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OCTOBER 12; NO'ON XUU

Thursday night Sept. 22, 1960 Nicasio played a last game of chess with me, before leaving for the ceremonial center where he was to take part in the religious festival known to the Coatlán Mixes as "No'on xuu". No'on is the name of a small insect that produces a red dye. This insect is better known as "cochineal". The red dye produced by this insect was much sought after in Mexico in ancient times for dyeing cloth. It once was the principal cash crop for the Coatlán Mixe. Its cultivation ceased perhaps within the last one hundred and fifty years in Coatlán. Memories of the cultivation of this insect are still vivid in the traditions of this people. They say that there are still evidences in some of the caves and rock cliffs where the animals used to be cultivated.

The "No'on xuu" festival is celebrated each year the first two weeks of October, with its calendar date listed as October 12. One of the village elder told me that the festival used to be celebrated on a different date, but was changed to coincide with the festival celebrating the crowning of the Virgin of Guadalupe as queen of the Americas. The purpose of the festival used to be to gain the blessing of the Supernatural on the dye industry. At present its purpose is to gain the blessing of the Supernatural on the crops in general and on the coffee crop in particular which is their principal cash crop today.

The "Supernatural" to the Coatlán Mixe includes phenomena associated with the earth (naaxhuif), and phenomena associated with the Supernatural Catholic Church. Phenomena associated with the earth includes the lightning, the thunder, water, animals (tigers, snakes), certain trees, certain rocks, spirit beings associated with the animal world, spirit beings associated with living people (teo'ok), spirit beings associated with the dead people, spirit beings associated with narcotic plants, winds and clouds.

"ened"
 For the Coatlán Mixe the (thunder) lives in caves. Once on the trail to San José the Indian traveling with pointed to a cave high up on a cliff and said that there was money "tuguc kaax" (three boxes of it) in that cave but it was the property of the thunder and nobody could touch it with out having something happen to him later.

Water is feared by the Coatlán Mixe. One type of sickness is described as "new tsugu'wfi" which means (water fright). Recently a man came to us for medicine for a certain sickness. I encouraged him to start taking the medicine then and there, but he refused because he had to cross the river and he was afraid of what might happen to him if he took the medicine and then went into the water. When there is a death in the family no member of the family can bathe until the fourth day. An old man told me that in times past the village of Coatlán used to make sacrifice offerings at the water springs to appease the water spirits. In a neighboring town the people still talk of a female water spirit.

Trees, rocks, and mountains are living beings according to the people of Coatlán with understanding of what goes on on the earth. According to their legends the mountain named "to'oxy queets cop" refused to let a sea be formed in the river valley below her. One of the "shamans" (Indian priests) told me that when a person is sick and they think that the cause of the sickness is fright. If they can't determine where the frightened spirit is, they go to the top of a mountain and with a sacrifice offering (pr. of turkeys or chickens) and address the hills, the rocks, and trees in general and ask them to send the frightened spirit back. Walking along the trails I have often seen the remains of flowers, candles, and money that had been offered at the foot of a tree. Offerings sites used for sacrifice offerings to the supernatural usually have either a rock altar, or a large rock.

The people here attribute supernatural power to some of the animal.
 According to some of legends some people have found treasure by listening to a conversation between two animals. They tell of a man in another town who has a money snake in a box. When the snake is treated with the proper respect it fills the box with money. When listening to the Indians elders addressing the supernatural in prayer I have heard them mention among other things the snakes and the tigers. The people here talk about a type of animal being that is never seen only heard. There are several of these animals and they have specific names and functions. One of these they call [?] . If this animal is heard at a night near a house it is a sign that a woman has become pregnant. There is the case of one girl that we know was engaged, but when her fiancé heard that this animal had been heard near her house he broke of the engagement.

