

"VIOLENCE AND ETHNICITY IN THE CASTE WAR OF YUCATÁN"

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Prepared for delivery at the 2000 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Hyatt Regency
Miami, March 16-18, 2000

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1. Introduction

The Caste War of Yucatán was the most important of numerous rural uprisings which unsettled Mexico during the 19th century.¹ It was mainly supported by parts of the Maya-speaking lower classes.² A traumatic event in the region's history, it claimed thousands of victims. After initial successes in 1847/48, the rebels were forced to retreat to the isolated southeastern part of the peninsula where they established independent polities. A bloody frontier war proceeded for several decades. The rebels made frequent incursions into the area controlled by the government. For their part, they had to face periodic attacks by government forces.³

The Caste War was seen by Yucatec elites as stubborn resistance of Indian barbarians against progress and civilization.⁴ The hegemonic discourse changed, however, after the Mexican revolution (1910-17). President Cárdenas (1934-1940), for example, interpreted the Caste War as a precursor of agrarian reform and as a legitimate struggle of the "Maya race" for its existence.⁵ Today, it is frequently looked upon as a symbol of Indian resistance to the suppression by Spanish-speaking descendants of the conquerors (Ladinos⁶). Mexican anthropologist Miguel A. Bartolomé, for example, calls it a "war of ethnic liberation" of "the Maya" whom he considers to be an ethnic community with a millenarian history.⁷

The Caste War was indeed of fundamental importance for the development of ethnic relations on the Yucatán Peninsula. It was a causal factor in the emergence of an ethnic consciousness among the rebels (see section 5 below). However, the Caste War was *not* the armed movement of an *already existing* ethnic group encompassing all Maya speakers of the peninsula as might be inferred from the notion of "war of ethnic liberation". Still today, many Maya-speaking peasant families in the northern and western parts of Yucatán frequently do not see the rebels as Indian freedom fighters. For them the Indians (*indios*, or *indiosob* in Maya) are "those who burned down the villages, those who had no compassion".⁸

They were very bad. The smallest [prisoners], small by years, they caught and throw them upward to receive them with the blow of a maul. There they were bashed. There they were killed. ... There they killed all of them. There they ate them.⁹

These views are not due to an "ambiguous and alienated identity", as some authors suggest.¹⁰ They are rather, as will become clear below, the result of the experiences of a major sector of Yucatán's Maya-

¹Cf. e.g. González Navarro 1976; Reina 1980.

²In the following Maya refers to the indigenous language of the Yucatán Peninsula not to the language family in general.

³For the Caste War see e.g. Reed 1964; Jones 1974; Bricker 1981:87-118, 185-218; Rugeley 1996; Dumond 1997; Sullivan 1997.

⁴Cf. e.g. Sierra O'Reilly [1848-51] 1994, I:17; Baranda 1867. For an extended discussion of elite discourse see Gabbert 1999:138-147.

⁵See e.g. Discurso en Mérida, Yucatán, August 3, 1937, Cárdenas 1972:154; cf. also Mensaje al pueblo yucateco ante las delegaciones campesinas y obreras concentradas en la ciudad de Mérida, August 8, 1937, Cárdenas 1972:170f; Bustillos Carrillo 1957:111, 175-179; Fallaw 1997:560, 563-565.

⁶The term "Ladino" which originally meant Spanish speaking is used in other parts of Middle America but not in Yucatán. Nevertheless, it seems more apt to describe the culturally and linguistically hispanicized section of the population than other terms (e.g. White) since it has less phenotypical or genetical connotations inappropriate for Yucatán.

⁷Bartolomé 1988:16, 19f, 179; see also Villa Rojas 1945:20; Buisson 1978:8, 21f; Montalvo Ortega 1988:301, 304-308, 314; Quintal Martín 1988:13, "La gesta heroica de la Guerra de Castas", *Por Esto!*, August 3, 1997. Other scholars stress the class aspect of the conflict and characterize it instead as a peasant rebellion (cf. Orlove 1979; Chi Poot 1982; Patch 1983; Dumond 1997). This perspective has, in my view, much to recommend it. However, any simple characterization of such a complex and protracted process must remain problematic.

⁸Interview, Xcupil, May 7, 1995. Here and in the following translations into English are mine.

⁹Interview, Campeche, August 29, 1998.

speaking population during the war and their transmission to the following generations through oral history.

In the following I will illustrate this point by briefly discussing the social composition of both, the conflicting parties and the war victims. After that the process of ethnogenesis among the rebels and their descendants will be briefly discussed. Before all this will be done, however, a discussion of the social categories employed in Yucatán during the 19th century seems necessary.

2. Social Categories in Yucatán

Even after Mexico gained political independence from Spain in 1821, Yucatán's population remained legally divided. The *repúblicas de indios*, established during colonial times as special administrative units for the indigenous, tribute-paying population, survived at least until the end of the 1860s.¹¹ The three-part division of colonial times - Spaniards, persons of presumed mixed ancestry (like mestizos or mulattoes), and Indians - was reduced to a system of administration which differentiated people with complete civil rights, the so-called *vecinos*, from Indians (*indios* or *indígenas*).¹² In the state of Yucatán, the *repúblicas* remained until 1868.¹³ In Campeche, which had separated from Yucatán in 1858, they were abolished around 1869.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the term *indígena* continued to be used in official documents and censuses.¹⁵

Everyday speech, in general, reflected this dichotomy (*indio*, *indígena*, Maya versus *vecino*, *blanco*, *yucateco*). The elite frequently considered it not merely a legal but a "racial" differentiation. Thus, Ancona writes that in Yucatán everybody who did "not belong to the pure Indian race" was called *vecino*.¹⁶ The terms *yucateco* and *blanco* (White) were frequently used in a similar broad way like *vecino*, namely as the opposite of *indio*:

In Yucatán White are generally not only called those in whose veins runs pure European blood but even those who had mixed it with any 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, not having mixed their blood with any other, and the second are the individuals of all other races¹⁷

In the Maya language social categories were also dichotomically structured. Members of the in-group were generally referred to as *masewal* (originally "commoner") or *otsil* (poor), those of the out-group were

¹⁰Cf. Barabas 1979:118; Lapointe 1983:40; Bartolomé 1988:117. For a critique of this interpretation see Gabbert 1997b.

¹¹The liberal constitution of 1841 formally abolished the *repúblicas de indios* but in actual fact they continued to operate. In 1847 they were re-established (Ley restableciendo y reglamentando las antiguas leyes para el régimen de los indios, August 27, 1847, APP III:146-151). For a discussion of the *repúblicas de indios* after independence see Rugeley 1996.

¹²Cf. e.g. Ley que arregle el cobro de la contribución personal, November 23, 1833, González Navarro 1970:299-301; Cline 1950, II:64. *Indio* and *indígena* were terms ascribed by others and used as synonyms in official documents, newspapers, novels etc. (cf. e.g. Baranda 1867; Hernández 1846b).

¹³See Suárez Molina 1977, II:292.

¹⁴Cf. Se prohíbe exigir servicios gratuitos á los indígenas, April 9, 1869, Alvarez Suárez 1991:93-95.

