Chapantongo, Hidalgo
Native Medicine and Curing: 1969, with Some Observations Concerning Beliefs in Witchcraft

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During the spring semester of 1969 at Wichita State University I was involved in an independent study of native medicine, curing and witchcraft in Mexico and Latin America. The following study plan was based upon that semester's work:

Mexico and all other Latin American countries share a cultural tradition—witchcraft, sorcery and native medicine and curing. The Indian and Mestizo populations exist primarily in areas aside from the major population centers. There exist enclaves in the major cities of monolingual indigenous persons who cling to remnants of traditional medicine and curing. Because of the necessities of maintaining their identity in the face of pressures to change, many of these traditions have undergone change in surface appearance and name, but the underlying complex remains basically the same. It is a documented fact that witches, brujos and brujas and the accompanying complex brujeria, as well as the native curers (curanderos) and herbalists do still function as one of the major sources of medical aid for the peasant populations of Mexico (Foster 1948, Brand 1951, Beals 1946, Kelly & Palerm 1952). The illnesses treated by the curers include spirit loss, psychosomatic illnesses, hypochondria, and physical

The data presented in Darrel Casteel's paper was collected while participating in an ethnological and linguistic field school sponsored by the University of Oregon and Washington State University.
ailments such as cuts and broken bones. The range of cures includes the use of such herbs as peyote, marijuana and the alkaloid mushrooms of Mexico, as well as many others. These cures may take great amounts of time. In cases of actual physical ailments such as cuts, broken bones, etc., the native curer and herbalist will often do the job as efficiently as Western medical technologists. At the present time our understanding of these practices is most seriously limited.

My specific plan of study was based upon the following consideration. Frake, in Hymes (1964) feels that native taxonomies of disease based upon native perceptions, rather than medical taxonomies of Western medicine, have a reality of their own. Hence, the following plan was developed in rough outline form:

1. Folk taxonomies of disease
   a. Natural cause
   b. Supernatural cause (spirit loss)

2. Taxonomy of cures
   a. Natural--nature healing by herbs
   b. Supernatural--healing through curer or witch

3. Taxonomy of curers
   a. Herbalist--native "doctor"
   b. Witch or priest

4. Taxonomy of herbs

Based upon field observation, the problem outlined above was unworkable in a two month field school, and, consequently the following study proposal was developed:
Study Proposal
Chapantongo, Mexico
July 15, 1969

I feel it is possible to establish a taxonomy of the following:

1. Herbs, used as native medicine
2. Illnesses as defined by the mestizo population in the area of Chapantongo, Mex.
3. The perception of the diseases known to the native medical specialists.

The establishment of a taxonomy is possible with the aid of native specialists. At the present time I have introductions to two such specialists. Both have consented to aid me in my study. The aid will be in the form of descriptions of the complete curing process. This involves the following:

1. Procurement and preparation of herbal medicines
2. Prescriptions based upon examination of the patient
3. The process of curing.

I hope to be able to follow one case from beginning to end. This study will be purely descriptive in nature.

Due to my lack of time and understanding of the necessary ethnographic skills, my original plan was overly ambitious. Consequently, the final paper is a description of native medicine and curing.

II. GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF CHAPANTONGO

Since Chapantongo is the village in which this study was conducted, a description of the geography and history of the
area is necessary to properly establish the setting.

Chapantongo, Hidalgo, Mexico is the county seat (cabecera) of the municipality (municipio) of Chapantongo, one of the 27 muncipios within the Valle del Mezquital. The 822,000 hectareas (one hectare equals approximately 2.3 acres) of the Mezquital comprise approximately 40% of the land surface of the state of Hidalgo. The Valle del Mezquital is divided into two zones—53,000 hectareas under irrigation supervised by the P.I.V.M., and 769,000 hectareas of semi-arid land. The total population of the twenty-seven Mezquital municipios is 337,000, representing 30% of the total population of the state. The above figures are taken from a bulletin published by the Patrimonio Indigena del Valle del Mezquital (Corona del Rosal 1968).

