



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF MAYANISTS – WAYEB

RHEINISCHE FRIEDRICH-WILHELMS-UNIVERSITÄT BONN / UNIVERSITY OF BONN

ABTEILUNG FÜR ALTAMERIKANISTIK / DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE AMERICAS

## 28<sup>th</sup> European Maya Conference

“Regionalism and Unity: Exploring Intracultural  
Variation and Commonality in the Maya Region”

*December 4<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Bonn, Germany*

**Conference Program**  
- Workshops, Abstracts and General Schedule -



**European  
Association  
of Mayanists**



**Abteilung**   
**für Altamerikanistik**

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Bonn, Germany // December 2023

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Schokoladenmuseum Köln

## DEUTSCHE ALTAMERIKA-STIFTUNG



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## Venues

- *Bonn tour meeting point* (Monday, 14 hrs) /[Map Bonn City Center](#)  
Beethoven-Haus Bonn, Bonngasse 22-24, 53111 Bonn.
- *Opening talk (keynote) and all workshops* (Monday to Friday) /[Map Bonn City Center](#)  
Abteilung für Altamerikanistik (Department of Anthropology of the Americas,  
University of Bonn) / BASA Museum - Oxfordstr. 15, 53111 Bonn // Ground floor &  
1<sup>st</sup> floor.
- *Colloquium University of Bonn’s projects* (Friday) /[Map Bonn City Center](#)  
Festsaal, University of Bonn (Main Building, 1st floor), Regina-Pacis-Weg 3, 53113  
Bonn. The building has two main entrances, one from Hofgarten (Regina Pacis-Weg),  
close to the MENSA, and another from the side looking to the street named Am Hof  
(in front of the restaurant Sausalitos).
- *Symposium* (Saturday and Sunday) /[Map Campus Poppelsdorf](#)  
Hörsaal 2, Campus Poppelsdorf - University of Bonn, Friedrich-Hirzebruch-Allee 5,  
53115 Bonn.

## General schedule

December 4th, 2023		December 5th, 2023		December 6th, 2023		December 7th, 2023		December 8th, 2023		December 9th, 2023		December 10th, 2023	
Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday		Sunday	
AM		8:30 - 9:30 hrs Registration	9:00 - 11:00 hrs Workshops	9:00 - 11:00 hrs Workshops	9:00 - 11:00 hrs Workshops	9:00 - 11:00 hrs Workshops	8:30 - 9:00 hrs Registration	9:00 - 12:30 hrs Symposium * - Session 4					
		9:30 - 11:00 hrs Workshops	11:00 - 11:15 hrs Coffee break	11:00 - 11:15 hrs Coffee break	11:00 - 11:15 hrs Coffee break	11:00 - 11:15 hrs Coffee break	9:00 - 9:30 hrs Welcome Address						
		11:00 - 11:15 hrs Coffee break	11:15 - 13:00 hrs Workshops	11:15 - 13:00 hrs Workshops	11:15 - 13:00 hrs Workshops	11:15 - 13:00 hrs Workshops	9:30 - 13:00 hrs Symposium * - Sessions 1 & 2						
		11:15 - 13:00 hrs Workshops	13:00 - 14:00 hrs Lunch	13:00 - 14:00 hrs Lunch	13:00 - 14:00 hrs Lunch	12:00 - 14:00 hrs Lunch	13:00 - 15:00 hrs Lunch						
		Bonn tour 14:00-16:00 hrs (optional)	14:00 - 15:30 hrs Workshops	14:00 - 15:30 hrs Workshops	14:00 - 15:30 hrs Workshops	14:00 - 17:00 hrs Colloquium Research Projects University of Bonn	14:00 - 17:00 hrs Symposium * - Session 5						
		15:30 - 15:45 hrs Coffee break	15:30 - 15:45 hrs Coffee break	15:30 - 15:45 hrs Coffee break	15:30 - 15:45 hrs Coffee break	15:00 - 18:00 hrs Symposium * - Session 3							
		18:00 - 20:00 hrs Opening Keynote Talk	15:45 - 17:00 hrs Workshops	15:45 - 17:00 hrs Workshops	15:45 - 17:00 hrs Workshops	17:00 - 20:00 hrs Workshop Farewell / Speakers' Welcome							
		20:00 - 21:30 hrs Opening Reception		17:30 - 20:00 hrs General Assembly Wayeb (Hybrid)									
	Venues		Abteilung für Altamerikanistik / BASA Museum - Oxfordstr. 15, 53111 Bonn										
		Festsaal, University of Bonn (Main Building, 1st floor), Regina-Pacis-Weg 3, 53113 Bonn											
		Hörsaal 2, Campus Poppelsdorf - University of Bonn, Friedrich-Hirzebruch-Allee 5, 53115 Bonn											
												*Detailed symposium schedule at the end of the program booklet.	

## About this year's event

The 28<sup>th</sup> European Maya Conference is co-organized by the European Association of Mayanists (Wayeb) together with the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn (University of Bonn) and is hosted by the Department for the Anthropology of the Americas of the Institute for Archaeology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Bonn, Germany, from December 4<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The conference will begin on December 4<sup>th</sup> with a welcome address, and will combine four days of workshops (Tuesday to Friday, December 5<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>) and a two-day symposium (Saturday to Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup>).

### **“Regionalism and Unity: Exploring Intracultural Variation and Commonality in the Maya Region”**

We are used to talking about “the Maya” in both popular and academic discourse. But did or does such a single homogeneous Maya culture actually exist? In fact, the idea of a large Maya culture, stretching from the highlands of Guatemala to Yucatan, only emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in connection with the European desire to divide the world into cultural areas. In this regard, the term “Maya” which originally designated the language and inhabitants of Northern Yucatan, was used for an entire language family and the various peoples speaking these languages and inhabiting the territory that comprises the Mexican states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo, and the countries of Belize, Guatemala, and parts of Honduras and El Salvador.

