
Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
<i>Foreword by Anthony Aveni</i>	xiii
1. Introduction	1
2. Aspects of Ancient Maya Intellectual Culture	13
3. Clandestine Compilations and the Colonial Dialogue	33
4. Creation and Apocalypse: The Katun 11 Ahau Myth	53
5. Theogony, Cosmology, and Language in the Ritual of the Angels	85
6. The Creation of the First People and the Origin of Suffering	121
7. The Calendar and the Catechism	153
8. "In Whatever Way It Is Chronicled"	179
Appendix: Cross-Reference of Material in the Katun 11 Ahau Creation Myth Shared by Two or More Redactions	185
<i>References</i>	201
<i>Index</i>	223



C H A P T E R O N E

Introduction

There is no Classical Yucatecan Maya word for “myth.” But around the close of the seventeenth century, an anonymous Maya scribe penned what he called *u kahlay cab tu kinil* (“the world history of the era”) before Christianity came to the Peten, the land of the Maya. In this he collected numerous accounts of the cyclical destruction and reestablishment of the cosmos; the origins of gods, human beings, and the rituals and activities upon which their relationship depends; and finally the dawn of the Sun and with it the sacred calendar Maya diviners used (and in some places still use today) to make sense of humans’ place in the otherwise inscrutable march of time.

Today, we call these accounts “creation myths” and refer to their collector as a “mythographer.” But for the Maya scribe who brought together this compilation, these accounts were drawn from two native genres: *kahlay*, meaning “annals” or “history,” and *kay*, meaning “song.” This compilation of myths itself eventually became part of a larger handwritten copybook, occupying pages 42 to 63 of the colonial manuscript known today as the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel.¹

Balam or “Jaguar” was the surname of a *chilan*, a pre-Hispanic oracle or “prophet” from the town of Maní in the northwestern portion of the Yucatán peninsula, in what is today southeastern Mexico. In Colonial times (ca. AD 1540–1821) this Chilam Balam was believed to have foretold the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors and the new religion they aggressively promoted, Christianity. Chumayel is the name of the particular Maya community, or *cah*, to which this specific copybook belonged. Located to the northeast of Maní, Chumayel is one of many Maya communities that had handwritten manuscripts called the Books of Chilam Balam. These books were compiled, copied, and recopied throughout the Colonial period. The Books of Chilam Balam are usually distinguished according to the town in which they were first encountered by scholars, such as Chumayel, Kaua, Chan Kan, and Ixil. Two other such documents are referred to by the names of the scholars who collected them, the Códice Pérez (after Juan Pío Pérez) and the Morley Manuscript (after Sylvanus Morley). These manuscripts contain materials on topics as diverse as cosmology, history, calendrics, astronomy, divination, medicine, religious doctrine, ritual, riddles, and tales drawn from both Mesoamerican and Renaissance European traditions, of which only a few texts are explicitly attributed to the books’ namesake, the Chilam Balam.² These community manuscripts are written primarily in the Classical Yucatecan Maya language using a modified version of the Latin alphabet, although isolated words and short sections in Nahuatl (Aztec), Spanish, or Latin occasionally appear, sometimes garbled because of the authors’ imperfect bilingualism. These books served as a major medium for recorded tradition once overzealous Christian missionaries had seized or burned many native books and had dismantled the temple-schools that in pre-Hispanic times taught hieroglyphic writing, calligraphy, and the Maya arts and sciences (Landa 1978 [ca. 1566]:12–13, 82).

The Books of Chilam Balam are an indispensable source of Maya literature and lore. As the *Eddas* are to knowledge of pre-Christian Norse culture, so these Classical Yucatecan Maya language manuscripts are to our understanding of this great Native American civilization. Like the K’iche’ (Quiche) Maya narratives contained in another Colonial period alphabetic manuscript, the *Popol Vuh* (D. Tedlock 1985, 1996; Colop 1999, 2008; Christenson 2003a, 2003b), much within these Classical Yucatecan Maya texts has its roots in ancient Maya civilization. Maya arts and sciences flourished during what archaeologists call the Classic period (ca. AD 250–900), and despite major societal upheavals they continued to be maintained throughout the Postclassic period (AD 900–ca. 1540), as evidenced by the few illuminated barkpaper codices that have survived, despite the

unforgiving tropical environment and their seizures at the hands of religious zealots.

