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Glocalization and Transnationalization in (neo)-Mayanization Processes: Ethnographic Case Studies from Mexico and Guatemala

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Abstract: In this article, the author focuses on the field of neo-Mayanity and its current transformations. She analyzes these transformations using a historico-ethnographic approach, which includes two phases. The first one consists in reconstructing the historical development of the “Mayan” category in two different social contexts. The second one focuses on current narrative and imageries produced around this category, stemming from ethnographic fieldwork in Mexico and Guatemala. Since the “2012 phenomenon”, in both countries, the accelerating transnationalization of the religious leaders has triggered a resignification of contents through various logics of rearrangement, innovation, cohabitation and glocalization. Finally, she demonstrates that the variations in the different ethnographies are linked with the religious leaders’ biographies and the modes of signification of the “Mayan” category—influenced by the socio-historical contexts of production.

Keywords: glocalization; transnationalization; Central America; neo-Mayanity; 2012 phenomenon

1. Introduction

In his public conference about the “Mayan calendar”, the Californian author Xan Xel Lugold¹ answers the question: “Where did the Mayans get their information from in the first place?”²:

“We do not precisely know. They have their own legends. The legends are all we actually know about it. Their legends tell that a person, or a god, named Itzamma, came down to the Mayan people and delivered information about language, writing, mathematics and the calendar. So they received this information as a gift. Where Itzamma came from, and where he went, we do not really know. And frankly, it is none of our business to know where they got it. It is much more important what we do with this information now. [. . .]. We have added to this information, with all the science we now have, and it’s come more to complete the circle³.”

This quote reflects the approximation of Westerners’ representations of the Mayans as distant people with mysterious legends and prophecies whose history and mythological tales we do not really know. This definitional blur around the Mayans echoes the controversy about the circulation

¹ This independent author is close to a U.S. stream that emerged between 1980 and 2000, called “Mayanist,” and composed of independent researchers connected with Californian New-Age circles, which proposes a new reading of the Mayan calendars [1,2].

² His most famous public conference is published in eighteen parts on YouTube. See [3].

³ [3], part 9, 3 min.

of representations into the context of cultural globalization. This blur is consistent with the current spread of decontextualized, dehistoricized, recycled and wrongly re-attributed information. The “neo-colonialist” attitude behind these inter-cultural appropriations troubles an entire generation of activist natives; however, some of the natives also contribute to the transnationalization of their representations. This controversy mainly drives the debates about “authenticity” [4]. The “2012 phenomenon”⁴ is an example: the Mayans and their “prophecies” found a strong resonance in our Western cultures, thanks to an audience that has been in search of alternative visions since the 1980s. This quote also reminds us of a Gregory Lassalle documentary film *From Art Drifts to Oil Drifts* (2012). The movie denounces the culturalist and capitalist attitude behind the organization of the 2011 exhibition “Mayan—from Dawn to Dusk” hosted at the Museum of Quai Branly in Paris (see, [5]). The exhibition opened under the patronage of Perenco, a multinational oil company working near the archaeological sites where the exhibited pieces were found. It displays “the Guatemalan Mayan civilization”, highlighting the aesthetics of “cosmovisions”⁵ and traditional expertise such as weaving without any social or political contextualization regarding the “contemporary Mayans.” An awkward silence remains concerning the living conditions and the daily struggles of Mayan people [6]. In his article “We Are *Not* Indigenous!” [7], Quetzil Castañeda endeavors to deconstruct the Western stereotypes and beliefs around the word “Mayan.” Tourists, NGOs, media, politicians and New Agers are among the many agents who participate in the construction of a fantasized and romantic image of the “Mayans.” Their image vacillates between excessive victimization, hyper-spiritualization, militance and aestheticization emptied of its political contents ([7], pp. 36–38). “Mayan” has thus become a transhistorical, homogeneous and abstract category existing in another dimension outside space and time.

The age of globalization enhances inter-cultural exchanges and interactions, enabling articulations between different symbolic systems. Connections between “New Age”⁶ and Mayan cosmovisions have been particularly fertile since the 1990s, evident in the many products of imagination inspired by the “2012 phenomenon.” The kitsch aesthetics of the ceremonies and their apparently artificial splendor make the journalists smile. Some anthropologists avoid studying neo-Mayan groups because they challenge conventional disciplinary assumptions about authenticity and tradition. In secularized contexts such as Switzerland, these Mayan-New-Age representations are overlooked in the media as figures of kitsch exoticism. Leaders of Mayan-New-Age groups are depicted as socially non-integrated. In reality, fieldwork shows that the activities of Westerners who simultaneously propagate and revise “Mayan wisdom” are not peripheral. Instead, they are socially integrated, urban and upper-middle-class, with unlimited access to postmodern technologies. The activities take place in city centers where they can purchase high quality audio-visual accessories to accompany their practice and downloadable meditation guides that are accessible from iPhone devices. Overall, neo-Mayan perfectly fit the economic model of neoliberal societies, without necessarily adopting its values. Meanwhile, American pan-Indian movements denounce the non-native economic exploitation of their symbolic resources and participate in the international legal struggle for gaining recognition and protection of their cultural and intellectual property rights (see, [8]). The field of neo-Mayanism is therefore filled with global challenges that extend beyond the frameworks of national borders.

As Peter Beyer writes, in studying contemporary transformations of religious phenomena, we question current expressions of social changes ([9], p. 428). Unlike the Mayan-New-Age, the formerly pejoratively connoted word “Mayan” today enjoys a mainly positive connotation in the public sphere

⁴ By “2012 phenomenon”, we mean here the different narratives about the “end of the world” or “end of a world”, the mythological origins of which have often been attributed to the “Mayans”. The date 12 December 2012, essentially, would have been finding, from the 1980s on, various millenarianist echoes in some circles linked with the North-American New-Age *milieu*, before circulating through new spiritual globalized networks ([1], p. 25).

⁵ An indigenous understanding of the world centered on the interrelation between human beings, nature and the cosmos.

⁶ The notion of “New Age” will be defined later. In a broad sense, we mean here the vast spiritual movement born in California between 1970s and 1980s, characterized by hope in the succession of a new era called “Aquarius”.

as a fashionable ethnic category. In my ethnographic fieldwork this notion is revisited in terms of spirituality, gender equality and harmonious relationship with nature. It is synonymous with “universal love”, “peace”, “unity” and “interconnectedness of all the elements.” This ethnic category has been currently updated within the same cultures that once condemned its symbolic aspects. Although some “Mayans” in certain regions such as Yucatan in southeast Mexico Hispanicized their names in the 1950s to avoid social and ethnic stigmatization ([10], p. 466), bearing a “Mayan” label is now a source of social pride and cultural capital [11]. The “Mayan” category is becoming a tool for making political demands, a place for spiritual creativity and a mode of identification that extends far beyond the traditional criteria of ethnicity and native family ties.

2. Research Questions and Ethnographic Methods

2.1. Research Questions

The general goal of this article is to analyze the contemporary transformations of the symbolic field of Mayanità through two cases taken from fieldwork in Guatemala (Quetzaltenango) and Mexico (Yucatan)⁷. Central to this mutation process, this field will be referred to as “neo-Mayanism” to designate its contemporary “transnationalized” and “glocalized” manifestations. Mayanism and its “neo” expressions are geographically multi-localized. Personally, I have observed them in Guatemala, Switzerland and various areas of Mexico and Germany. The concept of “field” is to be understood here as defined by P. Bourdieu [12], according to a semantic acceptance as a “structured space” composed of sub-fields and traversed by conflicts, power struggles, struggles for symbolic legitimacy and other specific issues that will be covered by this article.

