

MAKING MAYA MYTHS: FRAGMENTS OF NEW WORLD CIVILISATIONS AND THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL TURN¹

by JOSÉ LUIS ESCALONA VICTORIA
(CIESAS Sureste, Mexico)

Abstract

The nineteenth century interest in the exotic spread along new scientific fields, as an *epistemological turn*, a radical change in people's interpretation of the spatiotemporal order of things. This article outlines some changes in perceptions of ancient writings preserved in archives in Europe and America, the spoken languages and the ruined monuments buried under the jungle in Mexico and Central America, under the early interpretations focused on *mythology*.

Keywords: anthropology; epistemological turn; mythology; the Maya; Mexico; Guatemala.

I. Introduction

In the nineteenth century, one can observe a resurgence of interest in the exotic. It spread far and wide, taking a variety of forms including collecting, storing, and different ways of presenting the exotic. In numerous European and American cities, it went hand in hand with the foundation of new museums, libraries, and archives, and the creation of encyclopaedic publications. All these functioned rather as depots of random objects and ideas, sometimes without clear or systematic criteria for grouping and displaying the objects. This activity took place against a complex background. What was collected were not only exotic items from the nations' own past but also from their internal peripheries and colonised territories abroad. Interest in such items naturally resulted in the formation of various societies and networks of collectors, antiquarians, artists, bibliophiles, printers, and editors, who were passionate about studying and trading old, exotic, or 'primitive' objects and stories. Some were also engaged in the production of copies, facsimiles, replicas, or even – once trafficking became temptingly profitable – forgeries.

Nineteenth-century fascination with the exotic was associated with new archival techniques and museography, but even more strongly with the formation and

¹ I have presented a shorter version of this paper at the international symposium *Mayan Civilization and Japanese Myth: Land's Memory Woven by the Modern World's Knowledge* that took place in the Hakushika Memorial Sake Museum, Kobe, Japan, on 9 November 2019. I would like to thank Dra. Sachie Kiyokawa from project 'Comprehensive reconsideration of "myth" and its social significance in the modern world' as well as the Research Center for Promoting Intercultural Studies (Promis), which co-sponsored the workshop.

expansion of scientific fields related to the study of folklore, mythology, epigraphy, philology, archaeology, and eventually with the rise of anthropology in its modern form as a scientific discipline. These emerging disciplines developed at universities but also in libraries, laboratories, private studies, and cabinets of curiosities. In such places, 'exotic' objects were stored, examined, and sometimes transformed and arranged for public viewing. At the same time, there arose movements and specialisations known as, for example, Oriental or American studies.² In some ways, the entire phenomenon was a new taste of the world.³

This phenomenon, this shift in tastes and preferences, could be viewed as an *epistemological turn*, a radical change of the basis underlying people's interpretation of the spatiotemporal order of things, persons, and places on a global scale. To help us understand this shift, this article outlines some specific changes in nineteenth-century knowledge and perceptions of Central American landscapes, peoples, craftwork, and images. By the mid-nineteenth century, renewed attention was paid to objects that had been taken from different locations in Central America. Some were then stored in European libraries and cabinets decades or even centuries earlier, but now they were interpreted in novel ways, giving rise to new organisational schemes for thinking about them and displaying them. Suddenly, Central America came to be seen as the birthplace of an exceptional ancient civilisation and exploration of that civilisation became an exciting and popular enterprise.

Ancient cities with their sculptures and decorated buildings were gradually brought to light in the tropical forests by adventurers, travellers, and amateur archaeologists who came there in search of the only pre-Colombian civilisation in America that was known to have developed a complex writing system. The specific aesthetics demonstrated in the carved stones, columns, sculptures, walls, and buildings which were slowly emerging from beneath tangled foliage and fallen rocks evoked a sense of shared excitement. Various evidence of this shared aesthetic sense was now discovered throughout the jungle between Honduras and Yucatan but also in various drawings or inscriptions that had been kept in the collections of libraries and archives in Europe and America. Subsequently, various previously 'lost', i.e., unidentified and half-forgotten, and fragmentary evidence of the centuries-long process of cultural development in Central America were found scattered all over the world. The findings were of a wide variety of types, from ancient writings (both originals and copies) preserved in libraries in Rome, Saxony, Madrid, Paris, Guatemala, Merida, and Mexico City, all the way to the ruined monuments buried under the tropical forest in Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras. Even the living languages, rituals, and beliefs the peoples of Central America were somehow

² A well-known explorer of the recently discovered Central American civilisation, Jean-Frédéric Waldeck, considered himself to be the first 'Americanist', see Michael D. COE, *Breaking the Maya Code*, New Yorks 2012, p. 86. The first international congress of Americanists took place in Nancy (France) on 18 July 1875; it was organised by the *Société Américaine* in France. The *Société's* first gathering in the Americas was the XI International Congress of Americanists, held in Mexico City in 1895.

³ See, for example, Joseph Friedrich zu RACKNITZ, *A Rare Treatise on Interior Decoration and Architecture: Joseph Friedrich zu Racknitz's Presentation and History of the Taste of the Leading Nations by Joseph Friedrich zu Racknitz*, Los Angeles 2020.

related to the aforementioned finds in the jungles and to the old texts. Some of those texts received special attention because they appeared to contain partial translations of unknown writing systems into Latin characters, thereby promising to be the ‘Rosetta stones’ of the newly discovered civilisation.

Around this time, one can also see the emergence of the study of mythology as an academic subject. In some of the early interpretations of old writings and in the new reports from travellers, we can see that some of their authors focused specifically on uncovering the religion, ritual life, gods, and the ‘soul’ of the people who built the cities and wrote the documents. Mythology became one of the first intellectual objects in the exploration of this freshly discovered non-Western American civilisation. The question I want to answer in the following is why mythology/religion was considered a relevant epistemological framework during these early steps towards categorisation of civilisations within the narrative of world history.

The very first steps took place around 1810, when Napoleon’s invasion of Spain threw that country’s American colonies into a political limbo. At this point, we can see two large processes at work. First of all, explorers and scholars were collecting and analysing fragments from Central America’s ancient civilisation, then piecing them together to learn more about these peoples and their lives. At this point, Central America itself was fragmented, piecing itself together, and trying to figure out what it wanted to be. Both efforts continued into the twentieth century. In the end, the world’s conception of that ancient civilisation was – just like the modern nations that now occupied the same territory – a human construct whose leading figures had engaged in some degree of mythmaking along the way.

