

# Mobility and Religious Diversity in Indigenousness-Seeking Movements: A Comparative Case Study between France and Mexico

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## Abstract

In this article, the authors seek to explore spiritual diversity as seen in two contemporary movements that arose in the wake of the New Age and the “2012 Phenomenon”: Mexican neo-Mayanism and French Celtic neo-shamanism. They examine the relationship between the dual mobility of leaders (geographic and spiritual) and the hybridization of symbolic references by focusing on the set of objects, accessories and ritual clothing used by adherents in spiritual practice. Their analyses are based on ethnographic research carried out in France and Mexico between 2012 and 2014. The objects are analyzed in terms of symbolic rearrangements, identity innovation and coexistence of referential systems (glocalization). The authors’ analyses reveal that despite the globalized character of the New Age, the practices and discourses of these groups are heavily influenced by the transnational life pathways of their leaders.

**Keywords:** indigenous-seeking movements, spiritual hybridization, transnational mobility, ritual objects, New Age, comparative ethnography, Neo-Shamanism, Neo-Mayanism

## 21.12.12: A Transnational Event

On December 21, 2012, Mother Nah Kin, founder and spiritual leader of the Maya Solar Tradition (MST), organized a spiritual planetary summit in Uxmal (Yucatán, Mexico), the ancient Mayan city<sup>1</sup>. This event marks the end of the Mayan Long Count calendar – a complex pre-Hispanic system for measuring time – and has come to represent Mayan revival movements<sup>2</sup>. Spiritual leaders from around the world offered their teachings, forged ties and encouraged future transnational exchanges, all in the name of unity.

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<sup>1</sup> For an announcement of the event, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nJ6I97bh3Q&list=PLjMn1eaYlzUXHUK6dMDhYyWdhReqG9bEY&index=8> (accessed February 11, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the Mayan ritual calendar and 21.12.12 date, which corresponds with the end of a cycle, see Macleod (2013) and Tally (2012).

Among those participating were Emoto Masaru, known in Japan for his alternative research on the effect of human thought on water<sup>3</sup>; Carl Johan Calleman, a Mayanist and author of many works on the Mayan calendar<sup>4</sup>; and James Redfield, a well-known writer of the New Age<sup>5</sup>. The event provided an opportunity for leaders to recognize and legitimize each other’s efforts on the religious world stage.

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<sup>3</sup> In particular, he has published an internationally acclaimed book, *The Hidden Messages of Water*, Atria, 2005, New York.

<sup>4</sup> See especially *The Mayan Calendar and the Transformation of Consciousness*, Traditions/Bear, 2004, Rochester, VT.

<sup>5</sup> *The Celestine Prophecy* (Bantam, 1994, London) tells the story of an initiation in Peru, where a man searches for an ancient manuscript capable of creating a new humanity.

At 5:12 a.m. on the fated day, about one thousand “alternative” practitioners<sup>6</sup> prayed before the imposing Uxmal pyramid while ushering in the “Golden Age,” a time of “light, love and harmony”<sup>7</sup>. Stationed at the very source of “maximum reception” of “galactic rays”, people danced, sang, cried, embraced, and formed new alliances<sup>8</sup>. This Latin American event marked the birth of new transnational bonds, which, in turn, led to the creation of networks whose members reproduce and reinterpret these ceremonies in other settings. 2012 thus became a benchmark for non-Mayan alternative practitioners, as well, including the *Déoceltés*<sup>9</sup>, who took part in the event following the invitation extended by the MST<sup>10</sup>.

Their participation in the Planetary Summit served to express their solidarity with their “Mayan brothers and sisters.” As part of a global spiritual exchange, the celebration aimed for a communion of energies to raise human consciousness in peace, love and sharing, thus forming an immense fraternal medicine wheel. Practitioners’ interest thus served as a means for laying claim to localized identities (shamanism in the West, celtism in Europe, the Mayan tradition in Mexico) and for promoting universal goals as found in New Age movements.

The transnational dimension of the Spiritual Planetary Summit is reminiscent of events organized in Europe by the leader of the *Déoceltés*.

<sup>6</sup> These are people who have integrated different holistic *spiritual* systems of representation with the centrally important experiential dimension. See J. Stolz and M. Schneuwly Purdie (2015).

<sup>7</sup> Speech by Mother Nah Kin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nJ6I97bh3Q&list=PLjMn1eaYIzUXHUK6dMDhYyWdhReqG9bEY&index=8> (accessed February 15, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Speech by Mother Nah Kin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nK8ZUV-HLLO> (accessed February 15, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Dacquay’s website for the *Déoceltés*: [www.patrickdacquay.com](http://www.patrickdacquay.com), accessed 10 February 2016. The introductory video of the *Déoceltés* for the Spiritual Planetary Summit: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZFCyOYC\\_WM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZFCyOYC_WM) (accessed February 10, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> For the invitation, see: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nK8ZUV-HLLO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nK8ZUV-HLLO) (accessed February 20, 2016).

The Shamanism Festival<sup>11</sup>, in particular, is an annual event in France, which brings together about a hundred shamans from around the world and welcomes around 2000 participants. The festival highlights different practices and rituals, such as music, dances, sweat lodges (e.g., *Temazcal*, *Celtic cauldron*), totem and artefact building, and shamanic journeys. It also features guest lectures and films. Overall, it aims to create a pan-shamanic network that unites all “the ancestral traditions attached to Mother Earth and Nature” so that humans can return to their “natural spirituality” as they look for answers and an alternative identity by reinvesting in the past (peoples living in Europe during the proto-historic period and the pre-Columbian peoples).

### Overview of Issues

This article argues that the mobility of spiritual leaders, which is at the heart of this research, is a factor of diversity within the movements studied. Interest in this internal diversity – designated here by the process of hybridization (De la Torre 2014) – derives from the fact that these movements are situated in a shared dynamic of norm construction and similar values, which draw on elements of the New Age subculture yet lay claim to their specificities. It is in this specificity that comes the diversity of references and identities. This diversity also allows for comparison between the two movements – that is, variation between groups and cultural contexts – and thus becomes a useful tool. It further enables us to grasp the process of “glocalization,” which is central to our research. We will analyze this internal diversity from two perspectives: the reinvention of traditions and national identities (Hobsbawn 2006; Thiesse 2001) and transnationalism (Bava and Capone 2010; Capone 2004; Argyriadis, Capone, De la Torre and Mary 2012). We will analyze mobility of the leaders using Edio Soares’s notion of “religious foraging” (*butinage*)

<sup>11</sup> The website for the Shamanism Festival in France: [www.festival-chamanisme.com](http://www.festival-chamanisme.com) (accessed February 10, 2016).

(2009) and its “glocalizing” effects on practices and discourses (Robertson 2012).

