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THE CANADIAN METIS AND THE MEXICAN MAYAS: A CROSS
CULTURAL STUDY OF NATIVE LAND STRUGGLES

BY

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Abstract

This research focuses on the development of two native social movements during the nineteenth century; the Maya Caste War of Yucatan (1847-1901), in Mexico and the Western Canadian Metis movements known as Riel Rebellions (1869-1885). The analysis concentrates upon the internal elements that created the development of both movements, in order to demonstrate that these movements were not only reactions against dispossession. Central in this study is the idea that before the second half of the nineteenth century these groups were in control of their social organization, and thus were autonomous communities. The movements are shown as struggles to maintain the autonomy and social organization of the Maya and Metis groups. The analysis is based on a combination of primary and secondary sources, taken from Mexican and Canadian archives and libraries.

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Introduction

The nineteenth century was a period of economic, political, and social transformations and it was therefore a time of transition. For these reasons I consider it a liminal period. Two aspects of this transformation are of special interest to understand the social movements that were taking place around the world: the development and expansion of capitalism and the creation of the Nation State.

The New Nation States tried to develop the idea of nationhood, and to establish the ideals of liberalism. This created tensions with non-capitalist societies within these States that before this period were autonomous. Land struggles were a common feature in this period, and I will try to show how these social movements were not only reactions against dispossession but, more importantly, they were reactions against the loss of autonomy. Two examples of this would be the Maya rebellion known as the Caste War of Yucatan (1847-1901) and the Metis movements better known as the Riel Rebellions (1869-1885). In both cases I am interested in analyzing the internal aspects of these rebellions rather than to explain them through external factors only.

The analysis of both social movements is based on primary and secondary sources which were consulted in libraries and archives of Mexico and Canada. Although I had the disadvantage of limited

access to primary sources with respect to the Metis movement this was not a factor with the Maya primary source materials consulted. This research will concentrate on the structural dynamics which developed these social movements rather than in a detailed description of the events. Even though my primary emphasis is not on the external elements that helped develop these rebellions I would like to contextualize both ethnic groups prior to when the social movements began, in order to understand the historical background of these rebellions.

For the Maya of Yucatan the Colonial period was of great importance in order to understand how this group developed different strategies to cope with the colonial regime, and at the same time to maintain their own social structure. These strategies included the creation of the *Cajas de Comunidad* and the *Cajas de Cofradia*. [1] These economic, religious and political institutions helped the Maya elite to maintain their social order and autonomy.

For the Metis the Fur Trade era was of great importance for understanding the establishment of the Metis as a different ethnic group. In order to appreciate how their social structure evolved one needs to understand their relationships with the North West

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[1] All foreign words will be written in italics.
Cajas de comunidad and *cajas de cofradia* were strongboxes where the Maya communities kept their public funds.

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Company (NWC) and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), as well as their role as hunters (suppliers of pemmican), freighters and middlemen.

One of my hypotheses will be to demonstrate that before the middle of the nineteenth century both the Maya and the Metis created a more or less balanced relationship with the dominant society thereby achieving, to a certain extent, social, political and economic autonomy. To understand how these two groups preserved their social structure as well as their ethnic identity I will use Guillermo Bonfil Batalla's (1986) theory of cultural control, as well as Fredrik Barth's (1969) theory of ethnic identity. The concept of cultural control is of great importance in understanding how ethnic groups react against external pressures. For example, syncretism would be a way of reaction against the imposition of external cultural elements.

I also analyze the concept of territoriality to explain how an ethnic group needs a physical space to develop its identity, as well as its own social structure. This idea will help to explain these ethnic groups' attachment to their lands, not only as their means of production. The primary difference between the Maya and the Metis is that the Maya were peasants and the Metis, which I consider a liminal society, were in a process of transition from hunters to peasants. The way both groups related to their lands is very different. However, the idea of territoriality is common to both. Although each group related in a different way to their land,

nevertheless this special attachment to the land can be explained if we link the idea of territory to the idea of ethnic identity. Also the concept of cultural control helps one understand the internal processes of social movements which are frequently explained only as reactions against external political and economic pressures. Victor Turner's concept of liminality will be used to explain periods of time, groups, and individuals that I consider as interstructural or in an interstructural position. His concept of social drama will be also used as a device for analyzing social conflict. For Turner (1974, 1977, 1982) social drama is the processual structure of social action. The periods when social drama appear are considered as liminal periods. It is in these periods when we will find changes as well as cultural and social innovation.

Both the Maya and Metis leaders are considered as charismatic liminal individuals. That is to say, I consider them as charismatic because their authority is based in certain extraordinary capacities or gifts, and liminal, because this special condition places them in an interstructural position between their society and the dominant society. This special position enables them to struggle for the rights of their communities. In this sense the figure of Louis Riel can be better understood, because of his education he is always more related to the dominant society than to his Metis community. For me this special condition is of special interest to understand the condition of traditional leaders.

Another central aspect will be the cultural syncretism of the Metis group which has been poorly studied. One of my hypotheses is that there is a religious syncretism between Native religions and Catholicism in the Metis case, and that Louis Riel reelaborated this syncretic religion. I think that if the Mischif language has a syncretic structure it is very difficult to say that there is no syncretism in Metis culture. In this sense I analyze the figure of Riel as a prophet, taking into account the Native prophet movements as well as a reinterpretation of his visions from a syncretic point of view.

Both social movements have two periods. I will show how these groups tried to prevent an armed movement by dealing with the dominant society by different legal means, and when this failed they began to arm. The failure to deal with the dominant society in peaceful terms led these groups to rely on violent means to justify and legitimate their movements. By symbolic means both these groups considered themselves as chosen people, or new nations. I am going to analyze these concepts and the way these groups manipulated them in order to legitimate their actions.

The thesis will be structured in the following way: In Chapter I, I present my theoretical and methodological framework based in the concepts and theories of Roger Bastide (1970), Fredrik Barth (1969), Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1986), and Victor Turner (1967, 1974, 1977, 1982). Chapter II, presents a general historical context of the

nineteenth century, as well as the historical background of Canada, Mexico and Yucatan in this same period. In Chapter III, the ethnogenesis of the Metis group is analyzed, as well as the development of the Red River settlement, and the ideas of space and territoriality. Chapter IV, analyzes the development of the post-conquest Yucatec Maya group, studying the role of the Maya elites as well as the function of the *cajas de comunidad* and the *cajas de cofradía.* The basic elements of the ethnic identity of this group are also analyzed. In Chapter V, I present the description of both social movements, which are divided in two periods: the Red River Resistance 1869-1870, the Metis Rebellion of 1885, the Caste War of Yucatan 1847-1849, 1850-1901. Chapter VI, analyzes the general processes that generate social movements. Since both movements have a political-religious period, I will study the concepts of millenarism and messianism, as well as the symbols of ethnic unification for both groups. In Chapter VII, the role of the leaders is studied as well as the political organization of both groups. Syncretic religious elements are also analyzed. Finally I present my conclusions to the comparative analysis of both the Caste War of Yucatan and the Riel Rebellions.

MAP

CASTE WAR OF YUCATAN AND RIEL REBELLIONS.

NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA

Canada

Riel Rebellions
1869-1885

Mexico

Caste War of Yucatan
1847-1901
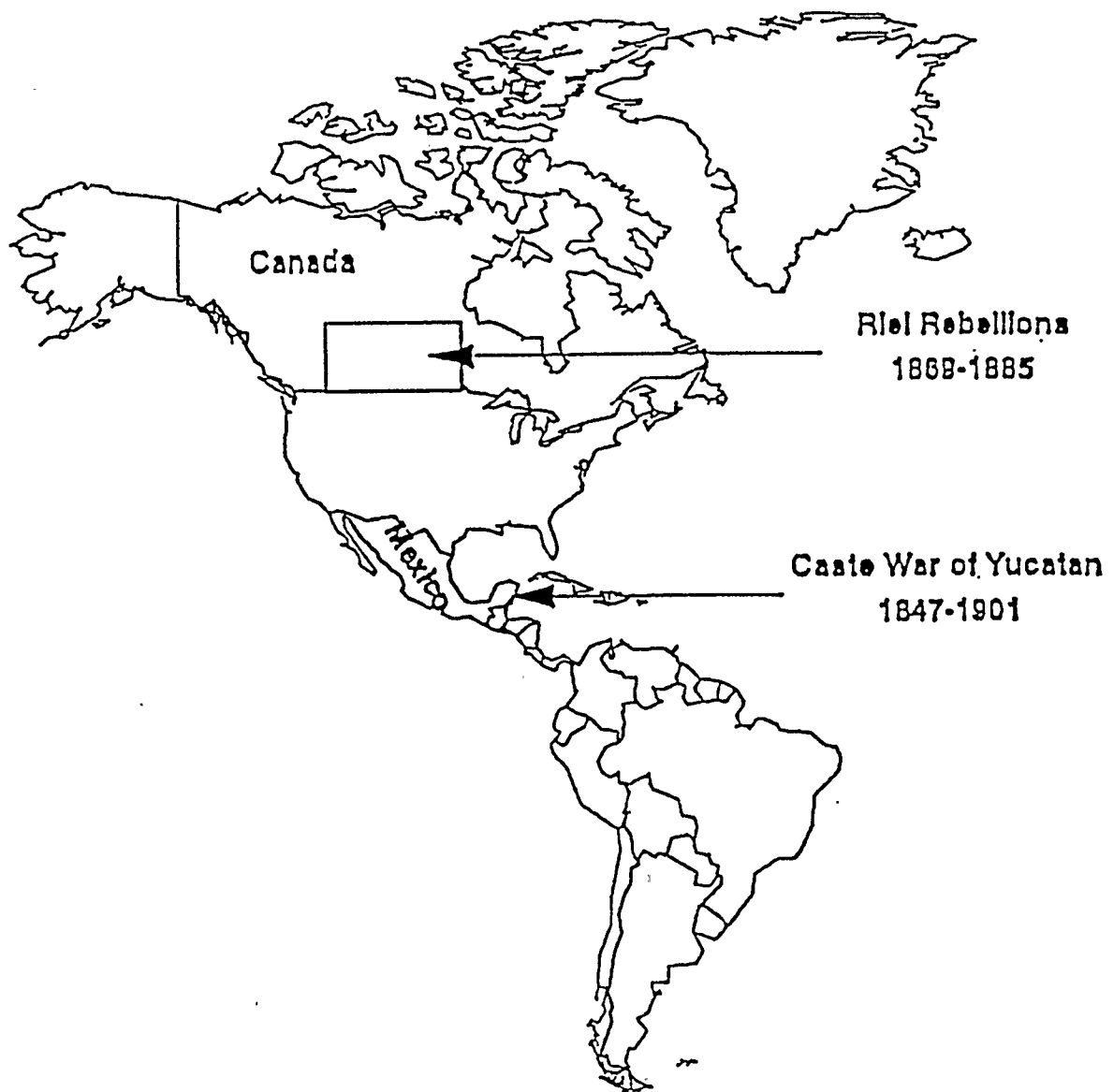
Chapter I
Theoretical and Methodological Framework

For both the Mayas of Yucatan and the Canadian Metis their identity was sustained by their normative system and by the interaction of their economic, religious, and political structures. In this sense their relationship to their land was of great importance because their land was conceived as a territory that sustained the above mentioned structures. Their land became the material and symbolic basis of the identity of the ethnic group, and its loss signified a break down of the whole social structure. In dealing with non-capitalist societies such as the Maya and the Metis one should be aware of the interethnic relationships that prevailed in the historical period that one is studying. Also to be taken into account is the conquest and colonization established by a foreign dominant group (Europeans) in relation to a native population. Since the time of conquest and colonization, to the period of Independence, the interethnic relationships prevalent in the Yucatec peninsula have been asymmetrical, that is to say of domination/subordination. From the time of the appearance of the mixed populations in Canada, to the establishment of the Province of Manitoba, the relationships of the mixed-blood populations (French and English speaking) with the white dominant populations (French and English) were also relationships of domination/subordination.

Roger Bastide (1970: 46-48) establishes this type of asymmetric relationship between two ideal models: the paternalistic and the

competitive. Paternalistic refers to the economic conditions of rural societies with little technological development but with more social stability. Since the social division of labour is ordered more by race, with its complete separation between the standards of life and education between the dominant and subordinate groups, an interracial competition becomes impossible. The dominant group constitutes a homogeneous social class and the subordinate group is subject to a determined juridical status. This wide separation between both groups implies that the prejudice regarding the inferiority of the subordinate group does not appear as dramatic, rather it makes the dominant group implement paternalistic and protective attitudes towards the others. The paternalistic type of asymmetric relations is common when peasant sectors exist. The competitive system described by Bastide (1970: 48), is linked to an urban and industrialized economy, and to less stable societies with a more complex division of labour, and where there exists a competition between races for status and leadership.

The paternalistic attitudes of the dominant groups varied because of the differing colonization policies of the Spanish, French, and English. The definition of paternalistic asymmetrical relationships can be applied to the Metis even though we cannot consider them a peasant society. The colonial period in Mexico is more representative of these paternalistic attitudes and relationships, because of the establishment of a whole set of laws and institutions created by the Spaniards to protect, isolate and control the native populations. As examples of these institutions we have the

4. Has a membership which identifies itself, and it is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.

Barth believes that such a definition gives too much weight to the idea of a shared common culture. What he proposes instead is that the establishment and maintenance of an ethnic group produces a shared common culture. I agree with his idea that ethnic identity cannot be equated to material culture, or to ecological factors, but I will say that his concept of culture is not clearly defined.

For Barth ethnic groups are conceived as forms of social organization, characterized by self-ascription and ascription by others. When social actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for reasons of interaction they constitute ethnic groups in an organizational sense (1969: 13-14). The cultural contents of ethnicity include two aspects: 1. overt signals or signs, that is the diacritical features that people look for and exhibit to show identity, such as language, dress, general style of life; 2. and the basic value orientations; on the standards of morality and excellence by which performance is judged, and to judge oneself by those standards that are relevant to that identity (1969: 14).

Barth emphasizes the rules and values that regulate ascription in relation to the establishment of ethnic identity (1969: 13-14). Such a view suggests that rules and values are cultural contents and that we have to have an ethnic group to have a shared common culture . Rather than establish this separation between culture and ethnic identity, I would emphasize that ethnic identity is above all a

cultural phenomenon, because ethnic identity is determined by the system of norms and values. I do not think, for example, that if the basic value orientations that regulates ascription and exclusion from a group changes completely and dramatically the ethnic group could maintain its ethnic identity. I agree with Barth, however, that the identity of a group is based in the rules that regulate the assimilation of individuals into a group, and those which regulate the interaction with others.

Barth also says that ethnic groups are not necessarily based on the occupation of exclusive territories (1969: 15), and I agree up to a certain point with him, but at the same time, I think he does not analyze in a profound way the relationship between territoriality and ethnic identity. It is true that a group can move or it can lose a territory and continue to be a separate ethnic group, but Barth does not see that to lose territory implies the loss of autonomy and organization. As Bonfil Batalla (1986: 21) suggests the original territory of an ethnic group is maintained as part of the proper culture even if it has been lost by the group, because it becomes part of their collective memory. This idea can help us understand why almost every ethnic social movement is directed towards the recuperation of a territory (the original or a symbolic one).

Ethnic groups persist as significant units only if they have persisting cultural differences. When there is interaction between persons of different cultures these differences are reduced, since interaction requires and produces a similarity of codes and values,

in other words, a similarity of culture (Barth 1969: 16). Interethnic relationships are governed by systematic sets of rules that regulate their interaction. Stable interethnic relations are based in a stable structure of interaction, which can be understood as a set of rules that control the situations of contact and allow the articulation in certain sectors of activity. At the same time this structure presents a series of sanctions that do not allow the interaction between groups in other sectors, and this helps to isolate certain aspects of the culture from confrontation and modification.

In the Yucatan case the norms and values which regulated the interethnic relationships between the Spanish and Creole[2] elites, and the Maya population, were established upon conquest and developed in the colonial period. At the end of the eighteenth century this normativeness began to change, modifying the interethnic relationships that prevailed in Yucatan. In the Canadian Northwest, from 1640 onwards, different norms and rules regulated the relationships between Europeans (French-English) and the relationships between them and different native groups (Crees, Ojibwas, Chipewyans, Blackfoot). We also have to take into account that another set of rules regulated the relationships among these different native groups. Afterwards, a mixed population was added to this complex framework of interethnic relationships. We have also, at the end of the eighteenth century, the beginning of a transformation of the normative system that regulated this

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[2] People of Hispanic culture born in America.

poliethnic structure. For both the Yucatec Maya and the Metis the introduction of capitalism signified a transformation of their relationships towards the dominant groups and a progressive loss of autonomy.

In order to clarify the relationship between culture and identity I will use Guillermo Bonfil Batalla's theory (1986) of cultural control. Bonfil understands cultural control to be the system by which the social capability of decision making is exerted over cultural elements. Cultural elements are all those components of a culture that interact in order to realize social actions (1986: 9). Bonfil classifies cultural elements in material and ideological terms, and he divides them into proper and strange elements. Proper culture is formed by an autonomous culture and an appropriated culture. It is in the realm of proper culture that, ethnic identity lies. Within autonomous cultures, ethnic groups make decisions over their own cultural elements which the group produces and reproduces as part of their cultural heritage. Autonomy consists in the lack of external dependency that could deny control over these elements.

Appropriated culture, another concept used by Bonfil, is when a group acquires the capacity to control strange cultural elements and use them in actions that respond to their own decisions (1986: 14). Syncretism would be an appropriation of culture because strange elements are combined with proper cultural elements. For example, the Mayas took many Catholic symbols (patron saints, the cross) and recreated them by adding other symbolic elements from their own

religious background. I also regard Metis culture as syncretic because the creation of their proper culture began with an appropriation of cultural elements from both the native and the European cultures. The elements that are appropriated are those which are in accordance with the cultural patterns of the culture adopting them. At the same time there are impositions of the dominant groups. In the Metis culture it is quite difficult to know how they selected the different cultural elements that created their proper culture.

Bonfil (1986) indicates the need for certain concrete elements in an autonomous culture that are essential for the existence of a group as a distinct ethnic entity. Such concrete elements have determined the norms and values that are regulating a society. Following Barth's and Bonfil's conceptualizations, we could say that ethnic identity lies basically in the normativeness that structures society and that regulates the external and internal relationships of the group. There are certain norms that strengthen the identity of a group and help them to differentiate themselves from the others. There are, at the same time, other rules that enable the interaction between groups.

In non-capitalist societies, such as that of the Maya and the Metis, the normative system that sustained their identity lay principally in their religious structure. Since, in these non-capitalist societies, there was a linkage between the religious, economic and political structures, there was also a linkage of the norms and values that

interacted in all these structures. The autonomy and identity of a group will be sustained while the group controls and maintains an equilibrium between the norms and values, and the material elements that support this ideological structure. While the group exerts control over its culture, and when it is able to take actions and decisions in relation to it, the permanence of the ethnic group is assured.

In this sense the relationship of ethnic identity and territory is of great importance, because the land is the material and symbolic basis which supports the social structure. That is why the loss of land for the Maya and the Metis, implied not only a material loss but also the break-down of their whole social organization.

Liminality, Communitas and Social Drama.

Victor Turner's concepts of liminality, communitas and social drama help to explain several elements of the social movements analyzed in this study. The concept of liminality was taken by Turner (1967, 1974, 1977,1982) from the conceptualization of Arnold Van Gennep (1909), in reference to phases in rites-of-passage. Rites-of-passage are the rituals related to a change of status, place, state and age. Turner regards liminality as an interstructural situation, that has an antistructural condition. The term rite-of-passage has been used in reference to life crises rituals that involve individuals, in transition from one social position to another, and of groups of individuals, related to rituals concerning seasonal changes, or life-

cycles. Afterwards, Turner applied the idea of liminality to every type of ritual, this is to say that every ritual has a processual type of passage.

Following Van Gennep, Turner (1967, 1974, 1977, 1982) has shown that all rites of passage have three phases: separation, transition and incorporation. The first phase signifies the separation of the individual, or the group, from an earlier social position. In the transitional phase the ritual subjects undergo a condition of ambiguity that has few symbolic referents in relation to their earlier condition. The third phase of incorporation includes symbolic action related to the returning of the ritual subjects to their new condition and social position. This implies that these individuals are subject to rights and obligations in relation to the social order.

Turner's use of interstructural refers to the idea that liminality is expressing a condition of being in between, or betwixt, the normal positions and conditions assigned by normativeness. Antistructure refers to the condition of dissolution of the normative social structure. In antistructure we find the potential alternatives that can create new normative systems. Liminality is thus considered as the source of the process of creating new cultures, conceived as a space where new models, symbols, paradigms, norms and rules can be created. The Metis and Maya social movements can be considered as liminal periods within which new symbols and new social organizations were created.

Liminality, expressed in rites-of-passage in tribal or early agrarian societies, means that the period of antistructure functions to reinforce the social structure and normative systems of these groups. When the concept of liminality is not used in relation to these specific rites in tribal or early agrarian societies, it can be used in a metaphorical way. I use the concept in this metaphorical sense, to analyze periods of time, groups and individuals. For example the nineteenth century is being defined as a liminal period because it is a time of economic, political and social transformations around the world. The Metis and Maya leaders were also liminal individuals, because of their special position in the whole social structure. They were intermediaries between their communities and the dominant societies. The Yucatec oligarchy can also be considered as a liminal group because they were intermediaries between a non-capitalist and capitalism system.

Turner (1982) also indicates that the concept of liminality can involve other processes that are not related to rites-of-passage in traditional societies. In this sense liminality can also appear in complex societies, in this case those societies created after the Industrial Revolution. Turner further divides liminality into liminal and liminoid phenomena, the latter a product of complex societies. Liminality, as a general social process, promotes creativity and criticism. On the other hand, it also includes the ideas of change, danger, and alienation. Social movements, insurrections and revolutions are considered by Turner (1982) as liminal processes in the metaphorical sense because, in opposition to the liminal in

tribal societies, social criticism and social discontent appear as central matters of these processes. They are not, he indicates (1982: 45) at the service of normativeness:

> Thus revolutions successful or not, became the limina, with all their initiatory overtones between major distinctive structural forms of orderings of society. It may be that this is to use "liminal" in a metaphorical, not in the "primary" or "literal" sense advocated by Van Gennep, but this usage may help us to think about global human society, to which all specific historical social formations may well be converging. Revolutions whether violent or non-violent may be the totalizing liminal phases for which the limina of tribal rites de passage were merely foreshadowing or premonitions.

It is important to underline that Turner speaks of general liminal processes that include his idea of a metaphorical use of the concept, his distinctions between liminal, in relation to rituals in traditional societies, and liminoid, in relation to complex societies. Turner's separation between both phenomena appears too rigid because even though liminal phenomena in traditional societies tend to preserve the social structure they can also create changes and alterations in the structure. The same can be said for liminoid phenomena in that, although their prime function, as Turner (1982: 33) states, is to criticize the social order, they are also elements that prevent social disorganization, by acting as an escape valve for social tensions.

I use Turner's concept of liminality as a general process, emphasizing the ideas of transition, transformation, crises, and creation of new models, rules, and symbols. This concept will help to characterize the social movements of both the Mayas and the Metis, because even though I consider them as conservative cyclical movements, I do not consider their results as mere copies of their old social organization. It is in these periods of social turmoil that new models, symbols, and forms of social organization were created, and this allowed for the maintenance of the ethnic groups.

Both the Mayas and Metis movements were liminal periods that can be analyzed as social dramas. Liminal phenomena create the sense of comradeship, of homogeneity, of social bonds among individuals. Liminality also creates a state where differences are diminished as well as structure. These conditions are considered by Turner (1969:132) as a state of communitas. Communitas, as well as liminality, is anti-structural in the sense of a space where creativity and freedom from the normative system is established. Communitas is a condition followed by social structure because the state of homogeneity and comradeship could not be sustained for a long time:

> Communitas itself soon develops a structure, in which free relationships between individuals become converted into norm governed relationships between social personae. (Turner 1969: 132)

Communitas represents a transition from a state of spontaneous communitas, or the free gathering of individuals who are bound together by the same means, but not by a normative structure, to the establishment of an organized social system, creating with this a normative communitas. Through this normative communitas the group and the social bond are preserved The concept of communitas is very important in understanding the process of social movements because when a movement starts there is this state of communitas that binds individuals to the achievement of certain aims and goals. But it is also true that a state of comradeship and equality cannot be sustained for long without a social organization. The Maya and Metis movements were not completely egalitarian, because the roles and positions of the leaders were differentiated from the masses following them. Communitas represents the condition that holds together a group of individuals that have the same goals and aspirations in a struggle (when speaking of traditional social movements) against a dominant sector that becomes more and more exploitative.

Turner (1974, 1977, 1982) defines social drama as a disharmonic process that arises in situations of conflict. In this sense they represent liminal phenomena. Social dramas usually have four phases:

> 1. Breakdown of normal social relations governed by normativeness that occur between individuals or groups of individuals in a social system. Such a break is manifested by a public transgression or deliberate

non-fulfillment of some crucial norms or rules that are regulating interaction between the parties. This transgression of the normative system is the trigger that develops the conflict;

2. Following the breakdown of the normal social relations there is a phase of ascending crises during which, unless the breakdown can be sealed off quickly in a limited area of social interaction, it tends to widen and extend. These crises have liminal characteristics since they are passages between more or less stable social processes;

3. In the third phase redressive action takes place. In order to control the expansion of the crises certain adjustive and redressive mechanisms, informal or institutionalized, are applied by leading or representative members of the disrupted social system. When these redressive mechanisms fail there is a return to crises. At this stage violent means may appear in the various forms of war, revolution, rebellion and repression;

4. The last phase consists either of a reintegration of the disrupted social group or the social recognition and legitimacy of the separation of the other group.

Turner (1982) says that social dramas occur in groups that are bounded by the same norms and values and sharing an alleged or a real common history. If we consider the Metis and Maya movements as social dramas we could say that both groups were sharing a common system of norms that regulated their interaction with the dominant groups. Barth (1977: 16) states that a long interaction creates a similitude of culture.

The main actors or "star groups," as Turner (1982: 69-72) calls them, are individuals or groups of individuals with whom other individuals identify deeply, and that fulfill all the desires and

goals of these individuals. The political aspect of social dramas is dominated by the star groups. Thus, when a crisis evolves and a group begins to follow a star individual, or star group, a state of communitas develops and this state binds the group and creates a special relationship with the leader or leaders of the movement.