They have also a separate being associated with a person which they call "tso'oc". This spirit being lives in caves or lives in animals. There is a rock cliff with many small caves that they call "tso'oc" cop" (tonal hill). They have many legends about their tso'oc. There is one legend where an old man and a young man have a feud. The tso'oc (companion spirit) of the young man is a tiger, and of the old man is a buzzard. The old man becomes sick and nobody can cure him. Finally the young man feels sorry for the old man because he is dying and tells him that his tiger has tied the old mans buzzard in a tree. The old mans wife then goes and finds a buzzard tied in a tree. When the buzzard is turned loose the old man gets well. A few years ago the house of one of the leading shamans in Coatlán was burned by lightning. It is generally believed that the lightning was the tso'oc of one of his enemies. In Mexican anthropology there is usually a distinction made between "nahual" and "tonal". However as far as I can discover the Coatlán Mixes have only the term "tso'oc to cover both these areas of meaning.

Check on consistency of notation for Coatlán & Apamixtlan names cited

The spirits of the dead are considered to be very much alive and present in Costlán. Just a few nights ago the dogs barked and barked to the annoyance of ^{those} ~~us~~ who were trying to get ^{sleep} a little shut eye. In the morning I asked Alejandro what the reason was. He answered that the dogs were annoyed by the spirits of the dead that they saw walking around. One time I was called to a home to help treat a baby dying with pneumonia. I was told that the sickness was caused by the spirit of the dead grandmother who was unhappy about something.

The much publicised narcotic mushrooms are known to the people of Costlán. Old Abram in describing his experience of eating the mushrooms told about "Los Señores" (the men) that appeared to him in his trance and talked to him. They led him outside and he was afraid that they were going to take him away and he pleaded with them for his life. Finally they agreed to cure him of his sickness and ^{leave him alone.} ~~let him be.~~

The winds to the Mixes are also spirit beings. One informant told me that they are messengers that spread information through out the earth. The winds are often thought to bring sickness. The people are very reluctant to put windows in these houses because they fear the powers of the night wind.

The Supernaturals associated with the Catholic Church are principally the "Saints" ,and "Dios" and the "Cross".

Since the Supernatural plays such an important part in the lives of the people of Costlán it is only natural that ~~they~~ ^{they} would make great efforts to live in harmony with it. This accounts for their many religious festivals all designed to keep the good will of the Supernatural. (about thirteen) in which the whole community takes Of their many religious festivals the "no'oh xaw is one of the most ^{responsibility} important.

5

Nicasio and his wife with their tiny baby and their few belongings passed our house as they started the long climb Friday morning from the ranch in the river valley to the ceremonial center on the mountain ridge. The ceremonial center is ~~known as~~ the town of Coatlán. It is the religious and political center of a widely scattered community of Mixe Indians. The community once numbered about two thousand people but disease and divisions have reduced it to about six hundred. Coatlán is an Aztec word which is a translation of the Mixe "tea'ah du'aam" meaning the place of the trail of the serpent. The present day Aztec name suggests that ~~the~~ town once may have been part of the great Aztec Empire that was destroyed by the Spanish conqueror Cortez.

Nicasio had a pack on his back tied to a tump line stretched across his forehead. His wife had ~~a tiny~~ ^{the} baby wrapped in a black stole tied across her shoulders, and a bundle of clothes perched on her head. They had left their three old daughters with the grandmother. A stole (Spanish ~~rebozo~~ ^{rebozo}) is part of the wardrobe of every woman in Coatlán. In Coatlán the color ~~is predominantly black~~ of the stoles are usually black. Nicasio had been named "majpudunwuy" (principal helper) for the no'oh xaw. He was to help the "mayordomo", the person assigned to be responsible for the festival. Nicasio told me that his part in the festival was to help carry the corn from the field, supervise the butchering of the animals, the cooking and serving of the food, and the building of the temporary shelters for those preparing the food.

Long before Nicasio's arrival in the ceremonial center the "mayordomo" had been making preparation. This year Placido had been assigned by the town elders to take this festival. Since religious festivals are a community responsibility every male must complete three religious festivals in a life time. Traditionally the no'oh xaw is the responsibility of one of the members of the town band. Placido is a young man and this was his first turn at having the festival. He is an extremely likeable fellow. He is also very poor and this festival ran him into debt.

cut down

In March and April Placido had cleared with the help of friends and hired hands a large field on a steep mountain slope where he planted corn for the festival. In May he journeyed to Jalapa del Marquez with borrowed animals to purchase provisions. The round trip to Jalapa takes a week. Jalapa prides itself on being founded by Cortez the conqueror of Mexico. At one time it was an important Spanish town both religiously and commercially. Still evident are the ruins of an ancient Catholic convent. The original town site will soon be inundated by the dam "Presa del Marquese" under construction on the Tehuantepec River. In Jalapa and in Tehuantepec another hour and a half journey by bus Placido purchased liquor, sky rockets, cigarettes, matches, candle wax, chile, salt, sugar, and some cases of beer.

