

# *'It Was Simply Their Word'*

## Yucatec Maya PRInces in YucaPAN and the Politics of Respect

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*Abstract* ■ This essay builds on a critique of anthropological knowledge production of 'the Maya' in order to ethnographically analyze the party politics of Maya identity in Yucatán, Mexico. The central question that links these two parts of the article is a questioning of the politics and possibilities of respect of and for indigenous/subaltern peoples such as the Maya who continue to live under (neo-)colonialist conditions that create a wholesale lack of respect for colonized and subaltern peoples. The article is written in a schizophrenic voice of a doubly Maya-Non-Maya, anthropologist-postcolonialist who narrates a divinatory story of ethnographic realities as a post-Maya Chilam Balam (roughly, 'priest'). Exploring the trendiness of and fashion for 'being Maya', this ethnographic foray might seem to be an 'experimental ethnography' or even an 'auto-ethnography', but is instead just as much a critique of this new academic pretension as it is of the Mexican political system that manipulates 'Maya' identity.

*Keywords* ■ cultural beliefs ■ identity politics ■ Mexico ■ new social movements ■ state politics

Elizabeth II's visit . . . propitiated in Uxmal the encounter of two dynasties: the Windsor, which dates back, as the reigning house of England, to the beginning of the 18th century, and the Xiu, whose origins can be found in the night of time. (Menéndez Navarrete, 1975: 2)<sup>1</sup>

[During the dinner in Uxmal, Carlos Loret de Mola, former governor of Yucatán recalled that] . . . sitting with us at the main table were the wise [Eric] Thompson; the humble mayor of Santa Elena, the municipality to which Uxmal belongs, and his wife; and Gaspar Antonio Xiu, the last descendant of Tutul Xiu, the builder and King of Uxmal . . .

When the host . . . explains in English the presence of Gaspar Antonio Xiu as descendant of the Xiu dynasty, whose genealogical tree is in one of the works of Sylvanus G. Morley . . . the queen asks me, through a translator:

'How interesting. Is this strange and extraordinary Maya dynasty really authentic?'

I look at the translator and I say to her, to her amazement:

'Say to her majesty that it is very curious, but Xiu asked me, a little before the

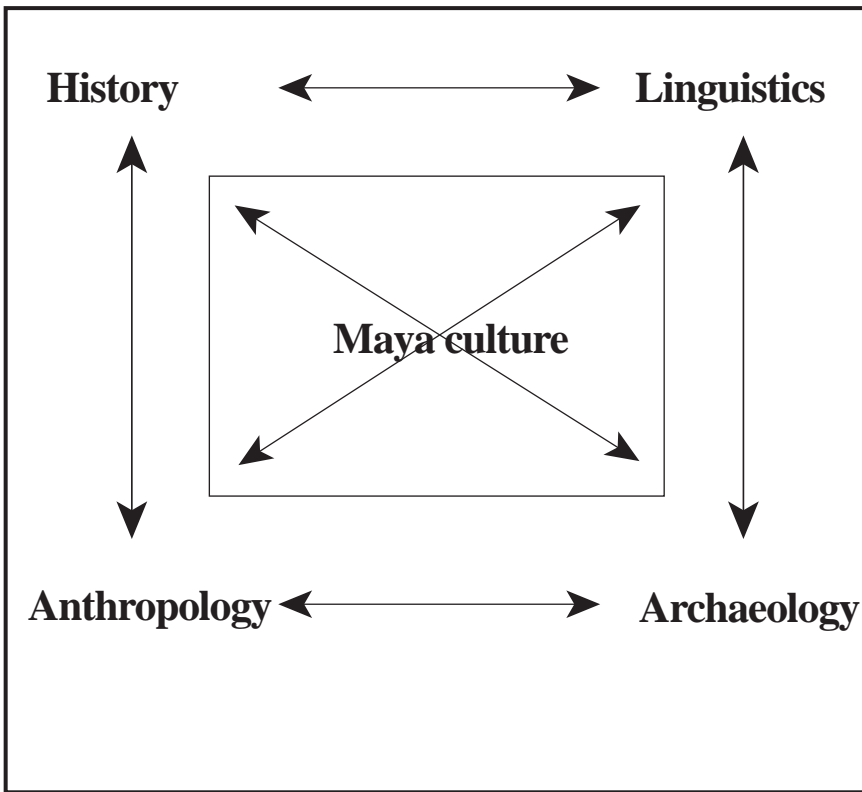
dinner, the same question about her dynasty: whether it is really authentic. The Maya are skeptical . . . also.' (Loret de Mola, 1978: 271–2)

The blood relationship of the Xiu of 1975 with the constructors of the majestic buildings of Uxmal . . . is not a legend, or a lyric or imaginative episode in order to give another pleasing and nice aspect to the visit of Elizabeth II. (Menéndez Navarrete, 1975: 2)

I am bordering on schizophrenia. I 'meet' myself in the midst of many I's that are watching me. They transform me one by one and all at once as if they were a strange chorus of the unknown and unwanted. . . . Yet that I desire. . . . The endless acquisition or imposition of I's is a fabulous nightmare. . . . Thankfully, those I's are not things, only temporary points of encounter and suture in the ephemeral quincunx. . . .

In anthropology books that I have read, the quincunx is described 'geometrically, as a rectangular plane in the center of which grew an enormous *ceiba* tree, which supported the skies, the heavens, together with the other four mythical trees, born from each corner of the same plane' (Montoliu Villar, 1987: 139–40). This rectangular plane is conceived in Zinacantan, in Highland Chiapas, as recounted by Evon Vogt (1970), like a large quincunx<sup>2</sup> of four sides at right angles; it is materially represented by the rugged limestone terrain and the volcanic mountains that touch the clouds, and is named by Zinacantecos as the Balamil, their world. The center 'of the upper surface of this world is the "navel" – a low, rounded mound of earth located in the ceremonial center of Zinacantan' (Vogt, 1970: 17). In the Popol Vuh,<sup>3</sup> it is on this plane that the gods created creation, including Earth and the People of Corn. Anthropologists call these people 'Maya'.

As a Yucatec Maya, I do not know the language and untranslated meaning of this K'ichee' Maya text, and so I, too, as an anthropologist, like other anthropologists must rely on translations in Spanish and English made by the experts. According to the Popol Vuh, the gods made three creations that failed; on their fourth attempt the gods created the quincunx – the Earth and humans. Apparently the Maya, as part of creation, were made by the word of their gods: '*It was simply their word that brought it [the Earth] forth*' (Tedlock, 1985: 72, emphasis added). Later, the gods found corn in the Earth to make humans and then blew their breath into the corn-humans to bring them alive. Dennis Tedlock notes that the authors of the Popol Vuh gave a special importance to dialogue in order to differentiate this 'Maya' way of thinking from the Christian monological creation. However, the gods dialogue among themselves, first, to figure out how to create quincunx and humans. This, it seems to me, is similar to the way anthropologists dialogue between themselves to figure out *what* Maya culture is, *who* is Maya and *why*. Yes, there was dialogue: but only after the gods created the Maya did they talk to the 'Maya' they created. And then the 'Maya' *talked back*.



