

“Archaeological-Anthropological and Linguistic Focus on the Americas (ALFA)”

**Advanced research meeting, Leiden University
April 27-29, 2010.**

Coordinators:

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TUESDAY APRIL 27 (Steenschuur 25: Kamerlingh Onnes gebouw - B013)

FIRST SESSION STARTS AT 9.00 hs.

Alex Geurds (Leiden) [a.geurds@arch.leidenuniv.nl]

Pre-Hispanic Stone Sculpture from Central and Caribbean Nicaragua: Distribution, context and meaning.

This paper discusses ongoing research on the physical and social context of monumental stone sculpture in Central Nicaragua in light of ongoing discussions surrounding cultural interaction. First, I provide an overview of existing analyses of stone sculpture and their accompanying questions for the better part of the last seventy-five years. In the second part, I present findings from archaeological survey and excavation activities in Central Nicaragua to question some of the existing assumptions surrounding stone sculpture. Enabled by first data on spatial and social context of these sculptures, I outline an alternative of shifting focus to the cultural practices developed by communities at the local and regional level rather than looking for stylistically comparable traits.

Renzo Duin (Leiden) [r.s.duin@arch.leidenuniv.nl]

Practice and Theory of a Four-Field Approach: a view from afar.

This presentation is based on my recent experiences at the University of Florida (USA), one of the last standing Four-Field Anthropology programs in the world, as well as on my in-depth fieldwork experiences in the Guianas (particularly among the indigenous Wayana of Suriname, French Guiana and Brazil). From these views from afar, I will discuss the interrelationships between science and research, and in due process I aim to further an understanding of a meeting-place for the Archaeological-Anthropological and Linguistic Focus on the Americas (ALFA) at Leiden University. Archaeology and anthropology, because of their unique holistic perspective, lie at the intersection of multiple approaches to the study of humankind that characterize other disciplines (biological, social, cultural, historical, linguistic, cognitive, material, technological, and aesthetic, to name but a few). These multiple approaches are encapsulated in the traditional four subfields that have composed the discipline since its establishment in the 19th century, namely socio/cultural anthropology, biological or physical anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics.

Anthropologists typically engage in particularistic research (devoted to specific topics, regions, theoretical, and methodological concerns) that ultimately contributes to the “big questions” about the human experience.

SECOND SESSION STARTS AT 10.50

Marcus Bajema (Leiden) [mjbajema@hotmail.com]

The 'dual-processual theory' and new insights on rulership, community and art.

In 1996 Richard Blanton and his colleagues formulated the dual-processual theory to account for the differences between different Mesoamerican cultures such as Teotihuacan and the Classic Maya. Their contribution was influential as it provided a way to make sense of the great variation between these cultures without reducing them to the typologies of neo-evolutionist theory. Another welcome innovation was the focus on (forms of) agency over conceptions of cultures as ‘adaptive superorganisms’. One of the main influences on the theory was anthropological work in Oceania which showed the variability of cultural forms and especially of socio-economic and ideological strategies. Yet strangely they did not take into account another big lesson from Oceanian ethnography, as revealed by Marilyn Strathern and others: that the basic forms and conceptions of agency encountered there were strikingly different from our emic understanding of them, including as formulated by Blanton et al.

What I want to discuss in this paper are the possibilities to remedy this situation. This calls for a number of steps. The first is to think through the implications of different conceptions of agency for the way we can compare cultures, something also addressed in recent debates on animism. It will be argued that we will continue to need models like the dual-processual theory to bring together all the different forms of evidence to consider general issues of culture in a meaningful way, yet at the same time we need to consider in a more dialogical manner the words and ideas we use in discussing, thinking and writing about such matters. The second step then is to take such general issues to specific aspects of archaeology and anthropology, which in the case of my doctoral thesis is the monumental art of the Classic Maya and Mycenaean Aegean. Taking as a source of inspiration Alfred Gell’s *Art and Agency*, I will consider how we can enhance the conception of art in the dual-processual theory precisely by looking at how different forms of agency are embedded in different art objects and their monumental settings.

Angus Mol (Leiden) [a.mol@arch.leidenuniv.nl]

“I heard it through the Seagrape”. Information exchange and social networks in the Pre-Columbian Antilles.

Presentation of preliminary results of on-going PhD research.

THIRD SESSION: 13.00-14.30

“Images between tradition and modernity: indigenous culture in Mexican cinema”

FILM CYCLE organized by: Itandehui Jansen (itandehui_jansen@yahoo.com)

1) *El Rebozo de mi Madre* presented by the director **Itandehui Jansen**.