In addition to the things purchased in Jalapa and Tehuantepec, Placido purchased a cow, and raised some pigs and a large flock of chickens and turkeys for the occasion. Cholera decimated his flock of poultry and he had to buy some and substitute for the rest with an extra couple of pigs. For every religious occasion the male turkey is necessary for the ^{best} offering to the Supernatural. They cost as much as five dollars a piece, because there is so much demand for them.

A few days ago Señor Sosemo told me some of his trials in connection with the preparation of the festival. His son, Antonio, had been named "mate pudunwepy" (little helper to the mayordomo). His part in the festival was to furnish firewood, water, and light. The firewood had to be cut several weeks in advance so that it would dry. It also took several days of searching for pitch pine among the fallen pine trees. Pitch pine is used for light at night. Antonio cut his foot while chopping the oak firewood and his father finished for him. The job takes about fifteen days. One Monday Sosemo went to cut firewood for the festival instead of appearing for town communal work on

the road. The town president put him in jail and fined him fifty pesos for not appearing for town work. He thought that he hadn't been treated fairly, because he considered cutting festival firewood as town work.

Friday night, September 30. I made a hurried trip to Coatlán to treat a sick person. I met my friend Candido on the street. He said that he was returning from helping Placido and Nicasio find the cow for the festival. They had searched the rugged mountains four days in "Rancho de Las Flores" (Ranch of the Flowers) before finding the cow. Since their cattle wander loose in the mountains with neither fences nor herders they are sometime difficult to find. Four years ago open war broke out when cattle broke into a farmer's bean field.

I went to the house where the festival was being held to see how the preparations were coming on. Placido had borrowed his neighbor's new adobe house with aluminum roof for the occasion. His own little grass roofed house wasn't big enough. Signs of preparation for the festival were evident. The temporary kitchen house had been built. There are prescribed leaves and poles used in the construction of this. They call it the "peop'ay ydajo" which means the white leaf house. On one end of the kitchen house was a fire place and a huge clay griddle for toasting tortillas. Lined along the walls were rows of grinding stones for grinding the cooked corn. The corn is soaked with lime to soften the hull, so that it grinds into a soft doughy mass. The grinding stone and tortilla have been important in this culture for hundreds and hundreds of years. When there are no tortillas the people say that they are starving. No meal is complete without them. Under a second smaller leaf shelter were three huge clay pots for cooking the corn and meat. At intervals of the festival food is prepared for as much as two or three hundred people at a time

In the house benches had been placed around three walls. The bench on the left was where the elders sat according to rank. The bench on the right was for the mayordomos (the men assigned to be responsible for the eleven religious festivals celebrated each year). The fourth wall of the house was occupied by the altar where the household saints were kept. Fresh flowers were laid in helter skelter fashion on the table in front of the saints. In the midst of the flowers a burning candle flickered. The candle was the short fat kind encased in a cup that last a long time. The burning candle represents the prayers of the people. No person in Coatlán would consider a house liveable if it didn't have an altar, be it ever so ramshackle, or a saint, be it ever so dingy with a candle burning before it. The saint and the candle are believed to protect the house against the evil work of spirit beings. Before a new house can be lived in a respect offering must be made to the Earth and the Supernatural associated with it, also candles are burned in the four corners of the house and in the center. Camilo told me that once he built a house with out doing the respect offering. As a result he became sick and feared that he was going to die. No medicine helped him. Finally ~~a shaman~~ he hired a famous shaman to appease the Earth and Supernatural with a special respect offering. Tamales made with the meat from the sacrificed pair of turkeys were placed in the corners of the house. The head of the turkey was ~~plac~~ buried in the center of the floor. As a result Camilo said that he became well again. However he moved out of the house. Any guest coming into a house in Coatlán is supposed to face the altar, cross himself and ^{make} mumble a short prayer to the saints on the altar.

