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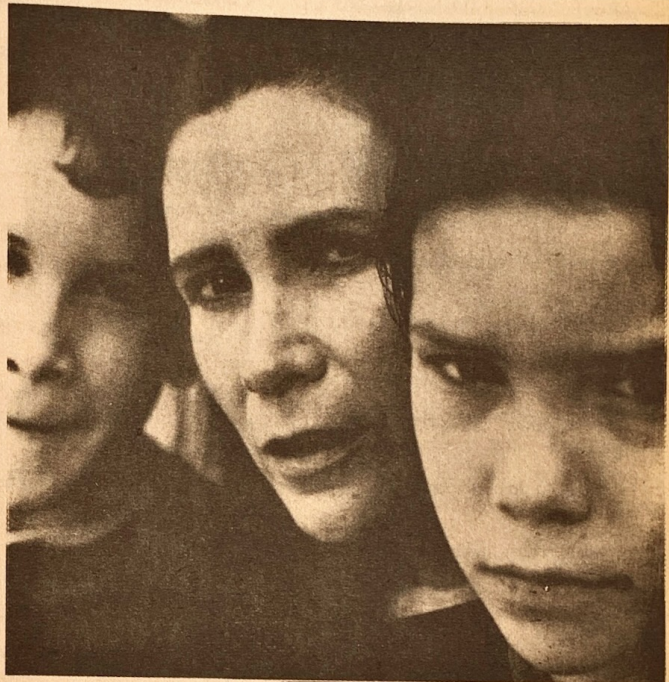
Free

The Silent Language

Some years ago, Edward T. Hall wrote *The silent language*, a fascinating book about the unspoken and generally unspoken (and generally unconscious) cultural assumptions that various societies make about what's real and what's not. For instance, in some countries, it's considered not only bad form, but a nasty threat to look into someone's eyes when speaking to them, you'd be receiving strange and hostile reactions and you might not be able to figure out why.

In other societies, merely touching a stranger is considered taboo. Hall's point was that not only beauty, but faux pas of considerable consequence are in the mind of the beholder.

Hall also writes about the cultural conceptual differences inherent in certain languages. Not so many years ago, U.S. Diplomats apparently had no end of problems in their attempts to convince one Middle Eastern power that the U.S. Desired to compromise with them. The Middle Eastern diplomats were outraged, since, to them, the verb "to compromise" meant "to take advantage of



Picture by Alberto Tovalin "Silence"

(as in the sentence: " His status as an honorable man was severely compromised. "). No one told the U.S. Diplomats until it was too late. No one had told the m because no one (except Edward T. Hall) and a very few other people) knew.

sonal assumptions about himself; his "image" of who he is and who he's not.

FOR the most part, it's one's own assumptions

“ One of the biggest pieces of baggage an individual carries is his collection of personal assumptions about himself; his "image" of who he is and who he's not.. ”

These sorts of cultural assumptions are unspoken rules... behaviors taken for granted... and every culture has them. Like it or not, they're there.

If you're a tourist, you brought yours to Oaxaca with you. PLUS, you brought your own PERSONAL assumptions about what's what. One of the biggest pieces of baggage an individual carries is his collection of per-

sonal assumptions about himself; his "image" of who he is and who he's not.

about oneself that are tested traveling. At home, one may lead a relatively stable existence. It's when one leaves the familiar nest that one's limitation (or lack of them rise like the phoenix (or a reluctant ostrich, depending on your point of view) from the ashes of conventionality.

For an in-depth look into your own and other cultural assumptions

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Just Like The Old Days

A couple years back a perhaps too long in the saddle travel writer was bemoaning to the O.T. his downbeat view that few Mexican cities now live up to their previous billing. Sheer population increase and modernity had affected them adversely: too much traffic, lack of maintenance and upkeep, a change from the old "laid back" ambience, among other woes. So it was a real "pleasure to visit Oaxaca (Wah-HAH-kah) and find that the city of green stone colonial churches remains a fascinating place to visit or settle down in. As in our last issue on this off the beaten path place, we can still call it: "In many aspects, Mexico's most enticing retirement city."

Let's just tick off some of these special enticements: At 5068 feet altitude, it has a mild climate year-round, averaging about 69° F. (Hottest in April and May, October through March evenings and early mornings can call for a sweater, and blankets at night.) Less rainfall than other tropical areas results in lower, livable humidity. Downtown streets are very clean and pot hole free, while the woody Zocalo, or Plaza Principal is completely closed to vehicles. The population is a melange of Europeans, Mestizos and Indians from 27 indigenous groups. Oaxaca abounds in colonial architecture, some of the buildings housing excellent mu-

seums. Good Language schools are easy to find, plus one of Mexico's best English Tourist Newspapers.

In the surrounding countryside are famous archaeological sites such as Monte Alban, Mitla, Dainzu, Yagul and others. Within the state, also named Oaxaca, are numerous interesting villages with their special fiestas, handicrafts, markets and 16th and 17th century buildings. And farther afield, where only burros and four wheelers can go, lie scores of Indian hamlets where seldom is heard the Spanish word. (Try twisting your tongue around some town names: Cuyamecalco, Suchixtlahuaca, Tlazoltepec, Chicomazuchil.) If beaches attract, Puerto Angel, Puerto Escondido and the newly developing Bays of Huatulco lie a hard day's drive (or a short flight) south. Oaxaca is also the gateway to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Chiapas and Guatemala via the Pan-American highway. The city is served by Mexicana, Aeromexico, feeder airlines, train, bus and difficult highways. Just thinking about it all makes a body want to order a Dos Equis at a sidewalk cafe on the Zocalo and simply watch the world go by. ♦

Metric Conversion Hints

Mexico officially uses the metric system of weights and measures. The following conversions will help you adjust to this system.

