

The Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas

\*\*\* SSILA BULLETIN \*\*\*

An Information Service for SSILA Members

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233.0 SSILA Business

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\* Results of the 2005 SSILA elections

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Ninety-seven ballots were received by the announced deadline. Elected were:

Leslie Saxon, Vice President for 2006 and President-elect for 2007  
Patricia A. Shaw, Member-at-Large of the Executive Committee, 2006-08

Victor Golla, Secretary-Treasurer, 2006  
Alejandra Vidal, Member of the Nominating Committee, 2006-08.

\* Seifart wins Haas Book Award

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Frank Seifart, of Berlin, Germany, was presented with the 2005 Mary R. Haas Book Award at the January meeting in Albuquerque for his dissertation, "The Structure and Use of Shape-Based Noun Classes in Miraña (North West Amazon)". The selection committee described it as "a most thorough and impressive description of an important typological phenomenon in a little studied language, which is sure to be of interest both to specialists in Amazonian languages and to typologists and other general linguists. It will certainly help to advance the study of noun class and classifier systems worldwide." The committee also commended Seifart for the extensive (and doubtless occasionally difficult) field work, both conventional and experimental, on which the work was based.

Seifart was able to make last-minute arrangements to attend the Albuquerque meeting, where he received the Haas Award in person at the SSILA Business Meeting from the chair of the selection committee. Pamela Munro. The other members of the committee were Andrew Garrett, Sergio Meira, Douglas Parks, and David Rood.)

\* Lakota Consortium awarded Ken Hale Prize

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SSILA's Ken Hale Prize, which honors those who strive to link the academic and community spheres in the spirit of Ken Hale, was awarded this year to the non-profit Lakota Language Consortium (LLC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to rescuing the Lakota Sioux language. The prize and cash award were presented in recognition of the organization's outstanding community language work and deep commitment to the documentation, maintenance, promotion, and revitalization of the Lakota language, one of the country's largest remaining Native American languages.

Pam Bunte, chair of the 2005 Ken Hale Prize selection committee, described the factors that led to the decision. "We were really impressed. The Lakota Language Consortium has done a great job with their documentation. Their materials have made it easier for community members to teach the language. They work closely with many people throughout the community and the praise of their efforts was truly amazing." The committee also included Nora England, Michael Krauss, and Roberto Zavala Maldonado.

Wilhelm K. Meya, Executive Director of the organization, received the prize on behalf of the Board of Directors. The Lakota Language Consortium is made up of numerous committed community members and linguists (see the LLC website, <http://www.lakhota.org>). As one of the largest language revitalization organizations in the country, its materials are used by over twenty-two school systems and expose over 4000 children to the Lakota language. In addition to Meya, the LLC's Board of Directors includes Jan Ulrich, who leads the organization's materials development work, and Leonard Little Finger, who directs the Lakota Language Studies program at Loneman School in Oglala, South Dakota.

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233.1 Correspondence

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\* Searching for a folktale motif

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>From Jason Jackson ([jbj@indiana.edu](mailto:jbj@indiana.edu)) 30 Dec 2005:

I am currently working on a study of Native American occurrences of a "folktale" type and/or motif with a rather wide old-world distribution and some surprising appearances in the database of Native North American text collections. I have collected it myself among Southeastern peoples in modern Oklahoma. The tale is best known in the scholarly world as an element in the legend of the founding of Carthage by Dido, as narrated in the Aeneid. In it, colonists trick the local inhabitants by asking for only as much land as can be measured with one ox-hide. Given the small size of a single hide, the locals agree and then the colonizers proceed to cut the hide into a very fine string (or thong, as we Americanists would say) with which they encircle a much more vast amount of land than was envisioned by the locals. According to the classic tools of the historic-geographic method (aka Finnish method), this item has been classified as both a tale type (AT 2400) and as a motif (K0185.1). I am interested in it in historical-geographic terms, but I also intend to examine it in ethnographic and discourse-centered terms.

I hope to be as thorough in locating Native American (North, Central, and South) examples as possible. For other world regions, there are now reliable reference works, often keyed to national folk narrative archives, but despite the work and interest of many of our predecessors (esp. Robert Lowie, John Swanton, Stith Thompson, Alan Dundes), nothing reliable beyond the loose catchword system, studies of particular tale types ("the eye juggler", "the star husband" etc.), and the text collections themselves, exists for Native American studies. Structural studies (Dundes, Claude Levi-Strauss) can help if they happen to treat a tale of interest, but there is no easy way to find examples of a unstudied type short of working through the texts from the Arctic to Argentina. (I would note parenthetically that, short of a comprehensive tale type index, (a project whose window of opportunity has probably passed given the limited interest in such work these days), modest guides to the texts associated with single groups, such as John Bierhorst's (1995) guide to Lenape texts, would be useful contributions and are within the realm of the do-able. I am slowly working on such for Yuchi.)

