Maya Ethnogenesis

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RESUMEN

Eran los mayas de Yucatán verdaderamente mayas? Con respecto a las identidades a las cuales pretendían y las que otros les daban, los mayas no eran mayas. Este artículo examina fuentes coloniales que demuestran que los habitantes indígenas de la península no se llamaban a sí mismos “maya” ni utilizaban ningún otro término étnico para identificarse como parte de un grupo étnico común. Este artículo explora el género de identidad maya durante los siglos coloniales, utilizando principalmente fuentes en lengua maya yucateca. El artículo analiza tres circunstancias que afectaron ésta “etnogénesis maya”—los conceptos de raza impuestos por los españoles durante la colonia, la Guerra de Castas en el siglo XIX, y la etnopolítica del siglo XX, enfatizando el efecto gradual, sutil o indirecto de cada uno de éstos contextos.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Identidad, Cultura, Etnogénesis, Mayas, Yucatán. KEYWORDS: Identity, Culture, Ethnogenesis, Mayas, Yucatan.

Inventing Mayas

WERE THE MAYAS OF COLONIAL YUCATAN actually Mayas? In terms of both the identities they claimed and those assigned to them, they were not. Colonial-era evidence shows that the native inhabitants of the peninsula, whom modern scholars identify as “Maya,” did not consistently call themselves that or any other name that indicated they saw themselves as members of a common ethnic group. Nor did Spaniards or Africans in colonial Yucatan refer to the Mayas as “Mayas.”

Nevertheless, the term “Maya” was in use in Yucatan in colonial times and most likely in the post-classic period too (if it is rooted, as I argue below, in the toponym “Mayapan”). Today it is the conventional term used in all languages to refer to a broad swathe of peoples in the so-called “Maya area” of southern Mesoamerica. The term has acquired considerable baggage, much of it contested, though arguably insufficiently so. In Edward Fischer’s words, “Maya scholars and peasants alike con-
continue to assert the legitimacy of an essentialist cultural paradigm, arguing that there is a metaphysical quality to Maya-ness that transcends the minutia of opportunistic construction” (2001: 243). Fischer is willing neither to embrace nor dismiss views of “Maya identity as nothing more than the product of counterhegemonic resistance or the romantic musings of anthropologists” (2001: 243); his compromise is “to view Maya culture as an historically continuous construction that adapts to changing circumstances while remaining true to a perceived essence of Maya-ness” (2001: 246; also see 15–19). Quetzil Castañeda’s position is somewhat less compromising; for him, “categories of Maya, Maya culture, and Maya civilization are not at all empty of meaning or reality, but . . . are fundamentally contested terms that have no essential entity outside of the complex histories of sociopolitical struggles” (1996: 13).

The presupposition of this article is that the issues surrounding “Maya” as a “contested term” are relevant to the colonial period, and vice versa; the article’s purpose is to approach this debate from the perspective of the colonial period, and to contribute to it by demonstrating how colonial-period evidence disproves the commonly made assumption that in previous centuries Mayas shared a sense of common ethnic identity. In the introduction to The Invention of Ethnicity, Werner Sollors refers to Ernest Gellner’s argument that “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist” (1989: xi); my position is that modern Maya ethnogenesis had to invent Maya ethnic identity because there was no Maya ethnic self-consciousness in pre-modern times to which Mayas could awake.

Because of its modern ubiquity, I begin with the term “Maya,” examining its meaning to Mayas of the Conquest and colonial periods in Yucatan, using Yucatec Maya-language sources to categorize its usage. I then briefly further explore the nature of Maya identity during these centuries, likewise using archival evidence primarily in Yucatec Maya, to search for possible alternative terms or bases of ethnic identity. Finding no clear ethnic component to self-ascribed colonial Maya identities, but at the same time uncovering hints of ethnic awareness in the written record, I resort to breaking down the broad category of “ethnic identity” into two sub-categories, overt ethnicity and implied ethnicity (both explained further below). Finally, I look very briefly at three circumstances that impacted “Maya ethnogenesis”—colonial Spanish ethnoracial concepts; the Caste War; and twentieth-century ethnopolitics—emphasizing the muted, gradual, or indirect nature of their impact.

“Maya” in the Colonial Period

If the historical roots of Maya ethnic identity are an illusion, what of the colonial-era use of the term “Maya”? It does not appear at all in Spanish-language written
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
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<th>Source: Genre, Town (Region) (Incidence)</th>
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<td>cultural:</td>
<td>colonial</td>
<td>quasi-notarial &amp; notarial sources (numerous)*</td>
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<td>&quot;the Maya language&quot;</td>
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<td>Book of Chilam Balam, Chumayel (Xiu) (thrice)</td>
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<td>quasi-notarial &amp; notarial sources (numerous)</td>
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<td>cultural/material: &quot;the ancient Maya count&quot;</td>
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<td>Book of Chilam Balam, Tizimin (east) (once)</td>
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<td>maya pom</td>
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<td>1669</td>
<td>cabildo petition, Calkini (Calkini) (once)</td>
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<td>Book of Chilam Balam, Chumayel (Xiu) (once)</td>
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<td>&quot;those Itza Mayas&quot;</td>
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<td>maya ah kinob</td>
<td>to others:</td>
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<td>Book of Chilam Balam, Chumayel (Xiu) (once)</td>
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<td>&quot;Maya priests&quot;</td>
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<td>maya unicorn(i)</td>
<td>to others:</td>
<td>colonial</td>
<td>Book of Chilam Balam, Chumayel (Xiu) (eight times); Titles of the Pech, Chicxulub and Yaxkukul (Pech) (twice)</td>
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<td>&quot;(the) Maya men/people&quot;</td>
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<td>to others:</td>
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<td>to commoners by nobles</td>
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<td>Titles of the Pech, Chicxulub and Yaxkukul (Pech) (once)</td>
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<td>of another Yucatec region</td>
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<td>to others:</td>
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<td>Title of Acalan-Tixchel (Chontal region) (once)</td>
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<td>to Yucatec Mayas by Chontal Mayas</td>
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<td>self-reference: &quot;we</td>
<td>1662</td>
<td>individual petition, Yaxakumche (Xiu) (once)</td>
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<td>Maya men/people&quot;</td>
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<td>cabildo petition, Baca (Pech) (once)**</td>
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<td>self-reference</td>
<td>1669</td>
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<tr>
<td>con maya unice</td>
<td>self-reference</td>
<td>colonial</td>
<td>Title of Chilam Balam, Chumayel (Xiu) (once)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>con ah maya unice</td>
<td>self-reference (as nobles of the Canul chibal)</td>
<td>colonial</td>
<td>(1595/1821)</td>
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Sources: Edmonson (1982: 169); AGI (Escribanía 317b, 9: folio 9); Roys (1933: 28); TLH (The Title of Calkini: folio 36); Roys (1933: 57); Roys (1933: 47, 58, 59); Roys (1933: 61); Roys (1933: 53, 55, 56, 31, 27, 24, 56); TLH and TULAL (Title of Chichahuitl: folios 6, 8, 15) and (Title of Yaxkukul folios 39, 48, 8v); AGI (México 138, the Title of Acalan-Tixchel: folio 76v); TLH (Xiu Chronicle: #35); AGI (Escribanía 317a: 2: folio 147); Roys (1933: 20). For many of these examples, see Restall (1997: 13–15; 1998: 35, 44, 74, 101, 116, 121, 124, 127, 134, 177, 233). *A notarial example is in AGN (Bienes Nacionales 5, 35: folio 5); a quasi-notarial one is in Roys (1933: 40). **This is an example; the phrase appears several other times in near-identical petitions from other north-west cahobs in 1668–69 (AGI, Escritura 317a: 2: various folios).
sources, as Spaniards preferred the generic *indio*. The term does appear in Maya-language sources, but with little consistency or frequency. Table 1 lists examples of this usage, with types of usage categorized and listed according to frequency of attestation.