Subsequently, the term “Maya” was transferred to the archaeological culture in the region inhabited by the mentioned peoples. Overlooking the differences, it was focused on shared prominent cultural traits - particularly the writing system and certain aspects of the art and architecture. However, this homogenizing perspective ignores the fact that in the entire area which we commonly refer to as that of “the Maya”, there were a multitude of different trajectories and local cultures as diverse as the geographic and climatic environments in which they existed. Be it in the Yucatan peninsula, the highlands of Chiapas and Guatemala, the lowlands of the Peten, or the eastern and western “peripheral” regions, clear differences can be perceived in the material culture, art and architecture, languages, and ideology of those who lived in the numerous competing and sometimes cooperating kingdoms. However, describing regionalisms is not sufficient; rather, we rather encounter evidence for complex intracultural variation and rich regional and temporal diversity. We want to ask how this great diversity of different developments and their perceptions can be interpreted. Were there particularly densely interconnected spaces of interaction? Were Maya states “ethnic kingdoms”?

And, finally, can commonalities be discerned that make it seem reasonable to group this diversity under the umbrella of “the Maya”? Do we have evidence for a common notion of something like a shared culture, territory, and identity among the ancient Maya? Is “the Maya” an analytical construct that reflects the sum of regional and temporally limited structures and processes of very different cultural characteristics in scientific discourse?

It is the hope of the organizing committee of the 28<sup>th</sup> European Maya Conference in Bonn, that these questions will be addressed and discussed during the entire length of the event. We warmly welcome you and wish you a pleasant stay in our city!

## **I. Workshop Descriptions**

### **Beginners' Workshop: An Introduction to Maya Hieroglyphs**

*Marie Botzet<sup>1</sup>, Dimitrios Markianos-Daniolos<sup>1</sup>, Panos Kratimenos<sup>2</sup>*

Textdatenbank und Wörterbuch des Klassischen Maya, Universität Bonn (1), Institute of Archaeology, University College London (2)

The Beginners' Workshop will provide a general introduction to Maya epigraphy. It is open to anyone interested in the topic, and is especially ideal for people who have never worked with Maya inscriptions, although people with limited previous experience are also welcome. The workshop will cover various topics, including the history of decipherment, an overview of the corpus, and the inner workings of the writing system itself. Starting from the basics, the participants will learn about the principles of Maya hieroglyphic writing, the Maya calendar, and the structure of texts. Hieroglyphic inscriptions from different Maya cities will be studied, as a means of providing a general picture of the politics, beliefs, and individual actors of the ancient Maya world. By the end of the workshop, the participants will be able to read simple inscriptions, follow calendrical calculations, and identify key historical figures. The workshop will be conducted in English, but individual explanations will also be available in Spanish and German.

### **Intermediate Workshop: Regional Variation in Ceremonial Discourse in Classic Maya Inscriptions**

*Felix Kupprat<sup>1</sup>, Alejandro J. Garay Herrera<sup>2</sup>, Guido Krempel<sup>3</sup>*

Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (1), Abteilung für Altamerikanistik, Universität Bonn (2), Textdatenbank und Wörterbuch des Klassischen Maya, Universität Bonn / CNCPC -INAH (3)

This workshop focuses on Classic Maya texts describing the different ritual activities and ceremonial practices of the lowland elites. As case studies, we will put emphasis on inscriptions from the sites of Tonina, Copan and Tikal, comparing them to select examples from other sites or regions. The main objective is to determine similarities and differences in ceremonial discourse, seeking out the parallels between the practices recorded at different sites, but also localized particularities and idiosyncrasies. Furthermore, we will discuss the issue of the Maya religion, which seems to have been quite homogeneous at the regional level, but at the same time extremely diverse with regard to particular patron gods in different sites and regions. Concerning ritual practices, we will describe distinct regional focuses for the three case studies, including calendrical, funerary and accession rites. The workshop is tailored towards participants with basic to advanced knowledge of Maya hieroglyphs and we encourage attendees to bring a personal device with WiFi connectivity to display online resources and PDF files (laptop, tablet, etc.) during the workshop.

### **Advanced Workshop: Mystery Texts**

*Nikolai Grube<sup>1 2</sup>, Christian Prager<sup>2</sup>, Elisabeth Wagner<sup>2</sup>*

Department for the Anthropology of the Americas, University of Bonn (1), Textdatenbank und Wörterbuch des Klassischen Maya, Universität Bonn (2)

Despite significant advances in deciphering Maya hieroglyphic writing, we can currently comprehend only about 60 percent of the attested over 1000 signs linguistically, wherein only



40 percent are deciphered with absolute certainty. Fortunately, these constitute the most frequently documented signs, allowing us a substantial linguistic understanding and the ability to translate a multitude of hieroglyphic texts. Nevertheless, within the extensive corpus of hieroglyphic inscriptions, we encounter texts that we grasp linguistically, yet their content remains enigmatic to this day. This mystery arises from four distinct factors: 1) certain signs elude decipherment, 2) terms from Classic Mayan are not preserved in modern Mayan languages and hence remain incomprehensible, 3) metaphors are only partially understood, 4) texts are constructed upon ontologies that continue to elude our understanding. In our workshop, we will present a selection of such “mystery texts” from throughout the Maya region to decipher them in collaboration with participants and collectively try to interpret their enigmatic contents.

**Special Workshop: Kaqchikel Maya Culture through the Living Art of Weaving/ La cultura Maya Kaqchikel a través del arte vivo del tejido**

*Ana Lucía Pérez Sebaquijay<sup>1</sup>, María Francisca Elías Canás<sup>2</sup>*

Universidad de San Carlos, Guatemala (1), ENBI Nim Naoj, San Martín Jilotepeque, Chimaltenango, Guatemala / Department for the Anthropology of the Americas, University of Bonn (2)

El tejer es una antigua técnica de expresión artística y, al mismo tiempo, la materialización de la memoria cultural y de la identidad maya. El tejido maya se remonta a tiempos precoloniales. Su supervivencia en el presente es un testimonio de la creatividad y resistencia de los mayas actuales. En el taller, los participantes se iniciarán en el arte de tejer Kaqchikel y, al mismo tiempo, conocerán aspectos importantes de la cultura Kaqchikel de hoy día. El taller se centra en el manejo del telar y en el aprendizaje de las técnicas básicas de tejido.

