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Asociación Europea de Mayistas

Maya Ethnicity. The Construction of Ethnic Identity from the Preclassic to Modern Times

Ninth European Maya Conference – Abstracts

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Berthold Riese (University of Bonn)
Ethnicity, the Maya, and Anthropology

This opening paper will give a general thematic outline for the conference. Short systematic summaries of the individual contributions in the first part of my presentation will highlight fundamental questions which could serve as guidelines for discussion. In the second part my focus will be on conceptual problems of the notion of ethnicity. My proposal is to concentrate our reasearch and discussion on more basic constituents of ethnicity which are more closely related to factual ethnographic, archaeological and epigraphic data. Since there seems to be furthermore no general consensus of what ethnicity means in reality, and theoretical constructs of the concept diverge greatly discussion of basic components seems to be the more fruitful approach.

Lolmay Pedro García Matzar (Oxlajuuj Keej Maya' Ajtz'iib', Antigua Guatemala)
La identidad maya contemporánea

El término identidad está ampliamente discutido por diferentes autores por lo que no entraré en detalles sobre el término sino sobre la formas en que los indígenas se identifican actualmente y los términos que usan para esta identificación. Existen diferentes términos que se utilizan para referirse a estas personas dentro de las que se destacan, indígena, natural, maya o simplemente nuestra gente. Al parecer el término maya lo utiliza cierto grupo y que por supuesto se ha ido introduciendo en la población, sin embargo existe la inquietud de ver que es lo que piensan los actores indígenas (soy indígena, soy maya soy kaqchikel, soy las tres cosas o soy pero no quiero ser o quiero ser pero me da pena, etc.). Pretendo llevar a cabo un análisis de los discursos de académicos, de personas que lideran el movimiento popular, de estudiantes y la gente indígena común. Finalmente quiero mostrar cuáles son los elementos culturales que se usan como argumentos para la identificación con tal grupo y si se potencializan esas diferencias y con que criterios. Como parte del resultado se podrá ver también el papel de los investigadores y/o la influencia de los mismos para ese hecho de identificación.

Session 1: The Emergence of Mayaness in the Pre- and Early Classic

Patricia A. McAnany (Boston University)
Habitus and Hierarchy: the Double Helix of Preclassic Maya Ethnicities

Language is a leading indicator of ethnic identity, however, only rudimentary glyphic texts have been forthcoming from Preclassic sites throughout the Maya lowlands. This circumstance is matched by an absence of recognizable Early Preclassic village sites leading some to postulate an in migration by 1000 BCE of proto-Mayan speakers from the west or south. By 200 BCE, an artisan tradition of monochromatic orange-red pottery -the Chicanel ceramic sphere- had spread across the lowlands and into the Grijalva drainage and the topography of lowland landscapes was punctuated by towering masses of monumental architecture. Does this materialization of cultural identity and religious power distinguish Maya ethnicity or just an eastern variant of a generalized Mesoamerican identity? What clues do the rise of the "Chicanel kingdoms" hold for understanding the emergence of an identity that archaeologists, for better or worse, have come to call "Maya." Were these identities forged in the crucible of martial and territorial conflict and amplified by increasingly entrenched hierarchies?

In order to address questions pertinent to Preclassic Maya ethnic identity, selected data -early sites of northern Belize and the central Petén- are arrayed along a timeline. Quantitative and qualitative differences between emergent seats of power and satellite villages are considered in order to distinguish between elite exclusionary identities and more widely shared -and possibly ethnic- identities. The notion

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of a profoundly deep Maya ethnic history is examined critically in light of the long duration of artisan traditions that buttress the premise of long-term ethnic homogeneity. It is proposed that habitual structures of material production and social reproduction intertwined with ritually saturated structures of authority to transform the Mesoamerican Formative village tradition into a culturally distinctive yet internally partitioned entity that has come to be called "Classic Maya."

