

# DUMBARTON OAKS

ART • NATURE • SCHOLARSHIP

PRE-COLUMBIAN STUDIES

SYMPOSIUM

FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

VIRTUAL WEBINAR

March 25-27, 2021

# DUMBARTON OAKS

ART • NATURE • SCHOLARSHIP

Thursday, March 25, 2021

## SESSION ONE: Foundations and Durability of Rulership

- 11:15AM - 11:45AM      Welcome from the Director and from the Program Director  
Thomas B.F. Cummins, Dumbarton Oaks  
Frauke Sachse, Dumbarton Oaks
- Introduction  
Marilyn Masson, University at Albany, SUNY  
Patricia McAnany, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- 11:45AM - 12:15PM      David Wengrow, University College London  
David Graeber †, London School of Economics and Political Science  
*Towards a New Framework for Comparing Ancient and Modern Forms of Social  
Domination (or, 'Why the State Has No Origin')*
- 12:15PM - 12:45PM      David Freidel, Washington University, St. Louis  
*Kingship, Kinship, and Community: Excavating the Foundations of Classic Maya Alliance  
and Conflict*
- 12:45PM - 01:00PM      Break
- 01:00PM - 01:30PM      Simon Martin, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and  
Anthropology  
*Dynasty and Moral Order: Cohesion of the Classic Maya Southern Lowlands*
- 01:30PM - 02:00PM      Q&A
- 02:00PM - 03:00PM      Break
- 03:00PM - 03:30PM      Alexandre Tokovinine, University of Alabama  
*Whose Mountains? The Royal Body in the Built Environment*
- 03:30PM - 04:00PM      Joanne Baron, Bard Early Colleges  
*8,000 Sky Gods and Earth Gods: Patron Deities and Rulership across the Classic and  
Postclassic Maya Lowlands*
- 04:00PM - 04:30PM      Q&A

# DUMBARTON OAKS

ART • NATURE • SCHOLARSHIP

Friday, March 26, 2021

## SESSION TWO: Dimensions of Authority: Kings, Queens, Councillors & Influential Patrons

- 11:45AM - 12:15PM William Ringle, Davidson College  
*Masked Intentions: The Expression of Leadership in Northern Yucatan*
- 12:15PM - 12:45PM John F. Chuchiak IV, Missouri State University  
*Denying the Rights of 'Natural Lords': Maya Struggles for Rewards and Recognition in Colonial Yucatan, 1550–1750*
- 12:45PM - 01:00PM Break
- 01:00PM - 01:30PM Maxime Lamoureux-St-Hilaire, Davidson College  
Patricia McAnany, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
*Relatively Strange Rulers: Relational Politics in the Southern and Northern Maya Lowlands*
- 01:30PM - 02:00PM Q&A
- 02:00PM - 03:00PM Break
- 03:00PM - 03:30PM Traci Ardren, University of Miami  
*Strange and Familiar Queens at Maya Royal Courts*
- 03:30PM - 04:00PM Jaime Awe, Northern Arizona University  
Christophe Helmke, University of Copenhagen  
Claire Ebert, University of Pittsburgh  
Julie Hoggarth, Baylor University  
*Le Roi est Mort, Vive le Roi: Examining the Rise, Apogee, and Decline of Maya Kingship in the Belize River Valley*
- 04:00PM - 04:30PM Q&A

# DUMBARTON OAKS

ART • NATURE • SCHOLARSHIP

Saturday, March 27, 2021

## SESSION THREE: Social Distance, Social Skin & Commensality

11:45AM - 12:15PM	Shanti Morell-Hart, McMaster University <i>Maya Gastropolitik: Tactics, Strategies, and Entrapment</i>
12:15PM - 12:45PM	Christina Halperin, University of Montreal <i>Temporalities of Kingly Costume in the Maya Lowlands</i>
12:45PM - 01:00PM	BREAK
01:00PM - 01:30PM	Antonio Benavides, Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia, Campeche <i>Jaina Figurines: Insights into Representations and Social Linkages on the Western Side of the Maya World</i>
01:30PM - 02:00PM	Q&A
02:00PM - 03:00PM	BREAK
03:00PM - 03:30PM	Scott Hutson, University of Kentucky <i>Discussant</i>
03:30PM - 04:15PM	Final Discussion Marilyn Masson and Patricia McAnany
04:15PM - 04:30PM	Closing Remarks Frauke Sachse, Dumbarton Oaks

## FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

A Pre-Columbian Studies Symposium, organized by Marilyn Masson (University of Albany, SUNY) and Patricia McAnany (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

