

require constant care in order to achieve and maintain an elusive balance: physically, mentally, socially and spiritually—and also, where the cosmos is understood as the place where balance or, more specifically, centeredness, is the prime and normative good. In addition, each individual's place in the universe is a center from which all other movement is described. This notion of centeredness is a pervasive cultural value in the Mams' dealings with each other—an organizing principle of daily life—and it is basic to the way they conceive of the present world as well as the one to come.

In this dissertation, I suggest that this sense of centeredness is what Nora England calls both a cultural and a grammatical theme. Culturally, the idea of centeredness is pervasive in how the Mam conceive of relationships, how they define their presence in the world, how they construct their homes, cornfields and towns, how they conceive of health and illness, how they bury their dead, and how they think of life beyond the grave. In addition to these interrelated cultural ideas, but separate from them, "an analysis of the purely grammatical aspects of language reveals a set of grammatical themes which are the underlying organizational principles of a language, linking structure with semantics" (England, 1978: 225-226). She adds that these grammatical themes are "pervasive semantic categories with profound grammatical force" (ibid: 226). In other words, languages tend to privilege certain issues or themes that are instantiated not only in the lexicon, but throughout the language: in the morphology, the syntax, and the discourse structure as well.

To illustrate these notions of cultural and grammatical theme, I cite at some length, Hale (1986) and his research on Warlpiri, a language of central Australia, in order to lay the groundwork for this study. Hale claims that all cultures have two world views,

2

what he specifies as World View-1 (what I'm calling a cultural theme) and World View-2 (a grammatical theme). According to Hale, World View-1, or philosophy, is learned apart from language and is autonomous from grammar. It is acquired by participating in a group's cultural ways. Schaengold, for example, reports for Navajo: "Some Navajo families seem to maintain Navajo cultural norms without fluent use of the Navajo language. The proper respect for the elderly and clan relationships with other Navajos can apparently be maintained without the Navajo language itself" (2004: 18).

Although one need not be a full native speaker of a language to share World View-1, Hale additionally claims that such a world view is not even necessarily shared by all native speakers of the language because of different levels of sophistication and access by culture members to the events and mechanisms that exemplify the cultural details of how the world works. Certain areas of cultural knowledge are inaccessible to men, for example, or women or youth or the otherwise uninitiated.

Nevertheless, World View-1 is not orthogonal to language; its relation to language is not grammatical, but semantic. It is elaborated in the lexicon, for example, in the now mythic status of the supposed dozens (or scores or even hundreds) of "Eskimo words for snow" (Martin: 1986), where a culture's ways and concerns are coded in the words used to speak of issues significant to the members of a specific culture. These meanings become salient to participants in the daily practice of culture, whether or not they actually speak the language natively.

World View-2, because it is "embodied in the system of lexico-semantic themes or motifs which function as integral components in a grammar (Hale, 1986: 234), is necessarily and automatically shared by all native speakers as an epiphenomenon of

3

learning to natively speak one's heart language. World View-2 has an intimate relationship to the grammar far beyond the mere accumulation of lexical entries into a cultural thesaurus.

Hale exemplifies World View-1 (our notion of cultural theme) in the Warlpiri idea that entities in the world are persistent through transformation, that what one sees at any given time is just the real-time instantiation of something that has always been and will always be. He calls this a logic of cyclical perpetuity as opposed to the Western logic of beginnings and endpoints. He says that this eternal logic "runs through Warlpiri ritual and totemic theory," (ibid.: 235) and in the daily practice of relationships among the generations, for example, when an individual's character is passed from parent to child; in the passing of seasons that repeat endlessly; and in other ways in which the Warlpiri think about the nature of entities in the world.[2] In addition, he claims that the Warlpiri have no simple way to talk about making something *de novo* or *ex nihilo*. Rather, the three terms commonly employed for the English term 'to make' literally mean 'to cause to be good or useful,' 'to put in place' or 'to sculpt or trim.' The idea here is that the Warlpiri don't conceive of creativity as making something out of nothing. Rather, things become useful, organized, or shaped, but not created. They proceed, but they don't really begin. For example, people say that an appropriate limb of a tree *is already* a boomerang, not that it could become one if a craftsman were merely to fashion it. The lexicon is not what Hale has in mind when he talks about World View-2 being autonomous of language, since "it stands to reason that the language will have vocabulary

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[2] Hale doesn't spend a lot of time on World View-1 in this article. He points us to O'Grady, 1960 and Lakoff and Johnson, 1980 for further discussion.

to express these ideas" (ibid.: 237). The lexicon is part of Hale's World View-1, having to do with the coding of how the world works.

World View-2 deals not with the simple naming of cultural phenomena, nor with the content of history or ritual, but rather in the way the grammar privileges certain recurrent themes that are instantiated in various grammatical structures or on different grammatical levels, say the morphology and syntax. Hale claims that World View-2 is necessarily shared by all members of the culture since these broad themes are acquired in the very process of learning one's first language. It is clearly not autonomous of the grammar, but rather is coreferential with it in that the internalizing of these grammatical categories is how World View-2 is acquired.

To illustrate, Hale discusses what he calls the lexico-semantic theme of coincidence/non-coincidence as an instantiation of World View-2, or what I, following England, call grammatical theme. He suggests that Warlpiri has four principal local cases that are distinguished by a sense of "coincidence." What he claims is that two cases (locative and perlative) situate people specifically in the place named in the sentence. For example, in the sentences "Bob is sitting on a rock" and "Jill is at home," the subject of each sentence is situated at the location mentioned—the subject and location are "coincident." With the other two cases (allative and elative), the location mentioned is either a goal or source, but it is not where the subject of the sentence is located. For example, in the sentence "Jill left home," Jill and home are not co-situational. Jill is elsewhere.

Hale says that this same opposition of coincidence/non-coincidence is "almost perfectly replicated" (1986: 240) with the four Warlpiri directional enclitics. He calls

5

these either centrifugal (because action starts at the speaker and moves away) or centripetal (where action begins elsewhere and ends in the same location as (coincident with) the speaker).

He goes on to suggest that the very same theme of coincidence/non-coincidence serves as the basis for the marking of finite complementizers. For example, in the sentence, "When we sharpen an axe, we grind it," both the independent and dependent clauses are referentially coincident. One sharpens and grinds the axe at the same time. A non-coincident sentence would occur when the dependent clause either precedes or follows the independent clause, such as in, "I am looking for a snake around here, since I ran over it." Sentence complementizers are marked according to whether or not they are coincident with their respective head clause.

Hale claims that the same opposition obtains for infinitive complementizers. In "I see a kangaroo running," my seeing and the kangaroo's running are coincident. In " they soften the ochre with their hands having wet it with water," the softening follows the wetting with water. Coincident and non-coincident occurrences are marked contrastively just as in the finite complements, in the directional enclitics and in the local cases mentioned above.

Hale also maintains that tense and aspect hinge on this notion as well. Citing Reichenbach's (1966) view of tense and aspect as relationships among a time of speech (S), a predicated event (E) and a temporal point of reference (R), Hale suggests that Warlpiri tense is expressed as a coincident/non-coincident relation between S and R, while aspect expresses a coincident/non-coincident relation between R and E. In "The kangaroo is running," there is coincidence of tense between the present tense report (S)

6

and the kangaroo's present action (R). In "The kangaroo was running," there is aspectual coincidence between the running of the kangaroo and the past tense report of the event. However, in "The horse ran," the reference time of the predicated event precedes the time of speech—S and R are not coincident—while in "I will run," the time of speech (S) is non-coincident with the incompletive aspect of the event. According to Hale, Warlpiri marks these notions distinctly along this same parameter of coincidence/non-coincidence.

Finally, Hale says that the notion of secondary predication also is marked according to the same grammatical principle. In "The horse is running tired," the running and the tiredness are depicted as coincidental; the fatigue and running coincide. But in "The horse runs till tired," the sentence is marked for 'translative' case where the state depicted by the second predicate is the end result of the action of the first predicate.

To summarize, Hale claims that the abstract lexico-semantic theme of coincidence/non-coincidence is instantiated throughout the grammar of Warlpiri, and it forces a certain fashion of speaking, i.e. the necessary consideration of such a theme in the formation of utterances. He further claims that the semantic notions underlying the specific theme of coincidence/non-coincidence, be they expressed by complementizers, local cases, directional enclitics, tense and aspect marking or depictive and translative predications are universal semantic notions. The languages of all cultures can express such notions, but they do so by cutting the semantic pie in different ways, along culture-specific grammatical categories and structures. His point is that the theme of coincidence/non-coincidence is coerced upon speakers by the language itself. It is not the case that some languages simply cannot express certain concepts, but rather, that some concepts are coded subconsciously and automatically (grammatically) in a given

language, while others must be articulated more circuitously. This reflects Hockett who said: "Languages differ not so much as to what *can* be said in them, but rather as to what it is *relatively easy* to say" (1954: 122, emphasis in original). This is what Slobin (1996: 78) means when he talks about "thinking for speaking," that a language by the nature of the salience of certain grammatical categories forces speakers to attend to specific details of the world (for example, the importance of the Warlpiri coincidence/non-coincidence theme) if they want to say anything at all.

What Hale does not do is try to correlate his findings concerning the abstract notion of coincidence/non-coincidence and any cultural World View-1 behaviors that would be instantiations of this underlying grammatical theme. He says, "It seems to me to be a matter of luck, a chance happening when a neat correspondence between World View-1 and a principle of grammar…is met with" (ibid.: 237). Nevertheless, he says that part of our work as language and culture specialists is to search for just such correlations between World-View-1 and World View-2. What is particularly difficult about finding or purporting any "neat correspondence" between language and culture is that it is extremely challenging to figure out any way to "prove" that there is causation involved, i.e. language causing a certain kind of cultural behavior, or culture causing a certain grammatical theme. Understanding causation has always been a goal in the human sciences, but being empirical about plumbing the depths of causation has been an ongoing problem.

In this dissertation, I suggest that we look at the relationship between language and culture in terms of local interpretation. How do the people themselves view such a relationship and how does an outsider mount evidence to endorse such an interpretation?

8

To do this, I suggest that we adopt an interpretive model of analysis based not on empirical findings, but on interpretive reflection.

Itkonen (1978) claims that proof in the human sciences is different in a number of ways from proof in the natural sciences. First, the sense of measurability is different. In the natural sciences, things can be weighed and measured, but in the human sciences, such measurement is either impossible or trivial. Cultural phenomena such as values, contentment, faith, and honor, are not readily reducible to numbers and precise calculation. Despite the fact that there are physical, spatio-temporal coordinates to cultural phenomena, and there are certainly aspects of behavior that can be measured and timed, to reduce the phenomena themselves to the location where they take place and to the measured movements of bodies in space, though not unimportant, is to a large degree orthogonal to what it is that cultural anthropologists are trying to find out. Second, whereas positivistic proof requires the precise measurement of calculable phenomena—observable "objects" in space and time—the human sciences strive not to measure, but to understand or interpret observations not reducible to such calculable phenomena: things like attitudes, cultural values and world view. Itkonen says that proof (and data) for the more "human" sciences is hermeneutic, rather than positivistic. He defines this by suggesting that "it might be said that hermeneutics acquires its data through understanding meanings, intentions, values, norms, or rules, and the hermeneutic analysis consists in reflection upon what has been understood" (ibid.: 20).

I suggest that a hermeneutic approach is basic to Clifford Geertz's Interpretive Anthropology, an understanding of culture that privileges local action as well as local understanding and explanation. Nevertheless, for Geertz, although the local view is

privileged, it isn't presented in isolation, nor does it trump all outsider observation. Rather, Geertz models an ethnographic technique where he observes culture as a participant, one involved (even embroiled) in the very cultural and linguistic notions he is attempting to understand, while relating them to similar situations in our own culture and language. In this way, he tries to make the strange familiar by showing how an event as gruesome as a cockfight (1973: 412-453) is basically an instantiation of the issue of prestige, something that we understand very well, albeit within our own cultural trappings. At the same time, by focusing on the common occurrences of daily life in microscopic detail, Geertz also succeeds in making the familiar strange by showing us that we are largely unaware of the intricate details of things that we think and do each day. I detail this technique in Chapter Four and discuss how an emic analysis of cultural values overlays an etic account of "what the camera sees."

For Geertz, the goal of ethnography is not proof or *explanation* as the empirical behaviorist would want it, but *understanding* in the hermeneutic sense of interpreting behavior as it is locally meaningful. Dealing with culture and the human sciences is less about logic in the strict sense of the physical scientist and more readily about interpretation or validation—showing pattern, not necessarily cause.

Of course, since culture is so often expressed linguistically, and since language can only be fully understood in extended cultural context, the teasing apart of the linguistic and cultural aspects of these themes—especially when they coincide—may not be at all straightforward, but, repeating England, "Where these themes overlap (culturally and linguistically, WMC) will be found powerful elements of the world view of a people" (ibid.: 226). This makes sense, since we would expect a language to code most

adequately and extensively those factors most important to the speakers of that language, or, as DuBois so quotably puts it: "grammars code best what speakers do most" (DuBois 1985: 363). This coincides with Hymes's observation that not only does our native language affect how we conceive of the world (linguistic relativity as per Benjamin Whorf), but also culture—how we look at the world and participate in it—has a profound effect on our native language (Hymes: 1966), by effectively coding those elements and themes that are most salient to us as cultural insiders.

I propose that the Maya-Mam theme of centeredness is just such a powerful cultural and grammatical element, one which reflects, affirms and constructs this Maya-Mam world view. As one speaks Mam, the world view that is represented and reflected by the language is confirmed and established in the very act of speaking. Action in the world, of which speaking is a prime example, is both the outflow or product of the world view which engenders it, as well as the prime building block used to establish that very world view. This is at the root of what Bourdieu calls "the system of structured and structuring dispositions, the *habitus*, which is always constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions" (1990: 52). In the same way, I consider centeredness among the Mam as both a template of how the world works as well as a goal to achieve personal peace and communal accord. Vogt says that this idea "symbolizes the essence of social order, civilized behavior—whether out in the hamlets with their clusters of house compounds or in the ceremonial center with the "houses for the saints" and the "navel of the earth." This is in opposition to the "undomesticated domain populated by wild plants, wild animals and demons" (1976: 33).

It is this sense of order, equilibrium, fairness and harmony that typifies the world as it should be—centered—not extreme, nor unbalanced nor skewed. At the same time, the world is rarely so nicely organized, so centeredness becomes a goal to work toward and a cultural value that comprises that which is ultimately *b'a'n* 'good' and meaningful. I will continue to spell this out as we look at data from a variety of contexts.

So the distinction between what Hale calls world View-1 and World View-2 is not as neat as he may have intimated. Rather, the two are "interconstitutive, through overlap and interplay between people's cultural practices and preoccupations and the grammatical structures they habitually employ" (Enfield: 2002: 3-4).

To understand another culture, it isn't enough to note their practices, since the habitus is not simply an exhaustive cataloguing of disparate activities, nor is it comprised of merely speaking a language well. Rather, the habitus includes the notion of history, both the acquisition and augmentation of cultural knowledge, as well as how that knowledge has been appropriately expressed throughout reported history. This sense of "that's how things are and have always been" lays down extremely powerful norms for regulating and interpreting behavior.

Although practice and language don't by themselves constitute the habitus, they are nonetheless critical to an outsider's understanding of it—the embodied, routinized history, or "the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product" (ibid.: 56), Bourdieu argues that this view of culture as a template-action composite both guides our actions as members of a culture as well as builds a framework for the interpretation of those actions. This amalgam of conceptualizing (the template mentioned above) and doing (the action) in which cultural subjects operate meaningfully in the real world is the

overarching context for and the full content of an emic analysis of culture.[3] Of course,

we can only hope to approximate, rather than attain, a truly emic analysis of

culture—particularly a culture other than our own—but to strive to do so leads us into an

analysis of the practices and cultural knowledge of a people, both of which can be

expressed in language. This is what Geertz means when he says that culture is public—it

is "out there" where it can be seen, learned, taught, acted out, and interpreted. In this

dissertation, I am assuming that both grammatical and cultural themes are indeed public

and "out there" in the world as it is understood and lived out by the Mam.

My goal in this study is to establish the Maya-Mam integrating value of

centeredness as a cultural and grammatical theme, and to posit the relevance of such a

theme to our understanding of the relationship between language and culture. I show that

the particular overlap of the cultural and grammatical theme of centeredness is specific to

Maya-Mam and basic to the Mam conception of the world. As such, this notion supports

the concept of linguistic relativity, according to which language affects culture (language

is a force for structuring the world). But it also shows that culture affects language

(language is a construct built up by the articulation of our understanding of the world and

how it works).

As sociolinguistics has become a well respected branch of linguistics by showing

the relevance of social context to language choice and structure, so anthropological

linguistics merits the same respect from the broader field, as we see how relevant cultural

context is to language. My hope is that this dissertation will be a step in that direction,

presenting linguistic and anthropological data together in order to show the critical

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[3] For a helpful overview of Bourdieu and the habitus, see Duranti, 1997, pages 43-46.

importance of both in our quest to understand another culture. As sociolinguistics looks at variety within language, based on differing social contexts, linguistic anthropology seeks to understand the commonalities that all culture members share despite social and linguistic variation. In this sense, I consider culture to provide a "context for contexts." In other words, despite language variation based on gender, age, socio-economic class, geography, education and other potential factors,[4] people within the same larger culture still basically agree on linguistic code and world view, powerful factors that allow for successful communication and basic agreement about how the world works despite observable differences within the larger group.

1.2 An overview of this dissertation

In this initial chapter, following the introduction to the present study, I make some general comments about Mam language and culture and the context of my research.

In Chapter Two, I broadly review the literature on a number of related fronts—the discussion of cultural and grammatical theme, architectonics, Mayan health practice, religion, the Mam lexicon, ethnosyntax, deixis, discourse studies, linguistic relativity, and Interpretive Anthropology—all of which will play a role in our understanding of centeredness as a Maya-Mam grammatical and cultural theme. In Chapter Three I look specifically at centeredness in terms of three aspects of Mam life. First, I discuss what is often called architectonics, how people create meaning in the spaces that they occupy, or, as Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003: 185) suggest, how people transform physical "space" into meaningful "place." In this section, I discuss how both the Mam homestead

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[4] For a discussion of these "potential factors," see Dodsworth, 2005.

14

and the layout of the central plaza in both pre- and post-colonial Guatemala exist as both a template and reflection of the Maya-Mam world and world view. Next, I discuss health practice as a seeking of a center space or balance between hot and cold, a notion that deals with illness etiology and treatment. Finally, I look at religion, both traditional, as evidenced in the content of the *Popol Vuh* and in the writings of a number of scholars about present day traditional religion, and Protestant, as discussed in the words of Mam Protestants themselves.

In Chapter Four, I deal with centeredness as cultural practice. I discuss, in ethnographic style, why I chose ethnography as both a process and product for the discussion of centeredness and daily life, and I maintain a meta-dialogue with the reader about both the content of the chapter as well as the value of ethnography as scholarly practice. This chapter discusses several events that I participated in, one by invitation, and one definitely *not* by invitation, but which I tie together in terms of a search for centeredness. In this chapter, I also discuss how the Mam themselves (both consciously and unconsciously) talk about centeredness.

Chapter Five deals with centeredness as a grammatical theme. I discuss a closed class of twelve Mam intransitive verbs of motion and a corresponding set of directional auxiliaries and how they depend on a deictic center (speaker, other or arbitrary) as part of their lexical meaning. I then look at several directional suffixes and discuss how the meaning of both the directionals and the suffixes become less grounded in physical movement, while still maintaining a sense of center or norm. Next I discuss these suffixes as grammaticalized discourse deictics that signal material as discourse old or new. In terms of discourse structure and centeredness, I also suggest in Chapter Five that

the use of couplets in ritual rhetoric in both Mam and other Mayan languages is iconic of

our principle of centeredness and the sense of dualism that other writers—particularly

Gossen (1986:6) have mentioned. Finally, I cite Godfrey (1981) and England (1983) in

regard to Mam relational nouns and I discuss them in terms of the notion of centeredness.

In Chapter Six, I tie together the notion of an overlap of cultural and grammatical

theme and use it as a rubric for commenting on the relationship between language and

culture, and I make a few suggestions about what seem to be good areas for further

research. I end with a call to delight once again in the words of the eighteenth century

German writer, Johann Herder (cited in Schlesinger, 1991: 13), who celebrated linguistic

and cultural diversity with these words:

> Let the nations learn from one another, and let one continue where the
> other left off…every nation has its center of felicity in itself alone, as
> every sphere has its center of gravity…Is not the good distributed through
> the whole world? It is divided into a thousand forms, transformed, an
> eternal Proteus! —in every region of the world and in every century.

Language and culture are among the most basic elements of our humanity.

Thinking about the relationship between the two is one of the privileges and joys our

humanity affords us.

1.3 Some comments on Mam culture

Mam is a Mayan group of some 500,000 people in Guatemala's Western

Highlands and in some areas of southwestern coastal Guatemala, and parts of the state of

Chiapas in southeastern Mexico. The Mam homeland is in the Guatemalan departments

of Huehuetenango, San Marcos, and western Quetzaltenango, while the further reaches of

the language area are due to recent migrations caused by the lack of day labor and

affordable land in the traditional highland home of the Mam. There are Mam colonizers in the far northwest of Guatemala near Barillas, and more and more Mam are migrating (some legally, but most) illegally to the United States. Most of these live near Los Angeles, Chicago, and West Palm Beach, while others are involved in meatpacking and seasonal harvesting mostly in the south.

1.3.1 Socio-economic situation

In their home area, Mam men practice slash and burn agriculture, growing a single crop of corn per year. They also plant black beans that vine up the corn stalks; and squash, which grows up and down the rows between the corn plants. Most families also have a few animals: chickens and turkeys, a few sheep and maybe a horse for helping carry loads. More rarely, there may be a pig or two and one or two cows. These larger animals normally aren't butchered for household meat, since rural refrigeration is rare. Rather, the larger animals are raised to be sold for cash in order to purchase needed household and personal items. Most families also have several dogs for protection and sometimes a cat to help guard stored corn from thieving rats and mice.

Work outside the home is considered a man's realm: preparing the fields, cutting trees for firewood, hauling loads to and from town, minor construction projects and traveling to the large urban areas.

A Mayan family normally needs about an acre of land to grow sufficient corn to feed the family and their animals for a year. Most families don't have that much land, so many are forced to seek wage labor in the lowlands in order to earn the money required to buy the corn that their families need to survive. In the past, the Maya were required by

vague "vagrancy laws" to work as laborers on the lowland plantations picking coffee and cotton and harvesting sugar cane. Although no longer obligated by law to work in the lowlands, the exigencies of their economic plight are such that hundreds of thousands of Maya do so nonetheless, living for months each year in extremely unhealthy conditions, both physically and socially. Sometimes entire families "go to the coast" to work, leaving their animals and lands in the care of others who stay behind. Often just the men and older sons go, leaving the women to care for the Highland homestead. The work is very arduous and the daytime temperatures are extreme, but many families have no other option but to work in the lowlands in order to eat. Lowland diseases, particularly malaria and hot-climate parasites, differ from sicknesses back in their home villages, and many return after three or four months of labor, sick and having spent much of their earnings on food and medicine. Wages on the lowland plantations have traditionally been set by the government (often in collusion with the wealthy land owners), so that Guatemalan grown products would be competitive in the world commodity markets. Today, Mayan laborers may make from six to ten dollars a day working long hours.

It is rare for Mam women to work outside the home (except in those families where clothes are washed at the river), although some have become school teachers or storekeepers in the family *tiendas*, and many offer goods for sale at the weekly local market. My impression is that the majority of the women who sell at the market do so for the social benefit and not the profit margin, although some women have clear entrepreneurial skills. Women are responsible for all work within the home: grinding the corn and cooking, starting and stoking the fire, cleaning and organizing the home, washing clothes (either at the river or on a concrete *pila* at home), and caring for the

children. Many women weave on a backstrap loom, making the traditional belts for which Comitancillo is renowned. Daughters help their mothers with women's chores as soon as they are able. It is common for a four year old girl to carry around on her back a younger sibling wrapped securely in a shawl.

Although men's and women's roles are largely gender specific, two activities in particular seem to belong to both men and women, and their location as to either outside the home or inside is somewhat ambiguous. Husking and shelling corn is a kind of transition step from outside to inside. It is the physical shift of the corn from the fields and drying area (where the men have done the work) to the kitchen, where it is transformed into *wab'j* 'tortillas, tamalitos'[5] by the women. This places corn husking and shelling in the ambiguous position of being both outside and inside the home—both men's and women's realms—and it is something in which both men and women participate—usually together with the children. In a similar fashion, men cut the trees, split the firewood into transportable logs, and haul it to the homestead. Here again, both men and women may split it further as the logs are outside the door ready to come in and be added to the fire. If my comment on the ambiguity of the outside/inside distinction of corn husking and shelling is correct, the secondary splitting of firewood may be another task where the normally clear line of gender roles is a bit fuzzy. And this secondary firewood splitting is indeed performed by both men and women either in the cook house or just outside the doorway.

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[5] *Tamalitos* are made of the same corn dough as tortillas, but instead of being patted thin and put on the *comal*, a thin clay plate, to cook, they are wrapped in leaves and steamed.

It is extremely common for women to bear their first child a year after marriage and to experience six to ten pregnancies or more over the span of their childbearing years. Marriage is by agreement between families, normally at the urging of the young couple, although occasionally, a new wife will not know her husband until her wedding day, the arrangements having been made by the groom or his intercessor and the bride's father. I discuss some details of a marriage proposal in Chapter Four.

Although couples practicing birth control are increasing in number, they constitute a decided minority. It is widespread that a woman and her older daughters may be pregnant at the same time. Most families have lost a child or more to dysentery or illnesses caused by parasites. Despite high infant mortality, the pressure on limited available land is acute and many have moved to the larger Guatemalan cities or to the States in search of work, often locating in urban areas with others of their home area, where language and many customs can be maintained, at least to some degree.

Most Mam families that can, save by investing in real goods: land (which is at a premium in Comitancillo), construction,[6] animals (which involve risk, of course), and inventory to be sold at the market or in the small *tiendas* or larger stores in town. There is a local banking cooperative that holds money at interest for people who want high liquidity. It is possible that one of the national banks will soon establish a branch in Comitancillo. This idea is met with mixed emotions. People are proud that their little town generates enough movement of money to be noticed by the banking system. But

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[6] Historically, homes were built of adobe, with baked clay tile roofs and dirt floors. Lately, more homes (especially multi-level homes) are built of light weight cement block and corrugated metal roofing. Modern floors are usually covered with a thin layer of concrete.

they are also concerned about people like Willie Sutton, who famously answered the question as to why he robbed banks by saying, "because that's where the money is." Although Comitancillo continues to grow economically and educationally, many people miss "the good old days" of just a few buses, a handful of small cottage industries, no police or army (and therefore no guns) and no armed thieves. Those days are gone.

A number of individuals also lend money at interest. The Mam loan money to each other at ten percent interest per month. The usual scenario, if a man were to borrow the equivalent of a thousand dollars on the first of March, is that he'd return on the first of each ensuing month and pay one hundred dollars to his creditor. On the following first of March, one year after the loan was made, and after paying $1,200 in interest in monthly installments, he would pay back the principal of $1,000 in a lump sum. Understandably, many Mam have become very prosperous in this way.

The Comitancillo market has become a major highland business venue. Upwards of 10,000 come each Sunday to buy, sell, trade, and catch up on local news. Trucks come from several hours away bringing merchants and their wares. Roads have been much improved over the last twenty years, and many mountain roads are now paved, although the main access into Comitancillo is still by means of a dirt road that winds down the steep mountainside into town.[7] Paved roads have reached both Tejutla to the northwest and San Lorenzo to the south, each only eight miles from Comitancillo. Today, one can find fruit and vegetables, both local and from all over the country, shoes, clothes (both

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[7] As of 2005, work was underway to replace the dangerous road into town (which is plagued by landslides, precipitous cliffs, narrow "lanes," and switchbacks) with a modern, paved road that would provide access for large trucks to reach town. This will only increase access to outside goods and people.

traditional and Western style), animals, local meat, fresh fish, kitchen appliances, radios, televisions, and on and on. The Comitancillo Sunday market has traditionally been part of a Highland *solar market system* where each of four or five area towns would host a market on different days of the week. In this way, merchants could rotate through the area making needed products available to a large buying public. Over the last few years, what has traditionally been a very secondary market day in Comitancillo—Wednesday—has become busy as well. In fact, a number of merchants keep market stalls throughout the week, offering goods every day. Some merchants still travel the cycle of the solar market, but if venders can maintain sales volume in a single spot, it is much easier than packing everything anew every day and carting it off to the next venue.

The digital age has come to Comitancillo. There are three Internet cafés in town and two private schools that teach computer skills. Both schools have waiting lists for Mam students that want to learn to use computers. Cell phones are everywhere, and I occasionally receive calls in Ohio from Mam friends in their village homes, some without running water or electricity, but now with a telecommunications link to the rest of the world.

One certainly wonders how such a strong market economy is able to thrive among people that make at most ten dollars a day (village day laborers usually make much less working near home than they can on the southern plantations, but with lower expenses as well.) There are two main reasons. First, Comitancillo has become a regional market and transportation center. When my family first went to live there in 1980, there were three buses that left the village each morning for San Marcos, the departmental seat,

returning later in the day. Today, there are over twenty different buses that leave throughout the day and go not only to San Marcos, but to Quetzaltenango (Guatemala's *second city*) and Guatemala City. Dozens of trucks are titled to Comitecos. These carry produce, animals, merchandise and people to destinations throughout the country. So, one source of significant income is local business,[8] either transport or retail sales.

A second source are the remittances sent back to Guatemala by family members who have gone to the States. This has created a dual economy in many towns, where dollars trump local currency and inflate prices, particularly the price of land and construction. Land and small homes in Comitancillo are now the same price as many areas of Guatemala City. This has the effect of making people that own land or homes in town into virtual tycoons. Because of access to dollars and the relative devaluing of local currency, more and more people are motivated to travel to the States in order to get in on the dollar economy, which is increasingly the only viable economy on the local scene as well.

Another, albeit unofficial, reason for the influx of cash to the area is the drug trade. Heroin poppies are grown and seed pods are transported in parts of Guatemala's western highlands, especially in areas near the Mexico border. The Comitancillo area is heavily populated and well traveled, so land beyond the eyes of neighbors is not as readily available for growing poppies as it is in Tajumulco and Tacaná, but word on the street is that some of the money pumped into local construction is from sources unknown, which often implies that the source is indeed known, but unspecified.

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[8] Three Mam friends and I started a bookstore and photo-copy service in Comitancillo in 1996, each investing $500. I sold out two years later, happy (and surprised) to break even. Today, the store's assets are worth in excess of $80,000.

1.3.2 Educational situation

There are three pre-university levels of education in Guatemala, which are the same in both urban and rural areas. Primary school goes from grade one through six. As of 2005, virtually every *aldea* 'hamlet' in Comitancillo had a public primary school. Most of these schools also offer a pre-primary or "headstart" year of bilingual education aimed at helping Mam children (usually six or seven years old) to learn to read minimally in their own language before attending first grade. Historically, primary school was taught in Spanish, and children were punished or insulted for speaking their native language, but this has changed for the better. Now bilingual education is part of the curriculum throughout primary school and in many cases beyond. Of course, quality of instruction depends more on the individual teacher than on the stated curriculum, and not all bilingual teachers are committed to bilingual education. I'll discuss further in section 1.3.4.

When students pass their sixth grade proficiency tests, they can enter their *basic education* phase, which lasts three more years. The town of Comitancillo has both public and private schools of basic education and a number of the larger *aldeas* 'hamlets' do as well. At this level, students occasionally have a class in Mayan language and culture, but all other courses are taught in Spanish, usually by Spanish monolinguals, although there is a growing number of Mam-Spanish bilinguals who teach as well. Upon graduation, students can opt for further studies in a diversified field, usually basic accounting, primary education or college preparatory. The accounting and education programs last three years and qualify graduates for an entry level job in their respective field. The

college preparatory course lasts two years and prepares students for university level studies. Comitancillo has a teacher training program at the diversified level, as do several *aldeas* 'hamlets.'

Most of the universities (four well established and one nascent) have rural outreach programs to help qualified and interested students to get the training and degree they desire. Classes are often in the evenings or on weekends to accommodate students' daytime jobs and responsibilities.

In part because of good international funding, at least initially, three of the universities (San Carlos, Rafael Landívar and Mariano Gálvez) have maintained programs in applied linguistics for the past fifteen years or more. At Rafael Landívar and Mariano Gálvez, North American linguists were involved as professors during the early years of the program.

1.3.3 Religious situation

I deal with religion as a search for centeredness in Chapter Three. The main point I make there is that the Maya are a deeply religious people, while at the same time, they have their feet planted firmly in the rich soil. Both traditional religion and conversion to Christianity (in this study, I deal more with Protestantism than Catholicism) are seen as an embracing of the Mayan cultural value of centeredness. This is a controversial claim, which I support with data from both historical and present-day sources. The choice of continuing with a traditional understanding of relating to God or the gods, or opting for conversion to another religious system is a very salient issue among the Mam, one discussed on the trails, in the markets, on the buses, and over the airwaves as people host

cultos 'worship services' in their homes and broadcast the music and sermons to the four winds by means of battery powered public address systems.

In the Comitancillo area, very few would consider themselves followers of traditional Mayan religion. Perhaps twenty percent would call themselves *evangélicos* 'Evangelicals, or Protestant,' while almost all of the rest would self identify as *Católicos*. Historically, Catholics have been less demanding than *evangélicos* in regard to calling for repentance from traditional Mayan views and practice, and the church is more syncretistic than the Evangelical churches, at least on the surface, often incorporating traditional ceremonies such as those centered around *Maximón*, (whose name is thought to be a blend of *max*, 'tobacco' and St. Simon), the cigar toting icon carried trough the streets during Holy Week. Other festivals that blend Mayan and Catholic teaching include Mayday celebrations that mark the *day of the cross* and the beginning of the rainy season, New Year ceremonies and *day of the dead* (November 1) rituals. For a Mayan diary that journals some of the overlap between traditional Mayan and Catholic life, see Sexton (1981).

Many *evangélicos* are so concerned about syncretism that they avoid the term *Maya* when identifying themselves in Spanish, preferring the term *indígena* 'indigenous', since they believe that things *Mayan* have been co-opted by those whom they believe would like to impose traditional religion on all Maya. Of course, the word *syncretism* itself is a loaded term, implying both a lack of theological purity and a non-directed, non-reflective approach to faith. Mauer (1993) prefers the term *synthesis*, since he feels that it is not the case that Christianity is grafted onto a pre-Christian base, but rather, modern Mayan religion reflects a situation where the two faith traditions inform each other. By

his account, the faith of most Maya today is something new, rather than a blend of pre-invasion and post-invasion traditions. Nonetheless, Mam Evangelicals would have issues with this view as well. They feel that conversion is necessary not only for practitioners of traditional religion, but for Catholics as well. They consider Catholicism to be the extension of traditional Mayan religion, which people are simply born into. They preach that a Christian is something you become, and that it is not merely part of one's cultural heritage. They believe that true Christianity implies a break with and a conversion from their religious past, not just an addition to it, which they understand Catholicism to be. In this dissertation, I will deal almost exclusively with traditional religion and Evangelicalism, not Catholicism. For further discussion on this topic and on the relationship between Catholicism and Evangelicalism in Guatemala, see Scotchmer (1989) and Annis (1987).

Obviously, religious belief continues to be a main area of contention among the Mam.

1.3.4 Sociolinguistic situation

Of course, the three previous subsections in this chapter on socio-economics, education and religion are all sociolinguistic in that they are relevant to speech choice and variation, but in this section, I'd like to highlight the relationship between Spanish and Mayan languages.

The mixing of Mayan groups—Mam, K'iche', Kaqchikel, Q'anjobal, Pokomchí and others—on the lowland plantations provides a hothouse environment (no pun intended) for the development of Mayan-influenced dialects of Spanish, where the Maya

learn Spanish as an L2 largely from other non-native Spanish speakers. These non-prescriptive dialects are stigmatized by the Spanish-speaking majority, and although the Maya fuel much of the Guatemalan economy, their economic contribution, while crucial, is minimized, and their native languages and lifestyle are ridiculed as backward and ill-suited to the modern age. At the same time that the majority Spanish-speaking culture belittles the Maya, Spanish is needed on the plantations by the Maya in order to communicate with farm authorities, in order to travel, and in order to do business at the local lowland markets, not only with native Spanish speakers, but also with other Maya who don't speak one's own language or variety. So the Maya, like so many minority peoples around the world, find themselves pressured to use a language that they speak non-natively, one that historically is the language of their oppressors and colonizers.

While the larger society has considered the Maya to be second class citizens, tourism has replaced coffee as the leading dollar producer in the Guatemalan economy. Today, in addition to depending on Mayan labor to harvest the nation's major money crops, the Maya are themselves a major reason why the world's travelers are coming to Guatemala. Now, the larger society has a vested interest in the traditions of the Maya, something that they were quick to pronounce judgment on just a few years before. But that the country could be considered a multi-cultural space shared among equals is still a hope unfulfilled.

For many years the Guatemalan government has tried to deal with "the Indian problem," an issue oft cited, albeit ill defined, but having generally to do with a low levels of education, lack of basic literacy, rural and urban poverty, lack of a consumer mentality, limited political participation, and the supposed divisiveness of minority

languages and cultures. Early vagrancy laws obligated the Maya to provide a number of days of free labor to their community in order to keep area roads level and cleared. These same laws also required Indian men to work on the lowland plantations (where they were paid a pittance) in order to bring in the yearly coffee crop, which has historically been Guatemala's largest producer of dollars (recently supplanted by tourism). Men who didn't have their identification cards stamped for completing these work requirements could be jailed for vagrancy. This forced-cheap-labor idea was revisited during *la violencia* with army recruiting schemes and even within the last decade as rural Maya were required by law to "volunteer" their time on civil patrols, groups of poorly armed men (if they were armed at all) which served as a buffer between the army and a well armed insurgency. Even today, the Maya continue to be a part of the motor that keeps the Guatemalan economy humming. The big three agricultural exports: coffee, sugar cane and cotton, are all harvested by hand, and the economic reality of many highland families is such that seasonal work on the lowland plantations is all that keeps them from extreme duress or even starvation.

In addition to the pressure to speak Spanish caused by the communication needs of seasonal plantation work, the media have made tremendous inroads into the Mam area. In Comitancillo, for example, cable TV—twenty some channels in Spanish, (with a few in Portuguese and English)—is offered 24 hours a day. Regional and national newspapers—all in Spanish—flood the local market. Many towns boast at least one Internet café, a service offered via satellite; computer training is also common, classes where Spanish vocabulary—not Mam—rules. Local government schools are in Spanish, and even bilingual schools, where Mam is supposedly respected and used as a medium of

instruction, are seen by many parents, teachers and students as merely a means to the goal of learning Spanish—a method of subtractive bilingualism, where Mam is used only as a bridge to Spanish, after which the bridge can be burned.

Funding agencies require project proposals to be written in Spanish; government agencies operate largely in Spanish; bank documents and contracts for the now ubiquitous cell phones are written in Spanish; churches teach and sing Spanish hymns; radio programs and popular music playing on the ever-present boom boxes are blared out in Spanish; and buses, cars and trucks carry people from the earliest hours of the morning out of the villages into the larger Spanish-speaking world. And for the thousands of Maya who emigrate to the cities, or beyond Guatemala's borders to Mexico, the United States or Canada, their native languages are, in practical terms, just a nostalgic part of the past.

With such a complex of issues related to the viability of Mam and the other Mayan languages, there have been a variety of indigenous responses. Some have abandoned the language altogether assuming that the future would depend on Spanish skills. The large majority has opted for bilingualism in one form or another. In Collins (2005) I discuss codeswitching as a linguistic strategy of the masses of dual identification with both the prestige of Spanish and the comfort of Mam. There is a third group of young professionals that considers codeswitching to be a capitulation to Spanish speaking society. This group favors language purity, speaking both Spanish and Mam well and without inter-linguistic contamination (ibid.: 255). It is this group that is leading a Mayan revitalization movement, which is an exciting embrace of Mayan culture in the face of five hundred years of denigration and inequality. The Mayan Language Academy

is comprised of people from this group, as is the Maya Writers' Association and other Mayan university and community groups.

One of the truly astounding capacities of the Maya is their ability to take what they see as helpful from the larger society without compromising who they are as a proud and viable minority group. Gossen (1986: 6) points to a possible explanation. He says: "The principle of complementary dualism has the potential to lead to a revised paradigm for thinking about syncretism in Mesoamerica" (ibid.). He claims that throughout the Mesoamerican region, men have been the assimilators of change and new codes (language, clothing, economic systems, political and military participation, among others), while the women have been the guardians of tradition (indigenous dress, curing knowledge, agricultural ritual, and particularly native languages). From this dual perspective comes a unity of Mayan values that looks both forward and back.

> This renders intelligible the enigma that has impressed many scholars and casual observers of Indian communities in Mesoamerica: people seem at once to be Mexican or Guatemalan peasants and living shadows of a vanquished pre-Columbian world. Which is the "true" identity? It seems clear that both identities are, simultaneously, true identities, for Mesoamerican ideology accommodates such complementary duality easily…The public sector voluntarily adapted, or forcibly capitulated to the ideological demands of the more inclusive system, while the domestic sector held fast. (Gossen, 1986: 6-7).

This idea of cultural continuity within culture change is perhaps the key notion in beginning to understand the complexity of modern Mayan life. They are truly a magnificent, surprising and multifaceted people. It has been a humbling and wonderful privilege to have known them and worked together with them for these many years.

1.4 Some comments on Mam language

Mam is a strongly ergative language, and typologically considered to be of unmarked VSO word order, although other word orders are common for purposes of topicalization or focus (Aissen, 1992). It is most known for its directional auxiliary verbs and for grammatical structures containing them, the related directional particles and full intransitive verbs.

Coe (1999) cites Mam, and its linguistic near-neighbors, Teko, Aguacateko, and Ixil as constituting the Mamean branch of Eastern Mayan which, together with Quichean split off from what were to become, some four thousand years ago, the Western, Yucatecan, and Huastecan daughter branches of Proto-Mayan (Figure 1.1).

Dialect divergence among the Mam is pervasive (Godfrey and Collins, 1987), stemming in part from the provincial lifestyle of a people who historically have spent little time outside of their home environs. This was most likely true in the Mayan "city-state" pre-colonial past, where, although there seems to have been extensive contact, trade, alliances and even war among independent groups, Suárez (1982) suggests that it was the leadership of the city-state along with the material and ceremonial aspects of Mayan culture which were most affected by this contact, leaving the commoners in a far more isolated position.[9] This provincialism was later taken advantage of as a method for controlling the flow of people and ideas during early Spanish occupation of the Maya homeland. This "divide and conquer" strategy was certainly part of what enabled Spain to exert hegemony over a much larger population. Indeed, there is evidence that

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[9] For a helpful summary of Mayan provincialism and an interesting discussion of both its repercussions and its possible causes, see Brown, 1998.

32
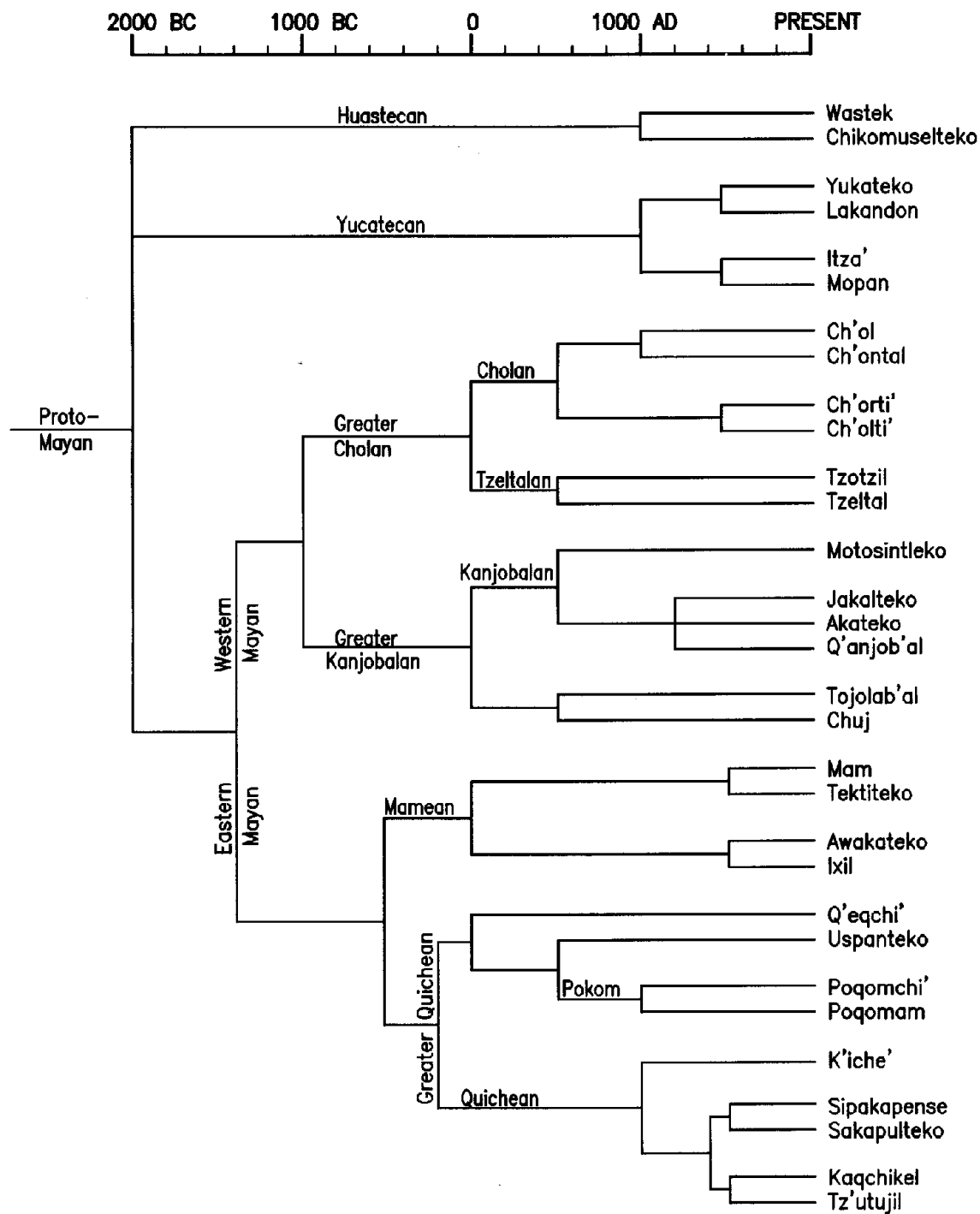
Figure 1.1 Classification and time depth of Mayan languages

Adapted from Cole (1999: 36). Language names regularized as per the Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín. Antigua, Guatemala. Larger groupings in English.

the vivid colors and unique patterns and styles of Maya traditional dress were promoted

not by the Maya themselves, but by their oppressors, who used the clothing's distinctive

features in order to identify someone's home *municipio*[10] and thus monitor the movement

of people and political ideas throughout the area (see Altman and West (1992: 20-21) for

limited discussion).

Godfrey and Collins (1987) posit six significant dialect areas, including Western

Mam, or Takaneko, a moribund dialect presently spoken only by bilingual (Spanish-

Mam) older adults. The remaining dialects (see Grimes, 2000: 308) would be considered

endangered in Krauss's terms (1992), but hardly moribund. Among the dialects of Mam,

England (1990) cites differences in phonology, morphology, syntax and discourse; so the

historical, political, and social distance among the Mam is matched to some extent by

diversity of linguistic features as well.

Today there is a strong movement to standardize the written form of Mam (as

well as other Mayan languages), since it is seen to be a unifying and educationally more

realistic strategy than promoting a plethora of individual dialects (see England, 1996 for

details).

1.4.1 Mam as an endangered language and efforts at revitalization

There's little doubt as to why Mam is endangered. Indeed, that it survives at all is

a tribute to the tenacity of a people apart. There is tremendous pressure to abandon Mam

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[10] A *municipio* corresponds to a town and its political environs. It is made up of a
cabecera (main town of the same name as the entire *municipio*) and a number of hamlets
(officially recognized *aldeas* and unchartered *caseríos*). Guatemala is divided into 22
departments. There are 330 *municipios*.

and adopt Spanish from both outside the language group: the government, the schools, the economy, and the larger Guatemalan society; and inside: parents who have decided that Spanish will serve them and their children better than Mam; bilingual schoolteachers who buy into subtractive bilingualism, and others who are embarrassed to speak Mam in public. Nevertheless, many people love their language and culture and are committed to keeping them alive both in their hearts and on their tongues.

In some ways, despite the tremendous globalizing pressures mentioned, the wheel is turning. When I first arrived in Guatemala in 1979, I read through SIL's files on Mam, and I found a photocopy of a memo from a large mission organization that stated that they were recommending no further Mam-language ministry because of the pervasive use of Spanish throughout the area, the encroachment of Spanish into the daily lives of Mam speakers, and the likelihood that Mam would fall into disuse within a generation. The memo was dated June, 1937. And when my Mam colleagues and I first offered Mam language booklets for sale in the local market in 1981, a number of people were bewildered. "Why are you offering us books in Mam?" they queried. *Nti' tajb'in lo* 'these are worthless.' "We already speak Mam, and look where it's gotten us. If you really wanted to help us you'd help us learn Spanish." Yet today, some sixty-eight years after the memo, and twenty-five years after my first market encounter, Mam is still spoken natively by hundreds of thousands of people who find it adequate to the dual tasks of conceptualizing their world and enabling them to operate in it, globalizing as that world may be. Indeed, the Mam of Comitancillo are participating in a larger Mayan renaissance that is taking place throughout Central America and southern Mexico, where there is renewed interest in being Maya, and maintaining Mayan culture and languages.

See particularly Garzon, et al. (1998) regarding the scope of and an analysis of this revitalization movement.

Language isn't maintained in a vacuum. Mufwene points out that in multilingual situations, languages aren't so much abandoned as deliberate action, but rather as "the cumulative consequence of repeated communicative acts (2002: 387)." These acts are benefit driven. If a person needs English or Spanish or Mandarin to make a living, it is unlikely that the native language will long be able to withstand these major languages' intrusion into the domain of the home, where the last bastion of resistance can give way to what many speakers feel is the inevitable move toward the modern, globalizing world, and its concomitant handful of languages. In such cases L1 can perhaps hold on as a specialized language for ceremonial events, but spoken only by an esoteric few who keep the language going for a generation or so, but, as Emiliana Cruz suggests (2004), when the responsibility to maintain a dying language rests with just one individual or a small guild, or a single family, any number of events, such as religious conversion, illness, or physical displacement of some kind can cause the language quickly to cease to exist.

So the larger linguistic and cultural context is always important, and each situation, despite intriguing similarities, is different. In Guatemala, a number of factors have converged to help promote the possibility of language and culture revitalization:

1. The awarding of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize to Rigoberta Menchú, a Mayan woman, has brought international attention to the plight of Central and South American indigenous groups. Mufwene considers politics the second bulwark of language maintenance (economics is first).

36

2. The National Bilingual Education Program has been funded for over twenty years. Well over a million Mayan children have received primary school instruction in their native language. This has heightened interest in native language literacy and literature production.

3. Three national universities have established applied linguistics programs that have helped train hundreds of Mayan teachers and professionals.

4. In 1991, the Academy of Mayan Languages became an autonomous national institution (for details see England, 1998:106). This grass-roots organization provides a forum for Guatemalan Mayan people to discuss and to resolve issues related to Mayan life and particularly Mayan languages. Despite many challenges, the Academy has been a focal point for Mayans promoting native language and cultural maintenance.

5. The signing of the Peace Accords in December, 1996 has led to (the possibility of) greater respect for human rights (including indigenous rights) throughout the nation.

6. Tourism has become the main motor of the Guatemalan economy replacing coffee as the nation's greatest dollar earner. Tourism officials realize that much of what tourists come to see is Maya-related, so the government has a vested interest in Maya language and culture maintenance. This doesn't necessarily bode well for the Maya. The Maya can easily be seen as just another resource to exploit, rather than as a cultural group with which to share a multicultural nation-space.

In addition to this national/international context conducive to revitalization, Comitancillo seems especially to be a place where there has been a certain readiness to respond positively within this overarching context. Although open to outsiders, the entire *municipio* is still populated almost exclusively by insiders. One needn't speak Spanish at the market or in most churches; speaking Mam is sufficient. Local government offices have Mam-speaking attendants. Mam books are sold from several Mam bookstores. A growing number of titles is available that include easy reading booklets and *fotonovelas* (a kind of reality comic book), the Central Mam New Testament (1998, 2002), a Mam hymnbook (2003) and Concordance (2002), a verb dictionary (1991) and a number of educational and booklets and Scripture portions. A Mam local radio station was established in 2002 and other regional Mam stations and programs have existed for over ten years. A monthly newspaper funded by local businesses has been published since May, 2003. There are bilingual schools throughout the *municipio*, and most Mam teachers are committed to language maintenance and a high view of Mam culture.[11] Mam parents continue to teach Mam to their children as L1. Although Spanish is highly valued, Mam is as well. So, in spite of the tremendous wearing down effect of Spanish, Mam language and culture continue to be held in high esteem by many locals. There is a support structure for Mayan revitalization; it is more than just wishful thinking on the part of a few. In Mufwene's words, there exists the "concurrent mobilization of the political and economic machineries (2002: 390)" that buttress a context where being Mam and speaking Mam is benefit driven, not only politically and economically, but socially and educationally as well.

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[11] For a detailed look at teachers' role in Mam revitalization, see Collins, 2005.

