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## Maya Ethnogenesis and Group Identity in Yucatán, 1500–1900

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### INVENTING MAYAS

The Maya of Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula are considered heirs to one of the most famous ancient civilizations in the Americas by most outside observers—both scholars and the wider public.<sup>1</sup> The Yucatec Mayan-speaking population of the past and the present is seen as an ethnic community with deep historical roots. The term *Maya* does, in fact, appear in several Colonial documents as a designation of human beings. But this does not necessarily imply that it had the same meaning it has today, that of referring to all Yucatec Mayan speakers, or that *Maya* was the name of an ethnic community (i.e., a group united by a belief in a common heritage and destiny).<sup>2</sup>

We argue in this chapter that the Mayas of the Yucatán did not exist until the twentieth century, terminologically speaking. In terms of both the identities they claimed and those assigned to them, the Mayas were not Mayas.<sup>3</sup> Colonial period evidence shows that the native inhabitants of the peninsula, whom modern scholars identify as “*Maya*,” did not consistently call themselves that or any other name that indicated they saw themselves as members of a common ethnic group.<sup>4</sup> This appears to have been true of the decades immediately before the Spanish invasion, as it was of the Colonial period and the early republican and Caste War period.<sup>5</sup>

We argue that the modern-day issues surrounding “*Maya*” as a “contested term” (Castañeda 1996:13) are relevant to the Colonial period, and vice versa. Our purpose is to approach this debate from the Colonial and Caste War periods, showing

how evidence from the era disproves the commonly made assumption that for centuries Mayan speakers shared a sense of common ethnic identity—even saw themselves as “Mayas.” Ernest Gellner (1964:168, original emphasis) has argued that “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist”; our position is that modern Maya ethnogenesis had to invent Maya ethnic identity because there was no Maya ethnic self-consciousness in former times to which Mayas could awake.

Because of its modern ubiquity, we begin with the term *Maya*, examining its meaning to the indigenous inhabitants of Yucatán in the Conquest and Colonial periods in Yucatán, using Yucatec Mayan–language sources to categorize its usage. We then briefly further explore the nature of Maya identity during these centuries, likewise using archival evidence primarily in Yucatec Maya, to search for possible alternative terms or bases of ethnic identification. We suggest that migration and demographic developments from the late sixteenth to late nineteenth centuries altered whatever cultural homogeneity Maya communities may have had before the Spanish invasions. Finally, we look very briefly at two circumstances that impacted “Maya ethnogenesis”—Colonial Spanish ethnoracial concepts and the Caste War—emphasizing the muted, gradual, or indirect nature of their impact.

#### “MAYA” IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD

If the image of a timeless Maya ethnic community is an illusion, what of the Colonial period use of the term *Maya*? Spanish Colonial sources frequently apply the term to the indigenous language spoken in Yucatán, occasionally to a region, but rarely to the inhabitants of a particular area (see, for example, Ponce [1897 (1588):447]). In general, Spaniards preferred the generic *indio* to refer to the natives of Yucatán. “Maya” does appear in Maya-language sources, but with little consistency or frequency. Table 5.1 gives examples of this usage, with types of usage categorized and listed according to frequency of attestation.

The primary category in table 5.1 is labeled “cultural,” containing references to the Yucatec language, as the term was mostly used as an adjective to describe it (*mayathan*, “Mayan speech or language”); Landa’s only reference to the term’s etymology is to “the language of the land being known as Maya” (*la lengua de la tierra llaman maya*; Landa 1959 [1566]:13; Restall et al. n.d.). The persistence of this connotation as primary to the term among the Maya themselves is illustrated succinctly in the dictionary of present-day Yucatec by Victoria Bricker and her native collaborators (1998:181); the sole entry under “Maya” refers to the language.

The context of Landa’s comment is the second category of usage, labeled “toponym” in table 5.1; the Franciscan asserts that the place name “Mayapan” was derived

**TABLE 5.1.** Uses of the term *Maya* in Colonial Mayan–language sources

| <i>Phrase</i>          | <i>Reference Type</i>                        | <i>Date</i>     | <i>Source: Genre, Town (Region) (Incidence)</i>   |
|------------------------|--|-----------------|---|
| mayathan               | cultural: “the Maya language”                | Colonial        | quasi-notarial and notarial sources (numerous)*   |
| maya cuzamil           | toponym (Cozumel)                            | Colonial        | Book of Chilam Balam, Chumayel (Xiu) (thrice)   |
| mayapan                | toponym (Mayapan)                            | Colonial        | quasi-notarial and notarial sources (numerous)  |
| uchben<br>maya xoc     | cultural/material: “the ancient Maya count”  | Colonial        | Book of Chilam Balam, Tizimin (east) (once)   |
| maya pom               | cultural/material: “Maya copal incense”      | 1669            | <i>cabildo</i> petition, Calkiní (Calkiní) (once)   |
| maya ciie              | cultural/material: “Maya wine”               | Colonial        | Book of Chilam Balam, Chumayel (Xiu) (once)   |
| maya zuhuye            | cultural/material: “Maya virgin”             | Colonial        | Book of Chilam Balam, Chumayel (Xiu) (once)   |
| maya ah<br>ytzac       | to others: “those Itzá Mayas”                | Colonial        | Book of Chilam Balam, Chumayel (Xiu) (once)   |
| maya ah<br>kinob       | to others: “Maya priests”                    | Colonial        | Book of Chilam Balam, Chumayel (Xiu) (once)   |
| maya<br>uinicob(i)     | to others: “(the) Maya men/people”           | Colonial        | Book of Chilam Balam, Chumayel (Xiu) (eight times); Titles of the Pech, Chicxulub and Yaxkukul (Pech) (twice) |
| maya<br>uinicob        | to others: to commoners by nobles            | Colonial (1769) | Titles of the Pech, Chicxulub and Yaxkukul (Pech) (once)  |
| maya<br>uinicob        | to others: of another Yucatec region         | Colonial (1769) | Titles of the Pech, Chicxulub and Yaxkukul (Pech) (once)  |
| maya<br>uinicob        | to others: to Yucatec Mayas by Chontal Mayas | 1567/1612       | Title of Acalan-Tixchel (Chontal region) (once)   |
| coon<br>maya<br>uinice | self-reference: “we Maya men/people”         | 1662            | individual petition, Yaxakumche (Xiu) (once)  |

*continued on next page*

from the term *Maya*. However, no other toponym in Yucatán contains the element “Maya”; when in a single quasi-notarial source the term is attached to the name for Cozumel Island, the context is a sacred association to Mayapan (Edmonson 1986:47, 58–59). Indeed, we suspect that the reverse of Landa’s suggestion is true, that “Maya” derived from “Mayapan.” This hypothesis is consistent with six pieces

TABLE 5.1.—continued

| Phrase                    | Reference Type   | Date                 | Source: Genre, Town (Region) (Incidence)                 |
|---------------------------|--|----------------------|--|
| coon<br>maya<br>uinice    | self-references  | 1669                 | <i>cabildo</i> pedition, Baca (Pech) (once) <sup>†</sup> |
| con maya<br>uinice        | self-reference   | Colonial             | Book of Chilam Balam, Chumayel (Xiu) (once)              |
| coon ah<br>maya<br>uinice | self-reference (as nobles of the Canul <i>chibal</i> ) | Colonial (1595/1821) | Title of Calkini (Calkini) (once)                        |

Sources: Edmonson (1982:169); AGI (*Escribanía* 317b, 9:folio 9); Roys (1933:28); TLH (*The Title of Calkini*:folio 36); Roys (1933:57); Roys (1933:47, 58–59); Roys (1933:61); Roys (1933:58); Roys (1933:53, 55–56, 31, 27, 24, 56); TLH and TULAL (*Title of Chicxulub*:folios 6, 8, 15) and (*Title of Yaxkukul*:folios 3v, 4r, 8v); AGI (*México* 138, *Title of Acalan-Tixchel*:folio 76r); TLH (*Xiu Chronicle*:#35); AGI (*Escribanía* 317a, 2:folio 147); Roys (1933:20). For many of these examples, also see Restall (1997a:13–15; 1998a:35, 44, 74, 101, 116, 121, 124, 127, 134, 177, 233).

\* A notarial example is in AGN (*Bienes Nacionales* 5, 35:folio 5); a quasi-notarial one is in Roys (1933:40).

† This is an example; the phrase appears several other times in nearly identical petitions from other northwest *cabob* in 1668–69 (AGI, *Escribanía* 317a, 2:various folios).

of evidence: (1) the term's association with, and primary usage in, the northwest, where Mayapan is located;<sup>6</sup> (2) the entry in the sixteenth-century dictionary from Motul, also in the northwest, that glosses *maya* as “nombre propio desta tierra” (see figure 5.1; Ciudad Real n.d., 1:folio 287v; Arzápalo Marín 1995, 1:489); and (3) the fact that several contemporary Spanish authors considered Maya a political entity.

Thus, Ponce (1872 [1588]:470), for example, speaks of the province of Maya (*provincia de Maya*) as the influence zone of the city of Mayapán. López de Cogolludo (writing in the 1650s) stated that at the time of the Spanish invasion, Yucatán “had no common name under which the area and its limits were known” but that it had earlier been “called *Mayapan* after the name of its capital where the king had his court” (López de Cogolludo 1957 [1654], book 2, chapter 1; see also book 4, chapter 3).

