

William V. Davidson

## **YAXCHÉ: *Ceiba pentandra* in Yucatán, a cultural geography**



Iglesia San Juan, Izamal.



Ceiba at cenote Zaci, Valladolid.



Yaxché village entry ceiba.



Hotzuc cemetery, ceiba, and well.

*Yaxché:*

*Ceiba Pentandra* in Yucatán,

A Cultural Geography.

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*Yaxché:*

**The Ceiba in Yucatán,**

*A Cultural Geography.*

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## **The Ceiba in Yucatán**

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Dedicated . . . to those who led my way to, and in, Yucatán, 1965:

Lucius Burch, Mike Cody, Charlie Newman, Manuel Angulo, and Germán García

\*\*\* \*\*



a.



b.



c.



d.



e.

**a. Cody and Manuel Angulo, b. Newman, Cody, and German García at San Miguel dock, c. Burch at Alacrán Reef, d. Author camping alone in Tulum ruins, e. Newman at Tulum.**

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## Preface

During the summer of 1965 Sharon and I drove down the east coast of México and across Yucatán on our way to Cozumel Island for master's research. On that trip, we saw a ceiba tree for the first time. We do not recall exactly where we were . . . it was probably along the coastal road between Tampico and Veracruz . . . but we do remember our impression of that tall, symmetrical plant that called out for our attention: Wow! Look at that! Ceibas attracted our attention for the rest of our trip.

At the time she could have never dreamed that we'd still be looking for ceibas . . . over half a century later.

The latitudinal and environmental ranges of *Ceiba pentandra* in México are perhaps surprising. On the northwest, in spite of extreme dryness, with professor Robert West in 1990, we photographed a ceiba planted prominently in the centro of Hermosillo, Sonora [29 degrees N.] (West 1992). On the northeast coastal plain, with son Chadwick, we saw a ceiba planted at the corner of rural dwelling just north of Aldama, Tamaulipas [23 degrees N.]. Both trees seemed a bit out of their natural tropical rainforest habitat.



Figures 1, 2. (left) Ceiba in Hermosillo centro, a core desert, 1990; (right) ceiba north of Aldama, Tamaulipas, 1994.



## Introduction:

### The *Yaxché* in the Ancient Maya World, in the modern ruins.

This study of *ceiba pentandra* in the state of Yucatán (not the entire peninsula) derives almost entirely from information collected during field trips of 1982, 1987, 1991, 1993, 1994, December 2008, February 2017, and January 2019 **and** from searches on Google Earth Street View (2013-2017). We did consult the literature and we did speak with a few informants along the way, but for the most part this is a study derived from **landscape observations**. In all, 616 places – settlements, haciendas, ranchos, ruins, cenotes – provided information on ceiba locations (See Appendix 1). We also drove a few highway transects in search of rural ceibas. Three hundred and eighty-two places had at least one ceiba; 234 had no ceiba. (see Table 1.) We can verify that 2,349 have been planted in a cultural context in our “places” and an additional 225 were seen along rural roads and at ranch entries (see chapter 7). We do not know how many we missed along the way. We were especially interested in searching for ceibas near churches and cemeteries.

**Table 1. The number of ceibas at 616 places, with number of occurrences, State of Yucatán, totaling 2,349 trees.**

# trees	# occurrences	# trees	# occurrences	# trees	# occurrences
0	234	9	7	19	2
1	107	10	1	20	1
2	82	11	3	24	1
3	36	12	13	27	1
4	33	13	2	28	4
5	26	14	4	31	1
6	20	15	5	39	1
7	14	16	1	46	1
8	10	18	4	541	1

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In addition:

Roadside ceibas = 225

Total trees known in State of Yucatán = **2,574**

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According to the 2010 census of the State of Yucatán, 567 settlements had over 100 residents. We surveyed 511 of those and in 64 other villages of less than 100 people.

In addition, we sought ceibas in 15 haciendas, 11 ranchos, 6 ruins, 5 cenotes, 1 new town, 1 abandoned town, 1 country club, and one nature reserve (see Appendix 1).

While approximately one-half of the state's 2 million inhabitants are indigenous (ind.), ninety percent of the settlements are dominated by Maya. The larger western cities have smaller proportions of indigenous people (Mérida (20%), Umán (39%), and Kanasín (41%)), and the absolute least indigenous places are the new subdivisions like La Ceiba (Mérida) (<1% ind.). The Gulf coast towns also lack native populations (11 – 42% ind.). The largest predominantly indigenous cities are toward the east, Valladolid (66% ind.) and Tizimín (65% ind.) (INEGI 2012).

I do not know of a work devoted just to the cultural geography of the ceiba in Yucatán, but the literature on the tree is massive. Mayanists, for years, have known of its overwhelming importance in the ancient and modern culture history of the peninsula. I do not attempt cover that research here. For only one example, see Bassie-Sweet (2008: 72-78). Few of the beautiful descriptions of the *Ceiba pentandra*, in Yucatán, such as that by Victoria Schlesinger (2001: 111-13), mention the tree as a cultural artifact. Some of the basic works on Yucatecan Maya do not even mention the tree (Staggerda 1941). Our study hopes to remedy that lack of recognition by presenting evidence of the intense man-ceiba relationship that plays out in the modern Yucatecan landscape.

Our focus throughout this project has been to discover patterns – those recurring relationships between ceibas and a cultural feature or location. We wanted to learn how frequently the relationship occurred. How intense was the relationship – as suggested by the number of trees? Also, we wanted to record photographically ample examples of ceibas in their cultural contexts -- for a historical record.

After accumulating and organizing our data eleven patterns emerged. We found ceibas were regularly placed at 1) aboriginal ruins, 2) settlements named “yaxche” or “ceiba,” 3) cenotes and other water sources, 4) churches, 5) cemeteries, 6) haciendas, 7) roadways and settlement entrances, 8) cattle areas, 9) urban centers, and 10) new tourist facilities. On the other hand, we noticed that relatively few ceibas were in the Gulf coastal region. To conclude we discuss a few Yucatecan places where modern ceiba landscapes indicate remnants of the ancient Maya cosmos on the face of Yucatán.

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*Ceiba pentandra*, known as the **ceiba**, **kapok**, or **silk-cotton** tree in most of Tropical America, is known as the **yax.ché** in Maya Yucatán. **Ché** is the generic term for “tree.” **Yax**, in this context, means “green.” Thus, it is THE green tree . . . THE TREE!

As the sacred tree of the Maya, much has been written about its role in their world. Simply put, the ceiba is the most important feature of the natural world of Yucatán, aside, perhaps, from the cenotes, the natural sinkholes that allow residents to gain access to water. Why *ceiba pentandra* was selected to play such an important part in

Mayan life can perhaps never be answered. I have always thought that its large size might have impressed the ancients. In Yucatán the ceiba does not reach the height that it does farther south, on the coastal plain of Honduras or in Costa Rica where it reaches almost 200 feet tall. When mature it does provide massive shade. And, it does grow really fast. And, it is really easily propagated. And, it attracts attention when young because of its sharp bark thorns. And, it does have some practical applications in folk medicine and its flowers can be spectacular. But still, I think it was probably selected for its special role in Maya society because of its size.

### **Girths of Ceibas in Yucatán, 2019**

(Measured at approximately chest height, above the buttresses.)

Izamal, San Juan church ceiba = 26 feet, 6 inches

Uayam, east entry ceiba = 22 feet, 5 inches

Valladolid, Zaci cenote ceiba = 21 feet

Tekanto, capilla San Ramón = 18 feet, 6 inches

Mucuyché, crossroad ceiba = 16 feet, 11 inches

Yalcobá, cenote ceiba = 16 feet, 6 inches

Xocén, church ceiba = 15 feet, 3 inches

For comparison, the larger of the two ceibas in the main plaza of Guatemala City, planted in 1991, is only 12 feet, 2 inches in girth (2017). It is approximately 66 feet tall.



**Figure 3. The amiable Virrueta family, owners the Hotel Casa de los Aluxes, in Valladolid, measuring their yaxche. Probably the second largest ceiba in Valladolid.**



From pollen analysis, ceiba-form incensors from 600-700 A.D., and early observations we know that ceibas have been at Maya ruin sites for centuries. Copán, the well-studied ruin in western Honduras, perhaps has the greatest number of ceibas of any ancient Maya site. Within the ruin central and surrounding forest dozens of ceibas can be seen (Ricardo Agurcia, personal communication, January 19, 2018). In Yucatán, apparently, most ruins have planted ceibas. A few sites are noted below.

***Chichén Itzá.*** (7 ceibas)

When son Chadwick, geographer Taylor Mack, and I visited Chichén Itzá in 1994 we saw a recently grafted tree next to the Temple of 1000 Columns. When we revisited with Memphis friends in 2017 we found the same tree, somewhat taller. Another baby ceiba is nearby, recently planted.



**Figures 4, 5. Same ceiba at Temple of 1000 Columns, Chichén Itzá, 1994 (left) and 2017.**

Of the seven ceibas on the grounds currently, none are older than 25 years. A second ceiba near 1000 Columns was recently planted. Five others surround El Castillo. Five more, much large ceibas are in the garden and reserve of the Hacienda Chichen Itza Resort adjacent to the south.



Figures 6, 7. Ed and “Everly” Dismuke of Memphis discovered the recently planted baby ceiba, Temple of 1000 Columns, Chichén Itzá, February 2017. Figure 7 map shows ceiba distribution at Chichén Itzá, 2017.



Fig. 8. Ceiba at the Hacienda Chichen Itzá Resort, south of the ruins.



***Kabah*** (Santa Elena) (6 ceibas)

The ruin south of Santa Elena about five km has three ceibas in the parking lot and three small ones in the site.



**Figures 9, 10. Kabah ceibas: (left) parking lot, (right) southeast corner of site.**

***Ek-Balam*** (Temozón) (12 ceibas)

Ceibas at Ek-Balam ruins are distributed throughout the site (8), two at entry into site (2), one in the parking lot, and another at the southwest entry from the highway. Ek-Balam town, just west of the ruins, has fifteen ceibas, all clustered around the central park.

***Izamal*** (six ceibas) The large pyramid mound (Kinich Kak Moo) in the center of Izamal has five ceibas on west (3) and north sides (2). Another tree is on the east side of the other large mound, Itzamatul.



**Figure 11. The ceibas at Kinich Kak Moo pyramid, west side.**

Frequently, entries into the ruins from the main highways are marked with ceibas. At Mayapán four can be seen. At Labná, four small ceibas, two on each side of the entry from the highway, have been planted.



Figure 12. The four ceibas, entrance to Mayapán ruins.

At the tiny village of *X-Bohom* (east of Chankom) the only ceiba in the settlement rests atop the small unreconstructed ruin near the center of town. An elderly informant said one of his friends planted the tree “*anōs pasados*” as “a spiritual gift.” When I asked the meaning, the informant clapped his hands once and opened his palms to me, but did not reply.



Figure 13. Ceiba atop unreconstructed ruin, X-Bojón (Kaua).



## The “Yaxché” Settlements of Yucatán

*Yaxché*, the Mayan term for *ceiba pentandra*, is a frequent toponym across the peninsula. As might be expected, those places normally have ceibas planted in and around the settlement. The Spanish term *ceiba* is being used more frequently as Hispanicization proceeds across the peninsula.

It must be assumed that all settlements named “Yaxché,” at one time, had a prominent *ceiba* tree in their local environment. It might have been spectacular because it was historically important as a plaza *ceiba* or in front of the church. Or, it might have been unusually large, providing shade for the market, marked the entrance to the village, or was simply located next to the cenote.



**Figure 14. Sign and yaxché tree at the entry to Yaxché (Valladolid), 2019.**

“Yaxché” settlements seem to be among the smaller inhabited places. In the 1891 *diccionario* of García Cubas (v. 5: 463) all of the sixteen “Yaxché” sites were categorized as “*fincas rústicas*.” The 23 “Yaxché” locations in the census of 1910 were listed as



“paraje” (1), “rancho” (7), or “hacienda” (15), and ranged in population from 2 to 945. No places named “Ceiba” were reported (Yucatán 1918). A century later, the 2010 census lists 55 settlements with “Yaxché” or “Ceiba(o)” toponyms. Sixteen were populated -- with populations from 1 to 990. The other 39 sites, which are without population, are listed as “*localidades*.” Another extensive list, from SEDESOL (Secretaría de Desarrollo Social) in 2013, names 44 “Yaxche” “*localidades*” – all with “*ámbito rural*.” Fifteen have populations. Further, the SEDESOL list includes ten “Ceiba” and three with “Ceibo.”

Notes on the following “Yaxché” settlements proceed according to population size in 2010. Proportions of indigenous residents are also noted. The first place noted, although without the Yaxché toponym, is important because it is, by far, the largest.

**La Ceiba** (Mérida) population 990, 7 indigenous residents (52 ceibas).

Among the new communities north of the Periférico (the ring road surrounding Merida), off the road toward Progreso, the best known is La Ceiba, a gated community built around the La Ceiba golf course. La Ceiba was built during the 1970s, designed by architect Félix Mier y Terán Lejeune. Sixteen ceibas have been planted at the entrance and 30 more are in the median that approaches the gate. At least five more are on the grounds and golf course, plus one at the church.



**Figure 15.** Entry ceibas into elitist subdivision of La Ceiba, north of Mérida, 2019.

**Yaxché de Peón** (Ucú) population 846, 333 indigenous (12 ceibas).

The twelve ceibas in this famous hacienda site can be seen at the church (2), at three entrances (6), in two of the corners of the village, and two in private yards.

**Dzoyaxché** (Mérida) population: 454, 448 of indigenous heritage, 72% of the residents speak Maya; location: 28 km due south of Mérida centro (18 ceibas).

According to a plaque at the site, the place originated during the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Francisco Arredondo Martínez placed the casco of his hacienda next to a prominent cenote. A ceiba must have been present as well. The “finca rística” was named San Nicolas for the saint from Tolentino, celebrated on September 10<sup>th</sup>. Of the 18 ceibas in the settlement, 13 are on the grounds of the old hacienda, which has been converted into a natural ecology reserve. The largest ceiba, perhaps 40 years old, is next to the small yellow church. Another seven (25-40 yrs) line the main road through the hacienda, including a north and a south entry ceiba. Five more (20-40 yrs) are to the west within the building complex. The five other trees are at the northwest entrance (7 yrs.), at the northern crossroads (20 yrs), and three at the school (8, 10, 40 yrs.). According to the census of 1910, Dzoyaxché was a hacienda of 251 people.



**Figure 16. Chapel and ceiba at Dzoyaxché (Mérida).**

**Yaxchekú** (Tizimín) population 274, 191 indigenous (7 ceibas)

Yaxchekú has seven ceibas, three mid-sized ceibas (at the north, northeast, and south entries) and a large tree at the southeast corner. The others are in the milpas within the limits of the village. The settlement is 23 km east-northeast of Tizimín, and 4 km north off highway to Colonia Yucatán, three km from Dzonot Aké.



**Figures 17, 18. Yaxchekú (left) ceiba at the end of pavement and electricity, northeast entry; (right) southern entry tree.**



**Figure 19. Entry plaque of Yaxchekú school proudly displays two ceibas.**



**Yaxché** (Valladolid) population: 114, all indigenous (3 ceibas)

This relatively new settlement is located a few hundred meters west of the highway that connects Yalcobá and Valladolid. An entry ceiba, with sign, is at the highway (see figure 11). Two more trees are in plaza that fronts the church and cabildo.



**Figure 20. The plaza of Yaxché (Valladolid), 2019.**

**Yaxché de Casares** (Mérida) population 106, 87 indigenous (3 ceibas)

This small village is located 5 km east of Cholul and 1 km north off the highway. The three ceibas are all saplings, planted on the east side of the street that leads to the church.



**Figure 21. Young tree on approach to church, which is hidden by the bus. Looking north, Yaxché de Casares.**

**San Sebastián Yaxché** (Peto) population: 93, all indigenous (2 ceibas)

The two ceibas here are small and on two of the 28 private house lots. The village is due south of Peto, northwest of Justicia Social, near the border with Tzucacab municipio.

**San Isidro Yaxché** (Tekax) population: 63, all indigenous (3 ceibas)

San Isidro is 39 km southwest of Tekax quite near the border with Campeche. All three ceibas are near the main highway on private property.

**Santa María Yaxché** (Mérida) population: 54, 15 indigenous (1 ceiba)

This comisaria is 8 km north of the periferico norte of Mérida, off highway 261, 4 km northwest of Dzilbilchatún. The lone ceiba is in the northeast corner of the park.



**Figure 22. Ceiba and park in Santa María Yaxché.**

**Yaxché** (Dzitas) population: 44, all indigenous (3 ceibas)

This site is only 5 km northeast of Pisté, but to reach it by automobile one must drive 10 km over a very dangerous, hilly, single-lane road that is often obscured on curves and before the hilltops. Two of the three mid-aged ceibas are at village corners (NE and SE) and the other is in a private field just north of town.

**Yaxché** (Chemax) population 31, all indigenous (1 ceiba)

The SEDUMA map of Chemax municipio places this settlement 2.5 km north of highway 180 between Cocoyol and X-can. The lone ceiba is in the center of the village.

**Yaxché** (Chemax) population: 12, all indigenous (ceibas unknown)

This little rancho is located about 3 km southwest of Sisbicchén on the north side of the highway, just past X-Cohuo. No ceiba was seen.

**Cayaxché** (Valladolid), population: 6, all indigenous (ceibas unknown)

The SEDUMA map of Valladolid municipio shows this site to be on the west side of highway 295 just south of the toll road and north of the entrance to Popolá. No ceiba was seen. In the census of 1910 the place is categorized as “hacienda,” but with only two male residents.

**San Miguel Yaxché** (Hunucmá) population: 4, all indigenous (1 ceiba)

This little rancho is directly adjacent to the northeast outskirts of Hunucma. It's only ceiba at its entry from Hunucma.



**Figure 23. The entry ceiba at San Miguel Yaxché.**

**Yaxché** (Tizimín) population: 2, all indigenous (3 ceibas)

This place is an operational cattle ranch 11 km northeast of Tizimín along the highway to Dzibinchén. Previously it was a hacienda as evidenced by the relict square tower, outbuildings, and walls. Two large ceibas are west of the highway at the cattle pen and house and a younger one, perhaps 15 years old, is away from the road to the east. In 1910 the hacienda, probably devoted to sugar and alcohol production, housed 107 people.



**Figure 24. The ceibas at Yaxché (Tizimín).**

**Yaxché** (Valladolid) population: 1, indigenous (1 ceiba)

One large ceiba appears to be located at the single-structure rancho located southwest of Yalcobá and 2.5 km northwest of the 180D interchange on the Yalcobá - Valladolid highway.

\*\*\* \*\*

### **Yaxché/Ceiba (o) places without reported population 39**

El Ceibo (Tetiz), La Ceiba (Calotmul), La Ceiba (Chemax), La Ceiba (Río Lagartos), La Ceiba (Sucila), La Ceiba (Tizimín), La Ceiba (Tizimín), La Ceiba Dos (Mérida), Los Ceibos (Mérida), Los Ceibas (Panabá), Nohyaxché (Buctzotz), Nohyaxché (Tixcacalcupul), San Antonio Yaxché (Mococha), San José Yaxché (Yaxcabá), San Pablo X'Yaxché (Chochola), Santa Cruz Yaxché (Buctzotz), Xkalayaxché (San Felipe), Yaaxché'e (Dzemul), Yaxché (Buctzotz), Yaxché (Cantamayec), Yaxché (Chapab), Yaxché (Espita), Yaxché (Izamal), Yaxché (Kaua), Yaxché (Mérida), Yaxché (Motul), Yaxché (Samahil), Yaxché (Sucila), Yaxché (Tahdziu), Yaxché (Tekax), Yaxché (Temozón), Yaxché (Teya), Yaxché (Tzucacab), Yaxché (Umán), Yaxché (Valladolid), Yaxché ó Yaxchel (Yaxcabá), Yaxcheil (Yaxcabá), Yaxcheil ó Nohyaxché (Tixcacalcupul), Yaxchen (Chemax)





## Cenotes (also wells and water towers) and Ceibas in Yucatán

“... [the ceiba] was a handsome tree that grows by wells.”

Bishop Diego de Landa (1566) (Landa 1973: 129)

“... the yaxche, the sacred tree of the Mayas, under roots of which, the natives assert, is always to be found a source of pure cold water.”

(Augustus Le Plongeon 1886: 133)



Figure 25. The “senote” and ceiba at hacienda Mucuyché (Abalá), from Stephens 1843: I, 203. Drawing by F. Catherwood, engraving by A. Anderson.

First . . . were the cenotes, *dznot* or *ts’not*, in Maya. Cenotes are the most important elements of the physical geography of Yucatán. These sinkholes, natural wells formed in the limestone that often exposed the ground water, were essential to survival because of the lack of surface water in the karstic land. Then . . . along came man, and perhaps because of a religious belief, a ceiba was planted nearby the cenote.

Eventually, . . . a Maya settlement was erected near the water source and largest tree.

When the Christians arrived from Europe, according to their notions of how to plan a settlement in a rectangular grid, their churches opened onto the core from the east side of the “plaza,” facing directly the ceiba and cenote. Over the years the cenote-ceiba-church directional orientations have become less rigid. See Table 2 for a list of places ordered by distance between the cenote and front door of the church.

