

# **“Fractitious Statelets” and “Galactic Polities”: Ideology, Ritual Practices and the Rise and Fall of Classic Maya States**

*Jeanne Lopiparo*

As the title suggests, the rise of complexity in the Classic Maya period (200-900 A.D.) is widely and loosely attributed to competition among elites and elite lineages for control over valuable economic resources, whether they be labor, raw materials, craft items, exotic goods, or the exchange networks that provide these (see Culbert, ed. 1991; Hammond 1991; Yoffee 1991; Pohl and Pohl 1994; Fox 1994; Demarest 1992). As proposed by peer-polity interaction models (Renfrew 1986) and factionalism models (Brumfiel 1994) for the development of political complexity, Maya statehood is viewed as arising as the result of "structurally and functionally similar groups," such as locally powerful elite lineages, competing for "a favorable allocation of existing resources" (Brumfiel 1994:4, 5). In fact there is no better definition of the common formulation of the rise of the Classic Maya state than Brumfiel's general conception of how factionalism leads to transformation and complexity:

The formation of competing factions within communities goes hand in hand with the development of alliances between faction leaders within different communities. The net effect of this process is to turn an entire region into a single political 'arena,' a community within which competing coalitions of faction leaders vie for resources. (1994:5)

These resources are assumed to be economically (wealth, surplus, exchange goods, labor) or ecologically (agricultural or natural resources) "adaptive" necessities in a zero-sum game of survival. The "need" for control over economic resources—usually presented as a means of efficiency or ecological adaptation—is seen as the driving force or prime mover behind complexity (read: hierarchy)—or the aggregation of power increasingly removed from the local level.

In general, however, control of "ideological currency" is not considered on this list of prime movers (i.e. causative of the rise of complexity), but rather as a post facto legitimation of rulership rights. While discussion of Maya elites' manipulation of religious iconography is extraordinarily widespread - in fact, often characterizing Classic Mayaness - it is usually cited only as a means of legitimation of an

established hierarchy, the goal of which is to control economic resources in some ecological or zero-sum calculus. Despite the fetishization of the rise and fall of Classic Maya statehood as a chronologically and geographically bounded entity with definable characteristics, the focus has been on "drastic" change in economic, ecological, and political systems - while a definite continuity is posited for religious beliefs and ritual practices (for example Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993). Ironically most of the characteristics used to define Classic Maya states focus on similarities in ideology and ritual practices.

Classic Maya statehood is often defined economically, based on the monumental civic-ceremonial centers and large aggregations of buildings, which are assumed to indicate dense concentrations of people. From the density of sites, archaeologists have inferred the large-scale intensification of agriculture and trade deemed necessary to support the population, and a concomitant intensification of administrative organization and hierarchy to control or gain access to products and labor (Sanders and Price 1968; Webb 1973; Rathje 1973). But ecological and economically instrumentalist arguments alone are not adequate to explain or differentiate statehood. Not only did large sites exist (though not in such large numbers) both before and after the delimitations of the Classic period, but the majority of characteristics commonly used by archaeologists to delineate the rise and fall of the Classic Maya states can only be considered "ideological": the institution of divine kingship or *ahaw* (Freidel and Schele 1988); monumental art and sculpture (particularly stelae); hieroglyphic writing presenting the rituals and history (much of it mythical) of the *ahaw*; belief in a tripartite universe (upperworld, earthly world, and underworld) inhabited by ancestors and other supernatural beings; elites' role as mediators between the living and the supernatural to ensure prosperity; ritual actions (particularly bloodletting, warfare, captive sacrifice) performed by the elites to propitiate and communicate with supernaturals and to "travel" between the earthly world and the supernatural realms (Schele and Miller 1986); depictions in sculpture, murals, and vessels of these rituals, as well as the presence of the instruments of ritual bloodletting (stingray spines and shark teeth); the laying out of sites as "cosmological maps" (Ashmore 1989; Baudez 1991; Joyce 1992), including the re-creation of sacred landscape features that link the three levels of the universe (pyramids/mountains, serpent mouths/caves, structures built over springs); the importance of dynastic history and ancestor worship (Fash 1991; Gillespie 1997); and a calendrical system emphasizing crucial cyclical intervals and their associated rituals (Chase 1991).

### **Materialist Versus Ideological Models of Transformation: Towards and Agency-based Model for the Rise and Fall of Hierarchy**

As Demarest (1992) points out, there is little evidence to support ecological and economic control models for Classic Maya states. The types of large scale raised

fields and irrigation works posited as requiring complex administration simply are not found, and long-distance trade networks seemed to have specialized in ritual goods instead of economic necessities. In fact most subsistence and utilitarian production appear to have been carried out locally (Demarest 1992:142). One cannot ignore, however, that there were extensive exchange networks, and formidable labor requirements for the construction of monumental architecture. Elites seem to have had differential access to these non-utilitarian "exotic" goods, and must have required and effectively extracted a certain degree of wealth from the masses (in the form of labor and subsistence goods), since the elites themselves were non-producing members of the economy. However, the dispersed nature of subsistence production and settlement calls into question the idea that the masses "required" the elites' administration, as the ecological models imply. So what exactly did the elites provide that gave them access to this labor?

