

# New and Old Social Movements: Measuring Pisté, from the “Mouth of the Well” to the 107th Municipio of Yucatán

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**Abstract.** This essay explores the history of the political structure of town and municipal authority in a specific case study of a Yucatec Maya community. The town is Pisté, a community that has become a significant tourist center that provides services for the nearby archaeological and tourist site of Chichén Itzá. A descriptive history of the town, mostly based in secondary literature and key primary sources from archives, is presented with two goals in mind. The first objective is to address ethnographically specific questions regarding the politics of this community, including the 1989 attempt to redefine itself as a “new” county according to Mexico’s 1917 Revolutionary Constitution. The second objective is to raise questions and broader issues regarding new social movements, state formation analyzed from the “bottom-up,” the importance of the authority structure of the town/county as a governmental strategy of the Mexican state, and the ethnographic and historical study of the 1980s’ crises in Yucatán. The case study contributes to Yucatec studies by pointing attention away from the political-economic core of Mérida, the usual institutions (church, hacienda, and highly capitalized economic sectors), and typical topics (e.g., party politics, elite factionalism) that have been the focus of Yucatec historiography. By directing attention to areas (communities in the milpa zone) and topics (the political and cultural forms of rural communities) that have been marginalized by Yucatec historians but that have been a favored topic of U.S.-based cultural anthropologists seeking idealized Maya culture, this essay raises new research questions for which yet another rapprochement is necessary in Yucatec studies between the fields of history and cultural ethnography.

## Town and Country—Otherwise and “in Reverse”

This essay explores the history of the political structure of town and municipal authority in a specific case study of a Yucatec Maya community. This community, Pisté, Mexico, of four thousand inhabitants, is located

*Ethnohistory* 50:4 (fall 2003)

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three kilometers from the archaeological site of Chichén Itzá; since the development of Yucatec tourism beginning in the 1960s, Pisté has become the center of a miniregion within the regional tourist economy based in Mérida and Cancún.<sup>1</sup> The politics of tourism thus infuses its municipal and town dynamics differently from the politics of other rural Yucatec communities in which the economy is based on subsistence agriculture or state-subsidized agribusiness. The political and economic crises that culminated in the late 1980s placed Pisté among other rural Yucatec towns that experienced intense, and often violent, struggles over the control of municipal and town governments. Unfortunately, to this author's knowledge, neither the study of specific cases of town/municipal conflicts nor the comparative study of these regional crises of rural authority have been conducted for Yucatán.

This case study contributes to Yucatec studies by directing attention away from the political-economic core of Mérida, the usual institutions (e.g., church, hacienda, and highly capitalized economic sectors), the typical topics (e.g., party politics, elite factionalism), and the privileged periodizations (the Revolutionary period, Cardenas period, and the Caste War in its before, during, or aftermath phases) that have been foci of Yucatec historiography. By directing attention to areas (communities in the milpa zone) and topics (the political and cultural forms of rural communities) that have been marginalized by historians of Yucatán—but heavily targeted by cultural anthropologists seeking idealized Maya culture—this essay opens up an area of study needing a rapprochement between the fields of history and anthropology. The essay addresses the following specific historical question: What is the history of political authority of the Yucatec town generally and of Pisté specifically? The aim is a descriptive history—addressed mostly through secondary literature, with additional support from a few primary documents and oral history collected through ethnography—that can generate further research questions and broader inquiry on the interface between town and country in relation to the formation of the Mexican state.

The relationships between centers and peripheries is an old theme and often based on the assumption that the politics of the center always move—whether in rational extension, fluid waves, smooth arches, or nervous spasms—outward to colonize, control, and/or dominate the spaces of groups thereby subordinated. Despite the nuances of these conceptualizations of hegemony, the effective control or domination of the modern state is established by intervening in space with its institutions and mechanisms to both materialize its power and transform space into territory, that is, an organized, controlled, known place. This process of de- and then reterritorialization of historical settlements into places strategically orchestrated as

territory by the emergent state must interweave the state's mechanisms with prior logics of place. This dual territorialization of the state, then, entails an articulation or infiltration between community and polity and is not, or not simply, a colonization from the center, but a calling forth of the state by what thereby becomes, or accedes to become, a part of its territory and is included within its subject-territory. Thus, not only is there an interpellation *by* the state of its subject-citizens, but an interpellation *of* the state by its subject-communities that seek integration within its formation as its public. It is toward this understanding of a (modified) "ground up" analysis of the state that much recent Mexican historiography has been moving<sup>2</sup> and to which this history of Pisté contributes.

The essay is divided into four sections. The first provides the ethnographic context of Pisté, Yucatán, México, in 1989 that stimulated the historical questioning of the authority structure of the Mexican municipio libre. The second section reviews the legal basis of the county in the 1917 Revolutionary Constitution and how this effected the state of Yucatán. The third and fourth sections present a history of the community of Pisté. The concluding, fifth section discusses broader issues raised by the case study.

### Pisté, the Antesala of Chichén Itzá, from 1989 to 1917

A history is given to show the changes which occur in a typical Yucatán town from ancient to modern times. During this early history the Pisté area undoubtedly prospered in the glory of Chichén Itzá. . . . In nearly every part of Pisté [in the twentieth century] the impressive ruins of many large buildings erected by the ancient Maya are found in all directions but chiefly in the southeast towards Chichén Itzá. Since Pisté is only 2.5 km from Chichén Itzá and has the excellent natural water supply of three cenotes (water holes), as well as good soil for the production of maize, it is likely that people lived on the present site when Chichén Itzá was in its aboriginal glory. (Steggerda 1941: 1, 3)

In December 1987 a new alliance of voters, based primarily in the agricultural and tourism sectors of Pisté's economy and led by a new generation of educated youth just reaching political maturity, was able to elect Oswaldo Yam as *comisario* or mayor. This, in effect, was a local putsch that displaced the political bloc that had maintained control of the town hall or *comisaría* for the preceding ten, if not sixteen, years. This new alliance—composed of teachers, employees of the National Institute of Anthropology and History (hereafter INAH), taxi drivers and owners, older (or at least party faithful) generations of *ejidatarios* (juridically defined peasant landholders), and the employees of certain restaurants and hotels that were

held together by strong Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) ideologies—responded with a belligerent strategy of subversion that lasted for nine months. This kind of internecine warfare within rural towns of Yucatán, as well as Mexico, was rampant in the 1980s. Class divisions were complicated and cross-cut by religious affiliations, union memberships, state-sponsored civil associations, differences of land ownership and/or use, divisions within and between political parties, and, of course, histories of family antagonisms, both within and between familial groups. In Pisté, as in other communities, ousted voting blocks engaged in the subversion of elected authority. These tactics escalated, forcing restaffing of the comisario's staff in March 1988 and again in June, and culminated in a physical assault of the comisario in *asamblea* (town hall meeting) on 9 September.

Hurricane Gilberto, which devastated the Yucatán Peninsula five days later, on 14–15 September, put a decisive end to the quotidian politics of such rural communities as Pisté. The storm's deterritorialization of everyday life created an opening for various kinds of opportunism, both positive and negative. While the governorship of Manzanilla Schaffer became mired in allegations of stealing disaster relief aid (an abuse that later fueled his eventual forced resignation by Salinas de Gortari), Pisté initiated a program of political reconciliation and nonpartisan self-help activities that eventually mobilized, during spring 1989, into what could be called a *new social movement*, except that the means, mode, and objective were quite old and even legally sanctioned (Burgos 1988a, 1988b, 1988c). Four months after the hurricane, the unified factions attempted not only to redefine Pisté as a community but also to restructure it via a juridical change in its status from a comisaría, or legally defined town level of government subordinated within a county (that of Tinum), to a *municipio libre*, that is, a “free” county as defined by Mexico's Revolutionary Constitution of 1917. The attempt by Pisté consisted of a social and political mobilization of the community that aimed at (informally) politicking and formally petitioning the State of Yucatán's governor and congress, the two official bodies capable of legislating the juridical change of status.