Our hypothesis is also consistent with (4) the term's vague link to the Itzás, who, like the site of Mayapan, were seen as part of the peninsula's semi-sacred, semi-mythic historical past; and (5) the following passage from the Chilam Balam of Chumayel (translation Restall's, but see Roys 1933:50, 140; Edmonson 1986:59; figure 5.2):

*oxlahun abau u katunil u*  
*he > cob cah mayapan: maya*

13 *Abau* was the *katun* when they  
founded the *cah* of Mayapan; they

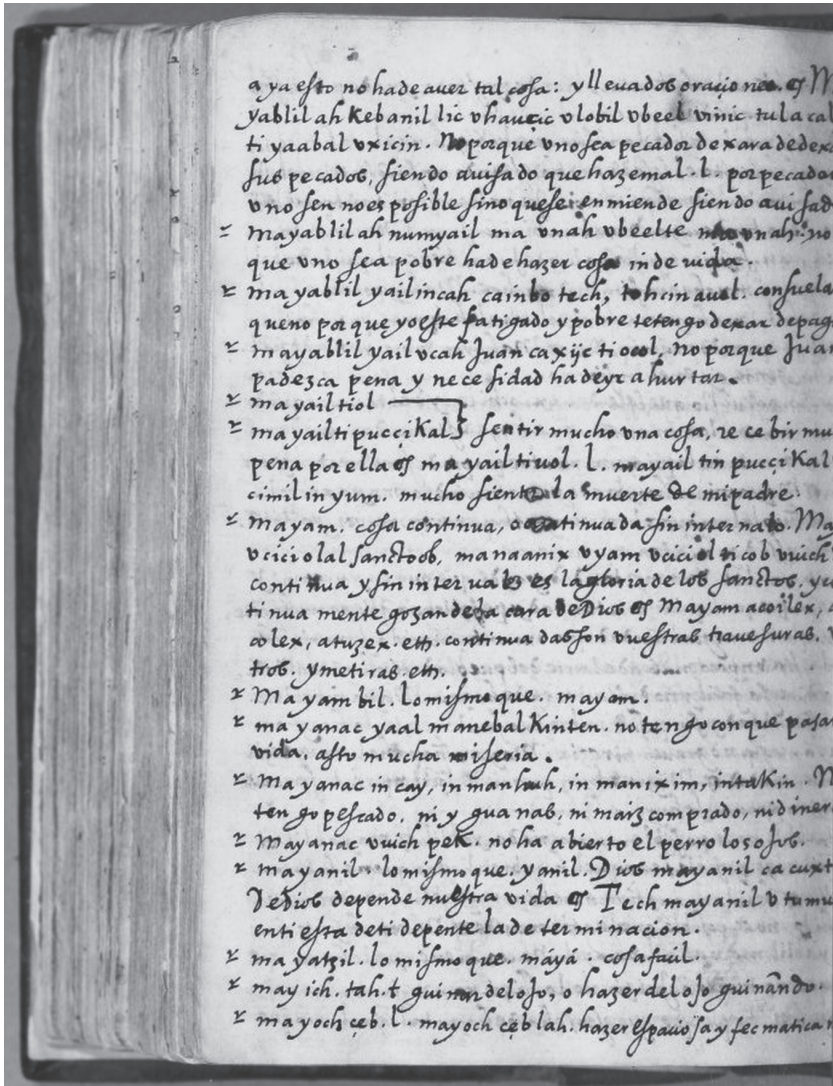


FIGURE 5.1. Motul Dictionary

*uinic u kabaob: uaxac abau  
paxci u cabobi: ca uecchahi  
ti peten tulacal: uac katuni  
paxciob ca haui u maya*

were [thus] called Maya men. In 8  
*Ahau* their lands were destroyed  
and they were scattered through  
out the peninsula. Six *katun* after

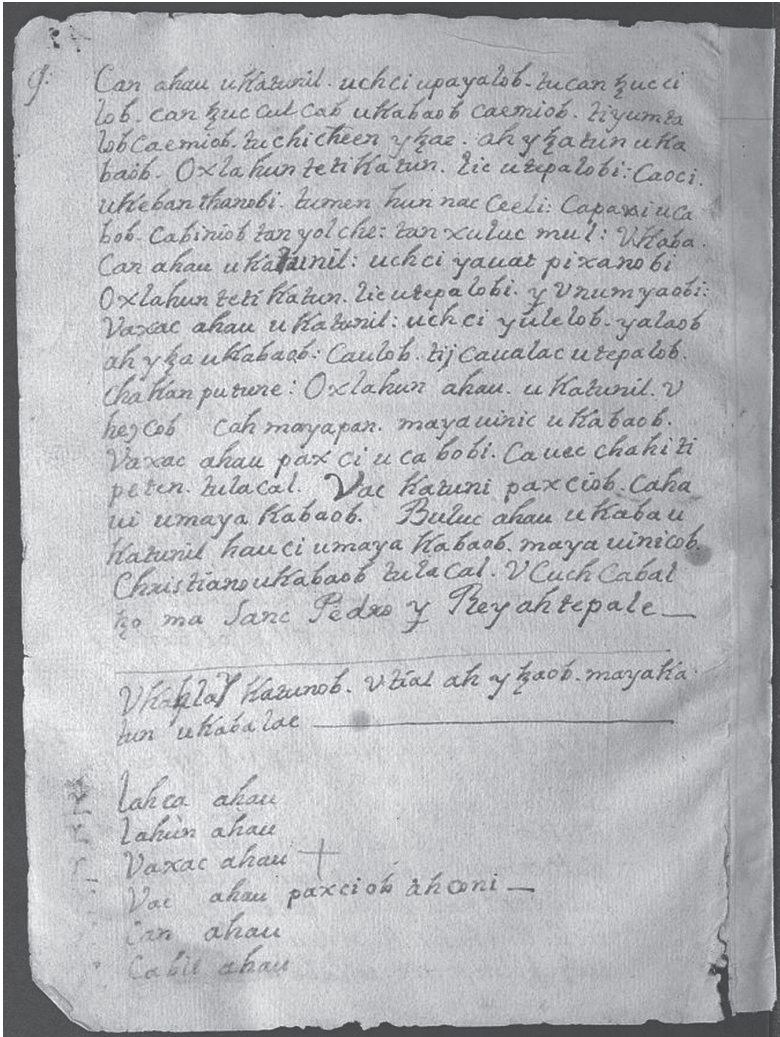


FIGURE 5.2. Chiam Balam of Chumayel

*kabaob: bulub ahau u kaba  
u katunil hauci u maya  
kabaob maya uinicob:  
christiano u kabaob*

they were destroyed[;] they ceased  
to be called Maya; 11 *Ahau* was  
the name of the *katun* when the  
Maya men ceased to be called Maya  
[and] were called Christians.

These annal entries offer both an explanation of the diffusion of the term *Maya*—a product of the diaspora created by the fall and abandonment of Mayapan—and a clear association of the term with the pre-Conquest pagan past. This hypothesis on the origins of the term was also circulating in sixteenth-century Yucatán; a dozen years after Landa claimed the derivation was vice versa, an old conquistador of the province, the *encomendero* for the *cah* (Maya community) of Dzan, wrote in the *Relaciones Geográficas* that “this province speaks but one language, called Maya, its name derived from Mayapan” (RHGY 1983 1:156).<sup>7</sup> Our final piece of supportive evidence is (6) the kind of language used in the Maya sources. Groups of people are not categorized according to cultural (linguistic) criteria but by applying political or kinship affiliations, that is, the community of origin (*cah*)<sup>8</sup> and the relationship to a certain ruling lineage (as a member or vassal)<sup>9</sup> or polity (province).<sup>10</sup>

Of course, accepting that “Maya” comes from “Mayapan” begs the question as to the toponym’s etymology. If “Mayapan” did indeed precede “Maya,” then Landa’s explanation of the toponym (*el pendón de la Maya*, “the banner of the Maya”) would only have meaning after the site became a major city (Landa 1959 [1566]:13; Restall et al. n.d.). However, there are many possible alternative roots. *May* and *Pan* are both Maya patronyms, for example; *pan* also means “dig, sink [a well], plant [a tree]” and *ah pan* thus “he who digs,” with *May Ah Pan*, “[the land of] May, the well digger.” As *yapan* means “broken up,” the origin could be a reference to the stony ground, with *ma yapan*, “not broken up, unbroken [terrain].”

The tertiary category of usages of “Maya,” labeled “cultural/material” in table 5.1, consists of references to material objects native to the peninsula (such as *maya pom*, “Maya copal incense”) or to local cultural practices (such as *uchben maya xoc*, “the ancient Maya count”). The significance of these types of references is that not only are they rare, but they all have sacred connotations and are consistent with the toponymic use of the term as rooted in semi-sacred myth and history. Although the Motul Dictionary lists a material item that seems to lack such associations—“*maya ulum* . . . gallina . . . de yucatan” and “gallina de la tierra: *ulum: mayaulum*”—in the references Mayas make to turkeys and chickens in their testaments, Restall and Christensen have never once seen *lum* qualified by *maya*; on the contrary, Mayas tend to qualify the imported fowl, the chicken, as *caxtillan u lum*, “Castilian turkey,” abbreviated to *cax* by the seventeenth century.<sup>11</sup> The purpose of a dictionary like the Motul was for Franciscans to make themselves comprehensible to Mayas, and Mayas would certainly have understood *maya u lum*. But Mayas themselves would have used *lum* for “turkey” and the qualified or invented term for “chicken”; this would have been more logical from their perspective and consistent with the more esoteric associations of *maya*.

Equally rare, and comprising the fourth category in table 5.1, are instances where “Maya” refers to people. As references are so few, patterns can only be tentatively identified. But the examples suggest that the term was mostly applied by Mayas to Maya “others” or outsiders, specifically Yucatec natives of another region or class. One usage in this context was by nobles in reference to commoners, with the term seemingly somewhat derogatory. Thus, when applied to Mayan speakers of another region, the term sometimes implied that such people were of lesser status, although at other times the reference seems neutral. Native perspectives on the Spanish Conquest are the context for one such set of derogatory references, with “Maya” designating the natives of communities who were slower to accommodate the invaders.

The Pech nobles, for example, authors of one Conquest account, assert that they and their Spanish allies suffered much “because of the Maya people [*maya uinicob*] who were not willing to deliver themselves to God [*Dios*]” (i.e., surrender themselves to the new Colonial regime); these *maya uinicob* are ambiguously either local commoners or natives to the east of the Pech region or perhaps both (*Title of Chicxulub*, folio 15, from the translation in Restall 1998a:124). A similar perspective is found in the *Relaciones Geográficas* from Valladolid, a Spanish account based partly on oral native sources, which claims that the natives of Chikinchel (in the peninsula’s northeast) called the Cupul and Cochuah (of the east and southeast, respectively) “*Ab Mayas*, insulting them as crude and base people of vile understanding and inclination [*soez y baja, de viles entendimientos e inclinaciones*]” (RHGY 1983 2:37).

This pattern incorporates the use of the term as a self-reference (the fifth and final category in table 5.1), in that the context in some of those cases is that of petitions, whose language was by tradition self-deprecating.<sup>12</sup> This tradition was Mesoamerican in scope, most clearly visible in petitions in Nahuatl and Yucatec Mayan. One of its central tropes was the presentation by nobles of themselves as children and commoners. In some Yucatec examples, this self-depiction is paralleled by a description of themselves as *maya uinicob* (Maya people or men). One group of such attestations is found in a series of petitions authored by *cabob* (plural of *cab*) across the entire colony in 1668–69, in response to *residencia* activities by Spanish officials—an investigation, in other words, into a governor’s term of office. In this case, the administration under review was that of don Rodrigo Flores de Aldana, whose use of forced purchase operations had made him especially unpopular among Mayas and some colonist groups.