## **II. Symposium Abstracts**

### **Session 1 – “Regional Developments and Interactions in Maya Art and Writing”**

Chair: Dimitrios Markianos-Daniolos

#### **1.1 Lapidary Variations and Commonalities in Antiquity: An Overview of Ancient Maya Portable Greenish and Bluish Stone Mosaic Masks (CE 300 – 800)**

*Juan Carlos Meléndez<sup>1</sup>, Emiliano Ricardo Melgar<sup>2</sup>*

Archéologie des Amériques UMR 8096 – CNRS / Université Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne (1), Museo del Templo Mayor. México, D.F. (2)

Within the Maya area, mosaic masks – comprised to a large extent of greenish and bluish stone tesserae (hereafter GMM) – have mostly been found in association with high-elite individuals buried in sumptuous funerary precincts during the Classic period (CE 300 – 800). However, few have been recovered from ancient caches and special deposits.

Both the style and technology manifested on ancient Maya GMM combined with their archaeological context provide insights to suggest that these cultural goods are the result of a lapidary tradition. Nonetheless, the scenario seems to be more complex when the raw materials of the tools used to manufacture the tesserae are identified, suggesting the existence of different lapidary trends to craft GMM both in the Central Maya Lowlands (CML) and along the Pacific Coast (PC).

This paper seeks to provide new insights on how environmental niches located within geographical landscapes as well as cultural preferences could have influenced the choices of ancient Maya lapidary craftsmen for using local resources as raw materials of the tools to carry out specific lapidary tasks, while simultaneously importing goods to execute others. These technological choices may be the result of an established artisanal hallmark and technological identity among craftsmen from both the CML and the PC.

#### **1.2 The Maya Commons**

*Guo Peng Chen 陳國鵬<sup>1</sup>, Xin Lin 林忻<sup>2</sup>*

University of Oxford (1), University College London (2)

The question of a unified Maya identity amidst regional cultural variations has long been debated. We posit that the concept of identity may not be the most effective lens through which to understand the experiences of communities in the Maya area. This is because all cultural identities inherently exhibit both commonalities and internal variations. Instead, we propose the application of the concept of “the commons” to this discourse. The commons refer to resources collectively shared by communities, encompassing natural resources, shared goods and services, and intangible assets such as knowledge, skills, and language. These resources are not privately owned and their usage is not confined to a specific group. This concept of the commons allows for the recognition of both regional variations and overarching unity. To illustrate the concept of the Maya Commons, we select three examples of jade among the Maya material culture from different regions and periods: the early commonalities in jade usage between the Gulf Coast and the Preclassic Maya, the regional variations in jade traditions in Honduras, and the temporal change of jade culture during the Terminal and Postclassic Periods. Through the perspective of jade, we explain the development and changes of the Maya Commons. This approach offers a more nuanced understanding of the Maya area, acknowledging both shared resources and regional variations. We conclude by highlighting the significance of the Maya Commons in advocating for indigenous rights in contemporary society.

### **1.3 Within Arm's Reach: Scribal Workshops and the Geographic Extent of Eighth-Century Maya Full-Figure Inscriptions**

*Catherine Nuckols*

Tulane University

During the 8th century CE, scribes of the ancient Maya world began using a particular innovation in their hieroglyphic writing: full-figure glyphs, which extend iconic head variant glyphs or abstract signs into full-bodied personifications, taking full advantage of the porous boundary between text and image in the Maya world. Curiously, during the roughly 100 years that full-figure glyphs enjoyed the height of their popularity, they only appeared at four sites: Palenque, Yaxchilan, Copan, and Quirigua. These sites sit at the borders of the Maya world, separated into two groups in the eastern and the western peripheral regions. However, the relative homogeneity of the execution of these glyphs suggests that scribes were at least aware of each other's work and likely shared technical and pedagogical approaches to creating these glyphs. This paper presents the local differences and regional similarities seen in the corpus of eighth-century full-figure inscriptions and argues that although they represent prominent shared cultural traits, they also suggest specific localized preferences particular to individual sites and, in some cases, individual rulers. I examine geographic, linguistic, and cultural influences that could have affected these localized preferences, and present outliers from earlier time periods that both elucidate and complicate the timeline of full-figure inscriptions as we understand them today.

## Session 2 – “Regional Aspects in Classic Maya Architecture and Settlement Patterns”

Chair: Paul Graf

### **2.1 Where an Area is More Than Land: Pre-Columbian Cultural Identity in the Chenes Region**

*Lorraine A. Williams-Beck*

Universidad Autónoma de Campeche

Since Teobert Maler’s travels among the peninsular Maya in the late 19th Century, the heartland reveals a distinctive individual character created by architectural sculpture and stucco façade designs classified later by subsequent scholars as the Chenes Region. Piña Chan proposed specific ecological areas for each regional expression throughout the greater peninsular Maya area. Potter offered a circumscribed Central Yucatan terrestrial unit with adjacent Rio Bec and Chenes components. Andrews, Gendrop, and Marquina, among others, suggested “style” as a recognizable design technique within which to classify and identify contemporary Chenes, Rio Bec and Puuc architectural traits. However, few questioned those “attributes” categories to discern whether those qualities also reflected archaeological and cultural entities. While Chenes Classic-period “style” portrays stucco dressed carved stone zoomorphic portal masks as a characteristic feature, relatively few sites include them in their place design. Freestanding towers, another unique Chenes built constituent, produced less consensus among scholars regarding their functional aspect until I confirmed a fifth example. Their geographical locations and particular urban design placements within specific places and points in the region not only delineate a Chenes “nuclear area” component within the larger land-based layout, but also adds symbolic and functional aspects to help explain the intra and inter-site roles those tower features played. This paper incorporates Classic Horizon architectural elements, archaeo-astronomical features, ceramic complex components, cultural traditions, and urban design programs unique to the Chenes Region that provided a singular pre-Hispanic identity for locals, and that also could have been recognized by contemporaries from afar.

