



The Cosmovision of the Yucatec Maya: the Motive Power for Resistance and Resilience

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The Cosmvision of the Yucatec Maya: the Motive Power for Resistance and Resilience

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A Thesis in the Field of Anthropology

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

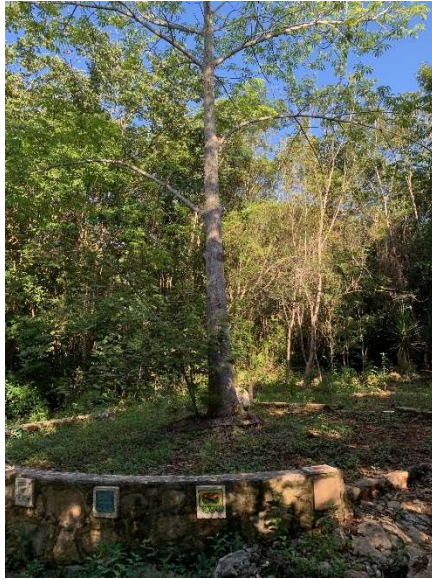
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Abstract

The Cosmovision of the Yucatec Maya is as old as their civilization. Since the arrival of the Spanish and through three centuries of colonialism and conflict, the political maneuverings of Mexican Independence and Revolution, and the incursion of modernity and globalism, their worldview has encouraged and sustained response to continuous and overwhelming change. To understand its endurance and adaptability, it is necessary to accept a way of knowing that identifies and affirms an essential interaction between humans, nature, and the supernatural world. This paper uses this Mayalogue framework of Victor Montejo and other Indigenous Knowledge Systems to evaluate key historical events and ideologies and amplify our understanding of the adaptive response of the Yucatec Maya.

Frontispiece



Benedicción / Payalchi

Neek' (Seed)

My word
is a red seed I sow in the earth's navel,
like this,
so that when my final night hugs the moon
it will be a big tree in whose branches bluebirds sing my song.

Isaac Carrillo Can

Author's Biographical Sketch

In November of 2023, I traveled to the city of Felipe Carrillo Puerto in Quintana Roo for a beginning Mayan language workshop and the annual Maya commemoration of the dead, Janal Pixán. While it occurs at roughly the same time as the ornate Day of the Dead celebrations in México, Janal Pixán's traditions and form are distinctly Maya.

During this time, I first learned of the history of the Cruzo'ob and the Talking Cross. I also realized that my originally planned research project did not address or reflect an important underlying basis of Maya resilience. As I visited the church and cenote where the cross was, as I walked the milpa of a friend, as I prayed during a service led by the *j-meen*, I realized there were intangible and esoteric factors that did not surface in my research and that merited further investigation.

Starting over with less than eight months to go was unsettling, especially with the feeling of starting over and knowing nothing. As I submit this study, I am humbled by all of the things I did not know (and still have yet to learn).

Dedication

With respect and gratitude, this thesis is dedicated to the warriors, the holy ones, the teachers, and the caretakers of the earth in the Maya community.

The Maya are a living people, and our traditional authorities are a present institution, not of the past as some would wish to see them. For them we use this time that you have kindly given to demand respect for our grandfathers and the mechanisms that permit our participation in making decisions that will affect, either directly or indirectly, the life of the community.

As we know, we have ideas and a voice that must be heard, and if this does not happen we are always ready for more centuries of resistance, educating our sons in our traditions, preparing always for a rebirth of our ancient grandeur.

They still make war on us.

*Noh Cah Santa Cruz Balam Nah – Felipe Carrillo Puerto
July 27, 1997*

Letter sent to the Congreso Internacional, “Una Guerra sin fin: los cruzob en el umbral del milenio”, Colegio de Antropólogos de Yucatán, Mérida, July 28 – August 1, 1997. Quoted in the Post-Postscript to Nelson Reed, *The Caste War of Yucatan* (Stanford University Press, Second Edition, 2001), p. 361.

Acknowledgments

To say thank you becomes a litany of the excellent professors and scholarship I have encountered in my studies at Harvard Extension School. Every class has contributed to this paper, though any errors or misunderstandings are my own. I would like to thank Jack Demick, James Herron, Theodore Macdonald, Flavia C. Peréa, Thomas Ponniah, and Nicolas Prevelakis for the solid foundation they provided. My exposure to and understanding of the history of México and its people was energized by the superlative scholarship of David L. Carrasco, William Fash, Pedro Morales, and María Luisa Parra. I learned so much about the place that I call home. A special acknowledgement to the Teaching Assistants that facilitated my learning, with a special thank you to Anoush Baghdassian, Anna Neumann, and Cassie Webb.

A thesis advisor is part teacher, part mentor, and in my case, part motivational coach. Special thanks to Rick Martin for his encouragement in the final days.

Finally, I would not be able to submit this work without the support of my Thesis Director, Lowell Brower. Your kindness and guidance have made all the difference.

Thanks also go to the Na’atik Language and Cultural Institute, and in particular to Oscar Yeh Chan, my teacher of Maya language and so much more. You willingly shared your home, your heritage, and your spiritual world and I am forever in your debt.

My last thank you is to my family and friends who wholeheartedly supported me and tolerated my disappearances in this journey.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

The Indigenous people we call the Maya are found in México, Guatemala, Belize, and parts of Honduras and El Salvador. The civilizations from which they originated are known for their remarkable achievements in architecture, art, mathematics, astronomy, and writing. The Mesoamerican civilization of these areas was one of the most advanced and culturally rich in the Americas, and its history spans thousands of years.

The term Maya is an externally and recently imposed identity. Its origins are found at the time of the Spanish conquest and colonization as the Spanish colonizers classified the regional people and the places that they inhabited. In antiquity and during the encounter, the inhabitants of Yucatán may have shared some sense of belonging among the various communities, but “colonial-era evidence shows that the native inhabitants of the peninsula...did not consistently call themselves [Maya] or any other name that indicated they saw themselves as members of a common group” (Restall 2004, 64).

We see the first usage in Diego de Landa’s description of Marina/La Malinche. He references her ability to speak “the language of the land being known as Maya (*la lengua de la tierra llaman maya*)” (de Landa 2013, 15). DeLanda also suggests that the location “Mayapan” was derived from the term “Maya,” although Mathew Restall, a prominent Mayanist, believes the opposite is true. He suggests that the term is derived from the Mayapan area - near what is now Cozumel (Restall 2004, 64). There is also a

passage in the Chilam Balam of Chumayel, one of the few existing native texts from colonial times, that also references “the town of Mayapan [founded by] the Maya men, as they were called” (Roys 1933, 108). However, today, it is a ubiquitous term that refers to those who reside in the geographical Maya area of southern Mesoamerica. There is much discussion beyond these two data points regarding the naming conventions (Edmonson 1982; Fischer 2010). However, this thesis will use the term Maya¹, acknowledging its challenge for self and group identity.

The history of the Maya highlights one of the greatest civilizations in the Americas and the world. From the outset, archaeological “efforts acknowledged that settlement patterns and certain other aspects of Maya culture shared many features with other cultures of Mesoamerica, and thus authors relied on Maya art and ceramics, or the presence of hieroglyphic texts, to define the culture area” (Hutson and Arden 2020, 795). While it was understood that the people of the Maya region were never a single, unified empire, early studies generalized a Maya historical chronology. Scholars generally define a cultural sequence (prior to the arrival of the Spanish) into three major periods: the Preclassic, the Classic, and the Postclassic (Coe and Houston 2022; Fash 2001; Garza 1994; Thompson 1966).

The ancestors of the Maya predated even this chronology. Before the Preclassic era, “...the earliest occupation of both the highlands and the lowlands was during the Paleoindian period, beginning at least 13,000 years ago (Coe and Houston 2022, 24). The first agricultural communities were settled in the Preclassic Period beginning around

¹ In the Yucatán, "Maya" is used as both a singular and plural noun, and also as an adjective, with the exception of modifying language. i.e. He/She is Maya. They are Maya, Maya astronomy (Na'atik Language and Culture Institute 2019).

2000 BCE. The distinguishing characteristics began to emerge as “the first villages and ceremonial centers are built, and various cultural activities grow up around religion” (Garza 1994, 3). The peak of the ancient civilization occurred between 250 and 900 CE in the Classic Period. Monumental architecture, art, and writing systems were developed during this time. The Maya made significant advancements in mathematics, astronomy, and calendar systems. City-states emerged, ruled by divine kings, and engaged in trade and warfare. During this time, Chichén Itzá dominated as “the largest and most powerful city in the Maya world...In contradiction to the pattern in the art and architecture of the Classic Period southern lowland sites... [its] focus was on the collective might of the kingdom and its patron gods, rather than the power and perquisites of the individual ruler” (Fash 2001, 187). It was a pilgrimage site for those who traveled to make offerings at its underground spring, cenote, to the Yucatec rain god, Chaac.

The Postclassic or Terminal period began around the 8th century. This era exhibited differentiation between geographic areas. Distinctions arose from regional histories mirroring that “it was a complex time, varying greatly by region” (Coe and Houston 2022, 25). The Postclassic Period was characterized by increased regionalism as the Maya civilization fragmented into numerous smaller city-states and the rise of new political entities, including the Itza in northern Guatemala and the K'iche in the highlands of Guatemala. During this period, there was also an influx of new cultures and influences. Evidence at the “late Postclassic sites along the east coast of Yucatán show that this area thrived on successful seafaring trade in the final centuries before the arrival of Europeans” (Fash 2001, 187), which suggests contact from other areas, even beyond the geography of México.

The broad expanse of territory that the Maya occupied is "often divided into three physiographic and cultural zones by archaeologists and anthropologists: the northern lowlands, the southern lowlands (or 'central area'), and the highlands and Pacific piedmont (or 'southern area')" (Fash 2001, 181). Each area's characteristics are distinct, with each area's uniqueness such that "there can be few parts of the globe as geographically diverse as Mesoamerica, which includes almost every ecological extreme..." (Coe and Houston 2022, 13). Geography profoundly influences culture by shaping how people live, work, and interact with their environment. The three distinctive regions vary in physical landscape, climate, and vegetation. These diversities inform cultural production, inspire and sustain artistic and societal practices, and are relevant to studying ancient and contemporary Maya (Reyes-Foster 2014). Each of these areas developed adaptive strategies that contributed to the development of distinct cultural practices and traditions during the historical eras. Any research on the "contemporary Maya" must reflect the importance of geopolitical location, as well as the diversity in language, and self and group identity.

The modern-day Maya are a diverse group whose identity reflects a rich tapestry of languages, cultural practices, geographic conditions, and political challenges. The Maya linguistic landscape is one of the most prominent features of their diversity. There are over 30 distinct Maya languages spoken today. These languages are not mutually intelligible (Kennesaw State University, n.d.), reflecting the historical and cultural divides that still exist among different Maya communities. Modern Maya communities maintain various traditional practices, but many are regionally distinct. Some Maya

communities have integrated into modern urban economies, while others continue to live in remote, rural areas, choosing limited assimilation.

Because of these distinctions, this study focuses on the Maya of México's Yucatán Peninsula, a region home to approximately 750,000 speakers of Yucatec Maya. The Yucatán Peninsula, comprised of the Mexican states of Yucatán, Campeche, and Quintana Roo, has played a unique role in preserving and evolving Maya culture, making it an essential area of study for understanding the Maya. As Castañeda notes, "The peoples of Yucatan have a dramatically different history of conquest, colonization, independence, and incorporation into a larger nation-state" (2004, 38). Their story is unique, not only in history but in the continued persistence of a vibrant and dynamic culture in the modern world.

For many reasons, there has long been a fascination with the Maya. Archaeological and anthropological studies abound, and the academic inquiry was expanded into widespread interest and New Age spirituality with the erroneous end-of-world myth of 2012. This research intends to utilize emerging frameworks (Indigenous Knowledge Systems) to interrogate how the Yucatec Maya's Ways of Knowing about man, nature, and the sacred influence their continued collective view of the world and their place in it. This lens has the potential to reframe ideas and vocabulary. My objective is not to prove or disprove the claims of other scholars, but simply to add to the discussion by demonstrating that the tools we use for analysis can affect and alter the results. As part of the analysis, this study will apply recognized theoretical tools to the new ontology proposed by an Indigenous Knowledge System to examine them within a pluricultural perspective.

Can the cultural representations and vernacular religion of the Yucatec Maya encourage and sustain their response to continuous and overwhelming change through a shared worldview and ritual praxis that adapts a centuries-old Cosmovision to today's world? How we understand the history experienced and adaptations taken by a culture thousands of years old but surviving and thriving today can potentially provide strategies for other Indigenous groups. Developing understanding and deepening knowledge of how to actuate and encourage cultural resilience and regeneration informs potential for world renewal.