As I entered the house Martin Meteric, who was seated just inside the door, greeted me. He was giving his services as "codaje" (head of the house) for the festival. In his capacity as head of the house he was chief consultant as to how things should be done, and he acted as priest in things concerning the Supernatural. As part of the respect for the Supernatural he offers a portion of the food, the tobacco, and the liquor served at the festival to it. Each time liquor is served he pours four handfuls of the first bottle on the ground at the same time addressing the Supernatural. For the tobacco offering he takes a fresh pack of cigarettes and removes two. One he breaks into four pieces and spreads the tobacco on the ground at the same time addressing the Supernatural, the second he takes for himself. When food is served he is served first and he offers part of his to the Supernatural. His seat just inside the door is the traditional place where the "codaje" is to sit. His presence at the door of the house is believed to keep "pikit Beings with evil intentions away from the house. The "codaje" is present at the festival house during the weeks of preparation as well as during the festival.

Martin Meteric is second in rank of the "mujja'ay dajo" (village elders). The elders are ranked according to age. Every able-bodied man in Guatemala who is reaching toward sixty is appointed by the village to serve the rest of his days as an elder. He is relieved of all other communal responsibility except that of interceding with the supernatural and acting as authority on what is proper religious custom. The elders regulate the religious festivals and appoint the men who are to be responsible for each festival. Practically every occasion in life calls for the services of an elder: whether it be a religious festival, a birth or death in the family, house building, sickness, or marriage. He acts as the intercessor for the people with the Supernatural. In times past their service were also needed for going hunting, planting corn, or harvesting.

tuberculosis

Ten years ago Martin was dying of T B. after exhausting all known remedies, and after trying the powers of all the locally known curers with out success, he came to us for help. With pills and shots we were able to restore him to a measure of health. He is grateful but still attributes his sickness to a fall and not to a germ.



There are two types of persons in Coatlán who might be called "shamans". One is the village elder who by virtue of his office does priestly or intercessory work, and the other is a "medicine man" whose vocation or life's calling is intercessory work with the Supernatural. The two operate in different areas although there is some overlap.

Saturday, Oct. 1 was a busy day at the festival house. In the morning a pig was butchered. In the afternoon the meat was cooked as well as some pots of corn. One of the women elders supervised the cooking of the corn. ^{Most} ~~All~~ of the old women have what is known as an "oficio" which is a certain task that they perform at the village festivals. In addition to Gliberta of the women elders Placido had obtained the services of Delaida, Inez, and Alifonsa to make the tortillas.

Saturday night all the elders both men and women who were present in the village gathered at the festival house. This night is known as "ja'ax ch'waba tsuu'w'a" which means the night spent in preparation for the gathering of the wood. During the night the elders make tamales to feed the people who carry wood the next day. The men tear the leaves for wrapping the tamales while the women shape the dough put in the filling and wrap it in the leaves. The leaf used for this occasion is known as "peep ay" (white leaf). The filling for the tamale is meat with a chile sauce.

The elders pass the night drinking, smoking, and making tamales. The men are all heavy drinkers. Only one of two of the women are known as heavy drinkers. The liquor used is imported. It is either alcohol watered down some or "mescal" a liquor made from the century plant. The tobacco smoked is the modern cigarette for the most part, however a few of the old people including ^{some} women prefer "puros" a home made cigar. The tobacco plant is native to this area, but is not cultivated in Coatlán. Venders occasionally pass through selling tobacco leaves.

No one dares to refuse the liquor or tobacco offered for fear of offending the Supernatural and probably also the people present. One of the elders advised me once that I should never refuse outright anything offered to me. If I didn't care for it I should at least make a pretense of partaking.

During the night ~~sky~~ rockets were fired every once in awhile to solicit the women of the town to come and grind corn. Every family is expected to send some female member to help grind the corn. Inside the house a Coleman gas lantern furnishes light. Outside the house and in the kitchen pine torches are used. Antonio was busy all night tending the torches, seeing that there was sufficient water on hand for the cooking, and refilling the liquor bottles when they became empty. Nicasio was busy serving food and coffee to all the participants.