**Table 2. Cenote-Ceiba-Church relationships in Yucatán: directions and distances.**

Place	Cenote to Church Direction	Distance	Cenote to Ceiba Direction	Distance
Dzoyaxché	E	34m/112ft	ESE	34m/112ft
X-Kanchakán	E	37m/120ft	ESE	55m/181ft
Cholul	E	46m/150ft	SSE	23m/75ft
Yalcón	NE	58m/189ft	N	37m/122ft
Chan X-Cail	NE	58m/190ft	W edge	< 5 m
Tixhualactún	E	75m/245ft	N	32m/104ft
San Juan Chen	NNE	76m/250ft	W	17m/55ft
Dzitox	SSW	79m/258ft	SW	44m/144ft
Yalcobá	NNE	88m/288ft	NNE	9.5m/30ft
Cuzamá	W	91m/300ft	NE	5m/18ft
X-Catzin	W	139m/456ft	W	135m/441ft
Uayma	NNW	172m/564ft	W edge	< 5 m
Xocén	ENE	251m/824ft	SW edge	< 5m
Maní	NE	295m/967ft	NE	30m/100ft
Valladolid	SW	510m/1,670ft	W edge	< 5 m



**Figure 26. Dzoyaxché (Mérida): church and ceiba (left) and cenote nearby.**



Figure 27. Tixhualactún (Valladolid): Church (left) and ceiba (right) near the cenote.



Figure 28. Chan X-Cail (Valladolid): Cenote (with low wall) and ceiba near church.





**Figure 29. San Juan Chen (Chemax): Cenote is between ceiba to left and church to right.**

The Franciscan Bishop of Yucatán, Diego de Landa (1524-1579) arrived in Yucatán in 1549 and for 30 years observed the land and life of the peninsula. He noted that “[the ceiba] was a handsome tree that grows by wells.” If one had lived a good life, after death Mayans would go to a delightful place where they would, among other pleasures, “rest and forever cease from labor” beneath “a tree which they call there *yaxche*, very cool and giving great shade, which is the ceiba.” (Tozzer 1941: 131; de Landa 1973: 60, 129)

John Lloyd Stephens, American diplomat, explorer, and early documenter of Maya ruins, produced in word and by illustration ample evidence of the ceiba/water source relationships throughout the peninsula. Stephens mentioned frequently the presence of “noble seybos” at wells, aguadas, and cenotes (1843: I, 203; II, 11, 31, 86-7).

Even today, some Yucatecans say that ceibas are excellent indicators of water beneath the earth surface. “If you want to find water, dig your well near a ceiba,” they say. The modern landscape reflects this ancient notion, but perhaps an opposite idea is more dominant – ceibas are more frequently planted near obvious sources of water. While ceibas can still be seen near a few cenotes, during our survey we found it is far more likely that ceibas are planted near modern sources of water, water towers and wells. The extreme example is at X-copteil (Chankom) where nine ceibas (three larger, six saplings) have been planted near the major well.



Among the largest, most prominent open cenote/ceiba sites are cenote Zací in Valladolid, at Yalcobá (Valladolid), at Xocén (Valladolid), at Chan X-Cail (Chichimila), at hacienda Kaan Ac (Valladolid), and at covered-cenote places such as Teabo (Teabo) and Kanacom (Yaxcabá).



Figures 30, 31. (left) Ceiba at cenote Zací, Valladolid, 2019; (right) “Sonato near Valladolid” (Norman 1843: 98/99).



Figures 32, 33. (left) Ceiba at walled cenote, X-Catzin (Chemax); (right) Ceibas at southern cenote, Santa Elena.



Figures 34, 35. The ceiba of the Yalcobá cenote, 2019. (above) The large, open cenote is enclosed by the low wall behind the Coca-Cola sign. The church is 88m/288ft. to the north-northeast (below).





Ceibas are also being planted near cenotes recently developed for the tourist trade (see Chapter 10).



**Figure 36.** Ceiba planted at three water sources, covered cenote, well, and water tower, Kanacom (Yaxcabá).



**Figures 37, 38.** (left) Ceiba and cenote at Teabo; (right) The only two ceibas in Tixcaltuyub (Yaxcabá) are planted next to the centro well and at the only water tower.

At Dzilam González (Dzilam González) the sole ceiba in town was planted and recently pruned at the water tower in the southeast corner of town.

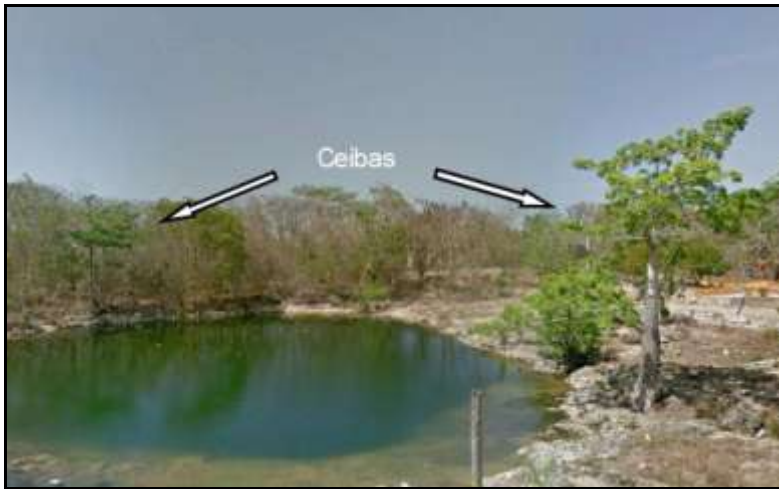


**Figures 39, 40. Ceibas at water towers: (left) Dzilam González; (right) Hotzuc (Umán).**



**Figures 41, 42. Water tower ceibas: (left) Popolá (Valladolid); (right) Santa Rosa (Maxcanú).**

Even fairly shallow *aguadas* attract ceiba plantings, such as at San Juan del Río (Panabá).



**Figure 43.** Two of the three ceibas planted around the *aguada* at San Juan del Río.





## Churches in Yucatán: Ceibas, Orientations, and Colors

“... after life ... if they had been of good conduct, [Mayas would enter a place of] ... a refreshing and shady tree they called **Yaxché**, the Ceiba tree, beneath whose branches ... they might rest and be in peace forever.” (Landa 1973: 60)

“Even now ceibas are planted in front of churches.”  
(Augustus Le Plongeon 1886: 125)

Since ancient times, in Yucatán, the Maya have believed the ceiba was a sacred tree that connected the underworld beneath the ground with the heavens (Tozzer 1907: 154, León Portillo 1988: 136-7, Thompson 1990: 195). When the Catholics arrived and constructed their houses of worship the grounds of those structures and adjacent plazas became obvious places to plant the sacred tree. However, over the years, as traditional ways have waned, ceibas have become less prominent near church landscapes.

From our survey of 616 places, we found at least one church in 514 settlements. Seventy- nine of the primary churches, always a Catholic church in the center of town, have a ceiba on their grounds. That is, only 15%, about one of seven Yucatecan churches, have related ceibas. (see Table 3)

San Marcos (Tekax), a village of 161 Maya, 92% of whom speak the language, has the most trees on church grounds. The five young *yaxché-ob* were planted by the priest some six years ago on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Día de la Cruz. Cholul also has five much older ceibas.



**Figure 44. The five church ceibas of San Marcos, Temax.**

**Table 3. Ceibas and churches in Yucatán.**

Num. Ceibas at church Church Door Faces ↓	0	1	2	3	4	5	Totals	
West	314	40	10	5	2	2	373	(73%)
South	37	6	1	0	0	0	44	(09%)
East	33	6	2	0	0	0	41	(08%)
North	33	2	0	0	0	0	35	(07%)
NE	7	0	0	0	0	0	7	(1.4%)
NW	7	0	1	0	0	0	8	(1.6%)
SW	4	0	0	2	0	0	6	(1.2%)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>514</b>	
Places without evidence of churches (none) = 56								
Places where churches not seen (ns) = 46								
Total places viewed in Yucatán = 616								

Most of the ceibas are located in front of the church, often in a nearby plaza. A few others are planted to the side or behind the church. In other instances, for example at Yalcobá where the ceiba was clearly planted near the cenote, and not the church some 88m/288ft away, we did not include that place in the list of “ceiba churches.”



**Figures 45, 46. (left) Xcucul Sur (Umán); (right) Yaahonx (Oxkutzcab).**



Figures 47, 48. Tizimín municipio church-ceiba scenes: (left) X-Bojón [2]; (right) Sucopo.



Figures 49, 50. Chichimila centro (left); capilla, sector San José, Chichimila [2 ceibas] (right).



Figures 51, 52. Valladolid municipio church-ceiba scenes: (left) Popolá; (right) Chamul (left).





Figures 53, 54. (left) Ticopo (Acanceh); (right) X-Mexil (Yacaba).



Figures 55, 56. (left) Pocoboch (Calotmul); (right) Chenchela (Espita).



Figures 57, 58. Municipio Mérida church/ceiba scenes: (left) Chablekal; (right) Cholul.



**Figures 59, 60. (left) Church sign and ceiba north of Mérida; (right) newly-planted ceiba sapling at Motul.**

The processes of modernization and political pressures to “improve” public settings have taken a toll on ceibas. New *alcaldes* often want to renovate the plazas and other areas near churches. When the older ceibas die in the centro, they are rarely replaced with another ceiba. It is in the *cabeceras municipales* that most renovation occurs and only fourteen of these 106 “little cities” have church ceibas: Cansahcab, Chichimila, Chicxulub Pueblo, Conkal, Ixil, Kopomá, Mani, Motul, Sanahcat, Santa Elena, Sinanche, Tekax, Ticul, and Tizimín. All of these 14 churches are oriented to the west, as tradition dictates.

The most obvious visual consequence of the renovation of the church/plaza scene in Yucatán is the recent imposition of thunderous cement basketball courts (*canchas*) in **ALL** settlements. Almost always they are immediately in front of, or next to, the church. Often, they are covered. When we asked why the intrusive, out-of-place *canchas* were allowed in formerly quaint, and often traditional landscapes, informants simply shrugged their shoulders and said, “Well, we wanted a nice place for our youth to play and get exercise.” Only once did we see children playing on the *canchas*.





**Figure 61. Yaxcopoil (Umán) centro: Church, cancha, ceiba, water tower, 2019.**

Cholul (Mérida) is perhaps the best, rare example of where an old church ceiba, after its death, was replaced by a sapling.



**Figure 62. Cholul (Mérida) church, Aug. 2014. Figure 63. Cholul church, January 2019.**

The entrance of Protestantism into Yucatecan life has resulted in the construction of smaller churches away from the centro. Of the hundreds of relatively new Protestant churches, I know of none that has a ceiba on its grounds.



**Figure 64. A Protestant church in San Diego Buenavista (Tekax) displays palms, not ceibas, as its ornamental trees.**

Apart from ceiba-church relationship we noted two other matters concerning churches: their orientations and color of the façade.

**Church orientations.** For the 514 churches in our survey, 373 (73%) have their front doors opening to the west. This is typical according to Spanish American town planning. The church is normally to the east of the plaza, with the altar to the east in the temple. (see Table 4 above).

The importance of the east as the dominant cardinal direction in Maya culture cannot be overstated.

“From the east blow the principal winds, out of the east arise the sun, moon, and planets; and from the east, in the springtime, the first clouds and rains, carried by the *chaacs*, emerge. In the dense forests to the east dwell the bee-gods and a number of lesser supernatural beings; and inconceivably far, somewhere to the east, lies Jerusalem, where Christ lived.”

(Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan* 1941: 119-120)

**Church façade [“west front”] colors.** The main entrances of the churches in Yucatán are quite colorful. Of the 514 churches we saw 465 had been painted in one of the few representative colors. White was the most prominent color (28%), but yellow (with its cousin “cream”) (43%) and red (with its pal “pink”) (26%) are seen throughout the state. “White” aside, the “yellows” and “reds” make up 95% of the painted façades.

Of course, church colors change through time. See the example of Chikindzonot for 2001 and 2012.



Figures 65, 66. Chikindzonot church before (2001) and after (2012) restoration.

**Table 4. Church façade colors in Yucatan.**

Colors:	(465 churches)	No Color:	(49 churches)
White	128 (28%)	Natural stone	38 (8%)
Yellow	108 (23%)	Thatch/stick	7
Cream	93 (20%)	Cement block	2
Red	69 (15%)	Wood shed	1
Pink	49 (11%)	Decayed wood	1
Blue	9		
Green	8		
Orange	1		

It is clear from several sources that ceibas and these preferred colors have been deep in the ethos of the Maya. Directions are also closely related to colors and ceibas. *The Chilam Balam of Chumayel*, one of the later Maya manuscripts, which dates from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (Roys 1967), mentions these relationships. The first page of the manuscript, discusses the “ritual of the four world-quarters” in this manner:

“The red ceiba tree of abundance is his arbor which is set in the east . . . The white ceiba tree of abundance is the arbor of the white Mucencab . . . The black ceiba tree of abundance is their arbor . . . The ceiba tree of adundance, the yellow tree, is their arbor. (p. 64)

“[The bees] . . . swarmed . . . the ceiba trees of the land . . . (p. 66)

“After the destruction of the world was completed [they placed the trees] . . . The green tree [ceiba] of abundance was set up in the center [of the world].” (p. 100)

Another of the ancient books, *Popol Vuh* from Guatemala, does not mention the ceiba but does speak of the colors of the four cosmic roads that lead to Xibalba. Once again, they are colored red, black, white, and yellow (Estrada M. 1980: 56); another time they are red, black, white and green/yellow (p. 87-88).

In ancient times, the Maya were limited in which colors were available in their natural environment: from earths, flora, and fauna (Rossi 2018; Zapata A. 1985: 246-7). White was derived from the ever-present *sacuum* (white earth) of the limestone peninsula. Yellow can be acquired from the wood and bark of the blackberry or the boiled roots of “intestines of the wild boar” plant (*choch quitám*). Red could be procured from achiote seeds (*kukub*, *Bixa orellana*), cochinitilla (scale insect of opuntia cactus), or red earths. Black, color of the west, death, and the dying sun, was available from finely ground charcoal or logwood (*EEK*, palo de tinto, logwood). Perhaps for ample reason, black was never used as a church door color.

Below see the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian’s (Washington, D. C.) portrayal of the color-direction relationship of the Maya (left) and author’s backyard garden plaque of Talavera tiles (right). The author’s orientation places red (east) toward the top as did the Maya (Mundy 1998: 203); the Smithsonian places white (north) to top as do we in modern world. The center was normally “green,” representing the ceiba, the *yaxché* or “green tree.”



Figures 67, 68. Portrayals of Maya color-direction.

Several writers have passed on their notions about Maya use of colors (Thompson 1934: 211; Kane 2016). Bricker (1999) learned that the Maya have only five terms for their colors, Hammond (2015) notes the colors of corn include red, black, white, and yellow, and Becom and Aberg (1997) found the Maya colors in the red eyes of the jaquar, the feathers of the scarlett macaw, blue/green in “the color of the sky, water, jade, and growing maize.” The comprehensive work of Houston *et al* (2009) notes the differences between common Maya and Yucatec Maya terms (p. 17).

East = Red = *kaq, chak*

North = White = *saq, sak*

West = Black = *ejq, éek*

South = Yellow = *q'an, k'an*

Center = Green = *ra'x, yá'ás or yá'ax*



## Cemetery Ceibas in Yucatán

The Franciscan Bishop of Yucatán, Diego López de Landa (1524-1579) arrived in Yucatán in 1549 and for 30 years observed the land and life of the peninsula. He noted that if one had lived a good life, after death, the Mayas believed, they would “go to a delightful place” where they would, among other pleasantries, “rest and forever cease from labor” beneath “a tree which they call there *yaxché*, very cool and giving great shade, which is the ceiba.” (Tozzer 1941: 131)

Eighteenth century travelers were also fascinated with the ceiba near cemeteries. John Lloyd Stephens (1843: I, 285) learned that it was a very fast growing tree when he visited the *campo santo* of Uxmal. The priest claimed he planted it only 23 yrs ago. Stephens’ woodcut of “*seybo tree*” in front of the cemetery was first drawn by his companion, Frederick Catherwood (Bourbon 2000; Myers 1972).



**Figure 69. The “seybo” at the Uxmal cemetery (Stephens 1843: I, 286).**

Given the ancient and colonial period relationship between Maya cemeteries and ceibas, it seems plausible that ceibas would still be planted near cemeteries, or on occasion the cemeteries might be located next to previously existing ceibas. That is not



often the case in modern Yucatán. Of the 616 places surveyed, we saw 514 churches and found 261 cemeteries. For the latter we recorded cemetery direction from the church and if they had a ceiba or not.

Only 29 cemeteries were with ceibas. The list includes 16 of single ceibas, 8 have two trees (guards, at the entrance), 4 of three ceibas, and the Toó (Mochchá) cemetery has seven trees. Toó is a former hacienda village of about 300 residents located between Mochchá and Ixil.



**Figure 70.** The seven ceibas surrounding the Toó cemetery, western edge of town. Air photo from Google Earth.



**Figures 71, 72.** (left) Candel (Mérida), ceiba outside; (right) Yaxkukul, ceiba outside gate.



**Figures 73, 74. (left) San José Tzal (Mérida): one ceiba inside; (right) Yalcobá (Valladolid): two large ceibas inside.**



**Figure 75. Umán: two guard ceibas just inside main gate of cemetery.**

On many occasions cemeteries also have wells dug nearby. Just as cenotes-ceibas-churches often have a geographical relationship, so too does the cemetery-ceiba-well complex across Yucatán.





**Figure 76. Chocholá: two guard ceibas outside, with well.**





**Figures 77, 78. (left) Hotzuc (Umán): ceiba inside, with well; (right) X-Canatún (Mérida): tree outside, with well.**



**Figures 79, 80. Cemeteries, wells and ceibas: (left) Tixkuncheil (Baca); Muxupip.**

When searching for cemeteries always head west of the church. One of the most consistent features of Yucatecan settlement pattern is the location of the cemetery to the west of the church. Almost 90% of the time, 232 of 261 occasions, they are in the western quadrant (northwest to southwest) in relationship to the church. (see Table 5)

**Table 5. Ceibas and cemeteries in Yucatán.**

Num. Ceibas at cemetery 	0	1	2	3	7	Totals	
<hr/>							
Cemetery Direction from Church 							
NORTH	2	0	0	0	0	2	<1
NNW	3	0	0	0	0	3	1.2%
NW	20	1	0	0	0	21	8%
WNW	15	1	1	0	0	17	6.5%
WEST	125	8	2	4	1	140	54%
WSW	16	2	2	0	0	20	7.7%
SW	31	1	1	0	0	33	12.7%
SSW	10	1	1	0	0	12	4.2%
SOUTH	3	0	1	0	0	4	1.5%
SSE	2	1	0	0	0	3	1.2%
SE	1	1	0	0	0	2	<1
ESE	0	0	0	0	0	0	<1
EAST	1	0	0	0	0	1	<1
ENE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NE	3	0	0	0	0	3	1.2%
NNE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	232	16	8	4	1	261	

Places with churches (514) and cemeteries = 261

Places with churches where cemeteries not seen (ns) = 251

Cemeteries with ceibas = 29, with a total of 52 ceibas

Normally, the cemeteries are located just beyond the built-up area of the settlement along the street that heads west from the church. At Sahé (Tixpehual) the graves are more than 4,000 feet north-northwest the town. At San Antonio Tzacala (Mérida) to reach the cemetery one must go westward over 3,000 feet. At X-Tepen



(Umán) the graveyard (with a wonderful ceiba) is hidden in the bush 1,500 m south-southwest from church by dirt road.

The Cementerio General in Valladolid is, according to protocol, situated almost precisely west of the front door of the cathedral -- 2,200 meters apart. The east-west calle 41 connects the properties. At the entrance of the cemetery, in the street median, a ceiba was planted some 40 years ago.

Following the cholera and smallpox epidemics of 1853-1855-1856, the belief that illness emanated from graveyards became a more common notion and cemeteries were required to be moved outside the own limits (McCrea 2007). Previously, many graves were placed on church grounds.

Of the 29 settlements that have ceiba cemeteries only six also have ceiba churches. All of these churches face west and in four instances the cemeteries are exactly west of the church. With these features and orientations, do we expect these places to be the most traditional?

Cholul (Mérida) has a church with five ceibas and a cemetery with three ceibas. The other settlements: Kopomá (Kopomá), Yaxcopoil (Umán), Cansahcab (Cansahcab), Pocobach (Calotmul) and Conkal (Conkal) have only one tree each in their cemeteries.

With rare exception, burials in Yucatecan cemeteries are in above-the-ground structures. Perhaps the rocky earth surface allows for nothing else. In Yucatán almost always the cemeteries appear older than the ceibas planted nearby.