Liquid measure. To roughly convert liters to quarts and gallons - one liter is approximately one quart; four liters about one gallon. To be more exact, multiply liters by 2.642 and divide by ten to obtain gallons.

Weight: to roughly convert kilos (kilograms, 1000 grams) to pounds - one kilo is about 2 lbs. More exactly, multiply kilos by 2.2046 to obtain lbs.

Distance: In order to convert kilometers (1000 meters) to miles - multiply by 0.6.

Air pressure in automobile tires is expressed in *kilopascals*. Multiply pound-force per square inch (psi) by 6.89 to find *kilopascals* (kPa).

Temperature conversions:
To convert Fahrenheit to Celsius, subtract 32 from the Fahrenheit temperature, multiply by 5 and divide by 9.

To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit, multiply by 9, divide by 5 and add 32.

It helps to carry a small calculator with you to make these conversions quickly. ♦

Advertisement Good News for Vegetarians

The "Sol de Oro" Association invites you to visit our new Vegetarian & Natural Foods Kitchen! We invite you to go or eat in. We guarantee delicious and nutritious cuisine: for only N\$ 9 pesos !! We also offer natural peanut butter, vinegar, honey, and quality brown rice! And try our vegetarian cooking classes! (20 N\$ pesos including lunch) We're in Avenida Lazaro Cardenas No. 63 (the old Camino Nacional) in front of the Church "Santas Perpetua y Felicitas".

Open 10 am till 4 pm Monday through Saturday. Telephone: 361-63 In City, will deliver! Remember: You are what you eat -- BE QUALITY!!!

VACATION PHOTO



TIPS

Probably the most photogenic state in Mexico, Oaxaca boasts sunny weather, blue skies, colorful festivals and tropical flowers.

Oaxacan Experiences you'll want to record include the Guelaguetac, The Day of the Dead, Montealban, Mitla, Yagul, and some incredible buildings of the XVI century.

For the best results with color film, keep the sun behind you and the subject, especially when taking photos of people. With many of the better cameras the built-in light meter should set you up.

When indoors use a flash. Keep your camera away from direct light. Don't wait too long before developing. A good place to develop your film is "Alfa" located at 213 Guerrero Street. Just 3 blocks away from the Zocalo. ♦

The Silent Language...

Continued From Page 1

Hall's book is highly recommended. In the meantime, here are a few lightweight personal assumption offerings which, though not comprehensive, may serve as interim help:

PERSONAL ASSUMPTION GUIDE TO OAXACA

1. Do assume that your preconceptions will be challenged.
2. Do not assume you will be the same person in Oaxaca that you are at home. Not only aspects of one's personality, but one's physical attributes can change as well. Many tourists claim, for example that their hair, fingernails and toenails grow at a different rate.
3. When you ask a Oaxaqueño whether something or other is possible, do not assume that the response, "Todo es posible en este mundo," is a joke or metaphor, or even an over-generalization. Everything is possible here and if you don't believe it, you haven't been here long enough. Return to "Go" and reread Carlos Castañeda.
4. Do not assume that you aren't the

sort of person who couldn't possibly dance in the streets with a witch or a devil (especially in October).

5. ...Or get stranded and spend the night at the Pemex refinery with the night watchman...
6. ...Or get yourself set on fire by an errant firework...
7. ...Or fall out of you hotel window.
8. Do not assume that just because: "turismo" means "tourism", "minuto" means "minute", & "curioso" means "curious", that "compromiso" means "compromise". It doesn't and this sort of extrapolation can be hazardous. If you say, "Quiere un compromiso?", you will be asking the listener if he or she wants an obligation or engagement (including the matrimonial variety). This kind of exchange has, as you might imagine, a wide variety of potentially interesting consequences.
9. a) Do assume that Oaxaqueños are some of the friendliest and most generous people in the

world.

- b) Even the so-called "Zocalo boys" and their female counterparts try to be generous in their own way. Do not assume these charmers will always be generous in a manner that would in any way please your mother.
- c) Do not assume anyone will contact your mother.
10. Do assume that you very possibly are just the sort of person who might find it necessary to walk 4 miles back to Oaxaca from the salsa place on the road to Mitla, at 2 o'clock in the morning.
11. Do assume that one can live through, learn from, and even enjoy (especially in retrospect) experiences like the one listed above.
12. Do not assume that Edward T. Hall, or anyone else has the answers.

That's what you are here for.... to discover them yourself.

Todo es posible en Oaxaca. ♦

Quetzalli Gallery Gala

The Quetzalli Gallery moved to Constitución #104 in style with a small gathering of local celebrities including the governor of Oaxaca, Diodoro Carrasco, and the owners of the gallery. ♦



Diodoro Carrasco, Fe Maria Abad and Graciela Cervantes.

Ask W-ed:

Dear W-ed,
The other day when I woke up in my hotel room, a cockroach was rooting around my nostrils. When I smashed it, I gave myself a bloody nose. What is the proper procedure for killing a cockroach on your face?
-Bloody from Berkeley

Dear Bloody,
Whatever you do, don't panic - Panic leads to irrational decisions such as your idiotic extermination method. The next time, just open your mouth and crush it with your teeth. Trust me, it always works.
-W-ed

If you wish to ask W-ed any questions, just send a letter or a postcard to:
Ask W-ed
The Oaxaca Times
307-12 M. Alcalá Street
Oaxaca, Oaxaca 68000
Mexico