In the Maya and Metis movements there was not a complete homogeneity· of the groups because the leaders had a higher status and position. In the Metis case, during the social movement of 1885, when they created a provisional government, Louis Riel tried to create the idea of homogeneity by suggesting that instead of provisional government they should name it Exovedate, which literally means "one of the flock" (Flanagan 1979:138). This institution served as the political and military organization that was in control of the movement. Riel's idea in creating this Exovedate was that there would be no difference of statuses and roles among the leaders, and between them and the population. In reality differences did prevail among the leaders and between them and their followers.

Sources and Method

The study of both the Maya and Metis movements was based on the analysis of primary and secondary sources. In the Maya case the analysis was based on documents written by the Maya leaders during the social movement. These documents were written in

Maya, so it was necessary to transcribe, and translate them into Spanish and into English. My knowledge of the Maya language allowed me to do these translations. The original documents are at the *Biblioteca Central Manuel Cepeda Peraza,* (Library Manuel Cepeda Peraza) in Merida, Yucatan and also in the *Archivo General del Estado de Yucatan* (General Archives of the State of Yucatan). In the Metis case I had the disadvantage of not working with a parallel set of primary sources. But an archival and bibliographical research was realized which allowed a familiarization with the Metis sources. Most of the documents used in this study were taken from the Provincial Archives and Provincial Library of Manitoba. Other bibliographical and archival material was also taken from the Glenbow Archives and Library, as well as from the Library of the University of Manitoba.

The analysis of the primary and secondary sources was of great importance to understand the development of both social movements from the perspective of the social actors. What I intend with the study and comparison of both movements, is to show that they did not develop only as reactions against external economic and political pressures; on the contrary, these movements tried to maintain their distinct identity as well as their social organization. In this sense I tried to clarify the concept of ethnic identity by using the theories of Fredrik Barth (1969) and Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1986). The Maya and Metis movements are regarded as social dramas, because they

represent periods of transition and transformation of these groups, when the norms and rules which regulated their relationships with the dominant sectors were broken.

Chapter II
The Nineteenth Century Historical Context.

In order to understand the logic of the Maya and Metis social movements one should analyze the historical periods in which they took place. Both movements developed in the second half of the nineteenth century when other social movements in India, China, Africa, North America, and other parts of Latin America were developing around the world. Examples would include the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the Nien rebellions in China 1852-68, and the rebellion on southern Rhodesia in 1896 (Frank and Fuentes 1990: 149-150; Lan 1985: 146-147). It is necessary to explain the Maya and Metis movements in the historical context of general forces that were operating around the world, and their specific circumstances.

Wallerstein (1975) and Frank and Fuentes (1990) consider these movements as reactions against the injustice and inequality of the capitalist system. This inequality and injustice is manifested between people, social classes and nations. Wallerstein (1975: 16) defines the world-system as a single capitalist world economy which emerged, historically, since the sixteenth century until the present. Although the world system emerged in the sixteenth century, Polanyi (1957) says it developed and consolidated in the nineteenth century. Wallerstein (1975) considers the world system as divided into different areas that perform different tasks. In this sense he

says there is a core, a periphery, and a semi-periphery. Even if one does not agree with Wallerstein's conceptualizations one could not deny the existence of political, economic and social inequality around the world. Wallerstein does not conceive the positions of the different states in the world economy as static, rather they keep changing because of new technologies, ecological exhaustion, and the socio-economic consequences related to these natural phenomena. A state can change from being part of the core, to become a semi-periphery, or vice versa, but this will not affect the system as a whole. It functions by having unequal core and peripheral regions.

The state in this system serves as a way by which particular groups control the functioning of the market. For Wallerstein (1973: 23), core states will have stronger control mechanisms than those of the peripheries. Polanyi (1957: 3) says that nineteenth century civilization rested on four institutions: 1. the balance of a power system, that prevented any long or devastating war among the Great Powers; 2. the international gold standard; 3. the self-regulating market; and 4. the liberal state. For this thesis the self-regulating market will be the key element sustaining the capitalist system and creating conditions leading to social movements. Polanyi (1957: 163) sees the nineteenth century as a march of industrial civilization over non-industrial societies. It was the period of colonial expansion of the Great Powers, guided by the principle of gain that changed the totality of social relations around the world.

The Industrial Revolution that took place in England in the first half of the nineteenth century emphasized the development of the market economy, free trade, and the gold standard. The social transformations that occured in England's countryside bore similar characteristics to those in other parts of the world as by-products of the expansion of capitalism (Polanyi 1957: 157). What Polanyi (1957: 201) understands as a self-regulating market is an economy directed exclusively by market prices, an economy regulated by gain and profit. In this system land, labor, and money are transformed into commodities (fictitious commodities) and their prices are called rent, wages, and interest. The inclusion of labor and land in the market economy signified the subordination of society to the laws of the system. The relationship of Man and Nature was completely modified.

The evolution of capitalism started in England in the sixteenth century, while the eighteenth century saw the transformations that gave the basis for the real development of capitalism. In the eighteenth century the creation of a market for labour and land implied the transformation of England's rural sectors. The nineteenth century presents a double movement: economic liberalism trying to establish a self-regulating market with the support of the trading classes, and the use of laissez-faire[3] and free trade as their methods. On the other hand, there was a

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[3] Laissez-faire supposedly the non-interference of government with commerce.

principle of social protection for the conservation of Man and Nature, as well as productive organization with the support of the people affected by the market system. The working and landed classes used the legislation and the creation of associations as methods of protection. For Polanyi (1957: 153) the struggle which developed in England in the nineteenth century was a class struggle. The expansion of the market system in the nineteenth century created the environment for spreading international free trade, competitive labor markets, and the gold standard. Laissez-faire was also fictitious because its laws were enforced by the state. The liberals used the state as a tool for the development of capitalism.

For Polanyi (1957: 157) class struggles are not based merely on economic factors, rather they are primarily social movements. The social reactions against the market economy were not only because of economic conditions, it was principally the social interests of the populations that were being threatened. When capitalism was expanding to other geographical areas the cultural contact created a devastating effect in the weaker part of the relationship. Polanyi (1957: 157) says that it was not economic exploitation, but the disintegration of the cultural environment of the affected populations, that created degradation:

> The economic process may, naturally, supply
> the vehicle of destruction, and almost
> invariably economic inferiority will make the

weaker yield, but the immediate cause of his
undoing is not for that reason economic; it
lies in the lethal injury to the institutions in
which his social existence is embodied
(Polanyi 1957: 157).

My analysis of the social movements of the Maya and the Metis
will be guided by these principles stated by Polanyi. It is not
possible to explain these movements by economic factors alone. It
is necessary to take into account the primary threat imposed on
social organizations by the new policies adopted by the dominant
nineteenth century groups.

Samir, Arrighi, Frank and Fuentes and Wallerstein (Samir (et al.)
1990) agree that, since the inception of the capitalist world
economy, there have been a series of antisystemic or popular
movements that have reacted against the system. But it was
during the nineteenth century that these movements became more
extended and continuous. For these authors such movements were
against the injustices and inequalities of capitalism. In this
sense they are anticapitalist or antisystemic. I see the Maya and
Metis movements as antisystemic in that these movements are in
opposition to the development and expansion of capitalism. These
movements struggled against this dominant system and against its
political, economic and political impositions. Frank and Fuentes
(1990: 142) points out that social movements are cyclical. He
relates these cycles, primarily in peasant social movements, to
external economic-political changes in the world system. These
economic-political changes are related to liberal reforms created

in response to export agriculture. Frank and Fuentes (1990: 150-151) sees the threat to subsistence production by landowners, trying to impose the commercialization of agriculture, as one of the primary causes for the development of peasant movements. Frank and Fuentes, Samir, Arrighi and Wallerstein (Samir (et al.) 1990) base their explanation of social movements primarily on economic grounds. The position taken in this study, follows Polanyi (1957), that the origins of social movements are not only related to economic changes, but primarily with the disruption of the norms, values, and basic social institutions, created by the market economy:

> These institutions are disrupted by the very fact that a market economy is foisted upon an entirely differently organized community; labor and land are made into commodities, which, again, is only a short formula for the liquidation of every and any cultural institution in an organic society (Polanyi 1957: 159).

The nineteenth century can be regarded as a liminal period because it was a period of transition and transformation. It was a period when nation states were created as part of the development of the market economy. Liberalism was the principal ideology of the dominant sectors, and the liberal state became a tool for the implementation of the market economy. The nation state created a policy that was in opposition to the autonomy (political, economic and social) of corporate groups such as peasants communities. For both the Maya and the Metis this period implied a transformation

of their relationships with the dominant groups, threatened their autonomy and their social organization. The second half of the nineteenth century marked the break-up of customary rules and normative systems, that regulated the relationships of the Maya and Metis with the dominant sectors. This made it was almost impossible for these groups to deal with the dominant groups in a legal way. Both the Maya and the Metis were threatened in this period with the loss of their lands, and this became a threat to their whole social organization. Their last resource was to develop social movements to try to stop this process.

Canada in the Nineteenth Century.

During the nineteenth century Canada was a staple exporting country that created, in words of Mel Watkins (1975), a class structure that distorted and suppressed industrial development. Canada can be considered as a rich and dependent capitalist country. Watkins (1975: 73) says that this structure has its origins in the colonial period when European aims were trade and the establishment of colonies producing staples for export to Europe, in return for European manufactured goods. An example of such mercantilistic policies was the fur trade.

The fur trade was controlled by two trading empires established in the western interior. From the 1780s to 1821, the Hudson's Bay Company was supported by the investment community of the City of London, while the North West Company was created first by the

traders of New France (1731-43) and after the conquest by Scotch and American traders, sustained by the labour of French-Canadian tripmen (Friesen 1987: 45). The problem associated with the fur trade was the organization of transport of supplies and furs over increasingly great distances. The organization of the transportation of goods and furs was of great importance for the social, political and economic development of this area. The French established the trading post system which later on was also adopted by the English. This system was one of the most important elements in expanding and consolidating the trading activities of the fur companies (Friesen 1987: 53).

As a colony Canada was tied to the capitalist world market but this is not to say that, since the beginning of the colonial period, there were capitalist relations of production in Canada. This was the case in the fur, where the relationships between the European traders and the native populations were non-capitalist. As John Hutcheson (in Watkins 1975: 73) argues, Canada grew from a colonial society that was already integrated to a capitalist empire. The development of Canada is related to the extraction of staple products by different imperial powers (principally England and the United States). Canada did not only become a resource colony, different from other colonies where capitalism encouraged plantation production using slavery, advance-wage or peonage labor, or perpetuated different forms of non-capitalist production systems based on peasant labour (Watkins 1975: 76). Canada allowed immigration to provide a needed free labour force, giving

preference to immigration from northern Europe. Canada became a fully integrated but dependent capitalist society, that is, a society with capitalist property relations, production, and a labour force. It was dependent because its dominant economic class was a mercantile capitalist class. Watkins (1975: 74) states that this class operated in the sphere of circulation in opposition to an industrial capitalist class, that operates in the sphere of production. For Watkins, Canadian history became the story of how the mercantile class maintained its dominance as the indigenous capitalist class from the seventeenth century until now. According to Watkins (1975: 75) industrialization took place in Canada, but not under the control of Canadian capitalists, rather over time by predominantly and increasingly foreign-based (mostly USA) multinational corporations.

The mercantile-financial capitalist class suppressed the development of an indigenous industrial capitalist class, and it created a state based in its own image. These Canadian mercantile elites were those who created the nineteenth century railway boom. These elites and the mercantile-financial capital were the product of the fur trade. For Watkins (1975: 77) the Canadian commercial class, closely allied with the British financiers, was able to consolidate its position by creating its version of the state with Confederation in 1867. By the end of the century Canada moved to high protective tariffs, which created industrialization by invitation, principally to USA companies that established branch plants. There were also railway subsidies and

an inflow of British capital as infrastructure for the branch plants, and the doors were open to immigration in order to create a pool of labour.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Canada was expanding towards resource-rich internal frontiers. The opening of the Canadian West for settlement was to develop and produce wheat for export to Europe. The Canadian mercantile class became an intermediary between British financial capital and the United States corporate capital (Watkins1975: 79). In 1857 the present-day Canadian West was not yet part of Canada, rather it was a British territory. It was composed of three parts: the colony of Vancouver, the Pacific Slope, and the Indian Territory that included Rupert's Land. The governing power over all this territory was the Hudson's Bay Company. The Company's commercial monopoly and its political authority began to be threatened in 1857 (Morton 1965: 3).

Britain, Canada and the United States were interested in the development of this rich frontier. The USA colony of St. Paul established free-trade with the Red River settlement in 1843 and was very interested in the annexation of the area (Morton 1965: 5). Canada West, or Upper Canada (Southern Ontario), was experiencing an economic boom in the 1850's. There was a great inflow of capital, development of railways, export of staples, and a great influx of immigrants. This economic boom created a scarcity of land and the need for expansion. But Lower Canada

(Quebec) opposed the annexation of these territories (Morton 1957: 107). Canadian politicians were divided because of their different interests and loyalties. The Liberal-Conservative party was promoting the annexation of the Northwest, not as a province but as a territory. The federal solution adopted was to create a British North America. In July 1st., 1867, four of the British colonies united to create the Dominion of Canada (Morton 1957: 117).

Canada purchased Rupert's Land and the North West Territory, from the Hudson's Bay Company for 300,000 pounds in cash. The Company kept one twentieth of the most fertile land. It was when the transfer was about to be completed that the Metis reacted against annexation, because they had not been consulted (Morton 1965: 18). Canada did not guarantee rights, properties, or the participation in the government by the people of Red River. Moreover, the Canadian government did not want the incorporation of the native groups (Metis (French-Indian ancestry), Half-Breeds, (English-Indian ancestry), Indians). They just wanted to push them aside and to control their lands.

The lands of the Northwest became available to subsidize the Pacific Railway and to develop commercial agriculture. The Metis, the Half-Breeds and the Indians, were not taken into account in the transformation of the Northwest, they were denied individual and communal rights as well as representative self-government (Morton 1957: 117-118). For the Metis it was not only the fear of

losing their lands, or their rights to the buffalo hunt, that made them resist the annexation. It was primarily the fear of losing their communal rights and their social organization. It was a struggle to keep their identity, culture and autonomy alive. The Metis social organization was based in the interaction of the economic, political and religious structures, and they had as their basis the parish organization (Morton 1937; Mailhot 1986). The alteration in the use of their land and other natural resources promoted a breakdown of their social structure.

Mexico in the Nineteenth Century.

Mexico, as Canada, was a staple exporting country in the nineteenth century. In 1821 it acquired its independence from Spain and from this moment different sectors of the oligarchy tried to fill the power vacuum left by the Spanish Crown. The first half of the nineteenth century did not present ruptures in relation to the colonial structure. Moreover it presents a continuity in relation to the economic, political and social structures. The Mexican oligarchy, as the dominant sector, took the colonial structures and liberal ideology to support the development of their own power structure. But liberalism was an ideology that did not match the policy of the Mexican oligarchy, it was only a façade used by them (Annino 1984: 4).

The nineteenth century saw the growth of exports in two basic sectors: that of agricultural-cattle raising and mining   The first

of these sectors was based on the development of *latifundios*[4] oriented towards export monocultures. This caused the Indian communities to lose their communal lands. Linked to latifundism, and to other sectors of production, we find the existence of forced labour and peonage labour. This indicated that the power of the oligarchy was based on the control of the natural resources and of the labour force. The oligarchies did not want to modernize the industry nor to change the structure of production. A well structured internal market did not exist because there was a predominance of commercial activity oriented towards the exterior that subordinated the internal production (Carmagani 1984). The dominant sector, or oligarchy, was a proprietary class. The oligarchy of the first half of the nineteenth century was a continuation of the oligarchy of the eighteenth century, and like it, it constituted an agricultural dominant class. The oligarchies were linked to capitalism as a mercantile class by an export staple economy (Carmagani 1984: 25).

Mexico can be considered a dependent economy since the colonial period but, contrary to Canada, it did not develop a capitalist structure. During the nineteenth century there was a continuous process of impoverishment of the subordinate sectors of the society by dispossession and a greater coercion of the labour force (Carmagani 1984: 27). These processes affected principally the

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[4] *Latifundios*: monopolization by an elite of large scale land properties at the expense of other rural populations.

Indian peasantry. The oligarchy was trying to fill the vacuum of power left after the independence from Spain, and in the nineteenth century there would be a continuous struggle among different sectors of the oligarchy that were trying to achieve absolute control and power. These different sectors of the oligarchy could be distinguished by their different levels of economic, political and social development. There was a struggle between the oligarchies from the center of Mexico and the regional oligarchies, such as the oligarchy of Yucatan (Annino 1984). Inside these regional oligarchies there were divisions and struggles to acquire power. This was the case of Yucatan, the setting where the Caste War took place. These conflicts of the oligarchies were supported by ideological façades such as liberalism and conservatism. The Mexican oligarchies can be divided in two sectors: the federalists-liberals and the centralist-conservatives. But the common goal of all of them was to create a state of proprietors, so their internal conflicts represent in reality a struggle among one class trying to achieve control over the other sectors of the society (Annino 1984: 13-14).

Yucatan in the Nineteenth Century.

In order to understand the evolution of the Caste War of Yucatan it is important to know the historical context of this region of Mexico.

Yucatan is a province situated in the southern part of Mexico, but, during part of the nineteenth century it was divided in two regions: Yucatan and Campeche (Farriss 1980: 172). During the eighteenth century Yucatan had a concentration of Spanish, Creole, and Indigenous population. The cattle raising *estancias,* in the northern and western parts of the peninsula, were situated near the most important urban center, which was Merida, as well as the only seaport, Campeche. In the last decades of the eighteenth century commercial agriculture developed because of increase of local consumption and foreign trade. Yucatan, in 1770, was one of the first colonies granted the privilege of free trade by the Bourbon policies. The products of the *estancias*, particularly leathers, fat and cheap food such as maize and beans, became in great demand in the ports of Veracruz (Mexico), New Orleans (U.S.A) and Havana (Cuba) (Farriss 1980: 194).

These new incentives for the development of production had two effects in the peninsula. First of all, the Spaniards and Creoles were no longer satisfied with the quantity of land that they owned, and they began to seriously threaten the Maya properties. The Maya of the northwest of the peninsula began to lose their lands to the Spaniards and Creoles, and, without lands, they were

incorporated as a labour force in the haciendas of the dominant sector (Farriss 1984: 371). At the same time the different interests of the two sectors of the Yucatec oligarchy began to take shape. These two sectors were the oligarchy of Merida and the oligarchy of Campeche, composed of proprietors, entrepreneurs, high clergy, and the military. The conflict between the Merida and Campeche oligarchies increased with the creation of the port of Sisal, in 1810, because it favoured the interests of of the Merida oligarchy. Such was the established basis of the rivalry between Merida and Campeche (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 50).

During the eighteenth century there was a breakdown of the normative system (legal and customary rules) that regulated the relationships of the dominant and subordinated sectors in the peninsula. This created very serious consequences which affected principally the Maya population. Shortly before independence, Merida had produced cattle, maize, beans, and starch, traded via Sisal mostly with Havana. Campeche produced camwood, rice, sugar-cane, and it had a very prosperous naval industry. Most of its commerce was with the port of Veracruz (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 50). After independence the interests of both groups clashed even more because they were oriented towards very different objectives. For example the union of Yucatan to Mexico in 1823 affected the people of Merida because their trade was oriented towards Havana, so for this reason they did not want to participate in the Spanish-Mexican (1810-1821) war and they wanted to delay the union with Mexico. On the other hand,

Campeche wanted immediate union with Mexico because they knew it was going to be favorable to their economic and political interests, because of their trade with Veracruz (Ancona 1978, III: 287-289). This internal division of the Yucatec oligarchy produced grave consequences when the Maya rebellion started, principally because the Maya exploited such division and weakness (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 68).

Regional, oligarchical conflicts continued during the century disguised as struggles between the liberal and conservative parties, or of federalists against centralists, depending upon the interests of different parties. When the interests of the Yucatec oligarchy were threatened by the oligarchy of Central Mexico, they united to oppose them. In 1841 two political parties were created in Yucatan, which represented this internal division of the dominant sector. One was represented by Miguel Barbachano, who was the representative of the interests of Merida, and the other by Santiago Mendez, who represented the interests of Campeche. The political careers of these two personages show that the conflict of the oligarchies was not ideological. Ideology was manipulated according to the interests of the group using it. Ideology did not correspond to the political practices of the oligarchy, because as their interests were developing and their relations with foreign trade were defined, their ideological-political positions were changing. For example Santiago Mendez was a liberal-federalist, who changed to become a separatist and ended as a conservative-separatist (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 71).

In 1839 a movement against centralism, led by Santiago Iman, incorporated the Maya from the eastern part of Yucatan as part of the militia, with the promise of the abolition of obventions.[5] Later on (1842-46) there were other armed conflicts between the Yucatec oligarchies and the Maya were incorporated with new promises as the permanent abolition of civic and religious contributions and the restitution of lands (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 68-69). These promises were never fulfilled.[6] The consolidation and arming of the Maya, in their factional struggles, was one of the principal signs of the break up of the normative system with that of the colony. For the Maya this situation gave their *caciques*[7] the regeneration of their military leadership, that they had lost since the colony's inception. It also gave them mobility, so they were able to observe the situation of the Indian *peones*[8] in the *haciendas*[9] I think this was the moment when the Maya *caciques* of the eastern part of Yucatan realized what the consequences would be if they lost their political power and the control of their lands, in relation to the maintenance of their

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[5] Obventions: Ecclesiastical head tax.

[7] *Caciques:* Indian leaders of the Indian villages.

[8] *Peones:* rural workers.

[9] *Haciendas:* large landed state dedicated to agriculture or ranching.

·autonomy and their culture. The Maya took as much advantage as possible of the division of the oligarchy during the Caste War.[10]

Even though there were differences and struggles within the dominant sector it could be established that their policy in relation to the subordinated population was exactly the same. Throughout the nineteenth century the relationships of the Yucatec oligarchy and the international market grew, because of export monocultures such as sugar cane, and later on, henequen (Tapia 1985: 227-228). With this economic development the dominant sector began to limit and dispossess the Maya communities, principally those in the southern and eastern parts of Yucatan. These communities had managed to control the possession of their lands. The oligarchy created a new land policy and a new legislation to help erode the political power of the Maya *caciques*. These new laws and policies affected the autonomous communities of the eastern part of the peninsula.

Before the independence, with the promulgation of the Constitution of Cadiz (1812), the development of the process of municipalization had begun in Yucatan. This would create severe damage to the Indian population, because the municipal

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[10] Sometimes during the Caste War the Maya used to declare themselves followers of one of the *ladino* political parties, creating confusion among the Yucatec militia, that did not know if the Maya were participating again in the internal conflicts of the oligarchy. (Ancona 1978, IV: 71).

institutions became elements of political and economical control of the dominant sector. While the Constitution of Cadiz was in force the *Republicas de Indios* were abolished, but with Independence and the later unification of Yucatan, to Mexico in 1823, these institutions were reestablished. In 1841 they disappeared from the legal context, but appeared later on as a result of the Caste War. Supposedly, with the Constitution of Cadiz and independence, the Indigenous population acquired the status of citizens. They were to be levied the same civil tax as all other citizens (Tapia 1985: 3-9).

The restitution of the *Republicas de Indios*, in 1823 and during the Caste War, shows the segregation of the Indians in society, in that the aim of reviving these institutions was to undermine the Indian political autonomy, because they were transformed in simple means of politic and economic control. With these institutions the indigenous population was subjugated. This was possible because they were controlled as a differentiated group. Their dispersal was prevented because this would have signified a loss of labour force and revenues for the dominant sector. The *Republicas* also eased the collection of civil and religious taxes (Tapia 1985: 26). Even though the Maya acquired equal legal rights as citizens, they were pushed aside from the exercise of power. This was done through the establishment of electoral laws that only gave the right to vote to persons having property, or permanent rent. These restrictions assured a joint representation of the oligarchy.

Notwithstanding the internal conflicts of the oligarchy in the first half of the nineteenth century there was a process of institutionalization of the municipal organization in the political sphere of the villages. The general tendency of this process in the villages was the disruption of the political power of the *Republicas de Indios*. The *ayuntamientos* gradually achieved political, economic and social dominance, which created a greater subordination of the Indigenous institutions with respect to the municipal institutions. During the period of 1824-1841 the land and municipal policies were complementary, reinforcing the power of the *ayuntamientos*. When the community lands became part of the *bienes de propios*[11] of the *ayuntamientos* this gave them the prerogative to charge for their use and this reinforced the economic government of the *ayuntamientos* in the towns (Tapia 1985: 35-36).

In the 1830's and 1840's a series of circumstances developed to define the process of private appropriation of communal lands and *terrenos baldios*.[12] There was large-scale occupation of *terrenos baldios*, from 1824 to 1842, in the southeast part of the peninsula where sugar industry *haciendas* were developing (Tapia 1985: 227-228) . From 1841 to 1842, a second period of the Yucatec land

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[11] Property belonging to the *ayuntamientos*.

[12] Lands that were considered vacant or unused, supposedly out of the town's jurisdiction.

policy can be defined. Several factors intensified the struggle for the acquisition of land. The principal among these was the establishment of the sugar industry *haciendas* and the taxation problem (Tapia 1985: 218). The oligarchy tried to find a solution to the financial problem by creating a new land law. In 1841 the federalists created a new legislation to establish the limits of the communal lands and the terrenos baldios. The government limited the *ejido* [13] of every village to four square leagues. Lands apart from the *ejido* were considered *terrenos baldios* and thus were susceptible to being sold as private property. Another law ordered the payment of a tax for the use of communal lands (Tapia 1985: 220-221).

It can be concluded that even though there were internal conflicts among the Yucatec oligarchy, there was a communion of interests in this sector. This was principally in relation to the political control and dispossession of the subordinated groups. Their policy in relation with these groups was based principally in the development of the municipal process, and also related to their land policy. The result was the political, economical and social control of the Maya communities. The Caste War was a response of the Maya *caciques*, of the eastern part of the peninsula to prevent the loss of their political, social and economic power, as well as to prevent the disruption of the institutions that maintained the autonomy and identity of their communities.

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[13] *Ejido* during the nineteenth century was considered the communal land of a village or town.

Comparison of the Mexican and Canadian Cases.