If you recognize the ox-hide (cow-hide, buffalo-hide) purchase tale/motif in the American Indian text collections that you work with, or if you have heard it told in Indian Country (anywhere in the Americas), I would be very grateful if you could contact me ([jbj@indiana.edu](mailto:jbj@indiana.edu)) and share whatever knowledge you are willing to pass on. As is customary, I will gratefully acknowledge help given in whatever publication this project eventually generates.

--Jason Baird Jackson

Dept of Folklore and Ethnomusicology  
Indiana University  
([bjb@indiana.edu](mailto:bjb@indiana.edu))

\* The copyright issue  
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>From Bill Poser ([billposer@alum.mit.edu](mailto:billposer@alum.mit.edu)) 11 Jan 2006:

During the SSILA Business Meeting in Albuquerque, Pam Munro alluded to a growing problem that scholars are having with copyright restrictions. This problem results from recent changes in US copyright law, which I briefly commented on at the meeting. Let me expand. The Copyright Term Extension Act of 1998 ([www.copyright.gov/legislation/pl105-298.pdf](http://www.copyright.gov/legislation/pl105-298.pdf)) extended copyright protection to the life of the author plus 70 years, or in the case of corporate authorship, 95 years. In addition, it eliminated the requirement that the copyright holder register an extension in order to exploit the full period of copyright protection. The result is that works are protected for a ridiculously long time whether or not the holder has any desire to do so, and since no renewal is necessary it may be impossible to find out who owns the copyright.

Several changes would improve this situation:

- (a) Shorten the period of copyright protection. A return to earlier copyright law would be reasonable. That law provided for a period of 28 years plus an extension of 28 years. This is more than enough time for the author to obtain reasonable compensation for his or her work.
- (b) Cause copyright to lapse if the holder does not register for an extension. This would have the effect of eliminating copyright after the initial period (e.g. 28 years) in the numerous cases in which there is no real value to the author. It would also force the copyright holder to make contact and provide information as to how he or she may be contacted.
- (c) Require the copyright office to maintain a database of contact information for copyright holders.
- (d) Impose compulsory licensing where the copyright holder cannot readily be located. A precedent is article 67 of the Japanese copyright law. This way, if the copyright holder cannot be located, the work is still available to others.

The recent changes in copyright law have been for the benefit of the entertainment industry. (The 1998 law is known to critics as the "Mickey Mouse Protection Act," since Disney was one of its major proponents). They are of no benefit to the consumer or to most authors and performers, but they are an impediment to scholarly work. A good deal of attention has recently been given to this problem of "orphan works." Indeed, the Copyright Office recently solicited comments on the problem.

A good source of additional information is Public Knowledge ([www.publicknowledge.org/issues/ow](http://www.publicknowledge.org/issues/ow)). This is an issue on which SSILA might want to take a position as an organization.

--Bill Poser  
Prince George, BC  
([billposer@alum.mit.edu](mailto:billposer@alum.mit.edu))

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233.2 Breaking News

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\* Archeologists uncover earliest known Mayan writing

>From Bjorn Carey (at the MSNBC website) 5 Jan 2005:

Newly discovered hieroglyphs show that the Maya were writing at a complex level 150 years earlier than previously thought. The glyphs, which date to about 250 B.C., were found on preserved painted walls and plaster fragments in the pyramidal structure known as Las Pinturas, in San Bartolo, Guatemala.

The earliest known evidence of writing the New World dates to about 400 to 300 B.C. and is associated with the Zapotecs in the Oaxaca Valley south of central Mexico. Most of the early Maya writing comes from between A.D. 150 and 250, and because Zapotec writing emerged so much earlier, researchers have long believed that the Maya were influenced by it.

The earliest single Mayan glyph - which could have stood for a person's name or might have been a sign on a calendar - dates to about 600 B.C. But it isn't considered writing. These new glyphs are much more complex, project leader William Saturno of the University of New Hampshire said.

"This is a full-blown and fully developed script," Saturno told LiveScience. "Which is not to say that the Maya invented writing and not the Zapotec, but it does lead us to question the origins and the complexities of these origins."

One thing seems certain: The Mayan style was not influenced by the Zapotecs. "It's not similar at all to Zapotec," Saturno said. "You have these roughly contemporary examples that are completely different, which implies a more complex history than simple derivation."

Despite being clearly developed written text, the new-found work cannot yet be read by scientists. "It's definitely writing, though, no question about that," Saturno said. "Some of these signs are consistent with Maya writing for the next 1,000 years."

