

"It was very cold this morning January, I felt colder because the truck ride from Playa del Carmen to San Cristobal was very long, 20 hours. I arrived the night before the wedding, and sincerity came a bit rushed but knew that i was going to attend something important. Nicoletta had warned me the possibility to attend a Tzotzil wedding, I did not think twice, I found a gap in my schedule and I went to San Cristobal.

The clock touched the 7am in the Highlands of Chiapas, one blue fog broke the sunshine coming out of the mountain peaks; the village was deserted and the chimneys spat a soft gray smoke into a smooth, clear sky. Nobody seemed to be on the streets. The meeting was in front of the church, in the center of Zinacantan for the arrival of the spouses. A strong curiosity made us move to greet the families who were preparing the big event.

A strong curiosity moves us to greet the families who were preparing the big event. The house was full from early hour of relatives and friends, smelled like party: the elderly was warming their bodies with a breakfast of chicken soup and tortillas while women prepared Mole. Antonia wore a cute Rebozo decorated with floral details and a long braid fell back, wore shoes decoration that sparkled in the morning light. A great rush floated in the air, rare for the tranquility of the mountain people; the younger sister was running in and out of the kitchen looking enchanted Antonia's dress.

The bride and groom arrived by car. The whole town was waiting. It was a special day, a day to remember. Two families were joining in marriage. Men wore the traditional dress, leather bags, plumes of purple, white and blue ribbon and the distinctive poncho of Zinacantan. Women, very proud of her femininity, was warming into a handmade rebozos with floral designs; heavy long skirts fell to the floor. The young women wore shoes bought in a catalog or a store in the city. The hair collected from excessive hairstyles created disharmony with indigenous face. Older women had gnarled feet stuck in black plastic sandals. The shoes were the metaphor of two generations: the grandmothers and granddaughters.

The church of San Lorenzo slept in a darkness broken only some rows of lighted candles, the temple was filled with people coming to meet the bride and groom; kneeling reverently guests launched his mysterious glances toward Catholic deities represented in wooden statues adorned with flowers. Santos and candles, incense and tears of blood, pain and regrets refilled the church of San Lorenzo. The Mass was held between the music of an orchestra and the smoke of incense. A gothic darkness silenced the crowd.

Gone out of the temple after the end of the function, spouses walked to the square opposite the church in a procession ordered. The elderly men sat in a row, next to each other in a low wall that divided the square, blessing themselves one with other. The hands touching their heads as a sign of respect and secret words in Tzotzil dialect whispering in the ear . Then it was the turn of women

It was almost lunchtime and the procession moved 'to the groom's house, Martin. The reception was organized under a yellow rectangular gazebo designed the logo of the Superior beer. The

elders continued the ritual of blessing while the couple were coming targeted to providing their devotion and gratitude to the Virgin of Guadalupe in a room made of gray blocks and decorated with flowers with an altar at the center. It was a small ceremony, nothing more for families. A traditional Maya land censers and statues with various forms of animals led the imagination memory of an ancient ritual.

It was two o'clock when men began to serve beer and plates of food. Chicken soup and Mole. A lot of curious people arrived at the public event, many children, neighbors home or mere acquaintances, standing or sitting around gazebo, almost motionless, staring with an inexplicable depth, and full of mystery, dances, gifts, the cake, the orchestra playing.

On the return trip, with the eyes looking out of the window, i was feeling of having lived a special day.

The Tzotzil ethnic group is very jealous of its privacy , on this day I received like a gift the passport to get into a small portion of their world

Alessandro Banchelli

Many thanks to

Nicoletta giuliodori

Marco giacomozzi