



Madrid, November 29-30, 2003

Michela Elisa Craveri (Universidad Católica de Milán)

El arte verbal k'iche': Reflexiones sobre sus funciones poéticas

La ponencia se basa en el estudio de los textos rituales contemporáneos de los k'iche' de Nahualá (Guatemala), sobre diferentes aspectos de su vida ceremonial, desde la bendición de la semilla y la enfermedad hasta la petición de novia, en cantos recogidos durante mi trabajo de campo en esta comunidad. En particular, se hará énfasis en la estructura de los textos poéticos, en la versificación, la organización sintáctica y la función de los recursos retóricos. Se observará cómo la versificación lógica constituye un recurso de profundización semántica de los términos asociados en paralelismo y cómo cada verso manifiesta un aspecto peculiar de un referente, matizado y profundizado por los versos siguientes. Los cantos contemporáneos presentan en general una estructura circular, en la repetición constante de significados, expresados en distintos núcleos narrativos. Los cantos se estructuran en una cadena de progresivas resemantización de un mismo referente y en un desarrollo temporal cíclico. La teoría de la oralidad ha permitido identificar fenómenos poéticos comunes a las culturas a oralidad primaria o mixta y otros propios de la poética k'iche', que responde a su peculiar visión simbólica de la realidad.

Otro aspecto interesante es que la retórica k'iche' manifiesta cierta continuidad a través de los siglos, desde textos registrados durante la Colonia como el *Popol Vuh* o inmediatamente después, como el *Rabinal Achí*, hasta los cantos rituales contemporáneos, que claramente revelan sincretismos religiosos, pero también una estructura profunda propiamente mesoamericana.

Kerry Hull (University of Texas at Austin)

Así Hablan los Ángeles: The Poetics of Ch'orti' Ritual Speech and Oral Narratives

The Ch'orti' Maya of southeastern Guatemala preserve in their curing and agricultural rituals complex poetic constructions and elegant metaphorical extensions. The heavily formulaic language used in Ch'orti' ritual prayers is said to be a necessary correlate to the act of performing the ritual itself. In fact, the Ch'orti' aver that dualistic speech reflects a heavenly pattern, i.e. 'how the angles speak'. This paper investigates both the form and content of these poetic features found in Ch'orti' ritual and oral narrative contexts. From data gathered principally through fieldwork, I propose explanations for the use of specific poetic devices in certain thematic contexts. Furthermore, through an analysis of over 250 Ch'orti' texts (ritual and otherwise), I will define the principal literary genres of Ch'orti' and identify the poetic figures most commonly encountered in each. Evidence will be offered from this large corpus of texts arguing for a close correlation between genre type and individual poetic devices used in Ch'orti'. Finally, I will show how several poetic devices with their accompanying contexts in Ch'orti' mirror those of many hieroglyphic inscriptions in significant ways.

John F. Chuchiak IV (Southwest Missouri State University)

De Extirpatio Codicis Yucatanensis: The 1607 Colonial Confiscation of a Maya Sacred Book - New Interpretations on the Origins and Provenience of the Madrid Codex

The origins of the Sacred Maya Books known as codices are shrouded in mystery. According to Gabriel Vail, we know almost nothing about the origin and acquisition of the Maya codices. The hieroglyphic Maya text known as the Madrid Codex is one such enigmatic document which has long puzzled scholars,

epigraphers, and historians. The origins and story of how the manuscript made its way across the Atlantic and to Europe is still a mystery.

This paper attempts to unravel the mystery of the provenience and history of the acquisition of the Madrid Codex. As this paper argues, a curious European paper patch on M. 56 may hold some of the answers to the secrets of the origins of the Madrid Codex. By means of physical and contextual evidence, paleographic analysis, and historical documentation, this paper develops a theory as to the time and place where a Spanish Catholic priest, who I believe I can identify by name, confiscated the codex in 1607 from the Maya as part of a campaign against idolatry.

This discovery is significant because as a sacred Maya book confiscated during the colonial period, the Madrid Codex serves as a valuable source for understanding the Postclassic and Colonial transitional period in Maya writing. The paper's conclusions can no doubt aid future scholars in answering some of the questions relating to the transition from hieroglyphic to alphabet writing in the recording of sacred Maya texts.

