תפיסת המוות בדתות המזרח ומערב

שעור מתקדמים

ד"ר עמוס מגד

רציונאל הקורס

מטרת הקורס הינה להפגיש את התלמיד עם התפיסות ההיסטוריות המסורתיות, המגוונות, של חברות במזרח ובמערב בנוגע למוות ולעולם שלאחרי. בתחילת הקורס נלמד באמצעות יחס התרבויות של מרכז אמריקה למוות והשיטות השונות שהן נוקטות בהן לטיפול במתים, כיצד ניתן להסיק מכך לגבי מערכות הסמלה ומשמעות אוניברסאליות למוות.

ברקע ההיסטורי, השיעור יעקוב אחר התפתחותן ותפוצתן של תפיסות המזרח ההודיות, היפאניות, והפרסיות (בודהיזם, הינדואיזם, שינטואיזם, זורואסטראניזם) בכלל המרחב האסיאתי ובמזרח הקרוב, ובמפגשן עם התפיסות הגנוסטיות-הלניסטיות; ו תפיסות המוות של העמים האינדיאניים ביבשת אמריקה. כמו כן, נלמד על מקומה של הנצרות הקדומה בהתהוות תפיסות אלה במרחב הים תיכוני. בהמשך, נלמד על תפיסות המוות אצל בהיבטיהם ההיסטוריים. חלקו האחר של הקורס יוקדש לפרקטיקות של קבורה וסגידה לעולם המתים ולשאלת הגבולות הרוחניים שבין העולם עלי-אדמות והעולם שמעל בחברות אותם סקרנו מבחינה היסטורית..בחלק זה נלמד בכל הנוגע לשאלות הזמן (טווח הזיכרון) והמרחב (מקומות הקבורה; ותיחומים בין עולם החיים לעולם המתים).

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א. נוכחות מלאה ב-80% מן השעורים;

ב. קריאה שוטפת של מטלות הקריאה משיעור לשיעור; תכניו של השיעור נועדו לחדד ולהעמיק נקודות העולות בקריאה.

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Pre-Classic and Classic Maya Mortuary Rites

From Susan Gillespie, 2002 Body and Soul among the Maya: Keeping the Spirits in Place. In The Space and Place of Death, edited by Helaine Silvermanand David B. Small, pp. 67-78. Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association, Number 11. Arlington, VA:

*The prehispanic Maya are known to have commonly interred their dead beneath the floors or within the platforms of domestic structures. This custom has been interpreted as part of a larger complex of rituals and beliefs associated with ancestor veneration. By continually curating the bones of deceased family members within their own domestic space, the surviving members of the household may have strengthened their rights to material property believed to have been acquired by these ancestors. Maya residences have thus been considered domestic mausolea: "places of death." However, archaeological interpretations of burial practices should take into account the likelihood of customs and beliefs regarding the proper disposition of the *nontangible* components of deceased persons along with their physical remains. These components include names and souls, which may have been the property of specific corporate groups who transferred them from the dead to the newly born as an expression of group continuity. Archaeological, historical, and ethnographic evidence from Maya peoples is examined here to suggest that residential interments may have served to ensure control over the souls of the dead. Ancestral spirits were important nontangible property belonging to prehispanic Maya corporate kin groups, known as "houses." They were carefully safeguarded for reincarnation in subsequent generations, thereby perpetuating the kin group. Rather than a place of death, Maya domestic space is therefore better considered a place of curation, transformation, and regeneration of enduring social personae.

*Maya religion is believed by scholars such as Michael Coe to have been based on a "cult of the dead" in large part because of where the dead were placed (Coe

1988:222: see also Coe 1956, 1973, 1975, 1978; Chase and Chase 1994:54).

As Coe (1988:235) observed, "If subfloor burial was the rule...as it seems to have been, then every Maya house was a sepulcher. The great Maya temple-pyramids [built over royal tombs] were house sepulchres writ large." In discussing this practice at the Classic Period site of Uaxactun, Wauchope (1934:146) suggested that only abandoned houses would have been used for burial, considering it "most unlikely" that the living would "continue to live in such a graveyard-home." His opinion conforms to our Western sensitivities but is contradicted by the archaeological, historic, and ethnographic evidence.