Chapantongo lies in the uplands of one of the fingers of the Sierra Madre Oriental. More accurately, the town lies at 7,800 feet above sea level, in a high long valley in two small extensions from the major system of the Sierra Madre. It is built in a river valley with an extensive system of natural springs (manantiales) which supplies potable water to Chapantongo and Alfajayucan, 16 kilometers distant. This means that there is a natural movement of water-carried soil deposits, which has improved the amount of usable land in the immediate vicinity of the village. Due to the existence of the natural water system as part of the riverine system, irrigation and earlier dams are now holding sizable amounts
of some of the richest crop land around Chapantongo. There seems to be enough water to serve the basic economic, agricultural and living needs in Chapantongo.

There exists, to my knowledge, no flat land in or around Chapantongo. Erosion of the top soil is a major problem for the peso agriculturalists of Chapantongo. The topsoil in most of this region is three to thirty inches above rocks, primarily igneous in origin. This rock erodes quickly, but not as fast as the thin topsoil. Magueys, mesquite, cacti and other types of desert succulents are the most common flora.

Chapantongo, or more precisely Chiapantango, literally means place of the waters (lugar de aguas). Natural springs abound in and around the village. According to local traditions, the site of Chapantongo has been occupied since pre-hispanic times. There are pot sherds and evidence of various types of construction in that area that seem to date from pre-Toltec times. Ceramics that seem to fall into the classic sequences of Teotihuacan orange ware, classic Toltec, and an overriding post-classic Aztec sequence are found in abundance at Chapantongo. In association with the various pottery sequences are other archaeological manifestations, such as walls, interred pyramids and some heiroglyph-covered stones of megalithic proportions.

The village was taken over following the conquest of Mexico. Oral traditions maintain that by 1570 the Spanish had taken possession of the village and by the year 1574 had
built their first chapel, which is now a part of the present church structure of Chapantongo.

About the same time the lands and people in and around Chapantongo became part of the _hacienda/encomienda_ system which was so prevalent in all of Mexico from the Conquest until the Revolution of 1910 (Henry Parkes 1966). Vestiges of this system are still visible in the Rancho Teneria and in the old cattle pens and settlements of the old _haciendas_ in Chapantongo.

During the 1930's there was a small war between Chapantongo and Santiago Loma over the _ejido_ lands (grant lands under the 1917 federal land redistribution program) in the _municipio_. This was the last armed conflict in which the villages were engaged.

The village has, according to the last official census in 1966, 1,581 inhabitants, with approximately 1,700 inhabitants in the rest of the _municipio_. It is a _mestizo_ village of much the same type found throughout Mexico (Redfield 1965). Most Chapantongo residents are subsistence farmers who own or use small plots of land. There are few absentee large land owners. The commercial district is centered around the square plaza that typified many of the towns and villages that were established by the Spanish. The major commercial enterprises in Chapantongo are stores (_tiendas_), restaurants and an array of shoe shops, carpenter shops and bars. One finds very little in Chapantongo that can be identified as
"Indian". There seems to exist an open hatred for anything that can be identified as "Indian". For instance, Indian carrying nets (ayates) are rarely found in Chapantongo, and they are never used with the tump-line. They are instead slung over the shoulders. Likewise, no one in Chapantongo municipio speaks Otomi, even though the municipio is surrounded on all sides by Otomi populations. The Otomis are considered to be backward, ignorant, without regard for themselves, and lacking the motivation to change. According to my informant, Otomis regularly attend the Sunday market in Chapantongo, but none live in the village proper or in the municipio. So Chapantongo is an old village with almost all the various forms of architecture from stone to adobe to new cement block, but lacking entirely the organ-pipe cactus and stone and maguey homes of the Otomi.

The village is quite modern in many aspects. It has both electricity and running potable water. There exist two schools, the public federal school with grades one through six and the private Catholic school which offers grades one through four. There are two health service facilities in Chapantongo. One is the Health Center (Centro de Salud), under the federal Secretary of Health and Assistance (Secretaria de Salud y Asistencia), maintained and manned by the doctors from the medical schools of Mexico doing their obligatory social service (servicio social) under the training programs for doctors. The other is the private dispensary in the Catholic
Aid Center. Both of these are at present manned by the doctor from the Health center.