**Figure 1** The quincunx

Sometimes I hear voices. I think I am in that quincunx that anthropologists describe as ‘the’ Maya (cosmos, culture, identity, religion, race, milpa . . .). Sometimes I think I am talking to the gods, but my friends at 7-Eleven in the *plaza* of Mérida tell me they are only anthropologists. Sometimes I think I am talking to an anthropologist and it is just myself; but I *am* an anthropologist. Sometimes I talk to other Maya in the Walmart on Paseo Montejo – and it happens to be myself. Sometimes I do talk to myself, but I do not know who I am! Sometimes I am a Maya and sometimes I am a post-Maya. I am also a Mayanist or *mayísta* and at other times a post-Mayanist. . . . I am a sociologist, Indígena, anthropologist, Mexican, Yucateco and none of these things: ‘I’ am vulnerable. I *observe* my Self as a ‘vulnerable observed’ (Behar, 1996; Castillo Cocom, 2000; Trueba, 1999). These identities ‘meet themselves’ in what Stuart Hall calls a ‘point of suture’ (Gupta and Ferguson, 2001: 13). At this point, this moment of suture, *there is respect*, respect among these multiple identities – and this

respect is *me*. Unfortunately, in conditions of postcolonial hybridity and postmodern difference, this suture of multiplicity is often not respected. There is need for respect. But as Cintron asks, 'How does one create respect under conditions of little or no respect?' (1997: x).

Right now, right here, I encounter myself as a Chilam Balam (that is, 'jaguar spokesman' or scribal priest of each town). I would like to say I am a *h'méen* ('shaman'), but there are already many anthropologists that are Maya shamans. My *zastún* tells me who they are and provokes me to publish the list, but the editor tells me the journal has a limit on word length. . . . Moreover, I respect those anthropologists for assuming the burden of becoming 'doers' or *h'méen*. In any case, I know of none that are Chilam Balam.

In my *zastún* (that is, a crystal divination stone used by the *h'méen* or 'doer' to divine the present) there is a quincunx that connects wires, not to the *ceiba* Trees of Life and Balamils, but to scientific disciplines, such as anthropology, history, linguistics and archaeology. These wires entangle the Maya at the center of this creation. In my *zastún* I see that the wires are words, discourses and dialogues, and these anthropologists, historians, linguists and archaeologists are talking to the essential Maya they created.<sup>4</sup> I see the gods crying, begging me to tell you this story of another creation, a fifth creation. Thousands of years after the gods created the world, marked its periphery, and mankind was created from maize, other 'deities' – anthropologists, archaeologists, sociologists, linguists, business people, the tourist industry, the state, and politicians – created notions of 'the Maya' and 'Maya culture'.<sup>5</sup> This is the fifth creation (Castillo Cocom, n.d.).

In this divination, based on the quincunx, this *relato* (retelling a telling), or *dzikbal* in Yucatec Maya, will recount the appropriation of the anthropological creation of the Maya by some individuals who have been able to access the inner circle of political power in Yucatán, Mexico, during the last 30 years of the PRI regime, in order to convert themselves into Maya politicians. They are Maya princes. Here follow the fifth words, the fifth eloquence. It is the continuation of the first words, the first eloquence that Tedlock (1985: 75) translates. Here, then, is the divination of the two Maya princes that are twins, not blood brothers, but twins of destiny. This is the *relato*, *dzikbal*, the fifth eloquence of the future of Maya politics and Maya politicians under the PAN regime in Yucatán that began in the fall of 2001.

In this prognostication of the present, the divinatory beans have a strange form. They are: Maya texts; newspaper stories and cafe gossip; *National Geographic* articles; comics and cartoons; conversations with friends who temporarily encounter themselves, as happens to me as well, in a 'Maya' point of identification; my work as ethnographer; and my imagination as *postmayista* – that is, as someone who finds it fashionable to be Maya and to study the Maya in an epoch when the essential notion of being Maya is being deconstructed (see Castañeda, 2004; Fallaw, 2004). This story is not only divination, but also about imagining the things that are about to

come, to be created from an illusion, the quincunx, and that which has always been there.

### **Between the Maya dream and the PRI reality**

How do Maya politicians self-appropriate the identities created by the gods and other 'deities'? How are they simultaneously the People of the Corn and well-connected politicians legitimated by the modern social and political system? Using a dual-faceted argument of both genealogical and cultural descent, Gaspar Antonio Xiu and Maximino Yam Cocom internalized the quincunx, advertised themselves as Maya and, in turn, sold themselves to the PRI. Most importantly, they used these appropriations to gain individual power and prestige rather than a voice for those they represent. While they claimed they were representing the Maya people to the political system, they were being used by the PRI to represent the party's ideas to the Maya people. In this section, I first present two organizations designed to promote Maya culture and the well-being of the indigenous people. Next, we see how these organizations fit within the PRI's political agendas, specifically in the context of Yucatán. Finally, I question the viability of these organizations, shedding light on a larger issue: are there Maya political movements in Yucatán?

### **¿Chocolate o café?**

The noise of the traffic outside the Café Exprés, one of the most traditional coffee shops in Mérida, was intense. It was about seven in the morning, and the politicians, daily customers of the Exprés, were making a commotion equal to that of the traffic outside. *Y no era para menos* (And this was to be expected). For on the previous day, 4 January 2000, Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón, a prominent member of the PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*)<sup>6</sup> and self-proclaimed descendant of the rulers of Uxmal,<sup>7</sup> had sparked a major scandal during a legislative session of the Yucatec State Congress. Xiu Cachón had taken the stand and stated that the memory of the revered, late socialist governor of Yucatán, Felipe Carrillo Puerto,<sup>8</sup> had been defamed by members of the PAN (*Partido Acción Nacional*)<sup>9</sup> during the annual 3 January grave-side ceremony held to commemorate the late governor.

During this ceremony, everyone, according to tradition and protocol – as soon as the Master of Ceremonies mentioned Felipe Carrillo Puerto's name and also the names of all the other persons who were executed with him in 1924 – was supposed to shout: '*¡Asesinado por la Reacción!*' ('Murdered by the Reactionary Faction!'). However, according to newspaper reports (*Diario de Yucatán*, 2000), the Master of Ceremonies had

mistakenly said: ‘¡Asesinado por la Revolución!’ (‘Murdered by the Revolution!’). Because of this slip-up, part of the audience shouted: ‘¡Asesinado por la Revolución!’ (*Diario de Yucatán*, 2000).

Xiu Cachón bluntly stated that the *panistas* (members of the political opposition party PAN) took advantage of that confusion with the intention of slandering the memory of a politician best known as a defender of the interests of the underprivileged classes, especially the Maya, and as a foe of the major capitalists of his time. For him, the whole situation was an attack not only on Carrillo Puerto, but also on the contemporary Maya and the PRI.

In his speech, Xiu Cachón asserted that *La Reacción* and *La Casta Divina* murdered Carrillo Puerto.<sup>10</sup> Both have strong ties with *El Partido Liberal* (the Liberal Party). For him, this party was the PAN’s predecessor; therefore, the *panistas* are their political heirs (*Diario de Yucatán*, 2000). In the past, besides Carrillo Puerto, they had also massacred Jacinto Canek<sup>11</sup> and countless Maya in the Caste War. At present, he stated, the *panistas* are the oppressors of the Maya.<sup>12</sup>

During the ensuing days, the media feverishly covered the responses of the *Sociedad Yucateca* to his accusations. Some collaborators of the *Diario de Yucatán* wrote that Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón, ‘seems to be keen on being the leader of another Caste War’ (Fernández Tappan, 2000a), or that he had made an ‘abrupt indelicate remark’ (Fernández Tappan, 2000b). He was referred to, among other epithets, as a ‘loose-mouthed congressman’, as a ‘politician of the past’ and as a ‘grotesque history professor’ (Aguilar Albornóz, 2000).