### **2.2 Regional Identity as Reflected in the Settlement of the Bajo El Laberinto Area**

*Kathryn Reese-Taylor<sup>1</sup>, Felix A. Kupprat<sup>2</sup>, Armando Anaya Hernández<sup>3</sup>, Debra S. Walker<sup>4</sup>, F. C. Atasta Flores Esquivel<sup>5</sup>, Joshuah Lockett-Harris<sup>6</sup>, Matthew Longstaffe<sup>7</sup>, Véronica A. Vázquez López<sup>8</sup>, Valeria Montserrat Suasa Nuñez<sup>9</sup>, Sophia Gutiérrez Rodríguez<sup>10</sup>, Kyle Farquharson<sup>11</sup>, Nicholas P. Dunning<sup>12</sup>*

University of Calgary (1, 6, 7, 11), Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (2, 5, 9, 10), Universidad Autónoma de Campeche (3), University of Florida (4), Tulane University (8), University of Cincinnati (12)

Settlement distribution is highly variable within the Maya lowlands. While some aspects of the spatial organization of households may have been influenced by climate, topography, and availability of natural resources, settlement patterns also reflect social relations. In the Central Karstic Uplands, specifically in the region centered on the El Laberinto bajo, multi-courtyard household complexes are organized in densely nucleated clusters. While nucleated clusters of complexes are found across the Maya lowlands, the pattern in the Bajo Laberinto region has specific characteristics.

First, the households vary in size, ranging from smaller groups housed in single patios and modest multi-patio complexes of less than 20 structures, medium sized groups in complexes of between 20 and 40 structures, and large groups in complexes containing between 40 and 60+ structures. Medium to large sized Laberinto complexes contain larger plazas with associated shrines, gathering spaces for communities on the sub-site level. Preliminary testing during the 2023 field season in the Calakmul and Yaxnohcah settlement suggests that at least some of these groups originated in the Early Classic, pre-Kanu’l period.

Despite the extensive monumental architecture of the site core of Calakmul, the Classic period population of the Bajo El Laberinto seems to have structured their social and political relations in terms of super-households and their affiliates, in contrast to urban areas with intermediate civic nodes integrating mid-scale population segments. This pattern of non-centralized administration may reflect a regional identity and a communal choice against more centralized polities to the north and the south.

### **2.3 Astronomical Orientations in the Lowland Maya Architecture: Common Trends, Regional Patterns, and Temporal Variations**

*Ivan Šprajc*

ZRC SAZU, Inštitut za antropološke in prostorske študije, Ljubljana

A number of systematic studies have shown that the important civic and ceremonial buildings in the Maya area and elsewhere in Mesoamerica were largely oriented on astronomical grounds. While most alignments marked sunrises and sunsets on specific dates, related to the agricultural cycle and calendrical system, a substantial number of orientations refer to Venus and lunar extremes, and some possibly to a star or asterism. The astronomical significance of orientations contributes to understanding important aspects of architectural design and urban planning. However, since the orientations are attributes of material remains, they can also shed light on issues of cultural history. Based on hundreds of orientations that have been measured in the Maya Lowlands, several orientation groups have been identified and, for the purposes of the present study, their spatial and temporal distributions have been analyzed. While some orientation principles predominated across the area and throughout Maya history, a preference for certain orientation patterns can be observed in particular periods and regions. On the one hand, the results of this study indicate that some general concepts underlying orientation practices can be added to other widely shared aspects of the lowland Maya culture, which resulted from common origins and long-distance cultural interaction. On the other, the alignment data reflect regional and temporal variations, which may be related to environmental peculiarities, differences in subsistence strategies, or idiosyncratic developments within autonomous political entities.

### Session 3 – “The Maya and Beyond: Intra- and Intercultural Relations”

Chair: Nikolas Schürmann

#### **3.1 Variation in Terminal Classic Isthmic Connections: Maya Cities at the Crossroad**

*M. Charlotte Arnauld*

Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), ArchAm (Archéologie des Amériques), Université de Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

If we want to explore intracultural variation and commonality in the Maya region, we must first recognize that this region is uniquely situated in Mesoamerica, and even in the American continent, between two isthmuses (Tehuantepec and Motagua), resulting in its particular role in the continental circulation of people, goods and ideas. The Pacific Coast, the Maya Highlands and Lowlands, their northern, central and southern sections were (and still are) differently opened and connected to the rest of Mesoamerica and its Central American margins. We propose to study this variation during the long crisis of the Terminal Classic period (760-950 CE), when many but not all Maya kingdoms collapsed. Focusing primarily on the Lowland urban aspect of this dramatic process, we can observe that most cities were progressively or abruptly abandoned, but a few were resilient and underwent a substantial urban activity even during the Early Postclassic period (950-1250). Their diverse connections to ancient and new Mesoamerican routes would have been critical in their survival. Likely Maya cultural variation and political structuration partly depended on differing degrees of openness to the greater isthmic circulations.

#### **3.2 Tak'alik Ab'aj, unidad regional versus diversidad local**

*Christa Schieber de Lavarreda*

Parque Arqueológico Nacional Tak'alik Ab'aj

Tak'alik Ab'aj se encuentra ubicado dentro del corredor geográfico de piedemonte a lo largo del litoral del Pacífico. El registro arqueológico de Tak'alik Ab'aj y otros sitios de piedemonte, así como reconocidos arqueólogos hace décadas, sugieren que este espacio geográfico es a su vez un corredor cultural. En este trabajo exploraremos la línea de evidencia arqueológica que muestra estabilidad local a lo largo de los 1700 años de desarrollo continuo, así como cambios notables en otras líneas de evidencia, que reflejan eventos que ocurren en el escenario mesoamericano. La naturaleza de la línea de evidencia relacionada con el ámbito más “privado” en comparación con las asociadas con las esferas “públicas”, puede arrojar luz sobre el caso de la sociedad de Tak'alik Ab'aj. Qué aspectos se relacionan con la perseverancia de la cohesión y unidad social (tal vez étnica y lingüística) en contraste con los aspectos que responden a la fragilidad geopolítica y económica regional.

