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Cover: Parts of the human body ruled by planets and constellations. Redrawn, with English captions, by Marianna A. Kunow on page 26 in Victoria R. Bricker and Helga-Maria Miram (2002) *An Encounter of Two Worlds: The Book of Chilam Balam of K'aua*. (Middle American Research Institute Publication 68) New Orleans: Tulane University. Courtesy of the Middle American Research Institute.

Tulane University

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Bloodletting and Vision Quest Among the Classic Maya

A Medical and Iconographic Reevaluation

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Keywords: Maya, bloodletting, vision quest

Introduction

This article¹ deals with the medical and organic bases of bloodletting among the Classic Maya. It is interested specifically with the question of whether it was possible to produce visions by harvesting blood from the human body, a hypothesis first presented by Peter Furst (1979) and later by Linda Schele and Mary Miller (Schele and Miller 1986: 177).

A tabulation of different methods for drawing blood from the human body will be accompanied by a short anatomic survey. A consideration of the causes and mechanisms of altered states of consciousness allows assessing whether blood sacrifice can create trances. The latter considerations are based on interviews with physicians specializing in neurology and psychiatry, who practice at the county hospital in Lüdenscheid, Germany. It appears that bloodletting alone is not able to produce visions, but rather that psychological and pharmacological stimulants contribute to it.

At this point a remark about the methods is appropriate: while the medical aspects presented here are based on clinical studies, a comparable experimental approach is impossible in the case of the ancient Maya. We have only fragmentary information about many aspects of the Classic Maya. It is, however, possible in some cases to supplement information that is missing for the Classic period (A.D. 250 to 950) from Colonial sources (after A.D. 1540). I have done so in the following to provide a fuller picture. Yet, I am aware that Colonial and Classic sources are separated by several hundred years and that the Colonial sources may not accurately reflect Classic period customs.

Previous research

That the Maya of the Classic period made offerings of their own blood has been known for a long time on the basis of

numerous iconographic and epigraphic analyses (among others Proskouriakoff 1973, Joralemon 1974, Baudez 1980, Stuart 1984, and Winters 1986). The authors of these previous works recognize a very detailed iconographic system that was used to depict the various aspects of blood sacrifice, together with ritual action, in writing and in pictorial representations.

Yet, few works dealt with the techniques of sacrifice as well as with the ritual aspects from a medical perspective. Peter Furst attempted in 1974 to provide a connection between bloodletting, pain and vision. Francis Robicsek and Donald Hales (1989) did a surgical evaluation of heart sacrifice. Jürgen Kremer and Fausto Uc Flores (1993) analyzed the so-called “ritual self-decapitation.” I will focus



Figure 1a. Lady *Xook* lets blood by pulling a thorn-lined rope through the mutilated tongue. Note the bowl that catches the rope on a pile of blood-spotted paper. Yaxchilan Lintel 24. Drawing: Ian Graham. In: Graham 1977: 3-53.

1. The present article summarizes the results of a paper originally written during summer 1999 and presented during summer term 2000 in Nikolai Grube's advanced seminar "Recent approaches in the exploration of Classic Maya religion" at the Institut für Altamerikanistik und Ethnologie at the University of Bonn.

X-Ray Toads and “The Enema Pot”

A Maya Vase in the San Antonio Museum of Art

Michael McBride
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Keywords: Maya, *Ik'* Site, “The Enema Pot” (K3054), *Tuub'al* place

Introduction

The *Ik'* Site in the Northern Peten which we now know as Motul de San Jose, along with its surrounding area, produced some of the most beautiful and descriptive examples of Classic Period ceramics which grace the entire Maya ceramic corpus. The vase described in this article yields much information about *Yajaw-te' K'inich*, the 8th century ruler or *Ajaw*, a subordinate lord, *K'inich Lam Ek'*, as well as a ritual event in which they participated. Additional information contained in the painted scene suggests an association between toad transformation and the use of ritual enemas, perhaps containing the toxin of the giant toad *Bufo marinus*. Further prospective information suggests a link between this toad transformation and a war event.

Background: *Ik'* Site Vessels

As the study of Maya ceramics has advanced, scholars have used a number of different techniques to identify site-specific workshops that produced groups of vases, as well as individual artists who created the polychrome images on them. Instrumental neutron activation analysis (INAA) has allowed the differentiation of individual manufacturing locations and workshops by identifying the unique concentrations of elements contained in the clays and tempering mixtures, and correlating the clays to their specific geographic areas. Some of the master artists who created the painted scenes on these vessels have been identified through their glyphic signatures and unique regional styles (see Reents-Budet 1994: 163–233).

