TOPOGRAPHY OF MAYA CULTURE: ON THE POLITICAL AND SCRIPTURAL ECONOMY OF THE "MODERNIZING MAYA"

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RESUMEN: Este ensayo busca el origen de la caracterización cultural, o sea la metanarrativa y *master trope* de los mayas de Yucatán como un pueblo "modernizándose". Retoma las representaciones etnográficas de Chan Kom escritas por Redfield y Villa Rojas, y la de Pisté escrita por Morris Steggerda para que, a través de dicha comparación y reconstrucción textual, el autor demuestre, "cómo y por qué es posible que la 'cultura maya' se haya construido textualmente tanto en la imaginación antropológica como en la visión popular como una comunidad-cultural de 'folk' 'progressiva' y que esta representación se haya localizado en un espacio determinado (Chan Kom) y no otro (Pisté)." La respuesta se ubica en la historia de la intervención de la antropología americana, tanto de los Estados Unidos como de México y de Yucatán. La visión predominante de los mayas yucatecos como cultura en proceso de modernización está forjada entre la intersección de la política de saber científico y de la política nacional-internacional de la construcción de identidad comunitaria. El análisis concluye con comentarios sobre las deficiencias de la investigación antropológica que se han presentado y se sugiere además cómo rectificar nuestra visión parcial.

ABSTRACT: This essay explores the origins of "modernizing Maya" as a cultural characterization. Reviewing Redfield and Villa Roja's studies at Chan Kom and Steggerda's at Piste, the author demonstrates "how and why it is possible that Maya culture has been textually constructed in anthropological imagination and popular views as a folk progressive cultural community, and that this representation has been located in a determined space (Chan Kom) and no other (Piste). The answer in found in the history of American Anthropological studies, in the intersection between scientific inquery policies and national and international constructs of community identity. Concluding remarks discuss research deficiencies and suggestions for correcting them.

("On" and "in" the) topography of Maya culture

From the Greek words *topos,* or place, and *graphein,* to write, we have *topography,* which nicely refers to the intersection between representation (whether discursive, textual, or image), the space of representation (itself a *topos),* the place to be represented, and the practices enacted on these distinct but connected spaces which both create an ordered place from profane space and that brings such a place into another representation (the topos). Topography, then, is both the meaningful inscription of three kinds of space and the orchestration of the social and discursive practices by which space is inscribed, imagined, carved, ordered, and enacted.[1] The example this paper considers is the Redfieldian Continuum of Folk Culture in

[1] This conceptual tool derives from de Certau's notion of scriptural economy and related concepts such as strategy, tactics, place, and space.

Yucatan. How was it that the objects, beliefs, and behaviors associated with the Indigenous peoples of Yucatan came to be known, perceived, studied, commoditized, identified, shaped, bounded/contained, and spatialized as a "culture" possessed by and possessing Maya? To initiate an answer, I want to summarize an analysis of the Carnegie sponsored studies of Chan Kom and nearby Piste. My objective is to point out the political economy that intervened in this scriptural invention of the Maya as a culture. For some, my comments may seem purely literary, historical or otherwise para-ethnographic, but my broader argument is that this task is fundamental to both the project of ethnography and the scientific study of social life. The premise of critical self-reflexivity here argues that in order to more fully and adequately comprehend an object of study, we must also fully analyze the operations of the anthropological apparatus and the effects of its interventions in the world.

A tale of three topoi

Redfield crafted an image of Chan Kom that persists in our vision. The persistence of this vision of the Maya is not disturbed by the fading of the Redfieldian ideal of folk/peasant culture under the frontal attacks of either the Marxist tradition of peasant studies (Wolf, 1955; Strickon, 1965) or critical postpeasant thinking (Kearney, 1996). For example, in the fifth edition of Michael Coe's *The Maya* (1993), which is a popular and primarily archeological account of Maya civilization over 2000 years, Chan Kom the village and the co-authored ethnography *Chan Kom* are both chosen to represent the contemporary Yucatec Maya: It is as if 60 years in the middle of the 20th century had not occurred! But, it is not clear for whom time had stood still, the Chan Komeros or for Dr. Coe. Thus, books such as this contribute to popular and internationally communicated stereotypes stamped with the authority of science in which peoples locked out of history and hopelessly hypostatized in an image of premodern tradition.

The irony is that this image of "Yucatec Maya culture" at the end of the 20th century is based on a generalization of one community as the general and generic ideal of all. But, in 1934 (pp. 4-6) Redfield and Villa Rojas point out that this village, Chan Kom, is the "extreme deviate" of Yucatec Maya communities; and, it is so because "more than any village" in the region, this one has "defined progress for itself." How is it that such an atypical community has come to represent all communities and symbolize what is quintessentially Yucatec Maya? In stark and completely unnoticed contrast, Piste, a village 20 km from Chan Kom and 3 km from Chichen Itza, has not entered into anthropological memory and its imagination of culture: it has been erased from the ethnographic *mappae mundi* through which anthropology plots its contesting classifications of socio-cultural forms to their proper space-time localities via the power/knowledge operations of theory-building. Why is Piste absent from the anthropological museum of cultures? And, what does this absence from the anthropological (and popular) imagining of the Maya tell us about both the political economy of the discipline and the topography of Maya culture? How and why has Maya culture been imagined and then localized/contained in certain spaces, such as Chan Kom, and not in others, such as Piste? The key to the answer is the particular relations that each community had to another Maya settlement, that of Chichen Itza, and to the anthropological apparatus that had installed itself within the jungle covered stones that were soon to become trans-

formed into ruins — that is, modern ruins, the modern ruins of Chichen, an artifact of Enlightenment archeological science in collusion with Mexican Revolutionary and socialist political agendas.

