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Revitalisation or re-folklorisation? The aesthetics and politics of the New Maya Song

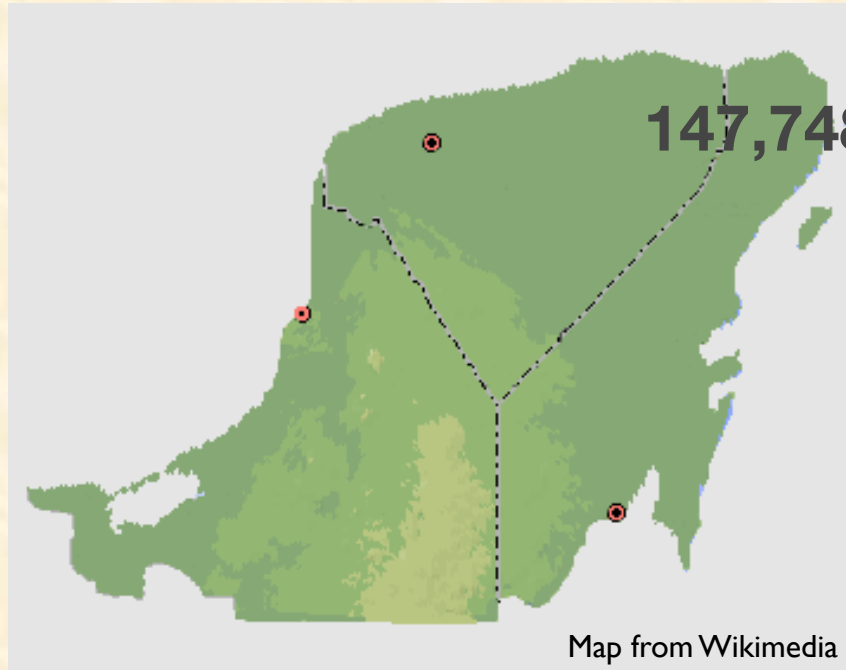
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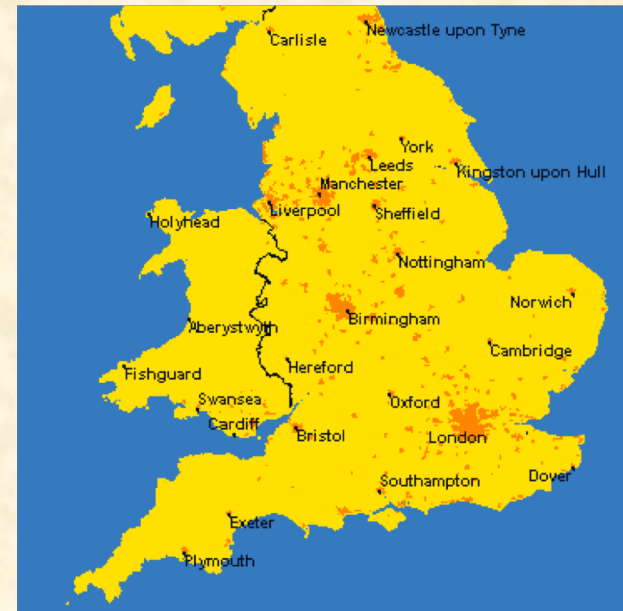
Engaged Humanities conference
15-16 November 2017; Warsaw, Poland

[Yukatek] Maya World



151,058 km² (58,324 sq mi)

Larger than Bangladesh, Greece,
Nicaragua, Bulgaria, Guatemala,
Hungary, etc.

