

## Ongoing Struggles: Mayas and Immigrants in Tourist Era Tulum

Tulum—an important Maya sea-trade center during the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries—now neighbors Mexico's most fashionable beach resort (Cancún) and has become the country's most popular archeological site. Since the 1970s, tourism, centered in the planned resort of Cancún, has overshadowed all other cultural and economic activities in the northern zone of Quintana Roo, Mexico. The tourism industry, including multinational capitalist and national and international government agents, was designed to

### abstract

In Quintana Roo, Mexico, an area once controlled by Maya descendants of the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Caste Wars of the Yucatan, the global tourist economy has led to radical changes. This study analyzes relations between local Mayas and Yucatec and Mexican immigrants in Tulum Pueblo, located south of Cancun and just outside a popular archeological site. Struggles between Mayas and immigrants have centered on cultural, marital and religious practices and physical control of the town's central church and plaza, eventually resulting in the establishment of dual, competing town centers. Questions of cultural politics and the control of space continue to be central to contemporary political movements around the world. This research shows that the fashioning of cultural places and practices is inherently tied to materially-based differences in power and inequality: differences are minimized when few disparities in power exist, but conflicts over places and identities are maximized when power differentials increase.

strengthen Mexico's economy and alleviate its unemployment and national debt payments (Cardiel 1989; García Villa 1992; Clancy 1998). In the process, tourism led to radical demographic changes and gave a special character to Quintana Roo's culture and economy. Although a group of Mayas and mestizos known as the *Cruzoob* once controlled the area, practicing a mixed trade and subsistence economy, Quintana Roo is now permeated with immigrant workers and entre-

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preneurs, tourists, and a plethora of sites for tourist pleasure and entertainment, including resorts, hotels, restaurants, shopping malls and nightclubs.

Focusing on Tulum Pueblo, located just a few kilometers from the ruins, this article examines two processes that occur within the context of a global tourist economy and highly stratified, often contested social relations: (1) how local land, sites, and spaces are gained, lost, or transformed into culturally meaningful places; and (2) how local cultures, differences, and identities are

lived, formed and altered through individual and collective actions. The complex fashioning of places, identities and cultural practices in Tulum is inherently tied to materially-based differences in power and inequality; differences are minimized when few disparities in power exist, but conflicts over places and identities are maximized when power differentials increase.

In Tulum Pueblo (hereafter referred to as Tulum), tourism-era battles have centered on cultural and religious

**resumen**

En Quintana Roo, México, un área previamente controlada por descendientes mayas de la Guerra de Castas del siglo XIX, la economía turística global ha resultado en cambios radicales. Este estudio analiza las relaciones entre mayas e inmigrantes yucatecos y mexicanos en Tulum Pueblo, ubicado hacia el sur de Cancún y cerca de un sitio arqueológico muy popular. Los conflictos entre los mayas e inmigrantes se han concentrado en costumbres culturales, matrimoniales, y religiosas, tanto como en el control físico de la iglesia y plaza central del pueblo, por fin resultando en el establecimiento de dos centros que están en competencia. Esta investigación muestra que la construcción de lugares y costumbres está inherentemente enlazada con diferencias de poder y desigualdad económica. Las diferencias son menos importantes cuando hay pocas disparidades de poder, pero los conflictos tocante a lugares e identidades son más importantes cuando aumentan las disparidades de poder.

practices and physical control of the town's central church and plaza. Eventually these struggles have resulted not only in cultural conflict and segregation between Mayas and immigrants, but also in the establishment of dual, competing town centers. Although anthropologists and Mayanists in the past (e.g., Redfield and Villa Rojas 1964) have uncritically assumed that culture resides in a geographic space, my ethnographic and archival research in Tulum demonstrates that local cultures, identities, and places are formed and lived within larger political economic processes. Drawing on Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson's notion of "cultural territorialization," or the processes by which particular spaces become meaningful places (1997:4), I explain how cultural practices, places, and identities have been fashioned in Tulum.<sup>1</sup>

Questions of cultural differences, identity politics, resistance, and the control of space continue to be central to contemporary political movements around the world, despite scholarly moves away from such questions. For example, Michael Brown recently asked anthropologists to stop focusing on issues related to resistance and instead concentrate on cooperation and harmony, identity, reciprocity, altruism, imagination, and the use of varied resources in varied environments (1996:729, 734). Adam Kuper also asks anthropologists to move away from analyses of resistance and identity politics, especially critiquing current emphases on cultural studies and multiculturalism because culture is tied to questions of difference and (oppositional, often race-mediated) identity politics (1999:247). Unfortunately, Kuper oversimplifies scholarship in multiculturalism and cultural studies, neglecting analyses that emphasize the role of material relations, discrimination, and inequality, recognize internal differences within cultural or ethnic groups, and establish that individuals often have multiple, sometimes contradictory identities.<sup>2</sup> Instead of ignoring cultural difference, my analysis parallels the notion of identities described by Gupta and Ferguson, foregrounding identities as "relations of difference" that are "continually contested," and arguing that difference is constructed within "structural relations of power and inequality" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:13-14). Although Mayas have been resisting outside domination since the colonial era, they have done so in complicated and sometimes contradictory ways, developing various alliances, identities, and places which are multiply constituted and determined. Analyses of contemporary Mayas must be situated within colonial history because "modern colonialism... instituted enduring hierarchies of subjects and knowledges" (Prakash 1995:3). By most measures, Mayas in Quintana Roo continue to be subordinate subjects of various institutions, corporations, and Mexican and other states. Nonetheless, colonialism in Quintana Roo, as elsewhere, was not a simple, unilinear, or homogeneous process. Here as elsewhere, it was local and contradictory (Prakash 1995). As I will show, contemporary Mayas continue to seek cul-

tural and political autonomy and resist outside domination in a process mediated by individual, local, and global material practices, shifting identities, and various forms of inequality.

My analysis begins by briefly contextualizing and situating the historical development of archeology and tourism in the region, showing how both foreign and national interests in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century started investigating Maya culture and appropriating archeological sites just as the Cruzoob began asserting their cultural and political autonomy. The investigation and appropriation of Maya places/sites set the precedent for what would later become known as transnational archeo-tourism—or archeologically oriented tourism—which exploded after the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century with the development of Cancún. The second section of the paper outlines the four major ethnic groups currently residing in Tulum, and shows how Mayas have used their prophecies and sense of historical time to understand the recent influx of tourists and immigrants—what they call the *Época del Turismo*, or Epoch of Tourism. Here I also reveal the ambiguities and ambivalence experienced by Mayas regarding the dramatic changes in their lives, even as immigrants initially accommodated to Mayas, partly because immigrants' lack of power made it necessary, and partly because they shared similar cultural practices.

The last section of the paper shows how religion became a site of conflict with struggles played out between Maya residents and Yucatec and Mexican immigrant workers and entrepreneurs. Although immigrants and Roman Catholic priests formerly tolerated and even participated in local Mayas' syncretic religious practices, by the early 1980s they began asserting the superiority of Catholic practices, especially with respect to marriages and weddings.<sup>3</sup> As the balance of power shifted, Catholic immigrants moved the town's spatial center of power by building a new Catholic Church and surrounding town center. At the same time, the edifice of the *Iglesia Maya*, once both figuratively and literally the town center, was physically guarded and enclosed, and thus marginalized. It is ironic that, as will be explained, Tulum's *Iglesia Maya* also thereby regained some of its prominence as a key ceremonial center and power for the regional *Iglesia Maya*, and garnered some status on the ethno-tourism circuit. By the latter 1980s, town spaces—including homes, churches, and businesses—were physically segregated and stratified on the basis of identities grounded in a combination of religion, culture, economics, and race-mediated ethnicity.