Robert J. Sharer & Loa P. Traxler (University of Pennsylvania Museum)
The Foundations of Ethnic Diversity in the Southeastern Maya Area

Historical sources from the Spanish Conquest and Colonial periods testify to the ethnic diversity of the Southeastern Maya Area (corresponding to eastern Guatemala and western Honduras and El Salvador). A long tradition of archaeological and ethnohistorical scholarship has proposed the temporal and spatial definitions of distinct linguistic and ethnic groups within this region. Although correlating archaeological data with ethnic distinctions is fraught with difficulties, contrasting patterns in these data undoubtedly refer to a range of socio-cultural phenomena, including ethnicity. Archaeological research in this region has defined several different patterned datasets that reflect distinct and coherent traditions. The earliest of these date to the Preclassic era. By the Early Classic period a fundamental divide between Maya and non-Maya populations can be defined by both archaeological and textual evidence. By examining these archaeological datasets we can begin to understand the role of ethnic diversity in the development of PreColumbian society in the Southeastern Maya Area.

Jesper Nielsen (University of Copenhagen)
The Coming of the Torch - Teotihuacan Iconography in Early Classic Tikal and the Concept of Toma de Posesión

Today most archaeologists and epigraphers will agree that ethnic Teotihuacanos were present in the Maya area in the Early Classic period. However, less agreement exists when it comes to the role played by these foreigners in Maya society: Were they traders or conquerors? And are the Teoti-huacanos we find depicted on Maya monuments really Teotihuacanos or merely Maya lords dressed up as Teotihuacanos? This paper takes a fresh look at the iconography of some of the key monu-ments in this debate: Stelae 4 and 18 from Tikal, and argues that Yax Nuun Ayiin is shown holding a Teotihuacan-style torch that can be related to the central Mexican concept of Toma de Posesión. On the famous Stela 31 Yax Nuun Ayiin again appears with distinctly Teotihuacan torches in his headdress. Torches thus seem to have been of major importance as a symbol of conquest, change of power and the foundation of new dynasties to a number of central Mexican peoples including Teotihuacan, and it is shown how this iconographic feature can be found on a number of Teotihuacan-style monuments elsewhere in Early Classic Mesoamerica. Finally, these new observations are discussed in relation to the ongoing debate concerning the extent of the Teotihuacan empire.

Session 2: Horizontal and Vertical Identities in Classic Maya Society

Simon Martin (University of Pennsylvania Museum)
Identity and Distinction in the Classic Maya Polity

At first sight, the Classic Maya lowlands presents a rather homogenous political landscape, in which a common and binding elite rhetoric overlays any regional distinctions. Yet any such system obscures an innate tension: a struggle between the desire for group membership and the need for individualism and differentiation. This paper discusses the issue of distinction between Maya states and explores the ways in which polity identity asserted itself and a community consciousness was successfully promoted.

Nikolai Grube (University of Bonn)
Identity and Boundaries in Classic Maya Society

It is unlikely that the Classic Maya invoked concepts of identity that were in any ways similar to modern concepts of ethnicity. Yet, there are recognizable boundaries between different groups in Classic Maya society, which were so meaningful that they structured patterns of behaviour and communication. Maya elites actively promoted a distinct identity by tracing their origins to foreign places, speaking a different language and living in a world of luxury and exotic goods. This paper will argue that in spite of all conflicts between polities and elite subgroups there was a strong consciousness of a shared elite culture and identity. This consciousness became stronger in times of stress, in particular during the Terminal

Classic period, when symbols of identity were employed to promote a sense of common origin and destiny.

Session 3: Markers of Ethnic Identity in the Archaeological Record

Estella Weiss-Kreijci (University of Oporto, Portugal)
Identifying Ethnic Affiliation in the Maya Mortuary Record