¹⁵For the continued use of the term *indígena* cf. e.g. Padrón general de contribuyentes pertenecientes a la recaudación de los Chenes, Bolonchenticul, February 17, 1873, AGEY, G, CP, P, box 1, file 15; Noticia que manifiesta los nombres y sexos de los nacidos inscritos en el registro de este juzgado en todo Marzo de 1873, Jefatura política, Estado de Yucatán, Juzgado del estado civil de Hunucmá and Padrón general de los habitantes del municipio de Panaba, partido de Tizimin, Panaba, February 27, 1885, both in AGEY, PE, P, CP, RC.

¹⁶Ancona [1879/80] 1978, IV:37 note 6; cf. also Stephens [1843] 1963, I:154f; Regil and Peón 1853:295; Martínez Alomía 1941:40, 46.

¹⁷Ancona 1879/80, IV:13 note 3; cf. also Arnold and Frost 1909:58, 325; Cline 1950, V:90f, 153. For the term *yucateco* cf. Hernández 1846a:291; Ley imponiendo contribuciones, June 17, 1843, APP II:245; Cline 1950, V:146f.

called *ts'ul* (originally "foreigner").¹⁸ These terms expressed social closeness or distance and it depended on the context on which trait (wealth, language, dress) the categorization was based.

The analysis of social categories in 19th century Yucatán is complicated by the fact that the social boundaries marked by different traits did not coincide.¹⁹ It was only surname that had a close relationship with legal status and administrative classification. In a list of tax-payers of the quarter of Santiago in Mérida in 1851, for example, only 13 (2.01 percent) of 630 *indios* bore a Spanish patronym, only nine (2.35 percent) of 383 *vecinos* had a Maya surname. All Indians listed in a birth register of Hunucmá in 1873 had Maya surnames.²⁰ People bearing a Maya patronym were therefore automatically categorized as Indians.

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. 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 got their importance for the categorization of individuals not as such but only in addition to other features, like wealth, dress, occupation, descent, etc. The owner of an hacienda, with a fine suit and a golden watch, perfectly speaking Spanish was, of course, considered a wealthy *vecino* even though he had a dark skin color and a round skull.²¹

In post-conquest Yucatán Spanish was considered the language of civilization by the urban elite which regarded Maya as the idiom of ignorance.²² But 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 Champotón) that Spanish dominated already in the 19th century. There, in contrast to the situation in Mérida, domestic servants had to learn that language and a part of the peasantry and farm hands seem to have spoken it, too.²³

¹⁸Cf. e.g. José María Barrera et al. to José Canuto Vela, Haas, April 7, 1850 and Libro Sagrado, March 15, 1903, both in Chi Poot 1982:237, 239, 278, 284f, 287f, 301f; Tozzer [1907] 1982:19; Cline 1950, V:149; Gabbert 1999:210-212. *Indio* and *Maya* were not used as self-identifications (cf. e.g. Tozzer [1907] 1982:19). Carrillo y Ancona suggests "mayab uinic" as self-identification of the Indians. However, this seems doubtful. His statement was probably an attempt to correct a mistranslation of *masewal* in the work of Stephens: "No native ever calls himself a Yucateco, but always a Macegual, or native of the land of Maya" ([1843] 1963, I:77; cf. also Heller 1853:263 note +). Carrillo y Ancona wrote very similar: "Up to the present the Indians of the peninsula never call themselves Yucatecan but always natives of Maya, *mayab uinic*" ([1865b] 1950:35; see also [1865a] 1950:17). But he did not mention *masewal* which is proven by many documents to have been a frequent self-identification of Maya speakers.

¹⁹An additional difficulty arises from the character of the available sources. The categories used in politics and administration can be relatively easily revealed through the analysis of official documents (census, legislation, decrees, etc.). The Spanish terms used in other contexts are documented in contemporary writings of different kinds (newspapers, books, travel accounts, etc.). Maya categories are, for example, accessible in the extensive correspondence between military leaders during the Caste War. These sources show relatively clearly which terms were used not only as ascription but also as self-identification. However, the circumstances under which certain categories were employed and the criteria which determined their usage can be only fragmentarily reconstructed from the available sources. To my knowledge, the voluminous corpus of Maya texts from the 19th century has not yet comprehensively analyzed for the usage of social categories. This cannot be done here either. What is intended is only to suggest empirical founded hypotheses to stimulate further study.

²⁰Cf. Padrones del número de contribuyentes de la parroquia de Santiago estramuros, n.l., June 1, 1851, DAME:155f; Noticia que manifiesta los nombres y sexos de los nacidos inscritos en el registro de este juzgado en todo Marzo de 1873 con expresion de los nombres de los padres, Jefatura política, Estado de Yucatán, Juzgado del estado civil de Hunucmá, AGEY, PE, P, CP, RC; see also Cline 1950, V:150.

²¹See Gabbert 1999:155f, 213-215.

²²Cf. e.g. Sierra O'Reilly [1848-51] 1994, I:202f.

²³Cf. Aznar Barbachano and Carbó [1861] 1994:15; Velasco 1895:73, 85, 92, 102, 109; Cline 1950, V:307f; Negrín Muñoz 1991, I:21.

Outside these areas, however, the Maya was universal. On the haciendas in the North administrators and owners talked to their workers in this language. Especially in the interior sermons were frequently given in Maya.²⁴ Maya remained not only the sole or preferred language of people considered Indians but was also, especially in rural areas, the mother tongue of many *vecinos*. Thus, Carl Hermann Berendt noted:

[The Maya] is used not only by the Indians, but also by the greater part of the white and *mestizo* population; in the interior of Yucatan I have met with white families who do not understand one word of Spanish.²⁵

Contemporary descriptions show that dress was an important symbol of status in 19th century Yucatán. Observers noted a division of society in two classes, those who wore pantaloons and those going in cotton breeches or drawers. The pantaloons was "the uniform of civilization" as Norman put it.²⁶ A section of Yucatán's population dressed in suits, dresses, and shoes following European and North American fashion. Another segment dressed in the folk costume which had developed from the garments Indians and mestizos had worn during the colonial period. This consisted, in the case of women, of a long skirt (*justan* or *pik*) over which a sacklike garment with embroidery (*ipil*) on its square cut neck and the lower hems below the waist was worn. Men were dressed in cotton shirts, trousers or drawers, and, frequently, sandals.²⁷

Those dressed in European fashion were called in Spanish *gente de vestido*. The folk costume was also known as *traje de mestizo/a* (mestizo costume). People wearing this type of dress were therefore sometimes referred to as "mestizos" regardless of their legal status.²⁸ This has confused many authors who suggested that the people called "mestizos" in 19th century Yucatán were a social group different from Indians and Whites.²⁹ This was, however, not the case. The *traje de mestizos* was *not* a garment specific for a social group but merely a term employed for the more elaborated variants of the folk costume. Differences in the quality of cloth and ornamentation reflected the economic situation of the wearer or were due to the contrast between clothing worn on ordinary days and that worn on holidays.³⁰

The use of European clothing was more widespread in bigger settlements, especially in Mérida and Campeche, than in the smaller towns and villages where, at the best, a handful of the most wealthy owned European style garments.³¹ What is more, in many cases it was 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 the folk costume.³²

As has been shown, the living conditions and the culture of poorer *indios* and *vecinos* in the villages, ranches, and haciendas of Yucatán did, in general, not differ. Thus, contemporary observers noted:

²⁴Cf. Stephens [1841] 1969, II:407; Norman 1843:68, 154; Heller 1853:217, 252; Aznar Barbachano and Carbó [1861] 1994:15; García y García 1865a:XXXVII; Anonymous [1866] 1997:15; Charney [1885] 1992:95; Velasco 1895:107; Tozzer [1907] 1982:54; [1921] 1977:14f; Cline 1950, V:147; Pintado Cervera 1982:93.