Throughout this article, we use the terms “New Age” and “alternative spirituality” to define the settings and networks where interviewees spent their time. Historically speaking, the “New Age” refers to the widespread spiritual movement with fuzzy boundaries that arose in California between 1970 and 1980, in the form of a network. Its purpose, themes, goals and history are laid out in Ferguson’s book (1980) – regarded as the most important text in the New Age movement. But in this article, we follow the ethnographic approach of J. Sutcliffe (2003). Sutcliffe does not consider the New Age as a movement or a homogeneous entity. Rather, he conceives it as a discursive emblem. “New Age” becomes a code-word reflecting the heterogeneity of alternative spiritualities. Sutcliffe’s book clashes with Western European sociology of the New Age while more closely resembling Latin American anthropological literature. Americanist authors including Renée de la Torre and Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga are not attached to defining the New Age by its substantive content. They consider it more a “matrix of meaning,” that is, a framework of “holistic reinterpretation.” They are thus able to do away with the issue of typologies and can perceive the New Age as a platform of perpetual meaning-making (De la Torre and Gutiérrez Zúñiga 2013:14). This approach is very useful, especially when studying recent hybridization processes between indigenous, shamanistic world-views and New Age representations.

This article provides a comparative analysis between two case studies: one of neo-Mayan groups and the other of neo-shamanic groups. The Maya Solar Tradition (MST) in Mexico is the focus of a field study carried out by Manéli Farahmand<sup>12</sup> for her PhD. The MST originated

<sup>12</sup> The data presented in this article come from fieldwork carried out by Manéli Farahmand in the Maya Solar Tradition, Mérida, Yucatán State, and southeast Mexico, conducted between April and May 2014. The research was completed in several stages: 1. discussion with a former MST follower about her experience in the movement; 2. observations of the *Casa del Sol*

in the 1970s by Mother Nah Kin is a movement that claims the return to a Mayan “Golden Age” through the founding myth of *Kinich Ahau*, a supernatural anthropomorphized entity said with superior genetic qualities. “Pure of heart” and “Atlantean” in origin<sup>13</sup>, *Kinich Ahau* would have trained many disciples to the “highest of Mayan cosmologies.” Mother Nah Kin gives herself the mission to “reactivate” this cosmology around the world. The MST movement is built on the dynamic processes of glocalization and transnationalization. Rites, myths and contents have local roots (in a revisited Yucatec Mayan tradition) and are made up of global images, symbols and uses. The leader and the initiates in this tradition enjoy significant transnational mobility. Mexican mixed-race, Western New Agers and/or *spiritual* holistic therapists take part in the activities on site and then import these teachings in their individual contexts.

The second group is the French *Déoceltes*, led by Patrick Dacquay and his wife Line Sturny, who were the focus of a field study carried out by Sybille Rouiller<sup>14</sup> as part of her master’s degree. This French neo-Celtic group lays claim to shamanism – “the ancient wisdom of humanity” – in its Western form. Members are motivated by the desire to return to the Celtic “Golden Age” according to a similar logic to the

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and participation in its weekly activities; 3. initiations of the *Ahaukines* lineage, first rank of “solar guide” within the tradition; 4. the MST’s annual event, *Kinich Ahau*, a ceremony in the ruins of Uxmal; 5. meeting with other Maya leaders in Mérida, working outside MST; 6. additional observations at the *Casa del Sol* and final interviews.

<sup>13</sup> Mère Nah Kin tells the story of *Kinich Ahau* in her first publication in 1997: *Kinich Ahau. Sabiduría Solar*, Editorial Kinich Ahau SCP, 2012 (1997), Mérida.

<sup>14</sup> Sybille Rouiller followed the *Déoceltes* and participated in their various activities. The data presented in this article were gathered in several stages: 1. Shamanism Festival in Cogolin, Var region, France, March 2013; 2. Shamanism Festival in Dole, French Jura, April 2013; 3. shamanism internship in Bugarrach, department of Aude, with the *déoceltes* Patrick Dacquay and Line Sturny, July 2013; 4. follow-up with participants on the Internet or one-to-one meetings with them during their visit to the alternative therapy fair in Geneva and Lausanne, Switzerland.

neo-Indians described by Galinier and Molinié (2006). The Celts are regarded as the European equivalent of pre-Columbian indigenous peoples. *Déo-Celtisme* lays claim to a territory-specific identity as well as integration in a global network of spiritual exchanges. By drawing on Western representations of “what a shaman should be” and what the Celts represented, the *Déo-Celtes* devote themselves to constructing a sense of authenticity and indigenosity. They create discursive and ritual mechanisms that invoke different categories arising from specific historical and cultural processes.

We drew on a combination of socio-anthropological methods to carry out our work: multiple field sites; collaboration with photographers; in-depth biographical interviews; comprehensive, semi-directed and informal interviews; as well as participant observation during workshops, ceremonies, conferences, care and individual practices, group meditations, and talking circles. A discourse analysis of the emic literature (produced by the movements themselves, as in the case of autobiographies and doctrinal texts) and on social networks (*Facebook*) was also completed.

Our decision to conduct a comparative analysis on these two groups seemed relevant for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the neo-Mayans and *Déo-Celtes* shared many common features and several unique aspects, which reflect both the wide diversity of practices that exist in New Age settings as well as shared glocal and transnational systems of thinking. Additionally, their membership in transnational networks of “alternative spirituality”<sup>15</sup> has brought them

<sup>15</sup> In the second half of the 20th century, researchers found that the speech of people who frequented New Age circles adopted the category of “spirituality” to define their practice, as opposed to the notion of “religion.” These individuals harboured negative associations with religion in terms of its institutionalization, transcendence, external authority, dogmatism and patriarchal structure (Heelas 2002: 362). Spirituality, by contrast, is connected with the personal, the immanent, interiority and direct experience with the sacred (*ibid*). These forms of spirituality are consid-

ered “alternative” in comparison with an established religion such as Christianity.

together at different times, including the Spiritual Planetary Summit in 2012. Our study will help us understand the effects of participants’ mobility on the processes of hybridizing spiritual discourses and practices. These will be illustrated comparatively<sup>16</sup>, using the wide range of objects, accessories and ceremonial clothing for each group. We will, moreover, trace the life pathways of the two leaders who are at the heart of this research: Mother Nah Kin for the Maya Solar Tradition and Patrick Dacquay for *Déo-Celtisme*. We will apply the notions of transnationalization and spiritual foraging (*butinage*) in our analysis, thereby emphasizing a physical and spiritual dual mobility.