Pierre Robert Colas (University of Bonn)

The Hunting Almanacs of the Madrid Codex: A Guide to Ritual Festivities

Hunting holds an important role in subsistence economy of modern Maya, but it is known both through Colonial as well as Classic sources that it did play this role as well in pre-hispanic times. For the Classic times there are some indications on vases and few monuments as to the role hunting played. The major source for our knowledge of the significance of hunting in pre-hispanic times, however, derives from a Postclassic source, the Madrid Codex.

The pages 38a and 39-49 hold a variety of scenes featuring deer and hunters alike. These scenes have mostly been interpreted as an almanac estimating the best days for a successful hunt. However, a close analysis of the scenes demonstrates a rather complex interpretation of those almanacs. Besides hunters carrying deer there are sacrifices of deer visible, as well as offerings made in front of censers for the hunting God Y, *Wuk Zip*. The hieroglyphic captions in these cases speak of ritual gifts and may denote the verb "to sacrifice". There also exists the possibility that certain glyphs refer to a ritual painting colour that was used by the hunters who smeared their bodies with it during hunting rituals.

Bishop Diego de Landa also accounts of blood sacrifices during hunting rituals as well as an offering for God Y. Landa also refers to fasten rituals embedded in larger hunting rituals. Landas account allows for an analogy interpreting many of the scenes in the hunting almanacs as rituals related to hunting. The analogy with Landa is methodologically possible because the time difference between the two is less immense than between Classic times and Colonial times.

The here presented interpretation shows for which purpose Codices were employed. Rather than being economic planners they were used to plan ritual festivities. They were not merely used by a time obsessed people to calculate days, but the most favourable days for hunting rituals were planned with the Codex. Codices were thus most likely used by ritual practitioners similar to modern *h-men*. As such Codices are an important and rich source for reconstructing pre-hispanic ritual behaviour.

James L. Fitzsimmons (Dumbarton Oaks)

Social Death in Classic Maya Texts

Classic Maya texts focusing on the relationship between captives and captors have long dominated epigraphic discussions of warfare, hierarchical relationships between sites, and human sacrifice. The ways in which texts describe captives, e.g., as beings stripped of their procreative or ceremonial power, have received far less attention.

The removal of articles of clothing, royal titles, and other attributes was often a prerequisite to sacrifice, a type of ritualized humiliation that brought about the "social death" of the captive. Building upon recent work by David Stuart and the author, this paper explores the ways in which a loss of social identity is manifested, within phrases like *ma' ch'ab' ak'a'b* 'without creation, without darkness [a procreative force]' and through the display of captives on monuments. Similar 'ritualized humiliation' is covered for the Postclassic and Colonial Periods, in both texts and iconography, to provide a broader time frame for this study of changing Maya identities.

Marianne Gabriel (University of Bonn, UADY)

"Sib-ten a w-alak'- o'ob ..." ("regálanos tus hijos, tus criados ...") - Oraciones dirigidas al "protector de los animales" (Sip)

Entre los campesinos mayas de Yucatán era común de pedir permiso a los "dueños de los animales" antes de salir de cacería y dar las gracias después. Ahora estas ceremonias se realizan solo ocasionalmente debido a la drástica disminución de la fauna silvestre.

Los animales silvestres que se logran matar son aquellos que los "cuidadores de los animales" soltaban como presas. Además del agradecimiento por cada presa, después de trece animales que han obtenido, los cazadores (*ah p'ul-o'ob*, *ah ts'oon-o'ob*) tienen que rendir cuentas a los "dueños de los animales" con una ceremonia que consiste en la ofrenda del 13º animal, panes y bebidas ceremoniales, una ofrenda especial para *Sip*, el "señor de los animales", y la "bendición de las escopetas" que implica santificar a éstas, a los cazadores y a sus perros.

En sus plegarias, el sacerdote maya (*h-men*) agradece los trece animales obtenidos, pide perdón y solicita nuevamente la licencia para otros trece. El *h-men* se dirige a *Nukuch Sip*, el gran protector de los animales, a *Yum Chac Sip*, *Yum Sak Sip*, *Yum Ek Sip*, *Yum Kan Sip*, además a *Yum Tsainal Sip*, *Yum Balam Sip* y *Yum Kóochek Sip*, y a *Yum San Sipriano*. Pide que los diversos "dueños" suelten a sus animales protegidos; especialmente a los venados. Nombra a todos los animales silvestres que sirven para el consumo humano. Al dirigirse a sus dueños, no les llama *ba'alche'-o'ob* (animales silvestres) sino *alak'- o'ob* (hijos), término que se usa para familiares y para los animales domésticos.