The laws regulating the *municipio libre* derive from the 1917 Constitution and introduce an ambivalence, if not contradictory dynamic, in the structuring of governmental authority. This tension is between centralization (at the federal level) and decentralization (at the regional or state level). The Municipal Law of 1917 charted the structuring of a hierarchy of executive authority from the president to governors and down to *alcalde* (county mayor) and comisario (town mayor) via the granting of grass-roots autonomy in the form of the *municipio libre*. Communities meeting certain criteria, for example, a population of five hundred plus citizens, could petition to become independent counties with *alcaldía* (mayor's office). The

ambivalence of this governmental strategy of state formation (centralization through local autonomy and decentralization through hierarchy) and its effects in structuring regional center-periphery politics has yet to be described, much less analyzed.

### **The Municipio Libre as a Measure of the Revolution: The Ambivalence of De/Centralization**

There are several strategies that have been analyzed by others through which vertical integration of the Mexican state was achieved: the literal inscription of individuals into the socialist party, which later becomes the PRI; the legal liberation of the debt-peon/slaves of the haciendas; the granting of communal or *ejido* lands to Indigenous communities coupled with the reformation of large land ownership; the institution of the ejido authority structure based on an ideological vision of the colonial *repúblicas de indígenas*; the creation of federal controls over Yucatec henequén production; the creation of labor unions; and the creation of a rural educational system.<sup>3</sup> The concern here is the inscription of a national territory on the Yucatec landscape at the level of the rural community. In this area the important work of Rodríguez Losa (1985, 1989, 1991) has charted the historical changes in juridical statuses of the towns of Yucatán and in the authority structures of town and municipal government. His research lays the basis by which to ask about the municipio libre as a governmental strategy that not only incorporates or integrates communities into the national structures of authority but also outlines how settlements began to revise their identity and solidarity as subject-communities within a national imaginary developed through the Revolutionary Constitution and post-Revolutionary politics.

The changes in authority structure are based in the 1917 Constitution. Article 115 eliminates the partido or district with its jefe político as the main unit of structural authority. It establishes in its place the municipio libre:

the internal organization [of the states shall be] the republican form of representative and popular government, having as its basis the territorial division and political and administrative organization of the municipio libre [which] will be administered by an ayuntamiento elected by direct, popular vote and *there will be no intermediary authority between it and the state government.* (Italics added)

In Article 115.3, each state was given the authority to legislate the creation and elimination of these counties. On 17 January 1918, General Salvador Alvarado (1915–8), as constitutionalist governor of Yucatán, put the Ley Orgánico de los Municipios del Estado de Yucatán into effect. This

granted all county governments, whether ayuntamiento or junta, the status of free counties if the county had a population of five hundred. In addition, it allowed for settlements with the status of pueblos, having comisarías and subject to the ayuntamiento of the county, to petition to become a *municipio libre*.

The decentralization that this law implied can be appreciated when contrasted to the centralization of the last years of the Yucatecan Porfiriato. First, the increasing number of partidos after 1865 and the practical reduction of the three forms of municipio authority to town councils increasingly consolidated the authority of jefe políticos and effectively made the partido a macro-county. Second, the number of municipio governments had been reduced to eighty-five in 1900 and then again to seventy-eight in 1910 (see Tables 1, 2, and 3; Rodríguez Losa 1985; Castañeda 1991: 108–14).

Although only eight new counties were created in the first three years between 1918–21, and primarily in the southern Puuc and eastern-central regions, the elimination of the partido was a significant change of authority in the northwestern core area.<sup>4</sup> From 1921 to 1930, ten additional municipios were created. Nine more municipios were created between 1930 and 1935, including the anthropologically famous case of Chan Kom. By the end of 1935, twenty-seven new counties had been authorized under the 1918 law. Only one more municipio was created in the twentieth century—Chikindzonot on 20 December 1957. By 1935 the territorial division of the state of Yucatán had been essentially finalized with 105 counties. It is not clear how many petitions were denied between 1935–57 or afterward. The creation of the last new municipio libre, the 106th of the state, occurred after a twenty-two-year hiatus; there have been no changes since 1957.

In 1984, the state government changed the law that stipulated the criteria by which a community could become a municipio libre: the demographic criterion was raised from a voting population of five hundred to twenty-five thousand adult citizens. This change was not publicized and turned out to be a secret weapon for those opposing Pisté's bid to be the 107th municipio of Yucatán (see Castañeda 1991: 502; de los Reyes 1989; Diario de Yucatán 1989b, 1989c).

The administrative unit of the town/municipality, as a grid of governmental control, was first used as a tactic within a broad strategy of local empowerment (the ideal of political autonomy of communities). This strategy is ideologically manifested in the legal terminology used to designate the new governmental unit, since the Spanish word *municipio* was selected over the word *condado*; while both can be translated into English as “county,” the former derives from the sixteenth-century *municipium* meaning “freetown” and the associated words *municeps* (citizen) and *muna*

(responsibilities), and the latter derives from the fourteenth-century Old French meaning of “county” as “lands belonging to the count or earl.” Thus, *municipio libre* is a somewhat redundant phrase indicating a break from prior forms of government-based aristocracy and kingship implied by the etymology of both condado and county.

Ironically, however, with the consolidation of the state territory, this juridical tactic increasingly became a mechanism of containment and subverting forms of local opposition and resistance to both the PRI and the state. Significantly, the Zapatista movement has recognized the importance of this ideal of the *municipio libre* as well as its duplicitous practice to establish hegemony in its name. The Zapatistas, discarding the terminology of condado and *municipio libre*, have encouraged Indigenous communities to become autonomous zones and have propelled a movement to create a new juridical form of governmental administration.

On the one hand, that different kinds of political actors are petitioning the state apparatus to change the administrative-juridical mode of incorporating its subject communities suggests a new angle on several problems. First, both cases of the Zapatistas and allies petitioning for the creation of new “autonomous zones” of government and other diverse communities petitioning to be incorporated into the state via already existing forms show that the territorialization of the state necessarily entails a form of interpellation. Second, while Luis Althusser introduced the idea of interpellation to refer to the primarily discursive manner in which the state “calls” or “hails” the individual to become a subject-citizen, here this general function of ideology is inverted. The state cannot actualize itself as the governmental apparatus except through the processes by which political subjects interpellate (“call,” “hail,” “petition,” and “invite”) the state into certain kinds of roles. Third, thus, the so-called “new social movements” appear as new precisely at those points where the failure of the state to respond to interpellation becomes manifest.

On the other hand, this suggests the need for a fuller comparative examination of the Mexican *municipio* to chart its double-edged use and contradictory ideals by different agents (communities and the state) in different historical contexts. The widespread agitation in rural areas before and after the 1988 elections stimulated a handful of communities in Yucatán, but also in Chiapas and Campeche, to seek autonomy via the Municipal Law of the Revolutionary Constitution. A comparative study of how and why Cancuc and Escarcega, of Chiapas and Campeche, respectively, were able to become a *municipio libre* in the same year that Pisté failed to do so would provide understanding of the political culture of Mexico in terms of the strategies of creating territory—that is, controlling and regu-

Table 1. Changes in number of municipios of Yucatán, 1900 to present

Year:	Number	Prior changes/comments
1900	85	In 17 partidos with 155 towns, 18 villas, 7 cities, 3 ports
1900–10	78	1 new, 8 lost (5 later reinstated, 2 lost to Quintana Roo, 1 never reinstated)
1910–17	78	No change in number of municipios
1918–19	86	8 added (1 reinstated, 3 automatically elevated, 4 new)
1921–29	96	10 added (3 reinstated, 7 new)
1930–35	105	9 added (1 reinstated, 8 new)
1936–56	105	No changes to present (2003)
1957	106	1 new municipio added
1958–present	106	No changes to present (2003)

*Note:* The 1917 Constitution put into effect by General Alvarado, constitutionalist governor of Yucatán, on 17 January 1918 eliminates partidos as executive structure in favor of “municipios libres”; all communities with “*junta municipal*” and “*ayuntamiento*” become “municipios libres.” The district comes into existence as a legislative or congressional unit.