II. Images and words from the tropical forest

Although some of the objects that attracted such interest during the nineteenth century had been seen before by travellers and curious people, few images and descriptions were in circulation among the American and European public. As an example, let us consider the process by which the wider public in America and Europe learned about the lost ancient city near the present-day Palenque, in the province of Chiapas. The lost city (hereinafter referred to simply as ‘Palenque’)⁴ was first reported and explored in 1784 by Joseph (José) Antonio Calderón, who was soon,

⁴ The name of the site remained undefined along the nineteenth century. Reports tended to refer to a ‘site near Palenque’, see Antonio del RÍO, *Description of the Ruins of an Ancient City, Discovered near Palenque, in the Kingdom of Guatemala in Spanish America* [on-line], London 1922 [1787], Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044095049060&view=image&seq=1>; but for instance, the naturalist Constantine Samuel Rafinesque-Schmaltz in 1832 referred to it by the name ‘Otulum’, see George E. STUART, “The Beginning of the Maya Hieroglyphic Study: Contributions of Constantine S. Rafinesque and James H McCulloch, Jr.”, *Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing* 29, 1989, p. 21; COE, *Breaking*, p. 93. Locally, the site was – like others in the area – known simply as the ‘houses of stone’ (‘casas de Piedra’) (Guillaume DUPAIX – José Luciano CASTANEDA, *Antiquités mexicaines. Relation des trois Expéditions du Capitaine Dupaix, ordonnées en 1805, 1806, et 1807, pour la Recherche des Antiquités du Pays, notamment celles de Mula et de Palenque...*, Paris 1834, p. V; Joseph Antonio CALDERÓN, “Informe (1784)”, in Ricardo CASTAÑEDA PAGANINI (ed.), *Las Ruinas de Palenque*, Guatemala 1946, pp. 22–29.

in 1786, followed by Antonio del Río.⁵ Calderón's report included drawings of some of Palenque's abandoned buildings, while Antonio del Río's 1786 expedition, which included the artist Ricardo Almendáriz, produced several drawings of images that had been carved into walls. Additional drawings and paintings were produced by the architect Antonio Bernasconi in 1785 and in 1807 by Guillaume Joseph Dupaix and his artist José Luciano Castañeda. A couple of decades later, in 1831–1833,⁶ Jean-Frédéric Waldeck made lithographic images of the same site.⁷ Frederick Catherswood, during an 1839 expedition where he accompanied John Stephens, drew dozens of pictures of not only Palenque architecture but also many other sites from Honduras to Yucatan. Several images from their two trips through Central America and Yucatan were published in two popular books called *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (1841), and *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* (1843). Teobert Maler took the first photographs of the monuments from 1877 until his death in 1917 in Yucatan. He sometimes collaborated with Alfred Maudslay, a British archaeologist who published photographs and drawings which the two had produced not only in Chichen Itza (in the 1880s), but also at other sites that had been recently explored for the first time, such as Copán in Honduras and Quirigua in Guatemala.

Even as the public's excited attention was drawn to such illustrations of rediscovered ancient Central American cities, scholars were rediscovering or re-examining old documents from that region. Codices were found in storage in Dresden, Paris, and Madrid, while other documents had been preserved locally, in libraries from Mexico to Guatemala. In the case of some of the codices, it turned out that their pedigree was truly impressive. For example, Coe's intuition is that the Dresden Codex is one of the items which Cortés had collected in 1519 when visiting the Cozumel Island and then sent to Spain as part of the royal fifth, that is, as a sort of tax, proved to be correct.⁸ In 1739, the Dresden Codex was acquired from a private collection in Vienna by Johann Christian Goetze, director of the Royal Library of the court of Saxony. Images of this codex had inspired Baron von Racknitz to publish a painting entitled 'Mexican Taste' as part of his remarkable *Presentation and History of the Taste of the Leading Nations* (1796–1799).⁹ Alexander von Humboldt reproduced five pages in his *Vues des Cordillères* in 1810.¹⁰ A few decades later, in 1829–1830, Edward King, Viscount of Kingsborough, published in *The Antiquities of Mexico* watercolours which Agostino Aglio made of the entire Dresden Codex

⁵ CASTAÑEDA PAGANINI (ed.), *Las Ruinas de Palenque*; RÍO, *Description of the Ruins*.

⁶ Waldeck also reworked Almendáriz's drawings for publication, see COE, *Breaking*, p. 92.

⁷ For a deeper analysis, see Omar LÓPEZ, *Nociones sobre los primeros pobladores del sureste: la representación del "indio" en el pensamiento de exploradores, eruditos y viajeros en la provincia de Chiapa, (1784–1840)*, [Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation], Ciudad de México 2021.

⁸ COE, *Breaking*, pp. 89–90.

⁹ RACKNITZ, *A Rare Treatise*, 2020. A view of the plate called 'Mexican Taste' is available in Olivia Horsfall TURNER, "World views – revisiting an 18th-century survey of global style", *Apollo*, the 9th of July 2020.

¹⁰ Alexander von HUMBOLDT, *Vues des cordillères, et monumens des peuples indigènes de l'Amérique*, [on-line], Paris, 1810, Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021], accessible from: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k61301m/fl.item.texteImage>.

and many other Mexican codices.¹¹ Then, in 1880, Förstemann published a complete chromophotographic copy of the Codex with comments and suggestions about the numbers and calendric signs.¹²

Meanwhile, the French orientalist León de Rosny had found another codex in the National Library in Paris in 1859 and published a facsimile of it (the ‘Paris Codex’) in 1864.¹³ A different find, which came to be known as the Madrid Codex, is a document composed of two parts or fragments. It is also known as the *Troano* or *Trocortesiano* after Juan de Tro y Ortolano, a descendant of Cortés. De Tro owned one of the fragments, which he showed in 1866 to Abbot Charles Etienne Brasseur de Bourbourg, a key personage in the early efforts to recover and study old documents. Afterwards, another fragment, known as the Cortesiano, was found in Madrid and published by Brasseur in 1869.¹⁴

Other documents, too, had survived both the conquistadors’ plundering and the ravages of time, and they were now being rediscovered. One example was the annals of Yucatan, which Coe called ‘the quasi-historical and semi-prophetical Books of Chilam Balam’.¹⁵ Written by unknown authors in the native Maya idiom of Yucatan in Latin characters, these texts were discovered and published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Two additional texts which resurfaced at this time turned out to be particularly important to mythologists – and thus to this article. The first was the *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*, written by Diego de Landa, a sixteenth-century bishop of Yucatan. The second, known as *Popol Vuh*, was written early in the eighteenth century by unidentified Indian writers under the supervision of Fray Francisco Ximénez, a priest of Chichicastenango, Guatemala; this treatise was allegedly based on a native text in K’iche’ (which has not been identified). The text of *Popol Vuh* was in both Spanish and in a local language known as K’iche’ or Quiche, which the authors transliterated in Latin characters.

Both Diego de Landa and Father Francisco Ximénez had been involved, with assistance of literate Indians, in evangelising areas where the native elites collaborated with Spanish priests and missionaries. As the title of his *Relación* suggests, de Landa was active in Yucatan, whose inhabitants spoke a language called ‘Maya’. He wrote the *Relación* in 1566.¹⁶ The original did not survive but a fragmentary copy made around 1660 was discovered in 1861 in the Madrid Archives of the Academy of Geography by Brasseur (the same abbot to whom Juan de Tro y Ortolano had shown the first fragment of the Madrid Codex). Brasseur published the *Relación* soon afterwards, in 1864. The wide variety of different types of information in the *Relación* made it a very important source for anthropologic, epigraphic, and historical studies.

¹¹ COE, *Breaking*, pp. 90–91.

¹² COE, *Breaking*, p. 111; Paul SCHELLHAS, “Representation of Deities of the Maya Manuscripts”, *Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology*, IV/1, Cambridge 1904.

