Caste War: the Key Players

Delmer Tzib
SJC
Objectives

• Identify the key political areas involved in the Caste war.
• Describe the political actors in the Caste War.
The Yucatan Peninsula

- A northeastern projection of Central America, lying between the Gulf of Mexico to the west and North and the Caribbean sea to the east.
The Republic of Yucatan

- Part of the Mexican Empire 1823
- Centralist took power in Mexico (all power centered in Mexico City)
- Santiago Iman took control of Valladolid and declared Yucatecan independence in 1840
Yucatecos

- General term used for white descendants (Peninsulares and Criollos)
- Held power in major urban centers
- High in the social pyramid: Caste system
Santa Cruz (Cruzob)

• Rose to fight for independence as a Maya state in the 1840s

• Rebellion started in Tepich and Tehosuco in 1847

• Legend of the Talking Cross: Cruzob and Chan Santa Cruz

• Controlled up to Bacalar and Rio Hondo (south) and the borders of Campeche, Valladolid, and Merida (North)
Icaiche/los Pacificos del sur

- Signed a peace treaty with Yucatecan authorities
- Capital Chichanha
- 1851 signed a treaty with Mexico this caused war with the Santa Cruz Maya
- Many Icaiche migrated south into Peten and British Honduras
British Honduras

• English got into Maya land
• Entering into Icaiche and San Pedro Maya Land
The war & our modern borders

Political boundaries never remain the same. They are constantly shifting over time as neighbors conflict, form alliances or migrate. The geographical area referred to as the Yucatan peninsula is witness to hundreds of years of civilizations, and constantly changing concept of the ownership of space. In this region the present political borders which exist are mostly a result of the most impactful event of the past 200 years, which is the Caste War. Most publications on the establishment of these boundaries fail to discuss these ‘official diplomatic negotiations’ and the signing of treaties which make up the political boundaries of today within the context of the Caste War.

The British

The British initial interest in the area that later becomes Belize was initiated by a desire to extract logwood along the coast in the 1760s. This was later followed by a desire to plunder the jungle for mahogany, and it was this that brought the British into the Western Interior. Eventually increasing into the Maya controlled territory it brought them into conflict with the indigenous people.

With the outbreak of the Caste War also came the佩服 of the British to maintain the independence of the Icaicha alliance territory which included a large portion of the Ican and northern region of Belize. Under the leadership of Marcus Canul (and other leaders before and after) the Icaicha alliance was successful in disrupting British occupation in the 1870s. British conflict with the Cruzeño nation was prevented by the British through a trade agreement of weapons and supplies.

Icaicha

This entire region of Maya communities was referred to by Yucatec authorities as ‘los pacíficos del sur’ because initially they agreed on peace with them; these included Maya communities like Xhanha, Lochha and Chichan. Chichan was the major Maya center in this region at the outbreak of the war in 1847; however, they in 1851 signed a peace treaty with Mexican authorities which brought them into conflict with the Chan Santa Cruz Maya [Cruzob] of the north east. Continuous cruzob raids eventually led to their migration south into the Peten region and northern and western Belize. Cruzob eventually became the center for the influence over this area and their major contention was against the Cruzob and expanding British claim to this region.

Santa Cruz [Cruzob]

What started as a rebellion in Tepich and Tihosuco in 1847 eventually erupted into a full revolution for independence by surrounding Maya communities. The fight by the Maya was slowly dwindling until 1850, however, the legend of a talking cross that encouraged continued rebellion appears in Chan Santa Cruz [present Felipe Carrillo Puerto] in 1850 and sent the fighting into half century of warfare. The center of this region became Chan Santa Cruz and the alliance became known as the Cruzob, eventually expanding their domination over Bacalar and as far south as the north banks of the Rio Hondo and in the north threatening the occupation of Valladolid, Merida and Campeche.

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Design and curation by: In collaboration with:
Carlos Quiroz
Vianney Novelo
Yasser Musa

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