Chapantongo has bus service from the Valle del Mezquital line. The town lacks rail, telephone, and telegraph connections. No daily newspaper service from the major centers close by (Mexico City, Pachuca, etc.) is available. Service for telephone and telegraph are available at Alfajayucan, sixteen kilometers to the north on the road leading to Highway 45. Train service is available at Sayula, twenty kilometers to the south on the unpaved road that leads to Tula, forty-five kilometers south of Chapantongo. The lack of telephone and telegraph does not mean Chapantongo is isolated from the outside world. There are many radios and televisions in Chapantongo.

III. ENVIRONMENT AND ITS EFFECTS

Special developments or new ecological niches for the people of Chapantongo are not presently available. Further, many of the traditional means of existence are rapidly disappearing. Consider the following examples:

1. No new lands to develop.
2. Local weaving trade disappearing.
3. No new developments in animal husbandry.
4. No new products of local manufacture.
5. More and more young people are migrating away from Chapantongo to other population centers of Mexico.
6. No new entrepreneurs.

The accumulative effects of the above make changes of major proportions in the present environment highly improbable.
These conditions bear directly upon the problem of special importance to me. They help explain why the traditional systems such as native medicine, curing and witchcraft persist. Even though presented with the choice between western and traditional medical practices, they continue to use the traditional practices, which seem to be in line with the static nature of the social system and subsistence system.

IV. NATIVE CURERS

According to Dr. Federico Otero, Health Center in Chapantongo, there are two kinds of curers—limpiadores and curanderos. I asked Dr. Otero to describe the limpiadores and following is that description.

Limpiadores

Most families in Chapantongo have one limpiador, an adult member of the family. These persons know, more or less, the way to treat most of the common everyday illnesses that affect the members of the average family. The principal types of problems dealt with by the limpiador are: a pain in the stomach (dolor de estomago), cleaning the kidneys (limpiar de rinones), pain of the head (dolor de cabeza), refreshing the intestines (refrescar de los intestinos), and purifying the blood (purificar de sangre). Any adult who wishes can learn the ritual formulas and applications of these various "cures". For problems which the home remedy does not effect
a cure, one goes to a limpiador of greater reputation outside the immediate family.

The limpiador is not considered to be of the same level of ability as a curandero. Because he lacks the reputation, as well as the basic ability and "medical" knowledge of the curandero, the limpiador is less potent. So an individual with a serious illness begins with the family limpiador, goes next to a limpiador of more repute, then finally to the curandero.

Curanderos

The curandero can be distinguished from the limpiador primarily by reputation, i.e., an initial success in curing. In a total of 1,311 interviews about belief in curanderos less than a dozen persons expressed disbelief in the abilities of expert curanderos to cure a range of diseases from the common cold (gripe) to tuberculosis and cancer. This shows the extent of the belief in the ability of noted curanderos.

The above data indicates the present strength of traditional medicine in the village. Don Pepe Galven, municipal president of Chapantongo, is the most influential curandero in Chapantongo. This community leader, one of the persons supposedly most responsible for progress, is at the same time helping to maintain traditional medical practices. This is the same situation, more or less, with Senora Herma1inda Candia of San Pablo, about ten kilometers from Chapantongo.
She is most highly respected and known throughout the whole region, from distances as great as one-hundred kilometers. Senora Candia and Don Pepe Galvan have and share a tradition, which is a blend of western medicine, European, prehispanic, and contemporary Mexican beliefs.

The types of illnesses treated by the _curanderos_ give some interesting insights into the beliefs of the people who are treated and the _curanderos_ who do the treating: Heart attacks (ataques del corazon), tuberculosis, sexual debility (debilidad sexual), bile (bilis), fright or shock (susto), ulcers (ulceras), cuts and broken bones (all classes)—the list goes on. As can be seen, these curers are considered specialists, capable in most instances of caring for the needs of the believing population in the presence or absence of western medicine.

