

IN THE WOMB OF THE EARTH: SEX IN THE MAYA CAVE SETTING

BY

Copyright 2009
Sarah Saffa

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Latin American
Studies and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts.

Brent E. Metz, Chair

Peter H. Herlihy

John W. Hoopes

Date Defended: August 24, 2009

The Thesis Committee for Sarah Saffa certified that this is the approved Version of
the following thesis:

IN THE WOMB OF THE EARTH: SEX IN THE MAYA CAVE SETTING

Committee:

Brent E. Metz, Chair

Peter H. Herlihy

John W. Hoopes

Date approved: September 2, 2009

ABSTRACT

Sarah Saffa

Latin American Studies

University of Kansas

2009

In this thesis, I investigate how caves, both spatially and symbolically, have been associated with sex among Maya groups, examine whether the link between landscape features and sex can increase our understandings of Mayan worldviews, and explore how the connection between caves and sex can be applied to future research. I conclude that among Maya groups, real or symbolic caves will likely have a sexual element associated with them and the link between the landscape and sex can expand our knowledge of Mayan worldviews. Lastly, I discuss the various ways caves' ties to sex could provide a basis for future research. For this thesis, I used sources from multiple disciplines, reviewed primary and secondary sources that relate to Maya and/or other Mesoamerican groups, read sources not specific to the Maya or greater Mesoamerican area, looked at both English and Spanish sources, and used ethnographic analogy.

Acknowledgements

I would like to share my appreciation with the many individuals who have made the start and the completion of this thesis possible.

First, I would like to thank my family for: encouraging me to pursue whatever path would make me most happy, providing the financial support necessary for that path, and for motivating me to continue on that path even when it was most difficult. Thank you for making all of this possible.

I would like to thank my friends for reminding me that life does exist outside of my laptop. I couldn't have made it without you.

I want to thank my boyfriend for giving me articles for which he had no interest, since these articles first sparked my interest in landscape studies, and being my constant support. Thank you for always being there, even though you lived hours away.

I would like to thank Peter Herlihy for helping make my first field school experience possible and encouraging me to take my first Mesoamerican class. I also want to thank John Hoopes for instilling in me a passion for Mesoamerican studies. I'd like to thank Brent Metz for always having a sense of humor, giving me his time even when he didn't have it to give, and providing me with his incredible insight. Thank you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1:

Introduction.....1

Chapter 2:

The Spatial and Symbolic Landscape.....11

Chapter 3:

Male and Female Associations of the Landscape.....33

Chapter 4:

Caves' Associations with Sexual Entities and Activities.....56

Chapter 5:

Conclusion.....80

Bibliography.....85

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

While it has been widely assumed that caves have had habitational and utilitarian functions (Brady and Prufer 2005a; Prufer and Brady 2005b), cave conditions (e.g. dampness, humidity, darkness, difficult entry) would have made human habitation and utilitarian use difficult (Thompson 1959:129; Burkitt 1956:7; Prufer and Brady 2005b:10-11). Indeed, “it is generally agreed that rockshelters rather than caves were utilized for shelter” (Prufer and Brady 2005b:10), but it is important to note that, according to Thompson (1975), caves occasionally served as places of refuge during times of unrest among Maya groups (Brady and Prufer 2005a:2).¹ Prufer and Brady (2005b:11) claim that in their surveys of Maya Lowland caves, not one example of cave habitation exists, and cave contexts are religious.²

Caves are considered sacred worldwide (Heydon 2005:32), including Mesoamerica (Figure 1.1; for the Maya area see Figure 1.2), and have many different associations among Mesoamericans. Caves are often seen as portals to the Maya Underworld (Pugh 2005:50), or *Xib’alb’a*.³ Similarly, some Nahua believe that beneath Pre-hispanic pyramid ruins are cave entrances that lead to Mictlan, the “place

¹ It is also noteworthy that in very cold environments caves can be advantageous residences (Prufer and Brady 2005b:10).

² In the 1990s habitational and utilitarian interpretations of caves began to come to an end, however, they still appeared in some publications on Central Mexico (Brady and Prufer 2005a:3)

³ “*Xib’alb’a* (Place of Fear) is the Quiché name for the underworld, ruled by lords of death and disease. Modern Quichés still use the word to describe an underground hell inhabited by demons who cause sickness” (Christenson 2003:114).

of the dead,” the underworld (Sandstrom 2005:49-50). Mesoamerican caves are considered the dwellings of gods (Moragas Segura 1998:184), and for the Maya they are places to directly approach ancestors and deities (Christenson 2001:83). For Mesoamericans borders between this world and the otherworld are places where both life and death can occur, so caves can represent both (Pugh 2005:50). Among the Maya, caves have been associated with creation, reproduction, fertility, personhood (Prufer and Brady 2005:11), the feminine, the sexual (Brady and Prufer 2005b:370), transformation (Pugh 2005:58), disease (Bassie-Sweet 1991:84-85; Brady and Rissolo 2006:479), cures for illness (Brady and Rissolo 2006:479), destruction of crops (Villa Rojas 1947:579), water (Stone 1987:103), rain, agriculture, and wealth. Similar associations can also be found elsewhere in Mesoamerica.