Chapter II.

Literature Review

As implied by its title, this research explores the relation between the Cosmovision of the Yucatec Maya and their persistent cultural presence in the modern state. It suggests that the Cosmovision of the Yucatec Maya is an essential factor in their adaptability. Therefore it is essential to understand what Cosmovision is and the nature of its essential tenets.

The Cosmovision of the Yucatec Maya is an extensive worldview that defines their understanding of the universe and their place in it. Time and place are integral components of consecration. Human life is deeply interconnected with the deities, manifest in their various forms, as well as other non-human actors, whose presences are recognized and accepted. The natural world is also perceived as an active participant, in its many forms. All of these elements, humans, the gods, the world, and the supernatural personalities, constitute a continuous spiritual and ritual engagement.

My research significantly relies on anthropological and archaeological literature that describes the mechanisms of time and space used by the ancient Yucatec Maya civilization. Specifically, it necessitates familiarity with the basic structure and mechanics of the calendrical system. This knowledge is critical for the unique representation of time within the Cosmovision. Additionally, the characterization of sacred geography and place is relevant. This area includes both natural formations and man-made configurations of monuments, village, home, and agricultural fields. Particular emphasis is placed on the quincunx formation and its relevance to expressing vernacular religion in daily life. To

relate these ideas to Cosmovision, it is essential first to explore what Cosmovision means and how it differs from other sociological terms.

Cosmovision

Knowing that the Cosmovision is fundamental to understanding the Yucatec Maya, both in antiquity and today's world, it is important to understand exactly what is a Cosmovision. It is necessary to determine how does it differ from the idea of culture and the theology of religion. Because Cosmovision is neither of those things. This becomes apparent when we explore the definitions of both.

Certainly, Cosmovision relates to culture but describing it as the Yucatec Maya culture limits or misconstrues its meaning. Clifford Geertz defines the idea of culture as self-spun "webs of significance...(whose) analysis (is) an interpretive one in search of meaning" (2017, 5). In this sense, culture is derived from the individual or groups of individuals. Man creates culture as the product of his own activity. Peter Berger concurs that "culture must be continuously produced and reproduced by man" (Berger 1969, 6). Samovar and Porter provide a more universal definition, defining culture as "the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, social hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relationships, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving" (2004, 8). However, even this definition of culture is inadequate. Cosmovision is not acquired or experientially constructed, it is an elemental aspect of existence that has existed since before creation.

Cosmovision is not a religious theology. The Oxford English Dictionary Online defines theology as "the study of the nature of God and religious belief...when

systematically developed” (Oxford Languages, n.d.). Religion produces “a tenet, doctrine, or precept accepted as true or real” (Vivanco 2018, 48). Religion is an academic discipline shaped institutionally and intellectually (Zachhuber 2021). While formulation of the Maya Cosmovision reflects elements of cosmology, Cosmovision is institutionally defined. It is not an empirical study of the nature of God, but rather an expansive expression of the divine and the interaction of humans as part of that system.

Cosmovision demonstrates "a set of foundations from which emerges a systemic understanding of the Universe, its components as life, the world we live in, nature, human phenomena, and their relationships...It is everything that we are and contain, that surrounds us, and that relates to us in any way" (Arruda 2023, 4). Specific to the religions of Mesoamerica, Carrasco defines Cosmovision as “a worldview that is charged with religious forces, stories, divinities, and ancestors who created the world and assisted in its maintenance and renewal” (2014, 14). These ongoing process of creation, maintenance, and renewal are all an aspect. The motive power is not human but rather divine. It grapples with and grasps the universe in a holistic and holy way.

The basic tenets of the Maya Cosmovision originated centuries ago and yet remain fundamentally unchanged today. In writing of contemporary Maya Spirituality, Jean Molesky-Poz affirms that “this culture that originated some fifteen or twenty thousand years ago [still] believes and understands that humans and all that exists are part of an indivisible whole” (2006, ix). The experience of the sacred occurs continuously and is the fabric of daily life. A visible relationship exists between religious symbolism, ritual, religious belief, social organization, and experience.

Two critical perspectives on how the Mayas perceive and navigate the world are anchored in understanding time and place as holy. These two beliefs serve throughout history to differentiate the Maya from other civilizations.

Time and the Calendars

The ancient Maya were gifted astronomers who explored and explained almost every aspect of their skies. There is an intimate relation between their mathematically expressive descriptions of the movement of the heavens and the accompanying rhythms of life on Earth. The Maya are singular in their relation to time as “no other people in history has taken such an absorbing interest in time as did the Maya, and no other culture has ever developed a philosophy embracing such an unusual subject” (Thompson 1954, 162). From antiquity, time and its interweaving with the life of individuals, communities, and the natural world in its entirety was a complex and astronomically correct system.

Significant scholarship describes the Mayan calendars and timekeeping (Aveni 1989; Coe and Houston 2022; Fash 2001; León Portilla 1988; Thompson 1966). The Maya view of time was reflected in their intricate calendrical system, which was used for both ritual and agronomic purposes. The Maya calendar is an interlacement of multiple calendars measuring periods of varying lengths based on astronomical observation and natural cycles. The most known calendars used by the Maya are the *Tzolk'in*, the *Haab* (which taken together constitute the Calendar Round), and the Long Count.

The *Tzolk'in*² is a Mesoamerican calendar comprising twenty named days organized into 13-day cycles (a cycle called a *trecena*), resulting in a 260-day rotation. Each day is governed by a deity, a lord of the day, combined with a number between 1 and 13 as a measurement of strength and indication of behavioral impact. The day sign (deity and number) of a person's birth predicted the personality and possibilities of a child born on that day (Macri 2006). These days were also used to identify favorable and unfavorable days for activities and events.

The *Haab* is a count of 365 days, thus approximating the solar year. It has 18 regular months, each with 20 days; this "month" designation is called a *uinal*. Each *uinal* has its own name and corresponding deity. These 18 months equal 360 days. The last and 19th month differs, consisting of five days. Together, the nineteen months total 365 days.

The nineteenth month, called the *Uayeb*, comprises five unnamed days. During the *Uayeb* days, the gods paused, the god of the old year slipping off their burden of time, while the god of the next year preparing to take it for the slow onward march (Clendinnen 1980). *The Songs of Dzibalche*, a manuscript of lyric poetry written around 1742, eloquently describes Uayeb as "The specters, The torturers, In the month Of black days. The time for weeping! The time of evil things! Loosed is the devil! Opened is hell! There is no good; There is only evil, Groaning And crying. Finished is the passage Of one count, Of the whole year (Edmonson 1982, 193). Thus, those days were suspended out of

² Tzolk'in is a transliteration originating with anthropologist William Gates in 1921 to designate the 260-day calendar known only by its K'iche' Mayan name, Cholq'ij. He suggested to archaeologist Sylvanus G. Morley that combining the Yucatec words Tzol and K'in would form the word Tzolk'in (Miller and Taube 1997; Pakalian Group of Mexico 2009). This new word, meaning "to arrange, to order the days," would be particular to Yucatec Maya and has been adopted by most academic and familiar usage sources.

time, outside the influence of the gods, and therefore unprotected and dangerous (Clendinnen 1980).

Given the regular and repetitive structure of the calendar system, only 4 of the 20 named deities could begin the new year cycle on their day and so they were designated as "Year Bearers." Each Year Bearer exerted influence on the upcoming year in a particular way. As *Uayeb* ended and the New Year began, "the image of the incoming Year Bearer god was installed at his appropriate entrance... [the Year Bearer would] serve for the next year as guardian, compass, and clock" (Clendinnen 1980, 382).

The complete designation of any given date in the Maya calendar system combines both a *Tzolk'in* date and a *Haab* date. Both were important markers but "the divinatory Tzolkin and the agriculturally based Haab were two different purposes, each represented by units of days and numbers thought to be gods themselves" (Aveni 1989,204). When these two calendars, the 260-day calendar and the 365-day calendar are in motion (two intermeshing calendar rounds), it will take exactly 52 years of 365 days for a given date to repeat (Miller and Taube 1997).

The third major calendar, the Long Count Calendar is a numerical system that counts the number of days elapsed from a zero-date representing the last creation. It is a remarkably sophisticated and complex system describing extensive periods and was used for historical and ritual purposes as well. Based on the number 20 (vigesimal system), the most basic unit of time was the day or *kin*. Its basic building block was the *tun* of 360 days. *Katun* was a 20-year period of the 360-day measure of a year. Four hundred of

these years (20 *katun* cycles) was called a *baktun*, totaling 144,000 days. An era, or a complete cycle, comprises 13 *baktun* cycles and totals 1,872,000 days.³

These dates, inscribed on stelae (the tall, monumental structures), have enabled archaeologists to date events and places very precisely, with the discovery of a correlation to the Western calendar. Because of the use of the Long Count dates provided “on their stelae, [ancient] Maya priests computed ‘scores of suns’ dating back hundreds of millions of years and, at the same time, forecast future cycles” (León Portilla 1988, 20). Much of our knowledge of ancient Maya worlds is due to the precision of these computations.

The Maya Sense of Place

The geography of Yucatán is distinctive and shapes its climate and culture. It is a massive limestone platform with a flat, tropical terrain. It has a unique aquatic system with numerous underground freshwater basins called cenotes.

A cenote is a natural pit or sinkhole formed by rock dissolution resulting from limestone collapsing. Cenotes were formed millions of years ago by the impact of a massive meteorite at the Chicxulub Impact Crater, an event credited with the extinction of the dinosaurs (Coe and Houston 2022). Cenotes are more than just a body of inland water. While “the Mayan word for cenote stems from *tz’onot*, which means ‘natural well of water.’ In reality, however, cenotes are complex and highly dynamic hydraulic systems” (Martos López 2008).

³ December 21, 2012 was calculated to be the end of the 13th Baktun, and was theorized by many in the non-academic community to prophesize the “end of the world.”

Cenotes are the primary water source in an area that has few rivers and lakes, and therefore played a crucial role in the development of the Mayan civilization. Early Maya settlements, such as Chichén Itzá and Tulum, were built near cenotes. This unique topographical feature continues to provide the essential water supply for the area (Redfield 1941).

Cenotes are holy places. The Maya felt that there was a relationship between rainfall, cenotes, and caves; they revered all three of these phenomena (Kurjack 2006). In particular, "...the cenotes are the places of the rain-gods, the chaacs...For the chaacs have within their power the granting or the withholding of the rain upon which the maize, and therefore, the life of the people depends" (Redfield 1941, 117). The spiritual significance of cenotes was reflected in their ceremonial and ritual importance as "[cenotes] were and remain sacred spaces, home to important gods and supernatural forces" (Russell 2016, 5). They were holy and appropriate spaces to make offerings to the gods, and many of these sites still present archaeological evidence of these rituals and offerings. INAH (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia) staffs underwater archeology teams to survey, catalog, and maintain these underwater sites of antiquity.

The quincunx, a geometric arrangement of five points with four forming a square and the fifth at its center, holds profound significance in Maya geography, Cosmovision, architecture, and community planning. This pattern repeatedly occurs and holds significance in the spatial organization and cosmographic representation of the Maya civilization. Repeatedly occurring in the geography of places, "the form of the quincunx serves to highlight the idea of centrality that is very important in Mesoamerican thought, spatially defining a focal point of the sacred and the place of human perception" (Stuart

2011, 77). The quincunx represents the Maya conception of the cosmos, where the four cardinal directions (North, South, East, and West) are anchored by a central point. At the four corners of the square, “at each cardinal point, a Sky-Bearer god sustained...his quarter of the world. Each direction was identified by its color - red for the east, white for the north, black for the west, and yellow for the south...” (Clendinnen 1980, 381).

At the central point is the “axis mundi.” This central axis is believed to connect the terrestrial plane with the celestial and underworld realms, symbolizing the universe's structure as a dynamic, interconnected entity. This connection at the center of the world “takes the form of a world tree...whose thick, tall trunk grows through the center of all the layers of the upper, middle, and lower world” (Stuart 2011, 88). The quincunx thus serves as a microcosm of the universe, connecting the heavens, the earthly plain, and the underworld *Metnal*.

In Maya arrangements, the quincunx was not merely a theoretical construct but a guiding principle in the planning and developing of living and working spaces. Many Maya cities and ceremonial centers were laid out according to this pattern, with central complexes or pyramids positioned at the heart of the quincunx. The village was designed as a square with its corners in the four cardinal directions, each guarded by a protecting spirit, with a fifth at the center point. The adjoining milpas (corn fields) are also considered squares, with identical protectors in place. (Redfield 1941, 119). In agricultural practices, the quincunx pattern was used to align fields and planting strategies with the sacred geometry of the cosmos, ensuring that agricultural activities were in harmony with the divine order.