Dr. Federico Otero stated that of the two-hundred patients he sees (average per month), most, if not all, have consulted a _limpiador_ or _curandero_ before seeing him and will likely report back to this same person after his visit.

**Curandero/brujos**

According to the opinions of my informants, with one exception, there are no _curandero/brujos_ in Chapantongo. The _curandero/brujo_ is one who uses both major curing practices—herbal medicine and witchcraft. The curing process used depends upon the curers diagnosis of the ailment. The diagnosis is the
same as used by other native curers, but in the case of an illness that defies description or in which the herbal cure has no effect, the *curandero/brujo* then resorts to divination of the illness by witchcraft. Moreover, *curandero/brujos* can be enlisted to cause illnesses to others by use of witchcraft. Informants say *curandero/brujos* exist in the surrounding *ranchos, pueblecitos, and sierras*, but not in Chapantongo. Yet, no one was willing to discuss this subject in the open, only behind closed and locked doors. (Miguel Tovera Lopez and others). There was a great fear manifest in my informants. For example, three members of one family stated that many in Chapantongo believed in witches and witchcraft, and believed that *curanderos* who know how to manipulate plants to their will could also use this knowledge in the practice of witchcraft. Talking about this subject could only be done once they felt sure that it would not reflect unfavorably upon themselves. These are the same people who stated there are no *brujos* in Chapantongo. This is a good example of the real and ideal expression of culture. These people do believe that Don Pepe Galvan and his mother-in-law---also his father before him---and Senora Hernalinda Candia of San Pablo are possibly *curandero/brujos*. This is based upon a belief in their superior curing abilities, and their competence in manipulating people and unknown forces.
Role and Recruitment

The status limpiador is easily achieved and retained. It is less complex and more readily diffusible to other members of the house-hold unit. A parallel might be noted to our own culture. Here parents often play the role of low-level medics, applying the techniques of western medicine and "folk" remedies. Limpiadores do not ordinarily recruit, because of the generalized nature of their knowledge. One of the family members will learn enough about curing to continue the practice after the principal curer either dies or stops practicing. The number of limpiadores would number in excess of one-hundred in Chapantongo, while the number of curanderos is less than five for the population of approximately 1,581.

Curanderos, on the other hand, have a more highly refined knowledge. Their status is achieved, and this status is validated by successful performance of the role. After having achieved the role or curandero, one rarely looses the prestige associated with it by poor performance. There are built-in mechanisms for the explanation of failure. According to Don Pepe Galvan and Senora Candia, the failures arise from conditions which are beyond the curandero's ability to cure because of possible divine intervention or because the patient did not follow the prescriptions precisely. To the knowledge of my informants, no curandero had lost his role because of poor performance. Some are considered better than others, but none
are thought to be totally ineffective. Curandero recruits are generally children of curanderos. Often it is a tradition in a family for one or more of the members to actively pursue this knowledge. (Arriving at this level is a lucrative enterprise.) Don Pepe Galvan told me that both his father and grandfather before him were curanderos and he was continuing what he calls a tradition. I asked if one of his children would follow him and he stated that he thought so. I do not know if the curandero would actively try to recruit in case there would be no one in the family to carry on. Senora Hermalinda Candia in San Pablo has trained her daughter, who will follow in the tradition of her mother.

One informant, Don G. from a small village on the coast of Veracruz, told me that when one knows he is intended to help or cure others and has no immediate source of instruction he seeks out a person willing to apprentice him. For instance, should I desire and show through diligent work my desire to be a curandero, they would apprentice me. So I see a possible analogous situation between Veracruz and Chapantongo.

Rank

Having achieved the role of curandero, one has a position of high rank. This is true both in Chapantongo and other areas of Mexico (Redfield 1940). I cannot state, however, that this is a universal in Mexico. Public knowledge and awareness helps one move into positions such as president of the municipality, or being considered a voice worth hearing in any matter of
The curandero is in the upper class or elite in Chapantongo.