Piste as zero degree culture: pre-postmodern, post-premodern, or exmodern postprimitive?[2]

Nineteenth century travelers of Yucatan frequently mention in passing the desolation and devastation that the Caste War wrought on Piste which until then had a population of 1500 linked to a mixed cattle-maize hacienda. Morris Steggerda, the Carnegie anthropologist, who studied genetics and anthropometry in Piste, contributes to this discourse of desolation and depreciation in his 1941 ethnography. Listen to how Steggerda depicts not a *community,* but a *town,* that is a geographic space occupied by a negative geometry of the social glue or bonding that so preoccupied the founders of modern sociology, such as Durkheim:

> During my observations in the village, I have never seen any evidence of hobbies among the men. No one carves stone or wood; no one is interested in learning to play a musical instrument well; no one has made a collection of archeological material.... No one seems to feel the need of such diversion.... There is an apparent lack of interest, as far as the men are concerned, in most forms of recreation. There is no tendency among them to form clubs or organizations. Piste has no band, although it might well have one considering its size. There are no outstanding leaders, priests, ministers, or doctors. In 1933 there were two yerbateros, but accusations of witchcraft forced them to leave the town. The town is not particularly religious, being indifferent to Catholic and Protestant and, apparently, to the remnants of its own Indian beliefs (Steggerda, 1941: 24-25).

Here is an anomalous social form that seems to lack that magical attraction and animism that would distinguish Piste from nature. Indifference and apathy is said to be so pervasive that we might ask if this qualifies as a community, that is as a social versus a natural horde. Modernist theories have sought to define this space between animal nature and civilization: This is the space of the concept of culture which is variously theorized into well known systems such as primitive/modern or mechanical/organic, culture/anarchy. Piste's reputedly resolute indifference to itself as a cultural form amounts to a collective state of anomie; however, it is not a dysfunctional or alienated response to urban modernity, i.e., not a modernist anomie. Piste's apathy is not quite anarchy, because there is custom bound compliance to norms and rules, but it is an automatic compliance marked by an indifference that threatens, less to dismantle, than dissipate both custom and religious belief, which as Durkheim suggested is the basis of the social glue itself. Further, this indifference leads Piste to refuse to "cultivate" itself through education as did the village that chose Progress; as I indicate below, part of Steggerda's ascription of indifference is in direct contrast with Chan Kom and with the way Redfield envisioned that community to "cultivate" itself by seeking to acculturate/cultivate the presense of the Enlightened/modern American archeologists of the

[2] The third term in the word play with typologies of social forms derives from Maccanell's (1992) category of "exprimitive" which he devises as a way to deal with those once considered and that he holds actually were primitives but that have retained their primitivity within the postmodern context as way to economically exploit the modern-now-postmodern Europeans. Such categorical typologies, whether modernist or postmodernists, are put under question by this essay.

Carnegie Institution of Washington. This condition of anarchic anamoly, then, not only situates Piste between nature and culture, but between types of ideal social forms, that is, between primitive and modern on the one hand and culture and civilization on the other hand.

Steggerda defines Piste by what is missing: He lists the absences of expected social practices that are associated with both a traditional, rural Maya community and a modern, urban society. This list, I assert, contrasts the traits described as diagnostic for Chan Kom according to the 1934 ethnography; this is especially clear when he notes the absence of archeological collections among Pisteleños, which Redfield not only "discovered" among Chan Komeros but also about which he published an obscure article (1932). Nonetheless elsewhere in Steggerda's published and especially unpublished fieldnotes[3] key traits of an urban modernity are noted: religious pluralism, racial-ethnic heterogeneity, economic diversification, and complex class stratification.[4] But, Steggerda also describes the festive and daily life of a rural village of 300 or so inhabitants that would categorically situate the community within the tribal-primitive category or the then still emergent categories of Folk/peasant society. However undecipherable this was to Steggerda and Redfield, it must be apparent for us today that Piste was (and continues to be) a weird, anomalous hybrid: It is modern and is traditional at the same time that it is not modern and is not traditional. Pre-postmodern or Post-premodern?

Consider for a moment the first tour guide of Chichen Itza: Martiniano Dzib. A man who was the first to be born in the reconstructed church of Piste after its destruction during the Maya Cruzob attack of 1862, was taken at the age of 10 to Santa Fe, New Mexico, by the archeologist Jesse Nussbaum to be his houseboy for over a year in the early 1920s. Should we be surprised that Martiniano, with his fluent English, became the chief informant and interpreter for Morris Steggerda, a monolingual speaker of English? In one sense, we should indeed be surprised, for many of the adult males of Piste *were also learning English* through 18 years of seasonal labor for the American archeologists of the Carnegie! Although tourism began in the 1930s, Martin became the first tour guide in the late 1940s and 1950s after the departure of English speaking archeologists: As one of the few locals with requisite knowledge of both the ruins and conversational English,[5] he became consistently sought out by the taxi drivers that brought tourists from Merida. Martiniano' reputation grew regionally and internationally by word of mouth and was especially sought out on recommendations by American tourists. A favorite story about Martin told by other tour guide friends is that he would complain to tourists of the hard work his wife en-

[3] These are located in the Hartford Seminary Foundation in Hartford Connecticut. After leaving the Carnegie in 1941 with the closing of the Chichen Projects, Steggerda became a missionary anthropologist teaching and researching at the former institution; his later work was devoted to Zuni and Navaho.