¹³ COE, *Breaking*, p. 105.

¹⁴ COE, *Breaking*, p. 109.

¹⁵ COE, *Breaking*, p. 80.

¹⁶ Although the text was written in Spain when Landa faced trial, it was based on notes taken in a Franciscan monastery in Yucatán, where native Americans were trained to support the Spanish evangelisation efforts. See COE, *Breaking*, pp. 104–109.

It contained basic information about the old numeral system and the calendar or, to be more precise, about a combination of different time-counting systems. Perhaps most importantly, Landa's explanation of the ancient glyphs for the names of days (transliterated into Latin characters) was the starting point for decoding at least some of the glyphs that had been found in various codices and on monuments.¹⁷

The abovementioned Francisco Ximénez had been active in the highlands of Guatemala, between Quetzaltenango and Chichicastenango, where many people spoke K'ich'e (the language used in the *Popol Vuh*) or other closely related languages. As we shall soon see, the *Popol Vuh* is an extract from a corpus known as *The Art of Three Languages: Cakchikel, Quiché, and Tzutuhil* (in Spanish *Arte de las tres lenguas cakchiquel, quiche y tzutuhil*), which Ximénez and his native collaborators prepared in 1701–1703 as part of their evangelisation work. This corpus also included 'arts' (dictionaries) and texts in other local languages, mainly Tzutuhil and Kakchikel.¹⁸ All remained almost unread until they were rediscovered in 1854 in Guatemala by Karl von Scherzer.

One of the discovered documents was a translation into contemporary Spanish and K'ich'e of what was, according to Ximénez, a K'iche' text. Ximénez and some native writers allegedly produced their translation in 1701–1703. The supposed original K'iche' source was probably written around 1550 but by Ximénez's times, it had been lost, and it has not been seen since. Von Scherzer published part of Ximénez's rediscovered translation in 1857 in a collection of Mexican antiquities.¹⁹ Shortly afterwards, Brasseur read Ximénez's original, recomposed an extract from it in French, and published that extract under the title *Popol Vuh* (1861). Brasseur's subtitle reflects the growing nineteenth-century interest in mythology: *Le Livre Sacré et les Mythes de L'Antiquité Américaine*. The *Popol Vuh* had since been translated into many languages.²⁰ Similarly, various other documents prepared by Ximénez and his collaborators had been bought and sold, reviewed, translated, and eventually published in Europe and America after their discovery by von Scherzer. Both the *Relación* and the *Popol Vuh* are translated and reprinted until the present day.

The impact of such findings on the nineteenth-century world owed much to the production of facsimiles and the publication of drawings, paintings, and photographs. We have already learned that in 1829–1830, decades before the discovery and publication of the *Relación* and *Popol Vuh*, Lord Kingsborough published

¹⁷ COE, *Breaking*, pp. 104–109.

¹⁸ Rosa Helena CHINCHILLA, "Introducción", in Francisco Ximénez, *Arte de las tres lenguas kaqchiquel, k'iche' y tz'utujil*, sf. Mcs, Chicago 1993, pp. IX–XXXII.

¹⁹ Karl von SCHERZER, *Las Historias del origen de los Indios de Guatemala, Traducida de la lengua Quiché al castellano para más comodidad de los ministros del S. Evangelio. Por el R. P. F. Francisco Ximenes*, Vienna 1857.

²⁰ Daniel G. BRINTON, "The Names of the Gods in the Kiche Myths, Central America", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 19, pp. 613–647, [on-line], Philadelphia, 1881. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021], accessible from: <https://archive.org/details/jstor-982803> 1881: 614; COE, *Breaking*, p. 103. For a fresh study on the issue, see Fumiko SUKIKARA, *Formación y transformación en la narrativa del Popol Vuh: las publicaciones y las prácticas de traducción al japonés, 1928–1971* [Unpublished Master Thesis], Ciudad de México 2019.

watercolour copies of the Dresden Codex and other similar texts. Kingsborough (an ‘eccentric Irishman’, according to Coe) invested all his savings into the publication of *The Antiquities of Mexico*, a massive folio series of old documents copied in watercolour by Agostino Aglio. Copies of the Dresden Codex were among the documents in the first seven folios of *Antiquities*.²¹

At that time, explorers and intellectuals were also becoming interested in the lives and languages of the current native inhabitants of Mesoamerica. Guillaume Dupaix was the first to suggest that the languages spoken by people in Yucatan and those in the highlands of Guatemala were related, but his notions were based on Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro’s studies of languages of the world. In Hervás y Panduro’s 1784 study, written in Rome, Huastec, Maya, and several others spoken in the dioceses of Chiapas and Guatemala are presented as separate languages named according to their geographical location.²² It is Hervás y Panduro’s later Spanish edition (1800) that gives the most information about the Maya language. He says that Chontal is spoken from Tabasco to Nicaragua along with several other languages, including Nahuatl. He also suggests that Chontal and other variants are probably connected to the Maya or “Yucatanana” language. This link was suggested to him by a Cakchi Indian from Guatemala who visited him in Rome.²³ Nevertheless, Hervás y Panduro also classifies some variants, such as Lacandon and Mame, as probably being part of Chiapanec, the ‘matrix idiom’.²⁴ This intuition about a link between those groups of languages occurred to Dupaix, Waldek, and others as well but by that time, Orozco y Berra had already established kinship between those languages, including Huastec (spoken in northern Veracruz), and decided to call them the Maya-Quiché (K’iche’) family.

All these scholars based their views not only on reports written by authorities of the Catholic Church and the Mexican Government but also on old documents

²¹ COE, *Breaking*, p. 91.

²² Lorenzo HERVÁS Y PANDURO, *Catálogo delle lingue conosciute e notizia della loro affinita e diversita. Opera del signor abbate Don Lorenzo Hervas*, [on-line], Roma, 1784, pp. 57–76. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021], accessible from: <http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000046751&page=1>; Lorenzo HERVÁS Y PANDURO, *Catálogo de las lenguas de las naciones conocidas, y numeración, división, y clases de éstas según la diversidad de sus idiomas y dialectos* [on-line], Madrid, 1800, pp. 289–290. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021], accessible from: http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/catalogo-de-las-lenguas-de-las-naciones-conocidas-y-numeracion-division-y-clases-de-estas-segun-la-diversidad-de-sus-idiomas-y-dialectos-volumen-1-lengua-y-naciones-americanas--0/html/01d25bf6-82b2-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_9.htm.

²³ “Debido el descubrimiento de la afinidad de estas lenguas a la noticia que he logrado de la lengua cakchi, por medio de un indio cakchi llamado Domingo Tot Baraona, criado del R. P. Miguel Zaragoza, que con el empleo de procurador de su provincia del Orden de Predicadores de Guatemala, vino los años pasados a esta ciudad de Roma. El dicho Tot, que en edad de diez y seis años mostraba el despejo y talento que no son comunes y se alababan mucho en jóvenes europeos de la misma edad, sabía perfectamente su lengua natural y la española, y no poco de la pocomana: por lo que pude cotejar estas lenguas con otras americanas, y hallé que en las palabras numerales, en otras muchas, y en no poco del artificio gramatical, se asemejaban a la lengua maya, que se habla en Yucatán [...]”, HERVÁS, *Catálogo de las lenguas*, pp. 300–304.

