

# PAN-MAYA IDEOLOGY AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN YUCATÁN

Allan BURNS  
University of Florida

Pan-Maya ideology is the conscious construction of a local identity in the Maya area with connections to other Maya groups in Chiapas, Guatemala, Belize, and the United States. Pan-Maya ideology is much more associated with the highlands, especially the highlands of Guatemala (Fischer and Brown 1996) than it is with the lowlands of the Yucatán. But the development of Pan-Maya identity is also a part of the changes occurring in Yucatán today. I took part in an significant event in the new Pan-Maya movement in the Yucatán when I was asked to teach a course in the Maya language to a group of Maya school teachers in the summer of 1996. I use this experience to explore how Pan-Maya ideology is being constructed in the Yucatán. The activities I will describe are those of indigenous Mayan school teachers who have moved out of the elementary school classrooms of the state into a more public arena, demanding that the Autonomous University of the Yucatán in Mérida provide courses that help these teachers do a better job. One of the courses was an advanced course in Mayan sociolinguistics that I taught to a group of 24 primary and secondary teachers. My interest in describing Pan-Mayanism through a particular course is to call attention to the need to anchor ideas and discussions on real-life activities, rather than suspend concepts like activism or Pan-Mayanism without any connections to real life events. My point is that the generation of Pan-Mayan ideas and strategies takes place in particular events and occasions. Education is an arena where attitudes and values associated with Pan-Mayanism are clearly seen. Pan-Mayanism becomes a conscious theme in educational settings and bilingual teachers are at the forefront of the discourse about Pan-Mayan issues today.

Pan-Maya ideology is a relatively new political direction for revitalizing Maya identity in the world of the Maya. Village, regional, and linguistic ideologies have traditionally been the strongest bases for identity in Yucatán as

well as Chiapas, Guatemala and other parts of the Maya world. Indeed, Yucatán is often thought of as peripheral to new Maya political movements, especially those that have led to violence in either Guatemala or Chiapas in the past decades. But Yucatán has a history of a strong Maya identity, and even today Yucatán is something of a “sleeping giant” of Mayan identity. It is a state that holds the heritage of the most successful native uprising in the history of the Americas, the Caste War of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yucatán continues to be a state with a strong indigenous presence, not just in terms of the numbers of indigenous *campesinos*, but also in terms of the political role of Maya culture in the state.

Yucatán is the most indigenous state of all of México, even though other states -Chiapas and Oaxaca— for example, have the popular image of being «Indian Mexico.» Forty-Four percent of the people of Yucatán are conversant in Maya, whereas in Oaxaca 39.1% of the population speaks indigenous languages and in Chiapas the percentage of speakers of languages other than Spanish is 26.4 (INEGI 1994). Outside of the city of Mérida where the percentage of Maya speakers is relatively low (at about 17%) Maya is spoken by most of the population. A good example of the pervasiveness of spoken Maya in Yucatán today is Ticul, the third largest city of the state. Eighty four percent of people in Ticul speak Maya (Güemez Pineda 1994:7), and the use of Maya is positively valued in all social classes. Maya is spoken in many contexts: the home, of course, as well as religious activities, especially *novenas* and activities associated with popular celebrations such as the *okolstapol* or dance of the pig’s head. Political activities are also carried out in Maya as well as Spanish, as is much commerce. The micro-industries of shoe making and embroidery are arenas where Maya is spoken as well. All in all, Maya is a thriving language throughout Yucatán and now that Pan-Maya ideologies are being discussed, the Maya language is a primary theme of the discussions.