Theoretically, the main purpose of this article is to demonstrate one of the specificities of this symbolic field, namely, that it has been growing in a “glocal” manner since the “2012 phenomenon”, which has been affecting the traditional ways of identifying “Mayan ethnicity”. More than a tension or a contradictory dynamics between particularization and universalization, my perspective integrates the dimension of the production of local meanings through transnationalization. Following the work of Sophie Bava, Stefania Capone [13], Renée de la Torre, Kali Argyriadi [14] and André Mary [15], I differentiate the concepts of “globalization” and “transnationalization”. I write about the effects of “transnationalization” rather than “globalization” to refer to the local reproductions linked with the flux of people, knowledge, practices and information coming from Central America to the hegemonic extra-continental poles, in the political meaning of a shift of cultural axis of influence. Not merely affecting the traditional ways of identifying “Mayan ethnicity”, the “glocal” construction of the symbolic field of Mayanità shall be seen as the very condition of its innovation by the rearrangement of contents.

By means of this neologization, I mean significations and new uses of images, contents, objects and ritual practices that are undergoing the process of social legitimization, which are not yet recognized as “new historical purities” [9]. The “2012 phenomenon” has been one, if not the only, source of the transnationalization of the field of Mayanità. It has intensified the leaders’ mobility and accelerated the circulation of contents. Since “2012”, the recuperation movements of Mayan traditions have been pluralized. Nowadays, the field is even more heterogeneous than in the past, driven by a variety of actors, views and trajectories, varying among regions and groups. Despite this great internal diversity, and following the analyses of the anthropologist Stefania Capone on common references to Yoruba culture in Orisha religion [16], the Mayanità field distinguishes itself by the claim of “Mayan” origin by all its actors, and/or by the common acceptance, on a partial or integral level, of discourses and practices emically attached to this category. This diversity does not prevent its actors from being guided by precise logics, either. Among these dynamics, we can point out, along

⁷ I shall return to the “Mayan” category.

with glocalization and transnationalization, logics of gender, revitalization, therapeutization, spiritual politicization-depoliticization, innovation of contents and new forms of “religious *butinage*” (religious picking). *Butinage*, in the religious field, is a mobile and creative way to develop and fertilize one’s symbolic universe and enhance it by bringing each element gathered (the “fruit”) from the other universes to it, following a multi-directional movement ([17], p. 30). The *butineur* produces new “hybrid” elements in its process [18]. All these processes are interconnected, producing an internal coherence. This article will focus on the first processes—glocalization and transnationalization—that will be illustrated by ethnographic examples from fieldwork in Mexico and Guatemala.

Broadly, revitalization is the logic predominating over all the others. It is shown at the individual level by forms of auto-identification, nuanced by exogenous attributions, and/or “identity appropriations”⁸, both intra-cultural and inter-cultural. Among these appropriative forms, the assembled ethnographic material brings into contrast two general movements: “Mayanization” and “New-Ageization”. The ethnographic material enables us to distinguish different types of Mayanization and New-Ageization. Literature and empirical data allow me to list the following variety of forms:

- (1) The processes of intra-national “Mayanizations” (such as Mayan Yoga, Mayan Kung Fu, Mayan osteopathy promoted by Mexican mixed-race or the Mayanization of the identity of a mixed-race group). These processes are accompanied by a discursive Mayanization of origins.
- (2) The intra-ethnic “Mayanizations” (such as the discourses of revitalization in activist terms delivered by the K’iche’ of Quetzaltenango or the Tsotziles⁹ from Chiapas).
- (3) New Age appropriations of all kinds (for instance, the spiritualization and millenarianization of the 2012 phenomenon in Switzerland, or the New-Ageization of the Mayan sweat lodge).
- (4) An intra-ethnic New-Ageization (for example, natives who integrate a New Age reinterpretation of their communitarian practices).

These various forms are the results of the first analyses. The notion of “Mayanization” must be understood here as the concept developed by S. Bastos in order to analyze the symbolic extent of “Mayan movements” in Guatemala and their modalities of reception and reformulation among *outsiders* (the state, the Catholic churches, the cooperative agents and private authorities) ([20], p. 9). For Bastos, this process means the action of spreading Mayan discourses and symbolic systems beyond the organizational borders, among actors who are located outside the structures that generate these discourses ([20], pp. 11–12). These actors appropriate and reinterpret those symbolic systems, which are therefore being transformed ([20], p. 12). For this research, I extend Bastos’s interpretation to the appropriation of diverse practices and objects coming from distant cultures, accompanied by a discursive Mayanization of origins (e.g., Mayan Yoga, Mayan Kung Fu or Mayan osteopathy). Another dynamic that emerges in the field and acts as a factor of differentiation is the dichotomy between the politicized and activist Mayanities on the one hand and the non-politicized Mayan New-Age on the other hand. This dichotomy is also illustrated by regional oppositions between, first, the militant Mayanities of Guatemala and Chiapas (Mexico) and, second, the less militant Mayanities of the Yucatan peninsula (Mexico).

2.2. Ethnographic Methods

On the ethnographic level, I have opted for mobility within mobility, since I traveled from one research site to another according to exterior events, and independently of the actors’ movements. This model of “itinerant ethnography” ([14], p. 21) made me “pick” [17] into different places of production of Mayanity. I have brought back with me every element picked from the various research sites in a single frame of study to develop my own ethnographic viewpoint.

⁸ The expression is borrowed from Christina Welch, which she uses in her analyses of the inter- and intra-cultural reappropriations of the Native-American *sweat lodge* and Aborigine *didgeridoo* [4].

⁹ Here in its historical meaning as an ethnolinguistic designation linked to a territory [19].

In my interview sample, all the interviewees had a common denominator: a shared sense of proximity with the “Mayans”—the common feeling of “Mayanity”—which varied according to their relationship to the broader category of “Mayan”, ranging from imaginary lineages [21] to real territorial and linguistic rooting, all of these being subject to particularisms. Thus, my sample is not randomly developed; it is inductive, thematic and cumulative. The character of the “Mayanity” claimed by various actors reflects the existence of a field, with borders, linking people into a network between Switzerland, Mexico, Germany and Guatemala, as many particular cases that fall within a transnational space. Therefore, while “2012” contributed to transnationalization, it converted me to the logic of “multi-site” ethnographic mobility, following the work of George E. Marcus [22].

For data collection, I have used direct participant observation, paying particular attention to the contents of the discourses and practices. In the tradition of qualitative research, I have also used biographic open-ended “narrative interviews”¹⁰, mainly that of “life histories”, a tool of ethno-sociology [23,24]. The life histories focused on the interviewees “spiritual and therapeutic journeys” [25], in order to sort out the different levels of discourses, similarities or differences among them, and therefore assist with understanding the interviewees’ patterns and logics of participation. In-depth interviewing with a loose thematic discussion guide was also used to supplement participant observation, especially when focusing on contextual and synchronous elements or organizational aspects rather than on individual life-journeys [26]. A total of fifty-two interviews were conducted between 2012 and 2015.