[4] As noted from Steggerda's quote, three religions were being practiced, however indifferently (modernist indifference to the sacred?). But also Piste was populated by Chinese, Korean, Lebanese, central Mexican, criollo Yucatec, Anglo-Americans, some transient French (LePlongeons), English (J. E. S. Thompson), and other northern Europeans, in addition to Maya from all over the peninsula. Business in Piste, in the 1920-40s included a gasoline station, taxi service, corn mills, truck transport service, chickle trade, cattle and corn production, several general stores, liquor outlets, and two factories, one producing matches, the other producing knowledge about the ancient Maya.

[5] It need also be added that Martiniano had also no doubt developed a strong disposition to labor in the field of service versus the fields of manual labor such as agriculture and hotel work. I have no doubt that other local Maya could have become guides as well, but were instead engaged as labor managers for archeologists.

dured having to haul water from the deep wells; in this way he always managed to receive tips in the form of a water pump, which he would promptly sell in order to buy that other beverage so necessary for human survival, *aguardiente*. Once again, Mariniano Dzib proves the people of Piste to be indifferent to the trap of progress. But, was he an indifferent prepostmodern peasant? or exmodern postpeasant primitive? And, what of that community or town of indifference that was the special site of a transnational intervention from the middle of the 19th century through to the present day?

The legacy of the ethnographic representation of Piste as indifferent persists: Today, Piste (I dare say) is near-universally imagined within this double bind of unassimliable difference. Unabashedly thriving on Chichen's doorstep as the socioeconomic center of a mircoregion based on 11 municipios (Morales *et al.*, 1989; Peraza López *et al.*, 1987; Peraza López and Rejón Patrón, 1989), Piste seems exemplary of the culture loss attributed to tourist impact. I cannot count how many times in the course of ten years of fieldwork archeologists of all national affiliations asserted to me that Piste was no longer a Maya community because of the tourism; the sentiment is just as pervasive within the urban circles of Yucatec society. And, among the tourists, *nacionales* see generic Mexico not Maya; likewise, most Anglo and European tourists understand the generally absence of traditional housing, the presence of concrete, cars, and tourist souvenirs as culture loss. There is, however, always a percentage that perceive the kitsch mural and other touristic Maya decor of Piste as signs, not of the cultural rape of tourism, but of pure cultural authenticity. Here again, however, Piste is indifferent to these either of these perceptions as its inhabitants have struggled daily in the wars for tourist dollars, often by carving stone or wood, and have slowly developed the capital to build houses of *mampostería*, develop small businesses, and to buy "automobiles and other house luxuries."[6] From the late 19th century travelers, to Steggerda and other visitors at the end of the 20th century, Piste has been imagined, represented and comprehended as an embodiment of a nonculture culture or what can be called a *zero-degree culture*. Piste is *post-modern matter out of place in modernist thinking of the social*. Thus, within the Redfieldian topography of culture, Piste has been erased; rather, it has been under erasure. But, it is precisely this erasure that has allowed for the now hegemonic notion of the Yucatec Maya folk-urban continuum to be constituted.

Remember that it is the indifference of Piste which marks its difference. Is this difference simply an ill-founded attribution on the part of Steggerda, due to a vision shaped by his theoretical apparatus? Afterall his object of study was not a socio-cultural entity such as an ethnic group, a community, a culture, or class; instead, he studied the inhabitants residing in Piste to disclose the socio-biological characteristics of a "race." Might a different believer and practitioner of the superstition we call culture (Herbert, 1991) have been able to depict the "community" of Piste? Redfield could have been that someone, but was not. Steggerda's genetic studies are referenced in the two Chan Kom and the Folk Culture books, but Piste as a socio-cultural entity is not discussed. Despite all the reasons he

[6] The reference is to Steggerda who argues that "The large amounts of money paid in wages [by the CIW], most of which was probably spent in Piste, did not materially change the mores of the community. People continued to cultivate their cornfields and to eat the same kind of food as they bad before... No automobiles or house luxuries were purchased, nor was extra food as table observed, and I believe that by 1938 the temporary effects of the money influx were completely obliterated" (Steggerda, 1941: 11).

may have chosen not to discuss Piste, Redfield simply could not have done so and produced the same interpretation nor theory of society that he did. For Redfield, Piste was a dangerous and polluting anomaly that threatened his cosmography of cultures, that is, his all too fragile theory of Folk Society/Culture and the Civilizational Continuum on which it was located.

"Progress" revisited: mysterious cultivation & scandalous impact

Curiously, Piste and Chan Kom were both situated in a betwixt and between space. However, Piste was erased from anthropological memory, while Chan Kom came to be described according to a new category and ideal type of object; an object that Redfield invented by embodying this hybridized Folk Society in a specific locality, the village of Chan Kom. A new object of study was invented as an ideal form that shared and uniquely combined aspects from the two poles of modernist theorizing. This circular argumentation can be deciphered to disclose the political economy of the textual construction of an imaginary landscape. To the four theorists Redfield cites as inspiration in the initial pages of the *Folk Culture of Yucatan* (1941), we must add the politics of Carnegie philanthropy and Mathew Arnold's concept of culture. A close reading of the beginning of his collaborative ethnography with Alfonso Villa Rojas (1934) reveals a critical genealogy of the concepts and theoretical apparatus that becomes systematized in Redfield's later works.