### Background of the Caste War and the *Iglesia Maya*

The complicated development of Maya places, identities and cultural practices in Tulum are illustrated by their Caste War heritage. Tulum was one of the Maya centers of power that developed in opposition to the Yucatec and

Mexican governments during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century “Caste War” of Yucatán (1847-1901). The purported caste or racial conflict involved mestizo and indigenous Maya struggles for autonomy and independence from the Mexican state of Yucatán, resulting in one of the longest indigenous resistance movements in the Americas.<sup>4</sup> As are most historical events, the Caste War was multiply determined by factors, in this case including political struggles between centralists and federalists, the impact of the Bourbon Reforms, changes in land use and the economy, political relations with neighboring countries, and the history of religious and racial exploitation.<sup>5</sup>

Shortly after the conflicts began, simple wooden crosses and statues of saints began miraculously appearing to various rebel factions throughout the area, and the miraculous crosses (managed by human patrons) ultimately became responsible for guiding and leading Maya forces. More importantly, Mayas elaborated new forms of social organization, as well as military, political, religious, and cultural practices centered on the crosses; these ultimately became the heart of culturally distinct customs and identities. Followers of the miraculous crosses believed themselves to be “true Christians,” in contrast to their enemies, and identified themselves as “Cruzoob” (Spanish for “cross” with the Maya plural suffix). With a hierarchical social organization that included military-political leaders and religious leaders such as the patrons of the crosses, the Cruzoob eventually controlled the easternmost portion of the Yucatán peninsula. In 1901, Mexican president Porfirio Díaz sent the Mexican army to make the final conquest, and erected the federal territory of Quintana Roo. Still, Mexico maintained only nominal control over Maya territory until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As the military-political focus of the movement declined, Mayas continued to live lives centered on the miraculous crosses and other cultural-religious practices that had developed around the Iglesias, including the guarding of the church and its crosses. In the tourist era, conflict between Santa Cruz Mayas and immigrants was to center on both the physical Iglesia and the cultural practices performed there.<sup>6</sup>

### **Transnational Archeo-Tourism and the Struggle for Dominion**

The defense mechanisms developed during the Caste War prepared Tulum Pueblo for the larger political economic processes of archeo-tourism, which appropriated their most sacred sites. The following section shows how both Santa Cruz/Tulum identities and the very place of Tulum Pueblo were formed in the context of larger political economic processes. State and private entities intervened and sponsored the archeological research and development projects that eventually led to Mayas’ loss of control over both sacred and everyday spaces. Ironically, although tourism did not supersede the region’s previous

economic sectors (horticulture, hunting, logging, fishing, and the production of *chicle* or chewing gum, coconut, and cattle) until the 1970s, the historical precedents of archeo-touristic travels in eastern Quintana Roo coincide with the time of the Caste War, or the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. At about the same time that Mayas sought cultural and political autonomy during the mid- and late 19<sup>th</sup> century, North American, British, French, and Mexican explorers and archeologists intensified their quest for knowledge of ancient Mayas, invading their space and documenting and collecting or looting regional antiquities (see Kelly 1993; Brunhouse 1973, 1975). Archeological research in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Yucatán and Quintana Roo—when Thomas Gann, an amateur archeologist, “obtained” Tulum’s so-called Stele One<sup>7</sup> for the British Museum—was sponsored by the Carnegie Institution of Washington, INAH (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, or National Institute of Anthropology and History), and the Mexican Scientific Expeditions for Southeastern Mexico and Central America (Kelly 1993:330; INAH 1961; Andrews and Andrews 1975).<sup>8</sup>

Although the Carnegie Institution tried to downplay the socio-cultural impact that archeological research and reconstruction had on the region’s inhabitants in the 1920s and 1930s, anthropologist Quetzil Castañeda estimates that their major project at Chichén Itzá employed almost all of the men from the neighboring town of Pisté (1996:57-60). By the late 1930s and early 1940s, according to Yucatec scholar Alfonso Villa Rojas, the federal government became more active in the occupation of Maya spaces by promoting archeological tourism, attempting to “make the important archaeological sites within the [Quintana Roo] Territory accessible to tourists.” In the archeological site of Tulum, he noted, “several ancient temples and palaces have been reconstructed and the place has been provided with a landing field and a small rustic hotel” (Villa Rojas 1945:34).<sup>9</sup>

Other factors in the mid- and late 20<sup>th</sup> century contributed to Mexican and foreign appropriation of what was once one of the Iglesia Maya’s most sacred sites—Tulum’s “ruins.” Nearby Cozumel Island, once a Mexican sea-port, was becoming increasingly popular as an international tourist resort after World War II. Renowned oceanographer Jacques Cousteau popularized the place for international tourists and divers during the early 1960s. Tulum’s ruins were easily accessible for day trips from Cozumel by boat or small plane. By 1958, residents of Tulum Pueblo began to feel they were losing control over their *cjido* (village-based communal lands) and asked to be compensated for the property used as a landing strip, even though the grass airstrip was only open during the non-rainy season.<sup>10</sup> By 1971, before the new Cancún-Tulum road was paved, a private club at neighboring Akumal was shuttling about 20 people per day from Cozumel to visit the ruins of Tulum.<sup>11</sup>

The occupation, control and development of Mayan archeological sites expanded the presence of Yucatecs, Mexicans and foreigners (especially North Americans) throughout the previously controlled Maya area. This was done with little consideration of indigenous claims and uses of the sites, although archeologists and visitors had full knowledge of the significance of the places for Mayas. Some commented on the evidence of indigenous ceremonies at Tulum (e.g., they found crosses, candles, and other offerings), but nonetheless proceeded with excavation or expropriation. Neither anthropologists, nor the state, nor touristic visitors expressed any qualms about appropriating or occupying the ruins of Tulum—one of the Mayas' most sacred religious spaces—for their own knowledge, profit, benefit, or pleasure.

Alliances between the Mexican state and international tourist developers strengthened over the years: the late 1950s and 1960s were turning points for displacing Mayas and developing Mexican tourism in Quintana Roo. In 1956, a Mexican presidential decree established FOGATUR (Fondo de Garantía y Fomento al Turismo, or Warranty Fund for Tourism Development), the first of a series of federal tourist development agencies (García Villa 1992:21). Chetumal, destined to be the state's capital, acquired electricity and piped water in 1959. That same year, Mexico built the Cozumel airport to accommodate and encourage the burgeoning tourist industry, but also to strategically defend the Panama Canal. The private club CEDAM (Club de Exploraciones y Deportes Acuáticos, or Exploration and Aquatic Sports Club) was also founded in 1959, and proceeded to buy property for tourist development at neighboring Akumal, directly across from Cozumel Island; thus the first mainland tourist resort was created only 24 kilometers away from Tulum. During the 1960s and 1970s, CEDAM's Akumal resort continued to develop with Mexican subsidies and tax relief.<sup>12</sup> They conducted underwater studies in the area, and found an underwater altar at Xelha Caleta (Kelly 1993:327). The diving industry, and specifically archeologically oriented cave diving, is now one of the area's major attractions.

During the 1960s, Cancún was one of six Mexican beaches (including Cabo San Lucas, San José del Cabo, and Loreto in the state of Baja California, Ixtapa in Guerrero, and Bahía de Huatulco in Oaxaca) identified as potentially lucrative tourist developments by a group of capitalist and government analysts seeking to develop Mexico and pay the burgeoning national debt (Cardiel 1989:5). Global tourism was growing in the 1960s, and ironically, Mexico borrowed the idea of tourism as a national economic strategy from Spain—their previous colonizer—which had recently alleviated economic problems using tourist promotion (Cardiel 1989:9-12). The business and government committee charged with selecting resort sites had a two-fold mission: one was to pick locations with the appropriate "ecology" (i.e., that were

physically pleasing and suitable for leisure activities), the second was to choose places located in “underdeveloped” zones that could easily provide the labor needed to quickly build mega-resorts.