²⁴ See HERVÁS, *Catálogo de las lenguas*, p. 306. Today we know that Lacandon, Cendal, and Mame are variants of the so-called Maya, while Zoque and Chiapaneca belong to two other linguistic groups.

collected and preserved in private libraries.²⁵ At around the same time, Francisco Pimentel was taking the first steps in his effort to map the native languages of Mexico. He published his first partial results in 1862–1865. Orozco and Pimentel communicated about their progress and their work was based on an almost identical set of sources.²⁶ According to them, Maya K'ich'e language family included the aforementioned language that was spoken in distant northern Veracruz and actually closely related to languages spoken in the Yucatan peninsula, Tabasco, and Chiapas. Charencey and Berendt later noticed that this family also included several variants of languages spoken in Guatemala and Belize. Charles-Félix-Hyacinthe Gouhier, Comte de Charencey (1832–1916), a contemporary of Orozco and Pimentel, worked on the philology and folklore of the same populations but called them the Mam-Huastec linguistic group. His analysis was based on Brasseur's texts.²⁷

The synergy between eager exploration of jungles and archives and the publication of the resulting finds for consumption by a fascinated public continued unabated. Naturally, the scholars and explorers who found, studied, or published the old documents wanted to understand the ancient civilisation that once inhabited the area. Remains of old settlements were thus be revisited and excavated in search of more evidence, and these efforts led to new discoveries. Among those intrigued by the published reports were John Stephens and Frederick Catherwood, who visited various ruined and sometimes unknown cities in an area stretching from Honduras²⁸ to Yucatan (1839 and 1841). Later, there came Teobert Maler, in 1877–1912, and Alfred Maudslay, who explored this region in 1880–1907. In Yucatan, Edward Herbert Thompson, a consul and amateur archaeologist, explored the ruins of Chichen Itza from 1885 until 1926. Long-term research in this region was supported by numerous institutions including the Smithsonian Institute (founded in 1846) and the Carnegie Institution (created in 1902, with Sylvanus Morley as its first field representative from 1918 until 1936). Extremely significant was also the support of research and exploration provided by the recently opened Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which was founded in 1866 and later attached to the Harvard University. In Belize, it was Thomas William

²⁵ Orozco thanked the National Archive and the private archives of (among others) José Fernando Ramírez and Joaquín García Icazbalceta. He said that his method was based only on the authority of the authors of those documents because he himself did not know any of the languages. Manuel OROZCO Y BERRA, *Geografía de las lenguas y carta etnográfica de México: precedidas de un ensayo de clasificación de las mismas lenguas y de apuntes para las inmigraciones de las tribus*, Ciudad de México 1864, p. IX.

²⁶ OROZCO, *Geografía de las lenguas*; Francisco PIMENTEL, *Cuadro descriptivo y comparativo de las lenguas indígenas de México o tratado de filología mexicana*, Ciudad de México, 1874.

²⁷ Hyacinthe de CHARENCEY, [Charles-Félix-Hyacinthe Gouhier], “Recherches sur le Lois phonétiques dans les idiomes de la famille Mame-Huastèque”, [on-line], *Revue de linguistique et de philologie comparée*, tome 5, 1872, pp. 129–167. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021], accessible from: https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Livre:Revue_de_linguistique_et_de_philologie_compar%C3%A9e_tome_5.djv.

²⁸ At that time, a party that advocated the formation of a Central American nation contended against several national parties that aimed at the formation of separate nation states. The former party was finally defeated, so Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador became separate independent states.

Francis Gann who first engaged in systematic research: the Smithsonian published his first findings in 1918. In addition to Harvard, universities such as Pennsylvania University and Chicago University developed research programmes in the area.²⁹ In Mexico, Guatemala, and other parts of Central America, German scholars and explorers such as Eduard Seler, Karl Berendt, Karl Sapper, Walter Lehmann, and Franz Termer reported their findings both in German and in other languages (Beaudry & Hardy 2000). Some of these researchers also had relationships with local institutions, such as the National Museum of Mexico (founded in 1825).

Thus, the fascination with the so-called Maya had spread, formed, and became institutionalised in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Along the way, various explorers and scholars supplemented their collections of documents and remains of the past with linguistic and other studies of the contemporary inhabitants of Central America. Intersections between these lines of investigation sparked, among other things, a considerable interest in the mythology of Central American peoples – and that is our next subject.

III. From idols to mythology

As the eager explorers and savants examined the re-discovered fragments of Central America's past, the so-called Maya civilisation slowly took shape in the scientific and consciousness and an enduring, feverish search for evidence of this sophisticated ancient American people had begun. Early in this process, Humboldt provided the first survey of fragments available to him from a perspective that discerned and focused on categories such as calendars. Later scholars added further categories, such as cosmogonies or creation myths, traits of totemism and animism, theodicies and the names of divinities, and calendars or systems for counting and measuring time. The epistemological turn which we have been outlining can thus be described as a categorical shift. The new categories caught on and endured, as one can infer from the subtitle which Abbot Brasseur chose for his edition of the *Popol Vuh: Le livre sacré et les mythes de l'antiquité américaine* (Paris, 1861). These categories also endured in how sculptures that were previously generally described in displays as 'idols'³⁰ were now assigned to categories such as History and Mythology.³¹ A case in point is one of the 'idols' that was found in Copan and then

²⁹ For instance, the Newberry Library in Chicago, which holds the first copy of the document called the *Popol Vuh*.

³⁰ For a wider analysis, see Miruna ACHIM, *From Idols to Antiquity. Forging the National Museum of Mexico*, Lincoln, 2017. 'Idol' is a word that apparently used Don Gregorio, the owner of a hacienda where the remains of an ancient city, now known as Copan, had at that time lain undiscovered. The name Copan was probably taken from a nearby settlement ('half-a-dozen miserable huts', as Stephens described it) or possibly from a nearby river, but it could also be named after a rebel cacique who headed a rebellion in the sixteenth century. See John L. STEPHENS – Fredrich CATHERWOOD, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*, [on-line], London, 1854, pp. 53–59 [First edition 1841]. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021], accessible from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Incidents_of_travel_in_Central_America,_Chiapas_and_Yucatan.pdf.

³¹ See BRINTON, "The Names of the Gods".

moved to the Peabody Museum in Cambridge. Renamed ‘young maize god’, the erstwhile idol was relocated within the museum and became its icon.

Daniel Brinton, a physician and amateur archaeologist of ‘independent means’³², was probably the first person to summarise, in 1868, what was up to that point known about the mythology of the newly named Maya-Quiché civilisation. But he was not the only one and his ideas had been shaped by of the abovementioned scholars and explorers. He was most influenced by Brasseur, but a Prussian physician Karl Hermann Berendt also had an impact on him.³³ Berendt was a member of a family that came to own a number of coffee plantations in Guatemala (Europeans introduced the coffee plant to Central America in mid-nineteenth century, which is also when Berendt came to the Americas). As Berendt travelled through Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala, he visited archives in an attempt to find documents that would contain information about the ancient civilisation.³⁴ He also collected or made copies of documents available in several other archives.³⁵ Berendt, who once met Brasseur in New York in 1863,³⁶ published very little but sold his valuable archive to Daniel Brinton.