Alexandre Tokovinine (Harvard University)

Art of Maya Epitaph

This paper is an attempt to define and describe a specific genre of the Late Classic Maya texts as 'obituaries' or 'epitaphs'. My presentation will focus on the literary properties of the genre but I will also consider its social, cultural, and political contexts. I will center on a small number of inscriptions committed by non-royal elites in the Usumacinta drainage and compare these texts with royal epitaphs from the same area.

The main challenge for an obituary writer is creating a coherent vision of an individual's life that would emphasize certain values important for a person committing the funeral monument. One of the most interesting findings of my research on the non-royal posthumous biographies is that the articulation of being with the king, following the king's orders offers a striking contrast to the royal concept of a ruler bound by no obligations except those before his gods. It seems likely that this division goes through all the genres of hieroglyphic texts and may be the very nature of the difference between royal and non-royal elites.

Gabrielle Vail (New College of Florida, Sarasota) & Christine Hernández (Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University)

Fire Drilling, Bloodletting, and Sacrifice: Yearbearer Rituals in the Maya and Borgia Group Codices

Early Mesoamericanist scholars commented on the existence of certain iconographic similarities that characterize the Maya codices and what have come to be called the Borgia group of screenfolds from highland Mexico. Our work continues in this tradition. Beginning with a comparison of Fejérváry-Mayer page 1 and Madrid pages 75-76, we examine how these and a number of other almanacs in the Maya and Borgia codices may have functioned as calendrical tools to schedule yearbearer ceremonies at specified points within the 52-year Calendar Round. A constellation of activities, including the capture and sacrifice of prisoners, the drilling and distribution of new fire, and the offering of food, incense, and blood, characterized these yearly ceremonies. Our research also suggests the importance of the Calendar Round in modeling Mesoamerican perceptions of time and space. For both the Maya and Central Mexican cultures, the world was conceptualized within a quadripartite framework, with special emphasis often being given to the fifth direction, or the center. Almanacs such as Fejérváry-Mayer 1 and Madrid 75-76 illustrate how the Calendar Round was structured within this model so that the four

quarter-points of the calendar (i.e., at 13 year intervals) define sacred quadrants onto which both space and time could be mapped and ritual activities prescribed.

Lisa Diane Bennett (University of California at Berkeley)

Two Maya Prayers: Microcosms of Cultural and Linguistic Contact

In the past 2000 years Maya religion and language have changed dramatically. Linguistic changes are most salient from the immense amount of loan words from Spanish, which include prepositions, numerals, nouns, verbs and adjectives. Maya religion has also changed in that most Maya now practice Christianity. However, Maya language and religion are still very much living entities, even if they are not exactly the same as they were in Pre-Contact days. A prime example of the living nature of Maya language and religion can be found in two prayers from the village of Xocen, near Valladolid in the state of Yucatan. The prayers commemorate such events as the death of Jesus, but they are written in Yucatec Maya. The Maya of these texts is old: most likely from the 18th century, but still contains loan words from Spanish. An analysis of these loans and an analysis of the texts in general will demonstrate the effects that Maya religion and Christianity have had on each other, and the effects that Christianity has had on the Maya language. These prayers encapsulate linguistic and cultural contact between the Maya and Europeans. As living relics of an older form of Yucatec Maya, they also contain important data about cultural and linguistic change and demonstrate a historical continuity in the Maya religious tradition.

Dmitri Beliaev (Knorozov Center for Mesoamerican Studies, Russian State University for the Humanities)

Rabbit, God L and Moon Goddess: Humor, Cursing and Myth on the Classic Maya Vase

The paper deals with the inscription on the Classic Maya polychrome vase (K 1398). The text, previously analyzed by Dieter Dutting and Richard Johnson, presents the myth about the Rabbit and the Old God. A new interpretation of the text is proposed. It records elements of colloquial speech, which was not preserved in the monumental inscriptions. This language is quite distinct from the formal language of the Classic Maya ritual texts, and includes such 'informal' elements as cursing, verbs in imperative mood etc.

With the help of other pictorial material (ceramics and figurines) we reconstruct the whole myth about Rabbit, God L and Moon Goddess, in which the Rabbit plays the role of trickster. The figure of the trickster rabbit Juan T'ul is common for the traditional Yucatec tales, and thus has its roots in Classic Maya mythology. The motif of the rabbit who steals the cloths from other person is also widespread among the Indians of the American Southeast.