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Introduction

Just a few days earlier, I was in Felipe Carrillo Puerto, Quintana Roo, where I visited Pat Boy's recording and production studio, ADN MAYA Producciones. Pat Boy, a prominent figure in the world of Maya rap in the Peninsula, had graciously accepted my invitation for an informal interview. Although I had interviewed Pat Boy before, this was my first visit to his recording studio. More than just a space to produce music, Pat Boy also hosts workshops to promote Maya language revitalization through rap improvisation and rhyming. Through these workshops, Pat Boy has successfully supported young Maya rappers across the Peninsula, many of whom have independently started their own recording and production studios. Paalil K'iin, a Maya rapper from the municipality of Tahdziú, is one of them. As such, this report will discuss my informal meeting with Paalil K'iin and offer further reflections on what I learned from him.

Hijo(s) del Sol

I arrived at a small church in Tahdziú with my family. It was only a 20-minute taxi ride from my family's hometown, Peto, Yucatán, and on this day, we decided to light votive candles in honor of my family. Sitting on the pews of the church, I remembered that Pat Boy had given me Paalil K'iin's contact information. Unsure whether to message him on such short notice, I consulted my tia about what I should do. Before I could think it over further, my tia was already outside the church, asking the neighbors if they knew where he lived.

In most small towns on the Peninsula, finding someone's home is not difficult if you have their family name. In this case, we didn't have that, but we did know his rap name, Paalil K'iin, which translates to "Hijo del Sol" ("Son of the Sun"). Additionally, Paalil K'iin is the father of rising social media star Angelito, known to many as "Angelito el Niño Mayero." Anyone with any connection to the Peninsula is likely familiar with Angelito and his viral videos. Unsurprisingly, the neighbors knew exactly who we were looking for and were able to direct us to their home. They were very kind.

I had visited Tahdziú before but never beyond the church. Last year when I visited, it was pouring and the church became our refuge. On this day, Tahdziú was humid, and the short walk that was promised felt unbearable. Though we followed the directions as we were told, my *tia* had to stop a few people to ask again. They assured us we were on the right street.

We knew we were at the right place when we peeked through a gate to see Angelito swaying on his *hamaca*. He was just as charismatic in person as he was in his videos. Shortly after, Angelito, his mother Liliana, and Paalil K'iin came out to greet us at the gate and offered

us chairs and hamacas to sit in. “*Ko’oten!*” (Come!). As we entered, Paalil K’iin mentioned that just the other day, they had some fans from Merida come visit Angelito too.

Although I had initially intended to informally ask Paalil K’iin about his rap career and music, our conversation naturally focused on his four-year-old son Angelito and his recent fame. Though he hoped to get back to his music soon, Paalil K’iin’s focus was on Angelito who in the last year reached an unimaginable amount of fame. With the support of his family and community, Angelito was being invited to shoot promotional content for restaurants, coffee shops, mercados, and other small businesses all over the Peninsula. That day, Liliana explained to us that we had caught them at a perfect time as they were scheduled to travel to Valladolid later in the evening for the vaquería. Angelito and his family were personally invited to attend by the organizers of the vaqueria.

As I shared with Pat Boy and Paalil K’iin, Angelito’s videos, much like their own musical endeavors, have become yet another significant platform for advancing language revitalization efforts and reducing stigma among Maya speakers. For them, adopting the hip hop genre has proven successful because the genre is already deeply embedded in mainstream popular culture and resonates with a wide audience of youth and young adults. By tapping into this widely recognized genre, they are able to demonstrate how hip hop can be a powerful tool for remaining strong in our culture. This manifests in many ways. Through visual narratives that capture the land, water, animals, traditions, food, etc., Pat Boy and Paalil K’iin explore the material realities of everyday life on the Peninsula.

Likewise, as Pat Boy shared with me, Angelito’s viral videos are also encouraging the next generation to learn Maya from their parents, elders, and communities. Oftentimes, Pat Boy explained, many experience shame and embarrassment for speaking in Maya. However, Pat Boy believes that Angelito’s videos—where he appears only speaking Maya and encourages his viewers to learn—are encouraging little ones to celebrate their Maya culture and language. Visual narratives, then, like hip hop, remain integral to Indigenous peoples’ expressive culture and can be seen as the latest, newest assertion of cultural and political sovereignty. Moving forward, I am excited to further explore this hip-hop and social media context as asserting an Indigenous presence in the present and in the future, remains a remarkable task.

I am deeply grateful to Pat Boy (@ patboy_rap_mayaoficial) and Paalil K’iin (@Paalil K’iin Rap Maya) for sharing their knowledge and time with me. *Dios bo’otik.*

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