***Kinds of Signs:  
Determining the indexical meaning of tz’ite’ seeds in a form of Mayan divination***

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In a common type of Mayan divination called *pajonik* (Tz’utujil/Kaqchikel/K’iche’ for “weighing”), the bright red seeds of the *tz’ite’* tree (*erythrina corallodendron*) are utilized in conjunction with the 260 day ritual calendar known as the *Chol Q’ij* in order to involve occult forces in a decision-making activity.  The *tz’ite’* seeds serve as “mediating artifacts” (Hutchins 1995) that help to coordinate various elements in an “ecology of mind” (Bateson 2000).  In particular, the *tz’ite’* seeds serve as “material anchors” (Hutchins 2005) when, during the divination, they are grouped into clusters of four to stand-in for the days of the *Chol Q’ij* calendar.  In this “conceptual blend” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002) the clusters of seeds come to take the place, physically, of particular days in the *Chol Q’ij*.  Since there are twenty distinct days in this calendar, each of which pairs with the numbers one through thirteen in the course of the 260 day cycle, the combinatorial possibilities present a clear challenge to working memory.  The use of material anchors facilitates the storage and manipulation of representations in a complex “traffic of signs” (cf. Peirce, Fisch et al. 1982) or “semiotic ecology” (Lang 1993).  Additionally, using material objects helps to render the decision-making activity “public.”  This effect, coupled with a “suppression of intention” typical of the divination process itself (Du Bois 1993), removes the decision from personal agency. This limitation of personal agency exculpates, to one degree or another, the people involved in the decision as well as invests the decision with an authority based on the power of symbol and tradition.  In this workshop, we will attempt to identify the kind of sign, or kinds of signs, played by *tz’ite’* seeds during the divination process. Referential performativity and pointing will serve as special topics of interest in the presentation.