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# The Reconstruction of Rural Society in the Aftermath of the Mayan Rebellion of 1847

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Résumé de l'article

En 1847, sous Ia direction de leurs *caciques* traditionnels, des paysans maya se sont révoltés contre les autorités de l'État du Yucatán. Cette rébellion, que les contemporains et les historiens après-eux ont désignée par la Guerre des Castes, est considérée comme la plus longue et la plus sanglante instance de résistance de la part d'un groupe indigène des Amériques depuis la conquête espagnole. Bien que le soulèvement appelle d'importantes questions sur la nature de la participation paysanne aux mouvements de changement social, cet article s'attache plutôt aux efforts du gouvernement pour rétablir l'ordre dans les campagnes et à la réponse des *campesinos* maya qui se retrouvèrent impliqués dans un conflit malgré eux. L'étude concerne une région particulière de la péninsule du Yucatán, la Sierra ou Puuc qui a joué un rôle de pivot au cours de la guerre, en raison de son emplacement stratégique entre la région du nord-ouest dominée par le gouvernement et celle de l'intérieur contrôlée par les différents groupes rebelles.

En plus d'une évaluation des résultats de la politique gouvernementale de pacification, cet essai propose un examen de la question des migrations et des fuites des réfugiés dans des zones de refuge, du même qu'une discussion des stratégies de survie qu'adoptèrent les paysans maya des communautés du Puuc. L'étude se penche aussi sur le rôle des non-combattants dans la conduite de la guérilla.

# The Reconstruction of Rural Society in the Aftermath of the Mayan Rebellion of 1847

BARBARA A. ANGEL

***Résumé***

*In 1847, Mayan peasants under the leadership of their traditional* caciques *rose up against the creole authorities of the state of Yucatán. This rebellion, known to contemporaries and later historians as the Caste War, has been described as the most prolonged and bloody resistance on the part of an indigenous group in the Americas since the Spanish conquest. While the rebellion itself poses challenging questions regarding the nature of peasant involvement in movements for social change, this paper deals with the government's efforts to restore order in the countryside, and the response of the Mayan* campesinos *as they found themselves caught up in a struggle which they could not avoid. The study focuses on a specific region of the Yucatán peninsula, the Sierra or Puuc, which, because of its strategic location between the northwest region dominated by the government and the hinterland controlled by various rebel groups, played a pivotal role in the war.*

*The paper assesses the results of the government's pacification policy, examines the question of migration and flight of refugees into zones of refuge, and discusses the survival strategies adopted by Mayan peasants in the communities of the Puuc. The study also addresses the role of non-combatants in guerrilla warfare, and their ambiguous relationship with both sides in the conflict, as potential allies or enemies.*

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*En 1847, sous la direction de leurs* caciques *traditionnels, des paysans maya se sont révoltés contre les autorités de l'État du Yucatán. Cette rébellion, que les contemporains et les historiens après-eux ont désignée par la Guerre des Castes, est considerée comme la plus longue et la plus sanglante instance de résistance de la part d'un groupe indigène des Amériques depuis la conquête espagnole. Bien que le soulèvement appelle d'importantes questions sur la nature de la participation paysanne aux mouvements de changement social, cet article s'attache plutôt aux efforts du gouvernement pour rétablir l'ordre dans les campagnes et à la réponse des* campesinos *maya qui se retrouvèrent impliqués dans un conflit malgré eux. L'étude concerne une région particulière de la péninsule du Yucatán, la Sierra ou Puuc qui a joué un rôle de pivot au cours de la guerre,*

I would like to thank Professor Timothy E. Anna for his careful reading of earlier versions of this paper. The comments of various anonymous readers were much appreciated, along with valuable input from my husband, Michael, and my son, Eric, who share my passion for the imaginative reconstruction of the lives of ordinary people.

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*En plus d'une évaluation des résultats de la politique gouvernementale de pacification, cet essai propose un examen de la question des migrations et des fuites des réfugiés dans des zones de refuge, du même qu'une discussion des stratégies de survies qu'adoptèrent les paysans maya des communautés du Puuc. L'étude se penche aussi sur le rôle des non-combattants dans la conduite de la guérilla.*

The most challenging task facing the historian of peasant rebellion is the construction of a coherent, multi-layered narrative, one that explains peasant behaviour in terms of real choices, rather than the ideological preferences of the author. Much of the literature on peasant rebellion is distorted by the need to prove the righteousness of one side or the other. Rebellious peasants who persist in their defiance are elevated to heroic status or pitied for their recalcitrance. Little attention has been paid to the far more typical plight of peasants whose options were limited to flight or surrender, collaboration with guerrilla or government forces, resettlement in a military canton or migration out of the war zone.

The literature on the Mayan Rebellion, known to contemporaries and later historians as the Caste War of Yucatán, is typical of the genre. The major historians of the nineteenth century, Serapio Baqueiro and Eligio Ancona, constructed their narratives meticulously, based upon extensive research, using primary documents and contemporary eye-witness accounts.[1] But these accounts are dominated by the liberal paradigm of the nineteenth century, the inevitable victory of civilization over barbarism, the ultimate triumph of progress, and the evolutionary march of human perfectibility. Mayan rebels who continued to hold out in the jungles of Quintana Roo were doomed to irrelevance; Mayan *hidalgos** who assisted the government in its campaigns to suppress the rebellion were praised for their loyalty and sacrifices; while the peasants who voluntarily surrendered were regarded either as lost sheep who had strayed from the fold and needed protection, or suspected for secretly continuing to support the rebels. Told exclusively from the point of view of the liberal elites of the day, these narratives cover the military campaigns against the rebels and the struggles among various creole factions in exhausting detail, with very little attention given to peasant participants in those events.

Subsequent studies of this period in Yucatán history, by Howard Cline, Nelson Reed, and Lawrence Remmers, while more sympathetic to the rebels, have drawn heavily upon the early works, with little attempt to go beyond a dualist interpretation emphasizing

* Hidalgo was the term given to Mayan volunteers who served as auxiliaries to government forces during the various campaigns against the rebels. Veterans of such service enjoyed certain privileges, such as exemption from the head tax.

1. Eligio Ancona, *Historia de Yucatán desde la época mas remota hasta nuestros días*. 5 Vols. (Mérida, 1885); Serapio Baqueiro *Ensayo histórico sobre las revoluciones de Yucatán desde del año 1840 hasta 1864*. 3 Vols. (Mérida, 1878-1887).

the cultural and racial differences between the rebels and the government.[2] Even modern scholars such as González Navarro and Leticia Reina, following the historians of the nineteenth century, have failed to question the assertion that loyal Maya in the territory under government control offered their services freely to sustain the cause of "civilization." The documents tell a different story — of conscription, forced labour, and confiscation of food supplies.