But the benefits aren't just these; there is a strong intellectual component as well. Three Mam-speaking professors told me in three different conversations that, as Maya, the way they conceive of the world fits the way the world is. They claimed that thinking of life in terms of complementarity, balance, and centeredness is a fully contemporary and adequate way to think about how the modern world really works; it isn't a primitive way of thought and language that is incapable of coping with the complexity of modern life. That the Maya developed long before Christopher Columbus came to the new world, complex systems for writing, mathematics, and record keeping, and that their astronomers could predict lunar and solar eclipses and the phases of both the moon and Venus is proof enough of the ability of their language (both then and now) to contain the technical flexibility and depth necessary to discuss and understand extremely sophisticated material. In addition, these professors suggest that the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred book of the Maya, discusses human drama and history in ways that rival English and Spanish for clarity and intensity.

In other words, even regarding modern life, there is a certain "degree of fit" between the model of the world as reflected by Mam language and culture and the real world that the Mam come in contact with both in the village and far beyond it.

1.5 The occasion for research

Data for this dissertation were gathered over the span of the twenty-five years that I've been associated with the Mam of Comitancillo, Guatemala, an important town in the Central dialect area in the department of San Marcos (see maps, figures 1.2 and 1.3). The municipal area of Comitancillo includes over 65,000 people, 98% of whom are L1

speakers of Mam according to the most recently published census information (1994).

Central Mam speakers also live in San Lorenzo, Tejutla, and parts of Concepción

Tutuapa and San Miguel Ixtahuacán, all in the department of San Marcos.
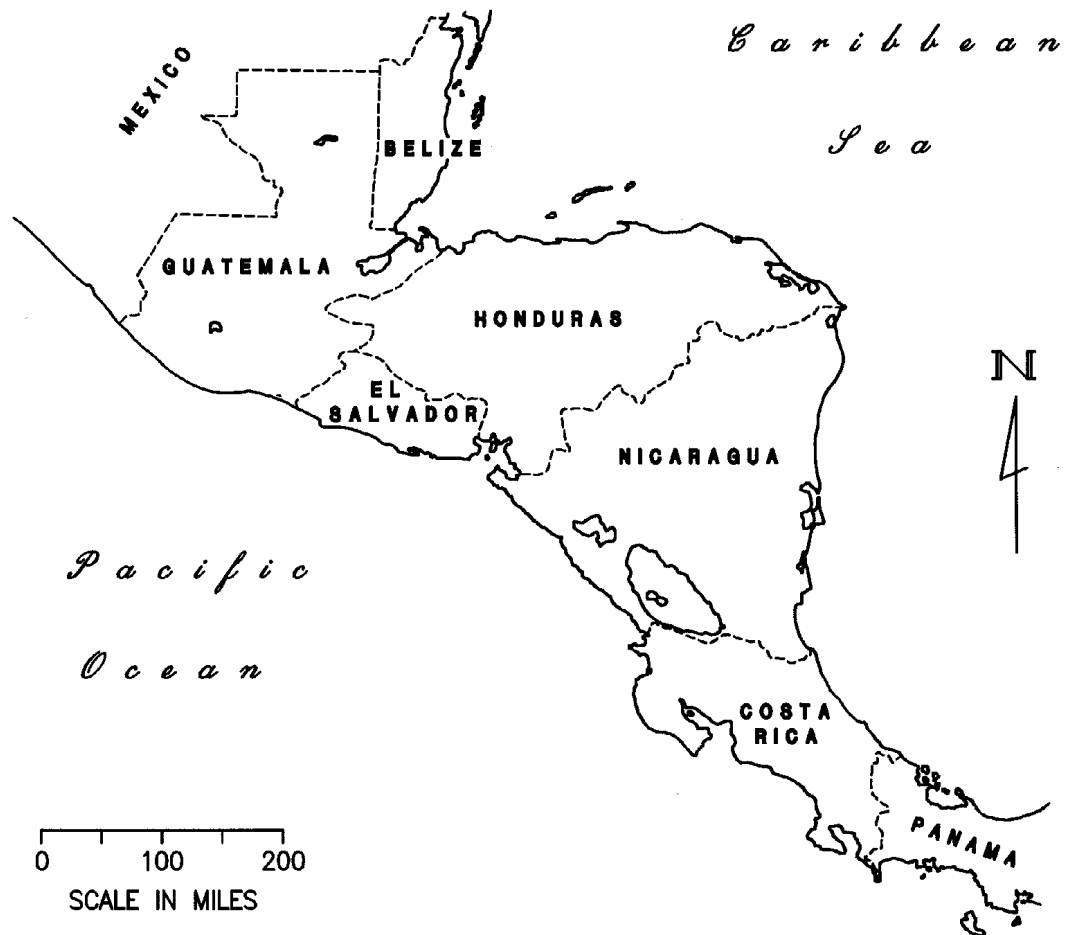
Figure 1.2 Central America; adapted by Craig Banghart from Woodward (1976: 6-7).

My wife, Nancy (and eventually our three children), and I lived in Comitancillo

from 1979-1982, and again from 1988-1993. In other years (1983-1988, and 1994-1998),

we lived in Guatemala City, but still made frequent trips to Comitancillo and continued to

work in Mam-related projects under the aegis of the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

40
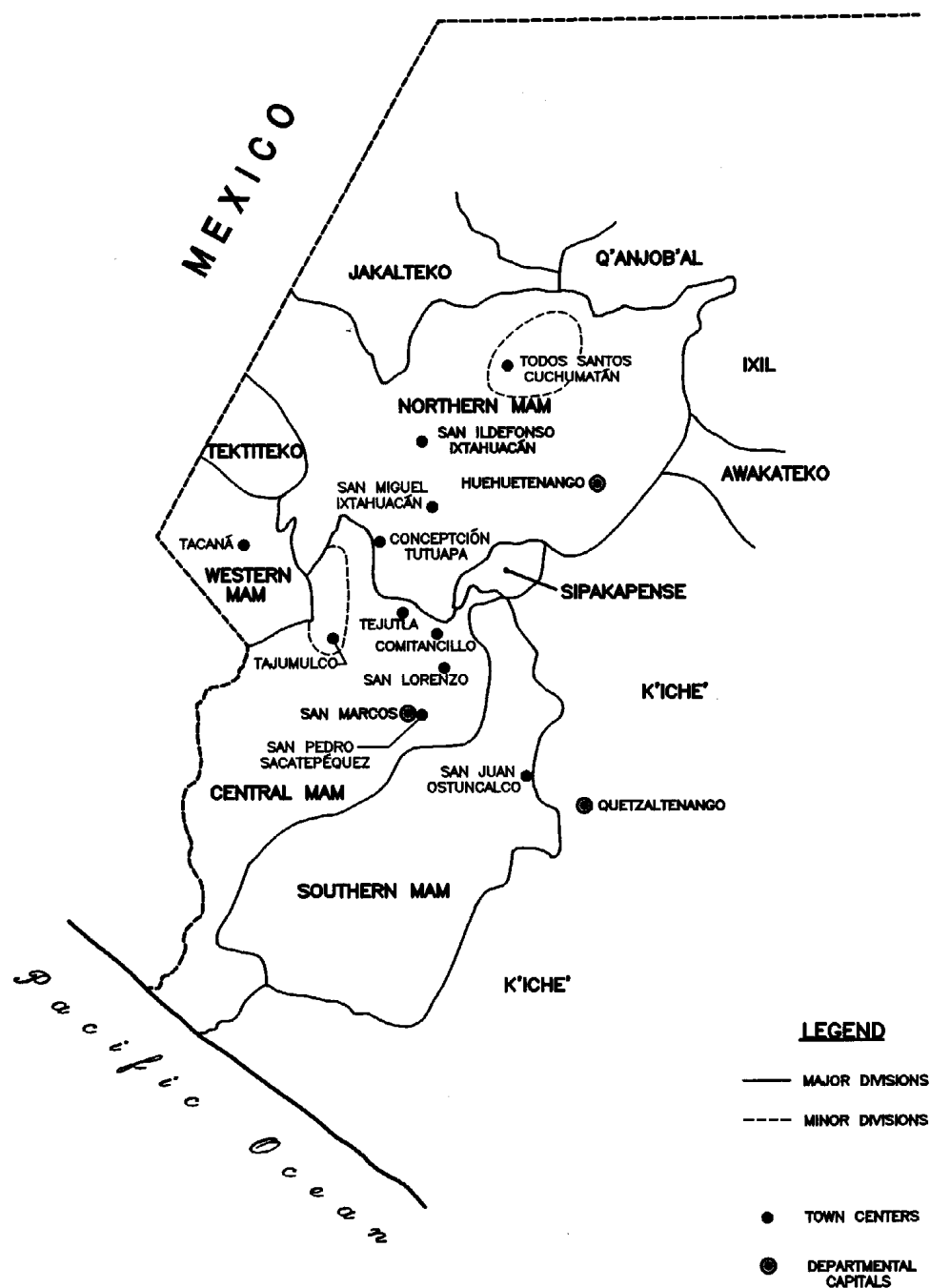
Figure 1.3 Principal divisions in the Mam area, adapted by Craig Banghart from England (1983: 8).

Nancy is a registered nurse and ran an informal clinic in our patio where she dealt with ten to twenty patients a day. Much of the information in Chapter Three about the hot-cold syndrome is from her vantage point as one who discussed with locals illness and treatment from a Mam perspective.

Both Nancy and I arrived in Guatemala City in August, 1979 with master's degrees in applied linguistics from the University of Texas at Arlington. Our university training was a practical orientation to syntax, morphology and phonology and it dealt largely with the nuts and bolts of language and culture learning. We also had basic training in translation, literacy, ethnography, and community development. While in Guatemala City we studied Spanish and walked the streets of the Capital using what Spanish we were "mastering" from day to day. Our language learning mentors were Thomas and Elizabeth Brewster, who refined a method for learning a language socially rather than academically (see their book, *Language acquisition made practical* (1976)). We took no formal classes in Spanish, but learned it in daily interactions with friends and acquaintances in the streets, markets, restaurants, theaters, and buses of Guatemala City and in the homes and shops of Guatemalans. Nancy was seven months pregnant with our first child when we arrived in Guatemala. This fact gave us no end of material for discussion with our new friends, and we were warmly received by locals who realized that our firstborn would be not only a *gringa*, but a Guatemalan as well. We spent six months in full time Spanish language learning as well as in learning to be parents. In both contexts, it was a new world.

Nancy and I were originally invited to Comitancillo by the leadership of the local Evangelical church of the Central American Mission in order to help with literacy and to

survey the need for Bible translation. In response to this request, we moved to a rented house in Comitancillo in May, 1980 just as the rainy season was beginning. We spent our first two years in language learning. Our Spanish was not very good at the time, but we were able to use it haltingly to get a grip on Mam, a language which we now speak fairly well. Although I speak Spanish better than Mam, I am able to do most of my work in Mam. I was happy to hear Eugenio say to me several years ago, *Ay tu'n tyolin noqx casi normal* 'you sound almost normal.' I took this as Eugenio's shot at a compliment. I talk a bit more about my language learning experience in section 2.6 on methodology.

I worked among a cadre of Mam men as a literacy worker and Bible translator. As mentioned above, the Central Mam New Testament was published in 1998, with a second edition (in a slightly revised alphabet) in 2002. I continue to have the highest regard for the Christian Scriptures and their message of hope, which I believe is both cross-culturally relevant and highly respectful of cultural and linguistic diversity.

I also cooperated with local school teachers and administrators to help fund and publish a series of primers that were used for several years in Comitancillo schools and in volunteer literacy programs sponsored by area churches. I also worked with Mam educators to help train authors and to publish literature in the Central dialect of Mam. I had a hand in upwards of thirty different Mam-authored titles published since the early eighties, although recently there has been a growing number of independent publications by local authors in addition to a host of new titles, particularly educational materials,

published by PRONEBI (Programa Nacional de Educación Bilingüe), the national

bilingual education program, and made available to all Mam schools.[12]

I also worked with a number of Mam men and women in establishing (with

generous Stateside support) a half dozen *microempresas* 'small businesses' and several

local institutions including a municipal library and a training institute which houses a

computer training facility and a Christian leadership training school. Recently, an

expanded clinic was added to the training facility campus.

Comitancillo has proved to be a wonderful place to work. Both men and women,

young and old take pride in the local language and culture, while also wanting to learn

new things. It is a place with a world view strongly rooted in the past, but which also

provides flexibility and applicability in the present. People are comfortable with their

Mayanness. I hope and trust that our own work and presence in Comitancillo over the

years has made a small contribution to the ethnic health of these precious people.

1.6 What's new in this dissertation?

In many ways, this dissertation is a reshuffling of the cards. Many of the

observations aren't original with me, but I try to see them in a new arrangement.

The disparate notions of the hot-cold syndrome, the similar design of Mayan

homesteads and cities, and the seeking of a central moral ground in both

traditional religion and Christianity, I claim are all instantiations of a single

theme—centeredness. This theme is reinforced by the language that people use in

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[12] Pan-Mam literature must deal with extensive regional variation. For a discussion on
the standardization of written Mam, see England (1996).

44

daily practice both to talk about issues they see as centered (for example,

agreement protocols, the disciplining of children, and advice to the wayward) and

as components of meaning in terms that they don't necessarily see as impinging

on the notion of centeredness (-*k'u'j* terms, for example). But our theme is also

bolstered by the formal grammatical structures of the language, as the deictic

center ascribes a formal sense of center or origo to the lexical meanings of

intransitive verbs and to the pragmatic calculation of metaphorical senses of

directional auxiliaries, affixes and discourse particles. I also suggest that the far-

reaching notion of dualism in Mayan language and culture is a further

instantiation of our theme.

That such a theme (or any other) would be manifested in both the culture

and the grammar of a people seems mundane and obvious, yet it is an idea that

has inspired linguists and anthropologists for generations. Is there a relationship

between the world that one knows (culture) and the language she or he uses to

describe and construct that world? To that question I offer no new empirical

evidence. But, as per Itkonen (1978) I present what seems to be a strong pattern

of instantiations and a different kind of proof—a hermeneutic kind—that is more

appropriate to the human sciences, where notions like values, faith, and loyalty,

though real, are not readily measured. Itkonen defines this hermeneutic approach

by suggesting that it "acquires its data through understanding meanings,

intentions, values, norms, or rules, and…hermeneutic analysis consists in

reflection upon what has been understood" (1978: 20).

This kind of understanding privileges an approach to culture like Geertz's Interpretive Anthropology, which is aimed at discovering the emic categories of a group and grounding them in the context of daily practice.

The model that I use to showcase the disparate instantiations of centeredness is one suggested by Martin (1977) and England (1978), where both cultural theme and grammatical theme are established independently and then compared both etically and emically to see if any detected pattern is salient to native speakers, and not just to hopeful researchers.

Through time, many linguistic anthropologists have asked for further studies aimed at shedding light on a possible relationship between language and culture: Hoijer, Hymes, Hale, Martin, England, Enfield, and many others. Showing a clear and unconstrained relationship between language and culture is perhaps not possible, and if anyone makes claims to that effect, he or she is asking for trouble,[13] but I think it possible to show an overarching pattern that is salient to native speakers and that includes both cultural and grammatical data. This is my goal in this dissertation.

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[13] Everett (2004) makes just such a claim, i.e. that language (at least Piraha) is driven by culture. His article is to appear in a forthcoming volume of *Current Anthropology*, as will a number of articles critical of his research and findings.

CHAPTER 2

SITUATING CENTEREDNESS: RELATED STUDIES

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I cite and discuss relevant literature on a number of topics that are

germane to this dissertation: cultural and grammatical theme, ethnosyntax,

architectonics, Mayan religion, health and illness, ethnography, deixis, discourse

cohesion and linguistic relativity. My claim is that a broad cross section of practices in

the daily lives of Mam men and women can be understood in terms of a quest for balance

and centeredness, a principle which I claim is a cultural theme, and which unites a

number of seemingly atomistic observations via a common thread. Centeredness is also a

grammatical theme in Mam, a formal linguistic category that links linguistic structure and

meaning.   I suggest that deictic centeredness or recenteredness, as Hanks (1990) calls the

refocusing of the deictic center or origo, is the formal linguistic notion that parallels the

cultural principle of centeredness or balance. After establishing and discussing

centeredness as both a cultural and grammatical theme, I suggest that the two notions are

cut from the same cloth in the minds of the Mam. I make this claim using Clifford

Geertz's model of "thick description," an eclectic, ethnographic practice aimed at

discovering emic categories via a broad commitment to participant observation and native language elicitation strategies. In the last chapter of this dissertation, I comment on the idea of linguistic relativity and discuss the general nature of the relationship between language and culture in terms of cultural and grammatical theme.

2.2 Relevant literature on cultural and grammatical theme

A study of the general relationship between language and culture impinges on both linguistic and anthropological scholarship. In broad terms, these two literatures are both vast and relevant, although it is the interplay of the two disciplines—linguistic anthropology—that is most relevant to this study. The basic idea of a comparison of grammatical and cultural themes which I develop in this study stems from Chapter Five of Laura Martin's (1977) unpublished dissertation (although she acknowledges Benjamin Whorf as the original source). Martin suggests that:

> After grammatical and cultural themes are discovered they can be compared to see whether and in what ways they correspond to or mirror each other. Only then can the possibility of mutual reinforcement, perceptual influence, and causal relationships be explored (1977: 366).

Both Martin and Nora England (1978) use the related ideas of cultural and grammatical theme as a heuristic for discussing the broader relationship of language to culture. England defines grammatical themes as "the underlying organizational principles of a language linking structure with semantics" (1978: 226). Martin adds that they are "pervasive semantic categories with profound grammatical force" (1977: 366). They are what Hale calls "lexico-semantic themes or motifs which function as integral components in a grammar" (1986: 234). To illustrate, Hale (1966) points out that in two

48

Australian languages, Lardil and Arrandic, pronominal reduction ('you and I' conflating to 'we inclusive;' or 'you singular' and 'she' reducing to 'you plural,' etc.), a speaker must attend to kinship relations among the individuals involved in the reduction, in order to articulate a grammatical sentence. He cites two salient kin relations among speakers of these two languages: agnation (patrilineal relations) and generation harmony (sometimes called 'generation skipping,' where, for example, 'grand' is used as a kinship term for alternating generations: 'grandson' and 'grandfather,' but not for immediately ascending and descending (disharmonic) generations). Hale shows how these two kinship categories interact in the choice of plural pronouns, depending on the kinship relations of those referred to, i.e. whether those represented in pronoun reduction are agnate and/or whether they belong to harmonious generations or not. Hale's point is that in the structured, formal rules of pronoun reduction, a speaker is obligated to refer to the cultural context—the salient and pervasive theme of kinship relations—before being able to make a choice of plural pronoun. Indeed, he claims that native speakers respond to a "wrong" reduction of kinship pronouns to be as equally ungrammatical as a sentence containing a singular subject and a plural verb. Kinship relations in Lardil and Arrandic, like honorific relations in Japanese, and like centeredness in Maya-Mam are cultural themes that are instantiated in the formal grammars of their respective languages.

For Martin and England, in order for a language-specific principle to be considered a grammatical theme, it must be instantiated on several levels of the grammar, for example, in the lexicon, morphology, syntax and/or discourse structure of the language, or else it should be seen in a variety of constructions throughout the morphosyntax of a language, as Wierzbicka (1992) claims for Russian agentless

constructions. These constructions have a number of distinct syntactic instantiations (for a discussion of these, see Goddard, 2003: 55-58) which, according to Wierzbicka, are iconic of the Russian sense of *sud'ba* 'destiny, fate, dreadful justice,' where the powers that be—both physical and metaphysical—are the only real agents, while powerless individuals are subject to the anonymous determinations of such powers. Wierzbicka claims that here language follows culture, mirroring in the formal structure of Russian grammar, the underlying sense of helplessness of the Russian masses in the face of almost certain and ultimate disappointment.

England states that in addition to linguistic data supporting the notion of grammatical theme, "Similar themes or categories can be analyzed using cultural data. Such cultural themes override community differences; they are defined for cultural groups as a whole" (1978: 226). Martin adds that cultural themes "are part of the history and behavior of whole cultural groups" (1977: 366). Hale (1986) concurs with the existence of the notion of cultural theme. As mentioned in Chapter One, what he calls "World View-1" refers to "the central propositions or postulates in a people's theory of how things are in the world" (1986: 233). He goes on to suggest that these understandings of the world are established by the researcher independent of language. Although they are largely opaque apart from language, they are nonetheless "out there" in the real world of behavior and the physical and societal contexts of life; cultural and grammatical themes must be independently established.

Whereas in sociolinguistic study we focus on how language variation can be explained by differences in social context, linguistic anthropologists focus on understanding the overarching cultural context which unites these different social

contexts. Granted, languages vary internally. But what is it that these different social groups share such that communication among these disparate groups is effective and meaningful? I suggest that it is these cultural themes that hold across social and even linguistic contexts that help solidify and account for social practice, the "the behavior of whole cultural groups" (Martin, 1977: 366) despite the distinctions of class, gender, education, and geographic region.

In the same way that a grammatical theme is instantiated on different levels of the grammar (no matter what one's social group), so a cultural theme is realized in different aspects of the culture—in the present study, for example, these aspects include areas such as the constructed world of the Mam, their religious life and choices, their perception of health and illness, and their daily conversations and use of language.

It is precisely at the overlap of grammatical and cultural theme that the possibility of mutual reinforcement of linguistic and cultural notions can be explored, along with any perceptual influence of language on culture or culture on language, or any causal relationships between them (see Martin, 1977: 366 for further discussion).

Interestingly, the notions of cultural and grammatical theme can be discussed naturally within the framework of ethnosyntax (Wierzbicka, 1979), where the linkage between language and culture is defined in terms of meaning. Meaning for ethnosyntacticians is an overlap between language structure and cultural practice, since meaning is a culturally dependent notion, while at the same time, it is (for ethnosyntacticians) encoded in both the lexicon and the formal structures of the grammar. Enfield (2002) defines ethnosyntax as "the study of connections between the cultural knowledge, attitudes, and practices of speakers and the morphosyntactic resources they

employ in speech" 2002: 3). I suggest that it is this overlap of cultural and grammatical theme that exactly coincides with Goddard's "narrow sense" of ethnosyntax, where "morphosyntactic constructions…encode a specifiable culture-related semantic content" (2002: 53), in other words, Martin's and England's grammatical theme and cultural theme respectively. And, assuming with Bonvillain that all meaning is culturally assigned (2003: 36) it is by means of ethnographic methods that locally salient meaning is discovered cross-culturally.

Enfield cautions against the overzealous positing of causal, non-arbitrary links between linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena, yet he claims that "exploratory attempts at explanation can be extremely valuable" (2002: 24) in that they give us an idea where to look for strong arguments supporting these links. He suggests that these arguments may well be psychological in nature, wrapped up in the meaning assigned by native speakers to linguistic and cultural phenomena. To that end, "it is well worth exploring the idea that a language's morphosyntactic resources are related to the cultural knowledge, attitudes, and practices of its speakers" (ibid.).

Both Martin and England pursue the notion of grammatical theme in Mayan languages, which I pick up below. Martin's dissertation is based on data from Maya-Q'anjob'al, while England's early work was in Mam.[1] But both scholars only suggest cultural themes, and this, largely based on the ethnographic work of others, particularly Gary Gossen (1974) who has done extensive ethnographic work among the Maya-Tzotzil of Mexico. Gossen suggests a number of ways in which spatial relations are critical to

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[1]Martin has worked more recently in Mochó, a moribund Mayan language of Chiapas, Mexico. England has expanded her work to cross-Mayan linguistics, far beyond her original research interest in Mam.

the world view of the Tzotzil of Chamula. For example, they consider their hometown,

Chamula, to be the "navel of the earth" (1974: 18). Similarly, divisions in the known and

religious world are also related to space and relations in space such as the circuit of the

sun through the sky, the primacy of "up" and the fundamental orientation to the right

hand (ibid.: 30-35), among other principles and primacies that he mentions. England

shows how location in space is critical to certain local Mayan deities which reside in and

are identified with specific hills or mountains and which are normally worshiped in their

actual locale. She also suggests that the strong identity that the Maya feel with their

home area—more so than with their language or their national or ethnic identity—may be

"a reflection of a deep-seated spatial theme" (1978: 234). In support of this notion, the

Mam have no generic term for "family;" rather, the idea is subsumed in the phrase,

"those who live (or see each other) in one house," where location trumps kinship, i.e. the

fact that they geographically occupy the same house is how family is defined practically

for the Mam rather than through kinship terminology. At the same time, the term *nxjalil*

'my people' includes not only my immediate family, but all who are in my extended

community as well, whether relatives or not. In addition to Gossen, England cites several

other ethnographic sources that discuss spatial relations in terms of Mayan ritual and

cosmology, but she admits that observations from daily life are more difficult to find.

Additionally, since she and Martin claim that cultural themes are indeed cultural rather

than merely social phenomena, they needn't be sought necessarily in local customs, but

rather such themes are expected to be geographically widespread as well as being

historically persistent. This is why they can cite authors like Gossen who works in a

Mayan language far removed from Q'anjob'al or Mam, since many aspects of Mayan culture are evident throughout the region and across time.

In terms of spatial relations as a grammatical theme, England suggests that the meanings of intransitive verbs of motion and directional auxiliaries which derive from them; as well as the existence of Mam locational particles and positional roots; and the use of possessed relational nouns to indicate spatial relations, can all be understood as formal structures related by the common thread of spatial meaning and movement through space (these will be discussed in section 2.4 below).

Martin, similarly, suggests that for Q'anjob'al, direction and location in space qualifies as both a grammatical and cultural theme. In terms of cultural theme, Martin, like England, makes her case largely via ritual, religious and cosmological data from Gossen (1974), as well as from the Mayanist historians and archaeologists Vogt (1969), and Eric Thompson (1954), among others. She suggests, in addition to location and direction, several other possible themes for Q'anjob'al: 1. The convergence of time and space as one moves further away from the here and now; 2. The linking of humanity and location as per England's "deep seated spatial theme" cited just above (in the *Popol Vuh*,[2] for example, the "Heart of Heaven" implies both a personality as well as a place); 3. Perceptual categorization, the idea that perceptual criteria are basic and characteristic of how Q'anjob'al speakers talk about the world; and 4. The organizing principle of duality. But she says that where there seems to be strong evidence for a cultural theme, grammatical structures are yet to be adequately studied. At the same time, where there

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[2] The *Popol Vuj* is considered to be the most sacred of Maya writings. It contains Mayan history, creation stories and epic adventures. It was written in a modified K'iche' using characters from the Spanish alphabet, but most of the content is clearly pre-Columbian.

are abundant formal linguistic structures supporting the notion of a grammatical theme, cultural evidence, especially as realized in daily practice, is lacking. It is hoped that this dissertation will provide strong evidence for both notions, linguistic as well as cultural. What seems clear from Martin's data is that space, motion, location and direction are integral to various suggested grammatical and/or cultural themes. Such themes are not monolithic. Rather, they can overlap and "crowd" each other (note the similarities and overlapping of Martin's suggested themes just above), and they may even cross cut. For example, a culture that produces proverbs as seemingly polemic as "He who hesitates is lost," and "Haste makes waste," obviously has more than a single all-inclusive model for looking at the world. After all, the world is a complex place, as are the appropriate responses we're called upon to make within it from moment to moment. Nevertheless, both Martin and England remind us that where these grammatical and cultural themes do occur and overlap, they are very significant.

Gossen looks at the idea of cultural theme (what he calls "symbol clusters" (1986: 5)) from two different perspectives. He himself has been a stalwart of what he calls the "micro-view" of culture: "Careful fieldwork that utilizes native languages and seeks local understanding of local truth through local models. . ." (ibid.). His ethnographic work on Chamula, cited by both Martin and England, is this kind of study—local. But he also espouses the benefits of a regional, Mesoamerican "macro-view" that generalizes through time and across the life ways of the early Olmec, the Aztec of central Mexico, and the Maya of southern Mexico and Central America. Based on local fieldwork, historical documents, archaeological insights, and the continuity and meaning of symbols

55

through time, Gossen suggests that there are a number of symbol clusters that are instantiated in cultures throughout the region.

First, he mentions the idea of the cyclicality of time. Maya *aj q'ij* 'the counters of days' help determine the maximally beneficial time for seeking a wife, planting a field, or performing a ritual—all based on the notion that as time was, so it will (in large part) be again. Those days in the complex of the Mayan 260-day cycle (and perhaps this cycle's interaction with the 365-day cycle) that have brought good fortune in the past will do so again. Fully understanding the past gives us insight into the future.[3] Second, the layout of the cosmos as sky, earth and underworld with "specialized communication among the realms" occurs throughout the region and has been extant from pre-Columbian days. Gossen says that there is spatial mobility of the powerful among the three vertical layers of the cosmos with the earth as the center layer, as there also is horizontally, with the quadripartite (east, west, up, down) division of the earth. The Maya elite from pre-Columbian days traveled widely, exerting hegemony over others and being exposed to new ideas, leaving the masses to stay home and tend to the land and local duties (Coe, 1987: 35). Third, "conflict is the genesis and precondition for order," whether order comes after three failed creation attempts as in the *Popol Vuh*, or after devastating earthquakes and volcanic eruptions during the colonial and pre-colonial past, or after

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[3] The ancient Maya seem to have been preoccupied with the past, establishing the zero date of their long count calendar as 3114 BC. All calendar dates are calculated from this date, the beginning of the present Great Cycle which is to end in 2013. Linguistically, Mam has six aspects related to the past (recent and remote completive, past progressive, perfect, pluperfect and past dependent) and just one, the dubitative, that pertains to the future. Tedlock (1999) warns us not to over-emphasize the Mayan notion of cyclicality of time. Time doesn't simply repeat, it also marches on. He points out, for example, the underworld escapades of the two sets of twin gods. There was repetition and similarity, but the outcomes were very different.

dreadful and destructive guerrilla war within recent memory. Fourth, the principle of "complementary dualism" where, for example, public and private life, male and female roles, and national and ethnic identities are not in conflict, but in healthy and mutually supporting tension. Gossen suggests that this sense of dualism or balance helps explain how the Maya are able to benefit from new technologies and options offered by the West (and which are received to a large extent by those who travel widely—the men), while at the same time, they dig in their heels to resist the destruction of their deeply established life ways (as instantiated by the lives of the stay-at-home women). As Gossen says, "New masters were pragmatically accommodated, yet the integrity of local identity and local knowledge was not shaken (1986: 7).

This push-pull dualism described by Gossen corresponds to what Gillespie (2000: 156) calls "the ranked complementarity of stability-mobility." She says that the Mayan house represents stability (historically, deceased ancestors were interred within its walls), while the movement and activity of daily life takes place largely outside.

A final symbol cluster that Gossen mentions is the power of the written and spoken word, whether ritually rhetorical or in daily speech and practice.

We can see that some of Gossen's broad themes overlap. For example, the idea that conflict is a precondition for order has been cyclical through time (clusters one and three above), from the four-fold creation of humanity in the distant past, up to the present time, where newness and hope spring from the destruction and chaos of war. Similarly, themes two and four concerning the balanced partitioning of the cosmos and the earth, and the idea of the dualistic nature of competing relationships emphasize a sense of balance and equilibrium in relationships both physical and metaphysical.

57

It is astride these two principles, the ordered layout of the cosmos and the "complementary dualism" of the region, that this dissertation fits. I suggest that, in addition to looking at the notions of dualism and balance as cultural themes in and of themselves (whether among the Mam, the Maya in general, or throughout Mesoamerica), we can also look at both of them in terms of a sense of centeredness or a fulcrum point, from which such a balance is defined and around which dualism coheres. I suggest that as we look at daily life among the Maya-Mam—Gossen's 'micro-view'"—as well as some larger themes that are Maya-wide, the salience of centeredness as both a cultural and grammatical theme will emerge. I don't see this idea as so much supplanting balance or dualism as cultural themes among the Maya. These important notions have been well established in the literature. However, it seems to me that by considering the salience of centeredness to the Mam themselves, and the evidence for it as both a cultural and grammatical theme, we may gain insight into how the Maya bring these two more general ideas: 1. space and movement (as per Martin and England) as well as 2. the balanced and dualistic nature of reality (as per Gossen), into organizing principles for daily life. For example, that the town of Chamula, would be considered by its Maya-Tzotzil inhabitants to be the "navel of the earth" not only grounds their town in space, but it also locates their natal hub at the very center and focal point of all that happens in the world and beyond. It isn't just the grounded location in space that gives Chamula its distinctiveness. Rather, it is its central position in the world that gives its location such organizing salience and explanatory power.

2.2.1 Evidence needed to affirm grammatical and cultural thematicity

So what kinds of evidence would we consider adequate to such an enterprise? First, grammatical and cultural themes need to be verified independently. In other words, grammatical themes should emerge from the formal analysis of naturally occurring texts in addition to the meanings and distribution of individual lexical items. And they should operate both across and within levels of the linguistic hierarchy—lexical, morphological, and syntactic, as well as in discourse. I suggest that deictic centeredness as a formal grammatical theme operates on just these levels of Mam grammar. In addition, the meanings of lexical items should be construed within an overarching semantic domain which is meaningful to locals. This is possible by comparing and contrasting use and meaning as they occur in daily practice. Without grounding centeredness in the daily lives and speech of the Mam, we run the risk of proving something to ourselves, while not shedding any light whatsoever on local custom and categorization.

Likewise, to posit centeredness as a cultural theme requires independent, non-linguistic verification across a number of cultural areas—religion, daily life, construction, health care, etc. Any generalizations must be cross checked with cultural insiders to prevent the "eye of the beholder" effect, where things seem perfectly clear to an outside researcher, but remain opaque to locals. Of course, pattern unrecognized is still pattern, but my claim is that grammatical and cultural themes converge in local meaning, so pattern, though crucial, isn't enough. We seek local interpretation in order to show emic linkage between linguistic and cultural material.

2.3 Cultural aspects of centeredness

It was the cultural aspects of centeredness that piqued my interest in the larger notion of centeredness as a cultural theme in the first place. Recall Eugenio's concern about our families' lack of balance and need for resolution. In this section, I discuss relevant literature related to architectonics (section 2.3.1), illness and health (2.3.2), religion and religious conversion (2.3.3), and daily life (2.3.4). My goal is to show how all of these disparate cultural areas can be better understood and explained by considering them in light of centeredness.

2.3.1 The constructed world of centeredness

In this section, I look at the constructed world of the Mam and the Maya, particularly their homestead construction and their towns, and I suggest that the layout of both is iconic to their view of how the world is structured. Setha Low (2000) considers the Latin American plaza to be a contested space, a public place that has been appropriated by governmental and oligarchic interests, and which has been wrested away from the masses. Her ethnographic work centers on the two main plazas of San José, Costa Rica, and her interest is two-fold. First, she wants to bring the ethnohistory of these two plazas to light. She claims that decisions about the use of general public space and the construction of public place are usually made by those other than the general public, and the history of these spaces has largely been written, not by the masses themselves, but by those and from the point of view of those interested in control of the masses. Secondly, she is interested in the more general theme of architectonics, the

transition of neutral "space" to culturally meaningful "place" (Low and Zúñiga, 2003: 13-17).

Low suggests that, although the notion of the central plaza was well known to the ancient Greeks and Renaissance Italians and French, it was not as common in Spain. Indeed, she asserts that the idea of a large and corporate central plaza was picked up in New World centers such as Tenochtitlán (Aztec) and Tikal (Maya), and was subsequently shipped back to Spain where Madrid was "an architectural laboratory of ideas received from Spanish-controlled cities (2000: 94)." Only then was the architecture of a civic center passed on to Spanish settlements in the new World.

Low says that, "Maya cities were laid out as microcosms, with buildings arranged so as to symbolically equate the architectural center of civic power with the center of the universe," what she calls a "sacred geography" (2000:109), an idea which is reminiscent of the Chamula idea of their hometown as the navel of the earth. Archaeological evidence points to the likelihood that early indigenous central plaza areas were built over with Spanish buildings, establishing what today is a common visage—the Catholic church on one side, municipal buildings across from that, and often commercial buildings and private housing (or military headquarters) filling out the four sides (For a discussion of Spanish city planning and the *grid-plan and plaza* system, see Low, 1993.) She goes on to suggest that the Spanish exerted hegemony over the Maya by appropriating the imagery of centeredness—where the new Spanish central plaza with its concomitant religious, governmental and commercial interests, subverted and replaced the former Maya center of community and ceremonial life. It may well be that this co-opting of

such significant space helped cement Spanish control over both the Maya and Aztec nations.

Although Low's contention that the Spanish central plazas derive from the great indigenous plazas of the New World is controversial, I accept and build on her notion of the Mayan plaza being what its builders understood to be a microcosm of the whole universe, a place of rich ceremony and cultural life.

In like manner, Pierre Bourdieu (2003 [1971]) also discusses architectonics and suggests that the Berber house viewed from the (female) inside is in juxtaposition to the same house as viewed from the (male) outside. He cites this opposition in terms of a Berber proverb, "Man is the lamp of the outside and the woman the lamp of the inside" (2003: 136ff). He claims that the inside of a Berber home "is organized according to a set of homologous oppositions: fire: water; cooked: raw; high: low; light: shadow; day: night; male: female. . ." (ibid.: 134). Yet at the same time that the home can be seen as an amalgam of internal oppositions, the house as a unified whole exists in opposition to the rest of the world in the sense that what goes on inside the house is private, intimate, and therefore "female," while life outside the house is public and thus represents the arena of men. In this way, Bourdieu ties Berber cultural practice and language to the construction of the Berber home, which, he claims is a "microcosm organized according to the same oppositions that govern all the universe" (ibid. 136).
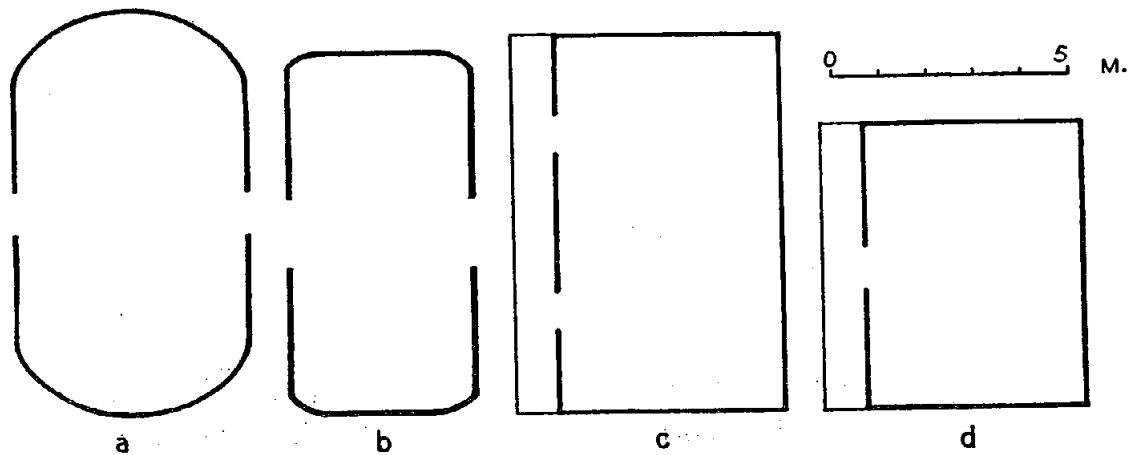
a. Apsidal House, Yucatán   c. Rectangular house, Guatemala
b. Flattened ends house, Yucatán   d. Square house, Guatemala

Figure 2.1 Basic Mayan home ground plans; from Wauchope (1938: 18).

Gillespie (2000) also sees the Mayan house as microcosmic of the larger world.

See cites Vogt (1969), who called Mayan house construction a manifestation of

"structured replication," where the four walls of the house mimic the four cardinal

directions in the world. In fact, she sees the Mayan house as part of an "encompassing

concentricity," where the house is both "contained and container, but on multiple levels"

(2000: 158). Just as the house replicates the structure of the world, so the bed and family

altar within the house represent the structure of the house with their four pillars or legs

and four sides (see figures 2.1 and 2.2). She cites Wisdom (1940: 43), who observed:

"The square is the only sacred plane, since it has the form of the *milpa* [corn field] and

the altar and has four corners. Similarly, Vogt (1976:11) quotes one of his Tzotzil friends

as saying that the universe is "like a house, like a table" and he concludes that "all

preeminent cultural symbols are square."
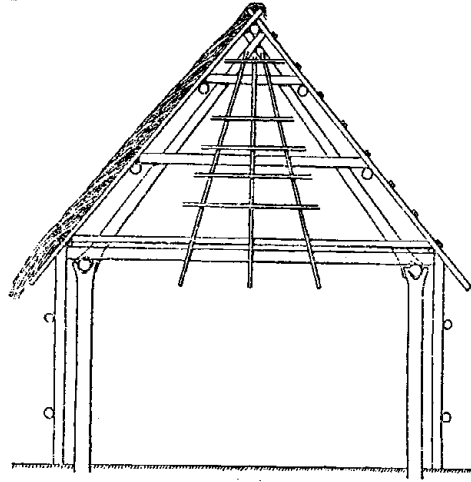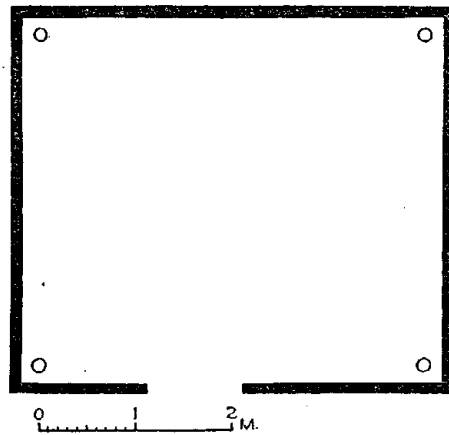
Figure 2.2 Common Mam home, San Sebastián, Huehuetenango; from Wauchope (1938: 95).

The architectonics literature emphasizes the use of and the enclosing of space as an instantiation of cultural or social or political aspiration. Of course, architectural iconicity—the use of buildings to mimic some meaningful cultural notion—is not merely the purview of anthropologists. Architects themselves have studied the topic, and cultures have been enclosing space in ways beyond mere protection for thousands of years. Scully (1991) follows the history of home construction and the layout of cities from the simplest prehistoric Navajo hogans which imitate the skyline of distant mountain peaks—to the Plaza Mayor at Tikal, where the central ceremonial area of the ancient Maya is bounded by the male Temple I, *Ah Cacao*, and the female Temple II, *Lady Twelve Macaw* (see figure 2.3). Building practices are rarely just practical.[4]

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[4] Note the visceral reactions to the rebuilding of the World Trade Center where so many interested parties have their own "meaning" which they feel needs to be reflected in the construction.
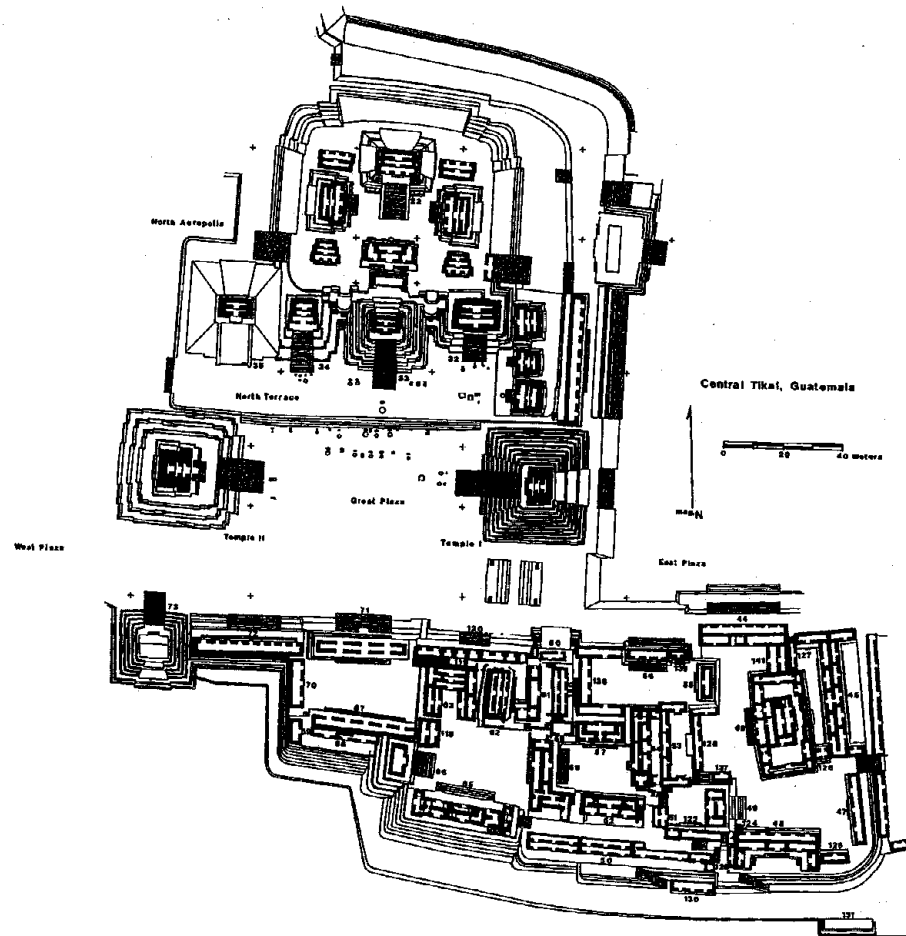
Figure 2.3 The two main temples at Tikal and the Great Plaza, *Ah Cacao* to the east of the Great Plaza, and *Lady Twelve Macaw* to the west; from Harrison (2003: 101).

In the study of architectural meaning and design, anthropologists, sociologists, and architects have been joined by geographers like Edward Soja, who writes on the political organization of space. He cites colleague David Harvey, who says: "It is impossible to comprehend geographic concepts of space without reference to the concepts of space developed in the language, art and science of a particular culture. Particular geographic notions of space are embedded on some wider cultural experience" (1971: 11). My claim in this dissertation is that the "wider cultural experience"

65

embedded in Mam home construction and Mayan plazas is the notion of centeredness. In the same way that the hometown of the Chamula Tzotzil can be conceived of as the center or "navel of the earth," so the plaza is the center of the town, the patio is the center of the homestead, and the hearth is the center of the home. I agree with both Low and Bourdieu who see plaza and home construction as microcosmic of the cultural view of the world and beyond. For the Mam, form follows the cultural meaning of centeredness, while at the same time serving as a template for the meaning and salience of centeredness in the world.

2.3.2 Health practice as the maintenance of centeredness

Redfield reports that, for Yukateko-Maya "Health of body and peace of soul depend on the maintenance of conditions of balance" (1941: 128). In addition, good health involves "maintenance of that median condition which the native expresses in terms of heat and cold" (ibid.). Neuenswander and Souder (1977) suggest that health is conceived in part as seeking centeredness—what Redfield calls "that median condition" between extremes of hot and cold. They suggest that although what they call the "hot-cold syndrome" is almost certainly pre-Columbian, it was abetted by early Spanish doctors who practiced medicine in the Hippocratic framework of the ancient Greek balance of humors—earth, air, fire and water; or dry, cold, hot and wet respectively. The hot-cold syndrome is pervasive throughout the Maya homeland as an explanation of illness etiology and as a metric for the treatment of disease, while the wet-dry aspect of the four-fold array of humors is endemic only to the K'iche' of Joyabaj. The fact that the wet-dry aspect of the humors has been lost virtually everywhere in the Maya region,

while hot-cold has persisted wherever Mayan people live is evidence that the hot-cold syndrome most likely predates the Spanish invasion and has been part of general Mayan cultural practice for ages.

Neuenswander was a healthcare worker among the Maya-Achí and found that her diagnoses were routinely called into question by her Achí clientele. Symptoms were explained to her in terms of events considered to be hot (sexual relations, pregnancy, outdoor work, cooking, getting drunk) and cold (working with metal tools, eating certain foods, drinking water or juice, and being caught in heavy rain or high winds). Diseases considered hot by the Maya (malaria, urinary infections, worms, and illnesses caused by sorcery) are considered caused by overexposure to things or situations considered hot, while cold diseases (swelling, measles, rheumatism, anemia and *susto* (fright)) are caused by overexposure to cold. Diseases are treated with herbs, teas, medicines, foods and ceremonies that are meant to counteract the overabundance of hot or cold built up in the ailing body. Cooler medicines and therapeutic foods are brought to bear on hot illnesses, while warmer medicines and foods are used to treat cold illnesses. Injections are considered hot, since they go "straight to the blood," while pills are normally considered cooler since they are taken with water, which is considered "cold" even when heated.

Early accounts of ethnographers have noted that the hot-cold syndrome has been part of Maya culture since the earliest days of contact with the Spanish. Redfield and Villa Rojas (1962: 372) cite reports from the sixteenth century claiming that when the Maya were questioned as to the nature of medicinal plants, most were unable to give any answer except that the plants were considered hot or cold. Neuenswander and Souder go on to elucidate the metric by which the Maya determine an element's hotness or coldness,

but for purposes of this dissertation, it is the balance of hot and cold in the healthy body that is my chief concern, a balance which I claim is yet another instantiation of our principle of centeredness. The goal in a Mayan view of health is centeredness, not just a balancing of hot and cold. Balance is the main strategy for achieving the center space of good health, not the goal itself. The goal is Redfield's "median condition." Pursuing balance is the way to achieve it.

That the hot-cold syndrome exists, and that it is a pervasive notion throughout the Maya region is indicative of its salience to modern Maya from the Yukateko (Redfield, 1941) in the north to the K'iche' (Henne, 1977) in the south, to the Ch'orti' (Wisdom, 1940) in the east, to the Tzotzil (Laughlin, 1969) in the west.

2.3.3 Religion as an instantiation of centeredness

Edmonson (1993) says that the religion of pre-Columbian Maya and present-day traditional religionists is based on reciprocity, the counterbalancing of what is asked of the gods with the value of what is offered in return. Traditional Maya consider their spiritual destiny to be the metaphysical "heart of heaven," the center of paradise promised in the *Popol Vuh*, where everything is in perfect balance and order, a goal which, while strived for, is elusive during life here in the world. Edmonson approaches Mayan religion in terms of traditional anthropological practice, studying the hieroglyphic record and pre-Columbian texts, particularly the *Popol Vuh*, as well as present religious ritual, and he looks for continuities between ancient texts and present practice. He concludes that for the Maya, religion mimics the early Maya word for religion, *ok olal* 'entering inwardness,' or, more idiomatically, 'seeking centeredness,' where being 'inside' denotes

68

a safe haven, which is *txolin* 'ordered,' *nik'u'n* 'balanced/peaceful,' *tz'aqsin* 'adjusted,' *jiky'tzin* 'straight,' *kuj* 'unwavering,' and *toj tumil* 'right.'

Edmonson explains that Mayan religion is mystical; it is the province of specialists who understand the counting of days, the patterning of the tossed beans or corn kernels, the complex sacrificial system and the requirements of the gods. He says, "the power of the ritual is demonstrated by its ability to placate the demanding gods and actually produce health, fertility, rain, sunrise, predicated planetary movements, and eclipses" (1993: 73). The Maya don't pray with empty hands. The priests require a gift commensurate to the importance and value of the item requested of them. In the *Popol Vuh*, not only do men and women depend on the gods. The gods also depend on men and women in a delicate balance of providence for hire. The gods were to be honored and fed the food of sacrifice. In the case of particularly momentous requests, the only "gift to god significant enough…is a human life" (ibid.: 83).

Nájera concurs. She says that human sacrifice demonstrated that:

> In order for life to be renewed, it was necessary to produce ritual death, and for this reason, it was required that the community produce such a death, so that the community itself could continue to exist; this idea is in strict relation with the *idea of reciprocity* that should and must exist between mankind and the gods: each needs the other to survive. Human beings, the divine creation, were formed so that they could, with their blood, sustain the gods, and in turn humans need divine power to help them deal with daily problems. The gods are not all powerful beings; they need the human offerings in order to live and it is human beings who are responsible for these offerings. Man considers himself the axis of the Universe, because without his action, everything would be destroyed (1987: 14, emphasis and translation from Spanish, WMC).

Not only does Nájera concur with the reciprocal nature of sacrifice (as per Edmonson), but she says it is the heart that was the most import aspect of human

69

sacrifice, since it served as the victim's essence and center (ibid.: 144), as well as being

the preferred food of the gods. Glyphs occasionally show the *world tree* growing up out

of the chest cavity of a sacrificial victim (Figure 2.4, from the Dresden Codex). The

tree's branches reach to the heavens; its roots go down into the underworld of death; and

its trunk is firmly planted in the literal and ritual center of the religious system, the

human heart.

Figure 2.4 Mayan *world tree* and the human heart. Fragment from the Dresden Codex; from Nájera, (1987: Fig. 25).

Nájera's work is largely a history of Maya human sacrifice as depicted in the

glyphic record. She discusses the grisly business of extracting a beating heart. She says

that the pulsating of the sacrificed heart was what guarantee of the further life of the

community. The title itself of her book is iconic to our theme: El don de la sangre en el equilibrio cósmico [The gift of blood for cosmic equilibrium (translation, WMC)]. Her claim, like Edmonson's, is that Mayan sacrifices are about reciprocity, a mutually beneficial agreement between humans and the gods.

In the present world though, it is the lack of centeredness, personal balance, and equilibrium that Scotchmer (1989, 1993) cites as motivation for the unprecedented conversion to Protestantism among the Mam and other Mayan groups. Scotchmer, unlike Edmonson, writes from a Geertzian ethnographic perspective, allowing Mam men and women to tell their own stories from their own perspective. He claims that it is because many Mam see traditional Mayan religion as not delivering on its promise of balance, i.e. social harmony, personal order, and other indicators of a centered life, that they have opted for other religious systems, particularly Catholicism and, lately, Protestantism. Scotchmer's goal was to provide an ethnohistory of conversion among the Southern Mam.[5] He cites the stories of many Mam men who claim to have beaten their wives and children, and who were addicted to alcohol—certainly not the kind of balance they were seeking. In this dissertation, I recast his findings in terms of a Mayan quest for centeredness. While many (both Mam and non-Mam) consider Christian conversion to be a delinking of the modern Maya with their past, I suggest, based on Scotchmer's work and further interviews with the Mam of Comitancillo, that conversion can be seen as the pursuit of the cultural value of centeredness which, far from being a delinking of the Mam with their past, can be understood as an affirmation of Mayanness. Indeed, the

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[5] Southern Mam centers around the town of San Juan Ostuncalco in the department of Quetzaltenango. It is more closely related than Northern Mam (of Huehuetenango) to the Mam of Comitancillo. See Godfrey and Collins (1987) for further details.