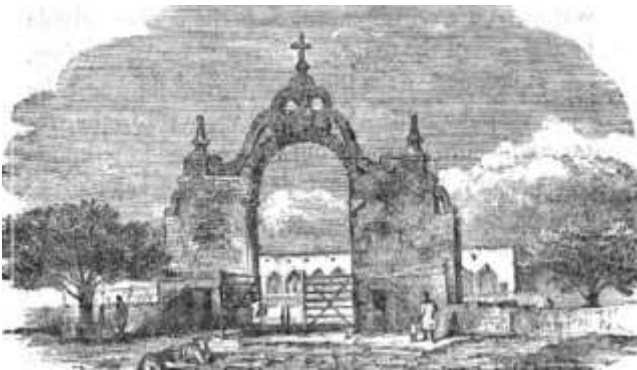


**Figure 81. Grafitti of Sureños 13 on cemetery wall at Dzununcán (Mérida). The gang has its origins in southern California, hence the “Sureños.”**



## The Hacienda Ceibas of Yucatán

Historically, and in modern times, ceibas are one of the most reliable features of the landscapes of Yucatecan haciendas. The earliest reports from travelers such as Stephens (1843: I, 328; II, 62, 138, 172-3) and the Le Plongeons (1886: 1909) note the ceibas planted at the Mucuyche, Uxmal, and X-Kanchakan haciendas and elsewhere. The hacienda near the ruins of Uxmal has probably received the most attention over the years (Valdés García 2014). The early scene photographed by Le Plongeon in 1886 at X-Kanchakan can still be identified.



**Figure 82. The portal and ceibas of Mucuyche (Abalá). (Stephens 1843: I, 203).**



**Figure 83, 84. Unidentified hacienda site of three ceibas (A. D. Le Plongeon 1886: 133); Uxmal hacienda ceibas behind the iconic portal (Desmond 2009: 193).**



**Figures 85, 86. X-Kanchakan (Tecoh) ceibas: (left) Le Plongeon photograph 1886: 124/25, (right), the “Yaxché Ixtabai” of X-Kanchakan, 2019.**

When we visited in January 2019 the largest ceiba behind the original portal at X-Kanchakan was known to residents as the “Yaxché Ixtabai.” We were warned that to go beneath that tree after nightfall could bring a man to his demise . . . the locals insisted!

Forty-three haciendas host at least two ceibas and have a total of 296, 131 more than are in the attached villages. For example, Cheumán (Mérida) has 5 trees on hacienda grounds and 7 more in the village. The former hacienda San José Chactún (Maxcanú) has 6 near the old casco and 9 at settlement entries (see sketch below and Table 6). Hacienda Texan de Palomeque (Hunucmá) has 30 ceibas, but only one more in the town. Hacienda San Pedro Ochil, a newly renovated hacienda on the route to Uxmal, has planted 28 ceibas over their grounds. Aside the “walk” of twenty royal palms, they have developed an impressive ornamental landscape. Twenty-seven other haciendas have four or more ceibas on their premises.

The geographical distribution of haciendas is somewhat confined. According to the national statistical office: “Yucatan is classified into three regions according to type of vegetation and agricultural development: the sisal/hacienda region (center-northern) dedicated mainly to the exploitation of sisal (*Agave fourcroydes*), the agricultural region (southern) with main activity the production of maize and citrus; and the livestock region (eastern) where 65% of the cattle of the state is concentrated (INEGI 1994). “ When a “hacienda” is found outside the sisal region is was probably once a sugar farm, such as Kancaba, just north of Espita (Cortés D. 2017).

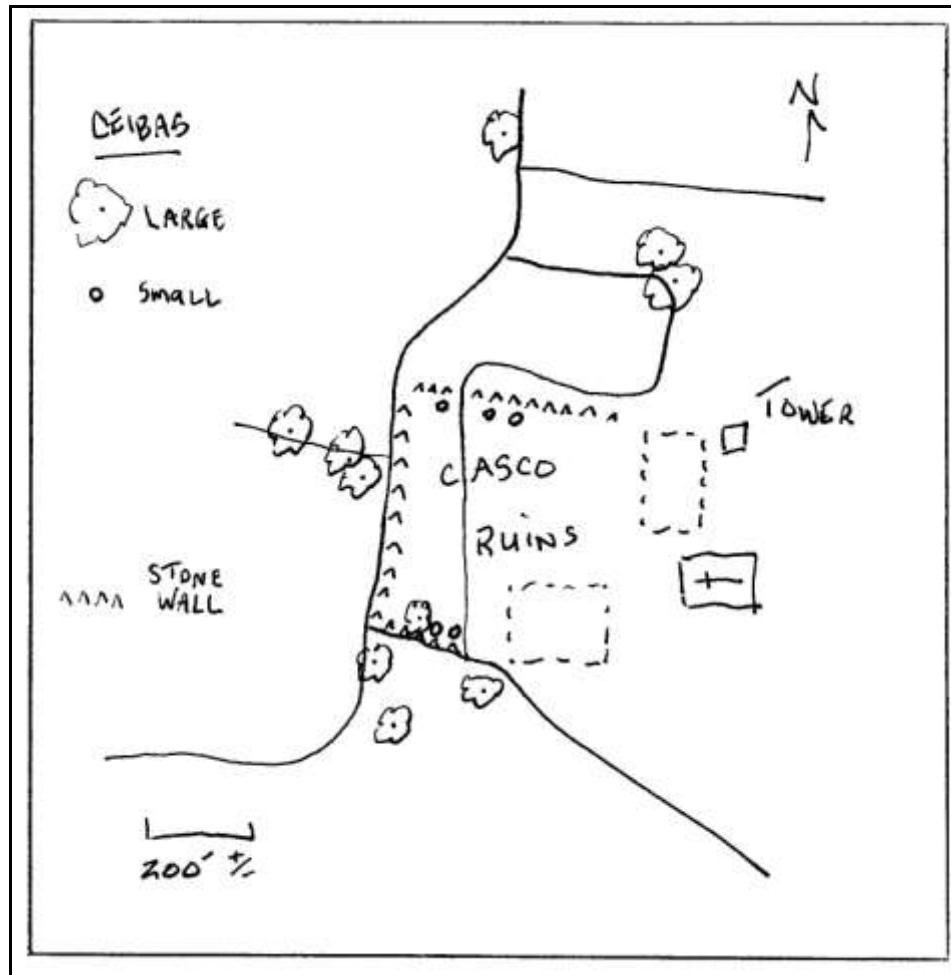


Figure 87. Sketch of ceibas surrounding the ruins of ex-hacienda San José Chactún (Maxcanú).



Figure 88. Nohuayan (Tetiz): hacienda portal frames ceiba in background.



**Table 6. Haciendas in Yucatán with more than two ceibas.**

Place	Municipio	Sett.	#	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		Pop.	Sett.	Only	Crossroad	Notes
		2010	Ceibas	# ceibas	# ceibas	
Texan de Palomeque	Hunucma	3264	1	30		
San Pedro Ochil	Abala	0	0	28	1 entry east	new tourist hac
Chichi Suarez	Merida	1050	2	16	1 hac entry	tourist hac
Chable Resort & Spa	Chochola	hac	0	16		tourism
Dzoyaxche	Merida	454	5	13	2 entry	3 school
Subincancab	Timucuy	965	0	12	7 west ranch entry	
San Jose	Tixkokob	hac	0	12	10 south entry	tourist hac
Yunku	Sacalum	145	18	10	1 E, 1 NW, 1 S	"dude ranch"
Tahdzibichen	Merida	724	3	9	1 S	tourist hac
San Miguel, hacienda	Valladolid	hac	3	9	2 N (guards)	1 on road
Yabucu, hacienda	Acanceh	hac	0	9		tourist hac
Kaan Ac, hacienda	Valladolid	hac	0	8	2 S (guards)	cenote ceiba
Bolantunil, hacienda	Chumayel	hac	0	8		in restoration
Itzincab	Tecoh	413	7	7		guard trees
Chactun, San Jose	Maxcanu	109	9	6	N,2NE,3W,SE,2S	ex hacienda
Santa Cruz, hacienda	Opichen	hac	0	6		
Sabacche	Tecoh	160	8	5	1 NE, 2 NW	5 rd in town
Cheuman	Merida	211	7	5	2 N, 2 S, 1 cross rd	
San Bernardo	Kopoma	421	7	5		6 park
Nohuayun	Tetiz	777	3	5	3 town	not tourism
Xmatkuil	Merida	526	1	5	1 E	
Petac	Merida	221	1	5	1 park	tourist hac
Chinkila	Tecoh	336	1	5		
Tesip	Merida	359	0	5		
Noc-Ac	Merida	450	14	4	2 S, 2 N	3 park
San Antonio Chel	Hunucma	220	1	4	1 S	
San Nicolas	Suma	11	1	4		old hac.
Suytunchen	Merida	102	0	4	1 E of bull ring	"dude ranch "
San Eduardo	Dzemul	69	0	4		working hac
Sotuta de Peon	Tecoh	276	24	3	19 entry road	tourist, working
Santa Maria Chi	Merida	303	9	3		9 lg park
Xcanatun	Merida	1495	7	3	3 entry	
X-Tepen	Uman	527	6	3		2 park
Hunxectaman	Uman	244	5	3	2 E	3 approaches hac
Techoh	Tixpehual	400	1	3	1 W	
Balantun	Izamal	hac	0	3	2 rd entry	
Bella Flor	Kinchil	hac	0	3	3 entry rd	
Kancaba, hacienda	Espita	hac	0	3		tourist hac.
Texan Camara	Merida	566	7	2	2 SW, 2 NE	2 school
X-Kanchakan	Tecoh	1593	4	2		
Holca road	Espita	hac	0	2	old hac.	5, 40 yrs
Tzactalha, San Fran.	Dzidzantun	hac	0	2		
La Guadalupe	Valladolid	hac	0	2		
			155	296		

Within the municipio of Mérida for a few decades there have been widespread attempts to preserve something of the henequen era by refurbishing the buildings and grounds for tourist resorts/hotels, with mixed success. Since 1996 fifty-one haciendas have been registered as cultural heritage sites, which require the owners to protect the historical nature of the place. Planners have placed the haciendas in six regions around Mérida.

1) The Central Metropolitan Region has 15 haciendas: Anikabil, Chenkú, Misné, Mulsay de la Magdalena, Multunkuc, Petcanché, San Agustín de Pacabtún, San Antonio Cucul, San Diego Azcorra, San Juan Bautista Tzeal, San Pedro Chukuaxín, Tanlum, Vista Alegre, Wallis and Xoclán.

2) The Northern Region, which contains the area lying between the City of Mérida and the Port of Progreso contains fourteen registered haciendas: Dzibilchaltún, Dzidzilché, Kikteil, Sac-Nicté, San Antonio Hool, Santa Gertrudis Copó, Santa María Yaxché, Sodzil Norte, Tamanché, Temozón Norte, Tixcuytún, Xcanatún, Xcumpich, and Xcunýá.

3) The Northwest Region, heading out towards Cautel, has three haciendas: Cheumán, Noc-Ac and Suytunchén.

4) The Southwest Region stretches from Mérida towards the Umán Municipality has four identified haciendas: Chalmuch, Opichén, Susulá, and Tixcacal.

5) The Southern Region, between Mérida and Abalá and Tecoh and moving toward the east between Mérida and Timucuy and Kanasín contains eleven protected haciendas: Hunxectamán, Petac, San Antonio Tahdzibichén, San Ignacio Tesip, San Matías Tzacalá, San Nicolás Dzoyaxché, San Pedro Chimay, Santa Cruz Palomeque, Texán Cámara, Xmatkuil, and Yaxnic.

6) The Eastern Region, toward Sitpach, contains four registered haciendas: Chichí Suárez, Oncán, Santa María Chí, and Yaxché Casares.

In areas farther afield from Mérida, driving routes have emerged to market closely located haciendas to tourists. One route to the southwest of Mérida near Umán, groups Hacienda Ochil San Pedro, Hacienda Temozón Sur and Hacienda Yaxcopoil. Another route, to the east toward Valladolid and Cancún includes Hacienda San Ildefonso Teya, Hacienda San José Cholul, and Hacienda Chichén. A third route is for the seven haciendas that make up the Cuxtal Ecological Reserve.



**Figure 89. Portal of hacienda Yaxcopoil (Umán).**

Today, one of the surest locations to find ceibas are the old and recently refurbished-for-tourism haciendas. All of the 30 ceibas planted just inside the wall of the refurbished hacienda Texan de Palomeque (Hunucma) are less than ten years old. Ceibas are often seen along routes approaching haciendas, at entrances, and near the main buildings. Often, villages near old haciendas also have ceibas more frequently than do their non-hacienda neighbors. Among the best examples are Sotuta de Peón where 19 ceibas line the western entrance, one is one the eastern entrance, and three have been planted along the tranvia that winds through the henequen field. Only three are on the grounds of the resort hacienda.



**Figures 90, 91. Highway entrance to hacienda Sotuta de Peón (Tecoh); (right) Subincancab (Timucuy) entrance ceibas to hacienda.**

**Yunkú (Sacalum).** One of the most spectacular ceiba landscapes near haciendas is that at Yunkú (Sacalum) where 15 ceibas are aligned along roads from the east and northwest heading to the hacienda. This small village of 145 residents has recently renovated its former hacienda and now invites tourists to its “dude ranch.” The landscape is rich with 28 large, old ceibas. Ten are within the grounds of the dude ranch and the others include trees at the only three entries into the town – on the east, south, and northwest.



**Figure 92. Northwest entry to hacienda Yunkú (Sacalum).**

**Yaxché de Peón (Ucú).** This hacienda, just northwest of Mérida, was such an important enterprise that its owner “A. L. Peón” (Augusto Peón (?), or perhaps Alonso Luis, son of Alonso Miguel, of Uxmal fame) had his own coins produced for use over his empire. At the time of the coinage of his *fichas*, the Peón family owned at least 12 haciendas (Villamil Rodríguez 2009). Today, the expanded village around the hacienda of Yaxché de Peón has 12 ceibas, including six at the entries, two near the church, and two at village corners.





Like the guard ceibas at entries to settlements, haciendas also, on occasion, have one or two ceibas planted at their portals. Three examples are below.



**Figure 93. Guard ceibas inside portal, Hacienda San Antonio Tahdzibichen (Mérida).**



**Figures 94, 95. Hacienda Chichi Suarez (Mérida): (left) south entry; (right) west entry.**



Figure 96. Hacienda Chuil (Izamal).



Figure 97. Hacienda Balantún (Izamal): entry ceiba from highway east of Izamal.





**Figure 98. Hacienda San Nicolas (Suma): long abandoned, but the large ceibas remain.**



**Figure 99. Gang graffiti of “Sureños 13” on northern hacienda portal, Hunxectamán (Umán).**



## Roadway and Settlement Entry Ceibas in Yucatán



**Figure 100. Roadside ceiba in Yucatán, from Waldeck (1838: 98/99).**

During his travels in Yucatán Jean F. de Waldeck (1766-1875) never mentioned the ceiba tree, but this detailed lithograph from 1837 clearly shows the leaves of a ceiba on a large tree aside a main road. Shortly afterward, John L. Stephens (1843: II, 235) rested under a “seybo” along his route.

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Unlike Central America where ceibas are a very prominent element of the roadside landscape, in Yucatán they are not as frequent along country roads. A very few can be found at political borders, crossroads, and on curves, and these are mostly recently planted. Those at road entries into settlements, cattle ranches in the northeast (see Chapter 7), or haciendas are far more common, but those should be considered



settlement ceibas rather than roadway ceibas. On occasion, because the large trunks provide a nice canvas, roadside ceibas serve as billboards.



Figure 101. Political ad on ceiba, rancho San Pedro, Chemax.



**Figure 102. Yucatán – Quintana Roo boundary ceiba, east of X-can, highway 180, 2016.**

There is another boundary ceiba on the quota highway between Valladolid and Cancun, marker 220 km. This highway provides one of the most obvious expressions of highway ceibas. In January 2019 we recorded the following trees with their road markers, locations, and approximate sizes (21 trees along a stretch of 113 kms). Obviously, most of these trees have been planted since the construction of the roadway and probably were planted with intent to impress tourists with the iconic Maya symbol.



**Figure 103.** First of several ceibas planted along the Valladolid – Cancún quota road.

166 km – in median, large size (photo above), 168 – in median, large, 174 – in median, 2 medium size, 182 – on south side, medium, 184 – in median, large, 201 – in median, 2 small size, 220 – at Quintana Roo – Yucatán border, 249-253 – in median, 10 medium, 252 – on south side, medium at house, and 279 – on south side, medium.

**Curve ceibas.** Ceibas on the outside of curves are planted as warnings. When a driver approaches from either direction and sees a ceiba directly in front, the driver is warned to slow.



**Figures 104, 105.** Ceiba on outside of curve, south of Popolnah, Yucatán, 2013. (left) View from north; (right) View from south.



**Figures 106, 107. Warning ceiba planted on curve next to sign, near Cheuman (Mérida), 2019; (right) curve ceibas planted north of Dzonot Aké, Tizimín, 2015.**

### **Settlement Entry Ceibas**

Deep in the ethos of Yucatecan Mayas is the notion that entries into settlements should be protected from “bad winds,” *mal aires* (Barrera M. 1976: 306). These *vientos malos* (*k’ak’as iik’*), invisible to villagers (Le Guen 2005: 54), are thought to leave their forest home, especially at night, and invade the human space.

Observers of the Yucatecan scene have noted that ceibas are often planted at one or more entries into their settlements. For the most part, a single tree is planted, but two “guard ceibas” between which one must pass are seen frequently. Crosses and chapels are also often located at entries to towns to protect the community from “bad winds,” *mal aires* (Re Cruz 1996: 58-9).

Often as one enters Yucatecan settlements, small chapels (*capillas*), can be seen. Locally called *ho’káah*, the little buildings are designed to host protectors of the village who watch over and prohibit the entry of the *malas aires* and forest spirits. Seyá has nine (figure xxx). Some informants believe that ceibas also “sanctify and protect from evil” at the “*puertas del pueblo*” (entries to the town). On occasion ceibas and *capillas* share the same entry.





9



1



2



8



3



7



6



5



4

Figure 108. The chapels of Seyé, Yucatán.





Figures 109, 110, 111. Paired ceiba/chapels at village entries: (left) northwest Hunucma and (right) east Hunxectaman (Umán), (below) Sacalum, north entry.



As at a few of the haciendas, a few towns have “guard ceibas” at one of more entries to settlements: the suburban development at La Ceiba, north of Mérida, has 16 around its entrance from the highway, Sacalum (Sacalum) has a total of 15 trees at the four major entrances, the old hacienda settlement at Peba (Abala) has seven on its north entry (Figure 116), as does Calotmul. The guard ceibas at Yaxcopoil (Umán) are obvious to the travelers long the main route to Uxmal (Figure 115).



Figures 112, 113. Ceibas at town entry signs (left) Tepalkan (Tepalkan) and (right) Yunka (Sacalum).



Figures 114, 115. "Guard ceibas" at entrances to Itzincab (Tecoh) left; Yaxcopoil (Umán) right.



Figure 116. Peba (Abalá): north entry has seven ceibas.



Figures 117, 118. (right) Halacho: northwest entry, three ceibas; Samahil, west entry, two ceibas.





Figures 119, 120. (left) Yobain: south entry ceiba; (right) Tixpehual: east entry at railroad crossing.



Figure 121. Crossroad ceiba at Cheuman (Mérida).



Figures 122, 123. (left) Piste (Tinum): west entry; (right) Sotuta de Peón (Tecoh): west entry.



## Cattle Ceibas, Spared Ceibas, in Yucatán

“En las fincas de campo se utiliza su frondosidad [del ceibo]  
para tener sombra en los corrales.” (Dondé 1873: 127)

Mary Lee Kennedy (1984: 339) found during her research on the ethnobotany of the ceibas of four towns slightly northeast of Mérida that “The yaxché is the god of ganado (Wan Thul), and is the central point of the Universe.” One landscape manifestation of this notion occurs during a town’s festival when a young ceiba is planted, at least temporarily, in the plaza de toros. This is still a tradition in many Yucatecan towns (Redfield 1936; Barrera 1976: 311), although, on occasion, other plants have been substituted for a ceiba. In the most traditional towns, however, such as Xocén, ceibas still are planted. During the July 30, 2019 festival about 15 men were engaged in lifting the tree into a hole.



**Figure 124. Raising  
the ceiba in Xocén,  
2019. (Courtesy Dr.  
Crystal Sheedly)**



This old ritual is most formalized at ganadería La Ceiba (Calotmul) where a large ceiba has been planted permanently within the bull ring.



Figures 125, 126. Bull ring and icon of ganaderia “La Ceiba,” southwest of Calotmul.

Redfield (1941: 141, 290) heard of “X-Juan-Thul,” “the supernatural patron of the cattle.” Rosales (1977) called the god X-Juan Thul and “dueño del Ganado.” It seems that after the Spanish introduction of cattle into Yucatán, the natives thought cows were most like the deer with which they were familiar and placed the bulls under a new guardian god who could protect those associated with the *corrida* from evil winds. When the ceibas are placed in the bull rings, the bulls are tied to the tree and the fusion promotes the protection (Terán C. y Rassmussen 2005: 168). Native beliefs connecting cattle with ceibas were probably reinforced when they saw cattle gathered in the shade beneath ceibas on haciendas. Numerous early photographs record this scene.

