

Las historias de dos culturas indígenas:

A Maintenance Comparison of Modern-Day Yucatecan Maya and Peruvian Quechua Cultures

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Preface: (personal statement)

The world has changed a lot since the discovery of the New World. I have enjoyed learning how indigenous cultures have adapted and maintained themselves despite the pressure by Western society to conform. We have so much to learn about them from those who live in the cultures themselves. Working with locals taught me so much during my study abroad in the Yucatan. The Spanish quotes used during this essay from interviews have been translated by the author.

Abstract

This essay will seek to explore how Yucatecan Maya and Peruvian Quechua are preserving and adapting their indigenous agricultural systems to the modern world. This relation is examined through indigenous spirituality ceremonies, food systems and economic systems. In both cultures, there are ceremonies, which are done in order to appease the local gods and encourage bountiful harvests. The traditional food systems have also changed due to the effects of colonization, imperialism and globalization. Both cultures have also seen a shift in their economic systems, as they have had to adapt different forms of crop productions in order to survive. All of these changes have impacted the way everyday life is conducted for these people, yet their way of life has continued. Preserving local customs and traditions that have roots in the pre-Hispanic past is important for their ongoing negotiations of their indigenous cultural identities, though they recognize the necessity of being able to adapt and assimilate into dominant, often non-indigenous ways of living. Such careful balancing of tradition and modernity has ensured their place in the modern world.

Chapter 0: Introduction

I first began investigating traditional agricultural systems when I took a study abroad to the Yucatan where I looked at Mayan religion, agriculture, astronomy and calendric were connected. Through this process, I was able to gain an understanding of who the Maya were and how indigenous cultures have continued throughout the ages despite the influence of more dominant cultures like that of Spain for Mexico and Peru. Seeing a new culture up close expanded my horizons to include more than what I thought was the way to do things. The old ways persist because they play an important role in the societies and have been adapted to fit within the new society. This maintenance and adaptation cycle of culture is the focus of this research in regards to how both the Yucatecan Mayan and Peruvian Quechua have done this process in regards to their agricultural systems. Agriculture is an important part of these people daily lives in more than just the food they eat, but also in various rituals and their economic standing in society.

Throughout this essay, the word 'indigenous' will be used to describe the people and practices of the Maya and Quechua. The author recognizes other words, such as 'traditional' and 'native', can be used in place of indigenous, but has decided on indigenous because these people groups have been in Latin America long before Europeans came to the Americas. These traditions date back centuries and have persisted despite Spanish influence in the areas and the changes which have happened in the countries. However, these words will still be used, although sparingly, as synonyms for indigenous.

Literature Review (2)

This section will look at different works which have been done previously among the Yucatecan Maya and Peruvian Quechua agricultural practices and the impact of climate change

on these practices. The literatures in this section are not exclusive, but are some of the key sources about these two groups.

Eduardo Peraza Castillo in “*Wahil Kol: A Yucatec Maya Agricultural Ceremony*” describes the *wahil kol* ceremony. This ceremony is integral to the agricultural ceremonial cycle as it gives thanks to the deities who provided for the growth of the crops. During my fieldwork in the Yucatan, this ceremony was not a key focus of my questioning and this article is needed to fill in the blanks about what happens and why this ceremony is done. Using the information from Castillo, I will be better able to explain what happens in the *wahil kol* and its connection to modern agricultural practices in the Yucatan.

In *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path* by David Freidel, Linda Schele and Joy Parker explores Mayan shamanism in the contemporary Mayan world. The authors look at both Yucatecan and Guatemalan Maya in their examination of the Maya. The main piece of evidence used from this book is the discussion of the *cha'a chac* ceremony. During my time in the Yucatan I was not able to see a *cha'a chac* ceremony because I was unable to see the ceremony in person. Receiving insight into the *cha'a chac* from an outsider enabled me to better understand what is happening in this ceremony as well as how the ceremony impacts the modern-day Maya's agricultural life.

Mountains of the Condor: Metaphor and Ritual in an Andean Ayllu by Joseph W. Bastien looks at the life of Aymara descendants in Bolivia, near the border of Peru. Through living with these people, Bastien was able to gain an understanding of how their traditional religion impacts their daily lives and how they relate to nature. Land is an important symbol for these people; one man told Bastien “The mountain is like us, and we're like it” (Bastien, 1978, xix). While this ethnography does not specifically look at Peru, it provides valuable insight into a major part of

Peruvian population (Bastein, 1978, xxi). Using this ethnography gives a bigger picture of the Quechua and their lifestyle. Understanding this culture provides the very basis of this essay of what the culture of the Quechua people. Without this book, this paper would not have been possible. Peter Gose expands on this by looking at the cycles of agricultural rituals of the Quechua.

Food, Power, and Resistance in the Andes: Exploring Quechua Verbal and Visual Narratives by Alison Krögel describes how food plays a powerful role in the lives of indigenous females (Krögel, 2011, 1). Krögel examines the role food has played in pre- and post-colonialism and on into modern history (Krögel, 2011, 2). The foods these people eat yearly follow a cycle based on what is available to them at the time as well as when different food are ready to be eaten (Krögel, 2011, 3). Food plays an important role in any society and shows what is important to a society. Understanding this allows this essay to show the importance of agriculture and the food system of the people.

This is not an exhaustive list of all the sources I looked at, but they are the main ones I used to gain an understanding of these cultures agricultural systems and how they have become hybridized since the Spanish Conquest.

Research Purpose

The focus of this research is looking at how the Yucatecan Maya and Peruvian Quechuan's agricultural systems are changing because of climate change. This will be addressed by looking at the impact climate change is having on traditional native beliefs, what is happening to the food systems of these people and finally how climate change is affecting the economic situation of these groups based on the other two factors. Understanding what is happening to

these areas of these areas gives a better grasp of what is happening in this area and other areas in the world.

Methods

The vast majority of this research was conducted through collecting data from outside sources. Part of my data used from the Yucatan comes from interviews I conducted between June 1 to July 15, 2014 with International Review Board approval on May 14, 2014. These interviews regarding the traditional Mayan belief system, agricultural system and their connection to astronomy and the calendric systems. The members of the communities of Santa Elena and Muna, Mexico I spoke with were local experts in traditional beliefs, agricultural practices and local knowledge and I recorded my conversations with them, per their approval, while taking notes during our conversations. I also visited a *milpa* and a *parcela* owned by different local people along with different commercial agriculture farms near the *parcela* I visited. Mr. Wilbert Vázquez was my primary informant for my interviews. During my conversations with Mr. Vázquez, we discussed ancient and current Mayan agricultural practices, ceremonies performed for agricultural fertility and to the Mayan gods, such as *Chac*, the rain god, and the ancient Mayan calendric system and its connections to astronomical observations made by the ancient Maya. I also spoke to local farmers in the area who had *parcelas* and *milpas*¹

The remainder of the information I gathered for the Yucatan and Peru was through extensive reading of various books and scholarly articles. The information I found on the Yucatan through these sources was to fill in the blanks, which I was unable to fill in during my interviews. Based on what I knew about the Yucatecan Maya, I was able to look for patterns of the Peruvian Quechua similar to what I found out in the Yucatan. All of the information I have

¹ *Parcelas* and *milpas* will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

gathered on the Peruvian Quechua is from various books on the subjects of their lives and scholarly articles. These sources gave me the information I needed to compare these two very different people groups. Lifestyles may be different for these two groups of people, but they share many commonalities that is examined in this essay.