In the early morning hours the men elders left the festival house and went to the church where they were joined by the church singer, the church musiciones, the sacristan, and mayordomos (all the men responsible for religious festivals for the current year). Flacido and Nicasio brought to the church the liquor, the tobacco, the candles, and the incense necessary for the ceremonies at the church.

The church is an imposing structure, built perhaps in the eighteenth century under the supervision of the Dominican Friars. It is a single domed structure built in the form of a cross. It is made of stone and brick. The walls are thick and have short buttresses. The walls and roof have been seriously damaged by earth quakes. ~~I was amazed to learn that the three huge church bells were cast in an improvised foundry near~~ by.

The sacristan announces the ceremonies taking place in the church by the ringing of the bells. Sky rockets also punctuate various parts ~~of the ceremony.~~ of the ceremony. The singer and the musicians perform the Latin ritual, while the elders kneel in front of the ~~Saints~~ to place lighted candles. The placing of the candles is accompanied by waving burning incense and a prayer in the Mixe language. In this prayer the thunder, the winds, the snakes, and the dead are addressed as well as the ~~Cross~~, the ~~Saints~~, and "Dios" (~~Spanish for God~~). There is no congregation in the church at the time of the ceremonies. The rest of the village goes on about their business content to have these responsible perform the ceremonies on their behalf. This morning (October 2) is the beginning of the "novena" (nine mornings of ceremonies in the church).

Sunday afternoon (Oct. 2) all the younger people (men, women, boys, and girls) carried fire wood from the mountain side where it was cut to the festival house. The wood carriers were met at the entrance of town by Antonio who offered them liquor and cigarettes. When they arrived at the site of the festival everybody was served coffee and tamales. Each person was served three, except the elders and special guests who were served five. The number four is always associated with the dead, and the numbers three and five with the living. The carrying of wood always takes place on Sunday.

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday there was not a great deal of festival activity. Every morning there were ceremonies in the church

as the novena progressed. Each morning after the ceremony inside the church was completed the participants gathered in front of the church for the liquor and tobacco offering to the Supernatural. Since the part of the liquor not poured out to the Earth is supposed to shared by all, everybody present feels obligated to stick around for awhile. Those who are not habitual drunkards slowly drift off one by one. Those who are in a mood to drink usually make a day of it.

Thursday (Oct. 6) there was much activity at the festival house. Pairs of turkeys and chickens were butchered and another pig. A pair is understood to be a male and female. Some occasions call for only males, other occasions call for male and female. I was told that poultry was proper for this occasion but because of their scarcity pig meat was partially substituted. All this was in preparation for the "cerra coj tsuu'a'a" which means the night of preparation for the making of the drinking candles. Again the old people spent the night making tamales and gossiping, the women of the village ^{take} turns at the grinding stones, flickering pine torches illuminate the scene, coffee simmered in the clay pots, tortillas baked on the clay griddle.

Friday morning a little while after the completion of the ceremonies in the church the band gathered at the festival house. The band had a special place prepared for it outside the house, with a roof, a table to rest their instruments on, and chairs to sit on. The liquor supply on the table for the band is never allowed to run out. When the music ^{began to play} ~~begins to play~~ it was an invitation for the people to come to the festival.

Inside the house preparations were made for candle making. The candle making is supervised by the sacristan. A wheel ^{was} ~~is~~ strung from the ceiling, ~~on which strings are tied~~. Strings were tied at intervals around the wheel. The strings form the center of the candle and

are cut the length that they desire the candle to be. Two sizes of candles are made; a large size, and a medium size. Enough candles are supposed to be made at this festival for the Virgin of Guadalupe to last a year. The wax for the candle making is heated in large clay basins, and is poured ~~ev~~ with special oblong shaped gourd ~~bowls~~ dippers.

While the candle making is in process the men elders are seated on one side of the room according to rank and the mayordomos are seated on the other side of the room. The "codaje" is at his position by the door. The remaining seats in the room are filled by whoever is present except that ~~respect~~ precedence is given to age or persons of respect such as a priest or school teacher.

