

12th European Maya Conference

The Maya and their Sacred Narratives: Text and Context of Maya Mythologies

Geneva, Switzerland, December 7-8, 2007

Symposium abstracts

Friday December 7

Alain Monnier (University of Geneva) 10.00-10.30
Comparar las mitologías

Abstract not yet available

Raphaël Gardiol and **Philippe Borgeaud** (University of Geneva) 10.30-11.00
Mythologies

Abstract not yet available

Christian Prager (University of Bonn) 11.30-12.00
Remembering the Narrative: A Cognitive Approach in the Study of Tzotzil Oral Tradition

Social living is the key selection pressure in the evolution of human intelligence, and the acquisition, storage and exchange of social information are fundamental adaptive functions of the human mind. Evolution-minded anthropologists and psychologists have long noticed that narration as a universal cultural domain is rich in social information in particular and storytelling can be viewed as a transmission in which the benefit to the listener is information about her environment. Narrative texts of any kind serve as models of personal (individual) and shared (group) experience. They simulate certain goals and problems of day-to-day human existence and provide local information necessary to pursue and solve them. Furthermore, narration and yarning are the product of brain function and as such inseparably linked to the basic cognitive functions of information processing, such as acquisition, storing and recalling past experiences or mental representations in general. Phenomenologically, a narrative consists of plot and narration. While a plot is the seemingly irreducible and mentally stable substance of a story, a narration is variable and represents the way the substance is linked. To yarn or thinking in general, however, even to remember, is always to change or re-construct mental representations from memory. Cognitive scientists are especially interested in those mental processes, such as storage structures, encoding and storage processes, mechanisms of retrieval from memory, and the mental and public representation of processed information. Transmitting narratives generally requires mnemonic support that is, however, costly to maintain in terms of labour, time and energy, the most basic human resources. People usually acquire and pass on salient folktales or everyday stories, but the transmission of sacred myths, for example, involves a great deal of cognitive effort. Cognitive psychologists argue that people are better at storing and remembering information when it is relevant to their personal interests than when it is not. Frederic Bartlett (1932) wrote that "material which is a direct or an indirect stimulus to pre-formed interests is sure to reappear" in subjects' recountings of short narratives. The recall of rumor details in the context of narratives is affected by the subjects' personal interests, too. Rumors, on the other side, have always their own community. Thus, certain groups will be more susceptible to a given rumor and narrative than others, because social groups are based on common interests (e.g., ethnicity, religion, social class, occupation); hence, a given group will be susceptible to rumors that pertain to the group or common interests determining the cognitive attractiveness of the narratives being used as the vehicle for the social information.

In the present paper I will focus on these general cognitive views of narrative theory and will draw on Tzotzil oral tradition. The narratives of the modern Tzotzil of Chiapas are the best published of any in the Maya cultural area. Robert M. Laughlin's seminal publications *Of Cabbages and Kings* includes a canon of nearly two hundred Tzotzil Maya myths, legends and tales from San Lorenzo Zinacantán, Chiapas, which form the basis of the present cognitive analysis of Tzotzil narrative and storytelling. One major strength of Laughlin's collection of texts is that it not only records different versions of the same narratives from various relators of the same tradition, but it also contains versions of the same story as told by the same person. This is a unique basic requisite for the study of the mechanism of creating, storing and transmitting narrative texts.

Simon Martin (University of Pennsylvania Museum)
Theosynthesis in Ancient Maya Religion

12.00-12.30

This paper examines the role fusion and hybridity play in the making of divine identity among the ancient Maya. In polytheistic religions such as that of Classical Greece, gods are discrete characters with relatively stable identities and bodily representations. But elsewhere, including Mesoamerica, deities can have a more amorphous nature, with boundaries so permeable that one can merge with another. Although noted by a number of authors, there has yet to be any specific study of this phenomenon--one which has notable implications for our understanding of ancient Maya spirituality.