Twentieth century models of peasant rebellion have also influenced scholarly writing on the Mayan rebels of Yucatán. Most of the recent anthropological and historical literature has concentrated on the rebel group known as the Cruzob, centred around Chan Santa Cruz. Their continuing resistance has been interpreted as an example of messianism, religious revitalization, and cultural resistance.[3] However, the Mayan rebels of the southeast, even in the mid-nineteenth century, represented only a portion of the Mayan population of Yucatán. Peasants who voluntarily returned to government-controlled zones, or who never left in the first place, have been written off and written out of the literature. Yet these people often bore the brunt of military occupation and were often caught between rebel and government troops in the intermittent guerrilla warfare that lasted several decades. Their story needs to be told as a preliminary step toward a revision of the romantic mythology surrounding guerrilla warfare and peasant resistance.[4]

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2. Dean C. Tipps, "Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 15 (1973): 199-226. The majority of the works of Howard Cline on the Caste War are available only on microfilm from the University of Chicago library. Other works on this topic include Nelson Reed's *The Caste War of Yucatan* (Stanford, 1964) and Lawrence Remmers' dissertation, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán" (Berkeley, 1983).
3. Victoria Reifler Bricker, *The Indian Christ, the Indian King* (Austin, 1981); Miguel Bartolomé and Alicia Barabas, *La Resistencia Maya. Relaciones interétnicas en el oriente de la peninsula de Yucatán*, 2nd ed. (Mexico, 1981); and Marie Lapointe, *Los Mayas rebeldes de Yucatán* (Michoacán, 1983).
4. The modern literature on the role of Latin American peasants in guerrilla warfare, notably Eric Wolf's *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1969) has been strongly influenced by Che Guevara's model of the relationship between guerrillas and peasants. As Che himself was to discover in Bolivia, the relationship is much more complicated than the Cuban experience would suggest. Peasants can seldom afford to be outwardly sympathetic to guerrillas and must resort to less overt forms of resistance. As Sebastian Balfour has pointed out in his recent biography of Fidel Castro, the explanatory power of the myth of peasant/guerrilla symbiosis may be somewhat limited even within the Cuban experience, yet it has influenced interpretations of peasant revolutions world-wide: " . . . as the campaign against Batista gradually centred on the Sierra, a new mythology arose that was to underpin the future legitimacy of the Revolution and influence the left world-wide. In this new version of rural populism reminiscent of the thinking of the Narodniks and the Chinese Communists and articulated above all by Che Guevara, the city was seen as a source of corruption while a somehwat idealized peasantry replaced the urban proletariat as the revolutionary class of Cuba." (Balfour, 1992: 49)

Did peasants in the zones of conflict assist guerrillas, or were they simply victims of rebel raids along with the creole landowners and their families? Was there any interaction between peasants and guerrillas, and did peasants influence the outcome of the struggle, either positively or negatively? Answers to these questions may not only shed light on the kinds of choices that peasants face under life and death conditions, but advance our understanding of agrarian insurrection, a phenomenon that has not been confined to nineteenth century Mexico.[5]

While the rebellion itself poses challenging questions regarding the nature of peasant involvement in movements for social change, the primary focus of this paper will be on how peasants responded to the government campaign to pacify and resettle the rural population. The study focuses on a specific region of the Yucatán peninsula, the Sierra or Puuc, which because of its strategic location between government-controlled territory and the hinterland dominated by various rebel groups, played a pivotal role in the war. Peasant support for guerrilla activities depended primarily on the amount of control exercised by creole authorities over the countryside. In order to counteract the influence of the rebels and because of limited military resources, the government had to rely upon local elites to maintain order, primarily by recreating patronage ties with the local peasantry.

Some historians have suggested that this process led inevitably to the growth of private estates at the expense of the communal villages.[6] I will argue that even though fewer peasants lived in the landholding Indian villages of the region after the rebellion, this does not necessarily mean that peasants had no alternative but to accept the domination of the local landlord. In fact, despite the continuing attempts of creole authorities to reassert control over village residents, because government policy was inconsistent and elites were divided by factional disputes, peasants had space in which to pursue their limited objectives, and there is considerable evidence for the persistence of autonomous peasant behaviour in the aftermath of the rebellion.

In the Puuc region of Yucatán, the relationship between *hacendados* and the landholding Indian villages on the eve of the rebellion was in transition, with basically three processes threatening peasant control of the subsistence economy: an increase in the people-to-land ratio caused by rapid population growth in the late eighteenth century, the monetization of the rural economy, and a shift to a market-oriented commercial agriculture. Demographic expansion is the first and most fundamental issue. Although

5. The extensive literature on varieties of peasant resistance has influenced this paper, particularly the books of James Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (New Haven, 1976) and *Weapons of the Weak* (New Haven, 1985), as well as his earlier work on patron-client relationships in southeast Asia, "The Erosion of Patron-Client Bonds and Social Change in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Asian Studies* 22 (1972): 5-38.
6. Both Cline and Remmers suggest that one consequence of the continuing insecurity of life in the "frontier zone" between rebel and government-held territory was an increase in the number of peasants willing to exchange autonomy for the limited protection afforded by *hacendados* who maintained their own defenses rather than relying upon the military garrisons in the towns.

approximately 49 per cent of the population continued to live as members of indigenous communities in the 1840s, the land resources available to those communities were increasingly threatened by the expansion of *haciendas* and the influx of migrants, many of whom were displaced *campesions* from other regions of the peninsula, seeking work as agricultural labourers. As John Tutino has noted with regard to other regions of nineteenth-century Mexico, the shrinking resources of the autonomous villages meant that, besides performing labour services for the community and parish, many of the residents of Indian communities also worked as casual labourers for local landowners. Peasants with usufructary rights to land might be able to produce a surplus, depending on favourable conditions for agriculture, but those without land "had no choice but to labour periodically at estates near their villages."[7] The opportunity to work was seasonal, sporadic, and depended on patronage ties with landowners.

The gradual monetization of the rural economy had a similar impact. Even during the colonial period, the autonomy of the peasant community was limited, in the sense that there was always some need for cash income for goods that the local economy did not produce. While peasants had minimal need for cash when tribute was collected in goods, the shift to a money economy early in the nineteenth century, especially for the payment of taxes, increased the demand for cash income. When successive state governments became involved in factional strife and military campaigns against the national government in the 1840s, the chronic insolvency of the treasury meant substantial increases in the tax burden imposed on the peasantry, in the form of the *contribución personal* (head tax), rents for *terrenos baldíos* (so-called vacant lands), and taxes on agricultural surpluses.

But the most serious challenge to the autonomy of the Mayan communities of Yucatán came in the form of state legislation intended to create an open market in land and stimulate the growth of commercial agriculture. In 1825, *terrenos baldíos* were opened up for sale and municipal governments were allowed to rent or sell communal lands to private individuals to generate revenue and encourage agriculture. While this legislation initially generated little public response, a new *Ley de colonización* passed by the state legislature in 1841 led to a more extensive programme of land alienation. In fact, an agricultural revolution of sorts was already underway, with the spread of sugar cane cultivation into the Puuc region south of the capital city of Mérida. Following independence, the importation of sugar from Cuba had been interrupted because the island was still part of the Spanish empire. Local entrepreneurs took advantage of the opportunity to transform landed estates which had previously been limited to maize and cattle-raising into sugar estates producing for the local market.[8] By the 1840s, the sugar

7. John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: social bases of agrarian violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton, 1986), 33.