²⁵Cited in Tozzer [1921] 1977:5 note 5; cf. also Stephens [1843] 1963, I:231; Aznar Barbachano and Carbó [1861] 1994:15; Anonymous [1866] 1997:15; Memoria del partido de los Chenes, LN, November 1, 1878:3f; Woeikof 1879:204; Brinton 1882:19.

²⁶Norman 1843:139; see also Stephens [1843] 1963, II:71; Cline 1950, V:143f.

²⁷Cf. Hernández Fajardo 1946; Cline 1950, V:143f; Hansen 1980:123f; Kubitzki 1997:42-47, 56f.

²⁸Cf. e.g. Norman 1843:145; Castillo 1845:295; Arnold and Frost 1909:63, 65; Ober 1887:118. Thus, people wearing the folk costume were *not always* called "mestizos" as Redfield (1938:521), Hansen (1980:123), or Pintado Cervera (1982:81, 90f) suggest. In other parts of Mexico and Latin America Mestizo generally refers to the offspring of unions between Spaniards or Whites and Indians, or designates the culturally hispanicized part of the population in contrast to the Indian part. To use the term for wearers of the folk costume is specific to Yucatán and is indicated by putting it in parenthesis.

²⁹Cf. e.g. Cline 1950, V:145f.

³⁰See Gabbert 1999: 157f.

³¹Cf. e.g. Stephens [1843] 1963, II:71; Norman 1843:3, 22; Ober 1887:55; Arnold and Frost 1909:63.

³²Cf. e.g. Anonymous [1866] 1997:15.

In the settlements of what we have called jurisdiction of Mérida [corresponding roughly to today's state Yucatán] the descendants of the conquerors, those who came from the interbreeding of the races, and everybody living there rapidly acquired the usages, customs, language, and even the character of the Indians. In the interior one could observe them speaking the Maya language, ignoring Spanish, living in the hammock like the Indian, using the same dress and food-stuffs like him and even acquiring the laziness and suspiciousness natural to this miserable race³³

A look at choice of spouses shows another interesting fact: There was no strict social dissociation between *indios* and *vecinos* in everyday life. Already in the first half of the 19th century in many communities a considerable portion of the *vecino* population married spouses with a Maya surname.³⁴ Consequently, kinship relations were frequently not limited to members of the same status category. Data from Hopelchén show that in the southern borderlands the situation was similar.

Nevertheless, it would be rash to assume a *general* insignificance of status categories in the 19th century. An analysis of entries in the registry office at Hopelchén demonstrates 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 hands). No less than 37 (29.13 percent) of the 127 marriages registered in Hopelchén in selected years between 1875 and 1910 were exogamous. People involved in these marriages belonged to the lower class.³⁵

A relatively high proportion of exogamous marriages alone would not offer a sufficient base for suggesting the minor importance of the status categories *indio* and *vecino* for the social interaction within the lower class. It could be explained by hypergamy (women of a subordinated social category marry men from a higher category) which has been shown for the colonial period.³⁶ The exogamous marriages in Hopelchén, however, do not show a significant gender-specific variation. Spouses with Spanish patronyms were men in 20 and women in 17 cases.

A look at the Ladino elite of Hopelchén shows a drastically different picture. This group was strictly endogamous. In none of the 35 elite marriages registered between 1875 and 1910 the spouse bore a Maya patronym.³⁷

The data on choice of spouse demonstrate that the social distance between lower class *indios* and *vecinos* must have been small already before the *repúblicas de indígenas* were definitely abolished. With the removal of the legal differentiation between both status categories tendencies towards the development of a culturally and socially relatively homogeneous and Maya-speaking lower class were strengthened. The elite, on the contrary, remained an almost completely closed social group.

As has been shown, the social categories used in 19th century Yucatán constituted a complex system. It was composed of a number of sets each referring to one or more dimensions of difference, for example, legal status, "race" (phenotype and descent), or clothing. A certain set was selected according to context (census, everyday communication, etc.), the topic in question, and the language used (Spanish or Maya). There were several categories denoting overlapping aggregates of people so that no such things as bounded, separate ethnic communities resulted. 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. The category of Maya speaker was by no means restricted to Indians but comprised the vast majority of the population. The legal or administrative distinction (*indio/vecino*) did, save surname, neither coincide with cultural differences nor with

³³ Aznar Barbachano and Carbó [1861] 1994:14f; cf. also Anonymous [1866] 1997:14f; Woeikof 1879:204; Charney [1885] 1992:26, 28, 59f.

³⁴ A sample of data from Ixil, Homún, Kimbalá, and Tixcacalcupul from 1803 to 1840 shows that more than 30 percent of male *vecinos* were married to Indian women (Dumond 1997:43).

³⁵ The entries analysed are from RCHO, M, 1875 (the beginnings of registration), 1880, 1885, 1890, 1895, 1900, 1905, and 1910. Exogamy refers here to marriages between spouses of different patronyms (Spanish or Maya). For a detailed discussion of the data presented here see Gabbert 1999:151.

³⁶ See Gabbert 1999:75.

³⁷ See Gabbert 1999:152.

endogamous units. The most important cleavage separated the mainly urban Spanish-speaking elite from the Maya-speaking lower classes which dressed in the folk costume.

3. The Social Composition of the Enemy Parties

Contemporary Yucatecan intellectuals, politicians, and the press had little doubt about the identity of the insurgents. They considered the conflict a "racial war" fomented by the "traditional hate of the descendants of the Maya against all in whose veins runs just one drop of White blood".³⁸ It has already been said that many later scholars followed this dichotomic interpretation portraying the war as a conflict between Indians and Whites. However, in actual fact the lines of cleavage were far from clearcut.

