

# The Caste War and the Maya of Yucatan

Dr. Angel Cal

## Factors Contributing to the Onset of the Caste War

It was only because of the crazy times, on account of the crazy priests that sadness came to us ... Because the "good Christians" arrived here with the true God but that was the beginning of our misery, the beginning of tribute ... the beginning of our suffering.<sup>1</sup>

Following the conquest, the Maya were reduced to subjects. During the remainder of the 1500s, conquest was followed by forced *relocation*<sup>2</sup> to settlements, existing and new, that were established so that *encomenderos* could easily collect their tribute, the authorities could easily recruit them to perform "voluntary" labor and missionaries could easily reach them to indoctrinate their children and to collect their compulsory religious offerings.

As if they needed more misery, European diseases such as small pox, influenza and measles continued to kill the Maya in large numbers. Periodic droughts accompanied the epidemics. Between 1549 and 1586, the Maya population of the north eastern part of the peninsula declined by 27 percent. They had to adjust to new, vicious and arrogant rulers who considered them as almost beasts of burden.



Spaniards torture Amerindians

The missionary campaign aimed at saving their souls for heaven brought more misery to the Maya. By 1560, several Maya had been assigned as *maestros cantores* (lay doctrine leaders) and teachers in smaller settlements, teaching children to read, write and sing in Spanish the hymns of the Catholic religion. By 1562, the Franciscans had established 12 monasteries and more than 200 settlements had a church and school with Maya teachers trained by the missionaries.

At Maní, discovery of human bones and Maya idols led to a special investigation conducted by the missionaries headed by Diego de Landa. The Maya were brought to "justice" for praying to their gods for rain and a good corn harvest. Under torture the accused confessed and implicated others. Guilty or not, everyone was tortured, the idols brought for destruction, and ancient Maya books for burning. Some 4,500 Maya from nine provinces were tortured, 158 died as a result and 13 committed suicide. The guilty were each administered 200 lashes on their bare back, the blood, pain and anguish making it a public spectacle.

<sup>1</sup> Chilam Balam de Chumayel. Cited in Antonio Canto López, *La Guerra de Castas en Yucatán*. Mérida, Ediciones de la Universidad de Yucatán, 1976, pp.88-89.

<sup>2</sup> Editors' note: Glossary at end of the essay.

The disclosure of human sacrifice further intensified the enquiry when Bishop Toral arrived in Mérida. Under torture the Maya revealed that children and men had been sacrificed to the Maya gods and that lay doctrine leaders and Maya chiefs were involved. Later Bishop Toral learned that Landa overused his authority and that the information gathered was false. Subsequently, the accused were freed on the payment of light fines. Many Maya fled their settlements to the forests of present day Quintana Roo; some may have reached as far south as Belize.

The Maya also learned that rebellion was a risky way to get out of oppression. In 1761 Jacinto Uc, known also as Jacinto Canek, declared at the village of Quisteil that it was time to overthrow the Spaniards. As a boy, Canek had spent some years at a Franciscan monastery in Mérida where he learned about the history of the conquest and the *Books of Chilam Balam*. He eventually became a baker after being thrown out of the monastery.

Canek convinced the Maya that he had special powers, could assemble more warriors, and could call upon the English to come to his aid. Canek was crowned king. The alarm was sounded when he intimidated a priest celebrating Mass. Canek continued preparing to resist the Spaniards.

The first attack came from the War Captain of the province with only ten men - no match for the Canek army; only one escaped. A Spanish force of 500 men attacked Quisteil and after three hours of bitter fighting, more than 600 Maya warriors were killed. The Spaniards entered the village and massacred everyone. The army followed the escaping rebels and massacred more people at nearby villages. Quisteil was burnt as a lesson to future rebellions. Canek and his 8 chiefs were hunted, captured and executed. He was first tortured, his bones broken with an iron bar and his flesh cut up in pieces, a punishment that lasted five hours. His body was burnt and his ashes thrown in the air. The Spaniards confiscated all firearms from the Maya throughout the Peninsula. The Maya, realizing that the Spaniards only accepted them as servile laborers and tribute payers, fled, some possibly reaching as far as Belize.

*Encomenderos* were worried about the Maya who ran away because in addition to tribute, they demanded free Maya labor. The Maya were required to pay taxes to the state and to "donate" their labor for construction and maintenance of roads and public buildings. The missionaries got their share. Initially contributions were on a voluntary basis but later tithes became compulsory. Added to this the Maya "voluntarily" worked a plot of land to contribute to the village's community chest, a fund used to pay "contributions" often required of the villages and to fund village *fiestas*.

