

TZINTZUNTZAN WEDDING: A STUDY IN CULTURAL COMPLEXITY*

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I

Social anthropologists are becoming increasingly aware that the rules of social behavior are conceptually distinct from the realities of that behavior. Recently both Firth (1959:341-346) and Beattie (1964:37-38) have refined this analytical distinction by suggesting that there exist three separate, though closely interrelated, dimensions of behavior: first, a dimension of ideals, that is, what people think ought to happen; second, a dimension of expectations, or what people think does happen; and finally, a dimension of reality, or what actually happens, as might be recorded by some hypothetical observer with perfect perceptual objectivity. Theoretically, ideal forms of social relationships and behavior could be identical with expectations and actual conduct. Needless to say, however, behavior does not always conform to ideals, nor is it always expected to. And for one reason or another, unanticipated circumstances may impose themselves on a social situation, transforming it into something quite different from what anyone had either wanted or foreseen.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine the complex interplay of ideals, expectations, and reality in a Mexican peasant wedding, and to highlight some of the prominent forces which make the reality of social life differ from what people expect or would like it to be. After a brief methodological statement, I shall begin my analysis with a sketch of the most noteworthy features of weddings in the community under consideration. I shall follow with an intensive case study of a single wedding. The paper concludes with a theoretical discussion of the nature of culture based upon the data presented in the preceding sections. Throughout the paper I shall use the term "wedding" in a broad sense to refer to a whole series of events which takes place from the time a couple makes public

their plan to marry through the day of the actual religious ceremony which officially unites them as man and wife. This definition is not necessarily meant to be cross-cultural, but is rather designed for the analytical purposes of this paper alone.

Data for the analysis come from Tzintzuntzan, a community of about twenty-four hundred peasants (1967) located on the shores of Lake Pátzcuaro in the state of Michoacán, Mexico. Almost all the villagers are Spanish-speaking mestizos, all are religious Catholics, and none possess disproportionately great economic or political power. A full description of the personality, society and culture of the Tzintzuntzeños, and how these people have been affected by changes during the past several decades, is provided in two major publications by Professor George M. Foster (1948 and 1967), who has examined the village from a variety of perspectives for nearly twenty-five years, and who returns to the village periodically for ongoing study.

As a result of a series of circumstances, my wife and I became marriage godparents to a Tzintzuntzan couple, whose wedding was planned and took place while we were in the field. Professor Foster and his wife, Mary L. Foster, were also in the village at the time of the wedding. Because of their ethnic identity with my wife and me, and because of the relative age difference between them and us, they came to fill the roles of our biological parents, who of course were not present. Each of us had an important part to play in the actual wedding proceedings. Thus, information on the wedding, which provides the empirical basis for the analysis, was collected through the method of participant observation in the strictest sense of the term.

Direct participation provided all of us with an invaluable opportunity for data collection. In order to learn how to play our roles correctly, we were permitted, even expected, to ask an unlimited variety of questions about proper wedding procedures and what we might encounter. This gave us access to the ideals and expectations of the villagers. Participation in the ceremonies and festivities themselves enabled us to determine what actually occurred during the wedding. All things considered,

the four of us, with various degrees of anthropological training and experience behind us, were placed in an unusually good position for an intensive analysis of the events.

Although it is somewhat uncommon for anthropologists to play such a prominent role in the life cycle rites of the people they study, this involvement did not necessarily "contaminate" the proceedings or the data, making them less "pure" or authentic, as some anthropologists might contend. Certain kinds of data, those which Berreman aptly refers to as "back region secrets" (1962:11), inevitably remained unrevealed to us because of the impression which the villagers as a whole wanted to create for us of a smoothly functioning wedding. However, because of our position as actors rather than as outside observers, much more of this back region, such as strained inter-relationships between families, was revealed to us than otherwise might have been the case. We were constantly confronted by discrepancies, sometimes blatant and sometimes subtle, between what we were told and what we observed. This sharpened our awareness that in some sense people were putting on performances, not only for us but also for other parties at the wedding. We consequently tried to get behind the staged presentation to the concealed motivations and actions of those involved in the wedding. Further, as godparents we willingly played the ritual and social roles as they were explained to us and obviously expected of us. Because of our social position, we fit neatly into the already existing system of patron-client relationship, which villagers often establish with more prosperous or influential outsiders. Far from limiting the kinds of data we could obtain or distorting our image of the social situation, our involvement opened up wide avenues of exploration which otherwise might never have come to our attention.