*Sources:* Rodríguez Losa 1985 and 1991.

lating space. In comparison to other Yucatec communities seeking independence as a new *municipio libre*, no other movement was as politically invested with so much at stake, nor as viable a movement as the attempt by Pisté. An oft-asserted comment during Movement 107 was that Pisté could not be granted its objective because it would set a precedent for other communities to create similar petitions.

In the seventeen-year period since the inception of the law (1918–35), 27 new *municipios* were created in Yucatán for a total of 106 (see Tables 1, 2, and 3). Among these was the anthropologically famous case of Chan Kom.<sup>5</sup> Although the making of new counties is viewed as a decentralizing move from the perspective of the state, the case of Chan Kom, in which a renegade community sought to safeguard the power of a local elite by incorporating itself to the socialist state, illustrates how these were actually different kinds of movements on the ground. Similarly, fifty-five years later in 1989, Pisté sought independence from its neighboring municipal authority and, more important, a new, more direct integration with the state. Rather than the state imposing its hegemony on the countryside, communities interpellated the state to subject themselves to its apparatus of power and authority; motivated by and aiming for a reimagining of collective identity, both materially and symbolically, these movements relied upon and thus facilitated the extension of state power into the countryside and thereby converted it into territory, that is, social space, and populations



**Table 2. Twenty-eight new municipios of Yucatán created under 1917 Constitution, 1918–57**

Creation date	Name	Parent municipio	Corresponding 1900 district	Zone
1 Jan. 1906	Chumayel	Teabo	Tekax	Southern
17 Jan. 1918	Cuncunul	Uayma	Valladolid	Eastern Maize
	Chemax	Valladolid	Valladolid	Eastern Maize
	Chaczikin	reinstated from 1900	Peto	Southern
	Tahdziu	Peto	Peto	Southern
30 June 1918	Samahil	Hunucmá	Hunucmá	Mérida
31 March 1919	Akil	Tekax	Tekax	Southern
10 June 1919	Tekom	Tixcacalcupul	Valladolid	Eastern Maize
28 June 1919	Temozón	Valladolid	Valladolid	Eastern Maize
13 Dec. 1921	Suma	Cansahcab	Temax	Mérida
25 Dec. 1921	Dzilam Bravo	Dzilam González	Temax	Mérida
2 June 1923	Yaxcaba	Sotuta	Sotuta	Central
19 Sept. 1924	Sanahcat	Hocaba	Sotuta	Central
22 Dec. 1925	Ucú	Hunucmá	Hunucmá	Mérida
18 Jan. 1927	Cantamayec	Sotuta	Sotuta	Central
12 July 1927	Telchac Puerto	Telchac	Motul	Mérida
13 Sept. 1927	Muxupip	Motul	Motul	Mérida
30 March 1928	Dzoncauich	Temax	Temax	Mérida
13 Sept. 1929	Tixpeual	Tixkokob	Tixkokob	Mérida
30 Dec. 1930	Tekal	Temax	Temax	Mérida
30 Sept. 1931	Quintana Roo	Dzitas	Espita	Eastern Maize
7 March 1932	Dzan	Ticul	Ticul	Southern
18 March 1932	Sudzal	Izamal, Yaxcaba, Sotuta	Same 3	Mérida-Central
25 Feb. 1935	Chan Kom	Cuncunul	Valladolid	Eastern Maize
8 July 1935	San Felipe	Panabá	Tizimin	Eastern Maize
15 July 1935	Kaua	Cuncunul	Valladolid	Eastern Maize
7 Aug. 1935	Kopomá	Maxcanú	Maxcanú	Southern
8 Aug. 1935	Mayapan	Chumayel	Tekax	Southern
21 Dec. 1957	Chikindzonot	Tekom	Valladolid	Eastern Maize

*Sources:* See Table 1.

**Table 3. New municipios of State of Yucatán, by economic-geographic zone**

Mérida core				
30 June 1918	Samahil	Hunucmá	Hunucmá	Mérida Core
13 Dec. 1921	Suma	Cansahcab	Temax	Mérida Core
25 Dec. 1921	Dzilam Bravo	Dzilam González	Temax	Mérida Core
22 Dec. 1925	Ucú	Hunucmá	Hunucmá	Mérida Core
12 July 1927	Telchac	Puerto Telchac	Motul	Mérida Core
13 Sept. 1927	Muxupip	Motul	Motul	Mérida Core
30 March 1928	Dzoncauich	Temax	Temax	Mérida Core
13 Sept. 1929	Tixpeual	Tixkokob	Tixkokob	Mérida Core
30 Dec. 1930	Tekal	Temax	Temax	Mérida Core
18 March 1932	Sudzal	Izamal, Yaxcaba, Sotuta	Sotuta/ Izamal	Mérida-Central
Maize frontier zone				
17 Jan. 1918	Cuncunul	Uayma	Valladolid	Eastern
	Chemax	Valladolid	Valladolid	Eastern
10 June 1919	Tekom	Tixcacalcupul	Valladolid	Eastern
28 June 1919	Temozón	Valladolid	Valladolid	Eastern
2 June 1923	Yaxcaba	Sotuta	Sotuta	Central
19 Sept. 1924	Sanahcat	Hocaba	Sotuta	Central
18 Jan. 1927	Cantamayec	Sotuta	Sotuta	Central
30 Sept. 1931	Quintana Roo	Dzitas	Espita	North Central
25 Feb. 1935	Chan Kom	Cuncunul	Valladolid	Eastern
8 July 1935	San Felipe	Panabá	Valladolid	North Eastern
15 July 1935	Kaua	Cuncunul	Tizimin	Eastern
21 Dec. 1957	Chikindzonot	Tekom	Valladolid	Eastern
Southern zone				
17 Jan. 1918	Chaczikin	(Peto)	Peto	Southern
	Tahdziu	Peto	Peto	Southern
31 March 1919	Akil	Tekax	Tekax	Southern
7 March 1932	Dzan	Ticul	Ticul	Southern
7 Aug. 1935	Kopomá	Maxcanú	Maxcanú	Southern
8 Aug. 1935	Mayapan	Chumayel	Tekax	Southern
New municipios created in area directly surrounding Pisté				
17 Jan. 1918	Cuncunul	Uayma	Valladolid	Eastern Maize
2 June 1923	Yaxcaba	Sotuta	Sotuta	Central Maize
19 Sept. 1924	Sanahcat	Hocaba	Sotuta	Central Maize
18 Jan. 1927	Cantamayec	Sotuta	Sotuta	Central Maize
30 Sept. 1931	Quintana Roo	Dzitas	Espita	Central Maize
18 March 1932	Sudzal	Izamal, Yaxcaba, Sotuta	Sotuta/ Izamal	Mérida-Central
25 Feb. 1935	Chan Kom	Cuncunul	Valladolid	Eastern Maize
15 July 1935	Kaua	Cuncunul	Tizimin	Eastern Maize

Sources: See Table 1.

became integrated with the state apparatus. This decentralization—rather, integration and territorialization—was essentially halted in 1935, inasmuch as between 1935 and 2001 only one new municipio (Chikindzonot) was granted, in 1957. Unfortunately, the history of these municipal changes has yet to be studied and many questions emerge about the intra- and intercommunity dynamics within and across regions in relation to the formation of the Revolutionary state apparatus. This, it seems to me, is a crucial ground that has structured the subsequent politics of class, community, (Maya) ethnicity/race, and urban–rural dynamics in Yucatán.

