



THE RUSSIAN-AMERICAN RESEARCH NEXUS 2ND FORUM

ABSTRACTS

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DYNAMICS OF POLITY EVOLUTION AT UAXACTUN (PETEN, GUATEMALA): COMBINING ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

Ancient site of Uaxactun is one of the most important Lowland Maya sites in the history of the Maya archaeology. However, its own history was known only in outline. The process of combining textual and archaeological evidence to reconstruct the history of Uaxactun is not similar to the study of other Ancient Maya sites. Bad preservation of the monuments made epigraphy a subsidiary discipline until recent years. Hieroglyphic inscriptions provided general dates but were not widely used to understand the evolution of the city and the polity.

Recent archaeological work at Uaxactun concentrated on the Late Preclassic period and the settlement survey with less attention paid to the Early and Late Classic. Redocumentation project created the basis for review of Uaxactun epigraphy and new reconstruction of the history of the site. Now the dynastic sequence and political history of Uaxactun kingdom is understood much better. Uaxactun dynasty was founded in the beginning of the Late Preclassic (ca. 300/250 BC). We see that Uaxactun continued to be important political center from the Late Preclassic (350 BC – 150 AD) to the Early Classic (200 – 600 AD) and became dependent from Tikal only in the Late Classic (600 – 810 AD). Short Terminal Classic (810 – 890 AD) renaissance is connected to the shifting alliances to new elites that arose during the Maya collapse.

Jacob HOLLAND-LULEWICZ
(Washington University in St. Louis)

Victor D. THOMPSON
(University of Georgia)

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND COLLECTIVE ACTION IN THE INDIGENOUS AMERICAN SOUTHEAST

Democratic cooperation, specifically characterized by its broad engagement and inclusiveness, are particularly complex types of cooperation that require attendant institutions to ensure that the problems inherent in collective action do not subvert the public good. It is perhaps due to this complexity that historians, political scientists, and others generally associate the birth of democracy with the emergence of so-called states and

center it geographically in the “west,” where it then diffused to the rest of the world. In this paper, we argue that the archaeological record of the American Southeast provides a case to examine the emergence of democratic institutions before the arrival of Europeans, and to highlight the unique ways in which such long-lived institutions were, and continue to be, expressed by Native Americans. Our research at the Cold Springs site in northern Georgia, USA provides important insight into the earliest documented council houses in the American Southeast. These results make the institution of the Mvskoke (Creek) council, whose active participants have always included both men and women, at least 1,500 years old and thus one of the most enduring and most inclusive democratic institutions in world history.

Sarah BAIREs

(Eastern Connecticut State University)

RELIGION AND THE MAKING OF A NATIVE AMERICAN CITY

Cahokia, Native North America’s largest polity north of Mexico, sits in the fertile floodplain of the Mississippi River in a region dubbed the American Bottom. This ridge and swale landscape was home to some 200 earthen mounds, at least one large and public plaza space, multiple neighborhoods and a series of small communities in the Richland Uplands just east of the main city. Cahokia emerged on the landscape ca. AD 1050 due largely in part to a regional migration of people into the city along with the expansion of local Terminal Late Woodland groups. These communities came together around a suit of practices that have been called, by some, a new religion. In this presentation I will discuss the role of religion in the creation of Cahokia by looking specifically at the relationship among landscape, mortuary practice, and water as it speaks to a shared suit of beliefs and practices that characterize Cahokia from its emergence through its abandonment.

Campbell DARBY

(Independent researcher, Mount Pleasant, SC)

RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM

This presentation will examine examples of religious syncretism encountered in the *hajj* to Mecca, among the Asmat tribe of West Papua Indonesia, the Ojibwe, and the Navajo. The paper documents two forms of syncretism, how these forms were imposed on their respective societies and how they functioned. Muslims employed the *hajj* to Mecca as a vehicle that encouraged tribal conversion to Islam. Dutch missionaries operating in West Papua Indonesia discouraged traditional forms of feasting as part of a larger campaign to stamp out head hunting and cannibalism among the Asmat. Due to the presence of Catholic missionaries, Asmat feasting practices have been modified. The Ojibwe struggled to maintain traditional values within an increasingly Christianized American world and yet they have managed to maintain traditional tribal practices through the singing of modified Christian hymns. Lastly, in the 1930s, the Navajo absorbed the Peyote Cult into a pre-existing tribal religious framework, creating a unique and entirely indigenous form of syncretism in the United States.