However, also like the Old World *Eddas* and the New World *Popol Vuh*, these Classical Yucatecan Maya texts reached their present form during a period in which many indigenous elites had recently converted to Christianity. The extant cosmogonic texts contained in the Books of Chilam Balam represent different historical stages of the colonial redaction of mythic narratives, stages spanning the entire length of the Colonial period and drawing on traditions of knowledge from both sides of the Atlantic that predate the colonial encounter. Since scribes not only were guardians of tradition but served or were themselves elites, obvious Christian references appear in the mythological texts. Furthermore, because the Franciscan missionaries who first evangelized the Yucatec Maya less often accommodated to local culture by assigning indigenous terms to Christian theological concepts than did the Dominicans who transmitted alphabetic writing among the K'iche' Maya (D. Tedlock 1985), the creation texts of the Books of Chilam Balam contain more obvious Spanish loanwords than the *Popol Vuh*. These historical contingencies of language use are only one of several challenges facing interpreters of Classical Yucatecan Maya creation myths.

DECIPHERING THE MYTHS OF THE BOOKS OF CHILAM BALAM

The last several decades have witnessed revolutions in our understanding of ancient and colonial Maya societies. The decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic writing has opened an unparalleled vista onto the world of the ancient Maya (see Coe 1999 for one history of Maya epigraphy). Although attracting less publicity, the emergence of the New Philology in postconquest Mesoamerican ethnohistory has resulted in a flurry of high-quality scholarship based on indigenous language sources (see Restall 2003 for a review of the development of research in this area). In the midst of these breakthroughs, less emphasis has been placed on the Books of Chilam Balam than in previous generations. As the late Munro Edmonson (1982: xiv) remarked, the language of the Books of Chilam Balam often presents considerable challenges to the translator, resulting in considerable variation from version to version. Scholarly translations in English of these documents go back to the pioneering work of Daniel Brinton (1882), and the entire Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel alone has appeared in two, at times very divergent, English translations. The edition by Ralph Roys (1967) was first published in 1933, followed many decades afterward by Edmonson's (1986) own poetic translation.³ Mexican scholars such as

Introduction

Barrera Vásquez and Rendón (1948) attempted to overcome some of these challenges facing translators by positing the existence of an original *wr*-text reconstructed from the various redactions available across different books of Chilam Balam. While a productive approach, this method tends to overlook the possibility of meaningful variation by treating alternate redactions as corruptions of the “original” text or ascribing alternate readings to scribal error. Given the challenges of arriving at accurate, readable editions of these documents, book-length studies of Maya myth and cosmology in recent decades have suggested that mythic literature from colonial Yucatán is either too sparse (Taube 1993:67) or too opaque (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:45) to figure significantly in their diachronic investigations.

Even with accurate translations, the significance of a given text is not necessarily clear, as the authors wrote not for us but assumed an audience familiar with their metaphors, mythic characters, and motifs. Also, because of the environment of suppression and the clandestine nature of these manuscripts, their transmission, and their performance, we often lack the reliable dates of composition otherwise available for the official documents written by colonial Maya scribes, such as testaments, or the readily available dates of publication of Mayan-language Christian doctrinal works. Such hurdles hinder the kind of chronological precision one conducting an ethnohistorical study of the composition of creation myths in the Books of Chilam Balam would like to have. In its absence, scholars endeavoring not only to translate but to interpret these Classical Yucatecan myths in their sociohistorical context must take into account what evidence is available in order to access the local meanings, the process of transmission, and performative contexts of the myths. What I adopt here is a case study approach focusing on features internal to the individual texts (deixis, reported speech, evidentiality) as well as intertextuality. By *intertextuality*, I am referring to the interrelationship between these myth texts and other texts that formed the basic resources and shared knowledge necessary for both the composition and interpretation of that text by their authors and their audiences. Intertextuality is conceived of differently at various points in this study depending on the case at hand, as broadly as allusion and shared motifs and as narrowly as the systematic comparison of multiple redactions of the same text or the usages of the same word or phrase between roughly contemporaneous documents. As we will see, the Maya maestros responsible for compiling, guarding, and performing the Books of Chilam Balam did so by drawing on a web of knowledge that had its origins in Classic Maya societies and the Postclassic Mesoamerican world system, a network that in some ways expanded as

the Maya were increasingly integrated into the Spanish colonial empire. This web of knowledge consisted of traditions of oral and written texts and iconography deriving from Maya and Central Mexican sources (embodying perhaps even older, pan-Mesoamerican themes), as well as popular European language writings and Christian doctrinal works composed in Classical Yucatecan Maya.