In scholarly debates on the mobility of religious figures, the concepts of “glocalization” and “transnationalization” refer to different socio-historical processes, although they may be intertwined. These two concepts allow us to analyze our case studies in three phases<sup>17</sup>. The first phase involves delocalizing so-called traditional practices and symbols by disseminating them through mystic-esoteric tourism, the arrival of shamans/healers/indigenous officiants in Europe and the circulation of ethnographic literature. The second phase involves translocalization, the birth of a new movement or stream that is geographically more widespread. Shamanism or Mayanism thus comes to be understood as cosmic and universal spiritualities whose foundations rest on the subjective perception of the individual. Adherents gather together mainly

<sup>16</sup> The comparative approach adopted draws on the “differential comparison” (Mancini 2007). Nevertheless, our approach takes into account similarities that help to grasp the circulation of objects, images and ideas in transnational space. Even if diversity is very important in terms of practices, references and objects, identical forms of logic and processes can be observed in different groups, which, in the end, tend to produce highly similar outcomes, especially by using shared concepts. Among these similarities there is a common claim of indigenosity.

<sup>17</sup> On these three phases, see Renée de la Torre (2012).

on the Web or meet up under temporary and episodic conditions (e.g., internships, festivals, large-scale rituals or journeys). The third and final phase involves the relocalization of a global Shamanism or Mayanism through remodeling practices and discourses. These processes are, in turn, affected by paradoxical forms of logic (universalism and particularism) known as “translogics” (Capone and Mary 2012). These translogics govern the dynamics of receiving, appropriating and resignifying in reterritorialized cultural contexts.

### Back-to-Indigenusness Movements

Substantial anthropological literature is available on indigenusness-seeking movements that came into contact with a New Age culture in Mexico (De la Torre and Gutiérrez Zúñiga 2011 & 2013; De la Peña 1999 & 2001; Molinié and Galinier 2006). These scholars’ work highlights how widespread New Age has become in Latin America at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such that it triggered a wave of appropriation and contextual resignification in local ethnic groups attempting to revitalize their traditions. Conversely, New Agers searching for tradition, authenticity and indigenusness have also drawn on pre-Hispanic traditions offering them new meanings. The configuration of the Mexican religious field from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century may be approached from the perspective of diversification. In the literature on religious diversity in Mexico, geographic mobility is considered an important factor of this diversification (De la Torre and Gutiérrez Zúñiga 2007:9). Back-to-indigenusness movements surface in the 1990s as backlash to the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conquest. Those movements take root in the 1970s *mexicanidad* culture, which was based on an idealized reinterpretation of the past and the reinvention of pre-Hispanic traditions (De la Peña 2001:96). The neo-Mayanist<sup>18</sup> trend

<sup>18</sup> The prefix “neo” for “neo-Mayanism” is used mainly from a historical perspective, representing “a new form of Indianness” visible in Mexico since the 1990s (Molinié and Galinier 2006). It is also part of “new identity generations” brought about by the intersec-

of New Age indigenusness-seeking movements in Mexico revolves mainly around a rereading of the Mayan calendar in relation to the “2012 phenomenon.” Other characteristics include the dialectic between an eclecticism of references and a reclaiming of Mayan purity. The Maya Solar Tradition in Mexico stands at the epicentre of this emergent Mayanism. Its specificity is to adopt a spiritual vision of the “ethnic” heritage, close to the concept of D. Hervieu-Léger (1993) “the imagined lineage”. It is not strictly necessary to be “Mayan” to join the movement; A person need to feel a spiritual affinity to participate.

The *Déoceltes*’s claim to an indigenous identity is set against a backdrop of argumentative pluralism. First, it is a response to accusations of identity-usurping from anthropologists and American Indians (Vazeilles 2008) against Western neo-shamans. Second, it is a means of constructing a legitimate identity by locating European “shamanic” ancestors in the pre-historic ages and antiquity (Hamayon 2003), from a primitivist perspective (Amselle 2010), that looks for the future of humanity in a past “Golden Age.” This type of approach falls into the category of movements of tradition’s invention described by Hobsbawn (2006). Third, the choice to focus on the figure of the Celt or Druid follows the theories of folklorist authors in the context of developing national identities in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Thiesse 1999). Among those aspects needed to claim a national identity, we can mention the evidence of ancestors living on the territory since the dawn of time, folklore and heritage, and finally the notion of a collective identity. For France, the ancestors chosen were specifically Celts because they represent the very prototype of original inhabitants (Coye 1993).

Transnational movements seeking indigeneity develop within New Age as a platform of hybridizations. The literature on these topics highlights the upstream logic of the New Age appropriations: indigenous traditions are approached for

tion of local settings with global networks of the New Age (De la Torre and Gutiérrez Zúñiga 2013: 155).

their exoticism and their alternative model to the Western capitalism. The selective process is also based on specific logic: the mystical Indian – the Druid in the case of *Déoceltisme* – are valued for their ancestrality, their knowledge of medicinal plants, their “cultural purity,” and their rural lifestyle (De la Torre 2014). Excluded, on the other hand, are the elements deemed contrary to some ideal of harmony, like the sacrifice, authoritarianism or the caste system (Frigerio 2013).

### Mobility and Religious Diversity

#### *Transnational and Trans-Spiritual Circulation of Leaders*

The leaders of these two movements are “nodes actors” (*agentes nodales*) (De la Torre 2014; Capone and Mary 2012), who can be recognized by their transnational mobility and their role in forging ties. Nodes actors know how to use cultural codes and translate them into their religious register. They appropriate, reformulate and pass on traditions. They can be seen at key events, can reconstitute ties and help us understand how the network structure works (Capone 2014). Furthermore, in our case studies, they exercise dual mobility, both geographic (transnational) and spiritual.

#### *Mother Nah Kin*

Mother Nah Kin<sup>19</sup> was born in 1961 in the region of Veracruz, Mexico, where she earned her university degree in social psychology. Her spiritual journey began when she was very young, following in the footsteps of her shaman Olmec grandmother. She would have inherited her grandmother’s psi faculties (extrasensory perception, clairvoyance, precognition, mediumship). At the age of 14, Mother Nah Kin had her first contact with the New Age through initiation in the Great Universal

<sup>19</sup> Biographical data on Mother Nah Kin comes from two main sources: field interviews with her and two members of her family, who are highly ranked MST initiates; crossed with her autobiography, which is available at <http://venerablemadre-nahkin.com/bio-ext.html> (accessed February 22, 2016).

Fraternity<sup>20</sup> (Roberta<sup>21</sup>, interview, 24 April 2015, Mérida, Mexico). This Fraternity was one of the primary disseminators of New Age culture in Mexico during the 1970s (Gutiérrez Zúñiga and Medina Jesus 2012). While still young, she was initiated into the practices of yoga, meditation and vegetarianism. Within the Fraternity, she received the high rank of *Venerable Sat Arha*. Mother Nah Kin became *Venerable Mother Nah Kin*. Subsequently she trained in Metaphysics, influenced by the I AM theosophic doctrines of Guy Ballard, in the 1930s (Overton Fuller 2005).