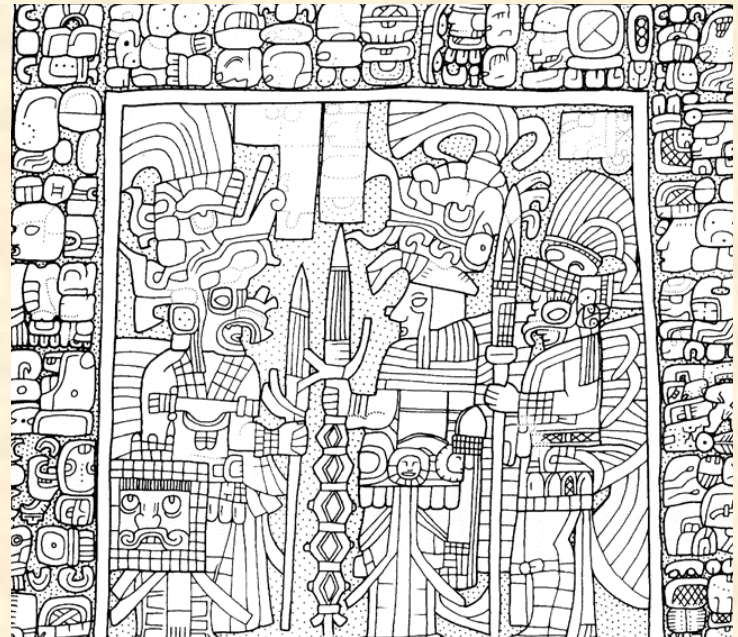


Map from <http://www.radio-now.co.uk/main.htm>



U K'áajlay Maaya T'aan I

- ✓ Yucatec Branch: Mopan, Lacandon and Itza.
- ✓ Written in Maya hieroglyphs in Dzibichaltun, Chichen (Lacadena)
- ✓ Pre-colonial variants: Canpech, Uaymil.
- ✓ Language name was recorded as “Maya” since the 16th century.



Halakal Lintel; Ek Balam, Yuc. (from Voss and Kremer 2000:159 via ResearchGate.Net)