Canada and Mexico share some similarities in the nineteenth century. For example, both countries were trying to create and consolidate independent nation states. They were also related to the market economy as staple producing countries. However, there were differences in their structures of production. Canada did not base its agro-export enterprises on the creation of *latifundios* owned by an elite and worked with labour force, or debt peonage, as Mexico. On the contrary, Canada was trying to apply the liberal principle of the development of private property and free labour (Watkins 1975). The Canadian government was not interested in transforming the Native population (Indians, Metis and Half-Breeds) into a forced labour pool. They just wanted to push them aside and have control over their lands. The oligarchy in Mexico, on the other hand, based its power on the control of natural resources, principally land and the control of the labour force of the dominated groups (Carmagani 1984).

Both in Mexico and Canada, during the nineteenth century, there was a transformation of the land policy due to the influence of the market economy. In Canada the native population was dispossessed in order to fulfill the liberal ideals of the creation of private property, and of a free labour force, and to establish capitalist commercial agriculture (Watkins 1975). In Mexico the indigenous peasant population was dispossessed in order to create

latifundios that were the economical, social and political basis of the power of the oligarchy. Canada was able to develop capitalist structures even though it did not develop an industrial base of its own. As Mel Watkins (1975) indicates, Canada became a wealthy but dependent country. On the other hand, Mexico did not develop capitalist structures at least in the nineteenth century. The Mexican oligarchy manipulated the liberal ideology in order to gain more power, but the liberal practices and ideals did not respond to the practices of the oligarchy.

The dispossession of the native groups in both countries created the same reaction. These social movements can be considered as antisystemic or anticapitalist. They were responses to the aggressive policies of the dominant sectors that were threatening, not only to dispossess them of their lands, but to a create a complete disruption of their social organization.

Chapter III

Ethnogenesis of the Canadian Metis.

Metis Origins.

One of the principal problems in the study of the Metis is to determine when they emerge as a new ethnic group. Authors such as Stanley (1960) and Morton (1967) emphasize specific historical events as the precise moments when Metis achieved an ethnic consciousness. The historical event that most authors underline as the moment where the Metis constitute a New Nation is the Battle of Seven Oaks in June 1816, when the Metis under the leadership of Cuthbert grant and the patronage of the NWC fought against the establishment of the Selkirk colony and the impositions of the HBC. Later on the Sayer trial (May 1849) would be another event that is taken as the consolidation of Metis identity. Nevertheless, in order to understand the process of ethnogenesis of the Metis we should analyze earlier processes occurring in the Fur Trade Era.

Darcy Ribeiro's (1977: 223) definition of New Peoples will be useful in our understanding of this process of ethnogenesis for the Metis. Ribeiro says that the New Peoples constitute one of the most important cultural and historical characteristics of the Americas. He defines New Peoples as groups that emerge from a relation of domination created by a process of conquest and colonization, and this implies the miscegenation between the

colonizers and the native groups. In Latin America this process of cultural and biological miscegenation created a population defined as *mestizos*. In the long term this group would constitute the dominant sector of the population. In Mexico the ideology and symbolism that characterizes the idea of nationhood is a *mestizo* ideology.

In North America it seems that the process of miscegenation between natives and Europeans was overshadowed by the immigration of Europeans. More importantly, the *mestizo* population never constituted a dominant sector, and the symbols of nationhood in North America do not derive from a *mestizo* culture. On the contrary, mixed-blood populations in North America were marginalized and until 1982, in Canada, they even lacked legal recognition as a separate group (Purich 1988: 174). It is of great importance to understand the processes through which the Metis acquired a proper culture, understanding it principally as the norms and values that regulated their behavior and their composition as a group, and which separated them from the others (Bonfil 1986: 17-19). Equally important were the mechanisms that helped them to maintain the control over these cultural elements. In order to understand this it is necessary to analyze the Fur trade Era and to analyze the French colonial policies in contrast with those of the English.

As stated by Dickason (1985: 21-22), the colonial policy of France was of assimilation of the native population (at least in

North America) and they tried to use this intermixing to consolidate their idea of empire. This policy unwittingly helped to prepare the way for the creation of new ethnic groups such as the Metis and the French-Canadians. France's policy (Dickason 1985: 22), in the seventeenth century was to send small groups of men to intermarry with the native women, creating French nationals overseas. To achieve this the French sought to convert the natives to their Christian practices and to incorporate them into their social organization. On the other hand, when the English were established on Hudson's Bay (1670) they also took native wives, even though English policy did not agree or encourage those practices. Many of these mixed marriages (French/English-Natives) took place a *"la façon du pays "* , or in the native way, without any legal or religious European sanction. More surprisingly is the fact that many Frenchmen were assimilated into native populations. This, of course, was not the original idea of the French government, which tried to stop these marriages when they took place without any control or sanction from the Church.

These intermarriages (Friesen 1987: 67) served other important purposes, specially as they related to the fur trade. A marriage to a native woman implied that the European man could establish kinship relationships that would open for him, and the Company he represented, diplomatic and business ties with the native population. Apart from this, as argued by Foster (1985: 86), native women also provided technical skills that were of great

importance in the fur trade economy. Such skills varied from the preparation of the pelts, the making of clothes and shoes, and the preparation of food such as pemmican.[14] At the same time, for the native woman, a marriage with a European provided her and her kin with access to European goods, and it also gave them political and economical benefits.

Olive P. Dickason (1985) argues that the Fur Trade Era, and the policy of colonization in the Northeast (Quebec), had specific characteristics that enabled the establishment of very good relations between French and Amerindians. This enabled them to develop mutually reinforcing styles of life. French and Amerindians in the Northeast became allies against the English. For Dickason this specific situation discouraged the creation of a separated mixed-blood population in the Northeast. The children of mixed marriages were identified either with the French or with the native population. Dickason (1985: 30) argues that the development of this kind of relationship between the French and the Natives in the Northwest was not possible because the English dominance in the region and this prevented the French from establishing as close ties with their native partners. One should add to this conceptualization that, at least for the eighteenth century in the Northwest, there was a poliethnic system which included several native groups (Cree, Ojibwas,

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[14] Pemmican is dried buffalo meat mixed with suet and berries.

Chipewyans, Blackfoot) as well as French, English, Metis, and English speaking Mixed-Bloods.

Barth's (1969) categorizations are useful for understanding how ethnic distinctions emerge in the Northwest, specially between the mixed-blood populations with respect to the other groups. First of all it would have been necessary to have an organization to categorize the population in exclusive and imperative status categories, together with the idea that the standards applied to a certain category could be very different to those applied to other categories. Each one of these categories will be related to a specific set of norms and values. The establishment of the Met. as a distinct ethnic group began in this situation of contrast and interaction between them and other groups, and was defined when they acquired a normative system that identified them as a distinct entity in relation to the other groups. The competition for resources was also an element of separation between the mixed-blood population, specifically with the Metis and the native population.

The Metis can be categorized as a liminal group, using liminal in a metaphorical way. They are liminal because they are the product of the interactions between two races and two cultures and because they stood in between their two original parent communities. They became intermediaries and brokers. This liminal position enabled them to acquire a specific blend of both cultures and to create their own new proper culture. This

becomes my definition of a syncretic culture. In order to understand Metis identity it is of great importance to understand their syncretic culture. Authors such as Woodcock (1975) define Metis culture as a simple aggregation of elements from the native and European cultures, and usually they concentrate on the material aspects of it; but they do not take into account the reelaboration of the cultural elements to create a different culture. Worst of all, in my viewpoint, they concentrate on the material aspects and they never analyze the ideological aspects of Metis culture. For example, Foster (1985) concentrates his analysis of Metis roots on the economic roles that developed in the Fur Trade era between French-Canadian men and Native women, which later on created the ground for the establishment of a distinct Metis culture, but he does not analyze other syncretic elements. I will try to show that the ideological syncretism is of great importance in order to understand Metis identity.

Metis identity is always identified with their relationship to the North West Company (NWC). As argued by Woodcock (1975: 28), Metis identity was promoted by them when the NWC was challenging the establishment of Selkirk's colony in 1815. It is true that the relationship between this Company and the Metis was of great importance but one can not say that they created Metis identity. What one could say is that the Metis are a byproduct of the Fur Trade. One important feature of Metis identity is the autonomy they acquired in their dealings with the NWC, and later on, with the

Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). As the Metis became a different and independent group they began to displace the natives[15] in their roles as middlemen, hunters and suppliers of pemmican. This autonomy helped the Metis to create a series of common values as well as a particular social organization that made them a distinct group.

The Red River Settlement

In the first half of the nineteenth century there were several factors that consolidated the structure of the Metis as a separate group. The most important one was their establishment at the Red River Settlement. Between 1800 and 1820 there was an increasing competition and violence between the HBC and the NWC. The union of both companies in 1821 put and end to this struggle and created a monopoly (Woodcock 1975: 20). The Red River colony was born from the plan of Lord Selkirk to establish a colony in the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers that would support the establishment of Scottish immigrants. The colony was established in 1812, located in the middle of the provisioning routes of the NWC, and it posed a threat to the existence of this company (Morton 1957: 51-52). Metis settlements, near the colony probably, also felt threatened by its presence. The establishment of the colony was important for the HBC as an instrument to harass the NWC, apart from its role as a settlement for their retired employees and their families. When

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[15]The Natives called the Metis "the free people" (Foster 1985: 81).

the colony was first established the Metis were not against the immigrants and they even helped them, but when the colony's governor, Miles MacDonnell, established a Pemmican Proclamation, that prohibited the exportation of provisions from the district, and also established a series of rules to regulate the Metis buffalo hunt, conflict resulted (Morton 1957: 53).

The threat to the Metis buffalo hunt organization was a crucial factor in the development of a violent reaction. Because it is in the buffalo hunt we find the roots of the social and political organization that characterized the Metis. The buffalo hunt provided the Metis with a separate identity. It was an activity that involved the whole community. It was governed by a series of norms and rules that regulated the activities of the different participants. It also appears as a contrastive activity because, even though the Metis shared a series of native elements in their hunting practices, they developed, at the same time, a whole set of new elements and rules that distinguished their hunting practices from those of the natives. When the resources, specifically the buffalo herds, began to diminish it promoted greater competition for these resources between the natives and the Metis.

Alexander Ross' description of the buffalo hunt (Woodcock 1975: 33), summarizes the organization of this event. He says that ten captains of the hunt were chosen, with one of them was named the great war chief, or head of the camp. In public events this

leader acted as a president. Each of the ten captains had ten soldiers under their command and ten guides were also appointed. The Metis used camp flags that were carried by a guide of the day. While the camp flag was up the guide had control over the camp and he commanded both captains and soldiers. The captains gathered at the end of each day with the elders to hold council, to discuss past events and plan future ones. The list of rules that governed the hunting expeditions were as follows (Woodcock 1975: 34):

1. No buffalo to be run on the Sabbath day;
2. No party to fork off, lay behind or go before;
3. No person or party to run buffalo before the general order;
4. Every captain with his men, in turn to patrol the camp and keep guard;
5. For the first trespass against these laws, the offender to have his saddle and bridle cut up;
6. For the second offence the coat to be taken from the offender's back, and be cut up;
7. For the third offence the offender to be flogged;
8. Any person convicted of theft, even to the value of a sinew, to be brought to the middle of the camp, and the crier to call out his or her name three times adding the word "thief"! at each time.

These norms and values, which regulated the Metis buffalo hunting trips, gave them a sense of unity and identity. More importantly, they gave them control over their lives and their resources. Authors such as Stanley (1960: 11) and Morton (1957: 51) argue that the events that ended in the Battle of Seven Oaks were instigated by the NWC. It appears, however, that the NWC and the Metis united their forces against a common enemy to

protect common interests. I do not believe that the Metis acted merely because they were following orders from the Company. As Friesen (1987: 76-77) says, with the leadership of Cuthbert Grant, a well-educated Metis, and the backing of the NWC, the Metis devised a plan to oppose the growth of the colony and most of all the impositions of their governors. This plan ended in the Battle of Seven Oaks (1816) even though this violent event was not planned by the Metis. From my point of view this event was more a reinforcement of Metis identity than an event that created Metis identity.

The union, in 1821, of the NWC and the HBC established a new era in the fur trade. The Red River settlement became a flourishing and stable community after the union of the companies, and the retiring servants of the company were encouraged to settle in Red River. The composition of the settlement was pluriethnic. It included Scots, French Canadians, Germans, British, Swiss, and an increasing mixed-blood population, Metis and English speaking mixed-bloods. Metis who lived at Pembina followed Cuthbert Grant to establish a settlement at St. François Xavier. As stated by Friesen (1987: 92), in the 1830s the Crees, Assiniboines and Blackfoot were still in control of the northern buffalo hunt and sold great quantities of hides and pemmican to the fur companies. By 1840-1850 the Red River Metis were challenging the Indian hunting and economic activities. They became the principal suppliers of pemmican for the HBC. By the

1860s the competition for plains resources was at its peak and conflict arose between the Indians and the Metis.

The strict regulations imposed by the HBC monopoly were an obstacle to the economic enterprises of the Metis. This situation was complicated by the fact that the majority of the Metis population were regarded (Friesen 1987: 97-98) as a cheap labour force by the Company. Very few Metis were able to become officers, or even to become skilled workers. Without any economic or social incentives, and with a lot of pressures and constraints, the Metis' only option was to threaten the HBC and try to establish a free trade. This does not mean that there were not successful Metis individuals, but the majority of Metis lackedan abundance of social and economic opportunities in the Colony.

The struggle of the Metis against the monopoly of the HBC resulted in a significant event (Woodcock 1975: 52-53), when in 1849 four Metis were arrested (one of them was Pierre Guillaume Sayer) on the charge of illegal trafficking of furs. The Metis organized a self-defence committee and one of their leaders was Louis Riel Sr. The presence of a large number of well-armed Metis resulted in the jury giving a guilty verdict, but with a recommendation for mercy. After the trial, when the Metis knew that their men were free and without any punishment, they assumed that this was a signal that the trade was also free. By the 1840-50s the Metis were active in a wide

variety of economic activities, including farming, freighting, hunting and guiding. The adaptations and transformations of the Metis, as individuals and as a group, seemed to have created the basis for their autonomy. But while the Metis were gaining autonomy and constructing their identity, a social, economical and political transformation was taking place, not only in the Northwest but around the world. This transformation was going to change the course of Metis life.

Space and Territory.

After the unification of the HBC and the NWC many employees were discharged, most of them were Metis and English-speaking Mixed-Bloods. As stated by Woodcock (1975: 29-30), Governor George Simpson recognized this as a problem when he took up his duties in 1822, and he warned his superiors in London that the unemployed mixed-blood population at large represented a peril for the Company. He therefore suggested that this population should be congregated in Red River. There were already missions established by Bishop Provencher in the Red River Valley, principally at St. Boniface and at Pembina, where a small Metis community had been established since 1780. Metis settlements had also appeared south of Fort Garry where the Metis settled in narrow river front lots patterned after the river lot system of seigniorial Quebec. As Mailhot (1986: 2) states it, these holdings provided the Metis with hay-cutting privileges and a wood lot, that supplied the basic needs for fodder to maintain livestock,

and for fuel and building materials. These settlements (Morton 1937: 94) became the Parishes of St. Vital, St. Norbert and St. Agathe. Another group of Metis were established in White Horse Plains under the leadership of Cuthbert Grant, and later the Metis of White Horse Plains established St. François Xavier.

The expression of Metis liminality can be seen in their use of space and their sense of territoriality. As liminal people they were in between a settled life and a wandering life. I will try to define the Metis idea of territoriality in relation with two spaces: the parish and the hunting grounds.

The Red River Settlement can be seen as a congregation of parishes. The parish originated as a settlement established around a mission. For W.L. Morton (1937: 90) the parishes represent natural social units that were recreating a particular way of life. There were Catholic and Protestant (Anglican) parishes, so we can consider these parishes as natural divisions among the French Metis and the English-speaking Mixed-Bloods. As social units the parishes served religious, economic, and political purposes. Although W.L. Morton (1937: 95) says that the parishes did not serve political purposes until 1869, from my view point, the political organization shown in 1869 suggests that the parishes served as elementary political units before this date.

Red River, as Payment argues (1990: 21), was a poliethnic settlement with a majority of mixed-blood population. Both the Metis and the English-speaking Mixed-Bloods had a social stratification. The Metis had well-educated individuals (Payment 1990: 21) such as Cuthbert Grant, Louis Riel Sr., Louis Riel, Louis Schmidt, as well as successful entrepreneurs. The Mixed-Bloods had also well educated and successful individuals and families, such as James MacKay, and the Ross family. But the vast majority of the mixed population were laborers, hunters, traders and freighters. The English-speaking Mixed-Bloods were more assimilated into their English parent community so that a complete alliance with the Metis was never possible. Even though they never completely supported Metis political actions (least of all their armed movement) they never acted violently against them. Although these two communities were separated, because of their different political and social aspirations and different religions, they were nevertheless united by the sharing of a common native ancestry, a similar way of life and sometimes kinship ties, because there were intermarriages between these two populations (Spry 1985) .

For the Metis the parishes represented winter homes and the use of their river lots was only for self-support. The parishes were regarded as places to plan and organize the buffalo hunt. As time passed the parishes became the territorial units where Metis social organization and identity was sustained (Morton 1937: 98). The Metis relationship to the land was through their native

ancestry. This is important because it shows that they recognized the value of their native heritage and their bond with the land. This shows the importance of syncretism in Metis culture. The Metis hunting grounds were a vital part in their conceptualization of space and territoriality, because the buffalo hunt was an activity that gave the Metis a particular social organization as well as the norms and values that created their identity as a different group. If we add to this that the buffalo hunt was the most important economic activity of this group we can understand their attachment to a land base.

Diane Payment (1990: 22) says, that the Metis had different *hivernements*, or wintering camps in the Qu' Appelle Valley, Touchwood Hills, in the vecinity of Wood Mountain, and the Cypress Hills, in what is today Saskatchewan. Their basis of operations until 1870 was the Red River settlement, when permanent settlements were established in those places that used to be wintering camps. Other *hivernements* were placed at Prairie Ronde, Gross Butte, and Petite Ville. In this last site the hunting party guided by Gabriel Dumont established a permanent settlement (1870) on the South Saskatchewan. There was a relationship between hunting grounds and wintering camps, and the later establishment of permanent settlements organized as parishes. In 1871 the parish of St. Laurent was established in Saskatchewan by Father Andre. In the same year a Metis trader opened a store on the eastern shore of the river, and a settlement developed around this store. It was named Batoche, (which was

the name of the Metis that owned the store). In 1881 Batoche became the parish of St. Antoine de Padoua, but the name Batoche clung to the place. In these settlements the Metis established the same system of river lots as in Red River.

The division between wandering life and settlement among the Metis can be separated in their relation to their hunting grounds and parishes. What has not been analyzed is the relation of the Metis to the wilderness and their hunting experiences, and their relationship to the native cosmovision of Man/Nature. We know that Metis culture was syncretic but we know very little about their ideological syncretism. Probably the buffalo hunt was the activity through which the native heritage of the Metis was most clearly expressed. In many aspects the Metis shared the religious practices and cosmovision of their native relatives, probably more in practices related to the wilderness. It will be of great importance in order to understand their syncretic culture to know what were the elements that Metis culture borrowed from their native ancestry and how they reconciled them with the Christian practices of their European ancestry. For example, how they reconcile the opposite cosmovisions of natives and Europeans in the relationship Man/Nature?

J. Baird Callicot (1983) argues that the basic differences in cosmovision in the relation Man/Nature, between Western

European and Native American cultures,[16] are of an ethical and moral character. Callicot's argument is that Native American cultures present an environmental ethic while Western civilizations present an alienation between Man and Nature as well as an exploitative practical relationship towards it (1983: 249). It seems that Native American cosmovisions and religions share a common element, that is a particular relationship between their Gods and their environment. For almost all Native American religions every element of their environment is a living creature with a soul and a power of its own. On the contrary, for western cultures only Man possesses a spiritual soul, and the capacity to generate feelings, perceptions and self-consciousness. Man in this viewpoint is considered the perfect creation, and that is why in this conception men think that everything that surrounds them exists for their own sake. The idea in Native American religions, that everything that surrounds them has a soul, is related to the idea that the Gods created everything. In this respect men are sharing a divine origin with their environment. For Native American religions Man is placed in a horizontal position towards nature, and in such a context human beings assume reciprocal responsibilities and mutual obligations with their environment. In western civilizations Man establishes a vertical position in relation to his environment. In this sense Nature is subordinated to human necessities. These

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[16] Native American cultures will be regarded as all the Native cultures of North America, Mesoamerica and South America.

distinctions have important implications, for understanding the Metis world views.

The Native American view of nature establishes a cooperative symbiosis between human beings and the environment, while for western cultures men establish an unrestrained exploitation of their natural surroundings. Native American religions establish norms and values that regulate their interaction with the other creatures of the environment. Callicot (1983: 249) calls this normative system a land ethic. He says that this land ethic should be understand as the ideal norms and values that regulate behavior, and not as the description of how people really behave. We can find exceptions to these rules and ethical codes and this does not mean that these norms are not functioning any more. For Callicot (1983: 249) examples of occasional destruction of nature, or over exploitation of resources by native populations (like in the Fur Trade Era, or the exploitation of the tropical forests in the Maya Area), do not refute the assertion of a land ethic for these cultures. These events should be situated in the historical contexts of these populations because usually they represent moments of social stress generated by external forces.

An ethical attitude includes sentiments of respect, admiration and love. This generates balanced and reciprocal relationships between Man and Nature. Callicot (1983: 255) says that an ethical attitude should not generate sentiments of fear because in this respect one can suspect that men are acting because of

their selfish sentiments. From my point of view an ethical attitude can contain sentiments of fear for the supernatural powers of natural beings and their wardens. In Mesoamerica people were conscious of their obligations towards their Gods and the wardens of the game and of their *milpas*. They acted with a mixture of respect and fear, and for me this will not be a contradiction of their ethical codes.

In the case of the Metis it is very difficult to state how they combined these opposite cosmovisions. From another perspective they can be seen to present a liminal condition. To a great extent one could say that they shared this Native American land ethic and that this gave them a sense of space and territoriality, but at the same time they present elements of over exploitation and wastage but, as Callicot says, this does not imply the loss of these ethical codes (1983: 249). The relationship between hunting grounds, wintering camps and parishes should be more deeply studied in order to understand the syncretic character of the Metis culture. The same applies to the understanding of their sense of a separate identity and their attachment towards their land.

In the Metis case it was of great importance to analyze their historical background, in order to understand the ethnogenesis of the group. If one considers the Metis as New Peoples (Ribeiro 1977, Peterson and Brown 1985), this is a group that emerged from a relation of domination created by a process of conquest and

colonization, then the study of the development of the group is of great importance. Equally important is to understand the process through which the Metis acquired a proper culture, understanding it principally as the norms and values that regulated their behavior as a distinct group. Their proper culture was a syncretic one, because they took elements from both the Native and French-Canadian cultures, recreating with this a distinct culture of their own.

For the Maya, their historical background, as will be shown in the next chapter, deals with the period after the conquest and colonization which placed them in a position of subordination with respect to the Spaniards. During the colonial period they had to create mechanisms to adapt to this situation. One of these mechanisms was to select certain elements of the dominant culture and to adapt them to their own, what Bonfil (1986: 14) calls an appropriated culture. The appropriated culture was then a syncretic culture, which enabled the Maya to survive as a distinct ethnic group.

Chapter IV

Ethnogenesis of the Colonial Yucatec Maya

Maya Elites.

After the conquest of Yucatan by the Spaniards in 1547 the Spanish colonial regime was established and the Maya population had to adapt to the new ruling system. This was achieved by a Maya elite that created practices and institutions that helped them to adapt to the new system and to preserve their own culture and social organization (Farriss 1984).

Yucatan was a special case in the colonial development because it did not have resources such as mining, or export European crops, on account of the special climate of the peninsula. For this reason the Spaniards were content to live from the product of the Indian labour. The control of their means of production, principally their land, as a result, was left in Maya hands. However the Spanish did establish cattle raising *ranchos*[17] and *estancias*[18] that complemented their diet. This type of agrarian structure allowed the preservation of the autonomy of the Maya communities. This was also possible because of the existence of Spanish indirect rule, that left the local administration and communal well being in the hands of a Maya elite (Farriss 1980:156).

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[17] *Ranchos*: a small rural property.

[18] *Estancias:* cattle raising property.

For Nancy Farriss (1984) this elite constituted the axis of the indigenous autonomy since they represented the community by being the depositories of the communal history and the wardens of cultural patrimony. This elite created a series of strategies that allowed the community to adapt to the new circumstances created by the colony that enabled them to survive culturally. As Farriss (1984) has indicated this elite group was formed by a Maya nobility that survived the conquest. It sustained its privileges, social power and rights because of their recognition by the Maya population and not because of the recognition of the colonial regime. When the conquest was finished (1547) the Spaniards tried to disarticulate and minimize this Maya nobility. They did this by creating the *Cabildos Indigenas* or *Republicas de Indios*,[19] offices that were imposed from the exterior by elections rather than by hereditary privileges (Farriss 1984: 232). The offices of the *Cabildo* allowed the appearance of a native elite from the ranks of the common people which merged with the surviving nobility. This new elite continued as the representative of the community and as defenders of the cultural patrimony. This process was completed in the middle of the sixteenth century.

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[19] *Cabildos Indigenas* or *Republicas de Indios* are colonial institutions that represent the Indian government in the Indian villages, derived from the 1542 "New Laws of Spain".

The Maya elites kept their power by taking control of two overlapping structures: the *Cabildo* and the *Cofradia*[20]. These structures overlapped because the Maya elite occupied offices in both structures, alternately or simultaneously. This demonstrates that the native elites sustained their power in the civil and religious spheres (Farriss 1984: 233). The most important offices, as stated by Farriss (1984), were the the *Maestro Cantor* (Choirmaster), *Patron de la Cofradia* (Patron of the Cofradia), *Batab-Gobernador* (Batab-Governor) and the *Escribano* (Town clerk).

Cajas de Comunidad and Cofradias.

The *caja de comunidad* was a formal Spanish financial institution designed for its colonial Indian communities. This *caja de comunidad* was literally a strongbox, where public funds were kept. This strongbox was to be maintained in a public building of the village under the custody of a fiscal official called the *mayordomo municipal* . The Maya elite created their own version of what a *caja de comunidad* should be. For them it represented a portion of the communal resources that were to be used for the needs of the community (Farriss 1984: 263). From these resources the community paid all their religious and civil taxes, the fiestas (religious celebrations) for the Patron Saint, and any other expenses of the community. These funds were

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[20] *Cofradia:* a religious brotherhood.

supplied by communal labour and with this kind of labour they also cultivated a communal *milpa,* the properties of the *caciques* and other economic and public projects.