By 1969, José López Portillo, the soon-to-be president (1976-1982) chose Cancún to be the nation’s top economic priority (Cardiel 1989:12).<sup>13</sup> Although there was some interruption in funding with the change in presidents, building began in 1970 with 80 so-called *chicleros* (chicle workers), only three of whom reportedly spoke Spanish. By 1971-72, just a year or two later, there were more than 5,000 workers (Cardiel 1989:16-17), and the territory of Quintana Roo became the state of Quintana Roo in 1974. Several government programs were developed to assist the private sector’s enterprises and ensure the project’s success, including guaranteeing and subsidizing loans (Clancy 1998). The boom in building and increase of immigrant workers has continued since its auspicious start, slowing only on rare occasions (Juárez 1996:291-293).<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, the tourism project did not just focus on Cancún; Cozumel had been a tourist destination since World War II, and promoters envisioned a “corridor” of development that would begin at Cancún on the northern coast and stretch south to Tulum—the now well-known Cancún-Tulum tourist corridor, also known as the Maya Riviera or Maya Coast. Just south of the tourist belt, Sian Ka’an (Maya for “where the sky is born”), a 1.3 million acre biosphere reserve, was established by presidential decree in 1986. The Cancún-Tulum corridor became even more popular after 1989 with the development of a major international ethno-tourism development project; La Ruta Maya, which linked the five nations that now cover the Maya culture area, was established to promote ethnic, archeological, ecological and heritage tourism. Development in the Cancún-Tulum corridor actually overtook Cancún’s growth by 1987 (Cardiel 1989:22); now Playa del Carmen, about halfway between Tulum and Cancún, is Mexico’s leading tourist development, and the city is trying to control its growth, as well as the character of the resort (Alisau 1999). The next stage of development targets the remaining areas of the state, just south of Tulum, where funding is being funneled for archeological research and reconstruction.

The encroachment of tourist and tourist-related buildings and businesses intensified with the mega-development of the corridor in the 1980s, spurring massive immigration and changes as workers flooded the area. Because virtually no housing was provided for workers, Tulum and other coastal settlements became “bedroom communities” for the new work force. The housing situation is gradually changing, but there have been regional conflicts over the control of space. For example, tourist expansion in Akumal, one of the earliest tourist resorts, competes with established worker’s communities since land



that was once considered unprofitable jungle is now prime real-estate for the booming condo-builders. Other Maya and Yucatec communities also experienced fundamental changes and loss of local control because of Cancún and La Ruta Maya's success (Kintz 1990, 1998; Daltabuit and Pi-Sunyer 1990). Paul Sullivan describes state and federal development projects in Quintana Roo for honey production and irrigated agriculture designed to create commodities for tourist and foreign consumption. In addition, Sullivan notes significant losses in population, especially because of male migration, in regional communities (1983:47-53). In nearby Chan Kom, Yucatán, anthropologist Alicia Re Cruz (1996, 1998) describes the social, political, and economic dynamics of a community deeply divided between migrant laborers who leave to work in Cancún and those who stay.

The contemporary tourist expansion—what Mayas call the Epoch of Tourism—has been similar to the chicle boom and earlier economic development projects in terms of its imperialist nature and consequences. If organized military conquests are rarely short-lived conflicts resolved with clearly identified victors and losers, then more loosely orchestrated processes such as the development of an economic industry certainly involve more convoluted and ambiguous positioning. Regardless of the level at which struggles occur—personal relations, families, cultural practices, political or educational institutions, economic industries, or some combination of these—opposing forces are always shifting locations and renegotiating strategies and goals within particular fields of power. Mayas in Tulum have been forced to mingle with tourists, tourist developers, and immigrant workers and businesses in ways they had previously avoided, but have continued to reposition themselves as in previous epochs, and take advantage of new opportunities. The rest of this article examines how Mayas have negotiated their power-laden identities, cultural practices and spaces on a daily basis while adapting their lives to a society changed by the great influx of tourism-era immigrants.

### **Prophecies and Immigrant Relations in the Tourist Epoch**

Tulum had grown from a town of about 265 in 1972 to about 2000 people in 1990 when I began my ethnographic fieldwork.<sup>15</sup> Most of the new residents were immigrants from surrounding Mexican states who came to work in the booming tourist economy after 1970, but my research focused primarily on Santa Cruz Mayas who lived in Tulum and surrounding settlements throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Santa Cruz Mayas who are still active in the Iglesia Maya made up about ten percent of Tulum's residents, most of whom belonged to five or ten extended families, on whom I have based my work.<sup>16</sup>

Because of tourist developments, the Maya Riviera received a tremendous influx of immigrants to meet demands for business development, provide labor and services, or otherwise cater to tourists. Consequently, four major ethnic groups now reside in the region. The first group is Santa Cruz Mayas, long-time residents of Quintana Roo who are descended from the Cruzoob. The second group is made up of Yucatec Mayas who have emigrated from other parts of the Peninsula, often sharing language and many cultural practices with Santa Cruz Mayas. “Mexicans” are another ethnic group, including persons from the Yucatán Peninsula who do not identify as Maya, as well as persons from any other region of Mexico. Finally, a group of non-Mexican foreigners is present, comprised primarily of tourists, the majority of whom are North American and European.

Focusing primarily on Maya interaction with Yucatecs and Mexicans, who are considered together as immigrants, I will now describe how Mayas have used religious prophecies to understand and make sense of tourism and their changing world. Prophecies and divination have been essential in Maya cultural logic. Archeological, hieroglyphic, and historical evidence indicates that Mayas used this logic for activities such as planning warfare, naming their children, and determining the success of marriages (e.g., see Freidel et al. 1993; Farriss 1987; Sullivan 1983). Maya codices or pre-Columbian books forecast events, especially those coinciding with particular calendar dates or astronomical phenomena, as do the *Books of Chilam Balam* (anonymously written Maya books that include a variety of traditional knowledge) [see Edmonson 1982, 1986]. 17<sup>th</sup> century Petén Itzá Mayas are famous for the purported role of prophecy in Spanish-Maya relations. Although Petén Itzá Mayas initially resisted Spanish conquest and colonization, later they purportedly sought out Spanish control and actively submitted to Spaniards because their prophecies foretold that it was the time for conquest (Farriss 1984:70). In Tulum as in other Maya areas, contemporary *hmen* and other diviners continue to diagnose the causes and cures of illness and social transgressions (Colby and Colby 1981; Sullivan 1989; Carlsen 1997; Faust 1998).

Today in Tulum, prophecies inform the everyday lives of Mayas, but they are particularly invoked in conversations about tourism. Doña Thalía, for example, recently interpreted the changes accompanying tourism as filtered through the ever-present lens of their prophecies. When I interviewed her, she was in her late forties and married to one of the few men in Tulum who still made *milpa* (i.e., farmed) in the early 1990s. One of the more active members of the Iglesia Maya, she spoke of Tulum’s transformation as follows:

Yes. That’s what my grandfather says. That’s how, well, that’s how my grandfather told it to other people—when my grandfather lived—that

the pueblo was going to grow. "Everyone is going to come here to live. The town here is going to end up large." Not like before, when they lived. Well, isn't that what's happening now? Aha.

It's like my grandmother says, "Oh daughter," she says, "at the time of the last year, if there is a god who gives them life, people will wear clothes made of gold. They will have shoes made of gold, they will use huge heels." Well, isn't that what's happening now? Just because you don't have any money, you don't buy it. If not, now there are shoes that look like gold. There are clothes that look like gold, well that is what [God] foretold.