U K'áajlay Maaya T'aan II

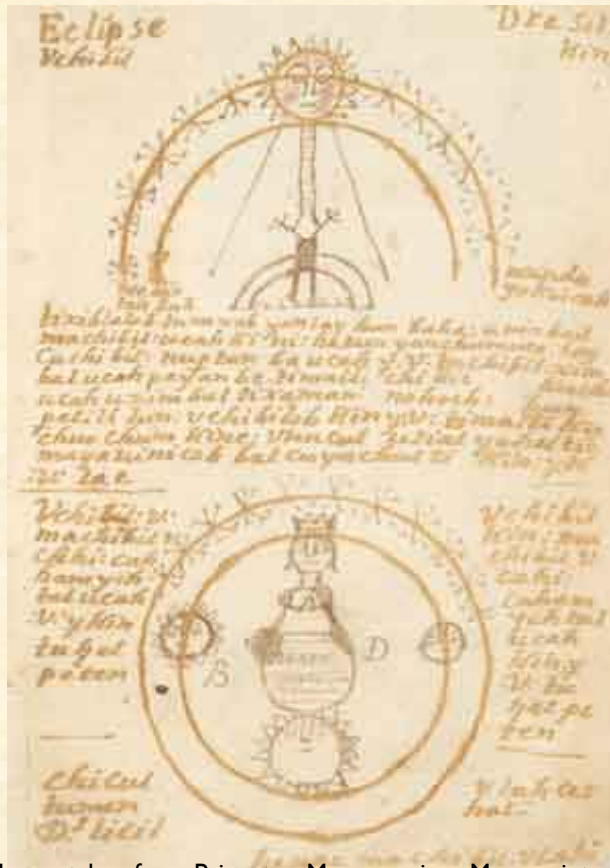
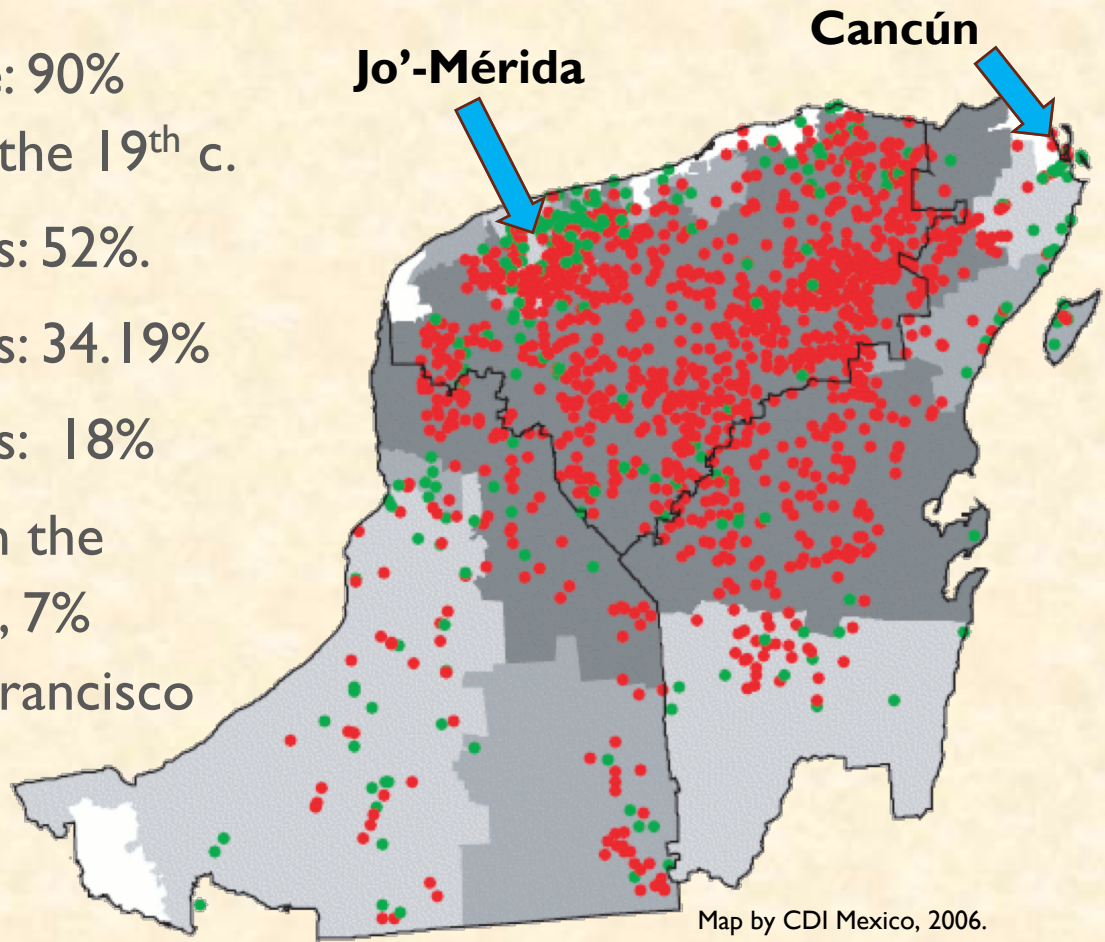


Image taken from Princeton Mesoamerican Manuscripts (C0940): <http://libweb5.princeton.edu/mssimages/meso-princeton1.html>

- ✓ Maya kept by Spanish religious and civil authorities for different purposes.
- ✓ Mayas escaping colonial control continued writing in Latin characters (Chilam Balam).
- ✓ Maya continued as lingua franca in the whole region until 1970s.

Displacement of Maya

- ❑ Historians estimate: 90% speakers by end of the 19th c.
- ❑ Official 1910 census: 52%.
- ❑ Official 1990 census: 34.19%
- ❑ Official 2015 census: 18%
- ❑ 796,406 speakers in the country: 9% Merida, 7% Cancun & 2% San Francisco Bay Area.



Map by CDI Mexico, 2006.



Territorial Displacement



- Linguistic rights recognized but not right to consultation or to own government
- "Agreement for the Sustainability of the Yucatan Peninsula" (ASPY): land grabbing & green washing?
- Vast areas earmarked for GMO cultivation of soy beans and maize.

From Saur Energy International's website. For illustration purposes ONLY. This company is NOT involved in solar farms in Yucatán.