During the early seventeenth century there was a struggle between the parish clergy and the Royal officials for the control of community income. The provincial governors became aware of the resources that the *cajas de cofradia* represented and so they transformed the communal revenue into a new tax known as *comunidades* (Farriss 1980: 165). They prohibited the Mayas from paying their religious taxes from the municipal revenues. In this same period the clergy transformed the old religious taxes into a new one called *obvenciones* (obventions)[21] which were independent of the *cajas de comunidad* and of civil control. Apart from paying the *obvenciones* the Maya had to pay for all other religious services.

The elite managed to create another less vulnerable institution apart from the *cajas de comunidad,* the *cofradias.* The *cofradias* were confraternities dedicated to the cult of one or more saints. But the Maya created their own version of this institution by organizing them like the *cajas de comunidad* and they became the symbols of the communities. They were organized around the patron saints and other minor saints, and were established with

[21] Later on this religious tax was one of the alleged motives for the Maya rebelling against the system.

the same organization as the community. This allowed the maintenance of their autonomy as well as the social, political and economical development jointly with the *cabildo.* The *cofradias* were also sustained with collective labour dedicated to the *milpas* of the *cofradia.* This system was created to pay the civil and ecclesiastical taxes and, what was even more important, to pay for the fiestas and rituals dedicated to the patron saints (Farriss 1980: 265). Many of these *cofradias* decided to start a non-traditional enterprise that seemed profitable; through cattle raising (*estancias de cofradia.*). This enterprise was created and managed by the elites who donated a certain amount of money, a *cenote* [22], or cattle, using, of course, communal labour. By the middle of the eighteenth century many of these *estancias* were very prosperous, mostly those situated in the northern and western parts of the peninsula where they were the most numerous. There were other *estancias* de *cofradia* in the eastern part of Yucatan but these were less in number and smaller, and they were mostly dedicated to agriculture (Farriss 1980).

Soon these *estancias* were also coveted by the Spaniards, as were the *cajas de comunidad,* so they began to be attacked by the bishops. The bishops turned their attention to these *estancias* because the great majority, situated in the northwestern corner of the peninsula and close to the centers of colonial power

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[22] *Cenote:* a natural sinkhole.

(Merida and Campeche), were near the developing Spanish and Creole *estancias*. The *estancias de cofradia* of the eastern part were fewer in number and more dependent on traditional sources of income, like apiculture and agriculture, so they were not as affected by the attack of the Spanish regime. The *estancias de cofradia* of the northwest were under the pressure of the Spanish *estancias* at the end of the eighteenth century. The majority of these *estancias* were transformed into ecclesiastical property and auctioned off by the clergy. The loss of these properties was a devastating experience for the Maya communities and for the elite. The Maya elite lost the control over the means that maintained their political, social, religious and economical power. They also lost control over the communal labour force (Farriss 1980: 186-188).

The Maya communities of the northwestern part of Yucatan lost their autonomy because the principal structures of their social organization were damaged. The rituals of the patron saints had been sustained by the *estancias de cofradia*. Without them disappeared the control over a fundamental aspect of their culture: the fiestas of the saints. This does not mean that these rituals disappeared in this part of Yucatan, what disappeared was their autonomy in carrying out these rituals. For the Maya communities the expropriation of these properties was a sacrilegious act, because it meant the loss of income to sustain the fiestas (the wax and other offerings), that helped to assure the continuous help and support of the saints. The consequences

of this loss in the religious sphere were unlimited (Farriss 1980: 192-193).

These expropriations (of community lands and *estancias de cofradia*) coincided with other practices adopted by the Spanish officials, and created the disruption of the Maya ethnic group in two areas. Firstly, because of their loss of autonomy and cultural control at the end of the eighteenth century, the Maya population of the northwestern part of the peninsula was absorbed by the *haciendas* of the dominant sector by the debt peonage system. The other sector of the Maya population, the communities established in the eastern and southern parts of the peninsula and the Indians that migrated from the northwest to this zone, were not similarly affected. These communities were able to maintain the control over their lands, their culture, and their autonomy.

Ethnic Yucatec Maya Identity.

The ethnic identity of the Yucatec Maya was sustained by three principal institutions: their religious, political, and economical organizations. Religion had a dominant place because it established the norms and values that regulated society, and established parameters of behavior. The political structure was supported by the religious structure and interacted with it. Both institutions, as well as their economic organization had, as their symbolic and material basis, the land. This is why the alienation

of the *estancias de cofradia* and of communal lands, at the end of the eighteenth century, created a breakdown of the social organization of the northwestern Maya communities.

The Maya elites recreated institutions like the *cajas de comunidad* and the *cofradias* to support communal identity and autonomy. As indicated by Bonfil (1986) the actions and decisions that characterize cultural control are generally made by mechanisms of representation or systems of privilege that are culturally accepted and that give a person or a group of persons the faculty of taking decisions of collective interest, as in the case of the Maya elites.

In the eighteenth century the dominant sector attacked not only the institutions organized by the Maya elite (*cajas de comunidad and cofradias*), they also attacked their political structure (*Cabildos or Republicas de Indios*) which resulted in a diminishment of their political authority, the loss of control over public revenues, as well as the incapacity to defend the communal patrimony. As a consequence of these processes the Maya population of the northwestern part of the peninsula began to lose control over the material and symbolic elements that sustained their culture, becoming more subordinated to the dominant sector. The loss of their communal lands and *estancias de cofradia* made them more dependent on the Spanish and Creole

haciendas, and many became *arrendatarios*[23] and *jornaleros*[24],
while others became *peones acasillados*[25]. This produced a
gradual loss of their autonomy and also of their identity. The
peones acasillados were the most subordinated and dependent
sector (Farriss 1984; Patch 1991).

Jose A. Güemez (1991) points out that cattle rustling was a kind
of social resistance used by the the Maya of the northwestern
part of Yucatan during the nineteenth century, against
encroaching commercial agriculture. Güemez sees this practice
as a survival strategy and a form of social protest. Although I
agree with him up to a certain point, his data shows the lack of
communal autonomy and of political organization of the Maya
population of the northwestern part of Yucatan. This was
because cattle rustling appeared as an activity organized by
individuals, and not by the whole community. I agree that cattle
rustling is a kind of social protest used in opposition to the
dominant sectors, but in this case it does not appear as a
communal strategy of survival or communal cultural control. It
represents the struggle of certain individuals against the
dominant system.

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[23] *Arrendatario:* person that rents a piece of land in a hacienda.

[24]*Jornalero:* a person that can be or not a permanent agricultural
worker in the *hacienda.*.

[25] *Peones acasillados:* peons bound in servitude to a creditor.

Güemez shows that the forms of social protest in the peninsula were substantially different from the northwest to the eastern parts, and this could be seen as a basic difference between both Maya populations. The southeastern part of the Peninsula became a zone of refuge for many Mayas that fled from the pressures of the dominant sector and of the system of peonage. This population was integrated into Maya communities already established there. These communities maintained a relationship of subordination by means of the political and economical mechanisms established by the Creole dominant sector, principally the fiscal system. Another sub-group within the Maya population were the *Uites*[26], who became established in these refuge zones for a long time. They were completely apart from the dominant system, keeping their autonomy and identity. However, very little is known of this group because there are very few sources for their study.

The Maya can be regarded as part of the peasantry with the exception of the *peones acasillados* and the *Uites*. The characterization of peasantry that I will use is based in the conceptualizations of Eric Wolf (1987) and Gilberto Gimenez (1987)[27]. As part of the peasantry these indigenous populations

[26] *Uites* (literally from the Maya) people from the mountain, or people who used loincloths. They were considered even by the peasant Maya communities as "uncivilized".

[27] Gimenez (1987: 45) in Lara (1988: 17).

maintained their individual or collective control of means of production. For Wolf (1987) the peasant category includes the peasants who rent a piece of land (*arrendatarios*) as well as the ones that own a property, and laborers who are in a position of making important decisions in the way they cultivate their lands. Wolf does not include fishermen or laborers without land (*peones*). Peasant production is oriented towards a direct consumption and subsistence and not to direct accumulation. There is a predominance of the domestic group that constitutes the fundamental structure of the economical and social organization of the community. The peasantry maintains an economic system that tends to be self-sufficient, and also maintains relationships with the dominant sector by the establishment of market relations. This relationship with the dominant sector is asymmetric because surplus is transferred to the dominant sector by the fiscal system.

The *Uites* were not of the peasantry because they were not subject to relationships of domination/subordination. The *Uites* participated in the Caste War because they felt that their autonomy was being threatened, but the leadership of the movement remained in the hands of the Maya peasant elites. The non-participation of the *peones* in the movement was due to their great dependency upon the dominant Spanish and Creole sectors, and because of their fear of losing everything. As Farriss (1984: 384) argues, the neo-colonial *haciendas* can be considered as recreations of the Maya communities under another name,

because they had a Maya population and each estate had its own chapel, patron saints, and fiestas. However the *haciendas* lacked the autonomy and cultural control which characterized the community structure.

I regard the Maya rebels as part of the peasantry even though they momentarily broke up the relation of domination/subordination. This rupture corresponds to a liminal phase when the Maya realized one of the greatest aspirations of the peasantry: to end the domination which took away their surplus and threatened their autonomy. To understand the Caste War it is necessary to analyze the two structures by which the ethnic group maintained their autonomy and their identity: the cult to the Patron Saints and their relationship with the *estancias de cofradia,* the political structure and the role of the Maya elites.

Deities and Patron Saints.

Since prehispanic times the Maya cosmovision depended on a series of divinities who controlled the universe. It was a religion with a retributive character, because the favours the gods gave to the faithful were only given if they met the punctual observance of the rituals. The prehispanic Maya gods cannot be considered as good or bad[28]. We can only state their

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[28] With the exception of the gods of the underworld that were considered malignant.

favorable or negative aspects in relation to human beings. In the *Relaciones Geográficas de Yucatán* we find the description of the relationship between the Maya and their divinities. One of these documents (De la Garza, 1983, I: 270) states that the Yucatec Maya worshipped a great variety of gods, including stones, trees and clay figures. They performed sacrifices of animals and human beings to please their gods in order to achieve good luck during war, to have good health, good crops, as well as for good luck in their fishing and hunting trips. The relationship between the Maya communities and their natural and supernatural worlds was based on harmony, established by the continuous practice of ceremonies and rituals which maintained an equilibrium. Because agriculture was their principal activity one could assume that the deities of greatest importance were those related to this activity. These were the deities which controlled the natural resources such as the earth and water.

After the Spanish conquest the Spaniards attempted to suppress the Maya public rituals which collectively linked the Maya with the supernatural world. These public rituals were directed by the Maya nobility in prehispanic times and they helped to assure the cosmic order and the well being of the communities, as well as the power and prestige of the nobility. With the imposition of Christianity the Maya faced a serious conflict because the Christian God did not allow the worship of other gods. Therefore, for the Maya to attend to their gods implied many risks, but to

not worship them implied even more risks. During the colonial period we find evidence of a great number of cases of idolatry and apostasy in the converted Maya villages (Clenndinen 1987). Many of the indigenous rebellions in Mexico during the colonial period were supported by the prehispanic religion (Barabas 1976, Bricker 1981).

The loss of public rituals was solved by a syncretism effected between the Maya deities and the Spanish saints. The Maya community elites centered their public rituals in relation to these deities in such a way that elements of both religions became united. The patron saints occupied the role of the Maya principal gods, and they assumed many of their characteristics and functions. It seems that the Maya did not participate in the decision of being under the tutelage of a certain saint, this decision was taken by the friars (Farriss 1984). For the Maya communities the most important thing was the establishment of a certain patron saint. This allowed the continuation of public festivities and celebrations throughout the year. The Maya deities were easily linked to the Catholic saints because of a similarity of characteristics or attributes, for example Black Christs (*Señor de Chalma, Señor de Esquipulas*) are related in Mesoamerica to black indigenous deities. This type of syncretism was useful to both the Maya and the Spaniards, because for the Maya it allowed them to continue with their public rituals and to create institutions such as the *cofradias*. For the Spanish friars it was a good tactic in attracting the

native population to the Christian beliefs by re-using the places of prehispanic cults and by replacing their deities with Spanish saints.

In Yucatan, many of the Christian saints were related with Maya deity figures, such as *Bacabes, Chaacs and Pauahtunes,* and also linked with the four cardinal points and their correspondent colors:

> También estan mencionados estos en los escritos de Granado de Baeza (1813) cura de Yaxcaba (1845) donde los llama Pahahtuns, dice que son divinidades de la lluvia, relacionadas con las direcciones y los colores del mundo, y para entonces ya se habian identificado con Santo Domingo (este), San Gabriel (norte), Santiago (oeste) y X-Kan Le Ox "Señora Hoja de Ramón Amarillo", alias María Magdalena (sur) . (Thompson 1982: 311)[29]

The patron saints became the wardens and protectors of the Maya communities. As the supporters of communal identity their role was reinforced by the rituals. These patron saints can also be considered as liminal deities because of their interstructural position as intermediaries between the communities and the supernatural world. The idea of a single Supreme being was not a

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[29]In the documents written by the priest Granado de Baeza (1813), who was priest of the town of *Yaxcaba* (1845), it is stated that the *Pauahtunes* who were Maya deities of the rain and were associated to the colors and directions of the world, were in the nineteenth century merged with Catholic saints. The *Pauahtunes* were identified with St.Dominic (east), St. Gabriel (north), St. James (west) and *X-Kan Le Ox* "Lady Yellow Leaf of the Ramon" [*Brosimun alicastrum*] or Mary Magdalene (south).

Maya held concept and the Christian view of omnipotent beings did not play a relevant role in Maya religious practices or communal rituals.

Patron Saints and Ritual.

As indicated by Victor Turner, patron saints can be considered as dominant symbols, because of the position they occupy in a ritual. Turner (1967: 19) defines a ritual as "a prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers". Turner divides ritual into two classes: one, that provides a series of redressive and regulative institutions to correct deviations from customarily prescribed behavior; and two, rituals that anticipate deviations and conflicts, and it is in these that we have the cyclical and life-crises rituals (1967: 45) . The time period when the ritual takes place is not a normal, time for the community. It represents a period that breaks the everyday routine, it represents a sacred time.

Since the establishment of the Yucatan colony the most important public rituals for the Maya were the rituals of the patron saints. Since the fusion of the principal Maya deities and the saints the latter were not considered as invariably good mystical beings. To achieve their favours and protection what was required was a punctual performance of rituals, principally the fiesta of the patron saint. Evon Z. Vogt (1983) has pointed

out that the ritual has a primarily function of communication, and he points out that there are two kinds of rituals: verbal and non verbal. The merging of these two types of rituals constitutes a communicative behavior that serves to perpetuate essential knowledge for the survival of a culture. What the ritual communicates is the essential contents for the ordering of life in society. With the performance of a ritual, the norms and values, as well as the ideas that cannot be perceived directly, are made visible and tangible. As Mary Douglas (1973) says, a ritual is mostly an intent to create and perpetuate a specific culture.

The rituals that the Maya developed around their patron saints maintained the cohesion and the identity of the communities because they established the bonds of reciprocity and alliances inside the group. Ritual banquets played a principal role in these ceremonies. The food involved was seen as a gift given and received by the divinities. This is specially applicable in relation to maize. The Maya communities centered all their efforts to support and maintain the rituals of the saints. The shared effort to keep their relationships with the saints gave them a sense of a social cohesion. Annual fiestas to honor the patron saints were the most important and ambitious public rituals for the Maya (Farriss 1980,1984).

The patron saints will be considered in this analysis as dominant symbols. As Turner states, "the symbol is the smallest unit of

ritual which still retains the specific properties of ritual behavior; it is the ultimate unit of specific structure in a ritual context." (1967: 19). Symbols are part of the social processes and because of this the ritual symbols became triggers for social action. This characteristic of the ritual symbols will be of great importance in order to understand the development of social movements such as those of the Maya and the Metis. Every ritual also has its senior or dominant symbol (1967: 22). These kinds of symbols are not considered as simple means to perform the ritual, they represent and express values that are regarded as ends in themselves. They represent axiomatic values. Dominant symbols became focuses of interaction causing the mobilization of groups around them, as well as the celebration of rituals and other symbolic activities that are centered in them. In the Maya and Metis cases the symbols of the Talking Cross and St. Joseph became the dominant symbols that were used by the Maya and Metis leaders in order to give cohesion and strength to their movements.

The participants in a ritual represent components of the social system that relate with the dominant symbols in a corporate way, that is, as families, lineages, groups by sex and groups by age. The patron saints can be considered as dominant symbols because they represent and express the axiomatic values of the Maya group which support their identity and autonomy. The Maya elites established institutions such as the *cofradias* that were centered around the saints and supported the whole social

structure. The *estancias de cofradia* were not only the material basis to support the rituals of the patron saints, the land was considered as a sacred symbol itself, which was given by the divinities. Its loss, or alienation, was regarded not only as a material loss but primarily as a sacrilege. For the Maya their land was linked to their lineages, their ancestors and divinities; it was the element that supported a reciprocal relationship between men and the divinities. The Maya communities which were able to keep their *estancias de cofradia,* and the rituals of the patron saints in an autonomous way, were the ones which were able to maintain their autonomy and identity, and were the ones that were able to rebel when their social structure was threatened.

Chapter V

The Metis and Maya Resistance Movements.

Instead of a detailed description of the military aspects of these social movements I will concentrate on the causes which developed them, as well as the demands and aspirations of both ethnic groups. These social movements were long term social processes which can not be understand if they are seen merely as spontaneous historical events. The movements can be analyzed, as Turner (1974, 1982) suggests, as a series of social dramas. The analysis of the movements as social dramas is in relation to the moment when the crises began, because even though social movements are long term social processes there is a point when conflict arises, and it is in relation to the development of this crises that the concept of social drama is most useful.

The Red River Metis Resistance 1869-70.

The Metis resistance of 1869 was a social process which had its origins in the 1850's when Canada and the United States turned their interests towards the Canadian West. Both countries were trying to expand their frontiers to develop agriculture for export. The ambitions of the Canadians made it evident that the Hudson's Bay Company commercial monopoly and political rule could not last much longer (Morton 1957: 109-111). By 1857 the commercial monopoly and political

rule of the Hudson's Bay Company began to be threatened. The territory which was governed by the Company was composed of three parts: the Colony of Vancouver, the Pacific Slope, and the Indian Territory which included Rupert's Land. The increasing interest in the Northwest created an influx of gold seekers and immigrants into this territory (Morton 1965: 3-5). By the end of the 1850's the buffalo hunt was deteriorating in the Red River area and the Metis realized that, in the new order of agriculture settlement, land would acquire great value. Most of the Metis settlers were squatters, their claim to their lands was based on tradition and occupation of Rupert's Land (Woodcock 1975: 74). The Hudson's Bay Company had never extinguished the Indian title to the land, this was only done for the strip of land granted to Lord Selkirk. As of 1860 the Metis began to discuss their rights with respect to their lands and the way to obtain legal titles for them (Morton 1957:105).

The annexation of the Northwest was a demand of Upper Canada and its Reform or Clear Grit (Liberal) Party. During the 1850's Upper Canada was experimenting an economic boom which created a scarcity of land and the need for expansion. Some in Lower Canada opposed to the annexation of the Northwest, fearing it could give too much power to Upper Canada. The colonies of British North America needed to find a common basis of unification which would enable them to annex the Northwest to the federation without altering the equilibrium by which they united. It was not until the July 1,1867, that

four of the British Colonies of North America were united to create the Dominion of Canada (Morton 1957: 107-108). The establishment of the Dominion of Canada made possible the annexation of the Northwest. The Canadian government was now in a position to end the Hudson's Bay Company's control of Rupert's Land. Canada purchased Rupert's Land and the North West Territory from the Company for 300,000 pounds in cash; but neither the Company nor the Canadian government consulted the people of the Northwest about the transaction. They never gave any assurance to the people in the Northwest that their land titles were going to be guarantieed or that self-government was going to be established (Morton 1957: 117).

Analyzing this resistance as a social drama it could be said that this event (transaction between the Company and the Canadian government) established the breakdown of the normal social relationships between the dominant group and the Metis. It was not only the fear of loosing individual possession of their lands that drove the Metis against the Canadian government, principally it was the fear of loosing their land conceived as a territory, which supported their whole social organization. The nuclei of the Metis social organization were the parishes which were the social, political, economical, and religious units of Metis society (Morton 1937; Mailhot 1986).

The Metis were not opposed to the transaction between the Company and the Canadian government but they were against the attitude of the Canadian government, of ignoring the rights of the people of the Northwest. This situation was aggravated by some Canadian immigrants who arrived at Red River during the 1860's and supported the annexation of the Northwest to Canada. They were called the Canadian Party and their leader was Dr. John Christian Schultz. Their attitude towards the people of the colony, and specifically towards the Metis, was very hostile. Many of them wanted to make a profit by speculating with the lands of the colony (Mailhot 1986: 14). On July 1869 Tourond, a Metis leader from St. Norbert parish, called a meeting to discuss the activities of the Canadians in the colony. He was elected as president and Jean Baptiste Lepine, from St. Norbert, was elected as secretary. Tourond was elected to organize a system of mounted patrols to defend the Metis lands from speculators. The territory which the Metis considered as theirs, was what is now South Central Manitoba (Mailhot 1986: 17-18).

The traditional community leaders of the Metis began organizing the resistance against the unjust attitude of the Canadian government. The Metis leaders needed a principal figure to give unification and strength to the movement, and it was in this moment that Louis Riel appeared as their leader. He was supported by the French-Canadian priests, Rev. Georges Dugas and principally by Rev. N. J. Ritchot, curé of St. Norbert

(Mailhot1986: 25). The French-Canadian clergy was deeply identified with the Metis resistance, and they were very much involved in the movement. The organization of the Metis was political and military, based on the model of organization of the buffalo hunt. The first step taken by the Metis was to stop the Dominion surveyors, not only from doing surveys on individual lots, but also most importantly on the territory which the Metis considered reserved for them as a group.

When it was announced that William McDougall had been made Lieutenant-Governor of the North West Territory and that he was going to put into practice the transfer of authority from the Company to Canada, the Metis decided to stop McDougall from entering into the colony. A Metis National Committee was elected, with John Bruce as President and Louis Riel as Secretary. The Metis built a barricade which closed the Pembina trail and they sent a message with an armed party to the border, to command McDougall to leave the territory. With this action the Metis intended two things: first to prevent the Canadian Party which had McDougall's support from seizing control over Red River, and to delay the transfer until the people of the Northwest established negotiations with Canada (Morton 1957: 122).

The Canadian party reacted by organizing a force to overthrow the Metis National Committee. In this struggle between the Metis and the Canadian Party, Upper Fort Garry represented as

a strategic goal because of its position and supplies. The side that seized the fort would certainly have more chances to succeed in establishing their program. The Metis, with their better military organization, seized the fort on November 2nd, and with this action they secured their military and political position on Red River (Morton 1957: 123-124). Since the principal concern of the Metis was to obtain acceptable terms of entry into confederation they needed to unite Red River settlement, that is to reach an agreement between the English-speaking and French-speaking populations. The Metis National Committee had to be transformed into a Provisional Government with a civil character in order to negotiate with Canada. Riel invited the population of Rupert's Land to send representatives, (one from each parish and two from the town of Winnipeg) to meet with the President of the Metis National Committee. Twelve French-speaking and twelve English-speaking delegates gathered at a convention in Fort Garry. On December 1869 the Metis prepared a first Bill of Rights which was presented to the English delegates and the Provisional Government was established on December 27, 1869 with Riel acting as president. In the meantime Schultz and the Canadian Party were preparing to oppose Riel and the Metis but the latter surrounded them and make them prisoners (Morton 1957: 125-126).

At this point the Canadian government sent several commissioners to investigate what terms would satisfy the

people of the North West. One of these commissioners was Donald A. Smith, who presented the Canadian government assurances of liberal treatment to the colony at a mass meeting which was held in the court yard of Fort Garry. Riel proposed that a Convention of twenty-five English-speaking delegates and twenty-five French-speaking delegates should meet to discuss Smith's message. The Convention drew a second list of rights which was accepted by Smith, who invited the Convention to choose delegates to go to Ottawa to negotiate the list of rights with the Canadian government (Stanley 1960: 110-111). Riel proposed the creation of a new Provisional Government, with representatives from both the English and French populations. Riel was elected as President and James Ross was made Chief Justice. The delegates that were nominated to go to Ottawa were Father Ritchot, Judge Black and Alfred H. Scott (Mailhot 1986: 65). Riel announced that the prisoners (from the Canadian Party) were going to be released but some of the members of the Canadian Party decided to liberate the prisoners by violent means. The actions of the Canadian Party pushed Riel to rely again on the military organization of the Metis to oppose the members of the Canadian Party, whose members were imprisoned again by the Metis The execution of one of the members of the Canadian Party, Thomas Scott, who was sentenced by a Metis martial court, served as a symbol to deny recognition and an amnesty to the principal Metis leaders (Stanley 1960: 105).

The delegates who were sent to Ottawa left Red River on March 23 had a third list of rights drawn up by the Provisional Government. In this new list the admission of the Northwest as a province was requested rather than as a territory of Confederation, with a governor that would be bilingual (French-English), and a general amnesty. Afterwards a fourth list was prepared, probably by instigation of Bishop Tache, which added a request for a senate and for denominational schools. Some very important items on these lists were that all the properties, rights, and privileges enjoyed by the people of the province were to be respected on entering into Confederation, and that the arrangement and confirmation of all customs, usages and privileges would be on the hands of the local legislature. The local legislature of the province was to exert full control over all the public lands of the province and the right to amend all acts or arrangements made in relation to these public lands (Stanley 1960: 110-113).

Of the three delegates that were sent to Ottawa Father Ritchot was the only one who struggled to obtain a confirmation of the principal items of the List of Rights. He told the representatives of the Canadian government that a general amnesty was a fundamental condition to the establishment of an agreement. He received positive responses to this condition, which were never fulfilled (Mailhot 1986: 97). Throughout the entire negotiations the representatives of the Canadian government manipulated the situation, adjusting the

law to their own convenience. The Northwest was accepted as a new province but it was to be a minuscule province which only consisted of the old district of Assiniboia, and later on was enlarged with the inclusion of the Portage settlement. The public lands of the new province were to be controlled by the Federal government, to construct railways and to create land for settlement. This policy was contrary to Canadian precedents, because the other four provinces of Confederation had the control of their public lands. Ritchot protested against the denial of provincial control over the public lands, and since the Canadian government refused to give this control, Ritchot proposed that a compensation should be given to the residents of the province (Mailhot 1986: 99-101).