The interviews’ content analysis used the Nvivo qualitative analysis software program in order to analyze and code the collected empirical data (interviews, written sources, fieldwork journals and audio-visual sequences). This mode of categorization—based on empirical data—is similar to the approach recommended by *grounded theory* [27,28]. However, through a series of successive steps, conceptualization has also been adjusted, shaped and inspired by the author’s broader theoretical framework. The codes used to classify the empirical data are therefore the fruits of a logic that is both inductive and deductive.

3. Mayan Ethnicity in Different Socio-Historical Contexts

3.1. The “Mayan” Category

In Latin America, the terms Mixed-Race, *Ladinos*, Indigenous, Natives and Mayan have no meaning on their own; they change according to times, points of view and situations. Behind this difficult question of ethnic designation, passionate historiographical debates question and deconstruct the notion of ethnicity, social classification and local policies of identity categorization. My ethnographic work took place between 2014 and 2015, mostly in the Yucatan peninsula, in Southeast Mexico.

The peninsula shelters the states of Quintana Roo, Campeche and Yucatan. The capital of Yucatan is Merida. Merida is a colonial city, which has experienced important urban growth since the nineteenth century. The city constitutes the main space framing most of my observations. The 1990 national censuses reveal that 30% of the peninsula population speak Yucatan Mayan ([10], p. 460). The data presented in this article also come from my exploratory research in Quetzaltenango, a state in southeast Guatemala mainly populated with “K’iche Mayans” [29].

From a historical point of view, the generic term “Mayan” constitutes a polysemic ethnolinguistic notion, which has been historically and socially elaborated ([30], p. 134). For anthropologists and archaeologists in the 1940s, it represents the “linguistic label of native populations” ([30], p. 143) living in southeast Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, western Honduras and Salvador. The exact definitions of the populations named by this category are to be found in the various national constitutions. Nowadays,

¹⁰ More or less one hour and a half per interview.

the word has been widely recovered by movements, organizations and social actors as an identity category, enabling the formulation of political claims and the struggle for recognition ([30], p. 143). If one looks at this category as a state designation, in Mexico, for example, it identifies “ethno-linguistic communities” linked to a certain territory: the Yucatan Mayan (Yucatan peninsula), the Lacandons (eastern Chiapas), the Chols (northeast of Chiapas), the Tzeltales and Tzotziles (center and North Chiapas), the Tojolabales (southern Tzeltales Chiapas), the Mames (southern Chiapas, near the border with Guatemala), and the Chontals (Tabasco) ([19], pp. 46–78). If one considers this category under the angle of “indigenous people”, the well-known political and legal expression in institutional discourses, it is also related to territorial, linguistic and lineage rooting ([31], p. 31).

3.2. *Mayan Ethnicity in Yucatan (Mexico)*

Yucatan is prominent in *Mayan Studies*. In this area, the uses and ways of identifying the “Mayan” category differ from those of Chiapas or Guatemala, notably because of the specificity of its history, from colonization to the Mexican revolutions ([7], p. 38). For example, the Yucatan “Mayan” have never been the objects of transnational media effervescence, which the Zapatista and Guatemalan social movements have known [7]. The anthropologist Quetzil Castañeda showed that, in this peninsula, the Mayan-speaking people have even distanced themselves from the category, declaring: “we are *not* indigenous” ([7], p. 38). This dis-identification makes one think about the “Mayan ethnicity” category, for this sole example challenges linguistic criteria of ethnic differentiation, reminding us of the importance of Frédéric Barth’s contribution to the debate about ethnicity and his effort to define it as a mobile, unfixed category whose borders are endlessly reshaped by social actors according to specific strategies [32].

The historico-anthropological analyses in the collection *The Maya Identity of Yucatan, 1500–1935: Re-Thinking Ethnicity, History and Anthropology?* [33] address the question of “Mayan ethnicity” and its historical mutations between 1500 and 1935. Specifically, these studies adopt a critical perspective on the issue of Maya’s ethnic boundaries. These studies show that, in the peninsula, the term “Mayan” has been coined with regard to public policies and not in response to a dominant-subordinate relationship. People designated in this way have used the term in a selected, re-conceptualized and calculated manner, responding to the colonial and state “interpellation” in order to negotiate specific modes of governance ([33], p. 46). These authors demonstrate that, unlike in Guatemala, the elaboration of ethnicity has been mutual between the state and the social group in question, and has not been horizontally defined against other ethnic groups (mixed-race, *ladinos*). Quetzil Castañeda draws the conclusion that, substantially speaking, in Yucatan, “Mayan” does not exist. The texts of this collection break off from the scientific paradigms of continuity, notably approved by the North American literature. Despite the spatial continuity with the pre-Hispanic civilizations, the socio-cultural developments since colonization have created, for these authors, temporal and socio-demographic ruptures.

In his article about the development of ethnic categories in Yucatan and their individual uses in social interactions from the sixteenth century on, Wolfgang Gabbert [10] strongly criticizes the advocates of the continuity thesis. He also denounces the recent use of genetic and cultural criteria to argue in favor of categorical unity ([10], p. 462). He aims to analyze ethnicity not through “ethnic” lenses, but rather through its underlying logics and strategic uses, according to different social contexts ([10], p. 463). Following the work of F. Barth, this approach conceives ethnicity as the result of a historical process continuously reproduced by social actors in their ongoing pursuit of social specification and resource negotiation with the state. Moreover, there would be no empiric proof underlining any shared ethnic conscience between *indios* or *indígenas* of the colonial era and those of the end of the nineteenth century. This social category would have been vertically imposed on a genetic criteria basis, without any auto-identification from the people. Gabbert also points out the absence of ethno-linguistic differentiation criteria during colonial time, since people of mixed-race and some *ladinos* (the other social categories of the time) also spoke fluent Yucatan Mayan. According to him, it

was after the resistance movements of the Caste War that the negative connotations of the term *indios* emerged, and that those perceptions were slowly adopted by the *indios*. It was only from the twentieth century on, after the ideological impact of the Mexican revolutions in Yucatan (1910–1917), that these categories would have seen a slight improvement together with the beginning of the Indigenist public policies, although they were still associated with the lower classes ([10], p. 474).

From the second half of the twentieth century, the expansion of the tourism industry and the policies of peninsular folklorization have given an elitist semantic impetus to the category: the “Yucatan Mayan” were then stereotypically associated with the pre-Hispanic civilization and its great advancements, without any concern for the day-to-day socio-economic realities of Yucatan workers and peasants. From the 1970s on, the native elite of Yucatan, from the educated milieu closely associated with or active in the indigenist movement, has brought a semantic change to the word in the public space, by initiating a process of revitalization and preservation (in the political meaning of cultural revitalization of language, folklore, etc.). Natives who, until then, had privileged the terms “*mestizo*, *mayero*, *campesino*, *gente del pueblo*...” have accepted those ethnicizing terms. Now, the identification of *Indio* with *Mayan* has become common and turned into a symbolic asset to claim negotiate state resources ([10], p. 466), but the revitalization movements have never gained the importance of the national Mayan movement in Guatemala. W. Gabbert reminds us of the importance of differentiating the social categories that shape Yucatan society, the groups based on them and the individuals that use them practically ([10], p. 479).