II

Weddings are among the most elaborate life cycle occasions in Tzintzuntzan. Throughout an impressive array of rituals and festivities, weddings bring together a great number of villagers, many of whom utilize

the occasion to establish or validate the dyadic bonds which are the primary source of social integration in the village. Wedding procedures are carried out with meticulous care and formality. This is the time when people assume that most actions have symbolic meaning for social relationships, and that all actions will be the subject of close scrutiny by everyone present.

A sketch of the ideal wedding in Tzintzuntzan will highlight the main features of the occasion. A wedding is almost always the culmination of a period of courtship during which a young couple decides to get married. Ideally, formal wedding arrangements are preceded by the pedido, the request, in which a representative of the boy--his father, baptismal godfather, and/or the village priest--goes to the house of the girl, armed with a gift of liquor, to ask her father for his consent to the union. Although the pedido is clearly the preferred form of initiating a marriage, and the sole method sanctioned by the village priest, it characterizes only a small percentage¹ of Tzintzuntzan families, usually the upwardly mobile ones.

By far the most frequent means for initiating a marriage in Tzintzuntzan is the robo, literally "robbery." The robo, a practice which has also been described for another central Mexican village (Diaz 1964), is a form of bride-stealing in which an unmarried man, sometimes with the help of friends, carries off and dishonors the girl he wishes to marry. Although people sometimes like to think that the man forcibly abducts and rapes the woman, thus practically coercing her into marriage, in almost all cases the robo is accomplished with the full consent of the woman and after a great deal of planning on the part of both parties.

Although the robo is not the ideal form of marriage in Tzintzuntzan, it clearly lies within the expectations of the villagers. Once accomplished, it triggers a neatly prescribed series of events. After the robo, the young couple temporarily remain together, either in the home of some third party--usually a relative, godfather, or friend of the boy--or in the home of the boy's parents, if they have given consent to the union.

Two or three days after the elopement, the boy's father, generally accompanied by several of the boy's godparents, goes to the home of the girl's father in order to hacer las paces, to assuage his anger and make peace between the families. Even though the girl's father may not actually be angry at the abduction of his daughter, he usually acts the part. But, as the folk explanation goes, he slowly comes under the effects of the alcohol brought by the boy's father to the paces, and is gradually swung around to a position of reconciliation. Actually, the girl's father has very little decision to make, since the elopement virtually nullifies his daughter's eligibility for marriage to anyone but her present suitor.

After the paces, preparations begin for the civil marriage ceremony, which usually takes place the first Saturday after the paces. The civil ceremony is required by Mexican law, though the Tzintzuntzeños regard it merely as an expression of serious intent to marry, similar to the procuring of a marriage license in the United States. Directly after the civil ceremony, the wedding party marches to the priest's office for the presentación, during which the couple and their fathers officially inform him of the wedding plans and individually receive from him a few minutes of religious counsel. The groom's family then serves a large mole dinner (a feast dish) in honor of the bride's parents. If all has gone well to this point, the girl returns to her own home to await the religious ceremony, which takes place anywhere from three weeks to two months later. There is always pressure from the priest for a physical separation between the girl and the future husband until after the religious ceremony.

In the interval between the civil and religious ceremonies, the father of the groom, sometimes after consultation with the bride's family, chooses marriage godparents for the couple. The marriage godparents are ritual sponsors to the couple and, in the view of the villagers, no couple may be married without such sponsorship. In addition to acting as attendants to the couple throughout the religious ceremony, the godparents are responsible for providing a large wedding breakfast at their own house

following the wedding Mass, and for hiring a band for the day of the wedding. They also may buy the couple the arras, or thirteen pieces of silver, the bridal bouquet, the lazo (a decorated yoke-shaped cord which is placed over the heads of the couple), and rings, all of which are used during the wedding Mass.²

As in parts of Spain (Pitt-Rivers 1958:424-426), the actual wedding ceremony in Tzintzuntzan is relatively unimportant in a social sense. That is, although a couple must perform the Catholic marriage rite in order to be considered legitimately married, attendance at the wedding Mass is relatively unimportant for all but the godparents (and, of course, the couple themselves). The really crucial social occasions immediately precede and follow the Mass.

The night before the wedding ceremony, the important members of a wedding party and their guests gather at the home of the bride's parents for the benediction and pozole dinner. The benediction is a folk religious occasion during which various people who have moral authority over the couple--their parents, and godparents of baptism, confirmation, and marriage--publicly give the couple a few words of advice on how to conduct themselves religiously and honorably in marriage, and confer a blessing upon them. Directly after the benediction, the marriage godparents ceremonially become compadres with various members of the bride's biological and ritual kindred.