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“Yucatan is classified into three regions according to type of vegetation and agricultural development: the sisal region (center-northern) dedicated mainly to the exploitation of sisal (*Agave fourcroydes*), the agricultural region (southern) with main activity the production of maize and citrus; and the livestock region (eastern) where 65% of the cattle of the state is concentrated (INEGI 1994). “

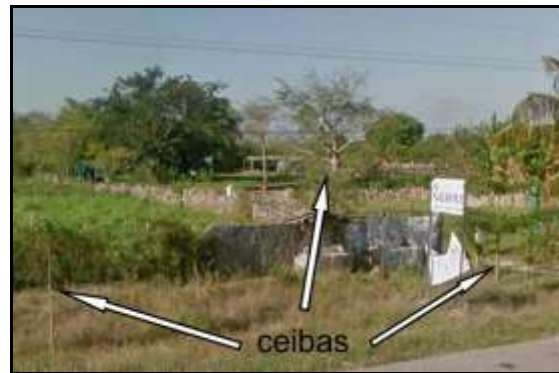
Most of the cattle lands of Yucatán, some 600,000 hectares, come from the northeast sector of the state. Half of the cattle are produced from ranches in three municipios: Tizimín, Panabá, and Sucilá. With regularity, entrances to cattle ranches north and east of Tizimín are marked with a ceiba tree. A few cattle pens are shaded with a ceiba. A few main houses are shaded by a collection of ceibas. With the regional exception of the cattle lands of eastern Yucatán, there are few roadside ceibas.



Figures 127, 128. (left) Tizimín – Colonia Yucatán road; (right) entry to Rancho La Dama y Los Tres Caballeros, Colonia Yucatán, the road north to Cuyo.



Figures 129, 130. (left) entry and cattle pen at Rancho San Francisco, km 10, Cuyo Road; (right) cattle pen at El Sagrario, Santa Pilar, 22 km, San Felipe Road.



Figures 131, 132. Young ceibas planted at ranch entrances, Buctzotz – Sucilá, km. 121 (left), km. 122 (right).

Off of these transects are a few other examples of ranch-entry ceibas, such as at Yaxché (Tizimín) (see Chapter Two on Yaxché toponym settlements) and Figure 133, below.

**Table 7. Ceibas seen along four highway transects through the cattle lands of northeastern Yucatán.**

Transects	1	2	3	4
Highway settlements	2	2	4	0
Ceibas in towns	4	1	4	0
Roadside	30	16	22	29
Ranchos (total ceibas)	(14)	(12)	(71)	(27)
Entries (ceibas)	6(6)	5(5)	8(13)	8(16)
Pens, Buildings	2	4	20	2
Spared (?) nearby fields	6	3	38	9
Others	2*	2**	0	0
TOTALS	46	30	93	56 = 225, not counted elsewhere

1 = Susila – Tizimin – Colonia Yucatán, 62 km.

2 = Tizimin – Rio Lagartos, 54 km.

3 = Colonia Yucatán – El Cuyo, 77 km.

4 = Buctzotz – Sucilá, 50 km.

\*Department of Agriculture Cattle Experiment Station

\*\* Río Lagartos Biosphere Field Station

### Spared Ceibas

Apparently, almost all ceibas in Yucatán are planted by man. Perhaps some trees propagated naturally can be found in the deep forests, but not much forest remains and what does is mostly scrub. When hiking on trails I have found that ceibas are normally near settlements or in formerly farmed areas, abandoned milpas, etc. Man and ceibas are, without doubt, inextricably intertwined.

However, when a ceiba, naturally propagated, is on purpose not cut down, it is consider “spared.” Spared ceibas are a cultural artifact as much as one that is planted in a specific culturally significant site.

One of the few areas where “natural” ceibas might have been spared is a large pasture in southern Peto municipality. Along the dirt road leaving highway 184 heading

toward hacienda Marques 12 mid-aged trees can be seen. A few ceibas can also be found in the adjacent forest. This scenery is rare in Yucatán.



**Figure 133, 134. (left) Ceibas in a pasture, Yaxcola road, southern Peto; (right) planted entry ceiba nearby at Rancho Kutza, Peto.**

The area of cattle ceibas coincides somewhat with that of the few spared ceibas. In the northeast this is perhaps best illustrated just north and west of Moctezuma, Tizimín, on the road to El Cuyo, km 10 north. However, in one instance (Figure 135), their regularity in location -- aligned with the road, about 20 meters away, or lined in the field -- is suspicious -- and might indicate the hand of man in origin, rather than a natural propagation. Another line of trees (Figure 136), less regular, might indicate natural propagation.



**Figures 135, 136. (left) north of Moctezuma; (right) west of Moctezuma.**

Ceiba sparing is aided by the fire-resistant nature of the tree. Despite severe burning of its lower trunk, this ceiba is leafing gloriously. This example is from midway the Tizimín – Colonia Yucatán highway, north side (Figure 137).





Figure 137.



## Urban Ceibas in Yucatán: *Cabeceras Municipales, Izamal, Valladolid, and Mérida*

The close relationship between humans and ceibas in Yucatán becomes obvious as population density changes. Generally, settlements with larger populations have more ceibas than do smaller settlements and rural areas. While the relationship is not perfect, the planting of ceibas is most vibrant around Mérida, the largest city, in the new residential developments and new tourist-oriented facilities.

### **In Yucatán: One hundred and six *cabeceras municipales*.**

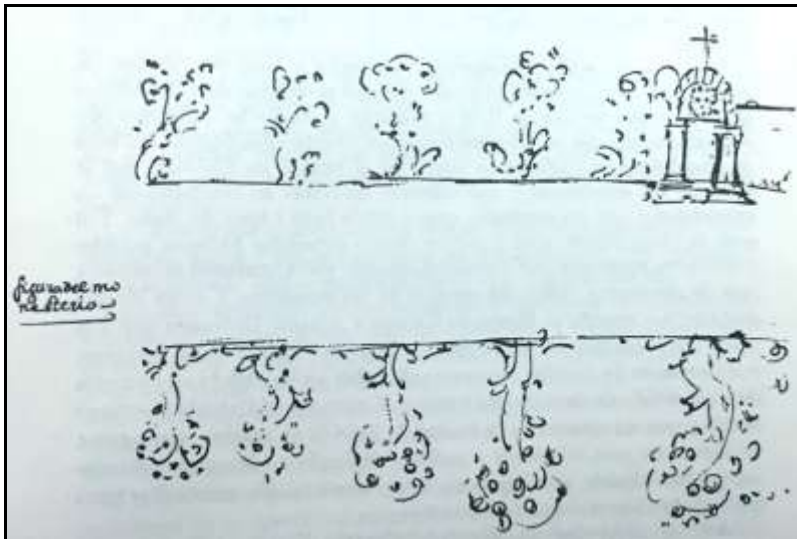
The State of Yucatán is divided into 106 *municipios* (the equivalent of a county in the USA). The political headquarters and normally the largest settlement of a *municipio* is known as the *cabecera municipal*. They are fairly uniform in traditional settlement pattern. Most are old settlements appearing on lists of places in 1582 (DHY 2: 55-65), 1609 (Vásquez de Espinosa 1941: 124-7) and 1806 (Farriss 1984: 397-8). Spanish colonial influences are obvious. Their streets follow a rectangular grid, with an occasional slight offset from the north-south-east-west norm. Almost all have west-facing churches and only three do not have cemeteries in the western quadrant from the church.

Mérida, Valladolid, and Izamal excluded, the other *cabeceras* have 229 ceibas. About 45% of those are near the entries into the towns. Thirty-eight *cabeceras* have no ceibas, only 14 have church ceibas, and only 14 have cemetery ceibas. It may be that in the *cabeceras* Maya traditions have suffered the most. It seems that to “make their mark,” to attract attention, and to “modernize” their towns, newly elected *alcaldes* (mayors) seem occupied with re-constituting the most visible public spaces around the church and roadways entering their towns. Falling beneath the gaze of professional “planners,” *cabeceras*, over the last decade or so, have seen the construction of large, grotesque, cement basketball courts (*canchas*) . . . **in every settlement**, no matter the size! The ornamentals planted along the entrances into towns are usually black locusts, mimosas, and a variety of palms. I have little expectation that when a ceiba dies in the centro or at an entrance it will be replaced with a ceiba.

**Valladolid.** The second city of modern Yucatán is the ancient Maya settlement of Zací (also Caquí, Caqué), now known as Valladolid. Tourism officials have named it “El Pueblo Mágico.” (Izamal has been dubbed with a similar title.) We know of 28 ceibas in the city.

The best known tree is the giant at the famous Zaci cenote, a few blocks northeast of the plaza. Its girth is a little more than 20 feet. While some locals say the tree is “over 500 years old.” The B. H. Norman (1843: 98/99) lithograph of the “Sonato at Valladolid” indicates no ceiba (see figures 30, 31).

However, Valladolid does have centuries-old historical evidence of local ceibas. From the famous “Relaciones Geográficas of 1579” (Edwards 1975) we learn that the Franciscans who built their church and convent (San Bernardino de Siena) some distance southwest from the plaza and cathedral in the center of Valladolid also constructed “*una calzada por mano,*” along which they planted ceibas. The only illustration accompanying the entire text of the *relaciones* is a “*figura del monesterio*” that emphasizes the ceibas that line the calzada.



**Figure 138.** Illustration of the Franciscan calzada, with ceibas, in Valladolid, 1579. (García 1983).

This scene was confirmed a few years later by Fray Alonso Ponce, the Commissary General of the Franciscan Order appointed in 1584. With his companion Antonio de Ciudad Real he made a remarkable several-years walk to inspect convents of New Spain. While in Valladolid, July 22, 1588, he observed that “from the convent to the

town there leads a road, closed on both sides with ceiba-trees, which are tall and thick and resemble the black poplar of Spain" (Noyes 1932: 320).

Today the "*Calzada de los Frailes*" is a prominent diagonal that cuts across an otherwise rectangular grid pattern, southwest of the plaza, ending at the convent. Towards the northeastern portion of the calzada is where the greatest concentration of ceibas is found today. Three of these are on property of hotels: Casa de los Aluxes (2) and Tunich Beh. Others are nearby at a gasoline station, a garbage bin, and in private yards slightly away from the street (6).

The other prominent southwest to northeast diagonal is in Maní, another early Franciscan center and home for a while of Bishop Diego López de Landa. In the case of Maní the diagonal connects the ancient cenote, in the southwest, to the upslope church, to the northeast. This street is also lined with ceibas . . . until today. (See Chapter 12)



Figures 139, 140. (left) Ceiba at c 41 x 46; (right) tree at 41-A interior.





**Figures 141, 142. Ceiba in patio of Hotel Tunich Beh; at the gasolinera calles 41x46.**



**Figures 143, 144. Valladolid ceibas: (left) garbage tree, calles 46xCalzada; (right) calles 37x54, NW corner.**



**Figures 145, 146. Valladolid ceibas: (left) calles 38x3, SW corner, private home; (right) calles 28x41, NW corner, business.**



**Figures 147, 148. Highway 79/Calle 41 west: (left) Hotel 41 ceiba, at round-about; (right) cemetery ceiba in the median.**

As for entry ceibas, there are two on the old highway 180 at the km 165 marker east of Valladolid. On the west, seven are aligned along the old highway. Three others can be seen in the neighborhood of west 37<sup>th</sup> street at 37 x 54 southwest corner, 37 x 54 northeast mid block, and 37 x 50 mid block. Finally, the nature park X-Kopek, east of San Juan, has four young trees. None of the six Valladolid churches currently have ceibas on their grounds.



*Izamal.* The famed “yellow city” of Yucatán is another center of ceibas. Like Valladolid, Izamal also has the official designation as “El Pueblo Mágico.” Including six rural trees near Rancho San Juan adjacent east of the city, Izamal has 20 ceibas. A few are quite memorable.

In the eastern barrio of San Juan, the yellow chapel is immediately fronted by one of the largest ceibas in Yucatán. The other most impressive tree covers the entire little corner plaza dedicated to Bishop Diego de Landa in the centro next to his statue and the imposing Convent of San Anthony of Padua.



**Figure 149. San Juan Church, Izamal.**



**Figure 150. Bishop de Landa plaza, Izamal.**

Other landscape markers can be seen at the northern and eastern entrances of Izamal and in its namesake Colonia Yaxché.



**Figures 151, 152. Izamal: the eastern entry ceiba; the yaxché of colonia Yaxché.**

Another large ceiba was planted at the west end of the railroad/police station, another is in the park just to the east, and a smaller one can be seen just inside a hacienda arch at the end of calle 28.



**Figures 153, 154. Izamal: railroad/police station ceiba, Ceiba at south end of calle 28.**

As shown in chapter one, five ceibas line the north and west sides the gigantic pyramid mound in the center of town (Kinich Kak Moo). Another tree is on the east side of the other large mound, Itzamatul.

*Mérida.* I have not attempted to locate or map all of the ceibas in Mérida, “La Ciudad Blanca.” As the largest city of Yucatán, and the place with greatest population increases, it is also the settlement with the most ceibas. They are being planted, with some vigor, in prominent places such as the new museum (Gran Museo del Mundo Maya) in northern Mérida (7 trees), at new government buildings such as the Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Estado de Yucatán in western Mérida (20 ceibas), and new residential subdivisions, especially around the periphery of the city. Fourteen mostly older trees can be found just south and southwest of the museum.



**Figure 155. Ceibas planted in lines at Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Estado de Yucatán.**



To mention only two examples from the suburban fringe: On the western edge of Mérida, along highway 281 just before Caucel, the new subdivision Gran Santa Fé has planted 385 ceibas in the medians of its major boulevards, at six roundabouts (*glorietas*), and at “*Cerrada La Ceiba*.” On a neighborhood sign the plantings were applauded as a residential reforestation program of October 2012: “*Un árbol para la tierra, un paraíso para nuestras familias.*”



**Figure 156.** Ceibas in the median, subdivision Gran Santa Fé, Mérida.



**Figure 157.** Cerrada “La Ceiba” in subdivision Gran Santa Fé, west Mérida.

While not within the city limits of Mérida, a similar pattern can be seen a bit to the south at Opichén, a small *comisaria* west of the Mérida airport. Thirty-four ceibas, all less than ten years old, have been planted in the medians. The only old, large ceibas are the four

in the town park. The elite development of “La Ceiba” is another example of urban sprawl -- to the north. Aside from Mérida, La Ceiba has more ceibas than any other settlement – 46. The trees of these subdivisions are not counted among the Mérida ceibas. Within the city proper, a few ceiba concentrations stand out. The neighborhood surrounding the ancient indigenous barrio of Itzamná, northeast of Mérida centro, has a tradition of planting ceibas. The church has three saplings and Luigi’s Italian restaurant is proud of its old tree. Six other old trees can be seen on the grounds of mansions nearby.



**Figures 158, 159. At Itzamná church (left) Sharon stands next to young ceiba, with another in foreground. At right, she is in front of Luigi’s Italian Restaurant.**

The eastern entry into the city via highway 180 is another area of concentration. Between the exit to San Pedro Noh Pat and the long block past the periférico [exit 7], heading west, 24 ceibas can be seen: the northern side (11), the median (4), the round-about (4), and the southwest corner of 180 x calle 12 (5). Two more are in the median of the road to the northeast at 7 x 32-34.



**Figures 160, 161. Mérida (left) entry east; (right) Parque La Ceiba entry ceibas (2).**

Parks often have ceibas – some examples are Parque La Ceiba (5), Hundido de Brisas (4), La Xtabay (2), Hunab (1). *Glorietas* (roundabouts) do as well – Xtabay (2), Brisas (2), Plaza de las Américas (1). North of the latter, along calle 52, eight ceibas can be seen in small parks and the medians.



**Figure 162. Glorieta La Xtabay, Mérida, statuary with two planted ceibas.**

Single ceibas can be seen at the Centro Internacional de Congresos de Yucatán, at Calpules x Cto. Colonias, within the centro office of SEDUMA (Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Medio Ambiente), and at an abandoned private casona near the church in barrio Santa Ana in the centro. Two more shade the back parking lot of the bank directly behind the Holiday Inn on Colón and four are on the grounds of “Los Ceibos” (Salon de Eventos) on calle 50, just east of the airport. Frequently, near prominent neighborhood ceibas, businesses incorporate the term in their name: OXXO La Ceiba, Plaza Comercial La Ceiba (4), Cerveceria La Ceiba (2), La Ceiba Medical Clinica, Bar La Ceiba, Tortas y Tcos La Ceiba, Tamales estilo México La Ceiba, etc.



**Figures 163, 164. Mérida establishments (left) restaurant; (right) bar.**

Counting only these mentioned, we have seen 541 ceibas within the city. Of course, many more are to be discovered.





## Ceibas at New Tourist Facilities in Yucatán

With the unprecedented and widespread growth of local and international tourism in Yucatán over the last several decades, the ceiba has become the major icon to focus attention on Maya culture and history. Planners are much aware of the role that the culture history of the Maya plays in the interests of tourists. That yaxché, “The Sacred Tree of the Mayas,” is propagandized so widely is not surprising.

Scholars are well aware of the “commoditization” of Maya heritage in Yucatán. However, Medina (2003) noted that while “living Maya people stood to gain economically from widespread interest in their heritage . . . versions of Maya history and culture do not reflect their experiences and values . . . ”

Especially on the east coast of the peninsula – along the so-called “Riviera Maya” that stretches from Isla Mujeres and Cancún south down to Tulum – new ceiba plantings have been intense. Millions of international tourists over the last decade alone have seen thousands of young ceibas appearing in the roadway medians and along highways, in fake cemeteries (Xcaret) and roadside shrines (Puerto Morelos), at country clubs and golf courses, at city halls (Tulum, Playa Carmen), at new luxury hotels, and new U.S. businesses, such as FedEx and Walmart. Playa Carmen has a nice urban Parque La Ceiba, with several ceibas.



**Figures 165, 166. Ceibas in municipal plazas (left) Tulum, 2017; (right) Playa Carmen, 2019.**



Figures 167, 168. Playa Carmen, 2019: ceibas at Walmart (left) and FedEx/bus station (right).



Figures 169, 170. (left) At cabildo park, Playa Carmen; (below) entry to Cancún Country Club.





**Figure 171, 172. (left) the fake cemetery at Xcaret has five ceibas; (right) hundreds of ceibas are only a few meters apart in the median of the coastal highway south and north of Playa Carmen. (What is going to happen when they get big?)**

Tourism developers in the state of Yucatán have been less showy with ceibas than those of the Caribbean coast (everything is more “cheesy” and exaggerated there), but ceibas are promoted at recently opened tourist cenotes, at the new museums, at restaurants, renovated hacienda resorts, and new subdivisions’ golf courses.

Some of the most obvious examples of the commoditization of THE Maya tree are in Yucatán state follow.

The cenotes of Yucatán have become major attractions for tourists. For only a few examples of recently planted cenote ceibas visit Cenote Xkenken, 1.5 km north of Dzitnup (Valladolid), where two ceibas have been planted at the entrance in stone circles, and Cenote Maya, well off the beaten track in northern Chemax but visited by tours from Playa Carmen, where a ceiba has been planted at the entry. The tourist cenote Sac Aua, near Dzalbay (Temozón), has four ceibas planted in the parking lot for future shade. Northeast of Temozón, at cenote Hubiku, and at cenote Suytún (east of Valladolid, west of Tikuch), other ceibas have been planted. There are many, many more.





Figures 173, 174. Sites of Cenote Xkenken (left), and Cenote Maya (right).



Figure 175. Ceibas in the parking lot of the tourist cenote Sac Aua, Dzalbay (Temozón).

At the new museum in north Mérida, Gran Museo del Mundo Maya . . .



Figures 176, 177. (left) Sharon at the entrance ceiba planted at the new museum in Mérida; (right) a plaque in the museum.





Figure 178. Drawing in the children's room, Gran Museo del Mundo Maya, Mérida.

And, at restaurants . . .



Figures 179, 180. (left) Restaurants built around a ceiba, at Pisté; (right) at Tikuch, restaurant Las Palmas has an elevated platform constructed around a large ceiba.



Figures 181, 182. (left) Lake ceiba at new subdivision and golf course Kahna, north of Mérida, (right) ornamental ceiba at tourist Hacienda Kancaba (Espita).