Returning to the original scene at the Café Expéress, now without politicians, the regular atmosphere had been restored to the coffee shop. A *gabachero* (a contemporary Yucatec Don Juan with eyes solely fixed on the conquest of foreign women) had installed himself at a table near a blonde tourist with a camera hanging on her chest and a bottle of purified water in her hand. At the same time, a *billetero* (someone who sells lottery tickets) and a performer of magic tricks had walked in as the waiters chatted to one another in Yucatec Maya, mocking the alleged Maya leader and other politicians. The quotidian was back.

A few days after this scene, back in my hometown Xocenpich, I was talking with my friend Francisco. As we drank cups of hot chocolate, we spoke about what had happened at the State Congress and the events that had taken place at Café Expéress. Francisco asked me: ‘Gaspar who? Who is Gaspar?’ ‘He is a Maya who has inserted himself in the state government.’ ‘A Maya? Where is he from?’ ‘I think that he is from Oxcutzcab [a town in southern Yucatán].’ Francisco touched his face and, seemingly unimpressed, as if the conversation no longer interested him, looked at me and uttered ‘Hmmm . . .’, as though he were trying to exhibit his boredom. He changed the subject and began talking about his dog and the many puppies to which she had recently given birth. After a pause, he told me

that he had just bought a color television, a Goldstar, and that he wanted to tell me about a program that he had recently watched:

In this program they showed a picture of a man known as Subcomandante Marcos, a man who wears a mask. They say on TV that he is fighting for the Indigenous people. Personally, I like to see men wearing masks, but without guns, like in the wrestling fights. . . . My favorite wrestling star was the late Santo, El Enmascarado de Plata [The Saint, the Man with the Silver Mask]. He didn't have a gun, but Subcomandante Marcos does, and it's a full-size one!

Do you know why the wrestler did not have a gun? Because his weapon was his mask. . . . Hey! By the way, this here Gaspar, does he have a gun, or a mask?

'Hmmm . . .' I said, while I was scratching my arm, trying to think of the 'correct' answer, but I realized that the correct answer was unattainable. It was not the first time that I had found myself unable to answer some of the questions that had arisen in the conversations that I had with people of Xocempich. Initially, when I could not offer answers, I would worry. I believe that this is one of the problems that many anthropologists face. Sometimes we see ourselves as a sort of cultural 'guide', taking on the mission of giving 'tours' in the social and cultural realms. We become like tourist guides at an archaeological site, who always have the 'correct' answer to any question and, when they do not, they invent one. To have 'the' answers is an inherent part of our profession. Yet, as time has passed, I have come to understand that lack of answers helps to establish, re-establish and continue dialogue.

Speaking with Francisco does not consist solely in emitting verbal sounds, but also in listening, and remaining silent. But, more than just speaking, listening and keeping silent, we have to find together the inter-connection between our personal histories, or stories, and their contexts – although, at times, it seems that such contexts are simply not there. For example, what connections could there possibly be between a Goldstar TV, a political scandal, Marcos, and a dog and her puppies? Or between a mask, El Santo, Enmascarado de Plata and a cup of chocolate? I do not know, but for me, the chocolate seemed somehow sweeter.

Events like the Xiu Cachón affair bring up the question of politics, Maya politicians and identities in Yucatán. For Xiu Cachón there is a clear-cut division of identities in Yucatán: Maya and *Dzul*.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, his political agenda is based on historical and cultural foundations. Hence his discourse is simultaneously ethnocentrically benevolent and ethnocentrically reverted (Spivak, 1999). In this context, I have been asking myself: Who is Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón? Who does he represent? The Maya? The PRI? I ask myself the same questions about Maximino Yam Cocom. Both are Maya princes.

The royal lineage of Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón and Maximino Yam Cocom could be traced in two of the five dimensions of the quincunx: history and archaeology. Both claim to be descendants of the Xiu and the

Cocom families that, along with the Itzá, the Cupul and the Canul, arrived in the Yucatán Peninsula around AD 1000 – or so say the archaeologists! These families were Putún-Maya or Nahua-Maya. During the early Maya Post-classic (AD 1000–1250) the Xiu ruled over Uxmal. During the late Post-classic (AD 1250–1424) the Cocom family ruled over Mayapan, the dominant center of western Yucatán after the 13th-century fall of Chichén Itzá (Bartolomé, 1988).

Gaspar Xiu Cachón and Maximino Yam Cocom, in order to access the inner circle of political power during the last 30 years of the PRI regime, appropriated the archaeological, historical and ‘cultural’ evidence verbalized in the quincunx. They appropriated for themselves the title of royal inheritors of the ‘Maya’ civilization. After that they constructed their political agenda, based on the discourse over their aristocratic past, and reclaimed the right to represent ‘the Maya’ to the *príista* regime. Ironically, their act of appropriation took place *after* the PRI crowned them as princes. Their appropriation was preceded by an act of imposition. The system granted them their prince status so that Xiu Cachón and Yam Cocom could be utilized to justify not only the system’s *política indigenista* (indigenous policies), but also to utilize both of them as political pawns against their political enemies. The newfangled Maya *PRInces* of the system were used not only against the opposition parties but also, as we will see, against the various factions of the PRI itself.

The construction of the royal identities for Gaspar Xiu Cachón and Maximino Yam Cocom, performed by the PRI, implied a well-crafted tour of the quincunx. Simultaneously it also implied a counter-tour of both Maya politicians to travel on a map that was already previously created for them. In doing so they reverted the system by reclaiming and gaining access to the inner *príista* political power. The way that the quincunx was utilized by the PRI implied an act of convincing Xiu Cachón and Yam Cocom that, because of their past, they had a manifest destiny: to be the voice of the Maya. In convincing them, they had to utilize something known in Yucatán as the *Cultivo Yucateco*.

### **PRInces cultivados: ‘It was simply their word’**

Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón is known in Yucatec political circles as El Príncipe Xiu (Prince Xiu). More than a royal title, this is actually just a nickname, an *apodo*. He was nicknamed Príncipe Xiu by the late governor Carlos Loret de Mola (1970–6) because of his Xiu last name (see epigraphs above). Although Xiu Cachón is related to the descendants of the Xiu family who nowadays live in Oxcutzcab, Yucatán, he is not a prince. In recounting his genealogy, Xiu Cachón (1986) admits that the inheritor of the Xiu dynasty was Doña Felipa Xiu Quijada, his grandmother. Doña Felipa, Queen of the Xiu, had four children: Nicomedes (the firstborn and



therefore inheritor of the Xiu dynasty), who married Fernanda Uc; José Agapito (father of Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón), who married Amira Cachón; José María and Guillermo.

Consequently, Don Nicomedes is a *Halach Uinic* (king) and his children are princes. Hence, Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón is a cousin of the inheritors of the Xiu nobility. Although his father is José Agapito, his mother was not the legal wife, Dona Amira, but Agapito's lover. As Maximino Yam Cocom, says: 'he is a bastard' – a pretender to nobility. Maximino Yam Cocom is also known as *Príncipe Maya* in the political arena because of his Cocom last name (although he does not present himself as such).