In the corpus of Classic Period Maya ceramics, some of the most unique and beautiful examples come from a site in the Northern Peten of Guatemala around Lake Peten Itza. This site is generally known as “The *Ik'* Site” because of its emblem glyph, which contains the sign for *Ik'* or “wind” in the main glyph. It is thought to be the site with the modern name of Motul de San Jose (Marcus 1976), but may have been a group of nearby sites that took the same emblem glyph as part of an area polity.

The *Ik'* Site emblem glyph has been identified on well over three dozen vases, as well as several carved stone monuments. Although most of the vases are without provenience, the very unique stylistic elements of the polychrome im-

ages, as well as INAA have allowed many to be identified as likely originating in the Motul de San Jose area and *Ik'* Site workshops (Houston 1993: 177; Reents-Budet 1994: 175; Grube in Schele and Mathews 1998; Eberl 2003).

Stylistically, ceramic images from this site are well known for the x-ray depictions of their characters, who, although they are shown wearing various costumes and masks in rituals, are painted with their heads and faces showing in profile though cut-away or “X-ray” portions of the masks (Coe and Kerr 1978). An additional unique feature of these images is that they often contain what is probably historical information about the dates and actors involved in the scenes, and are sometimes signed by the artist.

“The Enema Pot” (K3054)

In the Pre-Columbian Gallery of the Latin American Collection at the San Antonio Museum of Art, there is a beautiful example of an *Ik'* Site vase (Figure 1). Local San Antonians who are familiar with it know it as “The Enema Pot” for reasons that are discussed below. It is a polychrome ceramic vase on anonymous loan, with dimensions of 11 cm. tall, 13 cm. in diameter at the top rim and 10.5 cm. in diameter at the bottom rim.

A brief history of the vase shows that it has a catalogue number listed in the Dumbarton Oaks Maya Photographic Archive of LC-cb2-462. In the mid-1970's Nicholas Hellmuth photographed it and had a drawing made of it, and Justin Kerr has posted the drawing on the FAMSI web site as K3054 (www.famsi.org).¹ In *Painting the Maya Universe* (1994:175), Dorie Reents-Budet references this vase and places it in a series of vases painted by the scribe *Tuub'al Ajaw*, and dedicated to the *Ajaw* or Lord noted below. Additionally, as it is displayed at the San Antonio Museum of Art, a color rollout photograph, produced by a local photographer, accompanies the vase in its Museum display case. This rollout photograph is reproduced in Figure 1. Documentation of further copying or publication seems lacking.

1. Vases denoted with a K number are copyrighted by Justin Kerr. They have been catalogued and published by Justin Kerr in his *Maya Vase Book series* (Kerr 1989–2000) and on the web site (www.mayavase.com).

Knowing When to Clear the Fields: *Manacus vitellinus* and Swidden Farming in Northern Coclé, Panamá

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Keywords: Panamá, Coclé province, swidden agriculture, weather forecasting

Introduction

Forecasting the weather in the hopes of obtaining a successful harvest has preoccupied humans for ages. Peasant agriculturalists in a Coclé, Panamá village time the clearing and burning of their fields based on three factors. They use an intimate knowledge of weather conditions, the appearance of the courtship dance of the manakin bird, and set a date called *Sábado de Gloria* (Saturday of Glory) to time and coordinate the clearing and subsequent burning of village fields.

La Martillada is a village of 262 people (Weeden Gamboa 2000) in northern Coclé province, Panamá, where I lived for two years as a Peace Corps volunteer and returned as a graduate student of anthropology (Figure 1). The people of La Martillada live in *quincha* (adobe) houses, speak Spanish, practice Catholicism, and subsistence farming. The following observations were collected while participating in the life of the village as a volunteer, work that required accompanying agriculturalists to their fields. Living in the village full time for two years meant close relationships with villagers, including daily conversations which often amounted to a cultural exchange.

