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Bibliography is continued on a separate sheet

Mural Masterpieces of Ancient Mexico

Saturday, September 17th, 1994

A seminar and panel discussion sponsored by
The Pre-Columbian Society of Washington, D.C.
 with support from
 The Center for Maya Research
 and
 The Center for Archaeoastronomy

Program

- | | | |
|--------------|---|---|
| 8:00 AM | Registration
Morning Refreshments | |
| 9:00 AM | Welcome
PRESERVATION AND DOCUMENTATION | Scott Wilson
George Stuart |
| 9:30 AM | Keynote: Overview of the Mexican Murals Project.
WAR AND SACRIFICE IN THE PAINTINGS OF
BONAMPK. Historical record or mythical memory? | Beatriz de la Fuente |
| 10:30 AM | Coffee Break | |
| 11:00 AM | MURALS OF MONTE ALBAN TOMB 105, and
Methodological issues illustrated from other murals | Arthur G. Miller |
| 12:00 AM | THE BONAMPK MURALS RECONSIDERED:
New perspectives on a Major Maya Monument | Stephen D. Houston |
| 1:00 PM | Lunch
(show your tickets) | |
| 2:30 PM | HUMAN SACRIFICES AND RITUAL WARFARE
IN TEOTIHUACAN MURALS | Saburo Sugiyama |
| 3:30 PM | MURALS OF CACAXTLA:
Sacred Warfare, Sacrifice, and fertility from the
mouth of the mountain cave of the rain spirits | John Carlson |
| 4:30 PM | DISCUSSION
Closing | All speakers
Jeff Splitstoser |
| 6:30-8:00 PM | RECEPTION AND DELUXE BUFFET | for those who have registered for it.
At the Hyatt Regency, Bethesda |

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Abstracts

Beatriz de la Fuente, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
WAR AND SACRIFICE IN THE PAINTINGS OF BONAMPAK. Historical record or mythical memory? Overview of the Mexican Murals Project

1. What is the relation between the pictorial element and the glyphic element? If they are tightly linked, this gives a firm basis for interpretations both of the glyphs and of the iconography. Where do they communicate the same things, where different things?
 2. Are the representations of bloodless war and of sacrifice by dismemberment representations of actual violent events? On the one hand, the war scenes are not gory, while the sacrifice scenes are naturalistic. Do these contrasting representations reflect reality or a mythic model?
 3. Where do the scenes of war and sacrifice in the central panel, or the preceding ceremonies in Room 1 and the following ceremonies in Room 3, take place, in a historical dimension or on a supernatural level? In all three rooms, there are celestial observers, gods or astronomical personifications, under whose protection the rituals are carried out. Perhaps we might conclude that the battle is carried out to obtain approval from these supernatural observers, and that the human beings do obtain divine approval.
 4. Based on the preceding three questions, can we say that the content of the murals is mythological and sacred, but that it is expressed in naturalistic forms?
- What was then the purpose of these prehispanic murals in Bonampak, Chiapas?

Arthur G. Miller
ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF MURAL PAINTINGS; THE MURALS OF MONTE ALBAN TOMB 105

Methodological and theoretical issues in the study of Pre-Columbian mural paintings are raised based on over 25 years of studying murals from Teotihuacan, Quintanaroo, Yucatan, and Oaxaca. The talk also includes an analysis of murals from tomb 105 from Monte Alban in archaeological and ethnographic context.

Steve Houston, Dumbarton Oaks and Brigham Young University
THE BONAMPAK MURALS RECONSIDERED:
New perspectives on a Major Maya Monument

Cleaning by the Mexican authorities and recent photography by the National Geographic Society reveal new subtleties in the greatest of Maya murals. Historical interpretations advanced over the last few years need modification, both to place the murals in their larger historical setting and to amplify earlier readings of glyphic texts. These murals can be placed in a context of complex political interactions in the Usumacinta area, where the fortunes of various centers fluctuated. We gain some insight into the interactions both of titular equals and also of individuals of very different statuses, and can compare this with interactions in other Mayan realms. We now know the name of the structure housing the murals, and that fire ceremonies were held at the same time as the structure was dedicated. There are suggestions of deity impersonations in text and iconography. There is a possibility that the murals do not focus on the heir-designation of a child.

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Saburo Sugiyama, Dumbarton Oaks and Arizona State University
HUMAN SACRIFICES AND RITUAL WARFARE IN TEOTIHUACAN MURALS

Human sacrifices and ritual warfare have been pointed out as important cultural and social factors in Mesoamerica. Recent discoveries of mass-sacrificial burials at the Feathered Serpent Pyramid stressed that the Teotihuacan society, like those of Classic Maya and Postclassic Aztecs, also executed ritual sacrifice and warfare as a state program. As archaeological identification of these rituals developed, murals are also being explored as reflections of these actual social events. Iconographers currently recognize that murals in Teotihuacan demonstrate explicitly the importance of bloody rituals in Teotihuacan society. The present talk on the murals of Teotihuacan discusses representations of sacrifice and warriors/priests in the light of archaeological data with socio-political contexts. The data indicate that the Feathered Serpent Pyramid represented an early symbolic complex of ritual warfare/human sacrifice within a particular worldview that was later diffused widely in Mesoamerica. Especially, the Mayan adaptation of this Teotihuacan belief system was explicitly demonstrated in iconography and epigraphy. However, the first visual expressions of this symbolism seem to have taken place in Teotihuacan itself through murals of later periods in "Palaces."

Saburo Sugiyama is especially interested in the question whether some anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations may be best understood within the Teotihuacan socio-political context as images of specific historical people. (The traditional treatment of these was as abstract, ahistorical and anonymous priests or mythological and animalistic deities.)

John Carlson, Director, Center for Archaeoastronomy, and University of Maryland
MURALS OF CACAXTLA: Sacred Warfare, Sacrifice & fertility from the mountain cave of the rain spirits

The Epiclassic site of Cacaxtla in Tlaxcala, located approximately 80 miles east of Mexico City and Teotihuacan, has gained fame as the site of the best preserved and iconographically richest ensemble of pre-Columbian mural painting found in Mexico. Since their initial discovery in 1975, four major groups of murals have been unearthed within the acropolis that demonstrate an eclectic mix of iconographic and thematic influences composed and executed in an essentially Lowland Maya style. The author has previously demonstrated the presence of the themes of Venus-regulated sacred warfare and ritual human sacrifice in the context of the cult of transformation of blood into life-giving water and fertility. A system of Pochteca-style Highland-Lowland trade, conquest and tribute have also been discussed in the context of Cacaxtla's likely role in the Epiclassic transition and the fall of Teotihuacan. Following a review of current research, a new analysis of Structure A, including the so-called "Apotheosis scenes," will be given demonstrating that it is nothing less than the recreation of a specific mountain cave generative shrine of the rain and storm god (the Classic "Tlaloc"), located on the nearby volcano Malinche. The Lowland Maya influences in this design are presented for the first time in a further elaboration of the origins of Cacaxtla and its ruling dynasty.