To view these attestations as simple indicators of ethnic self-identity, however, would be to remove them misleadingly from their context. That context was, first, the self-deprecating component of Maya petitionary discourse and, second, the similarity of these petitions across the series, suggesting the use of a template that may have been partly Spanish-authored (with *maya uinicob* thus a translation of



a phrase such as *indios*) but was certainly aimed at a Spanish audience. Thus, by calling themselves “Mayas,” the petitioners were ritually humiliating themselves within two parallel social structures—one a wholly native one in which “Maya” had negative class and region connotations, the other a Colonial ethnoracial one in which “Maya” was understood to have meaning to *Spaniards* as a marker of ethnic subordination.<sup>13</sup>

The region-class-“Maya” nexus has an additional dimension, one that further undermines the term as a monolithic ethnic designator. This dimension is the mythical tradition of foreign origin maintained by a number of Maya noble families—all families in the group of prominent ruling *chibalob* that Restall (2001) has elsewhere dubbed the “dynastic dozen” (the Caamal, Canul, Canche, Chan, Che, Chel, Cochuah, Cocom, Cupul, Iuit, Pech, and Xiu). Scholars have tended to take this tradition at face value, as simple historical evidence of the non-Yucatec (usually central Mexican) origins of the peninsula’s native elite. However, there is no clear evidence beyond the tradition itself of any such invasion or migration. Furthermore, the metahistorical construction of the tradition by Maya dynasties conforms to the patterns of traditions of mythical elite foreign origins elsewhere in the world, what Sahllins has called “the ideology of external domination” (Sahllins 1985:77–78; see also Helms 1993, 1994, 1998; Henige 1982:90–96). We have argued, therefore, that this tradition was probably not rooted in a historic migration of ruling families into Yucatán but rather in pre-Conquest efforts to bolster legitimacy of status and rule through sacred, mythic associations with often-fictional distant places of origin (for the full development of this argument, see Restall 2001; Gabbert 2001a:28, 2004a:34–35).

These efforts were given renewed necessity and vitality by the Spanish Conquest, resulting in the frequent references to such mythic origins in sixteenth-century sources (e.g., in the *Title of Acalan-Tixchel*, folio 69v, *The Title of Calkini*, 36, the *Book of Chilam Balam of Maní*, 134, and RHGY 1983 1:319; see Restall 1998a:58, 101, 140, 149). The fact that indigenous nobles referred to themselves as “conquerors” and tried to distance themselves from the local indigenous population can be better understood if considered from a perspective other than that of the modern nation-state ideology that asserts the cultural and biological sameness of rulers and the ruled. A comparison with the estate societies of Europe before the French Revolution, as well as with other continents, is more illuminating. In contrast to present-day concepts, these societies were based on the idea of a fundamental difference between rulers and the ruled, from the point of view of culture and descent.<sup>14</sup> This model of society was also common in Mesoamerica. By claiming to be both native and foreign, Yucatán’s indigenous dynasties effectively problematized and undermined any incipient sense of Maya ethnic identity that may

have otherwise developed in late Postclassic and Colonial times. In permitting and often fostering the survival of a Maya elite, Spaniards thereby colluded in the perpetuation of an identity differentiation that ran against their impulse to see natives as an undifferentiated mass—and softened the impact of that impulse on Maya ethnogenesis.

All the attested self-references of Mayas as “Maya” come from the regions of the west, seemingly confirming Munro Edmonson’s suggestion (based on his reading of the Chilam Balam manuscript from Chumayel) that the Mayas were deemed to be the inhabitants of the peninsula’s west and the Itzás those of the east.<sup>15</sup> However, the vast majority of extant Colonial Maya sources come from the peninsula’s west, skewing the evidence. Furthermore, Edmonson’s translation of *maya ah ytzae* as “O Maya / and Itza” is more likely “those Itzá Mayas” (or “Oh Maya Itza,” as Ralph Roys has it). Elsewhere in the Chumayel manuscript the Yucatec language is called *u than maya ah ytzaob*, “the language of the Itzá Mayas,” again suggesting that Maya and Itzá were not always mutually exclusive categories (Roys 1933:167, 40; Edmonson 1986:100, 222).

The regional association, therefore, of Mayas with the west and Itzás with the east is suggested but not well supported by this evidence. In some ways, the category of “Itzá” is comparable to that of “Maya”; both are ambiguous, used variously and usually to describe some other group of natives within the peninsula, with uncertain historical roots but a fairly clear connection to an important ancient city (Chichén Itzá and Mayapan, respectively). But there is also a crucial difference between the two terms: Itzá was, and still is, a Yucatec Maya patronym; “Maya” is not, and there is no sign that it ever was. Although this could be taken to suggest that “Itzá” connotes family and “Maya” ethnicity, in fact the difference between the two is more complex. Whereas “Maya” has various connotations, most of them not referring to people, “Itzá” is a category that primarily refers to people, both in the family sense (in the form of a patronym) and in an ethnic sense (in the form of the Itzá Mayas of the Petén region of northern Guatemala, whose name may have derived from the patronym of the kingdom’s founders).<sup>16</sup>

Before we summarize the evidence offered by Mayan-language sources, it is worth turning briefly to the evidence of Colonial period dictionaries. This complex, bilingual, bicultural genre cannot be used as a simple window onto Colonial Yucatec; dictionaries merely suggest how Mayan was spoken in a particular time and region in the peninsula, as perceived and recorded by their Franciscan authors. Nevertheless, a search for *maya* entries in Colonial dictionaries is revealing, especially in the context of the evidence from Maya notarial sources discussed earlier (see Restall 2004:71–73 for a fuller discussion). Only in the Spanish-Maya sections of Colonial dictionaries does the term appear with any regularity, suggesting that

while the term certainly existed in Colonial Maya, it was not commonly used by Mayan speakers. The types of applications of the term in Spanish-Maya vocabularies compare closely to the examples we grouped under “cultural” and “material” (as opposed to “human”) in table 5.1, implying that to Spaniards the term was also an adjective conveying autochthony in a general sense rather than one specific to human beings. “Maya” remained uncommon as an ethnic designator through the end of the Colonial period (Ciudad Real n.d.; Arzápalo Marín 1995; Beltrán de Santa Rosa 1746; Pío Pérez 1898; Mengin 1972:folio 131v; Barrera Vásquez 1980:513).

We draw four conclusions from the evidence discussed so far and presented in table 5.1. First, *Maya* is not a common term in Colonial Maya sources. Second, it was used primarily to refer to the Yucatec language or to native material items, the latter mainly ones with sacred and historical associations. Third, when it was applied to people, it was never done in a way that explicitly indicated a peninsula-wide or macro-regional ethnic identity, suggesting instead smaller groups defined by region or class, with the term very possibly deriving from the toponym “Mayapan.” Dictionary entries of the term as a macro-regional ethnic one are irregular, with no Colonial dictionary including it in both a Maya-Spanish and a Spanish-Maya vocabulary; its more common dictionary meanings are in reference to the Yucatec language and to local material items. Fourth, there are signs that the term has been viewed as derogatory by a section of Yucatán’s speakers of Maya and by others as an archaic historical or literary term.

The apparent contradiction between uses of “Maya” with positive and negative connotations disappears if one realizes that the peninsula was subdivided politically—and to some degree also culturally—in pre-Conquest times. All positive references cited in table 5.1 for “Maya” that refer to rare or holy items come from regions once attached to Mayapan, while the negative uses are either from areas beyond Mayapan’s influence or from a Colonial context in which native elites tried to distance themselves from the local commoners.

#### A MAYA BY ANY OTHER NAME?

If indigenous Yucatecans did not see themselves as “Mayas,” what were the foundations of native self-identity? In addition to expected micro-identities, such as gender, age, class, and occupation, two fundamental units of social organization served as the basis of group and individual identity for Colonial Mayas—the municipal community (which Mayas called the *cah*) and the patronym-group (which they called the *chibal*). Mayas organized their lives and activities around these two units and consistently identified themselves and other Mayas according to *cah* and *chibal* affiliations.

The cah was a geographical entity, consisting of its residential core (what we would call a village or town) and its agricultural territory (the combination of the cultivated and forested lands held by cah members). But it was also a political and social entity, the focus of native political activity (regional politics was a Spanish monopoly during Colonial times) and the locus of social networks. At the primary level of the extended family, identity and social activity were generated at the meeting point of cah and chibal—built, in other words, around the members of a particular chibal in a particular cah. As chibalob were exogamous (in accordance with a deep-rooted native taboo broken only occasionally by dynastic-dozen couples), their members tended to form multi-chibal alliances that were inevitably class-based and related to political factionalism in the cah. As almost every aspect of an indigenous individual's life was determined by cah and chibal affiliations, it is not surprising that these units formed the native identity nexus and provided the references for identification; thus, someone might be *Ah Pech* or *Ah Pechob*, “of the Pech [chibal],” and *Ah Motul*, “of Motul [cah]” (Restall 1997a:15–50, 1998b) (see table 5.2).

One might argue that cah and chibal formed the basis of a kind of ethnic identity or a multiplicity of micro-ethnic identities, a notion reminiscent of an older historiographical tradition that saw the pre-Conquest Mayas as divided into various “tribes.”<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, if all Mayas shared the same *type* of identity, as well as sharing the experience of Colonial subjection, then one could argue that they shared a kind of aggregate ethnic identity. This argument is not without merit, but it is hard to reconcile with the three fundamental aspects of Maya identities: (1) class differences persisted within each cah, as discussed above; (2) the cah was an open community, in that it was exogamous, it permitted settlers from other cahob, and it was part of the complex pattern of Maya mobility; as we shall see, it accepted other native Mesoamericans and people of African descent during the Colonial centuries; and (3) the chibal was diasporic in nature; its members were found in a variety of cahob, almost never in just one and often not even in a single region. Thus, to categorize cah and chibal as types of ethnic identity would seem to stretch the term too far.<sup>18</sup>

Another potential candidate for a term used by indigenous Yucatecans to imply ethnic identity is *macehual*, which in both Yucatec Mayan and Nahuatl meant “commoner.” However, it would be a mistake to assume that *macehual* was effectively a Colonial cognate for “Maya” as used today (as Hervik [1999:39, 42] seems to suggest). By the mid-eighteenth century *macehual* appears in a Maya-Spanish dictionary glossed as *indio*, having been omitted entirely from earlier dictionaries (see Restall 2004:76 for a fuller discussion). A corresponding term, *dzul* (written *>ul* in Colonial orthography), meant “foreigner” and was often used to refer to Spaniards. Similarly, the Spanish word *vecino*, “resident,” was mostly used by

**TABLE 5.2.** Maya terms of self-description containing possible ethnic implications

| <i>Term, with Variants</i>                                | <i>Meaning</i>       | <i>Context of Usage</i>   |
|---|----------------------|---|
| ah cahnal, cahnal, (ah) cahal / cahalnal, h cahala [late] | cah member, resident | all genres, non-rhetorical, often juxtaposed to vecino (“Spaniard”) |
| ah otochnal   | householder, native  | same as ah cahnal   |
| macehual, masehual  | commoner             | rhetorical usage implying “Maya”                                    |
| mehen   | (man’s) children     | same as macehual  |
| almehen   | noble                | only to describe Maya nobility                                      |
| uinic   | man, person          | sometimes means (Maya) person                                       |
| kuluinic, u nucil uinic, noh uinic                        | a principal or elder | Maya person only  |
| maya uinic  | Maya man/person      | rare; quasi-notarial sources only                                   |
| mayathan  | Yucatec Maya         | the language  |
| ah [cah name]   | person of [cah]      | Maya person only  |
| ah [patronym]   | person of [chibal]   | Maya person only  |

Sources: Adapted from Restall (1997a:17), based on Colonial Mayan–language notarial and quasi-notarial sources.