Ap José Cornelio is the ranking elder. He is in his seventies. I would love to make a portrait of him but he refuses to have his picture taken. He is a prolific talker especially when drunk. It is claimed that he can drink straight alcohol. Every religious festival sets him on a binge that may last several weeks. He is noted especially for the advice that he gives to the younger. Sometimes when he is unable to navigate he lays down in the street, there flat on his back waving his arms he can be seen giving advice to an imaginary audience. When sober and back in his ranch rancho he is a hard worker and a tight wad with his money.

Candle making ^{took} ~~takes~~ all day and on into the night. There ^{was} ~~is~~ no hurry. Liquor and tobacco were served continuously. Food and drink were served at least three times to the main participants (elders, mayordomos, candle makers, and musicians). In the afternoon food (tamales, coffee) was served to all the village. If a person was not present food was sent to his house.

The making of the candles initiates a three day "holy" period called by the Mixes "amay xwa". There are a number of taboos ^{for}

the festival participants during this period. A man is not to sleep with a woman, no work is to be done in the fields, not even a tree is to be cut for firewood, they are not supposed to become angry and scold even a dog. In short they are not to offend the earth, or any of the Supernatural associated with it, or any being living or dead. Candide told me of a man in San José who became angry during this period, and even abused the altar where the candles were laid in the festival house. As a result a few years later he became sick and died (actually he died of T B).

Three is an important number in Mixe ceremony. Once I was treating old Abram for T B. In the middle of the treatment he called in a famous Shaman from the neighboring town. He told me that the Shaman had him drink a concoction of thirteen herbs for three mornings in a row. Another time a friend was visiting who wanted to observe the effects of the narcotic mushroom. We had the mushrooms, and we found a person who wanted to take them in order to be cured of his illness. However we couldn't make a deal because we couldn't wait three days for the person to make his religious preparation for taking the mushroom.

For the no'off xaa festival the ceremonies in the church, the novena, were climaxed by the "tugwas jopy" (three early mornings). Martin Meterio told me that on these three mornings they have what they call "pujy yojx" (presentation of special flowers to the saints in the church). The flowers are prepared in bouquets by the "mayordomos". Each bouquet is made up of three marifold flowers wrapped in leaves of the sour orange tree, and tied with bark from the balsa tree.

Early morning (from three to five o'clock) is an important time in Mixe ceremony. Most of their religious ceremony takes place at this time, whether it be in the church or at the altar on the hill back of town. One year I attended viewed the religious ceremonies

connected with the New Year. The concluding act of the ceremonies was the offering of the turkeys and chickens to the Supernatural at the altar on the hill back of town. Augustine was officiating. When he concluded he looked toward the east and saw the morning stars on the horizon. I heard him remark that the offering had taken place at just the proper time. To the people of Coatlán some times of the day are good and some are bad. One o'clock in the afternoon is considered a very bad time. Mid morning, mid afternoon, or just after dark are ^{permissible} ~~OK~~. They often have vespers in the church at seven in the evening. Candles are often taken to the church, or a person is buried at four or five in the afternoon.

When the candles were completed they were placed on a table in front of the altar in the festival house to await the time of presentation in the church.

Friday night, Saturday night, Sunday night they had the "pwjy yoix tsuu'a'a" nights spent in preparation for the early morning presentation of the flowers. ^{three} ~~again~~ The elders spent the nights making tamales at the festival house. These nights the presence of all the mayordomos was required for the making of the bouquets of flowers. They were to make as many of the bouquets of 4 flowers as they had time for. These three days the tamales were served chiefly to all the participants in the festival and not to the whole town. The tamales were served a short while after the completion of the presentation of the flowers in the church.

For Nicasio, Antonio, and Placido there was something to do nearly all the time. During the day there was poultry to be dressed, and cooked, corn to be cooked, water to be brought from the spring below the hill. At night there were the pine torches to attend, the tamales to be cooked, and the serving of liquor, cigarettes, food, and drink to the participants.

In the kitchen house also there ^{was} almost continual activity. The village women took turns day and night at the grind stones. The three women elders making tortillas had only brief respites between meals, since tortillas were called for at least four times a day to feed the ones participating in the festival. Most of those participating live at the festival house during the festival.