Burial analysis is one method to identify group affiliation in the archaeological record. However, most burial samples display variability in body treatment, mode of deposition, body orientation, grave construction and quality and quantity of grave goods. These variations can have various reasons and result from differences in age, gender, wealth, social position, occupation or even circumstance and cause of death. In some instances they can point to differences in ethnic affiliation. Past investigations of ancient Maya burial deposits from both Highlands and Lowlands have revealed considerable variation in mortuary customs. For over one millennium the majority of the residents of the Belize River Valley for example, buried their dead in an extended prone position whereas corpses in other areas of the highlands and lowland were deposited in extended supine, flexed and seated positions. Could this indicate the presence of groups who were ethnically different from those in the rest of the Maya region? Does the significant break in elite burial patterns in the mid-fourth and early fifth centuries point to actual migration by a population segment from Teotihuacan? Should we view the introduction of cremation at the Late Classic/Early Postclassic transition as a sign for a profound ideological transformation of Maya society or do these changes point to the immigration of new ethnic groups? This paper outlines how ethnic identities can translate into the burial record from a cross-cultural point of view and discusses what the variability in the mortuary record may tell us about group-relations of the ancient Maya.

Johan Normark (University of Göteborg, Sweden)
Ethnicity or serial action? Issues relating to a possible Chichén Itzá presence at Ichmul and Nohcacab in the Cochuah region

Near the recently discovered radial causeway system of the major centre of Ichmul, in southeast Yucatán, is the secondary site of Nohcacab. The smaller site has traces of Sotuta slate ware and postmonumental architecture that appears to be Chichén Itzá related. These traces contradict the previous Terminal Classic, Puuc-related, material patterns. It seems that a small different group arrived at Nohcacab at this time. It is less likely that the pattern reflects local import or imitation. The site was probably part of Ichmul's area of control, and, as such it was a possible target for a Chichén Itzá expansion into the central parts of Yucatán.

However, are these traces of the existence of different ethnic groups during the Terminal Classic? Historically, ethnicity is strongly associated with the culture concept. Most archaeological theories project currently known cultural or social categories backwards, to a largely unknown past, and attributes mute material remains with categories that are believed to be ontologically secure. The danger is if we believe that contemporary categories existed in the past. Materiality is therefore seldom evidence of identities that always has the tendency of becoming something else.

Another way to study past identities is to use Sartre's concept of serial action which does not depend on a predetermined social category. Groups or institutions of the past are, in most cases, non-available, whereas series can be found. The interaction between past human agents and materiality formed brief discontinuous series with no long lasting persistence and no outspoken, needed or shared emic identity. However, material objects in themselves are more persistent than the human agents and as such they acted as reference points for reproducing or changing both discourses and other material objects. This paper will present the material remains at Nohcacab and Ichmul from a perspective of serial action.

Elizabeth Graham (University College London)
Ethnicity and Society in Transition

The terms 'ethnicity', 'identity', and even 'culture' as we use them today were not extant concepts before modern times. Even the term 'ethnic group' was not used before the 20th century, and there was no single word or concept for 'ethnicity' among the ancient Maya. Nonetheless, individuals almost certainly thought of themselves as part of an identifiable group. Therefore rather than ask what defined ethnicity or what constituted identity in the past, I will consider how an individual in everyday life might have

conceptualized what we now call 'ethnic markers.' What are the features that individuals shared that made them think they were part of a group, and would any of these features be detectable in the archaeological record? I shall look for answers in our evidence for periods of transition, from the Classic to Postclassic period, and during the transition to Spanish colonial times.

Session 4: Regional Differences and Identities in Classic Maya Culture

Stephen Houston (Brown University)
The Strategies of Local Religion among the Classic Maya
An interpretive tension exists between those who correctly discern commonalities of belief and practice among the Classic Maya and an opposed tendency, which emphasizes local expression as a marker of identity in particular kingdoms. This paper reviews the evidence for "local religion" at a variety of Classic kingdoms and adumbrates the means and strategies by which the local intersects with widespread belief and practice.

Jerald D. Ek (State University of New York at Albany)
Domestic Shrines, Ancestor Veneration, and the Ritual Production of Group Identity
Ritual represents an important field of social practice in which actors create and reinforce group identity and social boundaries within a set of structured social relations. While large public temples have received the majority of attention from archaeologists interested in ancient Maya religion and ritual, the residential compound was the primary loci of ritual life for the majority of the ancient Maya populace.