The primary category is one I have labeled “cultural,” containing references to the Yucatec language, as the term was mostly used as an adjective to describe it (*maya than*, “Maya speech or language”); Landa’s only reference to the term’s etymology is to “the language of the land being known as Maya” (*la lengua de la tierra llaman maya*; Landa 1959: 13; Restall and Chuchiak, n.d.). The persistence of this connotation as primary to the term among the Maya themselves is illustrated succinctly in the dictionary of present-day Yucatec by Victoria Bricker and her native collaborators; the sole entry under “Maya” is “*maya*-t’aan, Maya language” (*maya than* in colonial orthography; Bricker et al 1998: 181).\(^1\)

The context of Landa’s comment is the second category of usage, labeled “toponym” in Table 1; the Franciscan asserts that the place-name “Mayapan” was derived from the term “Maya.” However, no other toponym in Yucatan contains the element “Maya”; when, in a single quasi-notarial source, the term is attached to the name for Cozumel island, the context is a sacred association to Mayapan (Edmonson 1986: 47, 58, 59). Indeed, I suspect that the reverse of Landa’s suggestion is true, that “Maya” derived from “Mayapan.” This hypothesis is consistent with: first, the term’s association with, and primary usage in, the northwest, where Mayapan is located; second, the entry in the 16th Century dictionary from Motul, also in the northwest, that glosses *maya* as *nombre propio desta tierra* (Ciudad Real n.d., 1: folio 287v; Arzápalo Marín 1995, 1: 489); third, the term’s vague link to the Itzas, who, like Mayapan, were seen as part of the semi-sacred, semi-mythic historical past of the peninsula; and fourth, the following passage from the Chilam Balam of Chumayel (translation mine, but see Roys 1933: 50, 140; Edmonson 1986: 59):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{oxlahun ahau u katunil u} & \quad 13 \text{ Ahau was the katun when they} \\
\text{he-cob cah mayapan: maya} & \quad \text{founded the cah of Mayapan; they} \\
\text{uinic u kabaob: uaxac ahau} & \quad \text{were [thus] called Maya men. In 8} \\
\text{paxci u cabobi: ca uecchahi} & \quad \text{Ahau their lands were destroyed} \\
\text{ti peten tulacal: uac katuni} & \quad \text{and they were scattered through-} \\
\text{paxciob ca hau u maya} & \quad \text{out the peninsula. Six katun after} \\
\text{kabaob st hau u kaba} & \quad \text{they were destroyed they ceased} \\
\text{u katunil hauici u maya} & \quad \text{to be called Maya; 11 Ahau was} \\
\text{kabaob maya uinicob:} & \quad \text{the name of the katun when the} \\
\text{christiano u kabaob} & \quad \text{Maya men ceased to be called Maya} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\(^1\) Ahau was the katun when they founded the cah of Mayapan; they were [thus] called Maya men. In 8 Ahau their lands were destroyed and they were scattered throughout the peninsula. Six katun after they were destroyed they ceased to be called Maya; 11 Ahau was the name of the katun when the Maya men ceased to be called Maya [and] were called Christians.
These annals entries offer both an explanation of the diffusion of the term “Maya”—a product of the Diaspora created by the fall and abandonment of Mayapan—and a clear association of the term with the pre-Conquest pagan past. This hypothesis on the origins of the term was also circulating in 16th Century Yucatan; a dozen years after Landa claimed that the derivation was the reverse, an old conquistador of the province, the encomendero for the cah (Maya community) of Dzam, wrote in the Relaciones Geográficas that “this province speaks but one language, called Maya, its name derived from Mayapan” (RHGY, 1: 156).

Of course, accepting that “Maya” comes from “Mayapan” begs the question as to the toponym’s etymology. If “Mayapan” did indeed precede “Maya,” then Landa’s explanation of the toponym el pendón de la Maya, (the banner of the Maya) would only have meaning after the site became a major city (Landa 1959: 13; Restall and Chuchik n.d.). However, there are many possible alternative roots. May and Pan are both Maya patronyms, for example; pan also means “dig, sink (a well), plant (a tree)” and ah pan thus “he who digs,” with May Ah Pan, “(the land of) May, the well digger.” As yapan means “broken up,” the origin could be a reference to the stony ground, with ma yapan, “not broken up, unbroken (terrain).”

The tertiary category of usages of “Maya,” labeled “cultural/material” in Table 1, consists of references to material objects native to the peninsula (such as maya pom, “Maya copal incense”) or to local cultural practices (such as uchben maya xoè, “the ancient Maya count”). The significance of these types of references is that not only are they rare, but they all have sacred connotations and are consistent with the toponymic use of the term as rooted in semi-sacred myth and history. Although the Motul dictionary lists a material item that seems to lack such associations—maya ulum... “gallina...de yucatan”; and “gallina de la tierra: ulum: mayaulum—in the references Mayas make to turkeys and chickens in their testaments I have never once seen lum qualified by maya; on the contrary, Mayas tend to qualify the imported fowl, the chicken, as castillan u lum, “Castilian turkey,” abbreviated by the seventeenth century to cax (Ciudad Real n.d., 1: folio 287v; 2: folio 199v; Arzápalo Marín 1995, 1: 489; Restall 1997a: 125–26, 181, 365, 370). The purpose of a dictionary like the Motul was for Franciscans to make themselves comprehensible to Mayas, and Mayas would certainly have understood maya u lum. But Mayas themselves would have used lum for “turkey” and the qualified or invented term for “chicken;” this would have been more logical from their perspective and consistent with the more esoteric associations of maya.