Carlos Pallán Gayol (INAH, Mexico)

14.00-14.30

The Many Faces of Chaahk: exploring the role of a complex entity within myth, religion and politics

An ubiquitous serpent-like figure, the Rain God *Chaahk* constitutes one of the main deities of the Maya pantheon, but also one of the most challenging to interpret due to a complexity and fluidness that has long fascinated and puzzled generations of scholars. Ever since the advent of a more complete decipherment of the hieroglyphic texts, it has become increasingly apparent that God B's multiple manifestations played a most significant role not only within Maya myth and religion, but also in politics. The relationship between these three cultural aspects shall be explored in detail. Its connections with other entities previously regarded as differentiated, such as *K'awiil*, shall be discussed, and most importantly, the question of why Classic Maya rulers used to such great extent different and regionally distributed descriptive epithets for *Chaahk* embedded into their personal names, such as Edzna's *Kahl Chan Chaahk*; Yaxchilan's and Piedras Negras' *O' Chaahk*; Copan's *Yopaat*; Topoxte's *K'ahk' We'il Chaahk*; Ek' Balam's 'Scorpion' *Ti' Chaahk* and Calakmul's *Nuun Bahlamn'al Chaahk*, among many others, encompassing from the southernmost regions of the lowlands to the north of Yucatan peninsula. How these glyphic expressions allude to specific activities associated with God B or its numerous cognates is evidenced in a number of myths and depictions in Classic Maya vessels, but also in Izapean lapidary art, Zapotec *Cocijo* representations and Teotihuacan's *Tlaloc*-complex imagery, given that the Maya 'Rain God' concept represents the continuance of a shared set of beliefs inherited since at least Preclassic times from different civilizations throughout Mesoamerica.

Nikolai Grube (University of Bonn)

14.30-15.00

The birth of the wayoob - a narrative on Codexstyle ceramics

Abstract not yet available

Karl Taube (University of California, Riverside)

15.00-15.30

Corn on the Cosmos: Maize and Creation Mythology of Southeastern Mesoamerica

Abstract: In ancient and contemporary Mesoamerica, maize is far more than a basic staple, it is also an essential means by which people see themselves and their surrounding world. In Mesoamerican myth, our very flesh is formed of corn, and maize also serves to delineate the cardinal directions and the world center. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the maize god is one of the preeminent beings of Classic Maya myth, and the recent discoveries at San Bartolo have demonstrated that much of this mythology can be traced to the Late Preclassic. In addition, the Preclassic maize imagery serves as

important bridge to the still earlier Formative Olmec. It will be noted that a great deal of maize imagery, symbolism and mythology known for the Classic Maya was also present among the Middle Formative Olmec.

Erik Velásquez García (UNAM, Mexico)

16.00-16.30

Imagen, texto y contexto ceremonial del 'Ritual de los Ángeles': viejos problemas y nuevas respuestas sobre la narrativa sagrada en los libros de Chilam Balam

En esta ponencia ofreceré una visión novedosa del “Ritual de los Ángeles”, nombre dado por Ralph Roys (1933) a un mito cosmogónico de finales del siglo XVIII, plasmado en los folios 48-58 del *Chilam Balam de Chumayel*. Se trata de un relato sagrado, críptico y simbólico, donde aflora el recurso del bilingüismo (atestiguado ya en los códices): yukateko (lengua vernácula) y latín (lengua de prestigio litúrgico). Su tema central es el nacimiento del dios del maíz (Josus Sustinal Gracia), cuya planta sirvió de columna que levantó los cielos, identificados a su vez con las siete esferas y planetas de la tradición grecolatina. Este episodio fue precedido por un diluvio y sucedido por un eclipse que anunció la autoridad de Jesucristo. Aclararé el significado de los principales protagonistas mencionados en el texto, cotejándolo con los chilames de Chan Cah, Nah y Tekax y con distintos reportorios españoles (Li, 1492; Salaya, 1524; Chaves, 1584; Zamorano, 1594; Martínez, 1606), así como con tratados de angelología cristiana (Aeropagita, ca. 500); indagaré en la relación de este mito con los cultos agrícolas de los “siete tuunes” (ver documentos inquisitoriales), y lo ubicaré en el contexto ritual de las *tiich’* o “misas milperas” (ca. 1764-1813). Finalmente estudiaré el simbolismo iconográfico de las dos ilustraciones que acompañan al texto (un emblema de muerte y un cáliz de misa, donde se libaba la “primera agua” o *yáaxha’*, ver Del Granado Baeza, 1813), indicando sus posibles fuentes de inspiración icónica, halladas dentro de la tradición litúrgica y emblemática cristiana.