The bride's family then serves an elaborately prepared hominy-like feast dish, pozole, to the entire wedding party. Toward the end of the meal, the bride's parents and the marriage godparents publicly enact an important series of ritualized invitations and food exchanges, which at times involve the services of intermediaries. Ideally, the evening ends with the bride and groom returning to spend the night at the house of their marriage godparents, who are supposed to help them with preparations for the events of the following day.

The couple is married early the next morning at Mass. The day's festivities begin when the couple and their marriage godparents emerge

from the church amidst band music and streams of confetti. The entire wedding party congregates and marches to the house of the godparents, who serve a large breakfast, followed by liquor and beer. As at the pozole dinner the previous evening, important ritual exchanges are made between the bride's parents and her new godparents.

The breakfast ends early in the afternoon, when a messenger arrives from the house of the groom to inform the party that the fiesta dinner is prepared. With the band still blaring, everyone parades to the groom's house for a large meal of chicken and turkey mole, made at the expense of the groom's father. The couple's parents and marriage godparents perform still more ceremonial exchanges and retire once again to a room to establish additional ritual kinship ties. On this occasion, the marriage godparents become compadres with the groom's parents and with any other eligible people from the groom's ritual or biological family.

After several hours of dancing and drinking which follow the dinner, the marriage godparents invite everyone back to their house for more of the same. At the end of the long wedding day all return to their homes except the newlyweds, who stay on with their godparents for eight days, which culminate in a private dinner prepared for the godparents by the bride.

Such in brief is the elaborate course of procedures for a wedding in Tzintzuntzan. It should be noted that several prominent developments take place during the day and a half of concentrated activity which surround the wedding Mass. First, crucial ritual bonds, carrying strong social implications, are established between various pairs of individuals. Aside from the obvious case of the marriage itself, the most important bonds established are those between new compadres. The historical background and general characteristics of the compadrazgo, or ritual co-parenthood, have been fully described elsewhere (see, e.g., Foster 1953, Mintz and Wolf 1950). It is enough to point out here that the compadrazgo is a mechanism by which the parents and godparents of a child enter into

a religiously sanctioned relationship which immediately confers upon them certain rights, obligations, and mandatory forms of behavior.

Particular rites of passage in the life of the child become crucial occasions for establishing such ritual kinship ties. In Tzintzuntzan a wedding is among the most important of these rites because at this time the parents, grandparents, confirmation godparents, and marriage godparents of both the bride and groom all become eligible to establish compadrazgo ties with one another. Through this "blanketing-in" of relationships, as Foster calls it (1967:83), an extremely large number of people may acquire additional compadres.

In addition to providing an occasion for establishing compadrazgo ties, the wedding events include numerous food and liquor exchanges which symbolically validate the new ties. These exchanges, all performed in public, assure the compadres and the wedding guests that, in spite of the abduction which necessitated the marriage, the relationships between all parties concerned are now smoothly and securely cemented. In fact, the wedding procedures as a whole offer limitless opportunities for people to demonstrate publicly that they are living up to their obligations and expect others to reciprocate. For this reason, the procedural rules of a wedding and the behavior exhibited during the events come under the closest examination by everyone present. Alongside the relaxation, gaiety, and fun which inevitably characterize the wedding festivities exists an element of psychological tension, generated by the critical eye with which everyone watches the playing out of formal rights and obligations.

III

A wedding is inevitably a tense affair because, either consciously or unconsciously, people realize that individual personalities or unanticipated occurrences might always intervene to upset plans or injure feelings. Although ideals and expectations provide a framework for action, action itself often deviates from these guidelines.

The discrepancy between formal rights and obligations, on the one hand, and actual performance, on the other, is clearly illustrated by a close examination of the wedding of Carmen Zurila of Tzintzuntzan and Pablo Alves of Ojo de Agua, a small community adjacent to Tzintzuntzan. The wedding was initiated by Pablo's "robbery" of Carmen which was carried out with her full permission. Although Pablo's mother and stepfather did not have prior knowledge of their son's plans, they accepted the elopement and welcomed the couple into their home. The elopement was succeeded by a whole series of events, from the civil ceremony through the benediction and wedding fiesta, all of which were characterized by unexpected occurrences.

A. Pre-benediction developments

From the moment Pablo "robbed" Carmen, his uncle and baptismal godfather, Don Tomás Rivera, was thrust into the role of his biological father, who had died over two decades before. As baptismal godfather, Don Tomás had more moral, legal, and financial responsibility in the eyes of the villagers than had Pablo's old deaf stepfather, who in any case would have been physically incapable of adequately filling an elaborate wedding role.