Equally rare, and comprising the fourth category in Table 1, are instances where “Maya” refers to people. As references are so few, patterns can only be tentatively identified. But the examples suggest that the term was mostly applied by Mayas to Maya “others” or outsiders, specifically Yucatec natives of another region or class. One usage in this context was by nobles in reference to commoners, with the term...
seemingly somewhat derogatory. Thus when applied to Mayas of another region, the term sometimes implied that such people were of lesser status, although at other times the reference seems neutral. Native perspectives on the Spanish Conquest are the context for one such set of derogatory references, with “Maya” being designated to the natives of communities who were slower to accommodate the invaders.

The Pech nobles, for example, authors of one Conquest account, assert that they and their Spanish allies suffered much “because of the Maya people (maya uinicob) who were not willing to deliver themselves to God (Dios)” (that is, surrender themselves to the new colonial regime); these maya uinicob are ambiguously either local commoners or natives to the east of the Pech region, or perhaps both (Title of Chicxulub, folio 15, from my translation in Restall 1998a: 124). A similar perspective is found in the Relaciones Geográficas from Valladolid, a Spanish account based partly on oral native sources, which claims that the natives of Chikinchel (in the peninsula’s northeast) called the Cupul and Cochuah (of the east and southeast) “Ah Mayas, insulting them as crude and base people of vile understanding and inclination (soez y baja, de viles entendimientos e inclinaciones)” (RHGY, 2: 37).

This pattern incorporates the use of the term as a self-reference (the fifth and final category in Table 1), in that the context in some of those cases is that of petitions, whose language was by tradition self-deprecating. This tradition was Mesoamerican in scope, being most clearly visible in petitions in Nahuatl and Yucatec Maya. One of its central tropes was the presentation by nobles of themselves as children and commoners. In some Yucatec examples, this self-depiction is paralleled by a description of themselves as maya uinicob (Maya people or men). One group of such attestations is found in a series of petitions authored by cahob across the whole colony in 1668–69, in response to residencia activities by Spanish officials—an investigation, in other words, into a governor’s term of office. In this case, the administration under review was that of don Rodrigo Flores de Aldana, whose use of forced purchase operations had made him especially unpopular among Mayas and some colonist groups too. However, to view these attestations as simple indicators of ethnic self-identity would be to remove them misleadingly from their context. That context was, first, the self-deprecating component of Maya petitionary discourse, and second, the similarity of these petitions across the series, suggesting the use of a template that may have been partly Spanish-authored (with “maya uinicob” thus a translation of a phrase such as “indios”) but was certainly aimed at a Spanish audience. Thus by calling themselves “Mayas,” the petitioners were ritually humiliating themselves within two parallel social structures: a wholly native one in which “Maya” had negative class and region connotations, and the other a colonial ethnoracial one in which “Maya” was understood to have meaning to Spaniards as a marker of ethnic subordination.4

The region-class-“Maya” nexus has an additional dimension to it, one that fur-
ther undermines the term as a monolithic ethnic designator. This dimension is the mythical tradition of foreign origin maintained by a number of Maya noble families—all families in the group of prominent ruling chibalob that I have elsewhere dubbed the “dynastic dozen” (being the Caamal, Canul, Canche, Chan, Che, Chel, Cochua, Cocom, Cupul, Iuit, Pech, and Xiu) (Restall 2001). Scholars have tended to take this tradition at face value, as simple historical evidence of the non-Yucatec (usually central Mexican) origins of the peninsula’s native elite. However, there is no clear evidence beyond the tradition itself of any such invasion or migration. Furthermore, the metahistorical construction of the tradition by Maya dynasties conforms to the patterns of traditions of mythical elite foreign origins elsewhere in the world (as studied, for example, by Mary Helms; see Helms 1993; 1994; 1998; also see Henige 1982: 90–96). I have argued, therefore, that this tradition was not rooted in an historic migration of ruling families into Yucatan, but rather in pre-colonial efforts to bolster legitimacy of status and rule through sacred, mythic associations with often-fictional distant places of origin (for the full development of this argument, see Restall 2001). These efforts were given renewed necessity and vitality by the Spanish Conquest, resulting in the frequent references to such mythic origins in sixteenth-century sources (for example, in the Title of Acalan-Tixchel, folio 69v, The Title of Calkini, p. 36, the Book of Chilam Balam of Mani, p. 134, and RHGY, 1: 319; see Restall 1998a: 58, 101, 140, 149). By claiming to be both native and foreign, Maya dynasties effectively problematized and undermined any incipient sense of Maya ethnic identity that may have otherwise developed in late post-classic and colonial times. In permitting and often fostering the survival of a Maya élite, Spaniards thereby colluded in the perpetuation of an identity differentiation that ran against their impulse to see natives as an undifferentiated mass—and served to soften the impact of that impulse on Maya ethnogenesis.

All the attested self-references of Mayas as “Maya” come from the regions of the west, seemingly confirming Munro Edmonson’s suggestion (based on his reading of the Chilam Balam manuscript from Chumayel) that the Mayas were deemed to be the inhabitants of the peninsula’s west and the Itzas those of the east. However, the vast majority of extant colonial Maya sources come from the peninsula’s west, skewing the evidence. Furthermore, Edmonson’s translation of maya ah ytzae as “O Maya / And Itza” (1986: 100) is more likely “those Itza Mayas” (or “Oh Maya Itza,” as Ralph Roys has it; 1993: 167). Elsewhere in the Chumayel manuscript the Yucatec language is called u than maya ah ytzaob, “the language of the Itza Mayas,” again suggesting that Maya and Itza were not always mutually exclusive categories (Roys 1933: 40; Edmonson 1986: 222).

The regional association, therefore, of Mayas with the west and Itzas with the east is suggested but not very well supported by this evidence. In some ways, the category of “Itza” is comparable to that of “Maya”; both are ambiguous, used variously
and usually to describe some other group of natives within the peninsula, with uncertain historical roots but a fairly clear connection to an important ancient city (Chichén Itzá and Mayapan, respectively). But there is also a crucial difference between the two terms: Itza was, and still is, a Yucatec Maya patronym; “Maya” is not and there is no sign that it ever was. Although this could be taken to suggest that “Itza” connotes family, and “Maya” ethnicity, in fact the difference between the two is more complex. Whereas “Maya” has various connotations, most of them not referring to people, “Itza” is a category that primarily refers to people, both in the family sense (in the form of a patronym) and in an ethnic sense (in the form of the Itza Mayas of the Peten region of northern Guatemala, whose name may have derived from the patronym of the kingdom’s founders).