Redfield (1956:27) defines peasants as people tied emotionally and traditionally to land they do not own. Firth (in Redfield 1956:26) defines peasants as agricultural

people who produce enough for subsistence but not for business. According to a recent study (Hughes 2002) forty-five percent of Coclé peasants were born in the village they reside in. However, they do not currently have title to their land. Coclé peasants also do not produce an agricultural surplus. Following Gudeman (1976), this article uses the Spanish term *campesino*, as that is how peasants in Panamá self-identify.

Culture in Agriculture

An integral part of rural Latin American life and culture is the *quemada para limpieza* (burning to clear) of agricultural fields. Balée (1994) uses the term *swidden* to refer to the cleared area used for agriculture, and *fallow* for the growing forest that people harvest and manage. The earliest evidence of forest burning in Latin America comes from La Yeguada archaeological site in Panamá that dates from 11,000 years ago (Cooke and Piperno 1993). In central Panamá, agriculture with fire predates ceramics (Cooke and Piperno 1993).

People have specific cultural strategies to carry out swidden agriculture. Conklin (1961) describes slash-mulch cultivation among Colombian Chocó Native Americans, who allow the felled brush to rot as mulch instead of burning. Mexican Huastec farmers wait three weeks between burn-

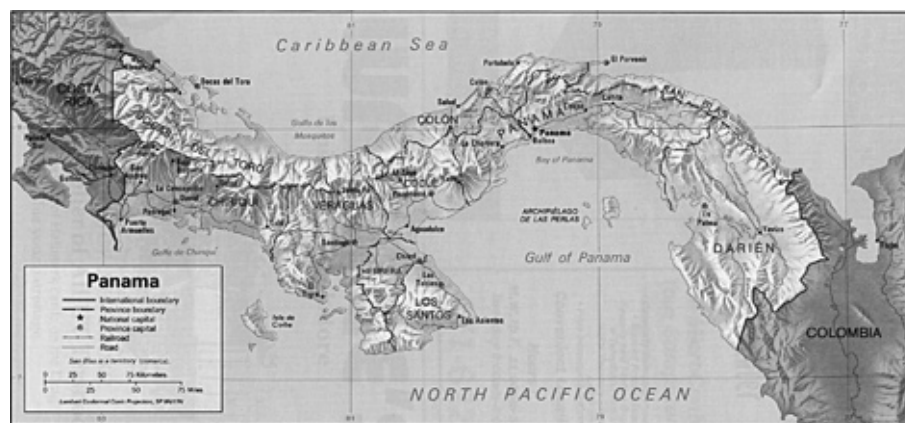


Figure 1. Map of Panamá. Coclé province is located in the center of the map (from the Perry Castañeda Library Map Collection at the University of Texas, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/panama_relief.jpg)

Human Cranial Plasticity

The Current Re-evaluation of Franz Boas's Immigrant Study¹

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Keywords: Franz Boas, Immigrant Study, cranial plasticity

Introduction

Racism found during the nineteenth century many adherents who sought to corroborate its principles by scientific methods. Detailed physical measurements of the human body gave rise not only to physical anthropology but also to pseudo-sciences like phrenology and criminal anthropometry. The latter assumed that bodily form relates to the abilities and behavior of individuals. Phrenologists thus traced intelligence to specific skull contours. A receding forehead or large ears were thought to allow the identification of “born criminals.” The trend to generalize from individuals to social classes became even more dominant with Social Darwinism. Herbert Spencer misapplied Darwin's evolutionary concepts to humankind and proclaimed that the “survival of the fittest” – not education, power, or wealth – accounted for the social hierarchy of his day. People on the top exhibited in his view superior biological traits that were transmitted from generation to generation whereas people at the bottom of society simply lacked the biological potential to improve.

Franz Boas (Figure 1) was one of the few scholars who confronted the tenets of scientific racism. His study *Changes in the Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants* (Boas 1910, 1912a, 1912b²) attacked the notion that physical traits are permanent and unchanging. Boas compared the body forms and sizes of immigrants to the United States. He showed that the foreign-born parents differed significantly

in body form and size from their children who were born in the United States. The human bodily form changed, in other words, with the change in environment.