Given the significance of ritual knowledge and practice in the definition and continuity of Classic Maya statehood and kingship, a model for control of "ideological currency" as causative of complexity might be more apt than a purely economic or ecologically functional one. For although economic hierarchy is a defining characteristic of statehood, it is not the inevitable outcome of some external set of circumstances. The naturalization of hierarchy ignores the generative and dialectical role of people as active agents continually experiencing, transforming, and thus producing their culture, as outlined in Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977). As Salamini describes of Gramsci's philosophy:

The relations of production do not evolve according to autonomous and self-generating laws, but act, are regulated or modified by the human consciousness ... No regime could sustain itself in power by exercising control and domination over the masses; it will need the 'ideological consent' of the masses. Hegemony becomes in Gramsci 'cultural and ideological direction' ... Gramsci conceives hegemony as an ideological phenomenon first, and only second a political one. (1981:33)

Thus I would posit a Gramscian argument, that change has to occur first in the minds of the masses—in the realm of ideology. The masses are not just cogs in an ecologically adaptive machine that selects for efficiency. No transformation of political organization, political hegemony, or extraction of labor could occur without first occurring in the mind of the masses.

In acknowledging the import of religion and ritual in the defining Classic Maya institution of divine kingship, several authors have advocated the application of a model prioritizing the role of ideology as the source and means of aggregating power in the rise of complexity (Joyce 1991; Demarest 1992). Similar to Mary Helms'

model for prehispanic Panama (1979), prestige and power are derived from control of exotic ritual goods and esoteric knowledge. Control of exchange networks in non-utilitarian, exotic goods often used in ritual was seen as mastery of distant realms. This horizontal map of the cosmos, with the city-state as the axis-mundi and distant or foreign lands metonymically becoming supernatural realms (Helms 1979; Joyce 1991; Gillespie and Joyce 1998), reinforced the elites' claims to control over the vertical cosmological universe in their exclusive ability to communicate with the supernatural inhabitants of the tripartite universe. The exclusivity of these abilities indicates that esoteric ritual knowledge was also a prized commodity, and perhaps the widespread commonalities in ritual practices and use of non-local products indicate a certain "commerce" in or exchange of this knowledge. So in fact the service the elite provided for (or control the elite exerted over) the populace was metaphysical—the mediation between the world of the living and the supernatural realm (how elites "alienated" the masses from their ability to communicate with their own supernatural ancestors will be considered below).

As with the rise of Classic Maya statehood, archaeologists have similarly fetishized the Classic Maya Collapse. If the above list outlines the criteria for the definition of Classic Maya statehood, then presumably the collapse should represent a disappearance, diminution, or transformation of these features. It is interesting that so many models of the collapse hypothesize some form of decimation of the population, despite scant evidence—or the problematic use of negative evidence—to support this hypothesis. The fall of hierarchical society is posited as disastrous—even cataclysmic—for those under its rule, rather than liberating. This model reifies the bureaucratic mechanisms and centralized control of the state as ideally efficient and necessary for the subsistence and survival of large populations.

An alternate model to this paean to statehood is that of "voting with one's feet." And in fact, dispersal seems like a more apt model than decimation (e.g. Webster and Freter 1990). For collapse really references the abandonment of the enormous civic-ceremonial complexes of the Classic Maya (Joyce in press) in favor of predominantly smaller scale, more dispersed, and multiple loci of religious activity in Terminal and Postclassic sites, for example at the Postclassic site of Mayapán (Proskouriakoff 1962; Smith 1962; Leventhal 1983). In addition, with the disproportionately scant attention paid to non-monumental and household architecture, it is no wonder that more dispersed Postclassic populations seem to "disappear" right before archaeologists' eyes. The many studies that have demonstrated the archaeological "invisibility" of Postclassic sites (Pyburn 1990, Chase 1990) serve as cautionary tales against the use of negative evidence to support the hypothesis of population decimation. As Rice describes for the Petén:

We do not have much archaeological evidence for the domestic remains of those mainland agriculturalists that the Spaniards found so

ubiquitous, living in simple houses near their fields and worshipping their gods in the woods and in caves ... The magnitude of the local disturbance of the lacustrine environments attributable to the Postclassic period, as measured paleolimnologically, suggests that this archaeologically invisible group may have been quite large. (1988:242)

While there are multiple ecological and economic models for the cause of collapse—for example, population pressure, environmental pressures, agricultural failure (Culbert 1973)—there is little discussion of the inherent failure of the religious system that this would imply (but see Gifford 1974). If mediation with the supernatural world was supposed to ensure abundance, what ramification would failure have on credence in the belief system? In other words, what happens when ritual fails? There is also little consideration of the possibility of "non-functional" ideological failure. With the exception of "peasant revolt" theories - which were, not surprisingly, popular during the rise of Bolshevism (Becker 1979)—few have considered the idea that the people upon whose labor statehood depended simply opted out, either through some form of uprising, or simply by leaving the city-states (but see Thompson 1954). Despite the dispersion or fragmentation of religious practices posited in the 1960s by archaeologists at the Postclassic site of Mayapán (Smith 1962) and documented ethnohistorically by Farriss (1984:289), many authors have emphasized the continuity of Postclassic ideology and religious organization with the Classic period (Freidel and Schele 1993).