Spaniards, and occasionally by Mayas too, to refer to non-natives (Restall 1997a:15–16, 1997b; Karttunen and Lockhart 1987; Lockhart 1992:86–89, 365–68; Gabbert 2004a:31–33).

This suggests that macehual and dzul did not become terms of ethnic identity comparable to the meaning we assign to “Maya” and “Spaniard.” In table 5.2 we have denoted the “context of usage” of macehual in Mayan-language sources as a rhetorical one “implying ‘Maya’” because native nobles typically styled themselves as commoners in petitions to Spaniards, as a political ploy and in accordance with Mesoamerican techniques of deferential discourse, in a way that was similar to their usage of “Maya” as an identity marker. Spaniards read such terms as ethnoracial because they defined the Colonial social structure ethnoracially (see also below). After the Conquest, Spanish colonialism established a social order in Latin America that can be characterized as an estate system. This means that fundamental social categories—Spaniards, Indians, and *castas* (people of presumed mixed ancestry, such as mestizos and mulattoes)—were legally defined and held specific rights and duties (e.g., Gabbert 2004a:19–20). Indigenous elites continued to see macehual as a class term because the social structure from their perspective was primarily a local one of native nobles and commoners and only secondarily a Colonial one featuring non-natives too.<sup>19</sup> The fact that Spanish officials read *maya* and *macehual* as *indio* was probably not lost on the native elite; indeed, this contributed to the

efficacy of their rhetoric and its adaptation to the Colonial setting. But that does not mean that native elites thereby adopted Spanish perspectives and internalized the Spanish perception of them as Indians.

Nevertheless, the appearance of *macehual* in Colonial sources cannot simply be dismissed, any more than *maya* can. Indigenous Yucatecans did not see themselves as “Maya” or any other term or label that contained all natives in the peninsula, but the evidence presented so far suggests that during Colonial times they did develop an awareness of difference that more or less corresponded to Spanish ethnoracial distinctions. More specifically, this awareness can be better understood if we draw a distinction between two forms of ethnic awareness: *implied* ethnicity, whereby terms of self-identification imply membership in a loosely defined ethnic category within the context of broader social and ethnoracial structures, and *overt* ethnicity, characterized by the existence of social relations, solidarity, and cohesion among members. A community in this sense only exists if members orientate their actions to one another, based on their sense of a common fate.<sup>20</sup> Colonial evidence indicates that the Colonial experience gave rise to and fostered a sense of *implied* ethnicity among the natives who lived within the Spanish province but that *overt* ethnic awareness did not exist among them in either the Late Postclassic or Colonial periods and thus presumably not earlier either.

One dimension of this terminological bifurcation is the role played by ethnic boundaries: Maya terms of implied ethnicity are mostly inward-looking and concerned with social life in the *cah*, excluding Spaniards; overt ethnic markers tend to be outward-looking and reflect a keen awareness of ethnic borders. Jon Schackt (2001:4) proposes that “ethnogenesis should mean the drawing of new boundaries or, perhaps, some notable redrawing of old ones.” The boundaries that defined community and identity among indigenous Yucatecans were not notably redrawn during the Colonial period, nor were new boundaries created; such boundaries continued to demarcate one *cah*, or group of *cahob*, from another without expanding outward to include the natives of all *cahob*.

By adding to the above analysis of Maya-language sources a reading of Spanish-language notarial sources from the Colonial archives (in Mérida, Mexico City, and Seville), it is possible to be more specific still in locating the Colonial conditions under which implied, but not overt, ethnic awareness developed. A survey of such sources reveals three pertinent types of condition. The first was the Colonial legal system itself. Its often-skillful manipulation by *cah* leaders suggests that one important reason for this bifurcated development was the natives’ realization that Colonial identities and their various facets could be used as weapons in law courts or as tools to work away at the structures of Colonial administration. Under these circumstances, ethnic identity remained implied most of the time.

The second Colonial condition was the growing difference between urban and rural Maya communities. In rural cahob, identity remained rooted in community and family affiliations, as discussed. Colonialism reinforced this localization of identity through its suppression of regional native politics. But in the city of Mérida and the Colonial towns—the villas of Bacalar, Campeche, and Valladolid and the pueblos that became semi-urbanized toward the end of the Colonial period, such as Izamal—native identity developed urban variations on the implied/overt model. The multiracial setting and the concomitant process of miscegenation made indigenous ethnic identity increasingly overt in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even if that identity was increasingly labeled *mestizo* (e.g., Gabbert 2004a:74–75, 114–20).

Urban developments, therefore, incorporate the third condition under which implied ethnic awareness rather than overt ethnic self-identity developed. This was, simply put, time. Our hypothesis regarding the chronological development of the use of the term *Maya* and its implications for Maya ethnogenesis is the following.

In the Late Postclassic period, the term applied to all or some of the inhabitants of Mayapan or the region dominated by Mayapan; after that city's collapse in the 1440s, the term applied to the diaspora of families who migrated to various locations in the peninsula, but its application seems to have been vague and probably increasingly obscure, as such families did not maintain identities that were clearly distinct from other Maya families. At the time of the Spanish invasion, its primary use was probably in reference to the Yucatec language, in the form *mayathan*. By the late sixteenth century the term was applied both to the Yucatec language and to local material items but not to people, and even then it seems to have been more commonly used by Spaniards than Mayas. At the same time, there remained no other term in Yucatec Maya equivalent to our understanding of “Maya” as an ethnic designator; Maya identity remained more localized than that, lacking a clear ethnic component (see also *ibid.*:31).

As the Colonial period wore on, a sense of implied ethnic identity evolved in response to Colonial conditions and the influence of Spanish efforts to build a Colonial society based on ethnoracial principles. In the late seventeenth century the written record reveals evidence of “Maya” used in reference to people, but attestations are rare and dictionary entries are only in the Spanish-Maya listings. More common in the Late Colonial period is the term *macehual*, but its transition from a class term to an ethnoracial one was gradual and not complete by the end of Colonial rule (see also *ibid.*:31–32). By the early nineteenth century, there is little sign of this implied ethnic identity having become overt.

## GENESIS OF MESO-MAYAS AND AFRO-MAYAS

We have argued thus far that the natives of Yucatán were not Mayas in name and can barely be said to have shared a common identity by another name (such as *macehual*). Our position on the putative central Mexican origins of elite dynasties in Yucatán is highly skeptical; we argue that the claim by such nobles was strategic rather than a literal one based on actual migration. In other words, we have *not* suggested that ethnic diversity in the peninsula undermined Maya ethnogenesis; on the contrary, unlike regions such as Oaxaca, with a marked degree of linguistic and cultural variation before and after the Spanish Conquest (Terraciano 2001; Yannakakis 2008), the Yucatán Peninsula was culturally and linguistically quite homogeneous. Even adjacent languages to the south, such as Chontal and Itzá, were arguably dialects of Yucatec spoken by descendents of migrants from the peninsula.

However, the sixteenth century brought rapid and complex ethnic diversity to the Yucatán. The arrival of Spaniards and the growth of a Spanish-native mestizo sector of the population is the most obvious dimension to that change, as mentioned. But two others have received little attention from historians: the arrival of other Mesoamericans in the 1540s and the arrival of Africans from the 1540s to the 1810s.

It has long been known that the three Franciscos de Montejo and their fellow Spaniards established a colony in Yucatán in the 1540s by bringing Nahua allies from central Mexico and recruiting Mayan speakers to fight each other. But the conventional view has long been that the Spaniards succeeded in colonizing the area largely by wearing down local resistance over three invasions and two decades (1527–46). More recently, the central role and multiple perspectives of Mayan speakers—including the claim of local nobles to the Spanish term *conquistador*—have been given more attention (Restall 1998a, 2003:44–51). And more recently still, the extent, diversity, and crucial roles played by Mesoamerican warriors and porters have been studied (Chuchiak 2007).

These allies were not Tlaxcalans, as previously claimed, but Nahuas from Azcapotzalco and Xochimilco (two towns held briefly as part of the Montejo *encomiendas*), with other central Mexican communities also represented. The Montejos also brought warriors, slaves, and porters from the regions where they had fought and attempted to establish colonies—primarily Honduras, Chiapas, and Tabasco. As table 5.3 shows, Spaniards brought 10,000 Nahuas with them, as well as another 3,000 or more warriors and porters from seventeen different Mesoamerican linguistic groups.

What was the fate of these thousands of indigenous newcomers? Evidence suggests that few, if any, returned to their native lands. Most probably died in the wars of the 1540s and from the disease epidemics that likewise hit Mayas during the period. The rest stayed in Yucatán, primarily in the Mérida-Tihó neighborhoods (or *cabbarrios*, as Restall has dubbed them; 1997a:31–37) of San Cristóbal and Santiago.



**TABLE 5.3.** Ethnic diversity of Mesoamericans brought into Yucatán in the 1540s

| <i>Ethnicity</i>             | <i>Region of Origin</i>   | <i>Number of Warriors</i> | <i>Number of Slaves and Porters</i> | <i>Totals</i> |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Nahuas                       | Central Mexico            | 2,500–3,000               | 5,000–7,000                         | up to 10,000  |
| Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Mixes     | Oaxaca                    | ?                         | 345                                 | at least 345  |
| Chontals, Popoluca, Zoque    | Tabasco                   | 200–300                   | 800–1,000                           | up to 1,300   |
| Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Chiapaneca | Chiapas                   | ?                         | 200–400                             | at least 300  |
| Chorti, Xinka, Pilil         | Guatemala and El Salvador | ?                         | 150                                 | at least 150  |
| Kaqchikel, K'iche'           | Guatemala                 | 100–200                   | ?                                   | at least 200  |
| Lenca, Jicaque               | Honduras                  | 100                       | 300                                 | at least 400  |

Source: Chuchiak (2007), who draws on sixteenth-century sources in AGI.