Without going into a line by line deconstruction of the opening of the classic ethnography, I instead present the passage in full and provide five summary points that are implied by the nuances of meaning and presuppositions. According to Redfield and Villa Rojas, Chan Kom is:

> neither large nor small; but in respect to the effects of the recent outside stimulus and in the disposition deliberately to welcome these changes and to *modernize* the community, Chan Kom is the *extreme deviate*. Other villages in the area assist their schoolteacher and evidence an interest in *reform* and in new public works, but none so much as has Chan Kom in the three or four years preceding and during the period of these observations. During this period it has been distinguished among its neighbors for *industry, sobriety and internal harmony*. Its leaders have determinted upon a *program of improvement and progress and have manifested a strong disposition to take advantage of the missionary educational* efforts of the government and of the advice and assistance of the occasional American or Yucatec visitor. *No considerable opposition* to this leadership has appeared; the inhabitants have, on the whole, supported the reform policy. *The reforms have not been imposed upon the community from the outside;* they have arisen out of the conviction of the village leaders and have been put into effect by the efforts of the people themselves. The principal of these reforms involves matters of *public hygiene, construction of new and more modern public and private buildings, and support of the school...* The explanation of the fact that Chan Kom has, more than any other Maya village in the region, defined "progress" for itself lies in a complex of circumstances that can be only imperfectly understood. One of these circumstances is certainly the unusual sympathy and guidance the people have had from certain of their schoolteachers, especially from the junior author of this monograph [Alfonso Villa Rojas]. Another is the particular attention given the village by Americans at Chichen Itza where the Carnegie Institution maintains its center for archeological work. Contacts with the Americans at Chichen began to be significant through the distribution of medicines and medical advice from the clinic there, and extended to the visits of scientific investigators in the village. A third circumstance is, probably, the chance occurrance in the village of Maya [here refering to the truly extraordinary, Don Eustaquio Ceme] with unusual gifts of leadership and temperamental disposition to

> enterprise. The presence of Villa, the teacher, drew the Americans at Chichen to Chan Kom; on the other hand, Villa's contacts with these Americans increased and partly shaped his interest in the village where he worked. Villa's advice and help supported the leadership native in the village. And the traditional Maya institution of *fagina,* whereby membership in the community is conditional upon faithful performance of labor tasks for purposes decided by the local leaders, has gradually eliminated those families who were least disposed to cooperate in the program of reform and improvement, and attracted to the village new families to whom the reforms were congenial (1934: 4-6; emphasis added).

First, consider how the diagnostic hybridization of Chan Kom becomes the defining concept that inheres within that of the Redfield's notion of Culture which in turn is precisely the theoretical form that transforms the content of folk into the concept of Folk. In terms of political economy, Redfield "finds", that within a mechanical, that is putatively classless, collectivity, there emerges an organic division of labor within the realm of politics, that is a political leadership which is naturalized as individualistic-achieved, temporary, and nonstructural differentiation. Thus, the politics of "reform" (i.e., compulsory labor) is traditional in that it is implied to be based on communitarian/consensual spirit and not the use of force hierarchically distributed by classes; but, it is also the basis of Chan Kom's "progress" since it is naturally used for purposes of education, improvement, enterprise, and a curious "freedom." But, it is this "progress"/modernizing of Chan Kom that is already inherent within its definition as a social form defined as Culture. If we remember that Chan Kom was founded by a migration out Ebtun by families who sought "freedom" on the frontier —lets, forget for the moment that they outmigrating because they were not congenial to the "fagina" imposed in the mother town— we can see that the blueprint for this hybrid division of labor is the image of the U.S. yeoman moving on the frontier in a context of democratic elitism. This is a corroboration of what historians of Carnegie philanthropy have noted (Lagemann, 1989): that Andrew Carnegie's institutions tended to sponsor research that scientifically promoted democratic elitism and other interpretations in line with its business, political and educational policies. Thus, the painful insistence by the authors to remind the reader that this political reform is indigenous and not imposed ("natural"/mechanical and not "cultural"/organic); and that it has no "serious opposition." Clearly, those who protested the compulsory labor that was non/imposed by the leadership left the community, which is implicitly constructed as an act of traditional backwardness that rejects progress versus the domination or totalitarianism writ small that is constructed as a forward march to a curious kind of modernist "freedom."[7] As becomes clear below, it is the factoring of education that transforms this forced labor into "freedom" and progress, whereas the freedom to escape it becomes marked as traditional ignorance.

Redfield explicitly defines the purity of Chan Kom's generic typicality in terms of its hybridity; or, rather the hybridity of Chan Kom is explicitly defined as its cultural purity in Appendix E, titled "Indian and Spanish Elements in the Chan Kom Culture" (1934: 363-375). In this revealing discussion, the authors state: "The Culture of Yucatan today is an integrated and unified mode of life, that is neither the aboriginal Indian culture nor that of Spain, but a third thing. It is not

[7] In fact, many such exiles from "progress" migrated to Piste (see Goldkind, 1956, 1966). See Friedrich (1986) for a parallel description of an exodus from progress, or what that author calls a *cacicazgo*.

the sum of Indian and Spanish elements, but a new development resulting from the contact of diverse cultures" (1934: 364). In the remainder of this appendix, the authors summarize chapter by chapter the hybriditization of cultures that occur in the subject areas that compose the content of chapters 3-12: "tools and techniques," "economics," "division of labor," "family, village and state," "invisible world," "novena and village fiesta," "sickness and its cure," "from birth to death," "meaning of nature." Redfield's 1950 restudy extends this line of argument by making every chapter of that book a discussion of how Chan Kom is both traditional and modern, which simultaneously defines both the community's status as a Folk Society and as a Village that Chose Progress. Here, in Chan Kom and Chan Kom, hybridity results in a pure authenticity; but, in Piste hybridity results in a communityless community, a nonculture culture, that is, in a zero-degree culture. But, more than simply define the content of culture and thus also its generic typicality vis-a-vis other Yucatec Maya communities, hybridity also defines the "progress" that Redfield and Villa Rojas ascribe to the community which is that which constitutes its "atypicality!" It is precisely, the hybridity, the in-betweenness, of the binary typology of social forms, Modern versus Primitive, that constitutes the Folk Culture as a concept and categorical form of collectivity within a topography of culture.