History

Both Mexico and Peru have complex pasts since the discovery of the New World and the subsequent Conquest. These two countries have experienced violence, which has challenged the traditional lifestyles and cultures of the indigenous people.

Mexico has a long history beginning about 40,000 years ago when people came Asia and Alaska who were hunters and gatherers until they began intense cultivation around 13,000 B.C. The Olmecs' (1,500 B.C to 900 B.C) were the first major civilization to emerge and they created the blueprint for other Mesoamerican civilizations with elites controlling the peasants, large buildings, cultivation of maize, the development of calendars and writing systems. Around A.D. 150, other great Mesoamerican societies, such as the Maya, began the Classic period A.D. 150 to 900. This time period was marked by war and exploitation of natural resources which led the Maya to migrate north to the Yucatan Peninsula from current-day Guatemala, Belize and Southern Mexico high and low lands. In the Yucatan, the Maya lived and were successful even beyond the Conquest.

Another great Mesoamerican civilization was the Aztec, established in A. D. 1325. The Aztecs controlled Central Mexico until the Spanish conquistador, Hernando Cortés, conquered Tenochtilán on August 13, 1521. The Spanish Conquest resulted in an upheaval of the customs and traditions of the Mesoamerican people. The Spanish enslaved native people and created the

encomienda and *hacienda* systems². The Spanish crown controlled New Spain until Mexico revolted on September 16, 1810. Independence was won from Spain in September 1821. After Independence, Mexico had a period of peace but erupted into revolution in 1910. This revolution lasted until 1917 when democracy was established. The vast majority of time since the Revolution, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) has largely maintained control of the government until 2000 when Vicente Fox Quesada became the first non-PRI president to lead Mexico. Beginning in the 1980s, neoliberalism³ gained significant ground in Mexican politics. Under President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Mexico moved in the neoliberal direction culminating with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in November of 1993. By signing NAFTA, Mexico entered into a stronger trading relationship with Canada and the United States of America.

The earliest hunter-gatherer sites now dated at roughly 14,000 B.C. in Peru. There have been multiple civilizations such as the Mochi, the Nazca in the southern coast of Peru, the Wari and Tiwanaku around Lake Titicaca and the Inca. Many of the ancient civilizations of ancient Peru engaged in frequent war with their neighbors. The Wari were different when they rose to power in A.D. 800 and maintained peace in the area until their fall. The Incas came to power only in the 1450s and amassed the biggest empire in South America. It stretched from modern day Ecuador, Peru down to Chile and inland to some of Bolivia and Argentina. The Incas were the civilizations in power when the Spanish conquistadors arrived in Mexico. Peru was discovered in 1533 and conquered by Francisco Pizarro with the help of European diseases. The

² The *encomienda* and *hacienda* systems were used by the Spanish to control the natives and create a plantation like system, similar to the American plantation system. These will both be discussed more in chapter 3 on the agricultural economic systems of these two locations.

³ Neoliberalism is an economic policy which focuses on allowing companies to have greater control over themselves and focusing on the free market (Meyer 2007 Chapter 38).

Incas did not simply submit to the Spanish right away after they were conquered; rather they continued to fight until the last Incan king died in 1572 when they completely surrendered to the Spanish.

Just like in Mexico, Colonial Peru had the *hacienda* system for land division. The Spanish control of Peru began to wane to the point Peruvians were able to declare independence in 1821 with full independence being gained in 1824. Peru's history since independence has been speckled with military dictatorships and democratic governments. A more recent example of their struggle with unrest is the Shining Path in the 1970s to 90s. The Shining Path was Peru's Communist party who created some of the bloodiest times in Latin American history since the 1800s. They affected elections in different areas throughout Peru during the democratic elections. They also challenged the authority of those who gained power through Lima instead of through the people. Even today, the Shining Path plays an important role in Peru, continuing their public perception as terrorists. Currently Peru has a relatively stable democratically elected president. However, there have been some economic issues in 2007 that have created some unrest in the country.

Geography and Climate

These two regions have very different geographic characteristics. The Yucatan is a peninsula in the Gulf of Mexico and its primary elevation is about sea level although can rise up to around 600 feet in the Puuc Hill region. This peninsula also has virtually no rivers and lakes but has *cenotes*, which are small "pools" interconnected underground throughout the peninsula and provide watering holes for those near them. Because of the lack of available water, rain is key for the people of the region as is the modern water infrastructure. The Yucatan's rainy season is between May and October and brings about 43 inch of rain to the region.

The Peruvian Andes are steep mountains which range in elevation from 8,000 feet to 22,000 feet resulting in a harsher environment and dramatically different rainfall amounts and temperatures throughout the year. The growing seasons are shorter here and are dependent on little change in the environment, as these crops have been grown in very specific niches for generations. The rivers in the region flow towards either the Pacific Ocean or the Amazon Rainforest. Rainfall in the area also varies greatly from just a couple inches to almost 60 inches of rain per year. The rainy season in Peru is from October to April.

Structure

The Yucatecan Mayan and the Peruvian Quechua cultures have become hybridized to include traditional beliefs and practices alongside beliefs and practices from the Spanish conquerors in their agricultural lives. The combination of these two systems has resulted in religious synchronization between the indigenous and Catholic beliefs and gods; changes in the food systems of these two groups and what foods are eaten; and the economic structures in regards to agriculture for these people. Agricultural practices of these people are deeply connected to their religious practices as they ask the various indigenous gods to give their land fertility and produce a bountiful crop. These rituals are timed to occur at certain times of the year based on the agricultural calendar and the religious calendar's overlap. The crops which are harvested by the people are their normal foods which have sustained them since they began inhabiting the area. The changes which have happened to these local crops because of climate change are forcing people to look to other foods which are not what they would have otherwise eaten if their crops had not changed. Lastly, in both countries, the economies have changed for what is profitable to produce and what is not. This change encourages the farmers to produce crops which are not in their traditional diets and impact their traditional economy and their

current economic situations. Looking at these three different aspects of these people's lives, the impact of climate change will be made apparent as the environment is deeply connected to native religions, foods and economy.