Well, having a lot of foreigners coming here is different, but *ni modo* (too bad). Since God said, "The town has to grow," well that's how it has to be. Because all the things that are happening now, that's what God said when he left. Well that's what's happening now, because it's going to start growing. We will see. [Doña Thalia 4/22/93:11]<sup>17</sup>

Doña Thalia, like other Santa Cruz Mayas, initiated her discourse by grounding the pueblo's changes in the words of the ancestors, her deceased grandparents. She retells the prophecies about the town's growth and the influx of wealthy foreigners with different customs flaunting expensive commodities. A time for war and the *wutz* or "inverting" of the world (Sullivan 1983:97-99) is also foretold and fully expected sometime after the year 2000, ultimately returning the land to Mayas and their "gods." In Tulum's oral tradition, it is specifically augured that Tulum is the "heart of the land," and as such will be the site where foreigners live and many languages are spoken. In fact, Mayas' lives are now peppered with English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and other languages. Additional prophecies, including the coming of roads, the death of young children, the lack of desire for offspring, widespread disease, and the proliferation of wars around the world, apply more generally to the entire Zona Maya (Maya zone), and appear well founded to Mayas.<sup>18</sup>

In Tulum, Mayas regularly recount how these prophecies are coming to pass. Wealthy foreigners from around the world now congregate in and around town and live in their midst. Foreigners' bodies, houses, and possessions are lavishly decorated with shiny metals such as gold, silver, chromes, and brass. These things could be acquired readily, as Doña Thalia declared, if only one had the money. Young children are rumored to be dying more frequently, and women regret getting pregnant. Some women consider the offspring they already have to be a burden, and some use birth control to prevent having other babies. According to many Mayas, God foretold that these things would hap-

pen. Yet faith in the prophecies, based on a cyclical understanding of history and time (Farriss 1987), is combined with a “realistic” assessment of Maya powerlessness against high-tech weaponry: they do not call for the armed struggles of previous epochs at this time. On the other hand, they call neither for abandonment of their own cultural practices, nor immersion in foreign customs. Consequently, Mayas question how to proceed with their lives.

As the domination of the state, multinational corporations, and the great technological advances of the 20<sup>th</sup> century become increasingly apparent in their everyday lives, Mayas debate the kinds of relationships they should have with immigrants and foreigners. The question of relations with foreigners—especially commercial relations—was one that had previously created tensions in Santa Cruz Maya communities. In fact, although Tulum had once been considered a dual capital of the Cruzoob, along with Noh Cah Santa Cruz Balam Nah (Santa Cruz), Santa Cruz successfully attacked Tulum in the 1880s because of disagreements about governance and trade.<sup>19</sup> Tulum never regained its prominence within the religious-political organization, although it continues to be an important ceremonial center. Although Mayas in Tulum attempted to physically control and keep visitors to the ruins out during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, ultimately they were not successful. Instead, they provided visitors with stories about exotic, rebellious Indians (see Larsen 1964; Peissel 1963; Luxton and Balam 1982; Sullivan 1989).

Prior to the tourist era, Tulum residents did have regular contact with persons from surrounding logging, ranching, coconut, fishing, and chicle industries, often working as itinerant or migrant laborers, and purchasing manufactured products from these businesses (Juárez 1996:ch. 4). “Outside” relations also included those with itinerant priests and vendors (on horseback until the 1960s, when jeeps could be used on the new dirt road). Prior to the opening of the highway in 1972, resident immigrants included a few Yucatec and/or Mexican business entrepreneurs (mostly Maya-Spanish bilingual), who immigrated during the period of road construction in the latter 1960s, establishing a couple of grocery stores. Most of these early Yucatec immigrants adopted the local lifestyle and religious practices of Tulum’s Mayas; some even became part of the local religious elite. Most Tulum residents also interacted with outsiders when they occasionally traveled (either on foot or horseback) to the neighboring “cities” of either Felipe Carrillo Puerto or Valladolid (96 to 100 kilometers away, respectively). Nevertheless, the marketing of Cancún and Tulum for tourism again heightened the community’s ongoing debate about the nature and extent of Maya-foreign relations. This was the case when government planners in the early 1970s proposed creating a *tianguis* or tourist market at Tulum ruins to sell curios, souvenirs, T-shirts, and “much-needed” refreshments. Planners attempted to persuade some local Mayas from the small

pueblo (population of 265 in 1972) to manage the tourist market. However, they refused to leave their homes and milpas (fields). Not wanting to mingle with tourists or participate in commercial activities on a year-round, daily basis, they preferred the periodic, supplemental income brought in from gum-collecting or wage labor from nearby *ranchos*, road crews, or construction projects, and would have nothing to do with the first attempts to create a tourist market.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, some felt that they had neither the money to invest nor the training to manage the market. With hindsight, some now say *que se apendajaran* (that they were stupid) for not asking the government to assist with either of these things.

When Mayas rejected the opportunity to develop a tourist market, planners recruited small-scale *artesanos* (artisans and artisan vendors) from other parts of Mexico, including Mérida, Mexico City, and Mexico's most developed tourist region—Acapulco and the state of Guerrero. In the early 1970s, the handful of adventurous *artesanos* who ran the market joined the schoolteacher and occasional Mexican marines (who started being stationed near the ruins in the mid-1960s) to become the first groups of "true" outsiders with whom Tulum locals had extended and intimate daily contact.

One of the strategies local Mayas initially used in the tourist epoch was simple avoidance of the new strangers or residents. At first, avoidance was not especially difficult; Mayas and newcomers normally worked in different places; that is, cornfields, homes, or *ranchos*, as opposed to tourist or commercial sites and developments near the ruins or in town. Continuing Santa Cruz ideology about foreigners being enemies encouraged suspicion and anxiety, so Mayas kept their distance.

Furthermore, according to the descriptions provided by tourists, travelers, and other adventurers themselves, Maya reservations about foreigners seem reasonable. For example, Peissel (1963) describes traipsing into Tulum unannounced in 1958, casually walking about their compounds hoping for someone to come greet him, proceeding to shout the name of the person he was looking for, and then brazenly walking into one of their homes (1963:136-137). Unlike neighboring beach areas described in his book on beaches and ruins in Yucatán, Memo Barroso describes the early 1980s beach areas of Tulum as "hip slums" defined as "...any beach accommodations...with slumlike sanitary and living conditions, patronized mostly by American, Canadian, and European travelers on tight budgets" (1983:160).

As the most isolated part of the Maya Riviera, and a halfway point between Colombia and the United States, Tulum's beaches were (and still are) renowned as places where nudity, drugs, and sex were widely available. Early on, cabarets and houses of prostitution were located in and around the area surrounding Tulum. Both Maya and immigrant women occasionally appealed

to local authorities to shut down businesses that were fronts for prostitution. Padre Javier, a Catholic priest who ministered to Tulum in the 1970s, reported that indignant villagers started taking their children with them to their fields to keep them away from the vices of the beach hippies.<sup>21</sup> Today, things are changing as the “hip slum” tourist is being pushed out as the beach area becomes less isolated, more commercialized, and acquires a better infrastructure (e.g., electricity became available for a few hotels in 1995; most hotels still rely on generators to provide electricity and light for a few hours at night). Also, Mexico’s federal government has begun to actively pursue persons involved in the drug trade, including Quintana Roo’s previous governor, Mario Villanueva Madrid, who was recently arrested on charges related to drugs and corruption. Ultimately, these new immigrant workers and entrepreneurs became neighbors through necessity, and a sometimes-tense relationship developed in which both immigrants and locals variously embraced and excluded each other. In fact, before the mid-1970s, relations were marked by minimal conflict as adventurous artesanos, including some women and families, largely accommodated to locals’ lifestyles. Not necessarily by preference, but by necessity, they lived in Mayan-style huts with Maya neighbors, ate similar food, and as mentioned earlier, even became active in the Iglesia Maya. Since many of the early tourist-era immigrants were Yucatec Mayas from Yucatán, Quintana Roo, or even surrounding Iglesia Maya communities, cultural similarities regarding kinship, religion, dress, food and other rituals mitigated their foreignness.<sup>22</sup> Between 1960 and 1980, the percentage of total immigrants in the state, as well as the percentage of immigrants who were Yucatec, changed significantly. In 1960 and 1970, 43 percent and 45 percent of the state’s population, respectively, were immigrants, and the majority (82 percent and 74 percent, respectively) of all immigrants were Yucatec. By 1980, more than half (54 percent) of the state’s population was comprised of immigrants, but only 43 percent of all immigrants were Yucatec (Mexico Census 1960, 1970, 1980). Before the mid-1970s, sincere friendships and reciprocal social relations often developed with Yucatec, Mexican, and foreign immigrants in the intimate, physically shared spaces of *bandas* (house compounds) where immigrants often lived.