So in preparing the translations of Classical Yucatecan creation myths that form the basis for the interpretations in this work, I first rendered the myths in lines that accord with the natural discourse features of the language, such as the initial particles and terminal enclitics that mark where an individual utterance begins and/or ends in Classical Yucatecan. This ethnoepic method for discerning line division based on particles was pioneered by Dell Hymes (1980, 1981), who applied it to native North American Indian texts. Although punctuation marks do exist in the original manuscript (Gordon 1993 [1913]), the use of punctuation throughout the manuscript is inconsistent, sometimes disregarding not only clause but even morpheme divisions. Therefore, I have not systematically relied on it in determining line divisions, although I do believe the patterns of punctuation in these documents deserve further research. I have departed from Ralph Roys's (1967) practice of providing the text in blocks of prose, for I believe this obscures for the reader those poetic elements such as parallelisms, chiasmi, couplets, and triplets, and so forth that are present and would have been heard in the myths' performance. At the same time, I have not straightjacketed the entire text into a sequence of parallel lines, as Edmonson's (1982, 1986) translations do. I believe my work is closest to the format employed by Bricker and Miram (2002) in their annotated translation of the Book of Chilam Balam of Kaua, whose line divisions enable the reader to pick out poetic devices where present without forcing the entire composition into an artificial model. The resulting transcription and translation is the text of Classical Yucatecan creation myths that provides the basis for the interpretive essays that make up this study.

In this work, I apply an interpretive approach that addresses the emergence of Classical Yucatecan creation myths as Maya peoples dealt not just materially but intellectually with the colonial situation. The intellectual resources the Maya had to draw upon included their access to both popular European and Christian sources as well as the cosmogonic traditions resulting from their previous position in the Postclassic Mesoamerican world system. Oriented in part by the works of Mikhail Bakhtin (1968, 1981, 1984) and the field of dialogical anthropology (Tedlock and Mannheim 1995), I am concerned with how the authors and redactors of Classical Yucatecan Maya cosmogonies give (and suppress) voice and how these voices reveal

different discursive positions relative to received and emerging mythological traditions and the authors'/compilers' sense of identity. These colonial creation myths, neither precise replicas of pre-Hispanic belief nor confused compromises of European religion, themselves constituted the genesis of a heteroglot colonial world of novel cultural categories and possibilities.

I hope to shed light on both the diversity of Maya mythic traditions and the uniquely Maya discursive strategies emerging during the Colonial period. If Classical Yucatecan Maya myth has previously been considered too sparse or opaque for useful analysis, I suspect it is in part because many of our scholarly models are poorly suited for adequately addressing the *mélange* that makes up mythic discourses in colonial settings.

COSMOGONY AS DIALOGUE

Scholars have long considered how creation myths, as foundational stories, establish and/or reinforce other fundamental cultural categories, serving as a charter for the organization of society (Malinowski 1948) and the basis of a moral order (Lovin and Reynolds 1985). However, mythology typically has not been the anthropologist's first choice of phenomena to examine when addressing questions of cultural dynamics and hybridization. Often set apart from other cultural forms of discourse, myth and its kin ("world-view," "cosmology," "cultural logic") traditionally rested beyond history in that garden preserve of *la pensée sauvage* kept by academic disciplines involved (more self-consciously to be certain) in mulching alterity. Myth in anthropology, like poetry in Bakhtin's sociological stylistics, is too often considered to be "by convention suspended from any mutual interaction with alien discourse, any allusion to alien discourse," and only to "reflect lengthier social processes, i.e., those tendencies in social life requiring centuries to unfold" (Bakhtin 1981:285, 300).