* Subfloor burial was common in the Classic (A.D. 250-maximally 1000) and following Postclassic periods, enduring even beyond the sixteenth-century Spanish conquest (Welsh 1988:186). However, by the Classic Period some of the more important persons were buried in special structures, even great temple-pyramids, as certain functions of the residence gave way to separate shrines, although these were still located in the vicinity of the residential group

(McAnany 1998:279).

* The Classic Maya further reiterated their claims to the souls of their ancestors by engaging in secondary mortuary rituals, sometimes utilizing the curated bones of the dead (Chase and Chase 1996:77; Gillespie 2001; McAnany 1998:288-89; Welsh 1988:193).

* Given its role in curating the eternal souls of its inhabitants, and in facilitating and localizing their transfer from one body to another over time, the Maya dwelling should be looked upon as something more than a "place of death," a sepulcher or domestic mausoleum. The residence was continually rebuilt to correspond with the changes in the life histories of its occupants (e.g.,

Waterson 2000), for it, like the social "house" as a corporate body, endured beyond their individual life spans. From this larger temporal perspective, we see the dwelling as the place

where the corporeal and non corporeal elements of humans intertwined in an unending cycle of death and renewal4; hence, it was equally associated with regeneration and immortality. The physical house is better understood as a locus for the enactment of claims to group continuity through the curation, transformation, and renewal of that group's material and immaterial property. It was thus a place of life.

Sixteenth-Century Yucatec Maya Mortuary Practices

* In Bishop Diego de Landa's (1982:59-60) description of sixteenth-century Yucatan, he stated that the dead, sometimes provided with a precious stone placed in the mouth, were interred under house floors or behind the house. The house was usually abandoned afterwards except in the case of large households, which continued to reside there. **However, lords and people of high esteem were cremated, and their ashes were put in large vessels or hollow clay statues placed in temples. Other principal persons, Landa said, made wooden statues of their deceased forebears for the same purpose, leaving the back of the statue's neck area hollow. Part of the deceased's body was burned and the ashes placed in that hollow, which was then covered with skin taken from the back of the neck of the cadaver. These statues were kept in the shrine areas of houses and venerated alongside images** of gods. The images were offered food on ritual occasions to ensure that the souls of the dead, in the other life, would also have food. **Landa further reported that the lords of Cocom, upon their deaths, were beheaded. The skulls were cleaned of flesh and the front half of the cranium was saved to be venerated alongside the statues containing ashes.**

* At the same time these constructions also served other functions

required by the living, including use of the house altars and benches for sitting and sleeping (Gillespie 1999:237-38). Thus the presence of the dead within the house did not greatly

disrupt the activities of the living but actually enhanced the sacrality and ritual status of the house (McAnany 1998:273).

In Chapter 33, he describes Maya mortuary rites according to which they covered the dead body with earth and that it was by means of interment. The verb applied in the Motul Dictionary for this practice was Mucaan –“something which is covered or buried”.

* As McAnany (1995:50) observed, "[T]he Maya convention of intracompound interment of ancestors could be viewed as a type of safeguard insuring that ancestors were kept on the land where their descendants lived." From this she concluded that "burial places of the ancestors create a genealogy of place that links descendants to that land" (McAnany 1995:65).'
* McAnany further proposed that by preserving the bones of their ancestors over time, the living family members maintained their exclusionary rights to material property, especially land, that was first acquired by those ancestors. That is, their continued ownership rights were evidenced by the fact that the enduring material signifiers of that family group's ancestors—their bones,
some of which were kept separately for ritual purposes—remained on the very land that they claimed was theirs (McAnany 1995:65).
* This process is part of a widespread Maya concept known as *k ex* or *k'exel*
(Carlsen 1997:51; Carlsen and Prechtel 1991; cognates include *c'axel* [Earle 1986:162], *k'esholil* [Vogt 1969:372], *jelol* [Montagu and Hunt 1962:141]; see
Watanabe 1990:139). *K'ex* is translated in early Yucatec, Cholan, Tzotzil, and Quiche dictionaries in verb and noun forms referring to an exchange, trade, conversion, substitution, or succession of one thing for another (Barrera