8. Robert Patch, "Descolonización, el problema agrario y los orígenes de la guerra de castas, 1812-1847," in Othon Baños Ramírez, ed., *Sociedad, estructura agraria y estado en Yucatán* (Mérida, 1990), 45-95.


GULF
OF
MEXICO
YUCATAN
Mérida
Valladolid
Sotuta
Muna
Ticul
Tekax
Peto
Tihosuco
Tzucacab
PUUC
Xul
Bolonchenticul
Campeche
Hopelchén
Becanchén
Laguna
Chichankanab
Cozumel
Chan
Santa Cruz
Mesapich
Elecib
Lochhá
Macanche
QUINTANA
ROO
Xkanhá
Isla del
Carmen
CAMPECHE
Bacalar
Chichanhá
Icaiche
Río Hondo
CARIBBEAN
SEA
GUATEMALA
BELIZE
Lago Petén Itzá
El Petén
Flores
Río Usumacinta

industry had expanded to the point at which surpluses were available for export to other regions of Mexico.

Nevertheless, it has not been clearly established what impact this expansion of commercial agriculture had upon the Mayan communities of the Puuc. No systematic study has been made of land alienation affecting villages, although it is known that the number of privately-owned establishments increased substantially.[9] It is equally difficult to determine how many free peasants became *peones acasillados**, permanently attached to haciendas. At the beginning of the nineteenth century less than 25 per cent of the Mayan population of southeastern Yucatán lived on privately-owned estates. However, by 1847 census figures indicated that approximately 51 per cent of a total population of 42,538 in the *partido* of Tekax were residents of *haciendas*, *ranchos*, and *sitios*.[10] In the period between independence in 1821 and the uprising of 1847, anecdotal evidence from contemporary sources indicates that the agrarian structure of the region was undergoing a profound change which threatened to destroy a centuries-old relationship between Mayan peasants and the land surrounding their villages.

While the 1847 rebellion began and was led by Mayan caciques† from the eastern and southeastern *partidos* of Valladolid and Peto, the advance of rebel forces under the leadership of Jacinto Pat and José María Barrera into the Puuc region in the spring of 1848 increased the ranks of the rebel armies. According to historians of the time, agricultural labourers in the region's sugar industry were particularly willing recruits, but many *caciques* of the Mayan villages of the Puuc also became involved in the rebellion once it had spread into that region.[11] Enrique Montalvo Ortega has stated that even though the "precise social composition of the rebel groups is unknown, it can be assumed that most of them came from those who lived off the *milpa*."[12] Although the demands of rebel leaders were focused upon specific issues such as the abolition of the head tax and the reduction of fees for religious ceremonies, agrarian issues were at the heart of the dispute, particularly the state government's repeated attempts to gain revenue

* Peones acasillados were agricultural labourers who had permanent homes on landed estates and were bound by debt to their landlords.

† *Cacique* was the title given to the indigenous leader of each Mayan community who governed his people under a system of indirect rule developed during the colonial period for the separate but dependent administration of Indian communities known as *Repúblicas de Indios*.

9. Lawrence Remmers, "Henequen, the Caste War and Economy of Yucatán, 1846-1883: the Roots of Dependence in a Mexican Region," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1981): 92.
10. Salvador Rodríguez Losa, *Geografía política de Yucatán* (Mérida, 1989), 192 and 211.
11. Leticia Reina, *Las rebeliones campesinas en México* (Mexico, 1980), 402-404.
12. Enrique Montalvo Ortega, "Revolts and Peasant Mobilizations in Yucatán: Indians, Peons and Peasants from the Caste War to the Revolution," in Friedrich Katz, *Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution: Rural Social Conflict in Mexico* (Princeton, 1988), 295-317. *Milpa* agriculture refers to a tropical system of land use involving slash and burn techniques for clearing land in preparation for two years of cropping, followed by long fallow periods of fifteen to twenty years.

from the sale and rental of *terrenos baldíos*, lands which the Indian villages claimed as theirs "from time immemorial." Many of the rebels were fighting to preserve their autonomy within an agrarian structure that had offered secure, albeit limited opportunities for subsistence.

The government of Yucatán, initially with no help from the central government, employed a variety of strategies to control the situation. During the early stages of the rebellion, when it was not clear whether the uprising involved only Mayan elements of the population or was connected to the ongoing civil war between factions competing for control of the state government, the authorities fell back upon the familiar methods employed by the colonial regime to deal with indigenous uprisings — execution or exile for the ringleaders, intimidation of the civilian population, an amnesty for those who could prove they had not committed atrocities, and the exploitation of divisions among indigenous leaders by persuading some to remain loyal to the cause of "civilization."[13]

When it became obvious that these measures were not achieving the desired results, the government called upon religious authorities for assistance to open avenues to a negotiated settlement. The pastoral letter of the Bishop of Mérida, José María Guerra, was translated into the Mayan language and distributed widely throughout the peninsula in February and March 1848, apparently in an effort to use the respect for religious authorities which secular government officials hoped still persisted among the Maya. Even though the priests appointed by Bishop Guerra were partially successful in arranging negotiations with various leaders, the strategy backfired for Governor Santiago Méndez, who soon found himself fighting for political survival.

The appointment of Padre José Canuto Vela as leader of the ecclesiastical peace commission led indirectly to the restoration of Miguel Barbachano to the governorship and exacerbated the rivalry among creole factions. The demands of the rebels for the reinstatement of Barbachano left Méndez with little choice other than to resign. Although the new governor did not have the support of all of the creole elite, it was hoped that his closer relationship with various rebel leaders would allow him to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The Treaty of Tzucacab, signed on 19 April 1848, confirmed the abolition of the despised head tax, set religious fees at the requested levels, named Jacinto Pat as *Gran Cacique* of all the Maya of Yucatán, and promised the restoration of confiscated arms to his followers. It seemed that the rebels had achieved everything for which they had taken up arms. But the treaty was unacceptable to the majority of the Mayan leaders.

Whether Barbachano set out deliberately to exploit rivalries among the leadership of the rebellion has never been determined, but subsequent events revealed the extent to which that leadership was fragmented. Among the rebel leaders, only Jacinto Pat had any interest in maintaining a patron-client relationship with Barbachano, the rest of the *caciques*, including Cecilio Chi, Bonifacio Novelo, Florentino Chan, and Venancio Pec

13. Baqueiro, *Ensayo histórico*, Vol. II, 271-272.

prefering to rely upon the demonstrated military superiority of their armies, which had not met serious defeat up to that point. When Pat abrogated the treaty after pressure exerted upon him by Chi, and their combined forces continued to advance upon the major urban centres of the peninsula, it appeared that creole strategies to contain the rebellion had failed completely.