3.3. *Mayan Movements in Guatemala*

In contrast to the situation in Yucatan, in Guatemala the historiography of the Mayan movements’ development focuses on the activist and socio-economic dimension of the people’s identification with the “Mayan” label. In Guatemala, the close connection between religion and politics is obvious. That is because of the particularly violent history of conflicts. This history includes a series of authoritarian governments between 1821 and 1944; repeated agrarian conflicts; exploitation of the native work force; armed violent conflict between 1960 and 1996 accompanied by sexual violence; and criminalization of social protest [34]. The religious realm is analyzed as a “political space”, a tool for identity reformulations interacting with the public space and its modalities of intervention [35].

In Guatemala, it is within the internally fragmented “Mayan movements” that this revitalization and resignification of the “Mayan” category is most often found ([20], p. 19). Their principal leaders entered the public space in the 1960s, during the waves of protest against the agrarian reforms [29,36,37]. Their decisive appearance on the national stage took place during the 1992 commemoration of colonization and was marked by their radical willingness to distance themselves from Catholicism. These movements are politicized and seek revitalization, rediscovery and reaffirmation of “Mayan lore, values and beliefs” ([37], p. 13). They are organized around the promotion of cultural self-determination, reconstruction of the “Mayan identity” and political participation [36,38].

In Guatemala, this context of reformulation of the “Mayan identity” within Mayan movements—going through politicization, claims and cultural revitalization processes—is the one that supports the positive and fulfilling acceptance of the “Mayan ethnicity” within the frame of social interactions. This analysis allows Bastos to highlight the located and historically contingent aspect of ethnic classifications in Guatemala ([20], p. 16). For M. Macleod, this category implies a whole “cosmovision”, that is, an understanding of the world centered on the interrelation between human beings, nature and the cosmos, which is also a resistance tool for contestation, redefinition of gender relations, and even, at some point, a resource for women’s struggles for equality and emancipation [34]. In fact, my exploratory research in Guatemala and the time spent with a K’iche’ Mayan human rights activist confirm this perception of cosmovision as an engine of secular conflicts; symbolic K’iche’ references structure the contents of socio-political activities.

The difference between the activist and politicized Mayanity of Guatemala and the non-politicized Mayanity of Yucatan thus lies in the different relationships, socially and historically developed, with

“Mayan ethnicity”. The 2012 phenomenon is another indicator of these differences. In Guatemala, the date of 21 December 2012, has probably been the most recent source of blending between the religious and political registers for Mayan movements. In my view, this date has roots in two opposite poles: activist Mayanità and New Age Mayanità. The works of Santiago Bastos, Engel Tally and Marcelo Zamora [39], and Morna Macleod [40,41] about “2012” in Guatemala have shown that the phenomenon triggered the creation of a whole range of views and activities of a politico-spiritual type. In a recent comparative analysis on the same subject [42], I have demonstrated how “2012” has been generating various appropriations from one cultural context to another, according to the political angle. In the French-speaking part of Switzerland, in a secularized context, this date appears again in a chronology built by Judeo-Christian communications associated with an apolitical New Age vision of history. On the contrary, in Guatemala, it is mainly signified by Mayan activists, who revisit it through human rights discourses. The fieldwork conducted in Mexico among New Age Mayan groups also reveals the apolitical and therapeutic-spiritual relationship to “2012”.

4. Toward a New Age Mayanità in Mexico?

4.1. Socio-Religious Contexts

In Mexico, the publication in 1988 of Arthur Velasco Piña’s novel *Regina* [43] marks the beginning of the indigenous revivalisms in continuity with the student movements of 1968 [44]. This book announces the start of a “new era” in Mexico. It is inspired both by the prophecy announced in *La mujer dorminda debe dar a Luz* (1970)¹¹ and by the coming of the “Age of Aquarius” that, according to New Age philosophies, unfolds from the figure of Regina. Historically, Regina is a young Mexican student murdered during the student movements of 1968 in Mexico City. But the fictionalized part tells that she died in a sacrifice to her mission, activating the “cosmic energy” of two Mexican volcanoes to fulfill a prophecy. According to this prophecy, Mexico or its “chakra” represents the geographical axis of the new era, and its activation will happen through the restoration of pre-Hispanic traditions ([44], p. 105).

This myth is one of the pillars of “Mexicanità”, a post-68 “cultural, political and spiritual movement”, supported by foreigners or mixed-race middle-class Mexicans with a certain level of education who live in urban areas ([44], p. 187) and give themselves the goal of revitalizing the native identities in Mexico on the basis of an idealized reinterpretation of the past and an archetypal image of the native people ([44], p. 96). The streams of Mexicanità are heterogeneous, both on the ideological level (belief in the extra-terrestrial beings, New Age inspirations, apology of native culture’s superiority, exclusion of any Western elements, etc.) and on the level of the activities (pre-Hispanic astronomy and mathematics, ritual dances, traditional medicine, conservation of the oral traditions, interpretations of the codices, handicrafts, Mexicanist arts, rituals in the public spaces, mainly in the archaeological sites, with commemorations of the historic dates of natural events such as equinoxes, etc.) ([44], pp. 97–98). Literature divides this movement into two tendencies: “radical Mexicanism” [44], also called “mexicayotl”, and “neo-Mexicanism” [45]. The first one is politicized, anti-Western and anti-syncretic and praises the “purity of the Indian race” ([44], p. 101; [45], p. 183). The second one is more spiritualized and pluralistic, and is part of a global program of a New Age type.

American ethnologists A. Molinié and J. Galinier have observed a similar socio-religious phenomenon in Mexico, but describe it through the use of a different terminology [46]. The Mexican cultural-religious stage of the 1990s is seen as one in which “new forms of Indianità” emerge and become public during the celebration of the Fifth Centenary of colonization [1992] ([46], p. 27). They describe this new phenomenon as “new-Indianità” that builds itself by mirroring the images

¹¹ It consists of the adventure of a young Mexican initiated into the “sacred traditions of Mexico and Tibet”. In Tibet, this young man is told of the existence of a prophecy foretelling that Mexico “is to become one of the most important places for the awakening of the new sacred culture” ([44], p. 103). Personal translation.

of Indianity that Westerners—mainly New Agers—provide. Like neo-Mexicanity, neo-Indianity paradoxically establishes itself between the "particularism inside the local" and a "worldwide message" of spreading "cosmic energy" ([46], pp. 9, 187). Its leaders are generally non-native ([46], p. 17), and consider themselves as "pure" as the rural Indians whose poor socio-economic conditions they deny. ([46], p. 9). As far as mythology is concerned, its origins could be traced back to the issue of V. Piña's *Regina*, while its historical premises would be placed in the nineteenth century, during the reconstruction of the national identity and the Indigenist programs ([46], p. 93).

The anthropologists Renée de la Torre, Cristina Gutiérrez Zúniga and Nahayeilli Juárez Huet link all these "neo-cosmovisionary" tendencies to the spread of the New Age in Latin America from the 1970s on, and to its effect on the processes of construction of the ethnic identities [47]. To them, the New Age is not to be defined in its substance, but as a "matrix of meaning" or a frame for "holistic reinterpretation", which was already hybrid in its own roots. In Latin America, this hybrid-holistic grid of reading provoked "new religious hybridizations" on a cultural ground already in a "syncretic" relationship with Catholicism. Therefore, there are three levels of syncretism—syncretism on the Mexican ground, New Age syncretism and New Age syncretization. In Latin America "popular actors" assimilated this matrix of meaning, which they re-signify and re-contextualize with a goal of cultural resistance to exogeneity. On the contrary, New Agers appropriated local traditions by essentializing them within a quest for Indianity, ancestry and authenticity ([47], p. 15).