Mam term for conversion is *tu'n tajtz ti'j tanmin* 'to return home in regard to one's heart,' to come home to centeredness. That the Mam would use such terminology in light of Nájera's emphasis on the heart in Mayan sacrifices is strong support for conversion as cultural continuity and not as cultural delinking. It also affirms the cultural salience of centeredness. Again, this is not simply balancing the good and the bad, obedience and disobedience. Rather, it is about occupying a center space—being *toj b'a'n* 'in goodness' here in the world and at the *heart of heaven* in the world to come.

As mentioned in section 1.3.3, Mam Evangelicals feel that conversion is necessary not only for practitioners of traditional religion, but for Catholics as well. They consider Catholicism to be the extension of traditional Mayan religion, which people are simply born into. They preach that a Christian is something you become, and that it is not merely part of one's cultural heritage. They believe that true Christianity implies a break with and a conversion from their religious past, not just an addition to it, which they understand Catholicism to be. In this dissertation, I will deal almost exclusively with traditional religion and Evangelicalism, not Catholicism.

2.3.4 Centeredness in daily life

Finally, we would expect that centeredness, independently posited as both a cultural and grammatical theme, would indeed overlap in the daily practice of life and in daily discourse, where meanings are encoded both semantically in the meanings of words and socially through the use of relevant lexical items and syntactic constructions in contexts where centeredness is called upon as a social and personal adjudicator for communal and psychological judgments. So we would expect and seek in the meanings

of words and situations, the encoding of our theme of centeredness. To do this, in Chapter Four, I follow Clifford Geertz (1973) in a *thick description* of a Mam agreement protocol that allows antagonists on two sides of an issue to meet in the middle and make peace. To my knowledge this dissertation constitutes the first extended ethnographic portrayal of this aspect of Mam daily life.

Geertz's emphasis on Interpretive Anthropology is a direct response to the Skinnerian behaviorism of the mid-twentieth century, the idea that a truly social *science* should concern itself only with the study of the observable (for a brief critique of Skinner, see D'andrade, 1995: 8-9). For Geertz, behaviorism leaves the major issue of language and culture—meaning—irrelevant and untouched, hardly a promising avenue for anthropological research.

Geertz had no particular issue with an etic viewpoint of cultural life. Indeed he embraced the microscopic detailing of an event as only an etic perspective can do. But he refused to privilege it as the behaviorists do. Geertz derided radical behaviorism as flat and two-dimensional, being nothing more than what a camera would see (Geertz. 1973: 7). Nor did he view culture in the fashion of Marvin Harris (1974). Harris, the quintessential cultural materialist, taught that, no matter what people say is their motivation for action, the bottom line is always economic. Harris looked at every society with an a priori commitment to a superimposed, etic, materialist explanation. Geertz rejected this as well. Both behaviorism and materialism are outsider perspectives brought to bear (and meant to explain) cultural practice.[6]

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[6] Geertz has been criticized that he is not empirical enough, that his famous article on Balinese cockfights excludes women, that he doesn't turn his own interpretive

What Geertz, however, sees as the task of cultural anthropology is understanding local life from an emic, culturally informed point of view, no matter where that takes us. For Geertz, the goal of ethnography is not proof or *explanation* as the empirical behaviorist would want it, but *understanding* in the hermeneutic sense of interpreting behavior as it is locally meaningful.

As mentioned in section 1.1, Itkonen (1978, 1975) claims that proof in the human sciences is different in several basic ways from proof in the natural sciences: in measurability, and in striving not to measure, but to understand or interpret observations not reducible to calculable phenomena like time, size, and distance. In this way, not only is measurement different, but what is observed is different as well.

In summary, Itkonen says that proof (and the decision of what constitutes data) for the more "human" sciences is hermeneutic, rather than positivistic. He defines this by suggesting that "it might be said that hermeneutics acquires its data through understanding meanings, intentions, values, norms, or rules, and the hermeneutic analysis consists in reflection upon what has been understood" (ibid.: 20).

In Chapter Four, I try to do this, seeking pattern in a number of events in which I was a participant as well as an observer.

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anthropology on itself and realize that his own view is "just another view," and that he is overly relativistic, among other critiques (see Shweder (2000) for a discussion of critiques and a largely positive view of Geertz, and Windschuttle (2002) for a negative view. Despite these critiques, I appropriate Geertz as a helpful model of how to go about arriving at the ethnographer's goal of illuminating 'what these people are like.'

2.4 Linguistic aspects of centeredness

It seems intuitive that centeredness, as a pervasive organizing principle in the daily lives of the Mam, would manifest itself in the language as well, since language is another pillar of cultural practice (along with religion, architectonics, beliefs, daily life, etc.). In the same way that action and the interpretation of action affirms cultural understanding, so language is "a form of action that both presupposes and at the same time brings about ways of being in the world" (Duranti, 1997: 1). As such, we can search confidently for a "language of centeredness" that both reflects this important Maya-Mam cultural theme while at the same time brings it into being in the minds and daily practice of speakers.

I suggest that centeredness as a grammatical theme is evident in the lexicon of Maya-Mam, and in its morphology, syntax and discourse structure as well. There are three formal linguistic notions that I explore in order to support this claim: the lexicon, spatial deixis and discourse structure. Since the notion of centeredness deals in part with spatial deixis, or more specifically, deictic anchorage, in the following discussion I will tend to extract the spatial concept of centeredness from the broader treatment of deictic notions proposed by the cited authors.

2.4.1 Centeredness in the Mam lexicon

Wierzbicka (1997: 1) claims, "there is a very close link between the life of a society and the lexicon of the language spoken by it." She agrees with Sapir and cites him: "Vocabulary is a very sensitive index of the culture of a people" (Sapir, 1949: 27). Again, "Language is a symbolic guide to culture" (ibid.: 162). In other words, there is a

connection, perhaps causal, but certainly considerable between language and culture. In the two sections that follow (2.4.2 and 2.4.3), I look at centeredness as coded in Mam morphosyntax and discourse. Here (2.4.1) I look at how centeredness is reflected in the lexicon.

In Mam, a rich lexical vein to mine is the use of terminology related to the stomach (*k'u'jb'aj*), which is representative of the center of the body and emotions; for example: to finish off the stomach 'to not be able to put up with something;' to eat one's stomach 'to have compassion;' to lower one's stomach 'to be defeated;' to enlarge one's stomach 'to be encouraged;' to have one's stomach arrive there 'to lust after something;' to be of two stomachs 'to vacillate;' to go out from one's stomach 'to forget'' (López Gabriel and Collins (1991: 99)). Additionally, Scotchmer (1978) discusses these stomach terms in light of the importance of the Maya-Mam sense of centeredness. He uses componential analysis, a technique developed by Ward Goodenough (1956), to discover local meaning for Mam *-k'u'j* terms.[7] He identifies and describes eighty-seven different forms that include the Mam root *–k'u'j* 'stomach.' Following Chafe (1965), he groups these occurrences as *literal correlates*, where the term is understood in its truth conditional, real-world meaning; *metaphors*, where both real-world and extended meanings are equally salient to native speakers; and *idioms*, where a new composite meaning of a phrasal unit overtakes and replaces its original literal meaning. Upon analysis of all occurrences, Scotchmer suggests that the Mam term *-k'u'j* 'stomach'

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[7] I've rewritten Scotchmer's examples in the now-accepted Mam alphabet. His original spellings were alike in all ways except that what is now written as <k>, Scotchmer (and Reynoso) wrote as <c> and what is now written as <q>, Scotchmer wrote as <k>. I've regularized these spelling conventions in order to simplify comparison.

"really is best translated 'the stomach-heart,' or 'the *core* of the person including his physical and psychological needs'" (1978: 30, emphasis, WMC).

He supports his analysis with several additional observations beyond his local, ethno-semantic analysis. First he alludes to the K'iche' cognate term *k'ux* which means 'entire being,' and suggests that this is in line with Mam usage and meaning. Second, he cites the Mam dictionary of Fray Diego de Reynoso (1916 [1644]), a sixteenth century friar and native K'iche' who learned to speak Mam. Reynoso includes a number of additional –*k'u'j* terms beyond those that Scotchmer studied, but which follow from and affirm Scotchmer's analysis. The Mam term that Reynoso gave for 'heart' was *k'u'j oloj*, which Scotchmer doesn't venture to analyze, although it is perhaps cognate with Edmonson's , *ok olal* 'entering inwardness,' mentioned in section 2.3.3 above. The *k'u'j* substitution for *ok* 'to enter' would describe the center or middle of inwardness, if we assume the final words of the similar phrases to be cognate. This, of course, would be strong support for the saliency of the centeredness claims of this dissertation. Third, Scotchmer cites modern Mam phrases where heart and stomach can be used interchangeably.[8] For example, to do something wholeheartedly *tuk'il tkyaqil nk'u'je* 'with all my stomach' and *tuk'il tkyaqil wanmiye* 'with all my heart' both mean the same thing. He suggests that this may be due to contact with Spanish speakers where the

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[8] The modern Comiteco term for heart is *anmin*, borrowed from Spanish *alma* 'soul.' The term is cognate with forms throughout the Mam area (Godfrey and Collins, 1987: 243). Interestingly, the word for his/her town *tanim* and his/her heart *tanim* are identical in Tectitán and Tacaná as well as in a number of other Mam towns. If these two forms are related (they are slightly different in Comitancillo and most other towns), it would strongly support England's notion of the convergence of the essence of personhood (one's heart) and place, and it would be yet another indication of the salience of centeredness.

notion of *corazón* 'heart' carries many of the emotional and extended meanings of Mam

–k'u'j terminology, although we've seen from Nájera that the heart historically has been

considered a seat of centeredness, so any similarity based on contact is only speculation

and is not necessary to the relation.

Scotchmer admits that trying to approach native speaker intuition on the meaning

of key terms like this one is both challenging and humbling. Nevertheless, he has

succeeded in establishing a meaningful link among the broad usage of *–k'u'j* terms that

lays out in one particular semantic field what it is that one has to know in order to operate

in a manner acceptable to members of Mam culture (Goodenough, 1964: 36).

In Chapter Four, I compare the use of *–k'u'j* terms in Comitancillo with data from

Scotchmer. Although there are some terms that Scotchmer lists that are unattested in

Comitancillo, and a number of Comiteco terms that are not mentioned by Scotchmer, the

basic premise holds, that stomach terms are iconic of strong emotion and the essence of

one's being.

According to Wierzbicka's (1997) article on cultural key words, *-k'u'j* would

certainly qualify as a *key word* in Mam. She points out that cultural elaboration of

vocabulary—having many lexical options for articulating issues that are culturally

meaningful (honorifics in Japanese, for example)—and frequency of vocabulary use in

texts are important metrics for determining the lexical items that instantiate salient

cultural values. Beyond these, she suggests that key words are those which show up not

only often and in culturally meaningful ways, but "in a whole phraseological cluster"

(ibid.: 16), as per Scotchmer's claim about *–k'u'j* terms in metaphorical and idiomatic

expressions. They also are frequently used in a particular semantic domain such as the

word *heart* in English that adds depth and feeling in concepts such as heartbroken, heartwarming, heartsick, heartfelt, heartstopping, disheartening, heartache, heartland, heartstrings, and even Braveheart. I suggest that *–k'u'j* is just such a term, a focal point around which an entire cultural domain— centeredness—is organized. "By studying these focal points in depth we may be able to show the general organizing principles which lend structure and coherence to a cultural domain as a whole, and which often have an explanatory power extending across a number of domains" (ibid.).

In Chapter Four I discuss additional Mam terms that deal with centeredness including *niky'jin* 'middle, half' and *niky'il* 'to know,' *nuk'b'il* 'ordered,' *t-xilin* 'its essence, its going forth,' and *tumil* 'correct, directed.'

2.4.2 Relevant literature on deixis

As discussed above, the Mam speak of life as a series of situations and relationships in which they try to maintain a healthy center of balance, for example: between an individual and his or her spouse; between a couple and their children; between a family and their neighbors and the wider community; between a farmer and the natural world of earth and sun and rain; between an individual or a community and their God or gods. Like a teeter-totter at the park, this idea of a metaphysical equilibrium in relationships conjures up the notion of a *center*, a fulcrum point upon which distinct sides are balanced. As seen in the discussion of health practice, for example, good health as a median point—a center space—between extremes of hot and cold, is the aim and objective of balancing these two competing forces. Linguistically, the idea of a center that serves as an origin point for grammatical notions is called an *origo* or deictic center.

Recent work on deixis and deictic notions by a number of scholars has included work in Mayan languages such as Yukateko (Hanks, 1990), Tzotzil (Haviland, 1996; and De León, 1991, 2001) and Tzeltal (Brown, 2001)—all spoken in Mexico, as well as Mopan Maya (Danziger (1994)) of Guatemala. Because centeredness is basically a spatial notion, it is spatial deixis (for which, see below), particularly in relation to a deictic center or anchor point, that is most relevant to this dissertation. Of course, the notion of origo is not specific to Mam. Indeed it seems likely to be a universal grammatical principle. What I suggest in this dissertation is that what is peculiar to Mam (and other Maya) is the way the notion of centeredness as both a grammatical and cultural theme reflects Mam speakers' means of organizing their experience of the world.

Before mentioning specific contributions to spatial deixis by Mayanists, I will look first at more general studies in the literature. Lyons (1977) provides a good working definition of deixis: "By deixis is meant the location and identification of persons, objects, events, processes and activities being talked about, or referred to, in relation to the spatiotemporal context created by the act of utterance and the participation in it, typically, of a single speaker and at least one addressee" (1977: 637). Since Lyons' discussion of deixis is in his two-volume work on semantics, he is less interested in deictic usage and more concerned about meaning and the dimensions along which meaning is assigned (although he readily admits to the necessity of invoking pragmatic concepts in the analysis of deictic meaning (ibid.: 591)). For example, he suggests that the human body in space is the basis of our understanding of direction. He says that the up-down dimension is established by our experience of gravity, a real-word reality; our feet on the ground provide us with a fixed zero-point from which other locations can be

designated or conceived. The asymmetry of our bodies from head to toe, along with the

fact of gravity, make verticality what he calls the primary spatial dimension (ibid.: 690).

The fact that humans are asymmetrical from front to back and that we tend to walk

forward and encounter objects by confronting them "face to face" marks front-back as the

second most salient spatial relation. In fact, we ascribe anthropomorphically fronts and

backs to animals and inanimate objects based on their prototypical movements or the

points at which they are routinely confronted. Because this is somewhat arbitrary, this

dimension is easier to confuse than up and down. For example, Fillmore (1997: 33)

reminds us that from outside, the front of a church is where we go in, but once inside, the

front is where the formal action is, which is usually at the opposite end from where one

enters. Lastly, Lyons claims that left and right derive from front and back. It is the least

salient and therefore the most often confused spatial relation. For example, the left side

of a washing machine is to our left as we face it, whereas the left side of a car is not as we

face it, but as we sit in the driver's seat. Lyons' discussion is less about spatial deixis and

mostly about locating objects in space, of which deictic locating is just one method. For

example, he claims that in the sentence *The church is behind the town hall*, there are both

deictic and non-deictic interpretations. Non-deictically, the speaker is understood to be

situating the church in the space near the town hall's canonical rear. The deictic

interpretation is more context-dependent and situates the town hall between the speaker

and the church irrespective of the orientation of the church to the town hall. Thus, for

Lyons, "The canonical situation-of-utterance is egocentric" (1977: 638). For Lyons (and

most scholars) ego in present time and space is the measure of all deictic notions, like a

surveyor's monument stake from which all legally binding measurements are calculated.

81

Routinely, we think of deixis in three categories: person, time, and place, anchored to a deictic center or anchorage point, what Levinson calls the "space-time-social center" of the entire world (1983: 64). Of this, Fillmore says: "I carry around with me, everywhere I go, my own private world. The spatial centre of this world is my location…the temporal centre of this world is the passing moment of my consciousness…the social centre of this world is me" (Fillmore, 1998: 40-41). The speaker—ego—is the center point from which all deictic notions are determined.

Levinson (1983), following other scholars, adds two other categories to the broader scope of what deixis includes, i.e. social deixis and discourse deixis. He sees social deixis as an extension of person deixis, since, tied to the immediate context of speaking are not only the notions of *you* and *me*, but also the honorific notions of what kind of *you* and *me* are intended by the interlocutors. By discourse deixis, Levinson (1983: 63) suggests a sentence like: *This is what phoneticians call creaky voice*, where the deictic *this* points not necessarily to a specific object in the physical context, but to a linguistic object (perhaps a sentence or series of sentences) in the co-text of discourse. This notion of discourse deixis will prove particularly important in the present study (see sections 2.4.2 and 2.4.3).

In addition to Lyons (1977), Levinson (1983) and Fillmore (1997), Anderson and Keenan (1985) provide a good overview of person, spatial and temporal deixis. Since Lyons, Levinson, and Fillmore each deal with the formal notion of deixis, its extent within the grammar, and its explanation, they largely restrict their treatment to English, attempting to get a handle on the concept before extending it cross-linguistically. Anderson and Keenan look almost exclusively to other languages for a fuller

understanding of deixis. In particular, they deal with spatial deixis and the number of systematic distinctions drawn from language to language. For example, they cite both English and Hebrew as distinguishing *this* vs. *that/here* vs. *there* in a two-term system based upon distance from speaker. They describe three-term systems such as Spanish based on distance from speaker (*éste*, *ése*, and *aquel*) as well as systems based on distance from both speaker and addressee, like Japanese *kono* 'near speaker,' *sono* 'near addressee,' and *ano* 'far from both.'   They also describe systems with more terms including Malagasy, which marks seven degrees of relative distance from the speaker.

They argue that some systems are not entirely egocentric. From Turkish data, they suggest that in certain contexts, the term supposedly meaning 'near to Addressee' can also be used "to pertain to things in the (physical or psychological) space of both the Addressee and the Speaker" (1985: 285). In other words, spatial deixis is not universally egocentric in every instantiation, but rather it implies (or can imply) a shared space between a speaker and an addressee.

Mayanist William Hanks heartily agrees with this notion. In fact, he claims that egocentricity is not the right way to ground the deictic field at all. Rather, the field is socially defined in linguistic practice between a pair, or more, of people who alternate among participant roles of speaking and hearing. But they don't just talk back and forth. Rather, as cultural insiders they also call to attention a backdrop of culturally lived schemata that offers a *ground* upon which to signal deictic *figures*. Hanks claims that reducing referential practice to a ping-pong match of egocentric moves is a gross oversimplification. More accurately, to engage in conversation is to locate oneself in a culturally co-constructed world of persons who "schematize their experiences in the very

process of living them" (ibid.) It is through this process of schema building that both speakers and hearers assign meaning and predictability to their shared world.

For Hanks, then, in opposition specifically to Lyons, as well as to Fillmore and Levinson, deixis is not so much egocentric as it is *socio-centric*. The concept of *here*, for example, includes not only an ego to which *here* is proximal, but also an addressee against which *here* has contextually meaningful distal significance (as per Anderson and Keenan on Turkish just above). He shows how there are no firm categories of what constitutes *here* and *there*, but that these are entirely based on the context of first and second persons.

Despite Hanks' concern about the risk of reducing socio-centricity to simple egocentricity, it seems evident that in a discussion between ego and an interlocutor, *here* is still canonically in ego's environs when juxtaposed to the space occupied by the addressee. In other words, a speaker and an addressee share social space as per Hanks, but only until the shared space is itself problematized and contested between the two, in which case, both will speak (in ping-pong fashion) from a position of egocentricity.

In addition to Hanks, Haviland (1996) also discusses deictic anchorage in a Mayan language—Tzotzil. He analyzes transposition, the shifting of perspective from the "here and now" to the "then and there." For example, when speakers employ the historical present or when they cite quoted speech, the deictic anchor shifts from the time that the speech act is encoded to the time that it references. In other words, origo has a radius or a trajectory, a projection (Haviland's term) that connects the actual utterance to the referenced context. The historical present and the use of quoted speech are examples of what Hanks calls "decentering" where the privileged "actual corporeal field" (1990:

217) of here-and-now deictic anchorage is recentered to a projected or extended anchorage point beyond the encoding context. My interest in this deictic shifting is that deictic centeredness is a social construct and, as such, it isn't simply speaker centric, although that is its canonical context. Decentering (from ego) and subsequent recentering elsewhere are mechanisms for resetting centeredness. This is important to our topic because centeredness is a broad notion that includes both the privileged (and traditional) egocentric position of origo, as well as a projected origo centered on someone or someplace other than ego in the here and now encoding speech event. In other words, the idea of *center* can move around. In fact, it is particularly mobile in the lexical meanings of Maya-Mam intransitive verbs of direction.

England (1983) reports that there are twelve such verbs. I will discuss these in detail in Chapter Five. For now, citing Haviland: "Transposition is necessarily reflected in the choice of directional verbs, whose very use always indexes some deictic origo" (1996:276). Although Haviland was talking about Maya-Tzotzil, his comment obtains for Maya-Mam as well, as speakers must project the extent or radius of origo for every use of the verbs of direction. The decision to employ a directional verb (which occur ubiquitously in Mam) requires the speaker to consider centeredness, the origo from which the motion encoded in the verb is calculated. Mam directional verbs cluster in the following groups: *xi'yil* 'to go,' *tza:jil* 'to come,' *u:lil* 'to arrive here,' and *po:nil* 'to arrive there.' These depend on speaker center for their deictic anchorage. *Kub'il* 'to descend,' *ja:wil* 'to ascend,' *e:lil* 'to leave,' and *o:kil* 'to enter' are "other-centric." For example, one can descend, ascend, leave or arrive from wherever one is situated. What the speaker encodes is a projected origo from which the action takes place. For these

85

four verbs, origo is the subject of the sentence not of the speaker of the sentence. In

contrast, for the first four verbs mentioned above, the origo that is coded is speaker

center. The final group, *kyijil* 'to stay' *a:jil* 'to return (home),' *b'ajil* 'to complete,' and

iky'il 'to pass' have no denoted deictic center. They code general movement (or in the

case of *b'ajil*, completion of movement, and in the case of *kyijil*, the cessation of

movement).

A final place where we will consider the projection of origo is as it relates to the

use of Mam relational nouns, which are based on the physical body in space. As Hanks

says, "Body space has a schematic structure. . .and it is related to other spatial schemata

by processes of analogy, homology and transformation" (1990: 81). The Mam use the

vocabulary for certain body parts to recenter an origo from speaker center to some other

projected center of reference and they locate referents in relation to this projected origo of

the body in space. For example, the Mam will say that something is *twutz ja* 'in front of

the house.' *Twutz* literally means 'its face (at the house's face).' Likewise something

can be *twi' ja* 'on the house (at the house's head)' *ttzi ja* 'at the entrance to the house (at

the house's mouth),' *ttxa'n ja* 'at the edge of the house (at the house's nose),' *ttxlaj ja*

'beside the house (at the house's side)' or *t-xe ja* 'under the house (at the house's root),'

where *twi', ttzi, ttxa'n, ttxlaj* and *t-xe* mean 'its head, its mouth, its nose, its side and its

root respectively.[9]

England describes the extensive use of relational nouns in Mam. "All sentence

constituents except the verb, the direct agent, patient, or subject, and adverbs are

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[9]Some relational nouns are *not* possessed body parts (although all are possessed), and
some relational noun phrases indicate not NP locative relations, but case relations.

indicated by relational noun phrases. This means that all nondirect cases and most

locations occur in relational noun phrases" (1983: 153). This suggests that in order to

speak at all, the Mam must take into account not only the deictic spatial relations of

verbal semantics as discussed above, but also spatial relationships between NP's as

expressed in body terminology that grounds these relationships in space via analogy with

the physical body. As Duranti says, "We often forget that the human body is the first

instrument we experience" (1997: 322), mediating between our thoughts and the world.

Although these relational nouns can be used non-deictically (as per Fillmore's example

above regarding the location of the church and the town hall), they nevertheless have a

sense of center, particularly in positional relations like 'in front of the house,' 'around the

house,' 'above the house,' 'on the house,' 'under the house,' 'behind the house,' etc.

where the house is seen as projected center stage, and the NPs located in relation to it are

situated in association to the "body" of the house itself.

Danziger (1994) discusses spatial deictics in Mopan Maya, a Yucatecan language

of northern Guatemala. Following Hanks, she claims that a four way contrast of locatives

emerges not from egocentricity, but from sociocentricity: *waye'* 'here (near speaker),

ta'kan 'there (near addressee), *tilo'* 'there (near a visible third person) and *te'* (invisible

away from everyone). Not only is this four-way distinction unique (and innovative)

among Mayan languages, but these deictics are used in discourse as well, to refer to

information that the speaker is presenting as new or old.   She concludes by saying, "No

reference to deictic location can in fact be made in Mopan without invoking semantic

contrasts relevant both to the social situation in which reference is made, and to the

medium of reference and state of shared knowledge of the discourse participants" (1994:

904). In other words, deictic referents do double duty as discourse markers, helping to manage the presentation and interpretation of narrative text, thus forging strong discourse cohesion, a topic to which we now turn.

2.4.3 Relevant literature on discourse studies

The study of discourse, like that of architecture mentioned above, is considered to be within the purview of many different disciplines: linguistics, rhetoric, anthropology, sociology, education, journalism, English and foreign languages, philosophy, political science, marketing, computational linguistics and artificial intelligence—each bringing an angle and an understanding of what discourse is and how we should go about studying it.

In addition, there have been a number of modern approaches to discourse analysis within linguistics proper: Speech Act Theory, Conversation Analysis, the Ethnography of Communication, Interactional Sociolinguistics, and Critical Discourse Analysis, each of which brings certain priorities to the table, and each of which has shed light on the words we choose and the way we speak.[10] A number of further approaches cut across the lines I've drawn here such as variationist approaches, pragmatics-based approaches and audience-design and accommodation approaches to discourse. For my purposes, the cohesion model of Halliday and Hasan will enable me to emphasize the cohesive nature of the discourse deictics, *-tz* and *–x*. I suggest below that Halliday and Hasan's concerns bout texture can fit well into a coherence model of propositional relations based on work by Sanders et al. (1992, 2001). For the purposes of the present study of centeredness, I

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[10] For a summary of the first four of these theories, see Schiffrin (1994) and Van Dijk (1997), especially chapter 1. For a critique of Critical Discourse analysis, again see Van Dijk (1997), particularly pages 22-23.

will limit my discussion of discourse to two specific areas where I show that the notion of centeredness is relevant to Mam discourse structure: first discourse cohesion, and second, the use of couplets in ritual speech.

2.4.3.1 Discourse cohesion

Discourse cohesion, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976), is what makes a text a text. They claim that a text has *texture*, whereas a mere random concatenation of sentences does not. Texture is realized by *ties*, each of which is an instance of cohesion that links something in a text with something else. For example, Halliday and Hasan propose the following sub-text: *Wash and core six cooking apples. Put them into a fireproof dish*. They point out that there is a tie between the NP *six cooking apples* and the pronoun *them*. This is an instance of referential cohesion.

They discuss several other types of cohesion as well. Not only are there referential ties in a text, but additional processes of substitution, ellipsis and conjunction also signal links throughout a discourse. These are all examples of grammatical cohesion, where morphosyntactic rules help govern the interpretation of these textual ties. the function of such ties can be teased out by contrastive analysis—contrasting the meaning and function of linguistic material containing the proposed tie with that which does not and also by interchanging the ties and seeing how this affects meaning and usage.   Cohesion is also realized through vocabulary where lexical repetition and/or the occurrence of related words in a text (fruit, apples, oranges, trees, juice, etc.) help give unity and texture to a discourse.

89

Halliday and Hasan are careful to point out that cohesion is not simply a structural relationship between ties in a text. Rather, it is a semantic relationship. "Cohesion is a semantic relation between an element in the text and some other element that is crucial to the interpretation of it" (1976: 8). Structure is secondary to these meaning-based ties, although it is still vitally important. "Structure is one means of expressing texture" (ibid.: 7). The resolution of anaphoric reference, elided and substituted forms and the understanding of conjunctive ties may well have a structural component, but it is the thread of meaning in a text that produces texture.

Despite their emphasis on meaning, Halliday and Hasan spend most of their ground-breaking book dealing with the nuts and bolts—the structure—of how discourse ties are encoded and otherwise realized. And it is one characteristic of this nuts and bolts aspect of discourse that is germane to this dissertation. They discuss what they call text reference, where, in English, words like *it*, *this* and *that* can refer to entire events which can span sentences or even larger chunks of text. For example, consider Levinson's sentence: "That was the funniest story I ever heard" (1983: 85). Assuming previous text of the veritable funny story, the *that* in Levinson's sentence applies to the entire story—perhaps many sentences long, possibly replete with facial expressions and with different voices coding different characters in the story—that precedes its occurrence. This is text reference in the sense that it isn't simply an anaphor referring to a previously introduced NP. In Levinson's words, as mentioned in 2.4.2 above, it is a discourse deictic, specifying a large chunk of text. For Halliday and Hasan, this is another instantiation of cohesion, which they define as "the set of possibilities that exist in the language for making text hang together" (1976: 19).

I suggest that in Mam, grammaticalized versions of the simple affixes *–tz* 'to come' and *–x* 'to go' are discourse deictics used to identify chunks of text as either discourse old or discourse new respectively.[11] This is similar to Danziger (1994) in that deictics have discourse force, but in the Mam case, the particles are normally not deictic, but directional in nature, whereas in Danziger's data, they are deictic. (For further discussion of given and new information see Prince (1981) and Ariel (2001)). Because of their text reference nature, these two morphemes are part of what Mam speakers use to help narrative text "hang together," and they, like the intransitive verbs from which they ultimately derive, base their meaning on a sense of deictic centeredness.

In the larger picture of discourse analysis, the discussion of cohesion is just part of the puzzle. Sanders et al. (1992) disagree with Halliday and Hasan that the linguistic realization of discourse ties is pivotal to texture. They opt for a cognitive model where "cohesive elements like connectives in the discourse (called conjunctions in Halliday and Hasan, WMC) are viewed as important though not necessary features of discourse; they are linguistic markers, expressing the underlying conceptual relations that are of a cognitive nature" (ibid.: 2). In other words, it is not the linguistic features themselves that are crucial to the overall unity of a discourse. Rather, Sanders et al. claim that the underlying unity of discourse is based not on linguistic cohesion but on the coherence of the propositional content of discourse segments, say S_1 and S_2. In this, they follow a

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[11] I confess to being more confident of the discourse meaning of *–tz* than *–x*, in part because of a greater number of what seem to be clear discourse deictic occurrences in texts. But *–tz* and *–x* seem to work in tandem in Mam texts, and in light of deictics as discourse markers as per the discussion of Danziger below, I consider my analysis to be likely. Nonetheless, I leave the final analysis of the discourse function of *–x* as an open question.

number of discourse analysts such as Grimes (1975), Longacre (1983), and Mann and Thompson (1986) all of whom claim that the basic unity of discourse is propositional in nature. What is different in Sanders, et al.'s account, is that they don't simply identify possible relations between propositions as these other scholars do. Rather, they suggest a typology which is both principled and cross-culturally applicable.

To do this, they define these coherence relations in terms of four primitives: 1. Is the relation between S_1 and S_2 additive or causal? 2. Is the source of the relation between S_1 and S_2 semantic or pragmatic? 3. What is the order of segments in the coherence relation, basic (the time of S_1 precedes S_2) or non-basic (the time of S_1 is after S_2)? and 4. Is the relationship between S_1 and S_2 stated positively or negatively?

They go on to claim that a taxonomy of coherence relations fall out from these four primitives. For example, in the sentence, *Because there is a low-pressure area over Ireland, the bad weather is coming our way*, a cause-consequence relation falls out from their four primitives. It is : 1. a causal relation, 2. a semantic, truth-conditional source of meaning, 3. it is in basic S_1 then S_2 order, and 4. it is positively stated. In this way, Sanders et al. subsume under their rubric the propositional relations posited by Grimes, Longacre, and Mann and Thompson.

Sanders and Spooren (2001) again discuss coherence relations, but they also discuss referential coherence (or cohesion as per Halliday and Hasan), a topic they chose to ignore in 1992 since at that time they felt that "cohesion does not concern connectivity at the level of the cognitive representation of the discourse" (1992: 3). The second time around, they are more receptive to the value of linguistic signals and discourse markers, and they discuss "grammar as a processing instructor" (2001: 10). Whereas in 1992,

Sanders et al. wrote that linguistic marking of coherence relations was optional, albeit helpful, in 2001 Sanders and Spooren claim that linguistic marking plays an important role in the understanding of a discourse. They say that hearers/readers make multiple representations of the sentences of a text: a surface code, which is a short-lived, exact reenactment of what was said; a text base, which contains the coherence relations of the propositions of the text; and a situation model in which the new information of the "gist" of the discourse is added to the background knowledge of the hearer/reader (2001: 3). They suggest that linguistic markers, as "part of the surface code, 'guide' the reader towards a coherent text representation" (2001: 17). In 1992 they wouldn't discuss the linguistic marking of discourse except as it supported the idea of relational coherence (1992: 25); by 2001 such marking (Halliday and Hasan's cohesion relations) had become an important part of their theory—what they call referential coherence—which supports and helps enable relational coherence. Although their theory is still cognitive, linguistic marking as per Halliday and Hasan, now plays a role in their theory as a "guide" and "processing instructor." This is significant, because it brings the notion of discourse cohesion back into the discourse mainstream, a place where it has not been for many years.

2.4.3.2 Couplets in Mayan ritual rhetoric

In addition to discourse cohesion, a second discourse-related structure relevant to the grammatical theme of centeredness is the occurrence of couplets in Mayan ritual rhetoric. Several publications by SIL colleagues have been especially helpful in looking at the linguistic corollaries of the cultural theme of centeredness and balance.

Neuenswander (1986) discusses dualism in Maya-Achí discourse as further evidence of the importance of balance in Mayan life. She claims that the use of couplets is pervasive in Achí discourse related to religion and prayer as well as in the discourse of other ceremonies and rites. For example, the following discourse was offered as a religious/didactic explanation as to why it is important to offer sacrifices to *dios mundo* (the world god). She says the text is "a reminder that one's offerings provide sustenance for the world, thus fulfilling the contract that, in return, charges the world to keep vigil in like manner over those who have made the sacrifice" (ibid.: 2, translation from Spanish, WMC). This is, of course, reminiscent of Edmonson's and Nájera's claim discussed in section 2.3.3 above that Mayan religion is based on reciprocity, a cosmic agreement and meeting in the middle of give and take.

> Thus they speak, our grandmothers,
>   our grandfathers:
>
> Due to the World alone we have our money.
> Due to the World alone we have our coins.
> Due to the World alone we have our food.
> Due to the World alone we have our drink, it is said.
>
> Because the World feeds us;
>   it gives us what we eat, it is said.
>
> It feeds our cows.
> It feeds our horses.
> It feeds our chickens.
> It feeds our pigs, it is said.
>
> In this way, the World feeds us,
>   it gives us what we eat.
>
> Here we are in the world, here where we are born,
>   here where we blossom,

> here where we die,
> here where we disappear.
>
> It is thus, that since we are of the World, the World feeds us.
> We also feed the world.
>
> Thus they say our long-ago mothers of all,
> the long-ago fathers of all, it is said.
>
> (1986: 3, translation from Spanish, WMC)

Neuenswander analyzes this and several other such texts and suggests a number of distinctive features of Achí couplets. They maintain common affixation, tense, and person marking, normally changing only a single element in the second line of the couplet, usually the noun or verb, or, less often, an adjective or adverb. In all of her examples, she points out that the female entity appears in the first line, the male in the second. She claims that this is distinctive for Achí. She also suggests that when two notions are juxtaposed in the two focal (substitutable) slots in the couplet, the first one is more salient or inclusive than the second.

Neuenswander's point in discussing couplets is both linguistic and cultural. She says that since language "is an aspect of culture, it should reveal certain premises upon which cultural behavior rests" (ibid.: 5, translation from Spanish, WMC). Her claim is that the pervasive use of couplets in rhetorical and religious discourse is iconic to the "strong tendency toward dualism" in Maya-Achí culture. She says that the two parts of the couplet are utilized to instantiate and emphasize a single concept, be it our ancestors, our prosperity, our animals, our lives or our passing from this world—a unity of meaning out of a dualistic diversity.

It may be more difficult to coerce the notion of centeredness out of Mayan couplets, than it has been to see it in the cultural instantiations I've mentioned, in the

95

Mam lexicon, and in the formal deictic notions of Mam grammar. Nevertheless, Gossen's notion of dualism as a Mesoamerican theme (1986: 6) includes a sense of balance, wholeness, harmony and equilibrium, all of which I claim are attributes of centeredness, and which I develop in some detail in Chapters Four and Five. Curruchiche Otzoy et al. (1994: 18) claim that a Mayan curriculum that takes into consideration Mayan values and world view must include the following related themes: Unity out of diversity, complementarity, cooperation, duality, the importance of the notion of "fourness;" and the philosophical search for centrality and equilibrium. I believe that all of these notions can be derived from a basic understanding of centeredness.

In this light, I consider dualism to be a single notion manifest in two, an abstract sense of balance and the center around which balance is situated. The men and women who in Gossen's account represent the push ahead/pull back of culture change and cultural continuity among the Maya also represent an underlying single culture expressed in a common language and a unified world view.

Townsend (1980) also discusses the linguistic aspects of couplets while making no claims about their cultural significance. He does, however, support the notion that the focus of couplets is on a single issue and meaning. For example, he cites the words of a Maya-Ixil (Ixil is a Mamean language) *iq'on b'e* 'carrier of the road (a petitioning shaman)' who represents the prospective groom and his family's interests in a ceremony meant to secure a bride. In the portion below, taken from a much longer text, the 'lord' is the girl's father. The shaman comes at dusk to talk to him about the availability of his daughter, 'the quetzal bird, the flower;' terms used here to emphasize the bride's

96

unspoiled beauty and desirability. The girl's mother answers the shaman's call at the

homestead entryway, and he says to her:

> I have come to waken him a bit
> I have come to rouse him a bit
>> lord of the land
>> lord of the dust.
>
> You, cradle of life,
>> we have come to wake you;
>> we have come to rouse you;
>>> that about the quetzal bird,
>>> about the flower.
>
> Not just about anything we have come here to awaken you;
> not just about anything we have come here to rouse you
>>>>> (Townsend, 1980: 3).

Townsend says that Maya-Ixil ethnopoetics and ritual rhetoric "depends heavily

on a correspondence of semantically similar units (rhyming of meaning)," which is "most

evident in parallelisms such as couplets" (ibid.: v). He claims that every adult Ixil can

employ this discourse style to a greater or lesser degree as the situation arises. In private

communication, Townsend agrees that the Ixil consider couplets to be a way to "tell the

whole story." In other words, the first line of a couplet seeks a sense of completion in the

second. I suggest that Townsend's additional data coincide with Neuenswander's and

that the parallel nature of Mayan rhetorical couplets is indeed iconic to the notion of

dualism as a cultural principle, one which has been well established (as per Gossen and

Martin in section 2.1 above) in the Mayanist anthropological literature.

Becker (1996 [1984]) also discusses the idea of iconicity of language structure to

cultural theme. He argues that Westerners shouldn't merely assume that another

language, in this case Burmese, is simply another way of describing the world as we know it. He says that grammatical explanation is in part political, when, for example, "we assume that there is one grammar for the Greek and the Barbarian—and it is Greek" (ibid.: 148). Becker calls for languages to be understood in the terms of those who natively speak them. He illustrates this by showing that, when he first wrote Burmese, he was scolded by his teacher for forcing it into a linear script. Becker tried to explain that it made no difference how the language was coded, but from the point of view of his Burmese friend, Becker was "hurting his language" (1996:149). The more Becker studied the language, the more he realized that it was written in syllable form with a central core with vowels and consonantal modifications wrapped around it, and that this form "was for many Southeast Asians, a mnemonic frame: everything in the encyclopedic repertoire of terms was ordered that way: directions (the compass rose), diseases, gods, colors, social roles, foods, everything. It was the natural shape of remembered knowledge, a basic icon" (ibid.).

Although Becker's work differs from Neuenswander's and Townsend's in that he dealt with the writing of language rather than its spoken structure, there is nonetheless similar strong support for the notion that native speakers have insights into their language and culture based on language form and structure, whether written or oral. Indeed, we can take Becker's "encyclopedic repertoire" just above and consider it not in Burmese terms, but in terms of the Mayan view of balance. Each of the disparate notions that I've mentioned: architectonics, health and illness, religion, daily life, and some of the formal structures of the language finds a common context in the Mams' search for and the real world's reflection of centeredness.

98

2.5 Relevant literature on Maya-Mam

Nora England (personal communication) says that Maya-Mam is extremely underrepresented in the scholarly literature. I am aware of three dissertations on aspects of Mam Grammar: Canger (1969), Godfrey (1981), and England (1975), which was updated and published (1983) separately from her original dissertation. Canger's work is based on Mam of Todos Santos, which is the dialect of Mam most different from the others (see Godfrey and Collins, 1987 for details). Her dissertation is an overview of Todos Santos Mam grammar and it is framed in a glossematic model based on work by Hjelmslev. Godfrey (1981) deals with spatial relations in Takaneko, a moribund dialect of Mam spoken along the Mexico border in the Guatemalan department of San Marcos. Godfrey's work basically deals with lexical semantics, the meanings of words. He discusses Mam person markers, relational nouns, spatial deictics and directionals and thoroughly discusses their meanings and uses. Of particular interest is his discussion of the reference location (i.e. the locus from which action is determined) of directional verbs in relation to the speaker and the one(s) spoken about that largely coincides with my discussion of the clustering of directionals based on their relation to the deictic center, although Godfrey's specifications of these terms is based not specifically on origo, but on pathway of action. The main difference in his analysis is that Godfrey lists 13 directionals, whereas England and I cite only 12 (*b'antil* 'to do something' cannot be used as an auxiliary in Comitancillo and otherwise doesn't group with the remaining directionals in terms of distribution, while Godfrey includes it in the set of directionals). A second and minor difference is that Godfrey considers the directionals *o:kil* and *e:lil* to have an up/down reference somewhat similar to *ja:wil* and *kub'il*, whereas in

Comitancillo, although they share an "other-as-origo" with *ja:wil* and *kub'il*, as opposed to "speaker-as-origo" deictic orientation, *o:kil* and *e:lil* refer to movement in and out respectively, not up and down.

England (1983) is most responsible for what the academic world knows about Mam. She has written extensively on numerous aspects of Mam grammar, particularly ergativity, spatial relations, and directionals. I cite her throughout this dissertation, particularly her insights on directionals and relational nouns as well as her discussion of cultural and grammatical theme. What is distinctive in this dissertation is my discussion of both directionals and relational nouns in terms of different deictic centers, rather than simply listing and discussing each one. I also recast her general presentation of spatial relations into a discussion of the cultural and grammatical thematicity of centeredness.

Two M.A. theses were the first modern scholarly publications in the field of Mam linguistics: Edward Sywulka (1948) and Dorothy Peck (1951). Both of these deal with Southern Mam morphology. England has a number of additional articles, many of which stem from her dissertation research, and SIL has produced some published and unpublished work on Mam as well, including an article of mine on Mam aspect and negation (1994). López Gabriel and Collins (1991) also contains a grammatical sketch that discusses transitivity and directionals. In addition, there is a growing body of literature, both academic and educational, written by the Mam themselves. This literature comes mostly from the Northern and more recently, the Central dialect areas.

2.6 Grammatical and cultural theme as a heuristic for discussing the relationship between language and culture

Although Martin's and England's work are the only ones that I know of that specifically talk jointly about grammatical and cultural theme, the basic idea of a relationship between the language of a group and their culture is as old as discussions on linguistic relativity which go back principally to Benjamin Whorf.[12] Indeed, both England and Martin cite Whorf (1956) as the impetus behind the idea that the relationship of language and thought (which is culturally construed) is essentially meaning-based, that is the language of a particular people and the culture of those same people mutually imply via the daily speaking of language that both gives meaning to and receives meaning from cultural practice.[13] Enfield agrees with the notion that thought is culturally construed. "Patterns of thought are seldom clearly separated in the literature from patterns of culture, given that for many, culture is defined as *collective* patterns of thought" (2002: 4, emphasis in the original).

Although Whorf's analysis of the Hopi conception of time has been discredited, his basic notion that meaning (which I take to be the content of thought) is influenced by the language that we natively speak, continues to excite linguistic anthropologists around the world. Whorf claimed:

> …each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing
> ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for

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[12]Spradley (1979: 185) reports that "the concept of cultural theme was first introduced into anthropology by Morris Opler who used it to describe general features of Apache culture."

[13]Whorf's ideas were formed at least in part through his association with his professor, Edward Sapir, who was influenced by Boas. Beyond Boas and Sapir in the United States, linguistic relativity goes back to von Humboldt and Herder in Europe

the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade…We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems of our minds (1940, reprinted in Carroll, 1956: 212-213).

The "categories and types" that he mentions here are cultural constructs that depend on the interaction of language and culture for their meaning. To affirm this idea, we need only consider Geertz's discussion of the difference between a wink and a twitch. Geertz says that the wink construct is the "speck of behavior" (the action itself) together with the meaning behind it, what he calls "a fleck of culture" (1973: 6). Meaning is culture based. There is nothing about the physical act of the wink/twitch in and of itself that makes it meaningful. Indeed, one might assume that there are cultures where what we consider to be a volitional wink is utterly meaningless and therefore ignored as etic detritus. It is rather the history of experiences (or prior texts, as Becker (1996: 144) calls them) with such behavior and the cultural contract or underlying agreement of those who have so interpreted it that gives it meaning. I agree with Geertz that the concept of culture is basically a semiotic one, one based on the shared meaning of signs, the most important of which is language itself. The etics of behavior—what the camera sees (the physical twitch)—are important to us as outsiders trying to understand what is going on, but it is the emics—the meaning—the interpretation by locals (the wink)—that speaks to the relationship between language and culture. Whatever else we might say about the relationship, it is my position that the link between language and culture—or in the present case, between grammatical and cultural theme—is meaning based. Whorf agrees.

He got this partly from his own study and observation and certainly in part from his

mentor and teacher, Edward Sapir. In perhaps Sapir's most oft-cited quote, he says:

> Though language is not ordinarily thought of as of essential interest to
> the students of social science, it powerfully conditions all our thinking
> about social processes and problems. Human beings do not live in the
> objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as
> ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular
> language which has become the medium of expression for their
> society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality
> essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an
> incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or
> reflection. The fact of the matter is that the "real world" is to a large
> extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No
> two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as
> representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different
> societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with
> different labels attached (1949, cited in Mandelbaum: 162).

In addition, Sapir says, "Language is at one and the same time helping and

retarding us in our exploration of experience, and the details of these processes of help

and hindrance *are deposited in the subtler meanings of different cultures*" (1921, cited in

Blount, 1995: 46, emphasis,WMC).

Harry Hoijer is the scholar perhaps most responsible for the post WWII revived

interest in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis after the two men's early deaths, Sapir at 55 in

1939, and Whorf at only 44 years of age in 1941. In fact, it is most likely Hoijer who

first coined the term the *Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis*. Hoijer's definition of the Sapir-Whorf

Hypothesis (hereafter, SWH) is the observation that "language functions, not simply as a

device for reporting experience, but also, and more significantly, as a way of defining

experience for its speakers" (1954: 93). Two readings of Whorf are possible, that

language *determines* the way we think about things, or, more subtly, that it determines

the thoughts that are available to us, or that our language merely *influences* how we think.

These two positions have come to be known as the strong version and the weak version of the SWH, respectively.[14] And although both Sapir and Whorf are on record with statements that could be construed as deterministic, they often mitigated these strong statements in print and most certainly held the milder view. The SWH is normally thought of in terms of how language potentially constrains thought, but from the outset, Hoijer saw it in more general terms, i.e. how language and culture interact (ibid.: 104).

Hoijer and Mayanist Robert Redfield organized a conference in 1953 at the University of Chicago that brought together some of the leading structuralist linguists and anthropologists in the country with the idea of laying out just what was meant by the SWH, and how it can be sustained through linguistic analysis and cultural observation. Hoijer's subsequent publication of the proceedings of that conference (1954) includes not only the papers presented, but the gist of the ensuing discussions as well. It is an outstanding resource for understanding the SWH in terms of how Sapir and Whorf's friends and contemporaries understood it, and in these articles, we can see that they were trying to feed linguistic and cultural data "up" to a more general level in order to develop a larger encompassing theory of the interaction of language and culture. Nonetheless, even Whorf's friends and colleagues found it difficult to pinpoint exactly what Whorf meant by linguistic relativity. Still, in the papers and discussions, several points were recurrent. First, that whatever one could say about the relationship between language structure and cultural experience in the world, it needs to be backed up by non-linguistic material. Formulating hypotheses about such a relationship on the basis of linguistic data

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[14] For a helpful overview of linguistic relativity, and particularly its strong and weak versions, see Schlesinger, 1991).

and then using linguistic data to prove these hypotheses is circular and trivial. Hoijer used his own work on Navajo to illustrate. Before diving into linguistic data, he takes several pages to discuss Navajo religious behavior and the underlying values of equilibrium and concord with the universe that are basic to understanding Navajo life. He claims that the Navajo never think of the task of humanity as bending or modifying nature to their needs or whims, but rather, that health and satisfaction come from harmoniously fitting into the eternal and unchanging natural world around them. When personal or communal disharmony is detected, a diviner is consulted in order "to put the maladjusted individual or community as a whole back into harmony with the universe" (1954: 100).

Hoijer then suggests that the notion of "fitting in to the natural world" is reflected in the morphological patterns of the Navajo verb. He says, for example, that two Navajo verbs *nínti* 'you have lain down' and *nìsínltí* 'you have caused me to lay down' actually have as their core Navajo meanings 'you belong to a class of animate beings which has moved to rest' and 'you, as agent, have set a class of animate beings, to which I belong, in motion to a given point' respectively. Hoijer claims that this way of speaking reflects the Navajo conception of the world as eternal and unchangeable, and a man's or woman's role in it is not so much as one who determines or causes, but rather their role is as responsive actors moving in relation to natural entities. He says:

> This fashion of speaking, it seems to me, is wholly consistent with the
> dominant motif we saw in Navaho religious practices. Just as in his
> religious-curing activities the Navaho sees himself as adjusting to a
> universe that is given, so in habits of speaking does he link individuals
> to actions and movements, distinguished, not only as actions and
> movements, but as well in terms of the entities in action or movement.
> This division of nature into classes of entity in action or movement is

the universe that is given; the behavior of human beings or of any
being individuated from the mass is customarily reported by
assignment to one or other of these given divisions (1954: 102).

This argumentation may be less than fully convincing. Pinker (1994) for one, is

quick to point out that even a gloss of "he walks" can be as stultifying as "solitary

masculinity, leggedness proceeds" (1994: 61), except that in Hoijer's case, the gloss falls

from the morphosyntax itself, while Pinker is simply trying to be difficult.[15] In fact,

Hoijer anticipates England and Martin in terms of just what it means for "the thinking of

a people" to be affirmed in grammar. Conclusions will come "from a totality of

categories cutting across lexical, morphological, and syntactical materials plus the

impresses of these upon other behavior which is nonlinguistic" (1954: 129).

At the end of his article Hoijer lays out a research agenda for establishing the

value of Sapir Whorf for cross-cultural understanding and to "develop the

hypothesis"—(1954: 102). It's interesting that he didn't see the hypothesis as something

to be proved or disproved, but rather, as a discovery procedure to be developed. As in all

ethnography, his basic research question is in essence, "What is going on here?" His call

for research has no clinical, laboratory component (although many such experiments have

been carried out). Rather, it is mostly related to the gathering of non-linguistic, cultural

information that would enable cross-cultural comparison of similar and dissimilar

languages with similar and dissimilar cultures, in order to understand not only "what is

going on" in specific cultures, but to come to the cross-cultural comparison of how

language and culture interrelate.

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[15]For a number of less-than-convincing arguments against linguistic relativity, see Pinker,
1994, particularly chapter three on Mentalese. Then see also Wierzbicka's rebuttal
(1997: 6-9).

Del Hymes (1966) calls for similar research. In looking at Wishram Chinook data, he considered what he calls a second type of linguistic relativity. He showed that the classic Whorfian doctrine, "that linguistic habits are in part constitutive of cultural reality" (1966: 116), needs to be bolstered by the reverse situation: "Cultural values and beliefs are in part constitutive of linguistic reality" (ibid.). Not only does one's native language affect culture, but one's culture affects his or her language as well. This is reminiscent of Bourdieu's proposition that as language actively structures cultural reality, at the same time, it is itself structured by that reality (1990: 52).

Hymes reports (using data from Spier and Sapir (1930) as well as his own fieldwork) how the Wishram Chinook people recoil from using verb forms for what he calls a "perfective future" aspect—the idea of future certainty, a done deal. At the same time, he found that this aspect, while being unattested and even stigmatized in daily speech, was commonly found in formal and ceremonial discourse. His analysis is that one cannot presume upon the future in terms of what one in and of him or herself will with certainty accomplish. Even young boys are admonished when they talk excitedly about the large catch of salmon they expect to harvest, since such arrogant presumption can doom the entire mission and even put the boys' and others' lives in danger. On the other hand, in ceremonial speech, when one is bestowing a name (or a name change), or disclosing one's guardian-spirit at the time of death, or formally reciting myth narratives, the certainty of future events is seen not within one's personal power to bring about, but rather, under the influence of the powerful spirit world. In this, one speaks of a future certainty based on a reality far beyond the individual speaker's ability to bring about.