Chapter 1: Spirituality

Traditional religious beliefs center on the yearly cycles of agriculture. Ceremonies are done to please the gods or spirits who provide rain, bountiful harvest, prosperity and many more. Offerings of the crops produced are given to different or the same gods in order to maintain a good relationship with those gods and continual prosperity for the town and people. This is the case with the Yucatecan Maya in the *ch'a'a cháak* and *wahil kol*. These ceremonies are done to incite and thank the Mayan god of rain *Chac*⁴ for the rainfall and harvest. The Peruvian Quechua do similar with *pago a Pachamama* and *Qoyllur Rit'i* where they honor *Pachamama* and ask her to bless and continue to bless them with their harvests and survival.

The *ch'a'a cháak* is a ceremony performed to ask the god *Chac* for much needed rains so that the *milpas* and to some extent the *parcelas* will produce much needed food. This ceremony takes place after the crops for the *milpa* are planted. The ceremony takes three days to complete with men being present for all three days and women being present for only the last day⁵. It is done for one *milpa* or collectively for a section of *milpas* in a village. Those invited are friends of the ceremony's hosts or are fellow *milpa* farmers, or *milpero*. The ceremony is conducted in April or May when the Maya *Chac* constellation is present in the sky⁵. Food is elaborately prepared this ceremony. The food, prepared at the field, is an offering for *Chac* and placed on an altar the men had assembled on the first day of the ceremony. A *ming*, or shaman, is the one who makes all the offerings to the gods⁵. The *ming* used to have more power than they do now, but since Colonialism they have lost their power thanks to the increasing power of Catholicism⁵.

⁴ This is one of the spellings of the Maya rain god's name. Another is *Chaac*. The sources I have read used this spelling of *Chac* and I have elected to do the same.

⁵ Wilbert Vázquez, in interview with author, June 12, 2014, Muna, Mexico.

The ceremony is conducted not just to a single god but rather four different *Chacs* and the Christian God. Each of these gods is incited to bring rain to the fields and thus a bountiful harvest. The four *Chacs* each represent the different cardinal directions. The offering of the food begins by presenting to the *Chak xib cháak* (the *Chac* of the east), then the north, west and south respectively. Each of these gods is offered *c'oal*, a thick liquid prepared on site for the ceremony⁶. By offering this to the four *Chacs*, the farmers are ensuring they will come and hopefully not be captured by other Maya gods who ensure the rains do not come. They also believe that when it rains, rain is falling everywhere because all they can see is the rain falling all around them⁷. The synchronization with Christianity and the Christian God for this ceremony shows the importance of the Catholic faith to these people as well as their ability to maintain and adapt their indigenous cultures. Both religions continue though the religious synchronization that has taken place because of the Spanish missionary influence on the beliefs of the people which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Another ceremony the Mayan do is the *waaji k'ool* which is similar to the *ch'a'a cháak* and asks the gods for help with their harvest.. A *ming* is performs this ceremony for someone wishing for continued prosperity in all aspects of life (Peraza, 1984, 252). Most of the ceremony occurs around a table set with candles, food and drinks. The table itself is placed against a sapling towards the east (Peraza, 1984, 254). On the trunk of the sapling, a crucifix is tied for during the ceremony (Peraza, 1984, 254). Ceremonial food and drink are prepared specifically like the *balche'*, which is made of “water, cinnamon, anise seeds, honey and the bark of the *balche'* tree” (Peraza, 1984, 253). *Balche'* is given to turkeys and chickens before they are sacrificed for the ceremony; people also drink this at multiple points during the ceremony

⁶ Wilbert Vázquez in interview with author, June 12, 2012, Muna, Mexico.

⁷ Wilbert Vázquez, *Ibid.*, July 10, 2014.

through the bread preparation and the chants (Peraza, 1984, 257). The birds are prepared by women into a soup which is another offering to the gods (Peraza, 1984, 265).

A large fire pit is also dug in order to cook the various breads the women make for the ceremony. The bread is similar to tortillas but is cooked in layers of varying numbers – Peraza observed 13 and 12 layers to the breads. He also witnessed a bread ‘armadillo’ made to offer to the gods (Peraza, 1984, 262). Those who participate and prepare the different food for the ceremony then share these breads. Peraza stresses the food for this ceremony is made only for this ceremony. Chants are another important part of this ceremony the *ming* leads the participants through. The chants are in the Yucatecan Mayan and address the agricultural gods of the Maya and the Christian God. This is another example of religious syncretism of the old religion with the modern religion. Giving thanks for all the gods ensures there will be continued prosperity for the people. Traditionally this ceremony is done at the field, but when Peraza observed the ceremony, it was done in the yard of the landowners’ home.

The Quechua perform simple ceremonies to thank one of their main gods, *Pachamama*, called *pago a la Pachamama*. They see *Pachamama* as Mother Earth and she should be thanked for what she does for them in terms of food, such as potatoes and quinoa, and animal, alpacas and llamas, provision. The ceremonies are fast with a small sip of a drink is poured onto the ground for *Pachamama*; then the person making the offering takes a sip; and the rest is then poured onto the field or the alpacas and llamas. Coca leaves are also an important offering for *Pachamama*. A similar pattern with the coca leaves when they are offered to *Pachamana*. The farmer and those who are participating take some leaves and chew them while they bury three coca leaves with great care. The offerings are given before planting, sheering and journeys. *Pachamama* is the main god of the Quechua, the one they most intimately follow and seek to

appeal to for provision. Before leaving on a trip, some coca tea is offered to *Pachamama* for a safe journey. This is the only offering offered before the journey begins showing the importance of coca in the Quechua spiritual life⁸.

Offerings to *Pachamama* help to keep the community stay in balance. Community is one of the key culture aspects of the Quechua instead of the individualistic society of the West. The well-being of the community, from the Quechua perspective, depends on what food is produced by the different farmers and *Pachamama* is the one who provides the harvest of both food and cash crops like alpaca and llama fleece. Balance enables Quechua communities to continue thrive and balance with nature is their most important focus because of the environment they live in. The Andes are one of the hardest environment to survive in but the Quechua have thanks to *Pachamama* according to Quechua belief.

Coca is an important offering to the Quechua gods and thus is offered in the different ceremonies they do to ensure their agricultural product. Coca leaves are the fundamental part of any Quechua ritual. Without it, there could be no ritual for the Quechua (Ausangate). Coca leaves are bestowed with breathe by the person offering the sacrifice. This bestowing of breathe allows *ayni*, the Quechua concept of reciprocity which happens all the time between nature and people, is maintained and engaged with (Ausangate).