Vasquez et al. 1980:397; Kaufman and Norman 1984:124; Laughlin 1988:231; Ximenez 1985:483). **[Compare with the movement of time/sun and ending days of cycles!]** Thus, in *k'ex*—considered as the transfer of a name

and accompanying soul from one body to another, or as the exchange of one body for another—the Maya have achieved a form of immortality (Carlsen and Prechtel 1991:26) even as their mortal components, the flesh and bone, constantly wear out and must be replaced. That this was a concern in the prehispanic era is suggested by Classic Period hieroglyphic inscriptions that reveal the reuse of the same names and titles by persons of different generations in a single ruling house, for example, in the king lists of Palenque (Freidel and Schele 1990:219) and Yaxchilan (Tate 1992:9). A text at Palenque has been interpreted as recording a ritual by which the name transfer was effected from a king who had died 94 years previously (Freidel et al. 1993:190). The subsequent name-bearers can be seen as the *k'ex,* the substitutes or replacements, of the persons who came before them.

*For example, the idea of *k 'ex* applies to the annual replacement of village officials by the new title-holders who succeed them (Laughlin 1988:231; Montagu and Hunt 1962:142). More important, it is associated with the transfer and thus continuity of human life (Carlsen 1997:50).

K 'ex is manifest in the common practice of "replacing" or "substituting" an older or deceased person, especially a grandparent, by giving a child born in his or her family the same name (Carlsen and Prechtel 1991.26; Guiteras-

Holmes 1961:110; Mondloch 1980; Montagu and Hunt 1962:141; Stross 1998:35; Vogt 1969:372, 1970:1158; Warren 1989:57; Watanabe 1990:139; Ximenez 1985:483). For example, among the Quiche *nu c'axel* "my replacement," is the term used reciprocally by a grandfather and his patrilineal grandson (Cook 2000:260; see also Carlsen 1997:54-55). *K'ex* therefore has important references to generational change and the continuity of personae

within a social collectivity in association with ancestor commemoration (Carlsen and Prechtel 1991:26).

Sixteenth-Century Maya Mortuary Practices in Guatemala

* **Among some of the Guatemalan peoples, deceased kings were cremated, and from the ashes and bone an artificial body was made. The body parts were bound with a thick gold thread, and the whole was adorned with many precious green stones. (Fr. Bartolome de Las Casas (I967[Il]:525-27), in his sixteenth-century report on Guatemalan customs).**

The body was laid in state for two days, after which it was placed in a large jar and interred, a mound being erected over the remains. On the mound a statue of the deceased was placed, and the spot was regarded as sacred. Father Goto gives somewhat the same account, adding that these mounds were constructed either of stone or of the adjacent soil, and were called cakhay or cubucak? He positively asserts that human sacrifices accompanied the interments of chiefs, which is denied by Fuentes, except among the Quiches. These companions for the deceased chief on his journey to the land of souls, were burned on his funeral pyre. A large store of charcoal was buried with the corpse, as that was supposed to be an article of which he would have special use on his way. Sanchez y Leon mentions that the high priest was buried in his house, clothed and seated upon his chair. The funeral ceremonies, in his case, lasted fifteen days.

P. 42: As their household gods, they formed little idols of the ashes from the funeral pyres of their great men, kneading them with clay. To these they gave the name vinak, men or beings (Goto).