Each morning about ^{four} ~~three~~ A M the men elders, the mayordomos, the sacristan, the musicians, and the church reader gathered at the church for the presentation of flowers to the "Saints". ~~Accompanying the flowers~~ Besides flowers, incense, ~~and~~ and candles were used in the presentation. While the singers and musicians perform the Latin ritual prescribed by the Catholic Priest the elders make the formal presentation of the flowers to the individual Saints.

There are about nine stations in the church where the presentations are made: (see chart) El Sarmen, La Santa Cruz, Jesus, La Virgin de Guadalupe, La Natividad (the patron ^{aint}), San Pedro y San Pablo, and San Jose y Maria. Since this festival is held in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe she gets the most attention.

There are many stories about the different ~~Saints~~ Saints in the church. Patricio Juarez once told me that Natividad was born mystically from the earth and people found her along with another Virgin in a field. When they brought her to Coatlán and put her in the church she showed her displeasure by becoming so heavy that they could hardly carry her. ~~Never-the-less~~ they decided to keep her. However they didn't pay much attention to her and one morning they found her out in the middle of the church. She had gotten off from her pedestal and was trying to leave. So they bought her new clothes and gave her a big festival. Since then she hasn't tried to leave.

Agustine told me about San José. In 1944 they had a grass hopper plague. It was decide to take a Saint out to the field and have a

festival in order to get help from the Supernatural. Since it was not permissible to take one of the regular Saints, they chose San José out of a pile of discards. They cleaned him up and washed his clothes and took him. The grasshoppers disappeared and San José was credited with a miracle.

In order to make the presentation the elder kneels in front of the Saint crossing himself as he does so. He lights a certain number of candles and places them. He puts incense on the hot coals in the incense burners. As he waves the burning incense he addresses the whole spectrum of the Supernatural and asks them to bless the village and the crops. At this time special blessing is asked for the coffee harvest. They also ask for protection from their enemies.

The designs of the enemy villages is no idle threat to the Mixes. One time the wind tore out a huge door on one side of the Coatlán church. The people in Coatlán say that the San Juan Guichicovi "tso'oc poj" (Nahuales wind) had done it when it came to steal a "tsaa maxanc" (stone idol of the ancients) that was buried in the floor of the church. It is also said that ever since that time the town of Coatlán has been suffering from sickness and troubles. Thus it seems that even today memories of their ancient Gods destroyed by the Spanish Friars have not been completely erased.

The people of the village place a great deal of confidence in the power of the religious festival to produce crops for them. Camile came down to the ranch while the festival was in progress to plant beans, and then hurried back up for the principal part of the ceremonies in order to get the most out of the blessings.

Monday morning (Oct. 10) another pig was butchered in order to supplement the meat of the turkeys and chickens. In the afternoon the musicians gathered at the festival to begin the all night musical known as "tsuu naxy" (passing the night). The purpose of this night is

to make preparations for the presentation of the candles in the church. The elders spend another night tamale making. The musicians play at intervals through out the night. There ~~is~~ ^{was} a crowd of men around the festival house and a crowd of women around the kitchen house. Occasionally there was ~~an~~ some dancing. The children ran hither and yon indulging in their favorite pas time of challenging one another to a duel. In the kitchen the patting of tortillas, the grinding of corn, and the making of coffee was a never ceasing activity. From the time the ceremony at the church began until after breakfast there was a lull in the festivity and those who could grabbed a few winks of sleep.

By mid morning the band is back playing dance music. Big pots of ~~are~~ ^{were} tamales are cooking in preparation to feed every body present. Liquor and cigarettes were served continually to everybody except children. The liquor consumption is kept down by the fact that no one person has possession of the bottle for any length of time, it is kept continually on the move. All use the same bottle. The world of microbes and germs is unknown to them. Soap is for washing clothes and bathing, but not for washing dishes or anything that could be made to look clean with out it

Late afternoon after every body has been fed at a word from the elders the ~~word-is-given~~ procession ~~is~~ ^{led} formed to take the candles to the church. ~~late-afternoon~~ The musicians ~~lead~~ ^{men} the procession playing as they go. As many of the elders as were still able to navigate fell in line behind the band each with a large candle flickering in the breeze. The ~~mayordomos~~ ^d follow the elders, next ~~came~~ ^{came} the old women, followed by the young women and children. Each person in the procession except the band carried a lighted candle. The candles to be stored for use during the year were divided up among the members of the procession to be carried to the church.