The transfer of the municipal authority structure, that is, the *ayuntamiento* (municipal government) and the *alcaldía*, from the *cabecera* (or county seat or capital of the county) to one of its *comisarías* (or subordinate towns) would entail systematic socioeconomic ramifications. For Pisté, this political restructuring of authority was an aim in itself as a culminating symbol of its imagining of its own community identity and belonging as a prosperous, growing, and important center that services the international tourism of Chichén Itzá. In public rallies and in the official petitions, the community and the leadership proudly called itself “Pisté, the *antesala* [parlor] of Chichén Itzá.” This political-symbolic objective was also a means to other, very material, goals: one, to take out of the hands of the county *cabecera* (Tinum)<sup>6</sup> control of the municipal revenues produced by the tourist complex of Pisté-Chichén Itza; and, two, through this greater municipal access to (if not exactly control of) these revenues, the development of both urban and tourist infrastructure. The identity, collective consciousness, and economic aspirations of Pisté are strongly oriented toward the archaeological heritage of Chichén and the further development of tourism in the community.

### A Tale of Three Towns: Pisté, Tinum, Chichén (1821–1917)

Under the Spanish-speaking Yucatecans [Pisté] became a thriving colonial town of 1500 inhabitants, which went down to ruin in 1847 during the War of the Castes. By 1918 its population had again increased, but a new revolution reduced its numbers by half and left the remainder quarreling and hating one another. Since then political changes, the archeological work of [excavating Chichén Itzá conducted by] the Carnegie Institution of Washington and the Mexican Government, and the building of the Merida-Chichen Itza highway have produced their effects on the community. Today Pisté is an agricultural Indian town in which the people live comfortably but without luxury. (Steggerda 1941: 1)

Prior to the Caste War, Pisté was comparable in size and economic importance to Tinum, the seat of the county to which Pisté came to belong at the end of the nineteenth century, and to places such as Cenotillo, another large and economically prosperous town in this central region that was then dedicated to cattle and maize production (ibid.: 6, n. 18, and 233-4; Vázquez Pasos 1981; Strickon 1965; Abiotes 1985). Between 1821 and 1846, Pisté showed a substantial population growth of 32 percent, from 882 to 1,171, while, in contrast, Tinum only managed a 5 percent increase, from 1,525 to 1,600 for the same period. In comparison to the larger towns of the Mérida core and the southern sugar zone, however, the settlements of the eastern maize and cattle areas near Valladolid tended to be about half the population size.

Pisté, as were these other major towns to the west of Valladolid, was dominated by the Spanish, in spite of being in the old Cocom and Cupul provinces that had always maintained opposition to colonization. The Maya who strived for political and cultural autonomy in the Caste War were located further to the south and the east. Documents from the period 1841-5 indicate that Juan Sosa Arce, the owner of the cattle hacienda at Chichén, addressed the first alcalde of Pisté with terms of respect, indicating a Spanish or *criollo*<sup>7</sup> leadership in the region (Steggerda 1941: 6-7, n. 18, and 233-4). A title for land in a *ranchería* (small settlement) near the twentieth-century municipio of Chan Kom is signed by the alcalde and two other witnesses, all of whom have Spanish names (ibid.). This suggests both the large territorial extent of the Pisté alcaldía and the Spanish *criollo* orientation of the Maya of Pisté, which is most likely due to a successful incorporation of the population to hacienda life much as the Maya of the area surrounding Mérida had committed themselves to Yucatec (i.e., white-Spanish descended) society and politics. This seems evident, given that both Pisté and the hacienda at Chichén became targets for the Maya Rebeldes (Maya Cruzob) from the outbreak of the Caste War to the end of the nineteenth century.

These communities, then, became part of the war zone that divided independent Cruzob Maya and the centers of white society. The pueblo of Pisté and the cattle Hacienda of Chichén were attacked early on in the war, not only devastating the settlements but also destroying most of the records that could have been used to piece together a history of the communities. The population, predominantly Indian or Maya and sympathetic to white Yucatec society (or perhaps peace), fled north to Dzitas and Tinum. The former town was a place of refuge since it had been, and continues to be, the Catholic *parroquia* (parish) to which Pisté belonged (Steggerda 1941: 7, n. 14); Tinum has been the parent town to Pisté at least since the six-

teenth century, when Chichén was given to Juan Cano of Tinum as part of his *encomienda* (colonial land grant). Furthermore, as has been mentioned, an ancestor of the Arce family, which has been dominant in the municipal government of Tinum since the end of the nineteenth century, was associated with the Spanish founding of Pisté in the later 1700s and was owner of the hacienda at Chichén.

According to the census of 1862, the decimation of the war left Pisté and Tinum with populations of 308 and 326, respectively. In the Cruzob campaign of 1862, Pisté was again sacked and burned, leaving it with only 228 individuals (145 *indígenas* and 83 *mestizos*) according to information from 1865 (Steggerda 1941: 7, n. 14). Afterward, for the next thirty years, the town of Pisté seems to have been alternatively abandoned and only sporadically repopulated by a handful of Maya families that dared return from their exile in the neighboring communities of Tinum and Dzitá to continue milpa farming. In contrast, the cattle hacienda of Chichén was destroyed and permanently abandoned by both Yucatec hacendados and Maya.

In 1875, between twenty and thirty Mexican and Yucatec soldiers composed the garrison that was to provide the early warning system to protect the towns to the north (Steggerda 1941: 7–9). Although no major Cruzob campaign entered the region, Pisté continued to live under constant threat of both rebel attacks and looting by the soldiers stationed in the burned out church. The indications are that, despite this garrison, the Pisteleños were no doubt ready to quickly hide or flee and that this frontier zone was a kind of political vacuum. The war had dramatically deterritorialized both civil society and the state apparatus. The social isolation of an on-again, off-again population of a couple hundred persons was so nearly complete as to make political authority a far away, unseen, and virtually unknown gesture of writing legislative reforms.

Articles 70 and 63 of 1859–62 legislation again reformed the governmental units in light of the demographic and political aftermath of the Caste War. Cities, villas, and *cabeceras de partidos* were allotted ayuntamientos. Below these political centers were three grades of authority structure: *juntas municipales*, *comisarías municipales*, and *comisarios auxiliares*, which were designated according to the number of citizens in each, that is, at least sixteen, between eight and fifteen, and seven or less, respectively (Rodríguez Losa 1989: 105–30). Thus, Pisté was designated as a *comisaría municipal* while Tinum became a *junta municipal*. It is not clear, however, whether these reforms included or were supplemented by the official subordination of Pisté to Tinum as *comisaría* to county *cabecera* or whether they were each independently and directly linked to the *cabecera* in Valladolid. Archival documents to resolve this issue as well as the question of

when Pisté officially fell under the municipal jurisdiction of Tinum have yet to surface.

This absence of rich documentary sources gives space to some interpretative characterization. What the few historical records do communicate is that the settlement of Pisté was being repeatedly unsettled, emptied in the literal sense of its population, not only by war, but by a plague of locusts in 1884, which was “augured by a comet” the year before, according to oral history collected by Steggerda. Pisté was emptied in another sense in that abandonment also entailed the deterritorialization of society and the state apparatus, whether Imperial or Porfirian Mexico or the Yucatec government. This image of a frontier space, virtually detached from effective outside political intervention except by whatever cocked gun or raised machete was present at the moment, is memorably pictured by the handful of archaeological explorers—for example, Le Plongeon in 1875, Charnay in 1880, Maudslay in 1888, and Maler in 1891<sup>8</sup>—that crossed through Pisté en route to the ruins of Chichén. Charnay writes the following from his second expedition:

Pisté, where we arrive, stands on the extreme [eastern] border of the state [of Yucatán]; It has been so often sacked and burnt by the revolted natives [*sic*], that the only building left is the church, occupied by a company of twenty-five men. It looks a forsaken, God-forgotten place, a veritable exile for the small garrison quartered here in turn for three months in the year; not that there is any immediate danger, for the natives, who first rose to conquer their liberties, fell to massacring from a spirit of revenge, and now only take the field for the sake of plunder. We have nothing to tempt their cupidity, consequently our escort of fifty men [and twelve Winchesters] is a measure of prudence rather than of necessity. . . . The ruins of Chichén are two miles east of Pisté, and were used as pasture for the cattle of the inhabitants, who at stated periods had the woods cut down, when the monuments were easily distinguished. (Charnay 1887: 322–4)

In the travelogues of these protoanthropologists, such as this one by Charnay, much of the narrative is taken up with dramatic entries about the problems getting armed escorts and the local fears of Cruzob *entradas* or attacks. These issues set up the inevitable head-on encounter of the white explorer with a contingent of Indios Bravos or Cruzob that eventually emerge from the trees and in the travelogue. Although these scenes are original sources for Indiana Jones, it is reasonable to suspect that the fears of Pisté locals are real and not simply the narrative stereotyping for purposes of a plot based on a racial (travel-)logic that Hollywood has mythologized.