3.1. The Rebels' Adversaries

The Maya-speaking lower class in the north and west of the peninsula did, in general, not support the rebels. In these regions the state had far more possibilities to control the population than in the rest of Yucatán due to the greater number of roads and the stronger presence of governmental institutions as well as military units. In view of local power relations and attracted by material incentives in these regions many Indians decided to fight for the government.³⁹ They were rewarded with the honorific title of *hidalgo* referring to the hierarchy of status in the colonial period where this term had been employed for a certain class of Indian nobles. Besides this raise in status there were other important material incentives to fight the rebels. The government gave no pay for service except booty, but it promised to pay for the debts of those held in debt bondage. The *hidalgos* would receive the same pensions like other soldiers in case of disablement or death. Additionally, "loyal" Indians fighting until the end of the campaign and the reestablishment of peace in the peninsula would be exempted from the poll tax (*contribución personal*).⁴⁰

What is more, some Indians who fought against the rebels were rewarded with land grants of considerable size. Juan Chi, *cacique* of Hecelchakán, for example, received one square league, or 1,755.61 hectares.⁴¹ A decree from spring 1848 promised, besides the customary pensions, a quarter of a square league (438.90 hectares) of public lands to anyone who would fight against the rebels.⁴² In addition, Indians who fought the rebels on their own were promised a little less than 17 pesos for every prisoner they captured and presented to the authorities.⁴³

In 1848, for example, no less than 10,000 of the 25,000 men fighting the rebels were *hidalgos*.⁴⁴ Their duties were not, as some authors have argued⁴⁵, confined to auxiliary services (like the construction of entrenchments) but they frequently participated in combat.⁴⁶

³⁸Ancona [1879/80] 1978, III:485f; see also Carrillo y Ancona [1865b] 1950:66f; Ober 1887:42.

³⁹Cf. e.g. Julian Pisté et al. to secretaría general de gobierno, Homun, June 23, 1848, Boletín Oficial del Gobierno de Yucatán, July 6, 1848, box 8, file 588 and Notificaciones del título de hidalgos de los indígenas de Seybaplaya, March 31, 1850, box 12, file 937, both in AGECE, G, PY; Nómima de indígenas de este pueblo que se han presentado voluntariamente á tomar las armas, Tekanto, May 27, 1848, AGEY, PE, J, JP, box 69; RM, January 22, 1873:3. For an analysis of the motives of this group see Gabbert 1997b.

⁴⁰Cf. Se declara hidalgo y exento de la contribución personal a Felipe Cauich, January 14, 1848; Premios y recompensas en favor de los indígenas que contribuyan a reprimir la sublevacion, January 26, 1848; Decreto concediendo el título de hidalgos á los indígenas que concurrieron á la defensa de Tunkas, April 3, 1848; Decreto eximiendo á los que se expresan de la contribución personal, April, 27, 1848; Orden aprobando la organización de hidalgos para el servicio de campaña, May 27, 1848, all in APP III:173, 181f, 203f, 206-209.

⁴¹Cf. Se notifica que se comunica al ayuntamiento de Hecelchakán que se recompensa a Juan Chi con una legua de tierra para sus servicios prestados, Hecelchakán, June 6, 1848, AGECE, PY, G, box 7, file 551. Three hundred *mecates*, or about twelve hectares, was deemed the normal minimum to meet the needs of a nuclear family (cf. Farriss 1984:127).

⁴²Cf. Decreto concediendo premios a los que sirvan en la presente campaña contra los bárbaros, January 15, 1848, APP III:177f.

⁴³Cf. Amnistía y penas de los sublevados que no se acojan a ella, February 6, 1848, APP III:186f.

⁴⁴See Carrillo y Ancona [1871] 1988:68.

Table 1: Members of the National Guard⁴⁷

Place	Year	Total	Maya Surnames
Tenabo	1869	174	116 (66.67%)
Iturbide	1869	49	15 (30.61%)
Acanceh	1872	177	130 (73.45%)
Bolonchén	1873	301	168 (55.81%)
Mérida	1879	92	40 (43.48%)
Cozumel	1883	54	9 (16.67%)
Hunucmá	1884	41	33 (80.49%)
Total		888	511 (57.55%)

The participation of Indians in the fighting against the rebels was by no means restricted to the first years of the conflict. It is true that for certain periods Indians were exempted from compulsory military service.⁴⁸ It is, however, not completely clear for how long these exemptions were effective. At all events there are numerous documents proving that Indians had to perform military service in the 1850s and 1860s.⁴⁹ Since 1868 there were no special regulations for Indians in the laws on the National Guard.⁵⁰ Table 1 shows the composition of several National Guard units from different towns between 1869 and 1884. These data are not derived from a statistically representative sample. However, they demonstrate that people bearing a Maya surname made up an important part of the National Guard units who fought

⁴⁵Cf. e.g. Molina Solís 1927, II:118.

⁴⁶Cf. e.g. Manuel Cepeda Peraza to governor of state, Valladolid, June 29, 1858, GS, July 2, 1858:1; Pedro Acereto to governor, Valladolid, March 9, 1860, EC, March 12, 1860:1; Juan Pino Muñoz, Batallón de G.N. "Independiente" to governor, Tenabo, February 1, 1869, AGECE, AH, G, AM, box 2; Bojorquez Urzaiz 1977:19f; Dumond 1997:212, 233, 315. After they had made peace with the government in the 1850s several groups of pacified rebels also fought actively against their former allies (cf. e.g. Itinerario de la marcha de las tropas sobre los indios bárbaros, Diego Peniche, Pueblo de Dolores en Isla Mujeres, August 19, 1872, RP, August 28, 1872:1; Jose A. Aguilar to Revista de Mérida, Valladolid, January 18, 1873, RM, January 22, 1873:3; Anonymous [1866] 1997:99; Dumond 1997:216f).

⁴⁷Sources: Juan Pino Muñoz, Batallón de G.N. "Independiente" to governor of state, Tenabo, February 1, 1869 [companies 1 and 2] and Lista para la revista de comisario ..., Zoylo M. Baqueiro, Iturbide, March 14, 1869 both in AGECE, AH, G, AM, box 2; Lista general de los CC. que han sido inscritos en la G.N. y deben formar el Batallón Union, J.Y. Villafañá, Bolonchen, May 31, 1873, AGECE, AH, G, AM, box 6; Batallón 1° número 9° G.N. del partido de Acanceh. Relacion de las altas ocurridas en este batallón, Agustín Gómez, Cuzamá, February 27, 1872, RP, March 6, 1872:1f; Jefatura política de Mérida, Relacion de los individuos que con esta fecha marcharán á las Colonias del Centro al servicio de las armas, O. Mendoza, Mérida, March 1, 1879, RP, March 5, 1879:2f; Lista nominal de la fuerza alistada para el servicio, Luciano Piña, Cozumel, July 1, 1883 and Relacion de los CC. que marchan á las Colonias del Sur, á prestar su servicio de GN durante los meses de Julio y Agosto del presente año, Angel R. Rosado, Hunucmá, June 27, 1884, both in AGEY, PE, M, Correspondencia Jefatura política, Policía militar.

⁴⁸Cf. Ley restableciendo y reglamentando las antiguas leyes para el régimen de los indios, August 27, 1847 and Nueva organización de la milicia local bajo el nombre de guardia nacional, November 8, 1849, both in APP I:54; III:151, 284.