It is interesting that this gradualist model is applied to religion, while economic and ecological "events" are seen more as "punctuating equilibrium." But why is continuity of religious practices always emphasized when such a dramatic transformation is posited for other aspects of organization? Perhaps it is because of the widespread reliance on ethnohistoric and ethnographic analogy to explain religion and ritual, which through circular reasoning gives an unconscious but manufactured aura of continuity. But even more interesting is the divorce of ideology from "hierarchization," as if people had nothing to do with it. Environmental adaptation models naturalize hierarchy as the only or inevitable response to a given set of circumstances. It presents statehood as necessary—as the only efficient way of organizing labor and resources to achieve subsistence for large populations. Perhaps this "inevitability of hierarchy" is more of a reification of western conceptions of progress towards civilization than an eternal fact of prehistory—the inevitable result of any number of external circumstances. I would argue instead that hierarchy is not inevitable, but rather the result of agents actively pursuing strategies—both within the framework of existing ideologies and through their manipulation and transformation—for control of economic, social, and ideological currency. My intent is not to portray the practices of religion and ritual by Maya elites as simply an "scheme" for self-aggrandizement. Rather, I suggest that the institution of ahaw, or

divine kingship, represented a significant transformation brought about through the action and negotiations of individuals and was not simply a natural outgrowth of preexisting ideological forms and practices. Bell supports this line of argument through her discussion of "negotiated appropriation":

The study of ritual has always assumed the close relationship of rite with belief. As we have seen, ritual has generally been thought to express beliefs in symbolic ways for the purpose of their continual reaffirmation and inculcation ... I will argue that the projection and embodiment of schemes in ritualization is more effectively viewed as a 'mastering' of relationships of power relations within an arena that affords a negotiated appropriation of the dominant values embedded in the symbolic schemes. To analyze the relationship of ritualization to belief, therefore, I will focus on the tension and struggle involved in this negotiated appropriation, rather than on the production of doctrines neatly internalized as assumptions about reality. (1992:182)

Thus an ideological approach to the rise of complex societies is an agency-based model, one that considers the role of people in transforming their relations of power—and their cosmos.

### **Heterogeneity to Homogeneity: Nested Levels of Religious Organization and the Verticalization of Pluralistic Ritual Practices**

As in ethnohistoric and ethnographic examples, religious institutions and ritual practice likely existed at multiple levels of organization among the Classic Maya. Like Hugh-Jones' (1994) example of dual shamanship in Amazonia, ethnographic and ethnohistoric evidence among the Maya point to both "public" or official religious ritual leaders, and private, ad hoc shamans and curanderos (Cancian 1965; Vogt 1969; Farriss 1984; Gossen and Leventhal 1993). Akin to Hugh-Jones distinction between horizontal and vertical shamanship, ethnographic and ethnohistoric studies describe a complex official (i.e., vertical) hierarchy that is not only local, but embedded in regional hierarchies, as well as a number of local shamans who perform curing and divination rituals and sometimes witchcraft. Vogt (1969:289) describes the hierarchies of official power in Zinacantan, with municipio caciques wielding civic authority in relationship with the Mexican government, and Elders, Alféreces, and Mayordomos holding enormous power and prestige within the religious cargo system. A third avenue of authority is through the type of independent, unofficial shamanism that Hugh-Jones describes as "horizontal" shamanism.

One might also expect to find this heterogeneity of ritual practices among prehispanic Maya cultures, and many have made this argument both from the

ethnographic and the archaeological evidence (Gossen and Leventhal 1993; Farriss 1984). While the distinctions made by Gossen and Leventhal (1993:186) between Great Traditions and Little Traditions (after Redfield 1941, 1960) and by Farriss (1984:288) between public and private spheres are problematic in their dichotomization of a probable continuum of practices, they make the important point that "Maya religion" (and particularly, Classic Maya religion) was likely characterized by a complex set of heterogeneous beliefs and rituals. As Gossen and Leventhal state:

A responsible reading of the ancient Maya world must proceed with an appreciation that there was undoubtedly a complex realm of individual and domestic supernatural practice that did not find its way into the formal inscriptions and iconography of the centers. We propose that its content will reveal a cosmos in which state religion was but one of many voices of supernatural vigilance over human affairs. (1993:210)