Carl D. Callaway (Texas State University, San Marcos)

16.30-17.00

The Birth of the Number Twenty in the Dresden Codex

Two of the “Serpent Number” pages of the Dresden Codex (pages 61 and 69) hold parallel passages describing creation events shortly before the start of the current era on **13.0.0.0 4 Ajaw 8 Kumk’u** (August 13, 3114 BC). Specifically, they record the creation of the *Winal*—the number twenty. Scribes reference the *Winal*’s “birth” with the passage *pataj ajwinik*, “was formed twenty.” The *Winal*’s birth is then followed by a short numerical count of twenty days that falls directly before **4 Ajaw 8 Kumk’u**. This count of twenty days is expressed by the numbers “19 and 0” written side-by-side. The birth of the *Winal*, followed by a count of twenty days prior to creation day shares a one-to-one correspondence with a similar pre-era event as recorded in the Post-Conquest writings of the Chilam Balam of Chumayel from the Yucatán. This strong correspondence between the Dresden and the Chumayel leaves little doubt that the *Winal* episode told on the Serpent Number pages serves as the antecedent to the Chumayel text, and thereby shows that a core mythos of Maya cosmology survived intact in Post-Conquest Yucatán despite the ravages and religious suppression of the European Conquest.

Gabrielle Vail (New College of Florida, Sarasota) and **Christine Hernández** (Tulane University, New Orleans)

17.00-17.30

Caimans, Caves, and K’awil: Creation Mythology in Late Postclassic Maya Iconography and Texts

Considerable emphasis has been placed on reconstructing creation stories recorded in hieroglyphic texts and depicted in Classic and Preclassic Maya art. Much less is known about Late Postclassic Maya mythology, although recent studies reveal that there is a rich body of data available for study.

Our presentation focuses on an analysis of codices and murals from the Late Postclassic northern Maya lowlands. In addition to those with widely recognized cosmological themes, a number of scenes from these sources have only recently been identified as pertaining to origin stories and the mythology of world creation and destruction. One such example is the *tun* mural from Santa Rita Mound 1, which includes a sequence of events that can be demonstrated to relate the story of creation. Although in abbreviated format, it touches on the birth of the scribal arts, the rescue of the maize god from the

Underworld ballcourt, the events at *na ho' ka'an*, the origin of humans, the sacrifice leading to the birth of the new sun, and the gift of maize and other forms of sustenance to humans.

Comparisons with colonial era texts indicate that the Santa Rita murals include episodes from Yucatec and highland Maya sources, as well as from highland Mexico. A consideration of other Late Postclassic texts and iconography indicates many with a similar thematic content. The widespread depiction of creation mythology in prehispanic painted sources can be explained as offering those inhabiting the northern lowlands a means of interpreting and contextualizing their world.

Saturday December 8

Timothy Knowlton (Tulane University, New Orleans and Berry College) 9.00-9.30
Composition and Artistry in a Classical Yucatec Maya Creation Myth: Prehispanic Ritual Narratives & Their Colonial Transmission

The myth of the destruction and recreation of the world in Katun 11 Ahau has proven a fruitful source for scholars interpreting hieroglyphic inscriptions and prehispanic iconography. In this paper I wish to focus attention not only on how the myth helps us understand these earlier texts, but to reconstruct the history of the composition of the extant Classical Yucatec Maya language narratives themselves.