Thus, the quincunx functioned as both a practical and symbolic tool, guiding the Maya in their interactions with the natural world and the divine. In Maya geography, the quincunx is more than a geometric figure; it is a profound symbol of the civilization's cosmological, religious, and spatial ideals.

Sources of information about sacred time and space found in the early archaeology of the Maya. Unfortunately, the number of texts from the pre-Conquest eras is severely limited. There are four codices (folding books), written in hieroglyphic characters. Three are named for the European cities where they are kept - Dresden, Paris, and Madrid. The fourth, the Grolier Codex, is in Ciudad de México (Mexico City). Of these four existing texts, “the most important is the Dresden Codex, which dates from the fifteenth century. It opens with almanacs that concern a primordial world in which the only measure of time was a 260-day calendar...A double-page spread from the Madrid Codex, a book that probably dates from the late sixteenth century, is devoted to a diagram that resembles a board game and maps the structure of several calendars that run concurrently” (Tedlock 2011, 9). The Dresden Codex provides hieroglyphic details of the twenty lords of the day. It also shows Venus, the planet, in relation to the four corners of the Maya cosmos.

We also see sacred space and sacred time in the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel, one of several texts collectively known as the Books of Chilam Balam, which the Maya authored during the post-conquest period in the Yucatán Peninsula. One of the central themes of the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel is the concept of sacred time. The text illustrates how the Maya viewed time not as a linear sequence but as a cyclical phenomenon, where specific periods were imbued with spiritual significance and cosmic

power. The Maya calendar system is prominently featured in the text describing the Calendar Round (consisting of the 260-day and 365-day calendars). It also references the Long Count.

The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel also provides insights into the concept of sacred space in Maya culture. It reflects the idea that the physical world is infused with spiritual significance, with the sanctity of places associated with gods, ancestors, or cosmological events. Maya geography, as presented in the text, is not merely a physical landscape but a sacred one, where mountains, caves, and bodies of water serve as points of connection between the human world and the divine.

Time and space as sacred constructs have existed for millennia in the world of the Yucatec Maya. They have been discovered, codified, and analyzed. But their fundamental place for the Maya is not as a historically placed anecdote. They are an essential part of an enduring Cosmovision.

Chapter III.

The Cosmovision and Ways of Knowing

Knowledge differs from information. However, the DIKW pyramid suggests that it is a prerequisite for wisdom (Rowley 2007). While the Cosmovision of the Yucatec Maya has been documented and studied, the epistemology that underlies it and how those beliefs inform both their history, and their present offers new areas for research and understanding. Essential to our knowledge of the Yucatec Maya is the perception of the role of the Cosmovision and its spiritual knowledge as foundational to the Maya ways of being in the world. It is more than a religious practice when "such knowledge reflects the commonsense ideas and cultural resource knowledge of local peoples concerning everyday realities of living. It is knowledge referring to those whose authority resides in origin, place, history, and ancestry" (Sefa Dei 2002). For most of the academic deconstruction of the Maya, the Cosmovision was ignored, with important and long-reaching consequences.

“Cosmovision is the worldview of a society that is deeply embedded in the way in which that society is organized and evolves over time. It is a society’s attempt to explain and better understand all that surrounds it, including its place within the cosmos, or universe and how it conserves it environment. In Africa, like elsewhere, indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) were used to administer peace, harmony, and order amongst the people and their physical environment. However, with the advent of colonialism..., IKSs were not only marginalized but demonized leaving their potentials for establishing and maintaining a moral, virtuous society, unexploited” (Mashingaidze 2016, 25).

These religious constructions of identity and community significantly inform other political and sociological frameworks. Parochial analysis through the lens of

Western theoretical frameworks and concepts can lead to biased interpretations and misrepresent Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

To be fair, the study of indigenous peoples has undergone significant evolution, reflecting changes in academic thought, colonial dynamics, and global politics. Colonial-era ethnography was often conducted by explorers, missionaries, and colonial administrators. These accounts were primarily descriptive, and aimed at documenting the customs, languages, and beliefs of Indigenous Peoples for colonial purposes, using a Eurocentric lens. This period was characterized by a significant ethnocentric bias, with indigenous cultures frequently depicted as "primitive" or "savage" in comparison to European civilization.

In the late 19th century, anthropologists like Lewis Henry Morgan and Edward Tylor proposed that societies too evolved until they were civilized. Motivated by Darwin's discovery, Tylor suggested that all cultures moved through three sequential stages: savagery, barbarism, and finally, civilization. However, even this progression created controversy as "the religious orthodoxy, challenged and vexed by the new scientific developments, reacted to the idea that humans had evolved from a primitive state similar to 'savages' living in the present. Rabid ethnocentrism and religious conceit made unbearable the idea that the 'naked,' 'immoral,' 'pagan savages' represented mankind's glorious beginning and God's perfect creation (Sidky 2004, 37) Since existing Indigenous cultures were often placed at the lower stages of this evolutionary model, colonial ideologies continued to be justified. This approach perpetuated the idea of cultural hierarchies, with Western civilization at the apex, influencing scholarship and rationalizing policies of the subjugation of Indigenous peoples. This period was also

heavily influenced by positivism, and most research design was characterized as qualitative “objective” studies of the “other.”

In the 1900s, Franz Boas challenged this approach by advocating for cultural relativism—the idea that cultures should be understood on their own terms, rather than judged against Western standards. He actively advocated and academically demonstrated "how race, language, and culture are causally unlinked" (Erickson and Murphy 2021,81), repudiating any idea that biology was a determinant of racial superiority and that cultural labels of "primitive" and "civilized" did not equate to a hierarchy. Also in the mid-20th century, Claude Lévi-Strauss introduced structuralism, which analyzed the underlying structures of myths, kinship systems, and languages in Indigenous cultures, suggesting that all human societies share deep cognitive structures. Anthropologists like Clifford Geertz focused on the meanings and symbols within cultures, interpreting rituals, myths, and social practices as texts that could be "read" to understand the worldview of Indigenous peoples. Recently, new approaches critically examine the legacy of colonialism in anthropology, emphasizing the power dynamics in the production of knowledge about indigenous peoples (Erickson and Murphy 2021; Kovach 2021).

The Cosmovision is an encompassing worldview in which the gods, other supernatural beings, the artifacts and elements of the physical world, time, place, and humans all participate equally in the ongoing sacred presence. Most of the anthropological theories that have informed the academic observation of Yucatec Maya are not expansive enough to include a receptiveness and acceptance of their intrinsically spiritual ways of knowing and being. At best, their beliefs are categorized as folklore and

at worst, native superstitions. But to ignore the non-human actors (divine, natural, and supernatural) is to dismiss key elements of the worldview.

The Mayalogue of Victor Montejo

While recent studies have created meaningful dialogue between Mayaness and Western thought in cross-cultural knowledge production, they are still bounded by rationality. Victor Montejo, writing from a Maya epistemology he “learned as a child and as a Maya man who has lived and struggled between both worlds” (2021, 16). He suggests that, for the Maya, “...this dialogue must include the nonhuman persons as part of the cosmic web of life we call *q’inal*, which means life, time, and existence” (Montejo 2021, 11). The religious belief system among the Maya persists and demonstrates its endurance. In an effort to develop a Maya specific dialog, Montejo attempts to "synthesize the knowledge system of Indigenous People based on a tri-dimensional cosmic unity and relationship between humans, nature, and the spiritual world" (2021,16). His “Mayalogue” emphasizes “...the concept of *komontatism*, which refers to the interrelatedness between communities of humans and nonhuman persons” (Montejo 2021, 49). Understanding this departure from the objectivity of scientific materialism is necessary if the discourse is to be meaningful.

Though not as specific, this idea is mirrored by Jacinto Arias’ description of the numinous world of the Maya. Arias writes that “its irrationality is extremely rational for the conscience of the person who possesses it, since, for him, the numinous is something indisputable and constitutes the ultimate reason for everything. It is the answer to unanswerable questions” (1975, 20). Both paradigms challenge us to suspend

preconceived beliefs concerning truth, science, and the possible inhabitants of the world in which we live.

Our orientation to Maya knowledge must also be shaped by the conception of Being. Diametrically opposed in philosophy, “the subject of ‘being’ in Western philosophy is centered on the person as the only living being in nature, with all else being inert and therefore without life. For the Maya, “the ‘being’ is everything that there is in the universe because everything has life and all things complement each other” (García Ixmata 2010, 229). Using these frameworks of human–nature–spirit as we study the attributes, and the history will enhance our understanding of the Maya Cosmovision and its implications.

The Divinity of Time

There is a fundamental dichotomy between circular time and linear time, two distinct temporal concepts. Linear time presents a chronological, one-way trajectory. Linear time also posits that time moves inexorably forward, with a past, present, and future. Events in linear time occur in a sequential, irreversible manner. Circular time embodies a recurring pattern. It has no beginning nor end, and its duration is measured by the repetition of cycles.

These two temporal paradigms' philosophical, cultural, and scientific underpinnings create differences in culture and perspective as “linear time accentuates progress, historical consciousness, and future-oriented thinking, creating an essential difference in ways of knowing. This distinction between “traditional societies and the man of modern societies ... lies in the fact that the former feels himself indissolubly connected with the Cosmos and the cosmic rhythms, whereas the latter insists that he is

connected only with History” (Eliade 2018, xxvii). Primitive man’s circular time highlights the natural rhythms, interconnectedness, and holistic worldview. Within its circumference, human existence is not isolated, but rather bound to the cyclical sequential ordering of time and connection to the sacred.

Astronomical observations and proficiency in the observation of the sky underlies the precision of the various structures for measuring and reporting time. The Maya excelled as “no other ancient culture was able to formulate, as they did, such a number of units of measurement and categories or so many mathematical relations for framing, with a tireless desire for exactitude, the cyclic reality of time” (León Portilla 1988, 13). Scientifically based belief that time repeats itself mirrored the belief that events and actions would also do so. Measuring the movements in the heavens and correlating them with events on earth gave "the ancient Maya [an] image of the universe, their conception of time as something divine and eternally flowing, without beginning or end, distributed in recurrent cycles saturated with ‘burdens’ or determinants of the destiny of man and the universe was united with their religious system and with the peculiar manner of conceiving the spatial structure of the universe” (Villa Rojas 1988, 113). Just as there was the daily circular motion of the sun - rising, moving through the sky, setting, and moving through the underworld - time would also repeat itself on a larger scale, implying the inevitability of all current challenges. The changes and transformations resulting from "this cosmic sowing and dawning provide the model for all subsequent creations, innovations, and changes” (Carrasco 2014, 123).

Seasons and cosmic phenomena have been observed as recurring in a perpetual loop. The predictable recurrence of events, given the context of “this cyclical system of

time gave rise to the idea that history was forever based on familiar, recurring patterns, and that ‘prophecy,’ at least in the Maya understanding of time, was but a reflection of events and trends of the past” (Stuart 2011, 20). Stuart continues, “time was structured. Events and trends of history repeated themselves from one era to another, and patterns of rises and falls were an essential feature of Maya history...[understanding] that the flow of time and history was readable, almost an exercise in pattern recognition” (2011, 24).

However, it is simplistic to qualify the difference in the Maya understanding of time as simply a dichotomy between circular time and linear time. In the Maya Cosmovision, time is a divine entity. Days are not merely sacred in remembrance but rather “the days are alive; they are personified powers, to whom the Maya address their devotions, and their influences pervade every activity and every walk of life; they are, in truth, very gods.” (Thompson 1960,69). Time is not esoteric, nor is it faceless.

Kinh, the Mayan equivalent for sun-day-time, was not an abstract idea. Kinh was a divine being, an attribute of a god with “the heart of all change, filled with lucky and unlucky destinies within the cyclic reality of the universe and most probably inherent to the essence of divinity itself” (León Portilla 1988, 33). Time itself was deified.

The discrete aspects of time were also divined. For example, the *Tzolk'in* calendar has 20 named days combined with 13 numbers, resulting in a cycle of 260 unique day names and numbers. Each of these named days is divine. Additionally, each of the numbers with which they combine also carries a divine essence. Every moment of time is sacred when “all periods of time are not only presided over by their corresponding deities, but they themselves are divine personifications [and] the numerals accompanying the glyphs of the various cycles display countenances of gods because they are carriers of

time.” (León Portilla 1988, 94). Not only does each day in the calendar round carry the sanctity of the day-lord and the divination of its number, but each day also has an association with a cardinal direction and color. There are multiple manifestations that all moments of time are fully divine presence.