Before summarizing the evidence offered by Maya-language sources, it is worth turning briefly to the evidence of colonial-era dictionaries. This complex, bilingual, bicultural genre cannot of course be used as a simple window onto colonial Yucatec; dictionaries merely suggest how Maya was spoken in a particular time and region in the peninsula, as perceived and recorded by their Franciscan authors. Nevertheless, a search for *maya* entries in colonial dictionaries is revealing, especially in the context of the evidence from Maya notarial sources discussed above.

As Table 2 shows, there is a clear *maya* entry in one of the two principal Maya-Spanish dictionaries of the colonial period (the 16th Century Motul), but it is not listed as a Maya term in the late-colonial grammar by Beltrán. The term supposedly appears once in the Maya-Spanish section of the San Francisco dictionary—to qualify *bat*, meaning “axe”—but the original manuscript of this dictionary was a 19th Century copy that is now lost and so its 17th Century origins remain speculative (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 25a-27a, 513). Only in the Spanish-Maya sections of colonial dictionaries does the term appear with any regularity, suggesting that while the term certainly existed in colonial Maya, it was not one commonly used by Mayas. The types of applications of the term in Spanish-Maya vocabularies compares closely to the examples that I grouped under “cultural” and “material” (as opposed to “human”) in Table 1, implying that to Spaniards too the term was an adjective conveying autochthony in a general sense, rather than one specific to human beings. Indeed, surprisingly “Maya” does not appear in reference to people in the Spanish-Maya volume of the sixteenth-century Motul manuscript, even though it does in the Maya-Spanish volume. Such an entry first appears in Spanish-Maya lists half way through the colonial period, in the Vienna vocabulary of the late 17th Century, and perhaps also in the San Francisco dictionary, which may date from the 17th Century too. But *maya* does not appear in reference to people either in Beltrán’s grammar of 1746 (in which the language is “el Idioma Maya,” “la Maya,” and “el Idioma Yucateco,” but its native speakers are “Indios” and “Naturales”) or the Ticul compilation of 1836, suggesting it remained uncommon as an ethnic designator through...
What can be concluded, therefore, from the evidence discussed so far and presented in Tables 1 and 2? First, “Maya” is not a common term in colonial Maya...
sources. Second, it was primarily used to refer to the Yucatec language or to native material items, the latter primarily ones with sacred and/or historical associations. Third, when it was applied to people, it was never done so in a way that explicitly indicated a peninsula-wide or macroregional ethnic identity, suggesting instead smaller groups defined by region or class, with the term very possibly deriving from the toponym “Mayapan.” Dictionary entries of the term as a macroregional ethnic one are irregular, with no colonial dictionary including it in both a Maya-Spanish and Spanish-Maya vocabulary; its more common dictionary meanings are in reference to the Yucatec language and to local material items. Fourth, such implications of “Maya” group identity are inconsistent and contradictory. Fifth, there are signs that the term may have been viewed by Mayas as derogatory and/or as an archaic historical or literary term.

A Maya By Any Other Name?

If Mayas therefore did not see themselves as “Mayas,” what were the foundations of native self-identity? In addition to expected micro-identities such as gender, age, class, and occupation, there were two fundamental units of social organization which served as the basis of group and individual identity for colonial Mayas—the municipal community (which the Mayas called the cah), and the patronym-group (which they called the chibal). Mayas organized their lives and activities around these two units and consistently identified themselves and other Mayas according to cah and chibal affiliations.

The cah was a geographical entity, consisting of its residential core (what we would call a village or town) and its agricultural territory (the combination of the cultivated and forested lands held by cah members). But it was also a political and social entity, being the focus of Maya political activity (regional politics was a Spanish monopoly during colonial times), and the locus of social networks. At the primary level of the extended family, identity and social activity was generated at the meeting point of cah and chibal—built, in other words, around the members of a particular chibal in a particular cah. As chibalob were exogamous (in accordance with a deep-rooted Maya taboo that was broken only occasionally by dynastic-dozen couples), their members tended to form multi-chibal alliances that were inevitably class-based and related to political factionalism in the cah. As almost every aspect of a Maya individual’s life was determined by cah and chibal affiliations, it is not surprising that these units formed the native identity nexus, and provided the references for identification; thus someone might be Ah Pech or Ah Pechob, “of the Pech [chibal],” and Ah Motul, “of Motul [cah]” (Restall 1997a: 15–50; 1998b: 355–81).
One might argue that cah and chibal formed the basis of a kind of ethnic identity, or a multiplicity of micro-ethnic identities, a notion reminiscent of an older historiographical tradition that saw the pre-Conquest Mayas as divided into various “tribes.” Furthermore, if all Mayas shared the same type of identity, as well as sharing the experience of colonial subjection, then arguably they shared a kind of aggregate ethnic identity. This argument is not altogether without merit, but it is hard to reconcile with the three fundamental aspects of Maya identities: the persistence of class differences within each cah, as discussed above; the open nature of the cah (in that it was exogamous, permitted settlers from other cahob, and was part of the complex pattern of Maya mobility, the cah was not a closed community); and the diasporic nature of the chibal (that is, members of each chibal were found in a variety of cahob, almost never in just one, and often not even in a single region). Thus to categorize cah and chibal as types of ethnic identity would seem to stretch the term too far.