The Spanish Crown realized that the *encomenderos* were too powerful and gradually eliminated this system by the 1780's. The Yucatan economy remained dependent on Maya labor. Next was the development of large *haciendas* involved in agriculture production for the local market or in cattle production; this too enslaved the Maya.

By the early 1800s, most of the good lands with *cenotes* (sink hole wells) were owned by the rich class. Water was scarce in the Yucatan Peninsula. To receive water, a single man worked every Monday for free and a married man cultivated a 2½ acre-*milpa* for the *hacienda*. Resident workers or *jornaleros* were paid a fixed wage plus a weekly ration of corn; however, they usually became indebted since this was not sufficient to feed their families and would often request an advance in salary (12 pesos yearly in 1830). This advance was also used to pay tithes to the church or the baptismal fee. Workers usually accumulated debts that could not be paid in a lifetime. Only those free from debts could obtain a certificate of clearance to work elsewhere.

After Mexican independence in 1821, Maya villages continued losing their communal lands. Vacant government lands were not available as the state began selling them to land speculators. Maya workers were enslaved. Each *hacienda* had its whipping post where "disobedient" workers were publicly punished. U.S. Consul Stevens observed in the late 1830s that punished workers "bear no malice; and when one of them is whipped and [hurting] under stripes, with tears in his eyes he makes a bow to the *mayordomo* and says, 'Buenas tardes, Señor'."<sup>3</sup>

With independence in 1821, Mexico stopped importing sugar from Cuba. A local sugarcane industry was developed in Yucatan. The change from the *haciendas* to sugarcane plantations had important effects on the Maya and is another factor that contributed to the Caste War.

The semi-desert lands of the north western part of the peninsula were unsuitable for sugarcane cultivation and sugarcane producers began moving east and south to more fertile land occupied by the so-called "free" Maya. These Maya had escaped from the *haciendas* or from established villages where they had to register and pay church and state taxes.

White Yucatecans blamed the Maya for Yucatan's underdevelopment and saw their removal from the fertile land as justified. From their point of view, traditional slash and burn farming destroyed the fertility of the land. The Maya of the *haciendas* were seen as lazy, dirty, distrustful and backward, prone to flee from "civilization" and to live as barbarians in the forest. The non-Maya population looked down on the Maya whom they regarded only as laborers and taxpayers. The popular saying that a Maya understands only through his back (that is, when beaten or whipped) illustrates the disregard most non-Maya people had for the original owners of the Yucatan Peninsula.



Yucateco punishes Maya worker

Politics in Yucatan just before and after Mexican independence was another major factor contributing to the start of the Caste War. There were two major political parties - the Conservatives and the Liberals. The Conservatives or monarchists supported the Spanish colonial system, its principles and values such as king, church and landed property. The Liberals stood for principles of freedom, equality, progress, and for the removal of any obstacle hindering development. In 1812 the Liberals won the approval of a liberal constitution.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Howard Cline, "The Aurora Yucateca and the Spirit of Enterprise in Yucatan, 1821-1847," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 1947, p.35.

(  
Mexi  
feder  
pufe  
Ana :  
war :  
Libel  
a bet  
decl:

Mér  
Carr  
dom  
offe  
harr  
auth  
had

and  
mes  
real  
ther  
arm  
exe

Ant  
Ay  
find  
four  
vill:  
rape

prol  
a fo  
ord

resp  
lead  
refu  
targ  
cash

Conservatives soon regained the advantage and important Liberals were sent to prison. But with Mexican Independence in 1821, the Liberals throughout Mexico regained power. They established a federal system of government in which each state had a large degree of power. Mexican Conservatives preferring a strong central government opposed the Liberals. When in 1835 Mexican President Santa Anna a federalist switched to the centralist camp, imposed a new sales tax and demanded soldiers for the war against the United States, the Liberals rebelled. The Mexican army defeated a Yucatan force. The Liberals supplied the Maya with weapons and promised reductions in their religious and state taxes and a better distribution of lands. With the Maya on their side, Yucatan drove out the Mexicans in 1840 and declared their independence for the time being.