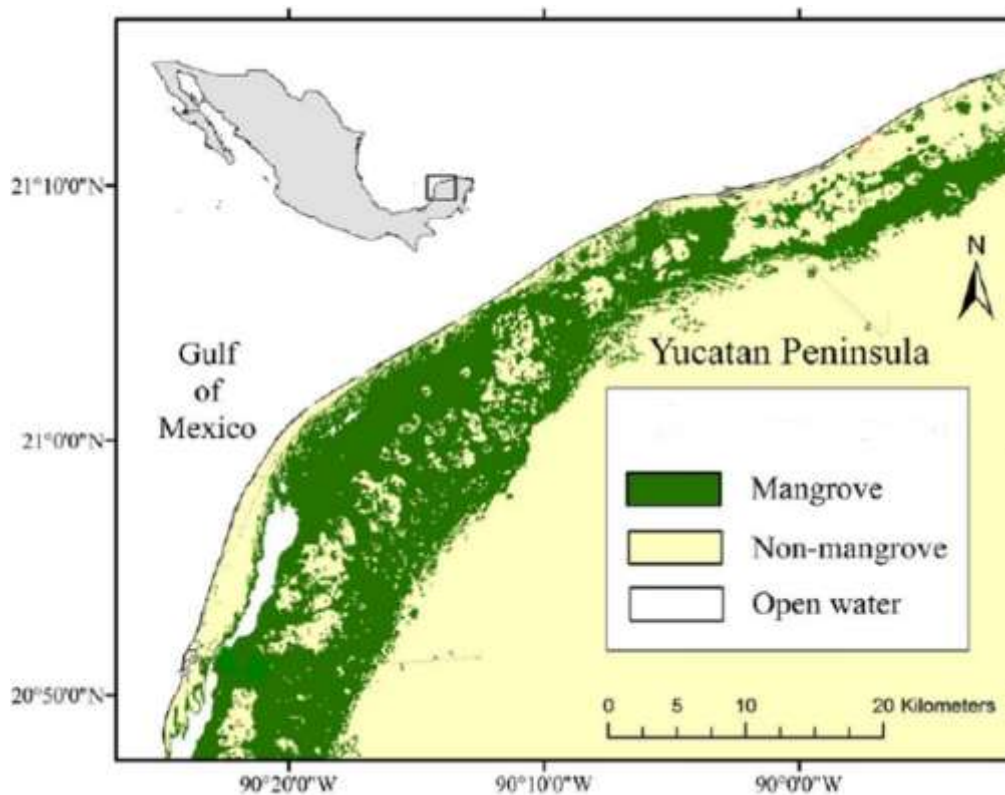


Figure 183. The new beer from Mérida, 2016.



## The Gulf Coastal Region

Environmental changes are fairly regular as one proceeds from the shore of the Gulf of México to the interior of Yucatán. Coastal sands give way to salty lagoons, brackish mangrove swamps, and marshlands, before firm karst land can be found on the surface. As one proceeds from Celestún in the west to El Cuyo in the east, the water-logged coastal fringe narrows from about 16 km to 5 km.



**Figure 184. Northwest sector, Yucatán peninsula.**

To determine the impact of the humid rimland on the presence of ceibas, transects between the fourteen coastal settlements and interior towns reveal the nature of this inhospitable no man's land. Three roads, beginning at Chabihau to Yobain (13 km), Telchac Puerto to Telchec (15 km), and Chicxulub Puerto to Chicxulub (20 km), have no ceibas. The other road transects, listed below, reveal locations of ceibas closest the sea.



Not surprisingly, the northernmost ceibas along the transects are found planted at the entrances to ranchos along the highways.

1. El Cuyo - Moctezuma road (12 km). At rancho San Manuel, some six km south of El Cuyo, two ceibas guard the entrance to the farm. Several larger ceibas surround the farmhouse in the background.



**Figures 185, 186. Rancho San Manuel (left) entry ceibas; (right) ceibas surrounding ranch house, entry ceibas can be seen at bottom of air photo.**

2. Río Lagartos - Loché road (26 km). At 10 km south of Río, km marker 94, are three ceibas surrounding an entry road (Figure 187).



**Figure 187.**



3. San Felipe - Panabá road (30 km). The first ceiba – trunk colored with orange and blue colors of a political party -- can be seen, isolated, at four km south of San Felipe. Four km farther south a concentration of four highway trees announce an entrance on the east. The only old, large ceiba of the entire coastal zone can be seen here. A bit farther south, Santa Pilar and El Sagrario have two trees at a cattle pen (Figures 188, 189, 190).



**Figure 188. San Felipe, isolated 4 km south. Figure 189. San Felipe road, entry 8 km south.**



**Figure 190. Sagrario cattle pen.**

4. Dzilam de Bravo - Dzilam González road (13 km). A six-year-old ceiba has been planted at the entry of a rancho 2.5 km from Bravo. Two more trees are nearby along the road (Figure 191).



**Figure 191.**

5. Santa Clara - Dzidzantún road (14 km). Seven km south of Santa Clara the first ceiba was planted formally near the entry of a ranch on west side of highway (Figure 192).



**Figure 192.**



6. Chabihau - Yobain road (13 km). No ceibas.

7. San Crisanto - Sinanché road (14 km). Three km south of San Crisanto a small rancho has planted six ceibas at its entrance (Figure 193).



**Figure 193.**

8. Telchac Puerto - Telchac road (15 km). No ceibas.

9. Xtampú - Dzemul road (24 km). The first two ceibas appear as guard trees at the northern entry to Dzemul (Figure 194).



**Figure 194.**

10. Chicxulub Puerto - Chicxulub road (21 km). No ceibas.

11. Progreso - Mérida road (33 km on hwy 261). Four ceibas guard an entry just south of El Paraiso at 10 km from the sea (Figure 195).



**Figure 195.**

12. Chuburna - Sierra Papacal road (15 km). Soon after the Technology Center, four km north of Sierra Papacal only two ceibas have been planted in the median (Figure 196).



**Figure 196.**



13. Sisal - Hunucmá road (23 km). The two ceibas that guard the Capilla del Viajero on the northwestern outskirts of Hunucmá are about 20 km from the coast (Figure 197).



**Figure 197.**

14. Celestún – Kinchil road (50 km). At 31 km from the coast, at Bella Flor, two ceibas announce the entry to the old hacienda on south side of the highway (Figure 198).



**Figure 198.**

Ceibas are rare near the sea. In the twelve coastal settlements surveyed only Dzilam de Bravo has a ceiba – a 4-year old planted at the CONAGUA plant.

At cemeteries, which remain toward the west of towns, even in the coastal zone, ceibas give way to other ornamental trees, such as the coconut at Loché (Panabá).



**Figure 199. Coconut  
fronting the  
cemetery at western  
entrance of Loché,  
Panabá.**

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Away from the coastal fringe, the largest essentially “dead zone” of ceibas, an area of some 1,810 square miles (4,687 km<sup>2</sup>) is in southern Tixcacalcupul, Tekóm, Yaxcabá, Chankom, Chikindznot, Tahdziú, Tixméhuac, and northeast Tzucacab. The area, which lies in a rough triangle with points at Tekom, Kantunil, and Tzucacab, includes at least 70 settlements where we have no evidence of ceibas. This of course excludes the *monte* within the zone where we have not looked.

Within this almost ceiba-free region we know of only six exceptions. Three places have ceibas planted next to the water sources. The ceiba at Kanakom (Yaxcabá) is next to the water tower, well, and cenote, another at Tixhualatun (Peto) is adjacent to the well, and in Xcoptel (Chankom) where nine (3 large, 6 very small) of their 14 ceibas are planted next to the well. A fourth town is Yaxunah (Yaxcabá) which has a young tree in its botanical garden at the Community Cultural Center (Bascopé, G. personal communication 2019). The other two settlements, X-Cohil (Tixméhuac) and Tahdziú (Tahdziú), each have a lone ceiba in private backyards.



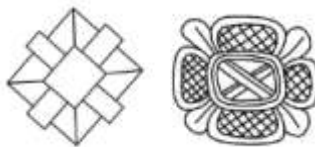
## To Conclude:

### The Search for the Ancient Maya Cosmos in the Modern Ceiba Landscapes of Yucatán

The basic geographical orientation of the Maya world has been often described as a “quinunex,” a five dot pattern that might outline a cross, a figure with four sides and four corners with a central tree, or, perhaps a square formed by the cardinal points resting on its western point and with a center (Friedel *et al* 1993: 161, etc.; Schele and Mathews 1998: 27; Mathews and Garber 2004; Bassie-Sweet 2008: 68). Two colorful examples are presented in Chapter Four on churches. The illustrations below are a few of the innumerable representations of five-sectors Maya glyphs (from Dunning *et al* 1992: 137). Many others can be seen elsewhere (Macri andLooper 2003: 188, etc.).



This pattern is still important in locating ceibas in the village centro (near churches, plazas, and cenotes) and at village entries where roads pass through the built up areas. However, because ceibas are often also planted at the northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest “corners” of modern Maya villages, often at trails leading to milpas, a more complete pattern for a “ceiba cosmos” emerges by superimposing the usual grid pattern of village streets atop the traditional quinunex. Some have suggested calling this nine-point pattern, a “nonagrid.” As seen below, nonagrid patterns can be seen in radial pyramids and Maya glyphs (Slater 2014: 205).



If the cemetery, normally located to the west, is added, a Maya “decad” emerges and a more complete picture of where ceibas are likely found is formed.

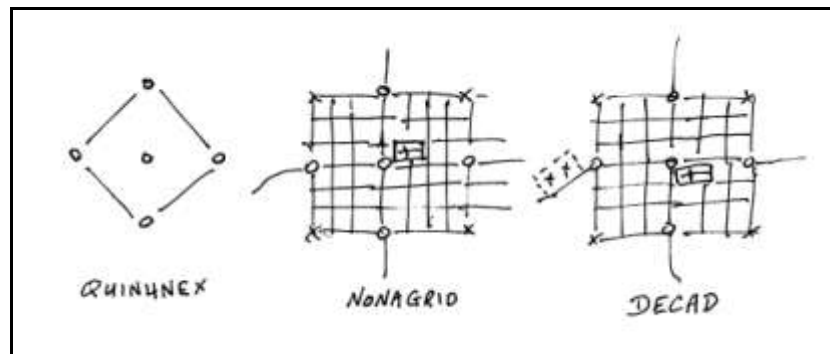


Figure 200. Sketches showing x(s) and o(s) of likely ceiba sites in Maya villages.

Figure 201 shows the actual distribution of ceibas in areas of the ten focal points –as determined from our survey of 575 Yucatecan settlements. Of course this compilation has no statistical validity. It simply illustrates what we experienced and recorded in our incomplete and inconsistent field notes. This sampling of 550 ceibas in location finds that 430, or 78%, are within the areas of the quinunex, 12.5% are in the corners, and almost 10% are at cemeteries.

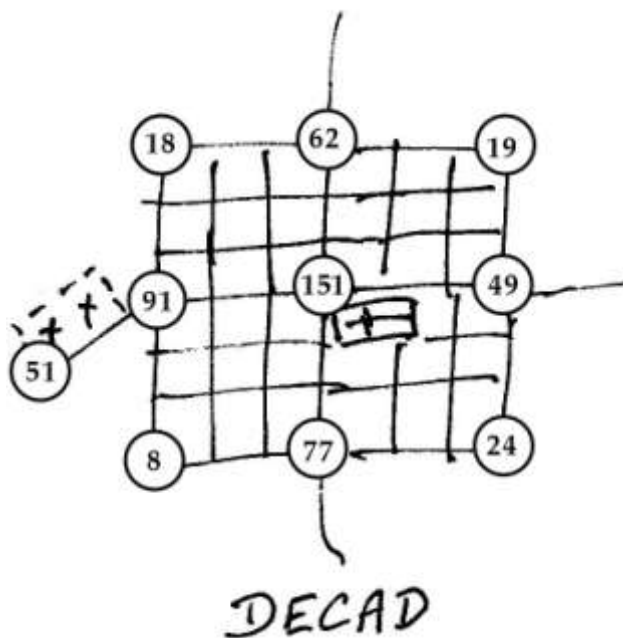


Figure 201. Locations and numbers of ceibas in the areas of the “Maya decad.”



Aside from ceibas, other significant landscape elements, perhaps proxies, such as crosses and oratories (Barrera M. 1976: 306; Freidel *et al* 1993: 55; cites), can often be seen in the “decad” pattern in Yucatecan towns. One example, Santa Elena, a cabecera municipal southwest of Mérida near the Campeche border, has recently become of interest primarily because of the deterioration of oratories that surround the town. The map (Figure 203) below indicates the locations of six oratories in an “outer ring” and an incomplete inner band of seven ceibas on the northwest, north, northeast, southeast, and south (JMRM 2014; Díaz M. 2017).

The settlement of some 3,456 residents lies along the Uxmal – Kabah route and was known to John Lloyd Stephens (1841, 1843) and other early travel writers as Nohcacab. It is one of the so-called Puuc villages and limestone uplifts within the town attracted Spanish attention. The main church commands a wonderful view of the surround flatlands.



**Figure 202. Santa Elena centro, air view from southwest.**

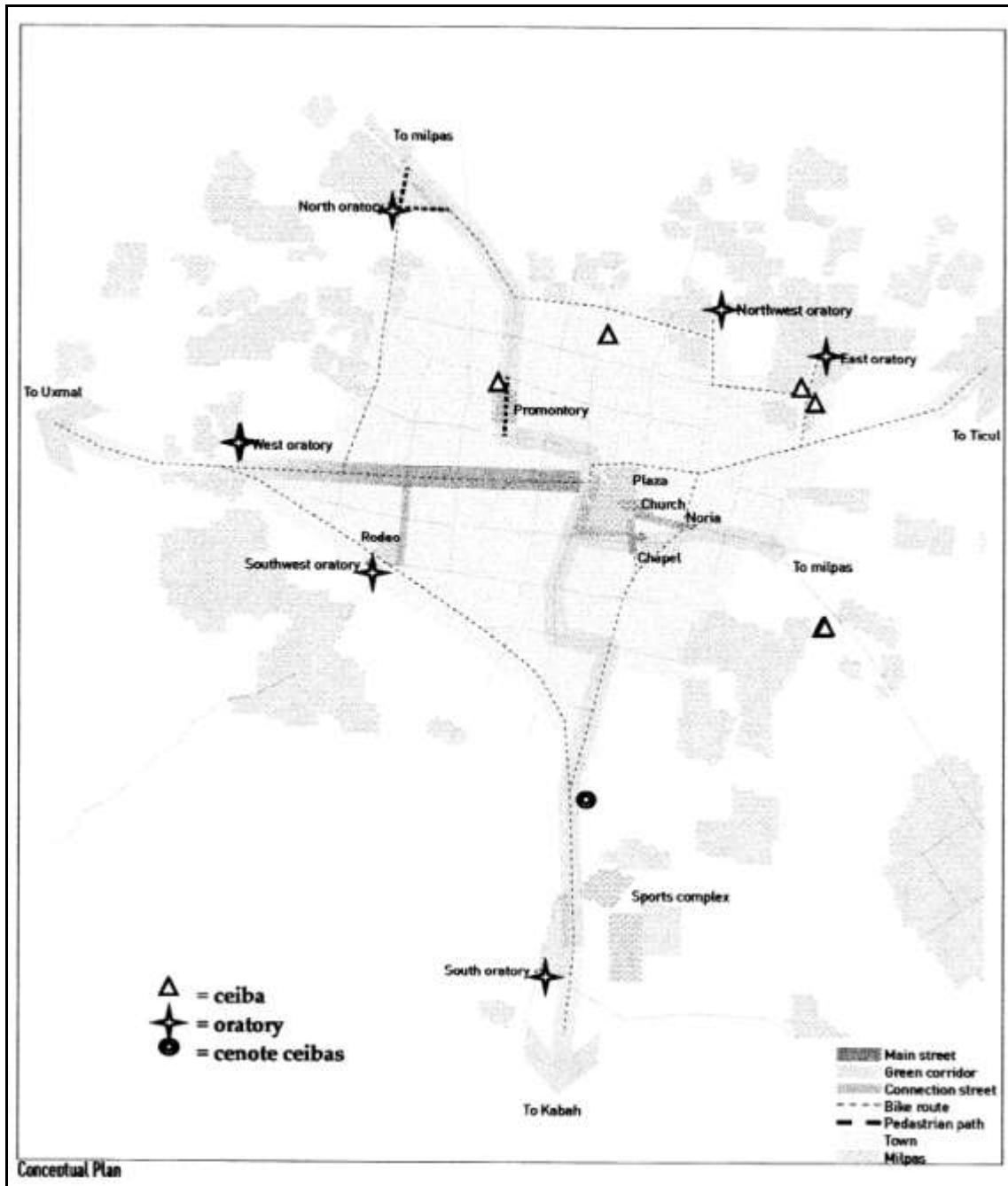


Figure 203. Locations of ceibas and oratories in Santa Elena. Base plan from Díaz M. (2017).

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Based on our survey of 616 places, an assessment of the status of the cultural complex of the ceiba in the State of Yucatan reveals mixed results. As classified herein by chapters, it is obvious that half of the ten “categories” or “gropings” are in the process of losing their ancient connections with the ceiba. In the settlements named “Yaxché,” it seems unlikely that new places will take that toponym. In the new residential developments where ceibas are planted in large numbers, such as La Ceiba, the Spanish term is obviously preferred. Ceibas are rarely planted near cenotes, but they continue to be planted near modern water sources (wells and water towers). Near churches and in their adjacent plazas ceibas are rarely replanted when the older ones die. The same is true for cemetery ceibas. Ceibas at settlement entries seem doomed for replacement by other ornamentals.

On the other hand, in the five other situations ceibas continue as valued elements of the landscape. In the case of Maya ruin sites, when ceibas are present almost all of the trees are young and are undoubtedly being planted in support of tourism in the ruins. In cattle areas ceibas are still being planted. Especially at newly-refurbished haciendas and in new tourism areas ceiba plantings are increasing significantly. Urban centers, in particular Mérida, also value ceibas as iconic expressions of Maya heritage and pursue their care and cultivation.

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My search for the duplication of the ancient geographical ideal expressed in the earliest Maya books – the so-called quincunx – a world of four-cornered ceiba-guarded setting, with a central ceiba next to the cenote, was not found. Some places undoubtedly once had that pattern.

Of course, as many have considered, the cosmic order of the Maya world has been radically altered with the advent of Catholicism, modernization, and most recently, international tourism and fundamentalist Protestantism. How Yucatecans view the ceiba in their new world of course has been changed. But are there remnants of the old ways remaining? Are there indications in the modern landscape that the ancient ideas of the past remain? Some of the special places most reminiscent of the “old ways” are listed below.

***Yalcón (Valladolid).*** Yalcón is at the end of a narrow and poorly paved rural road that reaches about 5 km east-southeast of Valladolid. The surrounding landscape is mostly low overgrown, previously cleared, bush. As of 2010, of the 237 residents, 231 are

indigenous. A century earlier the census counted 132 people. Today, the village has a reputation as a very conservative town that on occasion practices witchcraft and speaks of the seductress of the bush, La Llorona (Moreno 2016). During the 16<sup>th</sup> century Yalcón gained some fame as a Franciscan center, subject to Valladolid, and with convent and school. According to the 1579 “Relación del Pueblo de Yalcón,” it was a prized encomienda producing cotton mantas, many fruits and vegetables, maíz, and honey (CDIU 1900: 169-71; Garza 1983: II, 335-36). The modern ceiba landscape includes three trees at entries (N, E, SW), one in the central park, and a large ceiba next to the main cenote directly in front of the church. A very small sapling can be seen to the northwest of the church.



**Figure 204. Yalcón: cenote, ceiba, church, wells.**



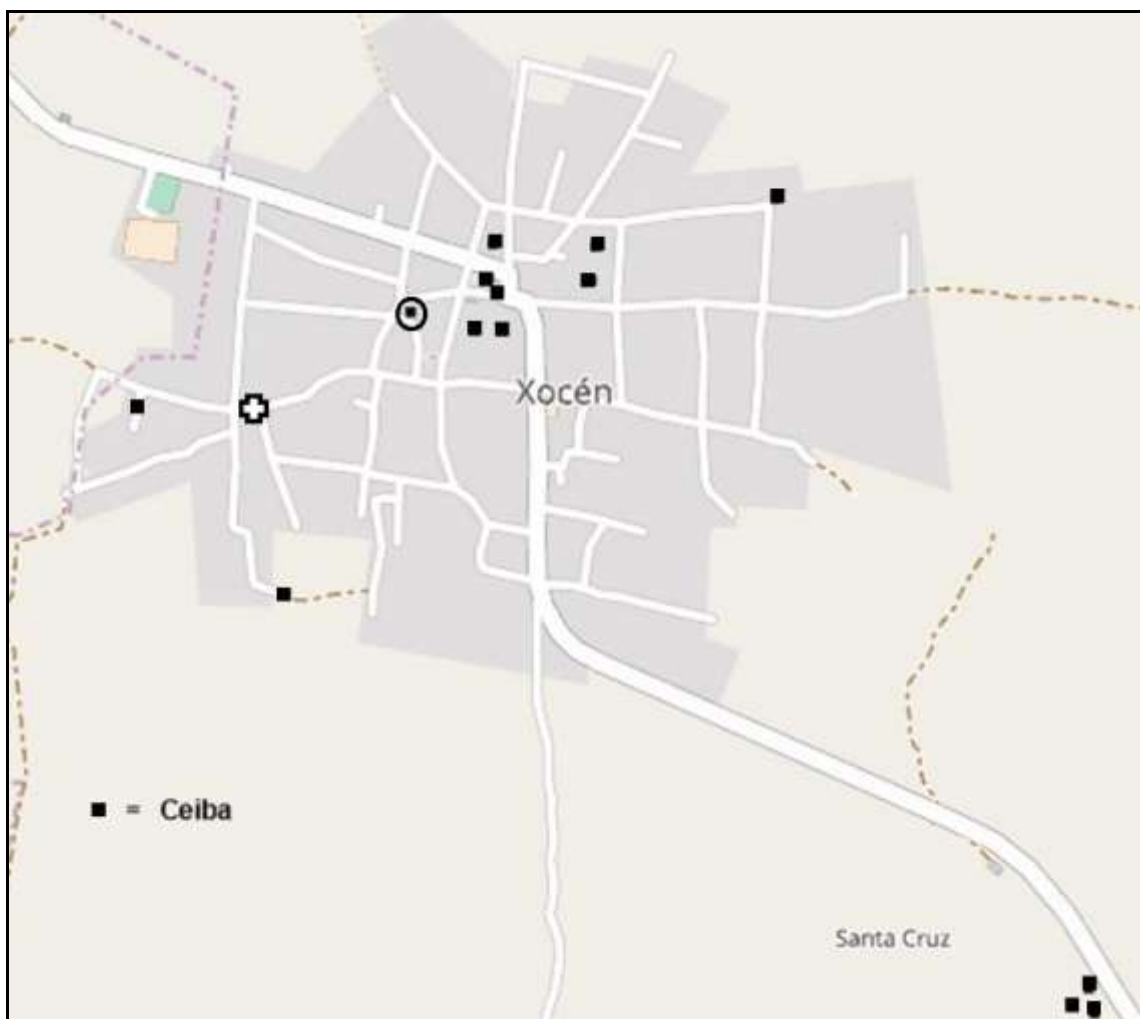
**Figures 205, 206. Yalcón: (left) entry east; (right) entry southwest corner.**



*Xocén (Valladolid)*. This settlement of some 2,400 residents lies 11 km south-southeast of Valladolid, 6 km southeast of Chichimila. It gained fame as a center of resistance against early Spanish *entradas* and during the Caste War of the mid-1800s and a setting for one of the “Talking Crosses” (Reed 1964, Terán C. y Rassmussen 2005). Today the site is frequently described as “the center of the modern Maya world” (Góngora B. y González M. 1995; Dzib May 1999; Terán C. y Rasmussen 2005, 2008). Each year on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Day of the Cross, many pilgrims trek to the Sanctuary of the Santísima Cruz Tún south of Xocén in search of miracles needed for the difficulties of their lives: to make their milpas more productive, to cure an infirm relative, to secure their *solares* from the bad winds. At Tún, theater/dance performances have become famous since 1989. Public performances attract Yucatecans as well as international tourists.