Documentary movie: portrait of a contemporary Mixtec village in Southern Mexico (60 minutes, Mixtec and Spanish spoken, English subtitles).

FOURTH SESSION STARTS AT 14.30

Roberto Valcarcel (Cuba) [rv.rojas68@yahoo.es]

El combate por las almas. Arqueología e Historia en la comprensión de la interacción hispano indígena en el nororiente de Cuba.

La percepción de la muerte y los muertos, y en especial el manejo de los cuerpos, resultan procesos culturales construidos por factores ideológicos, socio económicos, técnicos e históricos. Comprender estas situaciones y procesos puede ser de utilidad para valorar como distintas sociedades interactúan, particularmente en ambientes de dominación. Esta ponencia propone, desde un análisis de la visión española sobre la muerte y los muertos en el siglo XVI, considerando detalles de las relaciones interétnicas en la península, un esquema de percepción hispana de la muerte y el manejo de los cuerpos en sociedades indígenas de las Antillas Mayores. Desde este esquema se reflexiona sobre el cementerio localizado en el sitio arqueológico El Chorro de Mata, en el nororiente de Cuba. Se trata de un espacio donde las prácticas funerarias reflejan acciones de cristianización, paralelas al mantenimiento de tradiciones locales que sugieren una perspectiva de resistencia o manejo autónomo, como parte de una compleja y dinámica situación de interacción cultural.

Martin Berger (Leiden) [martinbergerrma@gmail.com]

The ballplayers of Dainzú? A reevaluation of the relationship between Pelota Mixteca and the iconography of Dainzú

Traditionally, the iconographical complex at the site of Dainzú, Oaxaca, has been interpreted as representing a group of ballplayers. Many archaeologists have argued that the modern-day game of Pelota Mixteca is a continuation of the game depicted at Dainzú, without conducting a thorough study of the game of Pelota Mixteca. This paper argues, that there is no relationship between the game of Pelota Mixteca and the iconographical complex at Dainzú. Moreover, it is argued that no ballgame is depicted at the site of Dainzú.

FIFTH SESSION STARTS AT 16.15

Gilda Hernández Sánchez (Leiden) [G.H.Sanchez@arch.leidenuniv.nl]

La alfarería indígena del centro de México después de la conquista

Después de la conquista española la cultura indígena desarrolló nuevos mecanismos para continuar. Durante la colonia los típicos medios precoloniales de la memoria cultural mesoamericana, como libros, monumentos o ceremonias públicas, fueron suprimidos. Así que otros medios menos institucionalizados, y menos observados por los colonizadores, adquirieron mayor importancia, por ejemplo, el culto a elementos naturales del paisaje o ritos

domésticos. También mucho del conocimiento precolonial cobró nueva importancia, es decir, conocimientos cotidianos como el cultivo de la milpa o la elaboración de cerámica se convirtieron en emblemas de la cultura indígena. Por un lado empezaron a ser elementos de auto identificación de los pueblos indígenas en la nueva sociedad colonial, y por otro, empezaron a ser reconocidos por los colonizadores como característicos del mundo indígena. Esos conocimientos y experiencias crearon mecanismos para sobrevivir la conquista y transmitirse por muchas generaciones. Algunos se rodearon de un contexto ceremonial mientras que otros se asociaron a actividades corpóreas repetitivas y estandarizadas. En esta plática se analizará cómo la alfarería en el centro de México se convirtió en uno de esos emblemas culturales y cómo ha sido el proceso que, a pesar de la conquista, le ha permitido continuar durante muchos siglos hasta el presente.

María de Jesús Ávila Sánchez (Barcelona) [marycolef@yahoo.com]

El efecto del capital humano y social en el proceso de tránsito que realizan los migrantes guatemaltecos por México en busca del sueño americano

La presentación se encuentra organizada en tres partes: la primera, trata sobre la estructura de la investigación y aborda los objetivos, metodología y capitulado tentativo; la segunda, denominada contexto general, describe el proceso de formación histórica de la frontera México-Guatemala y su caracterización sociodemográfica; la tercera, es una aproximación a la población objetivo, examina la migración internacional de guatemaltecos hacia México y Estados Unidos.

“Archaeological-Anthropological and Linguistic Focus on the Americas (ALFA)”

WEDNESDAY APRIL 28 (Steenschuur 25: Kamerlingh Onnes gebouw - B025)

FIRST SESSION STARTS AT 9.00 hs.