In addition to the monumental civic-ceremonial complexes of the Maya states, there is abundant evidence that ritual was taking place in domestic contexts, and it seems that this ritual took on both the official forms of state ideology and more personalized forms that cannot be explained within that framework. In many ways household shrines were microcosms of the universe, and hence represented cosmological maps on a small scale similar to those embodied by the larger ceremonial centers (Gillespie 2000). Extrapolating from ethnographic accounts of religious affiliation and ritual organization (Vogt 1969; Cancian 1965), settlement pattern data has often been interpreted as indicating "nested levels" of religious structures, with ever-increasing levels of organization having common shrines and presumably rituals (e.g. Joyce 1991; Gossen and Leventhal 1993; Hendon 1991; Leventhal 1983; Pollock, et al. 1962). It was ritual that unified these different levels of settlement:

Although kinship is one means of defining bonds between members of the household, the most regular feature defining different settlement units is the recognition of commonality through the enactment of ritual.

Facilities for unifying ritual were identified at each level of settlement, with excavated examples extrapolated to structures with similar size and position within groups. (Joyce 1991:148)

Gillespie (2000) argues that houses themselves not only recreated the cosmos, but metonymically became the cosmos through their construction rites and in the lived experiences or bodily practices of agents interacting with and within them. In

addition to being microcosms of the universe, houses were also macrocosms of the body (Gillespie 2000). Within the houses were household altars, which Gillespie argues were at once microcosms of the house and macrocosms, in that they were considered houses of the ancestors, thus representing the supernatural realm. Other houses of supernatural beings, such as the ethnographic example of Lacandon incensarios, or "god pots," take on anthropomorphic forms. That these levels of "containment" were subject to multiple inversions indicates the complex ways in which space was embodied.

House and body interact in a dialectic through which social memory is both maintained and transformed (Bourdieu 1977; Connerton 1989). Bourdieu describes "the dialectical relationship between the body and a space structured according to the mythico-ritual oppositions," arguing that:

inhabited space—and above all the house—is the principal locus for the objectification of generative schemes; ... this tangible classifying system continuously inculcates and reinforces the taxonomic principles underlying all the arbitrary provisions of this culture .... To discover how this spatial organization ... governs practices and representations ... and thereby contributes to the durable imposition of the schemes of perception, thought, and action, it is necessary to grasp the dialectic of objectification and embodiment in the privileged locus of the space of the house and the earliest learning processes. (1977:89-90)

Evidence that common features of a cosmological map occurred at multiple levels of spatial organization indicates the intricacy and diversity of experiences through which cosmology was embodied in practice. Through the construction of their domestic space and through daily movement and ritual "circuits" in that space, people both experienced and created their understanding of the universe. It is through this dialectic that social learning occurred and social memory was continuously constructed (Connerton 1989).

While these nested levels of microcosm and macrocosm followed similar structures as maps of the cosmos, they were not simply emulations of state religion. These similarities in form do not necessarily indicate a single, unified ideology embedded in a larger network led by the elites. For ritual practiced in the home takes on the significance and beliefs that individuals ascribe to it. To say that the masses were simply acting out religious dogma in slavish devotion to the state would be counter to most of the ethnographic evidence, which indicates a more individualized and ad hoc use of domestic ritual for personal needs. Even ostensibly under the imposition of colonial Catholic rule, Yucatecan Maya continued to carry out their traditional rituals in secret (Farriss 1984:290-292). Catholic rituals and symbols were



modified and integrated with traditional religious cycles and symbols, resulting in such syncretisms as the cargo system (Farriss 1984; Cancian 1965; Vogt 1969). There is no better way to convey this heterogeneity of household religious practices than by describing the bafflement of the Spaniards when they encountered among the Postclassic Maya such a seeming disregard or irreverence towards the primacy of state religion:

The state religion ... was linked to the private sphere through the family-owned idols that the Spaniards found in such bewildering and frustrating profusion ... Spanish accounts and court records make clear that Maya obsequies to their family idols, whether these represented lineage gods or community gods—or both—did not replace but were performed in parallel with the public cults; sometimes the family idols were trotted out to be included in the public ceremonies (Farriss 1984:289-290).

But how might this heterogeneity be read in the archaeological record? While there are always archaeological materials that are labeled generically as evidence of ritual (as a residual category for "no discernible utilitarian function"), there are also plenty of instances in which ritual can be reasonably inferred, such as careful arrangements and burials of figurines (and of course human remains), caches, household altars, and objects such as incensarios (e.g. Joyce 1991), which ethnographically and ethnohistorically have exclusive and well-documented ritual uses. We cannot make sense of many of these artifacts solely within the framework of official religion. It is only by referencing the heterogeneous practices encountered by the Spanish that we can begin to understand the uses and meanings of these artifacts outside of the commonly accepted homogeneous framework of Classic Maya religion. Like Rice's ubiquitous agriculturalists "worshipping their gods in the woods and in caves" (1988:242), these traces may be the only evidence of an extensive and heterogeneous set of "unofficial" and nonhierarchical beliefs and practices.