Sacred Geography

The ancient Mayans considered caves to be sacred features of the landscape. Many of these caves contain cenotes, which are powerful and important ritual sites and life-sustaining places. Forged by the deities, “water-related landscape features became closely associated with the sacred places of origin (*ch'en*). At its most mundane, *ch'en* (well) simply refers to any water-bearing cenote or cave. But its meaning can be much more profound, referencing the symbolic birthplaces of Maya lineages and dynasties” (Dunning 2020, 53). Some cenotes manifest as and serve as designated ritual sites. These cenotes are referred to as *zuhuy* - a word meaning “pure” uncontaminated (Redfield 1941). For ritual purposes, the water found deep in these caves (*zuhuy ha*) virgin water is an essential component of most ritual practices (Dunning 2020; Martos Lopez 2008).

Cenotes were sacred portals to the underworld, known as *Metnal*, and were seen as places where the divine and human worlds intersected. They were therefore sacred as they “were seen by the Maya as entry points into the Underworld and, therefore, as features that transcend world levels” (Vogt and Stuart 2005, 179). Cenotes are an integral part of the daily cycle where “...the celestial realm is bounded by the arc of the sun from east to west. At the western horizon, the sun enters the earth through a hole (cenote or cave) where it travels back eastward through the underworld emerging from another cave or cenote at the eastern horizon to begin the new day. This underworld is not apart from

the earth. It is contained within it” (Russell 2016, 13). Still perceived as places of awe and fear, one can often find shrines and crosses near or in caves in contemporary Maya communities.

The caves are also believed to be the home of the god of rain, Chaac, and mischievous spirits called aluxes. One of the many supernatural entities, these small, human-like beings guard the caves and cenotes and, therefore, must be ritualistically petitioned and thanked.

Place as Sacred

Much like other Mesoamerican civilizations, the Maya monumental architecture was profoundly symbolic. These central structures were often aligned with celestial bodies, particularly the sun, further emphasizing the integration of cosmic and terrestrial realms. The surrounding structures, aligned with the cardinal directions, reinforced the spatial and symbolic importance of the quincunx in defining sacred space.

The pyramid at Chichén Itzá is famously aligned so that during the equinoxes, the shadow of a serpent appears to descend the steps. By design and with intention, “the orientation of the structure was rotated so that on the equinoxes, the setting sun would cast its rays along the northwestern edge of the structure, in turn casting shadows on the balustrades of the northern staircase. These shadows produced a pattern of triangles imitating the pattern on a rattlesnake’s back. The bottoms of the balustrades were capped by large stone heads of feathered serpents. The overall effect was to give the impression of a feathered rattlesnake directed toward the Great Cenote” (Aldana 2022, 34). This familiar and iconic structure served as a material representation of the belief systems.

The quincunx represented the structure of the cosmos. While pyramids and temples were constructed with quincunx symbolism in mind, it was also a necessary and powerful organizing dimension of all spaces in which the Maya worked and lived.

The geometry of the sacred combined in “quadripartite partitioning and vertical layering [which] are both important components of the creation story and world order; thus, their re-creation served as an invocation to sanctify the utilization of space” (Mathews and Garber 2004, 56). By its very design, each space presents a matrix of universal space and time which “manifests itself in a variety of ways within the daily and ritual life of Maya communities. A house with its four corner posts, a rectangular cornfield, or milpa, or a community plan with four entrances” all express the sacred in their design. (Stuart 2011,78).

The formation also serves to provide important ritualistic protections. The use of the quincunx in “the village, like the world itself, is a square with its corners in the four cardinal directions. The cenote is its center. It serves as a place of ritual around which place identity formed. So five crosses should be set up in each village; one at each corner and one at the cenote. Each village has its protective spirit guardians who hover at the corners” (Redfield 1941, 119). The square-shaped milpa has “four corners [which]are protected by four *balamob* (supernatural guardians); the fifth, the *thup* (the youngest guardian) is sometimes conceived as occupying the central point” (Redfield 1941, 120). Offerings are made at each of the corners to ask for good harvest and protect the corn or other crop. The sacred character of the four cardinal points, often connected with its color symbolism, underlies the entire physical world of the Yucatec Maya.

Holy ground can also be considered *zuhuy*. It is the recognition “that the Milpa, like the cenote and the bush, is set aside from the ordinary life of the village is indicated when the native says that the milpa is *zuhuy*. Everything protected from or not exposed to the contamination of the ordinary, the earthly, the profane, is *zuhuy*” (Redfield 1941, 120).

Chaac – God of Rain, in Time and Place

This four-corned representation of the terrestrial plain, mirroring the same landscape in the celestial world, can present itself in the character of individual deities, giving these deities a temporal aspect.

Chaac (sometimes spelled "Chac") is one of the most visible and important deities in the pantheon of the ancient Maya civilization. As the god of rain, storms, and lightning, Chaac still plays a crucial role in the seasonal and religious practices of the Maya people. Chaac is typically depicted in Maya art with a distinctive, often fearsome, appearance. He has a long, curved nose and often is pictured with fangs or tusk-like teeth. In many representations, Chaac wields a lightning axe, which he uses to strike the clouds, producing thunder and rain.

As the god of rain, Chaac was integral to the agricultural cycles that were central to Maya life. The Maya believed that Chaac had the power to bring both the beneficial rains needed for crops to grow and the destructive storms that could cause floods and ruin harvests. As such, he was both revered and feared, and his favor was sought through various rituals and offerings (Miller and Taube 1997; León Portilla 1988).

Chaac was also closely linked to the four cardinal directions, with each direction associated with a different aspect or manifestation of his persona. These four Chaacs

were believed to control the rains and wind in their respective quarters of the world. Each personality of Chaac varied where “in the north (*xaman*) resides Sac Xib Chaac associated with the color white. K’an Xib Chaac, linked with the color yellow is found in the south (*nohol*). To the east (*lak’iin*) is Chaac Xib Chaac who is marked by the color red. The west (*chik’iin*) is the domain of Ek’ Xib Chaac who is associated with the color black” (Russell 2016,8). Each of these Chaacs is associated with a specific color, direction, and possibly distinct characteristics, though they all represent different facets of the same god.

Chaak also had other specific faces associated with different times of the year. There were temporal differences between “Yax Ha’al Chaak [who] was the god of the first rains and is said in one ancient text to have been born at the start of the rainy season. Other ‘kinds’ of Chaak included what was probably the spirit of misty rain, Muyal Chaak, and also the essence of heavy storms that brought out the first inundations of the year, Yax Bu’l Chaak, ‘First Flood Chaak.’” (Stuart 2011, 71). Chaak with his many faces was a god of both place and time.

The World Tree

The Ceiba tree, revered as the “World Tree” embodies the Maya understanding of the universe's structure, serving as a sacred link between the celestial, terrestrial, and subterranean realms. It is “said to exist at the center of all four directions whose branches connect to the heavens, trunk to our world and *mootso’ob* or roots to the under-world, in many cases by penetrating into cenotes” (Russell 2016, 14). In Maya Cosmovision, the Ceiba tree was considered the axis mundi—the central axis or pillar that connects and supports the three planes (Stuart 2011, 88; Miller and Taube 1997, 186) and holds the

center of the universe. The tree also serves as a conduit through which the Maya gods of the earth and water could move from the underworld to our realm. Among the Yucatec Maya, the roots of these trees are themselves believed to be quadripartite branching out to the four directions. The color green is associated with the Ceiba, representing the heart of life and the source of all creation (Miller and Taube 1997, 186).

The Ceiba is symbolic to many of the creation stories and ‘much can be said of the ceiba because this tree had, and still has, great mystical significance. Thus in the books of Chilam Balan it is mentioned that, as a memorial to the leveling of the earth caused by the *Bacabs*, four ceibas were set up at the four cardinal points and, as a symbol of the future age, a fifth one was placed in the central point” (Villa Rojas 1988, 138).

Conclusion

Discovering and studying the Cosmovision of the Yucatec Maya requires a new way of thinking that produces acknowledgment to a “trilogy of equal power and responsibility in the interaction between humans, nature, and the supernatural world as a cosmic unity” (Montejo 2021, 39). This body of knowledge has been shared in texts, hieroglyphic writing, ritual, and generations through time and space. It exists outside of the Western epistemic principles and must be configured within an Indigenous frame of reference. It is neither a comparative religion study nor a scientific exploration. It is a learning from a new way of knowing.

Chapter IV.

Contrast and Conflict in History

As presented in the previous chapter, Cosmovision was the cornerstone of life for the Maya. Its viability would be tested as the Yucatán evolved through three centuries of colonialism and conflict, political maneuverings, and radical transformations.

A review of history can be divided into three distinct periods. The conquest and imposed colonialism which began in 1527 was characterized by the Spanish friars, soldiers, and civil officers imposing new social and religious order.

The next era continued the established social order but no longer under the Spanish crown as México achieved its independence in 1821. While The Plan de Iguala (1821) proclaimed social and political equality for all Mexicans, “the national patrimony was, after all, the patrimony of only a few...and not with brown Indians...With the Indians came only lethargy, sly hatred, and treachery when one’s back was turned” (Bonfil Batalla 2009, 103).

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 with its reforms reaching into political, economic, and social spheres created a new challenge to Maya selfhood. Under the guise of Mestizo and Indigenismo to establish the identity of the modern Mexican state, it endeavored to erase the Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being. The assault by the Mexican government, whether unintentional or by design, repeatedly disregards the Maya world view and continues to this day.

In all of these contexts, the Maya were the “other” and “the Yucatec Maya history has been characterized by confrontations of different kinds between “the Yucatec Maya and *dzuloob*, a word that can be translated as strangers – ‘the other’ from the Yucatec

Maya perspective...Yucatec Maya dissatisfaction with the *dzuloob* and their culture and administration has caused confrontations throughout the Yucatec history” (Liljefors Persson 2003, 198). Over time, the faces of the *dzuloob* have changed from the Spanish to the Mexicans and global others. Still, they are always characterized as those unwilling to accept and participate in the Maya Cosmovision.

The Colonial Period

Any reputable history book of México (Clendinnen 2003; Fash 2001; García-Martínez 2013; Schroeder 2000) will describe, in greater or lesser detail, the initial arrival and invasion of the Spanish to the Yucatán Peninsula. It is essential to summarize the key players and events in order to contextualize the impact of this intrusion on the Maya way of life.

The initial encounters between the Spanish and the Maya occurred within a broader context of European incursion and conquest that began in the late 15th century and rapidly expanded throughout the Caribbean and the Americas. The first official European contact with the Yucatán Peninsula occurred in 1517, when a Spanish expedition led by Francisco Hernández de Córdoba set sail from Cuba and unintentionally arrived on the shores of the Yucatán after being blown off course during a storm. The expedition encountered the coastal Maya, whose towns and cities immediately impressed the Spaniards. These cities were the only source of fresh water, a resource desperately needed by the Spanish who came ashore to fill their barrels. Still alien to the environment, “the Spanish, who had as yet no notion that water was a scarce resource..., and its taking no light matter (Clendinnen 2003, 9) found these initial encounters to be hostile, resulting in skirmishes that inflicted heavy casualties on the expedition. Already

crippled by an earlier confrontation, the Spanish survivors returned to Cuba with reports of a populous and wealthy land, fueling further Spanish interest.

In 1518, Juan de Grijalva led a second expedition to the region, further exploring the coastline of the Yucatán and making contact with the Maya. Like his predecessor, Grijalva encountered well-organized resistance from the Maya, yet his expedition provided the Spanish with additional intelligence about the region's geography, its people, and the potential for conquest.

The formal conquest of the Yucatán Peninsula did not begin in earnest until 1527, under the leadership of Francisco de Montejo, a veteran of Hernán Cortés's domination of the Aztec Empire. Montejo's initial campaigns faced considerable challenges. Unlike the centralized Aztec Empire, the Maya region had a decentralized political structure. Combined with the Maya's knowledge of their rugged and dense terrain, they could mount a prolonged and effective resistance against the Spanish.

Montejo's first attempt to subjugate the peninsula (1527–1528) ended in failure due to fierce Maya resistance, disease, and the harsh environment. A second campaign led by Montejo's son, Francisco de Montejo the Younger, in 1531–1535, met with similar difficulties. However, the Spanish managed to establish a foothold in the region by founding the city of Campeche in 1540. Over the next several years, the Montejos engaged in a slow, brutal campaign to conquer the region, characterized by fierce battles, strategic alliances with rival Maya groups, and the systematic destruction of Maya cities.