4.2. Toward New Identification Modes to Mayan Ethnicity: Ethnographic Examples

The personal names used in the following sections are fictional; the interviewees remain anonymous. In a café in Merida, Ricardo told me several times: "*no soy Maya . . . No lo necesitamos por ser en esta espiritualidad*" (in reference to the "SolarMayan Tradition") ("I am not Mayan . . . We don't need to be to enter this spirituality"). He said everyone follows their "*camino espiritual*" ("spiritual path") and let themselves be carried by the "*rueda de la vida*" ("the wheel of life") "*que te trae lo que tu ser necesita en el momento mismo*", ("which brings you what your being needs at the present moment"), "*cuando estas listo*" ("when you are ready") "*Fluye Manéli*" ("let it be, Manéli") [48]. The discussion with this painter from Quintana Roo, who uses a Mayan imagery, lasted several hours. He did not want a formal interview, nor to tell his life story. I asked no more than one or two questions, which he answered vaguely. He told me to "turn off my intellect" and said that I would remember the information "on a vibratory level", the memory of which would fully return when I awoke the next day. He tried to lead me in a form of hypnosis, showing me his Mayan paintings and telling me to feel them. He maintained the course of speech at a regular rhythm, but spoke few words.

The permanent members of the Solar Mayan Tradition (SMT) do not define themselves as an ethnic or cultural group; none of them has Mayan roots. The general coordinator speaks of "spiritual tradition born from a solar lineage", through a process of "reincarnation" [49]. The SMT is an organization whose seat is in Merida, led by the "Venerable Mother Nah Kin", a Mexican mixed-race woman who graduated with a degree in social psychology and studied with spiritual leaders from various traditions. The leaders of this particular movement, called "Ahaukanes", have given themselves the mission to "save the spirituality of pre-Hispanic Mayan civilizations", which they also call "Solar Mayan" or "Cosmic Mayan from the Golden Age". This reading of Mayanity is New Age, since a central place is given to millenarianism ("new paradigm" theorization), the therapeutic contribution and "personal transformation", accompanied by a rejection of the institutional religious models. One of the heirs of the movement also told me that one does not need to be "Mayan" to join this group [50]. However, most of the members—all of whom are non-native and many of whom are foreigners mostly upper-middle-class urban women who pursued higher education—consider themselves to be "reincarnations" of those "Cosmic Mayans". Personalized interviews with most of the members confirmed this personal conviction attached to the feeling of having been Mayan "in another life". In this group, the lineage is imagined, in reference to Danièle Hervieu-Léger's concept [21]; modalities of belonging to the category come from a spiritualized vision of lineage, accompanied by the Hindu

philosophy of “reincarnation”. From this deep conviction of being Mayan by reincarnation flows this idea of a “mission” that they should propagate an important and “cosmic” message to the world.

In 2015, Ricardo was the first young non-Mayan man to join the Council of Mexico Mayan Elders as an “initiated member” (with a voice and a vote inside the Council). The Council of the Elders is an association located in Merida with a long history of struggle for the promotion and defense of indigenous cultures of Mexico. The permanent members are traditionally from a masculine lineage of ethno-linguistic Mayan with a specific spiritual function within the tradition. Ricardo was born in Mexico City, but has Oaxacan Mixtec and Zapotec roots. During this long interview about his biographical narrative and his Mayan therapeutic practices (“Mayan acupuncture”, “Mayan massage”, “Pre-Hispanic Sound-Healing”), Ricardo told me that he “felt Mayan in his heart” [51]. His relationship with Mayan culture is internalized, affective, at the level of subjective feeling.

These examples illustrate the various relationships different people have to the Mayan label and the difficulty in determining a single common denominator capable of uniting the entire symbolic field. The individuals and the groups at the heart of this research are all “Mayan” in an arbitrary sense. They claim being “Mayan” in a unilateral manner in order to distinguish themselves at a social level, without necessarily adhering to the criteria of Indianity or ancestral descent, irrespective of whether these are construed in a genealogical, linguistic or territorial manner. But what about the exogenous dimension of social categorization (official historiography and discourse of public institutions)?

Here the issue of underlying social logics becomes an interesting one, because it is intertwined with various socio-historical processes. To capture this intertwining, I use the prefix “neo” in a twofold way. First, I use “neo-” to capture the chronological signification that is reflected in the expression “neo-Indian”—the emergence of new forms of Indianity that can be observed in Mexico since the nineties ([46], p. 7). Second, I use “neo-” in the way Renée de la Torre and Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga have used it: as a way to register the “new identitary generations” born from the encounter between “local specificities” and ideas related to New Age as these are circulated around the globe in worldwide networks ([47], p. 155). The prefix “neo” signals precisely this encounter between local and global and is reflected in the words neo-tradition, neo-religion, neo-Mexicanity, neo-Indian, neo-ethnic, and other words. These words imply the “re-characterization” of traditional practices ([47], p. 18).

5. Transnationalization and Glocalization

The social-scientific literature that analyzes the relationship between religion and globalization often includes under this heading the topic of religious transnationalization. However, while the concepts of “globalization”, “glocalization”, “internationalization”, “transnationalism” and “transnationalization” are all inter-related, these terms also refer to different socio-cultural processes. Globalization is frequently discussed in terms of its impact upon the construction of individual and collective identities. Its effects are often described in terms of “*bricolage*, mixing, creolization and hybridization” ([52], p. 91). The debates about transnationalization stress the analysis of the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, and the relationships of governance that cross the “transnational social field” [53] and its networks of actors.

The transnationalization of religion is also studied in terms of paradoxical logics or “trans-logics”: those twin discourses that involve binary oppositions between homogenization and fragmentation, or between universalization and particularization ([15], p. 38). Anthropologists of religious transnationalization tend to prefer linguistic to biological metaphors in this context. Therefore, the term “resignification” is more appropriate here than the terms “mixing” and “hybridization” (in the organic sense) ([15], p. 39). The reception, reappropriation and resignification dynamics in cultural contexts of reterritorialization are analyzed as predetermined by presignified universes, in reference to Levi-Strauss’s concept of “*bricolage*”, of which the activity, applied to myths, “acts on the permutability of culturally structural elements historically predetermined” [54].

The word “globalization” now refers to the “the economic, political, social and cultural new logics” enabling the “circulation and consumption of material and immaterial goods” and the emergence of

“transnational actors” ([55], p. 10). Globalization implies growing “inter-connections” beyond national borders, and covering long distances ([56], p. 17). The number of “inter-connections” is increased through new technologies—the Internet in particular—but also through “networks”, structures linking places, crossed by fluxes of “persons, goods, information, significations, values, knowledge and ritual models” ([13], p. 244).