Domestic shrine structures were an important setting for ritual performance, in which individuals, families, and groups communicated important social messages. In particular, the residential shine represented a physical manifestation of identity reckoned through descent and kinship ties. This paper consists of a synthesis of archaeological data from domestic shrine contexts, and the material manifestations of ritual practices integral in the negotiation and maintenance of group identity among the Classic and Postclassic period Lowland Maya. This synthesis reveals some important patterns of similarity and regional variation in shrine architecture and associated ritual deposits.

The results of this investigation raise some important questions concerning our conceptualizations of 'Mayaness', ethnic identity, class relations, and scales of identity construction.

Pierre Robert Colas (University of Bonn)
Personal Names: One Aspect of an Ethnic Boundary among the Classic Maya
Frederik Barth's publication showed, that any social group uses a set of markers to define the ethnic self of a group and that no marker per se presents an essential ethnic "self". I use the term ethnic group describing people that share the same traits in several aspects (language, religion, heritage) of living.

It this presentation I want to emphasize, that personal names serve, among several others, as indicators of an ethnic boundary between the eastern and western regions of the southern Maya lowlands. As has been recognized, differences exist between the western and eastern region in the usage of different vernaculars in the inscriptions. Personal names reinforce this distinction. In the east kings' personal names are based mostly on names of gods. In the west kings base their names on names of animals, objects and social roles. In the west the name of the sun god K'inich is used as a title to legitimate a king's office, in the east it constitutes part of a personal name to legitimate the self of a king. Kings in the east use sentence-names, in the west simple word-names. These onomastic patterns hint at fundamentally different perceptions of kingship, whereby the eastern kings regard themselves as being actively involved in the mythological world representing the gods, the western kings regard only their office as legitimated by the sun god.

Personal names therefore present a religiously based aspect of an ethnic boundary between east and west in the southern Maya lowlands.

Alexandre Tokovinine (Harvard University)
Signification Domains and Expressions of Identity in Maya Writing
One of the fascinating properties of hieroglyphic scripts is their potential for transmitting information on two levels, 'phonetic' and 'pictorial'. Sometimes, these domains of signification are separated, as in the case of Egyptian writing where visual adornment of inscriptions is restricted to hieroglyphs, while the

literary embellishment occurs mostly in hieratic texts, so that either script develops its own conventions of signification within the prevailing domain.

Like their Egyptian counterparts, Maya glyphs are highly pictorial. There has been no evidence of hieratic script so far. The pictorial aspect of Maya writing is usually interpreted as a kind of visual aid for readers, not as a potentially independent way of transmitting information unrelated to phonetic values of signs.

I will try do demonstrate that social, political, and ethnic identity in the Maya lowlands was often expressed through the visual properties of the glyphs and not through their phonetic readings. I will focus on the so-called 'pseudo-glyphs', regional variations in logograms, and some 'foreign' signs in Maya writing illustrating various combinations of phonetic and visual signification that allowed a complex interplay of identities, a balanced representation of conflicting and yet complementary messages of sameness and difference.

Søren Wichmann (Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig)
Writing with an Accent: Phonology as a Marker of Ethnic Identity

One of the ways that the Classic Maya expressed their regional identities was through writing. Given its logosyllabic nature and the system of orthographic rules their writing system was eminently suited to reveal differences in pronounciation. The overt expression of such differences may be interpreted as a way of marking identity. On the other hand, such differences could optionally be subdued by leaving off phonetic complementation and minimizing the use of syllabic signs. In a typology of writing system one may distinguish more phonologically transparent systems (e.g. Greek writing) from less phonologically transparent ones (e.g., Chinese or Egyptian).

I hypothesize that the typological cline correlates with the sociopolitical organization of the societies using the writing systems: in a large, centralized state which subsumes a variety of ethnic groups it is fitting to have a writing a system which is not very phonologically transparent, whereas in a situation of, say, smaller competing city-states phonological transparency may serve the political purpose of marking off regional boundaries. In the typology of writing systems the Maya script has an interesting ambivalent position because scribes could choose to be more or less phonologically transparent, depending on the sociopolitical context.