⁴⁹Cf. e.g. Decreto imponiendo el deber a todo yucateco de inscribirse en la guardia nacional, Mérida, February 26, 1851; Orden facultando ampliamente a los jefes políticos para procurar el aumento de las guardias nacionales, Mérida, November 2, 1852 and Bando sobre indígenas hidalgos que deserten de la campaña, Mérida, March 27, 1855, all in García y García 1865b:30f, 36, 270-272, 398; Lista de los Sres. jefes, oficiales y tropa que recuperaron esta ciudad del poder de los bárbaros el 15 de septiembre último ..., Anselmo Duarte and Jacinto Escalante, Tekax, October 31, 1857, GS, February 2, 1858:1f; Lista nominal de los individuos que concurrieron á la funcion de armas el 28 del mes próximo pasado, Pedro Nestor Erosa, Dzitas, September 1, 1862, EN, September 5, 1862:2; Lista de los individuos de tropa de la compañía de Hopelchen ..., Bolonchenticul, September 29, 1862, EP, October 3, 1862:1.

⁵⁰See Ley que reforma la orgánica y reglamentaria de la Guardia Nacional, February 12, 1868, EP, March 20, 1868:1.

against the rebels. This participation in the fighting was not reduced to single regions nor to a specific point in time. Beyond that, people with Maya surnames did not only serve as enlisted men but some of them were sergeants or officers.⁵¹

3.2. The Rebels

To call the rebels Maya or Indians is only partly acceptable. Indeed, the rank and file of the movement were mainly members of the Maya-speaking lower class (especially the free peasants of the borderlands). However, the important role of non-Indians (*vecinos*) has been neglected in most treatments of the rebels.⁵²

The presence of *vecinos* must have been of considerable importance since a decree from June 1848 established the death penalty for all non-Indians found among the rebels.⁵³ Moreover, desertion to the rebels was widespread among the government troops.⁵⁴ Even a considerable part of the rebel leaders was not Indian. In a list of the most important leaders 18 (23 percent) of the 78 individuals named did not have a Maya surname.⁵⁵ Even José María Barrera, the founder of the cult of the Speaking Cross, which since 1850 was the most important ideological support of the rebels was considered as White or mestizo by contemporaries.⁵⁶ As late as 1853 the presence of non-Indians among the rebels was of such an importance that a peace treaty between the government of Yucatán and a rebel group, since then called the "Peaceful of the South" (*pacíficos del sur*), dedicated a special paragraph to the non-Indians granting

⁵¹Cf. e.g. Diario de la columna de operaciones ..., Antonio Calderon de Jumilla, Valladolid, February 16, 1871, RP, February 22, 1871:3; Relacion de los CC. Jefes y Oficiales del 5°, 6° y 7° Batallones G.N. del Estado ..., A.C. de Jumilla, Valladolid, July 13, 1871, RP, July 20, 1871:2.

⁵²For examples of this see Buisson 1978:10 or Bracamonte y Sosa 1994:115-146. Exceptions are Betancourt Pérez and Sierra Villarreal 1989 and Reed 1997.

⁵³See Penas de las personas que sean aprehendidas entre los indios sublevados, June 5, 1848, APP III:210f. For the presence of non-Indians among the rebels cf. also Ultima correspondencia de Florentino Chan y Venancio Pec ..., January 24, 1850, Baqueiro [1878-87] 1990, III:371f; Baqueiro [1878-87] 1990, II:17, 156, 163, 167, 283; III:28, 65; IV:31; RY, 1849, II:70f; Anonymous [1866] 1997:63; Ancona [1879/80] 1978, IV:181, 185, 263; Berzunza Pinto 1965:116f; Chi Poot 1982:264; Lapointe 1983:93; Dumond 1997:123, 214.

⁵⁴Cf. e.g. Cuaderno copiador de comunicaciones dirigidos por el comandante de Bacalar, Don Isidro González al comandante General del Estado, Don Rómulo Díaz de la Vega, Bacalar, February 28, 1851, CAIHDY, M, XLIV, 021; J.D. Sosa to Santiago Méndez, Tekax, January 31, 1848; Eulogio Rosado to Santiago Méndez, Peto, February 1, 1848; J.D. Sosa to Santiago Méndez, Peto, February 1, 1848; J.D. Sosa to Santiago Méndez, Tekax, February 28, 1848, all in Baqueiro [1878-87] 1990, II:286, 288, 290f, 304; Parte de la tropa se une a los mayas, Mérida, March 25, 1851, Reina 1980:405; M. Barbachano: Sobre la última correría de los bárbaros, EC, September 11, 1861:4; Orden mandando la aprehension de los desertores de la guardia nacional, Mérida, October 21, 1851, García y García 1865b:137; Anonymous [1866] 1997:102.

⁵⁵Cf. Relación de los principales caudillos de los bárbaros ..., n.d. Reina 1980:415f. For the presence of non-Indians among the rebel leaders cf. also Relación nominal de los capitanes indígenas, April 4, 1850, Reina 1980:402-404; Línea del Sur, cuartel de Peto, relacion de los vecinos que existen prisioneros en el campo de Chan Santa Cruz, José María Heredia y Peon, Peto, August 22, 1862, EN, August 27, 1862:2; Noticia que emite el C. Anastasio Duran á esta jefatura, de su prision en Tunkas por los indios bárbaros ..., N. Novelo, Peto, August 26, EP, September 12, 1862:4; E. Burke, magistrate of the northern district, to colonial secretary, Corosal, April 4, 1864, in Edwin Adolphus, acting private secretary to José María Martínez, consul of Mexico, NE, April 25, 1864:3; Seccion de operaciones sobre los indios bárbaros, comandante en jefe, Nicolas Urcelay, to general en Jefe de la Brigada de operaciones sobre Yucatan, pueblo de Dolores, en Isla Mujeres, August 19, 1872, RP, August 26, 1872:1; Línea de Oriente, Comandancia militar, Nicolas Aguilar, to governor of state, Valladolid, May 24, 1873, RP, May 27, 1873:2; Jefatura política de Peto, Rafael A. Perez, to governor of state, Peto, December 11, 1874, RP, December 16, 1874:2; Declaración de Estéban Cen, RP, April 16, 1879:2; Alderre 1869:74; Ancona [1879/80] 1978, IV:291, 296; Reed 1964:287f and 1997.

⁵⁶Cf. RY, 1849, II:70f; Reed 1964:287; Bricker 1981:108.

them the same guarantees conceded to the Indians.⁵⁷ Evidence for the presence of non-Indians among the rebels is also given by a description of the "Indian race of Yucatán" by bishop Carrillo y Ancona. He wrote in 1865 that:

deserters from the government's troops, runaway debt peons, evildoers and every sort of bad and debauched people of the different races, like Indians, Whites, Negroes, and Mulattoes" had found refuge among the rebels.⁵⁸

Considering the exposed data it seems highly doubtful that racist attitudes were generally held among the rebels.⁵⁹ An interpretation of the conflict in racial terms, in contrast, was typical for contemporary elite intellectuals and politicians. Many of them were influenced by early currents of anthropology dominated by racial determinism. A racial interpretation allowed them to divert attention from the social origins of the rebellion and the demands for political and economic reforms formulated by rebel leaders in the first phase of the conflict.⁶⁰