#### **3.3 The Pacific Coast: Maya or Not?**

*Oswaldo Chinchilla*

Yale University

The Pacific coastal region of Guatemala and Chiapas has a conflicting place in Maya archaeology. The region is sometimes regarded as a cradle of Maya civilization, key to explain the origins of settled life, social ranking, writing, and the calendar. Contrasting views brand the coast as a peripheral borderland, inhabited by non-Maya speakers who are regarded as marginal for the study of Maya civilization. Treatments of Pacific coastal archaeology make marked distinctions between Preclassic coastal peoples (associated with precocious developments at sites such as Izapa, Tak'alik Ab'aj, and Kaminaljuyú), and their Classic and Postclassic successors, who are sometimes labeled as “Mexican” or “Mexicanized,” and therefore

dismissed from the concerns of Maya archaeology. These interpretations reflect essentializing views of the Maya as forming coherent ethnic communities that were coextensive with the Maya linguistic family. Speakers of diverse Maya languages allegedly shared more in common with each other than with neighboring communities of non-Maya speakers. In this paper, I reexamine these views, taking cues from the archaeological and artistic record of the Pacific coast. I question culture-language correlations and the assumptions of core-periphery models, and suggest a less rigid approach to Maya and non-Maya communities of the southern Maya area.

### **3.4 How Far Is Beyond? Social and Cultural Identities in the Preclassic Western El Salvador and its Ties with the Maya Area**

*Jan Szymański, Joachim Marteck, Gabriela Prejs*  
Faculty of Archaeology, University of Warsaw

In order to understand the multi-faceted phenomenon of the ancient Maya, one needs to assume a variety of research perspectives that will shed light upon different aspects of the elusive “Mayaness.”

This paper offers a glimpse from El Salvador – the territory often assumed to be at the peripheral zone of the Maya – at the early stages of emergence and consolidation of various traditions that conflated into the Maya culture. Through new data coming from the site of San Isidro and its satellites, and by comparing it with information from large sites from within the Maya highlands (Kaminaljuyu, Tak’alik Ab’aj, Chalchuapa, and others), the authors will discuss the ways ancient social identities emerged, endured, evolved, and dissolved within the “liminal zone” along the southeastern Maya “frontier” in the Preclassic.

We believe that the Preclassic El Salvador is the area in which both conscious and unconscious responses to cultural pressures from the influential Maya in the west give us an opportunity to at least nibble at, if not flesh out, the complicated pattern of factors that constitute and distinguish social identities, both of the Maya themselves, and other groups that have often been conflated with them by contemporary Mesoamerican archaeology.

### **3.5 Terminal Classic Occupation at Naachtun, Peten: An Example of Resilience and Sociopolitical Reorganization after a Political Crisis**

*Philippe Nondédéo*  
Archéologie des Amériques (CNRS / Université de Paris 1)

The Maya center of Naachtun, a regional capital of the Classic period in Northern Peten, is an interesting case showing the capacity for a society to reorganize after a political crisis. Ruled by a royal dynasty since the Early Classic period, the city saw the fall of this political system at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Far from being abandoned, the city experienced a major sociopolitical and economic reorganization led by noble families that modified the perception of power and authority within society. All of these changes allowed for a second apogee in the city that lasted until 950 CE, accompanied by a demographic peak. Through this case study, we will show in detail the original solution adopted by the local elites to overcome a major political crisis.

## Session 4 – “Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Maya Regionalism and Unity”

Chair: Isabel Zwach

### **4.1 Kingdoms of the Highland Maya: A Reappraisal**

*Victor Castillo*

Institute of Archaeology, Jagiellonian University

In popular historiography, as well as in some anthropological models, highland Maya polities at the time of the Spanish conquest have been characterized as kingdoms. This depiction of the sociopolitical organization of the highland Maya has oversimplified a complex entanglement of territory, ethnicity, language, political structure, and rulership. Overall, this approach has led to equate linguistic and ethnic groups with well bounded polities, e.g. the K'iche' kingdom, the Kaqchikel kingdom, and so on. Historical records written by the Maya during the sixteenth century and archaeological data contradicts the notion of hereditary monarchies and presents a composite and fragmented political scenario. This paper tracks the emergence of the notion of the kingdoms of the highland Maya, from the writings of Bartolomé de las Casas in the sixteenth century to the proto-nationalist ideologues of late colonial Guatemala in the early nineteenth century. I propose that the narrative of the precolonial kingdoms of the highland Maya emerged as a result of the polemic held by chroniclers of the mendicant orders that worked in Guatemala in their historical reconstructions of the Christianization of the Maya, and further assess the impact of this narrative in the development of anthropological and archaeological models that address the sociopolitical organization of the highland Maya during the Postclassic period (AD 1250–1550).

### **4.2 Diversity and Integration in the Maya Highlands during the Late Postclassic Period**

*Iyaxel Cojtí Ren*

The University of Texas at Austin

The ethnic composition of the Maya Highlands of Guatemala during the Late Postclassic period (1200–1524 CE) was diverse in terms of language and sociopolitical organization as in other parts of Mesoamerica. Colonial indigenous documents from the Maya Highlands of Guatemala provide important clues about how people established collective identities between individuals or social groups and how they also conceived otherness in the region. The highland peoples interacted with each other under different contexts and circumstances. Some of these contexts were marketplaces, important roads, the establishment of political alliances that usually were consolidated through marriages, trade, the arrival of refugees, and the incorporation of defeated social groups (chinamit or amaq') by more powerful polities. Q'umarkaj, a k'iche' civic and religious center, and probably other settlements in the Maya Highlands became multiethnic due to these situations. It is also possible to visualize, with the help of indigenous documents, how expansionist polities such as the K'iche' and the Kaqchikel, tried to impose elements of their culture on their closest allies and recently incorporated social groups that included the language and the veneration of their patron deities. In this presentation, I will discuss how ethnic and cultural diversity was conceived in the Maya Highlands during the Late Postclassic period. I also will present specific cases about how the K'iche' tried to impose a set of cultural and religious elements on their allies to create a sense of community and integration at the same time that class differentiation was enforced.



