

Professor Aleksandar Bošković took part at the 12th International Association for Comparative Mythology (IACM), held at the Tohoku University in Sendai (Japan) and on 2 June presented a paper on “Classic Maya myths and politics: Creation and destruction of the world.”



In his talk, Prof. Bošković pointed to the motifs of periodic destruction and creation of the world, characteristic for Mesoamerican ideologies, as well to the role played by the rulers. He showed examples of continuity (three structures series, as reference to the three thrones from the creation myth), but also warned about the dangers of the “direct historical approach.” The leading Maya art historian of the second half of the 20th century, George Kubler, proposed instead what he called (following Renaissance art historian Erwin Panofsky) an “intrinsic approach” – looking at images in the context where they originated, and trying to interpret them from that very same context. Panofsky insisted on the understanding of the particular imagery (iconology) as the basis of eventual understanding of its meaning in the wider context (iconography): “...the correct identification of motifs is the prerequisite of their correct iconographical analysis, so is the correct analysis of images, stories and allegories the prerequisite of their correct iconological interpretation” (1955: 32). The decipherment of ancient texts and fuller understanding of ancient Maya political history that followed in the last couple of decades supports this view. Furthermore, there is now also a rich body of material that points to a complexity that had to do with creation myths permeating different aspects of the Classic Maya life – and also having some very practical political (and historical) consequences.