Brinton preserved Berendt’s archive, which consisted almost entirely of originals and copies of unpublished manuscripts. It included some of Brasseur’s originals, plus dictionaries found in Guatemala. The manuscripts (some were copies) on which Brinton based his interpretations of Central American mythology were written between the sixteenth and eighteenth century. Examples include four dictionaries, all written in Cakchiquel: a *Compendio of Names*; *Cakchiquel–Spanish*; the *Memorial de Tecpan-Atitlan*, and Thomas Coto’s *Cakchiquel Vocabulary*.³⁷ Brinton also mentions Landa’s *Relación* and the *Maya Dictionary of Motul* but his most important source was the *Popol Vuh*.

³² John M. WEEKS, “The Daniel Garrison Brinton Collection”, in: *The Penn Library Collections at 250: From Franklin to the Web*, Philadelphia, 2000, pp. 165–181.

³³ Daniel G. BRINTON, *The Myths of The New World: A Treatise on the Symbolism and Mythology of the Red Race of America*, [on-line], New York & London, 1868. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021], accessible from: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/19347/19347-0.txt>; BRINTON, “The Names of the Gods”.

³⁴ Berendt has no name for this civilisation and still applied the name ‘Maya’ only to the language spoken in Yucatan. See Karl H. BERENDT, “Report of Explorations in Central America”, *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1867*, pp. 420–426, [on-line], Washington: 1867. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021], accessible from: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.a0005998810&view=image&seq=1&q1=Berendt>.

³⁵ WEEKS, “The Daniel Garrison Brinton”; BERENDT, “Report of Explorations”, pp. 48–49.

³⁶ Elizabeth F. WOLFE, “Contributions of Karl Hermann Berendt to Central American Anthropology”, *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 61–62, 1982, pp. 1–19; Daniel G. BRINTON, “Memoir of Dr. C. H. Berendt”, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 3, 1884, pp. 205–210.

³⁷ Thomas COTO, *Vocabulario de la lengua Cakchiquel*, v, *Guatimalteca / nuevamente hecho y recopilado con fummo estudio, traujo y erudicio por el Pe. F. Thomas Coto, predicador y padre de esta Prouja. de el S.Smo. Nombre de Jesus de Guatimala / en que se contienen todos los modos y frases elegantes con que los naturales la hablan y dq. se pueden valer los ministros estudiosos para su mejor educacion y enseñanza*, 1651, [on-line], MSS 279 Series 8 Sub-Series 2 Sub-Series 1, Box: 36, Folder: 1. William Gates papers, MSS 279. L. Tom Perry Special Collections. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021], accessible from: http://archives.lib.byu.edu/repositories/14/archival_objects/53726.

In 1868, when Brinton published his abovementioned first book at mythology among ancient American civilisations, his image of the Maya was still influenced by the better-known Aztecs, although he was aware of the clear differences that could be seen in the *Sacred Book of the Quiches (Popol Vuh)*.³⁸ A decade later, on 4 November 1881, Brinton presented a broader view of Maya-Quiche (or Kiche) mythology in a communication he read to the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. First, he talked about the ‘Maya-Kiche stock’, noting that:

Even today, it is estimated that about half a million persons use these dialects. They are scattered over Yucatan, Guatemala and the adjacent territory, and one branch formerly occupied the hot lowlands on the Gulf of Mexico, north of Vera Cruz.³⁹

Following Berendt’s ideas, Brinton argued that the Maya of Yucatan is the purest language of the group and Mam is the most archaic variant among the about sixty languages still spoken at that time in Guatemala and southern Mexico (he included in that number some ‘metropolitan dialects’ of central Guatemala: Kiche, Cakchikel, Pokonchi, and Tzutuhil). Brinton believed that the glyphs were *mnemonic signs* which the Maya used to record their history and mythology. Unlike Ximénez, who was convinced that the text that came to be known as the *Popol Vuh* was a satire of Christianity, Brinton believed that it contained important information about native mythology.⁴⁰ He also asserted that the unknown native Kiche speaker who wrote it knew the ‘ancient records’.⁴¹

In his 1868 book that dealt with comparative mythology, Brinton found the notion of the supranatural ‘unseen’ world in the spiritual life of native American peoples:

It has been rendered spirit, demon, God, devil, mystery, magic, but commonly and rather absurdly by the English and French, “medicine.” In the Algonkin dialects this word is manito and oki, in Iroquois oki and otkon, the Dakota has wakan, the Aztec teotl, the Quichua huaca, and the Maya ku. They all express in its most general form the idea of the supernatural. And as in this word, supernatural, we see a transfer of a conception of place, and that it literally means that which is above the natural

³⁸ Brinton refers to the Natchez, a group that lived in the Lower Mississippi Valley, as a branch of the same people that later gave rise to the Huartecas and Mayas, see: BRINTON, *The Myths*, p. 27. Afterwards, John Swanton stated that Natchez may be related to the Muskogean languages.

³⁹ BRINTON, *The Myths*, p. 613

⁴⁰ BRINTON, “The Names of the Gods”, p. 614.

⁴¹ ‘The civilization of these people was such that they used various mnemonic signs, approaching our alphabet, to record and recall their mythology and history. Fragments, more or less complete, of these traditions have been preserved. The most notable of these is the National Legend of the Kiches of Guatemala, the so-called Popol Vuh. It was written at an unknown date in the Kiche dialect by a native who was familiar with the ancient records. A Spanish translation of it was made early in the last century by a Spanish priest, Father Francisco Ximenez, and was first published at Vienna, 1857. In 1861 the original text was printed in Paris, with a French translation, by the care of the late eminent Americanist, the Abbé Brasseur (de Bourbourg). This original covers about 175 octavo pages and is therefore highly important as a linguistic as well as an archaeological monument.’ BRINTON, “The Names of the Gods”, p. 614.

world, so in such as we can analyze of these vague and primitive terms the same trope appears discoverable.⁴²

What is this ‘supranatural’ that Brinton had found in the *Popol Vuh* and other sources? Brinton says that the *Popol Vuh* refers to powerful “gods” who are the source and cause of all things. He speaks even of the original couple that is invested with sexual and reproductive powers. In a later book, he notes that ‘we find numerous parallels in Grecian, Egyptian and Oriental mythology, this divinity is represented as embracing the powers and functions of both, sexes in his own person [...]’.⁴³ Examining the nature of those supranatural powers, he notes that:

The word *puz* is used in various passages of the *Popol Vuh* to express the supernatural power of the gods and priests, but probably by the time that Ximenez wrote it had, in the current dialect of his parish, lost its highest signification, and hence it did not suggest itself to him as the true derivation of the name I am discussing.⁴⁴

The ancestors *Xpiyacoc* and *Xmucane* are those who brought the humans, seeds, and other goods by their powers of organic (sexual) life.