Nevertheless, as tempting as it may be, the issue cannot simply be left tied up in the tidy parcels of cah and chibal. Colonial circumstances made Maya identity increasingly more complex than that. After all, however rarely or irregularly the Mayas used the term “Maya,” it was never used to describe a person or object from outside the peninsula (see Table 3). Furthermore, cahnalob, or cah members, were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERM, WITH VARIANTS</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>CONTEXT OF USAGE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ah cahnal, cahnal, (ah) cahal /cahnaln, h cahala [late]</td>
<td>cah member, resident</td>
<td>all genres, non rhetorical, often juxtaposed to vecino (“Spaniard”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ah otochnal</td>
<td>household, native</td>
<td>same as ah cahnal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>macehual, masehual</td>
<td>commoner</td>
<td>rhetorical usage implying “Maya”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mehen</td>
<td>(man’s) children</td>
<td>same as macehual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>almehen</td>
<td>noble</td>
<td>only to describe Maya nobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uinic</td>
<td>man, person</td>
<td>sometimes means (Maya) person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuluinic, u nucl uinic, noh uinic</td>
<td>a principal, or elder</td>
<td>Maya person only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maya uinic</td>
<td>Maya man/person</td>
<td>rare; quasi-notarial sources only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maya than</td>
<td>Yucatec Maya</td>
<td>the language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ah [cah name]</td>
<td>person of [cah]</td>
<td>Maya person only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ah [patronym]</td>
<td>person of [chibal]</td>
<td>Maya person only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Adapted from Restall (1997: 17), based on colonial Maya-language notarial and quasi-notarial sources.
never non-Mayas, nor could chibalob, or members of a particular chibal be non-
Mayas either. Another Maya term, macehual, which primarily meant “commoner,”
came to take on ethnic implications in the colonial period because Spaniards and
Africans could not be macehualob. As Table 4 shows, by the mid-eighteenth century
macehual appears in a Maya-Spanish dictionary glossed as *indio*, having been omitted
totaly from earlier dictionaries. Corresponding to terms that were applied only
to Mayas were terms applied only to non-Mayas, such as *dzul* (written *dzul* in
colonial orthography), “foreigner,” and the Spanish word *vecino*, “resident,” which
was mostly used by Spaniards, and occasionally by Mayas too, to refer to non-Mayas
(Restall 1997a: 15–16; 1997b: 239–67; Karttunen and Lockhart 1987; Lockhart 1992:

However, it would be a mistake to assume that “macehual” was effectively a colo-
nial cognate for “Maya” as used today (as Hervik seems to suggest; 1999: 39, 42). The
absence of “macehual” from colonial Spanish-Maya vocabularies and the consistent
defining of “dzul” in colonial dictionaries as “foreigner,” rather than “Spaniard,” sug-
gests that “macehual” and “dzul” did not become terms of ethnic identity compara-
tive to the meaning we assign to “Maya” and “Spaniard.” In Table 3 I have denoted
the “context of usage” of “macehual” in Maya-language sources as being a rhetori-
cal one “implying ‘Maya,’” because Maya nobles typically styled themselves com-
moners in petitions to Spaniards, as a political ploy and in accordance with
Mesoamerican techniques of deferential discourse, in a way that was similar to their
usage of “Maya” as an identity marker. Spaniards read such terms as ethnoracial
because they defined the colonial social structure ethnoracially; Maya elites contin-
ued to see “macehual” as a class term, because the social structure from their per-
spective was primarily a local one of Maya nobles and commoners, and only
secondarily a colonial one featuring non-Mayas too. The fact that Spanish officials
read “maya” and “macehual” as “indio” was probably not lost on the Maya elite;
indeed, this contributed to the efficacy of their rhetoric and its adaptation to the
colonial setting. But that does not mean that native elites thereby adopted Spanish
perspectives and internalized the Spanish perception of them as Indians.

Nevertheless, the appearance of “macehual” in colonial sources cannot simply
be dismissed any more than “maya” can. Mayas did not see themselves as “Maya” or
any other term or label that contained all natives in the peninsula, but the evidence
of Tables 3 and 4 suggests that Mayas did develop during colonial times an aware-
ness of difference that more or less corresponded to Spanish ethnорacial distinc-
tions. More specifically, this awareness can be better understood if we draw a distinc-
tion between two forms of ethnic awareness: overt ethnicity, whereby mem-
bers of an ethnic group clearly identify themselves as such; and implied ethnicity,
whereby terms of self-identification imply membership in a loosely-defined ethnic
group within the context of broader social and ethnорacial structures. Colonial evi-


dence indicates that the colonial experience gave rise to and fostered a sense of implied ethnicity among the Mayas who lived within the Spanish province, but that overt ethnic awareness among Mayas did not exist in either the late post-classic or colonial periods.

One dimension of this terminological bifurcation is the role played by ethnic boundaries: Maya terms of implied ethnicity are mostly inward looking and concerned with social life in the cah; overt ethnic markers tend to be outward-looking and reflect a keen awareness of ethnic borders. Jon Schackt proposes that “ethno-ogenesis should mean the drawing of new boundaries or, perhaps, some notable redrawing of old ones” (2001: 4). The boundaries that defined community and identity among Yucatec Mayas were not notably redrawn during the colonial period, nor were new boundaries created; such boundaries continued to demarcate one cah, or group of cahob, from another, without expanding outward to include the natives of all cahob.

By adding to the above analysis of Maya-language sources a reading of Spanish-language notarial sources from the colonial archives, it is possible to be more spe-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CENTURY</th>
<th>DICTIONARY</th>
<th>MACEHUAL</th>
<th>DZUL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16th</td>
<td>Motul (Maya-Spanish)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>extranjero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th?</td>
<td>San Francisco (Maya-Spanish)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th</td>
<td>Beltrán (Maya-Spanish)</td>
<td>indio</td>
<td>[forastero]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th</td>
<td>Motul (Spanish-Maya)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>advenedizo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th?</td>
<td>San Francisco (Spanish-Maya)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th</td>
<td>Vienna (Spanish-Maya)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th</td>
<td>Beltrán (Spanish-Maya)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>forastero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19th</td>
<td>Ticul (Spanish-Maya)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Ciudad Real (n.d., 1: folio 133r), which corresponds to Arzápalo Marín (1995, 1: 222); Beltrán (1746); Pío Pérez (1898: 51, 101); Barrera Vásquez (1980: 503); Mengin (1972).

Notes: I could not find macehual in the Spanish-Maya volume of the Motul manuscript in any entries referring to people, but it does appear in the compound form “vulgar lengua: mæçualthan” (vol. 2, f. 235v). The Cordemex (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 503) lists “masewol ki’: vino de la tierra” as a Beltrán attestation, but I could not find it in Beltrán or the Pío Pérez edition cited in the Cordemex. The Cordemex also cites the Spanish-Maya portion of the San Francisco in support of the macehual entry, but gives no specific attestation, leaving it unclear as to what form, if any, such an entry takes. I found “forastero. ɔul” in a Spanish-Maya list in Beltrán (p. 182) but could not find in Beltrán the reverse entry included by Pío Pérez (hence its inclusion in my table in brackets). I have modernized the spellings of extranjero, forastero, and advenedizo, which all mean “foreigner” (with the last having a connotation of “interloper”).
cific still in locating the colonial conditions under which implied, but not overt, ethnic awareness developed. Such sources stem mostly from conflict of some kind, being criminal cases, Inquisition files, land disputes, and investigations into alleged political and other abuses within or against the cahob (to be found in various sections of the AGI, AGN, and AGEY). A survey of such sources reveals three pertinent types of condition. The first is the colonial legal system itself. Its often-skillful manipulation by cah leaders suggests that one important reason for this bifurcated development was the Maya realization that colonial identities and their various facets could be used as weapons in law courts or as tools to work away at the structures of colonial administration. Under these circumstances, ethnic identity remained implied most of the time, becoming or seeming overt in rare moments of legal strategy.