Even after major conflicts developed between immigrants and Mayas in the latter 1970s, as I describe later in this article, a few of the early Yucatec immigrants continued to play major roles in the Iglesia Maya rather than in the Catholic Church. A handful of the early immigrants (artesanos or teachers) continue to live in what is now known as the Maya *barrio* (neighborhood), but have built contemporary Mexican-style houses and businesses. Most immigrants, however, have since moved on to other areas of town, often with the assistance of government-subsidized housing: married Mexican residents

could receive a free lot of land on the condition that they build on it within two years. Many immigrants now live clustered in the most exclusive section of the pueblo, currently recognized as the *Barrio de los artesanos*, or artisan and businesspersons' neighborhood, where, not surprisingly, many of the streets are even paved.

### Religious Beliefs and Practices: The Site of Cultural Contestation and Identities

Despite the relative accommodation of Mayas and early tourist era immigrants, Mayas continued to be concerned about foreign domination, and continually strived for political and cultural autonomy. Even as they accepted and accommodated immigrant Santa Cruz Mayas, Yucatecs, Mexicans, and other foreigners, they maintained their distance, struggling over the politics of space, practices, and powers. Historically, throughout the Maya area, social-political conflict has taken the form of religious resistance or revitalization (Bricker 1981; Farriss 1984); in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century this led to the creation of the religious-based social movement that recast Catholic religious practices, producing the Cruzoob and their contemporary Santa Cruz Maya descendants. Today, the religious arena continues to be the major site where struggles over cultural practices and identities get played out. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century prior to the tourism era, Mayas in Tulum developed friendly relations with the occasional Catholic priests who visited their village. The priests responsible for ministering to Tulum and the surrounding region were Maryknoll priests based in Cozumel or other parts of the Yucatán peninsula. By most accounts, including Maya, Yucatec, and Mexican, their visits were marked by a great deal of mutual respect regarding religious differences between the Catholic Church and the Iglesia Maya. In 1971, the Catholic Church established a prelate nullius (priest in charge of a territory outside the jurisdiction of a diocese) in Chetumal, and brought in other priests from the Legionnaires of Christ, who then became responsible for clerical service in the northern part of Quintana Roo.

Beginning in 1971, Padre Javier, one of the new Legionnaires, began traveling to Tulum from Cozumel where he—like the Maryknoll priests—was allowed to pray in the Iglesia Maya. Strong friendships developed between him and some of the Iglesia Maya's religious elite, especially the *tatic* (patron of Tulum's cross), Don Gilberto. In accordance with Maya religious practices, Padre Javier would remove his shoes to enter the church, thus respecting community traditions and participating in their ceremonies. In turn, he was allowed to say mass and baptize Maya children. Padre Javier noted several religious practices that combined Maya and Catholic elements. For example, what they call the *misa mayor* (major mass) involved the recitation of 15 mys-

teries of the rosary, each mystery marked by the ringing of altar bells. In addition they prayed the *trisagio* (hymn sung in honor of the Holy Trinity) and *letanías* (litanies) in a rapid, “disarticulate” Latin (Padre Javier 7/16/97). Padre Javier has a treasured photograph of Don Gilberto wearing a cross that he had given him.

By the latter half of the 1970s, however, Tulum’s newcomers—led by new Catholic priests who were less tolerant of autonomous, syncretic religious practices—began to contest the legitimacy of the Iglesia Maya’s indigenous religious customs. The differences and conflicts were first manifest in the institution of marriage, but later spread to struggles over the control of other kinds of spaces, as I will describe in the final sections of this paper.

### Roads, Conflict, and Doña Felipa’s Wedding

In Santa Cruz Maya tradition, marriages were simple private affairs arranged between two families and blessed by a Maya priest. The marital arrangements (*koónsito*) involved a short series of visits and exchanges (*muhul*) between the groom’s family and godparents (*padrinos*) and the bride’s family.<sup>23</sup> The nuptials themselves involved the couple’s kneeling and reciting prayers with the priest as they each held candles. According to both Padre Javier and Maya informants, the couple simply prayed until their candles burned out. The private nuptials were followed by a simple exchange; the groom’s family provided the bride’s family with a gift of food and tortillas.

The story of Doña Felipa’s marriage to a Yucatec immigrant exemplifies the complexity of Maya and immigrant conflict and identity. In the 1970s, Doña Felipa was a young woman born into a key family in the Iglesia Maya. She wanted to marry a man, Don Nacho, who was considered to be Yucatec. Although Don Nacho’s father, Don Lorenzo, was born in Tulum of a Santa Cruz Maya family, he left Tulum for Yucatán in the 1950s, eventually married a Yucatec Maya woman, and got into the cattle business in Panabá, Yucatán. Thus, Don Nacho was born and raised in Yucatán. In the 1970s, Don Nacho immigrated to Tulum, where he still had plenty of relatives, to work with the tourist era road crews. Because cultural differences between Yucatecs and Mayas were becoming increasingly significant and contentious, Don Nacho was considered a Yucatec Maya immigrant rather than a Santa Cruz Maya.

In the 1970s, tourist era road projects required large numbers of workers. Many local men worked on the roads, but most of the large road crews immigrated to the area from Yucatán. Doña Felipa’s father and brothers were among the Tulum Mayas working with highway construction. Their family moved a few kilometers north of the pueblo to the crossroad that would eventually connect the Cancún-Tulum highway to the major archeological site of Coba—the only crossroad between Cancún and Felipe Carrillo Puerto. The family



must have been among the group of residents who, in 1967, wanted to make sure the government built the planned road near their community.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, Santa Cruz Mayas from nearby Chumpon, one of the dominant Caste War Maya ceremonial centers, purportedly threatened road crews planning to build near their village (Farriss 1984:19). At any rate, Doña Felipa's family took advantage of the crossroad traffic and opened a small store, thus producing a great deal of conflict and alienation from the Iglesia Maya, but ultimately creating a very profitable family enterprise.

Doña Felipa was a young woman when her family moved to the crossroads, and it is here where she begins her story about her courtship, marriage, and the religious conflicts and negotiations that occurred in the tourist epoch. In the following excerpt, she explains how she met her immigrant husband, hinting at the conflicts yet to come:

Look, when we lived at the Coba crossroads, well ... when they were making the road, one of my brothers worked on the [Bocapaila beach] road. I think [my husband] saw me there with my brother. He saw me, and he asked my brother, Manuel, if I was his sister. Yes. Yes. I'm his sister. He told him that I was.

And then he ... I think he already liked me, and he came over to ask for water. I gave him a glass of water. And I gave him that glass of water, and everyday he would come over to ask for water. Well, I don't know if he [laughs], if he was very thirsty, or I don't know. He would get thirsty when he crossed over there. I don't know....

And, well, from there, I was about 16 years old. I still had young men who would talk to me, but I wouldn't, I wouldn't say anything. I wouldn't think about getting married, or, I don't know. I wouldn't fall in love, I think. Do you see?

But that man also, when he passed by, I did like him. And when he passed by to talk, I talked with pleasure. And when my brother no longer wanted him to come look for water... he told my father that he came every day to look for water and he told my mother that I did not have permission to give water, much less to talk. But I didn't care; I would go out and talk anyway. [Doña Felipa 4/20/93:2-3]

Doña Felipa eventually went on to marry this "immigrant" man, but the road that was bringing change to the pueblo also brought intense conflict to her family; roads and the movements of people, ideas, and places changed the world not only physically, but also in other important ways.

Although the notion of roads and travel are important metaphors (i.e., ways to think) for western cultures or European language speakers, as evidenced by the multivocality of words such as “path” and “journey,” roads in Maya cultural and linguistic logic are a major cultural symbol for understanding the world. Roads are “existential ideas” comprising important motifs in Maya history and religion, as expressed in the *Books of Chilam Balam*, other prophecies, and oral traditions (Burns 1992). Marriage is literally translated as “your road is completed,” greetings ask “how is your road?” and the idea of “today” is best translated as “this existing road” (Burns 1992:45). Prophecies regarding the wutz (turning or inverting) of this epoch circa the year 2000 proffer that seven roads will merge in Chan Santa Cruz (officially named Felipe Carrillo Puerto), where five major highways already meet (Sullivan 1983:101).

