

LACANDON PATHS TO THE UNDERWORLD

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Abstract

The article is based on fieldwork realized by the author as a long term research stays among the Lacandon communities of Chiapas from 1999, divided between various seasons, until 2010. The present study is focused on Lacandon funerary practices and ideas pertaining to the afterlife. Analysing mythological narratives and ritual practices, the author has recognized four Lacandon mortuary landscapes: The Underworld of the death god *Kisin*, the Sun World of the supreme god *Hachäkyum*, the Water World of the rain god *Mensäbäk* and the World of pine-tree forests of the god-creator *K'akoch*. As an explanation of this plurality the author argues against "contamination" of some central perspective and instead suggests the existence of these ideas alongside the same place and in the same time, as in the past.

Keywords: Maya, Lacandon, Underworld, soul, afterlife, eschatology

Resumen

El artículo se basa en el trabajo de campo realizado por el autor como una investigación de largo tiempo enfocada en las comunidades lacandonas de Chiapas y dividida en varias temporadas, desde el año 1999 hasta el 2010. El estudio presente se enfoca en las prácticas funerarias e ideas lacandonas sobre la vida eterna. Analizando las narraciones mitológicas y rituales que se practica, el autor reconoce cuatro paraísos, inframundos o destinos de los muertos: El Inframundo del dios de los muertos *Kisin*, el Mundo Solar del dios supremo *Hachäkyum*, El Mundo del Agua del dios de la lluvia *Mensäbäk* y el Mundo de los Bosques de pino *ocote* del dios creador *K'akoch*. Para explicar la pluralidad de estas ideas el autor no acepta el punto de vista de la "contaminación" de una perspectiva original sino presupone la existencia de varias concepciones una al lado de otra en el mismo lugar y en el mismo tiempo.

Palabras clave: Maya, lacandonas, inframundo, alma, vida eterna, escatología

Today, the Lacandon number around 1000 persons and they represent a very small but well-known Maya community in the Yucatec linguistic family. The community in general is divided into a Northern and Southern group, which are different from each other in physiognomy and dialect. The major parts of the evidence in my contribution comes from the North group, especially from Naha, where there are two principal clans called *onen* as subjects of animal lineage groups: *Ma'ax*, 'spider monkey' and *K'ek'en*, 'white-lipped peccary' (Boremansse 1998: 101-104).

The southern group was hardly influenced by Protestantism in the latter half of 20th century, but until the end of this period the north group retained its independence from direct influences of