Boas's reports resonated widely among the growing number of anthropologists. His conclusions continue to be cited in modern textbooks (e.g., Molnar 1998:17–18). Yet, scholars hardly reviewed the raw data that Boas had published in 1928 in response to contemporary criticism. Two recent studies (Gravlee et al. 2003; Sparks and Jantz 2002 [with a comment by Holloway 2002]) re-evaluate Boas's study of 1910 and his 1928 data set. Both studies apply modern statistical methods (that were not available around 1910) to Boas's data. Their conclusions, however, differ radically. Sparks and Jantz (2002:14636) claim: “These results contradict Boas' original findings and demonstrate that they may no longer be used to support arguments of plasticity in cranial morphology.” Gravlee et al. (2003:125) state to the contrary: “In general, we conclude that Boas got it right. However, we demonstrate that modern analytical methods provide stronger support for Boas's conclusion than did the tools at his disposal.” I discuss in the following the two re-evaluations of Boas's original study.



Figure 1. Portrait of Franz Boas (after Scupin 2000:122).

1. The June 2003 issue of *American Anthropologist* which was not available when this manuscript was submitted for publication contains comments of the authors of the two recent re-studies on each other's work (Gravlee, Clarence C., H. Russell Bernard, and William R. Leonard 2003 Boas's Changes in Bodily Form: The Immigrant Study, Cranial Plasticity, and Boas's Physical Anthropology. *American Anthropologist* 105(2):326–332 and Sparks, Corey S., and Richard L. Jantz 2003 Changing Times, Changing Faces: Franz Boas's Immigrant Study in Modern Perspective. *American Anthropologist* 105(2):333–337).

2. The publication history of the *Changes in Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants* is complex. Boas submitted a partial report to the U.S. Immigration Commission in 1909 that was published in 1910. An abstract of the completed report was submitted to Congress in 1910 and issued in 1911. The final report (Boas 1910) was presented to the U.S. Immigration Commission in 1910, submitted to Congress and printed in 1911, and issued in 1912. Columbia University Press reprinted the final report in 1912 (Boas 1912a).

Violent Cures for Violence: Bad Medicine, Silent Politics, Evacuation and Transit

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Keywords: Violence, medicine, disease, conflict, environment, politics, religion, multinationals, accusation, Africa, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola.

Introduction

[...] Disease is hooked onto life itself, feeding on it, and sharing in that reciprocal commerce of action in which everything follows everything else, everything is connected with everything else, everything is bound together. [...] every pathological phenomenon derives from their augmentation, diminution and alteration (*cited in Foucault 1963:153*).

Everything follows everything else and everything is connected with everything else when gazing into the pathologies of violence and those cures which are hooked on these pathologies. In this paper, I examine four instances of violent cures for violence. Conflict pathologizes disease on the body. Violence can be the only cure for war pathologies.



Figure 1. Map of Sierra Leone (Perry Castañeda Library Map Collection at the University of Texas: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/sierra_leone_rel82.jpg)

One must bear 'a spoon full of his own medicine' as both penalty and therapy. Violent cures are punishment for violence acts, much like arsenic kills both the sleeping sickness parasite which penetrates the body and its host. Accusation and blame are entwined in the remedies for violence.

The paper will focus on diverse experiences from field work with Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF)¹ from 1995 to 2002. The first instance will be the use of bad medicine in the war in Sierra Leone and the effects of war and conflict on bad medicine (witchcraft and sorcery) pathologized on the body. The second violent cure discussed will be that of political silence or diseased politics in the face of epidemics in Nigeria. The third case in point will be vaccination of the body through evacuation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The final instance of violence for violence will be roads and rivers as carriers of violence and disease in Angola.

With these separate and complex examples, I will attempt to demonstrate that violent cures share in the reciprocal commerce of violent action, that, indeed, pathological phenomenon derive from augmentation, diminution and alteration of conflict. In fact, war is hooked on life itself. War is disease.

Bad Medicine – Sierra Leone

[...] [T]he fact that warfare, raiding, and the knowledge that bodies could become commodities in exchange for wealth formed part of the everyday conditions of life for over four centuries was surely insidious in itself. Terror had become a taken-for-granted aspect of the environment in which people's lives unfolded (*Shaw 2002:41*).

Sierra Leone has been ravaged by a ten year war, which has been fought both internally and sub-regionally. Images of brutality and atrocities shatter the mind's eye with the mention of this tiny West African country (Figure 1). Ar-

1. Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors without Borders) is a non-profit humanitarian emergency organization working in 80 countries around the world. The majority of their medical interventions are for victims of armed conflict, but interventions are also made for victims of natural disasters, epidemics and chronic illness (HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, etc.).

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