In recent decades, however, several studies have undermined the old myth/history dichotomy (e.g., Bricker 1981; Guss 1981; Sahlins 1981; Taussig 1984). Furthermore, multiple mythic discourses exist simultaneously in many, if not all, societies. From ancient Mesopotamia to pre-imperial China and contemporary Guatemala, multiple cosmogonies have existed side by side within a single society, each discourse with its own system of categories and resultant behavioral norms and practices, either compatible or in competition (Lovin and Reynolds 1985). In the search for structural regularity, this privileging of centripetal forces, we have often defined our object in such a way that constructed variation is not as significant as structural regularity, blinding ourselves *a priori* to those centrifugal forces acting on culture. Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than

in the study of myth. Barth's (1987:8) critique of several anthropological approaches to myth and cosmology is that they are "linked with the premise of an encompassing logical order" and that "once this premise has been adopted, local variation becomes essentially uninteresting." Barth sees this as a problem of those approaches descended directly from either Durkheim or Lévi-Strauss; in other words, the assumptions of a great many anthropological approaches to myth and cosmology. Instead of operating at a level of abstraction in which "local variation must be reduced and controlled," Barth (1987:8) admonishes us that "we must always struggle to *get our ontological assumptions right*: to ascribe to our object of study only those properties and capabilities that we have reasonable ground to believe it to possess." Barth's (1987:84) own study focuses on the meaningful variation to be found in New Guinean Ok cosmologies when examined "as a living tradition of knowledge[,] . . . allow[ing] us to see the events taking place in a tradition as incidents of the very processes that shape that tradition." Barth found that different "schools of thought" within Ok villages no more lack meaningful variation than do the different schools of British social anthropology (Barth 1987:18–19); both are the effects of people historically transmitting (perhaps radically) different traditions of knowing about a shared object. For example, according to Barth's argument, it would be as indefensible empirically to analyze Ok traditions only in terms of their common denominators as it would be to lump together the theoretical arguments of Radcliffe-Brown and Leach on the basis that both address the subject of kinship. Barth (1987:85) does recognize that the specific method employed in his monograph is best restricted to variation within relatively isolated autochthonous cultures ("an exploration of meanings in the folk tradition of a society which has long been incorporated in the economic and political world system would have to proceed along very different lines"). Nonetheless, his focus on the social processes of knowledge transmission, and embracing rather than suppressing messy variation, is a much needed corrective to previous approaches to myth.

The difficulty anthropologists and other scholars have had in arriving at adequate interpretations of myth and culture change, and the Classical Yucatecan Maya cosmogonies of the Books of Chilam Balam in particular, may in fact result from an intellectual heritage we share with the original Spanish colonial missionaries to the Americas. This intellectual heritage is to be found in our theories of language, society, and culture. Bakhtin (1981:271) argues that the poetics of unitary language (and therefore of structuralism) are historically those of "Aristotelian poetics, the poetics of Augustine, the poetics of the medieval church," and the scholarship of European nationalism. He vividly describes the ends of such unitary

Introduction

linguistic projects as “the supplanting of languages, their enslavement, the process of illuminating them with the True Word, the incorporation of barbarians and lower social strata into a unitary language of culture and truth.” The beginning of the Spanish colonization of the Americas in 1492 was accompanied in that same year by the publication of Antonio de Nebrija’s *Gramática Castellana* as part of the Spanish Crown’s program of creating a nation from the linguistic, religious, and ethnic diversity of the newly reconquered Iberian Peninsula. Following Bakhtin’s critique, in structural linguistics and anthropology we can perceive the remnants of the colonial project embedded in our theoretical assumptions even as we, as scholars, seek to understand those elements of human diversity repressed under the colonial project (see also Mignolo 2003).

The present study attempts to address the *mélange* of mythological discourses apparent in colonial settings. I attempt to incorporate Barth’s theoretical critique by approaching creation myth not so much as an object but as an *interactional* communicative event, both sociologically and historically. I follow Bakhtin (1981:291) in asserting:

Thus at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs in the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These “languages” of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying “languages.”