As part of the local lore passed on by the residents, God has designated that Xocén will be the last place on Earth, in part because the seven cenotes of Xocén provide the best water. The main cenote is thought to be connected underground with those at Cobá and Chichén Itzá (Shaw 2008: 123). Other traditions practiced include an annual “staged” bull fight, with implantation of a young ceiba in the bull ring to protect the event from “los males vientos” and a recognition of Wan Thul as “dueño del Ganado.” The *cuch* ritual, with dancing pig heads, is also a part of the festival (Pohl 1981; Terán C. y Rassamussen 2005: 34, 51, 87, 168).

The town has at least eleven ceibas: five around the church/centro, one at the main cenote (away from the church), two at wells in the southwest corner, one at the well at the northeast corner, and two in the forest south of the comisaria. Three more trees are at the sanctuary south of town. We were told that a large tree on the southwest corner of town died some 20 years ago.



**Figure 207. Ceiba locations in Xocén (Valladolid). The circled ceiba is at the main cenote.**

The cross indicates the “Tres Cruces” monument.



Figure 208. Sharon at Xocén centro: two ceibas, two wells, and church, January 2019.



Figures 209, 210. Xocén: (left) northeast corner ceiba at well; (right) “Tres Cruces” at well.



Figure 211. Ceiba at the main cenote and well, Xocén, southwest, away from centro.



Figures 212, 213. Young ceibas at the southwest sector wells. (Courtesy Dr. Crystal Sheedy).





**Figures 214, 215. Sanctuary with entry ceiba on right, (right) Dancers in front of ceiba during May 3<sup>rd</sup> festival, Sanctuary of the Holy Cross Tún, south of Xocén (Valladolid).**

***Cholul (Mérida).***

Cholul is a growing, modernizing city of over 6,000 residents on the northern outskirts of Mérida, but in its ceiba landscape of 28 trees are indications of a more traditional heritage. It is one of the few places where the cemetery and the church have multiple ceibas. The church is very near and just east of the cenote and is surrounded by ceibas. Further, there are indications of corner and entry ceibas. Plantings still continue especially at off-ramps into the settlement from the main highway. When the old north-side church ceiba died it was replaced immediately with a ceiba sapling.



**Figures 216, 217. Church ceiba replaced in Cholul (Mérida), 2014 (left) and 2019 (right).**

*The Ceibos of Muna (Muna).*

The folks who call Muna “home” (Muneñses) always use the term “ceibo” when referring to the large trees that are prominently featured in few places around their town. On the northwest corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> streets four giant trees were planted long ago to surround a park. Commercial enterprises nearby, such as “Restaurant Chun-Yaax-che” and “Los Ceibos Workshop and Store of Maya Handicrafts,” [yep, titles really is in English] are obviously proud of the ceibos that provide their shade.



**Figures 218, 219. Parque Los Ceibos, Muna: (left) heavily pruned tree, southeast corner, (right) the southwest and northwest corners.**



**Figure 220. Northeast corner ceibo, Los Ceibos park, Muna.**

Another pattern of ceibo plantings in Muna is related to some of the several barrio chapels throughout the city. In front of the *capillas* of San Andres Chulub and behind San Sebastian and San Felipe de Jesus, old ceibos can be seen.



**Figure 221. Ceibo fronting the chapel of barrio San Andrés Chulub, Muna, Yucatán, 1994.**

### *The Ceibas of Maní.*

Maní was established as the first *doctrina* in Yucatán (Hanson 1995: 17). The town is well-known primarily because it is the site of Bishop Diego de Landa's infamous burning of Mayan manuscripts in 1562 (Landa 1973: 105). As leader of Yucatán's Franciscan community, it was in Maní where de Landa gathered most of his information for his *Relación de la cosas de Yucatán* (1566).

When we visited in July 1994 the town was in turmoil because the alcalde had just "killed" a giant ceiba that was one of several trees down slope along the southwest diagonal street from the church. In his defense the mayor said he had to protect the citizens from the large rotting limbs that were soon to fall and injury people and cars. He also wanted to enlarge a park. The small tree west of the church (figure 222) was not there in 2017.





**Figures 222, 223. (left) Son Chadwick and the church ceiba, Maní, 1994; (right) one of the older ceibas, Maní centro, 2017.**

The cenote-church-ceibas relationships in Maní were noted above in Chapter 3.

***Ek Balam, pueblo and ruina (Temozón).***

Twelve *yaxché-ob* have been planted on the grounds of the ruin at Ek Balam. Fifteen others surround the central park of the nearby pueblo of Ek Balam. When the ceiba of the southwest corner of the park died, a sapling was soon planted.



**Figures 224, 225. Ek Balam pueblo ceibas: (left) sapling of southwest corner, (right) northeast corner ceibas near the water tower.**



In a few places, in the modern distribution of ceibas, we might still see the lingering legacy of the proud Franciscan past and an even prouder remembrance of the ancient Maya heritage.

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As the late Miles Richardson, humanist anthropologist, my good friend, and colleague at Louisiana State University, used to remind me during our field trips in Latin America, “don Guillermo,” Miles would say, “landscapes never lie . . . if you are just wise enough to understand what they are telling us . . . you and me.”

What are the geographical patterns of the Yucatecan *yaxche-ob* telling us? Are we wise enough to hear what the *yaxché* landscapes of Yucatán are telling us?



# Appendix 1. Places (616) investigated for ceibas in the State of Yucatán, México.

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Abala	Abala	1890	1	west	yellow	SW	na		
Acanceh	Acanceh	10968	1	west	yellow	west	na		chapel entries
Actuncoch	Temozon	420	0	south	pink	ns	na		
Acu, Santa Maria	Halacho	1437	3	NE	red	WSW	hac		
Ake	Tixkokob	388	0	west	yellow	west	hac		
Akil	Akil	10176	1	west	red	WNW	na		
Alonso Caso	Tekax	403	0	ns	na	ns	na		
Ayim	Tekax	20	1	ns	na	ns	na	1 cross rd	
Baca	Baca	4553	0	west	red	west	hac		
Bacanchan	Tekax	1713	2	west	red	SW	na	2 SE	
Balantun	Izamal	hac	3	none	na	ns	1 hac	2 rd entry, guards	
Bella Flor	Kinchil	hac	3	none	na	ns	hac	3 entry rd	
Benito Juarez	Tekax	224	0	west	pink	ns	na		
Bokoba	Bokoba	2052	0	west	yellow	west	hac		
Bolantunil, hacienda	Chumayel	hac	8	none	na	none	8 hac		in restoration
Bolmay	Valladolid	312	0	north	thatch/stick	ns	na		
Bolon	Uman	1392	2	1 west	yellow	SSW	na		
Buctzotz	Buctzotz	7515	0	west	red	WSW	na		
Buena Vista	Chemax	38	1	none	na	ns	na		1 park
Cacalchen	Cacalchen	6787	1	west	yellow	west	hac		
Cacao	Abala	276	0	east	natural	WSW	old hac		
Calcehtok	Opichen	1503	7	west	white	west	na		
Calotmul	Calotmul	2764	7	west	cream	west	na	7 N	
Canek	Tekax	308	2	west	red	ns	na		
Canicab	Acanceh	758	0	west	yellow	west	old hac		
Cansahcab	Cansahcab	4293	2	1 west	cream	1 west	na		
Cantamayac	Cantamayac	1695	3	west	pink	WSW	na	1 W	
Carolina	Tixcacalcupul	62	0	none	na	ns	na		
Catmis	Tzucacab	933	0	west	white	west	hac		
Caucel	Merida	6988	8	west	yellow	1 west	na	2 E, 5 W	
Caxaytuk	Tzucacab	335	2	NE	pink	ns	2 hac		
Cayaxche	Valladolid	6	0	none	na	none	na		
Celestun	Celestun	6810	0	west	pink	west	na		

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Celtun	Chichimila	148	0	west	white/red	ns	na		
Cenote Ayil	Valladolid	cenote	2	none	na	none	na		cenote
Cenote Azul	Tizimin	214	0	west	white	ns	na		
Cenote Hubiku	Temozon	cenote	1	none	na	none	na		tourist cenote
Cenote Maya	Chemax	cenote	1	none	na	none	na	1 S entry	tourism
Cenote Sac Aua	Temozon	cenote	4	none	na	none	na		tourist cenote
Cenote Xkeken (Dzitnup)	Valladolid	cenote	2	none	na	none	na		2 cenote ceibas
Cenotillo	Cenotillo	3272	0	west	red	west	na		
Cepeda	Halacho	3064	1	west	red	ns	na		
Chabihau	Yobain	292	0	south	cream	ns	na		
Chable Resort & Spa	Chochola	hac	16	none	na	none	16 hac		tourism
Chablekal	Merida	3626	3	3 west	white	west	na		
Chacabal, San Pedro	Motul	795	0	west	red	ns	na		
Chacmay	Dzoncauich	452	1	west	cream	west	na		1 prvt
Chacsinkin	Chacsinkin	2555	0	west	red	west	na		
Chactun, San Jose	Maxcanu	109	15	west	cream	ns	6 hac	N, 3 W, 2 S, SE, 2 NE	
Chacua	Tixcacalcupul	4	1	none	na	ns	na		
Chalmuch	Merida	484	2	west	yellow	WSW	na		1 plaza sm
Chamul	Valladolid	60	2	1 west	cream	ns	na		
Chan Cenote	Tizimin	2225	0	west	white	west	na		
Chan Chichimila	Chikindzonot	464	0	north	cream	NW	na		
Chan Chochola	Maxcanu	373	1	north	cream	ns	hac		small prvt.
Chan Dzinup	Tekax	134	7	none	na	ns	na	2 E, 2 NW	
Chan San Antonio	Tizimin	429	0	west	white	west	na		
Chan Tres Reyes	Tizimin	131	0	west	white	ns	na		
Chan X-Cail	Chichimila	576	2	south	red	ns	na	NW corner	cenote ceiba
Chan Yokdzonot	Valladolid	130	0	west	cream	ns	na		
Chankom	Chankom	685	0	east	yellow/stone	west	na		
Chapab	Chapab	2141	1	west	stone	SW	na		



Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Chebalam	Cuncunul	48	0	north	cream	ns	na		
Chechmil	Chemax	547	0	south	cream	ns	ex hac		
Chelem	Progreso	3509	0	west	white/red	west	na		
Chemax	Chemax	14885	2	west	cream	west	na	2 W	
Chenche de los Torres	Temax	299	2	west	yellow	ns	1 hac		lg at hac
Chenchela, San Pedro	Espita	281	1	1 east	white	ns	old hac		50 yr
Chendzonot	Tinum	35	0	west	white	ns	na		
Chenkeken	Tizimin	254	4	west	white	ns	na	2 S	2 prvt
Cheuman	Merida	211	12	north	red	ns	5 hac	2 N, 2 S, 1 E cross rd	
Chibilub	Tekom	229	0	west	red	ns	na		
Chican	Tixmehuac	624	0	west	white	ns	na		
Chichen Itza, ruina	Tinum	ruin	12	none	na	none	na		7 ruins, 5 resort
Chichi Suarez	Merida	1050	18	west	yellow	south	16 hac	2 hac entry, S, W	tourist hac
Chichimila	Chichimila	5528	6	1 west	white	SW	na	1 N	2 schl, 2 chapel
Chicxulub Pueblo	Chicxulub P.	4080	3	1 west	yellow	west	na		
Chicxulub Puerto	Progreso	6010	0	west	white	west	na		
Chikindzonot	Chikindzonot	2699	0	east	red	SW	na		
Chinkila	Tecoh	336	6	south	yellow	ns	5 hac		
Chochoh	Tixpehual	597	0	north	white	WNW	hac		
Chochola	Chochola	4511	5	west	yellow	3 west	na		2 prvt pen
Cholul	Cantamayec	412	0	west	white	ns	na		
Cholul	Chemax	174	0	NW	white	ns	na		
Cholul	Merida	5880	28	5 west	yellow	3 west	na	14 NE, 1 NW, 1 SW	1 prvt
Choyob	Muna	89	5	west	stone	ns	hac		
Chuburna	Progreso	1929	0	west	pink	west	na		
Chucteil	Chikindzonot	31	2	ns	na	ns	na		
Chulutan	Chemax	515	2	west	thatch/stick	ns	na	1 W	1 school
Chumayel	Chumayel	3135	0	south	cream	west	na		
Chumbec	Sudzal	246	7	west	yellow	ns	na		3 pk, 4 vs frm ch
Chun, San Antonio	Uman	904	2	west	yellow	west	hac		

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Chunchucmil	Maxcanu	1091	19	east	yellow	NE	hac		hac ceibas
Chunkanan	Cuzama	356	2	west	white	ns	hac		
Chuntzalam	Buctzotz	rancho	1	none	na	none	na	1 N	
Cibceh	Acanceh	64	6	2 west	yellow	ns	aban hac		
Cisteil	Yaxcaba	85	5	ns	na	ns	na		5 park centro
Citilcum	Izamal	2247	2	west	yellow	NW	na	2 W	
Citincabchen	Chapab	843	0	west	cream/red	SW	hac		
Coahuila	Maxcanu	626	0	east	white	SSW	na		
Cococoyol	Chemax	629	0	west	white	ns	na		
Colonia Yucatan	Tizimin	1264	3	south	cream	SW	na	2 N, 1 S	
Conkal	Conkal	7173	4	1 west	cream	1 west	na	2 W	
Corral	Tzucacab	336	1	1 east	white	ns	na		
Cosgaya	Merida	670	0	west	yellow	NE	na		new cemetery
Cuahutemoc	Izamal	600	0	west	stone	ns	na		
Cuca	Tixpehual	122	0	ns	na	ns	hac		
Cuch Holoch	Halacho	2017	0	west	red	ns	na		
Cuncunul	Cuncunul	1314	7	west	yellow	west	na	1 cem cross rd, 6 N	cenote @ church
Cuzama	Cuzama	3721	2	west	stone	west	na		2 @ cenote
Dzalbay	Temozon	552	5	west	yellow	SW	na		4 cenot Sac Aua
Dzan	Dzan	4939	1	west	pink	west	na		
Dzeal	Kaua	359	0	north	cream	ns	na		
Dzemul	Dzemul	3228	2	west	white	west	na	2 NW	
Dzi	Tzucacab	518	0	west	white	ns	na		
Dzibikak	Uman	1388	19	1 south	cream	SW	hac		
Dzibilchaltun	Merida	170	1	west	white	ns	1 hac arch		
Dzidzantun	Dzidzantun	7393	6	west	white	WSW	3 hac	1 S, 1 NW	tourist hac
Dzidzibachi	Halacho	738	0	east	yellow	west	na		
Dzidzilche	Merida	285	3	east	yellow	3 west	hac		
Dzilam de Bravo	Dzilam de Bravo	2374	1	west	red/cream	WSW	na		
Dzilam Gonzalez	Dzilam Gonzalez	5875	3	west	yellow	west	na		
Dzitas	Dzitas	2879	0	west	red	west	na		
Dzitina	Acanceh	91	1	none	na	none	na		
Dzitnup	Valladolid	1248	1	west	white	NW	na		tourism cenot N

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Dzitnup, rancho	Sucila	rancho	4	none	na	none	na	entry 4 (4-15 yrs)	
Dzitox	Chichimila	881	2	2 west	white	ns	na		cenote
Dzitya	Merida	1602	0	west	yellow	SSW	na		
Dzon, San Francisco	Tekanto	175	5	west	red	ns	hac		
Dzoncauich	Dzoncauich	2318	0	west	white	west	na		
Dzonot Ake	Tizimin	442	15	west	natural stone	ns	na	2NW, 1NE, 1SE, 7S,	4 rural N
Dzonot Carretero	Tizimin	2184	1	west	cream	west	na	1 W	
Dzonot Mezo	Tizimin	294	0	east	white/yellow	ns	na		
Dzoyaxche	Merida	454	18	1 west	yellow	west	13 hac	1 N, 1 E	3 school
Dzununcan	Merida	1802	1	east	green	1 SE	na		
Dzununcan	Motul	244	0	west	white	ns	hac		
Dzutoh	Tixmehuac	132	0	west	pink	ns	na		
Ebtun	Valladolid	996	2	west	yellow	ns	na		2 at prison
Ek Balam	Tzucacab	568	1	west	red	NW	na		1 prvt 10 yr
Ek Balam, pueblo	Temozon	300	15	west	pink	ns	na		15 park
Ek Balam, ruinas	Temozon	ruin	12	none	na	ns	na		12 ruinas
Ekmul	Tixkokob	2168	0	west	cream	WSW	na		
Eknakan	Cuzama	698	1	1 west	yellow	ns	hac		gothic church
Ekpedz	Tixcacalcupul	1374	0	west	white	SW	na		
El Alamo	Tizimin	127	5	north	cream/white	ns	na	2 S, 1 NE	2 park
El Cuyo	Tizimin	1567	0	west	cream	west	na		
El Eden (Yaxic)	Tizimin	266	0	east	cream	ns	na		
El Paraiso (X- Maab)	Chemax	rancho	24	none	na	none	na	4 entry	
Emiliano Zapata	Oxkutzcab	1350	0	NE	cream	ns	na		
Emiliano Zapata	Tizimin	102	3	south	thatch/stick	ns	na	1 W	
Escondido	Tzucacab	131	0	ns	na	ns	na		
Espita	Espita	11551	0	west	stone	west	na		
Euan	Tixkokob	1186	0	west	red	west	na		
Felipe Carrillo Puerto	Tizimin	84	2	south	pink	ns	na		
Francisco Villa	Tizimin	49	0	west	yellow	ns	na		

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Granada (Chican)	Maxcanu	476	1	west	white	east	hac		1 sm prvt
Halacho	Halacho	9412	7	west	yellow	west	na		bo. El Ceibo
Hili, San Jose	Motul	301	0	south	pink	ns	hac		
Hocaba	Hocaba	4127	1	west	cream	west	na		1 cem chapel
Hoctun	Hoctun	4686	4	west	cream	west	3 hac		1 prvt sm
Holactun	Seye	617	4	west	natural	NW	hac	1 lg road	3 lg park
Holca	Espita	552	2	north	blue	ns	na		
Holca	Kantunil	1988	1	west	yellow	west	na	1 W	
Holca road	Espita	hac	2	none	na	none	old hac		5, 40 yrs
Homun	Homun	6146	2	1 west	red	west	na		
Hoteoch	Chemax	196	0	none	na	ns	na		
Hotzuc	Uman	280	6	east	red	1 west	hac		
Hubila	Tixkokob	251	1	west	cream	west	hac		
Huechen Balam	Yaxcaba	155	0	ns	na	ns	na		
Huhi	Huhi	4745	0	west	yellow	west	na		
Hunabchen	Chapab	42	0	ns	na	ns	na		
Huntochac	Tekax	304	4	NW	pink	ns	na	3 N	
Hunucma	Hunucma	24910	15	west	yellow	SSW	na		
Hunuku	Temozon	2971	5	1 west	yellow	WNW	na		
Hunxectaman	Uman	244	8	west	red	ns	3 hac	2 E	3 approach hac
Ichmul	Chikindzonot	911	1	west	stone	ns	na		
Itzincab	Merida	4744	14	2 east	cream	ns	hac		
Itzincab	Tecoh	413	14	south	green	ns	7 hac	5 W	2 guard trees W
Ixil	Ixil	3728	2	1 west	white	SW	na	1 SE	
Izamal	Izamal	16195	20	1 west	yellow	SW	na	1 N, 1 E, 6 rural E	bo. Yaxche
Justicia Social	Peto	302	0	north	white	ns	na		
Kaan Ac, hacienda	Valladolid	hac	8	west	red	ns	na	2 S (guards)	cenote ceiba
Kabah, ruin	Santa Elena	ruin	6	none	na	na	na	3 entry pk lot	3 ruins
Kabichen	Tizimin	231	0	west	thatch/stick	ns	na		
Kambul	Motul	185	4	west	white	ns	na	2 E, 2 S	
Kambul	Peto	221	0	west	white/red	ns	na		
Kanachen	Maxcanu	354	6	1 west	white	ns	2 hac	1 N	1 lg prvt, 1 lg pk
Kanakom	Yaxcaba	436	3	NE	white	ns	na	2 prvt	1 at well,



Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
									tower
Kanasin	Kanasin	77240	1	west	cream	1 WNW	hac		
Kancab	Tekax	2819	0	west	red	west	na		
Kancaba, hacienda	Espita	hac	3	none	na	none	3 hac		tourist hac.
Kancabal	Motul	552	0	west	white	ns	na		
Kancabchen	Halacho	460	4	east	white	ns	na		
Kancabchen Campos	Motul	372	1	SW	white	ns	na		
Kancabchen Uci	Motul	95	8	1 south	yellow	ns	hac		
Kancabdzonot	Yaxcaba	963	0	west	cream	west	na		
Kankabchen	Sudzal	41	11	ns	na	ns	na	11 S	
Kantemo	Tekax	432	0	west	pink	ns	na		
Kantirix	Tepalkan	156	0	west	abandoned	ns	old hac		
Kantoyna	Conkal	130	3	ns	na	ns	hac	2 rdwy	1 hotel entry
Kantunil	Kantunil	3491	0	west	yellow	SSE	na		
Kanxoc	Valladolid	3126	4	west	yellow	NW	na	1 N, 1 S	
Kaua	Kaua	2340	4	west	cream	west	na		
Kaxatah	Motul	982	0	south	white	ns	na		
Kaxaytuk	Yaxcaba	325	2	north	pink	ns	na		
Kikil	Tizimin	173	1	west	natural stone	NW	na		plaza ceiba
Kikteil	Merida	237	6	north	yellow	ns	hac	2 N	2 park
Kilinche	Tixpehual	268	1	south	yellow	ns	1 hac		
Kimbila	Izamal	3633	1	west	yellow	SW	na		
Kimbila	Tixmehuac	617	0	west	natural	ns	na		
Kinchil	Kinchil	6307	2	west	cream	SSW	na	2 W	
Kini	Motul	1581	0	south	white	WSW	na		
Kinil	Tekax	1127	1	west	pink	NW	na		
Kochol	Maxcanu	1560	3	south	orange	west	hac		
Komchen	Merida	4259	4	2 west	cream	2 WSW	na	1 E, 1 N	
Komchen	Motul	108	0	north	cream	ns	hac		
Kopoma	Kopoma	2026	2	1 west	pink	1 SSE	na		mrkt/pk/ch
Kopte	Motul	556	0	west	white	west	na		
Kuchel	Samahil	931	0	west	red	ns	na		
Kunche	Espita	793	0	north	white	ns	na		
Kuxeb	Chemax	724	0	east	white	ns	na		
La Ceiba	Calotmul	rancho	2	none	na	none	na	1 in bull ring	tourism

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
La Ceiba	Merida	990	52	1 west	white	ns	na	16 near W entry	30 in median
La Ceiba	Valladolid	4	0	none	na	none	na		
La Esperanza	Chemax	44	1	ns	na	ns	na	1 W	
La Gran Lucha	Buctzotz	236	0	north	white	ns	na		
La Guadalupe, hacienda	Valladolid	hac	2	ns	na	ns	2 hac		
La Libertad	Tizimin	78	1	west	white	ns	na		
La Sierra	Tizimin	393	1	NW	green	ns	na	1 SE	
Labna ruinas	Oxkutzcab	ruin	4	none	na	ns	na	4 entry	
Las Colorados	Rio Lagartos	1151	0	east	cream	ns	na		
Leona Vicario	Merida	2754	0	east	white	ns	na		
Libre Union	Yaxcaba	1671	3	west	pink	west	na		
Loche	Panaba	1237	0	west	white	west	na		
Lol-Be	Chemax	201	0	west	thatch/stick	ns	na		
Mac-Yam, San Isidro	Tekax	68	5	none	na	none	na		
Mahas	Tixcacalcupul	394	0	west	red	ns	na		
Mahzucil	Tecoh	380	1	NW	cream	ns	1 hac		
Mama	Mama	2876	3	west	red	2 WSW	na	1 E	
Mani	Mani	4146	6	2 west	yellow	NW	na		
Manuel Cepeda Peraza	Tekax	573	0	west	stone	west	na		
Manuel Cepeda Peraza	Tizimin	395	2	west	blue	west	na	1 E	park corner
Maxcanu	Maxcanu	12621	1	west	pink	WSW	na		
Mayapan	Mayapan	3263	0	south	red	WSW	na		
Mayapan ruinas	Tecoh	ruin	4	none	na	none	na	4 entry	
Merida	Merida	777615	541	west	natural	SW	na		new devs.
Mesatunich	Motul	600	0	west	pink	WNW	na		
Millet, San Antonio	Tixkokob	641	8	none	na	none	hac		
Mococha	Mococha	2042	0	west	pink	SW	na		
Moctezuma	Tizimin	384	12	west	yellow	ns	na	2 N	8 rural spared ?
Molas	Merida	2014	0	west	yellow	NW	na		

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Monte Verde	Tixcacalcupul	0	1	none	na	ns	na		abandoned
Motul	Motul	23240	6	1 west	pink	SW	na	5 E	
Mucel	Chemax	952	1	west	white	west	na		
Muchucuxcah	Chankom	318	0	north	white/yellow	ns	na		
Mucuyche	Abala	494	14	3 SW	white	west	hac	1 N, 4 W, 1 cross rd	tourist hac
Muna	Muna	11469	7	west	pink	west	na		
Muxupip	Muxupip	2399	0	west	pink	west	na		
Nachicomom	Yaxcaba	26	0	west	white	ns	na		new settlement
Nacuche	Espita	1219	0	NW	white	ns	na		
Nahbalam	Temozon	2196	0	west	pink	west	na		
Nenela	Cantamayec	250	0	west	cream	ns	na		
Noc-Ac	Merida	450	18	north	white	ns	4 hac	2 S, 2 N	3 park
Nohalal	Tekax	32	1	ns	na	ns	na	1 W	
Noh-Bec	Tzucacab	362	2	1 west	cement block	NW	na		
Nohchakan	Cuzama	186	1	west	white	ns	hac		1 govt bldg
Nohsuytun	Valladolid	313	0	west	cream	ns	na		
Nohuayun	Tetiz	777	8	ns	na	ns	5 hac	3 town	not tourism
Noh-yaxche	Buctzotz	4	0	none	na	none	na		
Nolo	Tixkokob	1493	0	west	cream	west	na		
Nuevo Tezoco	Tizimin	181	1	west	cream	ns	na	1 SE	
Ochil, San Pedro	Abala	hac	28	none	na	none	na	28 new hacienda	tourism hac
Oncan	Merida	610	0	north	cream	WNW	hac		
Onichen	Tunkas	93	0	west	white	ns	na		
Opichen	Merida	521	39	west	white	ns	1 hac	34 median	tourist hac
Opichen	Opichen	4751	1	west	cream	west	na		1 park
Oxcum	Uman	1175	2	south	cream/red	SW	hac		
Oxholon	Uman	822	13	west	white	west	hac		
Oxkutzcab	Oxkutzcab	23096	0	west	cream	west	na		
Oxtapacab	Tecoh	333	2	west	yellow	ns	2 hac 1887		tourist hac
Pabalam	Chemax	201	3	west	yellow	ns	na	1 NW	2 park
Panaba	Panaba	5232	0	west	red	SW	na		
Papacal	Peto	341	0	west	cream	ns	na		
Paraiso	Maxcanu	656	9	3 west	yellow	WNW	hac		
Peba	Abala	271	9	1 south	yellow	ns	1 hac	7 entry N	
Pencuyut	Tekax	1524	0	west	pink	west	na		

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Petac	Merida	221	6	west	yellow	ns	5 hac	1 park	tourist hac
Petec Biltun	Uman	155	0	east	red	ns	na		
Petectunich	Acanceh	600	4	west	white	ns	hac		2 lg pk
Peto	Peto	19821	0	west	stone	SW	na		
Piste	Tinum	5528	5	1 north	natural stone	SE	na	1 W	2 restaurant
Pixoy	Valladolid	1054	2	west	natural	west	na	1 E	
Pixya	Tecoh	930	4	2 west	yellow	west	hac		
Pocoboch	Calotmul	809	6	1 west	stone	1 west	na		
Pocoboch	Tekax	88	0	none	na	none	na		
Polhuacxil	Tzucacab	125	1	west	red	ns	na		
Poop	Tixcacalcupul	469	0	west	green	ns	na		
Popola	Valladolid	4176	2	1 west	natural	west	na		1 lg @ water twr
Popola	Yaxcaba	240	0	west	white	ns	na		
Popolnah	Tizimin	3276	1	west	white	west	na		curve south
Poxila	Uman	878	4	south	yellow	ns	hac		
Progresito	Peto	281	0	west	yellow	ns	na		
Progreso	Progreso	37369	0	west	cream	west	na		
Pustunich	Ticul	2480	0	west	stone	NW	na		
Quintana Roo	Quintana Roo	942	4	west	white	1 west	na	3 E	
Rancho en Medio (km 10)	Valladolid	rancho	6	none	na	none	na	3 on road	3 at casco
Rio Lagartos	Rio Lagartos	2218	0	north	cream/red	south	na		
Sabacche	Tecoh	160	13	west	white/pink	ns	5 hac	1 NE, 2 NW	5 rd in town
Sabacche	Tixmehuac	636	0	west	white	ns	na		
Sac Chich	Acanceh	233	1	east	cream	ns	1 hac		tourist hac
Sacalum	Sacalum	3721	18	west	white	NNW	na	2 W, 4 N, 1 E, 8 SE	3 school
Sacapuc	Motul	690	0	west	white	ns	hac		
Sacbecan	Tzucacab	236	0	ns	na	ns	na		
Sac-Nicte	Merida	345	1	west	white	SW	hac		
Sahcaba	Hocaba	1922	0	west	white	west	na		
Sahe	Tixpehual	507	2	east	cream	WNW	hac		2 pk, cem 4000 ft
Samahil	Samahil	2826	9	west	cream/red	west	na	1 entry south	2 ceibo park
Samaria	Tizimin	157	1	east	white	ns	na	1 N	
San Agustin	Tekax	140	0	west	pink	ns	na		
San Andres	Tizimin	306	1	west	yellow	ns	na		1 at well



Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
San Andres Bac	Valladolid	112	2	west	cream	ns	na		
San Antonio Camara	Temax	217	2	2 south	yellow	ns	hac		
San Antonio Chel	Hunucma	220	5	west	white	ns	4 hac	1 S	
San Antonio Chuc	Tunkas	289	1	ns	na	ns	na		1 park
San Antonio Hool	Merida	141	0	west	red	ns	hac		
San Antonio Tedzidz	Samahil	1237	0	west	pink/white	south	hac		
San Antonio Tehuitz	Kanasin	724	4	north	cream	ns	2 hac	2 S, rd to hac	
San Antonio Tzacala	Merida	650	2	west	yellow	west	hac		ch - cem 3000 ft
San Antonio Xiat	Cansahcab	187	3	1 west	yellow	ns	old hac	1 S	
San Antonio Yaaxhom	Oxkutzcab	115	2	1 west	cream	ns	na		1 park
San Bernardino	Seye	231	4	1 south	white/red	ns	2 hac	1 cross rd	
San Bernardo	Kopoma	421	12	west	white	ns	5 hac		6 park
San Crisanto	Sinanche	551	0	west	white	ns	na		
San Diego	Cuncunul	108	1	south	white/cream	ns	na		1 govt bldg
San Diego Guerra	Dzemul	69	0	west	red	ns	hac		
San Eduardo	Dzemul	69	4	west	cream	ns	4 hac		working hac
San Felipe	San Felipe	1789	0	west	natural	SSW	na		
San Felipe II	Tekax	67	2	west	pink	ns	na	1 N, 1 W	
San Felipe Viejo	Tinum	76	0	east	white	ns	na		
San Fernando	Maxcanu	281	1	ns	na	ns	hac		
San Francisco	Panaba	206	2	west	red	ns	na		1 prvt, 1 sports
San Francisco Grande	Tinum	1603	0	west	yellow	SW	na		
San Francisco Manzanilla	Dzidzantun	669	3	ns	na	ns	na		
San Hipolito	Tizimin	71	0	ns	na	ns	na		
San Ignacio	Progreso	766	7	1 east	red/white	ns	hac	2 rd, 4 E park	gothic church
San Isidro	Tizimin	185	0	west	red	ns	na		
San Isidro Kancab	Tizimin	77	0	ns	na	ns	na		

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
San Isidro Kuxub	Baca	209	0	south	red	ns	hac		
San Isidro Ochil	Homun	965	0	west	cream/red	west	na		
San Isidro Yaxche	Tekax	63	3	none	na	ns	na		
San Jose	Tixcacalcupul	484	0	south	white	west	na		
San Jose	Tizimin	127	0	ns	na	ns	na		
San Jose Chahuay	Chemax	134	1	south	natural	ns	na	1 N	
San Jose Montecristo	Tizimin	193	0	west	yellow	ns	na		
San Jose Oriente	Hoctun	990	4	south	white	west	hac	2 W, 1 E, 1 SE	
San Jose Pibtuch	Tunkas	174	0	south	yellow	ns	na		
San Jose Tzal	Merida	3543	1	south	cream	1 NW	na		
San Jose Yaxche	Yaxcaba	rancho	0	none	na	none	na		
San Jose, hacienda	Tixkokob	hac	12	west	yellow	ns	hac	10 south	2 hac. grounds
San Juan	Tizimin	164	0	ns	na	ns	na		
San Juan Chen	Chemax	430	1	west	red	west	na		plaza, well ceiba
San Juan del Rio	Panaba	77	7	north	blue/white	ns	na	2 E	3 cenot, 2 lg prvt
San Juan Koop	Muxupip	325	1	west	red	ns	1 hac		
San Lorenzo Chiquila	Tizimin	400	0	ns	na	ns	na		
San Luis Tzuk Tux	Tizimin	237	2	west	white	ns	na		
San Manuel	Tizimin	314	1	east	white	ns	na		
San Marcos	Tekax	161	5	5 west	red	ns	na		
San Marcos	Yaxcaba	173	0	east	white/red	ns	na		
San Martin Hili	Tekax	51	0	none	na	none	na		
San Mateo	Halacho	294	0	west	blue	SW	na		
San Miguel Yaxche	Hunucma	4	1	none	na	none	na	1 west entry	
San Miguel, hacienda	Valladolid	hac	12	west	red	none	9 hac	2 N (guards)	1 on road
San Nicolas	Suma	11	5	1 west	stone	ns	4 old hac		
San Pedro	Chemax	23	0	west	green	ns	na		

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
San Pedro	Chemax	rancho	1	none	na	none	na	1 entry W	
San Pedro	Chichimila	408	1	north	white	ns	na	1 W	
San Pedro	Yaxcaba	174	0	ns	na	ns	na		
San Pedro Camara	Motul	142	1	west	white	ns	na		1 park
San Pedro Chimay	Merida	1241	1	1 west	pink	NW	hac		
San Pedro Dzula	Tekax	103	0	east	blue	ns	na		
San Pedro Juarez	Tizimin	268	0	NE	thatch/stick	ns	na		
San Rafael	Maxcanu	1252	0	south	white	WNW	hac		
San Roman	Chemax	118	0	west	pink	ns	na		
San Salvador Piste Akal	Tzucacab	116	1	ns	na	ns	na		1 lg park
San Sebastian Yaxche	Peto	93	2	ns	na	ns	na		2 prvt, sm
San Simon	Santa Elena	369	1	ns	na	ns	na		lrg plaza ceiba
Sanahcat	Sanahcat	1619	1	1 west	cream/red	NW	na		
Sanlahtah, hac	Tekanto	hac	1	ns	na	ns	hac	1 @ road	
Santa Ana	Tizimin	214	1	west	white	ns	na	1 W	
Santa Clara	Chemax	46	1	none	na	ns	na	1 entry W	
Santa Clara	Dzidzantun	45	0	west	red	ns	na		
Santa Clara Dzibalku	Tizimin	178	2	west	white/cream	ns	na		
Santa Cruz	Chemax	336	3	south	white/blue	ns	na	1 cross road	2 prvt
Santa Cruz	Maxcanu	129	3	3 west	white	ns	na		
Santa Cruz Pachon	Motul	231	3	north	blue	ns	2 hac	1 NE	
Santa Cruz Palomeque	Merida	835	2	east	yellow	ns	hac 1640		2 govt bldg
Santa Cruz Regardio	Espita	19	2	east	white	ns	na	2 W	
Santa Cruz, hacienda	Opichen	hac	6	none	na	ns	hac		
Santa Elena	Santa Elena	3456	7	west	pink	west	na	1 SE, 2 S @ cenote	1 well, 3 prvt
Santa Elena	Tizimin	120	2	ns	na	ns	na	1 NW, 1 NE	
Santa Eleuteria	Cuncunul	98	0	none	na	ns	na		
Santa Eleuteria	Cuncunul	rancho	3	none	na	none	na		

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Santa Maria	Cansahcab	209	0	west	yellow	ns	na		
Santa Maria	Tizimin	157	0	west	white	ns	na		
Santa Maria	Yaxcaba	226	0	west	natural	ns	na		
Santa Maria Aznar	Uayma	593	0	east	red	NW	na		
Santa Maria Chi	Merida	303	12	east	white	ns	3 hac		9 lg park
Santa Maria Yaxche	Merida	54	1	ns	na	ns	na		1 park
Santa Rita	Temozon	458	4	south	white/red	ns	na	SW, NW, SE	well
Santa Rosa	Maxcanu	930	4	1 west	blue	WNW	hac		
Santa Rosa	Tizimin	451	0	west	red	ns	na		
Santa Rosa	Valladolid	40	1	none	na	none	na		
Santa Rosa Concepcion	Tizimin	146	1	1 north	white	ns	na		plaza ch ceiba
Santa Teresa, hac.	Motul	105	8	1 west	pink	ns	3 hac		5 town
Santisima Cruz Tun, Igl.	Valladolid	7	3	2 NW	white	ns	na		1 grnds behind
Santo Domingo	Buctzotz	186	3	1 west	cement block	ns	na		
Santo Domingo	Maxcanu	1234	11	SW	stone	west	hac		hac ceibas
Seye	Seye	8369	1	west	cream	WNW	na		9 entry chapels
Sidra Kin	Valladolid	new	2	none	na	none	na		
Sierra Papacal	Merida	1108	6	west	red/yellow	NW	2 hac	2 W	2 north median
Siho, San Antonio	Halacho	1566	0	south	red	SSW	hac		
Sinanche	Sinanche	2563	3	3 west	pink	SSW	na		
Sinhunchen	Abala	334	2	west	white	ns	na		
Sisal	Hunucma	1837	0	north	pink	west	na		
Sisbic	Tixmehuac	171	0	west	thatch/stick	west	na		
Sisbichen	Chemax	1747	1	west	pink	WSW	na	1 NW	1 ceiba felled
Sitilpech	Izamal	1799	0	west	yellow	west	na		
Sitpach	Merida	1634	2	west	yellow	SW	na		
Sodzil, San Antonio	Sacalum	414	2	west	yellow	ns	hac	1 NE	
Sotuta	Sotuta	5548	2	west	yellow	west	na		2 school
Sotuta de Peon	Tecoh	276	27	north	cream	west	3 hac	19 entry road	tourist, working



Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Subincancab	Timucuy	965	12	NE	yellow	ns	hac	7 west ranch entry	
Sucila	Sucila	3785	5	west	red	west	na	entry E 5 (2-4 yrs)	
Sucopo	Tizimin	1517	1	1 west	cream	WSW	na		
Sudzal	Sudzal	1261	2	west	cream	west	na	1 W, 1 SE	
Sudzal Chico	Tekax	143	0	ns	na	ns	na		
Suma	Suma	1861	0	west	cream	west	na		
Susula	Merida	445	1	south	white	ns	ex hac	hac aban	1 park
Suytunchen	Merida	102	4	east	pink	ns	4 hac	1 E of bull ring	dude ranch
Tabi	Sotuta	708	0	west	pink	west	na		
Tahcabo	Calotmul	460	0	west	cream	ns	na		
Tahdzibichen	Merida	724	12	west	yellow	ns	9 hac	1 S	tourist hac
Tahdzibichen	Yaxcaba	1699	0	west	yellow	west	na		
Tahdziu	Tahdziu	3742	1	west	cream	west	na		1 prvt
Tahmek	Tahmek	3493	0	west	red	WNW	na		
Tahmuy	Valladolid	958	1	west	white	west	na	entry N @ well	
Tamanche	Merida	587	3	east	red	ns	2 hac	1 E	
Tamchen	Kinchil	257	5	1 south	red	ns	hac	3 pk, 1 ch, 1 ent E	tourist hac
Tanil	Uman	454	1	north	red	ns	1 hac		
Tanya	Motul	879	0	south	red	ns	na		
Teabo	Teabo	6115	4	west	red	2 SSW	na		cenote ceiba
Tebec	Uman	463	0	west	cream	ns	hac		
Techoh	Tixpehual	400	4	west	yellow	WNW	3 hac	1 W	
Tecoh	Tecoh	9134	0	west	pink	west	na		
Tekal de Venegas	Tekal de Venegas	2562	0	west	yellow	west	na		
Tekanto	Tekanto	3105	4	1 west	yellow	west	na	2 W, 1 NE	S Roman pilgrm
Tekat	Mococho	532	3	SW	yellow	ns	2 hac		
Tekax	Tekax	25751	2	2 west	pink	WSW	na		
Tekik de Regil	Timucuy	1938	2	west	cream	west	1 hac	1 N	
Tekit	Tekit	9834	1	west	cream	SW	na	1 NE	
Tekom	Tekom	2540	0	west	pink	NW	na		
Telchac Pueblo	Telchac Pueblo	3517	0	west	cream	west	na		
Telchac	Telchac	1722	0	west	cream	west	na		

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Puerto	Puerto								
Telchaquillo	Tecoh	1385	0	west	cream	north	na		
Temax	Temax	6239	0	west	red	west	na		
Temozon	Peto	265	0	west	white	ns	na		
Temozon	Temozon	6553	5	west	pink	WNW	na	3 S	
Temozon Norte	Merida	291	5	1 west	white	ns	na	1 S, 2 W entries	1 centro
Temozon Sur	Abala	760	6	west	white	west	2 hac	2 NE crossrd	2 sm prvt
Tepalkan	Tepalkan	2064	5	west	yellow	west	na	2 W, 3 S	gov slghter hse
Tepich Carrillo	Acanceh	914	2	west	yellow/red	ns	hac	1 N	
Tesip	Merida	359	5	west	yellow	ns	5 hac		
Tesoco	Valladolid	1362	4	west	white	ns	1 hac		
Tetiz	Tetiz	3939	0	west	yellow	SSW	na		
Texan Camara	Merida	566	9	west	yellow/red	ns	2 hac	2 SW, 2 NE	2 school
Texan de Palomeque	Hunucma	3264	31	south	yellow	west	30 hac		
Teya	Teya	1975	2	west	natural	west	hac	hac 1683	2 school
Thohol	Tekax	rancho	1	none	na	none	na	1 W entry	
Tibolon	Sotuta	1633	0	west	red	west	na		
Ticimul	Chankom	726	0	west	blue (Presby.)	west	na		
Ticimul	Uman	929	1	west	pink	ns	1 hac		
Ticopo	Acanceh	1660	5	1 west	yellow/red	ns	1 hac	2 S	tourist hac
Ticul	Ticul	32796	5	4 west	red	west	na		
Ticum	Tekax	922	2	2 west	cream	NW	na		
Tigre Grande	Tzucacab	124	0	ns	na	ns	na		
Tiholop	Yaxcaba	1463	0	west	yellow	WSW	na		
Tikuch	Valladolid	1336	3	west	yellow	west	na	2 S strt to church	1 restaurant
Timucuy	Timucuy	3872	2	west	yellow	1 west	na	1 W	
Timul	Motul	943	1	1 south	red	west	hac		
Timul	Tahdziu	543	0	ns	na	ns	na		
Tinum	Tinum	2111	2	west	cream	2 west	na		
Tinuncab	Peto	164	0	west	stone	ns	na		
Tinuncab	Yaxcaba	164	1	west	cream	ns	na	1 N	
Tipceh, San Jose	Muna	513	5	SW	yellow	SW	hac	NW, NE	

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Tipikal	Mani	951	2	west	yellow	west	na		
Tixbacab	Cenotillo	363	0	west	white/yellow	west	na		
Tixcacal	Merida	881	2	north	red	SW	2 Hac		
Tixcacal Quintero	Huhi	86	4	1 west	yellow	ns	hac	no hac tourism	4 corner pk
Tixcacalcupul	Tixcacalcupul	3492	1	west	pink	SW	na		3000 ft cem.
Tixcacaltuyub	Yaxcaba	2146	2	west	stone	NNW	na		1well,1 twr
Tixcancal	Tizimin	2165	0	west	white	west	na		
Tixcuytun	Merida	418	2	NE	yellow	ns	hac	1 S	
Tixcuytun	Tekax	535	0	west	natural	west	na		
Tixhualactun	Valladolid	1576	9	3 west	cream	NW	na	1 SE	
Tixhualatun	Peto	383	1	west	cream	ns	na		1 water tower
Tixkochoh	Tekanto	349	0	west	yellow	west	na		
Tixkokob	Tixkokob	10968	1	west	cream	SW	na		
Tixkuncheil	Baca	799	1	west	pink	1 WSW	na		church/cenote
Tixmehuac	Tixmehuac	2392	2	west	pink	1 WSW	na		1 lg prk
Tixpehual	Tixpehual	3470	1	west	cream	west	na	1 E @ RR	
Tizimin	Tizimin	46971	7	1 west	white	WNW	na	1 S	1 park
Tohopku	Tinum	541	0	west	yellow	north	na		
Too	Mococha	399	7	west	white/red	7 west	hac		
Tulin	Chemax	102	1	west	blue	ns	na		1 lg park
Tunkas	Tunkas	2828	0	west	cream	SW	na		
Tuzik	Espita	380	0	west	yellow	ns	na		
Tzacalha, San Fran., hac.	Dzidzantun	hac	2	NW	red	ns	2 hac		
Tzalam	Sudzal	103	0	ns	na	ns	na		
Tzucacab	Tzucacab	9967	0	west	red	west	na		
Tzukmuc	Chankom	199	0	south	cream/red	ns	na		
Uayalceh	Abala	2323	0	west	natural stone	WSW	hac		
Uayma	Uayma	3126	5	west	red/white	west	na	1 E, 4 W	
Uci	Motul	1224	0	west	yellow	west	na		
Ucu	Ucu	2601	12	west	yellow	SW	na	1 E, 3 W	3 pk, 5 soccer
Uitzina	Peto	18	0	west	wood shed	ns	na		
Uman	Uman	39611	5	west	white	3 west	na		
Uspibil	Chemax	1890	0	west	cream	ns	na		
Uxmal ruins	Santa Elena	ruin	2	none	na	ns	na		2 at hotel
Valladolid	Valladolid	48973	28	north	natural stone	1 west	na	3 E, 7 W	cenote ceiba
Xacabchen	Cuncunul	60	4	1 west	yellow/white	ns	na	NE, NW, SE	

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Xalau	Chemax	2149	0	west	cream	SSE	na		
Xanaba	Izamal	1440	0	west	yellow	west	na		
Xanlah	Chankom	399	1	south	white	west	na	1 W	
Xaya	Tekax	1814	5	west	pink	2 WNW	na		4,6,10 yrs
X-Batun	Valladolid	26	5	2 west	white	ns	na	2 on road	
X-Bec	Buctzotz	462	0	west	cream/red	ns	na		
X-Bohom	Kaua	102	1	ns	na	ns	na		1 atop ruin
X-Bojon	Tizimin	106	4	2 east	white	ns	na	1 E	
X-Box	Chacsinkin	220	0	west	cream	ns	na		
X-Calacoop	Tinum	1313	0	west	cream	west	na		
X-can	Chemax	5191	2	west	yellow	west	na	1 W, 1 N	
Xcanatun	Merida	1495	10	west	white	2 south	3 hac	3 W	
X-Catzin (Catzin)	Chemax	2019	2	1 west	yellow	ns	na		cenote
Xcobiakal (La Colina)	Peto	81	0	ns	na	ns	na		
X-Cocail	Chankom	172	0	west	cream	ns	na		
X-Cocmil	Tekom	132	1	east	pink	ns	na	1 N	
X-Cohil	Tixmehuac	69	1	north	white	ns	na		1 prvt 25 yr
X-Cohuo	Valladolid	111	4	south	white	ns	na		1 road, 3 prvt
Xcopteil	Chankom	773	14	west	yellow	west	na	W entry, 2 entry E	9 @ well
Xcucul Sur	Uman	431	6	1 west	white	NW	2 hac		
Xcuil	Tekax	rancho	2	none	na	none	old hac		5,50 yrs
Xcunya	Merida	907	1	1 east	natural	ns	hac		gothic church
Xcuyum	Conkal	1576	9	west	red	ns	3 hac	1E, 1N, 1 glorieta	3 lg pk
Xhualtez	Espita	306	0	west	white	ns	na		
Ximhachen	Chemax	25	1	none	na	ns	na	1 lg N	
X-Kalak (de Dzibalku)	Tizimin	135	0	north	red	ns	na		
Xkalakdzonot	Chankom	789	0	west	yellow	ns	na		
X-Kanchakan	Tecoh	1593	6	3 SW	red/white	ns	2 hac		
X-Kanchechen	Temozon	50	2	none	na	ns	na	1 N	1 prvt
Xkatun	Chankom	142	0	ns	na	ns	na		
Xla'Kal	Chichimila	reserve	2	none	na	none	na	2 entry	bioreserve
X'Lapak	Yaxcaba	160	1	ns	na	ns	na	1 @ hwy entry	
Xmatkuil	Merida	526	6	east	red	ns	5 hac	1 E	



Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
X-Mexil	Yaxcaba	106	8	1 east	green	ns	na	2 S	5 park
Xnichteil	Chikindzonot	5	2	ns	na	ns	na	1 N	
Xocchel	Xocchel	3229	0	west	pink	west	na		
Xocempich	Dzitas	611	0	west	natural	ns	na		
Xocen	Valladolid	2407	11	4 west	white	NNW	na	1 NE, 2 SW @wells	1 main cenote
Xohuayan	Oxkutzcab	1405	0	west	white	west	na		
Xoy	Peto	714	0	west	white	west	na		
X-Panbiha	Tizimin	93	0	west	cream	ns	na		
X-Panhatoro	Tizimin	264	3	west	white	ns	na	1 N, 1 W	1 water tower
X-Pechil	Peto	126	0	east	stone	SSW	na		
X-Pon	Yaxcaba	57	2	ns	na	ns	na		2 at well
Xtabay	Tahmek	110	3	south	cream	ns	na		
X-Tepen	Uman	527	9	1 east	cream	1 SSW	3 hac		2 park
X-Thobil	Tixcacalcupul	340	0	west	yellow	ns	na		
X-Tut	Temozon	269	2	north	white	ns	na	2 N	
X-Uch	Temozon	303	0	west	cream	ns	na		
Xuilub	Espita	392	0	west	white	ns	na		
Xuilub	Valladolid	618	2	1 west	white	ns	na		1 prvt
Xul	Oxkutzcab	1110	0	west	stone	NE	na		
Xuxcab	Tekom	64	0	ns	na	ns	na		
Yaax-Hal	Valladolid	166	0	ns	na	ns	na		
Yaaxhom (Yaahonx)	Oxkutzcab	115	2	1 west	yellow	ns	na	1 park	
Yabucu, hacienda	Acanceh	hac	9	north	red	ns	9 hac		tourist hac
Yalcoba	Valladolid	2808	8	west	cream	2 SW	na	2 S, 3 N rural	cenote ceiba
Yalcon	Valladolid	237	6	2 west	cream	ns	na	N, E, SW	ch-cenote ceiba
Yalsihon	Panaba	528	1	west	stone	ns	na		
Yaxachen	Oxkutzcab	1633	0	west	stone	ns	na		
Yaxcaba	Yaxcaba	3007	0	west	red	SW	na		cenote
Yaxche	Chemax	31	1	ns	na	none	na		
Yaxche	Chemax	12	2	none	na	none	na		
Yaxche	Dzitas	44	3	west	white	ns	na	NE, SE	2 corners
Yaxche	Tizimin	2	3	none	na	none	2 old hac		cattle ranch
Yaxche	Valladolid	114	2	1 west	green	ns	na	1 entry E	
Yaxche	Valladolid	1	0	none	na	none	na		

Place	Municipio	Pop.	Ceibas	Church	Church	Cemetery	Hacienda	Entry	Other
		2010		Facing # ceibas	Color/trim	from Church # ceibas	Site # ceibas	Crossroad # ceibas	Notes
Yaxche Casares	Merida	106	3	south	yellow	ns	na	1 S entry	all young
Yaxche de Peon	Ucu	846	12	2 west	white	ns	hac	3 N, 2 W, 1 S, SE, SW	
Yaxcheil (Nohyaxche)	Tixcacalcupul	rancho	0	none	na	none	na		
Yaxcheku	Tizimin	274	7	ns	na	ns	na	1 NE, 1 S, 1 SE, 1 N	3 milpa
Yaxcopil	Peto	459	0	west	yellow	ns	na		
Yaxcopil	Uman	1149	7	1 west	yellow	1 SW	1 hac	3 N (guards)	1 @ water tower
Yaxha	Muna	229	1	west	yellow	ns	na		
Yaxkukul	Yaxkukul	2825	5	west	red	2 west	na		3 prvt
Yaxnic	Merida	794	1	north	yellow	ns	hac		1 school
Yaxunah	Yaxcaba	617	1	west	stone	west	na		botan. garden
Yobain	Yobain	1820	1	west	cream	west	na	1 S	
Yohactun, San Francisco	Tizimin	147	15	NW	green	ns	na		
Yohctun, Hidalgo de	Tizimin	302	1	ns	na	ns	na	1 W	
Yokdzonot	Yaxcaba	772	0	west	cream	west	na		cenote
Yokdzonot Presentado	Temozon	490	3	west	white	ns	na		3 pk
Yotholin	Ticul	2035	0	west	stone	WNW	na		
Yucatan Country Club	Merida	0	12	ns	na	none	ma		golf course,lakes
Yunku	Sacalum	145	28	east	white	ns	10 hac	1E, 1NW, 1S	"dude ranch"
Zavala	Sotuta	541	0	west	cream	west	na		



## Appendix 2. The *Yaxche-ob* of Cozumel Island, 2008

Sharon and I lived on Cozumel during the summers of 1965 and 1966. The little sleepy village of San Miguel was home base during research for my master's thesis on the settlement patterns of the island. We rented a house from the banker Carlos Namur and I roamed the island, on trails and off, in search of cenotes, aboriginal ruins, and evidence of economic activities that impacted the landscape, such as the low walls that partitioned sections of the abandoned henequen industry (Davidson 1967, 1975).

Although I was keenly aware of the ceiba tree (in Maya: *yaxché*, plural: *yaxché-ob*), I remember seeing only one while we lived there – the one behind the Capitanía on the main street (*malecón*) of the town that ran along the waterfront. Now that I look back, over fifty years ago, I think I would have expected to see more ceibas on the island. After all, shouldn't we expect to see the sacred tree of the Maya growing on the sacred island of the Maya? Maybe I was just not looking for them.

Over the years we made a few very brief stops at the island to see friends and dive in the clear sea, but had a chance for a more extended stay when our younger son, Chadwick, married in 2008. Parissa decided on a "destination wedding" and we were pleased to think they selected Cozumel because the island was where his parents had enjoyed living during the first years of their marriage. Of course, Parissa admitted she didn't know we had ever lived there. Still, we loved their wedding and gained an opportunity to check out the ceibas of the island.

### The Ceiba Survey of December 2008

Except for the single instance of a ruin toponym, evidence that the tree was present some years in the past is difficult to find. The ruin named *Yaxché* is located in the north central portion of the island. Supposedly, the site was named by local guide Manuel Angulo Vivas in the early 1960s because of the presence of a large ceiba. There is also a local, unconfirmed legend that a large ceiba was once beside the original cenote that probably watered early San Miguel -- on the east side of Av. 8 de Octubre, south of calle 29. The historical records I am familiar with do not mention either tree, or other ceibas on the island.

To my knowledge, the modern *yax.che.ob* of Cozumel number 60. Almost all seem to be in cultural context – planted at ruins, hotels, the country club, a tourist shop, two across the street from the urban cemetery, and the one mentioned before at the Capitanía. The one isolate, perhaps 30 years old, can be seen along the southern highway between km markers 20 and 21.



## 1. Ruinas (13)

Cedral, the small village in the south founded by the grandfather of don Cristino Cardenas Serrano in 1848 has three ceibas along its southern street and three at the ancient ruin site immediately behind the “campo” house of the late German Garcia Padilla (1941-December 2016), “Flaco” to his friends of older days. When we lived on the island “Flaco” worked in a dive shop. His dream was, he said, “to make five dollars a day and to marry his girlfriend.” He did both, and much more. He was the first Presidente de la Municipalidad de Cozumel (1975) and Jefe de la Policia Nacional del Estado de Quintana Roo. Our first children were born on the same day (April 4, 1968). He was *mi compadre* and I miss him.



Figure 226. Largest ceiba of Cedral, 2008. Sharon with German Garcia and grandson.

San Gervasio, in the north central sector of the island, is the primary tourist attraction. Three recently planted ceibas are along the roadway entering the ruin and another has been planted in the parking lot. All are less than three years old.

At an unnamed site inland from Playa Palancar, at the 27 km marker on the southern highway, is a large tree, perhaps 80-90 years old. It and two smaller ceibas are located between the old and new paved highways that bisect the ruin. Apparently, the old tree was carefully spared during the construction of the new road.



**Figure 227. Three ceibas on Southern Coastal Highway, km marker 27, 2008.**

## 2. Hotels (23)

With the expansion of major hotels along the southern highway, ceibas have been planted at some entrances. Hotel El Cid La Ceiba, which has seven trees visible on entry, incorporates the name of the tree in its formal title.





**Figure 228. Ceibas at entrance of Hotel El Cid La Ceiba.**

The Occidental Cozumel and Occidental Allegro Cozumel hotels have six more among their royal palms and coconuts.

North of San Miguel, heading to the older hotel area known as San Juan, somewhat hidden among the coconut palms and mimosas along the median of the highway can be seen several ceibas. Two are in front of the Puerto del Sol condos, four are at the Westin Cozumel, and two are near the entrance of El Cozumeleño. Just north of the country club where the paved road ends there are two crossroad ceibas.



**Figure 229. Ceiba in the median near the Westin Hotel north of San Miguel.**

### 3. Cozumel Country Club (18)

The largest concentration of ceibas on Cozumel is on the grounds of the country club and golf course north of San Miguel. Eighteen can be seen at the entrance (1) (Figure 5), along the roadway (7) among the royal palms, at the parking lot (4), and on the course (6). On their maturity all of these will project an impressive landscape.



**Figure 230. Ceiba at the entrance to Cozumel Country Club, 2008.**



**Figure 231. Ceiba on golf course of country club, 2008 (photo taken from El Cozumeleño).**



#### 4. Governmental (4)

Just behind the Capitanía building along the northern *malecón* (Av. Rafael Melgar norte) in San Miguel is a ceiba that is said to be 120 years old. It was large in 1965 when we lived in San Miguel. Although no one can determine its age with certainty, it seems to be the oldest ceiba on the island. Another very large ceiba, not available for photography, is in the military complex at the airport.



**Figures 232, 233. (left) Old ceiba behind La Capitanía, San Miguel, 2008; (right) two ceibas on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, San Miguel, across from the municipal cemetery.**

#### 5. Mayalum tourist shop (2)

At the 11 kilometer marker on the transversal highway (the extension of Avenida Benito Juárez that originates at the San Miguel dock) a migrant from Baca, Yucatán planted three trees in front of *Mayalum*, his artifact store, on May 3, 2005. Traditional Mayans know that the ceiba represents the Christian cross and it would be appropriate for the trees to be planted on *Día de la Cruz* (Day of the Cross in the Christian calendar). By coincidence, the discovery name of Cozumel, “Isla de la Santa Cruz,” was so placed because of the May 3<sup>rd</sup> date in 1518 when Grijalva landed.

When I photographed the trees in December 2008 only two remained. The April 2014 street view of Google Earth indicates how much they had grown (photos 9 and 10).



**Figure 234. Ceibas at Mayalum tourist shop, December 2008.**



**Figure 235. Ceibas at Mayalum tourist shop, April 2014.**

To conclude, given the ages of the 60 ceibas known on the island and their locations in medians, at new hotels, and the new country club, it is obvious that all ceibas on Cozumel, except for two (Capitanía and Playa Palancar ruin) have been planted in support of the recent development of tourism on the island.

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Scores of LSU students were introduced to the Yucatecan *yaxché-ob* during field trips of the 1980s. Below, the spring 1987 group poses beneath flossing trees.



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A place to play.

Based on landscape observations, this book explains the distribution and significance of *yaxché-ob* (ceibas, *Ceiba pentandra*) in the State of Yucatán, México. More than 2,500 ceibas can be found in a wide range of settings, including villages and cities, at churches and cemeteries, at cenotes and haciendas, along highways and at rancho entrances, and even at modern tourism facilities. However, in the ceiba landscapes of a few special places—Yalcón, Xocén, Maní, Muna, Cholul—evidence of the ancient Maya geographical cosmos can still be seen.

Ceiba at Uxmal cemetery, 1843.



La Ceiba bull ring with ceiba, Calotmul.