Cruzob entradas diminished in frequency over time and allowed for other sociopolitical issues to manifest. For example, the 22d Battalion garrisoned in the Pisté church seems not to have contributed to the security or tranquility of the community. On the contrary, the soldiers ruled over the town, stealing land, liquor, chickens, women, and other property as they (drunkenly) pleased. At least this is the debauchery that is protested in letters by the *alcalde auxiliar* and other concerned citizens of Pisté dated 10 and 18 August 1896, in which they plead with the *partido* authorities in the *cabecera* of Valladolid for help:<sup>9</sup>

In answer to your letter of the 7th of this month and with reference to the report that you requested of me regarding the scandals that some Mexicans have committed in this town, I inform you that a Mexican soldier of the 22nd Battalion named José Sanchez lives here who has a little store from which he sells liquor to the Mexicans who come to this place dedicated to the stealing of animals, money, and whatever else they can find. In the house of this Sanchez they hide since they buy at a low price and he exchanges *aguardiente* for all that they steal and in this way among themselves other scandals constantly occur. . . . On the morning of the 24th of July . . . Rufino Mendoza, Ensebio Alarcón and others stole weapons from Manuel Campos of the Hacienda Chichén and from Rufino Poot of this town. . . . Alarcón has planted terror in this town as a scandalous drunk and thief. (Pisté, 10 August 1896; translation by the author)

This letter by the *alcalde auxiliar* also states that he was able to arrest Alarcón and send him to jail but that he returned, having been released, to make fun of (*burlar*) Pisté's authority. Eight days later, a letter signed by nineteen persons was sent to the *jefe político* or district head of Valladolid *partido*:

we proclaim to you that since the [problem] of two months ago we do not have any authority in this town to represent its few inhabitants in order to stop the abuses constantly committed[.] Specifically there is still to this day some *chicleros* of the Hacienda [Chichén] that are destroying the fruit trees of the *ejidos*<sup>10</sup> of the present population. On the 12th of this month we communicated to the C. President of the Junta Municipal of the town of Tinum a letter with the same tenor and to this day he has not given it attention[.] [W]e inform you and plead with you to put a person of confidence to protect the order of this town [since] the proper C. juez absented [himself and] conceded his position to the *suplemente* [town official] who lives in Hacienda

Chichén, and we desire that you grant through this petition what we beg of you. (Pisté, 18 August 1896; translation by the author)

As this second letter implies, not only did Mexican soldiers terrorize the community, but the rise of the *chicle* (tree sap used to make chewing gum) trade in the second half of the nineteenth century brought chicleros, the gatherers of chicle, who seemed to exceed the law. Chicleros spread north and west from the southeastern base of the peninsula in search for and to trade chicle. In this way, they poached on communal lands of frontier towns such as Pisté. Further, the letter indicates that through the end of the nineteenth century, if not also the Porfiriato, Pisté was independent of Tinum under the jurisdiction of the Partido of Valladolid. However, in his exhaustive investigation of legal records, Rodríguez Losa (1989, 1991) has not reported any legislation that explains how, when, and why Pisté became a subordinate comisaría to the county of Tinum in the first or second decades of the twentieth century. This issue remains open for research.

The ineffectualness of local authorities in dealing with either Mexican soldiers or the chicleros is corroborated and explained in an incident told in 1938 by Manuela Huchin, a nineteenth- and twentieth-century resident of Pisté, to Morris Steggerda, who wrote a synopsis of her recollection in his unpublished field notes:

In 1887 Alejandro Martin, Comisario of Pisté, stabbed and killed Jose Ines Vega, the Presidente of Dzitas, because of jealous rivalry over a girl. Nobody prosecuted him, however, for assassinations were common in that period. Later Alejandro Martin had a quarrel with some other men, and Andres Alcocer called his attention to the fact that he, being the authority, ought to set a good example. Martin flew into a rage and threatened to kill Alcocer . . . one night he knocked at the door of Alcocer's house, but Alcocer . . . shot him as soon as he entered the house. The men who accompanied Martin fled. (Steggerda n.d.: 579)<sup>11</sup>

This was the law of the frontier. However, this common situation does not mean that there was no community of Pisté; rather, it suggests a self-sustaining, not very corporate, grouping of families. Capitalist relations of exchange and production linked the community of farmers and semi-proletariats to the merchants and landowners that controlled land in Pisté but that resided in the Yucatec criollo town of Dzitas. The lack of a church until 1910 did not seem to cause any difficulties: On the one hand, the official procedures related to death, birth, and marriage that are controlled by the church were processed in the parroquia of Dzitas. On the other hand,



the spiritual dimensions of social, individual, and agricultural health were attended to by several ritual specialists (called *h-méen* in Maya) who lived in town and worked in the region (cf. Thompson 1965 [1932]; Roys 1965: 168; Steggerda 1941: 24–25).

Although Pisté was quickly, if sporadically, resettled in the second half of the nineteenth century, a permanent re-population did not occur until the 1990s. At this time, Edward H. Thompson initiated attempts to buy land in Pisté but eventually purchased the Hacienda Chichén in the first years of the twentieth century. With this purchase, he brought individuals whom he had met in other parts of the peninsula during his travels to work for him at the hacienda; these retainers, including his Yucatec mistress, came to reside in the near vicinity of the main building. Thus the abandoned hacienda lands were again producing maize and cattle. But this economic activity was not the primary reason for Thompson's residence in Chichén; rather, it was to conduct archaeological explorations in search of artifacts and valuables to send to the Peabody Museum of Harvard University. His activities were very controversial and at the time were denounced by Teobert Maler as systematic pillage and plundering of the Maya city.<sup>12</sup> In this period the community of Chichén became differentiated from that of Pisté, a differentiation that lasted until 1983 when the road (built between 1924 and 1936) from Mérida to Chichén was closed or, more accurately, redirected from the ancient city's center around to the north of the Sacred Cenote (see Castañeda 1998, 1996). The population remained small and changed in relationship to the status of Chichén Itzá: While the Revolution forced the families associated with Thompson to abandon the hacienda, the initiation of archaeological excavations sponsored by the Mexican government and the Carnegie Institution brought other workers and their families to live in Chichén (both in the legally defined zone of ruins and on the privately owned hacienda lands) (see Breglia 2003).

One exception is Juan Olalde, who came to Pisté and Chichén to work as a majordomo for Edward Thompson at the Hacienda Chichén; he can be seen in photos in the museum of Chichén assisting Thompson getting into his scuba gear to search for treasures in the Sacred Cenote. By retaining a nonpartisan position, Juan was also subject to both socialist and liberal violence and eventually abandoned the hacienda when Thompson did so; yet his son Isuaro became a capitaz or foreman for the American archaeologists who conducted work at Chichén (1923–40) under Carnegie Institution of Washington sponsorship (Steggerda n.d.: 1918 Census and "Section B: An Account of the Families of Pisté). In turn, Isuaro's son Eraclio, or "Rach," Olalde became the key power broker in the Pisté movimiento to become a municipio; popular understanding is that when he died of a

heart attack while negotiating squabbles among the community in 1991, the Pisté struggle died with him. Four of his sons are currently tour guides at Chichén Itzá.