The *Qoyllur Rit'i* is a journey to the shrine at the top of Ausangate, the tallest mountain in southern Peru, where a Christian shrine has been built (Ausangate). This is the largest pilgrimage taken by the Quechua with a twelve mile hike up Ausangate. The mountain is believed to be the most powerful *apus*, or mountain spirit, in the area and must be honored through offerings of

⁸ Coca is also important in their daily life as it helps with altitude sickness, hunger and thirst. Using coca in this way is legal in Peru but the production of cocaine is not since coca leaves are where cocaine comes from.

smoke, coca leaves and other items used by the *pampa misayoq* or the *alto misayoq*, low and high priests respectively (Ausangate). Quechuas come from all over the Quechua world, such as Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile and elsewhere, or have representatives go for them to climb the mountain. This ceremony takes days to complete. On the way to the mountain, the pilgrims pass through different communities where native arts and ways of life are preserved in the towns (Ausangate). In the towns, people are able to prepare for the climb and different ceremonies that take place on the mountain. Once they have passed through the towns, the mountain climb is the next stage of the journey. They climb when there is snow because they are showing their connection to the mountain and the *apus* within the mountain (Ausangate). The ceremony challenges the people physically, mentally and spiritually as they make the difficult trek up the steep mountain face.

Before they reach the shrine, they stop at a rest point where elaborate costumes are put on, sacrifices are prepared and other preparations for the rest of the journey are made. Here people prepare for the last required stage of the journey loudly by dancing and chanting to both the Christian God and the indigenous gods. This preparation is key to enabling the people to have the strongest religious experience. From this half waypoint, some people will dress in bear costumes and spur people on as they finish the journey to the shrine at the top of the mountain. When they have reached the shrine, prayers, dances and chants are performed for the two sets of gods the people believe in. Offerings are also presented during this time to ensure good harvests for the next year. Most people return home once this is done. Some people continue past the shrine to Tayankani, another peak, where they wait for the sun to rise over the mountains and then descend in a formation of the cross. Dance continues until the end of the ceremony.

Both of these religious belief systems have seen a huge impact of Catholicism and have created syncretized religions that combine aspects of both religions. During the Conquest, conversion was a main goal of the Spanish as they saw the indigenous religions as heathen beliefs that relied on blood sacrifices. The conquistadors and Christian missionaries used indigenous festivals to convert the indigenous populations to Catholicism and lessen the cognitive dissidence, as a new belief became the norm of their societies. Using the native traditions made it easier for the local populations to accept the Catholic beliefs.

For the Quechua, the Virgin Mary is another representation of *Pachamama*. Both women are important parts of the traditional way of life for the people; both are also the giver of lives since Mary bore Jesus and *Pachamama* provides life through the earth and crop production. Without either of these women, there would be no life for these people. *Pachamama* has provided everything for the Quechua for longer than anyone can remember since she is the one who provided them with the food sources and way of life they have. She holds an important place in every Quechua's life as when they live in the city, they often return to the mountains for they see "God in nature and in the mountains" (Ausangate). Having an open heart to the natural world enables the people to survive despite the hard situations they are going through. Spirituality for the Quechua is key to how they view the world and interact with it.

In the Yucatan, the synchronization is much 'simpler' as the two religions have blended together with both sets of gods being honored by people in their everyday life. One of the local men in the village of Santa Elena had a shrine which showed cased Mayan gods and a shrine featuring a crucifix (Figure 1). Having the two sets of gods in the open shows how both are important to maintaining the culture of the past and the peace of the present and future culture. The Yucatecan Mayan culture places an emphasis on maintaining their past traditions while also

adapting them to fit in with the new world they live in. Their environment has changed very little from when the Maya were the sole rulers of the peninsula helping to ensure the survival of the Mayan culture. Rain is key for the Mayan survival even today, as irrigation has become more incorporated into their everyday lives. *Chac* has remained a focus of the Maya because he provides the water they require for their survival. People retain practices and rituals they know work while changing them to fit how they understand and interact with the world. Maintaining the *ch'a'a cháak* and *wahil kol* have helped to keep the Mayan culture similar to what it was like before the Spanish Conquest.

Both of these cultures differ in how they present their religious ceremonies to the public. In the Yucatan, the agricultural ceremonies performed are done privately by the local community and those who attend are invited to the ceremony. This keeps the beliefs closer to the people who they influence instead of creating the beliefs for outsiders. Outsiders are allowed into the ceremonies but only upon invitation from someone attending and this is only for certain people they trust to see the traditional practices. This enables the ceremonies to stay within the culture but also ensures preservation with some recordings of the different ceremonies. Both the *cha'a cháak* and *wahil kol* ceremonies present different aspects of the indigenous culture and how they have been modernized with different modern products like using a pre-made table instead of building a table for the ceremony (Peraza, 1984, 251). Adapting small changes and simplifications enable the ceremonies to continue on to meet the spiritual needs of the people.

In Peru, ceremonies have become more common for tourism instead of simply being one for the agricultural benefits of the gods. The *Qoyllur Rit'i* is a large event where Quechua come from all over South America and is an important time for the Quechua traditions. Crafts and indigenous goods are found all over the place enabling the spread and preservation of the culture.

Bringing people to the festivals and towns spreads the practices and crafts of the Quechua outside of their Quechua circle. Bringing foreigners to indigenous festivals preserves the culture in the wider culture of the world. Outsiders are not going to share the same understanding as the Quechua do but the outsiders will remember what they see and what they bought. Tourism also ensures the preservation of the culture by enlarging those who are involved in the festival or those who are aware of the festival. Tourism provides opportunities to continue the native beliefs. Bigger festivals bring people.

The spiritual beliefs of both the Inca and the Maya played an integral part in their eating systems. The crops they grew and offered to their various gods demonstrated what foods were and were not important or sacred to the people. The Mayan agricultural foods had every day applications whereas the Inca had foods for the everyday and the sacred. Never the less their agricultural practices were key to helping establish the cultures that have persisted despite being conquered and repressed for generations.

Chapter 2: Eating Systems

The food systems of both the Maya and Quechua were changed dramatically when the Spanish gained control of their territories. Despite the attempted repression by the Spanish of the traditional cuisine, that very food has survived and adapted to incorporate the influence of the Conquerors and other cultures, which have come to the areas (Krögel, 2011, 6).

The traditional food in the Yucatan centers on corn, beans, squash and turkey. *Frijoles negros*, black beans, are the common bean of the area and an important food source in the Yucatecan diet. One common side dish served during my time in Santa Elena was “soupy beans” which is black beans mashed up and cooked in liquid to create a smooth bean paste. Black beans also play a key role in *panuchos* where they are stuffed into the corn tortilla and topped with lettuce, tomato, pickled onions and avocados. Beans are everywhere in Yucatecan food and are one of the main crops from the *milpa* farming.