The paper will present a statistics of the use of syllabic spellings and phonetic complementation for the entire corpus of dated inscriptions describing the differences in phonological transparency in the temporal and spatial dimensions and attempting to interpret these differences in terms of ethnic competition.

Session 5: Local Identities and the Concept of Mayaness in Past and Present

Elisabeth Wagner (University of Bonn)
Ranked Spaces, Ranked Identities: A View from Late Classic Copan on Local Hierarchies, Community Boundaries, and the Question of an Emic Notion of the Maya Cultural Sphere

The present paper focuses on Late Classic Copan as a community/kingdom and the means to represent its corporate identity as well as on the ways how local elites ranked below the k'uhul ajaw claimed their own identities both as particular lineage and constitutional part of the kingdom. Analogous to colonial and modern Maya communities, the settlement pattern, spatial distribution of boundary shrines, as well as iconographic and epigraphic evidence show that ancient Copan was regarded as a symbolic cosmos. Cosmographic layout of settlement is present down the scale from 1) the kingdom/community ruled by the lineage of the k'uhul ajaw, 2) the main courtyard of a residential compound of an ajaw-lineage to 3) the house of the ajaw himself. This hierarchy of space reflects the ranking of the social groups involved in the government of the kingdom, supported by references in hieroglyphic texts. Reproducing the cosmographic order of the kingdom on a smaller scale and recording their own emblematic titles and dynastic counts shows that the Copan elites of ajaw-rank defined their own lineage identity by creating their own (micro)cosmos. Likewise they define themselves as part of the kingdom by expressing their relationship to the k'uhul ajaw and by fitting their own (micro)cosmos in the (macro)cosmos of the kingdom's symbolic space, the latter evident in the combination of direction-related cosmographic themes in facade iconography. Referring to the highest rank of symbolic space in Late Classic Copanec cosmovision, the question of an emic notion of a pan-Maya identity at Copan will be discussed by reconsidering earlier studies focusing on the mention of four major kingdoms in the context of cosmographic symbolism on Stela A.

Geoffrey E. Braswell (University of California, San Diego)
The Construction of Identity in Highland Guatemala: Ethnogenesis in the Postclassic Network Society

The Postclassic landscape of the Maya highlands was a patchwork of small polities. Then as now, inhabitants of different towns and regions wore distinct costumes, spoke separate languages, and maintained diverse identities. The complex network of highland society was cross-cut, however, by a transethnic elite identity. Within groups such as the K'iche' and Kaqchikel, great houses with distinct and disparate histories were assimilated by a constructed identity that enabled the forging of a unified elite class. Moreover, this identity created social proximity among elites from different territories and polities, while at the same time defined social distance between classes within the same polity. The construction of a composite elite identity during the Postclassic period may be considered in light of three general processes discussed by Manuel Castells (2004): legitimization, resistance, and project identity. Such new identities, which transcended notions of language, ethnicity, and territoriality, are typical of the network society that emerged in Mesoamerica by the Postclassic period. After 500 years of colonialism, such transethnic and transnational elite identities are once again forming in the contemporary pan-Maya movement.

Allen J. Christenson (Brigham Young University)
You Are What You Speak: Maya as the Language of Maize

As in many cultures whose livelihood is based to a significant degree on agriculture, the Maya believe that human birth, death, and rebirth are inextricably linked to the life cycle of sacred plants such as maize or the world tree. Among the Tzutujil-Maya of Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala, maize is not only essential to survival as a staple of their diet, but to all aspects of their cultural identity and familial relationships. Tzutujil itself means "he/she of the maize flower", an indication of the importance of maize as the symbolic source from which their people arose.

The Maya refer to themselves as qas winaq ("true people") and consider that they are literally of a different flesh than those who do not eat maize. The authors of the Popol Vuh assert that the gods made a number of unsuccessful attempts to make people who would be capable of remembering their creators and thus performing the proper ceremonies and prayers that would sustain the world and keep it alive, culminating in the creation of beings composed of maize dough.