Brinton also found traces of animism and totem worship,⁴⁵ two key concepts which the nascent anthropology used to describe the spiritual life of so-called ‘primitive world’.⁴⁶ For example, he says that the expression *vugh*, which can mean a type of fox,⁴⁷ probably expresses the admiration of small but clever animals that was common among the Algonkin and other hunting tribes of North America. On the other hand, Brasseur says that the term *vugh* is also related to the dawn of the day, and to myth of origins, because *vugh* is the darkness before the dawn. The names of other characters in *Popol Vuh* refer to animals as well; we find for instance an old man called a hog and his wife, who are both in possession of magical powers.

Thus we find here an almost unique example of the deification of the hog; for once, this useful animal, generally despised in mythology and anathematized in religion, is given the highest pedestal in the Pantheon.⁴⁸

⁴² BRINTON, *The Myths*, p. 46.

⁴³ BRINTON, “The Names of the Gods”, p. 616.

⁴⁴ BRINTON, *The Myths*, p. 617.

⁴⁵ BRINTON, “The Names of the Gods”, p. 625.

⁴⁶ Edward Tylor, the famous founder of modern Anthropology in England, established that ‘animism’ was the primitive form of religion, in contrast to Frazer, who stated that the origin of religion was the idea of the ‘soul’. Durkheim saw in *totemism* the elementary form of religion. See, Edward Burnett TYLOR, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, Cambridge 2010 [First Edition, 1871]; James George FRAZER, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*, Cambridge 2012 [First Edition, 1890]; Émile DURKHEIM, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse. Le système totémique en Australie*, Paris 1968 [First Edition, 1912].

⁴⁷ Tlacuache is not a type of fox, but a marsupial called opossum, see also in BRINTON, *The Myths*, 617.

⁴⁸ BRINTON, “The Names of the Gods”, p. 620.

Brinton also confronts Brasseur's interpretation of the word *pizote* (coati), which Brinton translates as the sacrificial drawing of blood by pricking.

We should probably understand these and similar brute gods to be relics of a primitive form of totemic worship, such as was found in vigor among some of the northern tribes. Various other indications of this can be discovered among the branches of the Maya family. The Cakchiquels were called "the people of the bat (zoq')," that animal being their national sign or token, and also the symbol of their god (Popol Vuh, p. 225, 249). The tueur owl, chan or cumatz serpent, balam tiger, and geh deer, are other animals whose names are applied to prominent families or tribes in these nearly related myths.⁴⁹

Brinton continues:

In Maya the same word is found, Koh, and in the Codex Troano, one of the few original Maya manuscripts we have left, these masks are easily distinguished on the heads of many of the persons represented. Recent observers tell us that in the more remote parishes in Central America these hideous brute faced masks are still worn by the Indians who dance in accompanying the processions of the Church! Even yet, every new-born child among the Kiches, is solemnly named after some beast by the native "medicine man" before he is baptized by the Padre.⁵⁰

Brinton says that the best translation of another animal, the *gucumatz*, is a 'serpent decorated with feathers'. Based on Coto's vocabulary, Brinton says that *gux* is translated as heart, but apparently in the sense of Soul or Spirit:

It would be more correct therefore, to render these names the "Spirit" or "Soul" of the lake, etc., than the "Heart." They represent broadly the doctrine of "animism" as held by these people, and generally by man in his early stages of religious development. They indicate also a dimly understood sense of the unity of spirit or energy in the different manifestations of organic and inorganic existence.⁵¹

In his 1868 book, Brinton states that there is a word for "god" in the Maya language, namely *ku*. He adds that the 'Mayas had legions of gods' and, as in other traditions, the idea of a god refers to heaven or the sky, that is, to unseen agencies devoid of personality which become the object of prayers.⁵² In his communication from 1881, Brinton found in the *Popol Vuh* also other ways of referring to divinity. Briton says that *qabauil* in *quiche* (also *gabovil*, *gabuyil*, and other terms in Coto's

⁴⁹ BRINTON, "The Names of the Gods", p. 620.

⁵⁰ BRINTON, "The Names of the Gods", p. 621.

⁵¹ 'This was not peculiar to the tribes under consideration. The heart was very generally looked upon, not only as the seat of life, but as the source of the feelings, intellect and passions, the very soul itself. Hence, in sacrificing victims it was torn out and offered to the god as representing the immaterial part of the individual, that which survived the death of the body'. BRINTON, "The Names of the Gods", p. 623.

⁵² BRINTON, *The Myths*, p. 47, based on LÓPEZ DE COGOLLUDO, *Historia de Yucathan*.

vocabulary) are all terms often used to refer to divinity. The notion is – aside from with magic, divining, and sorcery – associated with creation in expressions that include the term *naual* (a link with Aztec traditions) and *puz* or supernatural power, as noted above.⁵³ There is also a mythical place, identified by the term *Xibalba*:

The word Xibalba, Cakchiquel Xibalbay, Maya Xibalba, Xabalba or Xubalba (all found in the Diccionario de Motul, MSS.), was the common term throughout the Maya stock of languages to denote the abode of the spirits of the dead, or Hades, which with them was held to be under the surface of the earth, and not, as the Mexicans often supposed, in the far north.⁵⁴

Brinton's 1868 book included notes about calendars, which had attracted the interest of scholars ever since the re-discovery of the Sun Stone in 1790. He also connects calendars to the cardinal points and the shape of the world.⁵⁵ Glyphs and numbers are connected to calendric and astronomical texts, and even the names of days are connected to animals and other characters that feature in the *Popol Vuh*, such as *Balam* (tiger) and *Queh* (deer). Finally, all in all, Brinton identifies in the surviving relicts of Maya culture concepts of space, time, history, theodicy, and cosmogony.

Conclusion

Brinton's work was just the beginning of a lasting scientific and popular interest in the mythology of the peoples that inhabited this part of Central America. The subjects he was interested in, such as "supernatural" forces and "creation", "animism", "totem worship", "souls" and "spirits", "gods", "calendars", 'primitive geography',⁵⁶ and history in effect cover all the main topics of Maya research of that time and long afterwards. For example, in 1895 Eduard Seler⁵⁷ presented an analysis of the calendric signs in a Copan stela at the Americanist Congress in Mexico City. Seler had followed commentaries on Maya manuscripts (chiefly the Dresden Codex) that had been made by Ernst Förstemann. In a text published in 1902, Seler mentioned religious books that had calendric and astrological purposes and drew attention to the gods and goddesses shown in Mexican picture writings, and, in a specific style, also in the Maya Codex. In 1904 Paul Schellhas,⁵⁸ who studied Mayan

⁵³ BRINTON, "The Names of the Gods", p. 630.

⁵⁴ Brinton challenges Brasseur's interpretation according to which Xibalba was an ancient state in the Usumacinta valley with a capital in Palenque. BRINTON, "The Names of the Gods", p. 636.

⁵⁵ BRINTON, *The Myths*, p. 68.

⁵⁶ BRINTON, *The Myths*, p. 68.