For example, glyph 7 is an early version of "AJAW," a symbol ubiquitously used with kings' names that means "lord, noble or ruler." Glyph 2 has vague pictorial qualities and may suggest a hand holding a brush or a sharp knifelike object.

A common problem with dating Mayan writing is that it is often on stone, which scientists can't accurately date using radiocarbon dating. Instead, they must use stylistic changes to date materials. However, Saturno and his team found these writings in a pyramid made in part with wood, which is carbon-based and can be dated with radiocarbon techniques.

"The way the Maya built pyramids is by building one layer on top of another," Saturno said. "We have [the building where the writing was found] sandwiched between two other buildings. We can get a date from the building itself, but also a range from the other two."

Taken together, these samples imply that the text was painted between 300 and 200 B.C. But it's likely that Mayan writing goes back a lot further, Saturno said. "Given the grace, form, and consistent line-width of these symbols, it's not likely someone just picked up a brush and said 'I'm going to invent writing today,'" Saturno said. "This complexity shows it had been around for a while."

The research was detailed January 5 in the online edition of the journal Science.

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### 233.3 Positions Open

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\* Postdoc in syntactic typology, MPI-EVA Leipzig

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>From Martin Haspelmath ([haspelmath@eva.mpg.de](mailto:haspelmath@eva.mpg.de)) 10 Jan 2006:

The Department of Linguistics at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology invites applications for the position of a post-doctoral researcher in syntactic typology starting as soon as possible (subject to final approval of funding).

The salary will be according to the German BAT-O IIa (or equivalent TVÖD) scale. This is a non-permanent position terminating after three years.

The successful applicant will work with Bernard Comrie and Martin Haspelmath on a cross-linguistic project on ditransitive constructions, within the framework of a Forschergruppe on the grammar of verb arguments funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. The project includes the setting up of a typological database on ditransitive constructions in a sample of 200 languages. The complete project description is available (only in German) under

<http://www.eva.mpg.de/%7Ehaspelmt/DitrProjekt.pdf>

The working language of the project is English, but at least a passive knowledge of German would be an asset (given that meetings of the whole Forschergruppe will sometimes be held in German).

Applicants should send a full CV and a one-page cover letter (explaining why they would be qualified and interested in collaborating with us on this project) to:

Martin Haspelmath  
Abteilung für Linguistik  
Max-Planck-Institut für evolutionäre Anthropologie

Deutscher Platz 6  
04103 Leipzig, GERMANY  
([haspelmath@eva.mpg.de](mailto:haspelmath@eva.mpg.de))

(Applications by e-mail are preferred, ideally in a single PDF or text document.)

We will start reviewing applications on 25 January 2006, but applications will be considered until the available position is filled.

\* Graduate research assistantship positions in field linguistics  
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>From David Beck ([dbeck@ualberta.ca](mailto:dbeck@ualberta.ca)) 15 Jan 2006:

The Department of Linguistics at the University of Alberta is inviting applications for a Graduate Student Research Assistantship position, beginning September 2006, on a field project to document an endangered Mexican indigenous language. Participation in the project will involve work with native language consultants on campus and in the field in Mexico. Further details of the project can be found at:

<http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~totonaco>

These assistantships are designed to provide talented applicants with stable funding for the duration of their studies and to facilitate their involvement in the academic life of the Department. Students will have the opportunity to present the results of individual research at conferences and, where appropriate, will be encouraged to publish their results in professional venues. Further information about the Department and about our Graduate Programme can be found at:

<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/linguistics>.

The assistantships will be at the rate of \$15,000 CDN per academic year (September to April). Candidates will be required to meet the entrance requirements for the graduate programme in linguistics and will be assessed the normal tuition fees.

Preference will be given to applicants with a strong background in linguistics, preferably at the graduate level, and to those with some training in linguistic field methods. Competence in Spanish is a necessity. Although all applicants will be considered, we are particularly interested in recruiting students to work in one of the following areas:

- a) phonology/phonetics
- b) first-language acquisition
- c) computational applications for field linguistics

Interested applicants should contact:

David Beck  
Department of Linguistics  
University of Alberta

Edmonton, AB, T6G 2E7, Canada  
([dbeck@ualberta.ca](mailto:dbeck@ualberta.ca))

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233.4 Upcoming Meetings

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\* Burgoa Linguistics Conferences (Oaxaca)

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>From Michael Swanton ([mwswanton@yahoo.com](mailto:mwswanton@yahoo.com)) 9 Jan 2006:

Biblioteca Francisco de Burgoa of the Universidad Autónoma 'Benito Juárez' de Oaxaca is continuing its conference series dedicated to the linguistics of the indigenous languages of the state of Oaxaca. The conferences are given at 7:00 PM at the Biblioteca Francisco de Burgoa, located in the Centro Cultural Santo Domingo in the city of Oaxaca.