Mérida-Campeche rivalry was another source of political conflict. With a higher Maya population, Mérida was more interested in agriculture while Campeche was more interested in trade. As a result, Campeche favored strong ties with Mexico because altogether the whole country represented a bigger domestic market. Yucatan rejoined Mexico in 1841 but broke away again in 1846. When Yucatan offered to rejoin Mexico in late 1846, Campeche decided to stay out, afraid that the United States would harm its trade. Campeche armed the Maya, promising land and reduced taxes. The Mérida based authorities tried to force re-unification. Soon, a civil war was underway. In the meantime, the Maya had obtained weapons, experience and leadership training in warfare.

## The Maya Strike Back: The Beginning of the Caste War

Campeche and Mérida both courted Maya support in the civil war supplying them with more arms and making the same unfulfilled promises of the past: reduced taxes and land. While the white and mestizo Yucatec were killing themselves the Maya turned their recently acquired weapons against their real enemies, the *Dzules* (bosses) white or mestizo who had victimized, abused, exploited and terrorized them for many generations. In January 1847, Bonifacio Novelo, a captain in the Campeche volunteer army ordered his Maya infantry to attack Valladolid. With 1,000 Maya troops, Novelo ordered the execution of the military chief of Valladolid. Campeche won.

Soon it was discovered that Maya leaders Jacinto Pat, Bonifacio Novelo, Cecilio Chi and Manuel Antonio Ay were plotting to kill or expel the white/mestizo bosses from the peninsula. Manuel Antonio Ay was caught with "evidence" and was executed. The troops sent to capture the other leaders failed to find them and in frustration attacked and destroyed Cecilio Chi's ranch, raped a girl and shot and killed four Maya "for aiding the conspiracy". Cecilio Chi sought revenge. On 30 July 1847 he attacked the village of Tepich and burnt it to the ground, killing 30 white/mestizo families, sparing only the girls for rape. Thus began the Caste War.

The government called on all men ages 16 to 60 years to report to military duty with their weapons, prohibited the sale of firearms to the Maya, stripping them of their constitutional rights. It re-established a forced religious contribution of 12 *reales* (8 *reales* equal one peso), banned the use of alcohol and ordered the transfer of those living in small villages to larger ones where they could be controlled.

The Yucatec army showed what to expect if captured. Prisoners were lined up and shot. In response, the Maya took no prisoners. More laws were passed against the Maya. Suspected village leaders were jailed, their posts taken up by *ladinos*. By this time, the Maya began to use guerilla warfare, refusing to fight in the open unless they had the overwhelming advantage. The Maya also selected their targets very carefully. They attacked isolated *haciendas* where they could collect valuables to turn into cash to buy arms in Belize.

While the Maya were on the offensive, the Campeche and Mérida factions continued their struggle.

Soon, the Cocóm Maya joined the revolt and attacked *ladino* ranches and villages taking no prisoners. With increased confidence, the Maya attacked key towns. The *dzules* were on the retreat as refugees poured in from the countryside for protection. Sugarcane plantations were set on fire and many *haciendas* burned with the records of the indebtedness of their former Maya *jornaleros* who joined the rebellion. The Maya split their forces into regional groups, each taking on key targets. Jacinto Pat commanded the troops near Peto while Cecilio Chi took on Valladolid. One after another, the Yucatec towns fell.

The Catholic bishop tried to convince the Maya to stop fighting. From Tabí, the Maya chiefs replied, "And now you remember that there is a True God? While you were murdering us, didn't you know that there is a True God? You were always recommending the name of God to us and you never believed in His name..." Jacinto Pat stated that taxes must be abolished, fees for baptism, marriage and other religious contributions be reduced to the same level as for the non-Maya, and the return of confiscated firearms. Even though the *dzules* agreed, neither side trusted the other to respect a compromise and the war continued.

Valladolid, one of the three principal white cities was evacuated on 19 March 1848. Over 10,000 people with supply and munitions left for Mérida, the Maya harassed them along the way. The Yucatec army seemed in danger of breaking up with reports of desertions and chaos among the troops defending the Hispanics. Yucatecan governor Santiago Méndez sent urgent messages to the United States, Britain and Spain for "powerful and effective help" in return for "domination and sovereignty" over Yucatan. He then resigned freeing himself from the shame of a possible Maya take over of the Yucatan Peninsula.

The Yucatec made another attempt at peace negotiations by offering to abolish state taxes and to reduce church fees. The Maya were to have the free use of their communal lands and vacant government land and those indebted were to be freed of the *haciendas*, Miguel Barbachano, the leader of the Mérida party was to be made governor for life and Pat was to be made governor of the Maya. The last article was intended to divide the Maya. Understandably, Cecilio Chi rejected the peace offer.