After years of continuous regroupings, the conquest of Yucatán culminated in the fall of the last major Maya stronghold, the city of Tayasal, in 1546. By this time, the Spanish had imposed their control over much of the peninsula, although complete

pacification of the region would take several more decades due to continued resistance from the various Maya groups, particularly in remote areas.

For the Spanish, the occupation of the Maya lands had two primary objectives: “Military subjugation and the so-called *conquista pacífica* ‘peaceful conquest’. The objective of the *conquista pacífica* was to convert the natives from heathens into Christians living in accordance with *policía cristiana*, which we might gloss roughly [as] ‘Christian civility’. This conversion was necessary to incorporate native peoples into the colonial society, for to be a member of society entailed being Christian” (Hanks 2010, 2). This civility reflected the Euro-centric worldview, including Catholicism, and a reconfiguration of daily and community life. It also required a recalibration of language, time, and the idea of space.

The warriors sent by the Spanish King for the *conquista pacífica* were of the Franciscan Order. For such a large region, their numbers were small as “Yucatan received its first permanent Franciscan mission of eight friars...in 1545...Initially, the friars could staff only three monasteries, two in towns of Merida and Campeche, and the third in Mani province” (Clendinnen 1982). The Franciscans' role was complicated, contentious, and violent. The Franciscans were passionate and focused, and the conversion efforts were fueled by an urgency that the end of the world was imminent, and they were frantic to “save” as many of the Maya as possible. The horrific epidemic of smallpox raging through the population did little to discourage this notion (Clendinnen 2003). Their mission of “liberating and snatching away from the maw of dragon...[those] deceived by satanic wiles, dwelling in the shadow of death, held in the vain cult of idols” (Mills, Taylor, and Lauderdale Graham 2002, 61) was directed in the “Orders to the

Twelve,” a document of instruction issued to the original Franciscans upon their departure from Spain. Despite its admonition to convert by word and example, what instead ensued was mostly brutal coercion and intolerance. A primary method used was to gather up and separate the sons of native lords who were then “...sequestered in the schools...to be drilled in catechism, in Christian-Hispanic patterns of living, and in contempt for their fathers’ ways” (Clendinnen 2003, 47). These teachers were then returned to the villages to teach the new faith.

One of the most well-known figures in the Franciscan chronology was Diego de Landa (1524–1579). His legacy is complex (Clendinnen 1982; Clendinnen 2003; Nevaer 2013). Sent to the Yucatán peninsula in 1549, he eventually served as its Bishop from 1571 - 1579. His approach to conversion was often harsh, violent, and coercive, believing that the complete eradication of Maya religious beliefs and practices was necessary to achieve their complete conversion to Christianity. This belief was partly fueled by deLanda’s conviction that the devil had visited the Yucatán, based on the reporting of murals depicting this event at Izamal (Nevaer 2013, 4). In 1562, he led his most brutal inquisition against the Maya. It was at the Auto-da-fé of Máani’ where, by de Landa's orders, a vast number of ancient Maya codices and religious idols were burned. Many consider this destruction one of the most significant cultural losses in history.

It is ironic that while Diego de Landa is reviled for his role in destroying Maya historical texts, he is also responsible for creating one of the most important remaining sources of information on the Maya civilization. After being summoned to Spain to answer for his actions in Yucatán, Landa wrote the *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán* (Account of the Affairs of Yucatán), a comprehensive report on the land, culture,

religion, and society of the Maya. *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán* was a narrative “where like other aging men recalling their past, it was not the most recent years, with their bitterness, rancor, and betrayal, which compelled his attention. The world he evoked was the world which had challenged, absorbed, and enchanted him in the tender days of his youth...[it] is a tender remembrance of beloved things past” (Clendinnen 2003, 119). He provides almanac-like references to the geography, history, and particularly a detailed explanation of the calendar system.

The conversion efforts and actions irretrievably altered the societies they encountered. Their unique role acting “as the mediator between the Crown and violent processes of accumulation during the Conquest and long afterward, [enabled] the Catholic Church and Christianity at large [to play] a key role in (re)configuring the regimes of the senses through which specific forms of power, labor, and life, as well as gendered and raced performativities, have emerged and are incarnated ...in the Americas” (McAllister and Napolitano 2020, 2). In seeking to convert the Indians, they attempted to eradicate every aspect of the established way of life.

The first action was to relocate the Maya into centralized communities called *reducciones* to facilitate missionary instruction and surveillance. Within these locales, Spanish norms of civility and relationships were imposed. For example, “certain procedures were to be followed at meals: the sitting around the table, the cleanliness of the table cloth, the folding of hands, the saying of Grace...” (Clendinnen 2003, 58), actions intended to humanize and ennoble the Maya. Since “the landscape itself conspired to present easy access and supervision”, the civil authority, the *Audiencia*, supported the Franciscan effort of forcefully removing family groups from their homes

and milpas to *reducciones* (Chuchiak 2003) often burning their former fields and residences as they left.

This loss of home and village went beyond the damage of property. The Cosmovision with its ritualistic geography allowed “the construction of a Centre even in a man’s own house...It calls attention to something in the human condition...the desire to find oneself always and without effort in the Centre of the World, at the heart of reality” (Eliade 2021, 55). The removal of the Maya people to a secular space left them without their sacred home.

The *reducción* was the core element for successful transformation. Hanks underscores “that the term designates a bringing to order, and that it had three distinct objects: built space, everyday social practice, and language. Each of these three implied a different kind of intervention, but all were guided by the same telos: the conversion of the Indios into Christians, living in *policía cristiana* and speaking a language apt as a medium of Catholic practice in this telos” (2010, 7). However, the transformation of language would have repercussions for centuries afterward.

The knowledge and records of the pre-contact scribes annotating the advanced Maya astronomy were kept in architectural, artistic, and textual forms and had been presented in a robust hieroglyphic writing system. Obliteration was the first and immediate recourse as “the reduction of the Maya language first involved the destruction of an entire ancient sector of Maya discourse—books of Maya hieroglyphic writing” (Sullivan 2014, 263). The Franciscans then encouraged the production of texts in Latin-based characters, obsoleting and eradicating any retentive knowledge of hieroglyphic texts. Scribes were now taught the Latin alphabet. With linguistic dexterity, they were

able to shift, producing text in their indigenous language using the new characters. They produced Christian, Maya, and hybrid narratives, the Books of Chilam Balam being an example.

By the late nineteenth century, “literacy in the hieroglyphic writing system had been lost for at least a century, requiring modern Russian, European, and American scholars to initiate a process of decipherment. This means that for nearly a century, the scholarship on Mayan astronomy was developed based on numbers and dates, without an ability to contextualize them” (Aldana 2022, 3). The endemic importance of the calendar was reduced to mathematical puzzles being solved by non-Maya interpreters.

All notion of time was now reconciled to Salvation history. Time began with Adam and Eve, where humans were given dominion over the natural world. Nature and all of its inhabitants were no longer sacred but subservient to man, according to the Christian creation myth. The cross and resurrection of Jesus punctuated the timeline, which terminated in the imminent last days of the world. Cyclical calendars and histories were no longer part of temporality as calendars and other time artifacts were smashed. But again, it was not the loss of the material relics but rather the forced entry into profane time. Eliade tells us that “to transcend profane time and re-enter into mythical Great Time is equivalent to a revelation of ultimate reality” (Eliade 2021, 64). To move in the other direction, from the metaphysical to the stark physical calendar and its time, removed an essential part of everyone’s being.

The Franciscans were committed to the eradication of all material and behavioral vestiges of the old religion. As such, any action or object from antiquity was suspected as an idol. “The friars knew what they were doing when they set the villages to burn and

forced the Indians to watch; they knew those locations were thickly inscribed with the social and sacred meanings of a way of life and with a view of life they were determined to destroy” (Clenndinnen 1980, 379).

Ritual celebrations, such as for the new year, were altered or prohibited. Drinking to excess was a ritual part of the celebration of a new year, which now occurred on a different calendar and was void of the Year Bearers or any other aspect that had been passed from generations before. The five dark days of Uayeb were no longer a part of the passage into a New Year. Uayeb had always provided a time outside of time, a ritualistic and regular liminal space.

The end of Uayeb ritual, albeit celebratory drinking, was deemed uncivilized and was judged. The fathers condemned drunkenness, not only as a vice but also because of its relation to the old gods. “All the gods delighted in balche, the meadlike drink brewed from their honey, as did men, for whom it was sacred, purging them to physical cleanliness, and through the catharsis of ritual drunkenness to social and spiritual health” (Clendinnen 2003, 152). The success of *policía cristiana* meant that there were very few, if any, traces of day-to-day life before the Spanish arrived.

For the Maya, the arrival of Christian Spain’s soldiers and priests marked the beginning of the cycle of sorrow, as was prophesized.

“11 Ahau is the beginning of the count, because this was the katun when the foreigners arrived. They came from the east when they arrived. /.../ It was only because these priests of ours were come to and when misery was introduced, when the real Christians introduced Christianity. Then with the true God, the true Dios, came the beginning of our misery. It was the beginning for tribute, the beginning of church dues, the beginning of strife with purse snatching, the beginning of strife with blowguns, the beginning of strife by trampling on people, the beginning of robbery with violence, the beginning of debts enforced by false testimony, the beginning of

individual strife, a beginning of vexation, a beginning of robbery with violence” (Roys 2020, 37).

Time, as understood in the Cosmovision, would provide for them a “comforting assurance that all things, however, good or bad, have their appointed time to end, according to the pattern already established in the past and to be repeated in the future” (Farriss 1987, 585). The assault of the Cosmovision heralded a long period of necessary change and adaptations they would face as time cycled on.

While the friars were converting the Maya, the Spanish colonists and Soldiers of the Crown continued their military entradas from which they realized personal profit and the right to tribute (Clendinnen 1982), resulting in the *encomienda* system. This system of control over the native populations often resulted in marked conflict between the Church and the landowners, as they struggled for power and authority between themselves. There were also moments of internal criticism within the religious community. Bartolomé de las Casas, a Dominican friar, became an advocate for Indigenous rights, citing the conduct of both Church and State (Mills, Taylor, and Lauderdale Graham 2002, 105).

As mentioned, the Spanish Crown granted the right to extract labor and tribute to those who had participated in the conquest or had provided some service to the crown. These were called *encomiendas*. The *encomendero* did not technically own the land or the people but were entrusted with their care and Christianization. Paying tribute to a conqueror was familiar to the Maya. In the classic Maya kingdoms, warfare was a fact of life against neighboring polities and “conquered kingdoms...became new dependencies obligated to pay tribute” (Schroeder 2000, 51). What differed now was that prior

conquests had left the communities generally autonomous, retaining their social, religious, and political structures.

The system of *encomiendas*, however, led to widespread misuse and abuse. The imposition of heavy tribute requirements compounded labor exploitation. In 1542, the Spanish Crown (Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor) introduced a series of legal reforms. The most significant were *the New Laws of the Indies for the Good Treatment and Preservation of the Indian*. These laws sought to limit the power of the *encomenderos* and improve the conditions of the Indians. However, the “encomienda in Yucatan survived almost until 1821” (Machuca Gallegos 2018, 31), where it was a casualty of the period of Mexican Independence.

Independence from Spain

The call for México’s Independence from Spain began on September 16, 1810, but would not be realized until a decade more of conflict on September 28, 1821. Both the history of México and the Yucatán Peninsula become complicated at this point. With a succession of leaders and political philosophies, “the years between Mexico’s independence and the rise of the dictator Porfirio Diaz in 1876 were undoubtedly the nation’s most turbulent times and remain its least understood” (Rugeley 2009, xiii). The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), ending the Mexican-American War, required México to cede fifty-five percent of its territory, establishing a border with the United States at the Rio Grande River. As México tried to consolidate as a nation, it was experiencing major internal conflicts that arose between centralists and federalists.

Once again, the geography of the Yucatán peninsula played a formative role. The mere geographical distance of Yucatán from the capital, México City, was approximately

1,300 kilometers. That meant that the peninsula was removed from Mexican politics. In its colonial time, Spain had always seen the region as a completely distinct province, ruled by its own Captain General and with its own military. Yucatán also had diverse trading partners and maintained significant trade with Cuba, Jamaica, and New York. For these reasons, “this distant relationship during the colonial period inevitably meant that the interests of Yucatecan and Mexican political, economic, and military bodies clashed from the very beginning of independence” (Shara 2014, 314). Yucatán had its own perspective and prospects in the days leading up to and following Independence. Those differences would ultimately result in Yucatán declaring its own independence from México twice. On October 1, 1841, the Act of Independence of the Peninsula, established that the people of Yucatán (present-day Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo) were themselves a free and independent Republic of the Mexican nation. México, not wanting to lose more territory, attempted to negotiate terms. At the end of 1845, the Mexican state reneged on recognizing Yucatán’s independence. By January 1, 1846, the Legislative Assembly of Yucatán declared the Peninsula’s independence from Mexican territory again.

