

MESOAMERICAN MYTHOLOGIES

New World Archaeological Council

*Maya Symposium presented in conjunction with the
Archaeological Institute of America -- Orange County Society
& the Anthropology Department of UC Riverside*



Waterlily Jaguar sketch by Allen Christenson

October 18, 2008
**Beckman Center of the
National Academies of Science & Engineering
Irvine, California**

MESOAMERICAN MYTHOLOGIES

GUEST SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

Karl Taube, University of California Riverside

MAYA MYTHOLOGY AND THE ANCIENT MESOAMERICAN WORLD

Thanks to recent breakthroughs in the understanding of ancient Maya writing and iconography, much can be said concerning Maya mythology of the Classic period. It is now known that many episodes of the 16th century Popol Vuh can be traced to the Classic and even Late Preclassic periods. In addition, the names of many Classic Maya deities can be uttered once again in Mayan. However, the Classic Maya did not exist in isolation. Not only were they in contact with contemporary cultures of the Gulf Coast and highland Mexico, but they also inherited many traditions from the earlier Olmec. In this study, I will discuss many traits of Classic Maya mythology pertaining to maize, the earth monster, the plumed serpent and other topics in the greater context of Mesoamerica, including both the Formative Olmec and the Late Postclassic Aztec.



Michael Coe, Yale University - Emeritus

IZAPA: MIXE-ZOQUEAN OR MAYA?

In the late Gareth W. Lowe's seminal report of 1982, the great site of Izapa, situated in the Soconusco region of Chiapas, was the product of Mixe-Zoquean speakers. However, more recent information on the Late Formative of southeastern Mesoamerica places Izapa well within the Maya world, and establishes it as a key site in the development of Maya religion.



Wendy Ashmore, University of California Riverside

ENCOUNTERING MAYA MYTHIC SPACE

Ancient Maya kings and artisans commemorated events of creation via buildings, mural painting, and such other enduring media as pottery. In millennia past, these physical forms were crafted as avenues for entering mythic space and time, whether made accessible to a wide public or only a privileged few. Images in this talk illustrate that experiencing what are now Maya archaeological sites continues strongly to evoke the myths they were built to embody.



David Stuart, University of Texas

THE JEWELLED EAGLE AND THE ONE KING: NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE "PRINCIPAL BIRD DEITY" IN PRE-CLASSIC AND CLASSIC MAYA MYTHOLOGY

The "Principal Bird Deity" (PBD) is widely recognized as one of the most important entities in Maya mythology, but it (or they) still remains enigmatic in many ways. He is clearly related to "Seven Macaw" of the Popol Vuh, but a nuanced understanding of the great bird is best approached from ancient, contemporaneous sources. New finds and interpretations are now revealing the outlines of a complex mythological narrative wherein the Principal Bird Deity, a solar eagle, represented cosmic directionality and primordial concepts of kingship, power and wealth. Its "descent from the sky" was a foundational episode in Maya mythology, establishing the charter of royal authority and its appropriation by "One Ajaw," the mythical hunter-king of the Classic Maya.



John Pohl, Fowler Museum UCLA

NAHUA, MIXTEC, AND ZAPOTEC RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Between A.D. 1150-1520, southern Mexico was dominated by a powerful confederacy of the Eastern Nahuatl, Mixtec, and Zapotec civilizations. Nevertheless, profound differences in ritual practices are evident in their art. The Eastern Nahuatl emphasized iconography related to sorcery and divination. The Mixtecs, invoked the heroes of their creation stories depicted in codices. The Zapotecs ornamented their vessels with three-dimensional representations of a Zapotec god known as Bezelao or Lord Thirteen Flower, patron of an Elysium-like afterlife.



**Leonardo López Luján, National Institute Anthropology & History INAH
TLALTECUHTLI, THE AZTEC EARTH GODDESS: RECENT DISCOVERIES
IN DOWNTOWN MEXICO CITY**

On October 2, 2006, a huge monolith was unearthed in front of the ruins of the Aztec Great Temple and behind the Metropolitan Cathedral. Representing the earth goddess Tlaltecuhтли, this monument is the largest Aztec sculpture known to date. Professor López Luján will discuss the discovery of this incredible monument, the iconographic identification of the goddess and its possible funerary functions.

**Keynote Speaker Dinner
Saturday 5:45 pm**

Mary Ellen Miller, Yale University

MAYA WOMEN AND MEN —

AT WORK AND PLAY IN THE ANCIENT COURTS

Who were the people of the ancient Maya court, and what roles did they play? This talk will look at the musicians and artists, along with the family members and hangers-on — in short, the royal entourage. The Bonampak murals will help shape a view on the eve of the Maya "collapse," c. AD 800.



***There will be a separate charge of \$75.00 to attend
this public evening event.***

Please note that space is limited.

For additional information and registration, please visit

www.mesoamericanmythologies.info

email NewWorldArch@yahoo.com

or call (949) 713-0622 or (949) 640-4391

Symposium Registration Fee: \$165
Early Bird Registration: \$145
Prior to Sept 15, 2008

Includes parking, admission to the symposium, full buffet breakfast and lunch, coffee & cookies at the break, and a speaker reception (with complimentary soft drinks and hors d'oeuvres) which will provide an opportunity to talk with our guest speakers and other attendees in an informal atmosphere.

Note: Seating in the Beckman Auditorium is very limited. The first 200 registrants will be seated in the auditorium. Onsite registration on the day of the event will be permissible only if seating is available in the auditorium.

Attendees should plan to wear casual business attire. Please note that laptops and tape recorders are not allowed in the auditorium.

A \$25 administration fee will be applied to all refund requests prior to September 30th – unfortunately, no refunds can be given after that date. No student fee is available for this symposium.

Obtain a symposium registration form at
www.mesoamericanmythologies.info

Keynote Speaker Dinner
Registration Fee: \$75

Seating in Atrium is limited
to 90 attendees—

Early registration is recommended.

Our keynote event will start with a three-course dinner, featuring a signature entree of the Beckman Center, and will include a selection of California wines. Our renowned banquet speaker, Dr. Mary Ellen Miller (Yale University), will talk about the role of musicians, artists, dwarfs, and royal family members in the ancient Maya courts.

Use the following phone numbers and/or e-mail address to request additional information about the symposium: (949) 713-0622, (949) 640-4391 or NewWorldArch@yahoo.com

Hotel Accommodations & Transportation

The New World Archaeology Council has arranged a special Room Rate at the Crowne Plaza Irvine Hotel for our attendees on October 17 and 18, 2008. Call hotel reservations at (949) 863-1999, and state that you are attending the Maya Symposium at the Beckman Center to obtain this special rate.

The Crowne Plaza Hotel is located at 17941 Von Karman, Irvine, California 92614 and provides a complimentary shuttle service to and from the nearby John Wayne/Santa Ana Airport. A shuttle van will be available for \$5.00 roundtrip to and from the Beckman Center for our Maya Symposium events.

You may not need a rental car.

Beckman Center

National Academies of Sciences and Engineering
100 Academy
Irvine, CA 92617



The Beckman Center auditorium is an attractive theater that comfortably seats 238 people. The audio-visual equipment in the theater is first-rate, enhancing the value of presentations.