Christine S. VANPOOL and Todd L. VANPOOL

(University of Missouri, Columbia)

THE REALITY OF CASAS GRANDES POTTERS: REALISTIC PORTRAITS OF SPIRITS AND SHAMANS

Most Native American groups believed other-than-human persons (spirits) were fused with matter. These persons had volition that allowed them to interact with and even influence humans. Art in Western culture tends to denote “imagination.” However, many Native Americans do not equate art with imagination in the

same way, but instead use art to *realistically* portray these other-than-human persons (e.g., the Southwestern horned-plumed serpent). Here, we apply a cognitive framework to evaluate the interplay of spirits at various levels that were created as Casas Grandes artisans used art as a means of depicting the inherent structure of the Casas Grandes spirit world. In doing so, they created links between ceremonially important objects such as pots and spirits that transformed these objects into newly created animated beings. The art thus simultaneously reflected the structure of the unseen world while also helping to determine the characteristics of these newly created other-than-human persons. One technique commonly used was to decorate objects with literal depictions of spirit beings (e.g., horned-plumed serpents) that would produce a natural affinity among the ceremonial objects and the spirit creatures. This affinity would in turn allow the animated ceremonial objects to mediate the interaction between humans and spirits. This approach transcends a view in which Casas Grandes art is considered *symbolically* significant and instead emphasizes the art as a component that literally helped create other-than-human collaborators that aided Casas Grandes people as they navigate ontologically significant relationships.

Christopher DAVIS

(University of Illinois at Chicago)

**THE TORTOISE IN THE CAVE:
AMAZONIAN UNDERWORLD ANIMISM IN THE 'DEVILS LAIR'**

Cultures that first settled the Amazon entered rainforests and caves inhabited long ago by plants and animals, all of which established their own rhythms to environmental forces, and to each other. These activities left natural patterns on the landscape, which helped inform early cultures about viable locations, navigable paths, and ample resources. Rock Art painted in the Monte Alegre hills near the lower Amazon River appears to have annotated some of these natural patterns and environmental forces, not always as direct representational art, but sometimes as animistic and mnemonic symbols. This presentation theorizes rock art depicting an "underworld" mnemonic that infuses the very real threat of hydrothermal-produced toxic ammonia gas in a cave decorated with a few cryptic red ochre pictographs. Why did ancient Amazonian Paleoindians risk health and even life to paint animistic figures in caves where unseen forces emanate with "supernatural power"? What type of animistic beliefs are implied by the location and detail of those images? This presentation provides some compelling answers.

Elena NOVOSELOVA

(Russian Technological University, Moscow)

THE UNDERWORLD AS A PART OF THE ANDEAN WORLDVIEW

The question of ideas about the Underworld (its location, structure, etc.) is one of the most complex and controversial aspects of the worldview within the framework of the Andean civilization. There are some considerations on this subject in the literature, but this aspect has not yet found proper analysis in the historiography. One of the most important reasons for this situation are the fragmentariness and heterogeneity of the sources. However, a comprehensive analysis of these sources (written documents from the colonial era, archaeological, iconographic, and ethnographic sources) allows us to draw some preliminary conclusions. First, it should be recognized that it is hardly possible to speak of a single set of ideas about the Underworld: we observe too much chronological and cultural variation within the vast civilizational space of the Andes. Secondly, despite the above, there are some cross-cutting themes and ideas that are common to at least several cultures (the long way to the Underworld, a flying insect as a metaphor for the soul, etc.). Thirdly, the most common form of ideas about the Underworld should be recognized as the idea of continuing earthly life after death.

Konstantin ASHRAFYAN
(Moscow Region State University)

IMAGES OF INDIANS FROM SPANISH FLORIDA IN THE 16th CENTURY. TRUTH AND LIES, SPECULATION AND FACTS

The presentation shows the history of the creation of images of the Indians of Spanish Florida in the 16th century.

The article examines the images that have taken root in the minds of many generations of Europeans through books, textbooks, and fiction literature. The report provides numerous different photographs of images of Florida's Indians, based on excavations and reconstructions from Florida museums.