In 1579 a group of fifty-six surviving veterans of the war, all residents of these two cah-barrios, put their names to a petition asking that their privileges as conquerors (primarily exemption from tribute payment) be restored.<sup>21</sup> The petitioners, all with Spanish or non-Maya Mesoamerican surnames, were born in central Mexico, Tabasco, Guatemala, and Honduras. The 1579 petition reflects the facts that (1) veterans had stayed, established communities in the Colonial capital, and were cohesive enough that some could still collaborate in legal action long after their initial arrival, despite (2) their ongoing ethnic diversity (in the sense of their intermixing with Mayas); but (3) their declining numbers suggested they had begun to be gradually absorbed into the larger indigenous population around them. Indeed, later evidence confirms this; San Cristóbal and Santiago appear in the archival record in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as Maya cah-barrios, not as separate ethnic, linguistic, or political entities. The Mesoamerican veterans lost their privileges and eventually their separate identity.

At the same time Spaniards were bringing thousands of Mesoamericans into Yucatán, they also started introducing Africans into the peninsula. There were only a few dozen brought in the early 1540s, greatly outnumbered by Nahuas and others; but whereas the influx of Mesoamericans soon stopped (or became negligible), the importation of Africans became a slow, steady trickle for centuries. The first century of the Yucatecan Colonial period (1540s–1640s) was also a period of intense slave importation into Mexico (when the Portuguese controlled the Atlantic slave trade and for most of that century the Portuguese and Spanish empires were united

under the Spanish crown); even Yucatán, a relatively poor province of New Spain, witnessed a regular influx of black slaves, one that kept the black population at roughly the same level as the Spanish one. As Spaniards in Yucatán grew in number, partially by absorbing some “Spaniards” who had mixed ancestry, the Afro-Yucatecan population kept pace through parallel processes of immigration (in the African case, forced), reproduction, and racial mixing.

Thus, indigenous Mayan speakers remained the majority. But through the eighteenth century, Afro-Yucatecans (i.e., all those of African descent, from African-born slaves to Yucatán-born free coloreds) appeared in official colony-wide censuses as 12 percent to 15 percent of the total population. In 1779, Afro-Yucatecans were 11 percent of the population in and around Mérida and 27 percent in and around Campeche; in the rural districts that comprised the rest of the province, Afro-Yucatecans averaged 7 percent of the population. In the 1804 census, that number was 6 percent (Restall 2009:chapter 1). However, these numbers cannot be taken literally; all Spanish Colonial censuses must be subject to careful interpretation, and the official numbers from Yucatán need to be placed in the context of three further well-evidenced points.

First, Afro-Yucatecans were everywhere, even in the smallest villages. It is true that African slaves in the colony were auxiliary slaves attached personally to their owners (as opposed to plantation slaves), and both black slavery and the development of Afro-Yucatecan communities was more an urban than a rural phenomenon.<sup>22</sup> But even in the official church censuses of 1797–1813, there are people of African descent in 96 percent of the province’s parishes; the actual figure was likely higher.

Second, the official numbers of Afro-Yucatecans undoubtedly *understate* their true numbers because the socio-racial ranking culture in the colonies (sometimes called “the *casta* system” by historians, a term not used in Colonial times) was race-conscious but fluid. It encouraged and permitted category “passing,” which simultaneously reinforced ranking culture (the notion it was better to be a Spaniard than mulatto, better to be mulatto than black, and so forth) while also rendering its categories increasingly vague, broad, and unreliable (see also Gabbert 2004a:18–22). In Late Colonial Yucatán, Afro-Yucatecan categories such as *negro* and *moreno* (both “black” but with subtle distinctions) and *mulato* and *pardo* (both “mulatto”) faded from usage as their real numbers continued to grow. Afro-Yucatecans themselves did not disappear; they became Spaniards, mestizos, and natives.

This brings us to the third point, one especially relevant to the question of Maya identity: Afro-Yucatecan men married Yucatecan Maya women throughout the Colonial period. The archival record contains evidence of specific examples (such as the African-born Manuel Bolio, who married Josepha Chan, a Maya resident of Mérida, in 1757; see Restall 2006 and 2009:chapter 5 for the full story). It also

allows us to draw up statistical data; for example, over 2,000 marriages of Afro-Yucatecan in Colonial Mérida (1567–1797) show that 51 percent of black husbands chose Maya or mestiza wives, and 45 percent of colored husbands (pardo or mulato) did the same. Similar statistics out in the countryside show lower levels, as there were fewer Afro-Yucatecan men in Maya villages. But it took place everywhere; Afro-Maya marriage was a phenomenon that affected the entire province over centuries.<sup>23</sup> By 1800, in a manner of speaking, one can argue that Yucatán's Mayas had become Afro-Mayas (Restall 2009:chapter 7).

How, then, do the parallel stories of Mesoamerican and African arrivals in Colonial Yucatán impact questions of Maya identity? First, they strongly suggest that a process began in the 1540s whereby Yucatán's natives gradually became Meso-Mayas and Afro-Mayas—at least in terms of their ethnic or racial ancestry. This process of biological diversification was most intense in Mérida-Tihó and Campeche, but it had spread throughout the colony by 1800. But second, the numbers of, and diversity within, these two immigrants groups (Mesoamericans and black Africans) were such that separate, closed communities did not develop. Indigenous communities accepted and absorbed other indigenous and colored outsiders into their *chibalob* and *cahob*. In doing so, the *cah* and the *chibal* displayed strength through openness and flexibility, while a “Maya” identity continued to fail to develop.

#### ETHNIC CATEGORIES IN THE COLONY, 1542–1821

If the Colonial Maya evidence supports the notion of a lack of a broader ethnic consciousness among indigenous Yucatecans by the early nineteenth century, why have they been assigned such an identity with such regularity over the past five centuries? One of the most important factors is Colonial Spanish influence.

Spanish influence is rooted in the mid-sixteenth century, when repeated invasions finally resulted in the permanent establishment of a small colony in the peninsula. Directed by a presumptuous geography and a cavalier ethnocentrism, Spaniards imposed upon hundreds of native groups in the New World a blanket racial identity, that of *indio*, which indigenous people neither shared nor ever came to embrace. At the same time, Spaniards imagined that the “Indians” of particular regions, such as Yucatán, had a regional sense of identity that gave them particular characteristics in common.

Such characteristics were based less on systematic observation—investigations such as Diego de Landa's into native culture were the exception rather than the rule—and more on explaining phenomena related to the Spanish experience. For example, the protracted nature of the conquest—twenty years to establish a permanent hold on a mere corner of the peninsula (Clendinnen 1987; Restall 1998a)—was put down to

Maya bellicosity and duplicity, a paradigm that remained an undercurrent to Spanish discourse on Mayas throughout Colonial rule and one that would resurface with vehemence during the Caste War, when the Spanish Yucatecan Justo Sierra O'Reilly denounced the Mayas as “brutal, scheming, warlike savages, whose goal is nothing less than the destruction of civilization” (quoted in Chuchiak 1997:25).

Spaniards thus assigned the Yucatec Mayas what was in effect an ethnic identity, bounded by regionalism—in this case a Colonial province that more or less comprised the peninsula of Yucatán—or language and by perceived characteristics such as those cited above or those recorded by Landa.<sup>24</sup> Within the larger schema of the Colonial Spanish *sistema de castas*, or ethnoracial “caste” system, constructed ethnic units such as the Yucatec Mayas comprised the racial category “Indians.” The importance of the latter—with “Indian” characteristics more significant than regional ones—was reflected in Spanish terms of reference; native groups were usually “the Indians of this province” or “the Indians of that land,” with more specific references geographical (Landa sometimes refers to *los yucatanenses*; Landa 1959 [1566]:47, for example) or externally determined (there are so-called Chontal groups around the margins of the regions that were Nahuatl-speaking in the sixteenth century because *chontalli* is a Nahuatl term for “foreigner”).

“Indians,” as a subordinated but semi-civilized source of labor, were slotted into the ranking of the ethnoracial system between Spaniards, who as “people of reason” were destined to rule, and black Africans, whose inherent inferiority suited them to slavery. Because these “natural laws” were part of an evolving European ideology of Colonial justification, they had to be realized through a complex mixture of force, coercion, and co-optation. Furthermore, for the same reason, the system was never fully realized, leaving scholars of Colonial Spanish America to struggle with the complex contradictions between Colonial Spanish assertions and historical evidence on the nature of societies in these colonies. Some historians have argued that the Spanish-“Indian”-African ranking based on phenotype was, when it came to the functioning of social organizations, a Spanish-African-“Indian” system (Lockhart and Schwartz 1983:130). Others have argued that the growth in the mixed-race population, the people to whom the term *castas* properly refers, created a social structure in which class played a more significant role than race.<sup>25</sup> The point to be emphasized here is that there was, from the start and increasingly so, a disjuncture between social and cultural realities on the one hand and Colonial Spanish constructions and perceptions of ethnoracial identities on the other. One part of this phenomenon was the invention of an ethnic group of Yucatec “Indians,” later Yucatec “Mayas,” within the larger race of New World “Indians.” The next few pages outline what happened to this complex situation after Yucatán had gained its independence from Spain in 1821.