The second colonial condition was the growing difference between urban and rural Maya communities. In rural cahob, identity remained rooted in community and family affiliations, as discussed above. Colonialism reinforced this localization of identity, through its suppression of regional native politics; or, to borrow terms used recently by Natividad Gutiérrez in a more general context, “nondominant ethnic cultures . . . beyond the level of the village, lack the means to engender cohesion and to construct and reproduce homogenized meanings” (1999: 50). But in the city of Merida and the colonial towns—the villas of Bacalar, Campeche, and Valladolid, and the pueblos that became semi-urbanized towards the end of the colonial period, such as Izamal—Maya identity developed urban variations on the implied/overt model. The multiracial setting and the concomitant process of miscegenation made Maya ethnic identity increasingly overt in late colonial decades; in the compact world of differences that was the colonial Yucatec city or town, some Mayas became something close to “Maya.” At the same time there developed a form of implied native identity among mestizos or castas of mixed-Maya descent—the colonial genesis of the Maya-mestizo identity to be found in present-day Yucatan and frequently the subject of scholarly discussion (Hostettler and Restall 2001; this issue of JLAA).

Urban developments, therefore, incorporate the third condition under which implied ethnic awareness developed rather than overt ethnic self-identity. This was, simply put, the effect of time. My hypothesis regarding the chronological development of the use of the term “Maya,” and its implications for Maya ethnogenesis or ethnic identity, is the following.

In the late postclassic period, the term applied to all or some of the inhabitants of Mayapan; after that city’s collapse in the 1440s the term applied to the Diaspora of families who migrated to various locations in the peninsula, but its application seems to have been vague and probably increasingly obscure as such families did not maintain identities that were clearly distinct from other local families. At the time of the Spanish invasion, its primary use was probably in reference to the Yucatec lan-

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language, in the form mayathan. By the late 16th Century the term was being applied both to the Yucatec language and to local material items, but not to people, and even then it seems to have been more commonly used by Spaniards than Mayas. At the same time, there remained no other term in Yucatec Maya equivalent to our understanding of “Maya” as an ethnic designator; Maya identity remained more localized than that, lacking a clear ethnic component.

As the colonial period wore on, a sense of implied ethnic identity evolved in response to colonial conditions and the influence of Spanish efforts to build a colonial society based on ethnoracial principles. In the late 17th Century the written record reveals evidence of “Maya” being used in reference to people, but attestations are rare and dictionary entries are only in the Spanish-Maya listings. More common in the late-colonial period is the term macehual, but its transition from an exclusively class term to an exclusively ethnoracial one was gradual and not complete by the end of colonial rule. By the early 19th Century, with the possible exception of urban variants mentioned above, there is little sign of this implied ethnic identity having become overt.

Towards a Conclusion: Ethnogenesis as a Tug-o’-War

If the colonial Maya evidence supports the notion of a highly muted sense of ethnic identity among Yucatec Mayas by the early 19th Century, why have they been assigned such an identity with such regularity over the past five centuries? I have already alluded to one of these—colonial Spanish influence—but I would like to restate it more fully and in the context of a chronology of three historical developments that have pulled Mayas towards a “Maya” identity even as they themselves have continued to resist that tug.

Spanish influence is of course rooted in the mid-sixteenth century, when repeated Spanish invasions finally resulted in the permanent establishment of a small colony in the peninsula. Directed by a presumptuous geography and a cavalier ethnocentrism, Spaniards imposed upon hundreds of native groups in the New World a blanket racial identity, that of indio, which indigenous peoples neither shared nor ever came to embrace. At the same time, Spaniards imagined that the “Indians” of particular regions, such as Yucatan, had a regional sense of identity that gave them particular characteristics in common.

Such characteristics were based less on proto-ethnographic observation—investigations such as Diego de Landa’s into native culture were the exception rather than the rule—and more on explaining phenomena related to the Spanish experience. For example, the protracted nature of the Conquest—twenty years to establish a permanent hold on a mere corner of the peninsula (Clendinnen 1987; Restall
1998a)—was put down to Maya bellicosity and duplicity, a paradigm that remained an undercurrent to Spanish discourse on Mayas throughout colonial rule and one that would resurface with vehemence during the Caste War. Clendinnen quotes the conquistador Francisco de Montejo who wrote to the king in 1534 that Yucatan’s “inhabitants are the most abandoned and treacherous in all the lands discovered to this time, being a people who never yet killed a Christian except by foul means. . . In them I have failed to find truth touching anything” (1987: 29). Montejo’s words echoed three centuries later, in 1848, when, according to Chuchiak, the Spanish Yucatecan Justo Sierra O’Reilly denounced the Mayas as “brutal, scheming, warlike savages, whose goal is nothing less than the destruction of civilization” (1997: 25). 12

Spaniards thus assigned the Yucatec Mayas what was in effect an ethnic identity, bounded by regionalism—in this case a colonial province that more or less comprised the peninsula of Yucatan—and by perceived characteristics such as those cited above or those recorded by Landa. 13 Within the larger schema of the colonial Spanish sistema de castas or ethnoracial “caste” system, constructed ethnic groups such as the Yucatec Mayas comprised the racial category of “Indians.” The importance of the latter—with “Indian” characteristics being more significant than regional ethnic ones—was reflected in Spanish terms of reference; native groups were usually “the Indians of this province” or “the Indians of that land,” with more specific references being geographical (Landa sometimes refers to los yucatanenses; 1959: 47, for example) or externally determined (there are so-called Chontal groups around the margins of the regions that were Nahuatl-speaking in the 16th Century because chontalli is a Nahuatl term for “foreigner”).

“Indians,” as a subordinated but semi-civilized source of labor, slotted into the ranking of the ethnoracial system between Spaniards, who as “people of reason” were destined to rule, and Africans, whose “inherent inferiority” suited them to slavery. Because these “natural laws” were part of an evolving European ideology of colonial justification, they had to be realized through a complex mixture of force, coercion, and co-optation. Furthermore, for the same reason, the system was never fully realized, leaving scholars of colonial Spanish America to struggle with the complex contradictions between colonial Spanish assertions and historical evidence on the nature of societies in these colonies. Some historians have argued that the Spanish-“Indian”-African ranking based on phenotype was, when it came to the functioning of social organizations, a Spanish-African-“Indian” system (Lockhart and Schwartz 1983: 130). Others have argued that the growth in the mixed-race population, the people to whom the term castas properly refers, created a social structure in which class played a more significant role than race (most notably Cope (1994), but also see Boyer (1995) and Stern (1996), as well as additional citations on the race-class debate in Kellogg (2000)). The point to be emphasized here is that there was, from the start and increasingly so, a disjuncture between social and cul-
tural realities on the one hand and colonial Spanish constructions and perceptions of ethnoracial identities on the other. One part of this phenomenon was the invention of an ethnic group of Yucatec “Indians,” later becoming Yucatec “Mayas,” within the larger race of New World “Indians.”