In the Anglo-Saxon literature, the term “transnationalism” was coined in the field of Migration Studies in the 1990s. The term represents the researchers’ efforts to account for both the cross-border flows of people and cultural items, and for the social relationships that connect home countries and host nations by crossing over the physical borders of nation-states ([13], p. 237). The introduction of this concept allows us to focus on the links between “non-institutional actors” compare to the notion of “internationalization” that rather defines the (inter-)state relationships and activities ([15], p. 28) and [13], p. 237). “Transnationalism” supports an ideology describing both a political process opposed to the one of globalization and a “quality intrinsic to social phenomena”, which reveals an anti-hegemonic and marginal posture ([15], pp. 27–28). It is later replaced by the concept of “transnationalization” in the religious realm, underlining the idea of a multidirectional process. This allows studying not only deterritorialization modalities, but also reterritorialization strategies and re-adaptation in different contexts ([13], p. 242). S. Capone thus postulates that the “process of deterritorialization rarely occurs without a subsequent reterritorialization”. She adds that, while reference points, roots or boundaries may be dissolved or displaced, there is a concomitant production of discourse about origins, enabling what has been “deterritorialized” to be re-anchored in new real or symbolic spaces” ([25], p. 11). Therefore, transnationalization provokes a multiplication of “reference spaces” for a tradition and its roots, on a background of relationships of “power and prestige” ([25], pp. 16–17).

Because of the politicized dimension of the term transnationalism and of the reversed itineraries of transnationalization, contemporary anthropological literature stands apart from the notion of “globalization”, and its evocation of an upward transnationalization, coming from the missionary neo-colonial societies, which is to say from the globalized centers to marginal peripheral areas ([14], p. 13). Another criticism is that the concept of “globalization” would not let us grasp all the phases of the process; it conceals, notably, the steps of appropriation and re-signification ([14], p. 13). Specifically, the bearing actors of (neo)-Mayanity come from Latin America to the Western centers. The tensions appear in the “transnational field” between subaltern proprieties and hegemonic appropriations. As a result, the concept of transnationalization is more relevant here. It allowed me, for example, to understand the spread of the “2012 phenomenon” from one continent to another in its different phases (delocalization, circulation, reappropriation, resignification) [42]. Nonetheless, other processes of Mayanization, such as “Mayan Yoga” in San Cristóbal de las Casas (México) practiced by mixed-race Mexicans, reveal transnational and multidirectional trajectories, which are more difficult to trace back. Rather, they indicate the effects of globalization in general.

In literature, globalization is often analyzed through its contradictory dynamics. In his book *Religion and Globalization* (1994) (see [57]), Peter Beyer shows the different means by which globalization generates both universalities and new particularisms ([57], p. 11). Chantal Saint-Blancat also underlines this tension between ethno-territorial identity ostracisms, identity recompositions and the development of “global solidarities”, stressing the double dynamic structuring the relationship of religious actors to globalization ([58], p. 77). This tension is, moreover, the origin of the development of the word “glocalization” by Roland Robertson, writing in the Anglo-Saxon social science literature of the 1990s¹². Robertson’s “glocalization” seems to reconcile the tensions between the macro-sociology of globalization and the anthropological perspective of transnationalization. Roland Robertson explains that he introduced this notion to integrate the dimension of heterogeneity with the spatiality of

¹² The debates concerning the origins of this notion are complex and dynamic (see, [59]).

globalization, thus responding to the criticisms of globalization as a temporal process of cultural homogenization according to a model of unilateral domination ([60], p. 191). His argument is that we cannot deny that, today, the local is ultimately the product of globalization. He gives the example of the globalized promotion of “ethnicity”, articulated in “global terms” while preserving its characteristic of producing difference and particularity ([60], p. 192). In this meaning, the local does not exist without the global; they interpenetrate and therefore cannot be opposed, since the global is the condition of a consciousness of the dimension of locality. As V. Roudometof emphasizes in his analyses of the scientific development of the term, the dimension of locality implies, more than a geographical dimension, the idea of a “social space” ever influenced by the global ([59], p. 5).

Despite the criticisms of this term within the social sciences, notably linked to its origins in business and economic studies, and to its neo-liberal influences, the term appears relevant to the analysis of my empirical data. The reason is that the glocalization process implies an idea of melting or hybridization¹³—and so, of creativity—useful for understanding the studied cases.

During my fieldwork, I observed tensions between the frequently mobile leaders and the less mobile ones. There are also some gaps between the discourses about purity and the multiple resignifications within practice, together with reversed dynamics between transnational mobility and ethnic particularization discourses. That tension emerges in their considerations of the processes of internal differentiation, auto-definition, designation and definition of the symbolic legitimacy. Such discussions generate hierarchization among leaders and a constant reformulation of the field. In the background, the question of “authenticity” is always an issue—an authenticity that is crucial in the eyes of actors to gain legitimacy. The following ethnographic examples offer empirical illustrations of the typologies developed in the previous discussion about glocalization and transnationalism.

The common argument is that, since “2012”, the symbolic field of neo-Mayanità has been glocalized. This event has been the main engine of its actors’ transnationalization. Transnationalization has been, in turn, an important symbolic resource both for the process of a rearrangement of content and in the paradoxical reinforcement of the discourses on “the purity of tradition”. Since the acquisition of this global popularity, the neo-Mayanità networks have grown and the processes of Mayanization intensified. As far as I know, expressions such as “Mapuche Yoga” or “Inca osteopathy” do not yet exist; the current recompositions of Mayanità are singular.

6. Data Analysis

6.1. Glocalization in Quetzaltenango (Guatemala)

Into the context of the politicized Mayanità of Guatemala, the Xecam community, a little semi-urban zone of 8000 inhabitants located in the municipality of Cantel (Quetzaltenango state), the “globalocal” [60] represents an active dynamic within the discourse of the director of the *Centro Maya Para la Paz* (“Mayan Center for Peace”), an association promoting the K’iche’ Mayan culture located in the center of this municipality. This tension appears in this director’s discourses, practice and biography. In his mid-forties, Arcadio Salanic is a Guatemalan K’iche’ Mayan who sees himself as a defender of human rights (*defensor de los derechos humanos*). In the area, he is known for his political involvement, as a member of the directing council of the “WINAQ¹⁴ political movement”. In parallel, and without any dissociation in his discourses, he practices activities linked with the K’iche’ Mayan cosmivision, collaborating with Cantel “spiritual guides” (*guías espirituales*). From the 1990s on, he started to travel because he was invited by the solidarity networks of his center to lecture on the K’iche’ Mayan situation. However, he also sought international protection because he was under a death threat at home. He began with the U.S. where he was in contact with different religious-cultural organizations such as

¹³ On this subject, see the recent publication by V. Roudometof ([59], p. 8).

¹⁴ “WINAQ” means “human being” in Mayan K’iche’. This Indian-led political movement was founded by Rigoberta Menchú, Nobel Peace Prize in 1992.

the Powderhorn/Phillips Cultural Wellness Centre, the Latin American-Multi-Ethnic Association for Networking & Opportunities and the Global Citizen Networks [61].

Then, shortly before 21 December 2012, he went to Switzerland, where he was invited for a series of conferences about “2012” and to act in the documentary film “*The Voice of the Mayan*” [62]. He returned to Switzerland in 2014, invited by his Swiss French network, composed both of alternative therapeutic groups with spiritual offerings (mainly women), claiming their closeness to Mayan cultures, and of Latino-American NGO members working in the realm of Indigenous people’s rights. He led ceremonies between two U.N. meetings and sold his K’iche’ embroidered fabrics. Because of the “2012 phenomenon”, which he partly theorized, his transnational mobility has intensified and expanded. While following him—during his Swiss travels, in Guatemala, on Facebook, through written exchanges—I observed a tension between universalization and particularism in his messages. He works with the K’iche’ popular version of *Pop Wuh* [63]¹⁵. He expresses an intense attachment to his motherland, is deeply rooted in his locality and convinced of his mission to spread his ancestors’ message. Despite the death threats and problems regarding the land’s ownership, he refuses to leave the family house, where he performs ceremonies to his ancestors every day. He collaborates with locally rooted actors for the development of medicinal plant greenhouses in the Cantel region. He runs a local handicraft production and has communitarian commitments. Meanwhile, he uses global discursive registers about “native people” and “spirituality”. He travels outside Guatemala once a year. He advocates pan-Mayanist solidarity, creating exchanges with other ethnolinguistic communities in Mexico and Guatemala, and among the Dakota people. He globally broadcasts his messages about “2012” and seeks international solidarity. Observed from the outside, his mobility generates some global and local tensions. It bothers local organization members, NGO actors based outside Guatemala and people engaged in Mayan revivalisms inside the country. Some people have qualified his spirituality as “New Age”, synonymous with “non-authentic”. The global dimension can also be seen in his local handicraft production.