Nevertheless, most of the time, his political enemies, especially the media, use his nickname, as they do that of Xiu Cachón, to make fun of him. For instance, Felix Rubio Villanueva, a political analyst aligned with the PAN – in writing about a 1999 incident at the State Congress where congressmen Xiu Cachón offended one of his female colleagues by calling her names – sarcastically said that although Xiu Cachón thinks of himself as a worthy inheritor of the Xiues, he demonstrated his lack of 'refinement' with his attitude and the prosaic language that he used in offending his colleague (Rubio Villanueva, 1999: 4). He made this charge of impropriety against him, writing:

If Tutul Xiu [the builder and King of Uxmal] had listened to the ignominious way that Gaspar insulted his colleague; if he only had observed the awful behavior of Gaspar, he would be ashamed to have descendants like him. . . . [Although] Xiu Cachón is an Indio<sup>14</sup> of Oxcutzcab and a poor lackey of the *prista* system . . . he feels that he is a noble Indian who takes pride in his race, a race that he has betrayed . . . (Rubio Villanueva, 1999: 4–5)

Rubio Villanueva went on to say that it is not Xiu Cachón's fault that he believes that he is a real prince, but that of the corrupted system that created and educated individuals like him (see Fallaw, 2004; Restall, 2004). Xiu Cachón, he stated, is a product of the infamous *Cultivo Yucateco*.

This is, in general terms, a joke planned by a group of people (Roche Reyes, 2003). It consists of making a person believe in something that is far from real. For example, if someone is not handsome at all, the group makes him believe the opposite: that he is indeed an extraordinarily striking and handsome man. To assure him that he possesses such qualities the group arranges dates for him with ladies who have been instructed about the plan; they will tell him that there are several ladies interested in having affairs with him; they will send love letters and pictures; and so forth. Little by little the individual will start behaving as if he is God's gift to women. Every time he gets a date or when a lady 'flirts' with him, the group will congratulate and praise him. Nevertheless, as soon as he leaves the group everybody laughs at his naivete. These processes take a long time, dedication and imagination. It is a joke that never ends. In Yucatán there are several known cases of individuals who died thinking they were, for example, the

best bullfighters, brilliant journalists and writers, superb singers and actors, great lovers and Casanovas, extraordinary athletes and boxers, chefs and gourmets, political scientists and politicians, and anthropologists among others.

In this context, for Rubio Villanueva, as for many sectors of Yucatec, and especially Mérida, society, Gaspar Xiu Cachón is someone who has been *cultivado* as prince. His belief traces 'from the epoch in which Carlos Loret de Mola *lo cultivó* [wound him-up] at Uxmal's dinner with Queen Elizabeth II, when he presented him as the last inheritor of the Xiu dynasty . . . ' (Rubio Villanueva, 1999: 5; see epigraphs).

Rubio Villanueva, by taking a full excursion throughout the five dimensions of the quincunx (history, linguistics, anthropology, Maya culture, and archaeology), diminished and humiliated a Maya politician and, most importantly, a person, regardless of whether he is Maya or not, whether he is or is not a prince, and even whether he is or is not a bastard. The problem here is that Rubio Villanueva's quincuncial interpretation lacks respect – the same respect that he was demanding from Xiu Cachón. Nevertheless, how is it possible to talk and 'create respect under conditions of little or no respect' (Cintron, 1997: x)? This question lies at the root of understanding the inherent problems that exist in terms such as *política mexicana*, *política yucateca*, *política indigenista*, and *política Maya* and *políticos Mayas*. Most importantly, the essential quincunx is an invention that oppresses the subaltern people.

### Maya PRInces and the 'League of MayaPAN'

Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón and Maximino Yam Cocom rose to the highest level of political prominence in Yucatán. Both served in the State Congress, and in state and federal agencies. Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón has served as state congressman three times, Maximino Yam Cocom once only. Maximino Yam Cocom was Secretary of the *Departamento de Asuntos Agrarios del Estado de Yucatán*, under the government of Víctor Manzanilla Schaffer (1988–91), my 'uncle's' political *padrino* (godfather). Moreover, Manzanilla Schaffer appointed his protégé as a *diputado* (congressman) for the 52nd *Legislatura de Yucatán* (1990–2). Maximino Yam Cocom also rose to the top levels of political prominence in the Mexican Republic: in 1998 he was appointed as Secretary of the *Dirección de Asuntos Indígenas del Comité Ejecutivo Nacional del PRI* (see Table 1).

Under the umbrella of the PRI apparatus they created Maya organizations such as the *Consejo Supremo Maya* and the *Alianza Maya*. Maximino Yam Cocom founded the former in 1988 and Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón the latter in 1993. The stated goals of both organizations were to mediate between Yucatec Maya and state agencies aiming to channel state material resources to the Maya.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 1** Maya Members of State Congress

	<i>Gaspar Xiu Cachón</i>	<i>Maximino Yam Cocom</i>
<i>Governors</i>		
Carlos Loret de Mola Mediz	1971–3	
Víctor Manzanilla Schaffer	1988–90	
Víctor Cervera Pacheco	1998–2001	
Víctor Manzanilla Schaffer		1990–2
Dulce María Sauri Riancho		

The *Consejo Supremo Maya* had a semi-official character and the *Alianza Maya* was organized as an *Asociación Civil*.<sup>16</sup> However, both organizations depended economically and politically on the PRI. Therefore, they had to negotiate their interests within the complex terrain of the PRI's political clientage and state corporatism. Furthermore, the PRI compromised the organizations' leaders by co-optation and by manipulating historic-political rivalries among them.

The enmity between Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón and Maximino Yam Cocom could be traced in the quincunx: history, archaeology, anthropology, linguistics and culture. The Xiu and Cocom families – before, during and after the Conquest – were constantly involved in episodes of wars, rage, hate, distrust, betrayals and revenge. On one hand, as mentioned before, during the early Post-classic the Xiu ruled over Uxmal. On the other, during the late Post-classic the Cocom ruled over Mayapan. The Xiu and their allies destroyed Mayapan in 1441.

Maximino Yam Cocom is a family friend who I call 'uncle' and he calls me 'nephew'. But as his 'nephew' I am not a Maya prince (just a wanna-be) – I have talked several times about the enmity between the Cocom and Xiu families, and especially about the destruction of Mayapan. For him it is a catharsis. He gets anxious, furious and fuming. He has told me that:

The destruction of Mayapan by the Xiu was something horrendous, atrocious and terrifying. They massacred our family. When I say our family I am including you because you are a Cocom as well. The Xiu killed our grandparents and grandmothers, our uncles and aunts, our brothers and sisters, our cousins and nephews. . . . It was genocide! They slaughtered them all with the exception of two that were out of Yucatán at the time: Cocom Cat who was in Honduras and the other, I do not remember his name, was in Tabasco. Eventually they come back and took revenge by killing several Xiu princes. Oh! A Cocom never forgets! A Cocom never forgives! I am a Cocom; therefore as long as I live I will neither forget nor forgive the Xiu. You too, as a Cocom always remember this: the Xiues are your enemies!