Caroline Aretz (Leiden) [caro_aretz@web.de]

The ‘Finca La Perla’ case – a mnemonic battle over land rights.

In the so-called *Vértice Norte*, to the North of the Ixil region, in the department of El Quiché, Guatemala, there is a vast area of extremely productive land (approx. 5850 hectares). This land has been highly disputed over ever since in the in the late 19th century by a few Spanish families settled down and started to cultivate coffee. Little by little, they acquired the land, even though in most cases by not so legal means, pushing most families into dept bondage, and in the end into having to hand over their land. The original inhabitants were forced to move to ravines unsuitable for efficient agriculture and had to work in the coffee plantations to pay off their dept and for the land they were settling on.

Nowadays the communities, with population risen up to 1800 families in the four villages, suffer extremely because there is not enough land accessible for them to meet their basic subsistence needs. The land in the immediate surroundings of the villages Ilom, Sajsiban, Las Pilas and Sotzil is cultivated by the Finca – which has taken almost six times as much land into its possession then at its founding during the last century. Alarmingly enough, the number of hectares registered with the municipality (2790 ha) does not correspond to its real estimated size of 5850 ha.

There is now going to be made a legal effort to gain some of this land back into communal hands. A local NGO is attempting to organize and inform the population about their ancestral right to the land, as it is stated and defended in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the United Nations. The case is an illustrating example of a ‘mnemonic battle’ between two distinct mnemonic communities.

Ukjese van Kampen (Yukon, Canada) [tutchoneart@yahoo.com]

Overview of Yukon First Nations’ Myth-time, Spiritualism, Stories and Clan System.

This power-point presentation will give a brief overview of those subjects that I would consider to be the required basic knowledge to start understanding early Yukon First Nations art. The Myth-time is the Yukon’s historical past in the eyes of First Nations people. During the myth-time the world was created and made good for humans to live. This is the time when Crow as well as animals and other deities interacted with people. Yukon First Nations Spiritualism is the natural result of some of the events in the myth-time as well as my peoples understanding of the spirit world. This presently still involves our beliefs about death and reincarnation. The stories, coming from an oral tradition, are how we traditionally learned about the myth-time and spiritualism and is the thread that links the two to our present. Our spiritualism can be understood as laws and one of our most important laws is our clan system. The clan system is explained and illustrated how it is still used today. With this basic

knowledge people will have a better understanding of the context in which Yukon First Nations created their art.

SECOND SESSION STARTS AT 10.50

Stigter, Shelley (Lethbridge, Canada) [shelley.stigter@uleth.ca]

The Wíhtikow in Contemporary First Nations literature: Culture, Context, History, and Renewal.

The Wíhtikow is a figure from First Nations oral traditions. It is most commonly described as a cannibal figure, however just as there is purpose to elements from oral traditions so too does this figure have a purposeful place within its oral context and later within a literary context. As oral traditions change and adapt within their environment, so does the figure of the Wíhtikow. And much like oral traditions, the journey of this figure is also cyclic. From the time of colonial contact the Wíhtikow has undergone transformative changes. These changes include translation from an oral context to a literary context. Likened to such comparative aspects as the devil or werewolf, this figure is also transferred into Western literary contexts. Next, this figure is later placed back within an appropriate setting by First Nations authors, where writers intertwine their stories of the Wíhtikow to invoke memories of tradition, land, and language, thus continuing the cyclic nature and adaptation of oral traditions and continuity of the Wíhtikow. My work looks at these stages and the continued existence of the nature and essence of this figure.

Hans-Jörg Witter (Oberhausen) [hvdwitter@web.de]

El nacimiento del guerrero: la fiesta de Xipe y la Pascua del Señor.

My presentation deals with an important process of syncretism since colonial times of spiritual conquest in Mexico. It will show how the themes, symbols and background of the ancient mesoamerican celebrations of Xipe Totec help us to understand and to explain the celebration of Easter and their important themes and ritual realization in the municipalities of Chalcatongo and San Miguel el Grande in the state of Oaxaca today. The sacrifice of Jesus can be associated with the sacrifice of Xipe transforming nature. The role attributed to the roman officer as a great warrior during the Easter celebrations can be comprehended as a continuation of the ritual birth of the warrior in the ancient celebrations of Xipe Totec.