V. NATIVE MEDICINE

The principal flora in Chapantongo includes the various types of cacti and maguey. The garambullo cactus bears edible fruit and is also used for the curing of cuts. Another plant of this same category is the pulque maguey. The honey water (agua miel) of the maguey is used for making the alcoholic drink pulque, and the small leaf (pinca) of the white maguey (maguey blanco) is used in the treatment of postema (translation unknown). The above are excerpts from some formulas given to me by Sra. Hermalinda Candia. Severo Gonzalez and Don Cristobal Olguin told me that the horned toad (Chameleon) is commonly used to stop aigre, which is a pain in the body. One puts the Chameleon in one's clothes and the pain will stop almost immediately.

The above are just a few examples of elements of the plants which are used to cure. Also, it helps set the stage for the next section.

Specific Herbs

The following is a simple listing of herbs and their related uses. Some of the herbs will be written in formula form as they were presented to me.

The following materials were given by the limpiador, Miguel Tavera Lopez:
Manzanilla--used in tea form for general pain of the stomach.

Ojacin--used in tea form for a stomach refresher and cleanser.

Rosa de Castilla (Rose of Castile)--same as Ojacin

Cabello de maiz (Hair of corn)--tea form to clean the kidneys.

Estafiate--tea form for pain in the stomach

Yerba de Indio--tea form for pain of the stomach

Alfalfa--tea form good for kidneys

Ajo (Garlic)--eat natural with one glass of water for rheumatism

Cebolla (onion)--eat in natural state for rheumatism

Limon (lemon)--natural and dried skin in tea form to purify the blood.

Jitomate (Red Tomato)--natural or cooked for refrescant for the intestines

Jugo de Maguey (Juice of Maguey)--natural unfermented juice of the leaf or agua miel for hits, abrasions and bruises. Unfermented juice of the plant has the same uses.

Peyajito de Maguey (Small sucker plant from the Maguey) Mash the very small plants and apply the resulting liquid for cuts.

Tabacillo (Small tobacco leaves)--use the vapors of the dried natural leaf or place the green leaves below the foot in shoe or sandal--vapors for headache or pain in the head--green leaves used for bunions or corns.

Panales de Abispa--the honey--helps recover from shock

Cafe Puro (Raw doffee)--ripe coffee beans are eaten to settle the upset stomach when one is vomiting

Miel con Limon (Honey with lemon)--honey with lemon juice natural for cold and anemia in children
Tequila con limon (Tequila with Lemon juice---natural for colds in adults.

The following recipes were prepared and presented by Sra. Hermalinda Candia. They are recipes for specific treatments.

Para la Bilis y Susto

Tomar tecito caliente de:
Flores de tilia de las 2
Flores de junco de las 2
Flores de toronjil de las 3
Ajenjo
Canela (Cinnamon)
Anis de estrella (star anise)
Huashi
Barbas de Coco (beard of coconut)
Cascara de naho blanco
(Se toma en ayunas y al acostarse)

The above is for fright and shock, also for cure or recovery of ghost fright or exposure.

Para la tos. asma y bronquitis

Se toma un te caliente de
Flores de sauco
Flores de violeta
Flores de bonaja
Flores de bugambilla
Flores de gordo lobo
Tabachin
Itamo real

The above is for the cough of asthma and bronchitis.

Para el Corazon

Flor de Platano (flower of the banana)
Flor de manita
Flor de gardenia (flower of the gardenia)
Flor de pito
Flor de Magnolia (flower of the magnolia)

De una flor se secan 4 partes para 7 tomas. En ayunas se toma sin endulzarlo.
Para los Pulmones

For the heart, dry 4 parts of each for 4 drinks. Drink it without sweetening.

Se van 4 or 5 Guajes ciriales se les hacen un agujerito de donde depende la rama. Se llenan de Buen Vino Blanco. Se topan y se dejan 8 días en reposo. Se toma una copa en ayunas.

Translation:
Buy 4 or 5 guaje plums and make them into a water syrup. Fill a liter container with good white wine. Close and let rest for 8 days. Take one glass when needed.