Gaspar Antonio Xiu remembers that event as well. In his book *Usos y Costumbres de los Indios de Yucatán* (1986) he indicates that on 23 January 1541 the *Halach Uinic* (king) of Maní, accompanied by 13 chiefs of the province of the Xiu, met for the first time with the Spaniards in *T'ho*

(contemporary Mérida). In March 1541, the conquerors sent the same procession to a mission of peace in the territory of Sotuta, ruled by the *Halach Uinic* Nachi Cocom, the

... ancient enemy of the Tutul Xiu, who, after receiving them with mock friendliness and felicitations ... invited them to a place called Oztmal. ... There, he splendidly entertained them for three days and nights, and on the fourth day ... during the farewell banquet, in a cruel and cowardly way, he betrayed and murdered all of them with the exception of Ah Kin Chi. Nachi Cocom extracted Ah Kin Chi's eyes with an arrow and smeared salt in his wounds, and then led him to the outskirts of Maní. There, Nachi Cocom ordered him to tell his king what had happened to them and, most importantly, to tell him that this was how he was paying back and avenging the evil that the Xiu had caused to his forebears. ... Here is the list of murdered princes: Ah Napot Xiu, Son of Tutul Xiu; Ah Kin Chi, Lieutenant of Tutul Xiu'; Yi ban Can, Governor of Tekít; Pacab, Governor of Oxtutzcab; Kán Caba, Governor of Panaché; Kupul, Governor of Sacalum; Nahuat, Governor of Teabo; Uluac Chan Cahuich – it does not mention where he was Governor [comment in original text]; Zit Couat, Governor of Chumayel; Tucuchm, Governor of Mama; Xul Cunché, Governor of Tipikal; Ahau Tuyub, Governor of Muna; Zon Ceh, Governor of Pencuyut. (Xiu Cachón, 1986: i–ii)

In this way, Xiu emphasizes the gravity and extent of the violence inflicted upon his family. Maybe a 'Cocom never forgets', but neither, apparently, does a Xiu. And surely, as we will now see, neither does the PRI. But my mother, when I asked her about the centuries of bitter hatred between our families of Cocom and Xiu, did not remember anything. In fact, she asked me to explain who the Xiu were. When I finished she said, '¡Wow, *nunca supe de eso!*' (I never knew about that).

I was disappointed. For all these years I have studied the Maya and anthropologists who tell about this great and mythic struggle, I discovered that this collective memory was not imprinted in oral tradition passed down generation to generation, but was instead printed in anthropology books, the *Diario de Yucatán* and history textbooks. I read again Xiu Cachón's dedication to his book, *Usos y Costumbres de los Indios de Yucatán*, where he traces his royal genealogy as prince. He dedicates the book 'To the historians of white race and Mayan heart, Sylvanus G. Morley, J. Eric Thompson, Antonio Mediz Bolio, Alfredo Barrera Vásquez' (1986: 3).

Maximinio *no se queda atrás* (won't let himself get behind). He told me that his grandfather told him:

When you are in front of a Xiu, you must look upfront, look to your sides, look behind you because you never know when a Xiu is going to betray you. They are traitors by nature; they carry it in their blood. All you have to understand is the meaning of the word 'xiu'. 'Xiu' means, as you know, 'bad weed'. As bad weed it is a burden for us, the Maya. Why? Because we are Corn People, and if you are to grow you have to pull out the bad weed so you can grow.

I wonder now whether he learned this from his grandfather or when he was in the indigenista school becoming a *maestro rural* (rural schoolteacher) for

the SEP (*Secretaría de Educación Pública*). Both politicians went to school together.

As in the past, under the last 30 years of the PRI administration, Maximino Yam Cocom's *Consejo Supremo Maya* and Gaspar Xiu Cachón's *Alianza Maya* were allied with opposing factions within the PRI. While both Maya politicians have been directors of the *Consejo Supremo Maya* under different PRI governors, only Gaspar Xiu Cachón has been the president of the *Alianza Maya*. Once, Yam Cocom was its president under the administration of governor Víctor Manzanilla Schaffer (1988–91). Xiu Cachón was its chair under the governorship of Dulce María Sauri Riancho (1991–4) and during Víctor Cervera Pacheco's second term (1995–2001) (see Table 2).

The political shift, from being president or not of the *Consejo Supremo Maya* was a consequence of the roles that Maximino Yam Cocom and Gaspar Xiu Cachón played as political pawns of opposite sectors within the PRI. For instance, the late governor Carlos Loret de Mola used Xiu Cachón to undermine the political power of Víctor Cervera Pacheco who was, at that time, a federal congressman. Eventually, former governors Víctor Cervera Pacheco and Dulce María Sauri Riancho used Xiu Cachón again, but against Víctor Manzanilla Schaffer.<sup>17</sup> The charges against Manzanilla Schaffer implied that he had forgotten the indigenous people and thus he was not working to solve issues of marginalization, education and social services. Xiu Cachón was used as a pawn precisely because he was the figure who verbalized the political standpoint of Cervera Pacheco. His was

**Table 2** Governors of Yucatán, 1970 to the present

<i>Governor</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Political party</i>	<i>Notable aspects of the term of governorship</i>
Carlos Loret de Mola Mediz	1970–6	PRI	Normal period, six years
Francisco Luna Kan	1976–82	PRI	Normal period, six years
Graciliano Alpuche Pinzón	1982–4	PRI	Partial two-year term, removed from office
Víctor Cervera Pacheco	1984–8	PRI	Appointed replacement, four-year term
Víctor Manzanilla Schaffer	1988–91	PRI	Half term; removed from office in third year
Dulce María Sauri Riancho	1991–4	PRI	Appointed replacement, three-year term
Federico Granja Ricalde	1994–5	PRI	Interim governor, one year 'adjustment' term
Víctor Cervera Pacheco	1995–2001	PRI	Second term in office
Patricio Patrón Laviada	2001–7	PAN	Attempt by Víctor Cervera Pacheco to retain office for a third term, in defiance of the Constitution

the public face that vocalized Cervera Pacheco's political interests, specifically aimed toward becoming the next governor of Yucatán. By doing so, Xiu Cachón was positioned as a figure open to attack. Similarly, Maximino Yam Cocom was used by Víctor Manzanilla Schaffer to undermine the political power of Víctor Cervera Pacheco, specifically by manipulating the antagonism between Xiu Cachón and Yam Cocom. These antagonisms were exacerbated by the local press, which drew the attention of popular audiences.

In this context, when the PRI faction – with whom the *Consejo* was allied – was in power, the *Consejo* and its leader at the time became the 'voice' of the Maya. Conversely, when the *Alianza priísta* allies were in charge, the *Consejo* was out of the political game and the *Alianza* was in. Thus, one after the other, these organizations were granted political power by the state as a state agency. First, Maximino Yam Cocom then Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón emerged as the leader of the Maya. On each political change of *priísta* leadership (e.g. change in the internal factions that controlled the state government administration), either the *Consejo* or the *Alianza* was dissolved or made less politically active in favor of the other. In short, both organizations and both leaders were at the mercy of the PRI, serving more as representatives of the party to the Maya rather than representatives of the Maya to the state. Just like in a *dzikbal* (i.e. conversation, talk) about the quincunx, they were there and then not there. Wait . . . isn't this the dramatic phrase about the Itzá at the Light and Sound Show of Chichén? 'Did they come or were they here?' ('¿*Vinieron o estaban?*'). This is collective memory.