THIRD SESSION: 13.00-14.30

“Images between tradition and modernity: indigenous culture in Mexican cinema”

FILM CYCLE organized by: Itandehui Jansen (itandehui_jansen@yahoo.com)

2) ‘*La Epopeya de la Princesa 6 Mono y del Gran Guerrero 8 Venado*’ and ‘*Cantero*’ [Spanish spoken] presented by the director **Victor Hugo Ruiz Ortiz**.

The first movie tells a highly dramatic episode of ancient Mixtec history in the form of animated images from the Mixtec pictorial manuscripts. The second one is an animated movie focusing on the psychological trauma of the Spanish conquest and colonization.

FOURTH SESSION STARTS AT 14.30

Victor H. Ruiz Ortiz (Mexico) [cruizdaza@yahoo.com.mx]

Reflexiones sobre patrimonio cultural y desarrollo en el Estado de Oaxaca, México.

Análisis de las diferentes perspectivas, oportunidades, necesidades, así como de las diferentes facciones y grupos de interés con sus respectivas prioridades e ideas.

Antje Gunsenheimer (Bonn) [agunsenh@uni-bonn.de]

Contested memories: Two regional case studies on the remembrance of violence in contemporary Mexico.

The contribution presents recent results of a field work in Yucatán and Quintana Roo. It is part of a post-doctoral project which focuses on the creative process of the production of cultural memory in the contested area of national versus marginalized history in two different regional settings in the Mexican state which are:

- the representation of the Caste War in Yucatan and Quintana Roo in private and in public space in the past and in the present;
- the Yaqui-war in Sonora in the tribal history and in public space in the past and in the present.

Both conflicts started during the first half of the 19th century and reached their peak in atrocities during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1872 – 1910). Both conflicts were decided by Mexican federal troops, leaving the indigenous counterparts as defeated minorities. In both cases, a formal peace agreement was arranged between the conflicting parties. However, in both cases the Mexican state did not keep its promises and thus, provides until today the feeling of betrayal amongst the indigenous people.

Because of time constraints, the presentation will be limited on the discussion of the contemporary contested field of memory of the Caste War in the federal states of Yucatán and Quintana Roo.

The federal states (Yucatán and later Quintana Roo) and the Mexican national state quickly developed their own historical perspectives of the conflict, spreading them in the public space by monuments, descriptions in school books and encyclopedias', films, novels and gossips in newspapers. The marginalized and defeated ones kept their memories in families and villages. An exchange among the marginalized ones hardly existed. Additionally, the experienced traumatization caused an intentional retreat from non-Maya-people, leading to the development of many local historical micro-traditions.

Since the early 1990-ies, a younger generation of mainly Mayas by self-denomination, active in cultural associations of civil society, started to occupy the public space by inaugurating their own monuments, showing Maya leaders of the Caste War and by installing commemoration rites. These activities can be understood as the formation process for a clearly visible common "Maya" perspective of their own cultural memory.

The presentation will describe this process between 1901 and 2010 and will give a first picture of the agents of this formation process.

FIFTH SESSION STARTS AT 16.15

Elisa Loncon (Chile) [elisa.loncon@usach.cl]

Derivaciones que cambian clases de palabras en el mapudungun

En este estudio se analizan los principales tipos de derivaciones que cambian la clase de palabra en la lengua mapuche, se podrá ver que las posibilidades de las derivaciones de esta lengua depende en parte de su riqueza morfológica y de su sintaxis, y de la abundante cantidad de sufijos, los que entre sus propiedades manifiestan gran productividad y a la vez que son multifuncionales, sirven para derivar nuevas clases de palabras, como para marcar aspecto y modo. El Mapudungun, lengua hablada al sur de Chile y Argentina, es una lengua aglutinante y polisintética, (Augusta, 1903), (Smeets, 1989 -2007), (Salas, 1992) y (Baker, 2005); manifiesta incorporación de objeto directo; es también una lengua pro drop, cuyo orden básico es SVO, aunque este no es tan rígido como otras lenguas del mismo orden. La lengua mapuche es también una lengua poco estudiada y en la actualidad son muy pocos los lingüistas dedicados a su investigación. El estudio también forma parte de las iniciativas destinadas a la preservación de la lengua, en el que la documentación de la misma cumple un papel importante, sobre todo cuando su existencia se encuentra amenazada por la sustitución del castellano.