Para Dolores de Huesos Y Reuma

Se hacen unos vapores de Romero.
Romero
Ruda
Salvarreal de Castilla
Salvarreal de Bolita
Hojas de Eucalipto (eucalyptus leaves)
Hojas de Piru (Piro leaves)
Sochapatle
Panela
Laurel (Laurel)

This is for bursitis, pains in the bones and rheumatism. Make the above into a stew and use in compress or hold the affected part above the vapors.

Para la Postema

Se toma una posima de:
Una penca de maguey pinto
Una Penca de maguey guapilla
12 puas de maguey blanco
Palo mulato
Cascara de Habo blanco
Tejocotes
Pasas ciruela
Pasa chiquita
Concha de armadillo
Una copa de alcohol
1 gramos de azucar
1 gramos de azucar cande
Se pone a herbir en un litro de agua a que queda en medico
litro de agua. Se pone a serenar y se toma en ayunas.

The above is for internal hemorrhages. One drinks whenever
necessary.

Also, there are two small booklets of diseases, herbs and
cures. These are used to aid when Sra. Hernalinda Candia cannot
define the illnesses or does not know the proper herbs to use.
Zerox copies of these are included in Appendix I.

The following materials were supplied by Don Pepe Galvan.

1. Toloache—Loco or Jimson Weed
   This herb has curative and poisonous qualities. It is
effective for hemorrhoids. Use six leaves of this plant, and
when this is well cooked apply to the affected area, as hot as
the patient can stand. Use care not to take internally for it
has a strong poison.

2. Epazote
   It is in general use for beans, as a flavoring. It is
medicine for parasites of the stomach. The method of use is
to cook it, not letting the patient smell it or inhale the
odor. Later, have the patient drink the resulting product,
and the parasitic molestation will stop.

3. Epazote de Zorrillo
   This serves for intense stomach pain. Cook a root and
drink the brew as hot as possible.

4. Tianguis
   This herb has medical qualities and is effective for
infection of the intestinal tract. Make a drink from the
root and drink two or three times daily. May be sweetened
if one likes it.

5. Rosa de Castilla
   This has a rose of the color "rose" and the flower is
used as a laxative. It must be cooked and then taken. Has
no poison.

6. Artemisa o Santa Maria
   This herb has curative qualities for deafness not caused
by wounds or other grave illnesses. Grind the roots and leaves
and when well ground introduce into the ear. If it continues
to bother, apply another time. Contains no poison.
7. Sauco

This plant grows to the height of three meters. The flowers and the plant are curative. The formula calls for Hitamo Real, ciruela pasa, leaves of eucaliptus, 50 drops of 96% pure alcohol. Should be taken hot, when the patient is in the bed. Is medically effective for a cough.

8. Malba

This is a good laxative when one is constipated. It is particularly good when one is seriously ill. Cook the leaf until mushy, then let cool and eat with a spoon. It is not poisonous and the root is used to clean the intestinal tract in the form of an enema.

Perception of Application

As can be seen, these herbs have a prescribe manner of application. This is clearly shown in the preceeding examples of herbs for curing specific illnesses.

Often as not the purpose of the application of herbs is to restore the natural and necessary balance in the body. Should the balance not be reestablished, the illness could become more serious, and in some cases of serious illness, could cause death.

Another point of prime importance is the cause of the imbalance, whether it comes from natural or unnatural causes. For instance, fright or shock (**espanto** or **susto**) caused by an accident or exposure to a ghost can be either a physical or mental illness, or both.

IV. CURING

Treatment of disease involves certain western patent medicines. Use-patterns parallel those for herbal medicine.
Often the herbal medicines and the prescription for their use are presented in the same fashion as the western medicine. The curandero tries to make the interview situation as professional as possible. Not that this in any way establishes a doctor/patient relationship. The persons involved are often friends apart from their professional relationship. Most strangers are introduced by a patient/friend of the curandero.