The *Consejo Supremo Maya* and the *Alianza Maya*, instead of serving Maya interests, were, in reality, seeking to keep the Maya in line and supporting the PRI-dominated state. While the PRI appeared to be proponents of the Maya and their interests, the true goal of the party was to ensure the support of the Maya for the PRI through a multi-stranded patron–client network embedded in state agencies and programs. There was little opportunity for the creation of programs that would serve Maya interests under Maya control. While the PRI held political power and thus maintained control over the disbursement of state resources, Maya politicians, like their non-Maya colleagues, had to work within the labyrinth of the PRI structure to have any hope of success.

In this context, the PRI discourse based on the centuries-old Cocom–Xiu rivalry is an unfortunate continuity in Maya history that spins forward through time: the past mirrors the present. For myself, as Chilam Balam, I understand this melodrama from two perspectives: as an essentialist and as a *postmayísta*. From the essentialist point of view, this is a primordial example of cyclical history, one in which the past becomes a mirror of the present, as opposed to the linear perspective of pragmatic history in which the present becomes the time mirror of the past.<sup>18</sup>

From my *postmayísta* point of view, I would have to say that the actual story that I am narrating, whether cyclical or linear, is an event constructed

on the model of the quincunx. Hence, whatever way the PRI, Gaspar Antonio Xiu or Maximino Yam Cocom ‘tours this map’, it is a matter of their choice. As Chilam Balam, I am only narrating a ‘temporary’ history, one that strives to establish the interconnectivity between the fashion for, and trendiness of, being Maya and the political process. To say that history is a mirror of the past is only a way of accepting, as in the past, glass beads and worthless goods cunningly exchanged for gold, lives, creeds, lands – *toda la vaina* . . . the whole kit and caboodle. It is a way of compensating for the horrendous losses accrued in a struggle for the right to exist with basic human dignity.

### Waking up to reality: Maya political movements?

Yucatán, like all Mexico, confronts a new political era when the President of the Republic and the Governor of the State are both from the PAN. Politically, everything has changed, yet everything remains the same. We can see this through the following circumstances: the analogous but strengthened neoliberal model, the unchanged socio-economic conditions, the perpetuity of similar politicians with indistinguishable political promises and slogans:

President Fox’s	‘¡Hoy! ¡Hoy!’	‘Today! Today!’
Zedillo’s	‘ <i>Bienestar para tu Familia</i> ’	‘Good for your Family’
Salinas’	‘ <i>¡Que Hable México!</i> ’	‘That México Speaks!’
de la Madrid’s	‘ <i>Renovación Moral</i> ’	‘Moral Renewal’
Portillo’s	‘ <i>La Solución Somos Todos</i> ’	‘We All Are the Solution’
Echeverría’s	‘ <i>¡Arriba y Adelante!</i> ’	‘Up and Forward!’

Most troublesome is the continuing lack of respect for the vast majority of Mexicans, especially for the subordinated ones and specifically for indigenous people. Consequently, how is it possible to ‘create respect under conditions of little or no respect’ (Cintron, 1997: x)?

This question lies at the root of understanding the inherent problems that exist in terms such as *política indigenista del estado mexicano* (Mexican

**Table 3 Presidents of Mexico, since 1964**

<i>President</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Political party</i>
Gustavo Díaz Ordaz	1964–70	PRI
Luis Echeverría Álvarez	1970–6	PRI
José López Portillo	1976–82	PRI
Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado	1982–8	PRI
Carlos Salinas de Gortari	1988–94	PRI
Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León	1994–2000	PRI
Vicente Fox Quezada	2000–6	PAN

indigenous policies) in the current official discourse of the Mexican state or 'Maya politics', in the essentializing discourse of certain academics (who, in effect, are doubly essentializing both 'Maya' and 'politics'). I would further include the term 'indigenous movements' along the same lines of critique, as this language – though it might apply to the Maya people of Guatemala – has no relevance when applied to Yucatán.

I highlight these particular terms to make what might seem at first glance to be an unfashionably conservative or even retrograde claim – that the Yucatec Maya have no politics. Here is the reality: the majority of Maya people have no voice in the *política indigenista del estado mexicano*, a centralist bureaucratic discourse that emanates from México City. In terms of indigenous movements, there are no large-scale associations in Yucatán centered on an ethnic identity of 'Maya'. Further, one is likely to find a de facto rejection of the term 'indigenous' itself in communities throughout Yucatán. When Maya go to the polls, they are identifying, like other Mexicans, as *priista* or *panista*, not as Maya.

Let me try to explain why I claim that the Maya have no political movements. And for this, I return to my role as Chilam Balam. When the Chilam Balams before me described the world created by the gods, they represented it as a quincunx, as I described above. Nevertheless, is it not possible that they indeed knew the world was round? Perhaps they did, but their vision of the world was like a quincunx. When I say that the Maya have no political movements, I am not implying that they lack political beliefs, opinions or views. Our vision of politics is the same as the scientific reality that the world is round. Existing at the same time is the invisible side of what is politics and what constitutes political practice – and all of this is represented in the Chilam Balam's representation of the world as the quincunx. Both the round world and the square world are 'realities'. That the Maya do and do not have political movements, both are realities.

It is one thing to have a political belief, but it is another to act upon that belief. There are, however, salient questions that lie beyond the veil of this language that may begin to illuminate the everyday micro-political realities of being Maya in Yucatán. What are the actual governmental administration's policies towards Maya people? What is their position in relation to Maya politicians? How do Maya politicians deal with the new PAN administration? What is their actual and future role in the Yucatec political arena? How do Maya people who are not politicians participate in the state's political affairs?

### **Yucatec Maya PRInces in YucaPAN**

The Yucatec official political discourse on Maya people while the PRI was in power, or under the current PAN administration, which began in 2001, is basically the same. The difference between one discourse and the other



is nominal: for the PRI the Maya were a 'problem', for the PAN they are an 'issue'. They were a 'problem' for the PRI, that is, understood as something that eventually would be concluded or solved 'properly'; while for the PAN they were an 'issue', because it is a final outcome that constitutes a solution (as of a problem) or resolution (as of a difficulty). In either case, both terms are attuned to time and space: 70 years of the PRI government are summarized in Fox's infamous promise of a 15-minute solution to the Chiapas 'issue'. No doubt Fox would agree with the new age spiritualist interviewed in Himpele and Castañeda's (1997) ethnographic film, who says, 'you know, there are a lot of hassles in Chiapas'.

One of the promises made by then-presidential candidate Vicente Fox Quezada during his political campaign in 2000 was that he could solve the Chiapas conflict in only 15 minutes. He was referring to the eight-year-old rebellion of Maya indigenous peoples in the southern state of Chiapas. Long marginalized and exploited by the Mexican state, Chiapas has been a feudal society since colonial times that, to this day, oppresses the Maya indigenous majority of the state. Racist beliefs have bolstered a social structure that allows little opportunity for indigenous peoples. Consequently, Chiapas has been the site of indigenous rebellions for several hundred years. The most recent and internationally known is the Zapatista Rebellion, pitting the state's ruling elite against the indigenous peoples of the EZLN (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*).