Through this stream, she was introduced to the theory of the “Ascended Masters”, which she studied in greater depth in a “Miracle Course,” known throughout Mexico for bridging the Christian angelic world and the New Age. Over the next five years, she opened *El Árbol*, a vegetarian restaurant in Mérida. She later trained in methods of Eastern wisdom (in an interview she talks about Buddhist and Hindu circles), South American Shamanism, and Western esotericism which combines psycho-spiritual approaches, including psycho-astrology, Reiki, lithotherapy, rebirthing, neurolinguistics, shamanic journeys (power animal quests), regression to previous lives, and Osho dynamic meditation<sup>22</sup>.

At the end of the 1980s, Mother Nah Kin had her first contact with the symbolic universe of the Mayans. In 1993, she received *The Temple of the Sun: On the Sacred Mountain of Uxmal*, an esoteric and theosophical North American book that revolutionized her spiritual vision. This con-

<sup>20</sup> A French esoteric stream led by Raynaud de la Ferrière, which spread it throughout Latin America in the 1950s. As it developed, indigenous cosmovisions came to be integrated into GFU doctrines, breaking away from Eastern traditions. The GFU took on an ethnic identity and became the *Mancomunidad Iniciática India Solar*, a source of conflicts and later of scission in the movement (Gutiérrez Zúñiga and Medina Jesus 2012). For a new reference on this topic, see the H. Gooren’s Encyclopedia of Latin American Religion by Springer (2015).

<sup>21</sup> Pseudonyms such as this one are used to protect the anonymity of the participants.

<sup>22</sup> <http://venerableabuela.com/bio-ext.html> (accessed June 25, 2015).

tact marks an important change in her life, a kind of “biographic break,” a professional shift from therapists’ status in office to spiritual and charismatic leader of MST. She became aware of the solar figure *Kinich Ahau* for the first time and was said to have felt her calling. Afterwards she went to the temples of Uxmal and received visions encouraging her to reactivate the Mayan wisdom. At the time, Mother Nah Kin was already travelling significantly from country to country. From the 2000s, she became successful for her representations related to 2012, and her transnational mobility intensified, she used to visit four countries a month. She still travels frequently throughout the Americas, in Europe and Japan, where she offers her teachings on the “new paradigm” and meets with internationally acclaimed spiritual leaders, such as Emoto Masaru. Her travels and the international dimension of her Centre (staff translators, visits from Westerners) provide her a social pride. She acquires symbolic legitimacy within the “global religious system” (Beyer 2006).

#### Patrick Dacquay

Patrick Dacquay<sup>23</sup> was originally a businessman. Despite his commercial success, he chose to give it all up following the death of his son and a divorce from his first wife. This transitional period he experienced marked a true severing from his past. He set out on a spiritual quest, which led him on different paths of initiation. He has been active for 18 years in the trade guilds and freemasonry, and he travels regularly around the world to meet with spiritual guides and try out certain psychotropes<sup>24</sup>. In Ecuador he sampled *Ayahuasca* but did not retain its use in his shamanic practice. This experience, however, led him to

<sup>23</sup> Biographical data on Patrick Dacquay were collected in several ways: from interviews conducted in the field; from public speeches he made at festivals; from texts he wrote and made available on his website ([www.patrickdacquay.com](http://www.patrickdacquay.com)); and from his book *Paroles d'un grand-père chaman* (Éditions Vega, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Photographs of these journeys are available on Patrick Dacquay’s website: <http://www.patrickdacquay.com/#!enseignants-et-initiation/c24ml>, accessed 16 February 2016.

consider the possibility of contact with another world through altered states of consciousness. One of the meetings that left the deepest impression on him in North America was with Algonquin spiritual chief William Commanda<sup>25</sup>, a member of the *Circle of All Nations*<sup>26</sup> and an organizer of the gathering in Maniwaki. Commanda inspired Dacquay to found the Shamanism Festival in France and the Circle of Shamanic Wisdom<sup>27</sup> that he organizes. He has also travelled to California to follow the teachings of FSS members<sup>28</sup>, led by Michael Harner. Dacquay has become very attached to *Aigle Bleu*<sup>29</sup>, an Algonquin mixed-race shaman from Québec, who takes part in his festival every year. The two often visit each other and travel frequently together. In Mexico, Dacquay met *Acamapichtli*, a spokesperson for the *universal council* who invited him to take part in the Spiritual Planetary Summit in 2012. Since then, Acamapichtli regularly joins the Shamanism Festival in France. Dacquay has also travelled to Africa on several occasions. His most important visit has been with the *Gnaoua* brotherhood, whose master now travels every year to the Shamanism Festival with a delegation. Dacquay has also sampled *Vaudou* in Nossy-Bé, Madagascar, and has travelled to Kenya and Senegal to attend different ethnic rituals. He has even tried *Iboga* in Gabon with the Pygmies<sup>30</sup>. Last of all, Dacquay has connected with Asia. As an honorary member of a shamans’ association in Mongolia, he has organized several initiation journeys<sup>31</sup>

<sup>25</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Commanda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Commanda) (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.circleofallnations.ca/http\\_\\_\\_circleofallnations\\_2014NEW\\_Welcome.html/Welcome.html](http://www.circleofallnations.ca/http___circleofallnations_2014NEW_Welcome.html/Welcome.html) (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> <http://chamanismeancestral.org/?page=cercle-desage> (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.shamanism.org> (accessed February 2016).

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.aiglebleu.net/fr/accueil> (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>30</sup> This journey is described by Mélanie Navarro in her book, *Une occidentale initiée à l'iboga chez les pygmies* (Alphée, 2007). [http://ici.radio-canada.ca/emissions/macadam\\_tribus/2008-2009/chronique.asp?idChronique=44917](http://ici.radio-canada.ca/emissions/macadam_tribus/2008-2009/chronique.asp?idChronique=44917) (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.mongolie-voyage.org/voyage-a-la-decouverte-du-chamanisme-et-du-bouddhisme->

with the shamans *Har Sono* and *Tenger Huu*. Inspired by the ascetic *Sri Verabramindra Swami*, the master Balayogi<sup>32</sup> and the mythology of Ram<sup>33</sup>, Dacquay has travelled to India on many occasions for spiritual retreats. The country has influenced his workshops and training sessions on tantrism. This hybridization between Indian and Celtic influences follows its own natural logic since Dacquay defends the idea that the druids were similar in function and in social position to the Brahmin Indians.



Figure 1: Esoteric shop at *Casa del Sol*, April 2014, © O. Gschwend

### Equipment, Accessories and Objects of Power: Materiality in the Spiritual Quest

#### *Maya Solar Tradition*

In the 1990s, Mother Nah Kin founded the organization *Kinich Ahau* in the city of Mérida, the capital of the State of Yucatán. In 2008, she founded *Casa del Sol*, an annex on the outskirts of the city, which became a training and initiation centre for the Maya Solar Tradition. The *Casa* also offers holistic activities that are open to everyone.