Mesoamerican caves have been ritual spaces as early as the Archaic period (Stone 1995:19). After the conquest native Mesoamericans who continued to use caves as ritual spaces were often tortured and on occasion killed (Stone 1995:7). In fact, the persistence of cave rituals is claimed to be the reason why the Yucatan inquisition of the sixteenth century began (Bassie-Sweet 1991:78). The seventeenth-century Dominican chronicler Francisco de Burgoa (1934:478-481) reported that a



Figure 1.1. Mesoamerica. Alex Covarrubias. Permission to use found at <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Image:Region-Mesoamerica.png>

priest, Father Abrego, destroyed the idols made from altered stalagmites that were housed in a cave and venerated by the Chocho of Oaxaca (Fitzsimmons 2005:110-111).⁴ The priest was able to convert the people when the gods did not kill Father

⁴ An altered stalactite, carved to resemble a human figure, with remains of burnt copal and pottery sherds in carved depressions on the surface of it, was found in a Maya cave, the Río Frío Cave C in Belize (Stone 1987:96). It was likely venerated during the Late Classic (Stone 1987:96-97).

Stalagmites and stalactites are speleothems. Speleothems are defined as “any secondary mineral deposits precipitated from groundwater entering caves” (Brady and Rissolo 2006:480). According to Bassie-Sweet (1991:82), “when water drips from the roof of a limestone cave, it carries with it dissolved calcium carbonate from the limestone. The constant dripping and evaporation of this water result in the

Abrego (Fitzsimmons 2005:111). However, cave use by the Maya (Bassie-Sweet 1991:78) and other Mesoamericans continued through the seventeenth century despite conversion to Christianity, and Mesoamerican cave worship continues today (Stone 1995:7). Maya groups have used caves for “large-scale pilgrimage activities, public politywide ceremonies and validation of space, the seclusion of shamans, mortuary activity, group and individual rituals related to agricultural success, personal health, and accumulations of wealth and social status” (Prufer 2005:186), and elsewhere in Mesoamerica caves have served similar functions. Mesoamericans have also utilized caves for rites of passage (Moragas Segura 1998:184) and sociopolitical ceremonies like ascensions (Bassie-Sweet 1991:77).

Sexual complementarity has also been important among Mesoamerican groups, likely in part due to the fact that in Mesoamerica there is the belief that “order manifests itself in the balance of opposing forces and is essential as much for the human body as for the macrocosm” (Stone 2005a:258). Ritual activity throughout Mesoamerica has required the participation of both sexes (Josserand 2002:127). In Santiago Atitlán,

a man cannot take office before marriage and all offices have complementary tasks for the husband/wife pair...By extension, ‘units of function’ appear to stand in male/female relation to each other. Thus, the second *fiscal* (with his wife) is female to the first *fiscal* (with his wife)-the *cabecera*, at the top of the system, being male to the whole village-or the *juez de cofradía* is female (with

deposits that are called stalactites (when they hang from the roof) and stalagmites (when they are found on the floor).” Other types of speleothems exist (Brady and Rissolo 2006:480), however, stalagmites and stalactites will be the only speleothems discussed in this work.