The written expressions of the rebels do not support the thesis of a racial war either. In the surviving correspondence, written in Maya, the rebels most frequently employed the ethnically neutral term enemies (*enemigo'o'b*) to designate their adversaries. Even the occasional use of *ts'ulo'b* does not necessarily support an ethnic interpretation.⁶¹ This term had many different meanings and cannot be simply translated as White or Spaniard as is frequently done in the literature.⁶² As has already been mentioned, it alludes to differences in lifestyle and status and, especially, expresses the social distance to the speaker. In most cases the rebels called themselves *cristiano'o'b* (Christians), *otsilo'o'b* (poor), or *masewalo'b*.⁶³ *Kruso'b* (the crosses), as the rebels are frequently called, appears only rarely.⁶⁴ These terms referred to religious ties and a certain social position. *Masewal* was a designation for the common people and, at least for the moment, not an ethnic category.⁶⁵

4. The Victims

The Caste War was characterized by extreme acts of violence committed by both parties. The settlements of rebel groups in the southeastern part of the peninsula were repeatedly attacked and

⁵⁷ See Acuerdo de paz entre el gobierno del estado de Yucatán y los indígenas sublevados del sur, Belize, September 16, 1853, Bracamonte y Sosa 1994:232 and Anonymous [1866] 1997:98f; cf. also Comunicación original del Srío. Gral. de Gobierno D. Francisco Martínez de Arredondo al Sr. Cura José Canuto Vela, dándole instrucciones sobre su comisión, Mérida, August 4, 1851, Chi Poot 1982:274-276; Indulto a todos sublevados que se sometían a la obediencia del gobierno, February 2, 1850, APP III:315; Gregorio Canton and Eduardo López to general Vega, Belize, September 17, 1853, Ancona [1879/80] 1978, IV, appendix XXIX.

⁵⁸ Carrillo y Ancona [1865b] 1950:67.

⁵⁹ Nevertheless, racist motives of certain individuals cannot be completely excluded. One example might be the rebel leader Venancio Puc blamed for the killing of numerous prisoners (cf. Reed 1964:170f and 1997:74f).

⁶⁰ See Gabbert n.d. and 1999:122-126.

⁶¹ For the use of these terms cf. e.g. Jacinto Pat to Felipe Rosado, Peto, April 6, 1848; Florentino Chan to Calistro Yam, Xbohchen, April 6, 1850; Pablo Balan to José Tun Canton, Xcanil Akal, May 13, 1853, all in Chi Poot 1982:230, 240, 243; Eusebio Aké to Paulino Pech, Uayma, December 27, 1849, Quintal Martín 1992:59; Carta de Florentino Chan a sus militares de Chemax, Mahas, July 19, 1850, CAIHDY, M, XLII, 011; Sullivan 1989:118.

⁶² Cf. e.g. Bricker 1981:187-218; Quintal Martín 1992:*passim*.

⁶³ Cf. e.g. Proclamation of Juan de la Cruz, Bricker 1981:188-207; Libro sagrado, Chi Poot 1982:277-294; Juan de la Cruz, Chan Santa Cruz, February 1, 1850, Quintal Martín 1992:68.

⁶⁴ Cf. Libro Sagrado, March 15, 1903, Chi Poot 1982:285; A. Dzul, R. Pec, and A. Chi to governor, January 8, 1888, in R.T. Goldsworthy confidential dispatch, January 26, 1888, Colonial Office, 123/189, Dumond 1997:359.

⁶⁵ Cf. also Dumond 1997:123f; Gabbert 1999:92, 137.

burned to the ground by government troops.⁶⁶ Captured rebels were sometimes killed on the spot.⁶⁷ In Tekax in 1848 some rebels were caught in the second story of a building. Yucatec officers swung each by feet and arms and threw them onto the bayonets of soldiers in the plaza.⁶⁸

The rebels, on their part, raided towns, villages, hamlets, and haciendas in the area controlled by the government. Money, valuables, and goods were taken, the inhabitants sometimes killed or abducted in captivity.⁶⁹ The victims of rebel attacks were not only people categorized as White or mestizo (*vecinos*) but also many Indians who can be identified by their Maya surnames. This is true for the prisoners, many of them were forced to work on the sugar ranches of rebel leaders.⁷⁰ It does also apply to the numerous people injured or killed during rebel attacks, on their way to the area hold by the insurgents or later in the rebel villages.⁷¹ The attack on a ranch in the district of Peto named San Pedro in May 1853 is a case in point. An Indian servant later reported that the rebels had taken a number of prisoners. Some of them were killed during the retreat: "They also killed an Indian women since she could not walk for being pregnant".⁷²

⁶⁶Cf. e.g. Itinerario de la marcha de las tropas sobre los indios bárbaros, Diego Peniche, Pueblo de Dolores en Isla Mujeres, August 19, 1872, RP, August 28, 1872:1.

⁶⁷Cf. e.g. Jefatura política del partido de Espita, Dionisio Peniche, to governor of state, Espita, September 29, 1862, EN, October 1, 1862:1.

⁶⁸See Baqueiro [1878-87] 1990, III:22f; Dumond 1997:451f note 5.

⁶⁹Cf. e.g. M. Barbachano: Sobre la última correría de los bárbaros, EC, September 11, 1861:3f; Jefatura política del partido de Espita, S. Pérez Virgilio, to governor of state, Espita, August 29, 1862, EN, September 1, 1862:1.

⁷⁰Cf. e.g. Relacion de las personas que fueron llevadas por los indios rebeldes al invadir las rancherías de Kaua y Uayma, de este partido, el día 12 del actual y de los efectos que tambien se llevaron, RP, January 29, 1873:2f; Sullivan 1997, I:5-7.

⁷¹Cf. e.g. Nómina de las personas de ámbos sexos que fueron sacrificadas por los bárbaros en la derrota de Bacalar al 21 de febrero ..., Punta Consejo, March 2, 1858, GS, March 31, 1858:1; Línea del Sur, cuartel de Peto, relacion de los vecinos que existen prisioneros en el campo de Chan Santa Cruz, José María Heredia y Peon, Peto, August 22, 1862, EN, August 27, 1862:2.

⁷²Elogio Rosado, to governor of state, Peto, May 17, 1853, AGEY, PE, G, M.

Table 2: Victims of Rebel Raids, 1858-1879⁷³

Place	Number of Victims		Sex
	Total	Maya	
rancho Xnojbukun (Valladolid)	31	6	m,f
Peto	60	10	m,f
Xocen	2	2	m
Tzucacab	27	12	m,f
Sacalaca	44	8	m,f
rancho Kopché	3	3	m
rancho Santa Lucia	3	3	m
rancho San Pedro	17	1	m,f
Kanxoc	3	3	m
Chichimila	8	8	m,f
rancho Kakalná et al.	74	30	m,f
rancho Balché et al.	9	8	m,f
rancho Katbe	5	3	m
Total	286	97	

More than 40 percent (30 of 74) of the people killed or injured in 1864 during rebel attacks on several settlements in the district of Peto bore Maya surnames. Almost 15 percent (11) of the victims were female.⁷⁴ Table 2 presents data on the number and social composition of the victims of rebel attacks on several settlements in Yucatán between 1858 and 1879. Almost 34 percent of the victims can be identified as Indians by their surnames.