After the ceremony of presentation in the church there ~~is~~ ^{was} a brief lull then the musicians set up shop again at the festival *house*

for the "cerra huintau'u'a " (candle respect night). Dance music is played all night. This time the elders ~~made~~ "tse'x ymá'acy", (tamales with out meat).

The following day (Oct. 12) is known as "xwá codocx" (the lighted day). It probably means the day the candles are burning. In the early morning hours the ceremony in the church is centered around the lighting of candles for the Virgin of Guadalupe. This is her festival. This is her day as listed on the calendar. After the ceremony in the church the elders ^{performed} the final sacrifice offering of the fiesta. The pairs of turkeys and chickens butchered on the previous mornings were butchered by Nicasio with out ceremony. This day however the birds were beheaded by the elders. Each bird after it was beheaded was held up toward the heavens and the Supernatural was addressed. When I saw Augustine Perez perform this it appeared to me that he first waved the bird over the head of the offerer, and then pointed toward three or four different directions. He probably signalled the four winds or the four corners of the earth. The ancient Mayan concept of the earth was that it had four corners. After they were offered the birds were boiled in deliciously flavored water and served as a turkey soup. This meal is known as "tuut nuw gaay" (turkey soup feed) and all the town is expected to participate. The turkey and chicken meat was supplemented by meat from the cow that was butchered. The cows stomach had been served to the elders on a previous occasion.

The dividing of the meat is a speciality which can be performed by only a few men in town. Placido had borrowed the services of one of the elders named Soltero and Otilio Dominguez to perform what the call "jwocx ix" (dividing of the food).

^{were}
 The men-~~are~~ served in the festival house and the women in the
^{were} ^{the}
 kitchen. They-~~are~~ served in groups with eldest being served first
 and youngest last . The meat is divided according to age grouping.
 The elders receive a portion of each part of the turkey (drum stick,
 white meat, dark meat, liver, gizzard ^{etc.}) The next age group (tsaan)
 receive a good portion of turkey or chicken and a little beef, The
 maj ana'ao receive a small portion of turkey or chicken and a large
 portion of beef. The younger ones received almost all beef with only
 a token portion of the sacrifice animal.

^{some}
 When the elder receives his food he pours ^{some} of it on the earth
 and addresses the Supernatural asking them to be content with it. He
 especially addresses the spirits of the dead.

Coffee, tortillas and tamales were served with the-~~soup~~ meat
 courses.

The feeding of such a large number of people took on into the
 night. Every body in town was invited to eat wether a ^{legitimate}
 native or a visitor. They told me once of a tall blond visitor who
 said he was a doctor. He arrived in town during a festival. He spent
 the next three days eating and drinking at the festival house. When
 the festival was over he moved on. This is interesting to note since
 there is a strong in group feeling in Coatlán. An outsider even
 though he may have lived in Coatlán for years is still not accorded
 equal rights with a native son especially when it concerns use of
 the communal land.

After the "tuut new gaay" the people drifted off one by one.
 The band continued to play on into the wee hours of the morning.
 When the band left the festival was over for all practical purposes.
 The drunkards continued to celebrate on their own for a few more days.

Before this festival was finished preparations had begun for the next festival (Dec. 12). Coatlán has about five major festivals in a year and about nine minor ones.

Thursday (Oct. 13) the people began to return to their ranches. Friday Nicasio em came by the house on his way back, he said: "OH I'm tired; so many nights with out sleep. But the time went so fast, there was so much to do , it didn't seem like any time at all!"

A week later I talked with Placido. I said: "you had a big gaste" (blow out) He said: "it wasn't so bad I started preparing for it in April and May, the liquor and the cow did cost a lot though".

Estimated cost:

cow	700.00	salt	15.00
3 pigs	900.00	chile	20.00
liquor	300.00	corn	360.00
sky rockets	96.00	beans	120.00
cigarettes	600.00	turkeys	420.00
candle wax	48.00	chickens	300.00
incense	4.00		
panela	100.00		