Two nights after the robo, Don Tomás, acting as Pablo's father surrogate, went with Pablo's godfather of confirmation to the house of Carmen's father in order to make the peace. As is customary, they brought with them two bottles of liquor, and they returned from the visit content that they had placated Carmen's parents.

On the surface at least, everything seemed fine between the families of the bride and groom until the day of the civil ceremony. In the morning, prior to the ceremony, about ten close biological and fictive kin relations of the groom gathered together and walked along with the couple to the Registro Civil, the small village government office where the rite was to take place. During the walk they encountered Carmen's father, Don Paquín. Although Don Tomás urged him to join the group, he just continued to stand and chat with friends, saying he would come

along to the ceremony in a few minutes. However, neither he nor his wife appeared during the short, simple ceremony.

After the ceremony, the wedding party marched en masse to the priest's office for the presentaci3n. At the office the group was joined by Don Paquín, who had, however reluctantly, decided to attend the meeting. Everyone sat outside the office chatting while the priest spoke individually with Pablo, Carmen, Don Tom3s and Don Paquín. After the talks were completed, all began to walk toward Pablo's house in Ojo de Agua for the mole dinner. In spite of Don Tom3s' urging, Don Paquín managed to slip away from the group, saying he would rejoin it later at the groom's house. Of course, he never did come to the mole dinner, and his wife remained unseen the entire day. Due to the intransigence of the bride's family the dinner was a small, somewhat sad affair, which was punctuated by the periodic swelling tears in the bride's eyes.

The conduct of Carmen's parents during the day of their daughter's civil ceremony foreshadowed their behavior at future wedding occasions. Doña Helena, Carmen's mother, remained unpredictable throughout the weeks which followed. If, as some people thought, she was genuinely upset because Pablo originally did not want to marry Carmen after their elopement, she would have acted accordingly by refusing to participate in any way in the wedding proceedings. Rather, she constantly vacillated between participation and non-participation, first reconciling herself to certain realities, then refusing to accept those realities. And because of his dependent character, Don Paquín became a victim of his wife's unpredictable behavior.

Several significant developments occurred in the three-week interval between the civil and religious ceremonies. First, as was expected of her, Carmen moved out of Pablo's house. Since her parents would not receive her back into their house, an action which would have symbolized acceptance of the marriage, she was placed in the hands of a third party, in this case a friend of Don Tom3s and, coincidentally, a compadre of Carmen's father.

Further, during this interval Don Tomás chose my wife and me to be the marriage godparents. It seems that the choice was almost entirely in his hands, which well suited his role as surrogate father of the groom. The choice was clearly calculated to the economic and social advantage of the groom's side of the family, including Don Tomás himself. Economically, choosing us was a money-saving device. The large fiesta which takes place the day of the religious ceremony is made at the expense of the groom and his father. Since the fiesta is held in honor of the marriage godparents, these people are permitted to invite everyone they wish to the occasion. Naturally, my wife and I did not have a long list of friends, relatives and compadres in the village whom we would be obligated to invite. Thus, by choosing us to be godparents, Don Tomás and Pablo could be certain of saving money, an important consideration since Pablo was very poor and could only rely on limited outside financial assistance. Neither Don Tomás' obligations nor the obligations of Pablo's stepfather extended to this type of huge monetary outlay.

It was clear, too, that choosing us as godparents was socially as well as economically advantageous. By village standards, my wife and I were relatively prosperous individuals with high prestige. We were undoubtedly viewed as patrons, who could be called upon to help our compadres and godchildren in times of stress, and who might even be able to bring the young men of the family to the United States to work as farm laborers. And aside from any material advantage which might accrue from our sponsorship, having North American godparents definitely added an unusual flair to the proceedings which must have aroused the envy of not a few other families in the village. In fact, probably because of fear of arousing this envy, Don Tomás and the others involved in the wedding succeeded in keeping our sponsorship as much of a secret as possible, until the event was only a few days away and invitations had to be extended to a number of people throughout the village.

B. Evening of the benediction

Pablo and Carmen's benediction and the associated pozole dinner were held on schedule at the house of Carmen's parents the night before the wedding Mass. The entire evening was characterized by a good deal of controversy and confusion. Not only was there disagreement over what the rules of procedure actually were, but there were also significant irregularities in the manner in which the rules were translated into action.

The evening began on a note of uncertainty, for no one was sure whether or not Carmen's parents would serve the customary pozole. If the pozole is served, it ordinarily symbolizes reconciliation between the families of the bride and groom, even if the bride's family had been uncompromising until that very night. Shortly after Pablo and Carmen's civil ceremony, rumors about Carmen's mother's attitude had begun to circulate. They vacillated for over a week, one day indicating that she planned to serve the dish, the next day that she did not. Only after a large group of relatives, friends, and wedding guests had actually entered Carmen's house for the benediction was it evident that the pozole would indeed be served, for a long table had been set out in preparation for the meal.