Applying methods of textual criticism to the various redactions of the myth contained in the Books of Chilam Balam of Chumayel, of Tizimin, and the Códice Pérez, I demonstrate that these extant texts are derived from two earlier mythic narratives. The source narratives were each related to specific prehispanic rituals (also attested to by independent sources). As colonial authorities suppressed indigenous public ritual and transformed the institutions that transmitted these narratives, this created an environment in which Maya scribes reassessed the relationships between multiple independent strands of indigenous mythology. By comparing the redactions of the Katun 11 Ahau flood narratives with one another and with relevant Maya language texts contained in the 16th century Morley Manuscript, I argue Franciscan apocalypticism provided the thread by which Maya scribes combined these prehispanic myths of the Katun 11 Ahau Flood and the descent of Bolon Dzacab into the colonial period narratives extant today.

Hector Xol Choc (Universidad Rafaël Landívar, Guatemala) 9.30-10.00
Mitología Q'eqchi' y sus raíces clásicas

Cada conjunto de conocimientos/prácticas culturales de cualquier grupo social son originados a partir de una base, la cual se va desarrollando a lo largo de la vida de sus integrantes, con sus cambios y permanencias. Para los Maya'es Q'eqchi'es ese principio se llama *Xe' Toon* (raíz/tronco) reflejados en la actualidad en la lengua y en las prácticas y vivencias.

Esta ponencia trata de presentar una descripción comparativa de algunos elementos mitológicos Q'eqchi'es de la actualidad con conocimientos mayas plamados en fuentes clásicas sagradas, entre ellas: textos jeroglíficos (vasijas, estelas, murales, etc.), iconografía clásica y textos escritos con caracteres latinos (Popol Wuj, Chilam B'alam y manuscritos indígenas). También se incluye el análisis de imágenes encontradas en la iconografía católica ubicados en territorio maya Q'eqchi', en las que se pueden encontrar símbolos con orígenes clásicos.

Entre los elementos mitológicos q'eqchi'es a tomar en cuenta en esta ponencia están:

- **Qana' Poh:** la madre Luna que guía y orienta la vida q'eqchi' (social, agrícola, cultural, ceremonial, etc.); la figura femenina, el modelo de mujer Q'eqchi'.
- **Qawa' Saq'eh:** el varón, la figura masculina, el complemento de qana' Poh, el modelo de hombre Q'eqchi': el trabajador, el cazador, el agricultor, el artista, reconfigurado para el pueblo q'eqchi' como B'alamq'eh.
- **Qawa' Kaaq:** la energía vital, la luz, la claridad, el que castiga ante las faltas, el que, a través de sus rayos reorienta la vida de los que han desequilibrado la naturaleza y su importancia en el descubrimiento del maíz (xmaal kaaq, ch'i'pi kaaqul ha').

- **Loq'ljaj Tzuul Taq'ah:** la madre y padre de la persona Q'eqchi', el señor, la señora que sustenta y alimenta a los seres humanos, que produce y crea la naturaleza. El lugar sagrado, la casa de la maíz y de los rayos y truenos.

Los conocimientos y prácticas Q'eqchi'es no son producto de la casualidad, son construcciones colectivas e históricas, los que tuvieron un principio, transmitidos de generación en generación y readecuados a cada contexto socio-histórico que le ha tocado vivir al pueblo maya' en general.

Otros aspectos culturales a abordar que, al analizar la información que proporcionan los textos jeroglíficos, muestran su permanencia en la cultura maya actual. Tales como:

- El lenguaje figurado y metafórico.
- Símbolos y significados: K'anál Witz, los Wayoob' y el descubrimiento del maíz.
- La personificación e importancia de elementos del universo: los animales, los lugares sagrados y mitológicos, las plantas, etc.
- las prácticas rituales q'eqchi'es y su relación con las imágenes de códices, murales y vasijas de la época clásica.
- la forma de concebir y entender la vida, la naturaleza y el universo.