Why the rebel armies failed to press their advantage at this point is still unknown. A variety of reasons have been set forth, including the awareness among the peasant rank-and-file that there was only a limited time available for planting due to the seasonal nature of the rains; a shortage of munitions; the heavy casualties which could not be replaced by the Maya of the northwest (who were not particularly sympathetic to the rebel cause in the first place); a divided leadership with each *cacique* commanding only the loyalty of his own followers; and finally, a belief that the creole strongholds of Campeche and Mérida were better defended than they really were.[14] In any event, the drifting away of substantial numbers of peasant fighters during the month of June 1848 allowed creole troops to begin the slow process of recovering lost ground and regaining control of the towns in the Sierra.

After the collapse of the Treaty of Tzucacab and the disintegration of the rebel offensive, the remnants of the rebel armies retreated to the *partidos* of Valladolid and Peto and south of the Puuc hills where they still controlled the major settlements. While government forces were being regrouped for an assault upon these strongholds in the south and southeast, other creole troops were deployed in a "mopping-up" operation against isolated pockets of resistance throughout the Sierra. By the end of the summer, most of the towns and villages of that region had been recaptured by the military, but rebel groups still controlled the countryside and continued to make sporadic attacks on settlements in the district. In September Barrera and Marcelo Pat mounted an unsuccessful attack on Xul, Oxkutzcab and Tekax — the last major rebel campaign in the region while Jacinto Pat was still leader of the rebellion.[15]

With the recapture of Peto by creole forces early in October 1848 it appeared that the rebellion had finally been crushed, and in an effort to encourage civilians and camp-followers to surrender peacefully a confident state government issued a decree on 6 November 1848 expelling from Yucatán all rebels captured with arms. Rumours of the death of Cecilio Chi were confirmed in the final weeks of 1848, and on December 20 *El Fénix* speculated that the end of the war was in sight.[16] The bulk of the rebel armies

14. Moíses González Navarro, *Raza y tierra: la guerra de castas y el henequén* (México, 1970), 88.
15. On October 26, 1848 Padre Manuel Mezo Vales offered the last rites for Marcelo Pat, son of Jacinto, who had been mortally wounded during one of the final engagements of this campaign. After the death of his son, Jacinto Pat's role in the rebellion receded into the background, ending with his assassination by Venancio Pec in the fall of 1849.
16. *El Fénix* (Campeche), 20 December 1848. As quoted in Reina, *Las rebeliones campesinas*, 369.

had retreated into the southeastern jungles, the Campechano newspaper reported, or had drifted back to their respective communities to harvest whatever maize they had been able to plant in the midst of the fighting.

It was then that the difficult task of sorting out who had taken part in the rebellion and deserved to be punished began in earnest in every village and tiny settlement of the peninsula. Local *jefes políticos* (who owed their appointments directly to Governor Barbachano) were given extraordinary powers to conscript civilians for reconstruction of buildings and harvesting of crops. They were also given permission to dispose of lands belonging to rebels who had not surrendered, and to decide the fate of those who returned voluntarily to their communities.[17] Frequently the *jefe político* doubled as the militia officer in charge of the local campaign against the rebels and was therefore in an excellent position to consolidate his economic power in the community, either by appropriating confiscated land for personal use or taking advantage of his political power to channel labour services supposedly undertaken for the community into projects for himself and other private landowners.[18] At this stage, however, there were few people left to work for anyone!

The rebellion had uprooted tens of thousands of people. While the majority of creole families fled west to Mérida and Campeche, Mayan peasants went in the opposite direction, often in the wake of the retreating rebel armies. Approximately fourteen thousand refugees, both creole and Mayan, ended up in Belize, where they were encouraged to settle permanently in areas that had previously been sparsely occupied.[19] Many residents of villages, however, had simply fled into the surrounding countryside to await the outcome of local skirmishes between rebel and government troops. The *juez de paz* of the village of Dzan reported in May 1848 that "all of the inhabitants of that village had abandoned their homes, leaving behind maize, beans, and other necessities . . ."[20] As many historians have noted, Mayan peasants had a repertoire of survival strategies in times of war, plague, or famine, and the dispersal of the population into small settlements scattered throughout the *monte* was a time-honoured practice.[21]

In the areas where government troops had regained control of the towns and villages, the task of trying to resettle the rural population began. Creole forces, divided into small patrols, combed the countryside, rounding up peasants and "encouraging" them to return to their home communities. Troops sent to harvest maize from abandoned *milpa*s often encountered small groups of refugees. Those who surrendered voluntarily were called

17. Articles 4 and 5, State Decree of August 6, 1847; as quoted in Baquerio, Vol II, 248-250.
18. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Jefatura Politica-Tekax, Francisco Coello to Miguel Barbachano, 7, 21 and 25 October 1852.
19. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 61, Milicia, General Pedro de Ampudia to the Ministro de la guerra y marina de México, 24 February 1855.
20. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 28, Jefe político to Governor Barbachano, Ticul, 4 May 1848.
21. Nancy Farriss, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule* (Princeton, 1984), 201.

*presentados*; their names and communities of origin were carefully recorded by military officials; and most of them were sent back to their own communities or the *haciendas* where they had previously lived and worked. If they offered resistance, they were either killed or taken as prisoners, later to be deported to Cuba under contract as indentured labourers. On 5 March 1849 the first shipment of prisoners under this arrangement boarded the Spanish ship *Cetro*, bound for Havana.[22]

Refugees were often found in family groups, with children and elderly dependents. A typical entry from a military report of 18 March 1849 recorded the peaceful surrender of eight men, seven women, and seven children to the military canton in the *pueblo* of Tixmeuac, a large village several kilometers to the east of the regional capital, Tekax.[23] Most of the lists of *presentados* not only included names but also communities of origin, so it is possible to gain some impression of the extent of displacement experienced by peasants during the uprising. As in all civil wars, family members were often separated, sometimes as a result of the men being pressed into service as auxiliaries for the troops. In May 1849 the military commander of Yaxcaba in the *partido* of Sotuta reported to his superiors that the local garrison had conscripted ten Mayan labourers who were later found to be residents of the hacienda of Sahcabchen near Tixmeuac in the southern Puuc, approximately 50 kilometers away.[24]

While it should not be assumed that *presentados* were enthusiastic partisans of either the government or rebel cause, they were looked upon with suspicion by creole authorities and their movements carefully monitored. Their security was not guaranteed once they returned to their home villages, for they were potential victims of reprisals by rebel forces, who in the spring of 1849 still controlled much of the countryside. On May 27, the *juez de paz* of Mani, a village south of Ticul, reported that two *presentados* were found murdered and their wives and children wounded, presumably by guerrillas loyal to the rebel cause.[25] While it is difficult to determine whether rebel forces were still operating so close to the capital — the murders could have been simply the settling of a personal score — the incident demonstrates the lack of security afforded even by the presence of government troops in the villages.