Second, Andrew Carnegie's social philosophy and institutional policies, had an affinity to Mathew Arnold's culture concept (Williams, 1983): Culture was the cultivation of the individual and collective self primarily through education, which for both was symbolized in the metaphor of "light" and its capacity to provide "enlightenment." For Arnold, culture was the "progress" from and in contrast to anarchy (such as embodied in Piste's "indifference"); not only did this entail a differentiation between what is later understood as "high" versus "low" culture, but this "culture" of cultivation (of arts, letters, education, morality) was deeply associated with the cultivation of control over the base, corporeal, rude, sectors/classes of society. Culture as the nurturing refinement or progress from nature and anarchy was the instillation and habituation of self control at individual and collective levels, or civility and civilization. Thus, for Arnold culture was inherently by definition "progressive" in that it was premised on the cultivation/enlightenment of a general enlightenment. Although Carnegie was not an intellectual author of a theory of culture, his philanthropy was a "practice of culture" that was heavily informed by Arnold.[8] For Carnegie education was the means to attain human progress and advancement as indicated by the fact that prior to establishing his dozen philanthropic institutions, he had the habit of donating the construction of libraries for any U.S.A. community that asked for one. Besides the requirement to be able to financially maintain the library, Carnegie required that over the entrance would be an inscription to the effect that education was the "Bringer of Light."

Carnegie, the man and his philanthropic project as embodied in the institutions he created, is a link between Arnold and Redfield. Not only did they both share "Carnegie" as financial patrons, but Redfield's conceptualization of culture has affinity to the ironic duplicity of Arnold's theory; and all three shared a belief in the enlightening power/progress of culture. The elements cited in the quote above as the diagnostics of the "progress Chan Kom defines for itself" all find unity as facets of a more general form, that of educa-

[8] Andrew Carnegie was a sometime financial patron and supporter of Mathew Arnold; but, given the former's impoverished beginings, one can imagine that their views diverged on the question of the lower classes.

tion: Hygiene, schoolteachers, missionary educational programs, medicine, medical advice, the construction of schools and private buildings, industry, sobriety, harmony, American science and scientists, and even the compulsory labor *(fagina)* for the construction of roads are all linked to and subsumed by education as mechanisms for the cultivation of progress-culture. How is forced labor for road construction part of the political "reforms of improvement" much less "educational?" The answer, only in embryo in 1934, is fully elaborated and epitomized in 1950 in chapter 7 of *The Village that Chose Progress*. In this chapter, titled "The Road to the Light," Redfield discusses why the villagers of Chan Kom built (were forced to build) a road straight through the jungle to the modern ruins being constructed by American archeologists at Chichen Itza. The goal, no doubt in Redfield's mind, was to increase contact with the modernizing enlightenment that these scientists radiated. However, today, we may be surprised to read that:

> "The road to the light" starts out *toward Chicago rather than toward Mexico City[!]*. The changes in Chan Kom are in the direction of North American or cosmopolitan urbanized life rather than in the direction of Latin culture... Apparently the spirit of this people is not favorable to the adoption of Latin manners or mores.... None of the aesthetic sensibility of Latin culture has found lodgement in the Chan Kom people... The practicality, the exaltation of hard work, and the acquisitive rather than the expressive spirit — these qualities of the villager lead him away from Latin culture toward another, perhaps a *predominating stream of world-wide expanding influence*. Before progress came to Chan Kom, Chan Kom had a life-view of its own, not at all Latin in nature (Redfield, 1950: 153, 154; emphasis added).

Here we witness the scientific rebirth of the Black Legend. The Folk-Urban Continuum is transformed into a global sketch map of social forms according to a cultur-developmental hierarchization of several racially marked nations: that of the U.S.A., Mexico, Yucatec regionalist "nation," and Maya "nations."[9] In another work (Castañeda, 1996) I have argued that this cosmogrphy of nations inhabits the Museum of Chichen Itza as one of the registers in which a politics of knowledge is fought through the display, commoditization, and tours of Maya culture.

This quote, then, focuses our attention on the politics of representation in which anthropology plays significant roles. Patterson (1986, 1995), for example, has mapped the political economy of Americanist archeology: Its interventions in Latin America have been a fundamental part of U.S.-American neocolonial hegemony as indicated by the shift from private philanthropic granting institutions such as the Carnegie to governmental control (see also Escobar, 1991, 1995; Kearney, 1996). More directly related is Sullivan work (1989; cf. Villa Rojas, 1979), which has demonstrated how the leader of the Chichen Projects was involved in scientific espionage; that is, Morley was conducting U.S. Naval Intelligence under cover of his archeological investigations (see also Hinsley, 1981, 1984, 1985; Helm, 1984). A close reading of Kidder's (1930) statement of the Carnegie objectives in doing research clearly indicates the political-espionage dimension of the scientific project (see Castañeda, 1996: chapter 3). Thus, the quote in this context suggests that the U.S. appropriation of the Yucatec Maya as objects of knowledge fit into or coincided with a broader project to develop scientific interpretations of the Maya within allegorical war with Mexico conducted through scientific knowledge.

[9] See Kearney (1996) for further discussion of the politics of knowledge that contextualize the importance of the use of the peasant/folk society as the privileged object of study withing modernist Anglo-american anthropology.