Territorial Displacement

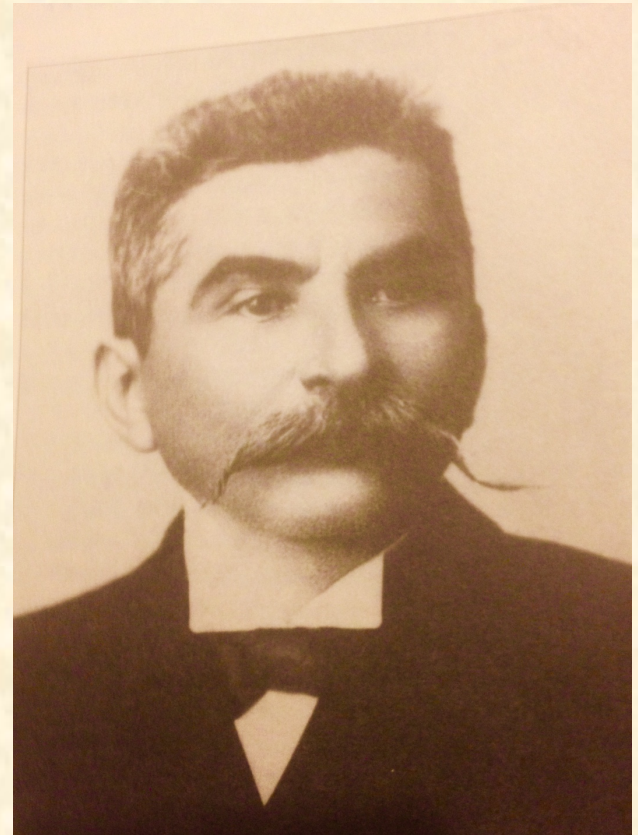


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Maaya K'aay: Maya Song

- ❖ 16th c. Maya Songs: Cantares de Dzitbalché.
- ❖ Early 20th century: Yucatecan *trova* (regional bolero) in Maya: Chan Cil. Non-indigenous elites promote choral singing and operas.
- ❖ 1980s: Maya song documented in ceremonial chants, lullabies, humorous songs; also *trova*, ranchero and cumbia.



Taken from <http://www.yucapedia.com/>
"Chan Cil (Padre de la Trova Yucateca)"



Aesthetics of New Maya Song I



Taken from Facebook.com/patboy.rapmaya/

- 2000s: Túumben Maaya K'aay promoted by State institutions: cumbia, ranchero, ballad, orchestra.
- Young people from Central Quintana Roo take up hip hop, reggae, ska & pop rock.
- Pat Boy (Jesús Pat) promotes *Bobóok Chi'* ("Hitting with the Mouth": Maya Rap). Creates ADN Maya "label" in 2015.



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Aesthetics of New Maya Song II

- Along so-called Maya Riviera, Maya speaking gang members start writing & recording their own rap songs and videos.
- MC Micro (Carlos Caamal) and relatives found DGS (Dueños del Gran Sonido) – Xíik' Naal (Flying) record “house” since 2013.



Screencap from video clip by Letra X Letra Ft El Micro Mc -
Respeto, Honor y Flow on YouTube

Politics of New Maya Song



Taken from Facebook.com/DeTradicionYNuevasRolas

- Maya Song promoted by the State, instrumental to neoliberal multiculturalism.
- Independent music producers: “unknown” (even to researchers).
- Maya Song broadcasts in social media, not mass media.
- Clashing styles (“clean” vs. “gangsta”) are regulated by State institutions who decide to whom they want to support and reward.

Discussion

- Post-modern hybridity + “noble savage” = Winning formula?
- What stories? What images?
- Aesthetics of rural poverty & marginalization: attractive to young people?
- Exotic language: “simple lyrics”?
- Depoliticization of New Maya Song



372,072 views since 4 May 2016

Screen capture:

https://verne.elpais.com/verne/2016/05/18/mexico/1463530322_435174.html



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