The space is quite large. There are three large rooms, a reception area with an “esoteric” shop<sup>34</sup>, a large classroom, a garden for initiation rituals, a kitchen with local and imported products (organic and vegan), and a consulting room for individual therapies upstairs. Along with MST

[mongol-avec-patrick-dacquay](#) (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> Pumi Lescaut, a friend of Dacquay who also takes part in the festival, wrote a book on this spiritual master: <http://www.poumi.com/ecritures-bio/publications/balayogi-lalchimie-du-silence> (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> This recurrent mythological character from neo-druidic movements serves as a link between Hinduism and Celtism because he travels between Europe and India to share his knowledge and thus gives rise to the druids and the Brahmins. The Indomania of the 18th century attained its full importance when it revived druidism (François 2012: 39-42). See Dacquay’s text on Ram: <http://www.patrickdacquay.com/#!druide-et-brahmans/c22tz> (accessed February 16, 2016).

<sup>34</sup> With a variety of objects from the Western esoteric circuits as well as neo-*Mexicanidad* circles.

initiation activities, the *Casa* offers courses in tai chi, yoga, Osho dynamic meditation, “angel meditations”, readings of the Mayan calendar (*Tzolkin*), group therapy, women’s circles, and “Mayan kinesiology”<sup>35</sup> consultations. In the shop, alongside the five shelves of Mother Nah Kin’s publications, there are shelves filled with books on Esoterism, neo-Hinduism and New Age. They have been placed beside books on mediumship, the celestial hierarchy, new spiritualities, psycho-spiritual therapies, aromatic plants, lithotherapy, Hawaiian and Eastern wisdom, alternative therapies, reincarnation and “karmic” registers.

On sale are stones, Mayan *Tzolkin* calendars with a pendulum as a working tool, figurines of archangels and fairies, and key rings with symbols of the World Religions. Also available are the items needed for MST ceremonies: purification accessories (e.g., sprays, liquids, balms, essences), items for altar preparation, clothing, headbands, educational material (e.g., CDs, brochures, books, textbooks, goddess oracle cards), stickers and symbolic jewels, *copal* incense (resin traditionally used in Mayan ceremonies), *Casa del Sol* t-shirts, and pre-Hispanic musical instruments.

As Jean-François Mayer (1993) says in his analysis of esoteric shops in Switzerland, each of these items can function separately, but their

<sup>35</sup> Program of the centre, April 2014.





Figure 2: Key rings featuring the world religions, April 2014, © M. Farahmand

juxtaposition is not trivial. It shows the existence of a “cultic milieu” in Mexico, where groups like the MST continually draw on symbolic resources. J.F. Mayer uses this concept in reference to Colin Campbell’s (1972) work. It designates a network-enhanced setting, a kind of spiritual subculture, where “meaning seekers” circulate, together with themes, objects, images and symbols. The platform is constantly maintained as new products and new generations of actors arrive. Within this “spiritual marketplace”, believers are directed towards commercial items (Mayer 2006: 98). This subculture also encourages “syncretism” due to the quick circulation of actors through the great diversity of its movements (Mayer 1993: 15). In Mexico, the cultic milieu is similar to *neomexicanidad* with its New Age leanings.

Throughout the activities, the ceremonial clothing, objects and accessories play a central role. Some workshops are not accessible without the proper “solar Maya” adornment. Before the Level One Maya Solar Tradition training week, participants already have all the equipment required. Experienced participants wear pendants or earrings that feature the two main



Figure 3: *Ahaukine*, a new initiate, in front of the *Sign of New Times*, April 2014, © O. Gschwend

symbols of the Tradition: the *Sign of New Times* and the *Kinich Ahau*.

As an initiation costume, the “solar Mayans” generally wear white as a symbol of purity and light. The red band worn as a belt around the waist serves as protection against the encroachment of “negative entities” during meditations, ceremonies and therapeutic sessions. The orange headband helps to maintain an “awakened consciousness” in order to integrate information from Nah Kin (session on 30 April 2014, Mérida, Mexico). Initiates wear these bands in a specific way: with their hand, they form the *Sign of New Times* before putting the band on and then repeat this gesture before taking it off. Wearing the ceremonial outfit is a mark of respect for the Tradition.

Initiates carry their power stick hooked onto their belt. Regarded as a symbol of spiritual authority, the stick shows the rank of the initiate. The smallest one, bearing an amber stone at its head and the *Sign of New Times* engraved on its side, reveals the status of *Ahaukine*. Conversely, *Ahaukanes*, the great MST initiates and masters of the elements, carry more imposing rods

made from wood with a snake at the head and feathers indicating the spiritual level attained in different traditions (more feathers suggests more spiritual experience). The colours of the costumes also match the participants' different roles during the ceremonies. Those wearing red are the guardians of the element fire; those in yellow, the earth; those in black, the water; and those in white, the air. Only guardians of the elements – primarily the *Ahaukanes*, who have attained the highest ranks – can carry out initiations.

Along with the official MST outfit, initiates have their own personal accessories, some of which are made individually whereas others are acquired from other spiritual traditions. For example, pendulums are used openly in class. Stones may be worn as pendants; Lakota-type feathers are often worn on the ears. Initiates may have Huichol-type bracelets or homemade power sticks. MST leaders allow for this wide range of accessories. Between activities, participants rush to the shop to pick up new educational materials. They then line up at the reception desk to discuss contents and prices. They buy Nah Kin's latest publication, an important resource for following along in the workshop. They might also purchase a censer for purifying their home or stickers featuring the two MST symbols.

During the workshops, participants who receive a dose of "negative energy" or experience "heavy tiredness" spray their environment and immediately purify their table companion. Cards are used for visualization exercises, where participants contemplate them, breathe them in, and tilt their head to "allow in the image." The images vary. They may be geometric or archetypal female figures from different cultures (e.g., Mary Magdalene, Young Ixchel, Kali, Venus, Isis, Gaia).

The prices for certain accessories can be quite high, which led me to observe participants deliberating their purchases on the basis of appropriation, symbolic association or personalization. When the rituals were over, participants secretively murmured to themselves

about such things as performing initiations in their homes using less expensive resin rather than gold. For each event, a long table was set up for selling ceremonial wear, accessories and objects. The solar Maya adornment appears to aesthetically enhance initiates' experience. Mother Nah Kin herself considers it as a vector of day-to-day transformation, a way of reaching an altered state of consciousness and of negotiating entry into the space and time dimensions of the rite. After removing the ceremonial clothing, initiates can return to ordinary life, transfigured<sup>36</sup>.

The processes of accessories significations reveal a range of influences, which raises the question of how the movement articulates the local and the global. This articulation may be related to Mother Nah Kin's transnational journey. The MST symbols reflect the doctrinal elements, which may be qualified as heterogeneous. The *Kinich Ahau* symbol refers to the spirit of the sun that already exists in local Yucatec sources (Villar Maria 1989). The symbol is visually taken up by the Maya Solar Tradition by applying the theory of "2012." It represents the face of *Kinich Ahau*: its open eyes signify an "awakened consciousness" and its open mouth signify "solar respiration." The symbol also represents moving into a new era in the wake of the "2012".