Such a situation should not be surprising given that the genealogy of the field of Maya studies traces through a series of personages who intricately mixed politics and science and often tourism: Before E. H. Thompson, the antiquarian-U.S. Consul to Yucatan, there was John L. Stephens, the diplomat-antiquarian and travel writer, both of whom, as was the case with Morley, could only become founding fathers of a science if their involvement with politics could be permanently concealed and minimized (see Ramírez Aznar, 1990). On the Mexican side of Mesoamerican anthropology, there is a much longer history of the collusion and conmingling of anthropological practices and politics/political agendas that stretches back to the founding of the colonial regime (see Barrera Vásquez, 1980; Bernal, 1980; Lafaye, 1974; Florescano, 1994; Klor de Alva, 1988, 1992). Furthermore, at the same time that the Carnegie was enacting its own geoscientific and philanthropic politics of modernization, the Socialist Governor of Yucatan sought to use archeology for other purposes: the political mobilization of Maya as a class and ethnic based following. The restoration of Chichen as a monument to Maya genius was to be an important mechanism toward that end (see Castañeda, 1996: chapter 3; see Campos García, 1987, 1989).

Third, if the underlying assumption of culture is cultivation specifically through education, then the concept also posits transformation as an intrinsic facet of culture. Thus, culture change is actually a split concept, refering to the continuous change of the everyday which is hypostatized by the categories of description ("structure," "system," "equilibrium") and to the unmarked sense of culture change as historical process. Both are identified in Chan Kom. On the one hand, Redfield's conceptualization of Folk cultivation-change already presupposes that the Folk are halfway out of primitivism and into modernist society; thus, culture-cultivation is necessarily conceived within *progress*. By ascribing hybridized features, such as a democratic elitism of the Folk, the identity relation of the village to the type is constituted. On the other hand, Chan Kom is said, on pages 4-6 of the 1934 ethnography, to have chosen to "modernize the community" through "a program of improvement and reform:" This project of directed change is essentially shaping the community according to the ideals of the socialist ideology of the new Revolutionary nation that was disseminated primarily through Villa Rojas, the schoolteacher, and agents of the Socialist League. As explored in 1950 Chan Kom's progress is its insertion into the modern nation-state; this has as its most quintessential manifestation the successful attempt by Chan Kom to become a new *municipio libre* according to the Revolutionary Constitution of 1917.[10]

In other words, the descriptive terms coincide with Mathew Arnold's rhetoric and abide by the cultivating agenda of state controlled education: Culture, in its opposition to anarchy, is the insertion of collectivity into socially habituated control via education and civility. Explicitly arguing against external cause, Redfield is at pains to attribute Maya agency to the community's adoption and adaptation of modernity, which in turn substantiates the democratic elitism of this Folk. On the one hand, this again contrasts with the indifference of Piste, not only as perceived by Steggerda but in terms of actual political practice: Whereas Chan Kom became a new *municipio* in 1935 (one year after the publica-

[10] Unlike other states, such as Oaxaca, Yucatan did not undergo the massive municipal fragmentation that was possible under this law. In Yucatan only 28 new municipios were created, all but one between 1921 and 1935; 10 were created between 1918-1921, 8 between 1922-1929, and 10 between 1930-1935 (see Castañeda, 1991: 86-126; Rodríguez Losa, 1985, 1991).

tion of its ethnography), Piste did not begin the political mobilization for such status until the 1960s and again in 1989-91. On the other hand, although Redfield's romantic rhetoric of progress was certainly in excess, it is now only after the demise of world systems and underdevelopment thinking that we can appreciate Redfield's argument as ironically having an insight that has currently become fashionable. In arguing that the most significant aspect of the "progress" that Chan Kom chose was to insert itself into the apparatus of the new Revolutionary state, Redfield —just like Friedrich (1986) in his account of Naranja *caciques*— how the Mexican state was consolidated less through imposition than through local agency that actively sought its extension into new "territory" (see Joseph and Nugent, 1994).

Thus, Chan Kom is said in 1934 to be the "extreme deviate" because it "defined progress for itself more than any other village in the region;" yet, it is this dual progress, an always already present cultivation within the cultural form of a formal progress stemming from culture contact, that constitutes the paradigm of the Folk Society and, in 1941, of Folk Culture as a spatio-historic Continuum or topography. In this topographic "progress" from extreme deviate to archetype, the governing trope and object of Yucatec ethnography is inscribed: From 1934 on, the "Modern Maya," or the always already modernizing Maya, becomes the paradigm of Anglo-American ethnographic research in Yucatan (see Coe, 1993; Everton, 1991; Hervik, 1991; Thompson, 1974; Press, 1975; Kintz, 1990). The Maya of Yucatan are ethnographically fashioned as always already modernizing but never quite yet modern; and this trope of a hypostatized "progress" is precisely what is disseminated for popular consumption and understanding through the international tourist apparatus.

Fourth, the role of Redfield and Villa Rojas' principal informant cannot continue to be minimized. Goldkind's (1965, 1966) analyses point out the errors in construing Chan Kom to fit the idealized Folk Society; he points out that instead of classless harmony, there was actually a political and economic elite class that had been undergoing internal factional struggles for totalizing control of the community. In other words, as Jones (1977) has noted, Chan Kom was not a situation of modernizing progress by a Folk Society, but a traditionally common struggle to create a *cacicazgo* (see Friedrich, 1986; Joseph, 1981). Thus, if we can recall the original appendices of the text, not only Villa Rojas' Diary and texts of various narratives, but notes on midwifery by Nurse Kathryn MacKay, and that the last chapter of the book consisted of Don Eustaquio autobiography, then we can begin to understand how polyvocal, dialogical, autoethnographic, and, in an ironic sense, "postcolonial" the 1934 and 1950 studies were: An Indigenous voice that seeks to present itself as the Voice of the village resonates throughout the interpretive and theoretical dimensions of both original and revisited texts. It so happens that Don Eustaquio's vision of the town and political agenda very nicely coincided with Redfield's and the Carnegie's such that from the euro- and anglocentric perspectives we are likely to attribute the entire interpretive narrative to Redfield and not to Eustaquio Ceme. But, certainly, the dynamics are more complicated than either granting authorial mastery to either man; it most accurate instead to identify the dialogical, power laden, unequal, and unharmonious complicity and collusion between them and "the junior author." The manipulation and adoption of each others terms was reciprocal as Redfield and Don Eus sought to promote each other in the context of a struggle with the new Mexican state. Thus, what is represented in the