Maya language is intimately bound with the concept that "true people" are composed of the flesh of maize. To be a qas winaq, and to speak the Maya language properly, a person must first eat maize. This notion implies that the power of human speech is not merely a means of communication that may be imitated by memorizing grammar and vocabulary, but a function of the physical essence of the Maya as a people.

Session 6: The Modern Maya Movement and the Search for a Pan-Maya Identity

Santiago Bastos (Área de Estudios Étnicos, FLASCO Guatemala)
Ser maya en el siglo XXI: construcción y difusión de una identidad política

Desde hace ya algún tiempo, el término "maya" ha pasado a formar parte del vocabulario que utilizan ciertos sectores de la sociedad guatemalteca para referirse a quienes antes eran socialmente designados como "indígenas" o "indios". Se trata de un término relativamente nuevo en la larga historia de este colectivo y de sus relaciones con el resto de los guatemaltecos. Su introducción, junto con todo el aparato ideológico que va asociado a él, proviene de la lucha por el reconocimiento de los derechos que los indígenas han llevado a cabo y poco a poco, va siendo aceptado por más sectores sociales y políticos en le país y extranjero.

Este término va asociado a una propuesta de cambio radical en la forma en que se concibe la diferencia étnica y las formas políticas de regirla en Guatemala. Pero también se inserta en toda la corriente mundial del multiculturalismo que, si bien ha servido para otorgarle legitmidad al término y los reclamos, puede acabar convirtiéndolo en una identidad "domesticada" que limite la transformación a que aspira.

Jon Schackt (University of Tromsø)
Q'eqchi' Ladinos and "White Indians": Cultural Identities in Northern Guatemala

Different from what is the case in many Latin American countries the social and ethnic division between Indians and non-Indians in Guatemala can seem rather clear-cut. At least in local settings most people

will agree to whether any particular person is Indígena or Ladino. The traditional hierarchical and caste-like division between the two groups relates to distinctions based on culture and language dating back to the Spanish Conquest. Ladinos generally speak and identify with the Spanish language, while most Indians, as their first language, speak one of 21 languages belonging to the Maya linguistic stock. Thus, each of these languages (K'iche', Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi', etc.) can be regarded as corresponding with a distinct ethno-linguistic group with its own culture and identity. Although these language-based cultures and identities are generally classified as Indian or Indigenous, they sometimes rub off on people who are not included by the latter categoroes. In some regions Ladinos may identify with the local native culture and language but without for that reason considering themselves Indian or indigenous. This is the case in Alta Verapaz where local Ladinos maintain a tradition of being bi-lingual in Spanish and Q'eqchi'. In this area one also finds "White Indians": people of mixed German and Q'eqchi' descent who maintain their Indian identity but who may also emphasise their European background. The Maya identity, introduced to Alta Verapaz only in recent years, can seem to challenge this complexity by emphasising the Q'eqchi' as a subgroup of the Maya. Thus, the spread of Maya identity appears to accentuate the ethnic bi-partition of the Guatemalan population, although without its traditional hierarchical implications.

Kerry Hull (Reitaku University)
Resourcing the Present, Citing the Past: Adaptive Strategies in the Definition of Ch'orti' Maya Identity

The Ch'orti' Maya of southeastern Guatemala have traditionally defined themselves in contrast to e mojrob', i.e. the ladino population. The construal of their group identity has in large part hinged on this dichotomous social construct. In recent years, however, some Ch'orti'have begun to reinterpret their social position relative to their relationship to the ancient Maya and past practices. The relative proximity of the Ch'orti'population to the archeological sites of Copan and Quirigua has contributed to this process by fueling an interest to redefine themselves as descendants of the inhabitants of these important Classic period sites. In addition, there have been certain movements within the Ch'orti'community to reestablish now-forgotten rituals in an effort to "recapture" cultural capital and elements of group identity. This paper will investigate these evolving notions of Ch'orti' ethnicity as they relate to this redefinition of the existing social paradigm. I will argue that among the Ch'orti' an intimate connection exists between ritual practice and internal views of identity. I will also show that this relationship is currently in a fluid state of reinterpretation, and thereby subject to shifts in local attitudes. For the Ch'orti' I posit an express value relationship between perceived "past-ness" and current conceptions of what constitutes identity. Finally, this paper will query the possible connections between the linkage of ritual to identity in the case of the Ch'orti' today with notions of royal ceremonialism and artistic presentation in the art of the Classic period.