From: Ross Hassig, *War and Society in Ancient Mesoamerica* (University of California Press), 100: "Around 800 A.D, the Olmeca-Xicalinca conquered and occupied at least part of Cholula for the next hundred years, as evidenced by the introduction of new ceramic traits and a radical shift in burial practices from the interment of bodies in a seated position facing east, to cremation and burial in vases"

From: The Space and Place of Death, edited by Helaine Silvermanand David B. Small, pp. 191-199. Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association, Number 11. Arlington, VA:

Analysis of the spatial and historical dimensions of mortuary expressions, and explicit recognition of their basis in personal, social, and symbolic memory, are the foundations of an emerging approach to the archaeology of death. Spatial representations of death are viewed in this perspective as elements in the ritual creation and maintenance of personal and social memories of the dead to serve the needs and interests of the living. Examination of a wide range of case studies shows that the scale and form of mortuary expressions are a function of the social and political scale for which memories are relevant and the circumstances in which their representation remains meaningful and effective. The growth and transformation of these expressions over time can therefore be read as a historical narrative of individual choices made in response to spatial representations of the immediate past and perceptions of current and anticipated social and political circumstances.

*Burials close to the household, as in the Maya area, is designed to maintain close relationship between the living and their dead kin "but does not create a more abstract form of commemoration of the dead".. The spatial landscape and the shared ritual experience become the basis for a collective memory that transcends personal memories."

There are indeed crucial aspects to be taken into consideration: the way that a particular space is allocated for the dead in this society; the unique rites performed for the dead, and the commemorative rituals dedicated to venerated ancestors; the specific time cycles according to which the dead are remembered. This society's distinct traditions and customs, and its autochthonous conceptualization of time and space, would truly elucidate for us their unique treatment of their social memory.

Aztec Conceptualization of the Afterlife

The Aztecs were indeed greatly concerned with the destiny of the souls of the deceased on their journey into the afterlife and their joining with the sun, *Tonatiu,* in the western land of the dead, Tamoanchan—Tlalocan. The journey of the soul into the afterlife is often described as being shadowed by sin, transgressions, and contamination/pollution, which must be cast away by water and fire. **Consequently, the Nahua practiced cremation. The bodily containers were cremated to free soul, which then journey into the afterlife conveyed by streams of water, as described in the Tepantitla murals. Death disengaged the *tonalli* from the body. In the usual funerary ritual, the body was cremated.** The fire released some of the *tonalli,* allowing some of it to accompany the *teyolía* (soul) to the Place of Burning in the afterlife, the destination of the souls of the dead and dying upon uniting with

the Sun. In a reverential address/lament chanted by the living to the souls of the dead who proceed to the *"tierra chamuscada"* [Scorched Earth] they chanted: "You are painted, and shining in diverse colors in front of the Sun, where we will never see you again. You should carry out your duties and offices well there, with all care and diligence."[i] The remaining hair clippings, and bones, were believed to provide strength to the family and calpulli of the deceased.[ii] In Nahua cosmology flowers are a common metaphor of the souls of the dead, which appear in this form in many shamanistic songs of the *Cantares Mexicanos,* dedicated to the dead warriors. In visual representations, the threading or entwining motif of coiled flowers is symbolic of acts that mean joining their souls with the ancestors and gods and their sacred lands.

Fr. Bernardino de Sahgún's most detailed account of the various destinies that awaited the deceased is to be found in the Appendix to the *Florentine Codex* Book 3. There, accordingly, the souls of those departed are destined to three different places: the Underworld (*Mictlan*), the Terrestial Paradise (*Tlalocan*), or, the Sky (*Illucintla*). One place to where the dead travelled was to the underworld, which was reigned by *Mictlan Teuhctli*, or, *Tzontemoc* (Descended Skull/Hair) and another goddess, *Mictecaciuhatl*, his wife. Those were the souls of those who died of illness, may those be governors, lords, or simple people. Before they died, laid down in bed in their homes, the elder sons would address the dying in a reverential manner, telling him/her about his/her destiny after death. The additional name given to this lord of the Undeworld here is: *Acolnaoacatl* (Disfigured, Reed-like Bone). The role of paper coating protecting and enshrouding the deceased's body, in the form of a shroud, is also at the core of this description: *"y luego, los viejos ancianos y oficiales de tajar papeles, cortaban y aparejaban, y ataban los papeles, de su oficio, para el difunto. Y después de haver hecho, y aparejado los papeles, tomaban al difunto y encogiendole las piernas, y vestianle con los papeles, y lo ataban…*(And thereafter, the old men and cargo-holders in charge of cutting

paper coatings, cut and adjusted them, and they tied the papers for the deceased. And having done so, and adjusted the papers, they lifted the deceased's body and contracting his legs they dressed him up with the paper coatings and tied him up).