As it was, government pronouncements toward the end of 1848 that the rebellion was under control and that all of the rebels had been forced into the southeastern jungle were premature. Skrimishes were reported in the Puuc region throughout the dry season (November to May) of 1849 and 1850, while sporadic raids continued for the next twenty

22. Reina, *Las rebeliones campesinas*, 383.
23. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 35, Comandancia Militar-Tixmeuac, Comandante militar to Comandante en Jefe de las fuerzas que operan sobre Tihosuco, 18 March 1849.
24. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 35, Comandancia militar-Cuartel de Yaxcaba, Nicolas Remirez to Barbachano, 20 May 1849.
25. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 35, Comandancia militar-Tekax, Comandante militar to Barbachano, 17 May 1849.

years. As Nelson Reed has described in his *Caste War of Yucatán*, government troops and rebels "contested the harvest" wherever there were crops standing unattended.[26] In fact, the battle for subsistence became the primary focus of both sides of the struggle in the aftermath of rebel withdrawal and creole counter-insurgency, a contest which invariably caught peasants in the middle.

The impact of this struggle for subsistence on the towns and villages in the disputed zone is well documented in the military despatches sent from local commanders to Governor Barbachano. In the spring of 1849, there were several reports of food shortages among both rebel and government forces, and skirmishes at various *haciendas* and *ranchos* over abandoned crops. Food, however, was not the only problem. Deserters from a rebel force which still occupied Becanchen in the Puuc hills south of Tekax reported that their comrades were suffering greatly from the scarcity of water and salt, as well as a shortage of ammunition, and for this reason were planning a raid on an *hacienda* close to Akil. The commander of the Tekax garrison, Gumesindo Ruiz, rewarded the deserters with their liberty in exchange for this information.[27] Government troops, as well as Mayan conscripts, were deployed to harvest abandoned maize fields throughout the region, in an effort to build up food supplies for the soldiers billeted in the various settlements.[28] And, in the neighbouring *partido* of Sotuta, troops were accused of stealing chickens and honey from peasants belonging to a rancho near Tixcacaltuyú, as well as pressing into service several residents of the village to harvest food for the military.[29]

In February 1850 the government declared yet another amnesty and assembled a new ecclesiastical peace commission, again under the leadership of Padre Canuto Vela, to negotiate with the rebels wherever they could be reached. Yucatecan creoles were beginning to realize that they were in danger of losing substantial numbers of the labour force if peace were not at least partially restored, and prominent Yucatecan liberals such as Justo Sierra O'Reilly publicly questioned the Barbachano government's reliance on military measures to suppress the rebellion.[30] The new peace initiative reflected an attempt to respond to some of the demands contained in the extensive correspondence between rebel leaders and clergy, and was clearly directed at the large numbers of rebel forces and internal refugees still at large in the *monte*.

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26. Nelson Reed, *The Caste War*, 120-131.
27. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 35, Comandancia militar-Tekax, Gumesindo Ruiz to Barbachano, 11 March 1849.
28. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 35, Comandancia militar-Oxkutzcab, Comandante militar to Barbachano, 14 August 1849; Caja 35, Comandancia militar-Yaxcaba, José Leonardo Días to Barbachano, 8 March 1849.
29. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 35, Comandancia militar-Yaxcaba, Remirez to Barbachano, 2 May 1849.
30. In December 1850, Sierra lamented the population losses caused by the war and the effect they would have on economic development. He wrote, "we are deeply concerned that without them [Mayan workers] nothing can be achieved in the area of agriculture, nor will the wealth of the country ever be developed" (*El Fénix*, 10 December 1850).

In a document entitled "Instructions to the ecclesiastical commissioners in their negotiations with the rebels on behalf of the government" dated 4 February 1850, the terms of reference of the commission and the conditions for a peaceful settlement were outlined in some detail. The main points reiterated previous assurances that those who acknowledged the sovereignty of the government of Yucatán would be allowed to return to their respective pueblos where they would be received "con amor y cariño" and would be allowed to occupy their former homes and houseplots. Rebel leaders who willingly returned to their communities would not suffer retribution at the hands of local authorities, nor would the latter have the right to intervene in those areas of justice which traditionally belonged within the jurisdiction of the *caciques* of the Repúblicas de Indios. They would no longer be required to pay the head tax but a religious tax would still be levied to support the church and clergy. Those who owned private property would be restored to the full rights of ownership, and all citizens would be free to travel from one community to another for the purpose of buying and selling goods. All of these guarantees were to apply equally to "blancos y vecinos" who had taken part in the rebellion and still remained alienated from the government. Prisoners currently held by government forces were to be released and allowed to return to their respective villages where they would be reunited with their families.[31]

Armed with these generous assurances, Padre Vela and his associates applied themselves with renewed vigour to the task of arranging meetings with various groups of rebels, leading up to a tentative agreement for the formal celebration of a peace accord on 4 May 1850 at Kampocolché. When the rebel leader José María Barrera failed to show up on the appointed day, however, government troops attacked the remnants of rebel forces remaining in the area. Rebel leaders, their suspicions aroused by a letter intercepted from the military commander of the garrison at Valladolid which implied that the clergy were being used as bait in order to trap the leaders of the rebellion and execute them, withdrew from negotiations and refused to entertain any more peace proposals from the government at this time.[32] Barrera and his followers, along with most of the rebel leadership, retreated further into the southeastern jungles of the peninsula where they created a new base of operations at Chan Santa Cruz, which became the focal point of Mayan resistence in subsequent decades.

Life meanwhile became increasingly difficult for the population left behind in the areas occupied by government forces. Troops were billeted in villages designated as military cantons, and were expected to live off the country. In practice, this meant that they had to share the meagre resources available to the entire population. A letter from the Mayan residents of the village of Xmacancheakal to Captain Pedro Reyes illustrates the feelings of the villagers about the situation:

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31. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, caja 37, "Instrucciones para que las comisiones ecclesiasticas se sujeten en los convenios que pueden celebrar en nombre del Gobierno con los sublevados, siempre que se reduscan a su obediencia, como unicas que puede concederles," Mérida, 4 February 1850.
32. Reina, *Las rebeliones campesinas*, 375.