107

Hymes' analysis is that the difference between formal and casual speech events reflects a cultural distinction that requires contrastive linguistic strategies. In this case, it isn't culture that reflects language, but language that reflects culture. Of course, the idea that a language must encode the meanings that are significant to the people that speak that language seems to be nothing more than a truism, but it is the mutual implication of language and culture that is at the core of Hymes' extended view of linguistic relativity. Indeed, as Everett (2004) argues, "the unidirectionality inherent in linguistic relativity may offer an insufficient tool for language-cognition connections more generally, for failing to offer a more fundamental role for culture in shaping language" (2004: 6). This unidirectionality—that language affects perception—is the very notion that Hymes expands upon, claiming that the influence goes both ways. This overlap of grammatical and cultural theme is a helpful heuristic in which to consider the more general relationship between language and culture. Conceptualizing the relationship within this thematic framework is more productive than positing a causation or dependence relationship—that language brings about a certain culture, or that language specifics necessarily emerge from a particular culture. Rather, the idea of the relationship between language and culture, or grammatical and cultural theme, is better understood in terms of Bourdieu's notion of a structured and structuring *habitus* (1990: 52) where language and culture are mutually implying, i.e. language realizes the culture of those who speak it, while at the same time it is through language practice that culture emerges and is built up over time, or, as Duranti claims, language "both presupposes and brings about ways of being in the world (1997: 1). In the same vein, Enfield suggests that language and culture are not only connected, but "interconstitutive, through overlap and interplay between

108

people's cultural practices and preoccupations and the grammatical structures they habitually employ" (2002: 3-4).

And, as Hymes argues, it is just such themes that one internalizes when he or she truly "knows" a language, since one who knows Wishram Chinook, for example, not only realizes in practice the complementary distribution of perfective future verb forms in formal and casual speech events, but he or she also understands the appropriate cultural background behind such a distribution.

Besides support from linguistic anthropology (Sapir, Whorf, Hoijer, Hymes, Martin, England), recent evidence from the psycholinguistics laboratory corroborates the idea that one's language influences perception.

John Lucy reports on classifiers in Yukateko, a Mayan language of southeastern Mexico (1996: 50). He talks about how in English, for example, many nouns imply a unit of measure (one candle, two sticks, one desk, etc.). However, for mass nouns, a unit of measure has to be supplied (a cup of water, three spoonfuls of sugar, two head of cattle, etc.). Lucy suggests that for Yukateko, classifiers supply what in essence is the unit of measure. For example, Yukatekos say for <a candle>, 'one long thin wax,' where the classifier gives shape to the more generic term 'wax.'

Lucy suggests that the use of classifiers in Yukateko predisposes speakers to think of objects in terms of the materials that make them up. He carried out an experimental task to contrast this with how English speakers classify objects. Interviewees were shown a small cardboard box and asked if it were more similar to a plastic box of roughly the same size and shape, or if it were more similar to a flat round piece of cardboard. He reports that English speakers consistently matched on the basis of shape and function and

chose the plastic box, not the cardboard disk, as being more like the cardboard box. Yukateko speakers, on the other hand, identified the little flat piece of cardboard, not the plastic box, as being more like the cardboard box. Lucy attributes this to how a language nudges speakers to disparate conceptions. The existence of nominal classifiers forces a focus on material for speakers of Yukateko, which is not present for English speakers.

In addition to Lucy's careful experiments, Boroditsky and Schmidt (forthcoming) show how grammatical gender marking in a subject's native language affects perception of gender in a second language. This is reminiscent of Slobin's idea of "thinking for speaking" (1996), where a language's obligatory categories (like tense, number and person in English, (but not evidentiality or duality, for example, which don't exist as English grammatical categories) must be taken into account before one can speak at all.

To these findings, we could suggest additional support from the field of psycholinguistic perception, i.e. how people identify sounds as being "their own" when they hear similar sounds in another language. For example, native English speakers say <taco> with a word-initial aspirated <t> (ignoring for present purposes how every other sound in the word is pronounced—or mispronounced, as the case may be). Psycholinguistic studies demonstrate that we actually perceive sounds based on the history we've had of hearing similar sounds over the course of our lives. As early as 1889 Boas said that "sounds are not perceived by the hearer in the way in which they have been pronounced by the speaker" (1889: 48). Rather, experience is not objective; perception itself is learned by consistent exposure over time. Theoretically, no two sounds are ever produced exactly alike—even in the same language, or even in multiple repetitions of the same word—but rather, the disparate sounds cloud around both a

110

coding and a decoding—i.e. a production and a perception—target. As listeners, we

interpolate from the array of <t> sounds that we've heard throughout the history of

hearing our native language spoken, just what the ideal target is, and we perceive the

spoken production as an exemplar of that target, in this case, the phoneme /t/, with all of

its corresponding English allophonic variation. This grouping ability is ideal for enabling

us to understand spoken discourse in our native language even when someone doesn't

speak that language clearly or particularly well, because of the vast experience we've had

in assigning these minimally different sounds to our ideal phonemic targets. But when

we hear similar sounds in *another* language, the overwhelming tendency is for us to

assign them to the same array of variation around the same native-language targets as we

do for sounds from our own language, even though they may well belong to different

targets in the second language. For details, see Kuhl et al., 1992; and Maye et al., 2002.

The idea in these articles is that the actual sound that hits the eardrums of

speakers of different languages is acoustically the same—or at least, no more different

than normal variation of sound exemplars in our own language—no matter what language

we listen to (just like color is the same in terms of the in-the-world color spectrum that

affronts our visual field, no matter how many words we might have for color distinctions

in our particular native language (see Berlin and Kay (1969), but also the critique of

Berlin and Kay in Sampson (1980: 95-102)). But sounds are from early in life perceived

as part of the (developing) phonemic patterning of one's native language. This is evident

in children as young as 4-6 months of age (Kuhl et al., 1992). At four weeks of age,

babies respond to all phonetic distinction as significant (as judged by head turns or

increased sucking rates). This makes sense, since any newborn can become a fluent

native speaker of any language, and at such a young age, all sounds are relatively "new" to the baby and potentially significant as future phonological building blocks. So any and all phonetic distinctions must be within the inborn competence of the newborn language learner, since some of these phonetic distinctions will indeed prove later to be phonemic as well. But as distributional data are processed over time, even young babies begin to lose interest in and become bored by sub-phonemic distinctions. So, in a language like English that has a distinction in vowel quality as evidenced in <bat> and <bet>, American babies retain their early ability to perceive the distinction; the array of vowel sounds that they process clusters around the bimodal targets: [æ] and [ɛ]. They keep the percepts separate. But Spanish-speaking babies lose interest in the distinction, because their perceptual clustering of the same sound stimuli is unimodal—i.e. clustered around a single target vowel, not two different ones as in English (Maye, et al., 2002). Since for them this distinction is sub-phonemic, Spanish speakers categorize the same array of exemplars (ranging from [æ] and [ɛ]) as belonging to the same target (Spanish /e/), and they actually perceive and respond to the sounds differently from native English speakers.

These laboratory findings (Boroditsky and Schmidt, Lucy, Kuhl et al., Maye et al.), along with a long history of support from the ethnographic accounts of linguistic anthropologists) suggest that linguistic relativity is still very much a salient topic in linguistic anthropology, and the "weak version" of linguistic relativity is certainly true.[16]

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[16] The "weak version" of linguistic relativity—that language influences thought—contrasts with the "strong version," often called linguistic determinism, where one's language specifies the thoughts that one is capable of having (as per von Humboldt,

In addition to the previously discussed cultural aspects of linguistic relativity, Martin's recapitulation of the SWH in terms of grammatical theme is both current and appropriate to the task of understanding the mutually-implying relationship between language and culture. Hymes' summation of the importance of such thinking and "what excites more attention is the showing of a pattern, fashion of speaking or style among a number of traits" (1966). Indeed, to know a language well is to move freely among these cultural and linguistic "patterns" that are both the structured and structuring blocks of daily life.

As stated throughout this chapter, Hoijer, Hymes, Martin, England, and Enfield have all called for additional linguistic and (particularly) anthropological research in order to help elucidate the relationship between language and culture. It is my intention that this dissertation be a response to that call.

2.7 Methodology of this dissertation

This dissertation combines various methodologies drawn from Linguistics and Linguistic Anthropology, Ethnography and Discourse Analysis. It is a mix of the scholarship of others and my own research. My contribution is largely in the arrangement and interpretation of the data, although much of the linguistic data is of my own investigation. I have corroborated among Central Mam speakers all the data that I have included from others and I have, to my thinking, made the data from other sources "my own," in the sense that I've attempted to find analogues in the speech and culture of

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above). Hockett disputes this, supporting the weak version, saying: "Languages differ not so much in what *can* be said in them, but rather as to what it is *relatively easy to say*" (1954: 122, emphasis in the original).

Comitecos concomitant with the data of others that I have cited, i.e. in the cultural fields of architectonics, health and illness, religion and conversion, and daily life and speech.

2.7.1 Ethnographic methods

My life among the Mam has been largely as a participant observer, although not exactly as an ethnographer. When we moved to Comitancillo in 1980 I had had a single graduate anthropology course, although I had fairly extensive SIL training in second language acquisition (which had a strong cultural component). I also had my recent Spanish acquisition experience to aid me in approaching a third language. As I mentioned in section 1.5, my language learning program was socially, not academically based. In 1980 not a lot had been published about Mam beyond a few dissertations. These were especially helpful for providing some advance notice of what to look for. Yet even today, although much more is available about the language, England still maintains (p. c.) that Mam is extremely underrepresented in the literature.

My language learning experience centered around a "route" that I walked several times a week, meeting people and visiting in homes where I recited a short, memorized monologue. After evaluating my performance and dealing with any questions that arose, I would learn another monologue and repeat the process. At the end of each week, I would review my progress, write up any interesting cultural or linguistic observations and plan for the following week. An acquaintance (and eventually an employee), Gilberto, worked several hours a day with me each afternoon, helping me to construct monologues that would answer questions people had about my wife and me and our newborn daughter. Where were we from? Were our parents living? Why did we have just one

114

child? Why had we come to Comitancillo? What was life like in the United States? Did I have a real job? Did we eat tortillas? [17]

When Gilberto and I had prepared a short monologue (usually just three or four sentences), he would record it three times in its entirety. I would listen to this over and over, trying to match Gilberto's rate of speech and his intonation. Then he would record it again, going through the text a phrase at a time, leaving a short dead space after each phrase so I could repeat it after him. Then he would tape another exercise, building the phrases up to full sentences for repetition, eventually to the point where I could say the entire text verbatim. I would often listen to these tapes and recite my text hundreds of times before trying it out on people in town. Gilberto would also note sounds that were difficult for me to produce and we would create taped exercises to focus on those sounds. We would also develop exercises to help me learn verb tense and aspect, person marking and new vocabulary. So although I claim that I learned language socially rather than academically (there being no schools to attend or adequate programmed materials to work through) there was still a strong formal component to my methodology,[18] much of which Gilberto and I developed as we went along. The difference in the Brewsters' system and a more typically formal one is based on the Brewsters' insistence on self direction, a very strong social component, and learning things as needed rather than according to a predetermined scope and sequence. I spent almost two years concentrating

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[17] While we were still in Guatemala City, before allocating to Comitancillo, I walked a Spanish language learning route each day. Memorizing Mam monologues was so much more challenging that I was unable to learn enough overnight to warrant another foray into the community the following day. I usually made these visits of several hours in length two or three times a week.

[18] For a fuller discussion of this methodology, see Brewster and Brewster, 1976.

on learning to speak Mam. Although I've never been mistaken for a native speaker, I was usually/often able to understand what was going on around me, and word spread about my language ability, which was usually overstated in the telling. In a way, this is a sad situation. Since there have been so few outsiders who have made even a stab at learning to speak this wonderful language, any that do become hot news.

The social and formal components of my language learning experience were bolstered by the technical work of translation. This is where I learned much about Mam language and culture as I worked with native speakers to try to understand together with them Biblical content and the best way to get this content across in Mam. Using Mam as the medium of communication and participation has been crucial to any insight I've been able to put forth in this study.

Good ethnography is based on just such participant observation. Participation implies a degree of language ability such that the researcher can share in the practice of daily life without constantly referring to the mechanics of speech. Speaking ability comes to be assumed and is used as an avenue through which deeper understandings are achieved.

Ethnography is both a methodology and a product. It offers explanations in terms of multiple voices, and it highlights views not often publicized. Basically, it tries to answer the question, "What is it like to be a member of this culture and a speaker of this language?"

Ethnography is a broad, interdisciplinary methodology. Yet, despite its all-comers eclecticism, there are some basic elements that hold true of all ethnographic inquiry, as suggested by Hammersly and Atkinson, 1986. It is based on participant

observation. It denies the possibility of being the so-called *fly on the wall* that is privy to

everything that happens and make judgments about its meaning. Ethnographers admit

that the *observer's paradox* is real (Labov, 1972: especially chapter eight), but their

solution is NOT to try to extract themselves from the situation and rise above it. Rather,

they participate (in varying degrees) in the events that they describe. The goal is to

understand the emic categories of the people being studied. With this in mind,

ethnography is long-term. One can't simply ask people, "So, what are your emic

categories?" These are uncovered over many months and years of inquiry, both formal

and informal. Ethnography assumes that research is done in the native language as much

as possible, and that it is based on firsthand observation. In addition, the search for emic

categories makes those studied the experts, so an ethnographer's role is one of a learner,

and she learns naturalistically, i.e. in social context via relationships with native

speakers—the holders of the emic categories—which are the ultimate goal of the

research. This characteristic of the researcher as participant is what ethnographers mean

when they say that they themselves are the research instrument. Members of the group

being studied answer questions for the ethnographer; they give advice, teach and learn

skills, share meals, and help solve problems in ways that include the researcher in the

local life of the group. In this context, ethnographic researchers plumb their own

thoughts and responses to how they are included (or not) in the local scene and they study

the language and practices of inclusion and exclusion. In this way, ethnography is

reactive and reiterative. Questions are never fully answered. Rather, more and more data

are brought to bear on how an issue is to be understood in different ways under different

circumstances. In this way, researchers can write not about some objectified/sterile sense

of what behaviors are exhibited by group members, but they can talk of life in context from the point of view of the cultural insider.

Ethnography is holistic. Ethnographers start with some cultural detail—for example, a cockfight (Geertz, 1973: 412-453) or a short proverb (Becker, 1996: 142-159)—and begin to explore it. In the exploration, more and more context is brought to bear on its interpretation. Questions are asked. Contrasts are sought. Both Geertz and Becker expand the scope of their original topics to include much larger issues of local life, language and thought, Geertz beginning with culture; Becker beginning with language. And yet both end up in a similar place, a thickly described slice of local life with adequate perspective to show us how that slice fits into the larger life of the group. For a succinct discussion of the common characteristics of ethnography in whatever field it is practiced, see Zaharlick, 1992: 30-32.

The product of effective participant observation is thick description (Geertz, 1973), where a researcher looks first at what seems to be going on, at which point he or she begins to add layers of further description by discussing language use, linguistic and cultural categories, local interpretations of events, and further relevant detail. Thick description is reflective as well as recursive, going back over details again and again, and thinking about them from different perspectives and answering new and further research questions until all emic moisture is wrung out of both real-time observation and further discussion with actual participants. This emic wringing Geertz calls Interpretive Anthropology, where the explication of world view is plumbed, along with how this world view is realized in linguistic and cultural practice.

118

Thick description not only extracts the emic from the etic, but it also explicates the use of language in culturally accepted and socially expected ways. In essence, thick description is an amalgam of how both cultural insiders and participant observers view a social situation and its relevant context, and it is the model I use to plumb the idea of centeredness as a cultural theme.   What makes Geertz particularly appropriate here is his integration of linguistic and cultural data that both emerge *from* the event and that he brings *to* the event in order to provide meaningful context for what seem to be unrelated and often atomistic impressions.   For example, in his article on Balinese cockfights (1973: 412-451) Geertz shows that an ethnographer must look at what he calls the *microscopic* details of a single event (the etic), while also addressing the broader issues of how those details fit into the larger picture of cultural/linguistic life by comparing them with others in contrastive life situations and texts. It is this layering of analysis that is the essence of thick description, which includes ethnolinguistic techniques for probing semantic categories, i.e. seeking information and asking questions around topics like kinship, work, religion, or, as in the present case, centeredness and balance.

Although Geertz doesn't establish a methodology for research, his writings and his emic studies do give us a powerful ethnographic model to emulate. For Geertz, ethnographic participant observation is different from a simple parade of anecdotes in that it is purposeful, integrated, holistic, contextualized, and centered not only on the researcher's rendition of what is happening, but on local analysis as well (Zaharlick, 1992). Whereas anecdotes let speakers tell a story from their own perspective, participant observation as an ethnographic strategy is less oriented to the agency of the teller and more focused on his or her part in the whole of linguistic and cultural practice.

119

In addition, a participant observer, as opposed to an anecdote teller, speaks with multiple voices—multiple viewpoints—and not just her or his own.

Malinowski said that the goal of ethnography is "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world (1922:25, emphasis in the original). Point of view is not readily reducible to proofs and numbers. In the same way, any connection between language and culture is not so much something subject to measurement as it is to interpretation. Cultural studies don't enable us necessarily to predict cultural phenomena, but to understand them. A Geertzian interpretation, as mentioned above, has both etic and emic components. The researcher supports her or his construal of events by triangulation, a term used by ethnographers to indicate that conclusions are drawn from a variety of sources based on disparate observations across different aspects of the culture in order to draw inferences that are integrated across the observations and commensurate with native opinion. My goal in this study is in one sense, as Hymes (1966: 117) says, to seek not proof, but pattern. But beyond Hymes, we are seeking local interpretation of this pattern. Pattern alone is not enough. Where language and culture come together is in the minds of native speakers. So it is this emic perspective—local meaning—that I'm seeking in this study. How is centeredness, as realized in cultural and grammatical theme, conceived and reflected in talk among the Mam themselves?

What I try to do then, as an ethnographer, is attempt to live the life of a Maya-Mam. What I hope to discover is whether what ends up in my own head as I endeavor to live that life, corresponds to the way that the Mam themselves think. My goal is for them to say, when we talk about my findings: *Axjo, ma tzyu'nte* 'Yep, you got it.'

120

These ethnographic methods together with their respective ethnographic products give us a clear goal to shoot for.[19] I hope to emulate their fine work in Chapter Four of this study where I discuss a Mam agreement ritual.

But I am certainly not the quintessential ethnographer, charged by an Anthropology Department to study an indigenous group. Nor was ethnography a methodology that I had in mind before I went to the field. I didn't keep a professional journal of daily events, although I did write up a number of observations that I made over the years, and that I found interesting, and I tried to see patterns and relationships among what seemed at the time to be atomistic and unrelated events. I expound on these write-ups and patterns at length in Chapter Four, which has a totally different flavor from the rest of the dissertation.

2.7.2 Linguistic methods and models

Linguistically, I follow Fillmore and Lyons in terms of my discussion of deixis, which is fairly traditional. Again, my dissertation is not about deixis; rather it deals with the formal, grammatical apparatus that the Mam use that relates to and is defined by centeredness of which origo is the prime formal example. So, even though egocentricity has been shown to be less than fully satisfying as the basis for deictic calculation, it is still a helpful idea and will be the way I discuss it in this dissertation. Also, I use Haviland's notion of projection to frame the way that centeredness can be "other-centric"

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[19] Of the many good ethnographies that have been published (including Geertz and Becker mentioned above), see especially Duranti, 1992, for a solid example of ethnography as both a process and a product, where he brings together linguistic and cultural practice in terms of Samoan ceremonial greetings. A related (and abridged) account of a Samonan fono appears in Duranti, 1995: chapter nine.

as well as egocentric.   I also follow Levinson's view of discourse deixis as part of discourse cohesion as per Halliday and Hasan, and I situate their work on cohesion within the broader framework of Sanders et al.'s Coherence Theory which acknowledges both referential (structural/cohesive strategies) and relational (propositional) coherence.

The model of discourse analysis I have followed in this study is one promoted by Halliday and Hasan (1976), where they identify via contrastive analysis what they call ties between what comes earlier in a text and what comes later (see especially their chapter eight). Many of the actual texts that I've looked at and the one included as an appendix have been "set up." Oscar's text (the appendix) is a story he told upon returning from his first trip to a somewhat distant market town to help sell books. I asked him to tell it as if he were telling a friend of his trip, but in reality, there was no friend there other than a tape recorder. After taping his text, Oscar went back over it to make sure that it sounded natural. Many additional texts have arisen out of questions I had about how or why people do things. For example, I've asked a number of people to tell me how one goes about building a house. This has given me a number of different perspectives based on whether the speaker was a man or woman, a girl or boy. Far from finding that people were nervous about recording, I have found most of my Mam friends and many strangers to be animated before a microphone and happy to record their language. I also have a number of interviews recorded by Gilberto who was putting together a booklet on the cultural and religious history of Comitancillo. He interviewed several speakers over sixty years old and helped transcribe these texts. Although they've not yet been published, they have been part of the input I've had as a language learner, and they inform my comments on Mam discourse in Chapter Five.

In terms of lexical meaning, I worked through with five Comitecos the details of Scotchmer's unpublished manuscript (1978) on –*k'u'j* terms and add additional lexical material beyond Scotchmer's findings.

In my discussion of how grammatical and cultural theme inform the ongoing debate of the relation between language and culture, I concur with Bourdieu who claims that they mutually inform. Language is part of the *habitus*, the history of a people that both structures and informs culture and is structured and informed by it. I will discuss this at some length in Chapter Six.

2.7.3 Analysis of the data

Chapter Four deals with Mam daily life and the vocabulary of centeredness. It is written from a Geertzian ethnographic perspective that highlights the beauty and wisdom and meaning of daily practice among the Mam. It is a chapter in which I am personally and inextricably involved as a protagonist and later, a supplicant. In this, I follow Geertz and Becker whose insight into Balinese and Burmese cultures respectively, were based on their embroiled participation in actual cultural events, not simply the reporting of these events.

The meta-dialogue that I maintain with the reader in Chapter Four is a characteristic of the "product" of ethnography. In this meta-dialogue I also discuss how I analyzed the data—conferring with other Mam not involved in the actual events about the specifics of cultural practice and discourse—and reflecting (as per Itkonen, 1978) on the etic "camera view' of my situation and the emic "insider view" of what was happening. In this, I try to emulate Geertz and Becker, whom I suggest are masters of the genre.

Much of the analysis of the cultural data that I've cited in this study is a recasting of the data in terms of centeredness and a bringing to bear of my own observations and experience from Comitancillo.

Similarly, much of my linguistic analysis comes from England (1983) and Godfrey (1981), again recast in terms of origo. As mentioned above, my comments on discourse deixis as a cohesive feature of Mam discourse is basically in the framework of Halliday and Hasan, although the idea that –tz identifies discourse old material and –x marks discourse new material is from Prince (1981).

In the end, what I try to do in this dissertation is look at disparate phenomena in both the culture of the Mam (health and illness etiology, the constructed world, religion, and daily practice) and the language of the Mam (in the lexicon, the morphosyntax, and in narrative discourse) and show links between them that are salient to Mam speakers and helpful to us as outsiders in understanding Mam cultural life.

2.8 Who cares?

The present research has a five-fold audience. The first group is that of linguistic anthropologists, sociolinguists and ethnographers—scholars who study the relationship between language and its broader context. To this audience, I offer what I believe to be a larger view of context than social context alone. For example, Hymes' SPEAKING model (1974) is appropriately sociolinguistic—participants, goals, setting, and other social factors are critical to understanding and explaining speech variation. What a model based on the overlap of cultural and grammatical theme brings to the table is what I call a context for contexts. In other words, culture is the bigger picture within which

124

sociolinguistic variation and social context operate. Culture includes the unifying values and world view of a people, an overarching context which is largely shared and agreed upon, despite social differences.

A second audience includes other linguists, especially the growing subset of linguists who study the structure of texts and the cohesive elements that a connected discourse displays that are missing from a simple concatenation of unrelated sentences (Bublitz, et al., 1999). Data on Mam discourse structure are rare (England, p. c.). It is hoped that the Mam discourse data included in this dissertation will add to our understanding of how discourse cohesion is achieved in Mayan languages.

A third group potentially interested in this dissertation are the Mayanists who study the languages and cultures of the five million plus Maya still living in southern Mexico, Guatemala and Belize (or who have emigrated north). Linguistic and cultural data on the Mam is limited, so this dissertation will be welcomed for its data, if not its analysis.

An additional group would be those interested in acquiring a second language and culture. To this group, I suggest that the complementary ideas of cultural and grammatical theme present us with a discovery procedure for second language and culture acquisition in the sense that pervasive cultural categories and values are likely to have a linguistic counterpart. Hymes says, "Cultural values and beliefs are in part constitutive of linguistic reality" (1966:116). In other words, a language will encode cultural factors that are salient to its speakers. So, the discovery of such factors suggests areas where we can successfully look to elicit culturally meaningful linguistic data. At the same time, as we discover relationships among the formal structures of a language,

say, honorifics, ambiguity, and indirection in Japanese, we can assume that these may reflect important cultural thematic material. Related to theme as a discovery procedure, the overlap of cultural and grammatical theme gets at the details of what one must know when he or she claims to "know" a language, where social and cultural context are as critical as grammatical competence to being a cultural insider (Franklin, 1971; Hymes, 1972).

A final group interested in this work is the Maya themselves. Maya-Mam, along with the other thirty-plus Mayan languages, is an endangered language, and efforts at cultural and linguistic revitalization should take into account the linguistic system within its broad cultural context. Language and culture comprise a system of life, thought, and practice that is worthy of our investment and support.

CHAPTER 3

CENTEREDNESS AS CULTURAL THEME

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four we will look at how centeredness is talked about and

manifested in the daily life of the Mam. This chapter is a precursor, but with three

specific areas of cultural life in view: health and illness, architectonics, and religion.

In this chapter, I draw more on the expertise of others, affirming their research with

observations of my own, observations which are neither as extensive nor as personal

as those discussed in Chapter Four. There, I take a more holistic and integrated

ethnographic approach to both my observations and write-up. Here I look at three

areas of culture in a more isolated and analytical way. I conclude with some

generalizations about how centeredness is manifested in each of the three areas

discussed in this chapter.

3.2 Health as an instantiation of centeredness.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Redfield reports that, for the Yukateko-Maya,

"Health of body and peace of soul depend on the maintenance of conditions of

balance" (1941: 128). He adds that good health is the "maintenance of that median

condition which the native expresses in terms of heat and cold" (ibid.). Neuenswander and Souder (1977) suggest that the "hot-cold syndrome" is almost certainly pre-Columbian. It is found throughout the Maya homeland as an explanation of illness etiology and as a metric for the treatment of disease. It almost certainly was abetted by the early humoral system of the Greeks, the Hippocratic notion of good health as the balance of humors—earth, air, fire and water; or dry, cold, hot and wet respectively—which was passed on to the Arabs who lived for a thousand years in the Iberian Peninsula (see Manderson (1987: 329) for a discussion of this cultural transmission).

By the time of the Spanish Invasion of the new World, the understanding of health as an integrated balance of the humors was widespread in Renaissance Europe (Messer, 1981: 133) and was exported by health professionals to the new World. The Spanish found ready acceptance of their humoral notion of health which leads us to assume that a similar system was already in place. A further piece of evidence is that the four humors—hot and cold, wet and dry—are still part of the understanding of illness etiology in the Kiche' town of Joyabaj. The wet-dry aspect of the humors has been lost virtually everywhere in Latin America, while the hot-cold syndrome is pervasive throughout the Maya area and the entire Mesoamerican region (for example, among the Aztecs (Orellana, 1987: 36; and the Zapotecs (Messer, 1981: 133-139). The fact that the wet-dry contrast of the humors has been maintained only in Joyabaj has led Neuenswander and Souder to conjecture that the system was promoted by a well respected priest-medic. "Otherwise it seems unlikely that there would still exist in Joyabaj the remnants of a system which has not been reported

128

elsewhere in Mesoamerica" (1977: 118). On the other hand, the pervasiveness of the hot-cold syndrome throughout the region leads us to the conclusion that humoral medicine was most likely an overlay to an older, but similar system.

Early anthropological accounts have noted that the hot-cold syndrome has been part of Maya culture since the earliest days of contact with the Spanish. Redfield and Villa Rojas (1962: 372) cite reports from the sixteenth century claiming that when the Maya were questioned as to the nature of medicinal plants, most were unable to give any answer except that the plants were considered hot or cold.

Among the Mam who visited my wife Nancy's village clinic, symptoms were explained to her in terms of events considered to be hot (sexual relations, pregnancy, outdoor work, cooking, getting drunk) and cold (working with metal tools, eating certain foods, drinking water or juice, and being caught in heavy rain or high winds). Diseases considered hot by the Maya (malaria, urinary infections, worms, and illnesses caused by sorcery) are considered caused by overexposure to hot, while cold diseases (swelling, measles, rheumatism, anemia, general pain. and *susto* (fright)) are caused by overexposure to cold. Symptoms are treated with herbs, teas, medicines, foods and ceremonies that are meant to counteract the overabundance of hot or cold built up in the ailing body. Cooler medicines and therapeutic foods are used to combat hot illnesses, while warmer medicines and foods are used to treat cold illnesses, the goal being to bring the body back to a center space of balance and health. This was the specific cultural background of most of the Mam that visited Nancy's clinic, and who talked to us about their concerns for improving their health and treating illness.

Interestingly, the categorization of foods and medicines as hot or cold doesn't have a lot to do with the actual temperature of the items in question. Messer says that the hot-cold principle "refers to intrinsic quality rather than thermal temperatures of medicines, foods and body conditions" (1981: 133). For example, oranges and plantains are considered hot, while lemons and bananas are considered cold. Beef and chicken are hot, while pork, rabbit and fish are cold. Black beans are hot. Green beans and white beans are cold. Injections of medicine are considered hot, while oral doses of the same medicine are cold.

Neuenswander and Souder (1977: 107-108) elucidate the metric by which the Maya determine an element's hotness or coldness. For example, certain items such as cheese and corn gain heat with age. Things that grow in or near water or that grow underground in the damp soil (potatoes, onions, and beets) are colder than those which do not. The meat of domesticated animals (cows, sheep, turkeys) is hot (with the exception of pork), while the meat of animals which historically were hunted (squirrels, rabbits (pigs) and wild birds) is cold. Strong or piquant flavors are hot (red chili peppers, coffee, spices, honey, liquor), while bland flavors (rice, fruit and most vegetables) are cold.

With the wide array of food choices and herbal teas available, it isn't hard to find a diet that would move someone with either a hot or a cold disease back toward the center space of good health. Local *curanderos* 'curers' and culturally sensitive healthcare workers respect the assumptions of locals and prescribe foods and medicines appropriately.

Messer points out that hot-cold systems don't float freely in cultures (such systems are common throughout the world, for which see Manderson (1987) and Messer (1981: 134) for brief overviews). Rather they are integrated with social and environmental factors that interact with an individual's body (Messer, 1981: 134). Children are cooler than adults and are therefore subject to difficulties from foods that are cold. Adults normally become hotter with age. Old men with spiritual power are considered hot and can cause illness just by someone getting too close to them. Women who are pregnant or breast feeding are hotter than when they aren't. Weather and time of day also interact with the hot and cold properties of foods and medicines. She points out that cool remedies are considered more effective when taken in the cool of the morning, whereas cold ailments are best treated with hot remedies during the heat of the day (1981: 137).

My point here is that the hot-cold syndrome is part of a larger picture, one that integrates the conception of wellbeing into the daily practice of life. People go through hotter and cooler periods depending on when and where they work, what and who they come in contact with, what they eat and drink, as well as what are their basic propensities toward hotheadedness (hot) or calm (cold). So the conception of balancing hot and cold factors in life is not simply a matter of treating illness. Rather it is part of the overall goal of maintaining centeredness in the midst of life's demands.

The hot-cold syndrome is still very strong among the Mam. Most of the people that visit my wife's clinic ask questions about what they should eat and drink—or what they shouldn't—in order not to counteract the hotness or coldness of

131

any medicine or herbal tea or remedies that she prescribes.[1] They assume that injections are hot "because they go straight to the blood," but they routinely ask about the hot and cold properties of pills, vitamins or drinks, which could go either way. Often patients determine whether Nancy feels their illness is hot or cold based on what she tells them to eat or not eat, to do or not do. A "cold" prescription implies a hot ailment, while the prescription of an injection of antibiotics and certain "hot" teas implies a cold illness.

In December 1990, I was driving to a nearby market town with three Mam school teachers, Gilberto, Goyo, and Abel. I told them that Nancy and I had discussed some of her patients' concerns about the hotness and coldness of their symptoms and Nancy's prescriptions. I asked them what they knew about the hot-cold syndrome.

There was an uneasy silence. Finally Goyo admitted that some old women *en las aldeas* 'small rural hamlets' believe that certain illnesses are caused by exposure to heat, and that they have to be treated with remedies considered cold, while cold ailments are treated with hot remedies. They told me that most people nowadays don't believe such things.

I mentioned to them that I was interested in the idea, because I had run several days before in the noonday heat. When I got back home, I took a shower (as I did after running virtually every day). Lately, I told them that I felt weak and lethargic. All three of my friends agreed that it was my own fault. Since I was in the hot sun

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[1] See Neuenswander and Souder (1977: 104) for a typical conversation of a health care professional and a Mayan patient.

exerting myself physically I needed to cool down slowly. They asked if I had had a cold drink when I got home. I told them that I probably did, since that was my custom. They told me that my gringo customs were responsible for my being sick. I shouldn't have tried to get back to normal temperature so quickly. These situations are delicate, they told me. I said that I had taken a warm shower, not a cold one, hoping that that would absolve me in their eyes. They said that it didn't matter. A shower is cool by definition, and the shock of being cooled quickly after being so hot was clearly the root of my problem. So, even though the goal is a hot-cold balance in the body, trying to achieve such a balance too quickly is considered bad health practice. Kunow includes this sense of weakness as a result of *pasmo*, a condition that includes "tetanus, eye-twitching and convulsions, infertility in women and post partum diseases" (2003: 65). She says that it is a cold ailment, often caused by cooling off too quickly after a hot episode of some kind. In other words, balance alone isn't so much in view as centeredness. If the paradigm were simply a matter of balancing extremes, we might assume that extreme cold would counteract extreme heat, but that isn't how the Mam view it. The goal is "that median condition" (Redfield, 1941: 128) of centeredness that is calm, peaceful and moderate, not a measured balance of extremes. Balance, rather, is a strategy for achieving centeredness, which is the goal.

What interests me particularly about this situation is the attempt by these professional young men to keep a foot in both worlds. They are well aware of the modern understanding of health and illness, but they've seen their indigenous system work too many times to simply brush it off. As Messer says: "Since people

133

eventually recover from most illnesses, in almost every case they can rationalize that the hot-cold system 'works'" (1981: 139). Actually, although I take Messer's quote to be true, I would be a bit more magnanimous about it. The Mam come to their values, as we all do, by cultural transmission and linguistic practice, but they also see these values confirmed in the real world from day to day. The Mam are observers and survivors in a world where their language and life ways are under assault. Their values are not just a rationalization of how they've been told that the world works, but in addition, they stand as a summary statement of accumulated observations. This is one of the conundrums of modern health care in the developing world. Not only are the values different between West and non-West, but both versions are firmly held and empirically supported. Privately, Abel told me that his mother doesn't accept the notion that illnesses are caused by germs in the dirt. She says that she has had eight children. Each of them has lived the same life, crawling on the same dirt floor of their home, a floor which the babies share with the cats, dogs and occasional chickens. They put things in their mouths, suck dirty thumbs, and eat and drink the same food and water. Some of them get sick and some don't; some die, some live. There is no cause and effect in her mind that supports the Western view of illness etiology. But illness as imbalance works. She's seen it over and over again. Sometimes the details of what the departure from center is is clear, sometimes it isn't, but "illness as deviation from centeredness" is time honored and at least as empirically proven in the minds of most Mam as are Western versions of the cause of illness and the maintenance of good health.

My professional friends were dealing with the same problem. They know

about germs and disinfectants, the need for boiling water and using latrines, but

they've also seen the hot-cold syndrome work. So they are somewhat apologetic

about it, while at the same time they won't let it go. When I so blatantly cast aside

good sense by showering too soon after running, values deeply held and even

suppressed came bubbling to the surface since centeredness is a part of life and not

just a rubric for determining the treatment of illness. These men, though modern

professionals, are deeply Mayan as well.

Messer (1981: 138) says that it is young motherhood where the hot-cold

syndrome is most practically learned and applied. Before she has her own children,

women live off the knowledge provided by their own mothers. They learn what

foods and medicines are hot and cold, but they don't have the practical experience of

this knowledge until they begin to watch patterns in the lives of their own children.

This experience of seeing a hot-cold etiology work is what validates culture not

simply as "a way" to conceive of the world, but as "the way." It is reflected in the

language, in cultural instantiations (religion, architecture, health, etc.) and in the

world itself. Gossen points out that it is the women who are largely responsible for

cultural continuity, bringing the past into the present (1986: 6-7).

Richardson (1977: 80-82) reports a somewhat similar situation among the Yali

of Indonesia in regard to Messer's quote (1981: 139) about the inevitability of

cultural assumptions "working." As boys go through initiation rites, if there is

thunder before the ceremony is completed, it stands as an omen that the spirits have

rejected one of the initiates, who will die an early death. Thunder is frequent in that

part of the world. And death by warfare, feud, and disease is common. People have long memories. If and when one dies prematurely, the curse is confirmed. The cultural viewpoint is again sustained in the real world.

This accounts for the resilience to change of cultures around the world. Culture not only provides a filter through which to understand the world. In addition, life in the real world confirms the very notions contained in cultural lore and practice. The search for centeredness not only is a way to conceive of one's role in the world, but the way the world is in terms of health and illness confirms the Mam conception of the beauty of centeredness.

However, not only is culture confirmed in the world of observation and practice, but the constructed world (in the present case, the construction of towns and homesteads) also has "ongoing influence in daily life" (Robinson, 1989: 253).

3.3 From *space* to *place*: on the meaning of building

I have worked from time to time writing copy as a freelance advertiser. One of my most fascinating projects was creating ads for a plumbing supply company that was planning to introduce a new line of fixtures—Jacuzzi bathtubs, designer sinks and toilets, and elegant shower fixtures—to the public. I wrote not about porcelain and flowing water, but about the demands of modern life, the "busyness" of the daily grind, and the need to find small opportunities to get away from it all. Into this picture, I introduced what I called the "architecture of isolation," and I suggested that modern bathroom construction epitomized the need to escape from the constant din of the demands of life. Indeed, modern bathrooms often contain luxury accouterments

like fireplaces, surround sound, garden views, fountains, built-in bookshelves and planters, even entertainment and communications hook ups.

Architecture as therapy, architecture as iconicity, architecture as much more than mere function is extremely modern, yet it is not new. From soaring Gothic steeples literally reaching toward heaven, to the hogans of the Navajo that emulate the distant mountains, architecture invites and evokes meaning. As evidenced by recent discussions of the proposed Freedom Tower, which is scheduled to replace the Twin Towers of the destroyed World Trade Center in New York City, most Americans are far more interested in the significance and symbolic nature of the new structure than they are in its mere utility. Building has meaning far beyond function. Construction reflects not just the needs of the builder, but the builder's soul as well.

As discussed in Chapter Two, there is an extensive literature on building and the enclosing of space that runs across disciplines. Recent anthropological literature, aside from the archaeologists who continue to describe buildings as they existed long ago, has focused on the notions of space and place. In this study, I adopt Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga's distinction that space is general, universal and etic, whereas place is particular, personally meaningful, and emic. They say about their work, "We are interested in how people form meaningful relationships with the locales they occupy, how they attach meaning to space, and transform "space" into "place" (2003: 13).

In this chapter, I look at two specific places, the Mam home and the town plaza, and suggest that they instantiate the Maya-Mam cultural value of centeredness. I lift the idea I pursue here—construction as microcosm—from two sources: Bourdieu, who speaks of the Berber home as "a microcosm organized according to

137

the same oppositions that govern all the universe" (2003: 136); and Low, who says of the central plaza: "Maya cities were laid out as microcosms, with buildings arranged so as to symbolically equate the architectural center of civic power with the center of the universe" (2000: 109). Two places, the home and the plaza; two microcosms.

Robinson says, "architecture structures activity and ways of thinking…the ideas manifest in built form have an ongoing influence in daily life" (1989: 253). She goes on to say: "When cultural patterns and built patterns fit, they become a strong mutual reinforcement" (ibid.), that built forms "mirror" cultural values. Lefebvre (1997) gets at this when he says that there is a mutual reinforcement of that which is created and the meaning behind it. Although people live in the practical spaces that they have established for themselves, these created forms can be abstracted away from their common usage and considered in terms of deeper cultural meaning "which will transform it into monumental space: the vase will become holy, the garment ceremonial, the chair a seat of authority" (Lefebvre, 1997: 143). He means that there is a duality of function in architecture. It is at once useful and practical while at the same time it can become *monumental* and timeless, as cultural meaning is encoded in built form.

3.3.1 Timo's town

The central plaza was a defining feature in the city planning of both Aztec and Mayan pre-invasion towns. Low (2000) suggests that, although the notion of the central plaza was common to the ancient Greeks and Renaissance Italians and French, it was not widespread in Spain. Indeed, she asserts that the concept of the central

plaza was picked up in New World centers such as Tenochtitlán (Aztec) and Tikal (Maya), and was subsequently shipped back to Spain where Madrid was "an architectural laboratory of ideas received from Spanish-controlled cities (2000: 94)." She claims that the Spanish American plaza "is actually a syncretic urban design form derived from European architectural traditions of medieval *bastides* and the Mesoamerican plaza temple complex and urban plans of the cities that the Spanish encountered during the conquest of the New World" (1997: 319).

Only after this syncretic blend of Old and New World plaza construction was accomplished, was the architecture of a civic center passed on to Spanish settlements in Latin America and codified in the 1573 *Orders for Discovery and Settlement* (Low, 1997: 319). Although the idea that 16th-century Spain got the idea for grand plazas from the new world is controversial, archaeological evidence points to the likelihood that early indigenous central plaza areas were built over with Spanish buildings, establishing what today is a common visage—the Catholic church on one side, municipal buildings across from that, and often commercial buildings and private housing (or military headquarters) filling out the four sides. Indeed, as quoted above, Low cites evidence that at the time of what the Maya call *la invasión*, "Maya cities were laid out as microcosms," where the buildings around a center "place" were iconic of the cultural value of centeredness, where things were ordered, culturally significant and deeply understood.

She goes on to suggest that the Spanish exerted hegemony over the Maya by appropriating the architecture of centeredness—where the new Spanish central plaza with its concomitant religious, governmental and commercial interests, subverted and

replaced the former Maya center of community and ceremonial life. It may well be

that this co-opting of such significant space helped cement Spanish control over both

the Maya and Aztec nations. Low suggests that both European and New World

plazas "were designed to display military and market domination" (1997: 319).

Indeed, "since the spatial relations of plaza to buildings, hierarchy of spaces, and

functions of the plaza remain somewhat the same, the symbolism (artistic

representation) retains aspects of both cultural histories" (ibid.).

The Latin American plaza, then, is a mix of the architectonic vision of both

the invaders and the invaded. So, despite the fact that the overlay of Spanish

dominance is the gold plating of the modern central plaza, the core concept remains

very much part of a continuity from the pre-invasion past. Coe (1999: 103-104)

points out that Tikal, the largest Maya site, may have been home to as many as

90,000 people during its zenith.[2] As the city expanded, new construction was more

haphazard than in the Aztec capital of Teotihuacán, which had roads and an apparent

plan for urban sprawl, building outward from the central plaza in grid-like fashion.

Tikal, on the other hand, had a well devised ceremonial center, but as one moved

outward from the central constructions, geometric organization lessened and small

huts were scattered in "colloidal" fashion toward the outskirts of the site. However,

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[2] Coe suggests a number between 10,000 and 90,000. The great variation in number
may hinge on the fact that Tikal, like most Mayan towns today, was a ceremonial and
commercial center (see Thompson, 1966: 66ff for a discussion of Tikal being just
such a center). In Comitancillo, for example, some 2,000 actually occupy the official
cabecera municipal 'municipal seat.' while over 60,000+ live in the environs (the
aldeas and caseríos throughout the *municipio*) and consider Comitancillo their
ceremonial, political and commercial center. Some 10,000 people visit the *cabecera*
on market day—even more during special fiestas—although the actual *cabecera*
population is much smaller.
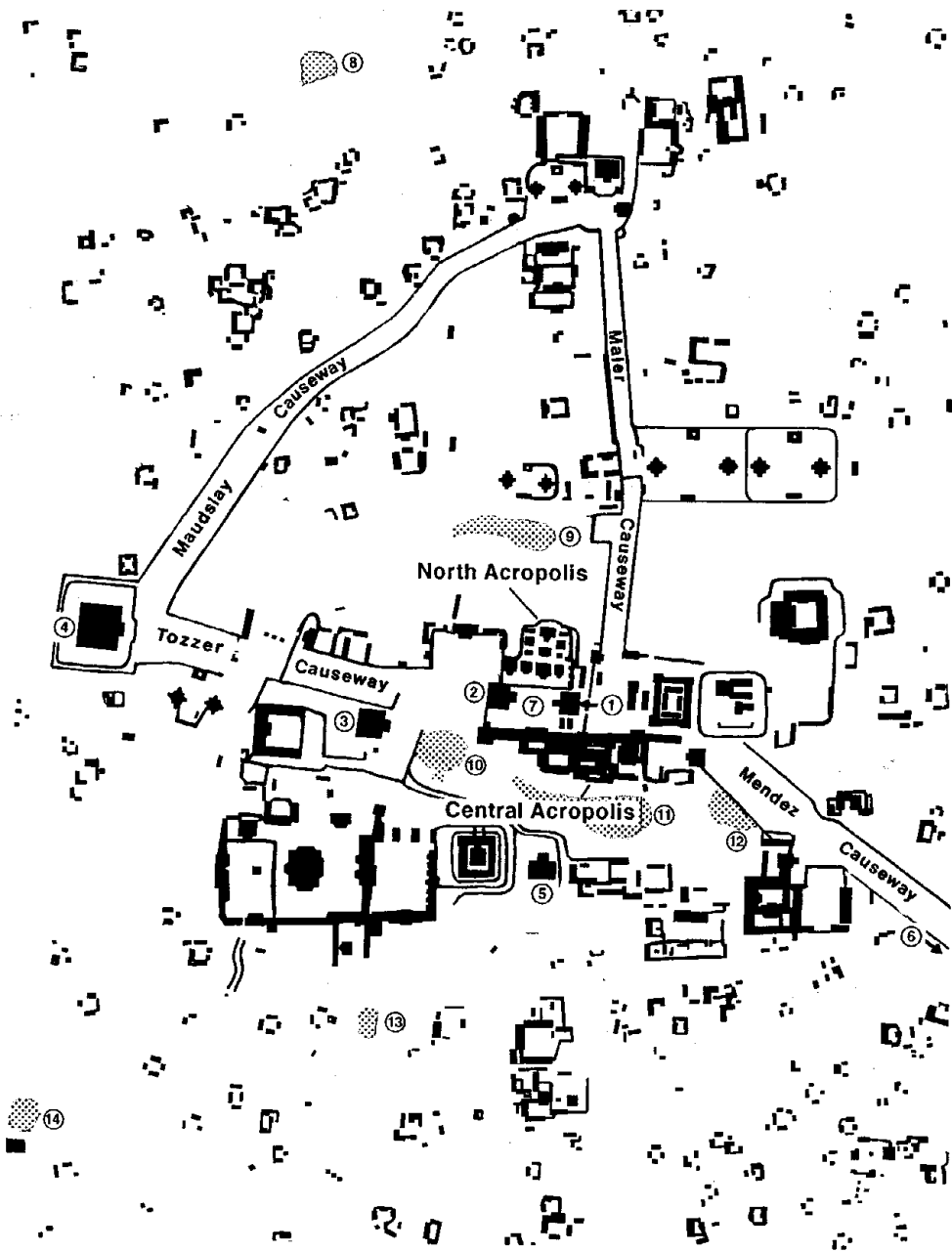
Figure 3.1 Tikal central environs, covering roughly one square mile; from Coe (1999: 102).

as we look at a general map of the central environs of Tikal (Figure 3.1), we're struck

with its overall organization from the Great Plaza outward to the humblest homes.

Since the Maya built these homes on raised rectangular mounds to guard against

141

seasonal flooding, archaeologists have a very good idea what the city construction array was like, even though most of the site's peripheral buildings have been ravaged by time and the weather. It's interesting that the small homesteads were usually constructed around a central patio (see the homestead sites toward both the top and bottom of Figure 3.1). So, what Tikal was—microcosm writ large—the homesteads were, writ small, i.e. constructed sites where center spaces (either plazas or patios) were defined by the buildings constructed around them.

Low (1996) suggests that it is the use of space that really defines its cultural function. She shows how the use and meaning of the two main plazas in San José, Costa Rica are contested. Locals have one view, the government and elite quite another. In the same way, Latin American plazas are a contested space, publicly marked off by the accouterments of Spanish culture, but locally understood as iconic of a deep sense of groundedness and belonging.

We've seen that the Tzotzil of Chamula identify their town as the navel of the earth. Similarly, the Mam have told me that the town is the center of the *municipio*,[3] and the central plaza is the heart (or stomach) of the town. In Mam, the verb *plasaril* 'to be in the plaza (ostensibly to buy or sell),' is one of only two borrowings I am

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[3] A *municipio* includes a central town with all of its rural hamlets and lands. for example, Comitancillo is an "urban" town of some 2,500 people, but the entire *municipio* (also called Comitancillo) has over 60,000 inhabitants scattered over one hundred square miles and including some 50 different hamlets (*aldeas* and *caseríos*). Just as the town has a central plaza, the *aldeas* and *caseríos* usually have a small center area bounded by an official meeting place, a jail, and sometimes a school or cook house.

aware of that verbalizes a place name.[4] Other important place nouns have been

borrowed into Mam such as *camposant* from Spanish *camposanto* 'cemetery,' yiles

(iglesia) 'church,' *municipalidad* 'town civil center,' *capital* 'capital' and *Estados*

Unidos, 'United States," but none of these has a verbalized form.

I visited my friend, Agustín, who was selling rope on market day in the plaza.

"What is it that you like about coming here on market day?" I asked him.

"The plaza is one place where I feel totally at ease," he said. *Nimx nniky'a ti'j*

tkyaqilx, a nb'aj tzalu'n 'I understand well everything that goes on here.' I know

where all the sellers are and where all the different produce is located. I see all my

friends. I know everyone and they know me."   He went on to say that the plaza

seems chaotic with people and animals all over the place and tarps and ropes strung

everywhere, but that there is an abiding and joyful unity beneath the surface. He says

that the press of humanity at the plaza: the pushing and noises, the smells and activity

is *puro alegr* 'pure happiness,' from Spanish *puro alegre*.

I take Agustín's words to be indicative of the contested space of the central

plaza. It is at once a government imposition with rules and taxes and vending

licenses while at the same time being symbolic of a deep-seated sense of belonging.

For Agustín the plaza just feels right. It's not so much that he thinks about the plaza

as iconic of the cultural theme of centeredness that he lives day in and day out, but it

fits his view of how the world works.

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[4] The word *skwelil* 'to go to school' from Spanish *escuela* 'school' is the only other
place name that I know of that has been borrowed into Mam and verbalized.

I discussed this sense of centeredness with a group of six Mam teachers and educational leaders in June of 2004 and again in March of 2005. They said that one of the things that helps maintain the historic cultural value of equilibrium and centeredness among their people is that it is a value that works in the modern world. It isn't an "old wives' tale" that is clearly mismatched with the dictates and complexity of modern life. Rather, maintaining balance and seeking moderation and centeredness is as much a moral compass to modern Maya as it was to their pre-invasion ancestors. And the central plaza, although the product of conflicting views of dominance and meaning, still holds for the Mam a sense that things are as they ought to be.

3.3.2 Timo's home

As Low (2000) calls the Mayan plaza (both pre-invasion and actual) a microcosm of the whole universe, so Bourdieu, in like manner, calls the Berber home "a microcosm organized according to the same oppositions that govern all the universe" (2003: 136). I suggest we can say the same thing about the Mam home. In the modern world, the home is one of the places where the Mam can connect to the timeless. Friends have told me that just as the plaza is the center of town, so the patio is the physical center of the homestead. The emotional center of the home is the cook house, and the center of the cook house is the hearth where families gather to eat and talk, just as Mayan families have for centuries. Gillespie (2000: 139) says of the Mayan home, "one who is seated in his house is in his place, representing a microcenter," the place where one is grounded and where he or she belongs.