The second symbol, the *Sign of New Times*, depicts a circular motion, facilitating the integration of harmony, peace, health, creativity, beauty and love – all qualities of the new era. In therapeutic terms, the symbol corresponds to a "Christ-like mudra," a specific body posture. The fusion of a Sanskrit term of Vedic origin with a Christian figure, here represented in the New Age sense of "Christ energy"<sup>37</sup> demonstrates the process of cultural hybridization. This is hardly surprising, given that Mother Nah Kin has been in contact with traditional Indian gurus such as Swami Tilak, the Tibetan Masters and Osho for

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Mother Nah Kin, 13 May 2014, Mérida, Mexico.

<sup>37</sup> In reference to the qualities of the Christ without his religious frame and meanings.

some time. This kind of hybridization has a positive connotation and is viewed by the group as original and enriching.

#### *The Déo-Celtes*

During the Shamanism Festival and an internship in Bugarach (France), objects were used in healing ceremonies, a sweat lodge, a shamanic journey, and a forest vigil. The Shamanism Festival also featured a New Age shop, but one oriented more towards American Indian cultures. It sold jewels, pipes, drums, rattles, fabric, clothing, leather bags and dream-catchers. Other stands sold crystals, Tibetan bowls and a wide range of books on the history of indigenous peoples, spiritual leaders' writings and personal spiritual experiences' accounts. This space served as an excellent example of European neo-Shamanism's dual relationship with the New Age and American Indian cultures. As Danielle Vazeilles (2008) has noted, these references are not only the product of white people culturally usurping indigenous peoples. Some well-known indigenous and mixed-race leaders, such as Archie Fire Lame Deer and Ed Mc Gaa, came to Europe to promote and at times "sell" these cultures to Westerners.

Few scholars describe in detail the objects used by neo-shamans. They mention them in passing, as "a fashion item sold in a specialized shop" (Vazeille 2013) or "a new perverse form of colonialism" (The Elders Circle cited by Vazeilles 2008). To be sure, these shops exist and their relationship with American Indian cultures is indeed problematic. However, this does not prevent us from presenting a different kind of analysis (without, of course, negating the first), which highlights other forms of valuing.

While the contents of the shaman's set of tools may seem random, it does indeed reflect the dialectic of the group and the individual. Some objects are common to all adherents and are gradually acquired over the course of one's initiation training, often during a rite of passage. Taking a closer look at these objects may be fruitful for ethnographic analysis.

Much like freemasonry, *Déoceltisme* is structured around three initiation phases: Abred's Visible Circle (Discovery); Keugant's Invisible Circle (Initiation); and Gwenved's White Circle (Silence)<sup>38</sup>. In this way, the objects represent an individual's social evolution within the group, progress along the spiritual path (a sign of learning and revelation) as well as access to a new practice (a therapeutic practice for others, a relationship to specific entities). Each object is invested with a particular meaning, and the set of tools as a whole symbolizes each person's spiritual pathway.

Despite the discourse on "returning to Celtic origins", these objects also reveal a diversity of references and therefore reflect the phenomenon of mobility of actors, concepts and objects. Dacquay explains<sup>39</sup> that *Déoceltes* acquire at least five objects over the course of their training: a broom, a golden sickle, a drum, a rattle and a medicine stick. These objects are sometimes acquired while abroad in places that holds particular spiritual meaning. They may be given, received or, as is more often the case, made by the individual user.

One of Patrick Dacquay's brooms comes from the Ashram of his master Balayogi, where it was originally used to clean the place. A broom can be made from plants that are symbolically meaningful or with a given therapeutic property in mind. For instance, the *Déoceltes* use brooms made from fir tree branches, a plant typically used to help alleviate sore throats and respiratory difficulties. A broom is used to clean the energies of people before they take part in a ritual. I was able to observe its use during the Shamanism Festival, specifically before the sweat lodge ritual. I also saw it used while I was in Bugarach, dur-

<sup>38</sup> This structure is present in other neo-druidic movements, including with the Breton druid, Yan Sukellos (Open letter to readers of the *Atlantis*, *Atlantis: scientific and traditional archeology: Meeting with the eternal druidism: 1. The Trinitarian doctrine*, 272).

<sup>39</sup> These explanations were given at the presentation during the Shamanism Festival. Dacquay also discusses it in his book. I received other information during the internship in Bugarach.



Figure 4: Line Sturny's altar, Bugarach, July 2013, © S. Rouiller

ing a healing ritual. In this case, the brooms were short and held in one hand. While some had a wooden handle, others were simply branches tied together.

The sickle, one of the druid's essential tools in the European imagination, is given to *Déo-Celtes* about to complete their training. It is, first and foremost, an object that signifies a particular rank, but it can also be used in therapy to "sever ties with bad energies".

The drum is the ultimate symbol of shamanism in the Western imagination, as the success of many drum-making workshops would attest.

Different cultures may use different forms of the instrument, but the one used most often among the *Déo-Celtes* is similar in style to those of the Siberian, Mongolian and Russian shamans. It can be held in one hand and is struck with a stick. Every drum is adorned with things like ribbons, bells, feather, and leather. It may also be decorated with drawings or paintings (animal totems or symbols) that have particular significance for the owner. Drums are used to transport people into altered states of consciousness during sha-

manic journeys and healing rituals. For Dacquay, they symbolize the Earth due to their round shape and heart-beats because of the sound they emit. He owns several, some acquired overseas (in Mexico and Ecuador) and others made by himself or his wife using special wood imported from Africa and goatskins from Brittany.

The rattle is a medical instrument that can be made from hollow wood, a dried and hollowed fruit or vegetable, a shell, a sewn leather case filled with seeds, beads or minerals. Afterwards, it is decorated with leather straps, ribbons, feathers, beads and drawings. The rattle may, of course, be used to play music,



Figure 5: Drum and medicine stick, Bugarach, July 2013, © S. Rouiller

but the *Déo-Celtes* have adopted it in treatment rituals for "recentering the soul in the body," focusing a patient's attention on the present moment or inducing an altered state of consciousness through alternating bilateral stimulation, as with other hypnotic techniques.

The medicine stick is used on different occasions: during treatment rituals, where it serves to connect and direct cosmic energy and vortex; to protect oneself from heavy or harmful energy in certain places; or to channel energy

during a collective ritual. Each *Déo-Celtes* must make his own medicine stick. Dacquay places great importance on manual work for investing objects. He believes that shaping the material is in itself an act of refocusing, a form of meditation. This work prevents one from cheating and allows one to confront oneself. A poorly cut stick will be defective and therefore ineffective, just as a poorly made drum will not sound properly. A person must be fully invested in this creative activity and be fully aware of the impact of his or her daily gestures. Creating a good, solid medicine stick provides confidence in a person and in his or her creative abilities. In this way, the stick is invested with the positive energy that its creator has put into making it. Such energy will then be retransmitted during treatment rituals to future patients.