Thus it seems that Maya ritual was characterized by both a homogeneous set of public or official practices, evidenced in the nested levels of public religious architecture, and a set of private, local, personal, heterogeneous rituals. Ancestor worship is commonly conceived to be the focus of homogeneous beliefs underlying Maya religion (Gillespie 1997; McAnany 1995; Fash 1991). Veneration of ancestors is particularly evident at the state level, with the extraordinary emphasis on dynastic history in monumental art and the elaborate interment and enshrinement of the dead as ancestors within the mountain/house/supernatural realm of the pyramids (Freidel and Schele 1988; Schele and Freidel 1990). Relating this monumental evidence to the smaller scale, local and household level ancestor worship has also been inferred from the regional and local shrines, the burial of the dead in house floors, and ethnographic

descriptions of altars as "sleeping houses" of the ancestors (Gillespie 2000; Gossen and Leventhal 1993; Leventhal 1983; Pollock et al. 1962).

Archaeological evidence for nested levels of religious organization, as indicated in the settlement patterns, organization of local-level public ritual spaces and practices, and ethnographic examples, likely represented the homogenization or verticalization of heterogeneous practices within the cosmological order governed or controlled by the ahaw. Presumably this integration benefited both the local elites in terms of prestige (and perhaps material gain), as well as the ahaw in terms of allegiance to polity and access to or control over goods and labor. But, assuming that preexisting, heterogeneous local rituals focused on the interaction with local lineage ancestors (the commonly held model), how did kings "alienate" locals from their ability to communicate with the supernatural?

I would argue that the amorphous and unsatisfactory distinctions made between ancestors and "other supernaturals" indicate the merging of two systems of belief (two sets of "contents") into an ostensibly continuous or preexisting set of ritual practices. Within the many spatial and temporal divisions of the universe, cosmological realms were complexly stratified, and supernaturals were depicted as having multiple manifestations (Gillespie and Joyce 1998). Deities were associated with creation, agricultural fertility, and other natural phenomena (Thompson 1970) and were variously personified, glyphically named, and depicted as cosmological symbols in Classic Maya representations. Freidel et al describe First Father as being personified in the Maize God, but also as being represented as the World Tree or as a maize plant (1993:53-55). The fluidity of these associations and the many metonymic links among the depictions appear to have been strategically manipulated by the elites in monumental art - as the descent of rulers from specific named ancestors and lineages (Schele and Freidel 1990) was connected to the deities, primordial ancestors, and events of creation (see, for example, Freidel et al (1993) on the ballcourt imagery at Copán, and Schele and Freidel (1990) on the Temple of the Foliated Cross at Palenque).

While most models for elite legitimation focus on their claim to descent from more important lineages or apical ancestors, would the assertion of status be enough to alienate people from allegiance to and communication with their own ancestors as controllers of their personal prosperity and fortunes? Instead, elites could have asserted control over another dimension of the supernatural realm—to claim both esoteric knowledge of realms beyond the access or familiarity of the masses and the supernatural abilities to master them. I suggest that this esoteric knowledge was the ability to communicate with the distant and superordinate realm of the supernaturals who created the universe itself. As Gossen and Leventhal note:

The picture of the ancient Maya religion continues to become complex and clouded when one turns to the center and identifies the existence not only of ancestor worship but also the worship of a series of deities tied to the natural world. (1993:211)

Perhaps it was the ability to interact with the supernatural realm of creation that was the quality or claim of legitimacy which differentiated and distanced the ahaw lineages from the ancestors of the masses, and initiated the verticalization or homogenization of ritual practices that signaled the ideological allegiance of local groups to a higher order of organization—and to a higher order of power.

### **Mechanisms of Continuity and Change: A False Dichotomy**

Following Bell's (1992:185) distinction between ritual and belief, I agree that while ritual practices must maintain a degree of continuity, they may contain a high degree of ambiguity or variability—over time and among different people—in their "content" or corresponding beliefs. This ambiguity is evidenced in the presentation by Gillespie and Joyce (1998) of an extremely heterogeneous model of the Maya supernatural realm. They argue that the myriad manifestations taxonomically lumped together by anthropologists as representing one god in fact represented temporally and spatially specific creations of local groups. Thus it seems probable that elites appealed to a different order of authority and appealed to higher order powers, heaping a new layer (or new content) onto the preexisting ritual practices of local groups. While the beliefs or contents might have been transformed, in many ways the ritual practices remained continuous, thus providing the continuity often cited (and sought) by archaeologists. Somewhat analogous were the colonial impositions of Catholicism and local integration into prehispanic ritual cycles and practices (Cancian 1965; Farriss 1984). Local Catholic patron saints were even made into figurines and placed at shrines to be ritually nourished, clothed, and maintained (both within the church and in microcosm at household shrines).