144

I've known Timo since 1980. The first time I visited him at home was 1983. He had just moved from a nearby hamlet to a piece of property he bought in an *aldea* 'hamlet' of San Lorenzo, the town immediately south of Comitancillo. Before actually moving to the property, he built two small adobe structures, each approximately twenty feet long and twelve feet wide (Figure 3.2).
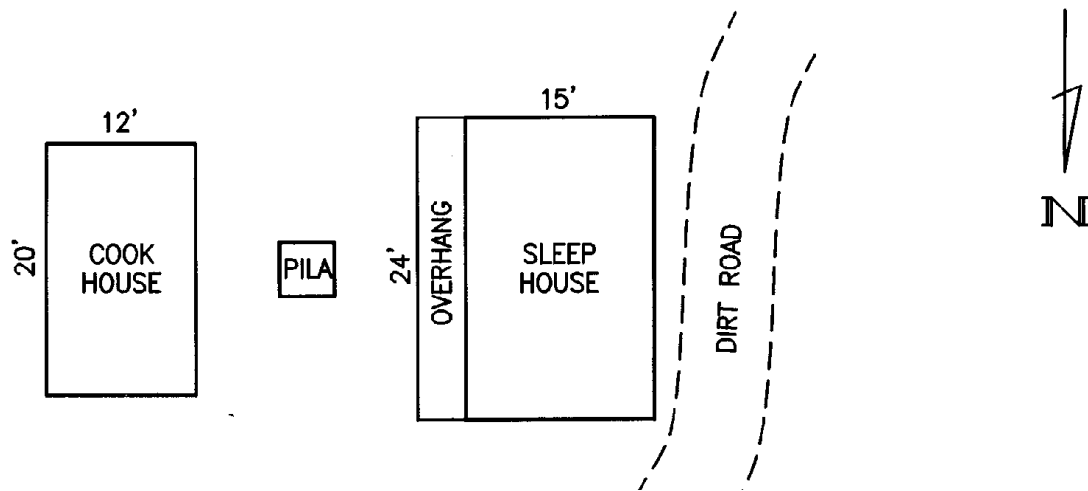
Figure 3.2 Timo's original (and typical) homestead. Drawn by Craig Banghart.

The two "houses" faced each other about 20 feet apart across a small courtyard or patio of packed earth. Each house was constructed of adobe blocks with a tile roof and a single door in the middle, facing the central courtyard. This homestead layout is extremely common throughout the Guatemalan highlands. In the patio between the two houses stood a *pila*, a cement structure for washing clothes and holding water. In the early 80's, Timo's home did not have running water. The women would go to a nearby spring and carry water back to the *pila*, filling it with approximately thirty gallons of water. This water was used throughout the day for washing clothes and dishes and for preparing food.

145
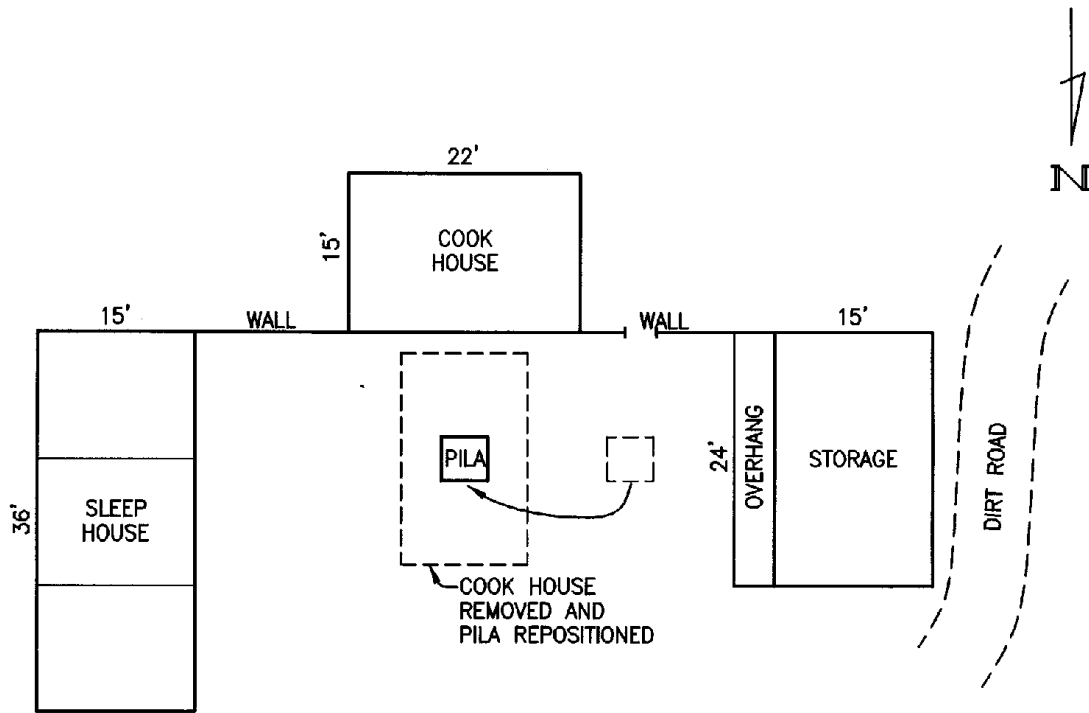
Figure 3.3 Timo's new construction. Drawn by Craig Banghart.

In 1995, Timo's son went to the States to look for work, ending up in an

Alabama meat packing company. He sent money home from time to time, and as is

common, this money was put into capital investments: usually the purchase of

additional land and construction projects.[5] Timo was able to purchase additional land

adjacent to his own, and he decided to expand his homestead site by adding some

small buildings. In order to take advantage of the additional acreage, Timo built a

block house (approximately 15 feet by 36) behind the adobe kitchen. This building

was sectioned into three 12 x 15 foot rooms, each with a door facing the patio area

and a small window. These rooms were used for sleeping. Timo then added another

building—a new cook house— perpendicular to the block sleep house (Figure 3.3).

[5] For a discussion and overview of remittances and their affect on poverty in
Guatemala, see Adams, 2004.

146
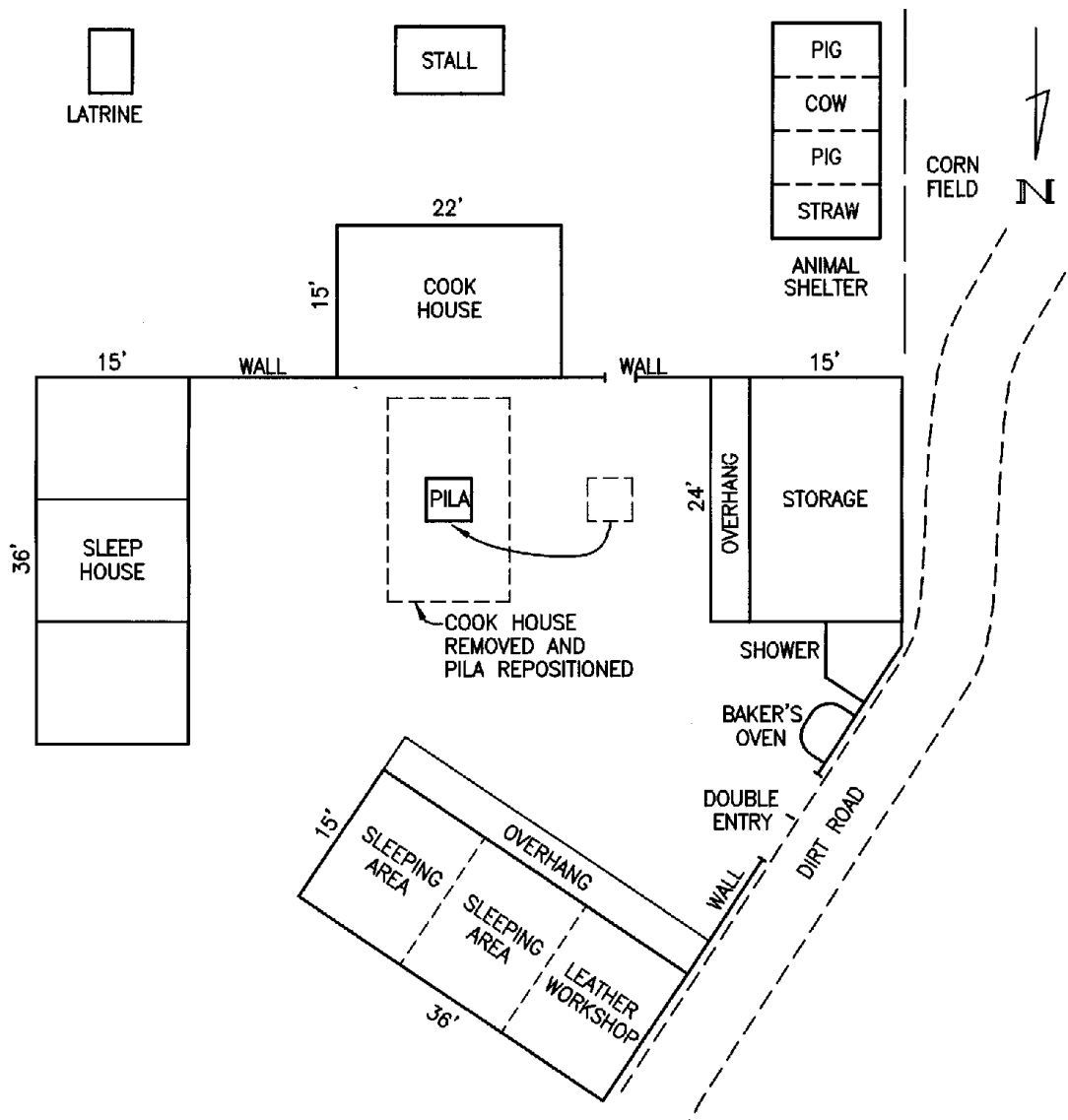
Figure 3.4 Timo's present homestead. Drawn by Craig Banghart.

When the construction of these two buildings was completed, the old sleep house became a storage area and the old cook house was dismantled. The metal roof was salvaged as were all the beams and boards. The adobe walls were then taken down and the spot was totally vacated, except that the *pila* was moved to take its position in the new center of the courtyard. Later, a third new building was added as

a workshop and additional sleeping area. He also added separately a shower stall and a large oven for baking bread (Figure 3.4).

What I have found interesting about this series of events is that the original cook house and sleep house were built at the same time. They were both in good condition when Timo happened into some extra money from remittances from his son in the States. Nevertheless, with the new construction, while the original sleep house was converted to a storage area, the original cook house was completely eliminated. What seems to be the reason for this is that the original sleep house, being situated on the perimeter of the "new" patio area, still provided a dimension for the central patio, whereas the original cook house was now in the middle of the new basic living area. If the cook house were to remain standing, it would relegate the new sleep house to an area away from the patio. Its doors would open to the back of the old cook house rather than to the patio, a situation Timo found unacceptable. When I asked Timo why he converted the old sleep house but not the cook house to a storage area, since both buildings were in good shape and salvageable, he said that it was not possible to leave the cook house where it was. Since he had built a new cook house, the old one was unneeded, he reasoned. I suggested that had he left the cook house where it was, he could have taken advantage of the space for a workshop and not spent additional funds on the construction of another building.[6]

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[6] Timo is a carpenter and leather worker. He has always needed space to store his tools and materials. He also needs space for a workbench. Practically speaking, the cook house would have been ideal, but it didn't fit Timo's notion of what constituted appropriate living space.

At this point, Timo gave me one of those looks like he often did when I had asked too many stupid questions. But judging from what Timo actually did, rather than what he said, the original cook house was in the way. There could be no open center area if this area was occupied by an old adobe cook house. Although the old adobe sleep house was fine since it didn't impinge on the new patio area, the cook house now occupied a special space, the center, and it didn't belong there. there was nothing particularly unbalanced about the old cook house being in the center of the new patio area. Rather, it impinged on the new center and therefore had to go.

After knocking down the original cook house, Timo moved the *pila* to the center of the new patio area, the place where it sits today. Today the *pila* is more than just a water storage and washing area. It is connected to running water, a fact which saves Timo's wife and daughters from having to go to the spring in order to keep the *pila* full.

The comparison of what Timo did and what he said is worthy of comment. Geertz would be dissatisfied by a stand-alone etic, camera-only recording of the events I've mentioned. At the same time, hearing the analysis from Timo's own point of view obscures what may well be behind the action that he took. Neither an etic nor an emic analysis stands alone. Geertz calls, rather, for an interpretation of events, one that takes into account everything—what actually happened, what Timo said, and how the events can be seen against the larger context of culture, something that outsiders tend to be too far away from to understand clearly, while insiders are far too close to be able to explicate it helpfully. From Timo's point of view, when he told me that it was not possible to maintain the old cook house in its present location, his

149

view was that that should have been enough for me. As Geertz teaches, culture is "out there" and public, interpretable by people's daily practice in lived space. Timo assumed that he had already answered my question. But because Timo lives a life committed to seeking centeredness, centeredness itself is a grounds upon which different figures—construction, health, faith—are focused. For him, it is the figures, not the grounds that are salient and meaningful. That I would concentrate instead and inexplicably on the grounds was for him the basis for nothing but silly questions. But as an outsider, it is only through an understanding of what's going on (the etic point of view) and a meaningful interpretation of the emic point of view that we can come to understand the world in which Timo lives.

But the world which Timo inhabits is not just about what he can experience in regard to health and the constructed world. It's also about the unseen world. As Annis says, "If you want to get an Indian's attention, talk to him about God (1987: 3).

3.4 Religion as a search for centeredness

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Edmonson (1993) says that the religion of pre-Columbian Maya and present-day traditional religionists is based on reciprocity, the counterbalancing of what is asked of the gods with the value of what is offered in return. Traditional Maya consider their spiritual destiny to be the metaphysical *heart of heaven*, the center of paradise promised in the *Popol Vuh*, where everything is in perfect balance and order, a goal which, while strived for, is elusive during life here in the world. In the *Popol Vuh*, the *heart of heaven* is both a destination and a personality. Martin (1977: 373) has suggested that the convergence of personality

and place may be a cultural theme in Q'anjob'al. Vogt states this in material terms, saying: "The Tzotzil also place their own bodily detritus—the hair that is combed from their heads (and fingernail clippings, WMC)—into the cracks of the house walls each day to further materially mark their co-identification with their houses" (1969: 580), thus manifesting the unity of person and place. In this way, a sense of centeredness has both positional and personal meaning for the Maya.

Freidel (1993) says:

> We now know that the first act of Creation was to center the world by placing the stones of the cosmic hearth. The second was to raise the sky, establish the sides and corners of the cosmic house that is the sky. The Maya at places like Cerros, Yaxuna, and Zinacantan have been centering the world and creating the four sides ever since. The center could be both grand in scale and execution, or like the navel of a human being, it could be a faint vestigial marker of the remains of the umbilicus that was once connected to an original source of creation and sustenance. It could be created by ritual wherever the Maya needed one (1993: 127).

Freidel, with Hanks, includes the center as part of the quincunxical cardinal directions, the four sides described by a center, and a center described by its four sides. Hanks (1990: 349) says: "Altars, yards, cornfields, the earth, the sky, and the highest atmospheres are described in terms of the five-point cardinal frame." So in the gods' first act of creation and in the Maya's daily interaction with them, with the land, and with each other, seeking the center was and is both a goal and an operating principle of life.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Edmonson says that Mayan religion is ritualistic and mystical, yet with a very practical audience that wanted to see results for their efforts. He says, "the power of the ritual is demonstrated by its ability to

placate the demanding gods and actually produce health, fertility, rain, sunrise, predicated planetary movements, and eclipses" (1993: 73). In the case of particularly momentous requests, the only "gift to god significant enough…is a human life" (ibid.: 83).

In section 2.3.3 above we saw that Nájera concurs. She says that "human sacrifice demonstrated the *idea of reciprocity* that should and must exist between mankind and the gods" (1987: 14, emphasis and translation from Spanish, WMC). Nájera also suggests that it was the heart that was the most important aspect of human sacrifice, since it served as the victim's essence and center (ibid.: 144), as well as being the preferred food of the gods. In this, she follows Landa (1566) who writes:

> The executioner came, with a flint knife in his hand, and with great skill made an incision between the ribs on the left side, below the nipple; then he plunged in his hand and like a ravenous tiger tore out the living heart, which he laid on a plate and gave to the priest; he then quickly went and anointed the faces of the idols with that fresh blood. (Landa, 1566 [1978]: 49)

As I mentioned in 2.2.3, ancient depictions often show the *world tree* growing up out of the chest cavity of a sacrificial victim (Figure 2.4, from the Dresden Codex). The tree's branches reach to the heavens; its roots go down into the underworld of death; and its trunk is firmly planted in the literal and ritual center of the religious system, the human heart.

Nájera's claim, like Edmonson's, is that Mayan sacrifices historically have been about reciprocity, a mutually beneficial agreement between humans and the gods.

152

Edmonson (1993: 65) goes on to point out that there was no codification of any pre-invasion Mayan belief system. Rather, the city-state political organization of the region militated against a single monolithic religion as each political/priestly/scribal geographical entity tended to portray their successes as stemming from their particular understanding of and relationship to the gods (Johnston, 2001). Nevertheless, throughout the Mayan area there was a basic unity of religious concepts: a preoccupation with time and prediction, an obsession with numbers, a strong sense of dualism "profoundly imbedded in Mayan thought and language" (Edmonson, 1993: 67), a developed notion of reciprocity between humankind and the gods, and a penchant among the masses for wanting to see positive results for their religious and political devotion.

Despite the lack of codification, we still have a reliable witness of pre-invasion religion through the glyphs, art and architecture of the Classic Maya. Edmonson also says that linguistic reconstruction gives us a good idea of religious categories, as does a reconstruction of the significance of number, particularly as these are compared to the knowledge and practice of modern day speakers and practitioners of the religion as it has been passed through the generations.

A final source for understanding pre-invasion religion is the writings of the Maya themselves immediately following the arrival of the Spanish. Prime among these sources is the *Popol Vuh*, often called the Mayan bible. The *Popol Vuh* is not so much a treatise about religion, as it is the story of the gods, the creation, the establishment of life on earth, and a history of a number of regional and supernatural conflicts. Much of the content of the *Popol Vuh* deals with interactions among the

gods before the successful creation of the first men and women. It assumes an understanding of Mayan religion and doesn't so much instruct adherents as to religious practice and belief.

The *Popol Vuh* was written in K'iche' by native K'iche' speakers who wrote their own language using Spanish characters. This was a major challenge since Mayan languages have fifteen or so phonemes that don't exist in Spanish. Nonetheless, modern translators have a good enough understanding of the language as well as the literacy skills of those who wrote down the *Popol Vuh* that we can be confident of its content.[7]

3.4.1 Centeredness and the *Popol Vuh*

In this section I highlight some of the content of the *Popol Vuh* that informs our notion of centeredness. The *Popol Vuh* itself is the story of the present creation. By Mayan accounts, there have been other creations in the past, and there will be more in the future. The present creation begins in watery darkness, silence and calm. The creator couple, in conference with other gods, decide to create humans so that they would invoke the name of the gods, fellowship with them and sacrifice to them. The first attempt to create humans resulted in the creation of animals instead, which are unable to call upon the name of their creators, so the creator couple tried again. The gods used mud to make their flesh, but these are unable to move or reproduce, so

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[7] Like Homer, the writer(s) of the *Popol Vuh* didn't invent the stories they wrote. Rather, they organized and edited them and wrote them down. It is clear from the glyphic record, carved as much as a thousand years before the invasion, that the stories had been passed down for many generations.

they bring down these creatures. Third, they make humans from sticks so that they would not fall apart when they got wet like those made of mud. But these, too, did not recognize their makers; they didn't feed and sustain them, and were therefore destroyed in a sticky, fiery rain.

Before the final (and successful) creation of humans, there is a long interlude about the travails of the twin gods who are lured to the underworld and killed. The sentient talking head of one of the gods is hung on a tree and impregnates with its saliva the daughter of one of the lords of the underworld. She is banished to the surface where she gives birth to another set of twins. When these two become young adults they return to the place of the dead, trick and kill the lords of the underworld and resuscitate their dead forebears who would eventually become the sun and the moon.

At this point the creation story is again picked up. The creator couple, also called the *heart of heaven, heart of earth*, create four men from corn. Miraculously, their four wives appear as well. These are the first Maya-K'iche', and the forebears of the important K'iche' lineages. The sun had not yet appeared, and these people and others wandered the earth in darkness. In their peregrination, they came to where they would receive their gods. The lineages receive three gods, but the main god, Tojil (Preuss (1988) says the name means "he who causes rain," and is also translated "Rainstorm" or "Cloudburst."), eventually becomes the chief god of all the lineages. He also provides fire for these first K'iche' who share it with other groups. When humans' fires are put out in a hailstorm, Tojil allows the K'iche' to provide it again to other groups, but only in return for sacrifices. At first, Tojil was content with animal

155

sacrifices of deer and birds, but soon, the priests and sacrificers offered their own

blood drawn from their arms and ears. Before long, however, Tojil requested human

sacrifices culled from enemy tribal groups, a practice which became more and more

bloodthirsty (in addition to human sacrifice, the glyphs show priests bloodletting from

their own tongues and penises). In modern K'iche', *tojil* means 'payment.' In Mam,

it would mean 'the inalienable possession of its inwardness.' This is similar to

Edmonson's claim (1993: 85), that the Maya term for religion is *ok olal* 'entering

inwardness,' which I discuss in Chapters Two and Four.

In some of the ensuing chapters of the *Popol Vuh*, other groups attempted, but

were unable to overcome the gods of the K'iche' despite numerous attempts and

wars.[8] This may well be an attempt by the K'iche' writers to establish their own

preeminence among the Maya, which was a scribal tradition (Johnston, 2001).

In the *Popol Vuh*, the creator is called both father and mother, two times

father, two times mother, grandfather, grandmother, two times grandfather, two times

grandmother. This sense of one out of two is common in Mayan ritual rhetoric

(Townsend, 1980; Neuenswander, 1986). In the first attempt at creating humans, the

gods requested of the animals that they call on them:

> Praise our name.
> Praise and say that we are
> > your Fathers and Mothers,
> > we who are Huracán Chipi-Culhá and Raxa-Cuculjá,
> > the Heart of heaven and of earth,
> > formers and creators,
> > Fathers and Mothers of all,
> Speak, invoke our name and greet us" (Ximénez, 1722: 8).

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[8] For a fascinating summary of the content of the Popol Vuh, as well as its allegorical,
astronomic meaning, see Tedlock, 1985.

Here we see the dualistic nature of religious rhetoric. Throughout the *Popol Vuh*, events and persons are often grouped in twos (and fours), and the poetic sections are usually presented in couplets.

Morley observes that, "The Maya religion had a strong dualistic tendency" (1956: 190). This resonates with comments by Gossen and Martin, cited in section 2.1 about the thematicity of dualism in Mayan culture. Dualism isn't simply the sense of two; it also contains the notion of one out of two, or unity out of diversity.

Neuenswander (1986) discusses how the Maya-Achí ancestors are addressed as 'our long ago mothers, our long ago fathers;' the universe is conceived of as 'the earth and heavens;' the world as 'the mountains and valleys. Her claim is that the pervasive use of couplets in rhetorical and religious discourse is iconic of the "strong tendency toward dualism" in Maya-Achí culture. I will discuss this further in Chapter Four.

In the publication of conclusions and recommendations from the *Primer Congreso de Educación Maya en Guatemala* (Curruchiche Otzoy et al., 1994), a number of themes are proposed as basic to an education that respects Mayan world view. Two of these are duality and the importance of the notion of "fourness." Whereas duality has to do with unity out of diversity, fourness harkens to totality or completeness, like Eugenio's comments about a dog with four legs or a family with four member-types. Only on four legs is an animal natural, normal, and balanced. Only with a father, mother, daughters and sons is a family complete. Coe (1999: 203) comments on various phenomena regarding the number four. The earth is considered

157

four cornered and is "supported by four aged *Pawahtuns*, the quadripartite form of the

old deity who ruled over the days at the end of the year" (ibid.). The sky also is four

cornered, sustained by four Bakabs or, by some accounts, four stout trees. The *Popol*

Vuh reports four attempts to create man, the fourth being successful when the gods

made men from corn. Four men were created, followed soon afterwards by their four

wives. Four animals were involved in leading the gods to the corn from which the

first men's flesh was made. Four owls served as messengers in the underworld, and a

road that split in four became the downfall of the first set of twins on their ill-fated

visit the underworld. Tedlock adds: "the settlement at the center of the K'iche'

kingdom embraced a cluster of four citadels" (1985: 57). The *Popol Vuh* also

mentions a number of other groupings and clusters of four.

It is from present day Mam that I learned about balanced families having four

member-types, that animals need full use of four legs to be considered normal

(although this is clearly true in our own culture), and that corn can have four different

colors: red and yellow, black and white. Indeed, each of the four basic directions *te*

twutz tx'otx' 'on the surface of the earth': *elnix* 'east,' *oknix* 'west,' *jawnix* 'up' and

kub'nix 'down,'[9] has a corresponding color associated with it: red for east, black for

west, yellow for downward, and white for upward,[10] with green or bluish green in the

middle. As the colors of the four directions symbolize the importance of corn which

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[9] *Oknix* literally means 'toward the entrance.' It means 'west' since that is where the
sun enters its house. In the same way, *elnix* means 'toward the exit,' is east because
in the east the sun leaves its house daily to enter the world.

[10] Coe (and others) considers these last two cardinal directions to be south and north,
not down and up (1999: 203). I agree with England (1978: 233).

is planted everywhere among the Maya (to the four directions), so the color green in the middle symbolizes tranquility, growth, balance and health, since the corn plants grow green and tall before the ear is formed. This is symbolized in the quincunx or what is commonly called a *God's eye* (Figure 3.5) its four outlying colors corresponding to the cardinal directions, with green (or blue-green) in the middle.

White (Up)

Black (West)　　Green (Center)　　Red (East)

Yellow (Down)
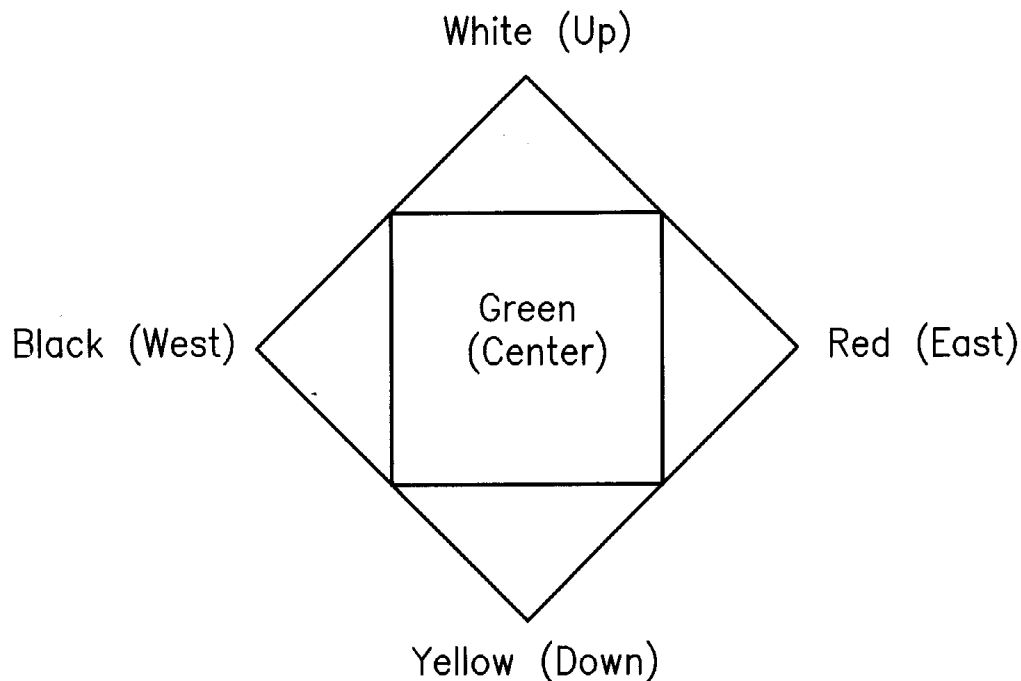
Figure 3.5 God's eye, a quincunx, adapted from Morley (1956).

In addition, there are four posts (*tqan* 'legs') that hold up a Mam home of four sides (as per Figures 2.1 and 2.2) four sides to a Mayan patio or town plaza, and cornfields historically have four sides, lined up with the sun's trajectory across the sky. Note in Figure 3.6 the alignment of the processional route at Dos Pilas with the path of the sun. The center of the central architectural complex aligns with the sun's zenith.   As mentioned, the sun's path is important not only to ceremonial centers and

the establishing of sacred space, but to the layout of the cornfield and homestead as well. Vogt (1976: 72, 80) shows that east-west orientation is important to Zinacantecos in healing rituals (the head of the patient is toward the rising sun). In addition, adults are buried with their heads toward the east, while children's heads face the west.

There are several direct mentions of the idea of a center in the *Popol Vuh*, albeit few. I take to be the most powerful metaphor of centeredness the idea of *the heart of heaven, the heart of earth*. As mentioned above, Martin, following Gossen, mentions the convergence of person and place as a possible cultural theme among the Maya. It denotes at once, both the warmth of relationship and the groundedness and situatedness of belonging. The dual designation of the center of both heaven and earth not only is iconic of the dualism mentioned above (and in Chapter Four), but it also is inclusive of the two worlds most relevant to the Maya, the here and now world of daily practice and the then-and-there world of the afterlife.

The creator couple, conferring among themselves, "in the midst of that darkness, created all creatures and the creation of the trees and all of life was manifest along with everything else that was made by the Heart of heaven…" (Ximénez 1722: 6, translation from Spanish, WMC). Here we see the creator couple as a basic unity of purpose and power out of the diversity of male and female; we see that it was in the midst of that primal darkness, *en medio* 'from the center' according to Ximénez, that the creation event took place; and it was the exalted person/exalted place of the *Heart of heaven* that did the creating. It is the same creator couple, "heart of heaven and of the earth" (Ximénez, 1722: 99), that eventually created men and women.

Another place where a sense of center is important is in the house of the mother of the deceived gods who met their demise at the hands of the lords of the underworld. Her grandsons (the second set of twins, Hunahpú and Xbalanqué) had left some cornstalks planted in the dry ground of her patio, when they went to the underworld to avenge their fathers' deaths. If the stalks sprouted, it would be a sign to the old woman that they were still alive. After the boys were gone a long time, Ximénez says, "the old woman was very happy when she saw the stalks sprout, and at that time idolatry began and the burning of incense in the *middle of the house* and *the center or exact point of the middle*, and it was called Cul-nicoh-ha,[11] *stalks of the center* for that's what the *center of the house* has been called…" (1722: 92 translation from Spanish and emphasis, WMC). Tedlock (1985: 42) likens this sprouting of the corn stalks to the corn itself, which is dormant and dry as seed, but comes to life after planting.

In this section, we haven't so much seen the details of Maya religious belief, but we've seen a context in which such belief operates. We've had but a glimpse of Mayan religion. It seems that those who wrote down the *Popol Vuh* assumed that their readers would understand the facts of belief. What they offered was the history of the world in which such belief has meaning. Although the idea of reciprocity isn't in and of itself a religious notion, among the Maya it does indeed have far reaching religious implications. The gods created men and women so that men and women could sustain the gods.

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[11] This appears to be cognate with Mam *K'ul niky'jin ja* 'weeds of the center of the house.' In Chapter Four we will look at the lexical item *niky'jin* 'center or middle.'

I suggest that this relation of reciprocity is an instantiation of our theme of centeredness. In Chapter Four we will look at the lexicon of centeredness and consider how the Mam themselves talk about such a notion. For now I suggest that Morley, Edmonson, Gossen, Nájera, Martin, Coe, Neuenswander, and the educators who attended the 1994 First Congress on Mayan Education would agree that Maya life, as instantiated in traditional religion, includes a strong impetus toward seeking the balance of centeredness between the individual and his or her family, between oneself and the gods, between a family and the land, and between an individual and his or her neighbors.

3.4.2 Entering inwardness; Mayan Protestantism

In the present world though, it is the lack of centeredness, personal balance, and equilibrium that Scotchmer (1989, 1993) cites as motivation for the unprecedented conversion to Protestantism among the Mam and other Mayan groups. He claims that it is because many Mam see traditional Mayan religion as not delivering on its promise of balance, i.e. social harmony and personal order, and personal peace with God, that they have opted for other religious systems, particularly post-Vatican II Catholicism and, lately, Protestantism. Scotchmer was a missionary anthropologist whose goal it was to provide an ethnohistory of conversion among the Southern Mam.[12] He cites the stories of many Mam men who claim to have beaten their wives and children, and who were addicted to alcohol, who fought with family

[12] Southern Mam centers around the town of San Juan Ostuncalco in the department of Quetzaltenango. It is more closely related than Northern Mam (of Huehuetenango) to the Mam of Comitancillo. See Godfrey and Collins (1987) for further details.

162

and neighbors, and who felt ungrounded in the midst of increasing modernization—certainly not the kind of life balance they had envisioned for themselves.

Scotchmer (1993) suggests that there are three areas in which the Maya seek a broad sense of peace: within the spiritual order, within the created order and within the human order. This is as much the goal of traditional Maya as for those who convert to Catholicism or Protestantism. I suggest in Chapter Four that the Mam word for peace, *nuk'b'il*, means not only 'peace' but 'order, where things are as they should be, correctly structured, balanced, safe, calm and without rancor.' This sense of *nuk'b'il* is the goal of the Maya view of religion, a moral and social center space, where life is in balance in every way. I believe this is why the *heart of heaven* as both place and person, is such a rich and powerful metaphor to the Maya. It symbolizes all that heaven should be, both personally and geographically intimate and grounded.

Scotchmer shows by citing life stories of the Mam themselves, that it is often failure to achieve this kind of balance that triggers the search for something else.

> When ritual performance fails to cure alcoholism, lingering illness, unresolved feuding, repeated misfortune, endemic poverty, social rejection and personal misery, there is an unavoidable crisis of belief. Questions of a very existential nature emerge that challenge not only the way one's ancestors and oneself have lived, but also what one has believed as true, acceptable and good about reality and one's place in the cosmos. (Scotchmer, 1993: 509).

Scotchmer suggests that because Protestantism deals with many of the same issues of life as traditional religion, it is not seen by adherents as something foreign and necessarily North American. "Invariably, the believer's conversion story refers

163

to the time when he or she was not a Protestant with strong images of what the old

way was like. For the man, the old life usually means alcoholism accompanied by

poverty, hunger, illness, violence, jail, indebtedness, loss of valuable land, and finally

despair" (1993: 508). There is often such a mismatch between how people wish to

live and how they actually live that Protestantism becomes an option that is

considered by many. That conversion to Christianity deals with these issues, so much

a part of Mayan life, makes it not an outsider religion, but one that deals with the

concerns of the Maya and humanity in general.

Scotchmer cites one Mam who said:

Qajaw Crist (Our Lord Christ) is the one leader for us, a captain, a general,
one who gives wise counsel. He has more authority than that of the people. We
essentially are fearful of people with much authority. But *Qajaw Crist* has greater
power, and much more authority than do these people. That's because *Tyol Dios*
(The Word of God) is a very sacred authority. More than anything it speaks strongly
to our hearts. It speaks about our lives and how they need to be opened, about how
we may become stronger believers, who are upright and true in our faith like a soldier
of *Qman Crist* (our Father Christ, WMC). (1989: 301)

In summary, Scotchmer says that the symbols of Mayan Protestantism: *Tyol*

Dios 'The Word of God,' *Qajaw Crist* 'Our Lord Christ,' and *hermano/a*

'brother/sister' "draw unmistakably on values which are deeply imbedded in the

culture and religion of the Maya" (ibid.: 307). So, for Mayan Protestants, they don't

see their faith as something from the outside that has been imposed on them, but

rather as a response to a very local (grounded) and personal (situated) reality.

Of the many testimonies I've heard about this from Comitecos who are now

Protestant believers, the following are indicative:

My friend, Flavio, told me that before his conversion he would be at the market on payday and he would determine to go home and take his earnings to his wife and family. But as he passed the *cantina*, his own throat would call out to him for a drink. At this point in our conversation, he paused and gestured, stroking his throat several times. He said that, try as he might, he couldn't get home sober. His life is different now, he says. Now he has the power and motivation to live *tuk'a tumil* 'with direction,' as he knows he should.

Victoriano told me that he never had a drinking problem, but that he loved the ladies. He said that he had lived an uncontrolled life, even after his first marriage, but he knew it was wrong. He says that after his conversion, God and the *hermanos* 'Christian brothers and sisters' helped him walk *tuk'a tumil* 'with direction.' The phrase *tuk'a tumil* implies life lived centered on a path leading in the right direction, and not *txalche* 'veering off course, to one side or the other.'

Timo told me that he and his first wife fought and yelled at each other all the time and finally divorced. His brother had come to believe and shared the Gospel with Timo who decided to believe as well. Now, he says, he is remarried (to another woman) and lives in harmony with his wife.

Each of these three men told me that they had converted to Christ from their old way of life. The term they use for 'convert' or 'repent' is *tu'n tajtz ti'j wanmi'n* 'to come home in regard to my heart,' to return to center. Many see their new faith as a return to this sense of centeredness, balance, and harmony. The goal here is not balance—swinging from good to bad—but centeredness and spiritual rest.

In 1984 I attended a meeting of Mam school teachers. The theme of the event was cultural and linguistic revitalization. One speaker said that a Mayan Evangelical is a *coco* 'a coconut,' brown on the outside, but white on the inside. This generated a lot of discussion. One teacher said, "Our ancestors didn't wear prescription glasses or drive cars. Are you saying that if we do anything that they didn't do that we're *cocos*?" It continues to be an important topic of discussion among the Maya, but the position that is increasingly held by Protestants is that they are not *cocos*, but rather, they are *actualizados* 'up to date.' They reject the notion that to be Christian is to be less than fully Mayan.

While some (both Maya and non-Maya) consider Christian conversion to be a delinking of the modern Maya with their past, I suggest, based on Scotchmer's work and further interviews with the Mam of Comitancillo, that conversion can be seen as the pursuit of the cultural value of centeredness which, far from being a delinking of the Mam with their past, can be understood as an affirmation of Mayanness. Indeed, 'to return home to one's heart,' is to come home to centeredness, the basic goal of Mayan life. It is more than mere balance. That the Mam would use such terminology in light of Nájera's emphasis on the heart in Mayan sacrifices is strong support for conversion as cultural continuity and not as cultural delinking. It also affirms the cultural salience of centeredness.

Not only is the basic concept of repentance understood in terms of a return to centeredness, but, recall that, according to Edmonson (1993: 85), the Maya term for religion is *ok olal* 'entering inwardness,' which is tantamount to seeking centeredness.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we've considered three areas of Mam life that are part of the daily practice of being Maya: their conception of health and illness, the constructed world that they inhabit, and the spiritual world that gives meaning and understanding to their lives.

What we've seen is that, as different as these aspects of life seem to be, they can be understood as instantiations of an underlying cultural goal, that of seeking centeredness. I began with a discussion of disease etiology and how to stay healthy in a world of extremes, both physical and metaphysical. We saw that scholars from the earliest contact with the Maya and indeed, modern Maya themselves talk about health in terms of a center space of balance and equilibrium with their surroundings. They come to this understanding both as handed down from their parents and grandparents, but also from the observation of the cold hard facts of how the world works.

Not only does the idea of centeredness "work" in terms of the maintenance of health and treatment of disease, but it also seems to be the model by which the constructed world is arranged. Mam homes are built around a central four-sided patio. We saw that when this center space is violated by additional construction, the space must be reconstituted and revitalized. Even the earliest and simplest homes, built over a thousand years ago on the outskirts of Tikal seem to recognize and accommodate the need for a center space around which homesteads were constructed. This is as true today in the town of Comitancillo and its *aldeas* as it was a thousand years ago. I suggested that this sense of center is so much a part of Mam life that it is

167

often ignored by the Mam themselves, a mere grounds by which to interpret a variety

of figures in their lives. But when the sense of center is somehow violated, by new

construction, or by an adolescent who is not walking *tuk'a tumil*, the grounds rise to

front and center, and buildings and lives need to be rearranged so that the center is

respected anew.
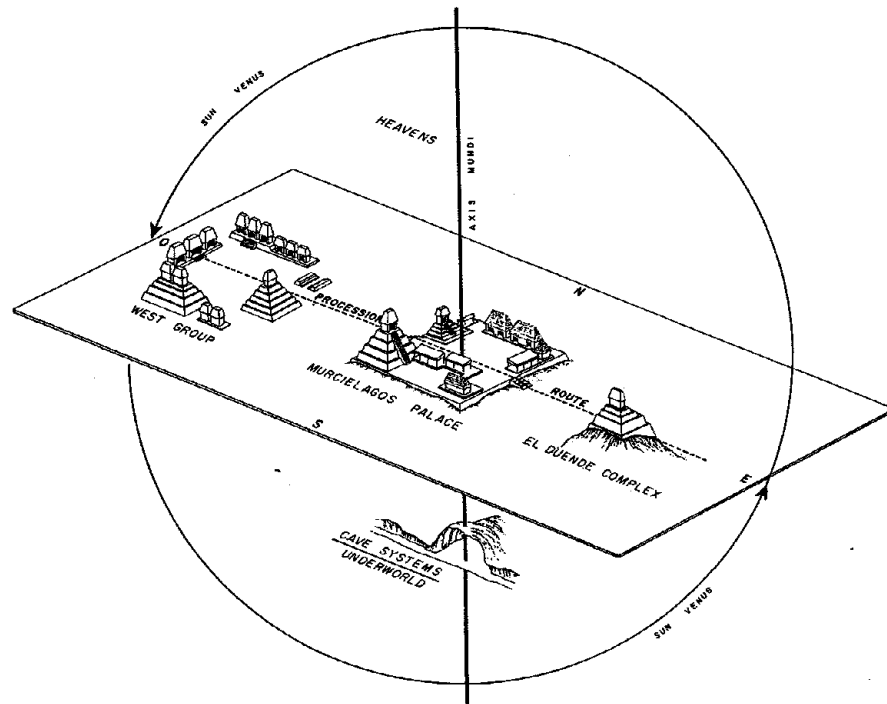
Figure 3.6 Schematic representation of Dos Pilas site, from Demarest, et al. (2003: 143).

Finally, we looked at Mayan religion, both traditional and Protestant. This is

an extremely delicate area, especially since I, as a North American missionary, carry

my own ideology and my own understanding of Mam life and belief. What I've tried

to do here is let people speak for themselves. The Maya are people of faith, as Annis

alluded to in his quote above at the end of section 3.3.2. The way to get their

attention is to speak of God. Flavio, Victoriano and Timo's testimonies weren't coerced or enhanced. In fact, it is a challenge to get the Maya to talk about things other than religion, since faith is such a basic part of their lives. My extractions from the *Popol Vuh* are taken from the translations themselves, particularly Ximénez (1722) and Tedlock (1999). What I've tried to do is show pattern, especially in the continuity of cultural values from the past to the present. I (and thousands of Mam believers) see Evangelical Christianity not as a foreign imposition and disconnect with who they are as Maya, but rather as a response to the values that they hold most deeply and meaningfully, and that they hold on to most tenaciously. As Hendrickson (1995: 197) says, "persistence and change are integrally related."

In the next chapter, we will refer to these three cultural matters—health, architectonics and religion, but we will see them not from a historical perspective, but from the perspective of life lived from day to day and in the worlds used to explicate a life committed to centeredness.

CHAPTER 4

CENTEREDNESS AS CULTURAL PRACTICE

4.1 Introduction

As discussed above, Itkonen (1978) claims that proof in anthropology,

sociology, history and other human sciences is different in a number of ways from

proof in the natural sciences. First, the sense of measurability is different. For the

natural sciences, "Since each centimeter or second is identical with each other

centimeter or second, the differences and similarities between (physical) things and

events can be ascertained in a precise and perfectly general way" (1978: 25). In the

human sciences, on the other hand, such measurement is either impossible or trivial.

Cultural phenomena such as values, contentment, faith, and honor, are not readily

reducible to numbers and precise calculation. Of course, there are physical, spatio-

temporal coordinates to cultural phenomena, but to reduce the phenomena themselves

to the location where they take place and to the measured movements of bodies in

space, though not unimportant, is to a large degree orthogonal—or at best minimally

relevant—to what it is that cultural anthropologists are trying to find out. Second,

whereas positivistic proof requires the precise measurement of calculable

phenomena—observable "objects" in space and time—the human sciences strive not

to measure, but to understand or interpret observations not reducible to such calculable phenomena, things like attitudes, cultural values and world view. Third, a positivist scientist attempts to stand outside of the universe of measurement and the things to be measured, and in this way, to be truly "objective," whereas social scientists "investigate something which they themselves, *qua* scientists, are part of" (ibid.: 30).

Itkonen says that proof (and data) for the more "human" sciences is hermeneutic, rather than positivistic. He defines this by suggesting that "it might be said that hermeneutics acquires its data through understanding meanings, intentions, values, norms, or rules, and the hermeneutic analysis consists in reflection upon what has been understood" (ibid.: 20). This gives rise to a fourth and final Itkonen observation: whereas the methodology of positivistic science is well established, hermeneutic methodology has no standard discovery procedure. It is eclectic, participatory, and interpretive.

With this in mind, how do we go about "proving" that centeredness is a cultural and grammatical theme in Mam?

1. First, we don't do away with careful observation. Rather, we contextualize it. Itkonen reminds us that meaning exists only in social context (ibid.: 63-64). So, instead of trying to extract ourselves from social context, linguistic anthropologists embrace it. This is quintessential participant observation, the hallmark of ethnographic description (see section 2.7 above). The ethnographer is part of the context and, as such, needs to be described and discussed just as any other fact of the context. Some feel that this kind of reorienting of context around the researcher is

useless and tangential navel gazing. Like anything else, it can get out of hand, but by committing to a focus on those being researched, the researcher is normally only manifested as a grounds against which figures play out their roles. The focus of good ethnography, while not denying the researcher's presence, is never on the researcher.

2. We look for historical continuities. Durkeim says: "The determining cause of a social fact should be sought among the social facts preceding it. . ." (1988: 244). Since I claim that centeredness is a "social fact," i.e. a pervasive, culture-wide phenomenon, it should be manifested through time, as well as across social sub-groups within the culture. In this sense, culture is a "context for contexts," providing an overarching system within which social variation takes place. Despite differences of gender, social class, education, region, and economic standing, there are nevertheless issues that supersede these differences that unite members of a culture group. These include language, values and world view, which can be uniting principles even in the face of social variation.

3. We seek patterns in the data that we observe, both linguistic and cultural; the more disparate and atomistic the data, the more helpful an encompassing theory "within which the observations find a natural place" (Chafe, 1994:21). And while the patterns should be independently verified (see section 2.2.1), we should be able to unite them under the common cultural umbrella of centeredness. Hymes says that a basic practice of anthropological study is "the showing of a pattern, fashion of speaking, or style among a number of traits" (1966: 117). This is the goal of my study—to explain how such diverse observations as religious choice, the constructed

world, the perception of health and illness, daily language use and aspects of the formal grammar of Mam are all instantiations of a single theme.

This kind of analysis is based on triangulation, a term used by ethnographers to indicate that conclusions are drawn from a variety of sources based on disparate observations across different aspects of the culture in order to draw inferences that are integrated across the observations and commensurate with native opinion. As Enfield (citing David Wilkins, 1993) portrays in regard to emerging patterns: "once tells us nothing, twice could be a coincidence, but three times starts to confirm a pattern of regularity" (2002: 22).

4. Itkonen says that the people themselves—the Mam—must be able to understand and accept the description arrived at in our research (1978: 64). This is what Zaharlick (p. c.) calls the "Aha! factor." When locals appropriately understand the data and the explanation, they should agree that the analysis is realistic and that it reflects how they view the world. The fact that locals would say, "You know, this is really the way we think about things," is itself data and therefore subject to analysis.

5. Culture includes learned and shared patterns of behavior. These cultural norms aren't deterministic, although they do exert tremendous pressure on individuals in the culture. As Durkheim (1988: 240) says, because society "surpasses the individual in time as well as in space, it is in a position to impose upon him ways of acting and thinking which it has consecrated with its prestige." As such, when someone acts outside of the cultural norm, i.e. if centeredness is ignored or flouted, we can expect and seek perturbations in behavior. A cultural value becomes salient

via its absence. I discussed this in terms of Timo's patio. When centeredness was considered compromised, something had to be done.

6. Finally, assuming that our theme of centeredness is as pervasive and explanatory as I've suggested, we would expect it to be manifested in many ways in the daily life of the Mam.

In Chapters Three, Four and Five I attempt to "prove" or affirm my premise via this six-fold rubric. What I do in this chapter is show how centeredness is a part of daily life among the Mam. I look at a marriage proposal and an agreement protocol where I was personally (and innocently, I might add) involved in offending a man's wife, and I discuss how centeredness comes into play in each event and also, how the two events coalesce around the notion of a commitment to reciprocal action, which I claim is an analogue of a search for metaphorical center space among disputants. I also discuss the language of centeredness, how the Mam themselves talk about daily life in terms of our theme and what vocabulary they use to do so. Most of this is based on lexical items taken from discussions in which I played a participatory role, although the longer discussion of –k'u'j 'stomach' terms stems from Scotchmer's (1978) unpublished componential analysis of such terms and my resultant ethnographic interview session with a number of Mam men based on Scotchmer's findings, and confirmed in local conversations.

4.1.1 Why ethnography?

Since the most powerful and persuasive evidence for claims about a group should come from an analysis of the daily life and interactions of members of the

group, an appropriate research tool should focus on the aspects of living. This is what

ethnography is, a privileging of the emic point of view, i.e. how locals understand

their own lives, or, as Malinowski put it trying "to grasp the native's point of view,

his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world" (1922:25, emphasis in the

original). In summary of the ethnographic method, Zaharlick says:

> Ethnographers establish social relationships with others in order to
> learn from them their ways of life. Through firsthand, long-term,
> participant observation, using themselves as research instruments
> and using an eclectic approach to data collection and analysis,
> ethnographers view human events in the larger contexts in which
> they naturally occur. . .The knowledge and understandings gained
> through the ethnographic process are then presented in the form of
> an ethnographic report that describes in rich detail what it is like to
> be a member of that culture. . .A good ethnography systematically
> describes the flow of behavior in a way that allows others to
> comprehend at an emotional level the events set before them and to
> understand the context motivating these events (1992: 121).

This emotional connection with the reader is a hallmark of good ethnography.

And the fact that the connection is by means of the participation (both competently,

and sometimes incompetently) of the ethnographer in a new culture, helps to make

these unknown people and their life ways come alive.

The idea that the ethnographer is a participant observer sets up several

professional dilemmas, two of which I mention here. First is the observer's paradox,

the idea that the very presence of the observer skews the observed. This is sometimes

called the thermometer effect, in that to measure the temperature of a liquid, one uses

a thermometer, but the act of putting the thermometer into the liquid to measure it

affects its temperature. Second, since the observer has her own agenda, point of

view, history, ideology, and culture; what she "sees" is itself filtered through her own

experience and is not objective. So not only is reality affected by the ethnographer's presence, but the result of the research—the written ethnography of the reality observed—is skewed as per the ethnographer's agenda and ideology.[1]

The ethnographer's solution to these dilemmas is to embrace them. She participates as appropriate in the daily life of the community, while not denying nor ignoring that she is a member of a different culture and a native speaker of a different language, a person with her own personality and history. This gives rise to what Duranti calls "a certain playful element" (1997: 86), where the ethnographer goes back and forth between her world—the one largely known to the reader—and the world new to him. She performs this balancing act by attempting to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange, i.e. showing how customs that seem unusual are in fact manifestations of our common humanity (for example, the comic stacking of cans in a tiny basket, for which, see below), while at the same time, showing how something as mundane as walking down the street can have layers of meaning far beyond what we would consider necessary to understand what is going on. The ethnographer includes herself—not just her scholarly opinions—and even acknowledges her own history to the reader in an attempt to "come clean" with her

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[1] Another dilemma is the ethnographer's acknowledgement of the idea of culture itself. Some modern writers (Said, 1989, is a prime example) consider "culture" to be such an elitist, essentialist, stereotyping, and colonialist notion, that it is pointless to define it, to pursue it, or to trust any generalizations that might be made concerning it. These are important critiques, but I assume, nonetheless, with Duranti (1997: 23-24) and Wierzbicka (1997: 17-22) that culture is a most helpful notion and that understanding human diversity is a wonderful, humanizing pursuit, as per ethnographic study as I've outlined it above. We have more to lose by ignoring culture than we do by studying and understanding it, even if incompletely. Beyond this, I won't defend the basic notion of culture here.

own background and viewpoints as they impinge upon the ethnographic task. In other words, there are multiple voices in good ethnography, not just those of the researched, nor of the researcher's "professional side," but of the researcher's personal side as well, i.e. researcher as "subject." The reader of ethnography also speaks, as the ethnographer anticipates the questions and reactions of her readers and responds appropriately. This makes ethnography one of the most readable and accessible of all scholarly writing, since it builds on both the reader's understanding of his own culture as well as his motivation to learn about another.

This meshing of voices and this embracing of both the observer's paradox and the observer's filter is what Duranti points to when he says that: "An ethnography is an interpretive act and as such should be turned on itself to increase the richness of descriptions, including an understanding of the conditions (personal or otherwise, WMC) under which the description itself becomes possible" (1997: 95).

This is why good ethnography not only privileges multiple voices, but it also maintains several dialogues at the same time. Along with the voice(s) "telling the story" is a meta-dialogue (an ethnography of the ethnography, or what Duranti calls the ethnography "turned on itself") where the researcher discusses the *process* of ethnography during the telling of the on-the-ground situation of the actual ethnography. The attempt to juggle all this is to be enjoyed and affirmed, not dismissed. Good ethnography is a genre of its own; at once scholarly pursuit, linguistic treatise, cultural exposition, travelogue, true confession, and readable non-fiction. The interplay and the cross discussion of voices is not tangential, it is the essence of good ethnographic writing.

4.2 Introduction to thick description

The following data are taken from three different occasions as detailed in my
field notes. The purchase of boards and ensuing discussion took place over the
weekend of September 23, 1989. The marriage proposal by Timo's son-in-law
occurred on December 26, 1988, and the text by Pablo about marriage customs of
long ago was recorded in March of 1983. In Chapter Five I will analyze a short
narrative text in order to pursue our topic of grammatical theme, but for now,
information from Pablo's text will help us understand some of the precedent and
situated meaning of present-day cultural practice related to gift giving and agreement
protocol, both of which I claim are instantiations of the pursuit of centeredness. My
three main sources—buying boards, an engagement ritual and a text about decades
old (at least) marriage customs—may seem unrelated and far distant time-wise from
each other, but there is a thread that runs through them all—one which I will make
clear as we understand the events that unfold in the pages that follow and the meaning
behind those events.