Regardless of how professional the curandero acts or reacts to the patient, these basic elements are distinc from the western medical approach. First, the "office" of the curandero is in the home, where the patient often interacts with the family of the curer. So immediately the patient is more at ease. When compared to the medical doctor with his sterile office and clinical professional approach, the native curer and more familiar surroundings are naturally preferred by the patient. Second, the native specialist uses principally herbs, many of which are known to the patient. Many of the illnesses, herbs for curing, etc., are part of the "oral" traditions of a people, and in Chapantongo this is the case. People know these traditions, even though they would probably not try to cure themselves of serious illnesses. Third, the basic approach seems to me different from the approach of the practitioners of western medicine. Western medicine tends to concentrate upon the physical (or biological) aspect of illnesses. The patient often has to face the mental adjustments of illness by himself. With native medical practices this is not true. Lacking part of the technical
proficiency in diagnosing illnesses, the native curer has to depend upon a catalog of symptoms which are revealed by the patient and interpreted by the curer. Up to this point both doctor and curandero are essentially the same. But at this point there comes a decided change in the practices. While gathering the life history, the native curer is building rapport with the patient. It is necessary to build in the qualifications for possible failure. (See page 13). This while process tends to build greater faith and as a consequence the total curing "Complex" is greater than its parts. Lastly, the whole physical environment is natural and native. The patient is at home, comfortable in a setting of constant values shared by the participants.

VII. WITCHCRAFT

I further believe, from the reaction to the questions concerning the two principal curanderos I met and interviewed that both Sra. Hermalinda Candia and Don Pepe Galvan are practicing witches. No one but Senor E., however, stated they were! I realize this does not constitute proof. The existence or non-existence of a belief in witchcraft is difficult to prove, but a reticence to talk shows a community-wide awareness. With some there was a reaction of fear. Possibly it was my expectation, but in some instances open fear or astonishment at my questions was registered.
Observed Effect and Specific Related Information

Don E., Federico Otero, Miguelito, Don Cristobal, Olguin, Don Sanchez (police officer of Chapantongo), and Don Pepe Galvan have all recognized, in one context or another, the existence of brujos or bad people who know how to kill with poison herbs (a class of herbs never described to me). All these people say there is a class of herbs to make things bad (yerbas para hacer mal). Also, there are believed to be persons who can use or control this information and much more.

Miguelito, for example, told me of a woman who had died of a tumor in the stomach, and everyone in Chapantongo believed it was placed there by a witch. But Miguelito stated that he did not believe in witches. At this time he further stated there was a general belief in witches in Chapantongo. I then asked if diseases were all the same, and Miguelito stated that no, there were both good and bad diseases. I asked how one could distinguish one from the other. He stated that the good can be cured, but often the bad cannot. He said that bad illnesses (enfermedades malas) come from witches, whereas the good or natural illnesses were a part of the life around one and, as a consequence, could be cured. In further conversation I questioned Don Cristobal Olguin and Don Sanchez about this same subject. I asked if there were classes of disease and, if so, what the classes were. The reply was an unhesitating and firm yes, there were different kinds of illnesses. Then I asked again about the classes. Good and bad was the answer. What caused the bad? Witches, was the reply.
My next question concerned witches in Chapantongo. There are none, it seems, in Chapantongo, but there are witches in other areas around Chapantongo, and they cause diseases which the local curanderos and medics can't cure. They also stated that any disease that could not be explained by a run of bad luck, regardless of the nature, was believed to be witchcraft. In these terms, then, witchcraft has great influence in the lives of the people of Chapantongo.

Illustrating further points about witchcraft are the following descriptions of specific phenomenon related to or believed to be caused by witches:

Mal de Ojo (Bad Eye)
Disease of the eyes of children caused by a small insect called "Zancudo". It is often called glass eye by English-speaking peoples. The eye glasses over and becomes milk-white.
This is also the name of a disease of adults which is caused by the malevolent look of a "brujo" (witch) which causes problems of sight, headaches which can't be cured and an intense pain from closure of the head and respiratory passages of the head.

Espinadas de Nopal (Spines of the Cactus)
This is a malevolent act of a witch, which causes or empowers the spines of a large nopal to attack the person who has been embrujada (bewitched). The attack is made as the person passes in the vicinity of the nopal (cactus). This is believed to be one of the main indicators of the presence of brujos, also one of the principal demonstrations of their (the witches') abilities.