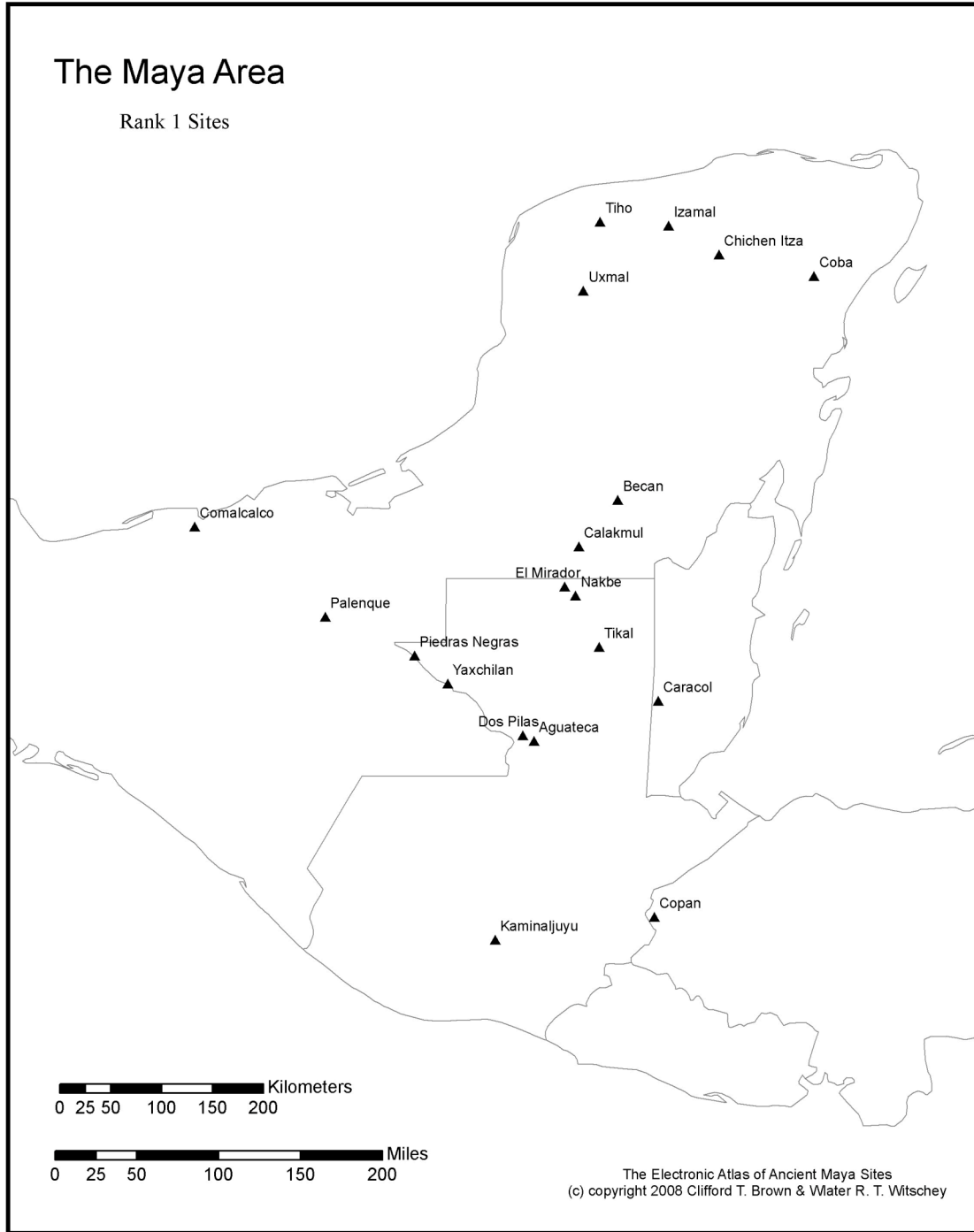


Figure 1.2. The Maya area. © Copyright 2001, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2009 Walter R. T. Witschey and Clifford T. Brown, The Electronic Atlas of Ancient Maya Sites
 Permission to use image found at http://mayagis.smv.org/maps_of_the_maya_area.htm.

his wife) to the *alcalde de cofradía* (with his wife). [Tarn and Prechtel 1986:173]

Deities, like Martín and the Mam, can also be considered the “wives” of their human officials (Tarn and Prechtel 1986:182 n. 2). Among the Ch’orti’, all prayers are given by symbolically male/female pairs, although the pair may actually consist of two men (Metz 2009:personal communication).

It is noteworthy that the notion of equality and balance between males and females sometimes reflects ideology more than actuality. Christine Eber and Brenda Rosenbaum (1993:163) note that in Highland Chiapas “most indigenous men and women say that the ideal household relations demonstrate fidelity in marriage and complementarity between sexes and generations.” They also say that in San Pedro Chenalhó, Chiapas the female earth and male sun are equally revered (1993:164). However, at the same time a patriarchal system is in place that gives men power in the public arena and allows women to be victim to abuses of male power (Ardren 2002:70). Patriarchal systems that exist simultaneously with an ideology of egalitarianism are found throughout the Maya area (Ardren 2002:70).

Androgyny has also played a role in some Maya societies. Williams (1986:142-47) discussed “Yucatec Maya *homosexuales*, males who are androgynous in behavior, take a passive sexual role with men, and may occasionally wear women’s clothing or mixed-gender costumes” (Looper 2002:176). Also, Looper (2002:174) suggests that the complementary Classic Maya Maize God and Moon Goddess were both androgynous and gender polarized. The cultural emphasis on androgyny and

sexual complementarity has apparently been a factor that can inform instances of male impersonation of or symbolic identification with females during ritual.

In this thesis, I investigate further how caves, both spatially and symbolically, have been associated with sex among various Maya groups, examine whether the link between landscape features and sex can increase our understandings of Mayan worldviews, and explore various ways the connection between caves and sex can be applied to future research.⁵ I conclude that among Maya groups, real or symbolic caves will likely have a sexual element associated with them and perhaps vice versa (even if only indirectly). This conclusion may encourage some to accuse me of cherry picking. Indeed, I focus only on the intersection of cave and sex complexes in this work and do not provide a complete review of both of these complexes individually. However, while caves do have many dimensions, my research demonstrates that a consistent link between caves and sex can be drawn through multiple areas of study such as archeology, ethnography, and iconography. In this thesis, I also demonstrate that the link between sex and landscape features shows the importance of sexual reproduction and the generative aspects of women and accentuates the value of sexual complementarity and androgyny among Maya groups. I show that sex has a dual association with both life and death in the cave setting as well. Lastly, I discuss how linkages of caves to sex could provide a basis for: finding more sites to study sexual concepts among Maya groups, interpreting artifacts, studying syncretism,

⁵ In this work, I associate sex with fertility, eroticism, sexuality, sexual reproduction, birth, and sexual and reproductive anatomy.

understanding past and contemporary Mayan representations, and discussing sex with Mayas in a polite and effective way.