The Canadian government was finally forced to offer 1,400,000 acres of land to be allotted in reserves to the unmarried children of the Mixed-Blood population. The claims were going to be taken by individuals who were free to select their land in any part of the province. Ritchot believed that in this way the Metis would be able to maintain their farming plots as well as their plots for hay and wood (Mailhot 1986: 107-108). The Canadian government agreed to a series of requests which later were changed in the Manitoba Act. For example, the delegates asked for a recognition of all the properties and rights of the people in the province while the government was only willing to recognize the titles given by the Hudson's Bay Company. It also changed the procedure to

distribute the Metis land reserve and the authority which was going to supervise the distribution. The purpose of the Canadian government was to undermine the parish organization of the settlement, because they knew that the parishes were the social, political, economical and religious units of the Metis (Mailhot 1986: 129-130).

As Mailhot (1986) indicates, these changes were great blows for the Metis because the arrangements which Ritchot had reached with the government could enable the Metis to expand their communities based on their river front system. Also, they could have been able to divide their plots in relation to their individual and communal needs. It was supposed that the ratification of this arrangement would take place under the control of a local government which the Mixed-Blood population thought it was going to dominate at least for some years. The amendments done to the Manitoba Act, by the Canadian government, were aimed towards the dispossession of the Mixed-Blood population, as well as to deprive them of their rights, and to undermine their social organization.

Even though Father Ritchot and Bishop Tache were assured that an amnesty was going to be granted by the Crown at the moment of the proclamation of the Manitoba Act, this was never done and the Metis were deprived from the only leader who was able to deal with the government. The Manitoba Act was proclaimed on July 15 1870, and with this event the legal

existence of the province of Manitoba began. During 1870 an influx of settlers from Ontario began to arrive to the new province, creating an imbalance of the population. And soon the French-speaking population became a minority in their own country. Without the legal means to protect their property and their rights, and without their principal leaders to support them, some of the Metis began to withdraw to Saskatchewan (Morton 1957: 148-150). It can be said that even though the Metis tried to negotiate with the Canadian government to stop the crises, created by the transfer of the territory, the redressive mechanisms which were undertaken by the Metis were futile because of the manipulation which the government made of the laws. As Father Ritchot stated:

> When the Hon. Ministers took so much
> pains to frame the clauses of the
> Manitoba Act, was it their intention,
> then to add [a] few words to the phrases
> which would later deprive the Manitoba
> settlers of their rights? (Mailhot 1986:
> 121)

The deprivation that the Metis suffered, not only of their lands but also of their political and social rights, as well as the support of their leaders, created the conditions for the development of a new social drama between the Metis that were settled in Saskatchewan and the Canadian government.

The Metis Rebellion of 1885.

The Metis from Red River had already established wintering camps, since the 1850's, in the Saskatchewan River Territory. In the 1860's Metis from St. François Xavier and from other parishes of Red River established winter camps at Prairie Ronde, Grosse Butte and Petite Ville on the west bank of the South Saskatchewan River (Payment 1990: 22). It was at this last site where the hunting party led by Gabriel Dumont was settled in 1870, and where Petite Ville became the center of the St. Laurent Settlement (Woodcock 1975: 78). After the events in Manitoba, during the 1870's, there was an exodus of Metis that left Manitoba to go to the South Saskatchewan River area. They left Manitoba because the Manitoba Act did not grant the means to keep their social organization nor their rights or property. With Riel in exile they lacked of a political figure that could give cohesion to begin a new movement to oppose the government's actions. The situation in Manitoba not only affected the common Metis, but also affected those Metis who had a good social position in Red River. For example Metis with good positions such as Louis Schmidt, Charles Nolin, Michel Dumas, and Maxime Lepine left Red River to settle in Batoche during 1882 (Woodcock 1975: 85).

During the 1870's there was almost no local government in the Northwest Territories. Under these circumstances the Metis party under Gabriel Dumont's leadership decided to use the

model of organization of the buffalo hunt to create a local government. In 1873 the Metis of the South Saskatchewan gathered at St. Laurent to discuss the creation of a local government. Gabriel Dumont was elected as President and a council was also appointed. This council was made up of members of the Metis leading families. The council established twenty eight basic laws which dealt principally with judicial, military, civil and administrative matters of the settlement (Woodcock 1975: 96-97). By 1874 the possession of their land became a matter of great importance and it became a source of conflict even among the Metis, so the Council of St. Laurent also established land regulations. The river front system, with its two mile of hay and wood privileges, was the basis of the landholding in St. Laurent. New regulations were also established with respect to the buffalo hunt, because of the disappearance of the herds.

It is clear that by the early 1870's the Metis of the South Saskatchewan were worried about the legal possession of their lands, and they also wanted to have representation on the governing body of the Territories. In 1878 Gabriel Dumont presided at a meeting in St. Laurent where the Metis drew up a petition, to the Federal government, demanding scrip and land grants as well as agriculture assistance. They also demanded to have representation on the Council of the Territories. Other Metis communities followed St. Laurent's example and they also sent petitions on the same issues (Woodcock 1975: 121-

123). The Metis communities kept sending petitions to the Canadian government to have their lands surveyed under the river front system and to achieve legal titles for them. Although the Metis tried to acquire their political and social rights by legal means, since the 1870's, the Canadian government did not undertake any measures to redress their grievances.

It was at this point that another social drama began because of these transgressions to the normative system. The Metis decided to put pressure on the Canadian government and after several meetings it was decided to send for Riel, who was living in Montana, so he could represent them. One of the individuals involved in the plan to bring Riel back into Saskatchewan was Charles Nolin (who was against Riel during the events of 1869 in Manitoba) who seems to have written the letter to Riel to encourage him to participate in the agitation of 1884-5:

> You must expect conflicts from the manner in which the Government treats the people of the N.W and you must know better than ourselves what is going on in this part of the country. I therefore do not speak to you of all the injustices and the manner in which the Government treats us all as well as the Indians.[30]

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[30] Provincial Archives of Manitoba (hereafter PAM), copies of English translations of rebel papers captured at Batoche in May 12, 1885 by Cap. George H. Young. Riel Papers Number 623, Letter Number 18, page. 3. From Charles Nolin (?) to Louis Riel, May 18, 1884.

In the letters addressed to Riel, asking him for help to defend the South Saskatchewan Metis, it is constantly stated that the ultimate causes of the agitation were the injustices, the unfulfilled promises, and the lack of interest of the government on the Metis claims and rights:

> For ten years they [the Metis] have employed the means of petition it was I suppose a ridiculous matter to the Government with Acts of Parliament and solemn acts of guarantees, all was a farce, the honor of Parliament, the honor of Government have been trampled under foot when there was a question of justice to the poor Half-Breeds.[31]

> This province has an arbitrary government which harasses the poor Half-Breed Nation even unto its homogeneity. Its dearest rights are completely disregarded. It is ill-treated as a slave; it is degraded till all its merit is lost in nothingness. Moreover these are things which you [Riel] have long known yourself.[32]

The arrival of Riel into Saskatchewan gave even more cohesion to the agitation, but he insisted on moderation and to resort to legal means in order to achieve their rights. At the same time

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[31]PAM, Riel Papers Number 623, Letter18, page 3. From Charles Nolin (?) to Louis Riel, May 18, 1884.

[32] PAM, Riel Papers Number 623, Letter 19, 4-5 pp. From (?) to Louis Riel, May 20, 1884.

other groups were discontent with the situation in the Northwest (Stanley 1960: 297-298). The English Half-Breeds and the White settlers seemed to support the claims of the Metis, but their support ended when the Metis decided to recourse to violent means. The Indians also were in a desperate situation and some of them decided to support the Metis rebellion, principally among the Crees and the Sioux near Batoche. But there were a lot of divisions among the different tribes, and even among them, and the Metis, so their participation was not very fruitful (Dempsey 1984).

The Metis demands in 1884 were: to obtain the status of a province for Saskatchewan, a responsible government, the resurvey of their lands and legal titles, as well as an official recognition of Louis Riel as their leader, and his incorporation to the territorial council or the Canadian Senate. The French-Canadian clergy of Saskatchewan supported the Metis in their legal claims, but when the movement became more radical and violent the clergy began to oppose the Metis leaders and specially Riel (Payment 1990: 152-153).

Riel began to use a series of symbols to unite the Metis and to reinforce their ethnic identity. He promoted the idea of a patron saint for the Metis, and he chose St. Joseph as the patron saint of the Metis and St. John the Baptist as a second protector. Saint Joseph's day became the National Day for the Metis; and the St. Joseph Society was founded to promote the

norms and values of the Metis society, their religious beliefs and their political ideals. A flag was also created. It had a white background with the Banner of Our Lady of Lourdes attached to it (or other religious images). A National Hymn was also composed, which had a religious and political character (Payment 1990: 154-156).

In 1885 the Metis repeated the same demands but their position was becoming more radical. They drafted a new petition which they sent to the government, but the government's reply included the non-recognition of Riel as the leader of the Metis, and a complete lack of commitment. On March 18 a provisional government was created in Saskatchewan, with Pierre Parenteau elected as President, Philippe Garnot as Secretary, and Gabriel Dumont as Adjunctant-General. Riel did not want to have any office in the provisional government, but he suggested that the council should be named Exovedate, and its members Exovedes, which means "one of the flock" (Flanagan 1979: 138). The term Exovedate, in Riel's conceptualization, meant that the provisional government was not assuming authority and that their only purpose was to defend themselves from an unjust and improper government. At this point the Metis were convinced that the only way to achieve their rights was by violent means, as expressed by the following document:

> Dear Kinsmen and Friends; If you have
> not heard them, you will hear the
> reasons which induce us to take up
> arms. You know that from time
> immemorial, our Fathers at the risk of
> their life, defended this country which
> was theirs and which is ours. The
> Ottawa Government seized on our
> country. For 15 years it has mocked at
> our rights and offended God by heaping
> us a thousand injustices.[33]

Even though Riel supported an armed rebellion it seems that his principal idea was to threaten the Canadian government by taking hostages and by showing a display of military organization. He kept restraining Gabriel Dumont's plans to establish a guerrilla warfare. The first armed conflict took place at Duke Lake on March 26 1885, between a party of Metis led by Gabriel Dumont, and a party led by Superintendent Crozier and the Prince Albert volunteers. This first battle ended as a victory for the Metis. The government's response was to send a Canadian expeditionary force commanded by General Middleton. Gabriel Dumont and the Metis forces were planning a strategy of guerrilla warfare which was stopped by Riel. He argued that the Metis forces could not be divided to practice this kind of strategy. Dumont did not oppose Riel because he was sure that God would help him (Woodcock 1975: 179-180).

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[33] PAM, Riel Papers Number 623, Doc. Number 126, page 45.

The last battle was fought at Batoche. Following Riel's prophetic revelations, the Metis concentrated all their forces at Batoche even though they knew they were not well prepared for this kind of siege warfare. The Metis leaders knew their situation was critical, but they did not want to oppose Riel whom they considered a prophet. The Metis built their defences by constructing rifle pits and trenches. They were able to stop the Canadian army for three days, but finally on May 12, 1885 the Canadian army entered into Batoche.[34] Riel fled to the surrounding woods, but he finally surrendered on May 15. As he stated, he was going to fulfill God's will. He like Jesus, had walked a *Via Crucis,* was betrayed (by Charles Nolin and other Metis who testified against him), and finally he became a martyr and hero of his people, thus becoming a symbol of the Metis identity and their struggle.

The Caste War of Yucatan, 1847-49.

The origins of this movement emerged from the economic, political and social transformations which took place in Yucatan from the end of the eighteenth century until the middle of the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, after the independence of Mexico from Spain, there were a

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[34] For a more detailed description of the military events of 1885 see, Woodcock (1975) and Beal and Macleod (1984).

series of transformations which created a recomposition of the dominant sector or oligarchy, and which broke the normative system which was regulating the relationships between the different sectors of the oligarchy and between this group and the subordinated groups. This situation created several social dramas at the national and regional levels. By the middle of the nineteenth century the Yucatec oligarchy began to exert more pressure over the Maya population. because of their political and economic interests. In the 1830's and 1840's there is a definition of the social, political and economic policies of the oligarchy. With the development of the process of municipalization the oligarchy exerted a greater political and economic domination over the Maya, and they also obtained the control over communal lands which resulted in the dispossession of the Maya communities (Tapia 1985: 217).

Aside from these pressures it should be noted that the Maya from the eastern part of the peninsula were forced to participate on a series of factional struggles between the two sectors of the Yucatec oligarchy. For their participation in these struggles the Maya were offered a reduction in their civil and religious taxes as well as the restitution of their lands. Of these promises it could only be said that after Santiago Iman's revolution in 1840 there was a temporary abolition of the obventions (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 69). A religious contribution of one real a month was established for every Maya man over fourteen years and less than sixty years.

The other promises were never fulfilled and this situation of injustice became the trigger for the development of the movement. As pointed out by the Maya rebels:

> The ...[war?] ...by the Spaniards against us the Indians originated in a breach of faith committed by the Citizen D[o]n Santia[go Iman]. In the year [eighteen hundred] thirty-nine he declared war against the Superior Government of Mexico alleging [sic] as a reason for so doing, that it was with a view of liberating the Indians from the payment of contributions. After this was gained by the Indians the same Citizen continued to levy contributions as usual, thus proving himself not to be a man of honor, having forfeited his word with the natives. But the hour has arrived when Christ and his divine mother has given us courage to make war against the whites, as we had no money to pay such exactions as the Government thought proper to decree. D[o]n Domingo Bar[r]et sent troops under D[o]n Santiago Mendez, with order[s] to put every Indian, big and small to death.[35]

Even though these unfulfilled promises served as a trigger to start the movement they were not the ultimate cause of the rebellion. The real causes behind the rebellion were the conditions which were threatening the Maya social organization. The fact that the Maya participated in the

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[35] Letter from Cecilio Chi, Venáncio Pec, and Jose Atanasio Espada to ?, March 22, 1849; in Bricker (1981: 93-94).

factional struggles of the oligarchy, from 1835 to 1847, meant that the Maya leaders recuperated their role as military leaders, which they lost after the conquest of Yucatan by the Spaniards (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 63). Their military participation in these struggles allowed them to move around the peninsula. Seeing the conditions of the Maya *peones* in the *haciendas* of the northern part of Yucatan, perhaps make them reflect on their own situation and of the pressures which the dominant group was imposing on them. The threat to their communal lands and to the lands of the *cofradia* was a major concern for the Maya *caciques*, because the loss of these lands implied the loss of their own political, economic and religious power.

The Caste War began in July 1847 when the *ladinos* discovered that the Maya *caciques* of the eastern part of Yucatan were planning a rebellion. For this end the *cacique,* Manuel Antonio Ay, was collecting funds from the Indians of Chichimila to obtain resources to buy ammunition and weapons in Belize. The movement's objective was, supposedly, to substitute the contribution from a *real* and a half to half a *real*. The movement was discovered because a letter was taken from Ay, where the plans of the rebellion were stated. Ay was captured, judged and sentenced to death (Gonzalez Navarro 1979; Reed 1982).

The principal leaders of the movement from 1847 to 1849 were: Jacinto Pat, *cacique* of Tihosuco, who was the leader of the southern area, and Cecilio Chi, *cacique* of Tepich, who was the leader of the central and eastern parts of the peninsula. The rebellion started when the *ladino* troops, commanded by Colonel Eulogio Rosado, attacked the town of Tepich and its indigenous population on July 29 1847 (Bricker 1981: 97). At the same time another factional struggle between the Yucatec oligarchy was about to take place. As always, the oligarchy tried to incorporate the Maya, but it seems that the Maya took advantage of the division of the oligarchy to start their own movement. They also manipulated the situation so that in various moments they deceived the *ladino* troops by making them believe they were taking part on the inter-oligarchic struggle (Ancona 1978, IV: 71). The Maya documents indicate that the Maya leaders had been carefully planning the movement from a long time, and that they had their own motivations and aims as well as good political and military organization. In a letter of July 27, 1847 to Fransisco Chuc, by Lieutenant Maximo Huchim, the Lieutenant wrote:

> Que dia comenzara este jueguito?
> Cuando usted nos diga nosotros lo
> llevaremos a cabo aqui, principalmente,
> y en los otros pueblos.
> Señor don Fransisco Chuc, a ustedes les
> confiamos los pueblos cercanos a
> Tecoh. Entonces veran lo que sucedera
> cuando toda la gente porte sus
> escopetas y machetes acabaremos con

> el pueblo de Zacpipoil y al pasar les
> causaremos mucho daño a los blancos.[36]

The Maya leaders created an excellent network of communications between the *caciques* of the different towns involved in the rebellion, and they also established a network of alliances between them to support the movement and to incorporate other Maya communities to their struggle. One of these groups which was incorporated was the *Uites*, a Maya group which escaped the white domination by retreating into the more isolated areas of the eastern part of the peninsula. It seems that the Maya leaders tried to incorporate other Maya towns by offering them food and supplies, for example the town of Tecoh asked for beans, maize, honey, pumpkin seeds and wood to join the movement (Letter from Lieutenant Maximo Huchim to Fransico Chuc, July 27, 1847, in Caso Barrera (1990: 163)).

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[36] The translations of the Maya documents into Spanish and English which appear in this work are my own, the Maya texts which were consulted and their Spanish version were taken from Caso Barrera (1990).

When will this game begin? When you say it so we will do it here, principally and in the other towns.

Mr. Fransisco Chuc we confide to you the towns near Tecoh. They [the ladinos] will see what will happen when everybody takes their rifles and machetes. We will destroy the town of Zacpipoil and we will cause a lot of damages to the Whites. (Biblioteca Manuel Cepeda Peraza (hereafter BMCP), Letter from Lieutenant Maximo Huchim to Fransisco Chuc, July 27, 1847. Document Number 1, in Caso Barrera (1990:162)).

After the *ladino* troops attacked Tepich the Maya retaliated by attacking the *ladino* population of Tepich. The political chief of Peto, Antonio Trujeque, then began to search for the conspirators. Trujeque captured five *caciques* who supported Pat and Chi, who were sentenced to death. He also sent Captain Beitia in search of Cecilio Chi, to take him prisoner, but the Maya were aware of all the steps the *ladinos* were making and they tried to stop Beitia (Reed 1982: 56). A message to the town of Chikindzonot, instructed the people to stop Beitia by using guerrilla strategies:

> Deben cuidarse de la llegada del
> Capitan Beitia y de sus muchos
> cosacos. Para esto es necesario que
> hagan agujeros que deberan cubrir con
> hierba, para que caigan estos malvados
> cuando pasen por alli y podamos
> atraparlos y tomar sus riquezas.[37]

Such tactics were successfully used throughout the Maya rebel movement.

One of the principal figures at the beginning of the movement was Cecilio Chi, who had a more radical position than the other Maya leaders. He established many of the goals and aspirations of the movement. The correspondence of the Maya leaders

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[37] You should be careful with the arrival of Captain Beitia and his many troops. You should make some pitfalls which should be covered with grass, so that these wicked men can fall there and we can catch them and take their belongings. (BMCP, Letter from Lieutenant Huchim to Fransico Chuc, July 27, 1847. Document Number 1, in Caso Barrera (1990:162)).

during the rebellion clearly identifies the importance of the leadership of Chi and the alliances which were established around him. Some of the motivations behind the rebellion, stated in the Maya documents and used as ideological weapons by the Maya leaders, were the exploitation of the Maya by the dominant group. They stressed excessive work demands without payments, or, if they received something it was a minimal payment. Also mentioned was the scarcity of land and the dispossession which they were suffering. All these injustices created a great resentment against the ladinos. A letter of August 20, 1847, written to Fransisco Chuc, clearly identified the Maya reaction to their conditions:

> Porque no es posible que nosotros
> respetemos este salario que ahora nos
> sustenta, nosotros les mostraremos
> nuestros machetes y el animo de
> nuestras escopetas, les mostraremos
> nuestro resentimiento. Es preciso que
> no se aumente el diezmo a los
> jornaleros y se les debe conceder una
> rebaja de algunos reales. Porque nos han
> arruinado nuestras tierras, porque
> señor, aqui todo nos ha sido arrebatado,
> nosotros no tenemos nada pues estos
> blancos tienen muy malos
> sentimientos.[38]

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[38] Because it is impossible that we should respect the salary which is sustaining us now. We will show them our machetes and our rifles, we will show them our resentment. It is of great importance that the *diezmo* [religious tax] should not be increased to the *jornaleros* [workers] on the contrary it should be reduced by some reales. Because they had ruined our lands, because here everything has been taken from us, we do not have anything because the white

Jacinto Pat, the other Maya leader, was also very important in the development of the movement but his position was less radical than that of Chi. He was more conciliatory and he was able to establish negotiations with the dominant group that might have resolved differences. Cecilio Chi's goal, however, was to achieve the autonomy for the Maya group (Bricker 1981: 100-101).

During this 1847-49 period of the rebellion the Merida-Campeche inter-oligarchic struggles continued, a situation which the Maya leaders took full advantage of by making the *ladino* troops think that they were participating on their struggles. This created confusion among the *ladino* troops and gave strength to the Maya movement. They began to have a series of military victories and also began to advance towards Merida, the Capital of the State of Yucatan. Such developments disturbed the members of the oligarchy and Governor Santiago Mendez, thinking that the Maya supported his rival Miguel Barbachano, asked him to speak to the Maya leaders, to listen to their complaints and to give them every kind of guarantees to end the rebellion (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 81).

This first attempt of negotiation was not successful, and in 1848 the Maya continued advancing towards Merida. Pat and

people have very bad feelings. (BMCP, Letter to Fransisco Chuc from ?. August 20, 1847. Document Number 2, in Caso Barrera (1990:184)

other caciques sent letters to the government and to the clergy, stating that the causes of the rebellion were the increase of civil and religious contributions. Based on these letters governor Santiago Mendez established the abolition of personal contribution, and also stated that the public treasury would pay for the religious cult and the services of the clergy when the war was ended (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 82). But the Maya kept fighting.

The situation of the Government of Yucatan became critical and Mendez asked for help from foreign countries. But he was unable to get foreign assistance or even federal help since Mexico was occupied with its war with the United States. Finally he decided to leave the office of governor to Barbachano, on March 25,1848, hoping that this would to put an end to the rebellion. A Peace Commission was created, headed by the priest Jose Canuto Vela, who signed a peace treaty with Jacinto Pat, called the Treaty of Tzuzcacab. In this treaty it was declared that personal contributions would be abolished, that the fees for marriage and baptism were going to be reduced, that the Maya could clear land for farming in the communal lands or on uncultivated forest land without paying any rents, that the Maya rebels could keep their weapons, and that the debts of the indebted servants were going to be canceled. The weapons which had been confiscated by Governor Mendez would be returned to the Maya through Jacinto Pat. This treaty also included two items of great importance; that

Barbachano would be Governor of Yucatan, while Pat would be Governor for life of the Maya (Bricker 1981:100-101).

It appears that Barbachano was trying to take advantage of the situation to stay in power indefinitely. Before signing the treaty he sent Pat a letter offering him various offices, including that of Governor of the Maya (Reina 1986: 399). Pat's troops did not support their leader in the signing of this treaty. The other Maya leaders, and specially Chi, opposed this agreement and the establishment of Pat as governor. It seems that the aspirations of the other Maya leaders were beyond what was being offered, and possibly they were thinking of gaining complete autonomy (Bricker 1981: 101).

By the middle of 1848 the Maya had occupied almost three quarters of the peninsula. They were at the outskirts of the City of Merida, but they did not enter into the city. There were several causes which impeded the advance of the Maya troops to the capital city. First of all, the Maya of the northwestern part of Yucatan had not joined the movement and many even fought against the Maya rebels. Also, the planting season was beginning and many Maya rebels returned to cultivate their land (Bricker 1981: 102). And what seems to have been the most important cause, there were divisions among the Maya leaders which created a loss of control over their subordinates (Letter from Captain Miguel Canul to Capt. Fermin Camal, June 20,1848. Document Number 3, in Caso Barrera (1990:193)).

The failure of taking Merida was of great consequence for the rebels, who began loosing terrain. This gave hope and strength to the *ladino* troops, which began to recuperate Maya held territory. In 1849 Cecilio Chi and Jacinto Pat were murdered and the movement lost its principal leaders. The leadership was then divided among several leaders, the most important ones being Florentino Chan, Jose Maria Barrera, Venancio Pec, and Bonifacio Novelo (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 91-92). In the same year new peace talks were promoted by the Yucatec clergy, without any result, because the *ladino* troops were attacking the Maya even though an amnesty was declared (Letter from Florentino Chan to Maya captains and commanders, December 30 (?). Doc Number 4 , in Caso Barrera (1990: 201)).

The Superintendent of Belize now became a mediator between the Yucatec Government and the rebels. He held an interview with the leader Venancio Pec. The principal condition asked by the Maya leaders to end the war was that part of the territory be ceded to them, so that they could establish an independent government. They also sent letters to Governor Miguel Barbachano and the Peace Commission, asking for the following conditions:

> Y finalmente declararon [los lideres mayas] que ningun arreglo les seria satisfactorio, siempre que no se les asegurase un gobierno independiente;

> que deseaban se les dejase una parte del
> pais, tirandose una linea desde Bacalar
> hacia el norte, hasta el Golfo de Mexico,
> y quedar libres del pago de
> contribuciones al gobierno del estado.
> Añadieron que por su parte no harian
> objecion ninguna a que los blancos
> residiesen dentro del territorio que
> pretendian obtener; pero que nunca
> consentirian en que estos ejercieran la
> autoridad en el lugar en que resideran.[39]

The Maya leaders in 1849 established more concrete and radical aspirations for their movement. They wanted to establish an independent state with an autonomous government, based on the traditional authority. After the original two principal leaders were killed the leadership was divided. This weakened the internal alliances and created confusion, followed by the Maya retreat to the eastern part of Yucatan. Many communities had disappeared, resulting in the former communal solidarity being transfered to the military organizations developed in the conflict.

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[39] Finally they declared [the Maya leaders] that no arrangement will be satisfactory unless it was not assured to them that they were going to obtain an independent government; that they wanted that part of the territory would be ceded to them, throwing a line from Bacalar to the north to the Gulf of Mexico. They wanted to be free of paying contributions to the government; they also said that they did not have any objections on leaving white people to reside on the territory they wanted to obtain, but that they never were going to allow them to exert any authority in their territory (Ancona 1978, IV: 280-281).