This continuity of ritual practices seems to prioritize "bodily practices," (Connerton 1989) in that it was the practices themselves that were maintained, providing the structure that served as a means of social learning, while new "content" replaced or was integrated into preexisting beliefs. Barth (1987) provides a model for how the processes of ritual transmission provide mechanisms for both continuity and transformation. As he describes for New Guinea, it is the ritual practitioners themselves who mediate between practice and content of rituals. The specific dynamics of oral transmission of knowledge need to be considered here, for each ritual performance is not a perfect replication, but rather is mediated through an agent.

While many discussions have focused on the conservative function of ritual, particularly of ancestor worship, this emphasis on continuity begs the question of how and why transformation occurs. In contrast to this model of ideological conservatism, I argue that ritual can be a powerful medium of manipulation and change—and is itself always being transformed. While the bodily practices of rituals do serve as a means of social learning, the content (or beliefs, following Bell's distinction as discussed above) of these rituals are continually modified by ritual practitioners (as accepted keepers of esoteric knowledge) acting as intermediaries between both ritual and belief, and the masses and exclusive knowledge of the cosmos.

### **Cyclical Time and the Unification of Continuity and Change: A Practice-based Model of Transformation**

In order to present a more transformative, dynamic, and embodied model of ritual, it is necessary to break down the traditional dichotomy between continuity and change. Central to this dichotomy are notions of time, in that cyclical time is often portrayed as extremely static, predicting and assuring the eternal repetition of cosmic and earthly events. In contrast, linear time is seen according to western rationalist notions of the inevitable march of progress. That the latter is seen as the more dynamic is perhaps not surprising in a long history of anthropological discourse essentializing the "other" as eternally unchanging (Fabian 1983). But it seems that the only inevitability predicted by Maya notions of cyclical time is change. The calendrical system that is so often interpreted in terms of repetition and inevitability not only incorporates change (there is even a period of the calendar round referred to as "the katun of change"), but has been argued to mandate it (Chase 1991). I would not, however, go so far as to assert that this "katun of change" dictates the content of that change, for in invoking the fatalistic visions of some authors, like Puleston (1979), who asserts its primacy in causing the Classic collapse, inevitability again supersedes the role of agency in transforming ideology and the relations of power. Thus, despite the false dichotomy between continuity and change, it seems that Maya notions of cyclical time predicted only the inevitability of the continuity of change. This synthesis integrates well with practice-based notions of social transformation in acknowledging the role of agents in continually interacting with and transforming social and ideological structures and practices.

Fabian describes the uses of time as "distancing devices" by which anthropological discourse creates the other:

Labels that connote temporal distancing may not have explicitly temporal references (such as cyclical or repetitive). Adjectives like mythical, ritual, or even tribal, will serve the same function. They, too, connote temporal distancing as a way of creating the objects or referents of anthropological discourse. (1983:30)

It is important to distinguish between religious and ritual continuity as essentializing the object of study—i.e. "Mayaness"—and continuity in the sense of historical situatedness. Beliefs at any given time certainly exhibited continuity in that they had historical antecedents that formed the basis of (but did not dictate) their structures and contents. But to gloss as "continuous" the rise and dissolution of a set of beliefs and ritual practices as fetishized as those of divine kingship essentializes an eternal Mayaness. Similarly, the naturalization of this hierarchy as ecologically inevitable denies the role of agents in transforming and creating their cosmos and in enacting different strategies to modify their relations of power.

Thus the rise of Maya statehood did exhibit continuity in that it drew on and homogenized preexisting ideological structures and ritual practices surrounding ancestor worship. That ancestors stood as sources of stability—as cosmological and chronological anchors with the power to ensure prosperity—served as a powerful symbol for the legitimacy of the power of the ahaw. It seems likely, however, that the realm in which that power was enacted was of a different order than that accessible to the masses. Supporting Gillespie and Joyce's (1998) argument that the multiplicity of forms of the non-ancestral deities represented the pluralism of their origins is Gossen and Leventhal's formulation for the rise of the Classic Maya centers:

Within the ancient world, the city centers were, at an earlier time, a part of the periphery. They were single family household groups that grew and gradually became the focal points of cities for numerous reasons not to be examined here. The center, therefore, is the periphery transformed, writ large, and formalized. Ancestor worship becomes structured and the animal souls, spooks, and natural deities of the periphery become formalized into a state religion. (1993:212)

Their model of the verticalization and homogenization of religion in the rise of Classic Maya states asserts an historicism to the realm of ideas that has been traditionally denied by ecological and economic models. At the same time we must keep in mind that the existing ideology formed the basis of its own significant transformation through the dialectical relationship between social actors and social memory. While Gossen and Leventhal do not grapple here with the specific mechanisms of this verticalization or transformation of heterogeneous beliefs and practices into a higher order of organization and power, they place them squarely in the realm of the ideological. Regardless of the many strategies and mechanisms hypothesized for the aggregation of power in the Classic period, transformation could not have occurred without Gramsci's "ideological consent" of the masses. Thus the dispersal of this power in the Postclassic, which has been characterized as "the collapse," was not an ecological cataclysm, but an ideological transformation brought about in the minds and by the strategies and practices of agents. In acknowledging a transformation of beliefs and positing an ideological model for change in the relations

of power, actors are reinstated into a previously naturalized hierarchy—an essentialized "Classic Mayaness"—for change must occur first in the mind.