My goal in this section is to emulate the work of Geertz, particularly his
delightful article on Balinese cockfights (1973: 412-453). He begins with a
cockfight, adds linguistic, cultural and personal data (including puns, sarcasm, irony
and rich detail), continually expands his analysis, and ends up giving us an overview
of Balinese culture that is meaning based (thick) and highly contextualized.[2] He

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[2] Geertz borrows (and extends) the notions of thick and thin description from
philosopher, Gilbert Kyle, 1971.

claims that the Balinese cockfight is not really about gambling or the life and death of roosters, although these aspects are ever present, rather it is about prestige, what Geertz claims is the "central driving force in the society" (1973: 436). In fact, he says that the influence of money and blood cause "the migration of the Balinese status hierarchy into the body of the cockfight" (ibid.). The cockfight is Balinese culture writ small, "a simulation of the social matrix, the involved system of cross-cutting, overlapping, highly corporate groups—villages, kingroups, irrigation societies, temple congregations "castes"—in which its devotees live" (ibid.). The fight also serves as a release for people whose cultural norms require social restraint and cool-headedness on all occasions—except as passions flare both in and around the ring.

A similar study, although from a different perspective is A. L. Becker (1996 [1984]), where he begins with a brief linguistic analysis of a Burmese proverb, and subsequently layers his analysis with rich cultural context until, like Geertz, he gives us an overview of Burmese language-within-culture that rings true. Although Becker enters Burmese culture via a three-line proverb, what he learns about how the Burmese categorize the world, how they perceive all things in their relation to and distance from Buddahood, and how they enjoy the aesthetic "feel" of their language all fall out from his translation of the proverb: *There are three kinds of mistakes: those resulting from lack of memory, from lack of planning ahead, or from misguided beliefs*" (ibid.: 142).

The two men have different starting points—Geertz with culture; Becker with language—but their goal is the same, richly layered, "thick" description that answers the question, what is it like to be a fully functioning member of this culture? In the

writing of these two linguistic anthropologists, Duranti's idea of "a certain playful element" runs throughout, as both authors clearly enjoy the telling of their stories and they discuss a number of tangential issues as they come up in order to remind us that their ethnographies are from a perspective which is at once personal, yet professional; playful, yet profound. In fact, their enjoyment in the telling of their respective stories is part of the message that they are trying to get across—that the Balinese and Burmese are people like us, people who have feelings and ideas, friends and enemies, times of ceremony as well as daily grind, times of work and play, joy and fear. The fact that both men bring in so much personal (and what some would call irrelevant) material has a two-fold purpose. First, they want to lay to rest the idea that they would claim to be seen by their readers as disinterested bystanders. Rather, they are full participants. Second, by talking of their own responses and thoughts, they bring what seem to be strange customs into our own minds and living rooms, helping us to see some of the commonalities we share with people so seemingly different from us.

In their cultural participation, they also serve as "instruments" through which they achieved cultural insight. It was Geertz's physical presence and his bodily participation in the events of the police break-up of the cockfight that not only endeared him to the locals and opened up their world to him, but that provided an opportunity for people to include him. People mimicked and repeated in detail Geertz's flailing arms and terrified expression as he burst headlong from the ring. It was his own clumsiness that provided the grounds against which he saw the beauty of Balinese restraint and self-possession in the midst of chaos. It was Becker's speaking the language and writing it down along with his egregious insistence that it didn't

matter how the language was written that was the mechanism by which he was corrected and patiently taught. The ethnographer participates in the local scene, body and soul.

One of the motivating joys of cultural anthropology is portraying how distinct customs and unusual happenings that occur in other cultures are analogous to thoughts and actions that we experience every day in our own culture, albeit with different trappings. The phenomena that I describe below—a social faux pas, forgiveness, power issues, a father-daughter relationship, agreement rituals—among others—are issues that any individual can understand and empathize with, and with which virtually everyone has had to deal from time to time. That these issues are so human and so near to us, while at the same time their cross-cultural analogues are seemingly so foreign and obscure, is at once to recognize the fascination of both the universal nature as well as the particular instantiation of cultural themes. The fact is, however, that it isn't the behavior itself that is so transparent and shared across cultures; rather it is the interpretation of the behavior that is the expression of our common humanity. As Geertz so clearly points out (1973: 5-10), the difference between a purposeful wink and a meaningless twitch is not in performance, but in interpretation of performance. The physical act (of winking or twitching) can be significant, but only within a meaningful context. Geertz decries those anthropologists who concentrate on "thin description," the radical behaviorists who, in our winking-twitching discussion, would not venture to interpret the act, but only to describe it, lest the act be misinterpreted. Geertz claims that such uninterpreted events are simply the view that a camera would give us—flat—potentially interesting

181

as art, yet contextless, and therefore meaningless (1973:7), and for that reason, not within the purview of interpretive anthropology.

4.3 Attaining *b'a'n*

When we lived in Comitancillo, I tried to maintain a fairly strict schedule, doing language related work during the week, and saving home maintenance and personal projects for the weekend if at all possible. I had wanted for some time to build a playhouse for our three children, and in late September, 1989, the time was right. I cleared a spot in the back yard, and I headed off to look for some lumber. The last twenty years has been marked by a building spree in Comitancillo (much of it facilitated by dollars sent back to the village from people working in the States (see Chapter 1)), so boards were not always easy to find, and one had to purchase what was available, without too much complaining about quality. Kiln-dried, planed, S4S lumber[3] of uniform thickness and width was (and continues to be) unheard of. Plus, with increased concern over soil erosion in the hinterlands, the Guatemalan government had instituted a system that requires special permission (and fees) to cut and transport boards. So the local need for lumber and its local availability don't normally coincide. With that in mind, when I heard that my friend Rafael had lumber for sale, I went to the market to talk to him. Although the main market days in Comitancillo are Sunday and Wednesday, Rafael maintains a large market stall seven

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[3] S4S is stamped on most lumber sold in the US. It means square four sides. In rural Guatemala, carpenters spend as much or more time preparing lumber before cutting it, than they do in building the actual project for which they were contracted.

days a week selling eggs, vegetables, dried fish, chili peppers and miscellaneous items.

He told me that he did indeed have boards (1x12's, more or less), approximately six feet long. I agreed to a price and paid for a dozen recently cut boards. Rafael informed me that the boards were drying in the patio of his home, but I could go there, inform his wife that I had paid him for the boards, and haul them away. My son, Isaac, who was five years old at the time, was with me as my *wuk'iy* 'my companion.' We walked to Rafael's place, went through the open double gate of the site and entered an open patio area around which the home compound was built—a sleep house or "family room" in one adobe construction, with a kitchen directly opposite it, about fifteen feet away across a courtyard of hard packed earth. I whistled for Rafael's wife.[4] She came to the door suckling her youngest child whom she had slung on her back in a shawl, but who was twisted forward in order to nurse. Two other children, a boy and a girl, grabbed at the pleats of her floor-length skirt. The entrance to the family room was via "Dutch doors." The bottom half of the door remained shut, while she opened the top half and greeted me, lightly touching my fingertips with her own. Both of us bowed slightly, as I respectfully removed my hat.

Chin q'olb'i'n 'I greet you,' I said. *B'a'n* 'It is good,' she replied. I told her of my deal with her husband, and that I had come to pick up the boards. As soon as I saw her, I noticed that her left eye was red, swollen, and filled with pus. I very lightly

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[4] Early in our time in Comitancillo, I was told that whistling is the greeting of choice when approaching a house (particularly a rural house), since people can normally identify a visitor by his or her whistle. Thieves commonly go to the door and make noise and/or knock in order to listen for movement inside the house. That way they can stay anonymous and simply move along if anyone happens to be home.

touched her cheek, slightly pulling at the lower lid, and asked her what was wrong.

Jun nyab'ila ma lemtzaj wi'ja 'an illness has come against me,' she said. I reminded

her that my wife, Nancy, had seen and successfully treated many people with pink

eye, and that she should come by the clinic (Recall that Nancy is a registered nurse

and ran a small clinic from the patio of our home). She thanked me and showed me

where the boards were—around the side of the house, leaning against a whitewashed

adobe wall to dry. I told her that I could only carry a few of the boards at a time,

since they were wet and heavy, but I would take them home and come right back for

another load.

Figure 4.1 A man carrying a load by means of a tumpline. Artist, Don Hubacher.

Isaac and I stacked four boards on a table and I drew a tumpline around them

and backed up to the table like a semi to a loading dock. I balanced the boards on the

small of my back, while leaning forward and adjusting the tumpline around my

forehead (see Figure 4.1). The boards were heavy; their rough-cut edges dug into my

back. I thought back to a trip I had made almost twenty years earlier to rural Haiti, where a tour guide at a cotton mill told us that specially trained men backed up to docks where they were loaded down with cotton bales weighing 550 pounds each. The bales were then moved around the factory on the backs of these strong men for processing. Although my load certainly weighed less than one sixth of those professional haulers' loads, I envied their soft cotton cargo and their special training. I mused to Isaac that much of the harvest of the world is not carried by trucks and forklifts from place to place, but on the backs and heads of rural men and women as they move thousands of tons of merchandise, firewood, and water a little at a time from place to place. Lost in my thoughts, albeit philosophically enriched, I made it home with a somewhat battered back and with neck muscles straining from the act of balancing the boards via the taut line extending from the load on my back to my unaccustomed forehead. I nursed a few raw spots on my back, and returned with Isaac twenty minutes later with some extra padding for the next load.

I was surprised to find that the place was closed up, with a lock on the outside of the door. Clearly no one was home. I was worried that someone may have outbid me for the remaining boards, but I knew Rafael, and I was confident that he'd honor our agreement. After all, we "paired up" our words (*Ma kymujb'in qyol*), which is one of the ways the Mam say that they have come to common accord regarding a transaction. They also say, *Ma qmujb'in qib ti'j jun ti''* 'we have paired ourselves in regard to something.' The idea is one of compromise, chipping away at disagreement until the two "words" pair up and people meet in the middle. The Mam gesture this

185

concept laying their index fingers together lengthwise about a foot from their chests, right in the centerline of their bodies.

This "pairing of words" or "pairing of selves" notion is iconic to Mayan dualism, the idea that reality is conceived not just an underlying unity, but as a balance of oppositions, just as an agreement among the Mam is not conceived as the imposition of one party's will on the other, but a consensus notion of two sides coming together into a common middle ground. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Neuenswander (1986) analyzes the use of couplets in Maya-Achí religious discourse as a linguistic reflection of conceptual couplets, that certain aspects of life "consist obligatorily not as one, but as two irreducible elements" (1986:1, translation from Spanish, WMC). She discusses how the ancestors are addressed as 'our long ago mothers, our long ago fathers;' the universe is conceived of as 'the earth and heavens;' the world as 'the mountains and valleys. This follows a number of dualistic notions and formal addresses mentioned throughout the *Popol Vuh*, which we looked at in Chapter Three. Morley as well says that, "The Maya religion had a strong dualistic tendency" (1956: 190). This resonates with comments by Gossen and Martin in section 3.1 about the thematicity of dualism in Mayan culture.

This notion of dualism points to the idea of equilibrium: of respect and recognition of two sides of an issue, two points of view in an argument or two people coming together in agreement. It hearkens to the underlying belief, as Neuenswander suggests, that life can't be reduced to a single concept, but is rather a balance of mutually implying ones. The Maya themselves are well aware of the centrality of this notion. Not only do the Mayan masses live it from day to day, but Maya scholars and

intellectuals discuss it as well. As we've seen, in the publication of conclusions and recommendations from the *Primer Congreso de Educación Maya en Guatemala* (Curruchiche Otzoy et al., 1994), the following themes are proposed (among others) as basic to an education that respects Maya world view: Unity out of diversity; complementarity (that ideas are not simple in nature, but complex, as per Neuenswander's discussion of couplets); cooperation; duality and the importance of the notion of "fourness;" and the philosophical search for centrality and equilibrium (1994: 18, parenthetical comment and translation from Spanish, WMC).

So in my dealings with Rafael, our "pairing of words" not only fit the social need of the moment—an agreement—but the idea fit a cultural template as well, the concept of an agreement as a symmetry of interests, in this case, a seller's and a buyer's, as well as a compromise, a meeting in the middle on price.

As I pondered my situation, Isaac and I made our way back home, passing Rafael's brother's house. His children were playing in the street and when they saw me, they chanted in Mam, "Wes has got mud on his shoes; Wes has got mud on his shoes." I looked at my shoes and they were no dirtier than usual, certainly not muddy. I had no idea what the kids were talking about.

For the rest of that evening, I continued to think about the hastily locked door and the children's chants, and I concluded that I had offended Rafael's wife, probably by my uninvited touch of her cheek. The fact that the kids were joking about my mud-stained shoes probably meant that Rafael's wife was passing the news of my apparent indiscretion around town. If her nephews and nieces knew of my escapade just minutes after it happened, who else knew, I wondered? I felt that I was clearly

187

innocent of wrongdoing. After all, my wife ran a village clinic; she had seen and palpated body parts far more intimate than a woman's cheek—and my innocent touch was through a Dutch door, no less. Did none of Nancy's license extend to me, her husband? Besides, in careful Mayan fashion, Isaac was along as my companion, and the offended woman was surrounded by her own children, as is culturally appropriate for her protection. How could I be realistically accused of anything untoward?

The next day, Sunday, was market day. I discussed my various issues with Miguel, an area pastor. He concluded that the alleged mud on my shoes could well have been either what he called "physical" or "spiritual." He suggested that I go to Rafael and simply tell him what happened.

As I thought about talking to an offended husband, I considered the many times Mam men had come to me to request a favor, to seek an opinion, to ask a question, or to pose a deal of some kind, one often involving my money or vehicle. Invariably, these men would bring some kind of gift—a live chicken, turkey or duck, a dozen peaches or apples, a squash, or at the very least, a can of juice or a Coke from a nearby *tienda*. Gift giving in relation to an agreement of some kind seemed to be very much a cultural practice. I used to think of these gifts as attempted bribes, that people were trying to buy a favor, but with time, I began to see them more as gifts, a way of somehow leveling the playing field—"you do something for me, and I reciprocate in kind," a common Mayan, if not universally human sentiment. A bribe reeks of indiscretion; a gift is the recognition of something mutual and shared, a friendship with some history.

There are a number of ways that the Mam talk about an agreement. Commonly, they will say, *Ma kymujb'in qyol* 'our words are paired up, or *Ma qmub'in qib'* 'we have paired ourselves' (we've come to an agreement),' as discussed above. They will also say, *Ma qo kyij toj b'a'n* or *Ma qo kyij toj wen* 'we have situated ourselves in goodness.' The first two phrases, the pairing of words or selves, is more common in terms of agreeing to a commitment of some kind; the second two phrases more likely imply agreement to a plan of action. They also say *junx qk'u'j* 'our stomachs are together,' in order to spell out in iconic fashion an agreement built on a "meeting in the middle." We will see below that *–k'u'j* 'stomach' terms are extremely productive in Mam.

I learned of the importance of agreement rituals almost a year earlier. My friend, Timo, told me several days ahead of time that he couldn't work that coming Monday. There was a special event going on at his house, and he needed to be there. In fact, he said that I would probably appreciate it as well, so he invited me to join him and his family. I inquired further and he told me that a young man was coming to ask him for the hand of his oldest daughter, Alba, in marriage. Since this asking for a daughter's hand is a longstanding custom among the Mam, Timo thought that I'd be interested in being there, which, of course, I was.

He invited me to join his family for lunch. They expected the young man, Samuel, and his family to arrive around 2:00 P.M. After a leisurely lunch of *caldo*, a thin stew, and tortillas, we chatted and waited for Samuel. Two o'clock came and went, then three o'clock, then 3:30. Timo's family looked concerned. They perhaps wondered if there had been a change in plans. Maybe, on further reflection, Samuel

189

or his family had changed their minds. Earlier, Timo had explained to me that Alba

had had two sons from affairs with two different men. He said that she had strayed

from the mark (*Ma txalche toj tchwinqil* 'she strayed (from the correct path) in her

life'). He confessed that it would be hard for her to find a good man to marry because

of her youthful errors, even though she had returned to the faith of her parents and

was presently living *toj b'a'n* 'in goodness.' It was very important to Timo to settle

his daughter into a marriage *toj b'a'n*, or *puro txole* 'lined up in orderly fashion,' or

tuk'a tumil 'with direction or correctness, straight' with a believing husband.[5]

McArthur (1979) says of *b'a'n* (the alternate term, *wen,* is a borrowing of

Spanish *bueno* 'good') that in Aguacatek (a Mamean language) it designates "good,

good fortune. . . health, happiness, physical well-being, long life, food, clothing, and

any other daily needs" (1979: 7). Beach concurs (1994). In his study of Tektitek (a

Mamean language considered by some to be a dialect of Mam) he says that *b'a'n* is a

state of goodness, balance, equilibrium, joy, peace; one's main goal in life.

Townsend (p. c.) agrees. He adds that *b'a'n* is a condition of peaceful relations with

everyone, often maintained by disengaging from a person with whom one has strong

disagreements in order not to imbalance the relationship.

When asked about someone, the Mam often state that a person is, as Timo

stated just above, *b'a'n 'good'* or *toj b'a'n* 'in goodness,' i.e. inhabiting the

metaphysical space of goodness, in the center of rightness, harmony, tranquility and

serenity. It is to be in that state of harmony, equilibrium and correctness that Timo so

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[5] Timo and other Evangelical Christians consider the term *nimil* 'believer,' to apply
only to Protestant Christians.

wanted for his daughter, since it would affect not only her, but his own peace of mind and his sense of rightness and satisfaction as a responsible father as well. But at this point, well over an hour and a half late, it looked like the potential husband or his family may have changed their minds. After all, Alba had baggage.

Timo's family was anxious; Alba's siblings began to whisper apprehensively, and I began to feel fidgety, as if I were witness to a well conceived plan of action that had somehow gone sadly awry. Alba's own moral shortcomings—albeit unspoken— were rising to the surface. Why else would the family not show up? And to make matters worse, I was there as well, invited, yet now unwanted, as one whose presence was intensifying and drawing attention to a family's disappointment in this melancholy turn of events. Why did I have to be there with a clipboard and a tape recorder taking notes? Why should a family's pain be documented in such a cold academic manner? Maybe the day that started with such promise, would end in a place other than *toj b'a'n*. And the gringo whose presence was meant to add prestige to the occasion was instead adding to the sad reality of hope unfulfilled.

But as 4:00 approached, and as I brooded in unease, almost two hours late, Alba's younger sisters called out, *Lu lo*, 'here he is.'

Timo, visibly relieved, welcomed the contingent, which included Samuel, his parents and paternal grandparents, a cousin, a sister, a brother and an uncle. Along with Timo and Alba were Alba's two brothers, her two young sons, her two sisters, her mother, her maternal grandfather, and me, an obvious intruder. Timo told the visitors that I was a family friend, and he assured them that I could be trusted, *tu'n*

191

kyqe kyk'u'ja ti'j 'your stomachs can sit regarding him.' I considered this a compliment.

Shortly after lunch, several hours earlier, Timo had combed his hair and donned a suit jacket. He looked noble, as only the Maya can. I felt conspicuously underdressed in blue jeans and a lightweight windbreaker, which I wore against the highland cold. As we entered the sleep house and arranged ourselves, sitting on beds (there were four in the room, one in each corner of the little sleep house) and chairs brought in especially for the event, the women in their colorful *huipiles* 'hand-woven blouses' stood out in the dim interior. There was a single small window, but it was closed and bolted against the wind and cold. The day was gray and cloudy and the sun was low in the late afternoon sky. The only light was from the open door. The women all wore ankle length, dark blue skirts and the men wore earth tones either by design or from the stain of dirt and sweat and smoke. Timo, with his navy blue blazer brought an air of dignity to the scene.

Timo's visage changed from one of concerned nervousness just a minute before to one of formal command.

After some routine small talk about the corn and the weather, Timo said, "You've come."

"Yes we've come," was their reply. "We've come about the situation."

"What situation is that?" replied Timo, as if he hadn't had it very much in mind.

Samuel's uncle, not wanting to state the family business too directly said, "You know, that situation we discussed several days ago."

He had come by earlier in the week to tell Timo of their planned visit and to make sure that Timo and his family would be at home when they arrived. It was on the basis of this prior visit that Timo invited me to the event.

Timo, on the other hand, wanted the supplicant family to be straightforward with their request. This would give him a position of power, not as the weaker entreating party, but as the one being entreated, the one who could grant their supplication, or deny it. "We discussed a number of issues several days ago," he reminded them. "Which one do you mean?"

After a little hemming and hawing, Samuel's uncle gave in, "The situation about our son marrying your daughter."

"Oh, *that* situation," said Timo, as if taken by surprise.

This sense of indirection is very widespread in Mam dealings. On a number of occasions people have stopped by to talk to me (bringing the requisite bottle of Coca Cola), and saying something like: "Tomorrow I will stop by and ask you if I can borrow twenty dollars. I'm not going to ask you now, so don't say anything one way or the other. I'll be back tomorrow." Then the following day, they would duly appear (with another Coke) and say, "I've come about the situation I discussed with you yesterday." This sense of decorum, of unease over being blatant is part of the Mam commitment to moderation. It is a politeness strategy (Brown and Levinson, 1979), a strategy not to be overt and direct in the face of an interlocutor, of not being overbearing or overly demanding, but rather, respectful and deferential. The Coke also prolongs the transaction as interlocutors tarry over sips and business.

This indirection was Samuel's family's *modus operandi*, but Timo wanted them to be forthright. He would brook no miscommunication or waffling of motives, nor any challenge to his leadership in the event at hand. After clearly stating their intentions, Timo launched into a mini-sermon about the difficulties of this day and age, and how much a family needs to stay together, how hard it would be for his own wife if Alba were to leave, what a task it would be to raise Alba's two sons in her absence,[6] etc. I was almost convinced that Timo had changed his mind about the marriage, when he concluded with these words, "I had considered not sanctioning this marriage, but then I thought, 'what if this is the will of God?'"

Here, Samuel's uncle was quick to pick up his opportunity. It was important for Timo not to be too pushy—all things in moderation—but neither did he want to leave the impression that this potential marriage was a non-starter; nor did he want to just "unload" Alba to anyone who would take her. He needed some room to maneuver—to agree to the marriage on the one hand without seeming to give his daughter up with no demands or concerns on the other.

"Exactly," said Samuel's uncle, not failing to respond to Timo's slightest of openings. "If this is the will of God, who are we to stand in the way?"

There ensued a short time of affirmation that no one in either of the two families wanted to do anything outside of what God's will was for the couple.

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[6] Samuel was willing to marry Alba, but he refused to raise her two sons in their shared home, since this would potentially jeopardize the inheritance he would pass on to his and Alba's future sons, an inheritance that would be diluted by the presence of two additional stepsons. Timo and his wife, although near fifty years old at the time, agreed to raise the young boys so that Alba could get a fresh start. The boys, now in their twenties, are doing well.

Samuel's grandmother then joined the discussion, somewhat impatient with the theological opining. "They are the ones who will be living together, what do they have to say?" The gathered women all agreed with the wisdom of the suggestion. "Yes, what do they have to say?"

As we all looked at the two young people (who were sitting in separate corners of the room, avoiding each other's furtive glances), first Samuel and then Alba, each agreed that they wanted to be married.

There seemed to me at this point in the transaction to be a collective sense of relief on everyone's face and in everyone's posture, as if the heavy lifting were over with. What remained were several important, yet secondary issues to be resolved. First was a wedding date. Samuel wanted to marry within a month. Timo thought this was unrealistic, as Alba's second child had not yet been weaned. Plus, it would take his wife some time to acclimate to a home with two young boys without her daughter to help with them or with the extra work occasioned by their presence. Timo suggested eight months. He knew that they wouldn't agree to this, but he stated an outside limit in order to be able to move toward the center and the eventual pairing of words (*tu'n kymujb'in kyyol*), or the 'togetherness or unity of stomachs' (*junx kyk'u'j*) a phrase which indicates a coming together and harmonizing of different motives and desires. After about ten minutes of haggling, they agreed to a late April wedding, four months from the day of discussion. Another, albeit unconfessed reason to postpone the wedding from Timo's point of view, was that during the engagement period, Samuel would be expected to work for Timo, visiting his fiancé in her parents' home, all the while cutting firewood, helping with field work and taking part

195

in any needed construction or other chores. After the marriage, Alba's labor would largely be lost to her own family, since she would go to live with her husband's family until the time that Samuel could afford to build his own house separate from, yet near his own parents' home.

The second issue to be resolved had to do the marriage ceremony itself. Samuel's father admitted that they were not wealthy people and, although Alba certainly was worthy of the new clothes befitting a lovely bride, they could not afford the thousand quetzales required to purchase all new clothing for her, much less for themselves. Timo said that he understood, and that they as well were not wealthy people. The families would just dress cleanly and neatly, with no special purchases,[7] although he insisted on both a municipal as well as a church wedding, since he expected things to be done *tuk'a jun nuk'b'il* 'with order,' and *toj tumil* 'with direction, in rightness.' He did not want the couple to simply begin living together, which continues to be how most Mam couples marry.[8]

The word, *nuk'b'il* 'order' is an interesting one. The verb form, *nik'ul* means to put in order or to arrange. It can also mean 'to explain carefully and fully, to orient someone to all relevant details, to clarify,' as a judge or lawyer laying out the details of the law in a legal decision, or a teacher marshalling his facts to prove a point. In

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[7]A thousand quetzales were worth approximately $200 in 1989, a value greater than an entire season of savings from picking coffee in the lowlands (see Chapter One).

[8]A municipal wedding is binding by law and is more difficult to break than a common law marriage. Subsequently a municipal wedding gives rights to the woman in case of divorce which are more likely to be enforced than if the marriage is just by common law practice. A legally sanctioned wedding is also required by the Evangelical churches for baptism and for full membership status in the local congregation.

fact, the term is commonly used in legal and educational contexts. It is often used not in a physical ordering (*txolil* 'to line up, to put in order' is more common in this sense), but in terms of a moral ordering of things, putting one's life in order. A father will tell his child that she needs *tu'n tnik'u'n tey tze'n tu'n tb'eta toj tumil* 'to organize/order yourself so that you walk with direction.' This implies that one must stay on the path of a well-lived life, and not veer from the moral center. In fact, the goal of the father's advice here is so that a child can live a balanced and centered life *nik'u'nxix wen* 'very well ordered' and *toj b'a'n*, in goodness. The noun form (*nuk'b'il*) extends to the notion of 'peace, order' where things are as they should be: correctly structured, balanced, in order, safe, calm and without rancor.

With the two issues of date and attire resolved, the agreement proper was complete. The words and families had been paired; the families' interests had been brought into harmony; people were *toj b'a'n* with the results of the discussion. Things were in order, *toj tumil* or *tuk'a t-xilin tumil* 'with the sense or essence of correctness.'

Toj tumil literally means 'in its direction,' but it also carries the force of 'manner or way, counsel, teaching, to be correct.' It is also often used as 'the course of one's life,' whether good or bad, although unmodified, it implies something good or positive. To walk *tuk'a tumil* 'with direction' or *toj tumil* is commendable. To teach *tuk'a tumil* means to teach correctly and truthfully. If something is characterized as *nti' tumil* 'without direction,' it means that it is incorrect or doesn't make sense, or that it will have a negative and hurtful outcome. A Mam father told me that in instructing his children he encourages them with these words: *Il ti'j tu'n*

197

kyb'eta toj tumilxix 'it is needful that you walk with extreme direction,' or, *Il ti'j tu'n kyb'eta jiky'inxix* 'you must walk very straight (not veering off center to one side or the other).' He says that this means that they should seek the center of the path of life and not turn aside in either direction.

The word *t-xilin* 'its essence,' also has a sense of centeredness or "core" about it. In most instances it means 'essence,' such as in the phrase *Ti'tzin t-xilin tyol*? 'What was the essence of his words?' or 'What did he say in a nutshell?' They use the word also to express the essence of what someone knows, thinks, believes, wants, teaches, or learns. It can also stand for the meaning of a symbol or allegory or of a word (for example, *ajo t-xilin yol nuk'b'il* 'the meaning of the word *nuk'b'il*). It can also be the basic personality or character of a person. Whereas *tumil* encodes the moral direction of a person's actions, *t-xilin* codes his or her core ideas, his or her depth or personality. It can also mean 'profundity or extent,' as in *t-xilin tq'inimil* 'the extent of his wealth.'

Now that the agreement had been reached, Samuel's uncle lowered a large net bag from his shoulder from which he produced a number of small cans of fruit juice. He beamed broadly as he began to pile them into a small basket on the table in front of him. As he piled the cans high, they began to topple and fall onto the dirt floor of the sleep house. He picked up the cans and smiled grandly while continuing to pile others still higher into the basket. This proved to be a futile exercise, since the cans continued to fall on the floor. He then took the basket around the room once and then twice, offering juice to each one of us in the room. Afterwards, he took out handfuls of small hard candies, again piling them into what I thought was a second comically

198

tiny basket. Once again, the candies fell to the floor amidst the smiles and joyful enthusiasm of Samuel's family. When he came to me, he said, "*Tzyunxa*[9] 'take one.' Take two. *At nim* 'there are plenty.' Take *three*!"

My first thought was to go find some larger containers that could adequately hold the items to be shared. Fortunately, I just watched and took notes, observing the sage and enduring anthropological axiom to just shut up and pay attention. Later, when I asked others about the juice and candy, their reply was that it was merely a gesture to show that there were ample resources to take care of the new bride; or as Timo said simply to me, "There is sufficient," the idea being, "Don't worry about your daughter, we have all we need at our disposal to be able to care for her and provide for her just as her own family would." The deeply touching part of this gesture is that neither family was particularly wealthy. Recall that the immediately previous discussion was about how neither family could afford to dress "lavishly" for the wedding and buy new clothes. In fact the word for 'rich' that they used, *q'ininx*, specifies that wealth is 'out there, beyond them, far away (the final *x* suffix is a directional particle meaning 'away from where the speaker is' (this is discussed at length in Chapter Five)); whereas the word they used for 'poor' *yajtz*, with the *tz* suffix, implies that poverty is near them, and has come to be an intimate part of daily life and experience.

The receiving of the humble gifts from Samuel's family was an important part of this ritual. Not only did it show in metaphor that Timo's daughter would be well

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[9] This is the same verb, *tzyul* 'to touch, to grab,' that got me embroiled in this whole situation in the first place. Here it implies 'to appropriate, to enjoy,' clearly meanings that I didn't have in mind when I lightly touched (*xi ntzyu'n*) Rafael's wife's cheek.

provided for—something on the mind of any caring parent—but by receiving the gifts, Timo's family was accepting the proposal. Mayan marriage isn't simply the union of two individuals, but of two families as well. The gifts given and received showed that an agreement had been reached, that words had been paired, stomachs unified. The reciprocal nature of the event was served. A new harmony was established, cultural equilibrium maintained, centeredness achieved.

After receiving these gifts, to break the agreement by backing out of the engagement is considered a serious offense. Normally, a father, concerned for his daughter's honor, won't let a boy even talk to her unless he expresses the intention to marry her. Although sexual relations during engagement are frowned upon, it is not uncommon practice. As one friend said to me, "During engagement, one can but shouldn't have sex." Another friend, Augustín once agreed to a marriage, cementing it with the giving of gifts just as Samuel's family had done, but after spending time getting to know his fiancé, he decided that he didn't want to marry her after all. This seems prudent and wise to us in the West where we have such open dating customs. But it seemed anything but reasonable to Augustín's fiancée's family. When the engagement was broken (even though they hadn't slept together), he was put on church discipline for two years for defrauding the girl and her family. An agreement had been made. Gifts had been given and received. The families and the couple had been *toj b'a'n*. Things were as they should be: correct, harmonious, right, centered. Tradition was respected. Life was in order. . .only to be derailed by one who refused to honor his word.

The engagement gifts hearken back to a text offered by Pablo early in our time in Comitancillo. Pablo was sixty-two years old at the time of the recording, March, 1983. He has always enjoyed talking about the good old days. A Mam co-worker of mine, Gilberto, was doing research for a booklet he was preparing on Mam traditions, when he asked Pablo to tell him about marriage customs back when Pablo was young.

The recording lasts over 30 minutes as Pablo explains to Gilberto how a boy would go about convincing a girl's family (*tu'n tkub' kyk'u'j* 'to lower their stomachs') that he was worthy of her hand. I learned early on in my time in Comitancillo that terms related to the stomach are pervasive and that they often deal with strong emotions. See Table 4.1:

Although many of these phrases I elicited based on Scotchmer's (1978) discussion of –*k'u'j* terms in Southern Mam (a variant centered around the town of San Juan Ostuncalco; see Godfrey and Collins, 1987 for further discussion of differences between Southern and Central Mam), each of these is part of the daily lexicon of Comitecos. Many terms from Scotchmer's study are not used in Comitancillo, and many that I list here are not attested in Scotchmer's data. There are many other phrases that contain the stem for 'stomach, -*k'u'j*, such as *twi' tk'u'j* 'the head of his stomach—his wages,' *tk'u'j chemj* 'the weaving's stomach—weaving sticks,' *ch'in tk'u'j* 'to have a small stomach—to be touchy,' and, in a phrase that interests us here, *junx kyk'u'j* 'together their stomachs—to be in agreement.' Suffice it to say, the term for stomach has broad semantic reach, stretching its literal, basic meaning of a body part to encompass such concepts as love and commitment, hate and death. As Scotchmer says, "-*k'u'j* comprises one of the most semantically

Mam	literal meaning	gloss
tu'n tk'u'jlin	'to cause to stomach'	to love
tu'n tk'u'jin	'to stomach'	to defecate
tu'n tul toj tk'u'j	'to arrive at one's stomach'	to lament/ to remember
tu'n tk'ulb'in tk'u'j	'one's stomach goes down'	to meet (someone)
tu'n tok tjtz'o'n tk'u'j	'to tighten one's stomach'	to work very hard
tu'n tel naj jun ti' toj tk'u'j	'to lose it from one's S'	to forget
tu'n tjaw tk'u'j	'to raise up the stomach'	to hate, to doubt
tu'n tkub' tk'u'j	'to lower one's stomach'	to convince
tu'n t-xi tk'u'j	'to have one's stomach go'	to be concerned
tu'n tpon tk'u'j	'one's stomach arrives there'	to lust or to divine
tu'n tb'aj tk'u'j	'to finish off one's stomach'	to be frustrated
tu'n tiky' tk'u'j	'to pass by one's stomach'	to defecate
tu'n tkyij tq'o'n tk'u'j	'to leave/give one's stomach'	to defecate
tu'n tkanin ti'j tk'u'j	'to arrive at the stomach'	to sense something
tu'n tjulk'aj tk'u'j	'to awaken one's stomach'	to remember suddenly
tu'n tel tk'u'j	'for one's stomach to leave'	to be dying
tu'n tqe tk'u'j	'for one's stomach to sit'	to have confidence in
tu'n tjaw ti'n tk'u'j	'to carry (up) one's stomach'	to be alarmed
tu'n tel ti'n tk'u'j	'to carry away one's S	to put it out of mind
tu'n t'xi t-xo'n tk'u'j ti'j	'to throw one's S at it'	to commit oneself
tu'n tajtz ti'j tk'u'j	'to return home in regard to one's stomach'	to repent
tu'n tkab'in tk'u'j	'to do twice his stomach'	to vacillate
tu'n tpatz' tk'u'j	'to flatten one's stomach'	to die
tu'n t-xtz'u'yin tk'u'j	'for one's stomach to cramp'	to have dysentery
tu'n tlakj tk'u'j ti'j	'for one's stomach to rip'	to have pity
tu'n tq'aq'in tk'u'j	'for one's stomach to burn'	to have compassion/ to be hungry
tu'n tjulin tk'u'j	'for one's stomach to roar'	to be hungry
tu'n tlipin tk'u'j	'for one's stomach to fly'	to be jittery
tu'n tok tk'u'j	'to enter one's stomach'	to trust
tu'n tk'ant tk'u'j	'for one's stomach to burn'	to eat too many chiles
tu'n tjaw we' tk'u'j	'for one's S to stand up'	to be convinced
tu'n tjaw ti'n tk'u'j	'to carry up one's stomach'	to be on the verge of giving birth
tu'n tnimsin tk'u'j	'to make large one's S'	to encourage
nti' tk'u'j	'to have no stomach'	to have no desire

Table 4.1 Verb Phrases containing –k'u'j 'stomach' terms

productive and culturally essential lexemes in the Mam language. Body part it is, and yet is it any wonder that the Mam (and the Maya) chose that which is central to him physically to extend semantically to include a much greater universe than his own belly" (1978: 30)? He goes on to say, "I would suggest that –*k'u'j* 'stomach' really is best translated 'the stomach-heart,' or 'the core of the person including his physical and psychological needs'" (ibid.).

The term, -*k'u'j*, then, is a clear example of what Wierzbicka (1997) calls a *key word*, a term which is "important and revealing in a given culture" (1997: 15-16). She says that these words are culturally elaborated, that is, they occur in many contexts, and they must be defined in relation to cultural notions, not simply in terms of their truth conditional meaning. They also occur frequently in daily discourse, particularly in certain semantic domains, although our –*k'u'j* terms cut across many such domains. But her main criteria for determining a term's status as a key word is whether or not we "are able to say something significant and revealing about the culture by undertaking an in-depth study of them" (ibid.: 16). I suggest, as per Scotchmer's definition, that –*k'u'j* terms are indeed iconic of the notion of the cultural relevance of centeredness in daily life. Even a cursory study of verb phrases in which -*k'u'j* terms appear shows the strong sense of emotion and physical groundedness of such phrases, as well as, assumedly, the importance of the metaphor behind such emotions. The stomach for the Mam, like the heart for English speakers, is never far from consciousness, as evidenced in a number of lexical items in English such as hearty, heartbroken, heartsick, soft hearted, cold hearted, warm hearted, hard hearted, wholehearted, disheartened, heartache, heartfelt, and even terrifying terms

like heart stopping, heart attack, and heart failure. The Mam love, not with all their

hearts, but with all their stomachs, which implies what "with all our hearts" does for

us: fully, passionately, all encompassingly, with all our being and strength.

There are two other terms the Mam use to denote a sense of center. *Niky'jin*

means 'half or middle.' They use it to denote the middle of a lake or river, or

something that is halfway up the side of a mountain. *Niky'jin q'ij* means 'noon,

middle of the day,' while *niky'jin aq'wil* means midnight. It can denote half of one's

possessions, half of one's land; and half of a measure, such as half a year, half an

hour, half an inch, or half an *ajlab'* 'four kilometers (the distance a man can walk in

an hour with a 100 pound load on his back).' It can also be used to situate something

in the center of an area, like the center of town, the center of heaven, the center of a

path. It is likely that this term (*niky'jin*) for the idea of the middle or center is related

to the Mam verb *niky'il* 'to know, understand, recognize, calculate, estimate.' The

idea would be that to know something is to get to its center, its essence. This is

speculative at this point, but certainly there appears to be a possible morphological

connection.

A final word used for the notion of centeredness is *tanmin* 'one's heart.'

Reynoso's 1644 Mam dictionary doesn't mention this term at all, but rather *k'u'j oloj*,

a phrase which Scotchmer doesn't venture to parse any further. He does mention,

however, that *k'ux* in K'iche' means 'one's entire being,' a definition fully

compatible with our discussion of Mam –*k'u'j* terms. Edmonson claims (see sections

2.3.3 and 3.2.4 above) that *ok olal* 'entering inwardness,' is the Maya word for

religion. It's unclear what he means here by Mayan, probably Yucatecan or perhaps

an early, even a proto-Mayan term. In any event, *ok* means 'to enter' in Mam, and *olal* may very well be cognate in northern Mam to *okslal* which is the word for 'believer' or 'religious,' a term probably built on the same root as *ok* 'to enter.' The *k'u'j* substitution for *ok* 'to enter' in the Reynoso dictionary would literally describe the stomach (center or middle) of inwardness, which seems to be a plausible rendering of the idea of heart as we've discussed it so far.

Today, however, *anmin*, a borrowing of Spanish *alma* 'soul' has come to mean 'heart' or 'departed soul' throughout the Mam area (Godfrey and Collins, 1987: 243). Assuming that Reynoso is correct with his Mam heart term *k'u'j oloj,* the word *k'u'j* did double duty (at least in part) as a lexeme for both 'heart' and' stomach.'[10] Sustained contact with Spanish speakers has provided ample opportunity for the distinction between heart and stomach to be more fully lexicalized. *K'u'j* apparently has maintained the meaning of 'stomach,' while 'heart' called for a new term beyond the modified form of, one borrowed from Spanish. The term for heart is more restricted, i.e. it deals basically with the body part or one's inner being or soul, and it doesn't enter into near the number of extended meanings as –*k'u'j* terms do. The only figurative uses for *anmin* that I've heard are listed in Table 4.2

Some of the phrases in Table 4.2 can also be used with *tk'u'j* 'one's stomach' terms instead of *tanmin* 'one's heart.'

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[10] ' If *(t)k'u'j oloj* means 'heart,' or literally 'the stomach of inwardness,' in light of Edmonson (1993: 85), it would mimic other phrases like *twi' qq'ob'* 'the heads of our hand—our fingers,' where a single lexical meaning 'finger' is expressed as a phrase using a relational noun (see Chapter Five for details). As per our discussion (see Nájera, 1987, and comments in sections 2.3.3 and 3.4 above), it seems plausible that terms for stomach and heart were at one time (partially) conflated.

Mam	literal meaning	gloss
tanmin nq'ob'a	'the heart of my arm/hand'	skill, ability to do something
tanmin kya'j	'the heart of heaven'	the center of heaven
tu'n tajtz ti'j tanmin	'to return home to the heart'	to repent
tuk'a tkyaqil tanmin	'with all one's heart'	wholeheartedly
che'wx tanmin	'to cool/calm one's heart'	to console/to be humble
at tanmin toj tq'ob'	'for one's hand to have heart	to have feeling in one's hand
chyo'n tanmin	'for one's heart to eat'	to be upset
nka'min tanmin	'to be double hearted'	to doubt

Table 4.2 Figurative uses of *tanmin* 'one's heart'

As we've seen, the Mam have ample ways to talk about centeredness: *-k'u'j* terms, *tanmin, niky'jin, nuk'b'il, tumil,* and *tu'n tten toj b'a'n* 'to be in goodness' (among others), but what interests us presently is the giving and receiving of gifts, centeredness as represented by reciprocal exchange. Pablo says that in order to pair up their words (agree to the proposal) when he was a youngster, the boy's family would bring *chicha*, a very intoxicating (and inexpensive) wheat or corn liquor, or *q'e'n*, 'moonshine,' a sugar cane derivative. This would be passed around among both families until they all (aside from the marrying couple) would get extremely drunk. Then the boy's family would pass around hand rolled cigarettes for leisurely smoking. This exchange of gifts sealed the agreement—the pairing of words—all of which took place so that there would be order and harmony in the new relationship, and that tradition and reciprocity would be respected, and the new couple could enter into a life *toj b'a'n*, on the inside of goodness.

Although Timo's and Samuel's families, as practicing Evangelicals, would not drink *chicha* or smoke, they found a suitable cultural equivalent that, while respecting their religion's ban on vices, nonetheless enabled them to engage in the culturally meaningful giving and receiving of gifts in order to affirm the pairing of words, while at the same time respecting the engagement ritual protocol. Interestingly, the *chicha* was substituted by juice, something that is drunk, while the hard candy which is sucked on, substituted for cigarettes, which are also "sucked on." And the satedness of drinking until one is rip-roaring drunk is substituted by the quantity of juice and candy that is so plentiful that even the baskets provided can't contain it.

So gift giving is more than social grace for the Mam. It is more akin to an American handshake, which we consider binding ("Hey, we shook on it!"). And what is bound in this agreement ritual are the paired words, the words of two families coming together, meeting in the middle and establishing a new home.

All of this swirled around in my head as I thought of Rafael. If I wanted to put things back on track and come back onto the path of moderation and good conduct, I needed to apologize, and have the apology accepted. I've seen on several occasions men offering gifts of one kind or another to someone at the town plaza. Sometimes the gifts are warmly received—as I hoped mine would be. But other times, I've seen the would-be receiver put his hands in the air, as if the victim of a hold-up. He wouldn't receive the gift; he refused to pair up his words, to unify his stomach, to enter together into goodness and share "center space" with his interlocutor. In such circumstances, the supplicant has to dig deeper and offer a gift

of greater value, somehow commensurate to the weight of the discussion at hand, whether a request for forgiveness, an agreement to buy or sell a horse or a house, or the supplication by a suitor for a bride.

My plight was the epitome of what ethnographers mean when they say that the ethnographer him or herself is the research instrument (see Chapter Three and particularly Zaharlick, 1992). In this situation, instead of reporting on the behavior of others as an outsider watching from the sidelines, I was in it up to my neck all by myself. I was a true participant observer, both playing a role in an actual event, as well as analyzing my involvement in the event. Like Geertz, whose flight (together with his wife) from the Balinese authorities opened the door for his acceptance into the community, my connection here was not as a bystander, but rather as a full participant, one invited into the lives of wonderful people of another culture. But, once accepted into a cultural system, I was expected to know and play by the cultural rules that I had unwittingly violated. This is truly applied anthropology in the largest sense.

So I searched for a gift that I thought would be meaningful—one adequate to my blunder. It couldn't be too much—it was an honest mistake; I had just wanted to help a sick woman. But at the same time, I had to step up and realize that my action was indeed an indiscretion, so at the same time that it couldn't be too much, it couldn't be too meager either.

I had a nice ball point pen that had a small LCD dial on it with a date and time function. This seemed to me to be sufficient. It was unusual enough to be

meaningful and valuable, but not expensive enough to overstate the weight of my transgression.

With pen in hand, I went to the market to talk to Rafael. Interestingly, by Mam custom, it wasn't Rafael's wife whom I had offended; it was Rafael himself. Had I spent more time with her trying to right the wrong, the situation would have simply deteriorated. It was being with her "alone" (despite the presence of our 'companions'), which had precipitated the problem in the first place. Going back to her to try to resolve my guilt would have only heaped burning coals on my head.

I greeted Rafael and asked to speak to him. He quickly walked to a private section of his market area and we stood close together. I told him that I had inadvertently wronged him by innocently touching his wife. He recounted that she had come immediately after my visit and told him that I had grabbed her.[11] I explained that I had no intentions toward his wife, and we had a friendly exchange. Nonetheless, I asked him to *tnajsi'n wila ti'ja* 'forgive my wronging of you,' which he did. I took the pen and offered it to him. He received it graciously. From that moment on, I've never been reminded of my indiscretion by him, by his wife, or by anyone else, nor have the children ever recounted to me the time that I had mud on my shoes.

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[11] The verb *tzyul* in Mam means either 'to touch' or 'to take hold of,' an unfortunate lexical extension which implied quite a bit more than I had intended.

4.4 Conclusion

What I have tried to do in this chapter is show that centeredness is a salient cultural principle in the daily lives of the Mam. Not only do they allude to it in dozens of distinct –*k'u'j* constructions that lexicalize strong emotions (pity, compassion, trust, courage, love, premonition, among many others) and important notions (health, birth, and death to name just a few), but additional terms such as *tanmin* 'one's heart,' *niky'jin* 'the middle,' *nuk'b'il* 'order,' *t-xilin* 'one's essence or core,' and *tumil* 'one's direction' are all called upon in myriad contexts to set children in the right direction in life, to counsel others not to leave the straight and narrow, or to come back to it, and to otherwise encourage others including the speakers themselves to seek centeredness.

I also showed how the language of agreement protocols involved in seeking either forgiveness or a wife (the togetherness of stomachs, the entrance into goodness, the situating of disputants in goodness, and the pairing of words or selves) all share the notion of coming together in mutual understanding around a metaphorical center space of unity, mutual accord, equilibrium, harmony, and balance.

Since these notions, both cultural and linguistic, are pervasive in the daily life of the Mam, I chose to present the data in this chapter by means of an ethnographic account that highlights the actions and vocabulary of the Mam as they go about living their lives. Throughout the telling of this story, I have maintained a meta-dialogue with the reader about the notion of ethnography itself, anticipating questions concerning both the methodology as well as the cultural and linguistic facts, while at the same time defending the concept of good ethnography.

210

I use the phrase "good ethnography" here and throughout the chapter because ethnography has unfortunately become a catch term for all non-quantitative analysis. Cyders (p. c.) reports that in the educational literature, titles like "An ethnographic account of teacher-student interaction" are ubiquitous. He goes on to say that some of these articles are based on observations made during one class period per week over the span of six weeks. There are no interviews with students, little discussion of context, no multiple voices, no microscopic reporting, no emic analysis, and no researcher participation, just fly-on-the-wall observation.

I started the chapter with a discussion of what one can "prove" with ethnography and why a researcher would chose it as an explanatory method. Gold is not valueless simply because we can't eat it. In the same way, the ethnographic process and product are valuable even though the notions described cannot be weighed or measured positivistically. Rather the social facts must be interpreted and understood in relation to a concept "within which the observations find a natural place" (Chafe, 1994:21). I suggest that centeredness is just such a concept, explanatory to cultural outsiders and pursued by the Mam themselves.

CHAPTER 5

GRAMMATICAL ASPECTS OF CENTEREDNESS

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four, I mentioned that one of the ways I intend to establish a link

between language and culture is to seek patterns in both the linguistic and cultural

data that we observe. And while the patterns should be independently verified (see

sections 2.2.1 and 4.1), we should be able to unite them under the common cultural

umbrella of centeredness. Hymes says that a basic practice of anthropological study is

"the showing of a pattern, fashion of speaking, or style among a number of traits"

(1966: 117). Pattern then, while not a conclusive link between language and culture,

is certainly indicative of a relationship between the two, especially in the minds of

locals, who don't bother making technical distinctions between what they know about

the world (culture) and how they talk about what they know (language).

In this chapter, I pursue what Hymes calls these "number of traits" in the

formal linguistic structure of Maya-Mam. In Chapter Four, woven through the

ethnographic discussion of our theme, I discussed how centeredness is instantiated in

the lexicon. Specifically, we looked at a number of terms: *-k'u'j* 'stomach' terms in

particular, but also *tanmin* 'one's heart,' *niky'jin* 'middle, half,' *nuk'b'il* 'order,

peace,' '*tumil* 'one's direction in life,' and *t-xilin* 'one's essence, and I talked about how the concept of centeredness pervades each one. I also showed how the Mam talk about agreement protocols, using phrases such as *junx kyk'u'j* 'together their stomachs,' *tu'n kykyij toj wen* 'to stay in goodness,' *tu'n kyten toj b'a'n* 'to be situated in goodness,' *tu'n kymujb'in kyyol* 'to pair up their words, *tu'n kymujb'in kyib'*, 'to pair themselves up. Each of these is iconic of the sense of center reached in a compromise, a pairing up of interests, an entering into the grounded center of mutual accord, a "unifying of stomachs," where people commit viscerally and wholeheartedly to a common cause.

I consider that centeredness is well established in the Mam lexicon as per my discussion in Chapter Four on different ways in which centeredenss is talked about by the Mam and how they use it as an organizing principle in their daily lives. In addition, Wierzbicka's claims about the cultural scope of key words which I discussed in section 2.4.1 above seem very much to hold true of Mam -*k'u'j* terms in particular, along with other Mam terms related to the notion of a physical or moral center. The lexicon straddles the artificial line between language and culture. As Wierzbicka (1997) says, "there is a very close link between the life of a society and the lexicon of the language spoken by it" (1997: 1). She agrees with Sapir who claims: "vocabulary is a very sensitive index of the culture of a people" (Sapir, 1949: 27). What people code they can talk about. What they talk about is important to them.

Much of Sapir's contribution to the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis is related to the lexicon, and how the vocabulary both opens up and narrows down the world that

individuals live in. Whorf 1974 [1941]) was more interested in what he called the

"habitual thought" of speakers, how the formal structures of different languages

shepherd the speakers of those languages toward certain observations and a specific

understanding of how the world works. Of these observations and understandings, he

says: "They do not depend so much upon *any one system* (e.g., tense, or nouns)

within the grammar as upon the ways of analyzing and reporting experience which

have become fixed in the language as integrated 'fashions of speaking' and which cut

across the typical grammatical classifications, so that such a 'fashion' may include

lexical, morphological, syntactic and otherwise systematically diverse means

coordinated in a certain frame of consistency" (1974 [1941]: 83, emphasis in

original). So Whorf saw habitual thought inhabiting not only the lexicon of a group

(as did Sapir), but even more so the formal grammatical categories of the language.

He goes on to say: "A category such as number (singular vs. plural) is an attempted

interpretation of a whole large order of experience, virtually of the world or of nature;

it attempts to say how experience is to be segmented, what experience is to be called

'one' and what 'several'" (ibid.). But it is a subconscious interpretation. Whereas

word choice—the lexicon—is the storehouse from which we choose what it is we

want to say, grammatical categories, come along for the ride. In Spanish, for

example, one can't discuss "dogness" without specifying one or many, male or

female. We consciously choose the topic of discussion, the dog; grammatical

categories force certain additional meanings upon us beyond the topic choice by

means of the sheer act of speaking our native language.