In this study, I consider mythological texts as a species of discourse, by which cultural knowledge emerges during its negotiation via one or more *languages*, languages being historical and social verbal-ideological systems that may or may not coincide with our traditional concept of unitary “national” languages. A dialogical approach provides an alternative to the structural view of language and culture as unitary entities internalized in an individual whose unique expressions appear in practice. Instead of assuming meaning exists within the structure of a unitary language and the practice of a unitary individual, dialogical anthropology recognizes “the word in language is half someone else’s” and that “every utterance participates in the ‘unitary language’ (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces)” (Bakhtin 1981:272). Rather than taking the categories of things and persons simply as socially given, these categories are considered to be cultural phenomena. To be truly cultural,

they must be shared. And in practice, categories are shared to the extent their meanings are the subject of implicit or explicit negotiation among persons, of dialogue. As we shall see, a dialogical approach is particularly appropriate in the case of Classical Yucatecan Maya creation myths, which frequently employ the discursive strategy Bakhtin (1984:110) refers to as syncretism, “the juxtaposition of various points of view on a specific object.” By accounting for both centripetal and centrifugal forces in verbal-ideological life, a dialogic anthropology may proceed unencumbered by those philosophical categories underlying structural anthropology that are ill-equipped to account for the variation, heteroglossia, and syncretism so characteristic of colonial creations like the Maya myths in question.

CONTENT AND METHODOLOGY

In the chapters that follow, I have several related goals, for which I apply several related methods. I wish to ground both the cosmogonies (creation myths) and their interpretations in the changing sociohistorical circumstances from which the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel ultimately emerged. Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of ancient Maya society and cosmology and presents an argument for the existence of two metaphysical discourses discernable from extant Maya hieroglyphic texts. Prominent in this argument is the couplet metaphor *chab akab*, which I translate as “genesis and darkness,” a phrase that refers to the creative power of penitential sacrifice and gift-giving. This phrase is part of the discourse of ancient Maya theogonies (myths of the birth of gods) and continued to be in use for more than a thousand years, where we will find it again in reference to sacrifice and the birth of gods in Classical Yucatecan accounts.

Moving forward from the pre-Hispanic documentation of Maya cosmogonies, Chapter 3 places the creation myths of the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel in the context of the social and cultural upheavals of the Colonial period. With indigenous institutions of religion and learning suppressed or destroyed, the legend of the Chilam Balam provided a quasi-legitimate voice in which newly Christianized Maya elites could attempt to continue their literary tradition and maintain their intellectual culture. The preface to the mythography in the Chumayel is analyzed in terms of what we can learn about the identities, motivations, and likely sociohistorical context of its compiler(s). Contemporaneous Maya- and Spanish-language sources are interrogated for what they can tell us about the transmission and performance of Classical Yucatecan creation myths. Finally, the relationship between Christian missionary works and the Books of Chilam Balam is discussed, with special emphasis on the anxiety of Christian authorities

about the existence of handwritten copybooks (*cartapacios*), like the Books of Chilam Balam, versus those printed works that were subject to oversight by the Inquisition.

Chapter 4 is the first of several concerned with the individual myths themselves that make up the Chumayel mythography. The Katun 11 Ahau myth is unique in the Chumayel mythography in having cognate versions in other Books of Chilam Balam. Comparisons among the different redactions are made not for the purpose of reconstructing an *ur*-text but for what this might tell us about the redactional history of the myth and the idiosyncrasies that mark the Chumayel redaction. Episodes in the myth are interpreted in light of Mesoamerican mythological motifs found in lowland Maya, highland Maya, Nahuatl, and Spanish sources. Finally, the distinctive eschatological frame that the Chumayel redaction of the Katun 11 Ahau myth contains is interpreted in light of the popular European apocalyptic literature known to have been translated into Classical Yucatecan Maya during the early Colonial period.

The creation myth of Chapter 5, the Ritual of the Angels, lacks extant variants like those available for the analysis of the Katun 11 Ahau myth. So instead its analysis focuses on what we can learn about the ritual context and transmission of the myth and its Maya-Christian cosmology and theology from the use of reported speech and markers of evidentiality internal to the text. Scholars have studied reported speech in Yucatec in particular (Lucy 1993; V. Bricker n.d.), and, more generally, reported speech is of special interest because of the importance often attributed to instances of divine speech in cosmogonies. God is frequently represented as the unique “NAME” or “WORD” in the Old World exegesis of Judeo-Christian cosmogonic traditions (Janowitz 1993) like those diffused by missionaries, and as we shall see, the name and speech of divinity are a pertinent issue raised in this colonial Maya theology as well. The text is also interpreted in light of near-contemporaneous Yucatec-language Christian doctrinal texts and reports of indigenous religious belief and practices by non-Maya clergy in order to establish the role of such a myth in the life of colonial Yucatec Maya communities.

