

Illness and Healing among the Maya in the Colony according to “EI Ritual de los Bacabes”: Change and Continuity¹

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ABSTRACT The ritual of the Bacabs is a collection of chants and medical prescriptions transcribed in Roman characters from a hieroglyphic manuscript written by the Yucatec-Mayas. The beautiful incantations written in a literary and cryptic style provide rich information for a better understanding of their ancient civilization. This contribution departs from the linguistic and semiotic analyses of the literacy and esoteric texts and offers an insight into the practice of medicine. Etymologies allow us to understand their cosmogony better, and in particular, to capture in some manner their knowledge of everything regarding diseases and healing; etiology, the classification of pains and illness, its therapy, as well as its relation to social, supernatural and the physical environment in general.