With Tekax abandoned, the southern Maya attacked the fort in Bacalar where the powerless Hispanic population had taken refuge. Offering to spare their lives if they surrendered, the Maya watched closely as the defeated Hispanics ran for Belize.

The English in Belize debated how to deal with the parties at war in Yucatan as they wanted to extend the cutting of mahogany and logwood to the Quintana Roo forests. A strike in their own backyard made them pause for in March 1848, Belize Maya attacked English mahogany camps on Irish Creek near Hill Bank, "with bows and arrows". A British military detachment sent to destroy the Maya arrived two weeks later and naturally, they could not find the attackers. The commanding officer concluded that the report was exaggerated.

Meanwhile, in northern Yucatan, matters were getting worse. The Maya were now in control of four fifths of the Peninsula excepting the cities of Mérida and Campeche and nearby villages. Refugees poured into Mérida increasing its population to 100,000 among them the old, the children, the sick, the wounded and the dying. The Hispanics began getting ready to evacuate Mérida and the peninsula to the Maya.

## Yucatec Forces Regroup and Recover Most of the Peninsula

The expected final assault on Mérida did not materialize. To this day the question remains unanswered. Why did the Maya not follow up on the *rare* opportunity to regain, if perhaps temporarily, *total*

control of the Peninsula? The best explanation given is that when it is time to plant, the individual Maya soldier reverts to his normal self: a *milpa* farmer. The Maya man knows that if he does not plant, his family could face starvation. Moreover, the Maya may not have been centrally organized since Maya fought under leaders from their own village. They may have also taken too long to plan *how* to invade Mérida and Campeche. As well, they might have had many casualties and disagreements among the chiefs.

In the end, the Maya waited too long. The quarrel between Yucatan and Mexico City was mended and Mexico began sending cash, troops and weapons. The Yucatec authorities wooed the Maya of the northwest by declaring them "*hidalgos*" (nobles), freeing them from taxes and erasing their *hacienda* debts if they agreed to support the government against the rebels. Many of them signed up. The Yucatan government confiscated church valuables for the war effort. Cuba sent rifles, artillery and supplies. New Orleans sent corn and money. United States mercenaries came to fight the Maya, but they suffered high casualties and many resigned.

There was violent disagreement among the Maya leadership. In December 1848, Cecilio Chi, one of the most unrelenting and uncompromising leaders was murdered. In September 1849, Venancio Pec (Chi's successor) and Florentino Chan broke away from Jacinto Pat and on 8 September 1849, Pec assassinated Pat. This weakened the Maya. As the Hispanic army advanced, they retreated. By the end of 1848, Yucatec forces had retaken Tihosuco and Valladolid and by May of 1849, Yucatan's 7<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Force supported by United States mercenaries had retaken Bacalar.

With control of Bacalar, Yucatec forces tried to stop the arms trade with the rebel Maya. This brought them into conflict with English timber companies operating on both sides of the Río Hondo. While that quarrel continued, the arms trade shifted to Ascensión Bay.

The Maya army was retreating to the 17,000 strong Yucatan Army. Maya prisoners were sold to Cuba as slaves for 25 pesos each. In November 1849, Maya leaders Venancio Pec and Florentino Chan met with Belize's Superintendent Charles Fancourt at Ascensión Bay to request support for independence from Mexico.

The war had taken its toll on human lives. Between the 1846 and 1850 census, there was a decline of 247,118 people. The hardest hit were the frontier areas of Valladolid and Tekax, which lost about 75 percent of their population. Most of the dead were Maya, but the war could not be brought to an end. Even if the Yucatec army could go anywhere it pleased, the Maya would melt away in the forest and regroup elsewhere. The Maya were not ready to accept defeat.



*Cecilio Chi leads attack*

## The Coming of the Talking Cross

The Maya kept up the fight. And it was at this time that José María Barrera found a wooden speaking cross at a place named Chan Santa Cruz. The Cross commanded the Maya to have no fear for as His chosen people He would lead them to victory. It ordered them to attack Kampocolché. They were defeated but their faith remained strong. They rebuilt Chan Santa Cruz and God began communicating with his downtrodden people from behind the altar in the church. Three Crosses said to be the daughters of the first Cross appeared at the Chan Santa Cruz capital of the People of the Cross, the *Cruzob*.