Corn is another crop from the *milpa* and is key to Mayan spirituality. A large section of Yucatecan dishes require corn meal for doughs like tortillas, *brazo de reina*, *panuchos*, *sanunchos* and *peb*. *Peb* and *brazo de reina* are special occasion dishes made only at certain times of the year – the Day of the Dead and Easter, respectively. *Panuchos* and *sanunchos* on the other hand are made in everyday life instead of just for special occasions. They are commonly found at restaurants and homes. Corn remains the one of the most important part of the Mayan diet. When served with soup, the tortillas are used as spoons as opposed to using the spoon utensil. Corn products can be commercially bought today in both pre-made tortillas and corn meal. Corn is something which a family goes through quickly since tortillas are always on the table ready to be eaten cold or hot.

For the Maya, they have gained many new types of food while also maintaining the food they have eaten for generations. Corn, beans and squash are foods which have been passed down for generations and grown in similar ways, but today's food availability has shifted to include more processed food as well as non-indigenous foods such as the mango trees and the sweet and sour orange trees. These four different types of trees produce fruit, which is a normal part of any *parcela*. These foods have given farmers lower maintenance crops because they only need to be watered and harvested, but they have also pushed people away from the traditional crop production. Instead of having to make say their corn meal, people are now about to buy it from stores and use that corn meal in the traditional recipes of the area.

Having the ability to buy food has drastically changed the Yucatecan Maya relationship to the food they eat and produce. Instead of having the physical labor relationship to their food, they only need to go to the store and buy what they need. The families I interacted with in Santa Elena and Muna all had a *parcela* where they would produce fruits and some vegetables they would eat, or share with others, while everything else they bought from a store⁹. Self-sufficiency has largely disappeared when it comes to food as everything is largely purchased instead of cultivated by hand.

The Quechua did not fare any better than the Maya in regards to their food system. Krögel says “the Spanish first arrived in Peru declaring Quechua ‘delicacies’ (*manjares*) to be ‘so rustic and crude that there was nothing that wasn’t badly cooked, and even more poorly roasted, over coals’” (Krögel, 2011, 6). Andean food has survived today outside of Peru in “more than twenty varieties of corn, at least two hundred varieties of potato, as well as numerous

⁹ One family owned a restaurant and had a large farm behind their home where they also raised chickens and pigs. Sometimes they would use this meat in place of store bought meat, but largely, they tended towards using store bought meat for their restaurant.

varieties of squash, beans, peppers, peanuts, cassava, avocado, highland tubers and grains such as quinoa, *kiwicha* (amaranth), and *cañihua*” (Krögel, 2011, 6; Cabieses 1995, 78). In both locations, those with power favored European food in the Colonial era such as the mestizos¹⁰ (Krögel 2011, 6). Food plays an important role in establishing identity of people through their culture and their social expectations. These factors greatly affect how a society functions.

The potato, or *papa* in Quechua and Spanish, is a large part of the Quechua diet as they have over 4,000 varieties. Each type is processed differently and help to ensure nutritional variety and completeness unlike what happened during the Irish potato famine. Since there is a large variety and processing ways, the potato crops last all year long. In Quechua farming, people seldom only harvest a few crops, but rather harvest a wide variety so that should one fail, people will be able to continue on until the next agricultural season (Krögel, 2011, 23). The *papa* plays an integral role in Quechua everyday life and is the basis for their diet. Krögel explains this by saying potatoes if eaten in the proper amount can provide everything the human body needs nutritionally (Krögel, 2011, 20). Potatoes also grow a larger variety of environments than other Quechua crops and are relatively easy to grow unlike *maize*. Because of these two factors, *papas* are a staple food group of the Quechua.

Maize, or *sara* in Quechua, was another crop grown by the Quechua like the other great Latin American cultures. *Maize* though is not as hardy or as easy to grow like the *papa*. Unlike the potato, *maize* plants must be protected from birds and small mammals when the plant is a seedling (Krögel 2011, 25). Despite the challenges of cultivation, it was revered by the Inca’s, likely due to the gold color of the kernels. *Maize* is still used today in various dishes, like soups,

¹⁰ Mestizos are part of the complex Latin American colonial era social hierarchy. They were a mix of European and American ancestry. There are other ways of using the word, but for the purpose of this essay, it will refer to someone of mixed race.

but unlike the *papa*, it does not provide as much nutritional value and people need to eat other foods along with the corn to meet all their nutritional needs. Corn is not a one and done crop like the *papa*, but it still held an important place in Quechua culture. It was used more commonly as an offering to the Incan sun god, Inti, and played a role in rituals unlike the *papa* and *quinoa*.

Quinoa is another traditional crop, cultivated in the *andenes*, terraces, and was largely unknown to the vast majority of the world until recently. Quinoa is an ancient crop grown throughout Latin America, but especially in the highlands of the Quechua people (Krögel, 2011, 29). People have eaten all of the plant as it has high nutritional value, especially among grains. In Peru today, it is largely considered a paupers food but is becoming more popular in upper-scale restaurants due to the health-craze in North America and Europe (Krögel, 2011, 28). The demand on quinoa today has made it harder for these farmers to cultivate the crop for themselves and to sell. Quechua continue to cultivate quinoa for themselves rather than for commercial gain, although certainly some crops are used to commercial gain. Despite the increase in Spanish food types, the native crops have continued on for the Quechua people. These people while incorporating modern day food into their eating system still eat in much the same manner as their ancestors did.

Both of these cultures have seen huge influence from the Spanish in food production and how the food is eaten. Other crops from around the world were introduced as well due to climate similarities such as the mango. Mangos are originally from South Asia but were brought to the Yucatan and are widely grown today. This influence has radically changed what is normal for people to eat in both of these locations. Both cultures share crops like *maize* and *quinoa*. *Maize*, for both cultures, has been the most important crop in regards to the gods but played a different role for the people. For the Maya, corn was an indispensable food used to make everything from

tortillas to flour. Tortillas are eaten with almost every meal. Whereas for the Quechua, their main food has been the potato and all its varieties, which are prepared in, many different ways in order to have potatoes last through for the entire year.

Potatoes and corn, or corn products, are easy to find in stores in both countries. Since not everyone is able to grow their own *maize* or *papas*, being able to buy these products enables a preservation of the culture in the forms of food and indigenous dishes. While these dishes have changed because of Spanish influences, they still very much remain in the way they were when the Americas were first discovered. There are certainly differences between store bought products and those of homemade products, like tortillas, but enabling the staple to be available to everyone, ensures the survival of the foods into the modern era. Eating systems are an integral part of a society and highlight important aspects of the society. For the Maya, the corn god was key to their ancient religious life and corn provided a main nutritional sustenance; the Inca are very much the same with the potato as they mass cultivated it in order to for people to have enough to eat.