texts is not a *one-way process* of "acculturation" despite the our hegemonic predisposition of interpreting the text as the manifestation of a singular authorial will to knowledge. Instead, the text reveals a complex economy of *transculturation* (Pratt, 1992) in which the Maya as a Culture and Maya Culture as Modernizing is invented within a topography of cultural forms and identities negotiated through collusion and mutual appropriation of the other for self centered purposes. Not only is the intervention of the state not imposed, but neither is the Angloamerican ethnographic interpretation. To find only external imposition is to deny the agency of the Chan Kom elite and the agency of the rest of community whose interests were also being negotiated, mediated, and refashioned in the struggles to control political and ethnographic self-representation.

Fifth, thus the landscape of Maya Culture is anchored by a deviant yet quintessential village; in turn, this vision of Chan Kom as paradigmatic is constructed on the erasure and negation of another anomaly, the zero-degree culture or differance of Piste. In 1939, two years before publishing his own study, Steggerda asked for information from the Carnegie Directorship about how much money was spent on wages paid to Maya primarily from Piste. He communicated his request in a letter in which he explained that he was concerned about the lack of an impact (which was a priori assumed that it would be positive) that 15 years of Carnegie archeology had had on the community. Here again Steggerda was making an implicit contrast to Chan Kom and the Redfieldian-Ceme-Villa Rojas account of Chan Kom: Unlike that village, Piste supposedly, Steggerda argues in a letter dated April 1939, had *not cultivated* their individual or collective lives as a result of either the long term and massive Angloamerican presence at Chichen or the massive amounts of money in silver received in the form of wages.[11] This assessment was in scandalously stark contrast to the 1934 assertions of Redfield-Villa Rojas-Ceme that *Chan Kom* was "progressing" and modernizing precisely due to the enlightening presence of the Carnegie Angloamerican Scientists, Science and Philanthropy at Chichen. The administrative response of the Carnegie indicates not only its staunch belief in the opinions of Scientists such as Steggerda and Redfield, the belief in Anglo-western civilizational superiority, but also its paternalism in that it felt responsible for not having improved the lives of Piste! And, thus, the Carnegie sougt to dissimulate its role in the failure of the scientific presence and wages paid to modernize Piste: Thus, although the annual average spent at the height of restoration was $10,000 for approximately 100 workers or approximately $170,000 over a 17 year period, the Carnegie President told Steggerda in a letter that the financial figures "were not clear"(!) but that the average annual amount paid in wages was only $7-8,000 and that less than 50 men were annually employed; and it was further emphasized that the Mexican government *also employed many more workers than the Carnegie* and that they also had a responsibility for the "lack" of "progress" in Piste.[12] Thus, while Steggerda was dismissed the next year and his rather indirect critique even softened up further and published

[11] See Castañeda (1995, 1996) for details on the Carnegie expenditures on archeological projects between 1923-1941. The source of information are Carnegie Proposed Budgets and Budget Reports, copies of the latter which were filed with the Mexican government.

[12] The Mexican government also sponsored archeological projects under its Monumentos Prehispánicos, which was later to become the INAH. The Mexican projects was lead by Erosa Peniche, who wrote the fist tourist guidebook to the modern ruins of Chichen Itza (1937).

by the Carnegie (1941), Redfield unabashadly wrote applauding propaganda for his sponsors, especially in the *Chan Kom Revisited* as already witnessed. For other reasons as well, the latter community and author became famous while the former author and community slipped into ethnographic oblivion.

The ironic point about this nonscandalous scandal, is that Steggerda himself provides evidence that contradicts his own assessment that the Carnegie did not have an impact or that it had a zero-degree impact. From historical hindsight, we can hardly imagine what Chichen, Piste and the whole of Yucatan would be without the Carnegie: Not only is it the foundation (both in a literal-knowledge and in a material sense) of all the archeology of the peninsula, but it in turn, the archeological network of factories of knowledge called "Maya ruins" is also the basic infrastructure of the tourist industry that emerged in Yucatan. The problem here is that we confuse historical relationships and think that tourism has had an impact on the Yucatec Maya world. What this essay indicates is rather that tourism is more the artifact of archeological science; it is anthropology in collusion with Maya communities, the politics of region and nation, and private capital that has built tourism on the modern ruins of Yucatan. Thus, to discuss the impact of tourism in Yucatan, and in Mexico generally, is to seriously and ahistorically confuse cause and effect.