As frequent victims of rebel attacks people bearing Maya surnames also received relief payments from the government. After Tekax had been sacked in September 1857 almost 900 of the town's inhabitants received financial aid. Almost 25 percent of the beneficiaries had Maya surnames.⁷⁵

5. War and Ethnogenesis - The *Kruso'b* of Quintana Roo

Around 1853 the most intense fighting had ceased. The rebels had been forced to retreat to the isolated eastern and southern parts of the peninsula. In the same year a part of the rebels in the central South (among others in Chichanhá, Icaiché, Lochhá, Macanché, Mesapich, and Xkanhá) made peace with the

⁷³Sources: Relacion que manifiesta los muertos y heridos que tuvo la expresada en el asalto dado por los indios sublevados á esta plaza hoy dia de la fecha, José Cepeda, Valladolid, April 4, 1858, GS, April 5, 1858:2; Relacion circunstanciada de los individuos de la expresada que han sido muertos ó heridos en la accion dada á los bárbaros en la mañana de este dia, Felipe Pren, Peto, August 21, 1858, GS, August 25, 1858:2; Brigada Acereto, comandancia en jefe, P. Acereto, to governor of state, Valladolid, July 20, 1860, EC, July 25, 1860:1; Relacion de los muertos y heridos en Tzucacab, Peto, August 1, 1860, EC, August 8, 1860:1; Relacion de las personas que fueron sacrificadas en la entrada de los bárbaros en el canton de Sacalaca el dia 1.º del presente mes, A. Sandoval, Peto, July 4, 1861, EC, July 8, 1861:2; Subprefectura de Valladolid, F.A. Canton to Prefecto del Departamento, Valladolid, February 12, 1864, NE, February 15, 1864:1; Lista de los individuos que fueron asesinados por los indios sublevados el 16 del corriente, Ramon Arzamendi, Chichimilá, October 18, 1864, NE, October 21, 1864:2; Relacion de los muertos y heridos hechos por los indios sublevados en los ranchos Kakalná, Thuul y el pueblo de Tzucacab, en el dia de ayer, Juan, I. Montalvo, Peto, November 29, 1864, NE, December 3, 1864:4; Comandancia en jefe de la línea del Oriente, Francisco Canton, Valladolid, January 18, 1873, RM, January 26, 1873:1f; Elogio Rosado to governor of state, Peto, May 17, 1853, AGEY, PE, G, M; Relacion de los muertos, heridos y prisioneros que hicieron los indios sublevados en los ranchos Balché, San José y Kancabchen, Sabino Piña, Peto, July 27, 1874, RP, July 31, 1874:1; Relacion de los individuos muertos y heridos que se encontraron en el rancho Katbé ... , J.D. Capetillo, Tekax, February 12, 1879, RP, February 14, 1879:2f.

⁷⁴Cf. NE, December 3, 1864:3.

⁷⁵Cf. several lists in GS, January 22, January 25, February 1, and February 2, 1858.

government. These *pacíficos del sur* preserved de facto autonomy until the end of the 19th century. Later they became more and more integrated into the state of Campeche due to intensified commercial and administrative relations as well as the construction of roads. In the 20th century they were assimilated to the neighboring population and numerous immigrants from other parts of the peninsula who entered the region to work in the collection of chicle, the basis for chewing gum. Thus, they disappeared as a distinguishable group.⁷⁶

In contrast to the *pacíficos* the so-called *sublevados bravos* ("wild rebels") continued fighting. The descendants of the rebels preserved de facto political autonomy up to the first decades of the 20th century. Even in the 1930s the influence of the Mexican state in the rebel area was small.⁷⁷ This political independence was not the outcome of developed concepts of autonomy but mainly resulted from the failure of all efforts to settle the conflict peacefully during the 19th century. Besides, the sugar industry in the interior borderlands which had prospered in the 1840s had decayed due to the war. Thus, the economic center of the peninsula shifted to the North and West and henequén cultivation became the mainstay of the economy. These were areas not threatened by raids of the rebels. Consequently, the interest of the Yucatecan elite to conquer the area held by the rebels remained limited for several decades. Nevertheless, the *sublevados bravos* had to face attacks by government forces from time to time.

The continued repression by the Yucatecan troops which attacked their settlements and destroyed their fields was an important factor in the development of an ethnic consciousness among the rebels and their descendants. The common fight against the government provided an important issue for ideological identification for the inhabitants of different villages and the followers of different leaders.

The development of the religious cult of the Speaking Cross was another important element fostering. It came into being in 1850 when the rebels were in a desperate situation.⁷⁸ The cult did not only provide them with an interpretation of their destiny but also allowed the development of military and social structures which integrated different local groups. Thus, for example, a type of fraternity called companies emerged to which, up to this day, the inhabitants of the *kruso'b* settlements belong.⁷⁹

Masewalo'b is till today the most frequently used self-identification among the descendants of the rebels.⁸⁰ The membership to this group is determined by shared way of life independent from descent. This is demonstrated by the fact that the descendants of Chinese contract laborers who had fled from Belize, Black lumbermen, and Ladino prisoners were all assimilated into the group. At the end of the 19th century, for example, a visitor to Chunculché, a settlement of *sublevados bravos*, found:

⁷⁶For the *pacíficos* see Sapper 1895; Dumond 1977 and 1997:262-287, 333-350, 382-386, 401-404; Ramayo Lanz n.d. and 1997; Schüren n.d.; Maler [1886-93] 1997:243-267. A northern group of rebels in Kantunil which had signed a peace treaty with the government in 1859 (*pacíficos del norte*) had a similar development (cf. Moßbrucker 1998).

⁷⁷Cf. e.g. Gann 1924:30f; Adrian 1924:235. For the history of the independent polities of the *sublevados bravos* see Villa Rojas 1945; Reed 1964:159-269; Jones 1974; Dumond 1977, 1985 and 1997. For developments in this region after the Mexican state extended its influence see Bartolomé and Barabas 1977; Villa Rojas 1962 and 1977; Sullivan 1984 and 1989; Hostettler 1996; Moßbrucker 1998.

⁷⁸See Reed 1964:132-145, 199-228; Bricker 1981:102-118.

⁷⁹Until the end of the Caste War the companies fulfilled largely military functions. Thus, the membership of women has been mainly passive. This is shown, for example, by the fact that women change their membership to the company of their husband when marrying. What is more, they are excluded from the performance of important ceremonies. For the cult of the Speaking Cross and the companies see Villa Rojas 1945:91-94; Bartolomé and Barabas 1977:33-38, 59f; Sullivan 1984:76-90; Grube 1990.

⁸⁰See Redfield 1941:60; Villa Rojas 1945:95; Bartolomé and Barabas 1977:117; Barabas 1979:136; Sullivan 1984:91; Kubitzki 1997:32.