Why does the Yucatán retain such a high proportion of Maya speakers in comparison with other states, including Campeche and Quintana Roo? Campeche and Quintana Roo have high percentages of Maya speakers, but not as high as those in Yucatán. The high proportion of bilingual Maya speakers in Yucatán is the result of history. The Caste War is primary among these historic events which have influenced the present strength of the Maya language. The Caste War began in 1847 and officially ended in 1901 (Reed 1964). During that period of over fifty years, the Maya held most of the peninsula of Yucatán and created an independent nation with political, jural, and external relations all carried out in Maya. Although the Caste War was declared over by Mexican forces in 1901, the strength of the rebel forces was such that it was only in 1976 that their stronghold, the territory of Quintana Roo, was made a state of the Mexican republic. The final crush of the «Santa Cruz» or rebel Maya of the Caste War was the building of the tourist corridor of Cancun-Chetumal in the 1970s and

80s. Now young men from rebel Maya villages work in resorts as waiters and cooks. But even in tourist employment the young Maya men are aware of the Caste War and continue talking about it. When I was in the diving resort of Akumal in 1997 I was able to quickly gather a group of seven waiters and cooks around me and talk about the role of their town, Xhasil-Sur in the Caste War. Maya language loyalty owes much to the strength and success of the Caste War uprising from 1850 through the early 1900s in the Yucatán (Reed 1964). Even now, some 150 years after the initial battles of this conflict started, the uprising is a popular theme for indigenous literature. On the official 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Caste War during the summer of 1997, a group of descendants of the combatants wrote to a congress organized in Mérida to discuss the implications of the uprising,

*Señores:*

*Antes que nada, permitanos saludar este importante evento. Al mismo tiempo queremos informarles que, nos tomamos la molestia de pedirle a nuestro entrañable amigo Francisco Ligorred su amabilidad de poder leer estas lineas en su espacio que le han concedido en su Congreso, a quien autorizamos su difusión en los medios de comunicación, ya que es un evento del que no somos ajenos la tercera generación herederos de la Guerra de Dios....*

*Hay que recordar que en la lucha de nuestros pueblos mayas resaltó el espíritu de libertad, que los abuelos supieron llevar hasta los lugares más apartados de la Península, porque pusieron en alto nuestro origen, desde el Nojoch Tat Nachi Cocóm y el inmovible Jacinto Can Ek, hasta los indómitos Cecilio Chi, Jacinto Pat, Manuel A. Ay, Venancio Pec, Bonifacio Novelo, Florentino Chán, Bernadino Cen, Crecencio Poot (gobernador de los mayas durante el periodo de autonomía, 1851-1901), y tantos héroes mayas que dieron la cara al destino que nos impusieron los ts'ules. De igual manera, este levantamiento del 30 de julio, tuvo como propósito recobrar la autonomía de los pueblos mayas y acabar con 300 años de opresión.*

*La historia oficial ha ocultado los verdaderos hechos históricos y ha opacado la valentía de nuestros pueblos, además han implantado su visión de la historia según sus intereses a través de los libros de historia y nos hablan de la guerra de una forma romántica. Que los mayas no pudieron ganar porque tenían que sembrar sus milpas, del triunfo del general Bravo en la ciudad santa cuando nunca hubo enfrentamiento y lo más grave, el querer minimizar la importancia de Noj Kaj Sta. Cruz Balam Naj, llamandole Chan Sta. Cruz...*

*Como es de saberse, tenemos ideas y una voz que deben escucharse y si esto no sucede siempre estaremos preparados para otros siglos de resis-*

*tencia educando en nuestras tradiciones a los hijos, preparándolos siempre para el renacimiento de nuestra grandeza antigua.*

*¡Nos siguen guerreando!*

*Leído y condensado en Noj Caj Santa Cruz Balam Naj—Felipe Carrillo Puerto, Quintana Roo, Domingo 27 de Julio de 1997.*

*(Firmado por veinte personas de Noj Caj Santa Cruz, Centro de Cultural Maya Maakan Xook, 27 de Julio de 1997)*

The Caste War is something that Pan-Maya activists in Guatemala are beginning to cite as a lesson from the Yucatec Maya, especially as it relates to the long protracted struggle of the Caste War. The memories of the Caste War are a symbol of Pan-Maya identity, especially the identity of the Maya as organizers of a very active resistance to Mexican control that is moving from the Yucatán to places like the highlands of Chiapas and Guatemala.

A second basis of the strength of Maya language as fertile ground for the development of Pan-Mayanism in Yucatán occurred through the policies of a populist governor of Yucatán immediately after the Mexican Revolution. The educational, feminist, and cultural reforms of governor Felipe Carrillo Puerto (1872-1924) resulted in ethnic and regional pride throughout the state. Carrillo Puerto took the nationalistic programs of the revolution to heart and succeeded in moving Yucatán from a feudal system based on the dominance of the henequen industry to a state that gave Maya campesinos political and social space to develop an identity strong enough to challenge the dominant European perspective of the elites of the henequen industry.