## The Maya Split: Santa Cruz Maya (Cruzob) Versus the Southern Maya

Hispanics called on priests to woo the southern Maya at Chichanhá, a major town just within the Campeche boundary. Flores Peten mayor, Modesto Méndez journeyed with a local priest to Chichanhá and within two days negotiated a peace agreement with Chief Angelino Itzá. *Cruzob* *patrón* Barrera attended the meeting but walked out. Instead, he invited Méndez to visit him at Chan Santa Cruz, an invitation tactfully refused. In due course, the *Cruzob* attacked Chichanhá, burning its buildings and taking Itzá and his chiefs prisoners to Chan Santa Cruz. The *Cruzob* -- Chichanhá civil war began.

José María Tzuc, Itzá's successor, appealed to the English in Belize to sponsor the signing of a peace treaty between Chichanhá and the Yucatec authorities. On 16 September 1853, the treaty was signed in Belize, co-signed by Superintendent Philip Wodehouse. It gave the southern Maya freedom to control their lands, to pay no state or church taxes, to retain their weapons, to be governed by their leaders, to obtain a pardon for acts committed against the Yucatan authorities and to maintain a 400 man army to defend themselves against the *Cruzob*.

By the end of 1852, north and central Yucatan had been retaken and the Maya had been driven into the Quintana Roo forests. Towns that bordered the forest and the settled areas of Yucatan were heavily protected. Many of the "free" villages had been broken up, their inhabitants relocated to safer towns with *ladino* chiefs and a church. The Yucatecs were tired of the war. It was expensive and dangerous, and there was no clear victory. It was suggested that the Maya be left alone to rot in the forest.

## The Cross Recovers and Goes on the Offensive

The Cholera epidemic of 1853 swept through Yucatan, killing many people. The Maya were not spared but they took advantage of the weakened position of the Yucatec armed forces to launch repeated raids deep into enemy lines. The Yucatec continued with their conspiracies that led to the renewal of fighting between the Mérida and the Campeche-based parties. Conspiracies between Conservatives and Liberals continued. Yucatec attacks on the Maya were aimed at their capital Chan Santa Cruz but did little damage as the Maya retreated into the forests at the signal of an immediate attack and burned huts were easily rebuilt. Maya successes did not translate into anything much either as they too were being held up by their faith in the Holy Cross and their determination not to surrender to execution or enslavement in Cuba. The war continued between the *Cruzob* and the state of Yucatan, supported by the government in Mexico City. Even so, victory was denied to the Yucatec government.

The non-*Cruzob* Maya of the north central and north western part of the peninsula returned to work for the *dzules* (bosses) while those in the south held on to their weapon and the peace agreement signed in Belize. Others fled to Belize and Peten while a few moved into hamlets deeper in the forest, but the

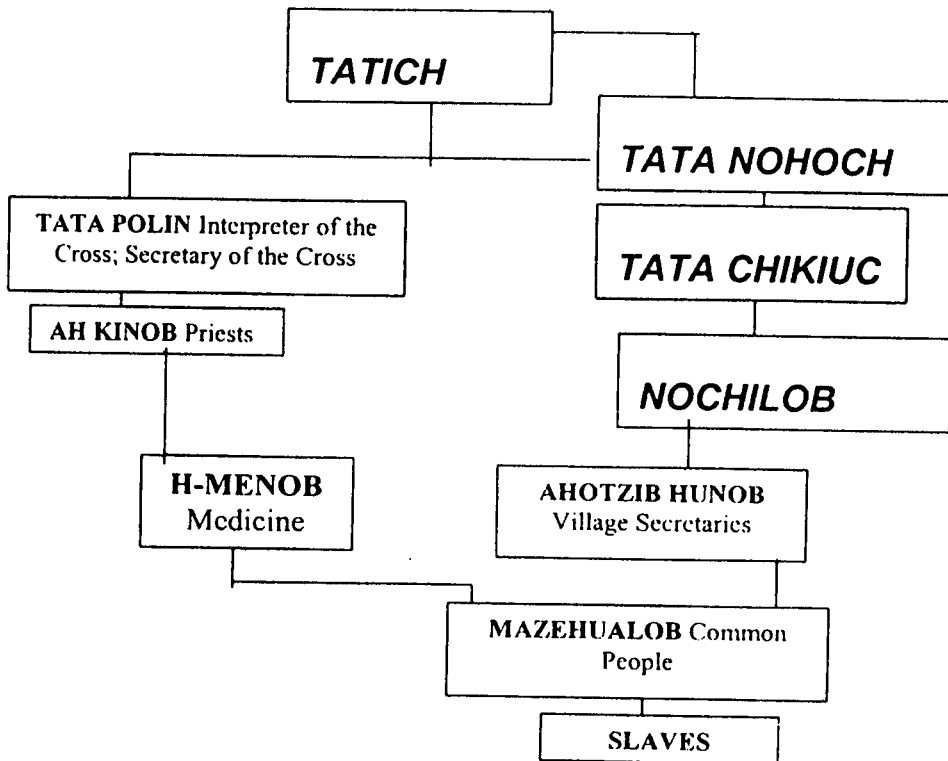
People of the Cross, hardened by their sacrifices kept on fighting.