In order to research the link between caves and sex, I drew from multiple disciplines, characteristic of a Latin American Studies MA thesis, including anthropology, geography, linguistics, and art and religious history. Scholars interested in this work may come from a multitude of disciplines including geography, art history, religious studies, anthropology, gender studies, sex and sexuality studies, and women's studies. I reviewed primary and secondary sources that included geographical, archeological, ethnohistoric, ethnographic, linguistic, epigraphic, and/or iconographic information that relates to Maya and/or other Mesoamerican groups. In addition, I read sources not specific to the Maya or greater Mesoamerican area. I primarily used English sources; however, I make a few references to Spanish sources as well.

While I make comparisons between differing Maya groups and between Maya and other Mesoamerican groups, it is not my intention to suggest that all Maya or Mesoamerican groups are homogeneous. Indeed, variation exists between Mesoamerican groups of today and those of the past, as it does between modern Mesoamerican peoples. Nonetheless, "just as it is imprudent to place exaggerated stress on cultural continuities from the remote past, so is it an error to go to the opposite extreme" (Houston 1996:138).⁶ Indeed, Lewis-Williams (2002:206) says,

⁶ According to Stone (1995:11), "ethnographic analogy takes as an assumption the continuity of particular forms or behaviors so that the better documented appearance of that form whether earlier, contemporary, or later (which is usually the case), can

“change does not mean total overthrow.” Also, Stone (1995:12) argues “that the Mesoamerican cave cult...is a likely candidate for cultural continuity” and “was widely shared in its essential features and rationale...Cave symbolism can rightfully be viewed, then, in a pan-Mesoamerican context” (1995:12).

On a similar note, I recognize that the term “the Maya” is problematic, but it does make sense given cultural connections between various Maya groups in time and space, including language, a written history, symbolism, and material culture. Also, “the Maya” is typically used with reference to the Pre-Hispanic groups that lived in the Maya area, which are harder to distinguish than the different groups living in the region today. Regional categories may be assigned such as the Maya of Yucatan or the Maya of the Peten.

In the following chapter, I discuss the features of the Maya landscape and the cultural significance specific features have had among Maya groups in order to familiarize the reader with the important role the landscape has had among humans that have lived in this area. In chapter three, I explore the associations that particular landscape features have had with the male and female sexes within the Maya area to demonstrate the sexual connotation of landscape features. The link between sex and these features can show the value attributed to the generative aspects of females and sexual reproduction by various Maya groups and underline the significance that sexual complementarity and androgyny have had among Maya groups. In chapter

explain the more poorly documented one. Naturally, such comparisons are invalid if discontinuities among seemingly like forms have occurred, whether due to synchronic or diachronic cultural differences.”

four, I further substantiate the link between caves and sex among Maya groups by investigating sexual entities and activities that have been associated with spatial and symbolic caves. I suggest that, at least in the cave setting, sex is not only associated with fertility and life but also death. In chapter five, I conclude that a sexual element will likely be present when there is a physical or symbolic cave and the connection between landscape features and sex can inform our understandings of Mayan worldviews. I also provide ideas for how the association of caves with sex can be applied to future research.

CHAPTER 2

THE SPATIAL AND SYMBOLIC MAYA LANDSCAPE

“Although caves are the best example of the sacred landmark, they are by no means the only one” (Adams and Brady 2005:320).

In this chapter, I discuss features of the spatial and symbolic Maya landscape and their cultural significance. I will focus the discussion on mountains and caves, as these are the features that have had the most prominent roles among Mesoamerican groups.

Features of the Landscape and Their Cultural Importance

In the past Mesoamericans used caves, *cenotes*, mountains, wells, ravines, mountain passes, rocks, trees, springs, and lakes as topographic shrines (Stone 1995:15) and they continue to do so today. Caves and mountains have had the most prominent roles (Stone 1995:15). In fact, Maya caves and hills or mountains “have for centuries been the focus of ritual and communal activities” and “caves and hills have long provided essential models for an interrelated set of crucial concepts in cosmology and ritual” for the Maya (Vogt and Stuart 2005:155). Undoubtedly, part of the reason caves are so culturally important for the Maya is because they are so numerous in the Maya area (Stone 1995:5-6). Sixty-nine percent of the Maya region is a karst terrain where caves are prevalent features of the landscape (Veni

1995:243).⁷ The karst is concentrated in the Chiapas and western Guatemala highlands, the lowlands of the Yucatan peninsula, and limestone that surrounds the Maya Mountains of Belize and eastern Guatemala (Veni 1995:244).⁸ Hills and mountains are also prevalent (Vogt and Stuart 2005:155).

Another reason for caves' importance is that "karst terrains generally have little surface water, and survival in such areas requires access to groundwater, which is what caves often provide" (Veni 1995:243). Springs in caves have been important sources of water among Maya groups (Pugh 2005:51), and for the Maya of the Yucatan peninsula, where rivers are nonexistent, *cenotes* were the primary source of water (Romey 2004:[2]). An incantation from the *Ritual of the Bacabs* refers to the cave as "the heart of the water" (Bassie-Sweet 1991:86). In Santiago Atitlán, residents believe that there are a series of caves underneath the Catholic Church and each of these caves is associated with water or rain (Christenson 2001:78). Among the Maya, speleothems have been considered water (Brady, et al. 2005:218-9).⁹

⁷ Karst refers to "a landscape developed by solution of the bedrock and the loss of water to the subsurface, typically via features such as caves and sinkholes. Karst occurs in areas containing soluble rock, such as limestone...Worldwide, and especially in the Maya region of Mesoamerica, limestone is the primary karstified rock" (Veni 1995:243).