Session 7: Ethnic Identity in Post-Conquest Yucatán

Wolfgang Gabbert (University of Hannover)
Indians, Maya, and Mayeros: Ethnicity and social categorization in Yucatán, Mexico - A Diachronic Perspective

The paper will start with a discussion of the concept ethnicity. It will argue that ethnicity is not an ubiquitous form of social organization but a historical process related to a specific technique of social distinction. The starting point for the analysis of ethnicity should not be ethnic collectives but individuals using ethnic categories in social interaction.

In the second part the development of social categories and ethnicity in Yucatán from the Late Postclassic up to the present will be analized. Among other things, it will be argued that up to now the term "Maya" has never denoted a self-conscious ethnic community but rather referred, at first, to the subjects of a native kingdom and later to a cultural category defined mainly by language.

John F. Chuchiak IV (Southwest Missouri State University)
Ah Otochnalob yetel Ah Chun Kaxob: Indios de Campana, Indios Idolatras, and The Colonial Re-Construction of Maya Ethnic Identity, 1590-1700

By the early 17th century definitions of Maya ethnicity began to change in Yucatán. Both Maya and Spaniards began to re-formulate and re-construct their notions of what it was to be Maya. Colonial

accommodations, Christianization, and social reorganization meant that those Maya "debajo de campana," or settled in Christian communities, viewed themselves as "hahil Maya uinicob" or "True Maya people." At the same time, they and their colonial overlords viewed those Maya who lived in the forests beyond colonial control as a fearful "other" ethnic group, the Ah Chun Kaxob, or forest dwellers, a loosely-knit group of "barbarians, infidels, idolaters and apostates..."

This changing view of Maya ethnic identity focused on the acceptance or rejection of the European colonial order. Those Maya who fled into the jungles, rejecting both Christianity and all things Spanish, were not seen as Maya, but as a separate ethnicity, a strange aberration of what both Christian Maya and Spaniards considered ethnic Maya identity. In this vein, many Maya from northern Yucatan willingly joined expeditions against the Maya of the interior who they considered inferior "others."

By examining primary documentation in both Maya and Spanish, the paper illustrates the historical, social, cultural, and religious factors influencing this colonial reconstruction of Maya ethnicity. The paper analyzes the colonial intra-ethnic conflicts between Northern Maya and the Maya of the interior, showing how this re-construction of Maya ethnic identity enabled the northern Maya to persecute the Maya of the interior, without feeling that they betrayed their own ethnicity.

Bodil Liljefors Persson (Malmö University)
"Con Maya uinice": Maya and the Other - (re-)constructing Maya Ethnic Identity in Yucatec Maya (Con-Texts)

It is the aim of this paper to explore various aspects of Ethnicity and Identity found in Yucatec Maya texts, above all in the Books of Chilam Balam and thus focusing Early Colonial time. Taking its point of departure in contemporary discourse on Ethnicity and Culture, this paper examines how Yucatec Maya Identity can be (re-) constructed from an analytic close reading of the Books of Chilam Balam. Furthermore, employing a contextual approach, Yucatec Maya Identity will be used as an analytical category for structuring the Early Colonial Negotiations between "us" and "them" - between Yucatec Maya and the Other.

Ethnicity is a multifaceted concept, and in this paper it is viewed as a relational concept created in moments of self-identification and in situations when cultural differences are perceived. Ethnicity is understood as a process during which questions of inclusion and exclusion are at stake, and also sometimes negotiated from emic perspectives.

What, then, is implied in the concept of Yucatec Maya Identity and of Mayaness? Delving into some of the texts in the Books of Chilam Balam, different contexts are highlighted in order to interpret Yucatec Maya Ethnic Identity, or rather Identities, as these concepts are both relational and situational. They also change over time, which is visible throughout the Colonial Period in Yucatán.