The genius of Whorf's view on this is that this "habitual" thought is congruent to the partially hidden grammatical themes which are so powerful in both the formation and formulation of speakers' understanding of the world. They are less salient to speakers than is the lexicon, since they don't show up in speech as "dictionary items," which reflect the clear coding of the perceived world. Rather, grammatical themes—ideas of number, gender, classification, tense and aspect, evidential and deictic marking, among others—are less palpable, albeit more pervasive, and as such, they are all the more constructive of the basic notions by which speakers understand and live in the world. This is somewhat similar to Lakoff and Johnson's (1980), and Santa Ana's (2002) claims that the under-the-surface nature of metaphor is what is so powerful about it.   Although metaphors aren't grammatical structures in the same sense that tense and aspect are, their influence, according to these authors, can be just as hidden, just as formative of our "conscience collective," and just as pervasive.

In the remainder of this chapter, I look at how centeredness as a function of spatial deixis is evidenced in the morphology, syntax and narrative discourse of Mam grammar. I suggest that centeredness is a "fashion of speaking" in Whorf's words or what Martin (1977) and England (1978) call a grammatical theme. England defines grammatical themes as "the underlying organizational principles of a language linking structure with semantics" (1978: 226). Martin adds that they are "pervasive semantic categories with profound grammatical force" (1977: 366). They are what Hale calls "lexico-semantic themes or motifs which function as integral components in a grammar" (1986: 234). In light of these three quotes, I suggest that we consider a

215

grammatical theme to be a meaning based notion that is realized across a number of grammatical categories. That it is meaning based makes a grammatical theme culture specific, since meaning derives from cultural practice and understanding. That it is realized grammatically (irrespective of, or in the present case, in addition to its lexical presence in the language) adds to its distribution throughout the language as a pervasive meaning "motif."

The study of these fashions of speaking are the purview of a relatively new field in linguistics called ethnosyntax, a term introduced by Wierzbicka (1979). Enfield (2002: 3) defines the field as "the study of connections between the cultural knowledge, attitudes, and practices of speakers, and the morphosyntactic resources they employ in speech." Goddard adds that these morphosyntactic constructions should, more narrowly, "encode a specifiable culture-related semantic content" (2002: 53). He also suggests that in the study of ethnosyntax, these linguistic structures "literally encode [a] particular 'ethnophilosophy.'" (ibid.: 55). As an example of this ethnosyntactic relation between language and culture, he cites the work of Wierzbicka (1997, 1992) who talks about the Russian concept of *sud'ba* 'fate, destiny, a sense of impending doom or dreadful justice.' Goddard mentions a number of impersonal, agentless, dative constructions where the powers that be—both physical and metaphysical—are the only real (albeit unspecified) agents, while powerless individuals are subject to the anonymous and perhaps whimsical determinations of such powers. From Wierzbicka's work and his own, Goddard cites seven such agentless constructions. In addition, he mentions common constructions in Russian colloquial speech that mean, 'it is indispensable,' 'one may not,' 'it is

216

required,' 'it is necessary,' 'one ought to,' 'one has to,' "and the sundry infinitive and reflexive constructions conveying meanings related to helplessness, obligation and necessity" (2002: 58). Wierzbicka claims that in all these constructions, language follows culture, mirroring in the formal structure of Russian grammar, the underlying sense of what she claims is a widespread sense of helplessness of the Russian masses in the face of almost certain and ultimate disappointment.

Showing a direct correlation between language and culture may not be possible, but clearly there is a pattern among the agentless constructions mentioned here and Wierrzbicka's reports on the reality of Russian life where nameless powers usurp personal agency and add to cynicism within the general population. We can dispute any causality in this pattern, but Wierzbicka reports that during communist rule, the language police tried to eradicate the use of these agentless passives, calling them archaic, obsolete, unscientific, uneducated and irresponsible in the sense of speakers' not taking personal responsibility for their situation, but by blaming others—often the bureaucracy (1979: 372-373). And yet, the constructions were (and are) so pervasive that political authorities felt that action must be taken to bring the cultural world view into line with the political world view espoused by the communists. Apparently the Soviet government interpreted the relationship between culture and language as a bit too close for comfort.

Wierzbicka and Goddard have set the stage for us. Grammatical themes are pervasive, meaning based multi-level phenomena that encode notions important to the culture. I suggest that centeredness in Maya-Mam is just such a phenomenon.

5.2 The centeredness of spatial deixis

Linguistically, the idea of a center that serves as an origin point for grammatical notions is called an *origo* or deictic center.

In Chapter Two I discussed various general treatments of deixis, namely, those of Lyons (1977), Levinson (1983), Anderson and Keenan (1985), and Fillmore (1997). The four studies largely agree on what are included as deictic notions, but I've opted for Lyons' definition: "By deixis is meant the location and identification of persons, objects, events, processes and activities being talked about, or referred to, in relation to the spatiotemporal context created by the act of utterance and the participation in it, typically, of a single speaker and at least one addressee" (1977: 637).

Routinely, we think of deixis in three categories: person, time, and place, anchored to a deictic center or anchorage point, what Levinson calls the "space-time-social centre" of the entire world (1983: 64). Repeating Fillmore's commentary from section 2.4.2: "I carry around with me, everywhere I go, my own private world. The spatial centre of this world is my location…the temporal centre of this world is the passing moment of my consciousness…the social centre of this world is me" (1998: 40-41). The speaker—ego—is the center point from which all deictic notions are determined. By most accounts, deixis is quintessentially egocentric, based on where the speaker is at the moment of utterance. This deictic center serves like a surveyor's monument stake, a binding starting point from which all measurements are calculated.

218

Because centeredness is primarily a spatial notion, it is spatial deixis, that measured from a deictic center or anchor point, that is most relevant to this discussion. Of course, the notion of origo is not specific to Mam. Indeed it seems likely to be a universal grammatical principle. What I suggest in this dissertation is that what is peculiar to Mam culture (and Maya culture in general) is the way in which the notion of centeredness as both a grammatical and cultural theme reflects speakers' means of organizing their experience of the world. In the same way that –*k'u'j* terms can be seen as the lexical manifestation of centeredness that both reflects and constructs the Mam notion of centeredness, I suggest that the use of grammatical categories that depend on the deictic center is part of the mechanism used to enculturate speakers to this view of the world.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Anderson and Keenan argue that some deictic systems are not entirely egocentric. They point out that Turkish has a demonstrative system that differentiates 'close to speaker (this)' and 'remote from both speaker and addressee (that).' But they claim that a third demonstrative, one signaling 'near to addressee' can have an extended or implied meaning. For example, the imperative "look at these/my hands," uses the 'near to addressee' demonstrative, yet one would certainly assume that the hands in question are closer to the speaker than to the addressee. Anderson and Keenan conclude that "in certain contexts it does pertain to things in the (physical or psychological) space of both addressee and speaker, and there serves in some way to emphasize reference to the addressee (1985: 285). In other words, spatial deixis is not universally egocentric in every instantiation, but rather it implies (or can imply) a shared space between a speaker and an addressee.

219

In fact, Hanks (1990) claims that egocentricity is not the right way to ground the deictic field at all. Rather, the field is socially defined in linguistic practice between a pair, or more, of people who alternate among participant roles of speaking and hearing. In this alternation, they don't just talk back and forth. Rather, as cultural insiders they also call to attention a backdrop of culturally lived schemata that offers a *ground* upon which to signal deictic *figures*. Hanks claims that reducing referential practice to mere egocentricity is a grammatical and cultural oversimplification. More accurately, to engage in conversation is to locate oneself in a culturally co-constructed world of persons who "schematize their experiences in the very process of living them" (ibid.: 514) It is through this process of schema building that both speakers and hearers assign meaning and predictability to their shared world. For Hanks, then, in opposition specifically to Lyons, as well as to Fillmore and Levinson, deixis is not so much egocentric as it is *socio-centric*. The concept of *here*, for example, includes not only an ego to which *here* is proximal, but also an addressee against which *here* has contextually meaningful distal significance (as per Anderson and Keenan on Turkish just above). He shows how there are no firm categories of what constitutes *here* and *there*, but that these are entirely based on the context of first and second persons.

    Despite Hanks' concern about the risk of reducing socio-centricity to simple egocentricity, it seems clear that in a discussion between ego and an interlocutor, *here* is still canonically in ego's environs when juxtaposed to the space occupied by the addressee. In other words, a speaker and an addressee share social space as per Hanks, but only until the shared space is itself contested or problematized between

the two, in which case, both will speak from a position of egocentricity. Just as in English, Mam *tzalu'n* 'here' can imply the area shared by the speaker and hearer, or it can mean 'my space' as opposed to 'yours.' On the other hand, *tzachi'n* 'there,' emanates out in 360 degrees from the speaker (both horizontally and vertically) if she's defending her own space, or from the space shared with an interlocutor, if she and her interlocutor, by Hanks' account, are socially sharing space. Nevertheless, in this study I'm assuming that egocentricity, not socio-centricity, is the basic monument stake of the deictic center and that the shared space where *tzalu'n* 'here' includes the addressee is a pragmatic (and polite) extension of its basic egocentric scope. Recall that for our Turkish data just above, Anderson and Keenan claimed that the term which normally means 'near to addressee' can be extended to the shared space of both speaker and addressee, but only "in certain contexts." In other words, the shared space of deictic centeredness is an *extension* of the basic notion of egocentricity. I argue below that the latter is the basis of and core meaning of Mam intransitive verbs of direction in terms of a reference location, a deictic center.

5.3 Mam intransitive verbs of direction

Mam has twelve intransitive verbs of direction that are different in meaning and distribution from other Mam action verbs. Godfrey (1981: 88) says that most Mam intransitive verbs of motion like *ajqelil* 'to hurry,' *pasyalil* 'to walk without a load,' *b'etil* 'to walk,' and *rinil* 'to run' specify manner of motion, but not change of location in relation to some reference point. Of course, running, hurrying and walking (with or without a load) imply a change of location, but exactly how that

motion resulting in change of location translates into movement (or lack of it) in relation to a reference point of some sort is left unspecified.

The twelve intransitive verbs of direction, in contrast to other verbs of action, specify movement in relation to a sense of center or reference point without specifying manner of movement. They are also distinct from other verbs in their ability to combine in complex VP's (see section 5.3 below).

intransitive verbs of motion	gloss
tza:jil	to come toward speaker
xi'yil	to go away from speaker
u:lil	to arrive here where speaker is
po:nil	to arrive there from where speaker is
o:kil	to enter from where 'other' is
e:lil	to leave from where 'other' is
ja:wil	to ascend from where 'other' is
kub'il	to descend from where 'other' is
a:jil	to return
iky'il	to pass (by)
kyijil	to stay, remain
b'ajil	to complete

Table 5.1 Mam intransitive verbs of direction

Both Godfrey (1981: 100-108) and England (1983: 167-174) discuss the semantics of these intransitive verbs of direction, but neither situates them specifically in a deictic system or in terms of a deictic center. Godfrey discusses the meanings of these verbs in terms of a change of distance (increase or decrease) from a reference location and whether the course or path of distance traveled focuses on the start of movement or its completion. So for the first verb in Table 5.1, *tza:jil*,

distance decreases during the movement toward the reference point (the speaker), and

the pathway focuses on the initiation of movement at some place distant. Movement

starts somewhere else and moves toward the speaker as in (1).

(1)   K-chi   **tza:jil**   n-k'wala   nchi'j.
        POT-they   come   my child   tomorrow
        My children will come (to visit) tomorrow.

(2)   O   **xi'**   ila'   maj.
        PERF   go   various   time
        He has gone various times.

(3)   I   **u:l**   tzalu'n ewa.
        REM.they   arrive   here   yesterday
        They arrived here yesterday.

(4)   K-**po:nil**   Mariy Txeljub'   yolil   tuk'a.
        POT-arrive.there   Mary   Xela   to.speak   with (her)
        Mary will go to Xela to speak with her.

For *xi'yil*, movement starts at the speaker and moves away. By Godfrey's

account, distance from the speaker increases (as in (2)). For the verb *u:lil*, the same

direction of movement as *tza:jil* is encoded (distance from the speaker decreases), but

the endpoint of motion (arriving where the speaker is) is in focus rather than the

initiating point of movement as in *tza:jil* (compare (1) and (3)). Likewise, *po:nil*

involves the same directional movement as *xi'yil* (distance from the speaker

increases) but the pathway focuses on the endpoint (arriving 'there' after having

begun where the speaker is) rather than the initiation of movement away from the

speaker as in *xi'yil* (compare examples (2) and (4)).

223

England spends a lot more time discussing directional auxiliaries (see section 5.4) than the intransitives from which they derive, but her glosses for the intransitives, while not as detailed as Godfrey's, are congruent with Godfrey's analysis.[1]

We can take Godfrey's idea of reference location and recast it in terms of centeredness without doing damage to his semantic analysis of the directional intransitives. What I suggest is that looking at reference location in terms of centeredness enables us to generalize over the twelve directionals while maintaining Godfrey's (and England's) basic idea of what the terms mean, particularly in Godfrey's rubric of change of distance and pathway.

The first four verbs listed in Table 5.1 are what Fillmore (1997) and Brown (2004) call deictic verbs, since they depend on a traditional deictic center for their meaning. In English, deictic verbs are those like *bring* and *take* which code action in terms of speaker location or origo.[2] Godfrey says that the speaker is the reference location for these four directional intransitives; the movement described by these verbs depends on the location of the speaker at the time of utterance. This is prototypical deictic usage.

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[1] Godfrey includes the verb *b'antil* as a directional intransitive, while neither England nor I do. In Comitancillo, and apparently in the northern area where England worked, it has a different distribution from the other twelve directionals. I believe it also has a different meaning. Godfrey glosses it as 'to be finished,' whereas I gloss it as 'to do or to be able.'

[2] Fillmore shows that it isn't quite so simple. We can say, "Bring it to work tomorrow," even if we don't happen to be at the work location at the time of utterance. Nonetheless, *bring* anticipates that I will indeed be at work when the action of bringing takes place. The prototypical sense of *bring* is action toward origo, whether actual or projected, which is the quintessential "me, here and now" locus of deictic measure.

The next four verbs in Table 5.1, *o:kil* 'to enter', *e:lil* 'to leave', *ja:wil* 'to ascend,' and *kub'il* 'to descend,' I've glossed in relation to 'other.' These verbs depend not necessarily on the location of the speaker, but of the subject of the sentence, usually someone or something other than the speaker. For example in (5) below, the verb *i o:k* 'they enter' makes no reference to the location of the speaker of the sentence. Both the speaker and the speaker's location are ignored. But there is reference to the relative location of the subject of the sentence, the people. The verb *o:kil* denotes movement from the position that the people occupied just before the action of the verb takes place into some kind of enclosure, physical or otherwise which is denoted by the action. It is movement starting outside, and moving inside.

(5) Ø   I   **o:k**   xjal   toj   ja.
     REM   they   enter   people in   house
     The people entered the house

(6) K-chi   **e:lil**   tata   toj   ja.
     POT-they   leave   man   in   house
     The men will leave the house.

(7) Ø   I   **ja:w** tata   twi'   wutz.
     REM   they   ascend man   top   mountain
     The men ascended the mountain.

(8) Ø   I   **kub'**   tata   twi'   wutz.
     REM   they   descend   man   top   mountain
     They descended the mountain.

Similarly in (6), the movement denoted by e:lil starts inside some kind of enclosure and ends up outside it. For *o:kil* and *e:lil*, Godfrey claims that the reference location is the opening of the enclosure which is either entered or exited. However, I assume that the reference location is that of the individual in focus (who/what I've

225

called 'other' in my glosses in Table 5.1), either inside or outside the enclosure. It isn't actually the enclosure itself (or the opening to it) that situates the action, but the position of the subject of the sentence in reference to the enclosure.

The same basic idea obtains for the next two verbs, *ja:wil* 'to ascend' and *kub'il* 'to descend.' They encode movement from a starting position before the action of the verb takes place to one either higher (as in the case of *ja:wil* in example (7)) or lower (as in (8)) than the starting point.

Again, Godfrey (1981: chapter three) chooses as reference point not the person or thing that is itself ascending or descending, but a stable and unchanging measuring point—the sky—in relation to which there is movement up or down. Since he considers the meaning of the directional intransitives in terms of an increase or decrease in distance between beginning and ending movement as specified in terms of a specific reference location, the sky would be justified as just such a location. As we descend, the distance between us and the sky increases. As we ascend, the opposite holds true.

I've suggested that for the first eight verbs that we've looked at from Table 5.1, the reference point, i.e. the deictic anchorage, is either the speaker (for the first four verbs) or the subject of the sentence (for the next four) that the speaker is coding. I don't see the need to refer to the sky in order to denote downward or upward movement (Godfrey admits this as well, 1981: 102). It seems to me that as long as we start with a grounded, in-the-world position, someone or something can move up or down from that position irrespective of the sky. (Even though movement from a starting position also increases or decreases distance from the sky, I take that to be

226

epiphenomenal to the deictic anchorage of these verbs.) Certainly this is what the Mam themselves think about when they choose one of these two verbs, *ja:wil* 'to ascend' or *kub'il* 'to descend.' Ascending and descending are measured from the point in which the person or thing was situated when brought into the discourse. From that point, the subject moves up or down. For example, we can use the verb 'descend' in a sentence like: *The man descended on the mountain from the tree line to the highest cornfields*. So even though he is (assumedly) still higher than the speaker when the sentence was coded, descending is not relative to speaker location, but to subject (or 'other') location. From where the man was located before the action began—not at the top of the mountain, but at tree line—to where he ended up—not at the bottom, but at the height of the highest corn fields—he descended.

With this in mind, I suggest that for the first four verbs, the prototypically deictic verbs, the reference point or deictic center is the speaker herself. For the next four, the reference point is 'other.' In other words, just as 'I' as speaker, serve as origo in terms of movements toward and away from me, I recognize that 'others' have this same sense of center, and movement can be in relation to them and their situatedness in the world, just as it can be in relation to me and mine.

The difference in deictic anchorage between speaker and other is part of the denotata of the lexical items themselves. *Tza:jil, xi'yil, o:kil*, and *e:lil* normally code the speaker as deictic center. *O:kil, e:lil, ja:wil* and *kub'il* code 'other' as the deictic center. This second group of verbs is not speaker-centric as is the first set, but other-centric.

The final four verbs from Table 5.1, *a:jil* 'to return,' *iky'il*, 'to pass,' *kyijil* 'to

stay or remain' and *b'ajil* 'to complete' are different again. I suggest that for these

verbs, origo is arbitrary. It isn't coded in relation to the 'speaker' or 'other,' but

rather to an arbitrary location. *A:jil* 'to return' can mean returning from anywhere to

anywhere (see example (9)). Use of this verb usually implies that the place returned

to is "home," but one's actual home isn't a necessary component of meaning. Rather,

one can return to any salient location, particularly one which somehow inheres to the

person (or thing) in question, like a market stall from which one routinely sells to the

public, one's cornfield, or one's hometown. One can return 'here' or 'there;' actual

location is arbitrary and so, it must be either implied or explicitly mentioned in the

discourse. As we've seen, with the first eight verbs mentioned, in contrast to these

last four, specific deictic anchorage is part of the lexical meaning of the term. In

these last four verbs it is not. These last four verbs code an arbitrary deictic

anchorage. There is still a sense of groundedness (either being in a place or in some

relation to a place), but neither origo nor movement in relation to it is specified.

(9)   Ma   chin   **a:ja**   n-ja'y.
        REC   I   return   my-home
        I am going home.

(10)   In   **iky'a**   tzma   jawnix   ewa.
        REM.I pass   to   toward.upper.area   yesterday
        I passed by the high area yesterday (Yo pasé por arriba ayer).

Just as *a:jil* codes an arbitrary origo, *ik'yil* 'to pass (by)' does as well

(example (10)). Someone can pass someplace far away or near. They may actually

arrive at the someplace in mention, or they may simply pass near it. Both direction

228

and reference location are arbitrary. Godfrey says that the only thing significant about their meanings is a change in distance. *A:jil* denotes a decrease of distance after an increase, whereas *iky'il* denotes its opposite. 'To return' somewhere implies that one has gone away from that place at some point in time, so distance indeed has to be increased before it can be decreased by returning. Likewise 'to pass' or 'to pass by' denotes that distance to some reference point (whatever it may be) has been decreased and then increased again.

     Kyijil 'to remain' also is arbitrary in reference to origo. It denotes lack of movement, no direction at all. It indicates suspended motion, not necessarily completed action. For example, in (11), we can assume that my little brother eventually makes it home, but from the perspective of the sentence, the action of a round trip to town has been suspended.

(11)   Ma   Ø   **kyij**   w-itz'i'n   toj   tnam.
           REC   3S   stay   my-little.brother   in   town
           My little brother stayed in town.

     B'ajil 'to complete,' on the other hand, means that the motion or action in question has been completed as in (12) and (13) below. I include both of these words *b'ajil* and *kyijil* as members of the set of intransitive verbs of direction even though they don't specify actual movement in the same way as the rest of the set. Lack of motion is a movement notion just as we can consider zero to be a measure of quantity. Plus, *b'ajil* and *kyijil* (actually, their directional counterparts) combine to form complex VP's just like the rest of the set of intransitive verbs of direction.

For both *kyijil* and *b'ajil* origo is again arbitrary. The (in)action of the verb inheres to the situation of use. Reference location is irrelevant because there is no focus on movement from one place to another. Whatever location is salient, that's where the movement stays; whatever action had occurred, it is over with.

(12) Ma   **b'aj**   jun   ti'   wi'ja.
      REC   completed action   one   thing to me
      Something happened to me.

(13) Ma   **b'aj**   te   xjal.
      REC   completed action   DEM   person
      That person died.

As discussed above, the differentiation in deictic anchorage is part of the lexical meaning of each of these twelve intransitive directional verbs. Whether the anchorage is speaker centered, other centered or arbitrary, it is coded in the word choices that people make every day. Not only does the anchorage contrast in Mam dependent upon the different verbs employed in speech, it can also shift in other complex ways. For example, when speakers employ the historical present in English or when they cite quoted speech, the deictic anchor shifts from the time that the speech act is encoded to the time that it references. In other words, origo has a radius or a trajectory, a *projection* in Haviland's terms (1996: 279-282), that connects the actual utterance to the referenced context. The historical present and the use of quoted speech are examples of what Hanks calls "decentering" where the privileged "actual corporeal field" (1990: 217) of the grounded here-and-now deictic anchorage is transposed or recentered to a projected or extended anchorage point beyond the

encoding context. My interest in this deictic shifting is that the deictic center, despite

my contention that egocentricity is its basic referential component (see section 5.1

above), can move around. Decentering (from ego) and subsequent recentering

elsewhere via structures like the historical present or quoted speech are mechanisms

for resetting centeredness. Haviland calls these structures "'triggers'—formal

elements that signal a shift in projected context" (1996: 273).

Haviland says: "Transposition is necessarily reflected in the choice of

directional verbs, whose very use always indexes some deictic origo" (1996:276).

I've discussed transposition in section 2.4.2. In transposition, it is the context and the

grammatical structures employed (like the historical present or quoted speech) that

trigger a pragmatic shift in deictic anchorage and project the terms normally oriented

to the here and now to the then and there. For example, I can tell my friend at

breakfast, "Last night my wife told me, 'If I catch you bringing that mess in here you

can just sleep outside from now on.'" In quoted speech, "the actual corporeal field"

of the here and now is projected onto a different context and frame, triggered by the

use of the quoted speech structure. "You" in our sentence above is actually the

speaker—me—the one who is telling my friend what my wife told me. "I" is not me,

but my wife; and "here" is not the denotata of the space that I or I and an interlocutor

occupy, but rather the space that my wife ascribed to herself, which was certainly *not*

one that she and I shared at the moment of her utterance. In the same way, "now"

doesn't mean 'now' in the traditional sense, but 'then'—last night.

This difference in deictic anchorage among the twelve intransitive directional

verbs is not technically transposition, since deictic anchorage is part of the lexical

231

entry itself. Nevertheless, even though the intransitive directional verbs have differing anchorage points, Haviland's comment that "the very use of directional verbs always indexes some deictic origo" (1996: 276) still holds. The use of any of these verbs calls upon a sense of origo, since the verbs denote action that is either speaker centered, other centered, or arbitrary in terms of origo. In other words, word choice (not grammatical structures like quoted speech or the historical present) necessarily triggers a specific frame for deictic anchorage. We will also see that the calculation of origo is more complex than simply being part of the lexical entry for these twelve intransitive verbs of direction. The use of directional auxiliaries shifts the conception of deictic anchorage from the semantic component of the lexical entry to a pragmatic calculation of direction, often metaphorical, based on origo not as a physical center space, but as a norm of some kind.[3]

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[3] I suggest in this study that the intransitive verbs of direction have a sense of direction tied to an origo as part of their lexical meaning. For the directionals, this meaning must be computed, as I will discuss below. But to illustrate, consider the directional *jaw*, which can be used in a VP to give each of the following meanings, the details of which must be calculated pragmatically: to choose, to stand, to resurrect, to take, to be astounded, to see, to speak out, to fall, to make fun of, to insult, to be astonished, to be born, to grow, to scream, to pray, to shiver, to open, to be confused, to pull, to move, to sit, to doubt, to obey, to be sad, to pull, to jump, to be in an uproar, to be jealous, to get drunk, to hurry, to argue, to believe, to hang, to speak against, to vacillate, to awaken, to be happy, to die, to strangle, to read, to change, among dozens of others. The pragmatic sense of "up" must be determined by the context for each of these cases. I discuss his further in section 5.4.1. The border between semantics and pragmatics is recognized as an area for further study, one which I will not pursue here.

5.4 Directional auxiliaries

England defines Mam directionals as "auxiliary elements in the verb phrase which indicate direction of movement and are derived from intransitive verbs of direction" (1983: 167).[4] Table 5.2 repeats the intransitive verbs of direction with their corresponding directional auxiliaries.

intransitive verbs of direction	directionals	gloss
tza:jil	tzaj	to come toward speaker
xi'yil	xi	to go away from speaker
u:lil	ul	to arrive here
po:nil	pon	to arrive there
o:kil	ok	to enter from where 'other' is
e:lil	el	to leave from where 'other' is
ja:wil	jaw	to ascend
kub'il	kub'	to descend
a:jil	aj	to return
iky'il	iky'	to pass (by)
kyijil	kyij	to stay, remain
b'ajil	b'aj	to complete

Table 5.2 Mam intransitive verbs of direction and corresponding directionals

[4] It has been suggested that the auxiliary construction I outline here is perhaps a serial verb construction since both verbs share a common subject (Creissels, 2000: 240). But Creissels goes on to say that in serial verb constructions, each verb has its own complement (which is not the case in Mam directional + main verb sequences). Additionally, Watters (2000: 198) says that in such multi-verb constructions, auxiliaries can carry tense, aspect or mood for the verb pair or have adverbial function. Mam directionals, like English auxiliaries carry tense for the entire construction and can code person—the object—in dependent clauses. For the present analysis, the actual status of the directionals is less important than the fact that they are secondary to, are derived from, and are more grammatical than their intransitive counterparts. I won't have anything else to say here in regard to their grammatical status.

Other than the presence of the infinitive suffix (-*il*) of the intransitives, the

difference that we notice with the directionals is that any complex vowels from the

first column of intransitive verbs of direction (either long V or V plus glottal as in

xi'yil) are shortened in the directionals. Both the intransitive verbs of direction and

the directional auxiliaries (from now on, simply *directionals*) occur very frequently in

normal speech. England says that directionals are "almost obligatory with two-topic

verbs" (1978: 227). She adds, "almost all transitive verbs are always accompanied by

directionals" (1983: 170), although they occur with non-transitive verbs as well.

Typical examples of the directional verbs follow:

(14) Ma   **tzaj**   t-q'o'n   Pegr   jun   u'j.
      REM   DIR.come   3S-give   Peter   one   book
      Peter gave me a book.

(15) Ø   **Xi**   n-q'ma'n   jun   yol   kye.
      REM   DIR.go   I-tell   one   word   them
      I told them a message.

(16) I   **ul**   kanin n-xjalila   pasyalil.
      REM.they   DIR.arrive.here   arrive my-people   to visit
      My relatives came for a visit.

(17) B'e'x   i   **pon**   kanin jni'   xjal.
      Immediately   REM.they   DIR.arrive.there   arrive all   people
      All the people arrived there.

In these four sentences we can see how the directional affects or adds to the

meaning of the main verb. The directional *tzaj* in (14) indicates movement toward

the speaker (compare with (1) above), which is what happens when Peter gives me a

book. It moves from him to me. In (15) my words go from me to the receiver, *i*

234

'them.' So the basic notion of *xi'yil* 'to go' is retained, which is movement from the speaker to somewhere else. In this sentence, it is my words that go from me to them. Even though the main verb in the sentence is nq'ma'n 'I told,' the directional still adds the meaning of direction away from the speaker to the act of my telling.

In (16) and (17) *ul* and *pon* both team up with *kanin* 'arrive,' the difference in the directional indicating the relation to speaker-as-origo where the arrival takes place, either starting elsewhere and arriving at origo or starting at origo and arriving elsewhere.

(18) Ma   chi   **ok**   t-b'yo'n   k'wal tx'yan tuk'a tze.
      REM   them   DIR.enter   3S-hit   child dog   with   stick
      The child hit the dogs with a stick.

(19) **El**   naj   jun   ti'   toj   tk'u'ja.
      DIR. leave   lose   one   something   in   your.stomach
      You forgot something.

(20) Ma   **jaw**   tz'aq q'a   toj   b'e.
      REM   DIR.ascend   fall   boy   in   trail
      The boy fell in the trail.

(21) Ma   **kub'**   q-b'isi'n   tu'n   mi   q-xi'y.
      REC   DIR.descend   we.EX-think   to   NEG   we.EX-go
      We thought that we wouldn't go.

In (18) the action of hitting by the child is perceived as entering into the dogs. The pain of being hit "penetrates," as one man said to me. It enters the bodies of those being hit. In (19) the directional *el* indicates that whatever it was that was lost has left—gone out from—my stomach, the place where things are stored and remembered. In both (18) and (19) the basic meaning of the directional is the same as for its corresponding intransitive verb.

235

The same holds for (20) and (21). I've noted two explanations for the

directional in (20). It would seem that falling wouldn't find a place for the directional

jaw 'up.' One claim is that in falling, the *jaw* directional codes the upward flailing of

the boy's arms as he fell. While the other view codes the position of the boy after he

has fallen—*bocarriba*—in Spanish 'face up.' In both cases, origo is clearly the boy,

not the speaker. And the "upwardness" of the directional is very much a live topic to

the Mam such that they attempt to describe how the meaning of "up" obtains in the

basic meaning of the VP which is to fall down. Either his arms are flailing up from

his body as he falls or, after the fall, his mouth is "up" in relation to the rest of his

body.[5]

In (21) *kub'* indicates the stereotypical downward gaze of someone deep in

thought, like Rodin's famous statue. Again, down signals movement from the norm,

which is the person's gaze straight ahead; it doesn't indicate 'down' from the deictic

anchorage of the speaker, but rather from the subject of the sentence. Again, the

Mam whom I queried on this directional have claimed that it is a physical movement

of the head downward in relation to the act of thinking. Like *jaw* above, the

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[5] Positionals are extremely common in Mam and other Mayan languages. These are
terms that situate an object in space or define its position or characteristics of its
position with great detail. Kaan and Sis Iboy (2004) report that Quiché and Achí
distinguish *in the verb word itself* meanings such as to walk upright, to walk bent
over, or on one's haunches, while carrying something small, carrying something
large, to walk with difficulty, or stiff, loose, bewildered or naked. In this instance
(*jaw tz'aq*), it is not the case that the directional is actually a positional, but
positionals are very salient in Mam and here it has positional force despite the fact
that it occurs in a normal directional VP.

downwardness of *kub'* is a live topic, one that has not been sufficiently

grammaticalized that people separate it from its basic, lexical meaning.

The arbitrariness of origo for the final four verbs in Table 5.1 we can again

see in (22) and (23).

(22) I   **aj**   t-meltz'in   tata   chej
      they   DIR.return   he-give.back   man   horse
      The man returned the horses.

(23) Ø   **Iky'**   t-i'n   nana   t-ikitz   najchaq
      REM   DIR.pass.by   she-carry   woman   her-load   far.away
      The woman passed far away carrying her load.

In (22) the horses are returned where they belong, but where that is, we

haven't a clue. In (23) the woman passes someplace far away, whereabouts which are

ignored except to say that the place is far from here.[6]

(24) Ma   **kyij**   naj   n-xjab'a   toj   plas
      REC   DIR.stay   lose   my-sandals   in   plaza
      I lost my sandals at the market.

(25) Ma   **b'aj**   n-b'inchi'n.
      REC   DIR.complete   I-do
      I just did it.

The use of *kyij* in (24) indicates that the lost sandals are assumedly still in the

plaza. It 'stayed' in lostness. In (25) *b'aj* signifies that my doing is done with.[7]

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[6] Both England (1983: 169-170) and Godfrey (1981: 97) use the verb *q'il* 'to carry'
(from which, *ti'n* 'he/she carries' above) to demonstrate how each of the twelve
directional auxiliaries can combine individually with the same verb. Both discuss
how the meaning of each complex construction is affected by use of different
directionals.

In each of these constructions, (14)-(25), the directionals add to the action described by the main verb in the sentence. The main verb carries the basic meaning; the directional fine-tunes it. Some directionals are very common with certain verbs and are virtually coterminous with them. For example, *kub' tb'yo'n* 'he down killed, *el tniky'* 'he out understood,' *kub' meje* 'he down kneeled,' *el tmatz'in* 'he out kissed,' *jaw xhch'in* 'he up screamed,' *jaw anq'in* 'he up resurrected. Some of these meanings may seem harder to grasp than others, but the Mam explain the use of directionals in these and all constructions in terms of physical motion in space (in reference to the relevant deictic anchorage encoded in the different verbs) and the basic meaning of the directionals themselves. For example 'to kiss' is understood as drawing something out of the one kissed (even if one kisses a newborn baby on the forehead). Each of these directionals, even in relation to a main verb, still maintains its lexical denotata of its respective center as discussed above.

England (1983: 171) points out that *xi* and *b'aj* are the directionals that occur most often. They have come to take on aspectual force—*xi* as a marker of incipience, and *b'aj* of completion. I suggest, however, that the aspectual nature of these two forms corresponds to their basic meaning and that they technically are not aspect markers, nor do they combine in the VP as other aspect markers do.

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[7] There's more here than meets the eye. Mam ergative markers (often called Set A by Mayanists), cross-references the agent of transitive verbs and the subject and object of intransitive verbs in certain dependent clauses (See England, 1983: 55-56 and also her chapter 8). This same set also marks possession. In (25) 'I did can also be glossed 'my doing,' where action is possessed just as an NP can be possessed. I don't consider any relationship between possession and centeredness in this dissertation, but the morphology of Set A markers is there to suggest such a relationship as discussed briefly in section 5.7 in regard to relational nouns.

5.4.1 Directionals and deictic centeredness

Although the directionals in the sentences cited so far seem to participate in the same deictic nature as their intransitive counterparts, this is not always—indeed, it is not normally—the case. Whereas the intransitives maintain a deictic profile as I've outlined above, the directional auxiliaries often have a more extended or perhaps even metaphorical meaning. Compare sentences (26) where the intransitive verb does not have a metaphorical sense and (27), which does:

(26) I   **xi'**   kawil ewa   tzma Europa   jyol   pwak.
      They go   leader yesterday   to   Europe   to find money
      The politicians went to Europe yesterday to seek funding.

(27) B'e'x   **xi**   najjo   tata   te   jun   majx.
      Immediately DIR.go   lose-SPEC   man   for   one   time
      The man was confused (went crazy) once and for all.

In (26) the politicians are denoted as being 'here.' We can assume that they were in Guatemala City, not literally 'here in my house in Comitancillo,' although the sentence would still be grammatical, albeit farfetched had the politicians left from my village home. Similarly, we can say in English, *The astronauts have come back safely*, without doing damage to the meaning of *come* as denoting an arrival to where the speaker is at the time of utterance. Even though they may not come to my hometown or my state, the astronauts came back to earth, which happens to be the planet that I am living on and that I share with the returning astronauts. Even if the astronauts are Chinese and return to their homes 10,000 miles away, they can still be 'here' on earth as opposed to 'there,' which would be on Mars or someplace else. In

239

the same way, *xi'* in (26) indicates that the politicians have left 'here,' the country where the speaker serves as the deictic anchor, and they have gone somewhere else. The basic deictic notion here is as Godfrey pointed out, movement beginning at the speaker's location and increasing in distance from this deictic center. Note also, that *xi'* in (26) is the intransitive, not the directional counterpart.

In (27), however, the directional auxiliary *xi* no longer deals with the deictic center of the speaker, i.e. Levinson's center of the entire world (section 2.3.2). That role is reserved for *xi'*, the intransitive verb. Rather, it treats the center in a metaphorical way—the man in his right mind, from which his unfortunate circumstances have caused him to go away. Here there is no physical movement at all, just a figurative moving away from the norm of mental equilibrium.

It could be argued that mental equilibrium is where the speaker *is* in the same way that earth is where 'I' happen to be in the discussion above, and that the unfortunate man is actually gone away from 'here,' the metaphorical space of mental health, in the same way that the Chinese astronauts have returned 'here,' i.e. in very loose terms. But further examples and comparison with the use of *tzaj* will help disavow us of such a suggestion.

(28) I   **xi**   t-q'ma'n   jun   yol.
      REM.them   DIR.go   he-tell   one   word
      He told them a message.

(29) **Xi**   t-yek'in   Pegr   jun   chej   te   Juan.
      DIR.go   he-showed   Peter one   horse to   John
      Peter showed John a horse.

(30)   **Xi**   ky-k'ayin   xjal   tx'otx'.
       DIR.go   they-sell   people land
       The people sold the land.

Examples (28)-(30) show clearly that the directional does not code movement

in relation to the speaker, but rather in terms of the subject of the sentence. In each

case, there is movement away from the subject: *he*, *Peter* and *the people* respectively.

The movement is of the telling itself or the words in (28); the demonstrating (the verb

also means to indicate, show or point out), where Peter directs John's gaze and

attention toward the horse and away from himself; and the selling of land, where what

is distanced is not the land, but ownership of the land. This last sentence exemplifies

the most extended meaning of all in the sense that both (28) and (29) involve the

notion of movement—either words or gaze—from the subject of the sentence to a

place somewhat distant. In (30) however, there is no movement at all, just a sense of

distance from the intimacy of ownership to the new relationship to the land as non-

owner.[8] The deictic anchorage of the actual speaker in these sentences is not coded in

(28)-(30) in any way. Compare (28) with (15) above. In (15) the subject of the

sentence also happens to be the speaker, so we can't tell for sure whether it is the

subject or the speaker that determines the deictic anchorage for the verb. In (14),

(16), and (17), however, the speaker is not the subject of the sentence and yet

nevertheless he or she still constitutes the deictic center. I take these occurrences to

be the prototypical meaning of the directionals, i.e. the same as their corresponding

full intransitive forms, i.e. movement in terms of an origo. Nevertheless, a

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[8] The Mam love the land. Selling it is very hard for them to do, even under duress. It
is difficult for us in the West to imagine the sense of intimacy and union that the
Maya and their land, especially the *kjo'n* 'cornfield.'

"demoted" sense of center is clear with the directionals as in (27) as well as (28)-(30), where the deictic anchorage is not the speaker, but is determined pragmatically from the context.

Similarly, in (31) auxiliary *tzaj* no longer acts as if the deictic center is the speaker as it does in its intransitive form in example (1) or in the prototypical (14). Rather, the father—not the speaker—is the center, and the movement is not towards him in a physical way, but in a metaphorical or extended way; it's the love that he feels for his son that moves toward him and grips him.

(31) B'e'x   **tzaj**   q'aq'in tej   manb'aj   tk'u'j
      PUNCT   DIR.come   burn   that   father   his.stomach

      ti'j.
      toward.him
      The father felt compassion for him.

What we've seen is that the special set of intransitive verbs—the verbs of direction in relation to a speaker—are based on the notion of the deictic center as per Levinson above. The directional auxiliaries are derived from these intransitives; they lose phonological size with the simplification of their complex vowels, and their centeredness can be more local or metaphorical than their intransitive counterparts. The deictic anchorage of the intransitive verbs of direction is part of the lexical entry for each verb. These are determined by the semantic content of each one. The meaning of the directionals, however, is determined pragmatically. They maintain their basic meaning of movement away from center (for *xi* and *pon*) or toward center

242

(for *tzaj* and *ul*), but their meaning in context must be calculated, as is basic to all pragmatic contributions to local meaning.

Nevertheless, deictic anchorage is still in view, whether lexically or pragmatically. People must situate action in terms of where it begins and where it goes—all in relation to a deictic anchor or center.

Centeredness is not only a cultural theme, one which continually arises in the thoughts and daily lives of the Mam; it is also an integral part of the language as well. Godfrey says "just about half of the approximately 5700 clauses in the text corpus contain some kind of directional verb" (1981: 93). Recall that England points out that directionals are "almost obligatory with two-topic (subject and object, WMC) verbs" (1978: 227). This means that the Mam are continually dealing with the concept of centeredness as a grammatical theme, since, repeating Haviland, the use of directional verbs "always indexes some deictic origo" (1996: 276), either their own as speaker, or another's, or an arbitrary center of reference. We've already seen the importance of the lexicon in coding centeredness; in this chapter, we've seen that centeredness is what Hale (1986: 234) calls a lexico-semantic theme, a grammatical category that is expressed in different morphosyntactic constructions and on different levels of the grammar. This is what Slobin means when he says that certain obligatory grammatical expressions *must* be expressed. They are "required by the grammatical organization of the language" (1996: 71). He calls this "thinking for speaking" (ibid.: 78), the idea that certain grammatical categories must be tended to in order to say anything at all.

In sections 5.5 and 5.6 we will see how directionals and their concomitant deictic anchorage play a further role in Mam morphology.

5.5 Complex directionals

Both the directionals and the intransitive verbs can be more fully specified by adding one of four directional suffixes to the root.[9] As seen in Table 5.3, the four directional suffixes are derived from the fuller form, taking only the onset consonant. Despite their reduced phonological forms, the *–tz* an *–x* suffixes (except as discussed below) maintain their full lexical meaning, while the *–j* and *–k* suffixes have more of an extended or metaphorical meaning.

intransitive verb/directional	reduced suffixal form
tza:jil/tzaj	-tz
xi'yil/xi	-x
ja:wil/jaw	-j
kub'il/kub'	-k

Table 5.3 Reduced suffixal forms of four direction-related verbs

(32)
a.	ja:w	'go up' +	-x	→	ja:x	'go up away from speaker'
b.	ja:w	'go up' +	-tz	→	ja:tz	'come up toward from speaker'
c.	e:l	'leave' +	-x	→	e:x	'leave moving away from S'
d.	e:l	'leave' +	-tz	→	e:tz	'leave moving toward speaker'

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[9] There are other directional suffixes mentioned by both Godfrey (1981: especially page 99) and England (1983: 168). These directional suffixes constitute an issue that needs further study. Of the four suffixes mentioned here, I will only discuss *–tz* and *–x* in this dissertation. Some speakers claim that *–j* derives from *kyij*, and *–k* from *ok*. I leave this as an open question.

(33)
a. b'i:nch 'make'   +   -j   →   b'i:nchj 'leave something made (up)'
b. ite'   'there are' +   -k   →   ite'k   'there are (placed (down) in
                                                          position))

The long vowels in (32) identify these verbs as intransitives (as opposed to

directionals which have only short vowels), while the verbs in (33) are not

intransitives. *B'inchil* 'to make' is transitive, while *ite'* 'there are' is stative.

Nevertheless, the directional suffixes can be added to them as well. The suffixes can

also be added to directionals as in (34).

(34)
a.   Ma ***jax*** tkanin xjal.   'the person arrived up there away from speaker'
b.   Ma ***jatz*** tkanin tzalu'n.   'the person arrived up here where speaker is'
c.   ***Etz*** rinin.   'he left running toward speaker'
d.   ***Ex*** rinin.   'he left running away from speaker'

The –*tz* and –*x* suffixes are common throughout Mam discourse, particularly

narrative discourse; whereas the –*j* suffix is common in procedural texts, but not

narrative. In the narrative text analyzed in this dissertation and included in the

Appendix, there are twelve instances of –*tz* throughout the forty lines of text, and

thirteen instances of –*x*. There are no occurrences of –*j* or –*k*. In a procedural text of

similar length that I elicited several years ago, there are 10 occurrences of –*j*, 8

occurrences of –*tz* and 7 of –*x*.[10] There are no occurrences of –*k* in either text.

In Table 5.4 below, I show the –*tz* and –*x* suffixes with a number of

directionals. While, the 'come' and 'go' meanings of the –*tz* and –*x* suffixes are

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[10] The procedural text mentioned here was elicited in August, 2003. It is a recounting
by a 35 year old man of the process one has to go through in order to build a house.

clear, both forms have taken on additional meaning beyond their directional meanings exemplified in (32) through (34) above.

el	'leave	+	-x	→	ex	'leave away from S'
el	'leave	+	-tz	→	etz	'leave toward speaker'
ok	'enter'	+	-x	→	okx	'enter away from S'
ok	'enter'	+	-tz	→	oktz	'enter toward speaker'
jaw	'ascend'	+	-x	→	jax	'ascend away from S'
jaw	'ascend'	+	-tz	→	jatz	'ascend toward S'
kub'	'descend'	+	-x	→	ku'x	'descend away from S'
kub'	'descend'	+	-tz	→	ku'tz	'descend toward S
iky'	'pass by'	+	-x	→	iky'x	'pass by on far side'
iky'	'pass by'	+	-tz	→	iky'tz	'pass by on near side'
aj	'return'	+	-x	→	ajx	'return away from here'
aj	'return'	+	-tz	→	ajtz	'return here'

Table 5.4 Directional combined forms with –*x* and -t*z*

What the addition of –*x* and –*tz* does to the meanings of these verbs (either the intransitive or the directional auxiliary) is to recenter origo from 'other' or 'arbitrary' to 'speaker.' *El*, for example, means 'leave,' but it gives no indication as to whether the motion of leaving is toward the speaker (thus 'come out') or away from the speaker ('go out'). The affix provides this additional information.[11]

Several other directionals have affixal forms such as *japin, jaw* + *pon* 'to arrive up there' and *ku'xb'aj, kub'* + -*x* + *b'aj* 'down there complete' (from England, 1983: 168), but these are far rarer than combinations with –*x* and –*tz*.

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[11] Phonological reduction as in the forms of –*x* and –*tz*, from *xi* and *tzaj* respectively, is common in the discussion of grammaticalization. However, the fact that the reduced forms maintain their full semantic denotata is not.

The use of directional affixes begins early in life. I stopped to visit a friend one morning and his toddler daughter (barely three years old) was in the yard. I greeted her, holding my hand low to touch hers. *Chin q'olb'i'n* 'I greet you,' I said. She took my hand and gently touched it to her bowed forehead. Mam children are taught this greeting ritual even before they can speak. I asked if her father was home and she said that he was in the house. *Ku to:kxa* 'go in,' she said. *Ku* is the imperative marker; the prefix *t-* and suffix *–a* constitute second person singular, leaving us with just *o:kx* 'enter + movement away from the speaker.' Had she been inside the house and invited me to enter, she would have said *Ku to:ktza*, using the *–tz* allomorph 'come toward me' rather than *–x* 'go away from me,' or she might simply have said *Ku to:ka* 'enter'. This (*Ku to:ka*) is the common way to invite someone into the house and it is what I was taught to say if someone came to the door and I was inside. This sentence leaves the idea of motion in relation to the speaker as unstated, since, as we've seen above (Table 5.1 and subsequent discussion), the origo for the verb *o:kil* 'to enter,' is 'other.' In the present case, the 'other' is me, the one being addressed. In *Ku to:ka*, I'm being told to enter irrespective of the location of the speaker.

But the little girl had learned something beyond the greeting ritual. Since the verb *o:kil* denotes an origo of 'other,' if she wanted to include herself in the picture, she needed a shift in spatial frame. She accomplished this shift by employing the *–x*. Indeed, the use of o:kil (or e:lil, ja:wil and kub'il) without affixation when referring to oneself is somewhat less common, since there is a mismatch between the denoted 'other' origo of the verb and the speaker-centric origo of the act of speaking. It is far

more common to recast the frame by adding an –*x* or –*tz* in such situations as spelled out in Tables 5.4 and 5.5 above and in the discussion following.

Brown (2001) talks about how Maya-Tzeltal children acquire spatial concepts and vocabulary beginning around two years of age. This is a challenge, she explains, because the notions of up and down not only are local to getting up in a chair or into a bus, but also general. The land basically slopes down to the north, so a man can be literally ascending while headed north and still say that he is descending. She claims that children do not seem to begin with any universal notions of spatial relations, and that the vocabulary they acquire is specific, based not only on the tokens that they analyze, but also on the nature of Tzeltal verbs which often have very specific meanings. For example, she cites a number of verbs for eating, depending on whether one is eating bananas, crunchy things, meat, tortillas, sugar cane, thick liquids, etc.[12] She suggests that children learn to speak depending on the unmarked norms for different activities to which they are exposed. They don't learn a general term for eating and then the other terms. Rather, they learn the specific terms first and only later do they learn terms to generalize over them. In terms of space, she says "From their earliest uses of the up/down vocabulary, children use the words with language-specific land slope meaning as well as with vertical meanings. Rather than verticality, a sense of 'place' is the semantic core to the meanings children attribute to these words" (2001: 513). It seems that children are inducing from the specific vocabulary of movement and space, the salient features which they will later need to understand in order to use the more general and extended vocabulary properly.

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[12] See Henne, 1977 for a discussion of eating terminology in K'iche'.

De León (2001) also found that Tzotzil children learn specific verbs first—especially verbs related to non-volitional falling, either of the children themselves or of other people or objects. She found that the closed class of directionals and motion intransitives were not learned early by children. Rather specific verbs were learned first and then, apparently based on the explicit coding of path, movement, and position, only later were the more general directional verbs used "long after they have acquired a rich repertoire of semantically specific verbs" (2001: 558).

To extrapolate from Brown's and de León's findings, it seems that Mayan children learn the saliency of position and path from precise verbs that encode such factors. As I've shown, the intransitive verbs of direction are very general in nature, denoting movement, but not manner (in Godfrey's terms) and the directionals themselves have meanings that are pragmatically construed. This takes time to learn. Nonetheless, during the third year, Mayan children begin to construct phrases containing closed class directional words that generalize over the components of meaning salient to the more specific verbs.

With this in mind, my young friend was perhaps just learning to use directional affixes in a way that situated herself as a deictic center.

5.6 Extended use of –x and –tz

From the above discussion of intransitive directional verbs and directional auxiliaries we see that the principle of deictic anchorage is part of the denotata of these terms which is reflected not only in the lexicon, but in the morphology (for

249

example, by the use of *–tz* and *–x* in the formation of words) and syntax (in the use of directional auxiliaries in complex verbs) of the language as well.

Above, I commented on the phonological reduction of *xi* and *tzaj* to *–x* and *–tz* respectively, while they maintain the full semantic force of the full forms (either the directionals or the intransitive verbs of direction). I mentioned that this kind of phonological reduction is common as words take on more grammatical function (see Hopper and Traugott (1993: 145ff) for extensive discussion). But I also mentioned that grammaticalized forms tend to be semantically bleached as well, as they take on a more grammatical function. Although we saw that this is not the case in the examples I cited above, in the discussion below we will see that the directional suffixes *–tz* and *–x* have indeed been affected in this way.

5.6.1 A narrative context for directional suffixes

The narrative text cited in this paper and included as an appendix, was spoken and then transcribed later that same day by Oscar, a personal friend of mine and a local schoolteacher. Oscar was 26 years old when the tape was made in 1994. Early that same morning, he had accompanied me and another friend to *El Tiunfo* 'The Triumph,' an important market town a two-hour's drive away from Comitancillo, Oscar's hometown. He came along to help sell books and to visit an area he had heard about for many years, but which he had never actually visited. When we got back to Comitancillo, Oscar recorded the day's experiences at my request. I asked him to tell the story of the day's events as if speaking to a Mam friend—although only I was in the room manning the tape recorder when he told the story. After

taping, Oscar himself made some minor corrections to his text. I've glossed the text only to the extent necessary for the purposes of this study.

In Oscar's text, he talks about the trip to *El Triunfo*, and he starts out with a few remarks about the roads and the beauty of the area (lines 1-10). The bulk of his talk (lines 11-35) is about the selling itself—how we went about setting up and reading from the books that we were offering for sale. Finally, in line 36, he talks about packing up our table, boxing up the books, and heading back home.

What particularly interests me in the text are the words for 'come' and 'go' and the directionals and suffixes derived from them. I've marked with bold typeface and underlining each word that is either the full form of these words (either as intransitive verbs or directionals) or that has a suffixal form (as discussed in 5.5 and 5.6 above as well as to follow). My specific interest is in the discourse function of the suffixal forms of *tzaj* and *xi*, i.e. *-tz* and *-x* respectively, as charted in Tables 5.3 and 5.4 above. We will cite occurrences of these suffixal forms throughout the text and consider several related meanings for their different occurrences.

5.6.2 –*x* in context

The suffix *-x* occurs 13 times in Oscar's text. Its most transparent use is as a directional suffix appended to an intransitive verb. For example, in line 27 (repeated here as (35), the word *e:x* is the same as that illustrated in (32.c) above. It signifies that the people who attended the market went (in a direction away from Oscar at the moment he was telling the story) in order to sell their goods at *El Triunfo*.

(35) Ma   **nin-x**   xjal   *e:-x*   k'ay-il   toj-jo
      very   many-AUG   people leave-away   to.sell-INF   in-SPEC

      k'ayb'il   a'.
      market   that
      A large number of people went to sell at that market.

This same -*x* directional suffix also occurs in lines 25 and 34 of our text, repeated below as (36) and (37) respectively. In (36) –x is again suffixed to the intransitive verb *e:l* 'to leave' as it is in (35). In (35) and (36), e:x does not function as a directional auxiliary. First, the long vowel precludes such a function, and second, the word is followed by an infinitive. In both (35) and (36) *e:x* has a long vowel and also it precedes an infinitive.[13] This structure is similar to the English gloss included for each of these sentences where the second verb serves as an infinitival complement to its immediately preceding intransitive verb.