Finally, Pan-Maya ideology has been able to develop in the Yucatán because of a unique ethnic label that developed there. Yucatec Maya people refer to themselves as “mestizos,” rather than as indigenous or Indian people as is common in other parts of the Americas. As *mestizos*, those who speak Maya have the advantage of being able to disclaim the prejudice and discrimination that characterizes other parts of the Maya world where speakers of indigenous languages are considered unpatriotic, subversive, and dangerous. In the Yucatán, the term *mestizo* has given a wider cultural space for people to switch between identities of indigenous people and identities of the Mexican mainstream. This has meant that Maya speakers and people with Maya surnames have been able to hold positions of political, economic, and cultural authority without the automatic assumption that they are carrying out an indigenous or Indian agenda. The use of the identity of *mestizo* by Maya speaking people in Yucatán means that some of the more visible symbols of identity (and, not incidentally discrimination) such as indigenous clothing, are not as linked to a rigid caste system as is found in other parts of the Maya world. Upper class people wear Maya huipiles just as lower class people dress in the inexpensive clothes of the European influenced clothing industry.

## PAN-MAYA IDENTITY IN ACTION: A UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM FOR INDIGENOUS TEACHERS

Pan-Maya identity does not occur in a vacuum. It is found in particular events and activities where people have the time and opportunity to explore and perhaps adopt a new identity. The class I taught on the grammar of contemporary Maya for Maya primary and secondary school teachers was one event. I use it here as a vehicle to discuss how Pan-Maya ideology is created and discussed among Maya people today. The class I describe took place in the summer of 1996. The twenty-four teachers were all native Mayan speakers and part of the cadre of over four hundred bilingual-bicultural teachers in the state of Yucatán. I am concentrating on an educational arena to discuss elements of a Pan-Maya movement in Yucatán because schools are an arena where questions of identity, ideology, and political movements become sharply defined. Teachers have vested and highly motivated reasons for thinking about and acting on concepts of Mayan culture, especially those teachers who are involved in teaching in Maya as well as introducing curriculum materials based on indigenous knowledge. In the time I have I will describe the course and how it was run and in so doing highlight four features of Pan-Mayanism in the Yucatán: One is the importance of locally developed literature, the second is the set of symbols teachers use to define Maya culture, the third is the legitimacy and authority of teachers as Pan-Maya activists, and the fourth is the issue of uniformity and heterogeneity in Pan-Mayanism in the Yucatán.

The summer course was given in Mérida, the capital city of the state of Yucatán. Even though the capital city of Mérida is often thought of as the place where non-Mayan people live in the Yucatán, in 1996 there were 12 bilingual teachers in the city who attended some 3,000 students (*Por Esto!* 7 June 1996). The fact that the beginnings of Pan-Mayanism are beginning in the city of Mérida suggests that part of the Pan-Maya agenda that is being developed in Yucatán is based on urban ideas and not just rural ones. Unlike the highlands or Guatemala, roads and other communication between Mérida and its hinterlands are well established and easy to use. Differences between the city and pueblos is no where near as great as it is Chiapas or Guatemala (Burns 1996). This is one way that Pan-Mayanism in Yucatán is different from similar movements in Chiapas and Guatemala. Promoters of Pan-Mayanism are comfortable in both urban and rural contexts in the Yucatán, even though the majority of bilingual schools are in the rural areas.

I was asked to teach the course by the dean of the college of education at the University of the Yucatán. She told me that the college of education at UADY was developing several courses for bilingual teachers and since I was a Mayan linguist and anthropologist, I would be a good teacher for the course. I am in Yucatán each summer as part of an exchange program with the *facultad* of education there, and I am one of the few faculty who works in that division who has inte-

rests in indigenous education. The Maya language in Yucatán, especially at the university level, traditionally was not an area of too much interest (Padilla *et al.* 1987; Gómez Alba 1992), even though one of the most used Yucatec Mayan grammars was written by a faculty member of the anthropology program, Refugio Vermont Salas, in the 1960s. But beginning in 1993, more and more students began requesting classes in Maya, especially in the schools of education, anthropology, and medicine. The Maya language has become so visible and popular in the university today that it is being taught in two different faculties to full sections of students.