## ETHNIC CATEGORIES IN THE POST-COLONY, 1821–1900

Even after Mexico gained political independence, the population of Yucatán remained legally divided. The *repúblicas de indios*, established during Colonial times as special administrative units for the indigenous, tribute-paying population, survived. The Colonial tripartition—Spaniards, castas, and indios—was reduced to a system of administration that differentiated between people with total civil rights, the so-called *vecinos*, and natives (*indios* or *indígenas*) (Cline 1950 2:64). The *repúblicas* remained in the state of Yucatán until 1868, whereas in Campeche, which had separated from Yucatán in 1858, they were abolished around 1869.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, the term *indígena* continued to be used in official documents and censuses (e.g., Padrón . . . Panaba, February 27, 1885, AGEY, PE, P, CP, RC). Everyday speech, in general, reflected the administrative dichotomy between “Indian” and “vecino.” Frequently, however, the Spanish-speaking elite considered it not merely a legal but an ethnic or “racial” differentiation. Thus, Ancona writes that in Yucatán anyone who did not belong to the “pure Indian race” was called *vecino* (Ancona 1978 4:37n6). The terms *yucateco* and *blanco* (white) were also used to mean the opposite of *indio* or Maya: “In Yucatán whites are generally not only those in whose veins pure European blood runs but even those who mixed it with a quantity of Indian blood. Thus . . . our population is divided into two broad sections: the Indians and the whites. The first are the descendants of the Mayas who did not mix their blood with any other, and the second are the individuals of all other races” (ibid.:13n3; see also Stephens 1963 1:154–55).<sup>27</sup>

Another set of categories contrasted those dressed in European fashion (suits, dresses, shoes), the so-called *gente de vestido*, with people who wore folk costume, which had evolved from the garments worn by natives and mestizos during the Colonial period.<sup>28</sup> Social categories were also dichotomously structured in the Maya language. Members of the in-group were generally referred to as *macehual* or *otsil* (poor), those from the out-group were called *dzul* (see documents in Chi Poot 1982:237, 239, 278, 284–85, 287–88, 301–2; Tozzer 1982 [1907]:19; Cline 1950 5:149; Gabbert 2004a:62–64, 78–79, 111–15).<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the social categories employed in nineteenth-century Yucatán constitute a complex system composed of a number of sets, each referring to one or more dimensions of difference, including legal status, “race” (phenotype and descent), and clothing. A particular set was selected according to the context (census, everyday communication), the topic in question, and the language used (Spanish or Mayan). The analysis of this system is complicated by the fact that the social boundaries marked by the different traits did not coincide.<sup>30</sup> Data presented by Don Dumond (1997:41–43) for the first decades of the nineteenth century show that only the surname had a close relationship with legal status and administrative classification.

This apparently remained constant in the ensuing decades.<sup>31</sup> There was therefore a strong tendency to categorize anyone bearing a Maya patronymic as “Indian” or Maya. Phenotype was a completely different matter. After more than three centuries of miscegenation, any attempt to separate different population groups according to physical traits was a hopeless endeavor. These physical features, however, were by no means unimportant, since statistically there was indeed a relationship between, for example, wealth and skin color. But physical traits were not important for the categorization of individuals as such; only in combination with other features, including wealth, dress, occupation, and surname.

In post-Conquest Yucatán, Spanish was considered the language of civilization by the urban elite, which regarded Maya as the idiom of ignorance. Only a small part of the population in the few urban settlements and provincial towns understood and spoke Spanish. It was only in the southwest (western Campeche, Carmen, and Champoton) that Spanish was already dominant in the nineteenth century and where, in contrast to the situation in Mérida, some of the peasantry and farm laborers seem to have spoken it and domestic servants were forced to learn it (Aznar Barbachano and Carbó 1994:15; Cline 1950 5:307–8). Outside these areas, however, Mayan was universal (e.g., Norman 1843:68, 154; Tozzer 1977 [1921]:14–15, 1982 [1907]:54). It remained the sole or preferred language of people considered “Indian” and was also the mother tongue of many *vecinos*, particularly in the rural areas. Thus, the German linguist Carl Hermann Berendt, who visited Yucatán several times, noted in the 1870s: “[Mayan] is used not only by the Indians, but also by the greater part of the white and *mestizo* population; in the interior of Yucatán I have met with white families who do not understand one word of Spanish” (Tozzer 1977 [1921]:515; see also LNE, November 1, 1878:3–4; Stephens 1963 1:231; Aznar Barbachano and Carbó 1994:15; Anonymous 1997 [1866]:15).

Contemporary descriptions show that dress was an important status symbol in nineteenth-century Yucatán. Observers noted a division of society into two classes, those who wore pantaloons and those who went around in cotton breeches or drawers. The pantaloons was “the uniform of civilization,” as US traveler B. M. Norman (1843:139) put it (see also Stephens 1963 2:71; Cline 1950 5:143–44). However, wearing European clothes was more widespread in large settlements, especially Mérida and Campeche, than in smaller towns and villages where, at best, a rich handful owned European-style garments (Stephens 1963 2:71; Norman 1843:3, 22). Moreover, in many cases they were only worn on holidays. Thus, the *gente de vestido* comprised only a small portion of the population. Even the majority of the *vecinos* dressed, like the *indios*, in folk costume (e.g., Anonymous 1997:15). Thus, the culture and living conditions of poorer *indios* and *vecinos* in the villages, ranches, and haciendas of Yucatán were in general

similar (as contemporaries observed; see Aznar Barbachano and Carbó 1994:14–15; Anonymous 1997:14–15).

Dumond (1997:40–43) has shown that many indios and vecinos were not only culturally alike but also related by marriage or descent. In his sample of four communities in northern Yucatán between 1803 and 1840, more than 30 percent of the male vecinos were married to indigenous women, while 22 percent of women with Spanish names were married to men with Mayan names. This meant, as Dumond puts it, that “a significant number of rural Yucatecan vecinos must have had a preponderance of Indian relatives and must have been Indian in outlook” (ibid.:43). However, it would be premature to assume a *general* insignificance of status categories in the nineteenth century. Gabbert’s analysis of entries in the registry office at Hopelchén, a town in the southern borderlands, confirms Dumond’s conclusion in general, but beyond that it suggests that choice of spouse varied with class. In actual fact, status categories seem to have been of little importance in determining the behavior of poorer people (like farm laborers). No fewer than 37 (29.13%) of the 127 marriages registered in Hopelchén in selected years between 1875 and 1910 were exogamous, that is, marriages between spouses of different patronymics (Spanish or Maya). All the people involved in these marriages belonged to the lower class.<sup>32</sup> In contrast to the marriage pattern found among the lower class, the Spanish-speaking elite in Hopelchén was strictly endogamous. Of the 35 elite marriages registered, none of the spouses bore a Maya patronymic.

The data on choice of spouse demonstrate that the social distance between lower class indios and vecinos had already become minimal before the repúblicas de indígenas were completely abolished in the late 1860s. With the removal of the legal differentiation between both status categories, a relatively homogeneous Mayan-speaking lower class began to develop.<sup>33</sup> The elite, on the contrary, remained an almost completely closed social group.

As has been shown, the social categories used in nineteenth-century Yucatán were dichotomously structured. However, there were several categories denoting overlapping aggregates of people. There was no such thing, therefore, as bounded, separate ethnic communities. The category indio (indígena) was, for example, part of more than one set. It could refer to people of a certain legal status, to individuals of a certain descent/phenotype, or to individuals wearing a particular dress. Apart from surnames, legal or administrative distinctions (indio/vecino) did not coincide with either cultural differences or endogamous units. Maya, for example, was not only the language of legal “Indians” but was the mother tongue of the vast majority of the population. The most important cleavage separated the mainly urban Spanish-speaking elite from the Mayan-speaking lower class who dressed in folk costume. The elite considered the vast majority of peasants, farm laborers, and their



**FIGURE 5.3.** Caste War defense work in Iturbide. Photo by Ute Schüren

families to be indios, whereas vecinos in the interior, who frequently spoke nothing but Mayan, referred to people legally so defined (or people easily identifiable by a Maya patronymic) as indios when trying to claim a higher social status.<sup>34</sup> The subjectivity of this ascription helps us understand why a community consciousness encompassing everyone categorized as “Indian” or macehual did not develop. Yet there was another major factor that shaped the development of ethnic identification in Yucatán: the so-called Caste War.

#### THE CASTE WAR OF YUCATÁN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

This conflict began in Yucatán in the 1840s as a civil war and during the course of 1847 was re-categorized and labeled a “caste” or race war by the peninsula’s Hispanic leaders (see figures 5.3–5.5). In a long historical and historiographical tradition, running from Justo Sierra O’Reilly (see his 1848 quote above) to Lzaro Cárdenas (1972) to Nelson Reed (1964) and Victoria Bricker (1981), the war actually became a race war or war of ethnic liberation, with vengeful Maya rebels, later known as *cru-zob*, almost regaining the lands taken from them by invading Spaniards and their descendents.<sup>35</sup> The counterview, articulated most notably by Terry Rugeley, is that divisions of region and class played a more important role than ethnic or racial antagonisms (Rugeley 1996; Cline 1950; Patch 1991).





**FIGURE 5.4.** Caste War fortifications in Bacalar. Photo by Ute Schüren

Questions of Maya ethnic identity are obviously at the heart of this debate, in the light of which our argument above on Colonial Maya identity has two possible applications.

One is that the Colonial period development of multiple ethnic categories laid a foundation for a Maya ethnogenesis during the Caste War. The other is that the bifurcation of implied and overt ethnic awareness persisted through the mid-nineteenth century, with the war failing to foster the emergence of an ethnic community consciousness that encompassed all Mayan speakers in Yucatán. As we have argued in other places (see Gabbert 2004a:46–59, 2004b; Restall 2004) and briefly outline below, we go even further than this, suggesting two major propositions: first, the fact that many Mayan speakers fought against the rebels or became victims of their attacks questions the characterization of the Caste War as a “race war” or the ethnic struggle of “the Maya.” Many rebel leaders as well as rank-and-file soldiers were not considered “Indians” by their contemporaries. Rebels frequently attacked entirely indigenous hamlets and villages, killing people with Mayan surnames including men, women, and children. The units that fought the rebels frequently encompassed many people with Mayan surnames. While the majority of counterinsurgents were drafted, many were volunteers.<sup>36</sup>

Second, we suggest that the Caste War was of fundamental importance for the development of ethnic relations on the Yucatán Peninsula, but instead of promoting native unity, it caused a deep rift between Mayan speakers. This fostered, on one hand, the emergence of ethnic consciousness among the rebels and, on the other hand, the development of a socially and culturally homogeneous Mayan-speaking lower class to the north and west of Yucatán, which retained a localized sense of loyalty. Thus, the war hindered any tendencies toward the development

of a broader Maya ethnic community encompassing all speakers of the language who lived in the peninsula.

In addition to the heterogeneous composition of the conflicting bands and the many natives who fell victim to rebel raids, the rebels' written expressions are similar evidence against the racial war thesis. In the surviving correspondence written in Maya, rebel leaders frequently employed the ethnically neutral term *enemies* (*enemigoob*) to designate their adversaries. Even the occasional use of *dzulob* does not necessarily support an ethnic interpretation (see the documents in Chi Poot 1982:230, 240, 243; Quintal Martín 1992:59; Florentino Chan, July 19, 1850, CAIHDI, Manuscritos, XLII, 011). This term had a multitude of meanings and cannot simply be translated as "white" or "Spanish," as is frequently the case in the relevant literature (e.g., Bricker 1981:187–218). It alludes to differences in lifestyle and status and particularly expresses the social distance from the speaker. In most cases the rebels called themselves *cristianoob* (Christians), *otsilob* (poor), or *masewalob* (see, e.g., the documents in *ibid.*:188–207; Chi Poot 1982:277–94). *Cruzob* (crosses), in comparison, which hints at the Cult of the Speaking Cross, appears rarely (*ibid.*:285; Dumond 1997:359). These terms referred to religious ties or a certain social position; *masewal* (or *macehual*) was a designation for the common people and, at least for the time being, not an ethnic category (*ibid.*:123–24; Gabbert 2004a:36, 54).