During the 1847-49 period no religious symbols had appeared to support the movement. This could be because the principal religious symbols were the communal patron saints, which represented the communal unity and identity. In this sense they could not be used in a movement which embraced the whole ethnic group. The movement began to lose strength and cohesion so the leaders that succeeded Pat and Chi, in order to achieve their goals and to give strength to the movement, had to resort to a symbol which would allow the unification and identification of the group, and that would generate social action. It was then when the Cult to the Talking Cross appeared.

The Caste War, 1850-1901.

The Cult of the Talking Cross began in 1850 when one of the Maya leaders, Jose Ma. Barrera, found the place which later on became the center of the cult (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 97). The establishment of the religious movement was seen by the Maya as a second war (Ordinances of Juan de la Cruz, February 10,1850 [1851?],. Document Number 5, in Caso Barrera (1990: 222)). It was ordered by their Messiah, Juan de la Cruz, who asked the permission and blessings of the Supreme Divinities to begin this new war against the *ladinos*, in which the Maya would be the winners. With the establishment of the Cult of the Talking Cross the movement was reorganized because the

cross ordered the military attacks and began to dictate new orders and laws (Document Number 5, in Caso Barrera 1990). The symbol of the Talking Cross gave certain unity to the rebel leadership, because its orders were of a divine character and everyone, including all the leaders, were supposed to obey its commandments:

> En los ultimos cincuenta dias he
> comenzado a pedir por los generales,
> comandantes, capitanes, tenientes y
> sargentos a fin de darles una señal y
> llevarles mis bendiciones, para que
> muchos de ellos me sigan hasta la hora
> de su muerte.[40]

The first military action that the cross ordered was to attack the ranch Kampokolche, then under *ladino* control, and belonging to Jose Ma. Barrera. Juan de la Cruz ordered the attack on the ranch on January 3, 1851. He also ordered to free all the other towns which were occupied by the *ladinos*:

> Otra cosa que mando a ustedes mis
> amados hijos, es que es preciso que
> reunan mil armas y mil hombres de
> tropa ligera, a fin de que podamos
> hundir y acabar con el rancho
> Kampocolche. Es el momento de destruir

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[40] In the last fifty days I began to pray for the generals, captains, lieutenants, and sergeants so that I could give them a signal and to give them my blessings, so that many of them could follow me [Juan de la Cruz] until the hour of their death. (BMCP, Ordinances of Juan de la Cruz, February 10, 1850 [1851?]. Document Number 5, in Caso Barrera (1990: 223)).

este rancho de una vez y para siempre.
Se podra liberar los cantones tomados
por los blancos en el oriente, en todos
los cantones en los que se encuentran.
Porque ha llegado la hora en que se
levante Yucatan sobre los blancos para
siempre.[41]

The Maya attacked Kampocolche on January 3, 1851, suffering a great defeat. But what was even worse was that the *ladinos* took Maya prisoners, who informed them about the cult that was developing in Chan Santa Cruz X-Balam Na (Little Holy Cross, House of Secrecy). The *ladino* troops decided to attack the shrine on March 23, 1851, and the Maya were again defeated. The Patron of the cross, Manuel Nauat, was killed and the cross was captured by the *ladino* troops. Although these tragic events took place under the guidance and protection of the cross the movement was not weakened by these defeats. A new cross replaced the one taken by the *ladinos* and new methods were created to make the cross speak (Bricker 1981:104).

In 1852 the leaders Florentino Chan, Venancio Pec, and Jose Ma. Barrera were killed. But, with the establishment of the

[41] Another thing which I command you my beloved children, is that it is of great importance that you gather one thousand weapons and troops so we can destroy this ranch Kampocolche. It is the moment to destroy this ranch now and forever. We also can liberate the other towns which have been taken by the whites on the east. Because it is the time that Yucatan will rise over the whites forever. (BMCP, Ordinances of Juan de la Cruz. February 10, 1850 [1851?]. Document Number 5, in Caso Barrera (1990: 221)).

Cult of the Talking Cross, the movement was not seriously damaged. These leaders were replaced by others, who, during 1853, took advantage of the endless struggles between the Yucatec oligarchy, and recuperated several positions in the east. The Maya continued their military resistence until the beginnings of the twentieth century. Although the Yucatecs officially declared an end to the Caste War in 1855, the Maya were still raiding *ladino* villages and were in control of the southeastern part of the peninsula. It was not until 1901 that the Mexican Government, under President Porfirio Diaz, dominated the Maya rebels by sending federal troops commanded by General Ignacio Bravo (Bricker 1981: 115-117).

Bravo entered and occupied Santa Cruz on May 4, 1901. Although this military defeat was the most serious one the Maya did not disappear, but they gradually lost their autonomy and their military organization. It should be underlined that the appearance of the Cult of the Talking Cross created the establishment of the Holy village of Chan Santa Cruz X-Balam Na (Little Holy Cross, House of Secrecy). The village was developed around the shrine of the Talking Cross, which at first was a simple hut, until the Maya were able to construct a huge stone building to keep the Holy Cross. Chan Santa Cruz became the capital of a military and theocratical indigenous government. It served as a ceremonial as well as a government center (Bricker 1981: 103-104).

During the colonial period and after the Independence of Mexico, the two institutions which supported the communal autonomy and identity were the *Republicas de Indios* (Indian Republics) and the *Cofradias*. It could be asserted that the basic patterns, which were reproduced and reinforced in Chan Santa Cruz, were those established by these institutions. This is not to say that Chan Santa Cruz was a reproduction of the colonial and post colonial Maya communities. It could be said it was more a merging between elements borrowed from the communal organization and the new elements given by the military organization, as well as from the new religious cult. In Chan Santa Cruz there was a superimposition of the religious and military offices and officers, just as it was before between the *Republicas de Indios* and the *cofradias*. Around Chan Santa Cruz a series of towns, or military companies, were established. These towns were under the political, military and religious control of Santa Cruz. The chiefs of these town-companies had the same role as the *caciques* of the other Maya communities. All of these towns, or military companies each month sent an armed party to Santa Cruz, to guard the shrine of the cross and to take part of the religious rituals in the holy town (Bricker 1981: 114).

The Talking Cross became the dominant symbol of the social, political, military and religious life of the Maya rebels. Through the establishment of its cult the group was reorganized and it was able to sustain its autonomy from the dominant group for at least fifty years. Through the rituals dedicated to the cross the principal norms and values of the group were reinforced and expressed, which enabled the Maya rebel group to keep and recreate its culture and autonomy. The temporal autonomy gained by the Maya rebels could not be sustained for a long time because, without the recognition of the Yucatec Government, they were in a constant state of warfare. They became isolated and without resources, diseases and internal struggles began to weaken their organization, until they became an easy pray for the federal troops. And with the occupation of this superior military force they lost both the control over their territory, and their autonomy.

Having outlined the historical contexts and the main phases of the Metis and Maya resistence movements closer attention can now be given to their internal dynamics. This will be done in the following chapters through an analysis of the underlying causes of social movements, how symbols become incorporated to support ethnic unification, the nature of religious syncretism, and the roles of leaders in social movements. This will allow for application of anthropological concepts and

insights to the Metis and Maya historical experiences in the nineteenth century.

Chapter VI
Dynamics of the Metis and Maya Social Movements.

Social Movements.

To understand the appearance of social movements, as those of the Maya and Metis, one should take into account other than the economic factors, which are always underlined as the principal elements in relation to the development of social protest. As Tarrow (1983: 3) indicates, political processes should also be taken into account. In this sense the nineteenth century was a period of transition because the nation states were creating substantial policy innovations in their social structures. This not only affected the economy but all the other structures of the society. A change of policy implied a change in the norms and values that were regulating societies before the innovations. The development of capitalism can be seen as a major change of policy and a transformation of the previous systems that regulated different societies.

Tarrow (1985: 27) states that the success of social movements lies in the dynamics of the political process and not only in external economic pressures. For Tarrow a movement is successful only when it achieves policy innovations. He defines social protest movements as groups which possess a purposive organization, whose leaders identify their goals with those of their followers, whom they try to mobilize against a specific area of the political system (1985: 7). In this sense social movements are regarded as

movements which present a series of well-established goals and aims, which are well organized. They are politically oriented, and they are aimed towards the solution of social problems.

In order to understand the Metis and Maya struggles my analysis will concentrate on the political organization of the movements, their ideals and goals, the strategies of their leaders, and the relationship between them and their followers. An element that always appears in the development of social movements is the idea of injustice. Following Moore (1978) and Frank (1990) it can be stated that the violation of social rules creates a sense of moral anger and injustice:

> Morality and justice/injustice, perhaps
> more than the deprivation of livelihood
> and/or identity through exploitation
> and oppression through which morality
> and (in)justice manifest themselves,
> have probably been the essential
> motivating and deriving force of social
> movements both past and present
> (Frank 1990: 175).

This was of great importance in both the Maya and the Metis cases where we find, first of all, a violation of social rules and norms that were regulating the relationships between the dominant and subordinated groups. What we had in the nineteenth century was a very fast disarticulation of the global normative system which affected the whole social structure of the subordinated groups. Most affected in this process were the political structure of the

subordinated group and the traditional leaders. In this sense it was the leaders who organized and established the goals and motivations of the movement, and they also represented the grievances of their followers.

Non-capitalist movements tend to be regarded as conservative or static, by authors such as Hobsbawm (1983), because they usually struggle to preserve their customary rights and their social organization. But this does not imply that they are not able to transform their own society. Their aim is to change their social system on their own terms and at their pace. In this sense these movements can be regarded as antisystemic because they are challenging the system, which is not to say that they are trying to change or replace the whole social structure. Rather, they are oriented towards a recomposition of the social order by trying to force a change of policy by the dominant sector.

The liminal or transitional conditions of the nineteenth century created the ground for the emergence of social movements. Social movements, regarded as liminal phases, enabled them to generate new myths, ideals, paradigms and political structures. The role of the leaders was one of creating and recreating symbolic tools to achieve political success, and a state of communitas. Communitas, as a state of comradeship and homogeneity (Turner 1967,1974,1982), created social bonds among individuals. Although social movements are characterized by a sense of communitas, where individuals share the same goals, ideals and values, this is

not a state of total homogeneity, because the hierarchical nature of the leadership is necessary for the development and maintenance of the movements.

The leaders are the ones that define, create, and manipulate the hardships and discontent of their followers. Communitas can be understood as the special bond that links a leader, or leaders, with their followers who are united by the same goals and aspirations. Communitas can be regarded more as an antisystemic relationship because of its contrastive character in relation to the dominant society. Social movements have to be conceived as elements of much broader social processes. The emergence of a social movement is not spontaneous, it represents a phase in a long term-process where the movement represents a moment of ultimate crises.

Social movements can be studied once they have developed as a series of phases, or what Turner (1974,1977,1982) defines as social dramas. A social drama is a disharmonic process that arises in conflictive situations. It is a liminal phenomenon because it represents a breakup of the regular, norm-governed social life. Social dramas usually have the following four phases (Turner 1974: 39-42):

> 1. A disruption of normal social relations governed by normativeness, between individuals or groups of individuals. This break up of the normative system should be understood in a holistic way because at least in the Maya and Metis cases, this process represented a disruption of their whole social system. This breakdown

of the normative system created a sense of injustice and moral outrage. This was important for the Metis and Maya cases, where it became impossible to bargain any more with the dominant society. Before the second half of the nineteenth century both groups were more or less in control of their social organization, and the global system allowed a certain degree of negotiation, but afterwards this became impossible. This transgression of the normative system was the trigger that developed both movements;

2. The initial breakdown of the normal social relationships was followed by a period of ascending crises, during which, unless the breakage can be sealed off quickly in a limited area of social interaction it tends to widen and extend.

3. In order to control the expansion of the crises certain adjustive and redressive mechanisms, informal or institutionalized, are applied by leading or representative members of the disrupted social system. When there is a failure of these redressive mechanisms there is a return to crises. It is at this stage when violent means could be sustained by way of war, rebellion or revolution;

4. The last phase consists either in a reintegration of the disrupted social group, or the social recognition and legitimacy of the separation from the other group. In most social movements it is quite difficult that the subordinated group can gain its separation or achieve recognition and acceptance as a separate group from the dominant sector. If the group as, in the Maya case, gains its independence but it does not achieve the recognition of the dominant group or the global social system, it remains in a liminal state until it is once more incorporated to the social system. In the Metis case, the group tried to achieve recognition from the Canadian government as a separate entity inside the global system, but the Canadian government did not give them this recognition.

For both movements the maintenance of their social structure and their lands, conceived as a territory, represented a struggle to maintain an established place in the structure of power. The violations to the normative structure that created the development of social movements also represented a disruption in the established structure of power. It was the disruption of the system that generated the political opportunity for the growth of social movements. As Tarrow says, "movements are organized, take fire and occasionally succeed as a function of political opportunity structure and not as earlier studies seemed to suggest as a direct function of the deep-seated frustrations and deprivation of the rural poor" (1983: 21). This is not to say that deprivation and oppression did not play an important role in the establishment of the social struggles, but they alone did not produce the development of an organized movement.

The study of antisystemic social movements shows that people that revolt are not the ones that suffer a greater degree of deprivation and oppression, but those that are still in control of their social organization and who feel the threat of losing this control. For example, in the Maya case the *peones* of the *haciendas* in the northern part of Yucatan did not join the movement, even though they were the more oppressed and deprived indigenous sector. What this sector lacked was an autonomous social structure and an autonomous leadership that made them be part of the social movement. In the Maya and Metis cases the political discourse of the leaders underlines the ideas of oppression and deprivation as

ideological tools. This is not to say that they were not deprived or oppressed, or that these elements were not important, but they were not the principal motivations for the development of the movements. More important would be the idea that these groups were struggling to maintain their social organization and autonomy.

The nineteenth century provided the Maya and the Metis with political opportunities to challenge the dominant system. For the Metis it was the acquisition of Rupert's Land by the Canadian government that gave them the opportunity to challenge their incorporation to the Canadian system. The moment of transition of the Hudson's Bay Company, and the establishment of the Canadian government, was used by the Metis to try to establish their rights. In the Maya case it was the political and military struggles of the Yucatec oligarchy that gave the Maya a chance to oppose the Yucatec government.

Messianism and Millenarism.

Both the Metis and Maya movements can be divided in two periods. In the Metis case, a period of political struggle (1869-70) and a period of military and religious struggle (1884-1885). For the Maya, there was a period of political-military struggle (1847-50) and a period of military and religious struggle (1850-1901). In this sense both movements had a similar structure and they were involved in two different kinds of social dramas. In both movements the military and religious periods were responding to a series of circumstances

when it was impossible for these groups to negotiate with the dominant sectors. In the Metis case, Riel and the Metis organizations, (in 1884) tried to gain Metis rights by legal and political means, but they found it impossible to deal with the Canadian government, who ignored their petitions. It was at this moment that Riel became a prophet and the movement was transformed into a religious and military movement. In 1849, the Maya stated their ultimate condition to end the war as the establishment of a Maya territory, with a recognized Maya government. This petition was never considered by the Yucatec government. Also, in the same year, the death of the two principal leaders (Jacinto Pat and Cecilio Chi) caused internal factionalism and disorganization of the Maya movement. The leaders that succeeded Pat and Chi gave new strength to the movement and avoided its disorganization. But they had to resort to the recreation of a religious symbol to give cohesion to their movement. This change in the character of the movements suggests that the groups were unable to deal with the dominant society by secular means. Thus they had to rely upon God's divine support and guidance in their struggle to achieve their rights.

What can be seen in both movements is a model of social drama, during the military-religious movements, based in a syncretic interpretation of the Bible, based principally in the figure and Passion of Christ. The religious symbol (Talking Cross) and the religious leader (Louis Riel) were playing the role of the Messiah, following the model of Christ. They both assumed the role of the

Messiah, who liberates his people from a situation of oppression and injustice. The presence of the Messiah, or his representative, among the group was the sign that they are the chosen people. This meant, at least symbolically, that these groups were conceiving themselves as the Hebrews of the Old Testament who were delivered by God from a situation of oppression. They assumed that they, as the Hebrews, would be delivered of their oppressive situation with the help of their Messiah. The ideas of oppression and deprivation were used as ideological and symbolic means, to sustain the movements.

The Biblical models were transformed by the different cultural groups that used them. In the Metis and Maya cases these models became syncretic. Riel identified the Metis as descendants of the Hebrews, and with this he created a symbolic link between the ancient chosen people and the new chosen ones. In 1876 Riel had a revelation which informed him that the North American Indians were descendants of the Hebrews (Flanagan 1979: 82-83). While Riel made this symbolic linkage, the Maya assumed that they were the chosen people because they were chosen by the Messiah (Bricker 1981: 155). But since their Messiah was linked to the figure of Christ, the Jews became the symbolic representation of the oppressors who persecuted them, as they had their Messiah.

It could be argued that both movements had a millenarian and messianic character. Messianic characteristics are inscribed into millenarian movements when their goal is to establish a state of social perfection. In Christian theology the millennium refers to the

second coming of Christ and the establishment of a thousand years of perfection, that will not end until the day of the Last Judgment. In a broad way millenarism can be understand as the belief in a future time which will be, at the same time, sacred and profane and when all social evils will be corrected. Pereira de Queiroz (1976: 20) says this is the nature of millenarism, to be at the same time religious and socio-political, and to unite the sacred and the profane. For Pereira de Queiroz, in order that these kind of movements can appear, the religion which supports them should have a belief of reciprocity between suffering and happiness. This is, that suffering inflicted in this life will be rewarded when the perfect society is established.

In the framework of millenarian beliefs messianism constitutes a particular case, because a personage or divine messenger will be the one with the mission of establishing the perfect society in this world. This personage becomes the mediator between the believers and the divinity. The Messiah announces and introduces the Heavenly Kingdom in this world, bringing redemption to the collectivity. Messianic movements should be considered as a conscious effort of a society to transform reality and to achieve an improvement in their human existence. These movements appear in traditional societies, or non-capitalist groups, that is, societies divided in lineages and extended families that have as their basis an their agriculture economy. The Metis fit into this category because they were in a transitional phase, from being buffalo hunters to becoming peasants.

The causes that generate such millenarian and messianic movements are internal social disorganization and the impossibility for the groups to achieve their rights and their goals by secular means. For Pereira de Queiroz (1978: 291-292) it would be only different levels of internal disorganization that could reach anomie, which will develop these movements. Messianic movements are then responses to a sudden and profound crises in the society whose religion favours the establishment of beliefs based in the appearance of the Messiah. The crises could be created by internal or external causes.

In the Metis and Maya cases it could be said that their movements were responses to the threat of social disorganization, which the development of capitalism was creating during the second half of the nineteenth century. The impossibility of these groups to deal, by secular means, with the dominant sectors made them rely on sacred means. In the Metis case, it seems that the failure of political and legal means, used by Riel and the Metis organizations in order to achieve their rights, pushed Riel to take a different direction, transforming the movement into a religious one. In the Maya case, in 1849, their principal demand from the Yucatec government to end the war was the creation of an independent Maya state, but their demand was not accepted. Since the principal leaders of their movement, Jacinto Pat and Cecilio Chi, were murdered in the same year, this created a profound crises in the social movement. This resulted in internal factionalism which debilitated the military and political leadership. And the Maya suffered a series of defeats which created a demoralization of their people. Many minor leaders were

killed and many Maya communities disappeared. The Maya leaders who succeeded Pat and Chi had to find a solution to this internal disorganization and this was the recreation of the Cult of the Talking Cross.

Religion can become the ideology that supports political and military movements, as was the case in the Maya and Metis rebellions. The model of the Exodus could be used as a general model of oppression and liberation, principally because the oppression of the Hebrews in Egypt was of a political nature. Michael Walzer says that, "the Exodus could be seen as an example of what today is called "national liberation", where the people as a whole are enslaved and the people as a whole are delivered" (1985: 32). The key ideas expressed in the Exodus were oppression and corruption that the Hebrews suffered in Egypt. The sense of injustice and moral outrage against the oppressor led to the Exodus and to later revolutions. These political ideas are expressed in the Old and New Testaments:

> Woe to those who enact unjust statutes and who write oppressive decrees, Depriving the needy of judgment and robbing my people's poor of their rights, Making widows their plunder, and orphans their prey! (The New American Bible, Isaiah, 10: 1-2)

> How blest are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs. Blest too are the sorrowing; they shall be consoled. Blest are the lowly; they shall inherit the land. Blest are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill. (The New American Bible, Mathew, 5 :3-6)

Walzer (1985: 133) outlines the patterns expressed in Exodus as oppression, liberation, social contract, political struggle, and the creation of a new society. These patterns fit quite well with the movements being analyzed. The model offered in the Exodus is reformulated and transformed by each group and culture which takes it as a model. For Walzer Exodus represents the source of messianic politics (1985: 196).

The model of the messiah in the Christian tradition is the figure of Christ. He became the mediator between God and men because of his liminal condition (human and divine nature). But, before he could be a mediator he had to be sacrificed. His martyrdom and sacrifice became the basis for the Messiah model. Turner (1974: 122) identifies several Mexican revolutionaries who had to walked a *Via Crucis,* like Christ, become symbols for the liberation of the Mexican people. Political messiahs, in Christian tradition, have to go through this *Via Crucis* to fulfill the model. They preach their message of liberation, sometimes they achieve an initial success. Later they may become frustrated, physically suffer, be betrayed by a close friend or supporter, or they have to suffer an exile. Finally, they might be executed, or assassinated by the principal political state authorities. Most undergo a symbolic resurrection, through legislation or in some kind of political canonization, also they become popular symbols, symbols of ethnic unification.[42]

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[42] For example Martin Luther King, Miguel Hidalgo, or John F. Kennedy.

Symbols of Ethnic Unification.

For the Maya communities the patron saints became dominant symbols, that supported the communal identity and autonomy. During the Caste War, after the death of the principal Maya leaders, their successors had to recreate a symbol to reunite the ethnic group and to strengthen the rebellion. This symbol was the Talking Cross. With the Metis it is very difficult to establish if they had a similar structure to that of the Maya. I was unable to find any sources describing in detail the religious practices of this group. Still I would like to establish some hypotheses in relation to some of the material that was available. First of all, knowing the parishes were the socio-political and religious units for the Metis, it seems probable that each parish was related to a specific patron saint. The establishment of patron saints in each parish was a decision taken by the parish priest. For example, Father Ritchot, after the events of 1869 and the establishment of the Manitoba Act, decided to build a votive chapel dedicated to "Our Lady of Victory" in the parish of St. Norbert. The Chapel was built with communal resources, donations and work (Mailhot 1985: 177).

There is almost no information about the religious beliefs and practices of the Metis other than that and they are usually regarded as true Catholics. The only author who clearly mentions a religious syncretism for the Metis is Diane Payment (1990: 312). She based her analysis primarily in oral tradition and

various informants told her about their syncretic religious practices. It is very difficult to think about a syncretic culture such as that of the Metis and not consider that their religion could be also syncretic.

My hypothesis is that Louis Riel, as in the case of the Maya leaders, had to recreate symbols to unite the Metis and to assure their identity and autonomy. These symbols were the figures of St. Joseph and the Virgin of Lourdes. Both symbols, in my point of view, were transformed into dominant symbols for the Metis. In the case of the Maya, however, the evidence of syncretism is much clearer.

The Talking Cross.

Cruciform symbols were common in the Maya area before the Spanish conquest, so that a merging of the Catholic cross and these cruciform symbols was not difficult. These Maya cruciform symbols evolved from a primary symbol the *axis mundi* represented by the ceiba tree, to which were added many other meanings and symbols, creating a very complex symbolic structure. This complex symbolic structure, which, like in Palenque, is represented as a cruciform symbol became a dominant symbol in the Maya area (Caso Barrera 1990: 109).

Turner (1967) points out two characteristics of the dominant symbols that are of great importance in order to understand the

development of the symbol of the Talking Cross. These characteristics are: condensation and unification of disparate meanings in a single formation. Turner defines condensation as, "many things and actions (that) are interconnected by virtue of their common possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought" (1967: 28). These qualities can be very general and widely distributed in different phenomena. The idea is that a dominant symbol can represent a great variety of things and feelings. Dominant symbols are the basic units of the ritual process, because they represent axiomatic norms and values. As Turner says, "within its framework of meanings, the dominant symbol brings the ethical and jural norms of society into close contact with strong emotional stimuli" (1967: 30).

Cruciform symbols in the Maya area present both characteristics. The first symbol from which these cruciform symbols were developed is the representation of the union of a reptile (Cipactli), a ceiba tree (Imix Chee) and a sacred bird. As Barrera Vasquez (1976) pointed out, this first representation appeared at Izapa, Chiapas (300 BC.-150 AD.) as shown in stela twenty five. This representation was borrowed from Izapa and was reelaborated upon, not only in the Maya area but in other parts of Mesoamerica. The symbol Imix-Cipactli was divided and incorporated into the two hundred and sixty day ritual Mesoamerican calendar. For the Nahuatls we have the sign Cipactli (monster of the earth, origin) as the first day of the Tonalpohualli . For the Maya the first day of the ritual calendar

called *Tzolkin,* is *Imix* (ceiba, origin). Both calendaric days have the same meaning, referring to beginnings or origins (Barrera Vasquez 1976: 197-198).

The representation of trees that have *Cipactli* roots are common, not only for the Maya but for other Mesoamerican groups as the Nahuatls and Mixtecs. The Maya word *Imix* signifies not only ceiba and origin, it also means fertility, and it is associated with the earth (*Cipactli*). The ceiba tree is regarded as the creator of the human race, but is also linked to the Maya nobility. Nuñez de la Vega (1702) states that the Maya claimed that by the roots of the ceiba tree their lineages ascended into the world (Barera Vasquez 1976: 202-203). In the <u>Chilam Balam of Chumayel</u> (Roys 1973: 15) the origin of the lineages of the families Canul, Cauich, Ah Noh and Ah Puch are related to a certain direction, a color associated to this direction, and to a ceiba of fertility, as seen in the following passage:

> Ix Kan Tacay is the name of the lineage of
> the Ah Puch family. Nine are the rivers that
> they guard, of nine hills they are the keepers.
> The red flint-knife is their stone of the red
> and potent Mucencabe.[43] The great *ceiba* tree
> of fertility corresponds to their lineage that
> is in the east.[44]

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[43] *Mucencabe* (The One that Guards the Honey) a deity related to the earth, is represented as a descending god.

[44] Translation from Roys' Maya text (1973:11) to English is mine.