Ironically, roads brought significant change, not just in their construction (via jobs), but also by giving outsiders the means to occupy and transform Maya physical and cultural space. Thus, in addition to jobs and people, they brought new ideologies, food, music, clothes, and commodities. But most importantly, they provided the region’s (mostly male) immigrant laborers with the means to enter Tulum and other Maya communities while remaining fully involved with politics and their families in their natal towns (see Re Cruz 1996, 1998 on this contentious process in Chan Kom). For local families, and especially for women, it was exactly this male participation in long-distance migrant work that created dilemmas and anxieties. Adult men often left wives and families in their hometowns while they pursued wage labor, yet complementary economic gender relations still necessitated that men have women to cook their food, draw their baths, and share a sexual relationship. Given these kinds of conditions, men often sought out new “wives” or lived with other women when they migrated as wage laborers. In the tradition of Maya prophecy, one Maya woman, in speaking of a number of local women who unknowingly “married” such men, dubbed this era the “*Época del Engaño de la Mujer*” (Epoch of the Deception of Women).

As a consequence of these dynamics, Doña Felipa had to convince her father that Don Nacho did not have another family in Yucatán.<sup>25</sup>

And my father would say, “No. No, you can’t marry him. You don’t know him. I tell you, I feel that he, well, I don’t know, I don’t know.” Since he was 23 years old, my father would say, “He is surely married in his town. You can tell that he is older. Surely he is married and has a family over there and he will deceive you. No, no, you can’t marry.”

And I would say, “Well,” since he went to talk to my father, “he said he wasn’t married and he didn’t have any *compromisos* (commitments or responsibilities) in his town. Nothing. He is older but he is not a father. He

doesn't have any obligations [a wife or children] that he left in his town, nothing like that."

And my father didn't believe it. No. My mother didn't believe it either. She says it is just a lie that people are saying, especially since you are just a young woman, he will lie to you. And I would say, "Well, no, I believe him. I believe that he really is not married." My niece would also say, "No. He's not married."

So from there my father said, "Okay, if you do not have any obligations, we want you to marry our daughter." And they set a year for visits, so we could talk, that's all. And he would go every day, but later they said he could only go every third day, so he would just go every third day. [Doña Felipa 4/20/93:3-4]

Despite the fact that Don Nacho had Santa Cruz Maya relatives in Tulum and shared local cultural and religious practices, the union resulted in much conflict and negotiation. As was customary in both Yucatán and Tulum, the groom's family and godparents petitioned the bride's family, negotiating the *koónsito* (agreement or terms of the marriage). Once the customary seven visits had been completed and the bride and her family's *muhul* (gifts such as jewelry, *huipil* or dress, shawl, chocolate, cigarettes, liquor, etc.) were in their possession, the wedding took place.

However, Doña Felipa's marriage to an "immigrant" was complicated by yet another factor; her fiancé insisted a Catholic priest marry them because he believed a Catholic marriage was more "sacred" and legitimate than a Maya marriage. Whether this sentiment arose solely from Don Nacho, others in the immigrant community, or was encouraged by the Catholic clergy is not clear. In my interview with Padre Javier, marriage was the one area mentioned where syncretic practices were restricted and devalued; this is not surprising, given the primacy of the sacrament of matrimony within the Catholic Church, and for Western and Mexican cultures. Moreover, many scholars have written of the significance of marriage and family as an instrument of control in the process of colonization and conversion (e.g., A. Castañeda 1998; Alonso 1995; Gutiérrez 1991; D'Emilio and Freedman 1988). At any rate, both Doña Felipa's father and the Iglesia Maya's "big men" (i.e., Maya *noboch maakoob*, or important, elite men) contested the Catholic Church's control of the sanctification of marriage:

Over there in the church, in the Maya church, they wouldn't let me marry. No, even though we are from the church. My father [and us], we are *católicos* [Mayas]. And we are all there from the Iglesia Maya.

But the [Maya] men wouldn't let you marry in the church if you weren't from here. They wouldn't let us marry in the church because the man was from another place. It didn't matter if it was from Yucatán. As long as you were from another place, it was stricter.

It's still that way today. Well, no, I don't think it's as strict. In those days it was stricter. [Local] people did not trust other people. Even if they lived here two years, three years, they still didn't trust.

So they wouldn't let us marry in the church. Where I married, it was just in the *cuartel* (guardhouse).<sup>26</sup> Where the men are today, where the church is, the house that is in front of it, in that house. [Doña Felipa 4/20/93:4-5]

After the families completed the marital arrangements, a practice that was shared by both Yucatec and Santa Cruz Mayas, negotiations began with the Iglesia Maya. Since Doña Felipa was going to marry with the priest, Father Miguel, rather than “in Maya,” the wedding was moved from the sacred space of the Iglesia Maya to the military-political space of the guardhouse. Don Nacho's father convinced Doña Felipa's father to allow the Catholic marriage, claiming that since her family accepted the bridewealth with pleasure, they should allow his son the pleasure of a more sacred Catholic wedding. In addition, the public, Mexican-style “reception” or celebration, which immigrants were beginning to popularize by this time, was restricted to the patio space between the guardhouse and the Iglesia Maya.

### Diverging Stories and Centers of Power

Just a couple of years later, by 1979, religious conflict had reached a turning point and neither the priest nor outsiders were allowed near the Iglesia. Doña Felipa recalls that during this five- to six-year period during the latter 1970s, religious practices became the site of struggle between locals and immigrants; however, the stories told of this conflict by Santa Cruz Mayas are quite different from those of immigrants and Catholic converts such as Doña Felipa. Mayas tell of priests coming to “say mass” in Tulum as they had in the past, but refusing to follow the requirement to remove their shoes and offer candles when entering the Iglesia Maya. Because religious injustices were part of what the Cruzoob movement had struggled against in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, religious autonomy was an essential aspect of identity for members of the Iglesia, and the priest's irreverence for their practices was considered a direct affront to their community. Moreover, the removal of shoes exemplifies Santa Cruz religious-political ideology; shoes in Mexico have historically symbolized highly stratified social divisions mediated by both race and class.<sup>27</sup>

Doña Felipa and other Catholics, in contrast to Mayas, recall this historical moment as one in which Mayas were needlessly “kicking out” Catholic priests (and other foreigners). Power struggles were becoming more apparent as immigrants asserted their growing cultural and institutional power. In the early 1980s, Doña Felipa recalled having to go to Felipe Carillo Puerto to baptize her children because the Catholic priest would no longer go to Tulum.

The Maya people would throw the priest out. They would throw him out. They couldn't even know that the Father had come, or they would gather to speak poorly of him. They really hated the Father. It's that, it's that they only want to be Maya. And they are really bad because they wouldn't let the Father come here. They wouldn't even let him come to the guardhouse! [They wouldn't let him enter?] No! [Doña Felipa 4/20/93:8]

In fact, part of the problem was that only “outsiders” would go to the masses celebrated occasionally by the Catholic priest in someone's home, and there were still relatively few outsiders—mostly artesanos, teachers, and soldiers. As aforementioned, the Catholic priest was either denouncing the legitimacy of Mayan autonomy and religious practices, or he was being unfairly kicked out and turned away, depending on whether Mayas or immigrants were telling the story.

By 1985, the availability of electricity had radically opened up business and housing opportunities in Tulum, leading to tremendous growth, increased immigration, and a shift in the balance of power among Mayas and foreigners. By the mid-1980s, members of the Iglesia Maya were in the minority, and Roman Catholics in Tulum no longer needed to incorporate indigenous practices. They started their own “place-making,” initially asserting their power and independence by building their own church. Newcomers quickly took advantage of their strength and expanded their occupation of Maya space, building a new town plaza, located, as it usually is in Mexican villages, around the “legitimate” Roman Catholic Church. The physical space surrounding the immigrants' new church and town plaza soon held other centers of power, including state and municipal offices, a large park, and a jail. This new town center contained the powerful institutions and physical structures needed for immigrants to impose both their visions of the world and the means to control it.