Anastasia KALYUTA
(Saint Petersburg Institute of History)

“WHAT KIND OF *TETEO* YOU ARE?” INITIAL INDIGENOUS PERCEPTION OF CORTES AND HIS COMPANIONS-IN-ARMS THROUGH THE EARLY COLONIAL SOURCES

This paper continues the series of works dedicated to the 500th anniversary of the Conquest of Mexico by Hernan Cortes and his followers. The central subject of paper is initial perception of Spaniards by indigenous population of Mexico in light of historical and philological data available in the Early Colonial sources written during the Conquest and in the first years of Spanish rule in Mexico. The paper returns again to the much-debated hypothesis that the native population of Mexico identified Hernan Cortes with returning god Quetzalcoatl and focuses on misinterpretation of historical sources which gave birth to this long-standing hypothesis.

Jennifer A. LUCIDO
(California State University Monterey Bay)

AFRO-HISPANIC MOTHERS OF THE CALIFORNIO NATION

The Spanish settler-colonial history of California is a complex entanglement of diverse peoples. The *pobladores* (settlers) from the Viceroyalty of New Spain (present-day Mexico) were born into a *sistema de castas* (caste system). This system was composed of three primary socio-racialized classifications that originated from Spain based on the concept of *limpieza de sangre* or so-called “pure” blood lines. These included 1) Spanish or *español*; 2) Indian (indigenous) or *indio*; and 3) African or *negro*. From those primary classifications were countless other variations of ethnicities and castes that had the potential to change.

In this paper, I focus on the lives of sisters María Tomasa and María Eustaquia Gutiérrez, daughters of María Feliciano Arballo de Gutiérrez, who is the common ancestor of many well-known Spanish and Mexican colonial families of Alta California. Historians have highlighted Feliciano as a pioneering woman given her status as a *mulata* (mixed African and Spanish) widow who traveled from Mexico to California in the 1775–1776 land expedition led by Captain Juan Bautista de Anza. Feliciano's contributions to the colonization effort of Spain were critical to shaping the Hispanic culture and history of California. She began a new life in California and birthed eight additional children. However, the lives of the two young daughters she brought with her remain in the shadows. Therefore, examining how Tomasa and Eustaquia navigated the frontier of Spanish California from childhood to adulthood contributes to furthering understanding of the lived experiences as women of mixed ancestry in the colonial landscape.

Sergei KAN
(Dartmouth College)

THE “LAST GREAT POTLATCH” OF 1904

In 1904 the Tlingit Indians of Sitka, Alaska held a major potlatch ceremony attended by numerous visitors from the surrounding native communities. Prior to the potlatch, its hosts promised the Governor of Alaska and other local American officials that this would be their last ceremony of this kind. Utilizing archival documents and ethnographic data from forty years of research among the Tlingit, the author analyzes the reasons for such a promise and for the fact that it was never kept.

Aleksandr CHUDAK
(Independent researcher, Vladivostok)

HERITAGE, AUTHENTICITY, AND TIME AT THE NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATION

My report, Heritage, Authenticity, and Time at the Native American Church Centennial Commemoration, is a logical follow-up to the topic which I started to discuss on the first RARN Forum. Similarly to the previous report, this was originally published in 2019 as a chapter in my M.A. thesis at the University of Oklahoma (Norman, USA), and is an attempt to fill the gaps in the scholarship of the peyote religion that, I feel, are critical. Based on the literature and my own observations, I have tried to build the bridges between studies of Peyotism (in the form of the Native American Church, officially incorporated in 1918 in the state of Oklahoma by the representatives of several Native peoples) and recent discussions around theories of heritage as a cultural construct as well as critiques of “tradition” and “authenticity”, informed by the developing indigenous scholarship.

The core case study here is the Native American Church centennial commemoration, which took place in Concho, Oklahoma, in October 2018 and which I was fortunate to attend. In addition, my year-and-a-half fieldwork in the Native Methodist community in Norman, Oklahoma, from 2017 to 2019 has provided material for this study as well. Contextualizing my discussion in this relatively small setting, I address the problems whose magnitude extends well beyond this particular context, and this study might be a contribution to a larger body of knowledge on these issues and have some important implications for the practice of anthropology, policy towards indigenous peoples, and social theory.

The main ideas which will be discussed in the report are the reassessed concept of history and supplement to the cultural heritage theory (its expansion in temporal aspect).