The second historical development that acted as an external force pulling Mayas towards an ethnogenesis was the conflict that began in Yucatan in the 1840s as a civil war and was during the course of 1847 recategorized and labeled as a “caste” or race war by the peninsula’s Hispanic leaders. In a long historical and historiographical tradition, running from Justo Sierra O’Reilly (see his 1848 quote above) to Lazaro Cárdenas, Nelson Reed, and Don Dumond, the war actually became a race war, with vengeful Mayas almost regaining the lands taken from them by invading Spaniards and their descendents (Reed 1964; Dumond 1997; also Bricker 1981).14 The counter-view, articulated most notably by Terry Rugeley, is that divisions of region and class played more important a role than ethnic or racial antagonisms (Rugeley 1996; Cline 1947; Patch 1991). Questions of Maya ethnic identity are obviously at the heart of this debate, in the light of which my argument above on colonial Maya identity has two possible applications. One is that the colonial-era development of multiple implied-ethnic terms laid a foundation for a Maya ethnogenesis during the Caste War. The other is that the bifurcation of implied and overt ethnic awareness persisted through the mid-19th Century, with the war failing to foster an ethnogenesis. My position is the latter; indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that Caste-War evidence demonstrates that a Maya ethnogenesis did not take place in Yucatan before 1850.

As the 19th Century is primary neither to this article nor my expertise, I prevail upon the reader to accept a mere sample piece of evidence to support this assertion. In the “Proclamation of Juan de la Cruz” of 1850, the cruzob author refers to his followers either in paternal terms, as “my children” (in sihsahbilob, literally “my progeny,” and in sihsah uincilob, “my engendered people”), or in the same terms of the implied—not overt—ethnic awareness of the colonial period (Cristiano Cahex, “you Christian cah members,” and maseual, “commoner [by implication, native],” or in sihsah maseualilob, “my commoner progeny”). Ethnic divisions are strongly implied—at one point Cruz lists four implied-ethnic groups, those of deul, (“foreigner,” by implication, Hispanic), box (“black”), maseual (“commoner,” by implication, native), and mulato—but the terms “indio,” “indigena,” or “Maya” never appear and the bifurcated sociopolitical world of the letter seems to be between Cruz’s community “children” and their “enemies” (enemigoob) (letter in Bricker 1981: 187–207; glosses mine. The same language was used in Cruz’s 1851 letter to Governor Barbachano; op. cit.: 208–18).

This example and its analysis has been chosen in part for reasons of methodological consistency with the philological analysis of colonial Maya terms above. It
has also been chosen as a bridge to the article by Wolfgang Gabbert that follows in this issue of JLAA. That article, viewed in the terms of this one, argues that ethnic identity did not create the two sides in the war, because ethnic divisions did not characterize the make-up of its combatants or victims. The intense period of war (from 1847 to about 1853) was followed by a half century in which Yucatec Mayas were as divided as they had ever been, with numerous native groups (cruzob, different pacifico groups, and so on) existing at various points along a spectrum between full incorporation into the Mexican state of Yucatan and complete autonomy. Whatever impact the intense mid-century conflict may have had on generating a macehual ethnic identity, the subsequent decades broke down macro-regional macehual identity as so-called pacifico groups began to call themselves mestizos and the so-called bravos or cruzob rebels proclaimed themselves macehualob in distinction to the “pacified” Mayas (Hervik 1999: 42–46; Dumond 1997; Castro 2001; Gabbert 2004: Part II). This political situation was partly a result of the state’s inability to establish direct rule over the whole peninsula, but it also represented continuity in terms of the localized nature of Maya identities and reflected the fact that the discourse of the rebels was not built upon the kind of ethnopolitical ideas that have underpinned the late-20th Century ethnogenesis in Guatemala.

This brings me to the third historical development that helps explain why Mayas have been so consistently assigned an ethnic identity; this is the process that coalesced in the 1960s and has been dubbed “ethnopolitics” by political scientist Joseph Rothschild. The ethnopolitical process mobilizes ethnicity for the political purpose of “altering or reinforcing . . . systems of structured inequality” between groups, and in doing so “stresses, ideologizes, reifies, modifies, and sometimes virtually re-creates the putatively distinctive and unique cultural heritages of the ethnic groups that it mobilizes” (Rothschild 1981: 2–3). In other words, ethnopolitics fosters ethnogenesis. In the context of this late-20th Century ethnopolitics, and specifically with respect to the Mayas, a modern Maya ethnic identity has been forged by Mayas and their non-Maya allies, complete with constructed historical roots, for the purposes of mobilizing the mostly-Maya underprivileged.

Guatemala offers a more vivid example of this process than Yucatan, partly because “Maya” appears to have been imported into the region from Yucatan by 19th-Century archaeologists (Schackt 2001: 7–8), and partly because of the late-20th Century civil war in Guatemala; modern ethnopolitics marks one important difference between that civil war and Yucatan’s earlier Caste War, the ethnopolitics of which resulted not in a pan-Maya movement but in a splintering of rebel Mayas into the distinct groups mentioned above (Carmack 1988; Smith 1990; Wilson 1995; Watanabe 1995; 1997; Warren 1998; Wellmeier 1998; Montejo 1999; also see Friedman 1992). The fact that “Maya” identity is a late-20th Century development in Guatemala is underscored by Sol Tax’s assertion that in the 1930s the “municipio”
delineated “the basic ethnic divisions and cultural groups into which the country is divided” (1937: 425). However, the process is also visible in Yucatan, where, in the decades following the Revolution of the 1910s elsewhere in Mexico, non-Maya Yucatecans sought to exploit a reconstructed Maya heritage for symbols of regional identity (Castañeda 1996: 108–9). Yet in both regions, political circumstances gave rise to a Maya ethnogenesis gradually and unevenly. As Jon Schackt has observed, with respect to both Guatemala and Yucatan, “until recent years most so-called Mayan Indians have been unaware of their common ‘Mayahood’” (2001: 3). When Fischer comments that “identifying oneself as Maya rather than a person from town X or a speaker of language Y no longer raises eyebrows in Tecpán and Patzún,” he is drawing upon fieldwork conducted in Guatemala as recently as the 1990s (2001: 245).