Allen J. Christenson (Brigham Young University, Provo)

10.00-10.30

"Who Shall Be our Sustainer": Sacred Myth and the Spoken Word

Nearly all contemporary highland Maya ceremonies and mythic tales focus on creation, or how things first came to be. How a thing begins its existence determines to a large extent its purpose and relevance in the present. The early sections of the *Popol Vuh* focus on the gods' search for beings who would be capable of remembering the creator gods and performing the proper ceremonies necessary to maintain their life-generating power. For the Maya, deities are not omnipotent, nor are they capable of sustaining themselves indefinitely. Thus the creation is a search for "providers and sustainers" who will remember the gods and worship them properly through sacred ritual. Much of this ritual is dependent on the spoken word, for, as the gods declare, "it is with words that we are sustained (Christenson 2007, 80)." The original K'iche'-Maya word for sustainer is *q'o'l*, which refers to one who provides sustenance, primarily in the form of nourishment, but also nurtures in any other way-- such as a mother caring for an infant. The wording of this passage thus implies that the authors of the *Popol Vuh* consider human beings to bear the burden of caring for the gods in much the same way as a mother nourishes and cares for its newborn infant.

Many of the larger highland Maya communities possess wooden chests containing books and clothing owned by their ancestors which they revere as precious relics. When brought out into the open, such books are reverently offered incense and prayers, but they are seldom opened or read. Partly this is because few living Maya know how to read the early script of the colonial period, and partly out of respect for the words themselves. When the words of the ancestors are read, or spoken aloud, it is as if that person had returned from death to speak again. In a real sense, they become manifest or reborn through by means of living speech. The recounting of myth and the performance of sacred ceremony are thus not merely idle stories or mummery—they are conceived as regenerative acts that maintain the world and its deities, and endow them with power.

Kerry Hull (Reitaku University, Japan)

11.00-11.30

The Grand Ch'orti' Epic: The Story of the Kumix Angel

Narrative recitation among the Ch'orti' Maya of Guatemala forms the empirical foundation for understanding notions of cause and effect in daily life. In this paper, I will unpack many of central cognitive concepts in Ch'orti' worldview through a detailed analysis of the most important mythological narrative in Ch'orti' society: The Story of the Kumix Angel. Known well by literally almost every Ch'orti' speaker in Guatemala, the tale of the Kumix Angel is nothing short of the grand epic myth for the Ch'orti' Maya. Through an analysis of 13 versions of this proto-typical Ch'orti' story I recorded in the field and several others by other researchers, I reconstruct a critical text of this core narrative, providing a unique insight into how the Ch'orti' world is reified and understood through this crucial hero narrative. Furthermore, I will show how the story of the Kumix Angel entails a formidable number of explicative references to how certain animals, geographic locations, natural phenomena and came to be, thereby reinforcing major elements of Ch'orti' worldview with each recitation. Finally, I will argue

that the epic tale of the Kumix Angel goes further than any other single Ch'orti' narrative in elucidating the Ch'orti' understanding of the creation, a temporal system of causality, and the processes of the natural world.

Edwin Braakhuis (University of Utrecht)

11.30-12.00

The Tzotzil Myth of the Jaguar Slayer Reconsidered

The acquisition of jaguar power was one of the main concerns of Maya kings and warriors. In addition to shamanic scenes of jaguar transformation, Classic Maya art shows kings and war chiefs wearing jaguar skirts, jerkins, and mantles. In this paper, the focus will rest on the jaguar skin worn as a mantle. Close attention will be paid to the surviving fragments of an important, but insufficiently studied myth, the Tzotzil tale of the Jaguar Slayer (Ohoroxtotil). In this tale, the hero interacts with historical enemies of the Tzotziles and with jaguars. The killing of the jaguars provides the structure for the disabling of the Jaguar Matriarch, a character corresponding to Xkitza in Q'eqchi' hero myth and Tlantepusilam in Pipil hero myth. Taking as a starting point Bricker's ethnohistorical analysis of Tzotzil Carnival celebrations, it will be argued that episodes of the Tzotzil tale of the Jaguar Slayer once functioned as a mythical charter for the initiation of war chiefs and the presentation of their jaguar-pelt mantles. Finally, possible connections of the Jaguar Slayer tale to the capture of the Jaguar God of the Underworld will be considered.