### **4.3 Water and Baptism in K'iche'an Social Identity: From Postclassic to Colonial**

*Mallory Matsumoto*

University of Texas at Austin / Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut / Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin

The diversity contained within the label “Maya” includes varying responses to cultural forms that were introduced through contact with non-Amerindians. Focusing on conceptions of water among K'iche'an groups in highland Guatemala as a case study, this paper presents a dialogical model of “Maya” culture(s) that accounts for post-contact encounters that have defined Maya experience since the sixteenth century. Water, besides being critical for sustaining life, played a key role in the development of K'iche'an ancestral identities. Upon their arrival in Guatemala in the sixteenth century, Spanish missionaries introduced another conception of water as a vehicle for divine grace in the Catholic sacrament of baptism. Water's role in K'iche'an cosmology presented, in theory, a point of articulation for missionaries to explain the spiritual transformation that baptism represented. Close examination of K'iche'an accounts of the baptismal encounter, however, indicates that K'iche'an authors integrated their own understanding of water into baptism as an index of sociopolitical identity. By reinforcing the authority of local leaders and interpreting the Catholic rite as a sociopolitical event, K'iche'an interpretation of baptismal water reflected the deep entanglement of spiritual and political conquest in early colonial Guatemala.

### **4.4 Formas de lo humano en la literatura maya contemporánea: análisis de obras de la península de Yucatán y Guatemala hacia un rastreo de lo similar y lo diverso en la naturaleza maya**

*Kristell Pech Oxe*

Universität Tübingen

La presente ponencia compartirá los avances de mi proyecto de doctorado, proyecto en curso, que bajo el título “Figuraciones de la naturaleza en la literatura maya contemporánea”, se dirige a realizar lecturas de los textos mayas contemporáneos que cuestionan la idea de naturaleza y puntualiza en los relacionamientos entre humanos y no humanos dentro de estas literaturas. Influenciadas por teorías antropológicas-filosóficas (Tim Ingold, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Philippe Descola) que cuestionan la dicotomía entre naturaleza y cultura, mis lecturas y análisis literarios exploran los relacionamientos entre humanos y no humanos, es decir, entre naturaleza y cultura, dentro obras mayas contemporáneas realizadas y publicadas en diversas regiones de la península de Yucatán y Guatemala. De esta forma, el análisis brinda un panorama regional y transnacional que ayuda a trazar las semejanzas y diferencias de estos relacionamientos dentro de producciones mayas contemporáneas que pueden contribuir a las discusiones sobre lo maya a una escala más general. Partiendo de las preguntas: ¿Qué es/quién es el humano en la literatura maya contemporánea? ¿Cómo se conforma este ser, qué nos dicen estas construcciones/representaciones? ¿Qué define lo humano? ¿Cómo varía esto en las múltiples representaciones? Se presentará un breve análisis de textos mayas contemporáneos, las reflexiones y conclusiones correspondientes.

### **4.5 Writing with Five Senses: Regional Variations in Contemporary Ts'ïib**

*Nancy Alicia Martínez*

Comparative Literature, Stanford University

How much is contained within the concept of “ts'ïib”? I aim to examine the ways contemporary Maya authors have engaged with and developed ts'ïib within their visual and written practices. Across archeological, art historical, and indigenous studies interventions into the cultures of the Maya region, there are at minimum two categories of ts'ïib that arise: a historical one and a

philosophical one. The historical approach focuses particularly on how the phenomenon of ts'ïib can be understood in the precolonial past. The philosophical one incorporates the historical approach while understanding ts'ïib as an epistemological approach to memory-making, preservation, and creative production that adapts with the world around it. In working to understand how contemporary Maya people continue to develop the concept of ts'ïib, it becomes increasingly important to understand both regional and temporal variations in how ts'ïib functions.

I will consider how previous archeological and art historical sources have understood ts'ïib as a precolonial practice. I will also consider how the regionalisms of the Maya people in the 20th century have allowed ts'ïib to develop differently according to local practices. By putting into dialogue art historical, archaeological, and indigenous studies scholarship with the works of Jakalteq, Kaqchikel, and K'iche' writers and artists, I aim to better understand how the long history of written practice amongst the Maya changes over time and space. By better understanding the complexity of ts'ïib as a category of creative production, I aim to connect discourses around Maya histories that are frequently divided by disciplinary borders.

#### **4.6 Voces múltiples en las memorias históricas de los kaqchikeles y continuidades en procesos históricos de violencia en Guatemala**

*Lolmay García, Brigittine French*

Casa de la Cultura, San Andrés Semetabaj

Los kaqchikeles han desarrollado un papel importante en la historia de Guatemala y por ende, en el discurso académico maya se habla de este grupo bien y mal por sus posiciones estratégicas en conflictos sociopolíticos. En esta ponencia se examinan los procesos históricos de violencia en los territorios de los kaqchikeles en Guatemala en la época colonial (1524–1604) y en la época moderna de violencia en la segunda parte del siglo XX (1954–1996). Se enfocan en estas dos épocas porque son momentos de ruptura profunda en las comunidades mayas y nos permiten analizar diferencias y continuidades en orígenes, consecuencias, alianzas, y contradicciones en los procesos de dominación en que han vivido y han participado los kaqchikeles. Usamos perspectivas analíticas de la lingüística (García) y la antropología (French) para investigar textos coloniales y contemporáneos de actores diversos entre los kaqchikeles. Se toman en cuenta los tres aspectos siguientes: 1) la alianza de los kaqchikeles con los Xexa' (españoles); 2) la guerra con los Xexa' (españoles); y 3) kaqchikeles como víctimas y participantes en la guerra civil en los departamentos de Chimaltenango y Sololá. El argumento está basado en que los idiomas y los testimonios escritos y orales de los kaqchikeles son vehículos culturales que llevan la memoria histórica de estos tiempos de crisis a lo largo de los siglos para los hablantes y los interlocutores. También nos dejan mostrar como los procesos de imponer un sistema de desigualdad por fuerza en tiempos coloniales siguen hasta el día de hoy en Guatemala.