As for ceremonial clothing, the *Déo-Celtes* wear white outfits and white headbands with a “triban” in the centre. This symbol of three converging lines also appears in other neo-druidic movements. In Dacquay’s view, the triban symbolizes the sacred number three (three worlds, three circles, three shields of love, strength and wisdom). It is a sign of membership in a Celtic lineage and a protective seal. Its colour indicates the *Déo-Celte’s* rank: red stands for the circle Abred, green for Keugant and gold for Gwenved. The triban’s shape is reminiscent of a triangle, which symbolizes the links between microcosm and macrocosm, the telluric world and the cosmic world. By wearing the headband, a person signals his or her membership in the universal lineage of shamanism, since “all shamanic peoples wear them”. By securing it to the forehead, a person cut off mental activity and would be thus guided by intuition.

The neo-shaman’s set of tools also include items known as *objects of power*: stones, feathers, water, tobacco, medicinal herbs, images,



Figure 6: P. Dacquay and L. Sturny in Bugarach, July 2013, © S. Rouiller

jewels, bells, shells, crystals, representations of animal totems, and photographs of spiritual masters. These objects are generally collected by chance and selected for the energy they hold within. Sometimes they are given. Each one is associated with a certain kind of power that may be used therapeutically. They are seen as connected with the kingdoms of living things and the elements.

The *Déo-Celtes* consider stones to hold telluric energy that, in turn, enable them to draw in heavy and negative energy. Whether they are found in a river, on a sacred site or in a forest, the stones’ rates of vibration varies and can help to heal different diseases.

The *Déo-Celtes* believe that the kingdom of animals can pass their energy on in different ways: by appearing in a vision, a dream or during a shamanic journey; through an image or an object representing them or a part of their body (e.g., feathers, paws, tail, talons, teeth). If they find a part of an animal in nature, the *Déo-Celtes* interpret it as a sign that the animal offered itself up to help heal humans. Dacquay, for example, has an owl’s wing whose feathers, he says, allow him to work much like an acupuncturist using the energy of birds. The feathers free up blocked energy points and help restore fluidity and lightness.

All of these objects are used as mediation tools between different levels of representation within a “creative imagination” process. By way

of these symbolic meanderings, a person constructs his or her identity and achieves therapeutic goals. Focusing on these objects, first of all, takes us back to the countries and cultures from which these symbols and artefacts come and guides us along the life journey of the person who owns them. The “healer’s set of tools,” moreover, shows the symbolic recomposition of referents from different cultures – Siberia, Latin America, Europe, India – and provides some indication of how a shaman is represented.

### Comparative Analysis

#### *Dual Mobility and the Logic Behind Foraging*

Mother Nah Kin and Patrick Dacquay reveal a dual mobility that is both spiritual and physical.

1. Both leaders have circulated from one spiritual stream to another, following the same dynamic of “religious foraging” (*butinage*) that Soares (2009) describes. They have expanded their symbolic referents and contexts of practice. Their foraging is a mobile and creative way of looking after their symbolic universe and enlivening it by adding elements gathered from other universes (Soares 2009: 30). The forager circulates among religious streams multidirectionally and synchronically, over time and across space, always moving back and forth from one point to another (Soares 2009: 57).

In our case study, transnational mobility and leaders’ spiritual foraging<sup>40</sup> are interconnected. This spiritual mobility, in turn, generates cultural hybridizations that vary from one context to another. For Soares, the foraging is neither a cultural response nor a process ending in a specific symbolic system. A similar dynamic can be seen in Patrick Dacquay and Mother Nah Kin life pathways, except that they both show evidence of diachronic mobility that drove them to create complex, hybridized systems. Mother Nah Kin foraged in a linear fashion along her

pathway. Neighbourly relations were the social imperative guiding Soares’ foraging in the quarters of Joinville, Brazil. By contrast, the influence of families and couples initially transformed Mother Nah Kin’s foraging. It was because of her grandmother that she first explored Olmeca shamanism and then later through a family friend that she met her first master within the *Great Universal Fraternity*. Her daughter is the official MST heiress, whereas her niece is an initiate of MST higher rank. Mother Nah Kin travelled among the different streams of *neo-mexicanidad* with her first spouse. Today, her husband leads some MST activities. Her foraging is also guided by a personal sense of spiritual evolution. She has moved successively from stream to stream “inhaling the nectar” of each one along the way and feels that she has evolved over time. After arriving in the Yucatán and encountering the medium *Kinich Ahau*, she decided to settle there permanently, convinced that she had come to the end of her journey. With each successive spiritual contact, she has integrated a missing piece of herself. Having reached the universe of the Mayans, Mother Nah Kin feels “completely reintegrated.”

Dacquay’s travels around the world have made him more legitimate for his public, particularly when he talks about Universal Wisdom and oppressed peoples. He has drawn a lot of insight from these experiences, which he has incorporated in his own spiritual quest and in his developing practice, both from spiritual/symbolic (i.e., concepts, representations, cosmologies, pantheons) and physical/material (i.e., ritual practices, therapeutic techniques, objects) standpoints. Dacquay’s foraging has further led him to broaden his social network. He keeps in touch with many people he has met while abroad. He welcomes them to his festival or visits them from time to time. In December 2014, he opened an international *College of Shamanism*<sup>41</sup>, which counsels and informs those interested in receiv-

<sup>40</sup> Unlike E. Soares, we stipulate that it is a “spiritual,” not a “religious,” foraging for all the problems that the use of the notion “religion” raises in contexts outside of Europe.

<sup>41</sup> <http://chamanismeancestral.org/?page=accueil> (accessed February 16, 2016).

ing care or training. The college has become an authoritative body for practitioners and followers alike. Despite its claims of being part of an oppressed group, Dacquay, as leader of several international networks, has wound up once again assuming the role of company director, although money is not his primary motivation.

2. Both leaders have also expanded their travels and “initiation” meetings beyond the borders of their own country. Thanks to their networks, they have travelled extensively across continents and have come into contact with Indian traditions and South American forms of shamanism. The dynamic of their movement through glocal space extends not only from their own transnational mobility (movements for single events, pilgrimages, professional travel, migration) but also from national and international mobilizations (political, environmental and identity-related demands). Their mobility is asserted individually through symbolic reconstruction of their life course and personal transnational trajectories. At the same time it is asserted collectively through the formation of networks that provide a sense of permanence and attachment. This dual mobility has led to on-going rearrangements within their respective systems. Such hybridizations are notably reflected in the wide range of Maya Solar and *Déu-Celte* accessories available.