Once inside the house, everyone stood around uncertain of what the order of the evening would be. After a minor argument between Don Tomás and Don Paquín on this question, it was decided to hold the benediction first, and the principal parties were accordingly ushered into a room off the patio. While Pablo and Carmen knelt on a straw mat on the floor, close biological and fictive kin gave them words of counsel and then blessed them.

Ideally, each individual blessing terminates with the bride and groom kissing the hands and feet of the blesser. However, many villagers find this custom repugnant; one generally traditional unmarried woman even said she would refuse to marry if it meant debasing herself by going through this ritual. Although Pablo and Carmen rather awkwardly tried to avoid the kissing ceremony several times, Don Tomás insisted they carry it

out. Had it not been for his insistence, they probably would have ignored the ritual entirely.

Immediately following the benediction, it was decided by general consensus to begin the formation of the compadrazgo ties. Potential compadres actuate their relationship in a formal, ritualized fashion. One pair at a time, the candidates kneel on a mat facing one another, say a relatively long vow about the meaning of the new relationship, and finally give each other the abrazo, the embrace, which validates the ritual bond. Ordinarily, the order in which the pairs of individuals exchange abrazos and the occasions during which they are given are standardized. In the case of Pablo and Carmen's wedding, however, there seemed to be serious disagreement over these essentials.

The first abrazos were exchanged between my wife and me on the one hand, and Carmen's parents on the other. If Carmen's godparents of confirmation had been present, this would have been the time for us to form compadrazgo ties with them, but as it was, none of her ritual kin attended any of the wedding events.

After we had made these initial abrazos with the bride's family, Don Paquín requested that the remaining abrazos with the groom's family be given. Don Tomás, a firm traditionalist, argued in favor of the ideal form, that is, waiting until the fiesta the next day to exchange those abrazos which would involve the groom's family. In the end, Don Tomás capitulated, and the remaining potential compadrazgo ties were established that evening. Doubtless, Don Tomás considered the preservation of peace at the occasion more important than rigid adherence to the rules.

In addition to deviating from the ideal time at which compadrazgo ties are formed, the individuals at Pablo and Carmen's wedding ignored the ideal manner of performing the ritual. Everyone was extremely nonchalant in the way in which he said the standard ceremonial vow, and in no case was the entire thing uttered. In fact, several informants had indicated prior to the wedding that people frequently forget the vow or joke their way through it in an effort to get it over with quickly. The abrazo is the only truly essential part of the ceremony.

The pozole dinner, which immediately followed the abrazos, was a dramatic event because it included several public validations of the social bonds which had just been created. Toward the end of the meal, Professor and Mrs. Foster, acting in the traditional role of our marriage godparents, each presented a bottle of tequila and a package of cigarettes to Carmen's parents, announcing that they were doing so on our behalf. Shortly afterwards, my wife and I ceremonially invited Don Paquín to the wedding breakfast the next morning. Don Tomás hastily added an invitation to the afternoon fiesta as well, and although Don Paquín quickly accepted the first invitation, he hesitated to commit himself on the second. It soon became clear that the reason for his reticence was Doña Helena's somewhat surprising refusal to attend the fiesta. Her continued intransigence was unusual since, as was stated previously, serving the pozole is ordinarily symbolic of at least minimal reconciliation. Only after several women publicly and persistently tried to convince her to accept the fiesta invitation, thus enabling her to save face, did she finally soften and give in. Everyone assured her that todo se murió, that the past would be forgotten and that no one would hold grudges because of anyone's former behavior.

Throughout the evening Doña Helena's high-pitched emotional state influenced her behavior in several significant ways. First, during the tense pozole dinner, she disregarded the mandatory Usted form of address in talking with and referring to my wife and me, and employed instead the informal tu form, despite the fact that we were her compadres and had never even seen her prior to that evening. Some informants speculated that she used the tu form purposefully in order to denigrate the whole occasion. But from taking other observations of her behavior into account, it seems likely that she used the informal mode instinctively, because it was more comforting in a time of stress than was the ideal speech pattern.