It was in this nascent and independent Yucatán that the rebellion started. The origins, events, and results of what is called the Caste War⁴ have been the subject of many and varied academic studies (Dumond 1997; Gómez 2023; Katz 1988; Reed 2001; Rugeley 2009, Restall 1997) providing much more analysis than is appropriate for the scope of the paper. It is not an obscure event however, as “Caste War scholarship has

⁴ Academic scholarship uses the term “Caste War” to describe this conflict. However, the *cruzo’ob*, call it the *La guerra de liberación* (War of Liberation) and it is now also referenced as *Lucha social maya* (The Maya Social Fight). For the sake of consistency with my sources, I will use “Caste War”.

something to say to anyone interested in questions of rural society, ethnic identity, peasant uprisings, millenarian religions, national revolt, social revolution, and a host of other issues at the heart of Latin American history” (Rugeley 1997, vi). However, a minimal context is necessary to establish its importance to the Maya and the defense and continuation of their Cosmovision.

The colonial legacy established a rigid social hierarchy that persisted into the 19th century, with the Maya people relegated to society's lowest strata. The *encomienda* and, later its legacy entrenched in the *hacienda* systems relied on an informal Casta System, which relegated the Maya to the bottom rung. In the “natural” order of things, “the powerful Christian Creationist paradigm excluded Indigenous People from the Great Chain of Beings (God, archangels, angels, saints, and humans created by God), thus classifying them as creatures outside of God’s creation” (Montejo 2021, 12). The owners of the *haciendas* imposed harsh labor conditions and deprived the Maya of their lands to establish and expand the lucrative henequen plantations. Maya labor was bound to the plantations under a system of debt peonage, with the Maya facing mounting debts and obligations to plantation owners. The truly rich were a handful of merchants in Merida or Campeche. Mayas regathered their society in colonial villages governed by priests, petty Spanish officials, and the Maya elite. During the colonial period, the Mixtón War and the Cupul Uprising were precursors to the resistance that was developing, as tensions between the local and municipal entities and a growing population exacerbated the situation between the native workers and landowners.

The Maya people of *Yucatán* took up arms in 1847, when Cecilio Chí, Manuel Antonio Ay, and Jacinto Pat took over the town of Tepich. The first two years of the war

were the bloodiest and most difficult. The Maya fought relentlessly and were close to dominating the entire peninsular territory in less than a year, except for Campeche and Mérida. These two cities were under siege with the white elites concentrated within their walls. Yucatán, at this point an independent nation and desperate for assistance, reached out to numerous foreign countries, including the British and the United States, asking for assistance in exchange for sovereignty. In the end, it was México that agreed to their terms, and once again, Yucatán was a part of the Republic of México.

In 1850, the Mayans were still at the gates of the city of Merida, ready for victory. Narratives diverge at this point, but E. H. Thompson, a Mayanist historian, relates an account⁵ he was told which has the Maya returning, without hesitation, to their milpas because it was time for planting. This retreat advantaged the Yucatecan Creoles and mestizos, who reorganized and began the counteroffensive. Discouraged, the Maya could not effectively regroup, and it appeared that they were defeated. Until the Cross spoke to them.

While there is agreement about the importance of the Talking Cross as a catalyst for the reanimation of the Maya, there are multiple versions of its origin and existence. According to one account, the Talking Cross presented itself in the town of Chan Santa Cruz. The cross reportedly spoke to a Maya leader, Manuel Nahuat, delivering messages of guidance and encouragement to the insurgents. In another version, José María Barrera, another leader, came across a tree upon which he painted a cross. As the tree grew, the cross also increased in size. Declared as the work of God, they cut down the sacred tree,

⁵ “...there appeared the winged ants in great clouds from the north, south, east and west... When they saw this, those with my father said to each other... ‘Ehen! The time has come for us to do our plantation, because if we do not do it, we will not have the Grace of God’ (Thompson 1932,70).

made a cross out of the wood, and took it to the village of Chan Santa Cruz. There is a version that credits Manuel Nahuat as a ventriloquist, able to throw his voice to the cenote behind the cross to enable its speech. In whatever form the cross was animated, it was and is an integral part of the resurgence of the Maya.

Despite these initial setbacks, the Maya resistance did not collapse. Instead, it evolved into a more focused and sustained campaign centered around the creation of a de facto Maya state. This state was led by a theocratic government under the spiritual authority of the Talking Cross. Chan Santa Cruz became the headquarters, and its influence extended across much of southeastern Yucatán. The Maya forces, now more organized and fortified, conducted guerrilla warfare against Mexican troops and European-descendant militias, effectively regaining and controlling large areas. The Mexican government, preoccupied with other internal conflicts, such as the War of Reform (1857-1861) and the French intervention (1861-1867), struggled to maintain control over the region. Eventually, the Mexican army took Chan Santa Cruz in 1901, officially ending the Caste War, at least by historical accounts. For the descendants of the Maya soldiers, the perception is different.

"We won the war - our grandfathers won it - because they had Kiichkelem Yuum in their hearts and minds" I remember stories about how freedom came to the Maya, about the revolution and its battles, about how our forefathers fought with only but'bi ts'oon (simple rifles). The soldiers of the Mexican federation had good rifles, and we, the poor máase wáalo'ob (indigenous farmers), we won the war - our grandfathers won it - because they had Kilichkelem Yuum (our Noble Father, God) in their hearts and minds, while the enemy did not. That's why they won the war, because God in heaven gave us his blessing and our forefathers were devoted to him" (Anastasio Estrada May quoted in Barbeau 2016, 31).

For the Yucatec Maya, the Caste War was a spiritual victory. It was also the "most important regional events of the Yucatán in terms of the creation of a modern Maya

identity” (Morgan and Leventhal 2020, 515). Its events and narratives are remembered and celebrated still.

Revolution, Mestizaje, and Indigenismo

The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) was driven by widespread dissatisfaction with the long-standing dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, who had ruled México for over three decades. His regime, referred to as the *Porfiriato*, favored the wealthy elite, foreign investors, and large landowners. At the same time, the majority of Mexicans, especially the rural poor, suffered from extreme inequality, land dispossession, and political repression. In the Yucatán, exports of henequen, the cash crop of the plantations, “rose from slightly less than 40,000 bales...in 1875 to more than 600,000 by the end of the Porfiriato in 1910...twenty or thirty families, the Caste Divina (Divine Caste) ...came to control between 80 and 90 percent of the henequen produced” (Buffington and French 2000, 419). The Maya countryside, however, was impoverished, as was much of the country.

The revolution began in 1910 with the call to arms by Francisco I. Madero. Porfirio Díaz was forced to resign in 1911, but the revolution continued until 1917 as factions (most notably those led by Emiliano Zapata, Pancho Villa, and Venustiano Carranza) vied for leadership. The revolution led to drafting a new constitution, considered one of the most progressive of its time. The 1917 Constitution introduced significant land reforms, labor rights, and limitations on foreign ownership of resources. It also laid the groundwork for secular education and the separation of church and state.

One of the motive forces for the revolution was fostering a strong national identity that was unique and no longer associated with the past. The overarching Spanish

persona was replaced by “*Mestizaje*...[which] became converted into an important ideological element to reinforce...legitimacy and underlie [Mexico’s] originality” (Bonfil Batalla 1996, 110). *Mestizaje*, or the concept of mixed-race identity, fulfilled the specific political needs of unifying the Mexican population after the Mexican Revolution.

The preeminent champion of *Mestizaje* was “José Vasconcelos, writer, philosopher, and politician [who] formulated the idea of the ‘cosmic race,’ the new mixed race that would prevail not only in México but in the world at large” (Knight 1990, 86). This new fifth race would integrate and supersede the current understanding of racial identity. It would be “a mixture of races accomplished according to the laws of social well-being, sympathy, and beauty, (and) will lead to the creation of a type infinitely superior to all that have previously existed (Vasconcelos [1925] 1997, 31). Mixed race, particularly of Spanish and Indigenous, was seen as superior to pure.

Under the banner of the 1917 Constitution, the new political regime also incorporated *indigenismo* into its official ideology. Revolutionary *indigenismo* was a national project that lauded the pre-Hispanic roots of the country. The artistic works of Frida Kahlo and the muralists represented this visually to the world. However, Indian in the new México carried connotations of poor, uneducated, rural, and unable to participate in the developing citizen identity. There was a common belief in the importance of integrating the Indian, albeit in an enlightened, noncoercive fashion (Knight 1990, 80). The aims of *indigenismo*, at least at the time of the Revolution, were to incorporate the culture and artistic production of pre-Hispanic societies and living Indians and incorporating these within modern Mexico” (Barnett-Sanchez 2001, 42). Education was the key.

José Vasconcelos provided brief but dynamic leadership for the new Ministry of Education from 1921 to 1924, and enthusiastically began to amplify and reform education, particularly in rural areas, providing schools, teachers, training, and libraries filled with Western classical literature. The emphasis was to replicate and elevate the Western Canon of knowledge.

His educational policy was meant to redeem this noble savage and “[integrate] all sectors of the México Profundo into a society that had set out on the path of Western modernization.” (Bonfil Batalla 1996, 114). He saw full integration into the Universal culture as a worthy and urgent goal. To that end, he refused to provide instruction in indigenous languages and opposed any programs that would accommodate the diversity of Indian regions. His initial educational philosophy has endured through subsequent administrations.

Indigenous education in México is slowly evolving through various government administrations. However, there is still little emphasis on developing or learning about the Indigenous culture itself. The 1970s saw programs labeled “bilingual and bicultural,” but all schools followed the same federal curriculum, using a standardized textbook, with those texts being translated into multiple Indigenous languages for free distribution to schools in Indigenous areas. However, the history and culture they taught was for acculturation into general Mexican society.

In 2020, the federal education system's administrative organization was reorganized to create The General Directorate of Indigenous, Intercultural and Bilingual Education (DGEIIB). They were charged "with creating programs...with cultural and linguistic relevance...in the recognition, appreciation, appropriation, and vindication of

the Indigenous worldview and languages" (Gobierno de México, n.d.). The most recent milestone was the announcement of 180 new textbooks translated into 20 indigenous languages (INPI 2024). Again, however, the emphasis focused on plurilingual development. Throughout the history of education in México, "the national project acquires certain characteristics depending on the historical moment; However, a constant is observed: the interest of the SEP (Secretary of Public Education) during its more than eighty years of 'castellanizar, alfabetizar, y homogeneizar'⁶ the indigenous population" (Corona 2008, 2). Even with the intended progress, the general curriculum does not meet the needs of the communities. Yucatec Maya children learn of their culture as a historical anecdote rather than a vibrant aspect of their daily life.

There is an economic implementation of *indigenismo* as well, selling México to international tourists and visitors. Beach destinations throughout México, and in particular, the Riviera Maya would become world-renown and "over the past three decades, tourism has become integral to the Mexican economy. Mexico easily leads Latin America in tourism exports providing tourist-related services to foreigners visiting the country. Today, tourism also serves as the second-largest employer in Mexico and ranks consistently among the top three foreign exchange earners" (Clancy 200, 128). Tourism is the motive power of much of México.

In the Yucatán it began when a joint project of government and private interests created Cancun. In the 1960s, Cancun was a fishing village of roughly 100 people. In 2024, the population has exploded to 1,045,000 residents (INEGI). Cancun's impact was immediate and far-reaching and "Mayas' lives began to change dramatically when, in

⁶ Translation can be best described as speaking proper Spanish, being literate, and acculturated with the Mexican society.

1971, a consortium of government and private entities began building the megaresort of Cancun, creating a tourist boom and leading to Quintana Roo's statehood in 1974. Since then, global tourism has become a major force in many local Maya economies" (Juarez 2002, 114). Tourists are sold a stereotyped version of ancient Maya life, void of any of the importance of the Cosmovision that underlies it.