Opposing readings of the confrontation between the priest and the Iglesia Maya illustrate the struggle between the two groups. The dominant Catholic version centers on the priest being “kicked out,” simultaneously legitimizing the marginalization of Maya institutions and people, as well as asserting Catholic and Mexican control. On the other hand, Maya versions focus on the

priest's refusal to bring candles and take off his shoes; that is, his disparagement of their religious practices. Ironically, some Mayas righteously cited hurricane Gilbert's (1988) destruction of the concrete-block Catholic Church as evidence that God was punishing Catholics, although this resulted in the construction of a bigger and better Catholic church. As foreign domination became increasingly pervasive, Mayas sometimes responded by socially and physically isolating themselves and fortifying the spaces they continued to control. Living in increasingly segregated neighborhoods, they physically fenced in their church to keep out foreigners (and tourists). Unlike the other *Iglesia Maya* centers, which have not experienced much immigration or development and only nominally guard their churches, the church in Tulum is physically fortified with a fence to keep outsiders—both curious ethno-tourists and contentious Catholic immigrants—out. In addition, the church is always well protected and the guardhouse is always adequately “manned.”<sup>28</sup> Significantly, this period of economic development and the accompanying cultural and religious conflicts led to Tulum's religious and cultural practices being revitalized, and Mayas becoming more involved in the *Iglesia Maya*, as I describe below.

The internal politics of Santa Cruz Mayas has been as convoluted and intriguing as that of any other social or political movement, and Tulum's history as a ceremonial center reflects these convolutions. Though, as described earlier, Tulum's rise as a religious-political ceremonial center was associated with the appearance of a miraculous cross in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Tulum was rarely in control of its miraculous cross throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rather, either neighboring Chumpon or Xcacal (also ceremonial centers with miraculous crosses) controlled Tulum's most powerful cross during most of the last century. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the cross resided in Chumpon. In the mid-1940s, patron of the cross Don Gilberto returned the cross to Tulum for a short while, but it continued to be shuffled between Xcacal and Chumpon, returning at least once a year for Tulum's annual festival or other pilgrimages.

Sometime around 1986, the cross was visiting Tulum and “refused” to go back to Xcacal; the “big men” who were in charge of its return journey were unable to lift it, despite their repeated attempts. Using divination, they discovered the cross wanted to stay “home,” where it belonged, in Tulum. Furthermore, it began demanding unwavering and intensified community service and offerings. Since then, many community members have strengthened their faith and religious devotion, and strongly identified as members of the *Iglesia Maya* and Santa Cruz Mayas. In the early 1990s, Tulum's *Iglesia* had visitors daily, especially in the evening, when a continual stream of freshly bathed people (many women and children) took candles to light and leave at

the altar, pray, and then mingle and visit. Not only did they increase their more routine practices, such as offering daily prayers and candles and occasionally taking *matan* (offerings of food to be blessed and redistributed to the community), they also intensified other periodic celebrations. For example, their weeklong annual festival is now much larger and includes real bulls for the bullfights, a heavy-duty corral, and regionally recognized bands for the all-night dances.

Class and ethnic tensions—manifest in everything from everyday discourse to occasional political violence—continued to grow as Tulum became more intimately integrated into national and global economies, and businesspersons and other immigrants were able to obtain the means and materials necessary to move away from Maya culture and assert their own cultural practices and ideologies. The Mexican government played a key role in marginalizing Tulum's Maya "founders" and residents by frequently granting foreigners the power and means necessary to establish their ascendancy. When immigrant Catholics wanted to control the town, they did not have to win Maya support; they drew on the state's dominion of previously Maya-controlled lands to create a separate town center with government cooperation in the form of land grants for parks and the building of government offices. The state also helped with the infrastructure needed to build separate neighborhoods, and encouraged permanent immigration by granting previously Maya-owned lands to married newcomers, again tipping the balance of power in favor of particular kinds of colonists and increased tourist development. This led to immigrants' and tourists' eventual domination of the political, educational, and recreational spaces of Mayas. But, though foreigners increasingly asserted new identities and cultural practices, Mayas also began to seek political support for their oppositional identity.

## Conclusion

This ethnography of Mayas and immigrants in Tulum has demonstrated that local sites, spaces, cultures, and identities are formed and transformed through individual and collective actions situated within particular political economies. The contemporary epoch of tourism was preceded by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century investigation and appropriation of Maya culture and sites, a process that occurred just as the Cruzoob tried to establish their political and cultural autonomy. Ever since, Mayas have used their cultural logic and prophecies to negotiate with immigrant foreigners. Even though tourist-era Mayas had initially developed mutually accommodating, even intimate relations with outsiders, and had come to appreciate some foreign cultural and economic practices and commodities, they later lost control of their local sites, cultural practices, and identities as the balance of power shifted toward the new immi-

grants. Maya rejection of the tourist market, fencing of church property, and religious conflicts were all forms of resistance to political and cultural domination. Although Maya struggles have not always ended their subordination to foreigners, in Tulum this process of foreign resistance resulted in their Iglesia Maya becoming more powerful and respected vis-à-vis both the ethno-tourism circuit and other Santa Cruz communities.

The tourist era intensified diverging trajectories of change for Tulum's Santa Cruz population. Some assimilated to the increasingly dominant Mexican Catholic culture, some are fully bilingual and bicultural, and some have chosen to revitalize and affirm their "Mayanness" through a newly empowered Iglesia Maya. With hindsight, some Mayas regretted the elders' decisions to resist incorporation into archeo-touristic developments, seeing that the relative wealth, status, and power of the immigrants could have been theirs. Some preferred to see themselves well positioned within Mexican national culture as they recognized the ubiquitousness of contemporary social, ethnic, cultural and religious stratification. Others, as I have shown here, chose instead to fight back by revitalizing their cultural heritage, especially through the religious practices of the Iglesia Maya. For all, however, institutional forces and powers that are often outside their control have mitigated their decisions.

Finally, my analysis challenges attacks on the fields of cultural studies and the politics of identity by joining questions of cultural difference, identities, and resistance to issues of social inequality, material practices, and power. Rather than dichotomizing questions of culture and power, or essentializing cultural identities, I show how actions and experiences at different levels—individual, local, and global—produce and transform identities and spaces, sometimes in unexpected or unintended ways. As Gupta and Ferguson have argued, resistance is "affixed or indexed not to particular acts, events, or results—or even to the attainment, development, or secure occupancy of a state of consciousness—but to an ongoing struggle with the ever changing deployment of strategies of power" (1997:18). Thus, it is not surprising that Tulum's early period of accommodation was transformed into struggles over identities as immigrants developed new sources of power. Moreover, tourist era struggles were not played out in a strictly "political" arena; instead they occurred primarily within the framework of marital and religious practices. My work demonstrates that cultural practices, far from being trivial, have real political consequences—the previously dominant Maya town center was displaced and a new Mexican/Catholic/immigrant center of town/power was instituted. In Tulum, Mayas and foreigners continue to struggle within constantly shifting, unequal alliances that are multiply determined, and as global pressures to cede autonomy increase, so do Maya assertions of control.



## Notes

1. For a brief review of literature related to the politics and processes of culturally defining places, see Hale 1997 and D. Brown 1999. Denise Brown specifically addresses Maya cultural landscapes in Chemax, Yucatán, but I disagree with her when she equates the loss of control over such landscapes with the loss of culture.

2. For example, he ignores the non-essentialist theories of scholars such as Anzaldúa (1987) and Rosaldo (1989), and fails to recognize new developments in the analysis of identities and identity politics as evidenced by scholars such as Gupta and Ferguson (1997), Jackson (1995), Lugo (1990), Flores and Benmayor (1997), Rosaldo (1999), Lamphere, Ragoné and Zavella (1997), Lancaster and di Leonardo (1997), and many others. For a concise summary of some of the major issues as they relate to Latin America see Hale (1997).