On December 16, Daniel Suslak (Indiana University, Dept. of Anthropology) gave a talk on "El desarrollo histórico de Anyükojmit Ayöök (Totontepecano Mixe)... y su futuro."

The next two conferences will be:

Friday, January 20

Aurea López Cruz (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia)  
"El comportamiento de los tonos en el zapoteco de San Pablo Güilá"

Friday, February 17

Barbara Hollenbach (Instituto Lingüístico de Verano)  
"Difrasismos mixtecos: del siglo dieciséis al veintiuno"

\* WAIL-9 (Santa Barbara, April 20-22) -- Deadline extended

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The 9th annual Workshop on American Indigenous Languages (WAIL) will be held on the UCSB campus on April 20-22. WAIL provides a forum for the discussion of theoretical and descriptive studies of the indigenous languages of the Americas. The deadline for submission of abstracts has been extended to January 25. For abstract format and other details, including travel directions and information about hotel accommodations, go to the WAIL website:

<http://orgs.sa.ucsb.edu/nailsg>

For further information contact the conference coordinator, Lea Harper, at [wail@linguistics.ucsb.edu](mailto:wail@linguistics.ucsb.edu) or (805) 893-3776.

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233.5 Recent Deaths

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\* Margaret Langdon, 79, professor emeritus of linguistics at the University of California, San Diego, died on October 25, 2005, in Bishop, California, where she had recently moved to be near her daughter. She was the primary expert on the linguistics of Diegueño and a leading figure in Hokan studies. A founding member of SSILA, she served as our Society's fourth President in 1985.

\* Paul Proulx, 63, an independent scholar well known for his work on Algonquian, Ritwan, and Quechua, as well as the study of kinship terminology and its implications for the reconstruction of social organization, died at his home in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, on December 5, 2005. He had been suffering from cancer.

\* Gladys Tantaquidgeon, 106, the Mohegan tribe's venerable medicine woman and custodian of its history and traditions, died on November 1, 2005, at the Uncasville, Connecticut, home where she had lived all her life. Tantaquidgeon wrote several books on native medicine practices and folk lore. Her best-known work, "A Study of Delaware Indian Medicine Practices and Folk Beliefs," was published in 1942 and has been twice reprinted.

[Full obituaries appear in the January issue of the SSILA Newsletter.]

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#### 233.6 E-Mail Address Updates

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The following additions or changes have been made to the SSILA e-mail list since the last Bulletin:

Bierhorst, John ..... [jbierhorst@aol.com](mailto:jbierhorst@aol.com)  
Dunnigan, Timothy ..... [jtdunnigan@comcast.net](mailto:jtdunnigan@comcast.net)  
Elias-Ulloa, José A. .... [jose.elias-ulloa@sunysb.edu](mailto:jose.elias-ulloa@sunysb.edu)  
Iggesen, Oliver ..... [o.iggesen@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:o.iggesen@latrobe.edu.au).  
Kershner, Tiffany Lynne ..... [tkersh@uncg.edu](mailto:tkersh@uncg.edu)  
Messineo, Cristina ..... [cristina.messineo@gmail.com](mailto:cristina.messineo@gmail.com)  
Morgan, Lawrence ..... [lawrencermorgan@mac.com](mailto:lawrencermorgan@mac.com) [CORRECTION]  
Sakel, Jeanette..... [jeanette.sakel@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:jeanette.sakel@manchester.ac.uk)  
Tenenbaum, Joan ..... [merlin059@centurytel.net](mailto:merlin059@centurytel.net)

When your e-mail address changes, please notify us ([golla@ssila.org](mailto:golla@ssila.org)).

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THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES OF THE AMERICAS

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The SSILA Bulletin is distributed electronically to all members of SSILA. Non-members may subscribe free of charge by sending their e-mail address to the editor ([golla@ssila.org](mailto:golla@ssila.org)).

SSILA also publishes a quarterly hard-copy Newsletter that contains book reviews, notices of journal articles and recent dissertations, and other news and commentary. The Newsletter and other publications of the Society are distributed only to members or to institutional subscribers.

SSILA welcomes applications for membership from anyone interested in the scholarly study of the languages of the native peoples of North, Central, and South America. Dues for 2006 are \$16 (US) or \$20 (Canadian) and may be paid in advance for 2007 and 2008 at the 2006 rate. Checks or money orders should be made payable to "SSILA" and sent to: SSILA, P.O. Box 555, Arcata, CA 95518. For further information, visit the SSILA website (<http://www.ssila.org>).

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