In this context, the indigenous 'matter' has been solved at the highest political level by changing the political 'map' but preserving the same 'tour'. By changing the map and preserving the tour, we arrive at the circumstance of change-without-change. Under the PRI, Maya politicians like Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón and Maximino Yam Cocom were acquainted with the PRI's map for accessing political power. Therefore, one could say that the two based their political agenda on the mystical and scientific quincunxes. The tour was already constructed by the PRI revolutionary rhetoric. However, they became trapped between a Maya dream and a PRI reality. Working within the PRI state allowed them to be compromised by it, but they could not be Maya within the PRI. They had to be *priístas* first and Maya second. But still they could not escape the quincunx. They only filled the established quota of the representative number of Maya who were allowed to rise in the PRI hierarchy.

Under the PAN, a political agenda based on the quincunx is an eccentricity. Xiu Cachón and Yam Cocom are acquainted with the map and tour but their cultural capital is not good enough to start the journey to power. Both figures know the terrain and contours of the quincunx, but this does not readily imply or guarantee the authority to ensure a rise to political power. Recall the diagram of the quincunx: authority/power is not a sixth nexus.

While they are trapped in a Maya dream they cannot be trapped in a *panista* reality. There is no established quota for how many Maya will be

allowed in the PAN structure. The PAN is either unwilling or unable to look them in the face and ask the truth of their desires. Maya politicians are trapped between ethnocentrism and inverted ethnocentrism: although they are essentially Maya, they themselves neglect their own representation.

Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón under the new *panista* governor lost his royal title. Recently he went to visit the governor, Patricio Patrón Laviada. At the time, political gossip dwelled heavily on the purpose of his visit. *Por Esto!* (2001), a Mérida-based newspaper, wrote that he went to ask for a job that would be fitting for one of his high lineage. The prince had to wait for several hours before the *panista* governor received him. They talked for few minutes. He left the governor's office without a job, but with a smile, and praising the new governor.

Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón's attitude is something that I have been trying to understand. My *zastún* tells me that his smile was because Yucatán's governor produced a solution to the indigenous issue in only 7½ minutes. This was the time it took for the governor to tell Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón that there is no such thing as a quincunx. Maybe he said this because he believes that the Maya came from Mars.

More recently, in January 2002, a prominent member of the PRD (*Partido Revolución Democrática*), and a close friend of mine, told me that Gaspar Antonio Xiu Cachón approached him. He wanted to register himself as a member of the political party. He offered his Maya services (mobilizing Maya people to support the Yucatec Left) in exchange for some revenues. This *perredista* (PRD member) gave Xiu two conditions: to stop calling himself a Maya prince and to assume his Maya proletarian role: monarchy and the Left are like water and oil.

As for Maximino Yam Cocom, he is semi-retired from politics. He lives in Mérida with his wife and children. My *zastún* is telling me that: 'Oh! As Cocom he will never forget the times in which he was a prince! He will never forget the good old *prüsta* times!' Indeed, my mother tells me that he calls often looking for me. He wants me to join his new political party (PCD or *Partido Convergencia por la Democracia*). He wants me to be his heir, to be his new Maya prince. I am afraid to tell my 'uncle', the post-prince Maya, that I am just a Chilam Balam – and a *gabachero* looking for my sweet-heart anthropology.

Sitting at Café Express, looking at the tourists who came for the equinox in Chichén Itzá or to watch the *Jarana* dance at Santa Lucia's Park, I ask my *zastún*, what is the future for Maya politicians? Maya politics? For Maya individuals? He tells me that I should not ask for the future because it is *tomoxchí* (to place a hex). To talk about it is an invitation to disaster. Nevertheless, the *zastún* tells me that:

... the future is this moment; the future is always here, not always there. So I can only tell you about now, about today. . . . The stories that you narrated here today and that somebody is reading now are something that could be named our quotidian future.



**Figure 2** 'A Prince in the Palace'

'Thank you oh great Duck-Governor! [nickname for Gov. Patricio Patrón Laviada] for allowing this humble "Maya prince" who has been waiting for two weeks . . . Don't you have a little something for me that will fit my royal standing?'

Source: Cevallos Aguilar (2001).

I wonder if it will be more creations. According to the Popol Vuh and the Books of Chilam Balam we are People of the Corn: the fourth creation. The creation of the essential Maya was the fifth creation. The creation of the hybrid Maya was the sixth. What is the next creation? The *zastún* tells me that there is no time for another one because the world will finish on 23 December 2012. Sunday. I forget now. Maybe it was the *Time Life Magazine* video on the Maya that said this was the date of the end of the Maya Cycle. Not my *zastún*.

At this point it is not possible to predict if there will be a future Maya

political movement that will represent the Maya any better than the PRI has or the PAN will. The *Consejo Supremo Maya* was superseded in 2001, under the PAN administration, by a special subcommittee: *El Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Cultura Maya del Estado de Yucatán* (INDEMAYA, the Institute for the Development of the Maya Culture of the Yucatán State). A non-Maya heads this new organization: Diana Canto Moreno. And now when I look into my *zastún* to ask about the future of INDEMAYA, I can see that the crystal-stone is only a post-prophetic glass stopper.

I look up from my hands and I see, sitting across from me, a *gabacha* – a female tourist – reading a book entitled *Composing Auto-ethnography*.

La reina con un vestido de flores verdes entrevenadas de hilos de plata y oro, chal azul, guantes blancos y aretes y pedantiff de brillantes y esmeraldas, lucia la más hermosa de sus joyas, su sonrisa, en la mesa principal, que compartía con un descendiente directo de los constructores de Uxmal, hace diez siglos, el *profesor* Gaspar Antonio Xiu. (*Diario de Yucatán*, 1975: 1, énfasis agregado)

[The queen, with a dress of green flowers interwoven with threads of silver and gold, blue shawl, white gloves and earrings, and a brooch of brilliants and emeralds, is showing one of the most beautiful of her jewels, her smile, at the main table that she shared with a direct descendant of the builders of Uxmal, ten centuries ago, *profesor* Gaspar Antonio Xiu. (*Diario de Yucatán*, 1975: 1, emphasis added)

And so I, Chilam Balam, begin again: so I repeat myself over and over as if I am trying to make clear the meaning of the meaning. Maybe one day I will be able to exclaim: I understand!

## Notes

- 1 This and all following quotes in Spanish are translated by the author.
- 2 This term used by Vogt (1970) is defined in the *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* as an arrangement of five objects in a square or rectangle, one on each corner and one in the center.
- 3 The Popol Vuh is a 16th-century K'ichee' Maya text concerning mythology and history.
- 4 See Castañeda (2004), Castillo Cocom (2004), Freidel et al. (1993), Gabbert (2004), Hervik (1999), Jones (1989), Restall (2004), Schele and Miller (1986).
- 5 As pointed out by Castañeda:

... to argue that Maya cultures are invented and continually reinvented does not mean that Maya cultures are not real or that they do not exist. 'Cultures' are very real, but have become real: this category of Western thought emerged in the 'anthropological' discourses of the nineteenth century ... anthropology has invented culture because it has been foremost in using this category as the central idiom to think about and experience otherness. (1996: 14; see also 97–151)

See additional analyses of the 'invention of the Maya', 'Maya essentialism' and 'mystery' by Casaúz Arzú (2001), Fischer (1999), Gabbert (2004), Hervik

(1999), Himpele and Castañeda (1997), Jones (1989: 1–2), Restall (2004), Schele and Miller (1986: 18–33), Warren (2001).