The Spanish brought with them expectations of what foods would be served and cultivated in the New World. They encouraged the indigenous people to grow crops like wheat and barley as opposed to corn and quinoa. Yet the Maya and Inca did incorporate these foods into the Spanish diet because the European crops were not as successful in the new environments of the Americas. Creating dishes with both Spanish and indigenous foods has created a unique blend of food which represents the history of these people and the maintenance of the indigenous culture. While the Spanish and indigenous cultures are very different, they have been able to coexist even if at times there were large challenges and problems between the different groups in

their respective countries. Each of these people have developed food, which is uniquely part of their indigenous heritage and a part of their colonial history.

The food systems of these two indigenous culture have changed but remained the same in some regards. The agricultural economic system have seen large changes since the Spanish arrived but they have continued with the traditional systems. The changes the Spanish brought to the food base for these people pushed them to be more like the Western world. The Maya have been able to incorporate the wider variety of Western food into their diets while the Quechua have maintained a much more traditional food base due to a much more restrictive economic status. The Maya have been able to continue their old food system while also including new foods into their diet like the mango. The incorporation of new foods has enriched the Mayan diet while also allowing them to include a wider variety of flavors. The old foods still place an important role in their everyday diet with tortillas and other corn based products and goods.

The continuation of traditional dishes for the Maya demonstrates how the Mayan culture had been maintained by adapting the dishes to Catholic holidays. One of these dishes is the *brazo de reina* that is only eaten during lent because it is vegetarian. By using native ingredients and adapting the dish to Catholic holidays, the Mayans have been able to continue on their cultural legacy inside a hybrid culture of Maya and Spanish. Blending the two cultures into one has created a new diet for the Maya while also retaining the Mayan culture. *Peb* is another dish, which people have continued to make despite the influx of Spanish food and culture. The resilience of food shows the importance of food to a culture and a people.

For the Quechua, the food systems have remained relatively the same. In the city, people have a wider variety of goods. Those who live in the Andes however are isolated to the point that they have to produce their own food. Much of the food they produced in the Andes is the

traditional food. The government in the past tried to incorporate different foods and methods into how the farmers produced their crops. These changes removed part of the biodiversity of the native plants and crops but local farmers are beginning to return to the traditional ways of farming and the crops that have enabled them to survive for centuries. Returning to the native crops has enabled people to go back to how things used to be while also allowing for the preservation of the large diversity of Andean fauna. For the Quechua food has remained consistent despite the Spanish, and later the Peruvian government, trying to convert them to nonindigenous foods. The foods the Quechua rely on are native to the Americas and life sustaining for them. The Andes are a challenging environment to live in and grow crops in yet the Quechua have survived off these specialized crops.

Working to maintain and adapt the food systems for those two regions has required the people to be flexible with the hybridization of their cultures. The cultures of today are no longer solely one culture, but a blending of cultures from around the world.

Chapter 3: Agricultural Economic System

These two countries have experienced similar struggles with how land is distributed for the benefit of both the upper and lower classes in their respective societies. The distribution, or lack of there, have created problems for the lower class with them being unable to largely produce an income for their survival. As a result, crops have become much more commercial based instead of being based for the food needed for the people.

In recently conquered Mexico, land was divided into *encomiendas*. The *encomienda* system started as a way to compensate Spaniards after the Conquest by giving them entire villages of natives. These natives then were under the power and care of the Spaniard who had received their land. In effect, feudalism had come to New Spain. The Spanish crown was not happy with this arrangement but could do little about the situation. The *encomienda* system fell away after the *conquistador* generation began dying. As a result, land was given back to the Spanish crown which meant a loss in Spanish tax revenues from the new world.

The *hacienda* system began in Colonial Mexico where land was divided into agricultural estates produced bulk crops such as henequen, maize, sugar and livestock like cattle and sheep. Crops that were produced by these estates were not only crops from the New World, but also from Europe. The “Colombian Exchange” gained prominence during this time period with crops like tomatoes and potatoes. The *hacendados*, the *hacienda* owners¹¹, gained further wealth separated them from the middle and lower classes. Slavery was common for the landowners with

¹¹ The *hacendados* were part of the *crillo* social class meaning they were Mexican born Spaniards and the second highest social class after Spaniards born in Spain. *Mestizos* were a mixing of either of the two upper classes and indigenous people. These people were mostly illegitimate children to these upper class groups who tended to have more Indian based-background. *Castas* were poor Spaniards who had moved to New Spain. Indians followed after this with blacks and black-mixes being at the bottom of the social class system. For a more detailed description see *The Course of Mexican History* chapter 11: “Colonial Society: Race, Class and Gender”.

the indigenous populations. This system persisted through independence until about 1915 in the Yucatan when the effects of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 reached the Yucatan.

Upon the collapse of the henequen industry, land reform was enacted to create the *ejido* system. This system established a track of land for every town and land for the town and was put into place by the PRI in 1934. The *ejido* land surrounds the village and goes beyond the village to allow for villagers to grow their own food outside of their home properties¹². Each town has an allotted amount of land which borders the land of another town. The land for the town is in the middle of the *ejido* land and has some room to grow, which can be seen in Figure 1. The circles around the initial town are the expansion radii for the town as it grows. The larger circle is the entire *ejido* land.

There are two different ways the *ejido* land is used. One is the *milpa*. This is the traditional Maya way of farming. The land used for the *milpa* is land reclaimed from the jungle by a farmer, or *milpero*, who cuts down the scrub jungle and removes the smaller debris. Once this is done, then the larger debris is burned away and cleared away although some will remain in the land and simply worked around by the *milpero*¹³. The land has been cleared and prepared for planting by June (Romero 1994, 33). Planting happens after the “first strong rains” have fallen^{14,14}. Shortly before planting happens, the *cha'a cháak*. After this, the land is ready for planting and the *milpero* will take a three corn and one squash seeds and with a stick, prepare a hole in the grown in which one of each seed is planted in row upon row. The *milpero* will then tend the field and wait for the rain.

¹² The houses I visited during my stay in the Yucatan in the summer of 2014 all had a few fruit producing trees in the front yards. Some even had areas to grow a few crops, but most of the growing was done out in the *milpa* or *parcela*.

¹³ Mariano Bonilla, milpa visit with author and class, June 30, 2014, Santa Elena, Mexico.

¹⁴ All interviews were conducted in Spanish and any quotes taken from them have been translated by the author.

Milpas are dependent on the rains to come as there is no watering system in this field as there is in the *parcelas*. When the rains come, the corn and squash begin to grow and bean seeds are added to the mixture and allowed to grow up on the corn stocks. The farmer then needs to remove the weeds and water the plants should the rains decide not to come¹⁵. Crops are harvested towards the end of October and beginning of November¹⁶. A *milpa* is only used one to two years after it has been cleared; then the *milpa* is allowed to go back to the jungle for six to seven years¹⁷.