Fátima Tec Pool (Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán)

12.00-12.30

Las cuevas, espacios míticos entre los mayas de hoy

Desde tiempos remotos hasta en la actualidad las cuevas han tenido una función primordial en la vida del hombre quien las utilizó como moradas, refugio, para abastecerse de agua, entre otras, las cuales están reflejadas por los vestigios que estos dejaron en su interior.

En muchas poblaciones de Yucatán las cuevas y los cenotes son espacios que tienen vida y por lo tanto, son habitados por guardianes, son morada de los vientos, de los dioses o de seres sobrenaturales. Es por ello que la gente va creando historias que aún permanecen en su imaginario cuyo significado ha permitido construir una ideología en su torno que trajo como consecuencia el culto y veneración hacia ellas.

El objetivo de este trabajo es dar a conocer aquellos mitos más representativos que tienen su origen en las cavernas y las actividades que se llevan a cabo como consecuencia de estas historias que aún permanecen en la ideología maya contemporánea.

Lars Frühsorge and Ulrich Wölfel (University of Hamburg)

14.00-14.30

Salt, Sites, and Mythology: An ethnoarchaeological survey of San Mateo Ixtatán, Huehuetenango, Guatemala

San Mateo Ixtatán, a Chuj community in northern Highland Guatemala, is well-known for its traditional salt production. The existence of an ancient trading centre is indicated by various sites in the vicinity of the mines, which also feature stelae suggesting long-distance-interactions. These archaeologically unexplored sites are still remembered in San Mateo as part of a sacred geography and visited for ritual purposes.

Neighbouring communities have conserved certain myths connected to the origin of the salt mines: A narrative of the Acatecos explains why the Chuj were blessed with the salt instead of them. The Tojolabal in Chiapas believe San Mateo to be an ancient homeland they had to leave after a conflict over the mines. This fact is commemorated in annual pilgrimages to San Mateo from where salt is taken back home. In San Mateo itself salt-making is considered a sacred activity connected to specific ceremonies and the product is used in traditional medicine.

The data presented in this paper is part of a documentation of sites, rituals and oral traditions to explore the potential of the region for a larger ethnoarchaeological project. We believe that traditional knowledge of the Chuj could be a valuable source for the reconstruction of the region's cultural history. Concerning the theme of this conference we hope that the case of San Mateo can shed some light on economy in pre-Hispanic times, which certainly was not only represented in, but also shaped through mythology.

Erik Boot (Rijswijk, The Netherlands)

14.30-15.00

Gods, Kings, and Queens at the Las Monjas Complex, Chichen Itza: Cosmological Order in Late Classic North Yucatan

The Las Monjas Complex at Chichen Itza is one of the least studied building complexes at Chichen Itza. The main building rises three stories and its giant stairway faces towards the Great Plaza which harbors, among others, the Castillo and the Great Ballcourt. The complex includes annexed structures, neighboring structures, and a ballcourt located at the back of the main building. I propose that this complex is part of a circa 12 year program developed by king K'ak' Upakal, initiated at the Casa Colorada and culminating at Four Lintels.

In this paper I analyse the architectural, visual, and textual narratives employed by K'ak' Upakal at the Las Monjas Complex to arrive at an understanding of cosmological order as recorded at Chichen Itza. I will show that the hieroglyphic narratives at Las Monjas contain an intricate display of remote ancestry, especially in K'ak' Upakal's maternal descent line. At the same time these texts provide a carefully narrated association of K'ak' Upakal and his relatives with the gods worshipped at Chichen Itza, employing a narrative style unique to the site.

The general lay-out, location, and function of the Las Monjas complex within the larger Chichen Itza urban settlement combined with the architectural, visual, and textual narratives at this complex are compared to Yaxchilan's Structure 33 and Palenque's Cross Group. This comparison will show that the architectural, visual, and textual narratives at Las Monjas stand within a long and continuous tradition of recording cosmological order within the Maya area by paramount kings.