Interest in the Maya language was not limited to university students. In 1994 bilingual teachers of the state demanded new books and other bilingual materials. They worked to revise the simple and ineffective vocabulary books that had been used in the schools. They produced new books called *Let's learn Maya* (*ko'ox kanik maya*) in an attempt to modernize bilingual instruction in the state. By 1995 these same teachers began requesting advanced linguistics and pedagogy courses for their professional development. This move from elementary classrooms to university settings is a key element in the development of Pan-Mayanism in Yucatán. By demanding and receiving courses in Maya at the university, these teachers transformed their roles as culture brokers between schools and the state to more activist positions in the politics of the university. By moving bilingual-bicultural education to the university setting, they were given ample media coverage where issues of Mayan cultural resistance and revival could be heard beyond the walls of elementary school classrooms. Pan-Mayanism in Yucatán in this way was a movement that had its birth in the government policies of bilingual education begun in the 1950s, but which came of age in the 1990s as bilingual teachers left the isolation of primary school classrooms and became a highly visible part of the university.

The teachers said that they were giving up their summer vacations to take this series of courses to better their skills as teachers, to increase their knowledge about the Maya language, as well as to gain legitimacy within the public education system as bilingual teachers. Although bilingual-bicultural education began in Mexico in 1955 when the Dirección General de Educación Indígena was created within the Public Education Secretariat (SEP), bilingual teachers in Yucatán have only recently pressed for university level courses and preparation for their work. Through the 1980s, only about 20% of the children in the bilingual schools finished elementary school whereas 50% of students in the non-bilingual schools finished their schooling (Braha-Pfeiler and Franks 1992:187). Some 36% of the population of the state of Yucatán is made up of people who speak Maya, and outside of the capital city of Mérida, up to 100% of the population is fluent in Maya (Braha-Pfeiler and Rosado n.d.). In this sense, bilingual education is more of a necessity in Yucatán than a program of revitalization (Güemez Pineda 1994). Barbara Braha-Pfeiler (Braha-Pfeiler and Franks 1992)

reported in that there were 454 bilingual primary school teachers in Yucatán in the early 1990s.

Before I agreed to teach the class, I was invited to the last few classes in advanced Mayan grammar that the teachers were taking from a Mayan ethnolinguist. I was impressed with the level of linguistic complexity of the course and the great enthusiasm of both the teachers and students. I had the distinct feeling that this was something unique that was happening in the evolution of Mayan cultural activism in Yucatán. I was introduced to the class and said a few words in Mayan. When the class ended, several of the teachers came up to me and launched into an animated discussion with me in Mayan. I was struck, as I always am, how much more lively conversations are in Mayan as compared to the formal and often subservient Spanish that Mayan speakers employ in bilingual situations. I decided that I would teach the next course, and also decided to take a Maya-centric position by using Mayan as the language of instruction. I found that all but one of the participants were native Maya speakers (the one exception was a Yucatecan anthropologist who had developed a career for herself as an elementary school teacher. Since my own expertise is in the area of discourse, oral literature, and ethnohistory (Burns 1995), I used a sociolinguistic base for the course. The course name was based on a couplet, *Bix a naatik le tzicbala; Bix a meyah yetele he'ela* or «How to understand (Mayan) conversation and how to work with it.» The participants in the class divided themselves into six different workgroups and each group researched and wrote up material for discussions. The following topics formed the basis of the course: (1) Riddles and word games (*na'ato'ob*) (2) Ethnobotany and ethnomedicine (*bix u kaaba la ba'ala*) (3) Playful speech and joking (*baaxal t'aan*) (4) Conversations in Mayan (*tzikbal*) (5) Prophecies and oral history (*cuentos*) and (6) Beautiful speech, including songs, poetry, and other formal genres (*hadzutz u t'aan*). These categories were selected by the teachers during a discussion of discourse routines in Mayan that could be easily used in teaching, and each one is a recognized speech category in spoken Mayan today (Burns 1995). The class met for three and a half hours a day for two weeks, or a 35 hour course. When it ended, the class created and presented a 60 page book with a chapter on each of these topics. In keeping with the Mayan-centric perspective we had adopted, the book was predominantly written in Mayan with the idea that it would be developed into a bilingual resource. The idea of writing a book for a course like this was something that was developed in an earlier class on the Mayan grammar that these same teachers had participated in earlier in the summer. That book, *Ejercicios Fundamentales de Gramática Maya* was written by theas the start of a set of resources for teachers that they themselves created rather than having to rely on older grammars and other materials that were written without the needs of primary education teachers in mind. *Por Esto!*, one of the major newspapers of the Yucatán, reported on the ideology of writing a book in the coverage of the course:

*«La lengua maya, de los mayas de Yucatán actuales, es la resistencia de una colonización vigente hasta nuestros días... es un elemento cultural vivo, en uso, por lo que es difícil de hablar de su extinción como falsamente algunos lingüistas han venido pronosticando», expresa el maestro Valerio Canché Yah, coordinador del grupo autor del libro.*

*En virtud de que los mayahablantes de la Península son personas que no saben escribir su propio idioma, existe una inquietud por gramaticarlo para que sus reglas precisas faciliten su escritura y las traducciones de ciertos escritos mayas al español o viceversa, se dice en la presentación del libro.*

*(Por Esto! 7 July 1996).*

The book that the course I coordinated produced was then the second in this series. These books in Maya are another feature of the beginning Pan-Maya movement in the Yucatán, in the same way that local publishing of Mayan pedagogical and literary texts characterize Pan-Maya movements in Guatemala and Chiapas (see, for example, Sam Colop 1996; Sturm 1996). The importance of books as defining and legitimizing a Pan-Maya movement extends beyond pedagogical materials to the publishing of poetry and other literary works in Mayan in Yucatán (Ligorred 1995). Books and writing are, of course, visible symbols of modern nations (Anderson 1991), and control over publishing is in a very real sense control over representation.

The class periods were lively events. Jokes and double entendres were the dominant mode of interaction among the group. One of the first linguistic features of Mayan that the class remarked on was that occasions like this were like «Mayan assemblies» when *ejidatarios* or members of the community gather to decide on critical issues. There everyone talks at once and consensus is obtained through a respect for giving everyone his or her turn to talk, but turns are taken all at the same time. In other words, the class meetings were loud, multi-vocalic to an extreme, and quite different from the ordered world of a western classroom. Indeed, we had to close the doors because we were disturbing other classes and people kept walking up to the door and looking in with wonder at the sounds and apparent confusion of Mayan being used as the means of instruction. The linguistic ease that participants felt was important because it allowed for open discussions of what was authentically Mayan, of how the language should be written, what children should be taught, and other issues of Pan-Mayanism.

Pan-Mayanism is also process of globalization and the creation of what Benedict Anderson (1991) calls an «imagined community» of people who are not in the face to face contact that characterizes local communities. Instead, symbols, memories, and references to extra-local culture are the materials of Pan-Mayanism. In Yucatán, references to the ancient Mayan calendar, out of use for the past several hundred years, is one such symbol. One of the materials that a teacher



brought into the class for the section we did on prophecies was a page from an anthropology book which listed the calendar names in Yucatec. Another teacher brought in a hand-painted picture he made with the names of the Mayan calendar on it. It seems to me that the re-incorporation of the Mayan calendar as an authentic part of Mayan culture serves Pan-Mayanism in several ways. First of all, the historic depth of the calendar links contemporary Mayan people with the civilizations of pre-hispanic Mesoamerica. Mayan farmers in the Yucatán today use an adaptation of the Spanish system of *cabañuelas* to prophecy weather and the years events: under this system, each day of January is understood as equal to a month of the year and so the days are watched for signs of rain, clouds, and other climatic conditions that will be seen later in the year. Unlike the ancient Mayan day names, the *cabañuelas* is a very well known system. But it has the disadvantage of being a colonial introduction and so is not considered part of the legitimate Mayan culture that the teachers wish to promote. One group of the authors of our book explained the calendar first in Maya and then Spanish as follows:

*Winalo'ob Maya*

*Le u k'aaba u winalo'ob Mayaaso'ob jach tá jats'u'uts, tumen ku k'alik ichil u tsolkimo'ob u evolución u pixano'ob.*

*U tsolmo'ob beya: K'abet u kaja yeetel imix ku ds'o'okole ku yuulsah yéetel Ahau tumen ku tukliko'ob jum'péel oración sagrada, beey xaan ku k'ansik u beej ku bisik wíinik waye' yokol kab.*

*U xo'ok ku yaala ku e'esik wíinik tumen ka jumpéel u ya'al u k'abo'ob máak yéetel, ka jump'éel y ua'al u yoko'ob. Le muucha' ku betik jum k'aal u k'at u yaale k'aal (balo'ob k'a'alam, wu a k'albi).*

*Esta relación de los veinte días Mayas compone una ordenada sucesión de ellos, un verdadero enunciado religioso de la evolución del espíritu del hombre desde que desciende a la encarnación hasta que se reintegra a la esencia divina.*

*La correlación entre los nombres de los días comprueba que el inicial de la serie había de ser siempre el día IMIX y evidencia la razón de que se consideraba cosa ritual repetirlos invariablemente en el mismo orden, que concluye en AHAU. Aparte de su asombroso empleo en las matemáticas de la cronología maya, constituyó algo semejante a una oración, a un relato sagrado que se enseñaba a repetir al pueblo de generación en generación.*

*El número veinte que los cuenta y comprende, es el número sagrado que simboliza al hombre en la suma de los dedos de las manos y los pies. Ya que se sabe que en Maya veinte se dice "k'aal" (cosa cerrada y completa).*

(Equipo de Nelda Guadalupe Tuz Cupul, Ana Calderón Rodríguez, Gaspar Tun Canul, 26 de Julio 1996)

The reintroduction of the Maya calendar is not just the reintroduction of words for days of the week or symbols. There is also an attempt to bring an indigenous sense of scholarship to the reintroduction of the calendar, a reflection on the origin and everyday meaning of the calendar as well as a sacred meaning. References to the use of the calendar as a kind of oration or map of the journey of a human being links this interpretation to the use the Tedlock discusses for the Quiche Maya *boo*, the *Popol Vuh* (Tedlock 1985). Immediately after the class under discussion here, several of the participants took part in a Maya hieroglyphic workshop organized by Linda Schele in Yucatán's second largest city, Valladolid. Pan-Maya identity as it is being developed in Yucatán is then an identity that includes a strong sense of scholarship and interpretation, not just the continuation of Maya practices without reflection and commentary.

Another difference between Pan-Mayanism in Yucatán and that found in the highlands involves essentialism or the theory that Mayan culture is an inborn trait of people. Yucatecan Maya people have always had much more fluid social boundaries than those found in other parts of the Maya world, and local theories of essentialism described by scholars for Guatemala do not have a salient place in Pan-Maya discussions in Yucatán. Fischer and Brown (1996:3) note that this element of Pan-Mayanism in Guatemala has caused a rift between Maya and non-Maya scholars who work in Guatemala: «As Maya scholars have turned to essentialism, North American and European academics have begun to reject this traditional analytic style, striving instead for more fluid paradigms.» In Yucatán it is much more important to understand the content of Maya culture than to be concerned about whether someone is born with it or not. As mentioned, the course included a primary school teacher who learned Maya when she was doing her licenciatura in anthropology. But her contributions to the course and the resulting book were afforded the same legitimacy as those of native speakers. I was more critical of her participation than the other members of the class because of her propensity to bring in published materials and to give textbook anthropology rationales for behavior instead of producing materials from the oral tradition as the other students did. But her acceptance by the class was a lesson in the inclusiveness of Pan-Mayanism in the Yucatán. The fact that her knowledge of Maya tradition came from books was admired by the bilingual teachers rather than deprecated. If anything, the added legitimacy of bringing in materials on Mayan culture from published sources added to the importance of her contributions.