3. See Villa Rojas 1945 and Sullivan 1983, 1989 for descriptions of Santa Cruz Maya religious beliefs and practices.

4. Mexicans and Yucatecs popularly attributed these uprisings to Mayas' racial hostility against whites in order to de-legitimize Maya demands, hence the name. Scholars continue to debate the primacy of racial stratification as opposed to other criteria in causing the war, with both Rugeley (1996) and Dumond (1997) recently minimizing the importance of race, in part because mestizos were also involved in the movement. Despite the fact that Indians did not simply hate whites, or that both Mayas and mestizos were involved, the movement was racial in the sense that the "rebels" were fighting against social injustice and exploitation which were clearly mediated by race and used race-based categories to develop their ideology and agenda.

5. Although historians of the Caste War differ significantly in the primacy of these factors in explaining it, most would agree that a combination of historical policies and events contributed to its development. The extensive literature related to the Caste War includes Reed 1964, Montalvo-Ortega 1988, Bricker 1981, J. Durán González 1977, Patch 1993, Jones 1989, Farriss 1984, Rugeley 1996, Sullivan 1989, Gann 1918, Dumond 1977, 1985, 1997, Villa Rojas 1945, Bartolomé 1988, Barabas 1987, Bartolomé and Barabas 1977, and Lapointe 1983.

6. Today the descendants of the Cruzoob are most likely to identify themselves as people of the Santa Cruz/Cruces (Holy Cross/Crosses), or members of the Iglesia Maya, where the miraculous crosses and saints are housed.

7. Stelae are upright stone slabs erected as monuments, usually depicting historical, ceremonial, or mythical events, and often including hieroglyphic texts.

8. Major explorers and archeologists in the mid- and late 19<sup>th</sup> century included Juan José Gálvez, Stephens and Catherwood (in the 1840s), Brasseur

de Bourbourg (1850s), the Le Plongeurs (1870s), E.H. Thompson, Maler, J. P. Contreras, and D. Elizalde (1880s). In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century they included Howe, Morley, Spinden, Gann, and the Andrews. For historical accounts of archeologists and archeological projects in Yucatán, see Kelly 1993; Brunhouse 1973, 1975; INAH 1961; and Andrews and Andrews 1975.

9. The landing strip and hotel referred to were located at neighboring Tanchá, just a few kilometers from the ruins, where various owners have developed cattle ranches, coconut plantations, and a *chicri*: trading center and seaport.

10. Expediente #24-9-002, Office of the Reforma Agraria Nacional (RAN), Chetumal, Quintana Roo.

11. Pablo Bush Romero letter, dated March 20, 1971, to the governor of the Territory of Quintana Roo, Caja 15, #430, Archivo General del Estado (AGE), Chetumal, Quintana Roo.

12. Pablo Bush Romero letter, dated March 20, 1971, to the governor of the Territory of Quintana Roo, Caja 15, #430, Archivo General del Estado (AGE), Chetumal, Quintana Roo.

13. Mexican and foreign “beach communities” abounded with gossip and rumors regarding Mexico’s ex-president Luis Echeverría’s (1970-1976) profit and ownership of tourist and coastal properties, especially near Tulum and in Sian Ka’an, a nearby biosphere reserve.

14. By 1989, the Federal District, including Mexico City, fell to the second most popular tourist destination, after Cancún (Clancy 1998). By 1990, Cancún had more hotel rooms and visitors than any other Mexican tourist resort, including Acapulco, which had long been Mexico’s leading beach resort (García Villa 1992:94-95). The Cancún area now receives over 2.5 million visitors per year, and accounted for more than a third of Mexico’s total tourist revenues in 1998 (Alisau 1999).

15. I began my fieldwork in the summer of 1990, then spent ten months in 1991-1992, and have continued to visit one or two weeks per year during most subsequent years.

16. I spent the majority of my time with these Maya families, and have used pseudonyms for all informants. Focusing on Maya women, I relied extensively on directed conversations and participant-observations of everyday experiences in private homes as women went about routine work, visits, and activities. I also spent a great deal of time with women and their families in more public spaces as they participated in both daily and periodic prayers, healing rituals, festivals, and other activities of the *Iglesia Maya*, in addition to accompanying them when they shopped, attended civic functions, and con-

ducted business with public institutions such as schools and clinics. Finally, I audiotaped unstructured life histories and interviews on selected topics, some of which are used below. I estimate that about 20 percent of individuals in Tulum who are descendants of the Cruzoob no longer identify with Santa Cruz Mayas or participate in the Iglesia Maya, either through a process of gradual aloofness and immersion in the more dominant culture, or through active rejection. Some of those who still participate in the Iglesia have become fully bilingual and bicultural.

17. All translations by the author, unless noted otherwise.

18. See Sullivan (1983:ch. 2) for a more in-depth discussion of Santa Cruz Mayas' prophecies. My fieldwork additionally indicated that the prognostications are gendered; Sullivan does not cite women's most commonly mentioned predictions—those regarding the death of children under the age of seven, and women's aversion to producing progeny (Juárez 1996).

19. Santa Cruz, where the first miraculous cross appeared, was the principal capital throughout most of the Caste War, but the complicated politics of the Caste War were intertwined with Maya, Mexican, British, and other conflicts (see, for example, Monteagudo 1887; Dumond 1997; Lapointe 1983; Reed 1964). In fact, Santa Cruz attacked Tulum because they allowed a white man, Juan Peon Contreras de Elizalde, the "eccentric brother" of an elite Yucatec family, to marry an elite Cruzoob Maya widow and assume governance of the Tancah and Tulum seaport, trade center and sacred/archeological sites (Monteagudo 1887; Dumond 1997). I wish to thank Paul Sullivan for providing the article by Monteagudo and other archival materials related to Tulum.

20. In addition to agricultural enterprises, *rancho* can also refer to small settlements such as private homes and beach hotels.

21. Numerous researchers mention the problems of drugs, alcohol, and so forth in tourist economies (see, for example, Chambers 1997; Kinnaird and Hall 1994; Kintz 1998; Daltabuit and Pi Sunyer 1990; and the special issue of *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 14[1], 1990). Ironically, at one time Maya women were customarily bare-breasted within their village (Villa Rojas 1945; Sullivan 1989), and some still wear only their skirts within their house compounds.

22. For example, Sullivan (1983:183-4) documented that Tuzik, an Iglesia Maya community, had about 30 percent of its adult male population leave between 1965 and 1978. Some of these central zone Mayas lived, if not worked, in Tulum. General ethnographies document the similarity of Yucatec Maya culture (e.g., Redfield 1950; Kintz 1990; Macduff 1991; Steggerda 1984).

23. See Juárez 2001 for a more extensive description of Maya marital practices and how they have changed during the last century.

24. Expediente # 24-11-025, Office of the Reforma Agraria Nacional (RAN), Chetumal, Quintana Roo.

25. Ironically, Don Nacho was considered a foreigner despite being a member of an extended founding Maya family that still resided in Tulum.

26. A Maya church compound usually consists of a guardhouse, where local men who protect and provide service to the church live, a patio area, and the church itself.

27. In Mexico and other places in Latin America, not wearing shoes, in addition to other cultural and racial markers, has often been associated with Indianness. Census takers have even used the wearing of shoes to help determine ethnicity. For Mayas, removing their shoes reclaims, valorizes and sacralizes a marker of subordinate racial, cultural, and ethnic status.

28. On visits to other Iglesia Maya churches and shrine centers (Xcocal, Chumpon, Señor, and Tuzik), guardhouses were often vacant and their churches were un-manned. Tulum, on the other hand, had about five to 12 men, many who actually lived in bordering ranchos, doing service each week, leaving only rarely if their homes were nearby. In contrast, Sullivan reports that, in the late 1970s, few men from Tuzik did *guardia* or guard service (1983:85-86).

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