### ABSTRACTS

Kingship has been characterized as one of the most durable forms of human governance. Yet within this form of authoritarian rule, there resides myriad possibilities for the construal of authority, particularly in how rulers relate to history, the cosmos, their constituencies, other rulers or religious authorities, landscape, and resources. This symposium explores the different faces of rulership in the Maya region with an eye to the monumental and enduring fashion in which rulers inscribed their legacies on landscape and the ways in which structures of authority were reconstituted, with innovations, through time. Although emphasis is placed on the Classic period as the apex of a populous and ruler-filled landscape, attention also is given to forms of rulership that survived or were revived during Postclassic-through-Contact periods. Speakers consider crosscutting themes of ruler personae, sociohistorical identity, charters of statecraft, personal adornment, and consumption habits that distanced ruling families from their subjects. The symposium fosters comparisons and syntheses of the organizational foundations of both northern and southern Maya kingdoms, bridging scholarly approaches that too often are confined to the sub-regional scale. Speakers consider how northern and southern courts differed in terms of the creation of divine charters and the liberties and constraints of kingly authority. Importantly, this symposium explores the underlying structural properties that explain divergent expressions of power and the relationship between rulers and those who were governed. The evolution and survival of authoritarian regimes is a prescient topic in the world today with direct consequences for future pathways. By focusing on the pre-Columbian Maya region of the Americas, speakers in this symposium address divergent pathways of authority.

**Marilyn Masson** is a historical anthropologist and archaeologist whose current research projects focus on resiliency and social transformations in the face of environmental and political disjunction from the Terminal Classic through Colonial periods in northern Yucatan, Mexico. This research engages the archaeology of the majority from the study of daily life, social diversity, hybridity, and household economies of ordinary people in town and countryside settings. In Mexico, she collaborates with an international team of researchers and local assistants. Most recently, this team launched new investigations at two remote, rural Maya mission towns of sixteenth-century date. Dr. Masson has authored or co-edited three recent books, *Kukulcan's Realm: Urban Life at Ancient Mayapan* (with Carlos Peraza Lope, 2014), *The Real Business of Ancient Maya Exchange* (with David Freidel and Arthur Demarest, 2020), and *Settlement, Economy, and Society at Mayapan, Yucatan, Mexico* (with Timothy Hare, Carlos Peraza Lope, and Bradley Russell, 2021).

**Patricia McAnany** (PhD 1986, University of New Mexico) is Kenan Eminent Professor and Chair of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. She has been the recipient of research awards from the National Science Foundation, the Archaeological Institute of America, and of fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the John Carter Brown Library, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and several others. A Maya archaeologist, she is principal co-investigator of Proyecto Arqueológico Colaborativo del Oriente de Yucatán, a community-archaeology project focused on the Preclassic through contemporary community of Tahcabo, Yucatán. As Executive Director of a UNC-CH program called InHerit: Indigenous Heritage Passed to Present ([www.in-herit.org](http://www.in-herit.org)), she works with local communities throughout the Maya region and beyond to provide opportunities to dialogue about cultural heritage and to magnify Native voices in education and heritage conservation. She is the author and coeditor of many journal articles and books, including *Maya Cultural Heritage: How Archaeologists and Indigenous Communities Engage the Past* (2016).

## FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

*A Dumbarton Oaks Symposium*

March 25-27, 2021

**David Wengrow**, University College London

**David Graeber** †, London School of Economics and Political Science

*Towards a New Framework for Comparing Ancient and Modern Forms of Social Domination (or, 'Why the State Has No Origin')*

Comparative studies of early, large-scale polities are increasingly rare, because previous efforts failed to generate a coherent definition of “the archaic state” applicable to cases such as the Classic Maya, Shang China, Inca Peru, Early Dynastic Mesopotamia, and Old Kingdom Egypt. Arguably, this is reflected in the recent turn back to more narrowly focused studies of kingship, empire, and republicanism in their various local and regional manifestations. Still, an intuitive sense remains that these cases had something in common and collectively mark a threshold in human political evolution, laying foundations for the emergence of “modern states.” Here we question the lingering teleology of such approaches, but also propose a new, alternative framework for comparing systems of social domination, ancient and modern. In this new framework, the presence or absence of kingship matters less than specific forms of authority laid claim to by rulers—we identify three elementary types, based on the principles of sovereignty, bureaucracy, and charisma—and the highly variable degree to which these are combined and extended in scope across time and space. This new approach allows us to clarify the range of similarities and differences among what are usually termed “early states,” as well as their relationship to more recent forms of organized power.