Pan-Mayanism can be seen as a process of conscious reflection on what makes up Mayan culture. Conscious reflection on what makes up Mayan culture can move in the direction of either an orthodox view of Mayan culture as a uniform and equally shared set of values and actions or to a heterodox position of multiple and complimentary ways of «being Maya.» Mayan sociolinguistic strategies suggest that the heterodox model is most appropriate, since the sifting of competing voices seems to categorize so much of Mayan discourse. But one of the features

of Pan-Mayanism is the heavy weighting of orthodox positions or authoritative pronouncements about what Mayan culture consists of. The struggle between orthodox and heterodox positions about the nature of Mayan culture was a constant issue in the course. One example of this was the writing system. In 1984, Yucatán, like much of the Maya world, has adopted a standardized writing system for the Maya language. The system was created by linguists and experts in pedagogy and included such things as replacing the colonial «h» with the modern Spanish «j» or *jota*, the inclusion of glottal stops signified by apostrophes, and vowel tone. While these orthographic conventions help to clarify the teaching of writing, they are at odds with the vast majority of toponyms and surnames that pervade the Yucatecan cultural and geographic landscape. Many of the teachers felt strongly that a standardized orthography was a sign of cultural stability, while others noted that the orthography adopted by the state put parents and their children at odds regarding how to spell their own names and the names of the towns where they live.

A second area where the difference between an orthodox and heterodox position on what constitutes Mayan culture had to do with gender roles and rituals. There was a tendency in the course to define gender roles in strict ways even though Yucatec Mayan society has fluid gender boundaries. Discussions of the defining rituals of Mayan life, such as the rain ceremony or *ch'achak* were defined along gender lines, rather than along extended family lines. When one of the women teachers mentioned that women do participate in the *ch'achak* ceremonies, she was told that that was an aberration and that real Mayan *ch'achak* ceremonies were performed by men. This led to a lively debate in the class, and the issue was not resolved. I expected the class to immediately divide along gender lines on this issue, as gender exploitation is another common themes in the discourse of Pan-Maya identity, as seen in Rigoberta Menchú's book, *I Rigoberta Menchú* (1984). But it did not. Instead the discussion centered around different elements of the *ch'achak* and how they vary from one part of the Yucatán to another. But what was interesting in terms of Pan-Mayanism was the tendency to state that authority for ritual behavior was becoming defined as a male sphere of activity. Similar tendencies to define Maya culture as based on the assumptions and perspectives of men has led to the dissolution of groups of Maya activists in Chiapas. Pan-Maya ideology in the Yucatán is less likely to become defined in terms of a male perspective, in part because of the strong role that Maya women have had in official political offices as well as in cultural spheres of economic production (Re Cruz 1996).

When we look at the development of movements in Mayan communities, it is well to consider that these movements occur in particular events or occasions with people engaging in defining themselves in terms of their occupations, aspirations, and individual histories. The series of classes on Mayan linguistics and culture taught at the Autonomous University of the Yucatán over the past several years offers a window into the process of Pan-Mayanism in this part of the Maya

world. The building blocks of Pan-Mayanism are seen in the way Maya people talk about their own history and contemporary culture, in the way they argue about legitimacy based on either pre-history or written documents, and in the way gender becomes a salient issue of the discussion.

Yucatán is often referred to as a «world apart» from the rest of México and even from the Maya world. But Yucatec Maya people are also engaged in this process of Pan-Mayanism. The fluid social and ethnic boundaries of Yucatán make essentialism a less compelling part of Pan-Mayanism there. Instead, the links to other Maya traditions today can be clearly seen in three areas: the emphasis on literacy and literature, a struggle over orthodox and heterodox perspectives on Maya cultural practices, and the importance of education as a locus of Pan-Maya ideology.