Armin Hinz (University of Hamburg)
Generating Identities: Presence and Representations of Social Actors in Cultural Performances of the Cruzoob-Maya in Quintana Roo

Within the framework of identity as creation of awareness and self-positioning, this paper explores the symbolic interactions of social actors in the Zona Maya in Quintana Roo, Mexico. I will examine the structure of interconnected sites, such as shrine centres, hamlets and milpas, which comprise the mental maps of the Cruzoob. On the basis of data acquired in several fieldworks between 1996 and 2004, I will analyse the social network of the shrine centre Tixcacal Guardia. At the micro-level, I will focus on the ceremony of the first corn, in which a milpero family addresses the numen of the forest and interacts with religious specialists, thereby reinforcing their rancho as a spiritual site in the collective mind. Another example draws attention to the macro level, the fiesta of the holy cross, which ritually connects members from different status groups as well as religious activists from various shrine centres. The ceremonial centre serves as a stage for performing and bargaining role models. Additionally, the political interaction of state representatives with the Cruzoob elites legitimises their latter's claim as descendants of the insurgents of former Chan Santa Cruz. In a diachronic perspective, I will outline shifting narratives of self-representation from the category of 'mazehual' to that of 'maya'. In this process, the Cruzoob take up (inter-)national discourses providing agency and growing public attention in a globalising world. This paper aims at reassessing the static paradigm of westernisation by Robert Redfield and recognizes modern Cruzoob society as heterogeneous and able to adapt to a changing social environment while maintaining a distinct group consciousness.

Session 8: The Construction of Multiple Ethnic Identities in Chiapas

Jan de Vos (CIESAS, San Cristobal de Las Casas, Mexico)
La construcción de identidades en la Selva Lacandona

La selva Lacandona, parte nororiental de Chiapas, ha sido desde tiempos prehispánicos un espacio en el cual los mayas lograron establecer relaciones muy específicas con el medio ambiente y a partir de ese intercambio construir identidades muy diversas. El objetivo de la presente ponencia es analizar ese proceso de creación desde la Conquista hasta la actualidad.

Objetos de observación etnohistórica serán, sucesivamente, los lacandones antiguos (siglos XVI y XVII), los lacandones advenedizos (siglos XVIII-XX) y los colonos pertenecientes a otras etnias mayas que colonizaron la Lacandona a partir de 1950. Más allá de las características lingüísticas y socioculturales propias de cada grupo, se pondrá énfasis en las diferentes maneras en que estos tres grupos selvícolas aprendieron a relacionarse con la vegetación y fauna tropical. El triple acercamiento se hará, tomando en cuenta la diferencia, a veces abismal, entre las identidades construidas por los mayas mismos y las que nosotros, los mayistas, tendemos a imponerles.

Ulrich Köhler (University of Freiburg)
Identidades étnicas entre los Tzotziles de los Altos de Chiapas. Sus puntos de referencia en contextos cambiantes

Los tzotziles consisten de varios grupos étnicos, cada uno con identidad propia y accentuado etnocentrismo. Así ya han sido descritos por los conquistadores del siglo XVI. Durante la colonia se han formado los atributos respectivos que distinguen las etnias tzotziles, como traje respectivo o santo patrón particular. Aparte de la identificación con la propia etnia como zinacanteco, chamula o pablero existe otra en condiciones de interacción con ladinos (mexicanos de habla castellana), entonces se identifican también como indios (inyo), pero no como tzotziles. En las últimas décadas varias influencias de afuera han contribuido a formar nuevas identidades y aflojar la importancia de la solidaridad étnica. Se trata principalmente de inovaciones religiosas (la llegada de sectas protestantes) y políticas. Entre las últimas el EZLN ha tenido mayor influencia en dividir las comunidades y etnias en fracciones mutuamente hostiles. - En la ponencia se dará una vista de lo que identidad significa entre los tzotziles en varias condiciones diferentes y como la identificación propia está cambiando en nuestros días.