The *Cipactli* sign is also related to the idea of fertility and with the creation of humanity. As Barrera Vasquez (1976: 203) says, the tree and the reptile became one and the same thing. The roots of the tree are represented with the head of the monster, usually without the inferior jaw. There is a clear relationship between the symbol *Imix-Cipactli* and the ideas of creation, origin, water, earth, fertility and ancestry. Barrera Vasquez (1976) states that the symbol *Imix-Cipactli* can also be related to the creation duality, the Mother-Father of all humanity. From my viewpoint the symbol is closely related to *Itzam Na* [45], because this divinity had the divine power of creation. *Itzam Na* was also related to elements such as water, earth, sun, and also to fertility. This god is related to the monster of the earth, and his name was taken as a synonym of reptile or alligator. *Itzam Na* means, "Sorcerer of Water of the Creative Power" (Barrera Vasquez 1980: 272) and is related to a celestial deity linked to the ideas of origin, fertility and water. The deity presents other aspects, one is *Itzam Cab Ain* (Sorcerer of Water, Earth-Crocodile) that is directly linked to the Monster of the earth and to the concepts of fertility, standing water, and the underworld. Thompson says that Diego de Landa also mentions a deity named *Kinich Ahau Itzam Na*, which he (1982:261) named *Itzam Na Kinich Ahau* (Sorcerer of Water of the Creative Power, Face of Our Lord Sun), this would be the aspect of *Itzam Na* as the sun.

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[45] *Itzam Na* the principal deity of the Maya pantheon.

One of the great cruciform symbolic complexes appears at Palenque, where they represent the ceiba tree or *Imix Yax Chee* as the *axis mundi*, or center of the world, that links the under, middle and upper worlds. The ceiba-cross symbol is a vehicle of communication of these three levels. The symbolic complex that appeared at Izapa, as the representation of the union of a crocodile a tree and a serpent-bird, was reelaborated at Palenque. The three cross-motifs at Palenque represent three aspects of *Itzam Na* in relation with the three levels of existence, and with the levels of existence and the cycles of birth and re-birth. *Itzam Na* is linked to the Maya nobility and to the ideas of creation, origin, fertility, re-birth and resurrection. He appears as principal deity in the rituals related with lineages and ancestry of the Maya nobility. The Maya cross motifs were associated to the Catholic cross and their symbolism was merged. It is possible that this syncretism was favoured by the Catholic friars who compared the cross with a tree.

> ! Oh Cruz signo de nuestra fe, el mas noble de
> todos los arboles! Ningun bosque produjo otro
> igual en hoja, ni en flor, ni en fruto... tu fuiste
> la unica digna de portar sobre ti a la victima
> del mundo (Maurer 1983:181).[46]

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[46] Oh! Cross sign of our faith, the most noble of all the trees. No other forest produced another like you, nor in leaf, nor in flower, nor in fruit...You are the only one worthy to carry the victim of the world over you.

The union of the symbol Imix-Cipactli with the Catholic cross created a syncretic religious symbol. The cross was linked to rituals of an agricultural character, and this was reinforced by Catholicism because the day designated by the Catholic Church to celebrate the Holy cross is the third of May, the day when the rainy season should start. All these elements that merged in the symbol of the cross allow it to be a symbol of ethnic unification.

In relation with the cult of the Talking Cross which appeared in 1850, Herman Konrad (1987) indicates that the cult already existed in the region and that it was taken and reelaborated by the Maya leaders in order to sustain the rebellion. For Konrad the origin of the cult was the town of Xocen (1987: 19). The Maya documents I analyzed always mention that the cross departed (its origin was) from the town of Chichen. This refers to the archaeological site of Chichen Itza (Chicheen Itza: Border of the Well, of the Sorcerer of Water) which, still today, has a mythical relationship for the descendants of the Maya rebels. Aban May (1982) regards the cross as an Itza Santo (Saint Sorcerer of Water). A Maya document reinforces the view that the origin of the cult was developed in Chichen. It also states a very important element, that the cult was probably quatre-partite, which is quite common for the Mesoamerican cosmology (Letter from Juan de la Cruz to Governor Miguel Barbachano, August 20, 1850 (?), in Caso Barrera (1990: 252-255)). The great importance of duality was also characteristic of Mesoamerican cosmovision. The nineteenth century Cult of the Talking Cross, even though being syncretic,

also continued to have the essential contents of the pre-Hispanic dominant cruciform Maya symbols. For example the ideas of fertility, origins, relationship with the ruling Maya elites, and with the agricultural cycle are still present in the Maya villages descendants of the Maya rebels in Quintana Roo.

It seems that the Cult of the cross existed in four places: Chichen, X-Balam Na, X-Cenil (or Xocen) and Yalahau. The Cult of the Talking Cross was an element that supported the Maya movement and that enabled the unification of the Maya group. The Talking Cross encouraged the Maya to rebel against the dominant Yucatec sector, and it promised its protection against them in the battles:

> Otra cosa que les ordena mi Padre a ustedes, pobladores cristianos, es que sepan que no solo se alzara una guerra entre blancos y macehuales, porque ha llegado el momento en que los macehuales se levanten por encima de los blancos de una vez y para siempre. Todo se llevara a cabo exitosamente, pues enviare mis bendiciones a mis hijos macehuales en esta guerra.[47]

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[47] Another thing that my Father commands you, Christian villagers, is that you should know that there will be not only an uprising between *macehuales* and whites, it has come the time that the *macehuales* will rise over the whites for now and forever. Everything will be successful because I will send you my blessings in this war (BMCP, Ordinances of Juan de la Cruz, February 10, 1850 [1851?]. Document Number 5, in Caso Barrera (1990: 220)).

The Virgin of Lourdes and Saint Joseph.

As previously stressed, dominant symbols are multivocal, they represent a wide range of significata. In the case of the worship and Cult of the Virgin Mary and the saints, Turner (1978: 145-151) says that these symbols are representing a great variety of meanings and that usually there exists a syncretism between pre-Christian and Christian elements in these cults around the world. An example of this would be the Cult to the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico, which represents a syncretic cult to a pre-Hispanic goddess named *Tonantzin* (Our Mother) and the Virgin Mary. The Cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe can be used as a reference because of it syncretic character and because processes related to her cult are similar to those which characterize the Metis situation. The Cult of the Virgin of Lourdes among the Metis, based on information given by Payment, suggests a syncretic cult:

> The pilgrimage of Our Lady of Lourdes at St. Laurent also reflected the religious and cultural traditions of the Metis. A grotto had been erected on 16 July 1906. Newspaper accounts of this event and personal testimonies of the Metis themselves suggest an intense almost mystical, religious atmosphere. Less well documented, however, is the emergence of a blend of both Native and Christian beliefs and ceremonies in Metis religious expression. The Messe Royale was sung in Cree as well as in French and the miraculous cures were attributed to both the Native Medicine and Catholic ritual (1986: 178).

In Catholicism the Virgin is regarded as the Mother of God, although she is also considered as a spiritual mother for all humanity. This symbol characteristic is of great importance in order to understand its relation to conquered populations, especially populations that are the product of that conquest or domination, such as *mestizo* populations.

In Mexico the indigenous population of central Mexico, as well as the *mestizos*, needed a symbol to help them overcome the oppressed conditions that the conquest created. Therefore the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared as their adoptive mother. For the *mestizos* the situation of orphanhood and their origins were of great concern. This situation was very similar among the Metis, who also needed a symbol to overcome this situation. The symbols of Saint Joseph and the Virgin of Lourdes were necessary to maintain the identity of the Metis as a distinct group.

The symbol of the Virgin is always regarded as a messenger or intercessor between men and God. Turner (1978) states that the Virgin is not only worshiped for herself, but also for her intimate connection with Christ. For most people she represents a vehicle, or access, to her divine son, and men plead for her to intercede with him on their behalf. For Turner (1978) Christ and the Virgin represent the paradigm of Christianity, the power of the weak. The Virgin is also regarded as a kind of martyr, because of the suffering inflicted on her by the passion and crucifixion of her son.

Louis Riel regarded the Virgin of Lourdes as a protector and an intercessor for himself and for the Metis Nation. His personal prayer went as follows:

> Dear Lady of Lourdes, the losses we have
> sustained, are heavy and overwhelming,
> Deliver us from evil we beseech thee... our
> good undertakings deign to lead us to success.
> Make us triumph over evil and its horrors,
> Pray for us that God may deign to soften the
> hearts of the wicked, to overthrow them and
> to subject them, His Faithful people.[48]

It was Riel who, in 1884 at Batoche, began a movement to obtain a patron saint and a national day for the Metis. The Catholic priests had no choice but to grant this petition of the Metis, and Riel chose St. Joseph as the patron saint of the Metis and St. John the Baptist as a secondary protector. It is quite possible that Riel chose St.Joseph as a patron saint because he was regarded, along with the Virgin of Lourdes, as an adoptive symbolic parent of the Metis. The Virgin of Lourdes and St. Joseph represented symbolic divine parents of their chosen people, the Metis:

> And let us be protected by Mary, by Saint
> Joseph, our dear adopted father, the chosen
> patron of the Metis, the patron of the
> Universal Church; by Saint John the Baptist,
> the second patron of our nation; by the holy

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[48] PAM, Personal prayer of Louis Riel that he gave to Mrs. Margaret I. Black, Riel Papers 632. This prayer is almost the same as the one that Riel wrote in the image of the Virgin of Lourdes and that was used as a banner in the battle of 1885.

prophets, apostles, evangelists, martyrs and
all the saints (Flanagan 1976: 33).

The Metis celebrated their first National Day on the 24th of
September 1884, when Bishop Grandin accepted the Metis request
of having their own patron saint. Afterwards it was celebrated on
the 24th of July. At this point a society was created, named the
St. Joseph's Society, which adopted a banner with the image of St.
Joseph and the Child (Payment 1990: 154). All the symbols of the
Metis identity were religious symbols. The Metis Council, or
Exovedate, adopted as a flag the figure of the Virgin on a white
background. It is probable that the Metis used other religious
images attached to a white background such as, Our Lady of
Lourdes, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Conception.
During the rebellion of 1885 a banner with the image of Our Lady
of Lourdes was used as a protection. On this banner Riel wrote a
prayer to the Virgin (Payment 1990: 155). This event is very
similar to that of the Mexican Independence and Revolution when
the rebels used as a banner the figure of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

The national hymn of the Metis was also religious and they
regarded Jesus as their liberator, and St. Joseph and St. John the
Baptist as the protectors of the Metis Nation. It went as follows:

> **Air:**
> Holy Spirit Descend on us.
> **Refrain:**
> Heart of Jesus protect us (repeat)
> In life in death we are (repeat) all yours.
> **First Stanza:**

Heart of Jesus, our hope,
Hear our chants and our vows,
To our suffering country (twice)
Give unity and constancy
Give happy times
Second Stanza:
Heart of Jesus our love our glory
In our battles for salvation, for honour
Guide, o guide our steps to victory,
Be, o be our liberator
Third Stanza:
O St. Joseph, Patron Saint of the Church
John the Baptist, protector of French Canadians
Save the French and Metis race
By your conquered love. [Translation] (Payment 1990:
157)

Saint Joseph, the Virgin (specially Our Lady of Lourdes), and Saint John the Baptist, can be considered as protectors of the Metis. They were intercessors between them and God, and the bearers of the distinctiveness of the Metis as a chosen group. St. Joseph especially sanctified the origins of the Metis by being converted into their spiritual and divine father. The result being the real origins of the Metis were no longer important. Riel's idea was that under the patronage of St. Joseph, Metis culture, identity and autonomy would be established and maintained.

The celebration of the Metis national day (the day of St. Joseph) was of great importance until the beginnings of the 20th century. As part of the celebration there was a recreation of the old Metis buffalo hunt, using an ox donated by one of the participants (Payment 1990: 57). This is most important because symbolically St. Joseph's day was linked to the recreation of one of the most

important activities of Metis life the buffalo hunt. Also, as of 1884, a pilgrimage, from Notre-Dame de Lourdes to St. Laurent de Grandin, was established to become another important celebration for the Metis (Payment 1990: 57-58). One can see this celebration as another way of reinforcing Metis identity and distinctiveness, as well as the norms and values that regulated Metis social life. St. Joseph and the Virgin of Lourdes became dominant symbols for the Metis culture.

Chapter VII

Leaders and Political Organization.

Charisma and Symbols of Power

Both the Maya and Metis leaders could be considered as charismatic figures. Max Weber (1988: 193) defines charisma as an extraordinary quality by which a person is considered to possess supernatural and superhuman powers, or at least qualities which go beyond normal everyday parameters. In this sense charismatic leaders are considered to be individuals send by the gods, invested with a divine quality. Other individuals who present exemplary qualities are regarded as chiefs, leaders, and guides. The authority of charisma lies in the recognition, by the followers, of extraordinary qualities and capacities invested on chiefs or leaders. These powers and capacities generate certain material or symbolic benefits to their community.

The organization of the charismatic authority is what Weber calls charismatic domination (Weber 1988: 194). When the charisma of the leader is recognized and has achieved social validation, then such authority is organized with a staff and a charismatic community, and it becomes a charismatic domination. The staff is chosen by the charismatic leader for its charismatic qualities. In this sense the prophet chose his disciples and the leader his trustworthy men. Charismatic leaders create, announce, and demand new commandments by revelation, inspiration, oracle, or by their

own merits and organization. Charismatic domination, in Weber's words, is in opposition to the normal order of society (1988: 194-195). It is not in conformity with any norms or rules. In this sense charismatic domination also disdains everyday economy, their means of achieving economic wealth being outside the established structure (1988: 19). The charismatic domination prevails while the charisma of the leader is recognized by his followers. This opposition to the established social order gives the charismatic domination its revolutionary character.

In order to continue the charismatic domination it has to become routinized, or legalized. This is specially true when the charismatic leader disappears and a successor has to be chosen. The definition of charismatic domination given by Weber (1988) could be complemented by Turner's (1977: 137-138) characterization of the charismatic domination as being outside of the established order, therefor a liminal period. As a liminal period it creates a sense of comradeship and social bond between the charismatic leader and his followers This liminal condition is regarded by Turner as a state of communitas, or, a state of creativity and freedom from the established normative system. If the charismatic domination is to become a long lasting relationship, then it has to change in character, it has to become part of the social structure again. In order to routinize the charisma and to have a successor of the principal charismatic figure then it is necessary to create, recreate and establish certain signs or symbols related to the charismatic power. These symbols of the charismatic power legalize the

character of the successors of the first charismatic leader. Once the charismatic domination is routinized then the charismatic community comes terms with the established system; the whole process signifies the return of the charismatic community into everyday life.

Charismatic leaders represent values in themselves, because of their liminal condition and because they are linked to the symbols that regulate the social order. Shils argues, that there is an inherent sacredness of sovereign power, because the individuals representing this power are using symbols that give them power and sacredness at the same time (in Geertz 1983: 122-123). Geertz argues that at the political center of any complexly organized society there is a governing elite and a set of symbols that legitimize their power and their actions. These symbols could be a set of stories, ceremonies, rituals and insignia that the elites inherited or, in a more revolutionary situation, they created them. As Abner Cohen (1979) indicates, most of the symbols which are politically important are nonpolitical. Sometimes the less obviously political symbols are the more politically efficacious, as in the case of the religious political symbols, such as the Talking Cross for the Maya. In non-capitalist societies there is no real separation between political, religious, and political organizations. Because of this, charismatic leaders can exert their power in these three realms of the social structure. In this sense the Metis and Maya leaders were charismatic leaders because they created, recreated and controlled the symbols that legitimized their power and which,

at the same time, enabled them to control social structures, and the social action of their groups.

Metis Leaders.

In the Metis case the two leaders which could be considered as charismatic are Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. Both were complimentary to the other because each controlled different symbols and actions in relation to their charismatic power. Louis Riel has been the figure most analyzed, in relation to the Metis movement, and it is frequently assumed that Riel alone organized these movements. As Mailhot (1986) points out, previous to the appearance of Riel, as a leader in 1869, there was an established organization which generated the resistance led by the traditional leaders of the Metis. On July 4, 1869 Jean Baptiste Tourond organized a meeting to discuss the staking and surveying activities of the Canadians, which were directly affecting the Metis communities. At this meeting, held at St. Norbert's parish, Tourond acted as president while Jean Baptiste Lepine was chosen as secretary. The resolution there taken was to create a system of mounted patrols whose task was to protect Metis lands from Canadian speculators (Mailhot 1986: 17). Mailhot shows that the settlement's traditional leaders began to organize such meetings when the takeover by Canada was imminent. These meetings were held to protest against the way the new regime was trying to be established.

In the writings of the priests, Ritchot and Dugast, it is stated that these meetings were organized by the community leaders (Mailhot 1986: 29) If this is true, then the idea that the parishes were the social, economic and political units of Red River is confirmed. It is possible that the priests encouraged the organization of the parishes as social units to support the Metis social organization. It does not seem possible that the political meetings that were held by the Metis leaders were not supported by a previous political structure. The military organization of the buffalo hunt was used as a model for the political and military organization of the Red River Metis. It seems that the 1869 movement, led by the traditional Metis leaders, was beginning to break up because there was a lack of cohesion, or a leader, to unite them. It is at this moment that Riel appears as a charismatic leader, giving cohesion to the movement.

Riel can be considered as a charismatic leader because of his extraordinary qualities. First of all he was a liminal figure because he was in between the dominant and the Metis societies. He was educated in Quebec, which gave him the opportunity to be in contact with the dominant society. This education also gave him a very prestigious status among his people. His figure was also linked to that of his father, who was a leader of the Metis in 1849 during the free trade conflict, who was also regarded as a very religious man. In 1869 Father Ritchot, the priest of St. Norbert, stated that Riel spent most of his free time praying in St. Norbert's Church (Mailhot 1986: 30-33). Mailhot says that it seems that Riel even asked Ritchot for a confirmation that his actions had a divine sanction

(1986: 33). The events of 1869 could be seen as a preparation of Riel's revelation as a prophet and as the development of his charismatic power.

After the events of 1869 Riel became an outcast. He was unable to become a recognized Metis leader and to exert his political power through the legal political structure. The exile imposed on Riel by the Canadian government make him a martyr-hero in the eyes of his people, a symbol of the Metis struggle. As a Metis (probably Charles Nolin) shows in his letter to Riel in 1884:

> But because that unfortunate Government has so abused its force and its promises which it has never fulfilled. Doubtless if it had kept what it promised you (Riel) would have remained in the country and defended your people; but your exile entailed that of your whole nation and where is the Half-Breed who does not feel the stroke of your exile and is not ready to defend you to the last droop of his blood? This is the whole nation.[49]

The role of the parishes as political, as well as economic and social units, and the political-military role of the traditional leaders can be confirmed with the analysis of the Metis parishes in Saskatchewan. The Metis community which settled at Batoche, and its surroundings during the 1870's, came from the winter camps of the Northwest. It seems that since the 1840's Metis families began to establish wintering camps in

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[49] PAM, Riel Papers Number 623, letter Number18.

this region. The Metis were divided between those who were more used to a settled life and agriculture in Red River, and those who went to the western prairies and tried to prolong their way of life, based on the buffalo hunt. These were the Metis which had wintering camps in Saskatchewan, but for a long time they remained attached to Red River, which was their principal trading center (Woodcock 1975:63).

The Dumont family became one of the families of traditional leaders among the Metis. Gabriel Dumont's father and uncle were recognized leaders of their community (Woodcock 1975: 63-64). Gabriel Dumont became the leader of the Saskatchewan buffalo hunt party in 1863, and also the principal leader of the Metis communities in the Saskatchewan region (1975: 76). In 1868, the temporary wintering camps were transformed into more stable settlements. In 1871 the first parish of St. Laurent was established by Father Andre. In 1873 Gabriel Dumont organized a meeting among the Metis of the South Saskatchewan in order to discuss the setting up of a local government (1975: 84-85). As in Red River, the organization of the buffalo hunt served as a model for their political organization. Gabriel Dumont was elected as a president and a council was created where the Dumont clan had a strong presence. The council was made up of the leading Metis families. They also established twenty eight basic laws that regulated the life of the community of St. Laurent, laws

which controlled the social, economic and political life of the Metis of this parish (1975: 95-99).

Gabriel Dumont could be regarded as a charismatic leader because he possessed special qualities that were quite different from those which characterize Riel. Contrary from Riel, Dumont was not educated (did not received formal schooling) but, from a very young age, showed remarkable qualities in relation to the life in the prairies. Dumont spoke six Indian languages as well as Mischif (mixed-language of French and Cree). He was a remarkable hunter and trapper, as well as an excellent guide. All these qualities marked him as a natural Metis leader (Woodcock 1975: 47). When Dumont became the leader of the buffalo hunt he was characterized by his generosity towards the poor and the disabled (1975: 91). This was a very important characteristic because it showed his social responsibility and obligation towards his people and, at the same time, this gave him recognition and support from his community. Dumont's role as a mediator between the Metis and different Indian tribes (Cree, Assiniboines and Sioux) was of great importance. He was a peacemaker and a peacekeeper and he created a network of social and political relationships with these groups (1975: 84).

Dumont became a partisan supporter of Riel in 1869. It seems that during these events he advised Riel to distrust the Canadian government and to organize an armed resistance. It

is reported that he offered to ride at the head of five hundred horsemen to support this resistance (Woodcock 1975: 81). Yet it was only in 1884 that both leaders were united, working together for the Metis cause. Riel became the religious-political leader, in his role as a prophet, while Dumont became the military-political leader of the Saskatchewan Metis. Riel and Dumont became symbols, representing the Metis struggle and identity. Riel also tried to create and recreate symbols to support his own power and his role as a prophet, as well as to give the Metis symbols of identity and cohesion like that of their patron saint, Saint Joseph.

The Maya Elite.

The Maya elite could be considered charismatic because their origins were regarded as divine by their people (Roys 1973: 15). Since prehispanic times the Maya nobility asserted its power and exerted control over the Maya population because of their sacred condition. Maya rulers were the mediators between the supreme deities and their people. It was the Maya nobility who began worshiping and nourishing the deities by giving them their blood by self-sacrifice so that the gods, in return, would give their people life and sustenance (Recinos 1980: 70). After the Spanish conquest the role of the surviving Maya nobility, and afterwards the Maya elite, remained very similar in relation to the Maya communities. They were the keepers of the ancient knowledge because they kept the

history, mythology, religious beliefs, as well as the history of the Maya lineages in the books of *Chilam Balam.*[50]

It seems that a book of *Chilam Balam* was kept on every Maya colonial village. They contained not only the history, religion and prophecies of the Maya, but also the notions of what the Maya considered as legitimate political authority (Barrera Vásquez y Silvia Rendon 1980). The Maya elite were still regarded as mediators between the community and the deities, now worshiped through the syncretic figures of the patron saints. They were also considered as mediators between the Maya communities and the dominant Spanish and Creole system. And because many Maya leaders were educated by the Spanish friars this gave them the opportunity to act as cultural brokers. Their knowledge about the dominant political and judicial systems gave them a good weapon to defend the interests and the patrimony of their communities (Farriss 1984: 273). In this sense they were a liminal group because they were the intermediaries between the communities and the sacred world, and between them and the dominant group. This condition reinforced their charismatic power and the recognition and support of their communities.

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[50] *Chilam Balam* is the name of a Maya priest that prophesied the -arrival of the Spaniards to Yucatan.

During the colonial period the Maya elite created the mechanisms to maintain the cohesion and autonomy of their communities. At the same time, this enabled them to preserve their own political, economic and religious power. This was managed through the institutions of the *cofradias* and the *Republicas de Indios*. Both institutions had overlapping functions and functionaries because the Maya elite controlled them both. The offices of greater importance were those of the *Batab-Gobernador* (Batab-Governor), *Patron de Cofradia* (Patron of the Cofradia), *Maestro Cantor* (Choirmaster) and the *Escribano* (Town clerk) (Farriss 1984: 233). Through these institutions the elite controlled the means of production, principally the land, the communal labour force, and the public revenues. The elite became the defender of the communal rights and property because, in this way, it was also protecting its own interests.

The relationship between the Maya elite and the community was based on reciprocity. On one hand, the elite received recognition, support and obedience from the members of the community and, on the other hand, they ensured the communal well-being by attracting the good will of the saints. This was done through a good administration of the lands dedicated to the support of the cult of the saints, and by properly organizing the ritually important fiesta of the patron saint. The social order was maintained by reinforcing the reciprocal horizontal relationships among the members of the community

as well as the reciprocal vertical relationships between the elite and the community (Farriss 1984: 338).

The Maya leaders were in control of the economic, political and religious structures because these were not separated from the Maya social structure. It was the Maya elite that organized the Maya rebellion in 1847, and who, in 1850, would take and recreate the symbol of the Talking Cross. It was used not only as a religious symbol, to give cohesion and strength to the social movement, but also as a political symbol, which allowed for political and military movilization.

The Caste War was led by the Maya leaders from the peasant sector of the southeastern part of the peninsula. These Maya leaders could be regarded as an indigenous intelligentsia, which created a political orientation with alternative social projects. Alicia Barabas (1981: 59) says, even though the people made the resistance and rebellion possible, it was the leaders who gathered and synthesized in an organized way the experiences lived by every one. There was a linkage of interests and objectives between the indigenous intelligentsia and the group which they represented and which they were part of. The indigenous intellectual became a condenser of communal goals and expectations. These leaders did not act in an irrational, spontaneous way or lacked a political project. They had their well-defined aims, as well as mature, well-structured projects. In order to fulfill their goals they took

measures to ensure the viability of their projects, for example, by creating internal and external alliances.

In the Maya case, the Maya leaders tried to incorporate all the Maya communities of the peninsula to create an internal alliance of the ethnic group. They established relationships with the British, in British Honduras (now Belize), who sold them weapons and ammunition. From 1847 to 1850 the two principal Maya leaders were Jacinto Pat and Cecilio Chi. They could be considered as charismatic because of their liminal condition, which gave them exceptional qualities and gifts. These Maya leaders were not considered as mere officers. They were regarded almost as quasi-divine individuals because they were symbols, who represented the ideals and values of the group (Caso Barrera 1990: 88). Jacinto Pat was an educated and wealthy man who did not have as radical a political positions as those of other Maya leaders. His position was more conciliatory with respect to the dominant group. Cecilio Chi was not educated as Pat, and not as wealthy (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 76). He represents the most radical political and military faction of the Maya rebels. After the death of these two leaders their successors (Jose Maria Barrera, Florentino Chan, and Venancio Pec) had many problems trying to maintain the unity and strength of the movement, so they resorted to the recreation of the symbol of the Talking Cross. This became the most important religious and political symbol for the Maya rebel group, as of 1850.

Riel's Religious Syncretism.