Lars Pharo (Oslo) [L.k.pharo@ikos.uio.no]

Concepts of Human Dignity and Human Rights in the philosophical systems of indigenous people of the Americas.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 has been perceived as the fundamental reference for an interpretation and an understanding of the principles of universal human rights and human dignity. But do equivalent concepts exist, beyond Western tradition and history, in the intellectual systems of indigenous people of the Americas? I advocate that *The Great Binding Law of Peace, Gayanashagowa* (GBLP) of the Haudenosaunee confederacy of North America, which came into being many hundred years before the European invasion, contain concepts of universal human dignity and human rights. The Haudenosaunee has the oldest functioning democracy in the world. Furthermore, GBLP proclaim equality between human beings, genders and peace with foreign nations – values of universal inalienable human rights and inherent human dignity later expressed in the UDHR. I intend also to investigate whether there were similar ideas in the philosophies of other cultures of the Americas. As languages – intimately related to cultural ideology and practises – constitute a foundational premise for analysing the encounter between different cognitive systems a *philological* study of *translation* represent the key instrument in the methodology. UDHR has been rendered into various languages of the world. I will analyse how the concepts of human rights and human dignity, with related notions, have been translated into an assortment of languages, in texts and dictionaries of the Colonial period combined with the study of indigenous writing and narrative visual sequential systems from the pre-Conquest and the early Colonial period. I emphasise that an essential part of the methodology constitute cooperation and communication with indigenous people. A related document, translated into numerous languages, is the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (URIP) of 2007. The values of UDHR and GBLP must as well be conceived in context with or rather opposed to the judicial-theological “Doctrine of Discovery” and the enterprise of missionary linguistics.

THURSDAY APRIL 29

MORNING SESSION 10.00 – 13 hs. (Cleveringa plaats 1: LIPSIUS 228)

Masterclass Dr. Jesper Nielsen (University of Copenhagen) [jnielsen@hum.ku.dk]
Iconography of Religious Narrative: The Hero Twins and the Big Bird at Teotihuacan.

Over the past two decades Teotihuacan has at times been characterized as a Mesoamerican utopia, a place that in many ways was, and strived to be, essentially different from the rest of Mesoamerica in the Early Classic period. While this may have some truth to it, particular concerning site planning, the housing of its thousands of inhabitants in apartment compounds, and the way in which the city expanded its power relations and cultural influence, recent excavations and research have shown that Teotihuacan society also shared a number of basic cultural traits with the rest of Mesoamerica, e.g., writing and calendar and a state based on institutionalized warfare and human sacrifice. Thus, it has demonstrated that Teotihuacan iconography shares many themes and expressions with the imagery of both contemporaneous and later Mesoamerican cultures, and we slowly beginning to realize that Teotihuacan was instrumental in developing and expressing core features of Mesoamerican practices and beliefs. One area of Teotihuacan research where we still lack a better understanding, is the mythology and religious ideas and practices of the ancient city. In this presentation I discuss mural fragments from the Palace of the Sun (Conjunto del Sol) in Teotihuacan that show big anthropomorphized birds descending or falling. The same birds are the target of two previously unnoticed human individuals with blowguns, presumably twin brothers comparable to the well-known Hero Twins of the Classic and Postclassic Maya. I hope to show how this important motif can be related to a well-known mythological theme from other Mesoamerican cultures, most notably the Maya, but also the pre-Columbian cultures of Oaxaca and Veracruz. This leads me to suggest that the myth was also part of Teotihuacan's repertoire of fundamental myths and that this widely shared master myth constitutes yet another shared cultural feature between Teotihuacan and its Mesoamerican forebears, contemporaries and successors. Finally, I discuss how the Mesoamerican ruling elites associated themselves with the mythic characters of the story, and how the location of some of the murals suggest that they had a central role in the ritual and sociopolitical preparation before royal investiture.

AFTERNOON SESSION 14.00 – 17.00 hs (Steenstraat 1: Museum Volkenkunde, Filmzaal)

“Images between tradition and modernity: indigenous culture in Mexican cinema”

FILM CYCLE organized by: Itandehui Jansen (itandehui_jansen@yahoo.com)

3) *Rito Terminal* (Spanish & Mixtec spoken, English subtitles) with discussion.

Photographer Mateo, visiting a celebration of the patron saint of a small village community, loses his shadow. Then, during a traditional funeral ceremony, a spiritual exchange causes him to lose his sense of the convictions that bind him to the real world. What ensues is a quintessential hero's journey in which he is forced to confront the question of what is left behind when you submit, unconditionally, to progress. He becomes, essentially, a trespasser into realms spiritual and sacred, where reality is denied by the senses. The local inhabitants both inform and challenge this unknown path: It is not until he accepts the loss of his shadow, and is able to face the woman who took it, that he will finally be able to recover it.