In the "Proclamation of Juan de la Cruz" of 1850, for example, the *cruzob* author refers to his followers either in paternal terms, as "my children" (*in sihsabbilob*, literally "my progeny," and *in sihsah uincilob*, "my engendered people") or in the same terms of the implied—not overt—ethnic awareness of the Colonial period (*Cristiano Cahex*, "you Christian cah members," and *macehual*, "commoner," or *in sihsah macehualilob*, "my commoner progeny"). Social and racial divisions are strongly implied—at one point Cruz lists four social categories, those of *dzul*, "foreigner, or rich," *box*, "black," *macehual*, "commoner," and *mulato*, "mulatto"—but the terms *indio*, *indígena*, and *Maya* never appear; and the bifurcated sociopolitical world of the letter seems to be between Cruz's community "children" and their "enemies" (*enemigoob*) (letter in Bricker 1981:187–207; glosses ours). The same language was used in Cruz's 1851 letter to Governor Barbachano (*ibid.*:208–18) and other documents (e.g., José María Barrera et al. to José Canuto Vela, Haas, April 7, 1850, in Chi Poot 1982:237; Cecilio Chi to Don Il. Ma. Díaz, Expec, November 11, 1847, and Eulogio Rosado to Secretario de Guerra y Marina, December 13, 1847, both in AGEY, PE, G, box 66, file Programa de indios sublevados).

As we have seen, ethnic identity did not create the two sides in the war because ethnic divisions did not characterize the makeup of its combatants or victims. The intense period of war (from 1847 to about 1853) was followed by a half century



**FIGURE 5.5.** Talking Cross in Felipe Carrillo Puerto. Photo by Wolfgang Gabbert

in which the Mayan-speaking population of Yucatec was as divided as it had ever been, with numerous native groups (*cruzob*, different *pacífico* groups, and so on) existing at various points along a spectrum between full incorporation into the Mexican state of Yucatán and complete autonomy. The so-called *bravos* or *cruzob*

rebels proclaimed themselves *masewalob* in distinction to the “pacified” Mayas (Hervik 1999:42–46; Dumond 1997; Castro 2001; Gabbert 2004a:57–64). This political situation was partly a result of the state’s inability to establish direct rule over the entire peninsula. But it also represented continuity in terms of the localized nature of Yucatán’s indigenous identities. At the same time, it reflected the fact that the rebels’ discourse was not built upon the kind of ethno-political ideas that have underpinned the late-twentieth-century ethnogenesis in Guatemala—such as the notion that promoting a pan-Maya identity is important, even essential, to the defense of individual Maya communities.

### CONCLUSION

In the decades that followed independence, a Mayan surname remained the only reliable indicator of membership in the legal and administrative category of *indio*. In everyday interaction, other features such as phenotype, dress, language, and the occupation as a farmhand were frequently sufficient evidence to be considered and treated as “Indian” by elite Spaniards and, later, urban *blancos*. However, more nuanced social categories were employed among *indios* and people of mixed heritage. Thus, it was not possible to determine unequivocally the group of people regarded as *indio*, since ethnicity was subjective—it depended on the eye of the beholder. The Spanish-speaking urban elite considered the vast majority of peasants, farmhands, and their families to be *indios*.

On the other hand, the *vecinos* in the interior, who often spoke nothing but Mayan, regarded as “Indian” only those legally defined as such or those with a Maya patronym. This subjectivity of ascription helps explain why no indigenous community consciousness could develop. The same applies to the term *macehual* or *masewal*. It did not denote a strictly confined circle of individuals but was interpreted differently according to the speaker’s social position and interest, as well as to the interactional context. The term *macehual* was generally related to a legally defined status category in the Colonial period. The primary social identification of the *macehualob* (or *masewalob*) was the community (*cah*) and the patronym group (*chibal*). In the west and northwest of the peninsula during the nineteenth century, *macehual* also referred to a status category and not to an ethnic community. Primary loyalty remained bound to the village or the hacienda.<sup>37</sup> It was only among the rebels in what is today Quintana Roo that an ethnic consciousness developed, which, however, excluded Mayan speakers from the rest of the peninsula. It was impossible for the majority of this population to identify with the rebels during the Caste War, since they constantly fought against them or were affected by their assaults on settlements in the territory controlled by the

government. Thus, an identity and community consciousness of all native Yucatec Mayan speakers did not develop. Maya remained a category employed by others—the Spanish-speaking elite and, later, foreign linguists and anthropologists—but generally denied by Mayan speakers themselves. This has only begun to change, slowly and partially, in recent decades. Such a change is the result, among other things, of the adoption of ethnic rhetoric by the government, international organizations, and social movements.

Spanish ethnoracial concepts that developed in the sixteenth century, and the rhetoric of race and polarizing violence of the Caste War, reified Maya ethnic identity among non-Mayas and provided a false appearance of being an independent factor in the ordering of the Yucatec social world. While non-Mayas consistently saw “Indians” and “Mayas,” the peninsula’s natives themselves held to their own less monolithic identities. For centuries, indigenous Yucatecans have refused to accept categories of identity assigned to them. In a sense, then, the Maya struggled for centuries in the face of steady opposition *against* their own ethnogenesis.

What are our arguments’ implications for diachronic research on indigenous (or other) populations? First, we are skeptical regarding the ubiquity of ethnicity (as defined above) in history. It is probably a form of political organization and legitimization of rule that emerged in tandem with the nation-state model of politics. While national as well as ethnic models of state society stress that rulers and ruled should be united by common descent and culture, elites in state societies before the late eighteenth century stressed their cultural and genealogical difference from the lower classes in their polities (Gabbert 2004a:34–35, 2006:91–93).

Further, elites in such societies should not be considered ethnic groups unto themselves. As Benedict Anderson (1991:6–7) has argued brilliantly for the European nobility prior to the French Revolution, they did not constitute a group that stressed cultural sameness but were divided into numerous genealogical branches of varying social status. Such a pattern is likely to have existed in many other societies as well.

The character of the commoners in such polities is exemplified by our discussion of Maya commoners. They identified themselves with their local community and their descent group and—in both the Colonial and pre-Conquest periods—as vassals of specific rulers. But they did not develop an overarching consciousness of belonging to an ethnic community. Such a consciousness only developed among the cruzob because of their traumatic experiences in the Caste War, resulting in a marked separation from both Spanish speakers and speakers of Yucatec alike. In addition, the religious “Cult of the Speaking Cross” provided an organizational form that tied the local cruzob communities into one body of believers and separated them from all others (Gabbert 2004a:57–59).

Researchers therefore face three challenges. First, we must abstain from reproducing the erroneous assumption by many nineteenth-century linguists and anthropologists that linguistic similarities or shared material culture constituted ethnic identity. Second, not each and every form of social categorization or identification (e.g., by locality, kinship, or polity) should be placed under the “ethnic” umbrella. Third, for various reasons, ethnicity can be detected in the empirical record only with major difficulties. It results from a complex interplay of self-identification and categorization by others. Ethnic categorization is context-dependent and *not directly* linked to overt markers, such as language, dress, or other items of material culture.<sup>38</sup> Since not all cultural traits are significant as symbols of difference, as Barth (1969) points out, and the meaning attributed to these symbols may vary among regions or situations, it seems highly problematic to infer ethnicity merely on the basis of material remains. Consequently, especially in cases where no written texts are available to complement archaeological findings, we will frequently be unable to reveal patterns of ethnic or other group identification.

#### NOTES

1. Earlier versions of some of the material presented here were published in Restall (2001, 2004) and Gabbert (2001a, 2001b, 2004a, 2004b).

2. As there is no agreement on the usage of the term *ethnicity*, a definition is necessary. It is understood here as referring to a phenomenon of social differentiation in which actors use cultural or phenotypical markers or symbols to distinguish themselves from others. It is a method of classifying people into categories that include individuals of both sexes and all age groups using (socially constructed) origin as its primary reference. These boundary processes can result in the development of a system of ethnic categories (i.e., classificatory units) or of ethnic communities (i.e., units of action). It is therefore of the utmost importance that *social categories* present in a specific society the *groups* or organizations based on such categories and the *individuals* using these categories in daily interaction be kept analytically separate. (See Gabbert 2004a:xii–xvii and 2006 for fuller discussions of the concept.)

3. In the following, the term *Maya* refers only to the speakers of Yucatec Maya unless otherwise indicated.

4. This is especially relevant since Barth (1969) rightly stressed that the specificity of ethnicity lies in the fact that *actors themselves* feel they belong to a common category.

5. The period of the Spanish invasions of the peninsula was 1527–46, the Colonial period lasted to 1821, and the Caste War era was 1847–1901; thus, we have given our chapter an approximate 1500–1900 time span.

6. Apparently, *mayathan* referred primarily to the language spoken in the north of Yucatán, since different terms were used in the surroundings of Campeche (*kampech than*),

in the extreme southwest (*putun than*), and in the southeast (*lengua de uaymil*). Maya than and kampech than did not differ a great deal, so mutual understanding was possible. The language of Uaymil resembled kampech than. The differences with putun than (Chontal), however, were much greater, making the language unintelligible to speakers of mayathan. See Landa (1959 [1566], chapters 3, 5); Ponce (1872 [1588]:393, 451–52, 468); Tozzer (1941:20n123).

7. A similar statement is made in the *relación* of “Quinacama” (RHGY 1983 1:254). See Gabbert (2001a, 2004a:28–31) for additional evidence. Munro Edmonson (1982:10) remarks that “the modern name of the Maya may be derived from Mayapan,” but he cites Alfred Tozzer (1941:7, 9), who merely states that the peninsula was called “Maia” without speculating as to the term’s etymology; later, Edmonson (1986:5, 9) suggested that the name was derived from the *may* cycle of 13 katuns.

8. Barrera Vásquez (1957:28–31, 72–73, 76–77, 80–81, 88–89); Roys (1939:356); Edmonson (1982:16, 37–38); Restall (1997a:15–17).