The second is the *parcela* which became common in the 1960s and 1970s¹⁸. The gridded square shows land that has been parceled off to people in the village who have permission to use the land through a certificate¹⁹. The crops which are typically in this type of farming, called *parcelas*, are fruit trees like sour oranges, avocados, coconut trees, etc., and vegetables such as squash. These fruits then help the family with healthier foods as well as a chance to sell excess produce to people who come through the *parcela* asking those who are at theirs if they can harvest their produce and pay them for what they harvest²⁰. This extra incentive gives people a chance to have a few more *pesos* than they would have had otherwise. The *parcela* also has a water line to it, which allows the farmers to put in a sprinkler system to water the plants.

Commercial agricultural lands, or *parcelas mecanicas*, produce 90-day crops of corn, squash and beans respectively²¹. These lands use chemicals, like fertilizers, in order to keep up with the demands on the soil and to produce the most they can for profit. These agricultural areas can produce fruit that has been genetically modified to resist insects and parasites, but generally,

¹⁵ Mariano Bonilla, *Ibid.*, June 30, 2014.

¹⁶ Wilbert Vázquez, *Ibid.*, June 10, 2014.

¹⁷ Wilbert Vázquez, *Ibid.*, June 7, 2014.

¹⁸ Wilbert Vázquez, *Ibid.*, July 8, 2014.

¹⁹ Wilbert Vázquez, *Ibid.*, July 3, 2014.

²⁰ Rene Flota Porras, interview with author, July 1, 2014, Muna, Mexico.

²¹ Wilbert Vázquez, *Ibid.*, June 26 and July 10, 2014.

they focus on the easy 90-day crops. These farms also use machinery instead of manual labor like the *parcela* and the *milpa*. They are also seeking to make a profit instead of supplying food for family and friends.

Peru's agricultural system is varied because of the geographic regions within the country: *la costa*, *la sierra* and *la selva*²². The main focus of this essay is on the *sierra* or the Andean mountain region where the vast majority of the Quechua live. Because of the environment they live in, they have terraced the land to create 'fields' which they can grow crops on. These terraces are called *andenes* and have been around since the Wari were in power in the Peruvian Andes. The *andenes* enabled the Quechua to farm in the mountains which have very narrow valleys and little land to grow crops. Creating the *andenes* gave them the land they needed to grow crops, although the crops were limited.

The initial land distribution in Peru is similar to Peru with the *hacienda* system being common well into the 20th century where there were few *haciendas* left after the land reform of 1969. The *costa* was where most of the agricultural products were produced in crops such as cotton and sugar whereas the *sierra* was the focus of the indigenous crops the people needed in order to survive in the region. This uneven distribution needed to be solved in order for Peru to better function according to the government which led the government to reform the distribution and production in Peru (Saleth, 1991, 85). Land distribution had been done in such a way that weakened the Peruvian agricultural industry as the three different regions produced a wide variety and quantity of crops for sale. Previous land reform acts which tried to rebalance the people who possessed the land, only left a vast part of the population landless and unable to provide for their most basic needs in terms of food (Saleth, 1991, 87). This only created more

²² *La costa* is the coastal region in Peru. *La selva* is the rainforest part of Peru as the Amazon Rainforest spills over into Peru on the interior.

problems for the government as they needed to find a way to care for these people while also taking care of the agricultural system within Peru.

Before 1969, when the military reformed land ownership and use of land for the benefit of the agricultural sector, the land in Peru was unevenly distributed with most of the land being under private ownership (89%) and 11% under commercial control (Saleth, 1991, 86). Most of the privately owned land was used by indigenous communities who produced the food their communities needed instead of having the agricultural sector focus as the government wanted. By rearranging how the land was distributed, the Peruvian government hoped to build up an agricultural system more integrated into the country's economy.

The 1969 agricultural reform created bonds carried at 3% interest and were redeemable after 20 to 30 years. People were forced to convert to the new agricultural system. When they converted, they received immediate cash for their land that helped them. This law also removed some old world practices like "sharecropping, leasing and all other forms of indirect cultivation to eliminate exploitative agricultural contracts and absentee ownership" (Saleth, 1991, 88). The land the government choose to redistribute would then be redistributed in a manner that was meant to help the people the most in terms of commercial agriculture (Saleth, 1991, 88). The *sierra* began being truly affected by the law in 1971 but large estates were divided up into smaller tracks of land owned by more of the population in the area. The rich land owners after this were expected to hand over control of their land to those who worked the land and give them an opportunity to make a living other than as simple laborers (Saleth, 1991, 88).

By allowing for the laborers to have land, they were able to begin focusing on the community which had been torn apart during the *hacienda* system time period. The communities formed from this change became parts of their local Agricultural Society of Social Interest

(ASSI). They continued to cultivate on the *hacienda* land but were able to keep the production of their labors rather than having to give it to the owners of the *haciendas*. Another aspect of the law was to require those who obtained the majority of “their income from cultivation or from employment within the community could qualify for community membership” (Saleth, 1991, 88). This division created between those who earn their income from the land and those who were more involved with urbanization created rifts in the societies which led to violence because they were having to incorporate capitalism into their culture and society (Saleth, 1991, 88).

One man in *Ausangate* pointed out the way the land had been redistributed, completion and a lack of variety in terms of crops had resulted. However, this change is against the Quechua culture as they are very community, *ayllu*, focused and have a wide variety of food they depend on for survival. This change in recent years has seen a push-back from the local population as they are beginning to again focus on the community with what groups are produced and how they are grown. The community can depend on each other instead of competing against each other as the Western society is telling them they need to. The reforms which were seen as a result of the Reform of 1969 did not benefit the people directly as it was intended to. Instead it enabled those who had more to do with prominent agricultural areas like cattle ranching and herding. These tribes and groups of people throughout the different climate zones in Peru were given special priority and allowed to be changed in the largest way instead of in the smaller, but still highly impactful ways of other smaller scale communities.

The return towards are more traditional agricultural system as of late in Southern Peru will recreate some of what was lost from the reform shift. While people have continued some of the older practices in terms of how crops are produced, they will be able to once again encourage the vast variety of food products they depended on traditionally. The variety is what has made

the Quechua successful in their environment. If communities are once again allowed to produce the variety of food they have historically depended on then they offer hope in terms of what can be used in other countries and environments for survival. Preserving and maintaining these two different aspects will be a benefit for the Quechua and the rest of the world.

Looking at what has happened in both of these societies, it is clear the Spanish have forced a hybridization of the two different ways of life. Both faced the *hacienda* system where land was stripped from the natives and given to the wealthy Spanish in order to have land where wealth from crops could be produced in mass quantities and sold at market. Another aspect to be noted and considered for these people is they do not share the same economic status. The Maya I worked with in the Yucatan are in the middle social class – able to provide for what they need and some wants but not able to indulge in their every desire. They live a comfortable life for the most part, but there are still times of economic hardship when unexpected bills arise. They are able to have homes where everyone has a room and there are public rooms. They also can own businesses as their main source of income.