Figure 1: Bundling up the Corpse, Sahagún's Florentine Codex, Book 3 (Appendix)

This act was followed by what the deceased's kin were instructing him and guiding him on the way down, into the Underworld: he was to pass at first between two mountain ranges, and then proceed through a road watched over by a Snake; there they provided the deceased with additional paper coatings and told him that he should encounter a Green Crocodile (*Cipactli*) called *Xochitonal* (Flowery Souls). Then, he should be at the eighth level of the Underworld (*Chicome Mictlan*), where there were eight valleys. These were situated, where he was given additional paper coatings. Then, he would pass through *Chicuetilihuhcan* (The Eighth Place of Disjointing) and face a turbulence of stone-razors (*Huitzehecatl*, "abrogating winds"; *Mictlan netoliniztli*, "Furies of the Underworld", Molina), just like the whirlpool of flints (*Tecpatl*) depicted on Section I-42 of the *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No. 2*. This was, indeed, the place of transcendence.

Figure 2: Whirlpool of the Underworld, Mapa de Cuauhtinchan No. 2 Section I-42

The deceased are described here as being covered up by the burned clothes of the war captives, to protect them against the turbulent winds. Here, Sahagún's informants explain that the women's paraphernalia, such as the wool for weaving was to be burned before their death in order to serve as cover (for the travelling souls?) during this windy phase. It is important

to indicate that in Sahagún's text before us, the diverse phenomena encountered by the deceased on their way to the Underworld are listed as day-names with their accompanying glyphic depictions: *Coatl; Cipactli; Tollin; Ehecatl; Tecpatl; Itzcuintli*. So that, these supernatural phenomena encountered during and after death are directly associated in Nahua cosmology with the sacred cycles of time.

Diverse pictographic “texts” in the Aztec and other Mesoamerican sacred almanacs and códices both describe and explain to the historian the differences in the funerary customs that existed between the Mexica, Otomí, and Chichimecs, on one hand, and the Mixtecs, Mixe, and Zapotec cultures on the other. Such texts provide us with rich ethnographic information about the customs commemorating the departed. Moreover, when we seek to understand the deep meaning of transcendence in Mesoamerican thought, this is best pursued, obviously, by following their funerary practices and mortuary beliefs that are filled with innate symbolic and performative structures and practices. James Preston has indeed categorized mortuary practices as coupled with pollution and social bonding, as well as with the maintenance of the boundaries of the "sacred": the re-adjustment of the cosmic and societal order, the appeasement of the spirits of the ancestors, and their deification.[iii]

In Fray Alonso de Molina’s Nahuatl-Spanish dictionary of 1571, two distinct entries are intertwined: one is *lpiya* ["to knot something; to tie something"], the other is *molpiya*, in the sense of ending or finalization of an era, that they had, of fifty—three years, and *xiuitl molpia*, meaning, "binding of the years". David Stuart suggested a similar interpretation for the word *k'al* in Maya, which was also closely related to the verb "fasten, enclose:" "This connection may have its origin in the tying or bundling of things counted in units of twenty…"[iv] Thus, in both the Maya and Nahua sources, enclosing denotes completion of time and the initiation of a new era. Therefore, the ritualized action of stone—binding, as described

by Stuart with respect to classic Maya monuments and stelae, denoted the end of a period of 7,200 days.