The Mayan Center for Peace leader indeed collaborates with a cooperative of Cantel women that are collectively working for their rights, increasing self-esteem and self-empowerment. These women teach Cantel inhabitants the traditional Mayan techniques of weaving. The project of collaboration between this group of women and the Mayan Center for Peace is to reactivate some symbols from the K’iche’ cosmovision to help the Cantel inhabitants to reappropriate this Mayan identity [64]. These fabrics conceal “codes” and “secrets”; each element hides a story, a meaning or the life of someone from Cantel. Arcadio defines the embroideries, in collaboration with the weaver and the “elders” of Xecam; they rely on the calendars, and on themes and symbols extracted from their mythological contexts. The colors also bear meanings. The number of threads used correspond, for example, to the 5125 years of the Long Count. Also appearing on these fabrics is the “plumed serpent”, the 0 restarting the Long Count at the end of the 13th *Baktun*, the “X” as the letter of the *Pop Wuh* gods, the image of the “sacred fire”, “Mother Earth” (when the neck is round), the “4 cardinal points” and “4 directions” (when the neck is square), the “complementarity between man and woman” (birds facing each other), the “cloth goddess”, “Xel”, the symbol of lightning, various combinations of “positive vibrations” and “negative vibrations”, the “earth and sky duality”, and the number 13 (in reference to the 13 articulations of the K’iche’ cosmovision that allow movement and action)¹⁶.

Once the fabrics are woven, Salanic himself sews additional patterns inspired by Western fashion. He sells them in San Marcos (San Pedro department) and redistributes the money to the women of the cooperative. Other merchants buy them and sell them in additional marketplaces. The profit is

¹⁵ The *Pop Wuh* or “Book of the Events” is a K’iche’ poem relating the cosmogony and history of the K’iche’ people. It was elaborated in K’iche’ but written in Latin by an anonymous author in 1550 before being discovered and hispanicized in 1701 by Father Francisco Jiménez. It has since undergone five waves of translation. The most recent, by Adrián Chávez in 1978, seems to be the most thorough and valid. On this subject, see, [63].

¹⁶ All these elements are based on my transcriptions of the exchanges with Arcadio Salanic [64].

then redistributed to the crafters. Arcadio keeps a low percentage. When asked to explain the choice of these new patterns, he says that it facilitates exporting to the U.S. and Europe. He would like to implant this art in an international market, purchase the threads in the U.S., discover new models, find more looms to develop the work and make it profitable. This is how this activity develops in the center of Xecam, in continuity with and in rupture from the past, under a glocal form, influenced by its director's biography. Here, local and global come together within an activity both deeply rooted geographically and, because of the mobility of its leader, renewed by transnational influences.

6.2. Glocalization in Merida (Mexico)

Madre Nah Kin, leader and founder of the SMT (Mexico), has a far greater transnational mobility than the director of the *Centro para la Paz*; she frequently travels not only in North America, South America, Europe and Japan, but also in different regions of Mexico. She visits up to four countries each month [65]. Her organization *Casa del Sol*, whose headquarters is in Merida, includes five translators, and her books have been published in Spanish, German, French and English. The organization counts thousands of members around the globe. The relationship with the "Mayan" is told in spiritualized terms—"reincarnation" and "spiritual lineage of the Ahaukines", a "priestly" class from the past era of the "cosmic Mayan". The members identify with this conception, or rather with what they consider its "purest" version, by imagined genealogy and not ethnic or cultural identification.

These views are the main factors of differentiation from the other local entities. This original way of feeling Mayan flows from the transnational biography of Madre Nah Kin, who has lived next to spiritual leaders her whole life, notably some from Hindu traditions. The Solar Mayan Tradition was born into the post-68 context in Mexico, first in the shape of an unstructured "movement"¹⁷ with undefined borders, gathered around Madre Nah Kin, the founding myth of the "Ahaukines" and the mythical hero "Kinich Ahau", guardian of the sun in the "traditional" Yucatan cosmology [67]. In the Solar Mayan, this mythical character is resignified by a New Age reading associated with a eugenicist vision. He is seen as an "ascended master" who would have lived at the time of the "cosmic Mayan", a "superior Ahaukine". He is considered to be a superhuman character distinguished by "superior DNA" that he inherited from the "Atlantes", and the elevation and "purity of his heart". Nowadays, he would dwell on the archaeological site of Uxmal, Yucatan, under a non-organic form that only Madre Nah Kin could perceive. In the imagery produced by Nah Kin's team, Kinich Ahau is mainly distinguished by his Aryan physique. His skin is white; he is tall and thin. His hair and beard are golden and his eyes blue. He stands in a Christ-like aura, surrounded by a halo and a golden cape. This new iconography deracializes the classical Yucatan representation of Kinich Ahau: a dark-skinned man, with native features, sitting cross-legged in humble Mayan clothes. This is an example of the interpenetration between local and global.

Global influences are inserted in a local representation by resignification, according to pre-established logic. These logics are precisely those preaccepted doctrines, which Madre Nah Kin has been living with her whole life. Most of the doctrines have nothing Mexican at their origins. In that sense, they participate in the innovation of local representations. For instance, this visual representation of Kinich Ahau looks like one of Saint-Germain, a figure referred to as an "ascended master". Although this figure is also used in the New Age literature, it was initially developed in the "I AM" theosophical doctrines of Guy Ballard, who taught in the U.S. during the 1930s ([68], pp. 222–24). This North American figure is associated with a specific message, the Nah Kin's Solar Mayan Tradition; it stands out because of its insertion into a stream referring to a local ethnic tradition. Therefore, the innovation processes issued from Nah Kin's transnationalism maintain a strong link

¹⁷ The notion of movement is related here to the concept of "social movements" involving "collective action" aimed at socio-cultural change, supported by people gathered around common interests ([66], p. 6).

with the local space. Paradoxically, however, it is not fully rooted in the local, since those processes differentiate the SMT from the “traditional” Yucatec representations.

Along the trips and encounters, Madre Nah Kin integrates new elements into the SMT. In 2014, the Japanese goddess *Amaterasu* became the female complement to Kinich Ahau, the “masculine deity”. Considering both the de-ethnicized aesthetics of Kinich Ahau and the integration of the Japanese goddess, one can see a form of indigenization, the erection of a link between the imported representation and the pre-existing traditions. The story of this integration can be linked to the effects of “2012” on the group. In December 2012, Madre Nah Kin organized an international event in Uxmal. Non-Mexican spiritual leaders were invited; among them was Emoto Masaru, known in Japan for his research on how water and its crystal structure reacts to thoughts, prayer and music. Since then, a bond has been established with him and his Japanese team. Many meetings and inter-spiritual dialogues have been held in Japan with Madre Nah Kin’s participation. A Mayan New Year celebration was even organized by the SMT on Mount Fuji in Japan during the summer of 2014. The place was viewed symbolically by the SMT as the “epicenter of the coming of a full and total love” [69]. But the sharing with this Japanese group was not without rules; it happened thanks to the compatibility of contents. In fact, Masaru’s work on water echoes Madre Nah Kin’s “initiations to water” that are inspired by a Yucatan Mayan representation of natural elements and their guardians.