The Quechua on the other hand, from what I have found during my research, are the poorest of the poor in Peru and have very little to offer. They own very little beyond their agricultural goods and materials. Most of them live in a one-room house where everyone lives and stores their few possessions. Children can be sent to college but their families still depend on them for labor when the harvest comes. Everything the Quechua farmer can produce for his family is what his family will have for the next year. The family depends on the success of the crops making their spiritual beliefs all the more important for them in order to survive in the harsh conditions they live in.

These two groups live in very different environments which have enabled them to develop differently in their economic situations. The Yucatan does not just depend on agriculture for its revenue; it also uses tourism as there are sites such as Uxmal and Dzibilchaltun. The capital also brings tourists to the state enabling people to have more job opportunities than they would if they were isolated like the Quechua are. Because of their remote location, the Quechua are self-dependent but can still be involved in industries like tourism if they are close enough to key locations like Machu Picchu. Self-production is the main source of revenue for these people no matter where they live which only helps to keep them in poverty. They may gain jobs in cities like Cuzco, but their traditional way of life plays an important part in how the Quechua understand the world. Nature and the mountains have provided all they have known for generations and will continue to do so for future generations despite the hybridization pressure from the outside world. Both agricultural systems have been challenged by the Spanish but have proved be resilient to the pressure. Neither system is the same as it once was, but by and large has continued on in its traditional way.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The changes that have occurred within the Yucatecan Mayan and Peruvian Quechua have created a hybridized culture where their agricultural beliefs and practices intersect with the Spanish practices. The indigenous populations were subjected to immense pressure in order for conversion to happen despite their best attempts at remaining true to their indigenous cultures. In both cultures, agricultural and traditional beliefs have remained important parts of their modern culture.

Upon examination of their religious life, it is clear religion, both traditional and Catholic, play an important role in their agricultural practices. Native gods are important as they provide a bridge to the past and have a longer record of accomplishment than the Catholic God for these people. By combining these two different sets of beliefs, the indigenous population has been able to avoid an entire replacement of one culture instead of another. The traditional gods are still an important mechanism for the people to understand the world as they have been around for as long as these cultural groups have existed and proved to be able to provide for what the people need. The Catholic God on the other hand has only been around since the Spanish entered the New World and as a result still has to prove Himself to these people. The religious synchronization in ceremonies such as the *ch'a'a cháak* and *wahil kol* for the Maya and the *pago a Pachamama* and *Qoyllur Rit'i* for the Quechua highlight this as both sides are represented in the ceremonies. These four ceremonies are key parts of the agricultural lives of both cultures. The governments in both Mexico and Peru have tried to repress these practices by changing the agricultural systems for these people but have been unsuccessful as these rituals play a key role in the worldview of these people.

The traditional systems and ways of agricultural have proved to be possible to change in these cultures yet people still continue to use them. The *milpa* and the *parcela* in the Yucatan are currently competing against each other as Mexico is focusing more extensively on producing crops in a commercial grade for Mexico and other countries. The *andenes* in Peru on the other hand have continued to be used by the Quechua in both modern and traditional ways as can be seen in regards to Southern Peru where the traditional methods are becoming increasingly popular once again. Both groups of people live in challenging environments where they have developed agricultural practices that produce the crops they have come to depend on for nutrition and survival. The crops of these two cultures are very different except for the role of corn. By relying on different food groups, they have created diets unique to their cultures and place in the world. Corn plays an important role in both societies as it is highly connected with gods and the ceremonies done for all the gods. The agricultural production for both of these people is a key part of their cultures as it plays an important role in their place in society. Combining some aspects of Western agriculture with the traditional methods have allowed for production of non-native crops has allowed for expansion. However, people have continued on with crops they know instead of completely abandoning the old for the new.

Looking at the relationship between agricultural and economic condition, it is clear there is a large difference in how these two groups of people have fared in the hybrid culture. The Maya are richer than the Quechua as they are not as isolated by their location. The Quechua depend on what they produce and are unable to change their circumstances as easily as the Mayan can. The different economic situations of these people play an important role in their relationship to agriculture. The governments have tried to change and improve upon the agricultural system traditions yet the traditions have persisted. New agricultural systems are

being introduced to this region focus on Western values rather than the indigenous values and methods which have been tested far longer than the Western methods.

Neither culture has remained untouched by the Spanish Conquest. The Spanish beliefs have come to play an important part in the worldview. The blending of these two very different systems, the indigenous and Spanish, have created distinct societies that share many aspects but also different from both. The hybridness of the two cultures has enabled them to both maintain and adapt different parts of their culture into the modern world instead of losing parts of their culture. The cultures we see today are neither Spanish nor native but a mixing of the two fit into the peoples' daily lives and explains what happens in their lives.

More research is need on this topic as it is complex and requires more firsthand experience with both groups of people. It would be ideal to spend long amounts of time gaining an understanding of the traditional agricultural systems and the role they play in the daily life of these two groups. This could be done by a group of researches or by a single researcher over a period of several years. Agriculture is not the only aspect of the culture to have changed as a result of the arrival of the Spanish. Understanding the changes and seeing the maintenances in person allows for a better grasp of the culture in its entirety rather than pieces. I have tried to present the cultures as holistically as possible within this essay, but there is much more to these cultures than has been presented here. Further research could also look at how the Nahunta culture in modern Mexico. The three great Latin American cultures could present an interesting comparison and contrast in the different aspects, which have been maintained and adapted to fit into modern day life.

No culture stays the same for long, especially when other cultures are interacting with it. This can be clearly seen in both the Yucatecan Mayan and Peruvian Quechua cultures. Both have

changed with the influx of Western society but the people have continued to maintain parts of their native cultures. This mixing of cultures brings about unique cultures where cultures intertwine to form a new culture with characteristics of both that become a hybrid – neither the first, nor the second. Agriculture continues to play an important role in both societies in their religious lives, their food systems and economy situation. Food production will continue to play an important part in these two societies despite the changes they are seeing in modern times.

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Appendix

Figure 1:



Don Hernan's alter in his home. Santa Elena, Yucatán June 2014. Photo Credit: autor. The Mayan corn god can be clearly seen in this picture on the Wall with corncobs in his arms. The alter itself holds a crucifix alongside other Mayan deities like the Chacmool, who is the messenger god for the Maya. (He is the one sitting down with his head facing the side while his body faces another direction.

Figure 2:



This is the ejido land map Wilbert Vázquez drew to explain the politics of ejido land. Muna, Yucatan, July 2014. Photo Credit: Mary Katherine Scott