**David Wengrow** is Professor of Comparative Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London. His research interests include Comparative archaeology of the Middle East, North-East Africa, and Eastern Mediterranean, early state formation, cognitive and evolutionary approaches to culture, and prehistoric art and aesthetics. He holds a PhD in archaeology from the University of Oxford and has undertaken archaeological excavations in Africa and the Middle East. He is the author of numerous academic articles and three books including *The Archaeology of Early Egypt* (2006), *What Makes Civilization? The Ancient Near East and the Future of the West* (2010), and *The Origins of Monsters* (2014).

**David Graeber** (deceased on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020) was Professor of Anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He was a renowned thinker with major contributions to the field of economic anthropology on theories of value, money, debt, and exchange; social hierarchies and inequality; and bureaucracy. Graeber held a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Chicago and taught at Yale University (1998-2007), and Goldsmith College (2007-2013). He is the author of *Debt. The First 5,000 Years* (2011), *Utopia of Rules* (2015) and *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory* (2018).

Graeber and Wengrow are co-authors of the forthcoming *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*.

## FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

*A Dumbarton Oaks Symposium*

March 25-27, 2021

**David Freidel**, Washington University, St. Louis

*Kingship, Kinship, and Community: Excavating the Foundations of Classic Maya Alliance and Conflict*

“The Classic style in Yucatan does not evidence the degree of elaboration and formal perfection that it does in the south. Art for art’s sake was apparently less highly valued and largely subordinated to architecture.”

Proskouriakoff 1950:183.

The perplexing pattern in the raising of Classic Maya stelae, with a clear paucity of monuments in the northern lowlands compared to the south, was not about art for art’s sake if such standing sculpture is taken as the *sine qua non* of Maya art. Generations of glyphic decipherment demonstrate that the primary purpose of Classic stelae was not just to show the faces of particular rulers but to document their legitimate status as Holy Lords through lineage and descent from Holy Lords. Northern lowland Classic rulers were Holy Lords, but they were selected by merit, elevated by councils, and transformed by ritual from human to god-like. Few of them chose to erect stelae before the Kaanul kings of the seventh century. Wars and alliances between sodality rulers of the north, the Kaanul Lords, and dynastic rulers of the south led by Tikal kings illuminate the dynamics of these distinct kinds of rulership. Kaanul King Yuknoom Ch’een II, attempted imperial dynasty, a new form of governance. These dynamics are registered in texts and archaeology.

**David Freidel** received his BA magna cum laude from Harvard College in 1968, and his PhD from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University in 1976, both in anthropology. He taught at Southern Methodist University between 1975-2007 and teaches at Washington University in Saint Louis since 2008. He directed research at Cerros (Cerro Maya) in Belize, Yaxuna in Yucatan, and El Peru-Waka', Peten. He has been studying Maya kingship since 1975. He focuses on Maya rulership as discerned through contextual analysis of complex ritual deposits. He is an iconographer of Maya material symbol-systems and interested in Maya ancient history.

## FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

*A Dumbarton Oaks Symposium*

March 25-27, 2021

**Simon Martin**, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

*Dynasty and Moral Order: Cohesion of the Classic Maya Southern Lowlands*

The Classic Period was defined by twentieth century scholars but recognizes distinctive and elemental features that correctly identifies a sociocultural reality lasting from the fourth to ninth centuries. The kingship of this time developed from Preclassic models but innovated in ways that point to important shifts in ideology, structure, and practice. Decisively, there was a new emphasis on dynastic rule, which became the constant feature of a political culture that stretched across the Maya world. Now that we have a well-tested understanding of the Classic political landscape—with its multitude of polities and their marked power differentials—the next step is to explain why such a system developed and how it was maintained for six centuries or more. It is clear that the behaviors and materializations we see in the record reflect conventions, norms, and protocols that all polities agreed upon and shared. The challenge now, and the route to a better understanding of Classic Maya kingship and kingdoms, is both to illuminate those cultural rules and to discern their underlying moral basis.

**Simon Martin** is an Associate Curator and Keeper at the Penn Museum and Adjunct Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. He is a specialist in Maya hieroglyphic writing, with a particular interest in the history, politics, and religious beliefs of the Classic Period (250-900 CE). He gained his PhD at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London. Dr. Martin is the author and co-author of many publications on the Ancient Maya. His book *Ancient Maya Politics: A Political Anthropology of the Classic Period 150-900 CE* published by Cambridge University Press in 2020 won the R.R. Hawkins Award 2021 of the Association of American Publishers. He co-curated the exhibitions “Courtly Art of the Ancient Maya” (National Gallery of Art, with Mary Miller) and “MAYA 2012: Lords of Time” (Penn Museum, with Loa Traxler) and recently completed the reinstallation of the permanent Mexico and Central America Gallery at the Penn Museum.



# FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

*A Dumbarton Oaks Symposium*

March 25-27, 2021

**Alexandre Tokovinine**, University of Alabama

## *Whose Mountains? The Royal Body in the Built Environment*

This paper builds upon recent advancements in the investigation of the archaeological sites of Holmul and Naranjo to highlight divergent strategies of defining and reinforcing royal authority through the built environment. There is a scholarly consensus that the monumental cores of ancient Maya cities were animate landscapes of patron deities and ancestral spirits. However, the actual relationship between built environment, community, and royal authority was explored at only a handful of Classic Maya cities, most notably at Palenque and Copan. It takes exceptional circumstances for a Classic Maya structure to be preserved well-enough to deduce its symbolic function. At Holmul and Naranjo, exceptionally well-preserved late seventh-century buildings offer insight into the local ritual landscapes. Analysis of the iconographic programs of these structures suggests that the built landscape at Holmul centered on veneration of the deceased rulers with a spatial overlap between the palatial and funeral buildings. While co-residence with the ancestors was an important structuring factor of the built environment at Naranjo, the main palatial complex constituted a transposition of a wider ritual landscape of the kingdom. The royal body at Naranjo was concurrent not only with the divine patrons of the realm, but also with the places where those spirits resided. This distinction between Holmul and Naranjo may have something to do with different strategies of legitimizing the authority of the ruler. Holmul inscriptions emphasized foreign connections of the royal dynasty. On the other hand, contemporaneous Naranjo texts stressed deep-time local origins of its kings. In either case, the apparent overlap of structures associated with governance and veneration of gods or ancestors calls for a more nuanced approach to the function and meaning of Classic Maya palatial compounds.

**Alexandre Tokovinine** is an anthropological archaeologist and specializes in Maya archaeology and epigraphy. His doctoral dissertation at Harvard University (2008) centered on Classic Maya place names. Other research projects include 3D documentation of Classic Maya monuments and contributions to *Ancient Maya Art* at Dumbarton Oaks. He is a research associate of the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions. Dr. Tokovinine currently holds an appointment of Assistant Professor at the University of Alabama. His primary research interest concerns the transformations of the ancient complex societies in the context of the Maya civilization. He has been relying on a combination of archaeological, textual, and visual data to explore the indigenous concepts of place, memory, and identity, as well as specific historical trajectories of individual polities and broader regional networks. The field component of the project has been centered on the region of the ancient cities of Holmul and Naranjo in Guatemala.

# FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

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**Joanne Baron**, Bard Early Colleges

*8,000 Sky Gods and Earth Gods: Patron Deities and Rulership across the Classic and Postclassic Maya Lowlands*

During the Classic Period, the veneration of patron deities—gods of particular kingdoms or regions— played an important role in ritual life in both the northern and southern lowlands. Sustained by the offerings of their communities, these gods were believed to inhabit physical effigies that brought success in war and oversaw the passage of time. Seeking to bolster their claims to authority and rights to resources, rulers emphasized their special relationship with these gods and even introduced new ones, especially in times of civil upheaval or political rivalry. Patron deity veneration appears to have survived the Terminal Classic period, as communities undergoing dramatic political and demographic changes continued to look to these gods as a source of identity and authority. Yet during the Postclassic period, both the northern and southern lowlands saw a decentralization of these religious practices, reflected in the archaeological record and, eventually, the accounts of Spanish chroniclers. While maintaining some continuities with the past, the veneration of local gods shifted to accommodate new political strategies and identities.

**Joanne Baron** is Assistant Professor of global social sciences for Bard Early Colleges and a consulting scholar with the University of Pennsylvania Museum. Her research investigates Classic Maya political strategies, including the manipulation of patron deity cults by Maya rulers to advance their political aims, both within their own communities and with their rivals. She has carried out archaeological research in northwestern Peten since 2008, first in her doctoral work at La Corona, and now as the director of the La Florida Archaeology Project. This project investigates the rise of a Late Classic kingdom along one of the most important Maya trade routes—the San Pedro Martir River. Her study of Classic Maya patron deities, *Patron Gods and Patron Lords*, was published in 2016. Her most recent research focuses on the role of chocolate and textiles in the Maya economy, and the political machinations that resulted in their adoption as currency in the 7th century.

# FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

*A Dumbarton Oaks Symposium*

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**William Ringle**, Davidson College

*Masked Intentions: The Expression of Leadership in Northern Yucatan*

The northern Maya lowlands presents the paradox of monumental architecture as early and impressive as any in the Maya lowlands contrasting with ethnohistorical accounts insisting on the late introduction of kingship from elsewhere, probably during the Terminal Classic period. Most famous are the arrivals of ‘Mexican’ groups such as the Itza, Canul, and Xiu, but other stories mention migrations from within the Maya lowlands. The relative poverty (and obscurity) of the epigraphic record provides little help in resolving this stark contradiction, but does indicate a further paradox in that several Classic-period glyphic titles and honorifics are lost by the Late Postclassic, while conversely titles of the latter period, such as *halach winik* and *batab*, are innovations not present in the inscriptions. These disjunctions contrast with clear continuities in the way kingship was represented and housed, paralleling deeper continuities in domestic life. This contribution examines why the political landscape of the north provided the key bridge between the worlds of the Classic and Postclassic, especially in light of recent discussions of “stranger kings,” collective action, and *poder compartido*.

**William Ringle** received his PhD from Tulane University and then became a member of the Anthropology Department at Davidson College from 1986-2019. His research has focused on the archaeology of northern Yucatan. Between 1984-1999, he co-directed the Ek Balam (Yucatan) project with George J. Bey, and since 2000 has been a co-director of the Bolonchen Regional Archaeological Project with Tomás Gallareta Negrón and Bey. His interests include settlement and landscape archaeology, mapping (particularly digital applications), early urbanism and political organization, and Mesoamerican iconography. Currently, Dr. Ringle is conducting settlement studies in the Valle de Yaxhom, within the Puuc region, focusing on the integration of lidar data and ground survey, and their implications for land use. He also has a strong interest in the development of Mesoamerican internationalism during the Terminal Classic/Epiclassic period, particularly as manifested at Chichen Itza and in the Puuc region of Yucatan.

## FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

*A Dumbarton Oaks Symposium*

March 25-27, 2021

**John F. Chuchiak IV**, Missouri State University

*Denying the Rights of 'Natural Lords': Maya Struggles for Rewards and Recognition in Colonial Yucatan, 1550–1750*

In Mesoamerica, many indigenous noble allies during the Spanish Conquest applied directly to the Spanish crown for the granting of a coat of arms or other privileges. In this presentation, the author presents and analyzes the historical and social reasons behind the indigenous Maya nobility's efforts at achieving recognition of their loyal services. The paper will attempt to answer the central question of why the Spanish Crown refused to recognize loyal Maya Indigenous allies in the Yucatan Peninsula with concessions of legitimate coats of arms. Similarly, this analysis will reveal how those loyal Maya allies reacted to this situation and how the Maya nobility in response decided to manipulate the heraldic imagery and symbolism of these emblems of royal privilege and design and clandestinely use apocryphal shield images that they appropriated from their own knowledge of Spanish Heraldry. Ultimately, this contribution aspires to suggest a new framework for analyzing both the successes and failures of other Indigenous Mesoamerican peoples in their own attempts to receive official recognition of their valuable services in the conquest of the New World.

**John F. Chuchiak IV** is Distinguished Professor of Colonial Latin American History, Director of the Honors College, Director of the Latin American, Caribbean, and Hispanic Studies program, and Rich and Doris Young Endowed Professor at Missouri State University. He is a corresponding member of both the Mexican Academy of History and the Guatemalan Academy of Geography and History. Among his publications are numerous books and articles on colonial Maya ethnohistory and the history of the Mexican Inquisition, including: *El castigo y la reprensión: el juzgado del Provisorato de Indios y la extirpación de la idolatría maya en el obispado de Yucatán, 1563-1763* (UNAM, forthcoming); *Text and Context: Analyzing Colonial Yucatec Maya Texts and Literature in Diachronic Perspective*, (with Antje Gunsenheimer and Tsubasa Okoshi Harada, 2009); *The Inquisition in New Spain, 1536–1820* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); *Los Edictos de fe del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición de la Nueva España* (co-author Luis René Guerrero Galván, 2018); and *The Spanish Inquisition: Fact and Fiction* (forthcoming, 2021). Currently, he is completing a book entitled *Unlikely Allies: Mayas, Spaniards and Pirates in Colonial Yucatán, 1550-1750* on the role of Maya militias in colonial defenses against piracy in colonial Yucatan.

# FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

*A Dumbarton Oaks Symposium*

March 25-27, 2021

**Maxime Lamoureux-St-Hilaire**, Davidson College

**Patricia McAnany**, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

## *Relatively Strange Rulers: Relational Politics in the Southern and Northern Maya Lowlands*

Royal courts of the Southern and Northern Maya Lowlands often are described in contrasting terms. Yet, despite considerable linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, their governing structures were mutually intelligible. Here, the relational dynamics articulating Lowland Maya royals, their allies, and vassals are modeled by drawing upon ethnohistory and comparative Medieval literature. Concepts proposed by Graeber and Sahlins—stranger king/queenship, upward nobility, and galactic mimesis—are examined for their utility in understanding pan-Maya political practices such as diacritical feasting, taxes and tribute, the distribution of regalia, and marital alliances. These practices—which strengthen and expand the networks of rulers and their families—are juxtaposed with other practices—such as veneration of patron deities—that emphasize intra-polity solidarity. The material remains of these large and small-scale interactional practices are archaeologically observable within and around regal palaces, in spaces designed for the exchange and accumulation of information and goods. By focusing on cogent politics and their pragmatic materialization, this paper advocates for a shared vocabulary and syntax for modeling Lowland Maya politics.

**Maxime Lamoureux-St-Hilaire** is Visiting Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Davidson College, Editor-in-Chief of *The Mayanist* journal, and co-organizer of the Maya at the Playa and Maya at the Lago Conferences. He obtained his PhD from Tulane University and his MA from Trent University. He has done fieldwork in Belize, Guatemala, Mexico, Honduras, the United States and Québec. His research focuses on political landscapes, regal palaces, GIS, and geoarchaeology. In particular, he is interested in the structure of Classic Maya regimes and the architectural institutions which articulated these ancient political communities. He recently published a co-edited volume entitled *Detachment from Place: Beyond an Archaeology of Settlement Abandonment* (2020). He has published in *Latin American Antiquity*, *Ancient Mesoamerica*, and *Geoarchaeology*. He wrote most of his dissertation, *Palatial Politics: The Classic Maya Royal Court of La Corona, Guatemala* at Dumbarton Oaks, as a Junior Research Fellow in 2017-2018.

# FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

*A Dumbarton Oaks Symposium*

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**Traci Ardren**, University of Miami

## *Strange and Familiar Queens at Maya Royal Courts*

Royal Maya women played much more diverse roles than just marrying the king and producing heirs. Recent scholarship has acknowledged the importance of female patronage in sustaining a dynasty.

Anthropological studies of queenly influence show it is always contingent and situated at the (often) paradoxical intersection of gender and power. Classic Maya queens were relatively common, but their roles varied tremendously across the polities of the lowlands, leaving behind a wide variety of data from which to explore the material and ideological ramifications of their presence in Classic society. Their role in the reproduction of dynastic heirs has overshadowed an equally potent participation in political and cosmological reproduction. The stranger-queen is a particularly interesting phenomenon in the Classic period and will be a primary focus of this presentation. High-status women who traveled to marry and live in distant polities are known from many sites, and recall the observation of Marshall Sahlins, “the remarkably common fact that the great chiefs and kings of political society are not of the people they rule” (Sahlins 1985:78). These remarkable women inverted gendered norms in order to recreate order (in the form of dynastic success) out of chaos. Maya conceptualizations of power accommodated the stranger-queen, who through her embodiment of foreign legitimacy, could birth or secure a dynasty and thus uphold her role as semi-divine.

**Traci Ardren** is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Miami and received her PhD from Yale University. Her research focuses on issues of identity and other forms of symbolic representation in the archaeological record, especially the ways in which differences are explained through gender. Dr. Ardren is co-director of the Proyecto de Interacción Política del Centro de Yucatán, at the Classic Maya site of Yaxuna, in Yucatan, Mexico where she investigates the ways ancient road systems allowed for the flow of information and ideas as well as how culinary tourism and modern foodways intersect. She grew up in and around the Ringling Museum of Art and the many ways in which objects are allowed to convey our wants and needs is a lifelong fascination.

## FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

*A Dumbarton Oaks Symposium*

March 25-27, 2021

**Jaime Awe**, Northern Arizona University

**Christophe Helmke**, University of Copenhagen

**Claire Ebert**, University of Pittsburgh

**Julie Hoggarth**, Baylor University

*Le Roi est Mort, Vive le Roi: Examining the Rise, Apogee, and Decline of Maya Kingship in the Belize River Valley*

The institution of Maya kingship has a long and dynamic history in western Belize, providing us with a unique opportunity to examine the rise, apogee, and eventual decline of kingship in this subregion of the Maya lowlands. Starting in the Middle to Late Preclassic period, leaders in Maya communities began to appropriate religion and ideological symbols to legitimize their elevated social, political and divine statuses. Elite links to supernatural forces are particularly evident in the arrangement of burials, and with corresponding features that associate fledgling rulers with the maize gods. In the Late Preclassic to Classic period, burials and their associated grave goods continued to be employed as important status markers, though much of the symbolism associated with divine rulership was eventually transferred to stelae, altars, and monumental architecture. This pattern endured into the ninth century when it was critically impacted by the decline of both major and minor polities in the region. Despite the disintegration of royal power, however, our evidence suggests that the few courts that temporarily survived this societal decline made every effort to cling to the past through their attempts to perpetuate traditional Classic period symbols and traditions associated with the institution of kingship. Besides discussing the evidence for these evolutionary changes, this paper also serves to highlight differences in both the development and manifestation of kingly institutions in western Belize and the northern Maya lowlands.

**Jaime Awe** is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Northern Arizona University and Emeritus of the Belize Institute of Archaeology. His multidisciplinary research focuses on questions concerning human-environment interaction, the rise of cultural complexity, and the factors that impacted the rise, apogee, and decline of Maya civilization. Awe also invests considerable professional efforts in the conservation and management of Belize's tangible cultural heritage, public archaeology, and heritage education.

**Christophe Helmke** is Associate Professor of American Indian Languages and Cultures at the Institute of Cross-cultural and Regional Studies at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. He holds a PhD in Archaeology from University College London. He teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on the archaeology, epigraphy, iconography and languages of Mesoamerica. Besides Maya archaeology and epigraphy, his primary research interests include the Pre-Columbian use of caves, Mesoamerican writing systems and rock art as well as comparative Amerindian mythology.

**Claire Ebert** is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh. Her research focuses on the complex dynamics between people and their environments including human adaptation to climatic and ecological change. She is particularly interested in the emergence of complexity among the earliest Mesoamerican agricultural communities during the Formative period. Her current research projects include exploring the stable isotope ecology of agriculture in western Belize, the role of diet in resilience in early Maya society, lidar remote sensing analyses and survey in the Belize River Valley, and pottery and obsidian geochemical sourcing analyses.

**Julie Hoggarth** is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Baylor University. She conducts research on identifying the timing and processes of the breakdown in political systems and demographic decline at the end of the Classic period in the Belize River Valley. Her research fuses archaeological investigations with demography, history, geography, and other fields and is strongly focused on chronology-building. She is also working on comparative archaeology projects on human-environment interactions in North America, South America, and Southeast Asia.

# FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

*A Dumbarton Oaks Symposium*

March 25-27, 2021

**Shanti Morell-Hart**, McMaster University

## *Maya Gastropolitik: Tactics, Strategies, and Entrapment*

Gastropolitik threaded through ancient Maya statecraft from the earliest nascent cities through the arrival of Spaniards. Across Maya courts, rulers were 'eating to make friends, and eating to make enemies.' Beyond famines and feasting, food politics was manifested in tributary offerings, trade goods, mobilized labor, appeals to deities, and basic everyday subsistence. Paleoethnobotanical and faunal evidence, iconographic representations, and ethnohistoric documents are brought to bear on gastropolitics and ancient Maya rulership. Drawing on established theories of foodways and gastropolitics, I address the relationship between eating and sociality. I also consider the flow of food practice, focusing on tactics and strategies in the dynamics of realpolitik. How did Maya rulers craft and maintain social distinctions through food—trading ingredients, performing consumption, ritualizing offerings, enunciating tastes, managing agricultural labor, and ensuring diplomacy? How did manifestations of gastropolitik differ from north to south, and from Preclassic to Postclassic? How did the establishment and maintenance of rulership affect gastronomic dynamics, and how did gastronomic practice undergird and undermine rulership?

**Shanti Morell-Hart** is Associate Professor of Anthropology at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. She centers her research on gastronomic heritage, the origins and impacts of agriculture in the development of societies, the contributions of plants to ritualized activity, the range and diversity of ancient botanical practices, and transformations in human-environment dynamics over time. Methodologically, Dr. Morell-Hart employs paleoethnobotany, archival research, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) modeling. She has engaged in funded research in Mexico (Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Quintana Roo), as well as projects in Honduras and Guatemala. She is currently completing a book titled "Gastronomic Heritage: Stakes in Antiquity" (McGill-Queen's University Press) that investigates the role of archaeogastronomy in narratives of food security, revitalization, and resilience.



