



Language and Culture Archives

Bartholomew Collection of Unpublished Materials

SIL International - Mexico Branch

© SIL International

NOTICE

This document is part of the archive of **unpublished** language data created by members of the Mexico Branch of SIL International. While it does not meet SIL standards for publication, it is shared “as is” under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>) to make the content available to the language community and to researchers.



SIL International claims copyright to the analysis and presentation of the data contained in this document, but not to the authorship of the original vernacular language content.

AVISO

*Este documento forma parte del archivo de datos lingüísticos **inéditos** creados por miembros de la filial de SIL International en México. Aunque no cumple con las normas de publicación de SIL, se presenta aquí tal cual de acuerdo con la licencia "Creative Commons Atribución-NoComercial-CompartirIgual" (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>) para que esté accesible a la comunidad y a los investigadores.*

Los derechos reservados por SIL International abarcan el análisis y la presentación de los datos incluidos en este documento, pero no abarcan los derechos de autor del contenido original en la lengua indígena.

ZAPOTECA

Workers
Mr. & Mrs. Otiñ Leal

Place
Yatzachi el Bajo, Oax.

Inheritance custom

The inheritance is divided equally among all the children. This goes so far as to the dividing of a house. If three children, each getting one third are in the family, the house will be divided to the three. If one of them decides not to live there, he may take his third of the house away. Since the roof (the tile part) is the most valuable part, he may take only that. The other two children can't stop him. Thus often a house is left to ruin because the roof has been removed.

Even the fields are divided up so that today there are many little fields which one man may own. This results from the fact that each field had been divided equally among all the children. A man may own many of these little fields stretched over a large area; thus he will work in one of the fields a half hour, then move on to the next, and so on, moving around constantly from one place to another because each place of work is small.

Marriage customs

When a young unmarried man dies, he is married to a girl at the burial. The girl who places flowers in the grave is to be the wife in the next world because there is a belief that a wife is needed in the next life.

The marriage procedure is somewhat as follows: The boy's parents go and ask the father of the girl, and when they get the word they proceed with the "gifts." If the boy's parents may not be liked or have no standing, they can get a go-between who has respect. The boy doesn't have any say in the matter, but he must give his consent. It is not forced upon him but they talk him into it. The girl sometimes is taken by force.

The parents go to see the girl's parents around 8:00 pm. The girl often doesn't know till the day of the marriage that she is to get married. They don't consult her at all; if she keeps her eyes and ears open she usually finds out what is going on.

The sign of a good wife is to be able to make as large and as thin tortillas as possible. When the word has been given they bring to the girl's parents, mezcal (about 1 gallon) and cigarettes. This is one or two months before the marriage; the marriage can however be sooner after than. The boy also gives corn, beans, wood, and salt, and apparently the whole dinner. The boy must furnish for this fiesta which is for the friends and relatives of the girl's family. He must also furnish for a fiesta for the friends and relatives of his family. When the time comes for these fiestas he is not allowed to attend either; he is sent to the field to work. At the girl's home they don't eat the food, but carry home the food stuffs. At the boy's place they eat the food. Some people who are friends of both families get to go to both. These two fiestas are on the same day, but they can be on different days. The mezcal and cigarettes are brought over the night day of the fiesta.

When the parents first go over to the girl's home, they bring up their business, but they are never accepted the first night. They bring cigarettes and if they are accepted then they know that sooner or later the answer will be yes. The girl's parents, by custom, make a pretext for not accepting the first night. The boy's parents return the next night and so on till the actual yes answer is given. If, however, the cigarettes are not accepted the first night they need not return for the answer is a definite "NO".

When the word is given that the daughter can be had, the mezcal is sent over that night, and the food stuff is sent over ~~either~~ that night or the next day. The fiestas begin at about 3:00 pm. Sometimes the parents of the boy talk it over with the girl and tell her what ought to be done.

Whatever food is given at the fiesta it is always ~~in~~ in twos; that is, everything is paired off. The number of turkeys given is a matter of finances, but they are always given in pairs, a male and the female. If the boy's parents are wealthy, then the turkeys are given the next day; if they are not it will take time to acquire the turkeys. The number of turkeys also depends on what the girl's parents demand. It may be up to three dozen or as low as a few. After the word has been given that the girl can be had, the boy is "stuck" for the price of the girl is usually not given till after the agreement has been made and he has to pay no matter what the demand is.

Often there are four pair of turkeys. They make soup at the girl's house and serve it with beans, tamales and tortillas. Turkeys half cooked are carried over to the girl's house by young men of the friends of the boy's family. They make plenty of noise and let all the village know; this is done at night. They also carry along a live rooster so that it will crow along the way. More mezcal and cigarettes are also taken along at this time.

After the soup is cooked they send out a commission to invite the friends and relatives of the girl's family. They come but do not eat of it there; they take portions home with them.

The girl's god mother must take an entire turkey home with her and make soup and she and her family must eat all of it.