During the *Xiuhmolpilli* ceremony, for example, at the close of the fifty-two year cycle, the "new fire" was ignited at midnight at the top of the hill of Citlaltepec; the event was celebrated by the burning of ritual bundles consisting of fifty—two reeds lashed together with a rope. **The burning of knots and bundled offerings in times of transition and at period endings therefore simulated the act of bodily cremation, and consequently the emergence of the secured and purified soul (*in teotl*) out of its human receptacle, similarly to the classic—period Maya metaphor of the newly—born maiz plant emerging from its place of birth in the underworld.** Alva Ixtlilxochitl's account contains similar acts of setting on fire the sacred knots of "feather—grass" after Nopaltzin's acts of foundations took place in the Valley of Mexico (*tlalpilli*=bundle, a tangle of branches; *xomalli*, meaning, "feather—grass," Fray Alonso de Molina). In his account of the rites of death (1572), the Dominican chronicler, Fray Durán indicates that at the end of four days of mourning *acxoyatl* (sacred fir branches) images tied together with cords called *atztamecatl (soga blanca)* were set on fire, in the same manner in which the sacred knots of feathered grass were burned, as well as the manner in which the bundles of darts and women's paraphernalia were burned during the Quecholli rituals.

These parallel acts suggest that the binding together of grass cords/knots and their subsequent burning signaled or represented something beyond the act itself. Possibly, the binding pointed to past, primordial acts and their remembrance, especially in the context of those departed who could not participate in the acts that would follow. Within the context of social remembrance, the sacrifice is therefore connected with foundation rites. According to Fray Bernardino de Sahagún a sacrificial act of self—piercing was a common ritual offering during nightly vigils that preceded a festive occasion. It was usually accompanied by the tying

or binding together of maguey ends, smeared with blood from the knees, which were placed over branches of the *acxoyatl*:

"Some of the devotees offered blood in the temples, during the vigils of the feasts, and that their offering would be more acceptable, they went out to look for *laurel sylvestre*, that they called *acxoyatl*, which was very common in these woods; then, at the shrine (*calpulolco*), they smeared blood [that they extracted] from the knees over two maguey ends. From there they brought it over to the temple, where they made a knot out of the fresh branches and on top of it they placed the bloody maguey ends, offering them to the god whom they adorned, and this they called *acxoyatemaliztli* [the act of placing the sacred fir branches]."[v]

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[i] Durán, *Historia de las Indias de Nueva Espana*, Book II, Ch. 18: The war against Tepeaca, and the solemn ceremonies for the dead in the war against Chalco (including two of Motecuhzoma's brothers. Compare with contemporary Huichol beliefs that the souls of the dead are joining the Sun (in Nahuatl, the word tonal, meaning sun, is identical to that of one of the souls, located in the head). In diverse Nahua iconography, Nanahuatl appears as the Rain-Moisture-Agriculture-Fertility god, and was another name for the Sun god; thus, the two elements of water and sun are also correlated there.

[ii] Alfredo López Austin, *The Human Body and Ideology: Concepts of the Ancient Aztecs* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 367—368, 371

[iii] James J. Preston, "Purification" In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, eds. Mircea Eliade and Lindsay Jones, 2nd ed., Vol. 12 (New York: Macmillan Press, 2005), 91-100.

[iv] Stuart, *Kings of Stone*, 148—171; *Códice de Metepec, México*

[v] Sahagún, *Historia General de las cosas de Nueva España*, Book II, App. III, 20; Michel Graulich, on the myth of the creation of the sun and the moon: "…Tecciztecatl's fir tree branches (acxoyatl, on which the bloodied spines were laid as offerings) are actually precious quetzal feathers, his grass ball (zacatapayolli, in which the spines were stuck) is gold, his

bloodied maguey spines are coral, and his incense is costly, while Nanahuatl uses only commonplace ritual instruments, offering his own blood instead of coral and the scabs from his pustules for incense." Michel Graulich, "Autosacrifice in Ancient Mexico," *Estudios de cultura náhuatl* 36 (2005), 301—329