We must give credit to Steggerda for raising the issue and remember that his asssement of zero-degree impact was a critique not only of the Carnegie but of acculturation: Here in this situation of culture-contact, the more "primitive" culture **did not** take on the cultural traits of the more "advanced society" as it *should have* and supposedly did elsewhere. Interestingly, this critique of anthropological intervention is solidly grounded in a colonialist framework (and gives us pause to reflect not only on the ethics but the science of our individual and disciplinary interventions): Piste should have progressed, should have learned to cultivate themselves from their extensive contact with the Americans at Chichen. That Steggerda perceived no impact on the inhabitants of Piste is directly linked to his attribution of indifference: This indifference amounts to a zero-degree culture and constitutes a zero-degree impact. This scandalous and anarchic difference was not simply threatening to the Carnegie and Redfield, but to the principal of rule governed behavior that underpins the modernist discourse of culture (Herbert, 1991). Thus, the imaginary topography of Yucatan that Redfield inscribed and which we reinvent in our ethnographic practices is composed on the erasure of the *kind of threat* that Piste represents. What Piste and my representation of this town threatens is the trope and paradigm of the Modernizing Maya that was initiated with Redfield, Villa Rojas, and Don Eustaquio Ceme's *Chan Kom*. The Maya, I suggest, are always already Modern. Or, are they previously already postmodern?

Zero degree culture: anthropological domestication of savagery and the savagery of anthropological domestication

> Maya studies, save for those carried out in distant villages by intrepid ethnographers, have been predominantly studies of *civilization*... Those regions and time periods that have been perceived, rightly or wrongly, to fall outside these criteria have been largely ignored. Remaining beyond the limits of the known and the readily apprehensible, they have simply not challenged our interest and imagination (Grant D. Jones, 1989: 3).

This parodic multiplication of teratological typologies —prepostmodern, postpeasant, exmo-

dern primitive— should suggest that all of these are indeed inadequate and that there is something fundamentally different that continues to escape the theorization of sociocultural forms. This that escapes, is not, I argue, the "real" "lived-in" cultural experience as an intersubjective reality versus a "cultural construct pattern"; nor is it an objectively "real" reality that is left undomesticated by anthropological theory, of both modernist and often enough postmodernist theory. Certainly, these qualities are difficult to represent, but what interests me is something different: Rather, what (also) escapes such typologies and theories of social forms is an analysis of the intervention of the anthropological apparatus within the study of the historical shaping and construction of both phenomenon as objects of study and as phenomemon that can become objects of study.

In conclusion, I suggest that the real scandal here, the really real issue, is that the political and ideological economy of the scientific study of a social entity was on the one hand concealed and on the other aggrandized. The creative camoflaging was not, in this case, conducted for the sake of a hard-core, positivistic objectivity: The scandal I perceive is ethical and more ours than Steggerda and Redfield's: Unlike them we tend no longer to ask *simultaneously* what are the ramifications of *both our individual and institutional interventions* in that mythical place called the field site. Today we tend to efface the political economy of our knowledge producing strategies. Despite claims for critical self reflexivity we tend not to include as part of our object of study the history of the transnational disciplinary interventions at both the institutional and ethnographer "levels" that are a part of the historical construction of the world and of the sociocultural phenomenon that become carved into objects for study. This is clearly a question of the politics of knowledge, but it is also an issue of ethics. Further, I suggest, it is not only an ethical question, *but an issue of error.* The objects of study are constituted as such because of the scientific apparatus that impinges on the slices of reality we investigate. Thus, the genealogy of our practices is part of that reality and must become a part of what we investigate.

Thus, I have argued that Piste is one of those zones of savagery, as Jones phrases it above, that have escaped study. It has escaped study, not only by Steggerda who could not fathom its cultural community, but by the anthropological community which has repressed it from the ethnographic record because of its hybridity. But, it is not just its hybridity that has conditioned its repression from anthropological memory-theory. It is also that the history of Piste embodies the irrefutable fact of the anthropological intervention in the world and how that transnational, politically motivated, and variously contested intervention has shaped the reality that would be its object of study. Thus, in turn, there is another zone of savagery that remains outside and beyond the anthropological domestication of cultural forms. This savagery is precisely the scriptural and political economy by which anthropology seeks to domesticate the world as a knowable, containable, controllable entity.[13] This is the savagery of anthropological domestication.

In conclusion, then, this leads me to state the implicit question to which I have sought to pro-

[13] The postcolonial movement has pushed us further towards this objective (see for example Asad, 1973 and 1991; Turner, 1991; Kearney, 1996; Escobar, 1991 and 1995). But generally speaking we have yet to reach the point where the anthropological study of the history of anthropology and its interventions is a necessary part of the normal agenda of any and all anthropological studies. As Kearney (1996: 1-4) states, a "fully anthropological study" of anthropological knowledge has yet to become a constant part of the normal research project.

vide a partial answer in this essay: How might themes emerge in the study of Yucatec Maya that are *not a rehearsal of the modernization of tradition script?*[14]

Acknowledgements. I thank Bruce Love and Eugene Anderson for the opportunity to formulate this synthesis of my research at the 1993 A.A.A. Meetings. I also thank Ana Luiza Izquierdo for suggesting submission of this piece to the Centro de Estudios Mayas and the opportunity to substantially augment the argument. Bob Carmack, Gary Gossen, Jim Collins, Michael Kearney, Joanne Rappaport, Kay Warren, Jeff Himpele, Stephen Tyler, Manuel González Oropeza, Mario Ruz, Jennifer Burtner, Antonella Fabri, Wendy Weiss, Laura Bunt, Jorge Klor de Alva, have all significantly contributed in different ways and times to the development of the analysis. Their aid in improving the text is fundamental to what it may offer the reader; however, I reserve the responsibility of its inadequacies.

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Journal Title: Estudios de cultura maya

Volume: 21
Issue:
Month/Year: 2000
Pages: 249-65

Article Author: Cataneda, Quetzil E

Article Title: Topography of Maya culture: on the political and scriptural economy of the 'modernizing Maya'.

Imprint: firstsearch.oclc.org:AnthropologyPlus

Call #: F1435 .A2 v.21 2000

Location: B-WELLS

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