La Negra Noche (The Black Night)
This is a special night which has a distinct set of conditions. It will be unusually warm or cold for the time of year. It will be "nublado", a condition of heavy, low clouds, and a completely black night. On this night special spirits roam or are released, supposedly by brujos. These spirits are capable of
destructive acts, which includes the act of killing.

There are three such spirits in Chapantongo. One inhabits the large tree in the road at the northwest corner of the plaza. The spirit that inhabits the tree is believed to be able to kill people. Should one sit under this tree on the "negra noche" the spirit would kill that person, or so it is believed. For this reason people who live in the vicinity of the tree will not pass in front of it on these special nights. The people will detour three to four blocks around, just so they will not pass in front of it.

The second spirit is in one room of the house of Don Cristobal Olguin at the Restaurant Jardin. This spirit is supposed to have killed one driver from the bus line Valle Del Mezquital. Other drivers have reported awakening in the middle of "La Negra Noche" while being strangled by a pair of hands of an invisible being. Now drivers will not sleep in this room on these special nights. The room is closed with a heavy wood log, chains and padlock to keep anyone from entering or anything from exiting from the room on this night.

The third spirit lives near the "Tanque" (a large pool formed by one of the major springs of Chapantongo). I did not get a description of this spirit, other than the belief that it exists.

These are all the special manifestations of witchcraft that I obtained during my stay. I heard mention, but could not get a description of, special spirits from "Indian" times. What they were or why they were mentioned is not clear. I know that Chapantongo was a village site in prehispanic times, but what importance this has I do not know.

Don E. and his family related the following to me:

"A witch never uses salt, for salt is a most powerful medicine against them. Witches are capable of dividing in half and the top half is the part that roams about killing, casting spells or causing harm. So should a person find the bottom half of the witch's body, all he has to do to render the witch ineffectual, or to stop it, is pour salt on it. The witch will also die if only the bottom part is salted, because both parts must rejoin for the witch to live."
Don E. and his family further stated that in the last twenty years or so several people have been accused of witchcraft. Of those accused, where it was of general public opinion that these persons were indeed witches, they have been killed. That is the fate of a witch even today, so I was told. The witch is hanged from the tree that has the "spirit" at the northwest corner of the plaza. They are then shot and buried with casket and cross. From seven to nine persons have been so executed for witchcraft over the past twenty years. So, part of the folk belief is as follows: if you are suspicious of a person, watch and see if he or she uses salt. If not, then the one suspected has great possibilities of being a witch.

VIII. OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The most common diseases treated by the doctor, Federico Otero, at the Health Center are:

For children:
1. Bronchial pneumonitis
2. Intestinal parasites
3. Tonsilitis
4. Malnutrition
   amoebus
   round worms
   pin worms
   tape worms

For adults:
1. Cirrhosis of the liver
2. Amoebic dysentary

He treats approximately two-hundred patients per month for the above ailments. Don Pepe Galvan, on the other hand, treats approximately twelve-hundred patients per month. I find Don Pepe's figure a little hard to believe. Yet, I know that his medicine has greater acceptance than western medicine in
Chapantongo. I believe that both of these medical specialists are treating the same basic diseases, but Don Pepe does not identify his patient's problems in these terms. The same may be said for all the limpiadores and curanderos in Chapantongo, and Senora Hermalinda Candia in San Pablo.

There has been a Health Center in Chapantongo for three years, yet a large percentage of the medical needs of the community are met by the native medical specialists. Consequently, I feel it is reasonable to postulate and state the following: native medicine and curing practices constitute a strong cultural tradition in Chapantongo and the surrounding area. These practices are slow to change and I believe they will continue for some time in the future.

At present the belief in witchcraft is in the terms which I have described. It does not lie on the surface and indeed it is difficult to obtain sufficient information concerning witchcraft. Admittedly, my information is sketchy at best. This aspect of Mexican culture needs a great deal more study. In my opinion, this is something that cannot be thoroughly studied in two months. I may be overstating my case concerning witchcraft, but this is my tentative conclusion based upon observations from this summer.

Appendix Not Included
BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Books


B. Periodicals