Nonetheless, the message’s aptitude for rearrangement is not enough to guarantee its transnationalization. In fact, other “trans-logics” act upstream such as the relationship with space and the mechanism of power reproduction ([13], p. 249). Therefore, inside the SMT, the relationship with space is central; Mount Fuji is seen as the Japanese equivalent of Uxmal, the ancient Mayan city of Yucatan. The question of power is also crucial. Before “2012”, the SMT lived in peaceful and ecumenical cohabitation with national and local traditions, but afterward, it was pushed to the international stage, allowing Madre Nah Kin to dialogue on a multilateral inter-spiritual level with leaders from Japan, Europe and South America. Leaders recognize each other at the international level. Thus, they gain more social and symbolic legitimacy in the field of transnationality, whose issues remain tied up with the question of power. “2012” has been and remains an important factor in the process of legitimation of the SMT into the global system.

The general administrator of the organization tells the story of Madre Nah Kin’s transnationality in spiritual terms, using notably the theory of “reincarnation”:

Her—at a very deep level of her soul—into one of her highest states of consciousness, since she was young, when she opens her eyes, she sees a Zen garden. It means that her soul—that is her soul at a certain point—lived a highly spiritual incarnation in the East. Therefore, since the beginning, in her highest states, she enters this garden and says that she understands it as if she had absorbed it, and not only had the meaning of it but also a great code of information. So in fact she has many soul links with Japan, so when they meet, they discuss those links and all [. . .] [70].

The movement around Nah Kin has become increasingly institutionalized. The Kinich Ahau organization was created in the 1990s in Merida. From 2000 on, successive waves of change and restructuring took place. Madre Nah Kin has become increasingly famous for her representations around “2012”; her transnational mobility began a decade before 21 December 2012, in preparation for the date. More and more Westerners were attracted by her message and joined her activities in Merida. Numerous members told me that they had joined the movement out of curiosity. As a result, the network has expanded thanks to “2012”. In 2008, the Casa del Sol Center was founded outside Merida as the place for formations and initiations. The eclecticism of the references is linked to Nah Kin’s complex biography. She was, at a very young age, initiated to various New Age and esoteric streams that spread throughout Mexico in the second half of the twentieth century [71], such as the French stream of the Great Universal Fraternity of Raynaud de la Ferrière, where she practiced Yoga, meditation and vegetarianism, and the North American Metaphysic stream, influenced by the I AM theosophy. She was also trained in “psycho-astrology”, “Reiki”, “lithotherapy”, “rebirthing”,

“neurolinguistics”, “shamanistic trips and power animals”, “past life regression”, “Osho’s active meditations” and more [72]. She is doubly mobile: her journeys outside national borders and her trans-spiritual circulation.

The transnationalization and the trans-spiritual curriculum of Madre Nah Kin, after “2012,” have therefore brought changes and re-arrangement of contents. The integration, halfway through, of the goddess Amaterasu from the Shintoist mythology is explained by Madre Nah Kin in terms of “union”, not “fusion”: the two “deities” would unite without merging their contents [73]. The structural organization changes, not the cultural contents. However, this unity gives birth to a genuine message that integrates the dimension of gender, but also and above all, the prestige that comes from an association with an internationally recognized leader.

7. Conclusions

In this article, I began with an explanation of my field of research and the conceptual issues that it reveals, notably my choice of the term “neo-Mayanity” to define my subject and its frame. I defined it as being crossed by different social-religious processes, notably pointing out two opposing movements: “Mayanization” and “New-Ageization”, which fall into a list of various forms such as intra-national Mayanizations, intra-ethnic Mayanizations, New Age appropriations and intra-ethnic New-Ageizations. I also made explicit both my investigation and my analysis methods.

Then, to understand the concept of neo-Mayanity, I presented the recent research historically deconstructing the “Mayan” category and its “weakly politicized” uses in the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico, together with the political signification given to the concept in the national context of Guatemala. This historical research allowed me to understand neo-Mayanity as a field crossed by two main categorical forms of revitalizations: one a collaborative type linked with New Age significations, the other highly politicized, crystallizing the collective struggles for recognition. Moreover, this work on the “Mayan” category allowed me to achieve two goals: to question “ethnicity” according to the new identifications observed in the fieldwork, thus enlightening my use of the prefix “neo”, and to present, in the second part of this article, two cases corresponding to this binary typologization—politicized *vs.* New Age.

The analysis of the cases began with considering the effects of the “2012 phenomenon” as an initial engine. I showed that in Guatemala as in Mexico, the mobility of actors has increased since that date or just before, in preparation for it. The “2012 phenomenon” was even the trigger for the leaders’ transnationalization beyond cultural and national borders. Rather than studying the global circulation of contents since that accelerated transnationalization, I opted to analyze its reversed effects, which are the transformation processes of contents at the local level. I referred to these effects through the notion of “glocalisation”, a term coined by R. Robertson, but in light of the cases, I redefined it as characterized by a signification of contents through logics of rearrangement, innovation, cohabitation between local native influences and global inspirations, rather than analyzing them in term of “syncretism”.

Regarding the variations in the ethnographic examples, they depend on the different socio-historical contexts and the leaders’ curricula. These different historical contexts influence the production of narratives and imageries around the “Mayan” category. In this way, they affect the way the groups negotiate their recognition and legitimization. The national context factors are also crossed with this new context of a transnational social field, where symbolic objects, being uprooted, circulate, often via networks of spiritual offerings. This tension between universalization and socio-historical particularism is observable in both of the studied groups. The Guatemalan leader reveals a strong activist and associative biography, traveling within international human rights networks. His career is punctuated by social engagements, resignificated within the global language of human rights. Paradoxically, he expresses a deep attachment to the territory and claims a systematic local contextualization of K’iche Mayan practices and representations. His relationship to “Mayan” ethnicity is politicized and legitimized by his genealogical inheritance and public institutions, and their representations of “Indigenous people”. Meanwhile, the life of Madre Nah Kin is characterized

by a hyper-mobility across different transnational spiritual streams and an intra-national circulation through Mexican spiritual movements. Her relationship to Mayanità is simultaneously de-historicized, spiritualized and locally rooted. The biographies of these two leaders added to the differentiated revitalizations of the “Mayan” category from one cultural context to another (the Mayan movements in Guatemala and the less politicized Mayanità of Yucatan) show that, in the first case, the glocal views are used to support local cooperative work in favor of the K’iche’ women and their fundamental rights, and more generally, in service of communitarian, collective goals. And, in the Yucatec one, the glocal views are, paradoxically, tools to claim the purity and singularity of the “Tradition” in a social context of Indigenous heritage revitalizations, spiritual tourism and merchandization of the Maya brand. In this last case, neo-Mayanization processes foster individual therapeutic journeys.

Abbreviations

SMT Solar Mayan Tradition

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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