The brand establishment of Maya culture was seen as necessary to continue the success of the industry and "...in the past two decades, the tourism industry in Cancun and the Yucatán Peninsula has changed significantly. Tourists are no longer interested only in the "Three-Ss"—sun, sand, and sex—they also seek cultural encounters. Cancun has had to offer a new commodity: Maya heritage" (Muñoz-Fernández 2015, 68). In doing so, they "have co-opted Maya narratives to suit their promotional needs. This framing emphasizes the glories of ancient Maya culture but also eliminates modern Maya people from the present-day landscape" (Morgan and Leventhal 2002, 513). The Yucatec Maya live in an environment where they no longer exist. The Cosmovision's essence and rituals serve as a romanticized notion, based only in ancient history, that is packaged for tourism.

The latest incursion by the government is a regional railway looping around the states of the Yucatán Peninsula. The "Tren Maya" project is once again presented as a necessary economic boost to support and develop the local economy (Fondo Nacional de Fomento al Turismo 2021). Despite assurances that there would be no environmental impact, the 950 miles of track necessary is creating havoc in the geography, impacting forests, water structure, and wildlife. Despite the promised economic benefits, there is little support from the Indigenous population. In the words of one resident, Gabriel

Mazón, “If our ancestors could see what is being done in their name, they would die of sadness, knowing how they have been profaned, prostituted, and their culture and traditions used” (Time 2023). Those who live in its destruction even find the name offensive.

Sometimes by intention and sometimes by insensitivity or ineptness, the political and religious actors in the history of México have ignored or attacked the very heart of the Yucatec Maya, their Cosmovision and worldview. Much like the colonial entrance into the land of the Maya, there is a continued effort to conform the Maya persona to one that suits the requirements of the powers that rule. The Maya have shown a particular approach of adaptive resistance through all of these historical assaults

Chapter V.

Adaptive Strategies

Despite everything, the Maya of Yucatán remain an essential and vibrant part of the peninsula. Their resilience has been observed and “anthropologists have argued that one reason for the survival of Maya culture over two millennia is its marked ability to assimilate elements from invading cultures without losing what is essential to its own. Despite the tenth-century invasion of Toltec culture from central México, and notwithstanding the Hispanic conquest of Yucatán and imposition of Catholicism in the sixteenth century, key features of Maya culture have persisted into the present” (Heusinkveld 2008, 128). This chapter will examine some of the strategies employed in each of the historical eras we have discussed to suggest how they have protected, adapted, and thus preserved the Cosmovision.

For various historical and geographic reasons, the Yucatec Maya no longer practice the old ways to the extent that other more isolated groups of Maya people do. However, if we consider religion “...the means by which people express... and live... their allegiance to an order that transcends human power and promises well-being. (If) religion is lived and experienced, not merely imposed and prescribed” (Mills, Taylor, and Lauderdale Graham 2002, xxvii) then we can discover if the Maya way of knowing still predominates in their modern life, ritual practices, sacred places, geography, and social organizations.

This chapter hopes to identify the underlying values, characteristics, and intended meanings of the cultural adaptation strategies practiced by the Yucatec Maya within the history and societies in which they have found themselves. The Mayans' ability to adapt

and their tendency to adjust their characteristics according to their environment or surroundings have taken many forms.

Strategies of Adaption during Conquest and Colonialism

The arrival of the Franciscans challenged, by their intent, every aspect of life for the native population of the Yucatán. A forced alteration of the two critical pillars of time and space predicated a crisis. The Maya were in chaos as “spatial disorder was accompanied by a confusion of temporal frameworks, born of the confrontation of different time systems...In a matter of years, they saw themselves deprived of ways of measuring and influencing the passage of time...Indigenous time systems could not be instantly replaced by Christian temporality” (Gruzinski 2002, 38). Instead of an imposition of civilization, “the destruction of an established order, the abolition of an archetypal image, was equivalent to a regression into chaos” (Eliade 2021, 38). To return from the disorder proved to be a test for the resilience of the Maya.

The Pre-conquest Maya lived in a numinous world. The arrival of the Franciscans and their doctrine would change that. For the Maya, everything was sacred. Their experience with the divine, as manifest in the seen and unseen world, mirrored the relationship described with the vocabulary of Martin Buber⁷ as I-Thou. Christianity would distance that connection, reducing it to the I-It paradigm. Mircea Eliade, a historian of religion, proposes there is a distinction between two types of experience. The first is the sacred, associated with the divine, the supernatural, and the realm of religious

⁷ Martin Buber, a Jewish philosopher, distinguishes between two ways of relating to the world: the "I-It" and the "I-Thou" relationship. "I-It" engages with others and the world as objects. In the "I-Thou" relationship, both parties encounter each other as whole beings in their full presence (Buber 1970)..

significance. In contrast, the profane refers to life's ordinary, mundane aspects (Eliade 1959; 2018). Both of these scholars recognize a difference between living in the sacred and living a profane life.

Time carries these same attributes. Sacred time is cyclical and regenerative. It is “the eternal repetition...and the eternal recovery of the same mythical time of origin, sanctified by the gods” (Eliade 1959, 107). Eliade also attributes a sacral characteristic of place, with an unfortunate example of the Conquistadors raising the cross in their newly conquered lands (Eliade 1959). Eliade’s philosophy requires a transformation of the mundane to the sacred. For him, the existence of sacred space implies a hierophany, “an interruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different” (Eliade 1959, 26). For the Maya Cosmovision, an engagement, a oneness, existed with the cosmos - including the natural world, the heaven above, and the underworld. Very little was mundane and sacred was its natural state. All contexts had the potential to be sacred, and all actions contained a performance of the holy. The new Christian doctrine reversed the time and space of the sacred and the profane. Now an unfamiliar ritual action by a particular actor was required to sanctify a moment or a place. This was a significant change in thinking and fundamentally redefined the cosmos, again signifying an omen of catastrophic change and crisis.

Victor Turner (Turner 1975; 1980; 1995) is known for his thesis of social drama and its outcome. He describes a four-stage process that begins with Breach (a rule-breaking dramatic change), which subsequently causes a Crisis, where “conflicts between individuals, sections, and factions follow the original breach, revealing hidden clashes of

character, interest, and ambition” (Turner 1990, 8). The chaos and uncertainty “mount towards a crisis of the group’s unity and its very continuity unless rapidly sealed off by redressive public action, consensually undertaken by the group’s leaders, elders, or guardians” (Turner 1990, 8). Redressive Action is the third and most crucial stage. Since the Maya had no access to political or legal judicial process, forms of redressive action, they adopted a Ritual Process. In this stage, there were rites of separation, albeit imposed by the Franciscans. They then entered the liminality and ambiguity of “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (Turner 1995, 95).

The idea of limen as a “universally potent temporality...[and as]...an interlude wherein conventional social, economic, and political life may be transcended” (St. John 2008, 5) is a vital interpretive tool. The Maya Cosmovision understood liminality. They had ritualized it as a natural and expected stage of the year's progression. The five-day month of Uayeb prepared them and the gods for the New Year. That recurring and sacred experience would help them navigate the limen stage.

At this point, reintegration or schism can occur. The positive outcome of the Social Drama is a sense of *communitas*. New rules and types of human solidarity emerge from a previously unrecognized potential. In this new modality of community, a collective action can occur to heal. Turner further suggests that “the experience of *communitas* becomes the memory of *communitas*, with the result that *communitas* itself in striving to replicate itself historically develops a social structure” (Turner 1974, 78). These actions will reaggregate into a new understanding. If we can accept that the

foundation of the new social structure continues to have the Cosmovision as its foundation, then adaptive resilience is apparent.

Resilience, “the capability of a cultural system (consisting of cultural processes in relevant communities) to absorb adversity, deal with change and continue to develop” (Holtorf 2018, 639) would require adaptation and remembrance. The Cosmovision would be recorded in the new writing. The legacy of the burned texts would be recreated and veiled in new literature, The Books of Chilam Balam. A combination of traditional beliefs overlaid on Christian and Spanish colonial ideas, the texts include historical chronicles, prophecies, mythological narratives, medical and botanical knowledge, calendrical and astronomical information, and Christian religious teachings adapted to Maya beliefs. The preservation of “aspects of the unified pre-Conquest Maya view of time, religion, and spatial planning” (Paxton 2001, 191) could be passed to another generation.

But there was a subversive literary style in the writing. Written for a specific audience, “the enigmatic surfaces presented by the Books of Chilam Balam are not solely due to the deficiencies of copyists and the uncertainties of translation: they are, deliberately, gnomic. They are texts designed to be elucidated by skilled oral performers. 'Still, he who comes of our lineage will know it, one of us who are Maya men. He will know how to explain these things when he reads what is here, sings the Chilam Balam of Chumayel'” (Clendinnen 1980, 390). There were subtle allusions that only spoke to those who were Maya, ritually participating in *communitas*.

The Talking Cross and the *Cruzo'ob*

There is a distinct *macehual* or *cruzo'ob* community and religious practice, which is the "dominating religion in the local area of the southeastern part of the Yucatán peninsula. Religious shrines are found in Tulum, Chumpom, X-Cacal Guardia, and in Cancah Veracruz" (Liljefors Persson 2003, 209), with the central cross in Chan Santa Cruz at the original site. Thus, the quincuncial four corners with a center are preserved. There are specific churches, although much ritual practice occurs outside of them. Their clergy consists of non-celibate priests and acolytes who conduct rituals from the Book of Prayers, *A'almaj T'aan*, in Maya, Spanish, and Latin.

The Talking Cross was a principal actor during the Social War. During that time, the rebels organized a religious practice dedicated to the cross. However, the Maya Cross was not a product of that time nor of the Franciscan missionaries. It symbolized the axis mundi, represented the centrality of the cosmos, and celebrated the ceiba as the world tree well before pre-Columbian times. The crosses are green, as they are believed to be living beings, supernatural entities that are spiritual and significant. In one study, Miguel Astor Aguilera found that "the history of the Caste War demonstrates that the confiscation and destruction of the crosses has not caused them to be silenced. My preliminary research indicates that there [are] still active communicating crosses" (Astor Aguilera 2004, 28).

Because the cross is the preeminent symbol of Christianity, many assume that this is a syncretic artifact. The *Oxford Dictionary of Cultural Anthology* defines syncretism as "the blending of cultures, typically during periods when people from two or more cultures are in regular interaction. In most cases, a dominant culture may provide a greater share of cultural elements, patterns, and themes than the other, but many elements

and patterns from both cultures can be observed... anthropologists have often used it to refer to religion” (2018, 205). In the specific case of the Maya cross, this is not the case.

The implication of syncretism also implies that the interpenetration fundamentally changes the belief system, with the result a hybrid that differs because of exchange. This amalgamation is for "those in the liberal, scholarly traditions of comparison [viewed] as the path to an essential spiritual truth that is universally, if imperfectly expressed in its local variation" (Martin 2000, 280). Much of post-conquest Mesoamerica exhibits instances of syncretism as “the majority of the most important folk institutions in Mesoamerica are syncretic" (Nutini 2001, 180),

However, the Cosmovision of the Maya evidenced in the religion of the *Crucero'ob* and Christianity/Catholicism clash in some important and fundamental beliefs, most notably in the divinities and in terms of the animistic connection with the natural and supernatural beings. So, while the symbols and rituals may have syncretic elements, the religion does not. It is an affirmation and advocacy of the relationship between humans, nature, and the spiritual world, which includes non-human participants and a radical assertion that the Cosmovision can survive in the modern world.

Adaption to *Mestizaje* and *Indigenismo*

Modernity makes the adaptive process more complex and more global. An unavoidable interaction among our collective identities and stories requires a more extensive response. How can the Yucatec Maya protect and practice Cosmovision in today's world? Carlos Fuentes poetically answers that “the answer is fleeting and mutable; its name is Myth, its name is Magic, its name is The Sacred. Can it someday also be named Justice?... Magical reality makes Indians visible to themselves; the

possibility of justice can also make them visible both to themselves and to others” (1996, 28). The encroachment of the modern world into the Maya realm requires them to have more than just a peripheral existence. It requires a potent voice and effective strategy to be seen. It requires activism.

Justice and genuine respect can be sought through the social and cultural expression of the many mediums of artistic expression and channels of communication. Art and political activism are very different strategies, but they can have shared goals. The relation is complex as it exhibits “a power struggle of defining, interpreting, giving meaning, and ultimately shaping the world. Both can be a reactionary or revolutionary force, an art/act of conformity, or an art/act of dissent” (Vella 2023, 12). Artistic expression is now recognized as a critical performance of the Yucatec Maya and an assertion of the Cosmovision in the world. Art, in its many forms, can challenge a power relation. It is “...only recently [that] Westerners have become aware that what they have to say about the history and cultures of ‘subordinate’ peoples is challengeable by the people themselves, people who a few years back were simply incorporated, culture, land, history, and all, into the great Western empires, and their disciplinary discourses” (Said 1994, 191). Art provides a compelling and intimate tool for change.