In 1858, the *Cruzob* went on the offensive. They surprised and massacred hundreds at Tekax and with the goods taken bought more weapons in Belize. Bacalar was next to fall. The Yucatec could not hold the fort and so, 41 persons were taken prisoners, while others fled to Belize. The Maya demanded 8,000 pesos for their freedom and James Hume Blake, a Corozal landowner went to negotiate the life of the prisoners.<sup>4</sup> Blake took 2,000 pesos and another 1,000 in goods. When a report of enemy troops near Bacalar was received, orders were issued for the prisoner's execution. Only eleven, mostly women and children, were spared, the rest were executed.

With Bacalar as their southern base, the *Cruzob* now controlled the mahogany and logwood of the southern forests, charging rent from interested parties. Proceeds were used on the war. A new 100 ft. by 60 ft. church *Balam Ná* was built of stone in Chan Santa Cruz. The church had annexes that served as a school. Similar stone buildings were constructed for the residences of the *Tatich* (the *Patrón* of the Cross), the general in charge of information and one for the General in Chief of the armed forces, a Council house, seven barracks and a prison.

The organization of *Cruzob* government can be outlined as follows:<sup>5</sup>

**Cruzob Government, 1850-1901**



<sup>4</sup> Editors' note: see J. M. Rosado's Memoirs on the CDROM for a personal account of this event.

<sup>5</sup> After Nelson Reed, *The Caste War of Yucatan*, Stanford University Press, 1964, p.212.



The slaves were made up of white and *ladinos* prisoners, other Maya who abandoned the fight, and some Chinese who ran away from sugarcane plantations in Belize.

In 1863, the *Cruzob* again attacked the town of Chichanhá. Most of its inhabitants moved to Icaiché, closer to the Belize frontier. Some 3,000 moved to Belize and Peten with over 1,000 founding villages in the Yalbac area of Belize with their capital as San Pedro.

### The English side with the Mexicans: The Spenser-Mariscal Treaty

Emperor Maximilian became Mexico's king in 1863. He declared Belize a part of Mexico and sent troops to defeat the Maya, but failed. In 1867, the violence connected with Maximilian's defeat and execution gave the Maya a break. But by this time, the *Cruzob* population had been cut to half, to about 40,000. By the 1880s, the population had been further reduced by diseases, flight to Belize and devastating raids to about 10,000.

Anticipating the *Cruzob*'s defeat, the English tried to mediate so as to benefit from the peace as they had during the war. The rebel Maya bought most of their weapons in Belize though we should emphasize that the Maya also captured weapons from the Yucatec army and in most cases the Maya preferred machetes.<sup>6</sup> The English also wished to remove the Icaiché Maya's claim to Belize's northwest that was part of Maya territory in 1853 when the southern Maya signed a treaty in Belize.

*Cruzob* generals Crecencio Poot, Aniceto Dzul and Juan Chuc met in Belize with the Deputy Governor of Yucatan on 11 January 1884. The *Cruzob* would continue selecting their leaders. In return, they agreed to recognize the Mexican government. The signing of the peace agreement called for celebration, but one drink led to another, and in the heat of the discussion Canto assaulted Dzul tearing his shirt. The following morning, the Deputy Governor begged forgiveness but Dzul would not hear of it. The peace agreement was off.



HENRY FOWLER, on several occasions Colonial Administrator of British Honduras and Acting Governor of the Colony, was an avid explorer of the country. He wrote in English periodicals about his trips through the country. He was very eager to make a final peace with the Maya peoples of Belize. In the photo above we see him meeting with Maya representatives in 1884.