## References Cited

Ashmore, Wendy

- 1989 Construction and Cosmology: Politics and Ideology in Lowland Maya Settlement Patterns. *In* Word and Image in Maya Culture: Explorations in Language, Writing, and Representation. William F. Hanks and Don S. Rice, eds. Pp. 272-286. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.

Barth, Fredrik

- 1987 Cosmologies in the Making: A Generative Approach to Cultural Variation in Inner New Guinea. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baudez, Claude F.

- 1991 The Cross Pattern at Copán: Forms, Rituals, and Meanings. *In* Sixth Palenque Round Table, 1986. Virginia M. Fields, ed. Pp. 81-88. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Becker, Marshall Joseph

- 1979 Priests, Peasants, and Ceremonial Centers: The Intellectual History of a Model. *In* Maya Archaeology and Ethnohistory. Norman Hammond and Gordon R. Willey, eds. Pp. 3-20. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bell, Catherine

- 1992 Ritual Theory Ritual Practice. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre

- 1977 Outline of a Theory of Practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brumfiel, Elizabeth M.

- 1994 Factional Competition and Political Development in the New World: an Introduction. *In* Factional Competition and Political Development in the New World. Elizabeth M. Brumfiel and John W. Fox, eds. Pp. 3-13. Cambridge University Press.

Cancian, Frank

- 1965 Economics and Prestige in a Maya Community: The Religious Cargo System in Zinacantan. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Chase, Arlen F.

- 1991 Cycles of Time: Caracol in the Maya Realm. *In* Sixth Palenque Round Table, 1986. Virginia M. Fields, ed. Pp. 32-42. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Chase, Diane Z.

- 1990 *The Invisible Maya: Population History and Archaeology at Santa Rita Corozal. In Precolumbian Population History in the Maya Lowlands.* T. Patrick Culbert and Don S. Rice, eds. Pp. 199-209. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Connerton, Paul

- 1989 *How Societies Remember.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Culbert, T. Patrick, ed.

- 1973 *The Classic Maya Collapse.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- 1991 *Classic Maya Political History: Hieroglyphic and Archaeological Evidence.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Demarest, Arthur A.

- 1992 *Ideology in Ancient Maya Cultural Evolution. In Ideology and Pre-Columbian Civilizations.* Arthur A. Demarest and Geoffrey W. Conrad, eds. Pp. 135-157. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Fabian, Johannes

- 1983 *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Farriss, Nancy M.

- 1984 *Maya Society Under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Fash, William L.

- 1991 *Lineage Patrons and Ancestor Worship Among the Classic Maya Nobility: The Case of Copán Structure 9N-82. In Sixth Palenque Round Table, 1986.* Pp. 68-80. Virginia M. Fields, ed. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Fox, John W.

- 1994 *Political Cosmology Among the Quiché Maya. In Factional Competition and Political Development in the New World.* Elizabeth M. Brumfiel and John W. Fox, eds. Pp. 158-170. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Freidel, David A. and Linda Schele

- 1988 *Kingship in the Late Preclassic Maya Lowlands: The Instruments and Places of Ritual Power.* *American Anthropologist* 90(3):547-567.

Freidel, David, Linda Schele, and Joy Parker

- 1993 *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path.* New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.

Gifford, James C.

- 1974 Recent Thought Concerning the Interpretation of Maya Prehistory. *In* Mesoamerican Archaeology: New Approaches. Norman Hammond, ed. Pp. 77-98. London: Duckworth.

Gillespie, Susan D.

- 1997 Social Memory, Collective Identities, and Mortuary Ritual Among the Ancient Maya. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association.
- 2000 Maya "Nested Houses": The Ritual Construction of Place. *In* Beyond Kinship: Social and Material Reproduction in House Societies. Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, eds. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gillespie, Susan D. and Rosemary A. Joyce

- 1998 Deity Relationships in Mesoamerican Cosmologies: The Case of the Maya God L. *Ancient Mesoamerica* 9:1-18.

Gossen, Gary H. and Richard M. Leventhal

- 1993 The Topography of Ancient Maya Religious Pluralism: A Dialogue with the Present. *In* Lowland Maya Civilization in the Eighth Century A.D. Jeremy A. Sabloff and John S. Henderson, eds. Pp. 185-217. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

Hammond, Norman

- 1991 Inside the Black Box: Defining Maya Polity. *In* Classic Maya Political History: Hieroglyphic and Archaeological Evidence. T. Patrick Culbert, ed. Pp. 253-284. Cambridge University Press.