⁸ Sometimes the ceiling of a cave may collapse and if the collapse reaches the surface then a large pit is created (Veni 1995:244). This pit is occasionally called a collapse sinkhole (Veni 1995:244). In Yucatan, if water is in these spaces, they are called a *cenote* (Veni 1995:244). *Cenotes* are for the most part restricted to the northern Yucatan Peninsula (Stone 1995:29). Accordingly, the *cenote* glyph (T591) and its illustrated variants are mainly limited to Yucatecan art (Stone 1995:29; picture on same page).

⁹ Ceramic vessels have been found beneath dripping stalactites in deeper caves in the Maya area, and according to Thompson (1975: xx; see also 1959:125), they likely were used to collect virgin water (*zuhuy ha*) for ritual purposes (Rissolo 2005:358).

Interestingly, in Maya myth even dry caves are thought to have water behind their walls (Bassie-Sweet 1991:80). Also, since water is located inside of subterranean elements, they have been connected with rain gods, such as Chaak (Figure 2.1) (Pugh

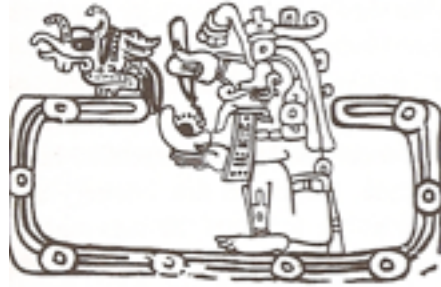


Figure 2.1. Chaak as a scribe inside a cenote from the Madrid Codex (Stone 2005b: 141, drawing after Lee 1985:121). Permission to reproduce image courtesy Andrea Stone.

2005: 51). For example, La Pailita Cave in the central Petén includes a “life-size” masonry effigy of Chaak seated on a throne with an axe held against his chest (Vogt and Stuart 2005:163). This effigy and many of its associated ritual activities may date to the Late Preclassic or Early Classic period (Vogt and Stuart 2005:163).¹⁰ Indeed, “as sole sources of life-giving water, caves were attributed both great practical and religious importance by the Maya” (Veni 1995:243). So, while many features of the natural landscape have been culturally significant, caves and mountains have been especially important, and I focus on these features for the remainder of this chapter.

¹⁰ Outside the Maya area, some Mesoamericans have thought that the place where the rain god Tlaloc lives, Tlalocan (or Talocan as some Nahuatl-speaking people call it), an area located beneath the earth, is a huge cave (Heydon 2005:25). Also, the use of stalagmites to represent rain deities is common in Oaxaca; one probable example is a modified stalagmite at Blade Cave (Fitzsimmons 2005:103, 111-112).

Mountains and caves have been two important features that Mesoamericans have looked for when settling in new areas and incorporated when building their communities. This phenomenon can be explained in part by a model Erich Isaac (1962) provides that describes the relationship between religion and landscape worldwide. Erich Isaac (1962) says:

Perhaps from the point of view of landscape transformation tendencies it is possible to divide religions into those giving weight to one of two basic attitudes. *Religions that conceive of the process of world creation as providing the meaning of human existence stand at one pole, while at the other are religions which conceive the meaning of existence to derive not from the process of world creation as such but from a divine charter granted to them...*In either case, the religion will, in its rites, dramatize its central conception of origin so that where world creation brought the human order into being the attempt will be made to reproduce the cosmic plan in the landscape with greater or lesser effect upon the land, depending on the elaborateness of reproduction attempted. In religions where the act chartering the order is central, rites will reenact the specific charter and comparatively little landscape transformation is likely to be attempted.¹¹ [Isaac 1962:12-3]

The many examples of Mesoamerican settlement patterns, landscape modifications, and built environments that relate to the cosmic plan and creation suggest that Mesoamerican religion falls into the category of world creation as providing the meaning for human existence. In fact, for the ancient Maya, creation was the fundamental element represented in their art and architecture (Friedel, et al. 1993:60), which supports this argument. Indeed, after describing Isaac's religious categories, Manuel Aguilar, et al. (2005:79) say, "while the concept of the covenant is not unknown in Mesoamerica, cosmology definitely focuses on the act of creation." They

¹¹ Isaac mentions that these divisions are only theoretical, as many religions have been in contact with and influenced one another (1962:16).

give Angel García-Zambrano's (1994:217-218) description of an ideal place of Mesoamerican settlement as support:

Mesoamerican migrants searched for an environment with specific characteristics that comprised several symbolic levels...Such a place had to recall the mythical moment when the earth was created: an aquatic universe framed by four mountains with a fifth elevation protruding in the middle of the water. The mountain at the core had to be dotted with caves and springs, and sometimes surrounded by smaller hills. A setting like this duplicated, and forever would freeze, the primordial scene when the waters and the sky separated and the earth sprouted upwards.¹²

This primordial setting of mountains and caves not only reflects the moment of creation but also a quincunx, a four-corned element with a central feature that is a prevalent representation of Mesoamericans' conception of the universe (Aguilar, et al. 2005:70). The central element was an imaginary axis, oftentimes embodied as the Tree of Life [or world tree] that was located above a mountain, which connected sky, earth, and underworld (Aguilar, et al. 2005:70).¹³ A cave can also be an *axis mundi*, as centers of Maya villages are sometimes designated by a cave or *cenote* (Brady and Ashmore 1999:127).¹⁴

¹² Defense, water, soil, fertility, and other factors were also important in choosing settlement sites depending on the time period (Metz 2009, personal communication).