## Session 5 – “Highland-Lowland Maya Interactions”

Chair: Marie Botzet

### **5.1 Regionalism Versus Unity: Exploring Head and Tooth Crafting Under the Backdrop of Mobility and Cultural Change in the Greater Maya Area**

*Vera Tiesler*

Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, Mérida

In the spirit of this year’s conference theme, I explore the shifting looks of artificially shaped heads and dental modifications under the umbrella of “the ancient Maya” as an analytical construct. Both permanently inscribed body modifications have come to light in thousands of dated burial contexts surrounding the Mesoamerican Gulf Coast, the Yucatan Peninsula, the Central Peten, and the Maya Highlands. Gravitating away from familiar discussions of physically inscribed Maya identities, I use systematically scored local and pan-regional data sets (including isotopic provenience data and age-at-death profiling), to examine their shifting distributions across the Eastern Mesoamerican landscapes. The discussion will take up these trends as proxies to examine *longue-durée* Maya embodiment under the backdrop of ideological shifts, populational mobility and migration, political crises and relocation.

### **5.2 Global Concepts, Local Expressions: Regional Innovation in Chaculá Ceramics and Sculpture at the End of the Classic Period**

*Caitlin Earley<sup>1</sup>, Ulrich Wölfel<sup>2</sup>*

University of Texas (1), Universität Bonn (2)

The artistic style found in Late Classic archaeological objects from the Chaculá region in the northwestern highlands of Guatemala has been considered an example of “cultural backwardness” and a disconnection from the bearers of the highly developed Classic Maya culture found in other parts of the Maya world, especially the lowlands. At the same time, the location of the region at the foot of the Guatemalan highlands makes it an ideal place to observe interaction among different Maya groups that lived in the region in the past and today.

In this paper we explore the ways in which the artistic styles of the Chaculá region and neighboring areas reveal information about group identity in the Late and Terminal Classic periods. Focusing on carved stone sculpture from the area of Quen Santo in conjunction with ceramics recovered from the site, we consider how style and function interact in sculpture and artifacts, the relationship between style and iconographic content, and connections between styles in this part of the Maya world. We argue that the Chaculá style is an example of local innovation, and that when considered in light of other material categories, it reveals information about social and political organization as well as regional identity. Considered more broadly, the Chaculá style points to regional diversity in Maya material expression.

### **5.3 Making Ceramic Mayans within a Highland–Lowland Interaction Zone**

*Erin L. Sears*

Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, Washington D.C.

Late Classic Maya ceramic figurines, ocarinas, musical instruments, and other figural forms are noted for their ability to reflect ancient inhabitants within sites that are not represented by large-scale elite messaging systems. These small ceramic sculptures are intimate compared to the public advertisements found on stelae, glyph-lined temple staircases, or carved lintels. They also depict, at times, a personal interaction with supernatural mythology. How these ceramic figural items are created on a regional scale along the Upper Chixoy–Pasión riverways and Transversal corridor indicates different artisanal production preferences and cultural expectations of their use. This paper reflects on what ways the making of these figural objects

demonstrates aspects of variation and preference of the ancient Maya communities that resided within this particular Highland-Lowland zone.

#### **5.4 Dynamic Regional Relations and Local Identities at the Highland-Lowland Interface in Central Guatemala**

*Brent K. S. Woodfill*

Winthrop University

While highland-lowland interactions during the Classic period have been intensely studied and debated by Mayanists for over 100 years, very few archaeologists have actually worked near the nexus of these two regions. This talk will focus specifically on the international relationships, regional identities, and evidence for migration in the Northern Transversal Region, a narrow strip of land at the base of the Guatemalan highlands that is home to Salinas de los Nueve Cerros, the Candelaria Cave system, and other important settlements and sacred places. Using rock art, ceramic analysis, and ethnohistoric data, it is possible to reconstruct a history of shifting alliances and migrations into and out of the transversal from the Preclassic through the colonial period, culminating in the conquest of Sak B'alam in 1695.

#### **5.5 The Same or Different Maya? Diversity and Homogeneity in the Ixil Region During Pre-Hispanic Times**

*Jarosław Żrałka, Juan Luis Velásquez, Vera Tiesler, Jakob Sedig, David Reich, Dorota Bojkowska*

Jagiellonian University

In this paper we discuss the populations of the Ixil Region situated in the northern part of El Quiché department, Guatemala, which is one of the least known and studied parts of the Maya area. Our major aim is to demonstrate the pre-Hispanic heterogeneities and differences of the Ixil Region with other parts of the Maya area, especially in the context of highland-lowland connections. As a case study we pick up two sites of this area: Xacbal and Chajul, both of which were studied by the authors of this paper as part of three different projects conducted in recent years. Based on archaeological information (architecture, funerary customs, skeletal information on head shapes and dental decorations, as well as material culture) we intend to answer the following research questions: 1) When the Ixil Region was first inhabited and by what populations? 2) What relations did it sustain with other neighboring regions of the Maya Highlands; 3) What role (if any) did it play in cultural and trade contacts between Maya Highlands and Lowlands? Our preliminary paleogenetic results of Xacbal's millenary population complement the (bio)archaeological survey of the area's pre-Hispanic inhabitants and their populational shifts.