Further, Doña Helena took advantage of the occasion to establish a compadrazgo relationship with Professor and Mrs. Foster. To our surprise, she consistently referred to the Fosters as compadre and comadre, even

though they had neither participated in the abrazos nor entered into any formal ritual relationship with her. By using this form of address, and in fact continuing it throughout the following day, she had transformed the Fosters into her compadres de chinguere (loosely, "joking" compadres), thus creating an informal compadrazgo bond (one which is usually established while the parties are in a state of high emotion) which could be formalized during some appropriate occasion in the future. In any case, it is likely that Helena's decision to serve the pozole dinner was influenced significantly by the prospect that she could gain prestige by acquiring compadrazgo ties with not just two, but four, North Americans.

The evening ended with Doña Helena still torn between reconciliation and resistance. Instead of leaving us two individual pots of pozole to take home, as she properly should have, she left only a pot for my wife. This action and her generally unaccommodating disposition throughout the evening were signs of impending difficulties.

C. The day of the religious ceremony

The wedding continued the next morning, beginning with the Mass and marriage ceremony. Although the groom and his family could not control the nature of the wedding service, which was dictated almost entirely by Catholic ritual and law, they could choose where the service would be held. Don Tomás and Pablo chose the chapel of Ojo de Agua rather than the much larger Tzintzuntzan church, and the choice was undoubtedly a shrewd money-saving device. The chapel is located closer to our house, where the wedding breakfast would be held, and to Pablo's house, where the wedding fiesta would take place, than is the Tzintzuntzan church. This meant that fewer friends would be encountered as the wedding party marched from location to location throughout the day. And the fewer friends encountered the better since, in Tzintzuntzan, one is more or less obligated to invite all passers-by to join the wedding train. In short, the choice of the chapel was probably made on the grounds of economic self-interest, as well as for the sake of mere convenience.

After the wedding Mass, everyone marched together to our house for the breakfast. Don Tomás, who had generally taken charge of informing us of our duties, forgot to tell us to invite the priest. Aside from this rather gauche oversight, however, the wedding breakfast ran smoothly.

At the conclusion of the breakfast, it is customary for the mother of one of the marriage godparents to present each of the bride's parents with a tray containing the ritual breakfast foods--chocolate, sugar, and bread. Since neither my wife's mother nor mine was present, Mrs. Foster filled this traditional role, thus switching from her previous identity as our marriage godmother. Following instructions from women in the kitchen who were preparing the breakfast on our behalf, Mrs. Foster presented a tray to the bride's mother only. Not until a few days later did we become aware that Mrs. Foster had unwittingly become an agent in the game of insults between the families of the bride and groom. Since Carmen's parents had only presented my wife with a pot of pozole the night before, we unknowingly retaliated by presenting only Doña Helena with a tray of the breakfast food. When later asked about this incident, informants actually used the word venganza, revenge, to explain why this action was taken.

We were not the only transgressors of the rules for breakfast exchanges however. During this meal the bride's father is expected to present a bottle of liquor to the marriage godparents, but Don Paquín ignored this obligation. Upon examination why, it became apparent that it was just because of his stinginess. Don Paquín is a notorious tightwad, and informants were sure that he thought he could escape from this particular expense without causing offense to my wife and me; after all, how were we to know and remember all the minute patterns of exchange?

Like the previous wedding events, the afternoon fiesta was not carried out without confusion. People seemed concerned because my wife was accidentally served the leg rather than the breast of turkey, a mistake which might be considered rather insignificant to us, but which actually was taken quite seriously by the Tzintzuntzeños, to whom each cut of meat

is representative of a particular social status. As godmother of honor, my wife should have received the breast; though it was sent to her from the kitchen, it somehow never arrived at her placesetting.

A more disruptive event occurred when Doña Helena began arguing loudly with her daughter. In a puff of anger, Helena dramatically rose from the table and left the house without taking the large pot of food which the groom's mother had only a little while earlier presented to her. Of course, this was a blatant insult, for rejection of food is clearly symbolic of personal rejection to the villagers.

After unsuccessfully trying to convince Don Paquín not to leave with his wife, everyone stayed on at Pablo's house for music and dancing, and then disbanded to our house for still more. For some unknown reason, Don Tomás asked Pablo and Carmen not to join the rest of us. Perhaps he wanted to save Pablo, Carmen, my wife and me embarrassment, because he knew that we were all anxious to evade the rule which stipulates that the new couple live with their godparents for a week after the wedding. If Pablo and Carmen had returned to the house with us, someone might have pressed for conformity to the rule which would have been as uncomfortable for us as for the bride and groom.

IV

It can be seen that Pablo and Carmen's wedding was a rich and complex cultural event. No simple description of wedding rules could possibly illuminate the unique nature of the numerous symbolic exchanges which ultimately shaped the reality of the proceedings. The complexity is even more striking in view of the fact that I have here presented a simplified version of the wedding, omitting a myriad of small details and speculations concerning the behavior of the participants. Nonetheless, it is possible to abstract and derive from this complexity several principles of theoretical significance.