⁵⁷ Eduard SELER, et al., *Mexican and Central American Antiquities, Calendar Systems, and History*, [on-line], Washington, 1904. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: https://antropowiki.alterum.info/index.php/Eduard_Seler; Eduard SELER, "On the present state of our knowledge of the Mexican and Central American hieroglyphic writing" [on-line], *Transactions of the International Congress of Americanists*, 1902. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: https://antropowiki.alterum.info/index.php/Eduard_Seler.

⁵⁸ Originally in German (1897), Schellhas text was published in English in 1904 under the supervision of Charles Bowditch, a Maya expert associated with the Peabody Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts. SCHELLHAS, "Representation of Deities of the Maya Manuscripts".

gods, collaborated with the Berlin Museum of Ethnology to make reproductions of reliefs found in the ruined cities. He had also worked on the available editions of Landa's *Relación*, the Maya codex, and other recently published documents. Harvard's Alfred Tozzer performed fieldwork among the Maya and Lacandonas in 1902–1904 and began teaching a seminar on the Maya entitled Anthropology 9 in 1905.⁵⁹ Tozzer published one of the first ethnographies of the contemporary Maya and Lacandonas,⁶⁰ describing the Lacandonas as the purest performers of the old Maya rituals compared to the more Christianised contemporary Maya of Yucatan. He compared the performances and paraphernalia used by Lacandonas with the images found in codices, colonial texts, carved stones, and painted or moulded ceramics. As a Harvard professor, he continued his archaeological work in the area and devoted years of his life to translating and studying Landa's *Relación*. In 1941, he published his translation of that work with both his own notes and notes by his late mentor, Charles P. Bowditch.⁶¹

In nineteenth-century texts, from Stephens to Berendt, we learn about several issues that variously troubled, fascinated, and entertained the people of that epoch. There was an unclear definition of international borders at that time, somewhat fluid boundaries between Catholicism and other beliefs, and various overlaps and tensions between the interests of the British, French, Prussian, and American governments in Mexico, Guatemala, and the 'other Honduras', the British Colony in the area. We hear of wars between political bands, a rebellion against abusive logging companies, and the cultivation of coffee, tobacco, sugar, fruits, and sisal or henequen. We learn about the landscape, soils, waters, flora, and fauna. We see that categories such as 'Aztec' or 'Maya' or classifications of linguistic families were not yet as stable as they would become in the following decades. Still, what the explorers – and the intellectuals who read their reports – found most interesting was the old American civilisation still hidden in and under the jungle. Nineteenth-century texts show that the hunt for remains of that civilisation extended to the contemporary peoples living near the archaeological sites and colonial towns, particularly in locations where Maya languages were still spoken. Expeditions were organised in search of locals who might be able to read the glyphs and for the remains of the old mythical thinking preserved in the stories and ritual life of the contemporary peoples. These subjects then helped form the agenda of anthropological research for the following generations of both amateurs and professionals.

(Written in Spanish and translated into English by the author)

⁵⁹ Philip PHILLIPS, "Alfred Marsten Tozzer, 1877–1954", *American Antiquity* 21/1, 1955, pp. 72–80.

⁶⁰ Alfred TOZZER, *A comparative Study of the Mayas and the Lacandonas*, Report of the Fellow of American Archaeology, 1902–1905, New York 1907.

⁶¹ Alfred TOZZER, *Landa's Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatan, a Translation (with 1154 Notes and Syllabus)*, Cambridge 1941.

REFERENCES

- ACHIM, Miruna, *From Idols to Antiquity. Forging the National Museum of Mexico*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017.
- BEAUDRY-CORBETT, Marilyn – HARDY, Hellen T. (editors), *Early Scholars Visits' to Central America, Reports by Karl Sapper, Walter Lehmann and Franz Termer*, Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology & University of California, 2000.
- BRINTON, Daniel G., “Memoir of Dr. C. H. Berendt”, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 3, 1884, pp. 205–210.
- CALDERÓN, Joseph Antonio, “Informe (1784)”, in: Ricardo Castañeda Paganini (ed.), *Las Ruinas de Palenque*, Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, 1946, pp. 22–29.
- CASTAÑEDA PAGANINI, Ricardo (ed.), *Las Ruinas de Palenque*, Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, 1946.
- COE, Michael D., *Breaking the Maya Code*, NY: Thames & Hudson, Third Edition, 2012 [First Edition, 1992].
- CHINCHILLA, Rosa Helena, “Introducción”, in: Francisco Ximénez, *Arte de las tres lenguas kaqchiquel, k'iche' y tz'utujil*, sf. Mcs, Chicago: The Newberry Library, & Academia de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala (Biblioteca Goathemala, volumen XXXI), 1993, pp. IX–XXXII.
- DUPAIX, Guillaume – CASTANEDA, José Luciano (illustr.), *Antiquités mexicaines. Relation des trois Expéditions du Capitaine Dupaix, ordonnées en 1805, 1806, et 1807, pour la Recherche des Antiquités du Pays, notamment celles de Mitla et de Palenque...*, Paris: Jules Didot, Printed for the Bureau des Antiquités Mexicaines, 1834.
- DURKHEIM, Émile, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse. Le système totémique en Australie*, Paris: Les Presses universitaires de France, 1968 [1912].
- FRAZER, James George, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012 [1890].
- LÓPEZ, Omar, *Nociones sobre los primeros pobladores del sureste: la representación del “indio” en el pensamiento de exploradores, eruditos y viajeros en la provincia de Chiapa, (1784–1840)*, [Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation], Ciudad de México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2021.
- OROZCO Y BERRA, Manuel, *Geografía de las lenguas y carta etnográfica de México: precedidas de un ensayo de clasificación de las mismas lenguas y de apuntes para las inmigraciones de las tribus*, Ciudad de México: J. M. Andrade y F. Escalante, 1864.
- PIMENTEL, Francisco, *Cuadro descriptivo y comparativo de las lenguas indígenas de México o tratado de filología mexicana*, Ciudad de México: Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística, 1874.
- PHILLIPS, Philip, “Alfred Marsten Tozzer, 1877–1954”, *American Antiquity* 21/1, 1955, pp. 72–80.
- RACKNITZ, Joseph Friedrich zu, *A Rare Treatise on Interior Decoration and Architecture: Joseph Friedrich zu Racknitz's Presentation and History of the Taste of the Leading Nations by Joseph Friedrich zu Racknitz*, (Simon Swynfen Jarvis translation and edition), Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute.
- SCHELLHAS, Paul, “Representation of Deities of the Maya Manuscripts”, *Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology* IV/1, Cambridge: Harvard University, 1904 [1897, first edition].
- SCHERZER, Karl von, *Las Historias del origen de los Indios de Guatemala, Traducida de las lengua Quiché al castellano para más comodidad de los ministros del S. Evangelio. Por el R. P. F. Francisco Ximenes*, Vienna: Casa de Carlos Gerold é Hijo, 1857.
- STUART, George E., “The Beginning of the Maya Hieroglyphic Study: Contributions of Constantine S. Rafinesque and James H McCulloch, Jr.”, Washington: Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing 29, 1989.
- SUKIKARA, Fumiko, *Formación y transformación en la narrativa del Popol Vuh: las publicaciones y las prácticas de traducción al japonés, 1928–1971* [Unpublished Master Thesis], Ciudad de México: Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, 2019.
- TOZZER, Alfred, *Landa's Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatan, a Translation (with 1154 Notes and Syllabus)*, Cambridge: Peabody Museum Papers, 1941.