In part due to the military defeat of the Cruzob Maya in 1901, Pisté began a steady population increase. The peace that settled on the peninsula allowed for a resurgence of migratory drift, not only of Maya, but of Chinese, Lebanese, and Mexicans (i.e., non-Yucatecan Mexicans from central or northern Mexico). Some were involved in petty commerce, others in chicle production, wage labor, and subsistence farming, and yet others in any combination of these. Pisté prospered, not only with a lively commerce in maize, cattle, and chicle, which linked the town to wider markets, but work was available at Thompson's hacienda and at a match-furniture factory that operated on the west side of town.

### **Pisté and the Municipio Libre, from 1917 to 1989**

The "importation" of the Mexican Revolution<sup>13</sup> did less to disrupt the situation that had settled into this frontier zone during the first decade of the twentieth century than to intensify areas of contestation and struggle (Joseph 1982). Allen Wells and Gilbert Joseph (1996) refer to this period of low-intensity violence and conflict in terms of escalating discontent and upheaval. Their focus, however, on the protagonists of the Mérida scene and its immediate peripheries leaves open questions about the broader periphery of frontier zones.<sup>14</sup> Ethnographies of the period (e.g., Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934; Steggerda 1941, n.d.) note the sporadic, even "nervous," quality of governmental order in the frontier and suggest something akin to a "culture of terror" (Taussig 1987: 3–135) if of lower intensity than that which is usually invoked by the term.<sup>15</sup>

The hacendados, under the banner of liberalism and afraid of another Maya resurgence, intervened in the rural towns to organize their paramilitary squads so as to demobilize any revolutionary threat. In 1918, the president of Tinum went to Pisté to organize, with the aid of locals Juan Aguilar and Antonio Martín, the Liberal Party and to conscript a liberal squad from local veterans of the Mexican army who had participated in the 1901 assault on the Cruzob capital of Chan Santa Cruz (Steggerda 1941: 10, and n.d.). Oral history collected in 1989 from descendants of the Estanislao Puc-Juliana Ceme family recalled stories about an ancestor, Julian Ceme, an ex-soldier, who assumed a prominent role in terrorizing socialists in this period of "terror," that is, from the end of Alvarado's governorship in 1918 until mid-1924, when the Socialist Party recuperated control of the government after the assassination of Felipe Carrillo Puerto. Interestingly,

the assassins hired to kill Carrillo Puerto were from the town of Xocenpich, just seven kilometers (roughly four and a third miles) north of Pisté (Castillo Cocom 2003). As noted by Steggerda (n.d.: 1918 Census Appendix III), Pisté suffered a 58 percent total population loss and a loss of 49 percent of the "founding" families from the 1890s' resettlement.

An opposing socialist militia was organized in defense and in turn drove out the liberal soldiers three months later; subsequently, raids and counterraiders prevailed, including a 1921 attack on the liberal headquarters of Yaxacaba by a coalition of socialist militias from Chan Kom, Pisté, Cuncunul, Ebtun, Tinum, and Yaxcaba. While the contours of the back-and-forth fighting is charted by Robert Redfield and Alfonso Villa Rojas (1934: 212–30) and Morris Steggerda (1941: 18–30), histories of these struggles that would detail the dynamics of these regional events have yet to be excavated from the archives.<sup>16</sup> Further, the vicissitudes of violence in rural Yucatán are of course correlated to the "upheavals" and seasons of socialist victory in Mérida (Wells and Joseph 1996) but in ways that still need clarification and analysis. The victorious socialist leaders of these communities formed the camarilla network and the groundwork for what would later become the governmental grid of power as Mérida political brokers consolidated themselves in the aftermath of the assassination of Carrillo Puerto and accommodated the Revolution to their agendas.

In 1921 the Presbyterian church established a bible school in Mérida from which to convert Yucatán. Among the targeted rural communities in the eastern maize zone were Pisté, Xocenpich, and Chan Kom (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934; Redfield 1959; Goldkind 1965, 1966). Most of the community of Chan Kom converted, but then the famous cacique lineage of the Cemes converted back to Catholicism and used the idiom of religious difference to violently expel Protestant families from the village. While Redfield analyzes this struggle in terms of community solidarity and progress, Victor Goldkind, using Redfield and Villa Rojas's ethnographic data, shows that this was also a political struggle over authority between agricultural-oriented landholding and commercial-oriented families to attain political control over the town.

As Goldkind notes, many of the self-exiled Protestant families moved to Pisté (as well as to Cuncunul) in the 1930s and 1940s. According to oral history documented in 1988–89, many in Pisté remember the arrival of Protestantism as a continuation of the "same" factionalism and violence that marked the earlier socialist versus liberal struggles. In Pisté, as in Chan Kom, there were gun fights in the center of town. While many Catholic towns reacted violently against the Protestants, Xocenpich, a small sister community seven kilometers to the north of Pisté, was one of the rare

communities where the missionary movement was not negatively received. Because of the welcome acceptance of the missionaries, Xocenpich was selected in 1942 as the new headquarters of the Presbyterian Evangelical movement (Castillo Cocom 2003). The violence was short-lived in Pisté and the Chan Kom Protestants and other converts were accepted into the community.

Interestingly, while one branch of the Pat family changed their name to Padilla and continued their economic endeavors, but now without pursuing political office, another remained Pats as well as campesinos (peasants) and became politically prominent in both the agrarian and civil authority structures up through the 1990s. Further, one senior Pat male became key leader in the Lucha 107. In turn, some of his male children by his second wife initiated their political careers in the Pisté movement and later went on to champion the founding of the opposition Partido Acción Nacional, or PAN, in Pisté in 1994.

Unfortunately, the regional history of the Evangelical mission during this early period as well as the relationship between religious conversion and Protestantism to the consolidation of PRI political power has not been the subject of sustained anthropological or historical study. This may be due to the way the Protestant church disrupted the idyllic image of the authentic Maya community that so animates the anthropological imaginary. In turn, the Mérida-centricity of Yucatec historiography has left us with few studies of the Revolutionary violence in the countryside and the ways in which this process articulates with community, class, and ethnic-racial identity formation in the different regions of Yucatán (e.g., Puuc versus maize zones). More important, there are questions about intracommunity articulation within regions of Yucatán in relation to both the Evangelical mission and the new modes of integrating with the emergent socialist state.

From the socialist victory at Yaxcaba (discussed by Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934), Pisté-Chichén began a new mode of incorporation into the nation-state. This involved imagining themselves as citizens of and as a collectivity subject to the nation. The historical record does not provide any heroic or dramatic moments in this slow and silent process that would allow it to be tracked. But it is possible to imagine the effects of the pervasive role of Chichén in all aspects of Pisté's daily life, especially after 1923, when Chichén became massively invested as a monument, to the Maya (see Castañeda 1996, 2001), yes, but more importantly, to the Mexican nation. The multiple and dense interventions by science, state, and business would affect, in the long run, the sentiments and consciousness of belonging. By 1989, Pisteleños called upon the state to change the form and mode of its

integration within the nation. "¡Somos cien por ciento PRI-ístas!" [We are one hundred percent PRI-ístas!] was not only a cry of identity that differentiated this community as worthy in contrast to other less worthy and/or uncitizenly subjects; it was also a direct interpellation of the state to intervene, a beckoning of the paternalistic power of the party (and thus the state) to perform the script of hegemonic authority.<sup>17</sup>

As the community of Pisté grew dramatically starting in the 1970s in relationship to the burgeoning tourist industry at Chichén and the region, it pursued the goal of becoming a *municipio libre* (c.f. Redfield 1950; Castañeda 1995). By 1983, based on its functioning as the support service for tourism at Chichén, it had already incorporated the satellite community of Chichén and become the fastest growing socioeconomic center of a micro-region of eleven neighboring counties.<sup>18</sup> To briefly explore this characterization, consider that Tinum county, of which Pisté represents 45 percent of the population (see Tables 4 and 5), was among the top fourteen counties of Yucatán in terms of per capita income during the 1980s and in 1985 was second only to Mérida.<sup>19</sup> While Tinum, the local economy of which is based in agriculture and cattle, is not accessible by a major road, Pisté attends to an average of 50 percent of the state's annual number of tourists, or approximately 300,000 tourists annually during the 1980s and more than half a million by the mid-1990s.