In order to understand fully the theoretical implications of Pablo and Carmen's wedding, it is useful to examine Firth's distinction

between social structure and social organization. Briefly, he equates social structure with "the sets of relations which make for firmness of expectation, for validation of past experience in terms of similar experience in the future" (1951:40). In other words, the social structure provides a guide or framework which makes it possible to predict behavior and act accordingly. It is the reliable, standardized form of social life.

Social organization, on the other hand, is social process, "the systematic ordering of social relations by acts of choice and decision" (Ibid:40). To Firth, society is composed of individuals who constantly choose from among alternative courses of action. Therefore, he believes, individual interests, values, and temperament ultimately determine the reality of social life. Individuals consciously or unconsciously assess social situations and act according to this or that alternative provided by those situations. Therefore, "in the aspect of organization is to be found the variation or change principle--by allowing evaluation of situations and entry of individual choice" (Ibid:40). Individual decision-making, the organizational aspect of society, is the basis for deviation from or conformity to the social structural rules.

Social structure, in Firth's sense, is exemplified by the social and cultural expectations which characterize weddings in Tzintzuntzan, and which provide a framework of action for these occasions. Smoothly functioning social relations are not necessarily based upon some ideal form of social relations. But they are dependent upon expectation, upon the ability of individuals to predict how others will behave in any given social context. In Tzintzuntzan it is to some degree expected that people will initiate a marriage by robo rather than by the ideal pedido. And although the father of the bride-to-be may not actually feel greatly angered over the abduction of his daughter, he is expected to exhibit hostility, and must be assuaged by means of another set of expectations--the peacemaking ceremony. To give another example, it is relatively unimportant that individuals who enter into a compadrazgo relationship meticulously recite the long standardized vow which ideally accompanies

the ritual formation of the bond. Rather, it is expected that people be somewhat informal and nonchalant during the ritual, in spite of the seriousness of the occasion. Thus, people frequently behave according to sets of expectations which may conflict with, or at least do not coincide with, ideal forms. It is the various sets of expectations, operating independently of the ideals, which provide the structural framework within which role relations in a wedding are played out.

The actual performance of roles belongs to the realm of social organization. Key individuals in Pablo and Carmen's wedding made numerous decisions, large and small, from among alternative courses of action. It was these decisions more than anything else which determined the social reality of the wedding, that is, the concrete manner in which the wedding events unfolded.

From the data presented, it is apparent that at least four main factors prompted individuals consciously or unconsciously to make certain decisions: first, law and precedent; second, psychological idiosyncracies; third, considerations of self-interest; and finally, accident and oversight.

1. Law and precedent. The general characteristics of Pablo and Carmen's wedding were more a product of people's desires to conform to the guidelines set down by law and precedent than of any other single factor. For the most part, people unconsciously followed traditional procedures simply because they were most comfortable operating within this framework, or because they would have been criticized severely for deviating from it. For example, no one would have ever considered marriage under any religious auspices other than the Catholic Church. At several points during the wedding, however, procedural rules were brought to the surface and overtly questioned, as in the discussion about whether the pozole dinner should precede or follow the benediction, and in Don Tomás' insistence that Pablo and Carmen go through the more unpleasant aspects of the benediction ceremony.

The importance of law and precedent as a determinant of behavior is highlighted by the prominence of surrogates in the wedding. Rules for

a wedding, as for any cultural event, stipulate specific roles for particular individuals. If these individuals are for one reason or another unable to attend the proceedings, other people must be found to take their place. Hence, Don Tomás became Pablo's father surrogate for the purposes of the wedding. And Mrs. Foster even had to change her role from that of marriage godmother for the purposes of the benediction, to that of biological mother for the purposes of the wedding breakfast.

2. Psychological idiosyncracies. The wedding data make it clear that a person's psychological composition may prevent him from playing his role according to the rules. All evidence indicates, for example, that Doña Helena was just an indecisive, moody, and overly-emotional woman, whose particular psychological imbalance more than anything else was responsible for her strange behavior throughout the wedding. Her husband consistently strove for a minimal reconciliation between his family and the groom's family, but he was relatively impotent in the face of his wife's unpredictable behavior. Although some husbands might have been able to control their wives in a similar situation, he was unable to do so, for it was rumored that he was a henpecked and submissive man. Here is a case in which personality traits operated to make people act contrary to structural patterns.

