

Shared Knowledge, Embodied Structure, Mediated Process The Case of the Zapotec of Oaxaca

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Long-term Field-based Data

Analysis of primary data gathered from intensive fieldwork among the Zapotec of Mexico (El Guindi 1986, 1983, 1982, 1981, 1977a, 1977b, 1973; El Guindi & Read 1979a, 1979b; El Guindi & Selby 1976) suggest that implicit knowledge underlies culture and shapes structure. Formal models of analysis are formulated to reveal the structuring process manifested in cultural activities.

To demonstrate, this presentation explores aspects of the Zapotec wedding ceremony in which live turkeys and raw food gifts are literally waltzed with in musical processions around the village for ceremonial delivery and reciprocal exchange of gifts to specific kin, drawing the boundary of social and cultural geography and kin universe. Kin categorizations are fluidly defined and redefined in dynamic transformations but within specific parameters (Fig 1). Embedded shared knowledge is revealed in imaginative cultural manifestations.

Some Conclusions

- ➔ Underlying culture is coherent web of shared knowledge about all aspects of life. Culture domains (sacred, secular, spatial, political, social and religious, life and death) are linked into a whole.
- ➔ Process of structuring & restructuring creatively occurs within and across social-cultural domains.
- ➔ Whole knowledge is mastered by a few in the culture (the scientists of the group).
- ➔ Implicit knowledge is concretely (explicitly) manifested in beliefs & ritual practices (both are same level). Anthropologist constructs analytic formulations to reveal it in analysis.

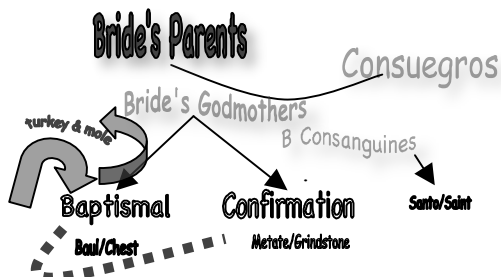


Figure 1 Complex Transformationality of Kin

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