... several purely white people, some with fair hair. These people speak only the Indian language - 'Maya' - and in dress and manner, and so far as I could judge, in ideas, are exactly the same as the Indians by whom they were surrounded.⁸¹

Describing the situation in the 1930s Villa Rojas also stressed the overriding role the shared way of life played in determining membership in the in-group:

In classifying people as *mazehual*, the natives do not take into account differences in surname, as between Spanish and Maya. Thus, the descendants of Whites who had lived in Quintana Roo for three generations as members of the native group and who therefore show no difference in custom, language, or costume, are considered as *mazehuals*; and this despite the fact that in some cases there is not only the difference of surname but an obvious difference in physical type.⁸²

Up to the present *kruso'b* dissociate themselves from the Ladinos as well as, although less rigidly, from the Maya-speaking population of the states of Yucatán and Campeche. The foundations for this are the historical experience of the fighting against the government's troops (which consisted, as we have seen of both, Ladinos as well as Maya speakers), the cult of the Speaking Cross, and the organization into companies.⁸³

6. Conclusion

The Yucatán material hints at several important methodological generalisations in relation to the study of ethnicity.⁸⁴ Firstly, ethnicity is strongly related to processes of social classification or categorization. It is of the utmost importance to keep analytically separate social *categories* present in a specific society, *groups* or organizations based on such categories, and the *individuals* using categories in daily interaction. It would be erroneous to conclude from the existence of a category denoting a certain aggregate of individuals that there necessarily must exist social cohesion, solidarity, and group consciousness within that population.⁸⁵

In the colonial period the terms *indio* or *masewal* were generally related to a legally defined status category. The primary social identification of the *indios* or *masewalo'b* had been the community (*kah*) and the patronym group (*ch'ibal*).⁸⁶ During the 19th century both terms also referred to a status category and not to an ethnic community in the west and northwest of the peninsula. Primary loyalty remained bound to the village or hacienda.⁸⁷ It was only among the rebels in what today is Quintana Roo that an ethnic consciousness developed. This, however, excluded the Maya-speakers of the rest of the peninsula. For the majority of this population to identify with the rebels was impossible since they constantly fought against them or were affected by their assaults on settlements in the territory controlled by the government.

⁸¹ Miller 1889:28; cf. also Gann 1926:246f; Villa Rojas 1945:48.

⁸² Villa Rojas 1945:95; see also Bartolomé and Barabas 1977:117.

⁸³ Cf. Villa Rojas 1945:95; Bartolomé and Barabas 1977:117f; Sullivan 1984:90-92; 1989:45, 47, 219f; Moßbrucker 1993:44-50; Kubitzki 1997:32, 35, 41.

⁸⁴ As there is no agreement over the usage of the term, a definition is necessary. Ethnicity 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 which include individuals of both sexes and all age groups using (socially constructed) origin as its primary reference (this definition builds on Eriksen 1993:4 and Levine 1999:168). See Gabbert (1992:31-37) for a more extended discussion of the term and a typology of ethnic communities.

⁸⁵ See Gabbert 1992:8, 33-37; 1993:292-294, 303-305.

⁸⁶ See Farriss 1984: 156f, 167f; Restall 1995:61 and 1997:15-18.

⁸⁷ This is indicated, among others, by the frequent conflicts between communities. Cf. Rugeley 1996:34, 161; for the period after the Mexican revolution see Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934:26f, 221-224; Brown 1998; Moßbrucker 1998:20f, 269.

Secondly, the meaning of social categories can only be elucidated by taking as a starting point not ethnic communities or "peoples" but the use individuals make of certain terms in everyday interaction. In doing this, it has to be remembered that the use and meaning of categories may change in accordance to whom is using them and to whom they refer. As Bourdieu has noted, the everyday usage of social categories does not aim at logical coherence, the development of a system of classifications that is free from contradictions, but obeys the "'logic' of partisanship".⁸⁸ It is itself part of social conflicts. Thus, self-identification and ascription by others are not indissolubly linked to a person as is suggested by the notion of "ethnic identity". Frequently, they do not coincide.

During the 19th century the Maya surname remained the only reliable indicator of membership in the legal and administrative category *indio*. In everyday interaction other features, like phenotype, dress, language, and the occupation as farm hand frequently sufficed to be considered and treated as an Indian. The circle of persons called *indio* was thus not unequivocally determined.

The Spanish-speaking urban elite considered the vast majority of peasants, farm hands and their families Indians. The *vecinos* in the interior, in contrast, who frequently spoke nothing but Maya, referred to people legally so defined, or people easily identifiable by a Maya patronym, as Indians when trying to claim a higher social status.⁸⁹ The term *masewal* did not denote a strictly bounded circle of individuals either but was filled differently according to social position and intentions of the speaker. Till today, Indian or Maya do not stand for a more or less precisely defined group but their meaning is highly dependent on the changing contexts of their usage (when, where and by whom they are used).⁹⁰ This relativity of ascription helps to understand why no consciousness of community developed encompassing all people categorized as Indians or *masewal'ob*.

The Caste War was thus not the war of liberation of an already existing ethnic group against their oppressors. It began as a civil war that pitted factions against each other which consisted both of *vecinos* and *indios*. However, in their isolated refuge area in what today is central Quintana Roo one of these factions (the rebels) became a Maya-speaking ethnic community integrating people of diverse ancestry. Maya-speakers in the rest of the Yucatán Peninsula, however, remained a cultural category without an encompassing group consciousness.

⁸⁸Bourdieu 1987:742.

⁸⁹This may be inferred from material presented by Redfield 1941:66-73, 375-377) and data collected during my field work in the municipality of Hopelchén, Campeche between 1993 and 1998 (Fieldnotes, Hopelchén, January 11, 1995).

⁹⁰Cf. Gabbert 1997a and 1999:203-212.

SOURCES AND SECONDARY LITERATURE**Archives**

AGEC	Archivo General del Estado de Campeche, Campeche
	AH Archivo Histórico
	AM Asuntos Militares
	CP Censos y Padrones
	G Gobernación
	P Padrones
	PY Período Yucateco, 1820-1857
AGEY	Archivo General del Estado de Yucatán, Mérida
	CP Censos y Padrones
	G Gobernación
	J Justicia
	JP Juzgados de Paz
	M Milicia
	P Población
	PE Poder Ejecutivo
	RC Registro Civil
CAIHDY	Centro de Apoyo a la Investigación Histórica de Yucatán, Mérida
	M Manuscritos
RCHO	Registro Civil de Hopelchén, Hopelchén

Printed Sources

APP	Colección de leyes, decretos y órdenes o acuerdos de tendencia general del poder legislativo del estado libre y soberano de Yucatán [cited numbers follow pages in Aznar Pérez & Pedrera 1849-51].
DAME	Documentos del Archivo de la Mitra Emeritense [cited numbers follow pages in Dumond and Dumond 1982].

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EC	<i>El Constitucional</i> , Mérida
EN	<i>El Espíritu Nacional</i> , Mérida
EP	<i>El Espíritu Público</i> , Campeche
GS	<i>Las Garantías Sociales</i> , Mérida
LN	<i>La Nueva Era</i> , Campeche
NE	<i>La Nueva Epoca</i> , Mérida
PE	<i>Por Esto!</i> , Mérida
RM	<i>Revista de Mérida</i> , Mérida
RP	<i>La Razón del Pueblo</i> , Mérida
RY	<i>Revista Yucateca</i> , Mérida

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