From the perspective of surrounding farming villages, Pisté is clearly an urban oasis. The town has three-star hotels; restaurants; a fleet of twenty taxis; swimming pools; video game rooms; open, homosexual, and cross-dressing clubs; and youth, drug, and gang cultures. Yet, from local and tourist perspectives, the underdevelopment of the urban infrastructure was in the 1980s and early 1990s starkly contrasted to the technological modernity of the tourist services of Chichén and Pisté. This underdevelopment—for example, lack of running water, no paved roads, 30 percent electricity<sup>20</sup>—strongly motivated the community, both as a whole and as individuals, to seek the improvement of their life situation through political control of tourist receipts.

These goals of the improvement of basic standards of living, which would be realized through the social mobilization to attain a political goal, lead to the question of how Pisté's struggle for *municipio libre* shares aspects with or a family resemblance to new social movements (Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Laclau 1985; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Slater 1985).

Although there is a great diversity of examples and concepts by which to analytically grasp these variations, new social movements can be defined, for the purposes of this argument, as movements in which the agents are not the classically conceived subjects of history (e.g., classes, economic sectors,

Table 4. Population of Pisté, Tinum Pueblo, and Tinum County, 1811–1990

Year	Pisté	Tinum Pueblo	Tinum County	Noteworthy events
1811	1,433	—	n/a	
1821	882	1,525	n/a	Mexican Independence from Spain.
1846	1,172	1,600	n/a	Census just prior to Caste War.
1862	308	326	n/a	Second Cruzob Maya attack on Pisté.
1883	0	—	1,496	Pisté abandoned; refugees go to Tinum.
1900	85	616	1,735	Slow repopulation of town begins after
1910	233	782	2,227	1888, continues until Revolution.
1918	474	—	—	Mexican Revolution “imported” to
1921	332	1,092	1,817	Yucatán. <sup>a</sup>
1930	295	—	2,116	Morley begins projects in 1924.
1933	307	—	—	Steggerda begins 5 yearly census and
1934	364	—	—	other “race”-focused research.
1935	415	—	—	Highway from Mérida to Chichén
1937	433	—	—	completed in 1936.
1940	500	—	3,028	Carnegie project ends in 1940.
1950	820	—	3,350	
1960	974	1,149	3,757	30,000 visitors to Yucatán in early 1960s.
1970	1,308	1,289	4,171	Mass tourism begins in region.
1980	2,471	1,776	6,725	Cancún ten years old.
1982	2,718	1,954	6,958	Closing of highway sets off invasion.
1988	3,774	—	—	Presidential elections.
1989	3,979	—	—	Lucha 107 de Pisté begins in March.
1990	4,196	—	—	Pisté wins municipal elections.
1990	3,124	1,723	7,111 <sup>b</sup>	

*Sources:* Figures for 1821 are from Rodríguez Losa 1985; for 1846, 1862, 1900, from Rodríguez Losa 1989: 190, 206, 219. Figures for the municipio 1910–70 are from the general census of the state of Yucatán (Gobierno del estado de Yucatán 1980). Figures for Pisté 1910–37 are unpublished (Steggerda n.d.); for 1811, from Steggerda 1941: 5 n. 14, 233. Figures for 1980 and 1982 are from Gobierno Estatal de Yucatán 1982: sec. 5.2. Alternate figures for 1980 are 4,986 (Rodríguez Losa 1991: 349) and 5,154 (Gobierno del estado de Yucatán 1980). Figures for Pisté in 1988 and 1990 (Pinto González et al 1989: sec. 3) are based on survey and projected growth rates. Figures for 1989 are from the census of the Comisaría de Pisté and the Comité Pro-Lucha (Pisté 1989). Official figures for 1990 from INEGI (1991: 13, 32) appear to be underestimations.

<sup>a</sup> Joseph 1982.

<sup>b</sup> Population of Tinum County in 1990 according to Rodríguez Losa (1991: 349) is 7,131.

political parties, unions) but also as solidarity groups based in cultural-historical criteria of belonging that cross class, institutions, and races (e.g., gender, age, sexual orientation, culture per se, widows, disenfranchised barrios, urban marginalized, prisoners, ethnic-racial groups). The shared identity and/or conditions of subordination within these new social move-

**Table 5. Distribution of municipal population of Tinum, 1940–90**

Pueblos	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
Pisté	16.5	24.4	26	31	37	45
Tinum	—	—	30	30	26	24
Others	—	—	44	39	37	31
Municipio	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

ments are organically used as a banner to create alliances with analogous identity groups and to mobilize not a radical agenda with radical means, but the political demands of redress, reform, or fuller implementation of democratic ideals.

Pisté, then, was a social (i.e., democratic) movement unifying disparate groups into a community of solidarity without, however, a banner of subaltern identity politics, but instead with a more conservative party line politics, to achieve an end that was neither overthrowing bad government nor fulfilling democracy, but rather an application of a law that if applied entailed dramatic and radical, if not exactly revolutionary, ramifications in different local, regional, and national spheres.<sup>21</sup>

### **"New Historiographic Movements"; or, Notes on the Comparative Ethnography of the Maya**

This ethnographic history of Pisté and the Lucha 107 may have intrinsic interest for regionalists, that is, Mayanists, Yucatecologos, and the people of Pisté. Beyond the merits of the discussion for these interested parties, this account has sought to raise broader issues of significance by suggesting both problems for further investigation and approaches to these questions. Specifically, the social and political movement of Pisté raises comparative questions and implies yet another clarion call,<sup>22</sup> addressed to the fields of Yucatec historiography and Maya ethnography, for a rapprochement between anthropology and history.

The concept of new social movements is based on a comparative analysis of a great diversity of phenomena. The social and political movement of Pisté can therefore be understood, ambivalently or contradictorily, as a kind of "new social movement that was not." That is, it was such a movement in spite of the fact that its mobilization chose not to pursue its objectives in terms of a subaltern identity and not to ally itself with other movements that had a broader slate of issues. It was such a movement, however, in its objectives: to attain local political autonomy through a legally sanctioned process and the fulfillment of a democratic ideal. In this,

Pisté's gambit to become a *municipio libre*,<sup>23</sup> like other such attempts by Yucatec communities in the 1980s or the successful attempts by Escarcega and Cancuc, preceded the deployment of a similar strategy by the Maya Zapatistas, a strategy that seems unequivocally identifiable as "new" if not also, for some analysts, a "postmodern" social movement. Given the history of the *municipio libre* (in Yucatán, at least), the question arises whether there is something new in these movements and how these elements are to be distinguished.

In their political histories and ethnographies, numerous works (e.g., Joseph 1982; Wells and Joseph 1996; Villanueva Mukul 1984; González Padilla 1985; Lara Cebada 1997; Hervik 1999) have provided a basis to ask about Maya identity politics in the twentieth century. However, in addition to the Mérida-centrism of these works, there is a gap in understanding such community-based political movements or Maya identity political movements in Yucatán from the 1910s to the present. The problem here is that Maya identity, in the aftermath of the critique of Redfield, has been stereotypically typified as race or class based, to the detriment of understanding the social solidarity and belonging of Maya identity in terms of community structurally shaped by the governmental strategy of the town and *municipio*. This oversight also correlates to the general gap regarding the relations between popular cultures, political cultures, and the formation or consolidation of the Mexican state apparatus from the 1920s to the present (see Joseph et al. 2001). This artifact of scholarship needs to be addressed by ethnographers and historians with the goal of providing more rich ethnographic histories of twentieth-century Yucatán. Thus, the need for yet another rapprochement of anthropology and history (see Castañeda in press).