> And also I tell you that you [the soldiers] should not wander about stealing our supplies of corn, because you have no idea of the work it takes to produce them. If you could only manage to stay quietly in your own villages, things would go well; this I say to you, because we do not wish to judge your actions, but when we say something, it is so — we do not lie! . . . How poor you must be, that you go about harvesting our fields, but you will no longer be able to eat when you die of a bullet; if you come to us politely asking for charity, we will freely give it to you; but no, you only come to rob; how can we get along in this manner?[33]

Moreover, the presence of troops still did not guarantee security. In the aftermath of a guerrilla raid on Tekom, peasants reminded the governor that as well as the burden of taxes, they continued to pay a high price for their loyalty; in addition to the loss of lives and homes, even their agricultural implements had been stolen by the rebels![34]

Given the oppressive and often ineffectual nature of the military occupation, it is not surprising that government efforts to resettle former rebels and non-combatants were not very successful in the first few years after the outbreak of the rebellion. According to Reed, only 4,400 internal refugees were collected by armed patrols from September 1849 to April 1850. Most of these people were women, children and the elderly. Just 51 armed men were captured and 152 killed among the numbers recorded in the documents for the period.[35] González Navarro reports that around six thousand former rebels turned themselves in to the authorities in the eastern *partido* of Valladolid between December 1848 and May 1850, due mostly to the efforts of Padres Vela and García.[36]

But the resettlement effort was less successful in the south, where rebel forces still maintained control of significant numbers of followers despite a fragmented leadership. Few voluntary returnees are mentioned in the documents — most were gathered up during raids conducted by government troops operating out of Tekax. Of lists compiled for the southern districts of Tekax, Sotuta, and Peto covering the four-year period from March 1849 to May 1853, documents yielded a sample of only three hundred prisoners: 122 men, 120 women, and 58 children.[37] The great majority were former residents of the *partidos* of Tekax and Peto. The results of repeated amnesties and special "peace commissions" were minimal, despite the time spent and the lives wasted.

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33. México. Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, Exp. XI/481.3/2914, Unsigned letter to Captain Pedro Reyes, Xmacancheakal, 28 August 1850.
34. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 59, "Solicitude" from the principales of Tekom in the partido of Valladolid, 19 December 1854.
35. Reed, *The Caste War*, 125.
36. González Navarro, *Raza y tierra*, 95
37. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 35, Comandancia Militar — Yaxcaba, 3 March and 24 April 1849; Caja 38, Comandancia Militar — Tekax, 3 February 1850; Caja 49, Milicia — Peto and Tekax, 6 February, 11 April and 20 June 1852; Caja 55, Milicia — Bolonchenticul, 13 May 1853; Caja 55, Tihosuco and Kampocolché, 27 April, 1 and 13 May 1853; Tekax, 26 May 1853.

As González Navarro has pointed out, "the major obstacle to the success of the peace commissioners was the contradiction between the subsistence needs of the occupation forces and the governor's instructions that they maintain a defensive position. Far from respecting these instructions, they advanced further and further into enemy territory in order to capture the food supplies of the rebels."[38] Moreover, relations between Mayan peasants and the clergy were already strained by the issue of religious taxes or *obvenciones*. After the failure of the army to respect the truce arranged by Padre Vela at Kampocolché during the spring of 1850, the credibility of the clergy as peacemakers was seriously undermined.

The discrepancy between government policy and the behaviour of the troops is well illustrated by the orders given by General Manuel Micheltorena to divisional commanders on 3 February 1850. Questions had arisen concerning the treatment of prisoners, and the *Comandancia General* attempted to address the problem by defining who were prisoners of war and what was to happen to non-combatants captured by government troops in enemy territory. Only those captured with weapons and who had taken part in hostilities against the government forces were to be treated as prisoners of war, while non-combatants rounded up by patrols and who had not offered resistance were free to resettle in their respective *pueblos* without punishment or obligatory labour services. Women and children below the ages of twelve/thirteen were not to be separated from their parents, nor were women ever to be considered as prisoners. Indigenous prisoners were not to be detained in military quarters along with the troops for any reason whatsoever . . . "commanders of military cantons will be held strictly accountable for any violations of this provision."[39]

Despite the apparent attempt of senior military officials to distinguish between fighters and non-combatants, between rebels and refugees, such distinctions were academic when patrols conducted raids on hidden settlements in the forests south of Tekax and Peto. In January 1852, the *jefe político* of Tekax, Francisco Galera, reported that several women who had been given passports to go to the rebel camps had persuaded some family members to return with them to Tekax. These *presentados* reported that there were over one hundred unarmed men and their families living in a settlement called Lochhá; that there were many successful *milpas* in the surrounding area; and that supplies of maize, beans, and peppers were plentiful and cheap because there was no one to buy surpluses. The returning peasants also claimed that there were many others who wished to return but were being prevented from doing so by their captains, Raimundo Chi, Juan Cauich and Pedro Cantó. Three months later, Colonel Gumesindo Ruiz decided to force the issue by ordering a raid on Lochhá which resulted in the capture of few men, but over sixty women and children.[40]

38. González Navarro, *Raza y tierra*, 92.
39. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 38, Comandancia militar-Mérida, General Micheltorena to Governor Barbachano, 3 February 1850.
40. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 48, Francisco

The instructions for the treatment of prisoners taken in these raids were ignored by local commanders who routinely authorized their use as servants in the garrisons and by *jefes políticos* who complained of the expenses incurred maintaining them in local jails, arguing that they should be made to pay their way by working for local *hacendados*.[41] Most of the prisoners of war who did not die in captivity ended up as permanently indentured labourers for creole families in the cities and towns of the peninsula, if they were not turned over to Cuban labour contractors.

While there is no way of telling how many refugees and former rebels were actually resettled in their communities of origin, there are some references to petitions from small landowners to resettle lands abandoned in the course of the rebellion. On 6 May 1850, Pascual Espejo, *jefe político* of the *partido* of Sotuta-Yaxcaba, wrote a letter accompanying a petition from two *vecinos*, former residents of Tacchibichén, requesting permission to resettle there. Espejo recommended that their petition be ignored, given the fact that the village where they wished to settle was not garrisoned and lay on a route giving easy access to rebel bands on their way to attack the regional capital. Moreover, the *jefe* charged that one of the signatories to the petition, Vicente Ruiz, had left his son among the rebels and had returned simply to see if a *milpa* which belonged to him had been burned in preparation for planting. Espejo also reminded the Governor that the inhabitants of Tacchibichén, even though they were not Mayan, had taken an active part in support of the rebels, harassing government troops whenever they had attempted to occupy the village and distinguishing themselves in various attacks on the town of Yaxcaba in the uprisings of 1847 and 1848.[42] The other petitioner, Anastasio Pec, had been identified by informants as one of the most ardent supporters of the rebel cause. For all of these reasons, Espejo urged the governor to deny the petition and Barbachano agreed with his deputy.[43] Neither of these names appear in the *Censo de fincas rusticas* of 1856, so it may be assumed that they never did get permission to resettle their lands.[44]

Reluctance to authorize the resettlement of former rebels also demonstrates the extent to which local officials were preoccupied with the threat of rebel infiltration. A major problem of the resettlement process was the control of population movements, because Mayan agricultural practices often involved the clearing of new *milpa* lands located far from villages. Seasonal migration for agricultural purposes was a deeply

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Galera to Barbachano, Tekax, 14 January 1852; Caja 49, Milicia-Brigada Cadenas, Gumesindo Ruiz to Sebastien Lopez de Llergo, Lochhá, 11 April 1852.

41. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 48, Francisco Coello to Barbachano, 2 October 1852.
42. González Navarro in *Raza y tierra* (Mexico, 1970: 100) states that over one hundred residents of Tacchibichen, whom he characterizes as Morenos or Mulatos, died in the siege of Yaxcaba in September 1848.
43. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 37, Jefatura política-Yaxcaba, Espejo to Barbachano, 6 May 1850.
44. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 66, "Censo de fincas rusticas y urbanos," Sotuta, 1856.

imbedded custom within the culture.[45] Travel for trade and patronal festivals was also a widespread feature of village life.[46] Keeping track of the movements of Mayan peasants between village and *milpa*, from one community to another, or during religious festivals, was probably a hopeless task. Local military authorities established a passport system to monitor the movements of civilians in their jurisdiction, but despite such precautions there are several reports of contact between peasants and the rebel communities in the south. Because of the illegal nature of these activities, it is difficult to determine how frequent or widespread contact was, but there are enough reports to indicate that it was a problem for the authorities.

In August 1853, the *juez de paz* of the *pueblo* of Chikindzonot in the *partido* of Sotuta informed the *jefe político* that the local cacique had apprehended and turned over to the authorities Calletano Chan, his wife Juana María Sulub and their son José María Chan, along with Francisco Mis of Tihosuco. The four admitted to having made five trips between Chikindzonot and various other *pueblos* in the area for the purpose of buying salt and other articles to resell in rebel communities, according to an agreement with rebel captains. On their way to the district *cabecera*, Chan escaped, leaving his wife and the others prisoners. The *jefe* sent her back under escort to her original community with instructions to collect the rest of her family (two sons and an elderly woman) who had been left in the *monte* south of the Puuc.[47] Not only does this incident illustrate the difficulties faced by local authorities in controlling the civilian population under their jurisdiction, but it suggests that one important motive for contact with the rebel communities was commercial. This was also the case in an incident mentioned by Gumesindo Ruiz, the Comandante Militar of Tekax, in May 1853, who complained that one of his junior officers had seen but had been unable to prevent six residents of the town heading south in order to trade with the rebels.[48]

One further example will serve to illustrate the variety of motives for contact between communities in the northwest and the rebel communities of the south. In August 1855, Pablo Viz and Tomas Mis, formerly of Kimbilá in the *partido* of Izamal, were questioned by the local prefect, José Castillo. He reported that both had recently arrived from Lochhá, now under the leadership of Pablo Encalada, one of the *caciques* of the Pacificos del Sur, who had signed a peace treaty with the government of Yucatán in Belize

45. Farriss, *Maya Society*, 209-210.
46. Terry Rugeley, "Official Cult and Peasant Protocol: the Cofradía of San Antonio Xocneceh," unpublished paper, 1992.
47. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 54, Jefatura política-Sotuta, José María Esquivel to Díaz de la Vega, 11 August 1853.
48. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 55, Milicia-Tekax, Gumesindo Ruiz to Díaz de la Vega, 9 May 1853.

in August 1853.* Both men had returned in the company of wives and children, having decided to resettle in their home community. They had travelled to Kimbilá by way of Becanchen, Tekax, Pencuyut, all communities in the *partido* of Tekax and on a well-travelled route from the south. One of the men had apparently told their captain in Lochhá that he wanted to make the journey for the purposes of pilgrimage and thanksgiving (Izamal was a famous pilgrimage site), while the other claimed to be looking for a son who had served in the army. They also told the official that in the course of their journey from Lochhá they had learned that the *pacifico* community of Macanche had purchased two bulls in Tekit (a village near Ticul) for celebrations surrounding the festival of the Holy Cross in early May. In a marginal note, the militia commander receiving this information commented that these men should be persuaded to return to the south in order to find out whether the *pacificos* intended to keep the treaty they had signed with the government, and what their future relationships might be with the rebels of Chan Santa Cruz.[49] Unfortunately the document does not indicate whether they were ever sent back to the south as spies! There is, however, a reference in a despatch from the *jefe político* of Sotuta, to the capture of two rebel "spies" who were accused of trying to recruit servants of the *hacienda* Xixil in 1857.[50] This is very likely one example among many which remain undocumented because of the clandestine nature of contacts between rebels and residents of the areas under government control.

The reference to pilgrimages and religious festivals in one of the preceding documents is a reminder of the continuing importance of ritual and religious observance in the life of the Mayan peasants, despite the upheaval and dislocation of the rebellion and its aftermath. Emotional attachment to family and community of origin was strong and must have been hard to relinquish for those who chose the difficult route of permanent exile among the rebels or in Belize. One final example of renewal of contact comes from the village of Teabo in October 1858. A woman by the name of Manuela Yah, wife of the owner of a small *paraje*, stumbled upon three guerrillas on her way back from gathering maize in the family *milpa*. She recognized one of them as a former resident of the village whom she had not seen since the outbreak of the rebellion, eleven years previously. She thought that they had come from Chan Santa Cruz. They warned her not to tell anyone of their whereabouts and promised to reward her when they returned for the celebration of the Day of the Dead.[51]

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* The term Pacificos del Sur refers to a group of former rebel communities whose leaders signed a peace treaty with the government of Yucatân and agreed to withdraw from the rebel coalition in return for freedom to remain in their settlements south of the Puuc. They were granted an exemption from paying taxes, as long as they gave nominal recognition to Yucatecan sovereignty over their region.

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49. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 61, Milicia-Prefectura de Izamal, José Castillo to Barbachano, 24 April 1855.
50. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 69, Milicia-Sotuta, Jefe político to General José Cádenas, 31 October 1857.
51. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 76, Comandancia militar-Tekax, J. Ortoll to Governor Liborio Irigoyen, 8 October 1858.

While it is apparent from the documents that many peasants co-operated with government authorities and returned to their home villages in the aftermath of the rebellion, we do not fully know what coercive measures were applied in order to gain their co-operation. It is therefore difficult to determine whether or not the pacification campaign achieved the results anticipated by the government. If population figures are used as the sole criterion of the success or failure of government policy, then the resettlement programme was a resounding failure. A sampling of five communities (Tekax, Ticum, San José, Tixcuytún, and Tixmeuac) which represented approximately one-third of the total population of the *partido* of Tekax in 1846 indicates that most of these communities suffered population losses in excess of 50 per cent as reported in the 1862 census. Although it is virtually impossible to pin down the number of casualties for each community, the fact that very few of the major battles of the rebellion took place in the Puuc region suggests that the drop in population reflects migration (as well as the cholera epidemic of 1853) rather than losses due directly to the war.