#### *Materialization of the Spiritual: Hybrid Objects and Transnationalization*

The two groups adhere to the logic of the marketplace through commodifying and publicizing their activities while developing their customer loyalty<sup>42</sup>. To accomplish this, they act on several levels. They create the need for initiates to educate themselves by asking them to do readings related to their internships. They require initiates to own certain objects in order to participate in

<sup>42</sup> For the discussion around consumerism and interculturalism in the historic evolution of the New Age movement, see Paul Heelas (2008). On the relations between symbolic merchandise, believer logic, and market logic, see Renée De la Torre and Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga (2005).

initiation activities, and the number of these objects continues to grow the further along initiates proceed on their spiritual journeys. The groups promote a kind of “humanitarian” consumption by selling objects specifically designed for militant association activities (e.g. environmental and indigenous rights movements). These spaces of commercial transaction are highly visible at large social events, such as festivals and conferences, but they are also accessible via the Internet. Neo-Mayan and neo-shamanic leaders have their own websites where they can sell their wares and can refer those interested to related organizations.

Apart from their market aspect, the objects play an important symbolic role. For both groups, owning or using these objects was essential to participating in the rituals, even during practice sessions and the Shamanism Festival. If participants come without the required objects, they must quickly find someone from whom to borrow them. Once the ritual is over, they are encouraged to buy or make their own. Initiates who frequent these settings understand the important role the objects play and typically find out in advance from the leader, other members or in books what supplies they will need to bring. Coming “properly equipped” demonstrates that one is prepared, ready to receive the teaching, the care, and the “energy” that comes from taking on an active role in the ritual. Moreover, it is a sign that one recognizes the legitimacy of the group and the rituals it performs. The experiential dimension is crucial in these settings: to find out whether a given practice or group is suitable for their purposes, prospective initiates must “have their own direct experience,” physically and spiritually. It is not possible to be a passive observer. Owning the basic set of equipment thus ensures the best possible experience for participants.

The two groups wear similar ceremonial clothing: a white outfit and appropriate headbands. In both cases, white is associated with the spiritual world, cosmic light and purity. The headbands

are symbolically invested in a number of similar ways:

1. Placing the band on the forehead suggests performing work “on the consciousness,” or the “third eye”. MST and *Déó-Celte* followers often talk about “chakras.” According to this system of thought, the chakra is located in the forehead and can communicate with other worlds. Wearing the headband thus represents one way of psychologically preparing oneself to enter a given state of open consciousness.
2. The headband is also invested as a social and hierarchical marker. Its colours vary depending on the rank of a given member within the group. The headband can indicate a position of novice or authority.
3. Generally speaking, wearing a ritual costume is comparable to putting on a uniform. The clothing communicates our status to others. It is a symbolic and physical way of entering a community. The two-featured groups differ in the symbols that adorn their costumes, which serve to express aspects of their local identity. The fact that the group comes together appropriately “dressed” underlines the time and sacredness of the ritual and initiates’ journey from the “profane” to the “sacred” world.

These objects are material evidences of “spiritual foraging” and the actors’ mobility. Even becoming part of a group that has well-developed initiation practices and hierarchical structures does not prevent a person from embarking at the same time on a comparable personal “quest.” This helps to explain how those movements, even if they claim to define themselves through “clan-like” or “traditional” collective approaches are no less modern as individual lies at the centre.

In our two case studies, the protagonists acquire a variety of objects coming from around the world and from different spiritual traditions. However, we note two points of divergence concerning whether objects are industrially produced or “home-made” and how the relationship to authenticity is established. For neo-Mayans,

an object made by oneself is initially perceived as “an imitation” or an inauthentic version. The material used is very important, and it is generally expensive. Alfredo, a Mayan guide from Mérida unaffiliated with the Maya Solar Tradition, explained, for example, that the best power stick would be one given by a “grandfather” during a long initiation journey. Here, making one’s own object is one way of subverting the system while still being able to participate in all regular activities without having to spend large sums of money and thus thwarting the market logic. For *Déó-Celtes*, making one’s own object is an end in itself because it is part of spiritual and therapeutic work. Authenticity does not derive from the material of which an object is made but, rather, from the intention that the object’s maker put into it or from the status of the person who previously owned it.

### Overall Conclusion

In this article we have focused on the internal diversity of two movements that have reinvented their ethnic and cultural traditions by drawing on spirituality in their process of ritual creativity. We have sought to understand this diversity as an evolving process, or a pluralization, by looking specifically at a range of objects, accessories and ritual outfits. We justified adopting a comparative perspective due to the transnational character shared by these two movements and the central importance given to material aspects. Through this approach, we observed symbolic and functional variation and similarities around ritual objects, which led us to conclude that mobility and diversity are closely intertwined. In our study, we examined mobility through the lens of geographic and inter-spiritual movement, as evidenced by leaders’ transnational journeys and the effects of this transnationalism on diversifying points of reference.

Whereas research on cultural and religious super-diversity within urban spaces has typically focused on the intersectionality of gender, migration, social class and age, our study makes an original contribution by analyzing diversity



in terms of the intersectionality between the mobility (physical and religious) and the pluralization. Religious diversity lies at the heart of power relations, which pertain to issues of social recognition and identity. By approaching diversity and pluralization in the light of materiality and mobility, we emphasize, first of all, the relationship between local and global in the two case studies. The objects illustrate both transnationalized themes of the New Age (specifically, the pervasiveness of Hindu themes, crystals, card games and ethnic jewelry) and the desire to promote an indigenous community with its particular characteristics (sticks, Celtic and Mayan symbols, drums, pre-Hispanic instruments). Secondly, materiality serves to recognize the groups' ritual legitimacy and doctrinal specificity. Third, it constitutes a social marker and underscores the power structures inside and outside the movements, thereby acting as a factor of inclusion and exclusion. Fourth, materiality, in both cases, is a way of positioning oneself within a local and global context of diversity, since it creates borders and gives rise to issues of authenticity between different groups. Fifth, the distinction between manufactured objects and "home-made" objects reveals that materiality acts as a space for negotiating power structures, a place for continually defining one's individual position within a particular religious community.

Finally, we note that this "foraging" is not random and holds meaning for the actors involved. It is tied to their journeys that at once touch upon spirit, emotions, psychology, family, identity and geography (travel, pilgrimage, migration). When we look at the photographs of neo-Mayans and Déo-Celtes at the 2012 Spiritual Planetary Summit in Mexico, we see them wearing very similar outfits. The two groups have shown consistency in their transnational, glocalised discourses and practices through their objects. Each has found its unique spiritual path and expresses it through a growing number of objects. At the same time, shared "global" objectives and ideals are expressed through "classic" symbols of the

New Age and joint participation in community events, such as the 2012 Spiritual Planetary Summit. In this way, neo-Mayans and Déo-Celtes can identify with each other as spiritual brothers and sisters. Finally, our two examples illustrate perfectly the three-phase process of delocalization, translocalization and relocalization, described by Renée De La Torre. The ceremonial objects appear like the CV or the DNA of the movements, serving as concrete testimony for the group and its leaders.

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