The sum, then, of these three phenomena — Spanish ethnoracial concepts that developed in the 16th Century, the rhetoric of race and polarizing violence of the Caste War, and 20th-Century ethnopolitics — has been, to paraphrase the Comaroffs (1992: 61), a process of reification that has given Maya ethnic identity the false appearance of being an independent factor in the ordering of the Yucatec social world.

While non-Mayas consistently saw “Indians” and “Mayas,” the Mayas themselves held to their own less monolithic identities. Schackt has expressed concern that his position “that Maya identity is not ancient but under construction in the present” might be taken as suggesting it to be “spurious or inauthentic” (2001: 10). His fear is not groundless; at a recent panel discussion, my assertion of the same argument was taken as showing “lack of respect” for Mayas, a reaction that supports the very point that Maya identity is presentist and politically — rather than historically — rooted.16 As Schackt observes (2001: 10), construction or invention does not imply inauthenticity, as invention is “a necessary dimension of all cultural processes.” Crucial to understanding the cultural process of Maya ethnogenesis in the 20th Century — and my argument that such an ethnogenesis did not occur in previous centuries — is an understanding of how that process is rooted in both 20th-Century politics and an invented ancient Maya identity (hence the current Maya “revival,” “renaissance,” and “resurgence”).17 In between those modern and ancient points lie three or four centuries of “Maya” history during which Maya peoples refused to accept categories of identity assigned to them, be it indio or Maya. In a sense, then, the Maya struggled for centuries in the face of steady opposition against their own ethnogenesis.18
Acknowledgments

An initial, briefer version of this article was presented as a paper on the March 2000 LASA/Miami panel "Rethinking Maya Identity in Yucatán, 1500–1940." Another briefer and somewhat different version, titled “The Janus Face of Maya Identity in Post-Conquest Yucatan,” is included in Hostettler and Restall (2001: 15–23). I am grateful to Robert Carmack, Quetzil Castañeda, Ben Fallaw, Wolfgang Gabbert, Ueli Hostettler, James Muldoon, and anonymous readers for comments made on earlier versions of the paper and article.

Notes

1Bricker et al record the variant of mayab'-t'àan (mayab' is entered in the same dictionary as "flat").
2A similar statement is made in the relación of "Quinacama" (1: 254). Wolfgang Gabbert comes to the same conclusion regarding the origin of the term (2001: 25–34). Munro Edmonson remarks that the modern name of the Maya may be derived from Mayapan (1982: 10), but he cites Alfred Tozzer, who merely states that the peninsula was called "Maya" without speculating as to the term's etymology (1941: 7, 9); later Edmonson suggested that the name was derived from the may cycle of 13 katuns (1986: 5, 9), a theory that Castañeda finds persuasive (1996: 13).
3The earliest attestation of cax that I have seen is mid-17th Century; by Beltrán's time, it had become a dictionary term—"Gallo de Castilla Abcax" and "Gallina de Castilla Yxcax" (Beltrán de Santa Rosa 1746). One could argue that turkeys did have sacred associations, as they were traditionally used in sacrificial rituals; but that does not mean that turkeys were always imbued with sacred significance. Such an argument is stronger with respect to the maya bat entry in the 17th-Century San Francisco dictionary, as maya is clearly being used here to describe something historically distant and possibly with vague sacred associations—an ancient "Maya axe," as opposed to the metal axes that Mayas had been using for a century by the time this dictionary was compiled (see mention of this entry, the dictionary's dating, and citations below).
5On the Itzas of the Peten and their Yucatec origins, see Jones (1998: xix, 3–107). This would not be the only instance of a Maya people adopting as a group or ethnic label the name of a founding ruler or dynasty; the Quichés did it too (see Hill and Monaghan 1987: 32–33).
6Juan Martínez Hernández also published an edition of the Motul in 1931, but, as William Gates observed in a review, it was so riddled with errors of transcription—over a hundred in the first ten pages alone—as to be "nothing short of disastrous" (1931: 93). In contrast, I have yet to note a single transcription error in the Arzápalo edition.
7Robert Chamberlain and Ralph Roys used the term "tribe" (see especially Roys 1943), and their influence can still be seen occasionally in print; see Rugeley (1996: 8), for example.
8I am indebted here to an anonymous reader for JLAA, who pointed out the possible applicability to the colonial period of a piece by Carol Smith (1987), arguing for the compatibility of local community identities with an ethnically marked class identity among modern Guatemalan Mayas.
9The seminal study to demonstrate the central role played by dividing lines between ethnic identities in identity formation was of course Fredrick Barth's 1969 edited volume. The literature on ethnic bound-
aries since 1969 is too substantial to cite, but two recent studies of the topic as applied to Yucatan by European scholars are Hervik (1999) and Gabbert (2004). Studies of race in modern Latin America tend to make the misleading assumption that modern categories have exclusively 19th-Century roots (Knight 1990; Stepan 1991), without considering the 16th-Century impact of the New World discoveries and invasions upon European conceptions of “nations” and “peoples” (Elliott 1970) and the subsequent development in mid- and late-colonial Spanish America of “modern” notions of race (Kellogg 2000; Cañizares Esguerra 1999).

10 Other Spaniards, almost all Franciscans like Landa, also wrote accounts of Yucatec history that included discussions of Maya culture, but they tended to devote their attention more to Spanish achievements, especially those of the Church, and to view Mayas through the prism of their evangelizing, “civilizing” endeavors; a good example, though unpublished in English, is Cárdenas y Valencia’s 1635 manuscript (in the BL).

11 For another example of racist stereotyping of “Indians,” see the 1845 description of Mayas by the Yucatec priest Granado Baeza (quoted in Hervik 1999: 38). There are numerous primary and secondary sources available on the broader context of Spanish attitudes towards various native groups in the Americas; a primary example already mentioned is Landa (1959: first eleven “chapters”), while secondary examples include Elliott (1971), Keen (1971), Todorov (1984), and Restall (2003).

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13 Landa wrote a vast study of Yucatec Maya history and culture, called, according to its genre, his Recopilación; the work appears to have been lost in the late-17th Century, with the only surviving traces being the compilation of excerpts, some of which may not have been written by Landa himself, cited above as his Relación (see Restall and Chuchiak 2002).

14 On Cárdenas’ interpretation of the righteous role played by the “Maya race” in the war, see Fallaw (1997: 560–65). See Gutiérrez (1999: 42–44) and Wolfgang Gabbert’s article in this issue of JLAA for more discussion and references on interpretations of the war as one of “ethnic liberation.”

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