- 6 The PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*) was the main political force of México from 1929 until the victory of the PAN (*Partido Acción Nacional*) in the 2000 presidential elections. The slogan of the PRI, *Sufragio Efectivo No Reelección* (Effective Suffrage, No Re-election), synthesizes the ambiguity of the nationalistic doctrine of the PRI. This guiding principle was characterized by its ambivalent application, which depended upon the prevailing international contexts and on diverse historical moments. This party was characterized by overly protecting and privileging a sector of the most important business executives; it promoted, although with limitations, the upward socio-economic mobility of the middle classes; it controlled the union workers and *campesino* organizations; and, it was an authoritarian presidentialist and interventionist party (Montalvo Ortega, 1996).

The complexity of this party allowed it to remain for more than 70 years in the presidential chair, to successfully transit from its revolutionary-nationalist doctrine to a populist doctrine, and, under the last three Mexican presidents (Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, and Ernesto Zedillo), to promote, practice and defend the neoliberal doctrine. It is within the context of the ideological ambivalence of the PRI that it is possible to explain the speech that Xiu Cachón delivered during the legislative session at the Yucatec State Congress.

- 7 Uxmal is a 'Classic' Maya city that reached its maximum splendor between AD 600–900. It is located in the Puuc region, which in Maya means 'hills', and from which the architectural style of this region derived its name. During the Post-classic (AD 900–1200) Uxmal was ruled by the Xiu family.
- 8 Felipe Carrillo Puerto was a socialist governor of Yucatán from 1 January 1922 to 12 December 1923. Yucatán, in this period, was known as the 'Russia' of México because of its socialist tendency and its social conditions. Carrillo Puerto organized the *Partido Socialista del Sureste* (the Southeast Socialist Party), a political party that had around 80,000 members. Additionally, he masterminded the *Ligas de Resistencia del Partido Socialista del Sureste* (the Resistance Leagues of the Southeast Socialist Party), a political organization that sought to reorganize the Yucatec society economically and politically (Castillo Cocom, 1994).

During the government of Felipe Carrillo Puerto, laws were passed in accordance with his revolutionary ideas. Examples of these bills are the Law on Rational Education, the Divorce Law, the Agrarian Law and the Expropriation Law. With the Agrarian Law, Carrillo Puerto promoted agrarian reform and the formation of *ejidos* (communal-owned land). The Agrarian Reform of 1922 benefited 10,727 people who received 208,972 hectares of land (Quintal Martín, 1990: 87). This series of reforms stipulated the expropriation of the haciendas and other properties with idle lands and thus was seen as a threat by the conservative and traditionalist segment of Yucatec society – especially the Agrarian Law, which exacerbated the antagonism of the *hacendados* (hacienda owners) towards Carrillo Puerto. Hence they sought to eliminate him both politically and physically (see Bustillos, 1959; Paoli and Montalvo Ortega, 1987; Quintal Martín, 1990).

- 9 The PAN (*Partido Acción Nacional*) is a political organization of mainly urban Catholic middle-class people. Their political ideals are quite close to the ideology of the Christian Democrats, a doctrine that holds that social equality

can be achieved by applying the principles of the Catholic ethic. However, the lack of attention that the PAN pays to Mexican socio-economic reality (e.g. the extreme poverty of 40 million Mexicans) prevents the PAN seeing that these inequalities are not simply the product of a lack of ethics, but that they are the result of structural problems derived from the economic, social, and political construction of México. Their vision of Mexican reality allows the PAN to justify the neoliberal doctrine. From this perspective, the PAN views the neoliberal doctrine as the simple product of human interaction. Therefore, these doctrines are perfectible, but only with the application of the principles of the Catholic Church.

- 10 The term *Casta Divina* or *Casta Privilegiada* (Divine Caste, or Privileged Caste) was coined by Salvador Alvarado (Governor of Yucatán from 1915 to 1918) as a reference to the oligarchic regional group comprising the *hacendados* (plantation owners), wealthy businessmen and rich functionaries who conspired with the great American corporations to control the *henequén* industry. The *Casta Divina* dominated the political, economic and social life in Yucatán. According to Paoli and Montalvo Ortega, 'In reality, the *Casta Divina* includes the entire dominant group that formed at the time that that faction [the Liberal Party] allied with the bourgeoisie of exporters and the high functionaries of the State Government' (1990: 34).

These days, according to Bartolomé:

... technocrats, industrialists, politicians, professionals and functionaries of a different hierarchy make up the *Casta Divina*. For the most part, they live in the regional metropolises and specific sections that, as is the case in Mérida, configure an urban social ecology that tends to maintain especially the inter-ethnic borders. (1988: 296)

- 11 A renowned Maya leader who rebelled against Spanish rule in 1761.
- 12 Xiu Cachón was not satisfied and additionally began a frontal attack on the Catholic Church, by saying that the priests were the 'exemplary teachers' of the *panistas*. His attack on the Church was corroborated by the *priista* Congresswoman Myrna Hoyos Schlamme, who added that many priests have had both heterosexual and homosexual relationships.
- 13 The Maya term *Dzul* is used for male foreigners regardless of social status, and for males of high status regardless of whether or not they are Maya. However, anthropologists tend to believe that the term only applies to foreign people.
- 14 *Indio* is a grotesque historical remnant of racism.
- 15 These goods included food, fertilizers, building materials, scholarships and funds for medical services. These organizations also offered legal aid, for instance translation services to monolingual Yucatec Maya who were facing legal difficulties.
- 16 In legal terms an *Asociación Civil* (AC) is an organization – profitable or not – composed by two or more individuals who share a common goal. For example, to study, to promote or to sponsor any activities related to culture, politics, economy, business, legal aid, social activities, education, sports, health and so forth.
- 17 Castañeda (1996: 259–97, 2003), in his discussion of the sociopolitical movement of Pisté, Yucatán, shows how these political games of using Xiu Cachón as Maya representative against Manzanilla Schaffer were played out at the level of community politics (see especially Castañeda, 1996: 291–5). Ironically, Xiu was in Cocom territory. Nevertheless, the Pisté Maya did not

obey 'their' Maya prince. On the contrary, they consciously rejected 'the' 'Maya' identity as a means to pursue their community goals.

- 18 For M.I. Finley (as expounded by Rappaport), the European linear conception of history is: 'chronological, organized on the basis of a coherent dating scheme and using evidence derived from documents that are then formulated into a systematic formulation; myth is the antithesis of history: non-linear, atemporal, fictional, non-systematic' (Rappaport, 1990: 12). Consequently, linear history strives for chronological accuracy and cyclical history for meaning. As Rappaport points out: 'The past is only useful insofar as it sheds meaning on the problems of the present' (1990: 179).

In this context, according to Tedlock:

Mayans are always alert to the reassertion of the patterns of the past in present events, but they do not expect the past to repeat exactly. Each time the Gods of the Popol Vuh attempt to make human beings they get a different result, and except for the solitary person made of mud, each attempt has a lasting result rather than completely disappearing into the folds of cyclical time. Later, when members of the second generation of Quiche lords go on a pilgrimage that takes them into the lowlands, their journey is not described as a literal repetition of the journey of Hunahpu and Xbalanque to Xibalba, nor even as a retracing of the human founders of the ruling Quiche lineages, but is rather allowed its own character as a unique event, an event that nevertheless carries constant echoes of the past. The effect of these events, like others, is cumulative, and it is a specifically human capacity to take each of them into account separately while at the same time recognizing that they double back on one another. (1996: 59–60)

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