Helms, Mary

- 1979 Ancient Panama: Chiefs in Search of Power. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Hendon, Julia A.

- 1991 Status and Power in Classic Maya Society: An Archaeological Study. *American Anthropologist* 93:894-918.

Hugh-Jones, Stephen

- 1994 Shamans, Prophets, Priests, and Pastors. *In* Shamanism, History, and the State. Nicholas Thomas and Caroline Humphrey, eds. Pp. 32-75. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Joyce, Rosemary

- 1991 Cerro Palenque: Power and Identity on the Maya Periphery. Austin: University of Texas Press.



- 1992 Ideology in Action: Classic Maya Ritual Practice. *In* *Ancient Images, Ancient Thought: The Archaeology of Ideology*. Proceedings of the Twenty-third Annual Conference of the University of Calgary Archaeological Association. A. Sean Goldsmith, ed. Pp. 497-505. Calgary, Canada: University of Calgary Archaeological Association.
- In Press The Classic Maya Collapse. *In* *Historia General de Guatemala*. Jorge Lujan Muñoz, ed. Guatemala: Fundación para la Cultura y el Desarrollo.
- Leventhal, Richard M.
- 1983 Household Groups and Classic Maya Religion. *In* *Prehistoric Settlement Patterns: Essays in Honor of Gordon R. Willey*. Evon Z. Vogt and Richard M. Leventhal, eds. Pp. 55-76. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, and Cambridge: Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.
- McAnany, Patricia Ann
- 1995 Living with the Ancestors: Kinship and Kingship in Ancient Maya Society. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Pohl, Mary E. D. and John M. D. Pohl
- 1994 Political Factionalism in the Maya Lowlands. *In* *Factional Competition and Political Development in the New World*. Elizabeth M. Brumfiel and John W. Fox, eds. Pp. 138-157. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pollock, H. E. D., Ralph L. Roys, Tatiana Proskouriakoff, and A. Ledyard Smith
- 1962 *Mayapán Yucatan Mexico*. Publication 619. Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington.
- Proskouriakoff, Tatiana
- 1962 Civic and Religious Structures of Mayapán. *In* *Mayapán Yucatan Mexico*. Publication 619. Pp. 87-163. Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington.
- Puleston, Dennis E.
- 1979 An Epistemological Pathology and Collapse. *In* *Maya Archaeology and Ethnohistory*. Norman Hammond and Gordon R. Willey, eds. Pp. 63-71. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Pyburn, K. Anne
- 1990 Settlement Patterns at Nohmul: Preliminary Results of Four Excavation Seasons. *In* *Pre-Columbian Population History in the Maya Lowlands*. T. Patrick Culbert and Don S. Rice, eds. Pp. 183-197. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Rathje, William L.

- 1973 Classic Maya Development and Denouement: A Research Design. *In* The Classic Maya Collapse. T. Patrick Culbert, ed. Pp. 405-454. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Redfield, Robert

- 1941 The Folk Culture of Yucatan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.  
1960 The Little Community. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Renfrew, Colin

- 1986 Introduction: Peer Polity Interaction and Socio-Political Change. *In* Peer Polity Interaction and Socio-Political Change. Colin Renfrew and John F. Cherry, eds. Pp. 1-18. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rice, Don S.

- 1988 Classic to Postclassic Maya Household Transitions in the Central Petén, Guatemala. *In* Household and Community in the Mesoamerican Past. Richard R. Wilk and Wendy Ashmore, eds. Pp. 227-247. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Salamini, Leonardo

- 1981 Sociology of Praxis. London: Routledge.

Sanders, William T. and Barbara J. Price

- 1968 Mesoamerica: The Evolution of a Civilization. New York: Random House.

Schele, Linda and David Freidel

- 1990 A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya. New York: Quill William Morrow.

Schele, Linda and Mary Ellen Miller

- 1986 The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art. New York: George Braziller, Inc.

Smith, A. Ledyard

- 1962 Residential and Associated Structures at Mayapán. *In* Mayapán Yucatan Mexico. Publication 619. Pp. 165-319. Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington.

Thompson, J. Eric S.

- 1954 The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.  
1970 Maya History and Religion. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Vogt, Evon Z.

- 1969 *Zinacantan: A Maya Community in the Highlands of Chiapas.* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Webb, Malcolm C.

- 1973 *The Peten Maya Decline Viewed in the Perspective of State Formation.* *In* *The Classic Maya Collapse.* T. Patrick Culbert, ed. Pp. 405-454. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Webster, David and Anncorrine Freter

- 1990 *The Demography of Late Classic Copán.* *In* *Precolumbian Population History in the Maya Lowlands.* T. Patrick Culbert and Don S. Rice, eds. Pp. 367-404. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Yoffee, Norman

- 1991 *Maya Elite Interaction: Through a Glass, Sideways.* *In* *Classic Maya Political History: Hieroglyphic and Archaeological Evidence.* T. Patrick Culbert, ed. Pp. 285-310. Cambridge University Press.