# FACES OF RULERSHIP IN THE MAYA REGION

*A Dumbarton Oaks Symposium*

March 25-27, 2021

**Christina Halperin**, University of Montreal

## *Temporalities of Kingly Costume in the Maya Lowlands*

Part of the enduring power of Maya kingship was its ability to embody the memory, experience, and movement of time. While much is known about the dynastic histories of Maya kings and queens and their memorialization in stone, this paper explores the ways in which kingly costume elements embodied different temporalities that allowed the ruler to carry-on the weight of lengthy dynastic tradition, to mark coming of age in a personal narrative, and to embody the fleeting fertility of a given season. Such temporalities are explored through both quintessential and well-studied costuming, such as jade jewelry, and poorly known but symbolically rich costuming, such as feather capes and flowers. These costume elements did not remain in fashion for all time periods, and thus, their exploration also allows for an understanding of how particular types of histories are not only made, but also rejected, forgotten, and reworked.

**Christina Halperin** is Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Université de Montréal. She is currently the director of the Proyecto Arqueológico Ucanal in Petén, Guatemala (2014-present), which investigates changes in urbanism and social relations during the Classic to Postclassic period transition. Her research examines ancient Maya politics from the perspectives of household political economies, gender, materiality, and everyday life. She has published extensively on topics such as ceramic figurines, textile production, chemical analysis of ceramics, architecture, and landscape archaeology. Her book *Maya Figurines: Intersections between State and Household* (2014) was one of the first books to comprehensively investigate figurines across the Southern Maya Lowlands. She is also the primary editor of the books, *Vernacular Architecture of the Pre-Columbian Americas* (2017) and *Mesoamerican Figurines: Small-Scale Indices of Large-Scale Social Phenomena* (2009), which was awarded a CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title.

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**Antonio Benavides Castillo**, Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia, Campeche

*Jaina Figurines: Insights into Representations and Social Linkages on the Western Side of the Maya World*

Archaeologically excavated figurines from the island of Jaina total around 580 items. Here we do not consider those objects allegedly from the island, but only those with an archaeological provenience on the island. In addition to the large corpus of Jaina reproductions, archaeological figurines very similar or practically identical to those from Jaina have been reported from settlements of central Veracruz and the coasts of Tabasco, Campeche and Yucatan. Jaina figurines encompass significant variation, not only in the two manufacturing processes (molded and hand-made) used for their construction but also in dimensions, decoration, sex, and other kinds of representation. These small objects reveal how the ancient inhabitants considered themselves, but also how they were seen by other ethnic groups. Their clothing and ornaments speak to us about their ranks and activities. Most figurines represent adults who embody Maya ideals of beauty (with some significant deviations). The island of Jaina was humanly constructed and yet several field seasons have yet to discover a ceramic kiln. Significantly, paste analyses of figurine samples through neutron-activation (conducted by investigators from the Anthropology Department of the Natural History Museum, Smithsonian Institution) have revealed different sources for the raw materials.

**Antonio Benavides Castillo** is research professor at the Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia, Campeche, which he led as director in 1987 and 2016-2018. He received his doctoral degree in Mesoamerican Studies from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. He began his career as an archaeologist at the sites of Coba, Ecab, Tulum, and Xelha in Quintana Roo and then worked at Chacmultún, Oxkintok, and Kom in Yucatan. Since 1985, he has directed research, excavation and consolidation projects in Campeche at the sites of Edzna, Jaina, Xcalumkin, Uxul, Dzehkabtun, and Santa Rosa Xtampak. He also directed a maintenance program at scarcely known sites like Sabana Piletas, Chunchimay, Ichmac, Ramonal, Puerto Rico, Hwasil, Xcochkax, Xuelen, and Chelemi. He is the author of several books, many specialized and popular articles, and has given many lectures. Dr. Benavides has also been involved in the foundation and administration of several regional museums.

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**Scott Hutson**, University of Kentucky

*Discussant*

**Scott Hutson** is Professor of Anthropology and of Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies at the University of Kentucky. He began his scholarly career as an archaeologist in Oaxaca, Mexico, but, thanks to Tim Beach and Bruce Dahlin, he got permanently sidetracked into studying the ancient Maya. His recent books include *The Ancient Urban Maya* (2016), *Ancient Maya Commerce: Multi-disciplinary Research at Chunchucmil* (2017) and, co-edited with Traci Ardren, *The Maya World* (2020). His most-cited papers came out over 20 years ago and focus on techno-shamanism.