### III. Symposium Schedule

<b>Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023</b>			
8:30 – 9:00		<i>Registration // Hörsaal 2, Campus Poppelsdorf - University of Bonn, Friedrich-Hirzebruch-Allee 5, 53115 Bonn</i>	
9:00 – 9:30		<i>Welcome Address</i>	University of Bonn, Wayeb President
<b>Session 1 – “Regional Developments and Interactions in Maya Art and Writing”</b>			
Chair: Dimitrios Markianos-Daniolos			
<i>Time</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Talk</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>
9:30 – 10:00	1.1	<b>Lapidary Variations and Commonalities in Antiquity: An Overview of Ancient Maya Portable Greenish and Bluish Stone Mosaic Masks (CE 300 – 800)</b>	<i>Juan Carlos Meléndez, Emiliano Ricardo Melgar</i>
10:00 – 10:30	1.2	<b>The Maya Commons</b>	<i>Guo Peng Chen 陳國鵬, Xin Lin 林忻</i>
10:30 – 11:00	1.3	<b>Within Arm’s Reach: Scribal Workshops and the Geographic Extent of Eighth-Century Maya Full-Figure Inscriptions</b>	<i>Catherine Nuckols</i>
11:00 – 11:30		<i>Coffee Break</i>	
<b>Session 2 – “Regional Aspects in Classic Maya Architecture and Settlement Patterns”</b>			
Chair: Paul Graf			
<i>Time</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Talk</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>
11:30 – 12:00	2.1	<b>Where an Area is More Than Land: Pre-Columbian Cultural Identity in the Chenes Region</b>	<i>Lorraine A. Williams-Beck</i>
12:00 – 12:30	2.2	<b>Regional Identity as Reflected in the Settlement of the Bajo El Laberinto Area</b>	<i>F. A. Kupprat, K. Reese-Taylor, A. Anaya Hernández, D. S. Walker et al.</i>
12:30 – 13:00	2.3	<b>Astronomical Orientations in the Lowland Maya Architecture: Common Trends, Regional Patterns, and Temporal Variations</b>	<i>Ivan Šprajc</i>
13:00 – 15:00		<i>Lunch</i>	
<b>Session 3 – “The Maya and Beyond: Intra-and Intercultural Relations”</b>			
Chair: Nikolas Schürmann			
<i>Time</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Talk</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>
15:00 – 15:30	3.1	<b>Variation in Terminal Classic Isthmic Connections: Maya Cities at the Crossroad</b>	<i>Marie-Charlotte Arnauld</i>
15:30 – 16:00	3.2	<b>Tak’alik Ab’aj, unidad regional versus diversidad local</b>	<i>Christa Schieber de Lavarreda</i>
16:00 – 16:30	3.3	<b>The Pacific Coast: Maya or Not?</b>	<i>Oswaldo Chinchilla</i>
16:30 – 17:00		<i>Coffee Break</i>	
17:00 – 17:30	3.4	<b>How Far Is Beyond? Social and Cultural Identities in the Preclassic Western El Salvador and its Ties with the Maya Area</b>	<i>Jan Szymański, Joachim Marteck, Gabriela Prejs</i>
17:30 – 18:00	3.5	<b>Terminal Classic Occupation at Naachtun, Peten: An Example of Resilience and Sociopolitical Reorganization after a Political Crisis</b>	<i>Philippe Nondédéo</i>



**Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Session 4 – “Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Maya Regionalism and Unity”**

Chair: Isabel Zwach

<i>Time</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Talk</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>
9:00 – 9:30	4.1	<b>Kingdoms of the Highland Maya: A Reappraisal</b>	<i>Victor Castillo</i>
9:30 – 10:00	4.2	<b>Diversity and Integration in the Maya Highlands during the Late Postclassic Period</b>	<i>Iyaxel Cojtí Ren</i>
10:00 – 10:30	4.3	<b>Water and Baptism in K’iche’an Social Identity: From Postclassic to Colonial</b>	<i>Mallory Matsumoto</i>
10:30 – 11:00		<i>Coffee Break</i>	
11:00 – 11:30	4.4	<b>Formas de lo humano en la literatura maya contemporánea: análisis de obras de la península de Yucatán y Guatemala hacia un rastreo de lo similar y lo diverso en la naturaleza maya</b>	<i>Kristell Pech Oxte</i>
11:30 – 12:00	4.5	<b>Writing with Five Senses: Regional Variations in Contemporary Ts’üib</b>	<i>Nancy Alicia Martínez</i>
12:00 – 12:30	4.6	<b>Voces múltiples en las memorias históricas de los kaqchikeles y continuidades en procesos históricos de violencia en Guatemala</b>	<i>Lolmay García, Brigitte French</i>
12:30 – 14:00		<i>Lunch</i>	

**Session 5 – “Highland-Lowland Maya Interactions”**

Chair: Marie Botzet

<i>Time</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Talk</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>
14:00 – 14:30	5.1	<b>Regionalism Versus Unity: Exploring Head and Tooth Crafting Under the Backdrop of Mobility and Cultural Change in the Greater Maya Area</b>	<i>Vera Tiesler</i>
14:30 – 15:00	5.2	<b>Global Concepts, Local expressions: Regional Innovation in Chaculá Ceramics and Sculpture at the End of the Classic Period</b>	<i>Caitlin Earley, Ulrich Wölfel</i>
15:00 – 15:30	5.3	<b>Making Ceramic Mayans within a Highland–Lowland Interaction Zone</b>	<i>Erin L. Sears</i>
15:30 – 16:00		<i>Coffee Break</i>	
16:00 – 16:30	5.4	<b>Dynamic Regional Relations and Local Identities at the Highland-Lowland Interface in Central Guatemala</b>	<i>Brent K. S. Woodfill</i>
16:30 – 17:00	5.5	<b>The Same or Different Maya? Diversity and Homogeneity in the Ixil Region during Pre-Hispanic Times</b>	<i>Jaroslav Žralka, Juan Luis Velásquez, Vera Tiesler, Jakob Sedig, David Reich, Dorota Bojkowska</i>
17:00 – 17:30		<i>Closing of symposium / Final remarks</i>	
17:30 – 18:30		<i>Flag Ceremony and closure of the EMC</i>	

Note: Speakers will have 20 min for their presentations and 5 min for Q&A after each talk.