¹³ Eliade (1964) demonstrates that the concept of the world tree is a widespread phenomenon and describes the tree as located at the center of the universe and the cosmic axis that links the sky, earth, and underworld (1964:194 n. 41). Eliade (1964:266-269) also discusses another widespread representation of the world center, a cosmic mountain, which performs a similar function. This representation resonates with the example given by García-Zambrano above. Eliade (1964:169) claims that sometimes, as mentioned above, the symbols of the world tree and central mountain coincide.

¹⁴ The *axis mundi* is the vertical axis that "stands at the center of all things and passes through each of the three major layers of existence--underworld, earth's surface, and sky" (Christenson 2001:105). Interestingly, features of communities that residents

The center was the location of the creation of the world and humanity (Aguilar, et al. 2005:70) and some residents of the Maya area have especially tied caves, sometimes in conjunction with mountains, to this role. Some Maya stories about the creation of the world involve three creation stones, and caves have been associated with these stones among Maya groups of various geographical locations and time periods. In Classic Maya texts “the placement of the three stones is subsequently followed by the separation of the sky from the earth and the erection of the world tree at the center of the universe” (Headrick 2007:112).¹⁵ These stones were placed “in the triangular pattern of the hearth” (Freidel, et al. 1993:79), and the hearth found in traditional Maya homes, which is composed of a griddle that sits on top of three stones, is a representation of the three stones (Headrick 2007:112). The world tree supported the weight of the sky, providing the sun the space to move across it, and hence, the beginning of time (Headrick 2007:158). By placing the three stones, “the gods established the center and created a location from which the rest of the world could emanate; therefore the stones came to represent not only the heart of the world but its very creation” (Headrick 2007:112).

One example of a link between caves and the three creation stones comes from the Main Chamber of the cave of Actun Tunichil Muknal in Belize, which contains ceramics that date to AD 830-950, the Terminal Classic Spanish Lookout

refer to as the centers of their communities are not always located in the physical center of those communities (Bassie-Sweet 1996:27).

¹⁵ In Maya cosmology, the world tree symbolizes the *axis mundi* and “also oriented the horizontal plane of the world by extending its branches outward toward the cardinal directions” (Christenson 2001:105).

phase (Moyes 2005a:271). Holley Moyes (2005a) has argued that an encircled quincunxial model with a three speleothem-cluster as its middle element exists within this chamber.¹⁶ She claims the cluster “represents the 3-Stone-Hearth at the center of the cosmos in Maya belief” (Moyes 2005a:294).¹⁷

Another possible example of an association between the three stones and a cave comes from modern day Chamula. The people of Chamula designated the five days of the Catholic Carnival fiesta as the five unlucky “lost days” of the Mayan calendar that marked the end of the Mayan year (Bricker 1973:8). During the fiesta of Carnival in Chamula, male and female residents take stones or potsherds to throw into a cave as payment, “for if they do not offer three stones to the cave, they will die. The cave is evil and must be placated” (Bricker 1973:114). Such symbolism is likely related to that of Quirigua Stela C, in which the setting of three creation stones apparently marked the transition from one epoch to the next (Freidel, et al. 1993:67),

¹⁶ Unfortunately, it is not clear from the reading what the specific composition of this cluster is.

¹⁷ A common metaphor for the world among the contemporary Maya, which likely also existed in colonial and Pre-Hispanic times, is a house supported by four corner posts (Taube 1998:429-432). The four corner posts in the cosmic house model symbolize directional trees that help hold up the heavens (Taube 1998:432). The middle of traditional Maya houses is symbolized by the three-stone hearth, for they do not contain a central post to represent the *axis mundi* (Taube 1998:432). Taube (1998:427-432) suggests that the temple in Maya architecture adopted the cosmic house metaphor. Given that in the Maya area a term used to refer to cave is “stone house” (Stone 1995:35) and the quincunxial model with a three stone hearth representation in the middle of it found within Actun Tunichil Muknal, perhaps caves could be associated with the cosmic house metaphor as well.

just as Chamula residents place their stones in the cave during Carnival, marking the end of the year.¹⁸

An association between the three creation stones and caves and volcanoes comes from Santiago Atitlán. Residents of this town consider the three volcanoes that surround Santiago Atitlán to be the three creation stones (Headrick 2007:112), and, according to one informant, these were the first land to emerge from the primordial waters of Lake Atitlán (Christenson 2001:74). The same informant also said the three church altarpieces in the Catholic church in this town represent these volcanoes, and he and his brother said the niches in the central largest altarpiece refer to the most sacred cave in the area, Paq'alib'al (Christenson 2001:74, 84).¹⁹ The altarpieces are

¹⁸ In Mesoamerica, a common notion is that there have been multiple creations preceding the present one. For example, in the K'iche' *Popol Vuh*, the world was created at least three times prior to the present creation (Freidel, et al. 1993:61). Interestingly, with regards to the three creation stones, among the Maya "stone is used as a metaphor for egg" (Bassie-Sweet 1991:17), and eggs have been seen as a symbol of rebirth (LAA 602 Class Notes) and, among the Ch'orti, have been equated with testicles (Metz 2006:115) or *ku'm* (Metz 2009: personal communication).