Penny J. Steinbach (University of Texas, Austin)

15.00-15.30

Daubing and Aspersing: the Mythic Basis of a Classic Maya Heir Designation Ritual

In 1998, I identified a pictorial narrative on a Late Classic Maya ceramic vessel in which a pair of priestly attendants daub and asperse two young males who have transformed into baby birds with spotted feathers. Using different versions of the same event portrayed on other objects, I demonstrated that the young males who assume avian form are Jun Ajaw and "Yax B'alam" and that the details of the event may be strategically altered in its ritual reenactment so that only one male undergoes transformation. I also suggested that the transformation was ritually reenacted either as a rite of accession or as part of an heir designation ceremony. Several years later, new evidence came to light that revealed additional information about both the nature of the ritual and the political circumstances under which its performance was likely to be explicitly documented. The most striking new evidence is the Temple 21 Panel at Palenque. It describes and depicts the ruler K'inich Janaab' Pakal and two of his designated heirs, each of whom wears a cape of spotted feathers and faces a priestly attendant holding an aspergillum with which the prince beside him either has been or will be aspersed. In this paper, I will review the evidence confirming the mythic origin of this ritual, describe what the ritual entails, and illustrate the manipulation of mythic narrative to suit royal needs.

Pierre Robert Colas (Vanderbilt University, Nashville)

16.00-16.30

The Liminal Deities: Birth and Death Gods in Classic Maya Personal Names

As Van Gennep reminded, rites of passage include liminal states that describe the changing from one state of being to another, such as childhood to adulthood. The Classic Maya exhibited liminal states often by changes in identity and indicated them in their narratives, among them personal names. Important liminal states are birth, childhood-adulthood, accession, and death. A systematic study of all birth and death contexts of historical individuals and the analysis of their personal names in Classic Maya inscriptions shows that only in these contexts certain previously unknown deities and aspects of other deities appear in their anthroponymic phrases that otherwise are not recorded in the inscriptions.

The analysis of personal names in birth and death contexts thus reveals much about the religious significance of liminal states and in general about the nature of Classic Maya numinous beings. Liminal states were probably thought by the Classic Maya to be extremely dangerous situations in which a human being needed to be accompanied by deities. Since these numinous beings appear only in these contexts it will be shown how Classic Maya deities are not only general social

constructions, they are locally and contextually formed and served at a certain time in a specific location a purpose. Since many of the deities identified here are aspects of other more encompassing known deities it shows that from a shared general mythological knowledge the Classic Maya formed locally and contextually unique concepts of the numinous.

Simone Thun, Julie Nehammer Knub and Christophe Helmke (University of Copenhagen)

16.30-17.00

The Divine Rite of Kings: An Analysis of Classic Maya Impersonation Statements

Impersonation rituals were undoubtedly one of the most important rites of divine Maya kingship in the Classic period. While such rituals are attested in both the iconographic and epigraphic corpus of the Classic Maya, our focus here is on the latter. In their most complete form these expressions are rendered hieroglyphically as **u-B'AH-hi-li-AN-nu**, though a variety of abbreviations and associated spellings have been documented. While the phonetics of these impersonation statements are relatively clear, the semantic dimension remains somewhat opaque. In order to refine our understanding we have conducted an extensive review of the Classic Maya hieroglyphic corpus in order to obtain a comprehensive and near-exhaustive sample of impersonation expressions. This research has subjected the sample to a series of in-depth quantitative and qualitative analyses. The most promising results of this research are presented in this paper. The salient trends of impersonation statements are reviewed in light of their temporal distribution, diachronic spelling, syntactical placement, the deities involved and associated iconography, the timing of these rituals and concurrent events, as well as the gender and titles of the agents. We will focus on these impersonation statements in order to shed light on the sacred rituals behind the glyphic statements as well as the agents who performed these.