<sup>6</sup> Editors' note: "El la batalla, me dijeron, Cen llevaba un machete de tres libras. Lo ataba con una correa en su anebrazo, para que aun empapado con la sangre de sus victimas, el arma no resbalara de su mano" In the battle, I was told, Cen carried a machete weighing three pounds. He would attach it with a strap to his forearm so that although soaked with the blood of his victims the weapon would not slip from his hand." Sullivan, Paul, 1998. Para que luchara los maya rebeldes: *Vida y muerto de Bernardino Cen*, Universidad de Quintana Roo.

Ti  
by Me  
betwe

T

M  
was cc  
powerl  
Bravo  
Felipe

Hi  
compa  
fort na  
*Cruzob*  
1901.

The English continued their treaty negotiations with Mexico. The Spenser Mariscal Treaty ratified by Mexico in 1895 recognized the Río Hondo and a small portion on the northwest as the boundary between British Honduras and Mexico. Both sides agreed to stop the arms trade with the Maya.

## The End of the Caste War

Mexico sent General Bravo to finish off the *Cruzob* whose numbers continued to decline. A railway was constructed straight into the *Cruzob* capital. With no access to arms and in the face of more powerful artillery, the *Cruzob* abandoned their capital and retreated deeper into the forests. General Bravo marched into Chan Santa Cruz promptly renamed Santa Cruz de Bravo, which was renamed Felipe Carrillo Puerto.

Huge tracts of lands of the former *Cruzob* forest were given out in concession to large lumber companies anxious to reap the wealth of the Quintana Roo forests. Othón P. Blanco positioned a floating fort named "Chetumal" at the mouth of the Río Hondo to enforce the ban on the arms trade. The *Cruzob* vowed to have nothing to do with the Mexicans, their religion or their schools. The year was 1901.

## Glossary

**Cenote:** a natural *well* formed when porous limestone breaks at the top exposing the water table; common in Yucatan. Belize's in-land Blue Hole is an example of a cenote.

**Dzul:** employer, usually an hacienda owner in Yucatan during the 1800s and up to the middle of the 1900s; also means "foreigner".

**Encomendero:** a Spaniard who obtains an *encomienda*, as a reward usually for having served in the wars of conquest or for having performed meritorious service for the Spanish king.

**Encomienda:** literally an "entrustment" of <sup>anumber</sup> ~~an~~ number of natives usually from a settlement to a Spaniard. Each native is required to pay to the *encomendero* tribute or taxes in the form of products cultivated or high value goods such as honey, cotton, or cacao. In return, the *encomendero* is required to "protect" the natives and to assist the church in Christianizing them.

**Federal:** a system of government in which a number of "autonomous" states agree to join to form a country; power is usually shared with the central government but the individual states retain most of the power.

**Fiesta:** literally "feast" usually in honor of a patron *saint*; *fiestas* had religious, social and political importance.

**Hacienda:** a large landed estate in which the Yucatec Maya worked as *luneros* meaning every Monday in return for drinking water from the *hacienda's* well or as *jornaleros*, resident workers on an annual wage.

**Hidalgo:** literally meaning "hijo de algo" or "son of someone of noble birth". The Spaniards in many cases recognized noble status among the natives especially if they could prove it or if nobility is bestowed on them for meritorious service such as in fighting with the Spaniards against the fellow natives.

**Jornalero:** a resident worker in an *hacienda*; the worker (and his family) are usually heavily indebted to the *hacienda* that they cannot leave to seek employment elsewhere.

**Ladinos,** a native who having been exposed to mestizo or Spanish culture begins to assume some of their characteristics such as in speaking Spanish or converting to Catholicism or in dressing like them

**Maestro cantors** Lay religious leaders usually of small, isolated villages where the parish priest seldom visits; they are in charge of conducting prayers or simple Catholic services such as the rosary of <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ *novenas*.

**Mayordomo:** a person responsible for managing the workers in an *hacienda* in Yucatan.

**Milpa:** a corn field but in it the farmer also plants other crops such as beans, peppers, squash, etc.

**Real:** a sub-unit of a *peso*, there being eight *reales* per *peso*.

**Relocation:** the forced or Voluntary removal of native people to a new or an expanded village where they can be more easily controlled; used especially by the missionaries among the Mayas they tried to move them to villages where they could Christianize and collect Church fees from them.