- TOZZER, Alfred, *A comparative Study of the Mayas and the Lacandones*, Report of the Fellow of American Archaeology, 1902–1905, New York: Archaeological Institute of America, 1907.
- TYLOR, Edward Burnett, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1871].
- WEEKS, John M., “The Daniel Garrison Brinton Collection”, in: *The Penn Library Collections at 250: From Franklin to the Web*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Library, 2000, pp. 165–181.
- WOLFE, Elizabeth F., “Contributions of Karl Hermann Berendt to Central American Anthropology”, *Kroeber Anthropological Society Papers* 61–62, 1982, pp. 1–19.

Electronic resources

- ALMENDARIZ, Ricardo, Colección de Estampas Copiadas de las Figuras ... de Chiapas, una de las del Reyno de Guatemala en la América Septentrional, Palenque, in The Jay I. Kislak Collection, The Rare Book and Special Collections Division, The Library of Congress, [on-line], Ciudad de México: 1787. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March, 2021]. Accessible from: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=rbc3&fileName=rbc0001_2005kislak1page.db&recNum=0.
- BERENDT, Karl H., *Report of Explorations in Central America (= Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1867*, pp. 420–426). [on-line], Washington: 1867. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.a0005998810&view=image&seq=1&q1=Berendt>.
- BRASSEUR DE BOURBOURG, Charles Etienne, *Popol Vuh. Le Livre Sacré et les Mythes de l'Antiquité Américaine*, [on-line], Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1861. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: <https://archive.org/details/CollectionDeDocumentsDansLesLangues/page/n13/mode/2up>.
- BRINTON, Daniel G., *The Myths of The New World: A Treatise on the Symbolism and Mythology of the Red Race of America*, [on-line], New York & London: Leypoldt & Holt & Trubner & Co., 1868. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/19347/19347-0.txt>.
- BRINTON, Daniel G., *The Names of the Gods in the Kiche Myths, Central America*, Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 19, pp. 613–647, [on-line], Philadelphia, 1881. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: <https://archive.org/details/jstor-982803>.
- COTO, Thomas, *Vocabulario de la lengua Cakchiquel, v. Guatimalteca / nuevamente hecho y recopilado con summo estudio, traujo y erudicio por el Pe. F. Thomas Coto, predicador y padre de esta Prouja. de el S.Smo. Nombre de Jesus de Guatimala / en que se contienen todos los modos y frases elegantes con que los naturalas la hablan y dq. fe pueden valer los ministros estudiosos para su mejor educacion y enseñanza, / Tomás Coto, 1651*, [on-line], MSS 279 Series 8 Sub-Series 2 Sub-Series 1, Box: 36, Folder: 1. William Gates papers, MSS 279. L. Tom Perry Special Collections. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: http://archives.lib.byu.edu/repositories/14/archival_objects/53726
- CHARENCEY, Hyacinthe de [Charles-Félix-Hyacinthe Gouhier], “Recherches sur le Lois phonétiques dans les idiomes de la famille Mame-Huastèque”, [on-line], *Revue de linguistique et de philologie comparée*, tome 5, 1872, pp. 129–167. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Livre:Revue_de_linguistique_et_de_philologie_compar%C3%A9e,_tome_5.djvu
- GANN, Thomas W. F., *The Maya Indians of southern Yucatan and northern British Honduras*, [on-line], Washington: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, BULLETIN 64, 1918. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/46973>.
- HERVÁS Y PANDURO, Lorenzo, *Catalogo delle lingue conosciute e notizia della loro affinita e diversita. Opera del signor abbate Don Lorenzo Hervas*, [on-line], Italia: Cesena, Gregorio Biasini, 1784. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: <http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000046751&page=1>.
- HERVÁS Y PANDURO, Lorenzo, *Catálogo de las lenguas de las naciones conocidas, y numeración, división, y clases de éstas según la diversidad de sus idiomas y dialectos*, [on-line], Madrid: Imprenta de la Administración del Real Arbitrio de Beneficencia, 1800. Internet Archive, [Consulted

- 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/catalogo-de-las-lenguas-de-las-naciones-conocidas-y-numeracion-division-y-clases-de-estas-segun-la-diversidad-de-sus-idiomasy-dialectos-volumen-1-lengua-y-naciones-americanas--0/html/01d25bf6-82b2-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_9.htm.
- HUMBOLDT, Alexander von, *Vues des cordillères, et monumens des peuples indigènes de l'Amérique*, [on-line], Paris: F. Schoell, 1810. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k61301m/f1.item.texteImage>.
- RÍO, Antonio del, *Description of the Ruins of an Ancient City, Discovered near Palenque, in the Kingdom of Guatemala in Spanish America*, [on-line], London: Henry Bertoud, 1922. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044095049060&view=image&seq=1>.
- SELER, Eduard, et al., *Mexican and Central American Antiquities, Calendar Systems, and History*, [on-line], Washington: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1904. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: https://antropowiki.alterum.info/index.php/Eduard_Seler.
- SELER, Eduard, *On the present state of our knowledge of the Mexican and Central American hieroglyphic writing*, [on-line], Transactions of the International Congress of Americanists, Austin: University of Texas, 1902. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: https://antropowiki.alterum.info/index.php/Eduard_Seler.
- STEPHENS, John L. – CATHERWOOD, Fredrich, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*, [on-line], London: Arthur Hall, Virtue & Co., 1854 [1841]. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Incidents_of_travel_in_Central_America,_Chiapas_and_Yucatan.pdf.
- TURNER, Olivia Horsfall, “World views – revisiting an 18th-century survey of global style, Review of *A Rare Treatise on Interior Decoration and Architecture: Joseph Friedrich zu Racknitz's Presentation and History of the Taste of the Leading Nations by Joseph Friedrich zu Racknitz (edited and translated by Simon Swynfen Jervis)*”, [on-line], *Apollo*, the 9th of July 2020. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/joseph-friedrich-zu-racknitz-book-review>.
- WALDECK, Frédéric, *Voyage pittoresque et archeologique dans la province d'Yucatan (Amérique centrale), pendant les années 1834 et 1836*, [on-line], Paris: Bellizard Dufour Et Co., Éditeurs, 1838. Internet Archive, [Consulted 31 March 2021]. Accessible from: <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/voyage-pittoresque-et-archeologique-dans-la-province-dyucatan-amerique-centrale-pendant-les-annees-1834-et-1836-986066>.

Brief information about the author

E-mail: jescalona@ciesas.edu.mx, joseluisescalona@prodigy.net.mx

Dr. José Luis Escalona Victoria is a Full Professor in the Centre for Research and Graduate Studies in Social Anthropology, Mexico. He holds a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the Manchester University, UK. His academic specializations are on anthropology of power in contemporary societies in south Mexico and Guatemala, and the history of Anthropology in the same area. His current project focuses on the Anthropological Manufacture of the Maya, based on original ethnographic work, anthropological publications and archive research. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1783-0142>