**Acknowledgements:** I would like to thank the participants in the course, «*Bix a naatik le tzicbala, bix a meyah yetel je'ela'*» for the inspiration and interest they brought to the discussion of Pan-Mayanism in the Yucatán. I also express my thanks for the support of the Autonomous University of the Yucatán, especially through the kindness of the Dean of the School of Education, Mta. Silvia Pech Campos and the Rector of the University, Cp. Carlos M. Pasos Novelo. Ideas that form the basis of this article were presented as part of a symposium «*Bordering On The Essence: Pan-Mayan Projects In Comparative Perspective*» at the 1997 meetings of the American Anthropological Association organized by Anthony Berkely and R. McKenna Brown. Their comments and those of other members of the symposium, especially those of Victor Montejo helped shape the arguments presented here. My ideas about Pan-Mayanism have benefited greatly from discussions with Stephan Igor Ayora and Gabriela Cetina of CIESAS-SURESTE, Francisco Fernández Repetto of the Autonomous University of the Yucatán, Francesc Ligorred, of the Unidad de Ciencias Sociales in Mérida, and Lis Joergensen of ACNUR. Members of the Sociedad Española de Estudios Mayas have always been an important group of colleagues in my work, and I would especially like to thank Andrés Ciudad Ruiz for his patience and professional spirit while waiting for this article to reach him. Some portions of this article originally appeared in *Cultural Survival* (March, 1998).

## REFERENCES

- ANDERSON, Benedict (1991). *The Imagined Community*. Verso. Londres.
- BRAHA-PFEILER, Barbara and Anne Franks (1992). Bilingual Education: Preserving the Mayan Language. *Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Linguists*, pp.185-188. Quebec.
- BRAHA-PFEILER, Barbara and Celia ROSADO AVILÉS (n.d.). La lengua y sus expresiones artísticas. In *Procesos Territoriales de Yucatán*. Comp. M.T. Peraza Guzmán, pp. 45-58. Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. Mérida, Yucatán.
- BURNS, Allan F. (1995). *Una Epoca de los Milagros: La Literatura Oral del Maya Yucateco*. Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. Mérida, Yucatán.

- BURNS, Allan F. (1996). Siempre Maya: Identidad Cultural en El Mundo Yucateco de Ciudades y Turistas. *Revista de la Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán* 11 (197): 29-37.
- FISCHER, Edward F. and R. MCKENNA BROWN (Eds.) (1996). *Maya Cultural Activism in Guatemala*. University of Texas Press. Austin.
- GÓMEZ ALVA, Guzmán (1992). *Voces indígenas hablan de la educación bilingüe-bicultural de México*. Colección Presencias. INI-CANACULTA. México D.F.
- GÜEMEZ PINEDA, Miguel (1994). Situación actual de la lengua Maya en Yucatán. Un enfoque demográfico. *I'inaj* 8: 3-14.
- INEGI (1994). *Estadísticas del Medio Ambiente*. Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geográfica e Informática. México.
- LIGORRED PERRAMÓN, Francesc (1995-96). La literatura maya de Yucatán en el último katún del siglo XX: de la marginación a la imaginación. *Buletin de la Societé Suisse des Américanistes*, 59-60: 139-146.
- MENCHÚ, Rigoberta (1984). *I Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Edited and introduced by Elizabeth Burgos- Debray, translated by Ann Wright. Verso. Londres.
- PADILLA Y SOTELO, Lilia, M<sup>a</sup> Elena CEA HERRERA, Irma ESCAMILLA y M<sup>a</sup> Antonieta DEL VALLE (1987). Análisis de algunas características educativas de la población hablante de lenguas indígenas en la península de Yucatán. *Memorias del Primer Coloquio Internacional de Mayistas*, pp. 1031-1043. México D.F.
- RE CRUZ, Alicia (1996). *The Two Milpas of Chan Kom*. State University of New York Press. Albany.
- REED, Nelson (1964). *The Caste War of Yucatán*. University of Chicago Press. Chicago.
- SAM COLOP, Enrique (1996). The discourse of concealment and 1992. In *Maya Cultural Activism in Guatemala*. E. Fischer and R.M. Brown Eds., pp. 107-113. University of Texas Press. Austin.
- STURM, Circe (1996). Old writing and new messages: the role of hieroglyphic literacy in Maya cultural activism. In *Maya Cultural Activism in Guatemala*. E. Fischer and R.M. Brown Eds., pp. 114-130. University of Texas Press. Austin.
- TEDLOCK, Dennis (1985). *The Popol Vuh*. Simon and Schuster. New York.