9. For example, ah Itzaob, Itza winikob, ah Canulob.

10. For example, ah Maniob, ah Ecabob, ah Chikinchelob. See, e.g., the Titles of Chicxulub and Yaxkukul (Restall 1998a); Roys (1933:53); Edmonson (1982:6–7, 10, 24, 33–34, 39, 54, 78–79, 82, 88, 94–95, 97–100, 143, 158, 174, 194); Roys (1939:78, 86). The name of a locality with the prefix *ah* (and the plural marker *-ob*) designates the inhabitants of a city or province. A patronym with the same affix refers to members of a lineage or patronym group (*ch’ibal*). The pre-Conquest provinces remained important for some time after the conquest (see also Gabbert 2004a:173n24). The inhabitants of the region around Valladolid and Chichén Itzá, for example, were called, at least until the seventeenth century, “people of ah Cupul” (*ah Cupul winikob*) after the ruling lineage of the same name (Roys 1939:78–79; Ponce 1872 [1588]:397).

11. In 2008 Restall and Mark Christensen re-read all extant Colonial Maya testaments surveyed earlier by Restall to double-check the assertions made here regarding terminological usage. The earliest attestation of *cax* that we saw is mid-seventeenth century; by Beltrán’s time, it had become a dictionary term—“Gallo de Castilla *Ahcax*” and “Gallina de Castilla *Yxcax*” (Beltrán de Santa Rosa 1746). One could argue that turkeys did have sacred associations, as they were traditionally used in sacrificial rituals; but that does not mean turkeys were always imbued with sacred significance. Such an argument is stronger with respect to the *maya bat* entry in the seventeenth-century San Francisco dictionary, as *maya* is clearly used here to describe something historically distant and possibly with vague sacred associations—an ancient “Maya *ax*,” as opposed to the metal axes Mayas had been using for a century by the time this dictionary was compiled (see mention of this entry, the dictionary’s dating, and citations below) (Ciudad Real n.d. 1:folio 287v, 2:folio 119v; Arzápalo Marín 1995 1:489; Restall 1997a:125–26, 181, 365, 370).

12. However, as Gabbert has suggested, “maya uinicob” may also have been used by elites in some regions to claim descent from the ancient rulers of Mayapan, which was still held

as prestigious in most of northern Yucatán at least in the sixteenth century (see Gabbert 2004a:30–31, cf. also Landa 1959 [1566]:chapter 24; Barrera Vásquez 1957:28–31, 104–7).

13. On petitionary discourse among Mayas and Nahuas, see Restall (1997a:251–66, 1997b:255–59) and Karttunen and Lockhart (1987). The 1668–69 petitions are in the AGI (*Escribanía* 317a, 2, various folios). For a discussion of possible Spanish and Maya roles in the formulation of a series of petitions in Maya from a century earlier, see Restall (1998a:151–68).

14. See, for example, Rothschild (1981:11–14); Gellner (1983:1, 10–12). For Polynesia, see Sahlins (1985:73–103). For pre-Conquest Yucatán, see also Lincoln (1990:45–49).

15. Thus, the Chumayel phrases *ch'ibal c on maya uinic e* (which Edmonson glosses as “the ancestry of us Maya”) and *u ch'ibal maya uinicob* (“the lineages of the Maya people”) are a reference to the people of the peninsula’s west (Edmonson 1986:109, 178).

16. On the Itzás of the Petén and their Yucatec origins, see Jones (1998:xix, 3–107). This would not be the only instance of a Maya people adopting as a group or ethnic label the name of a founding ruler or dynasty; the Quichés did it too (see Hill and Monaghan 1987:32–33).

17. Robert Chamberlain and Ralph Roys used the term *tribe* (see especially Roys 1943).

18. As Gabbert has argued elsewhere, it is necessary to differentiate between kinship and ethnicity. Both terms are related to (real or supposed) common descent. However, only those social categories that are related to ideas of common descent and integrate several families and kin groups should be referred to as “ethnic.” Many scholars see ethnic collectivities as intermediate groups, larger than local communities but smaller than a nation (e.g., Tambiah 1989:337). Although there is no need to confine the meaning of the term *ethnic collectivities* to subnational groupings, it should be restricted to communities of a certain scale, to account for the different bases of cohesion. Only groups above the level of the local community should be referred to as “ethnic” because they have to integrate individuals who cannot be united directly through social, economic, or kin relationships (Gabbert 2006:88).

19. See Gabbert (2004a:16–25) for a discussion of the Colonial social structure and the role of the native nobility.

20. See Gabbert (2001b:463–64, 479–83, 2006:90–91) for a discussion of the differences between ethnic categories and ethnic communities.

21. AGI, *México* 100 (Restall thanks Robert Schwaller for transcribing and sharing this petition; also see Chuchiak 2007:175–78). This tale of betrayal and disappointment was repeated throughout Mesoamerica, as Spanish officials reneged on Conquest period promises and native veterans and their descendents fought in the law courts to regain some semblance of status (see Matthew 2004; Matthew and Oudijk 2007; Restall and Asselbergs 2007; Yannakakis 2008).

22. Restall defines and discusses these distinctions in general terms in Restall and Lane (2011:chapter 10) and Restall (2009:chapter 3).

23. In general, intermarriage was most common among the so-called castas, or mixed groups. However, status endogamy seems to have remained high among the Indian



population. A high rate of endogamous marriages is to be expected among Indians, since they made up the bulk of the population (cf. Gabbert 2004a:23).

24. Landa wrote a vast study of Yucatec Maya history and culture, called, according to its genre, his *Recopilación*; the work appears to have been lost in the late seventeenth century, with the only surviving traces the compilation of excerpts—some of which may not have been written by Landa himself—cited above as his *Relación* (see Restall and Chuchiak 2002). “Indios mayas” is used, for example, in a report from 1588 by the Spanish cleric Fray Alonso Ponce de León as a designation of all speakers of mayathan, excluding the Chontal and the inhabitants of several towns around Campeche and Bacalar (Ponce 1872 [1588]:407, 410, 413, 417–18, 420–22, 439, 441, 445, 447, 451, 462–64, 472, 474–75).

25. Most notably Cope (1994), but also see Boyer (1995) and Stern (1996), as well as additional citations on the race-class debate in Kellogg (2000).

26. The liberal constitution of 1841 formally abolished the repúblicas de indios, but in actual fact they continued to operate. In 1847 they were reestablished. For a discussion of the repúblicas de indios after independence, see Rugeley (1996) and Gabbert (2004a:60–62).

27. For the term *yucateco*, see Hernández 1846:291; Cline 1950 5:146–47.

28. This consisted, in the case of women, of a long skirt (*fustan* or *pik*) worn with a long, wide blouse with embroidery (*ipil*) on the square neckline and the hem below the waist. Men dressed in cotton shirts, trousers or drawers, and frequently sandals. The folk costume was also known as *traje de mestizo/a* (mestizo costume). This has confused many authors who suggested that the people known as “mestizos” in nineteenth-century Yucatán were a different social group than the Indians and whites (e.g., Cline 1950 5:145–46). This was, however, not the case. The *traje de mestizo* was *not* a garment specific to a social group but merely a term employed for the more elaborate variants of the folk costume. Differences in the quality of cloth and ornamentation reflected the economic situation of the wearer or were a result of the contrast between clothes worn on ordinary days and those worn on holidays (Gabbert 2004a:76–77). People wearing the folk costume were *not always* called “mestizos,” as Redfield (1938:521) and Hansen (1980:123) suggest, but were frequently referred to as Indians (e.g., Norman 1843:145; Castillo 1845:295). While *mestizo* in other parts of Mexico and Latin America generally refers to the offspring of unions between Spaniards or whites and Indians or designates the culturally hispanicized section of the population in contrast to the Indian one, in Yucatán *mestizo* is used to refer to wearers of the folk costume and has become a symbol of Maya Indian identity.

29. *Indio* and *Maya* were not used as self-identifications (Tozzer 1982 [1907]:19). The use of *dzul* today is still variable and highly dependent on context. It is also used to refer to wealthy people irrespective of language spoken and style of dress (see Gabbert 2004a:114, 197n29).

30. Gabbert made this point for the first time in a paper presented at a meeting of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Völkerkunde in 1995 (Gabbert 1995; see also 1997). Don

Dumond (1997:38–40) came to the same conclusion independently in his opus magnum on the Caste War.

31. On a taxpayer list from the Santiago quarter in Mérida in 1851, for example, only 13 (2.01%) of 630 indios bore a Spanish patronymic, and only 9 (2.35%) of 383 vecinos had a Maya surname (Dumond and Dumond 1982:155–56). All Indians listed in the Hunucmá birth register in 1873 had Maya surnames (AGEY, PE, P, CP, RC, box 185).

32. The entries analyzed are from RCHO 1875 (the beginnings of registration), 1880, 1885, 1890, 1895, 1900, 1905, and 1910. A relatively high proportion of exogamous marriages would not be sufficient to suggest the minor importance of the status categories indio and vecino for social interaction within the lower class. It could be explained by hypergamy (women of a subordinated social category marrying men from a higher category), which has been ascertained for the Colonial period. The exogamous marriages in Hopelchén, however, do not show a significant gender-specific variation. Spouses with Spanish patronymics were male in twenty cases and female in seventeen cases. For a detailed discussion of the data presented here, see Gabbert (2004a:72–73).

33. Similar tendencies toward the development of a common lower-class culture among people of different legal status have been reported, for example, for Colonial Mexico City (Cope 1994) and eighteenth-century Potosí, Bolivia (Abercrombie 1996).

34. This can be inferred from material presented by Redfield (1941:66–73, 375–77) and data collected during fieldwork by Gabbert (e.g., field notes, Hopelchén, January 11, 1995).

35. On Cárdenas's interpretation of the righteous role the "Maya race" played in the war, see Fallaw (1997:560–65).

36. See the full argument, data, and references in Gabbert (2004a:53–57, 2004b:97–104).

37. This is indicated, among other things, by the frequent conflicts between communities. See, e.g., Rugeley (1996:34, 161).

38. In addition to Gabbert (2006:90), see Michael Moerman's (1965) seminal article.

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|--------|--|
| AGI    | Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain                                |
| AGEY   | Archivo General del Estado de Yucatán, Mérida, Yucatán                   |
| AGN    | Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City                                |
| CAIHDI | Centro de Apoyo a la Investigación Histórica de Yucatán, Mérida, Yucatán |
| CP     | Censos y Padrones  |
| G      | Gobernación  |
| JCBL   | John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, RI              |
| LNE    | <i>La Nueva Era</i> , Campeche (newspaper)                               |
| P      | Población  |
| PE     | Poder Ejecutivo  |

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| RC    | Registro Civil   |
| RCHO  | Registro Civil de Hopelchén, Hopelchén   |
| RHGY  | <i>Relaciones Histórico-Geográficas de la Gobernación de Yucatán</i> (see below) |
| TLH   | Tozzer Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA                                |
| TULAL | Latin American Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA                       |

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