To understand Louis Riel's role as a political and religious leader one has to understand the origin of his religious thought. This was an elaboration of Christian beliefs and also of Metis traditional beliefs. If one considers that the Metis culture has a syncretic character then it is of great importance to analyze the cultural elements which have been merged. Riel, as other religious and political leaders, created and recreated symbols which were appealing to his people and that drove them into social action. Riel took elements and symbols from the Bible, which were the most suitable to Metis culture, and he combined them with traditional Metis cultural elements. His liminal condition enable him to do this because he was in between the dominant society and his own Metis culture. His religious training in Montreal gave him the theological background to built his own religious conceptualizations. These concentrated on two principal topics; Riel's role as a messiah-prophet, and the role of the Metis nation as a chosen group.

Even though Riel did not explicitly relate himself with the figure of Christ, it is clear in his writings that the ultimate model he was following was that of Jesus, as a Messiah, as a Saviour. In his writings and in his deeds he established many similarities between Jesus and himself. His devotion and love for the figure of Jesus makes us believe that he wanted to

follow Christ's role as a Saviour and Martyr. As shown in one of Riel's entries in his diaries on June 3,1884:

> Leader of the Manitobans! (Riel) You
> know that God is with the Metis, be
> meek and humble of heart. Be grateful
> to God in complete repentance. Jesus
> Christ wants to repay you for your
> labours. That's why He is leading you
> gradually along His way of the cross.
> Mortify yourself. Live as a saint, die as
> one of the elect (Flanagan 1976: 26).

He conceived Jesus, as himself, not only as a religious saviour but also as a political one. In Riel's writings Jesus appears as a combative Messiah. In his personal prayer he addresses Jesus with political titles:

> Beseech our dear Lord Jesus Christ to
> prove now to all men that He alone is
> Lord, Emperor, King, Monarch, President,
> Czar and Premier.[51]

Following Jesus' model, Riel knew that he had to be sacrificed in order to redeem his people, but, like Jesus he wanted to be resurrected after his death:

> With his (Riel) Death and Burial, it was
> surely to be thought that all trouble
> was at an end, but no so, for he had
> stated when in the plenitude of his
> power, that he would be raised from

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[51] PAM, copy of a personal prayer that Riel gave as a gift to Margaret I. Black. Riel Papers Num. 632.

the death and come riding on a Grey
Horse in the clouds of heaven [...].[52]

Riel's relation to King David could be explained by the relationship he established between the Hebrews and the Metis as chosen people of God. The most important thing was that David was a religious and a political leader, a position which Riel wanted to achieve. His role as a prophet was also of great importance because in his prophetic revelations he introduced most of the traditional beliefs of the Metis. As a prophet Riel was in constant communication with God, so his principal task was to reveal God's will to humanity, and to reveal future events which were of importance for the Metis nation. As Flanagan (1979: 76) says, "A prophet is extra-institutional; his authority rests upon divine charisma, manifested in his holy life, his visions and revelations, his ability to work miracles."

Metis culture was syncretic because it represented elements from both sources, the Native traditions (principally Cree and Ojibwa) and French Canadian traditions. Metis culture merged native languages, art, religious beliefs, and other cultural elements with French, Christian beliefs, art and other elements and practices from the French Canadian culture. It should be pointed out that in Cree religion, as well as for most Native North American religions, the power of visions

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[52] PAM, Riel Papers Num. 622, document Number 5. Document made by George H. Young, based on his notes of the events of 1885.

and the vision quest were central elements of their cosmology (Hultkrantz 1987: 20). Since most Native North American religions were based in visions and revelations, which were passed on through oral tradition, there was an interest in preserving ancient traditions as well as to accept new ones (Hulkrantz 1987:16). Native North American religions were more flexible because they were constantly being recreated and enriched with new visions and experiences (1987: 16). In Native religions the vision quest provided a direct contact with the supernatural and with the divine. The vision quest was linked to fasting and other types of physical suffering, which was the only way to get in contact with the supernatural beings (Mandelbaum 1940: 252-253). In these visions the spirits granted a person with special powers.[53] Special instructions were also given so that the person did not lose the power. Most of the times the person was asked to avoid certain things, persons or actions; the person was then responsible of taking care of the power which has been given to him/her (Mandelbaum 1940: 253).

It is quite striking that the central element in Riel's religious practices was his capability to have visions and to give revelations, even though Flanagan (1979) argues that Riel's

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[53] One of these special powers could be the power of divining, which was usually given as the ability to foresee the enemy (Mandelbaum 1940:261).

role as a prophet was shaped by Biblical influences. There are also a lot of similarities with the vision quest of the Native religions. It seems that the Metis shared the belief in visions and revelations of their Native kinsmen. As asserted, although vaguely, by Theresa Gowanlock, who became a hostage of Big Bear's Band during the events of 1885:

> [...] the Indians came and told us what
> they saw in the heavens. They saw a
> church and a man on a large black horse
> with his arm out and he looked so
> angry, and they said God must be angry
> with them for doing such a thing
> (massacre of whites?); the halfbreeds
> are as superstitious as the Indians
> (Gowanlock and Delaney 1885:31).

The Half-Breeds, which Theresa Gowanlock referred to, were Metis who were with Big Bear's band at the time. What it could be inferred from her statement is that both Indians and Metis believed in visions and revelations. As stated in Payment "Among the other customs and beliefs, there were the tales and dreams, often of a religious nature, but also pervaded by other influences. "Old wives" specially told tales about old times, "horror stories", ghost stories and "prophesies" (stories predicting a misfortune, death etc.) Death was the main theme of several of these stories" (Payment 1990: 59).

Riel himself stated that his prophecies were revelations of future events, and he even compared his power to the capacity of Metis hunters to predict the future:

> I (Riel) have seen half-breeds say, my
> hand is shaking, you will see such a
> thing today,and it happens. Others will
> say I feel the flesh on my leg moving in
> such a way, it is a sign of such a thing,
> and it happens (Flanagan 1976: 159).

Riel received a series of admonitions from God, in relation to his conduct, his health and his eating habits. As a prophet-messiah Riel had to be very moderate in his diet (Flanagan 1976: 44-45). He also avoided alcohol and tobacco, was chaste and lived a poor and simple life (1976: 18). He was constantly mortifying himself and fasting, which resembled the ideas of suffering and fasting of the vision-quest as well as the ideas of suffering and penance related to the figure of Christ. It has to be underlined that one could find elements in both religions, Christian and Native, which could be compatible and which could be easily merged.

Riel's revelations during the 1885 rebellion were in relation to the movements of the Canadian army and the events which were occuring during the battles:

> The Spirit of God showed me the upper
> road. It is open, it is clear, it is wide. I
> do not see any sign favorable to the
> enemy. The upper road is a fine road. It
> is the road of the Metis who are
> marching towards victories here below
> (Flanagan 1976: 71).

Following these religious revelations Riel restrained the actions and guerrilla tactics which the military leader Gabriel Dumont wanted to put into practice. Dumont's explanation to the events of 1885 were the following:

> I yielded to Riel's judgment, although I
> was convinced that from a humane
> standpoint, mine was the better plan;
> but I had confidence in his faith and his
> prayers, and that God would listen to
> him (Woodcock 1975: 191).

In relation to the Metis as a chosen people it is clear that the model Riel was following was that of the Hebrews in Exodus. As had the Hebrews, the Metis were suffering from oppression, deprivation and injustice from a tyrannical political power. God had chosen the Metis as he had the Hebrews, to deliver them from this situation of oppression, and to be recipients of the true religion. In his revelations Riel constantly declared that the movement was a struggle for truth, justice and righteousness:

> Alas! Alas! War is great and solemn for
> those who wage it for the love of truth,
> justice and righteousness. Alas! Alas!
> War is horrible for those who are not
> just. Woe! Thrice woe to soldiers who
> fight on the side of the evil; they are
> soon vanquished (Flanagan 1976: 70)..

Riel had a very interesting revelation where, in a symbolic way, the Metis Nation was shown to him as a Metis woman (Jeneviève Arcand), that was drived only by sensual desires. But in Riel's

revelation, there was a transformation of this woman, because she was following the path of justice (Flanagan 1976). By following the path of justice and truth the Metis Nation was transformed. But in order to achieve a complete transformation it was necessary that the Metis prayed and suffered as Riel himself was:

> O my Metis Nation! Take courage! Your four
> days of fasting, prayer and mortification have
> produced wonderful effects of transformation
> among you. I see your change; it is great
> (Flanagan 1976: 76).

The transformation of the Metis Nation as a chosen people of God allowed it to become the bearer of the true religion. This gave Riel and his followers the right to oppose those who were oppressing them and opposed to their mission. Riel and the Metis represented the Catholic, Apostolic and Living Church of the New World. Since the priests, Father Andre and Father Fourmond, were in opposition to Riel's new religious ideas, as well as to his military and political actions, he rejected them. They were going to be replaced by the members of the Exovedate. The members of the Exovedate were to become religious and political leaders:

> On each member of the French-Canadian
> Metis Exovedate, send down all the
> charitable gifts of the priesthood, all
> the evangelical graces of the ministry,
> all the wonderful fruits of Your Holy
> Spirit, that each Exovade may be
> pleasing to You, that each may celebrate
> the solemn and consoling services of

> the true religion, edifying Your people
> in grace! (Flanagan 1976: 8).

Riel, in his messianic role, created new religious symbols and practices. For example, he created a new communion by consecrating milk and bread. These reformulations were seen by Riel as a reformation of the liturgy, because the old religion was full of deficiencies that Rome was inculcating worldwide. The creation of a new religion could be seen as part of a process to achieve autonomy, in other words, to create a national church.

Juan de la Cruz' Relation to Jesus Christ.

The Caste War turned into a political and religious movement in 1850 with the development of the Cult to the Talking Cross. It seems that one of the principal Maya leaders, Jose Maria Barrera found the location which later became the place of the cult. This place was a grotto where there was a *cenote* (natural sinkhole) and a tree, probably a mahogany which is considered as a sacred tree in Maya cosmology. It was in this tree where the cross was carved.[54] In some historical accounts it is mentioned that there was only one cross (Reed 1982: 135-136), while in others it is stated that there were

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[54] There is a relationship between the place of the Cult of the cross and the presence of a cenote and a sacred tree.

three (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 97). We know when the cult started because of a Maya reference which states the exact day when the cult began:

> En el dia quince del mes de octubre del
> año de 1850, comence a comunicarme
> con mis hijos aqui sobre la tierra, yo
> Juan de la Cruz, residente del pueblo de
> X-Balam Na.[55]

The Talking Cross communicated through its Patron, a ventriloquist named Manuel Nauat.

In the Maya case the Messiah is represented by Juan de la Cruz, who is symbolically represented on earth by the Talking Cross. The Maya created a syncretic religion by taking certain elements and symbols from their traditional religious beliefs and merging them with certain Christian beliefs. The Christian symbols which the Maya recreated were those which were more related to their own beliefs. For example, in Maya cosmology and mythology there could be found the ideas of sacrifice and auto-sacrifice of gods and cultural heroes for the benefit of humanity. These ideas were of great importance because one of the elements which the Maya found most appealing in Christianity was Jesus' sacrifice. The Passion

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[55] It was on the fifteen of October of the year 1850, when I began to communicate with my children here on earth, I, Juan de la Cruz, resident of the town of X-Balam Na. (BMCP, Ordinances of Juan de la Cruz , February 10, 1850 [1851?]. Document Number 5, in Caso Barrera (1990: 219)).

theme would be a central topic of the writings of the Messiah, Juan de la Cruz. Juan de la Cruz assumed the role of Christ as a saviour and redeemer of his people. His writings constantly underlined the suffering which he was enduring in order to liberate and protect the Maya:

> Porque yo los cree a todos ustedes, yo
> derrame mi santa sangre por ustedes
> mis amados siervos para que ustedes
> vean como mis pies estan clavados y
> engrilletados, y cuantas sogas me atan
> con las que soy castigado por mi
> hermoso Padre por ustedes.[56]
>
> Les dare a ustedes una señal que
> deberan arraigar en sus corazones
> porque yo en todo momento me
> encuentro caido, acuchillado, razgado
> con espinas sobre el madero [Cruz] en el
> que paso por Yucatan para redimirles a
> ustedes.[57]

Authors such as Villa Rojas (1978) and Victoria Bricker (1981) argue that Juan de la Cruz was a historical personage. I will

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[56] Because I created you, I spilled my holy blood in your behalf my beloved people, so that you can see how my feet are nailed and chained and how I am tied with ropes which are used by my beautiful Father to punish me on your behalf. (BMCP, Ordinances of Juan de la Cruz, February 10, 1850 [1851?]. Document Num. 5, in Caso Barrera (1990: 224)).

[57] I will give you a signal that you should keep in your hearts, because I am at every moment fallen, stabbed, pierced with thorns over the piece of wood [cross] in which I pass through Yucatan to redeem you. (BMCP, Ordinances of Juan de la Cruz, February 10, 1850 [1851?]. Document Number 5, in Caso Barrera (1990: 221)).

disagree with them in this respect because for me Juan de la Cruz is a symbolic-religious personage who acts as the Messiah, and who is linked to the symbol of the cross. It appears to be a dual symbol because most of the documents are signed by Juan de la Cruz, resident of the town of X-Balam Na, and by Juan de la Cruz, resident of the town of X-Cenil. While the cross was the tangible symbol for the people, it was Juan de la Cruz who was the mediator between men and the Supreme Beings. My hypothesis is that it was the semantic construction of the name which was appealing for the Maya. Because Juan de la Cruz (John of the Cross) gives the idea of a personage [Juan, John] who is linked or associated to the cross. This symbolic-religious personage was associated with Christ since the development of the Cult of the Talking Cross.

The Cult of the Talking Cross developed with a series of intermediaries, the first being the ventriloquist Patron Manuel Nauat. After his death the Cross communicated through letters which were written by the Secretaries of the Cross. Juan de la Cruz, was a mediator as Jesus himself was. In his role as mediator Juan de la Cruz implored the permission of the Supreme Beings to begin a new war (a religious war) against the whites where the *macehuales* [58] would defeat them, because Juan de la Cruz promised the Maya that he was going to protect them against the bullets of the *ladinos*. (Ordinances of Juan de la Cruz, February 10, 1850

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[58] *Macehuales* are Maya commoners.

[1851?]. Doc. Number 5, in Caso Barrera (1990: 233-234)). He was a combative Messiah and exhorted his people to fight against the white dominant group of Yucatan. He also granted his protection and blessings during the battles. His blessings and protection were made manifest through the symbol of the cross, which was carried to the battle fields. It was Juan de la Cruz who ordered an attack to the Kampocolche ranch on January 3, 1851, and to free the towns which were occupied by ladino soldiers:

> Otra cosa que mando a ustedes mis
> amados hijos, es que es preciso que
> reunan mil armas y mil hombres de
> tropa ligera, a fin de que podamos
> hundir y acabar con el rancho
> Kampocolche. Es el momento de destruir
> este rancho de una vez y para siempre.
> Se podra liberar los cantones tomados
> por los blancos en el oriente, en todos
> los cantones donde se encuentran.
> Porque ha llegado la hora en que se
> levante Yucatan sobre los blancos para
> siempre.[59]

The Maya attacked and were defeated. The *ladinos* took Maya prisoners, who told them about the cult to the Talking Cross which was taking place at the town of Chan Santa Cruz X-

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[59] Another thing which I command you my beloved children, is that it is of great importance that you gather one thousand weapons and troops so that we can destroy this ranch Kampocolche. It is the moment to destroy this ranch for now and forever.We can also liberate the other villages which have been taken by the whites in the east. Because it is the time that Yucatan will rise over the whites forever. (BMCP, Ordinances of Juan de la Cruz, February 10, 1850 [1851?]. Document Number 5, in Caso Barrera (1990: 221)).

Balam Na (Little Holy Cross, House of Secrecy). The *ladino* troops then decided to attack Chan Santa Cruz on the 23rd of March 1851. The Maya were once more defeated, but the worst thing was that the Patron of the Cross, Manuel Nauat, was killed during the battle and the cross was captured by the ladino troops. The death of Nauat was one of the most serious reversals for the development of the cult, as it is stated in the following document:

> Yo no puedo hablar con toda la gente,
> solamente puedo hacerlo con mi patron.
> Asi es que desde que mataron a mi
> patron sus tropas, no hay con quien yo
> pueda hablar.[60]

With the attack on Chan Santa Cruz and the capture of the cross, the documents written by Juan de la Cruz reinforced the Passion theme, to the point that the *ladino* soldiers were identified as the Jews who gave in Christ to the Romans:

> El 24 del mismo mes mataron a mi
> patron en el pueblo de Chan Santa Cruz.
> A mi [la Cruz] me ataron y me llevaron
> al rancho Kampocolche en donde me
> abofetearon. Me asaetearon repetidas
> veces la espalda y durante una hora tres

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[60] I can not speak to everybody, I can only speak with my patron. Since my patron was killed by your troops there is no one to whom I can speak. (BMCP, Letter from Juan de la Cruz to Governor Miguel Barbachano, August 11, ?. Document Number 6, in Caso Barrera (1990: 243)).

veces me pidieron que yo hablara con
ellos.[61]

Juan de la Cruz dictated a series of commandments and rules
to guide the reorganization of the rebel Maya society. These
norms became the basis of their autonomy. These
commandments were to be read to everyone in the rebel Maya
villages, and they had to be followed and obeyed because Juan
de la Cruz stated, that it was the only way in which the Maya
were going to be delivered. Those who did not want to follow
these norms would receive great punishments and sufferings:

> Mi señal la pongo a su vista en esta
> carta para que ustedes conozcan mis
> mandamientos. Aquellos que no asuman
> mis preceptos recibiran un trago
> amargo de miseria y mortificacion, que
> no tendra fin. Los que no cumplan mis
> ordenes tendran que ganarse la grandeza
> de mi gloria, mi afecto y mi proteccion
> debajo de mi mano derecha para que sus
> almas merezcan entrar en mi gloria y
> puedan finalmente resucitar.[62]

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[61] The 24th of the same month they killed my patron in the village of
Chan Santa Cruz (Little Holy Cross). I [the cross] was tied and they
took me to the Kampocolche ranch where they slapped me..They
injured my back several times, and in one hour they asked me three
times to speak with them. (BMCP, Letter from Juan de la Cruz to
Governor Miguel Barbachano, August 20, ?. Document Number 7, in
Caso Barrera (1990: 257)).

[62] I put my signal in this letter so that you can know my
commandments. Those of you who do not accept my commandments
will receive an endless bitter drink of misery and mortification.
Those of you who do not follow my orders will have to gain the
greatness of my glory, my love and my protection under my right

In his role as a Messiah Juan de la Cruz not only promised a Heavenly Kingdom, he also promised the restoration of his kingdom in this world. This would be one of justice for the poor and the dispossessed, in this case the Maya rebels. The Maya took the figure of Christ, and the Passion theme, which they recreated through the symbols of Juan de la Cruz and the Talking Cross. The Maya rebels became the chosen people, who were going to be delivered by the Messiah Juan de la Cruz, and his representative on earth the Talking Cross. Juan de la Cruz was constantly communicating with his followers through the Talking Cross. His protection and blessings were also given through this symbol. Juan de la Cruz, as a Maya Christ, was in opposition to the dominant white group, so he became not only a religious symbol but also a political one. Thus, Juan de la Cruz was transformed into the symbol of the autonomy and identity of the group.

The Maya and Metis religious syncretism could be seen as an appropriation of cultural elements to generate and reinforce their own cultures. The reinterpretation of the Bible, which was merged with Native religious elements served as a religious-political ideology. The political discourse of both the Maya and Metis leaders underlines the ideas of oppression, deprivation, and injustice which were used as ideological tools. What can be stated by analyzing both

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hand, so that your souls deserve to enter into my glory, and that they can finally be resurrected. (BMCP, Ordinances of Juan de la Cruz, February 10, 1850 [1851?]. Document Number 5, in Caso Barrera (1990: 219)).

social movements is that they were generated to protect and maintain the ethnic identity of these groups, which was based in the norms and values that regulated them, as well as their social organization and autonomy.

Conclusions

As suggested by George Rude (Kaye 1988: 79) the comparative analysis of social movements is of great importance because it enables the researcher to look at the general as well as the particular; to analyze the general pattern of revolutions as well as the individual case-histories. In this sense, the comparative study of the Maya rebellion known as the Caste War of Yucatan, and the Metis social movements known as the Riel Rebellions, was very important because it allowed for two different kinds of analysis. First, each movement was analyzed separately, to place them in their general historical context, to study their external pressures and internal problems, and to look at their political organization as well as to the motivations and ideals of their leaders. Second, the objective was to try to analyze the common elements which appeared in both movements, for example, both movements developed in the nineteenth century, a historical period which presented certain characteristics which enabled the development of these kind of social movements. The nineteenth century was analyzed as the general framework for the development of both movements. It was characterized as a liminal period because of the transformations which produced and created the development of a series of social movements around the world.

Both movements were divided in two periods, a political period and a political-religious period. With respect to the latter it was found a similar pattern because in both cases the Bible was used as a model to create a syncretic politico-religious ideology. An interesting aspect of this kind of comparative analysis is the possibility of generating models which could explain the growth of social movements. I will like to conclude this study by enumerating some of the principal common elements which I found in the analysis of both movements. This could be used as a framework to understand the development of both social movements under these similar circumstances.

First, it has to be pointed out that before the second half of the nineteenth century both the Maya of the southeastern part of Yucatan and the Red River Metis were more or less in control of their social organizations. They were dominated by an external power, but they had managed to retain certain control over their lives. In the second half of the nineteenth century there was a great transformation which was going to affect not only the Maya and Metis societies but many other ethnic groups, as well as non-capitalist sectors around the world, and this was the development of capitalism. Also in the nineteenth century there is the creation of new Nation States, many of these new Nation States were former colonies or were under the control of other powerful Nations. In many

cases the establishment of the new Nation States implied the development of wars of independence (like in the Mexican and in the United States cases). The nineteenth century created the political ground for the development of social movements because of the general restructuration of economic, political and social structures.

In the second half of the nineteenth century both the Canadian and the Yucatec Governments were exerting more aggressive policies towards their native populations, in order to establish more political and economic control over them, and their means of production. In both cases the social movements could not be regarded only as reactions against dispossession, rather they could be seen as reactions against the threat of losing control over their ethnic identity, based in the norms and values that regulated these groups, and their social organization supported by their lands. These were considered as a territory. Without control over lands the basic social institutions of these groups could not be sustained and without these institutions the normative system which regulated their lives would also be eroded. Following Barth's (1969) and Bonfil Batalla's (1986) conceptualizations it could be stated that ethnic identity lies basically in the normativeness that structures society and that regulates the external and internal relationships of the group.

In non-capitalist societies, such as the Maya and Metis, the normative system that sustained their identity lay principally in their religious structure. The autonomy and identity of a group will be sustained while the group controls and maintains an equilibrium between their normative system, and the material elements that support this ideological structure. In this sense the Maya and Metis movements were conscious efforts to maintain their ethnic identity, their social organization, and autonomy. To rely only in the economic and material aspects to explain these movements is misleading because they are more oriented towards the protection of the social system.

Both the Maya and Metis movements could be regarded as antisystemic, because they were against the abrupt changes that the introduction of capitalism wanted to impose on them. In this sense I consider these movements as politically oriented, that is, they were motivated by an ideology which was created by their leaders. It is ideology, not only deprivation which makes people participate in a social movement; without an ideology there could be no social action.

In the Maya and Metis cases the basis of their ideology was the moral outrage against the disarticulation of the normative system that regulated their relationships with the dominant groups, and their syncretic religion. An analysis of the documents made by both groups shows that the impulse of the

movements derived from the breakdown of this normative system, which created a situation of social injustice. Both groups were offered promises to redress their grievances by the government, which never were fulfilled. The legal system was used by the dominant groups as a weapon to deprive and oppress both the Maya and Metis groups.

In both cases it was found that the leaders of the rebellions were charismatic leaders who had a liminal character, this is they were individuals who were in between the dominant society and their own societies. These leaders were more educated than their followers, and usually they were educated by the dominant system. This knowledge of the dominant society was of great value for them when they rebelled against it. Their liminal condition enabled these leaders to appropriate cultural elements from the dominant society (ideology, laws, political and military ideas as well as religious elements) and merged them with their own cultural traditions and beliefs. These leaders legitimated their power and actions through a set of symbols, which most of the time were non-political symbols; this was quite true when the movements become political-religious movements.

The second phase of the Metis and Maya movements was a political-religious period. For both groups the resort to religious symbols in order to give new impulse to their movements derives from the impossibility of getting an

agreement with the dominant group, and also because there were conditions which were threatening the development of these social movements. In the Maya case the death of the two principal leaders (Pat and Chi) caused a great crises within the rebel group, so their successors had to create the Cult of the Talking Cross. In the Metis case it was the intransigence of the Canadian Government in granting the Metis rights which pushed Riel to become a prophet and to transform the movement in to a political-religious one. Both movements used the Bible as a model for political action, the two principal sources which were used in these politico-religious movements are that of the Exodus, where the Hebrews are the chosen group which was liberated by God from an oppressive situation; and the figure of Christ as a Messiah and redeemer of these new chosen groups (the Maya and Metis). In both cases we have Biblical models which were transformed to fit the cultural patterns and the needs of the groups using them. The religious symbols generated by a social movement serve to unite and give cohesion to the group which creates or recreates them, and to support the ethnic identity as well as the development of the social movement. At least this was the case for both the Maya and Metis.

It could be stated that the general causes which generated these movements were not only their dispossession. In both cases it seems that it was more important for these groups to maintain their ethnic identity, their social organization, and

their autonomy. The threat of losing their autonomy and control over their social organizations created the basis for a resistance. These threats were recognized by the traditional leaders, who realized that without the control of their resources their whole social organization was going to collapse. In this sense the communal lands are not seen as mere means of subsistence, but more as a territory which supports their social organization. The social structure and the system of norms and values of these groups were linked to the control of their resources.

Both movements could be labelled as reformist because they were trying to protect their social organization, their ethnic identity, and autonomy, which were threatened with the changes that capitalism was introducing. But this does not mean that these movements were backward looking or static. These movements were not against all changes, but they wanted to participate in the decisions which involved those changes, and they wanted to change at their own pace and by their own motivations. The movements, being liminal periods in themselves, were moments where new symbols, laws, norms and values were created, so these groups were transformed in these processes.

Finally, it could be said that the ultimate and principal cause of these movements was the interest of one group (Metis), to establish a self-government within the wider society, and the

other (Maya), to establish a complete autonomy from the dominant society, indicating that both movements were politically oriented. If we keep looking at these kind of movements only as reactions of non-developed groups, to the establishment of progress, or only as reactions to dispossession, then we will never understand their true meaning as political movements.

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