A broader issue of investigation emerges here since, in the case of Pisté, Cancuc, Maya Zapatismo, and the other cases of Yucatán derive from the political and economic crises of the 1980s. While this topic has stimulated voluminous and crucial work, there seems to be a gap in addressing the issue of the municipal structure of authority as a governmental strategy of state power. There are two key, and interrelated, points that are raised. First, the question of the ambivalence of this strategy of power to work, both ideologically and practically or materially, in the direction of both hegemony and local autonomy (or containment and empowerment) requires further comparative study.

Second, community mobilizations that seek the condition of *municipio libre* are in effect interpellating the state. This is most clear in the immediate period of widespread designation of new *municipios*, but also in the case of Pisté; the study of Escarcega and Cancuc would, it seems,



provide further substantiation of the point. Here then is a crucial investigative focus that has not been attended to in asking about how the state or its hegemony is created not from the center out, but from "outside" in or "bottom" up. Furthermore, this idea could then be usefully employed as a criterion of conceptual definition of and further research on new social movements. In what ways are these social movements seeking not only to create anew the state from the bottom up, but refashioning the manner in which the state territorializes itself in relations of governmentality to subject citizens and subject communities?

In this regard, the pursuit of the municipal-town authority structure as a containment strategy within the governmental strategies of the Mexican state is conjoined with an attempt to trace the interpellation of the state by community agencies in ongoing self-constitution. In particular, this essay has sought to chart a history of the structure of localized, town authority, which is but one of four axes of governmentality that territorializes the Mexican state (class, community, race-ethnicity, culture) in Yucatán (see Castañeda 1996; Castañeda and Fallaw in press). This approach seeks to sidestep assumptions of a binary dynamics between two pre-stated opposites, the politically subordinate and the dominant group, and instead seeks to trace a more fluid field of interaction in which there is more than a simple give and take between differentially positioned (as well as constituted) collectivities.

## Notes

- 1 The article title includes two word plays. First, Pisté is the name of the town whose history is under consideration; this Yucatec Maya word means "to measure." Second, Pisté is located close to the ancient Maya city of Chichén Itzá, which translates as "Mouth of the Well" of the Itzá.
- 2 Examples are Mallon 1994; Joseph and Nugent 1994; Nugent 1993; Lomnitz-Adler 1995; Vaughn 1997; Joseph et al. 2001. Jan Rus's (1994) study is particularly noteworthy, as are early ethnographies (e.g., Friedrich 1970, 1986; Redfield 1950).
- 3 For new analyses of how the Revolutionary educational agenda was put into practice in rural Yucatán and for how the educational discourse of the Revolution sought to reform the Yucatec Maya Indian, see Fallaw in press and Eiss in press, respectively.
- 4 The districts were reinstated as a territorial unit headed by elected deputies. These supra-county units thus changed from the executive to the legislative branch.
- 5 Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934; Redfield 1950; Goldkind 1965, 1966; Castañeda 1995.
- 6 Tinum is the name of both the cabecera and the municipio.
- 7 The ethnoracial and social classification system of Yucatán is distinct from that

- of Mexico. While criollos became Yucatecos, the people known in the twentieth century as Maya (of Yucatán) became classified by different nonethnic terms; those who sided with the white-Yucatec society in the Caste War became mestizos, while others remained indios, that is, either *indio rebeldes* (the Cruzob Maya) or *indios pacíficos* (communities of Campeche). See Restall in press, Gabbert in press, and Castillo Cocom in press for details.
- 8 Steggerda 1941: 6–9 quotes these early archaeologists' descriptions of the abandonment of Pisté.
  - 9 See Castañeda 1991: chapter 2 and appendices; letters in the Archivo General de Yucatán (old catalog system, Municipal Series, Valladolid Box 1885–6).
  - 10 The word *ejido* in this letter references a plot of public or common land. However, this is not the same as the ejido land grants that were legally defined by the 1917 Revolutionary Constitution.
  - 11 The quote is from the typed manuscript "Appendix IV: History of Pisté As Told by Former Inhabitants of Pisté." The information is repeated in the typed manuscript "Section B: An Account of the Families of Pisté." Both originally were planned to be part of Steggerda's monograph but were pulled at the last minute by his supervisors at the Carnegie Institution of Washington.
  - 12 See Ramirez Aznar 1990 for a history of the plundering of Chichén for Boston's museums and the antagonism between Maler and E. H. Thompson.
  - 13 On the Revolution, see Joseph 1982; Sierra Villarreal 1986; González Navarro 1970: 226–38; Villanueva Mukul 1984; Sierra Villarreal and Paoli Bolio 1987; Baños Ramírez 1990; Wells 1982; Joseph and Wells 1982, 1983; García Quintanilla 1978: 44–49, 54–58.
  - 14 Recurrent issues in the historiography of Yucatán are the political control of the henequén economy, power blocs or *camarillas*, and the regional accommodations with the forces and protagonists of the Mexican Revolution approached with a Mérida-centrism that privilege the state and traditional historical agents (e.g., parties, classes, capital, church). See Castañeda in pressb for a discussion of this historiography.
  - 15 On violence, see Abiotes 1985; González Navarro 1970: 277–83; Joseph 1982; Orosa Díaz 1982; Paoli Bolio and Montalvo Ortega 1977; Reed 1964: 229–49; Sánchez Novelo 1986; Sullivan 1983: 176–80, fn. 4; Villa Rojas 1945: 20–30.
  - 16 A diary of Don Eustaquio Ceme, the cacique of Chan Kom, is published as chapter 13 in Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934. It includes an important discussion of the history of the mobilization of socialists against liberals. Following Redfield's lead, Morris Steggerda also sought to elicit oral history about the Mexican Revolution. His unpublished field notes include two accounts, one by his research assistant from Pisté, Martin Dzib, and one from Margaret and Robert Redfield's research informant from Dzitás, Pedro Castillo. Both accounts are handwritten documents located in the Steggerda files of the Hartford Seminary Foundation; both are minimal narratives and mostly include listings of named persons who were affiliated with the two partidos. I thank Ben Fallaw for his generosity and friendship in sharing with me his research notes and copies of documents he located among the Tinum municipal documents. Those documents inform parts of this essay but are mostly unexploited and await a future collaboration.
  - 17 See Castañeda 1996, 2001 for elaboration on the questions of the entanglements of anthropological science, tourism, and government in the history of Pisté and Chichén. See Castañeda 1996: 259–97 for an ethnographic account of

- the Lucha 107 between 1988 and 1989. See Castillo Cocom (n.d.) for a landmark explanation of the practice of Maya identity politics in the Yucatán.
- 18 On the artesanry industry of the Pisté and Chichén region, see Peraza López and Rejón Patron 1989; Peraza López et al. 1987; Morales Valderrama et al. 1989; Castañeda 1996: 203–58, 1998, in pressa.
  - 19 See Gobierno Estatal de Yucatán 1982; INEGI 1987a, 1987b, 1991; and Castañeda 1991: Appendix G–F.
  - 20 See Castañeda 1996: 68–93 for community life of Pisté in the 1980s.
  - 21 See Castañeda 1996: 259–97; Castañeda and Burgos Cen 1989; de los Reyes 1989; *Diario de Yucatán* 1989a, 1989b, 1989c; Gongora Navarrette 1989; and Pisté 1989.
  - 22 In Yucatec studies, key landmarks are Jones 1977; Farriss 1984; Sullivan 1989; Castañeda 1996; Restall 1997, 1998; and the conference *A Country Like No Other*, organized by Gilbert Joseph, Ben Fallaw, and Paul Eiss and sponsored by the Yale Latin American Studies Center, New Haven, CT, 4–5 November 2000.
  - 23 While waiting for the state to grant either political autonomy or urban infrastructural development, Pisté attained economic autonomy through a fund that paid town bills and the Lucha 107. Funds derived from individual donations of Pisté citizens and from contributions made by tourist businesses in Pisté as well as some tourist agencies based in Mérida and Cancun.

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