3. Considerations of self-interest. Although people at Pablo and Carmen's wedding for the most part tried to operate within the boundaries of law and precedent, they simultaneously tried to reap as many social and economic benefits as possible from the occasion. Firth points out (Ibid:40) that the social structure itself frequently provides alternatives. In these instances, people often act so as to maximize their social or economic position. Such considerations were important, for example, in Don Tomás' choice of marriage godparents, in Doña Helena's decision to hold the pozole dinner, and in Don Tomas and Pablo's decision to hold the wedding ceremony in the chapel of Ojo de Agua. People frequently could maximize their social position, or their prestige, merely by adhering to the rules of procedure. After the wedding, Don Tomás and

his wife somewhat smugly expressed satisfaction with the correctness of their behavior throughout the several days of events, saying over and over, "People are now talking about Helena and Paquín, not about us."

4. Accident and oversight. Unintentional blunders, such as forgetting to invite the priest to the wedding breakfast and serving the wrong cuts of meat to important individuals, comprised minor deviations from the wedding rules. Although accidents were not a prominent part of this particular occasion, it is conceivable that there would be situations in which they would have major social and economic implications.

To be sure, the above four categories are closely interrelated and mutually inclusive in certain respects. However, it is analytically most useful to distinguish them conceptually from one another. For example, people to a large extent choose to follow structural laws on the grounds of self-interest, because it maximizes their prestige and minimizes the possibility that people will harm them by vicious gossip. But they also make this decision unconsciously just because they want to conform to the rules; either no other possibilities are personally acceptable (for example, marrying in a Protestant ceremony), no other alternative would provide equivalent psychological security, or no other alternatives are at all perceived by the actors. In these instances, law and precedent provide their own justification as a course of action, apart from considerations of social or economic self-interest.

We may hypothesize that these four factors--law and precedent, psychological idiosyncracies, considerations of self-interest, and accident and oversight--to some extent consciously or unconsciously lay behind the behavior of all people. At times, an individual might have to choose between acting on the basis of two or more conflicting principles, in which case he would have to weigh the value of each. For example, Don Paquín's psychological idiosyncrasy, stinginess, prevented him from fulfilling all of his obligations. He had to choose between spending money for liquor and thus deriving a certain amount of prestige from complying with the rules of the exchange, or saving money and satisfying his own unique

psychological need. He resolved the conflict by deciding not to concern himself with what people might say about him and by conforming to his own emotional peculiarity. Similar examples of conflicting principles within individuals and their personal resolutions of such conflict could be cited at every step in the wedding proceedings.

The social structure, the standard expectations of behavior, therefore only provides the framework within which numerous behavioral decisions, large and small, are made. The basis for any single individual decision may be a complex melange of varied considerations, some of which reinforce one another, others of which conflict. It is the complexity of the social organization, the decision-making process, that virtually assures that no great cultural event like a wedding can ever come off exactly according to preconceived ideals and expectations. Every person involved in the proceedings constantly battles between desires to conform to the rules, to maximize economic and social benefits (which may themselves conflict; it takes a lot of money to be socially correct), and to satisfy certain unique psychological demands. In addition, every person must be acutely aware of his numerous minute obligations so that, during all the confusion which inevitably accompanies great cultural events, he does not overlook a particular duty and in doing so offend someone. The wedding of Pablo and Carmen thus illustrates the tremendous intricacy of social life, and the omnipresent tension between rule and reality in culture.

Finally, the analytical separation of rule and reality as manifested in the wedding has practical implications for the techniques of fieldwork. As Nadel (1939:319) pointed out some time ago, anthropologists cannot always depend upon their informants to provide reliable information about social behavior. Accurate ethnographic description requires that the field techniques of interviewing and observing be viewed as complementary to, rather than substitutable for, one another; certainly, if my wife and I had not become so closely immersed in our data, our understanding of the complexities of Pablo and Carmen's wedding would now be significantly

more superficial. But whatever techniques the anthropologist may use to collect ethnographic data, it is desirable that he make explicit his field methods. Recently, Berreman has called for an "ethnography of ethnography," that is, a "self-analytical reporting of research procedures and research contexts" (1966:350). Largely because of the unique nature of the field experience, anthropologists are becoming increasingly aware of the necessity--indeed the scientific responsibility--to describe in detail their methods of data collection and analysis. It is to be hoped that this paper provides a contribution toward the goal of more self-analytical ethnographic reporting.

NOTES

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¹ Foster says that "During a recent six-year period fifty-eight marriages between previously unmarried people were initiated by robbery, and only ten followed upon a formal request" (1967:69-70).

² There is sometimes a special madrina del laso, or godmother of the laso, who provides the laso and the bouquet. This is a city practice which has been introduced into the village in recent years.

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