The emerging voice of the Maya community of artists reaffirms the knowledge and importance of their Cosmovision and way of living in the world. The literary community has been formative and “since the 1980s, Mayas in the Yucatán Peninsula have produced a literary canon that seeks to distance itself from Indigenismo, or literature about the Indigenous world by non-Indians. This literary canon, which ranges from poetry to theater, songs, prayers, narrative, testimonies, and legends, is an attempt by the

Mayas to arm and establish their own literary and cultural authority” (del Valle Escalante 2014, 50). Responding to the Mexican nation-state’s policy of *indigenismo* and acculturation, the authors and artists reveal the uniqueness of the Maya and their world.

The multitude of creators spans all genres. Authors and poets, many nationally and internationally recognized, tell stories, shared in their language, that give us a new and intimate perspective of the world and our place in it. The music of Maya Pax, which originated in the Caste War, is now on stage with rappers in Yucatec Maya, creating a continuation of identity.

A recent example of art expressing this cultural authority is found in sculpture and a Battle of the Gods. A statue of Poseidon was erected on the beaches of Progreso, Yucatán. Residents claimed that an angry Chaac sent the heavy rains from Hurricane Beryl. In response to the overwhelming objection and the memes and hashtags of #ChaacvsPoseidon, a neighboring city commissioned a statue of Chaac. The three-meter-high fiber-glass sculpture was installed in August of 2024 (Garza 2024).

A vital art form in the Maya canon is storytelling. There is a tradition of Yucatec Maya oral performance as a conduit to transmit knowledge and a way of knowing (Worley 2013). Allen F. Burns describes the narrative form “as a type of conversation” with a dependence on all parties participating (Burns 1983). Unlike the written form, “the participatory nature of such performances and the agency in them are among the foremost things lost when these are translated into print” (Worley 2013, 21). It also requires a pivot from Eurocentric epistemologies “by acknowledging magical thinking as an alternate system of knowledge” (González-Martin 2021, 30), for the narrations often reflect the Cosmovision with all of its non-human participants.

Community, *el pueblo*, is fundamental to Maya life. In our discussion of the Mayalogue in Chapter Three, Cosmovision was positioned as the comprehensive view of life as a community of beings and their relationships. Individuals and groups see themselves as an integral part of the whole. However, the physical boundaries of a village have long been broken down. Communication platforms, migration, and other forces have reshaped the definition of *el pueblo* to “a form of community and a collective social and political subject” (Eiss 2010, 11). The inhabitants of the Cosmovision have responded by redefining community into three new geographies: local, global, and online.

Locally, organizations that promote and embrace Maya values have proliferated (See Appendix 1 for examples). They are concerned with far-ranging initiatives, including beekeeping and horticulture, language, healing arts, traditional arts, and environmental activism. One such organization, *U Kúuchil K Ch'i'lbaló*, whose stated mission is “to contribute to the dignified life of the Mayan people, valuing the ancestral knowledge that is safeguarded by grandmothers and grandfathers, promoting the meeting and exchange of knowledge between them, and between girls, boys, and young people” (CITSAC - Centro de Investigación en Tecnologías y Saberes Comunitarios, n.d.). They offer many workshops and gatherings, convinced that education of the young and the old must be provided given the void that exists in the schools. Their physical location, a combination of traditional building and outside space, also displays informational placards educating the next generation about the Caste War, including the role of women, and the impending threats facing the community today. One poster reads, “Tourism. In 1940 our autonomy was dismantled with the agrarian distribution of Mexico, in 1970 the Cancún project was created that took away our food self-sufficiency and made us

dependent on tourism. In 2018 the poorly named Tren Maya will exacerbate the devastating model of Cancun and the Riviera Maya. We Mayans will have to overcome with our resistance and rebellion, because we continue to carry the seed of resistance and rebellion and dignity”. Grounding in the Cosmovision and heritage, the organizations feel it imperative to aggressively defend the natural world, even while the grandmothers teach traditional embroidery to the young students.

Throughout history, the world of the Mayas comprised numerous geographic and linguistic communities that did not see themselves as a centralized body of people and culture. But given the pressure of external forces that is changing and “the current revitalization of Maya culture reflects also the continental mobilization of Indigenous people seeking self-determination on the American continent. On many different levels - cultural, linguistic, political, and religious - Maya are participating in the process of unifying the different Maya peoples into a pan-Maya movement for cultural revitalization and resurgence in the Mayab’, the Mayan-speaking region” (Montejo 2005, 16). A shared Cosmovision and worldview unites them. Their combined voices have become a vocal force in protecting the planet. The motivation reflects the continuing colonial/religious conflict that “for those of us who belong to the Judeo-Christian tradition, the world is at our service; for the Indians of the entire continent, on the other hand, the earth is alive, it is a living being, and from this condition many commitments arise for man, who is at the service of the world. For indigenous peoples, their relationship with the earth is very precise: to help in its conservation, in its life” (Montemayor 2000, 98). Driven by belief and ways of knowing, the Maya once again oppose the Christian ethic of man’s

domination over nature. Maya are environmental activists, driven to protect their fellow inhabitants, both human and non-human in the world.

The world of the Maya has expanded as it adeptly embraces the modern platforms of communication and interaction. Numerous grassroots efforts exist to revitalize Yucatec Maya and inform about history, culture, and belief in social media. In contrast to the limitations of institutional and traditional structures, Facebook, Instagram, online radio and all the other internet possibilities provide a far-reaching platform for connection, education, and activism, particularly among youth and other residents of the diasporic Maya world.

The ability to change and adapt behaviors and strategies is the key to Maya resilience. The core beliefs have not been affected by time or incidents. It is only the response that continues to change and adapt to whatever next threat is on the horizon of time. After all, time, in its circularity will eventually come around again.

Chapter VI.

Conclusion

This study attempted to interrogate how the Yucatec May have survived, endured, and thrived through centuries of political and religious authority and social transition. It examined the historical contexts, cultural representations, and vernacular religion of the Yucatec Maya, primarily expressed through the Cosmovision. Traditional and emerging frameworks were applied to interpret a worldview and ritual praxis that adapts a centuries-old Cosmovision to today's world to understand the response to continuous and overwhelming change.

It is intended to contribute to the literature regarding the spiritual conquest of the Yucatec Maya and suggest and question assumptions that, despite its horrific methods, it completely vanquished the metaphysics underlying Cosmovision. We can expand our understanding by readjusting known lenses and adding new insight. By revisiting our vocabulary we can further eradicate any incorrect, biased, or inadequate conclusions. The prevailing logic of the conquest and beyond should be framed as the clash of two equal and legitimate belief systems. For the Yucatec Maya example, we see a failed or at least, limited process of conversion to Christianity. The Maya adapted under duress; there was not an epiphanic change.

As participant observers, our vocabulary is a source of distortion. The use of "magical" or "shaman" immediately implies archaic and irrational, and therefore not intelligent. To speak of "animism" or "non-human actors" is fanciful and unreal. When we research "the Cult of the Talking Cross" we unconsciously overlay perceptions of

extreme, marginal, or strange; all these casualties resulting from a poor translation of “*Culto de la cruz parlante*.”

“Religion” is another term that carries multiple inherited meanings. It implies a hierarchy of legitimacy. Mirroring scientific classification, “the most significant shift...[was] when people began to use *religion* as a genus of which Christian and non-Christian groups were species...The concept *religion* understood as a social genus was increasingly put to use by to European Christians as they sought to categorize the variety of cultures they encountered as their empires moved into the Americas” (Schilbrack 2022). We can call it “folk” or “popular” religion, but the implication is still the same. It is a belief system that is subordinate to “real” religions.

The most difficult of terms and theoretical frameworks for this study is “syncretism.” In the case of the Maya Cosmovision and Catholicism, it is a standard adjective and the highly synchronistic nature of Catholicism in the Maya region is equated with the Maya religion, based on the Cosmovision. However, they are not the same. A far better vernacular would be to discuss the Mayan integration of Catholic ritual practices into their cosmology and worldview. From the beginning, the Maya adopted elements of the Spanish Catholicism into their practice, but they did not necessarily surrender their belief. The rituals may have become more syncretic, but the exclusivity required by the new god was not really recognized.

When we consider that the Cosmovision housed a pantheistic system, it is understandable that the Franciscans' new Christian god and saints could be easily added. Keep in mind that the language barrier made learning of the new gods primarily a visual exercise. The Maya practiced processional rituals, so including these new deities would

not require effort or a profound profession of faith. They could acquiesce without much difficulty.

The Franciscans understood the importance of space as holy. It was usual for them to build their new churches and monasteries on top of former temple sites. Izamal is an example. Izamal was a temple to the Sun God, Kinich Ahau, and was a site for pilgrimage even in the early days of the conquest. Father de Landa was well aware of the significance and “built a massive monastery to Saint Anthony atop one of [the] structures” (DeLanda 2013, 112). This monastery is now the “Virgin of Izamal” shrine. The Izamal Virgin became known for her many miracles, and the church that houses her is a place of pilgrimage for Catholics. The shrine was visited by Pope John Paul II in 1993. The Virgin of Izamal is proclaimed the patron of Yucatán, and her feast day aligns with a major Catholic celebration of the Immaculate Conception. But it suggests that the occupant of the holy ground could have evolved as a hierophantic detail rather than an expression of belief.

Consider for a moment transubstantiation, a ritual that changes an inert object (bread and wine) into the body and blood of Christ. This is a critical doctrine of faith in Catholicism. Even a theological explanation today requires eloquence. Yet for the Yucatec Maya, the possibility of that transformation was no more miraculous than the sacredness of a cenote.

And in a context where the Catholic Bishop believed that the physical form of the devil visited the Yucatán, it is understandable that much of the Catholic message was accepted by the Maya as different, but viable.

Certainly, over time, those who identify as Catholic have aligned more closely with its theology, and it is undoubtedly a syncretic practice. However, there is another expression of belief that is not syncretically Catholic, that of the *Cruzo'ob*. It is important to see the distinction. It would require further study to understand how much of the population falls into which definition.

Vocabulary in an unfamiliar or second language can also be a source of distortion, particularly in understanding the nuance in a language such as Yucatec Maya. The distinction between identities of “*Maaya Wiinik*,” “*Maya Macehual*,” “*Cruzo'ob*,” and “*Maya mestizo*” is nuanced and rarely made in English translations.

The study of Indigenous systems requires that the bias toward our knowledge systems should be reviewed. Rationalism, as the source of knowledge, strips, the world of anything that cannot be seen, including many traditional religious systems. Cosmovision is reduced, at best, to faith, but more likely a superstition or psychological model constructed to explain the world outside of the known world. Scholars like Montejo are emerging, and it is essential that these first voices are indigenous. However, they should not be parked on the periphery as “alternate” views.

Conjointly we need to revisit our research methods. The production of a thick, rich description is still a function of recording and compiling observations. Description can never be neutral when each word choice carries private meaning. Observation leaves little possibility for imagination of other worlds or supernatural inhabitants. We should not perform dispassionate anthropology, but rather engage in “the most fascinating, bizarre, disturbing, and necessary form of witnessing left to us at the end of the twentieth century. As a mode of knowing that depends on the particular relationship formed by a

particular anthropologist with a particular set of people in a particular time and place, anthropology has always been vexed about the question of vulnerability” (Behar 2022, 4). To be vulnerable and influenced by our observations will create a positive distortion. If academic study aims to learn and not teach, then different methods and approaches will be necessary. We will need to observe and participate with different eyes and hearts.

Somewhere between the caption of “folk culture” and the emblem of “resistance” is an explanation of endurance. The legacy of adaptation and selective integration is the motive power for resilience. If we can question our comfortable frameworks and apply them in new ways, there is an expansion in the possibility of knowing. The expansion of traditional theory, vocabulary and practice could benefit all studies, not just in the Indigenous realm.

Appendix 1.

Yucatec Maya Organizations on Social Media

For many of the communities or organizations of the Yucatec Maya, social media platforms have a significant reach and amplification of their voice without cost. As “grassroots” groups, it is often the only means of communication and expression. Given the IRB complexities of citing such sources, I have not included their information and wisdom as part of this study. However, I would like to recognize them and thank them in their efforts to build a world aligned with the Cosmovision..

Facebook

Baktún Pueblo Maya

Belize Yucatec Maya

Centro Comunitario U ku'uchil k Ch'i'ibalo'on

Maíz Criollo Kantunil

Mayas Cruzo'ob

Mayas Cruzo'ob (K'atabche')

Somos Mayas

Tsolkiin Noticias

Uyoolche AC

IG

vazquezcetina

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