In (35), *e:x* is what is predicated about the people who have gone out (away from where Oscar is when he is telling his story) in order to sell at the market. Likewise in (36), they have gone away from Oscar in order to buy at the market, which is located away from him as he tells the story.

(36) At-taq   **n-e:-x**   laq'-ol-te   tu'j   Marks
      exist-PAS   PROG-leave-away   to.buy-INF-it   book   Mark
      There were some who went to buy the book of St. Mark

In (37) however, note that *ex* has a short vowel and it is followed by a tensed verb. This is the archetype occurrence of a verb phrase that includes a directional.

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[13] Actually, this construction is more akin to a serial verb construction than those with directional auxiliaries as in line 34 of the appended text.

252

Here, *ex tlaq'o'n* implies that people out-away-bought books, that is they bought
books, taking them away from the place where they were sold. In (35) and (36) there
are two clauses; in (37), only one (ignoring the stative verb *attaq* in both (36) and
(37).

(37) At-taq   te   ***n-e-x***   tlaq'o'-n-taq   tu'j
      exist-PAST   he   PROG-leave-go   buy-NONFUT-PAST his books
      There were those who bought books

In line 10 of the text, repeated here as (38), *-x* is affixed to the preposition
tzma 'toward.' giving us *tzmax Twi' Chlub'* 'toward *Tuichilupe* (a town), but away
from where Oscar was at the moment of speaking.'

(38) A-tzin   t-xilin   ulne   iky-jo   tze'n-ku
      that-then   its-essence   coming   similar-SPEC like-down

            b'e   ***n-tzaj***   xkye   ***tzma-x***   Twi' Chlub'.
            road   PROG-come   begin at-go   Tuichilupe.
      The way we went was similar to the road that comes toward us from the town
      of Tuichilupe.

Aside from its use as a directional suffix, *-x* can also be used as an
augmentative suffix as well. The following words are taken from the text, lines 4 and
6. The entire words (including the affixes) are listed as (39), (40) and (41).

(39) t-b'an-il-**x**-ch'in
      3S.POS-good-INAL.POS-AUG-little
      'pretty good, (literally 'very good, a little')'

(40) nin-**x**
      many-AUG
      'very many'

(41)   quq-**x**-tz
        dust-AUG-then
        'a lot of dust, then'

These augmentative uses are related to the directional meaning discussed

above in examples (36)-(38), and they have similar force. Something big

(augmented) goes beyond the normal in terms of size or quantity (as in 'very good,'

'very many,' and 'a lot of dust' in (39), (40) and (41) respectively), so the

augmentative sense is that of moving away from a standard of some sort. It's not

uncommon to the hear the Mam say in Spanish *más allá* 'further away,' to signal a

contrast with a person who is smarter than another or more widely traveled or richer,

as in English 'he's *far and away* smarter than his brother, where there is semantic

overlap between distance away from the speaker and the sense of augmentation. So

the metaphorical use of -*x* as an augmentative appears to be a live metaphor (Larson:

1989) in Mam, active and morphologically meaningful. The augmentative is

conceived of as being beyond some sense of standard—if not in terms of actual

motion away from a deictic center, at least a metaphorical movement beyond a norm.

For example, if a lucky woman were to win the lottery, the Mam would say, *Ma*

q'ininx te nana 'the woman became rich'. Note the –*x* suffix on the verb *q'inin* 'to

get rich.' If someone gets rich, she figuratively moves away from the rest of the

group, which is considered to be not rich.

There are two occurrences of -*x* in Oscar's text that seem to fit neither the

directional, nor the augmentative function. I'll discuss these tokens below in sections

5.7 and 5.7.2.

5.6.3 *-tz* in context

There are twelve occurrences of the suffix *-tz* in Oscar's text. As seen in (14)
and (31) above, *-tz* has directional force. We can see this in line 39 of Oscar's text,
repeated here as (42).

(42) Ex   b'e'x   o   ***a:j-tz-tz-a***,
      and   PUNCT   we   return.home-come-then-EX
      And we returned home.

In (42), the intransitive verb *aj* (see example (9) above) is affixed with two *–tz*
suffixes. The first carries directional force. We returned home, here, the place where
Oscar was narrating his story. The second *–tz* has discourse specifier function and
will be discussed below in sections 5.7 and 5.7.1.

Another interesting use of the *–tz* suffix is in line 22 of the text, repeated here
as (43).

(43) Ex   nchi   b'in-xjal   ti'j   u'j   ***n-ja-tz***
      and   PROG-they   listen-people   regarding   book   PROG-up-then

              u'jin-taq.
              read-past
      and the people listened to the book that was being read.

Here, the word *njatz* is a directional that pairs with and precedes the (tensed)
main verb *u'jin* 'to read.' The directional here is denoting that the words that the man
is reading are coming up (the *ja* part of the directional) out of his mouth and toward
(the *tz* part of the directional) the hearers. This is exactly the same directional form,

255

jatz as demonstrated in example (34b) above, although its meaning must be pragmatically calculated. Here the *–tz* doesn't signal Oscar as the speaker, but rather those hearing the reading. So, just as Oscar's text exemplified both conventional (speaker-centered) and extended meanings for *–x* (compare examples (36)-(38) with (39)-(41), so the text also contrasts the conventional uses of speaker-centered *–tz* in (42) with an extended 'other center' in (43).

Recall that the *-x* suffix had metaphorical usage. By the same token, the *–tz* suffix does as well. Previously, we saw that a woman who wins the lottery goes beyond the financial norm of her indigenous peers. In similar fashion, if a family's house burns down and they become poor, the Mam could say, *Ma yajtz kye tata* 'those people have become poor. Note the affixation of the *–tz* suffix on the word *yaj* 'to be poor.' Here, by becoming desperately poor and losing all one's possessions, the group still sees the unfortunate family as retuning to the norm rather than sinking below it and "going away" from the group which would be comparatively better off. Even when one has managed to acquire a comfortable degree of wealth, the Maya still consider themselves, at least publicly, to be numbered among the poor. Townsend (p. c.) suggests that this is an instantiation of the Mayan quality of leveling all ranks, especially any Mayan who gets ahead financially, where the Mam will say, "The nail that sticks out must be hammered down," the idea being that to move away from the norm is bad and even dangerous.

McArthur (1979: 2) also reports on this solidarity with the poor, reporting that the Aguakatek burn the tail of the shirt or blouse of one that is buried in order to show one's lack of resources and in order not be prideful of one's possessions at the time of

death. This idea of solidarity or intimacy is related, I believe, to the use of –tz and –x

in narrative discourse to mark information as discourse old and discourse new.

5.7 The discourse function of *–tz* and *-x*

Neuenswander (p. c.) and, more recently, Zaharlick (p. c.) have discussed the

metaphor of body position vis-à-vis the cultural conception of time. We in the West

normally think of ourselves looking toward the future, with our back to the past, as

we march boldly forward into the unknown.

Many non-western cultures are not nearly so bold about the unknown. Both

Neuenswander and Zaharlick talk about Amerindian groups metaphorically facing the

past, with their backs toward the future. They don't so much march into the future as

have the future overtake them. It becomes the present as they experience it and then,

as they recall it, it is part of the past. There certainly is an emic logic to this idea of

body position vis-à-vis time, since we have experienced the past (and can therefore

"see" it), while we don't know the future, despite an English future tense that claims

"I WILL do such and such." Indeed, Mam has at least five past tense grammatical

aspects, and only one future, which carries along with it the sense of the dubitative or

unknowable. The language is far more specific about the past, which has been

experienced, than the future, which they consider unknowable. For example, when

my family and I left Guatemala in 1998, we were feted at a special party where many

of our friends wept and carried on. I told them to ease up, because we would be back

within six months, to which they replied, "Who are you to claim to know the future?

You don't know for sure that you'll be back. Maybe you will return, and we can rejoice, but today we assume that we will never see you again. Let us be sad."

Metaphorically, with this in mind, it's more realistic to consider the Maya as facing and more intimate with the past—that which they know and have experienced—while the future—that which they don't know and haven't yet experienced—is behind them, creeping up on them unbeknownst.

To extend this cultural metaphor in linguistic terms, the *-tz* suffix denotes movement, either actual or metaphorical, toward the deictic center, whereas the *-x* suffix moves away from the deictic center. The sense of 'to come,' then, is more intimate, near and known than 'to go,' which represents apartness and distance. I suggest that our suffixes *-tz* and *-x* mimic this idea of the known and the unknown, and reflect a coherence strategy in Mam discourse.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Danziger (1994) discusses spatial deictics in Mopan Maya, a Yucatecan language of northern Guatemala. She discusses a four way contrast of locatives: *waye'* 'here (near speaker), *ta'kan* 'there (near addressee), *tilo'* 'there (near a visible third person) and *te'* (invisible, away from everyone). She goes on o point out that these deictics are used in discourse as well, to refer to information that the speaker is presenting as new or old. She concludes by saying, "No reference to deictic location can in fact be made in Mopan without invoking semantic contrasts relevant both to the social situation in which reference is made, and to the medium of reference and state of shared knowledge of the discourse participants" (1994: 904). In other words, deictic referents do double duty In Mopan

as discourse markers, helping to manage the presentation and interpretation of narrative text, thus forging strong discourse cohesion.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), languages have ways of showing that a natural text is qualitatively different from a mere concatenation of disjointed sentences. The difference is that a text displays discourse *texture*—a cohesive unity based on linguistic strategies of reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion (1976:4), all of which serve to link later text with what has come before. Mam, of course, is no different. Mam speakers employ discourse strategies to articulate well-formed texts. One of these strategies is the use of extended notions of *–tz* and *-x* in order to specify discourse old and discourse new information. Although Danziger discusses the discourse function of the spatial deictics themselves, the Mam use the directional suffixes *–tz* and *–x* which are not technically deictics (except as discussed below), but nevertheless code deictic anchorage. I suggest that the Mam suffix *-tz*, by representing nearness and intimacy extends to text that is discourse old and known, while *-x*, which represents apartness or distance, extends to text that is new and unknown.

5.7.1 A discourse function for *–tz*

As mentioned in 5.6.3 above, there are twelve occurrences of *-tz* in Oscar's text. Three of these have directional force as shown in example (42) and one (43) is used with an extended, non-speaker center meaning, as discussed previously. I suggest that the rest have discourse function signifying that the stem that they attach to is discourse old. In line 3 of our text, repeated here as (44), *-tz* is affixed to *ayi'n*,

259

meaning 'me,' a participant that was mentioned as part of the "we" in sentences 1

and 2 by entailment, since "we" includes "me", which is immediately accessible from

the previous text. So the –*tz* affixed to 'me' identifies 'me' as evoked by or previously

mentioned in the text.

(44) A-tzi'n   q-b'aj-a,   a   Julián ex-sin
    that-then   our-number-EX   that Julián and-then

       ayi'n-tz-a.
       me-then-EX
    So our number included (Josué), Julián and me.

Here it affixes to a pronoun. And although it doesn't here seem to have the

meaning of 'come,' either as speaker center or other center, it nonetheless suggests

something known and recently mentioned or something 'close by,' something

intimately or recently experienced.

In sentences 5 and 6 of Oscar's text, here as (45) and (46), all -*tz* occurrences

point back to the trip, mentioned in 1, 2, 4 and 5.

(45) Noq-tzin ***tu'n-tz-jo***   te ***q-xi'-ch'il-tz-a***
    Only-then regarding-then-SPEC when we-went-a.bit-then-EX

       tu'n   q-kanin   Triunfo,
       in.order.to we-arrived Triunfo

       nya-xix   wen b'e
       not-very   good road
    Regarding this (trip) when we went (from Twimuj) to Triunfo, the road was
    not very good.

(46) Ma ***nin-x***   jul, ex-sin   manyor   ***quq-x-tz***.
    quite big-AUG   holes and-then   much   dust-AUG-then
    There were big holes and a lot of dust.

In 21, here as (47) *-tz* is attached to *Josué*, who was first mentioned in 2, but who was kept close to the story since it was *Josué* who actually made the tape of Oscar's story and was present as it was being recorded. In addition, he was part of every mention of "exclusive we" in 1-5, 9, 11 and 14-17.

(47)　Ok　　ten-pe-tzi'n　te　　***Josué-tz***　　yolil　　　　kyi'jjo　　　jni'
　　　　Enter　begin-?-then　he　　Josué-then　　to.speak　　about　　　all

　　　　u'j　　　toj　　q-yol
　　　　book　　in　　our-language
　　　Then Josué began to talk about all the books in our language.

In 36, included here as (48), *-tz* reappears after a fairly long hiatus, referring to book sales, still the main topic of the discourse, and clearly discourse old.

(48)　B'aj　　　　***k'ayin-tz-a***　　ja'lin,
　　　　Complete　　sell-then-EX　　now
　　　　Then (we) finished selling,

In 39 and 40 (49), Oscar completes his narrative. The mention of home reflects the full circle traveled that day and the place where the day had begun and where the discourse was originally spoken.

(49)　Ex　　b'e'x　　　　o　　***a:j-tz-tz-a***,
　　　　and　　PUNCT　　we　　return.home-come-then-EX
　　　　And we returned home

　　　　tu'n　　　　***q-u:l-a***　　kyxol　aj　　　　　Txolja.
　　　　in.order.to　　we-arrive-EX　among　resident　　　Comitancillo
　　　　in order to come again to our own pueblo.

So, it appears that *-tz* when used in its discourse function, points to preceding context, that which is accessible within Oscar's discourse (or implied by it), never

261

forward in the text or to new information. Because of this, I consider this marker or discourse particle, *-tz*, to have discourse status as a true deictic or specifier. I don't consider it to be a discourse marker in the technical sense, since it doesn't "manage" text portions, it only selects them. This is different from other discourse markers (DM's), which actually manage portions of text. For example, the DM, *nevertheless*, points both ways in a text, taking what occurs before it and considering it as grounds that have been somehow overcome by what comes after it in its containing sentence. Fraser (1999) says that DM's "impose a relationship between some aspect of the discourse segment they are a part of, call it S2, and some aspect of the prior discourse segment, call it S1." Our particle *-tz* seems not to impose such a relationship, since it doesn't impose any analysis on S2; it merely points to something in S1 or in the broader preceding context. Nevertheless, even though it isn't a DM in Fraser's sense, it nonetheless supports text cohesion and "texture" as per Halliday and Hasan, by reaching back into previous text in order to keep it discourse current.

The suffixes *–tz* and *–x* are what Levinson (1983: 63) calls discourse deictics. To exemplify, he suggests a sentence like: *This is what phoneticians call creaky voice*, where the deictic *this* points not necessarily to a specific object in the physical context, but to a linguistic object (perhaps a sentence or series of sentences or an entire discourse) in the co-text of discourse.

5.7.2 A discourse function for *-x*

Although *–x* occurs frequently in Oscar's text, it doesn't occur as often as a discourse specifier as *–tz* does. There are only two clear occurrences in the limited

text that we will discuss here. In line 13, Oscar mentions that Julian had gone to sell his wares. Then in line 14 (repeated here as (50)), he says that we also went to sell. This is the first mention of the merchandise that we had brought to sell.

(50)   Ex   ***iky-x-jo***   qe,   oxe   qe   k'ayil
       and   similar-AUG-SPEC   us.EX three us.EX seller

       ti'j   k'axhjil-a   iqin-taq.
       regarding   merchandise-EX   carry-past
       And we as well, (being as) the three of us were salesmen of the stuff that had been brought.

He then goes on to talk about setting up a small table and laying out books for sale—all first mentions.

In line 18 (repeated here as (51)), the first word in the sentence is *noq-x* 'only.'

(51)   ***Noq-x***   te   t-lon-te   tnejil xjal, b'aj   ***tzaj***
       only-then   when   he-saw-it   first   person complete   come

       q'i'n   txqan-l   xjal.
       bring   all-remaining people
       When the first person saw our goods, he brought in everyone else as well.

Both the first person and everyone else are first mentions. There had been no inkling in the text of buyers up to this point. So both *ikyxjo* and *noqx* look forward into the text to what is coming. This contrasts sharply with the discourse use of *–tz*, which looks back in the text.

There is another difference in distribution between the two suffixes which may prove to be important. The *-x* suffix, when used as a discourse specifier, occurs

263

early in its containing sentence. In our three examples, it occurs affixed either to the first or second word in the sentence and it seems to take scope over the entire sentence. In contrast, -*tz* tends to occur at the end of its containing clause, and it seems to take scope only over the word that it is attached to, particularly if its host is a noun or verb. Of the eight occurrences as a discourse specifier, only once is it attached to a word other than a noun or verb. This is in line 5 where a noun (the trip) is implied, although the suffix is attached to *tu'n* 'regarding.' Also, this is the only instance where -*tz* is suffixed to a word early in the sentence.

Despite these distributional differences, it seems safe to consider that the affixes –*tz* and -*x* and work as a cohesion team in Mam discourse, specifying text as known or new.

In this chapter, I've traced the meaning and function of Mam directional forms from the intransitive verbs of direction to their corresponding directional auxiliaries to several affixal forms. In each instantiation of these terms we've seen a subtle effect on meaning. The full intransitives code deictic anchorage as part of their formal semantic character, a basic relationship between the form and the world. But we saw that with the directionals, although the same basic meaning holds true, deictic anchorage must be recalculated dependent upon the local context of speech. With the affixal forms, we saw a fairly stable sense of deictic anchorage and movement in relation to it, where the allomorphs –*tz* and –*x* serve to fine tune the directions coded in the fuller forms. But we also saw that these suffixes can be extended to meanings that seem not very directional in nature. For example, -*x* can be used as an augmentative, intensifier, or as an affix meaning 'all,' as in *tkyaqilx* 'all, every one.'

Finally, I suggested that the affixes *–tz* and *–x* are used to identify information in Mam discourse as discourse old or new.

A question that arises concerns the relationship among these different forms. Many formal theories would treat the intransitives and directionals as separate lexical entries. After all, most of them have different phonological shapes and a distinct distribution. And the different meanings of *–x* as 'away from speaker,' 'away from sentence subject,' 'augmentative,' 'intensifier' and 'inclusive affix' can be treated as a case of homonymy, where homophonous forms would have distinct meanings. Sweetser (1990) however, suggests that the regularity of meaning among multiple functions can be captured with a cognitive approach to meaning that privileges not the form as it relates to the world, but rather as it is interpreted by native speakers. A cognitive theory of meaning "takes not the objective 'real world,' but human perception and understanding of the world to be he basis for the structure of human language" (ibid.: 2). A cognitive model that assumes polysemy rather than homonymy privileges the point of view of native speakers, with all of their pragmatically informed schemata and cultural "grounds" against which to interpret speech.

In this study, I've tried to do just that, looking at the vocabulary and grammatical structures of centeredness in light of the cultural value of centeredness.

5.8 Relational nouns as an instantiation of centeredness

A final place where we will consider the projection of origo is as it relates to the use of Mam relational nouns, which are based in part on the physical body in

space. As Hanks says, "Body space has a schematic structure. . .and it is related to other spatial schemata by processes of analogy, homology and transformation" (1990: 81). The Mam use the vocabulary for certain body parts to recenter an origo from speaker center to some other projected center of reference and locate NPs in relation to a projected origo of the body in space. These relational nouns have "live" denotative meaning, such that a spatial relation is evoked in many grammatical relationships that are handled in other ways in other languages like English or Spanish. For example, the Mam will say that something is *twutz ja* 'in front of the house.' *Twutz* literally means 'its face (at the house's face).' Likewise something can be *twi' ja* 'on top of the house (at the house's head)' *ttzi ja* 'at the entrance to the house (at the house's mouth),' *ttxa'n ja* 'at the edge of the house (at the house's nose),' *ttxlaj ja* 'beside the house (at the house's side)' or *t-xe ja* 'under the house (at the house's root),' where *twi', ttzi, ttxa'n, ttxlaj* and *t-xe* mean 'its head, its mouth, its nose, its side and its root respectively.[14]

England describes the extensive use of relational nouns in Mam. "All sentence constituents except the verb, the direct agent, patient, or subject, and adverbs are indicated by relational noun phrases. This means that all nondirect cases and most locations occur in relational noun phrases" (1983: 153). This suggests that in order to speak at all, the Mam must take into account not only the deictic spatial relations of verbal semantics as discussed above, but also spatial relationships between NP's as expressed in body terminology that ground these relationships in

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[14]Some relational nouns are *not* possessed body parts (although all are possessed), and some relational noun phrases indicate not NP locative relations, but case relations.

space via analogy with the physical body. As Duranti says, "We often forget that the human body is the first instrument we experience" (1997: 322), mediating between our thoughts and the world. Although these relational nouns are used non-deictically (as per Fillmore's example in Chapter Two above regarding the location of the church and the town hall), they nevertheless have a sense of center, particularly in positional relations like 'in front of the house,' 'around the house,' 'above the house,' 'on the house,' 'under the house,' 'behind the house,' etc. where the house is seen as projected center stage, and the NPs located in relation to it are situated in association to the "body" of the house itself.

relational noun	usage	literal meaning
A.		
twutz	'before'	'its/his face'
ttzi	'at the entrance to'	'its/his mouth'
twi'	'on top of'	'its/his head'
ttxlaj	'beside'	'its/his side'
(tzkyel) ti'j	'behind'	'its/his back
ttxa'n	'at the edge'	'its/his nose'
B.		
tuk'a	'with'	'its/his companion
t-xe	'at the base'	'its root'
tu'n	'by, by means of,	
te	'to, of, for'	
txol	'between, among'	
ti'jila	'around'	
tib'aj	'over'	
tjaq'	'under'	
toj	'in'	
tzma (tsma?)	'at'	
tumil	'in the direction of'	

Table 5.5 Mam relational nouns

267

For example, Table 5.5 shows how relations coded by several English prepositions are coded in Mam. The nouns in set A of Table 5.4 reference body parts, while those in set B do not.

Sentences (52)-(57) exemplify the relational nouns in set A of Table 5.4, those which are based on body parts.

(52)   A xjal at ***twutz*** tja.   'The person is in front of (at the face of) his/her house.'

(53)   A nana at ***ttzi*** jul   'The woman is at the entrance to (at the mouth of) the cave'

(54)   Jun pich' at **twi'** ja   'A bird is on (at the head of) the house.'

(55)   Lu at **ttxlaj** ja.   'Here it is beside (at the side of) the house'

(56)   At jun tze **ti'jxi** ja.   'There is a tree behind (at the rear of) the house.'

(57)   Jun pich' at **ttxa'n** ja. 'A bird is at the drip edge (at the nose) of the house.

By stating that the Mam consider these relational nouns to have "live" denotative meaning, I mean that the Mam consider these terms in light of an actual body in space, even if the body in question belongs to a house or a car or a chair. There is wide agreement, for example, that the "nose" of a chair is the front edge of the seat. Plus, if something is in front of me, I wouldn't say *Lu jun xjal twutz nwutza* 'Here is a person at the face of my face,' but rather, *Lu jun xjal nwutza* 'Here is a person at my face,' where my own body is the basis of the relational use of the noun. In other words, the relational nouns have not been so grammaticalized that they have lost the "live" denotational meaning of the body in space and its accompanying sense of center.

What these relational nouns do is force an origo of 'other' into the context of speech. This holds for all of the relational nouns, not just those in Set A of Table 5.5. In every case the deictic anchorage shifts from the speaker to that of the "body" of the NP that follows the relational noun. For example, in (53) the person is situated in front of the house. This implies that the house has become the new anchor point of the sentence, and the person is situated not in terms of her location in regard to the speaker, but rather, in terms of the new anchor point, the house. In this case, the person is somewhere near the wall of the house in which the front door is located.

5.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have built on the notion that centeredness is a cultural theme and showed that it is a recurrent notion in the grammar as well. In Chapter Four we looked in detail at the way a number of lexical items are built around a sense of centeredness. In the present chapter I suggested that in similar fashion, the intransitive verbs of direction contain in their lexical meanings a reference location or deictic center. Four of these verbs (*tza:jil, xi'yil, po:nil* and *u:lil*) code the speaker as their deictic anchor or origo; four code 'other' as origo (*o:kil, e:lil, ja:wil*, and *kub'il*), and four code an arbitrary origo (*a:jil, iky'il, kyijil*, and *b'ajil*).

A corresponding set of directional auxiliaries is derived from these intransitive verbs of direction. They are phonologically reduced and their meaning, while consistent with that of their corresponding intransitive, is affected as well. Whereas the intransitives have deictic anchorage coded into their basic meaning, origo for the directionals is calculated pragmatically. The directionals can be further reduced

269

phonologically to single-phoneme suffixes, two of which, *-tz* and *–x*, we've looked at in this chapter. Although further phonologically reduced, we saw these suffixes still have full directional meaning just as their intransitive and directional counterparts. However, just as the directionals code meaning beyond that of their intransitives from which they derive, so the affixes have meaning and functions beyond those of the directionals. Nevertheless, we've seen that the Mam consider these meanings to be equivalent and that deictic anchorage must be tended to for each of the full intransitives, the directional auxiliaries and the directional suffixes.

I showed why I think that what seems to be grammaticalized forms of these directional affixes have come to have discourse function, based on the extended meanings of the forms for 'to come' and 'to go.' Educated Mam are willing to consider these as related to the directional forms, but most people think of them simply as homophonous to the directional affixes. They translate both discourse particles as *pues* in Spanish 'well' or 'then.'

In this chapter, we've seen how the notion of centeredness is a theme that runs through a number of grammatical categories, specifically the morphology (in terms of directional suffixes and relational nouns, both of which require deictic anchorage), the syntax (in the pervasive use of directional auxiliaries in transitive sentences and the high percentage of use of intransitive verbs of direction in Mam speech), and the discourse. At the level of discourse, we've looked at directional suffixes which I claim have the force of discourse deictics, particles which specify text as discourse old or new. We've also considered the use of couplets in Mayan ritual rhetoric (see

270

Chapter Four) as iconic to the notion of dualism which I claim is another instantiation of centeredness.

That deictic anchorage is basic to each of these grammatical categories makes the calculation of centeredness as important grammatically as we've seen it to be culturally. This, of course, is the basic premise of this paper, that centeredness functions as an organizing principle throughout Mam language and culture.

At a meting with Mam Evangelical village leaders in March, 2005, we were discussing instantiations of centeredness as a cultural theme. The gathered men affirmed that centeredness is indeed a formative principle in their lives, and Mesac said, only partly in jest, "This explains why our people are so hard to work with. Each of us thinks he is the center of everything." In saying this Mesac realized not only that the seeking of centeredness is a Mam cultural value, a motivating and organizing principle, something external and "out there" to be pursued, but the fact that each individual constitutes a center from which the pervasive Mam notion of movement and spatial relations is lexicalized by the language and grammaticized in the language makes it a principle that is internalized and all the more pervasive as well.

I consider Mesac's statement an affirmation of my premise that centeredness is both a cultural and grammatical theme. The seeking of centeredness and the construction of it in terms of architectonics, religious choice, the conception of health and illness and even the lexicalization of centeredness in –*k'u'j* and other terms discussed in Chapter Four situate centeredness as a cultural theme. But the idea of

271

oneself as center is a notion deriving from the habitual thought or fashion of speaking required by the grammar itself.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 What we've seen

In this dissertation, I've shown that centeredness is a cultural theme, a recurrent thread of cultural understanding and practice that points toward shared underlying values and world view. England says: "Such themes "override community differences; they are defined for cultural groups as a whole" (1978: 226). Martin adds that they "are part of the history and behavior of whole cultural groups" (1977: 366). A cultural theme is what Hale calls World View-1 "the central propositions or postulates in a people's theory of how things are in the world" (1986: 233).

I posited the existence of centeredness as a cultural theme by looking at four specific instantiations of it: the constructed world, health practice and illness etiology, religious choice, and the practice of daily life.

I suggested with Low (2000) and Bourdieu (2003 [1971]) that both the Latin American plaza and the Mayan homestead are microcosms of how the Maya think about the world. Gossen (1974) points out that the Chamula Tzotzil consider their town to be the navel of the earth.   In the same way that Chamula is considered the

epicenter of all that matters in the world, so Mayan homes are built around a patio that defines a center space in and around which all home activity takes place. I showed what happens when this center area is violated, for example when Timo wanted to add on to his homestead, that major renovation is required to reestablish an appropriate center space.

In addition, Low (2000, 1993) suggests that the Latin American plaza is iconic of the sense of center "with buildings arranged so as to symbolically equate the architectural center of civic power with the center of the universe," what she calls a "sacred geography" (2000:109). She goes on to suggest that the appropriation of such sacred space—the imagery of centeredness—may well have added a sense of gravitas to the invading Spaniards' eventual success in exerting hegemony over the Maya. I also cited an interview I had with Agustín where he talked about the plaza as a place of comfort, knowledge, peace, harmony and unity amidst diversity. The plaza is a grounded and physical center space where one truly belongs.

In terms of illness etiology, Redfield says, that good health involves "maintenance of that median condition which the native expresses in terms of heat and cold" (ibid.). Diseases considered hot by the Maya (malaria, urinary infections, worms, and illnesses caused by sorcery) are considered caused by overexposure to things or situations considered hot, while cold diseases (swelling, measles, rheumatism, anemia and *susto* (fright)) are caused by overexposure to cold. Diseases are treated with herbs, teas, medicines, foods and ceremonies that are meant to counteract the overabundance of hot or cold built up in the ailing body. Cooler

274

medicines and therapeutic foods are brought to bear on hot illnesses, while warmer medicines and foods are used to treat cold illnesses.

This idea is more than simply the notion of balance. Balance, rather, is a strategy for attaining centeredness, what Redfield (1941: 128) called "that median condition" between hot and cold. Treating illness utilizes a balance paradigm in order to restore centeredness to the body, a sense of *b'a'n*, wellbeing and centeredness. I have suggested that it is centeredness—"that median condition"—not the balance or reciprocity used to attain it, that is the goal of the Maya.

Perhaps the most powerful picture of the notion of centeredness is the Mayan religious concept of the *heart of heaven* conceived as both a personality and a position. As Martin (1977) suggests (following England, 1976), there is a Mayan notion of the convergence of person and place. Mountain deities are identified with the high places they inhabit. Saints are identified with the towns for which they intercede (Maurer Avalos, 1993: 231), people identify not so much with the larger language group, but with the *municipio* where they were born. And, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, there is no Mam word for the notion of "family;" rather they speak of "those in the same house," where location is given priority over kinship in expressing this important relationship of an individual to his or her family. They occupy the same space.

In Chapter Three I looked at Mayan religion in light of reciprocity—offering to the gods a gift commensurate with what a supplicant has requested of them. The *Popol Vuh* lays out a give-and-take relationship between humanity and the gods that is mutually beneficial and mutually dependent. I suggested that this idea of

275

agreement or bargaining in this area of life is a metaphorical center space that promises a life of harmony and proper relationships between people and the gods, people and the land, and people and each other. Recall that Edmonson claimed that the Mayan word for religion is *ok olal* 'entering inwardness,' which is tantamount to seeking centeredness.

Historically, this balance was achieved, at least on major occasions, by human sacrifice, offering the red blood of a victim to the gods so that they would send the red dawn of a new day. Nájera discusses the heart as the center and essence of humanity, and it is this that is offered to the gods in exchange for the equilibrium essential to life here in the world.

I also suggested that to the extent that people are unable to achieve the kind of personal centeredness that they seek from their faith, the door is opened to faith alternatives. Citing Scotchmer and my own interviews, it was the lack of personal balance that drove many Mam to consider new ways to conceive of their relationship to the supernatural. I suggested that the unprecedented conversion to Evangelical Christianity among the Mam is not necessarily a rejection of "Mayanness," but rather a confirmation of the importance of the cultural value of centeredness and the Mam's willingness to pursue it. Indeed, the Mam phrase for repentance and turning to faith in Christ is *tu'n tajtz ti'j tanmin* 'to return home to one's heart.' I suggested that the use of *heart* in this phrase and in light of the heart as conceived as the essence of humanity and the food of the gods presents powerful support to the salience of centeredness to the Mam. And as mentioned above, reciprocity is not a goal in and of itself. Rather, it is a strategy for attaining that median condition—centeredness.

276

I also discussed how the Mam talk about centeredness. We looked at terms such as *niky'jin* 'half, middle,' *tanmin* 'one's heart,' *–k'u'j* 'stomach,' *t-xilin* 'one's essence,' *nuk'b'il* 'peace,' *txolb'in* 'order,' *tumil* 'one's direction,' and *jiky'in* 'straight,' all of which point to a sense of being grounded in some kind of moral or actual center space. I also looked at Mam agreement protocol and how they talk about making a deal or coming to agreement. These phrases, *tu'n qkyij toj b'a'n* 'that we remain in goodness, *tu'n qten toj wen* 'that we occupy goodness,' *tu'n kymujb'in qyol* 'to pair up our words, or *tu'n kymujb'in qib'* 'to pair up ourselves,' commit both sides to an agreed upon compromise, a social center space where both can be happy with the agreement.

In addition to seeing that centeredness is a cultural theme, we also saw that it is a grammatical theme as well. England defines grammatical themes as "the underlying organizational principles of a language linking structure with semantics" (1978: 226). Martin adds that they are "pervasive semantic categories with profound grammatical force" (1977: 366). They are what Hale calls "lexico-semantic themes or motifs which function as integral components in a grammar" (1986: 234).

I suggested that the formal notion of a deictic center could be considered the grammatical corollary to the cultural theme of centeredness. I discussed how the closed set of twelve intransitive verbs of motion can be analyzed in terms of motion in reference to a deictic center, either speaker center, other-center or an arbitrary center. From this set of intransitive verbs is derived a corresponding set of directional auxiliary verbs that maintain the basic meaning of their intransitive counterparts, but extend it beyond the simple notion of movement in relation to a deictic center. I

277

suggested that motion about such a center is part of the lexical entry for the intransitive verbs of motion, while the directional auxiliaries' precise meaning must be calculated pragmatically. From four of these directionals are derived a set of single-phoneme suffixes that denote direction from a deictic center, or other meanings related to movement toward or from a norm of some kind. Finally, I showed how grammaticalized versions of two of these suffixes (-*tz* and –*x*) function in Mam discourse to tag information as discourse old or discourse new.

I also looked at the Mam relational nouns, a closed set of preposition-like words that establish relations between noun phrases in Mam. About half of these relational nouns are possessed body parts that express relations such as in front of, on top of, at the side of, behind, etc. These forms as well, depend on the notion of the live metaphor of a body or center from which these relations are calculated.

The pervasiveness of the Mam intransitive verbs of motion, the directionals and the directional affixes, plus the relational nouns guarantees that virtually every utterance requires attention to the grammatical concept of an origo of deictic center.

Finally, I discussed the use of couplets in Mayan ritual discourse as iconic of our principal of centeredness where the balancing of notions as in the following invocation from the *Popol Vuh* petitioning the gods to create human beings, is a strategy for attaining centeredness:

> Midwife, matchmaker,
> our grandmother, our grandfather,
> Xpiyacoc, Xmucane,
> let there be planting, let there be dawning
> of our invocation, our sustenance, our recognition
> by the human work, the human design,
> the human figure, the human form.

278

So be it, fulfill your names:
Hunahpu Possum, Hunahpu Coyote,
bearer twice over, begetter twice over,
Great Peccary, Great Coati,
lapidary, jeweler, sawyer, carpenter,
plate shaper, bowl shaper,
incense maker, master craftsman,
Grandmother of Day, Grandmother of Light.

(Tedlock, 1996: 69)

I suggested following Neuenswander that the use of couplets is an instantiation of the Mayan value of dualism mentioned by many including Morley (1956), Gossen (1986), and Coe (1999) as thematic among the Maya. Neuenswander says, "The aspect of the Achí language selected as the focus of [her] study is the stylistic characteristic of rhetorical parallelism or, specifically in Achí, the formation of couplets in poetic discourse" (1977: 1). She says that in dualism, a single entity is in view, or two aspects of a single entity. I have suggested that this sense of "unity out of diversity" is a paradigm of balance that, while highlighting the two sides of the dualistic frame, at the same time points to the fulcrum upon which the balance hinges.

6.2 Where do we go from here?

A dissertation usually gives rise to more questions than it actually answers—particularly for the writer. Among recommendations for further study, I'd like to suggest several:

First is the idea of homonymy between the ergative markers and the possessive markers. They are identical. Since relational nouns are possessed, there is a sense of center involving a body in space. If we could consider the ergative

279

marking on verbs to be possessed action as opposed to simply person marking, there might be some interesting discoveries.

Second, I ignored many of the allomorphs of the directionals as well as other directionally-related affixes (see footnote 9, Chapter Five). Here my goal was to present a principled few. An exhaustive study—probably by a native speaker—would be a wonderful addition to what little we as outsiders know about Mam.

Third, would be other areas of life where centeredness might be an organizing principle. For example, Hendrickson says that the Mayan themselves " explicitly argue for the worth of indigenous dress as a symbol for all things Maya" (1995: 196). She suggests (ibid.: 195) that "our mother tongue" and "our costume" are the closest and most emotional of connections that we have with any cultural object. Figure 6.1 shows a *huipil*, a woman's traditional blouse with the head opening in the center, circled by a motif of the sun and other symmetrical figures. The rich ornamentation and symbolism of Mayan weaving would be an important place to seek analogues of centeredness (see De Jongh Osborne, chapter 8).

I also think it would be helpful to pursue the idea that direction and origo are part of the "lexical entry" for intransitive verbs of motion, whereas these are calculated pragmatically for directionals. Such a study would impinge on issues of mutual interest to practitioners of both semantics and pragmatics, and it would help us understand some of the inner computations the Mam employ in order to assign pragmatic meaning.
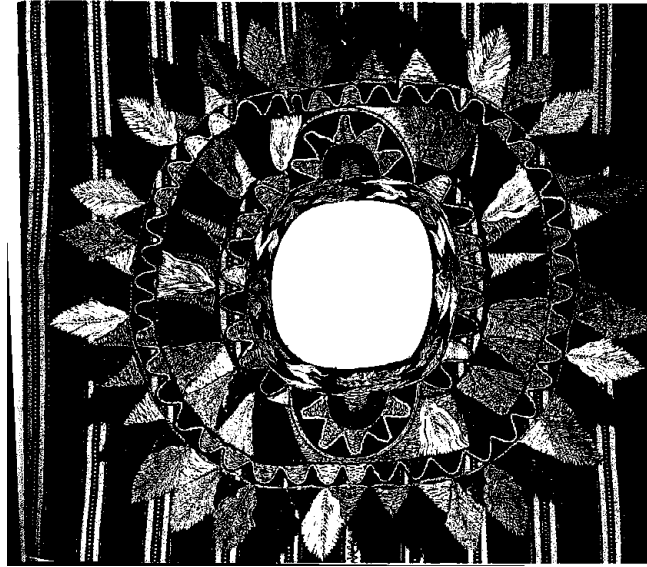
Figure 6.1 Embroidered neckline of Kaqchikel huipil; from Altman and West (1992: 4).

6.3 So why the commotion?

I believe that we have established the importance of a sense of center in the cultural and linguistic practice of the Mam—that centeredness is indeed both a cultural and grammatical theme. The age old question remains: Is there a causal relationship between the two? We would certainly think that what is important to people, they code in ways such that such would be easy to talk about. This was Sapir's view, and it was wrapped up mostly in the lexicon. Following Boas, he said: "Vocabulary is a very sensitive index of the culture of a people" (1949: 27). The words and lexical meanings of a people group make explicit those issues and features that are salient to speakers. Languages are different because cultures are different. It is not the case that we simply have different words across cultures for the same

concepts. Rather, as I said in Chapter One, the semantic pie is cut in different ways by different people groups. Each culture has its categories, its fashion of speaking, "its genius," according to Sapir (1921: 32). Our goal as linguists is to plumb the depths of that genius to see and describe how it works as an integrated conceptual system. As anthropologists, we try to understand how such a system works "on the ground," i.e. how people talk about the things that matter to them and how they live in the specific context that their language has created.

Hymes (1966) recognized this. He said that just as language affects culture, so culture affects language and privileges certain fashions of speaking, certain ways of cutting the pie.

That said, I believe with Everett (2004: 37), Wierzbicka (1997: 5), and Hoijer (1954: 100) that culture basically drives language. There seems to be nothing about any universal properties of language that coerces any particular cultural analogues. Rather, it appears that culture, as its members interact with the real world, selects among the potential ways to slice up the semantic pie that privileges a certain linguistic code. What is important to people of a culture, they name, and what they name they can talk about. It is the grammar of this "talking about" that interested Whorf, those fashions of speaking or grammatical themes that forced themselves upon the minds of speakers by their obligatory nature. As Boroditsky and Schmidt (forthcoming) point out, if our native language codes gender, then gender becomes a salient and inescapable theme by which we categorize the world. That gender is also reflected in the reality of how the world works only serves to solidify the theme as a legitimate understanding of the world. This is why cultures are so resistant to change.

Like Abel's mother in Chapter Three, she has seen her perception of how the world works confirmed time after time after time.

So at the same time that I claim that culture basically drives language, it is language that carries culture and instills it in those who learn the language in the very act of watching it be affirmed in the real world. This is behind what Enfield (2002 says about language and culture. They are not only connected, but "interconstitutive, through overlap and interplay between people's cultural practices and preoccupations and the grammatical structures they habitually employ" (2002, 3-4).

This sense that language and culture are interconstitutive reflects Bourdieu's notion of a structured and structuring *habitus* (1990: 52) where language and culture are mutually implying, i.e. language realizes the culture of those who speak it, while at the same time it is through language practice that culture emerges and is built up over time, or, as Duranti claims, language "both presupposes and brings about ways of being in the world (1997: 1).

Yet to claim that language and culture mutually imply is not to show that they do. In Chapter Four I laid out a rubric that I would follow in this study to show the nature of the overlap between cultural and grammatical theme, and to try to "prove" some kind of relationship. I suggested that we adopt a different kind of proof regimen that dealt not with positivism, but hermeneutics—the interpretation of events not by measuring them, "but through understanding meanings, intentions, values, norms, or rules, and [reflecting] upon what has been understood" (Itkonen, 1978: 20). To review the "proof" rubric that I suggested in chapter Four:

1. Itkonen reminds us that meaning exists only in social context (ibid.: 63-64). So, instead of trying to extract ourselves from social context, I embraced it. This participant observation technique was our main strategy for understanding the emic categories and point of view of the Mam.

2. We sought historical continuities. If cultural and grammatical themes are indeed an appropriate window on Mam culture, they should not only be pervasive within the culture, but they should be instantiated historically among the greater Maya diaspora. By citing scholars from throughout Mesoamerica and by looking at the historical record (the Popol Vuh, cross-group comparison, and early writings), we've seen that this theme is both geographically widespread and persistent through time.

3. We sought patterns in the data that we observed, both linguistic and cultural; the more disparate and atomistic the data, the more helpful an encompassing theory "within which the observations find a natural place" (Chafe, 1994:21). And while the patterns were independently verified (see Chapter Three), we were able to unite them under the common cultural umbrella of centeredness. Hymes says that a basic practice of anthropological study is "the showing of a pattern, fashion of speaking, or style among a number of traits" (1966: 117). This was the goal of my study—to explain how such diverse observations as religious choice, the constructed world, the perception of health and illness, daily language use and aspects of the formal grammar of Mam are all instantiations of a single theme.

4. Itkonen says that the people themselves—the Mam—must be able to understand and accept the description arrived at in our research (1978: 64). This is

what Zaharlick (p. c.) calls the "Aha! factor." When Mesac said that the idea of centeredness "explains why our people are so hard to work with. Each of us thinks he is the center of everything," he was affirming the overlap of cultural and grammatical theme. He realized not only that the seeking of centeredness is a Mam cultural value, a motivating and organizing principle, something external and "out there" to be pursued, but the fact that each individual constitutes a center from which the pervasive Mam notion of movement and spatial relations is lexicalized by the language and grammaticized in the language makes it a principle that is internalized and all the more pervasive. The other men gathered at this meeting experienced just such an "aha moment," affirming that deictic anchorage and a cultural center space are cut from the same cloth.

5. I suggested that when someone acts outside of the cultural norm, i.e. if centeredness is ignored or flouted, we can expect and seek perturbations in behavior. A cultural value becomes salient via its absence. I discussed this in terms of Timo's patio. When centeredness was considered compromised, a major renovation had to take place to reestablish the central patio. I had some repair work of my own to tend to in the case of the offended husband, where the center space of communal peace and tranquility was upended by my careless indiscretion.

Similarly, when parents want to give advice to their children who have wandered from the norm, they talk in such a way to bring the prodigal back to the center, the road of life that should be traversed down the middle without deviating to the right or left.

285

6. Finally, we expected our theme to be manifested in many ways in the daily life of the Mam. In Chapter Four, I showed how centeredness is pervasive as an organizing principle among the Mam and how the vocabulary of centeredness is coded lexically in a number of terms and in the details of agreement protocol.

These six observations perhaps don't prove that language and culture are intraconstitutive in a measurable, empirical way, but I believe that I have satisfied the hermeneutic approach to the problem, interpreting data in a patterned way, consistent with how the Mam themselves view the world, their place in it, their description of it, and their practice within it.

APPENDIX

1. Jun   qlixje,   o   ***xi'-y***   toj   jun   q-b'e-y
    one   morning   we   went-EX   in   a   our-trip-EX

        k'ayil.
        to sell
    One morning we went on a trip to sell (at a market).

2. Oxa   q-b'aj-a;   o   ***xi'-y***   tuk'a   t-karr   Josué.
    Three our-number-EX   we   went-EX   with   his-car Josué
    There were three of us that went in Josué's car.

3. A-tzi'n   q-b'aj-a,   a   Julián   ex-sin
    that-then   our-number-EX   that   Julián   and-then

        ayi'n-tz-a.
        me-then-EX
    So our number included (Josué), Julián and me.

4. A-tzi'n   te   ***q-xi'-y***,   ***tb'anil-x***-ch'in   n-b'e
    that-then   when we-went-EX   very.nice-AUG.a.little   my-road

        te   q-kanin   Twi'muj.
        when   we-arrived   Twimuj
    Now when we went, the road that took us as far as Twimuj was pretty nice.

5. Noq-tzin   ***tu'n-tz-jo***   te   ***q-xi'-ch'il-tz-a***
   Only-then   regarding-then-SPEC   when   we-went-a.bit-then-EX

       tu'n   q-kanin   Triunfo,
       in.order.to   we-arrived   Triunfo

       nya-xix   wen   b'e
       not-very   good   road
   Regarding this (trip) when we went (from Twimuj) to Triunfo, the road was
   not very good.

6. Ma   ***nin-x***   jul,   ex-sin   manyor   ***quq-x-tz***.
   quite big-AUG   holes   and-then   much   dust-AUG-then
   There were big holes and a lot of dust.

7. Te   ***q-xi'-y***   Txolja o-taq   tz'ok   wajxaq
   When   we-went-EX   Txolja PERF-PAS   entered   eight

       tajlal   te   qlixje,
       its count   of   morning
   When we left Txolja (Comitancillo), it was eight in the morning.

       Ex   q-kanin   o-taq   tz'ok   lajaj   te   qlixje.
       and   we-arrived   PERF-PAS   entered   ten   of   morning
   And we arrived (at Triunfo) at ten in the morning.

9. Ponix-jo   tal   najb'il ja'   o   ***qanin-tz-a***.
   Nice-SPEC   DIM   place   where we   arrived-then-EX
   The place where we went was very nice.

10. A-tzin   t-xilin   ulne   iky-jo   tze'n-ku
    that-then   its-essence   coming   similar-SPEC like-down

       b'e   ***n-tzaj*** xkye ***tzma-x***   Twi' Chlub'.
       road   PROG-come   begin at-go   Tuichilupe.
    The way we went was similar to the road that comes toward us from the town
    of Tuichilupe.

11. A-tzi'n   te   ***q-kanin-tz-a***,
    that-then   when   we-arrived-then-EX

       ma   ***nin-x***   xjal   n-k'ayin-taq   Triunfo.
       very   big-AUG   people PROG-sell-PAS   Triunfo
    When we arrived, a lot of people were selling there in Triunfo.

288

12. N-we'   karr   ja'lin,
PROG-stop   car   now
Now the car stops

13. ex   b'e'x   ***xi'***   te Julián   k'ayil.
and   PUNCT   went he Julián   to sell
and Julián went off to sell.

14. Ex   ***iky-x-jo***   qe,   oxe   qe   k'ayil
and   similar-then-SPEC   us.EX three us.EX seller

    ti'j   k'axhjil-a   iqin-taq.
    regarding   merchandise-EX   carry-PAS
And we as well, (being as) the three of us were salesmen of the stuff that had
been brought.

15. Ex   tib'aj jun   tal   netz' mexh-jo
and on   a   DIM   little table-SPEC

    o   k'ayini'-y   toj   plas.
    we   sold-EX   in   plaza
We sold (our things) on a little table at the plaza.

16. Ex   a-tzi'n   q-k'axhjil-a   iqin-taq:
and that-then   our-merchandise   carry-PAS

    tajlal ab'q'e, jun   t-u'j   San Juan,
    counter year one   his-book   San Juan

    ex   ma   ***nin-x-taq***   txqal u'j.
    and   very big-AUG-PAS   other book
And the goods we brought to sell (were) calendars, Gospels of San Juan and a
lot of other books.

17. Kub' yek'-aj-tzi'n-jo   tal   q-k'axhjil-a.
down show-PASS-then-SPEC   DIM our-merchandise-EX
We laid out our little bit of merchandise.

18. ***Noq-x***   te   t-lon-te   tnejil xjal, ***b'aj***   ***tzaj***
    only-then   when he-saw-it   first   person complete   come

    q'i'n   txqan-l   xjal.
    bring   all-remaining people
    When the first person saw our goods, he brought in everyone else as well.

19. Tze'n-la   ***e:'l-ila***   toj   ky-wutz   xjal-la
    how-uncertain leave-uncertain   in   their-minds   people-uncertain

    What could the people have been thinking?

20. Noq   b'aj-jo   ka'ylaj.
    only   complete-SPEC   amazed
    They were amazed.

21. Ok   ten-pe-tzi'n   te   ***Josué-tz***   yolil   kyi'jjo   jni'
    Enter begin-?-then he   Josué-then   to.speak   about   all

    u'j   toj   q-yol
    book in   our-language
    Then Josué began to talk about all the books in our language.

22. Ex   nchi   b'in-xjal   ti'j   u'j   ***n-ja-tz***
    and   PROG-they   listen-people regarding   book PROG-up-then

    u'jin-taq.
    read-PAS
    and the people listened to the book that was being read.

23. Ex   ***iky-x-taq***   we-ji'-y   noq-taq   ***n-xi***
    and   also-AUG-PAS   I-EMPH-EX   only-PAS   PROG-go

    bi'n   we.
    listen me
    And even I myself was listening,

24. tu'n   tnejil maj   in   ***xi'***   we'   k'ayil tuk'a Josué.
    since first   time   I   go   EMPH to.sell with   Josué
    since it was the first time I had ever gone to sell with Josué.

25. At-taq   **_n-e:x_**   laq'ol-te   tu'j   Marks
    exist-PAS   PROG-leave   buy-INF-it   book   Mark
    There were some who bought the book of St. Mark

26. mo   ti'j-jo   txqan-l   u'j-taq
    or   regarding-SPEC   other-remaining   book-PAS
    or some of the other books.

27. Ma   **_nin-x_**   xjal   **_e:-x_**   k'ay-il   toj-jo
    very   many-AUG   people leave-go   sell-INF   in-SPEC

    k'ayb'il   a';
    market   that
    A large number of people went to sell at that market.

28. noq   ja'-chaq-ku   n-chi   **_b'aj_**   **_tza:j-e._**
    only   where-disperse-down PROG-they   complete   come-HAB
    (God only knows) where all these people come from.

29. Ex   **_xi_**   ky-laq'o'n   ky-u'j.
    and   go   they-bought   their-books
    And they bought books.

30. Tu'n-pe-tzi'n, o   k'ayin   qe   wen.
    for-?-then   we   sold   us.EX   well (bien)
    For this reason, the books sold well.

31. Ex   nya   jotx   **_b'aj_**   loq'in.
    and   not   everyone   complete   buy
    And not (even) everyone bought.

32. At   te   noq   nkanin   ka'yil,
    exist   he   only   PROG-arrive to sell
    There are those who are coming only to sell

33. ex   mina   Ø   loq'in ni   jun   u'j.
    and   no   he   buy   nary   one   book
    and they didn't buy a single book.

34. At-taq   te   **_n-e-x_**   tlaq'o'-n-taq   tu'j
    exist-PAS   he   PROG-leave-go   buy-NONFUT-PAS   his books
    There were those who went to buy books

35. tu'n **_n-ok_**   tkay'in-taq   tu'n   b'an-taq   te   mos
    since PROG-enter see-PAS   that   able-PAS   he   non-Mam

    yolin toj   q-yol
    speak in   our-language.
    simply because they heard a foreigner speaking our language.

36. B'aj   **_k'ayin-tz-a_**   ja'lin,
    Complete   sell-then-EX   now
    Then (we) finished selling,

37. ex   o-taq   tz'ok   kab'lajaj   te   q'ij,
    and   PERF-PAS   enter   twelve   of   day
    and it had passed 12 o'clock noon

38. ja'   **_q-niq'u'n-tz-a_**   q-k'axhjil-a.
    where we-arrange-then-EX   our-merchandise-EX
    there where we had set up our merchandise (to sell).

39. Ex   b'e'x   o   **_a:j-tz-tz-a_**,
    and   PUNCT   we   return.home-come-then-EX
    And we returned home

40. tu'n   **_q-u:l-a_**   kyxol aj   Txolja.
    in.order.to   we-arrive-EX among resident   Comitancillo
    in order to come again to our own pueblo.

292

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