The religious or church part of the marriage fiesta consists of the couple going to the priest and confess^{ing} their sins. The priest tells them how many praises (memorized prayers) they must memorize before they can get married. If both can learn them right away, then they can get married right away otherwise they must wait. Some of the prayers are in Zapoteco. If the girl decides she doesn't want to marry then this is a good place for her to delay, but if she doesn't learn within a certain period, then her parents go to the priest and offer him money in place of her reciting the prayers and the marriage goes on. When the two have recited the prayers then the priest appoints a day on which they are to get married. The bride's parents buy her an outfit--ordinary clothes but new. The groom buys his own outfit.

The boy's family has bought 32 almuds of corn, about 50 kilos of flour, two pigs, and perhaps ~~some~~ other things for the wedding feast. Sometimes there are two days of fiestas.

At the groom's party, to which the groom cannot go, the band goes to the groom's house and plays on the night before the wedding. There is a dance in which only the old folks take part. They dance in pairs. While they dance they tell jokes on the bride and on the groom. These are usually dirty jokes and anything else that they think will interest the people. Some put on outfits from other towns; others if they tell something on the girl will dress more or less like her. After the dance they eat.

The girl is not present nor any of her relatives. The food eaten is a dish of ground chile and dumplings made of green bananas made into a patty. If no bananas are available, then they use corn with coffee. When the party is over the ladies of the house make atole for the next day (chocolate atole). Those who stayed up making the atole drink first the next day so as to be ready to serve it.

Before breakfast the mother chooses a lady to comb the bride's hair. Then the families meet at the church and go to mass. Then the wedding in the church takes place. The girl's parents both go; the boy's mother is too busy making food so that she can't go, but his father goes with him. If he is not living then a man is sent with him whom they can "trust." If the girl's parents are not living then a trustworthy person is sent with her. They get married before breakfast. If they have to go to another town to get married, the band meets them part way. People of Yatzachi usually go to Zochila where the priest lives.

The boy's family sends someone to meet them and the girl is brought to the groom's house or the girl may go home and a person is sent there to get her. The girl's relatives also come at this time to get their portion of food--blood sausages, and take it home along with 4 halves of bread and two portions of atole.

Each family or household group gives the girl a basket of cotton (about a half kilo) with the seed in it. Some substitute cloth which amounts to 4 or 5 meters. The god mother must give the bride a new outfit. This is apart from her wedding dress. This outfit consists of a huipil and a skirt.

The girl's relatives and the godmother leave. The father, mother, and bride eat in the house of the groom and also take home a portion for the brothers and sisters and any other relatives in the house (small ones) who had not been invited to the feast. The relatives of the groom had eaten before the others had come to get their portion. The girl eats at no fixed time and goes home with her parents afterwards.

After a few hours the band arrives at the home of the bride where she and the relatives had returned. There is a dance for everyone who wants to. The men must wear a hat; he puts it on the girl or woman with whom he dances. (This is not the American type of dance.)

Then all go to the groom's house again. Midway they meet the people who have dressed in other costumes and all go to the groom's house. The bride's relatives get their portion of the dinner but they don't take it home right away; they stay a while to watch the dance. They eat meat tortillas and soup so they won't get too hungry. This is served to be taken home but they eat it. The women/^{part} first or ~~all~~ all eat together. This is opposite to the regular custom around there. After eating, they have a dance again, but this is only for married people. They don't necessarily dance with their own wife or husband. People have all brought money, and the dance is only for the married relatives of the bride. A special old man begins the dance with one of the women he chooses. He has a flower which he gives to the woman and at the end of the dance he drops out. She then continues by choosing a man partner and gives him the flower. At the end she drops out and he chooses another woman and gives her the flower, etc. At the time that the woman drops out, she drops money into a container for the ~~bride~~. Only the women pay in this dance except if a married man dances whose wife is not present. They usually give about 25 centavos to a peso each. The money goes to the groom. There is a strict division of property between man and wife and often after 15 years, one still knows exactly what is who's property

When the dance is over for all who were invited and have given the money, the dance continues for the grinder women and others who have been working. Their dance is free and continues till supper time and all stay for supper. There are usually only a few left by this time.

The bride spends the first night with the groom at the house of the groom. The next morning the god mother and parents of the bride go to the groom's house for breakfast and again report there for lunch. On the day before these old folks had given advice to the young couple on how to be considerate, etc. The second day after the wedding they make tamales of yellow sauce and chocolate atole (at the groom's house) and send it over to the bride's folks at their home.

Birth customs and child care

At child birth the umbilical cord is not cut with a knife lest the boy become a "knifer" or murderer. They use a piece of sharp carrizo. They take the placenta and making sure that it is absolutely clean, they put it in a new cantaro and cover the mouth of it and bury it behind the house in order that the child will grow up always wanting to live in their town. If the placenta is dirty when it is buried, they believe that the baby will get sick in his eyes. If the placenta is thrown away, the child will die, and if the placenta is thrown in the river they believe that the child will become a wanderer. If the baby gets sick in the eyes, they believe it is because the placenta was not clean and they will dig it up and clean it some more and rebury it right ~~away~~ away.

Children are usually not left alone but if they must be, a machete is placed across him.

After birth, a baby is put to a wet nurse for the first two days and after that suckles from the mother. It is because they believe that the mother's milk is unfit for the first two days