¹⁹ Despite extensive reconstruction done on the central altarpiece by these brothers from 1976 to 1981 as a result of earthquake damage, perhaps the Franciscans who established the church and oversaw the area during the colonial period had envisioned the altarpieces as representing the Holy Trinity (Christenson 2001:XIII, 56). The right (south) altarpiece is dedicated to the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit, with María Concepción (Mary of the Conception) holding Christ as an infant as the image in the center of the altarpiece (Christenson 2001:56, 58, figure 3.4). The dominant imagery of the left (north) altarpiece includes two life-size images of Jesus Christ (Christenson 2001:56), and the central and dominant altarpiece contains both male and female images, including God the Father and various saints (Christenson 2001:9). Interestingly, the domination of the flanking altarpieces by either male or female imagery and the association of the central dominant altarpiece with both male and female imagery is similar in arrangement to the seemingly gendered structures of the Palenque Cross Group, which may represent three creation stones, discussed by Looper (2002).

found in association with a hole, the *pa ruchi' jay xibalba* (“at the doorway of the underworld”) or *r'muxux ruchiliew* (“navel of the face of the earth”), that represents the center point of creation, which residents have said is the endpoint for one of the seven caves/passageways beneath the church floor (Christenson 2001:77-9, 82).²⁰

Pre-Hispanic art and architecture depicting the three stones within mouths also associates the three creation stones with caves and mountains. Karl Taube (1998:439) says that an Early Classic stucco relief at the site of Copan shows a caiman with stones in its teeth that may represent the three-stone hearth. Comparably, Late Classic Copan Altar T illustrates a caiman with three *tsuk* stones protruding from its mouth

Looper (2002) analyzes similarities between the three creation stones listed on Quirigua Stela C and the Palenque Cross Group. Parallels between the stones of Quirigua Stela C and the three deities associated with the Palenque Cross Group suggest the possible relationship between the stones and the Cross Group. This triadic pyramid complex has two flanking structures, one associated with the feminine gender and the other with the masculine gender, and a third axial and dominant structure with ties to the androgynous Maize God/Moon Goddess. This is similar to the arrangement of the three creation stones on Quirigua Stela C. On this stela, the stones are sorted hierarchically (two complementary parallel stones with the third one distinct). [This is one reason Looper claims why it may not refer to the three mythical hearthstones but rather to another three creation stones. However, the three mythical hearthstones could have been ranked at times. For example, in San Pedro La Laguna, in the Lake Atitlán region of Guatemala, within the hearth “the most important of the three hearthstones is known as the grandmother stone” (Vail and Stone 2002: 224). This shows that hearthstones in the village are ranked and also demonstrates that they could have gender associations.]

The similar pattern of arrangement between the pyramids and creation stones furthers the notion of their possible relationship with one another. The parallels between the three creation stones and the Palenque Cross Group suggests that the three creation stones could have been gendered, given the gender associations of the structures in the Cross group. The Palenque Cross Group is a testament to the role of gender in cosmogenesis among the Maya (184-195).

²⁰ The significance of seven caves will be discussed later in the chapter.

Among the Mixe of Oaxaca, “the cave ‘of the infants’” is thought to be the navel of world because everything in the heavens and on the earth are thought to have come from there, such as the Moon and the Sun (Heydon 2005: 29).

(Taube 1998:439). The mouth of the caiman may be representative of a cave (Moyes 2005b:205). The authors of the *Popol Vuh* mentioned that “They [the effigies of carved wood] wanted to hide in caves, but the mouths of the caves closed up before their faces” (Christenson 2003:89). In contemporary Yucatan, the Maya of Yalcoba see the entrance to the cave as the as the open mouth of a wild beast (Stone 1995:23). “The Chol refer metaphorically to stalactites as the teeth of the cave” (Bassie-Sweet 1996:211 n. 6) and in all probability, speleothems were thought of as the fangs of cave mouths among the ancient Maya (Saturno, et al. 2005:14).²¹ Also, mouths of beasts, such as those of jaguars, saurians, and serpents, are common in Mesoamerican art, and they can represent real or artificial cave entrances and are portals that lead into sacred space (Stone 1995:23).²² The architectural *Witz* Monster mouth symbolizes a cave opening (Moyes 2005b:205) (Figure 2.2).

²¹ Interestingly, among the Ch’orti’, vaginas have been equated with mouths and *Gringas* (light-skinned, foreign females) (Metz 2006:115; 14 n. 1) have been thought to have vaginas with teeth that devour the penises of men (Metz n.d.:4). Given these associations among the modern Ch’orti’, the notion that caves have been associated with both vaginas (discussed in the next chapter) and mouths with teeth is perhaps not so hard to fathom.

