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Joseph Campbell Foundation & OPUS Archives Research Grant Summary

My involvement with the Joseph Campbell archives will be an on going engagement for many years to come as I sail ever deeper into the archetypal waters of the study of myth. The materials that are housed in the Pacifica campuses are a mine of information, wonder and inspiration for those of us committed to the study of myth, not as a means to some other end, but as an end in itself: the coming home of the true science of myth.

As previously stated, my research was focused on the area of Mesoamerican mythologies but the wealth of materials at the archives permitted for exploration throughout, allowing for the play of chance to lead to the unexpected. And with the extraordinarily generous help of Richard Buchen I was able to cover much ground and finally to hone in the work Joseph Campbell has done with mythologies “south of the border.” And in particular, I was helped to understand his thought touching the ancient Maya epic *Popol Vuh: Book of the Council, Book of the Peoples* of ancient Guatemala. The amount of research dedicated to this part of the world, however, was surprisingly little. Most of the relevant material was condensed in Box 136, which contained for the most part reading notes for the compilation of the *Historical Atlas of World Mythology*. Joseph Campbell does in fact dedicate one page of the Atlas to the *Popol Vuh* ( Vol 1, p 17) under the heading of “‘Let it Thus Be Done!’ (the Popol Vuh, Guatemala).” The notes that were presumably used for this entry are neatly assembled in folder 5 as “Mayan Mythology 96.” There we can read Campbell’s reading notes from another atlas of world mythologies in thirteen volumes: *The Mythologies of All Races* (1920), and in particular, Vol. 11 by Hartley Burr Alexander. It was clear that Campbell relied heavily on Alexander’s work, especially concerning chronology and history. Later, I went back to the Joseph Campbell library at the Lambert campus and located the specific tome that he was studying for his notes. In addition to this, the Campbell Library also has the two seminal editions of the *Popol Vuh* that Campbell lists in the “Popol Vuh” folder (5<sup>th</sup> Mayan mythology 96). The first: the French edition of 1855 by the Abbé Charles Etienne Brasseur de Bourbourg; and the second is also a rare first edition of the “*Popol Buj*” in Spanish by Antonio Villacorta and Flavio Rodas (1927). These two are certainly valuable pieces in Campbell’s collection and contain careful underlining throughout.

Furthermore, although at first we feared that there might not be any audio recordings of he unpublished 1979 lecture series Joseph Campbell delivered in Guatemala and Mexico entitled “*A Mythological Voyage with Joseph Campbell*,” I was lucky enough to locate such recordings and in particular locate the lecture Campbell gives on the *Popol Vuh*. The morning of October 28<sup>th</sup> 1979, Campbell delivered this lecture in Chichicastenango, the town where the Quiché manuscript was discovered, in front of an eager audience. I also had a chance to compare his hand-written notes with his spoken words and did indeed find that he maintained a close connection in his apparently “free” style of speech and discourse.

I hope that findings like these may encourage more research in the mythological terrains of Mesoamerica, especially from the archetypal perspectives now being forged at Pacifica. Although Campbell has opened the door for us, we have barely begun to scratch the surface of the inexhaustible store-house of Mesoamerican wisdom. It is up to us now to follow through with his driving intention in the *Atlas* and help to reveal the poetic truth of myth all over the earth—a task no human person could ever complete in a single life time. Thank you very much for the opportunity to serve our research center.