The difficulty of establishing a climate of trust in which refugees or former rebels could return without fear of reprisals was probably insurmountable, except in rare cases where a patron-client relationship could be re-established with a powerful intermediary such as the parish priest or local hacendado. Of five communities for which there is continuous data, Tixmeuac experienced the most successful population recovery, having regained 75 per cent of its prewar population by 1862. This relatively successful result may have been due to the presence of one of the few priests in the region, Padre Manuel Mezo Vales, who was willing to support peasants in his parish who protested against mistreatment at the hands of the military.[52] In addition, land ownership in this community was more widely distributed than other villages in the *partido*, and several Mayan residents of the village owned small rural properties. However, larger landowners also benefited from resettlement. According to the 1862 census for Tixmeuac, the number of residents of nearby *haciendas* and *ranchos* had doubled, from 435 to 822. In Ticum, where large *haciendas* dominated the countryside, the rural population remained relatively stable. Except for a low point in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion, landowners were able to attract and retain labourers in sufficient numbers to reestablish their agricultural operations.[53] Unlike Tixmeuac however, the pueblo of Ticum only recovered 25 per cent of its pre-war population.

52. In 1853 the parish secretary of Tixmeuac drafted a letter on behalf of several residents of the village, protesting about being forced to serve as auxiliaries in the military cantons of Tekax, Becanchen, Macanche, and Xul, without pay or recognition as *hidalgos*. Unlike *hidalgos*, they received no exemption from the head tax, and were forced to labour far away from homes and families without compensation or recognition. Their complaints were dismissed because the priest was considered a troublemaker! Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 56, Jefatura Política-Tekax, Coello to Barbachano, 13 March and 21 April 1853.

53. According to the *Censo de fincas rusticas* of 1856, the *subdelegado* of the *partido* of Tekax, Domingo Tenreyro, owned the most valuable rural property in the district and was probably able to use his position as tax collector to persuade landless peasants and refugees to live on his *hacienda*. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon,

Changes in the urban/rural distribution of population in these communities are consistent with a long-term trend throughout the Puuc region, that of an exodus from the communal landholding villages.[54] By 1862 only 35 per cent of the residents of the *partido* still lived in towns and villages, compared to 49 per cent in 1846 and 80 per cent in 1821.[55] The Mayan Rebellion of 1847 did not reverse this trend, even though the sugar *hacendados* of the region complained that the uprising had destroyed their establishments. Economic recovery took several decades, and was no longer based exclusively upon sugar, but in the aftermath of the rebellion the landowning classes emerged stronger than before, fortified by the addition of militia officers who had taken advantage of their military role in the post-war period to expand their estates with confiscated rebel lands and their control over labour supply. Nevertheless, within this elite-dominated social structure, peasants continued to exercise some autonomy within a narrow range of options.

## CONCLUSION

In nineteenth century Yucatán the state government pursued a systematic campaign of pacification and forced resettlement of refugees aimed at eliminating peasant support for Mayan rebels in the southeastern jungles of Yucatán. The establishment of military cantons and the destruction of clandestine refugee settlements by government troops were policies designed to force peasants to resettle in government-controlled villages. However, many peasants continued to respond to oppression by developing alternative strategies for survival, particularly migration. For some peasants this migration involved incorporation into guerrilla forces or the *pacifico* communities; in other cases, permanent exile in Belize was the safest option. Peasants also returned to villages in government-controlled zones, or continued to travel back and forth between the independent communities of the south and their home villages.

Documentary sources also indicate that there was contact, widespread and ongoing, between rebels and Mayan residents of the government-controlled zones. The most commonly reported motives for contact were trade, religious festivals, and family

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Caja 58, Poblacíon — Padrón General, compiled by Juan de Díos Marín, Juez de paz segundo, Ticum, 8 November 1853, contains a list of *hacienda* residents, both *mestizo* and Mayan, who worked on the large estates in the vicinity of Ticum.

54. What implications this shift in population distribution had for peasant autonomy are not entirely clear, since there is some evidence for the continued participation of peasant producers in regional markets as sellers of maize. In the absence of accurate census figures indicating place of residence and a cadastral survey of land ownership, it is difficult to say whether these producers were residents of communal villages, tenants, or small independent landowners. See Carlos Bojórquez Urzáiz, "Estructura agraria y maiz a partir de la *Guerra de Castas*," *Revista de la Universidad de Yucatán* 20:120 (1978): 15-35.

55. This figure of 35% for 1862 is based on a total population of 23,690 for the partido of Tekax reported in Rodríguez Losa, *Geografía Política de Yucatán*, 211. However, this number may have included residents of the *Pacifico* communities of the south, thereby suggesting that more than one half of the population still lived outside of the *hacienda* system.

reunion. While it is impossible to determine how this contact may have influenced the ultimate outcome of the rebellion, it is clear that the Mayan rebels of Chan Santa Cruz were well-informed about political developments among the creole factions of Yucatán, and made use of this knowledge to stage successful raids on communities in government-controlled territory. Such raids played an important part in delaying the resettlement and economic recovery of the Puuc region.

After the peace treaty of 1853, which detached significant numbers of rebels from the Chan Santa Cruz movement, reports of contact between the Pacificos del Sur and the villages in the government zone became more frequent. Migration between these areas went in both directions. In the census of 1862, there were over 12,000 inhabitants reported living in communities designated as *pacifico*.[56] For several decades after the outbreak of the rebellion the communities of the south continued to serve as zones of refuge for army deserters and peasants fleeing debt and other forms of oppression in their home communities.

Peasant responses to the upheaval of the rebellion and its aftermath were complex and often contradictory. During the chaotic period following the rebellion, the life history of one individual might include a brief stint with the Chan Santa Cruz rebels, desertion to the pacificos at the time of the 1853 treaty, and an ongoing patron-client relationship with a landowning militia officer in the Puuc region.[57] Neither the dualistic model proposed by Cline, Reed, and Remmers, nor the symbiotic model found in the literature on peasants and guerrilla warfare accurately reflect peasant reactions to civil war. Between the two extremes of collaboration or defiance, many peasants pursued their own objectives, seeking to renegotiate a space for themselves in the middle ground between opposing forces.

56. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernación, Caja 94, Juzgado civil-Padrón General, "Mesapich y su comprehension de *Indios Pacificos* establecidos en la demarcación del partido de Tekax," 4 June 1862.

57. On 10 October 1863, the acting jefe político of Tekax, José Dolores Escalante, reported that a sizeable force under the command of the military captains of the *pacifico* community of Macanche, was planning to raid the hacienda of Colonel Gumesindo Ruiz, in order to rescue José Domingo Yx, listed in 1850 as the rebel captain of Oxkutzcab. Yx was being held by Ruiz for non-payment of a debt incurred sometime after the outbreak of the rebellion. Archivo del Estado de Yucatán, Poder Ejecutivo, Ramo de Gobernacíon, Caja 97, Jefatura Política-Tekax, 10 and 12 October, 1863.