The myth of Chapter 6 is introduced in the Chumayel manuscript by an anthropomorphic illustration of Death. This account addresses the creation of the First People and the origin of death and disaster as dramatized in the “Itzá” song of the collapse of the ancient city of Chichén Itzá. This narrative occasions a discussion of Colonial period Mayas’ approaches to suffering, illness, and death, as well as a critical evaluation of scholarly interpretations of indigenous ontologies during the pre-Hispanic and Colonial eras.

Chapter 7 analyzes the “Birth of the Uinal,” a cosmogonic “song” (*kay*) set within the “chronicling” (*tzol*) of the days of the 260-day Maya divinatory calendar, or *tzolkin*. In this text, the Maya myth-singer juxtaposes Maya and Christian cosmologies in a composition of beautiful syncretism, while simultaneously undermining the claims of some European clergy and catechism texts that divine truth is a monologue to the exclusion of Maya voices. Chapter 8 concludes with a reflection on dialogism in Classical Yucatecan Maya creation myths as well as suggestions for future research.

NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

As this study incorporates Maya texts in different languages and scripts from different time periods, determining how to consistently represent these in a way intelligible for audiences from different backgrounds has been a challenge. For the transliteration of hieroglyphic texts I have followed the guidelines of the series *Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing* (RRAMW, Number 15, May 1988). However, to facilitate comparison of the transcriptions of the language of the hieroglyphic texts with Colonial era Maya texts, I have adapted those transliterations to the modified orthography also used for Classical Yucatecan Maya alphabetic texts throughout:

b	voiced, glottalized bilabial stop
tz	voiceless, plain alveolar affricate
dz	voiceless, glottalized alveolar affricate
ch	voiceless, plain alveo-palatal affricate
ch	voiceless, glottalized alveo-palatal affricate
h	voiceless, laryngeal spirant
j	voiceless, velar spirant
c	voiceless, plain velar stop
k	voiceless, glottalized velar stop
l	voiced, alveolar lateral
m	voiced, bilabial nasal
n	voiced, alveolar nasal
p	voiceless, plain bilabial stop
p	voiceless, glottalized bilabial stop
z/s	voiceless, alveolar fricative
x	voiceless, alveo-palatal fricative
t	voiceless, plain alveolar stop
th	voiceless, glottalized alveolar stop
u/v	voiced, labiovelar glide
y	voiced, palatal glide
a	low, central, unrounded vowel

Introduction

e	low, front, unrounded vowel
i/y	high, front, unrounded vowel
o	low, back, rounded vowel
u	high, back, rounded vowel

Since a scholarly consensus regarding the significance of synharmony and disharmony in the ancient Maya script has yet to emerge at the time of this writing (V. Bricker 2004:1056; Houston, Stuart, and Robertson 2004; Lacadena and Wichmann 2004; Robertson et al. 2007), I refrain from imposing any particular proposal on transliterations of hieroglyphic texts contained herein. Furthermore, tone is not usually marked in Classical Yucatecan alphabetic texts and is therefore not represented in transcriptions of these texts either. Neither are vowel length and the glottal stop usually represented in Classical Yucatecan alphabetic texts; when a vowel is represented by two letters (*aa*, for example), this may represent either V^hV or a long vowel. Consonants *f*, *d*, *g*, and *ñ* occur in Spanish loans. Line divisions in the original manuscripts are marked by a slash mark (/). Transcriptions in this study utilize /y/ to represent the abbreviation of the Yucatec conjunction *yetel* ‘and’ that occurs frequently in the colonial documents.

The names of Guatemalan Maya ethnic and language groups in this text follow the orthography approved by the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala.

NOTES

1. Page number citations for the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel manuscript follow Gordon (1993 [1913]).

2. Restall (1997:chapter 21) refers to the Books of Chilam Balam as a “quasi-notarial genre,” meaning the language of the Books of Chilam Balam shares similarities with notarial genres such as titles and land records. This is certainly correct in the case of a few sections of the Books of Chilam Balam (like those cited in Restall 1998:chapter 7). However, given the wide diversity of materials actually contained in the Books of Chilam Balam, many with obviously closer links to other genres such as Christian doctrinal literature (e.g., see Knowlton 2008), it is clear Restall’s original and insightful analysis provides an important, but only partial, perspective of the genres that are part of these manuscripts.

3. Edmonson’s translation (1986) has been criticized on a number of counts (Hanks 1988).