²²A possible example of a mouth representing a cave comes from the Madrid codex. Page 20 of this document shows actors coming out of the mouth of a toad or frog that has the coiled body of a snake (Bassie-Sweet 1991:133). In the Maya area toads and frogs are associated with caves and the toad is linked with birth, as are caves (Bassie-Sweet 1991:133, 256 n. 1). In Ch’orti’ stories the mouths of toads symbolize vaginas (Metz n.d.:7). Snakes are also associated with caves (Bassie-Sweet 1991:132-133, 137), and among the Tzutujil of Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala “the womb is visualized as a coiled snake” (Vail and Stone 2002: 215). The toad/frog head and snake body could associate the emergence of these actors from the mouth of this creature with the emergence from the cave/vagina/womb.



Figure 2.2. *Witz* doorway of the main building at Hochob (Miller 1999:56, figure 43). Permission to reproduce photograph courtesy Mary E. Miller.

Taube (1998:438) says that the facade of a shrine of Tonina Structure E5-5 depicts a *witz* monster and suggests that the representations of *tun* stones on the facade, one found on each side of the monster mouth, and a stone ball in the center of the shrine chamber together represent the triangular hearth inside the mouth of the zoomorphic mountain. The association of the three stones with mouths in Pre-Hispanic art and architecture at Copan and Tonina further demonstrates that the three creation stones have been associated with caves and mountains within the Maya area.

Another possible example of a link between caves and mountains and the three stones comes from the previously mentioned Quirigua Stela C. Bassie-Sweet (1996) suggests that the text of Quirigua Stela C refers to a Classic period reordering of the world that included the setting up of T528 *tun* “stone” idols at the midpoints of

three of the cardinal directions (north, west, and east) (Bassie-Sweet 1996:140).²³ She explains that “the metaphor or model that is used for the triadic ordering of the world appears to be the configuration of the three hearth stones of the house” (Bassie-Sweet 1996:140). She also proposes that the T528 *tun* sign could be used to symbolize a hearthstone and that the T528 *tun* stone may even refer to specific stalagmites (Bassie-Sweet 1996:138, 155). This latter suggestion fits with the three speleothem-cluster found in the cave discussed by Moyes above. Bassie-Sweet (1996:62) claims that the cardinal midpoint of each side of the quadrilateral world included a mythological mountain and cave. Since the stones might have been placed at three of these midpoints, and because the stones may have referred to stalagmites, this stela suggests an association between the three creation stones and caves and mountains. Thus, the connections between caves and mountains and the three stones ties these landscape features to creation among Maya groups of various places and time periods.

Like mountains, caves have also been associated with the world tree by inhabitants of the Maya area. For example, Nicholas Chavez, a resident of Santiago Atitlán, says that a tree, which Christenson relates to the Maya concept of the world tree, that grows near Paq'alib'al is the origin place of life and all things good; it is the

²³ As mentioned above, on Quirigua Stela C the setting of three creation stones apparently marked the end of a previous cycle of time and the beginning of a new one (Freidel, et al. 1993:67). Bassie-Sweet (1996:140) mentions that it is interesting that the text of the stela only discusses three stones instead of four, since the world has a quadrilateral nature. She mentions that similarly, in the *Popol Vuh*, the K'iche' begin with “four lineage heads and their respective patron deities, but by the time the first community is founded only three of these deities are placed around the community and worshiped” (Bassie-Sweet 1996:140).

place where “the first rays of dawn begin” (Christenson 2001:84-5). Also, a stone “tree” found in the cave of Balankanche that is surrounded by pottery offerings may be considered a representation of the world tree (Reed 2001:149). This “tree” includes a stalagmite “trunk”, which grows up from the floor of the cave towards the ceiling, and stalactite “leaves”, which grow down from the ceiling of the cave towards the floor (Reed 2001:149, see picture on same page) (Figure 2.3). Indeed, some Maya informants have indicated that ribbed stalagmitic columns are *ceiba* trees, the Maya world tree (Brady and Prufer 2005a:5). The association of caves with world trees by some Maya groups connects caves with creation in these groups.

Throughout Mesoamerica, residents have thought that humans were created in the earth and then emerged from caves (Diehl 2004: 110). Nahua groups saw “the archetypical homeland or place of creation and origin as the Chicomoztoc, or Place of the Seven Caves” (Aguilar, et al. 2005: 79; see Figure 2.4 and Figure 2.5). Similarly, “according to the *Popol Vuh* and other highland Maya texts, the ancestors of the K’iche’an people...originated at a place called Wuqub’ Pek, Wuqub’ Siwan (“Seven Caves, Seven Ravines)” (Christenson 2001:80), and the concept of “Seven Caves” may have been in existence among Maya groups since the Classic period (Sheseña 2007:361-362, 386-387). Manca (1995) claims Chol people believe that they and the patron saint of Tila, the Black Christ, originated in caves (Vogt and Stuart 2005:175). C. Guiteras Holmes (1947:1) reported that Tzotzil lineage clans are each associated with a specific cave, where lineage ancestors emerged and the souls of members



Figure 2.3. Example of a stone “tree.” Carlsbad Caverns, New Mexico, 2009. Author’s photo.

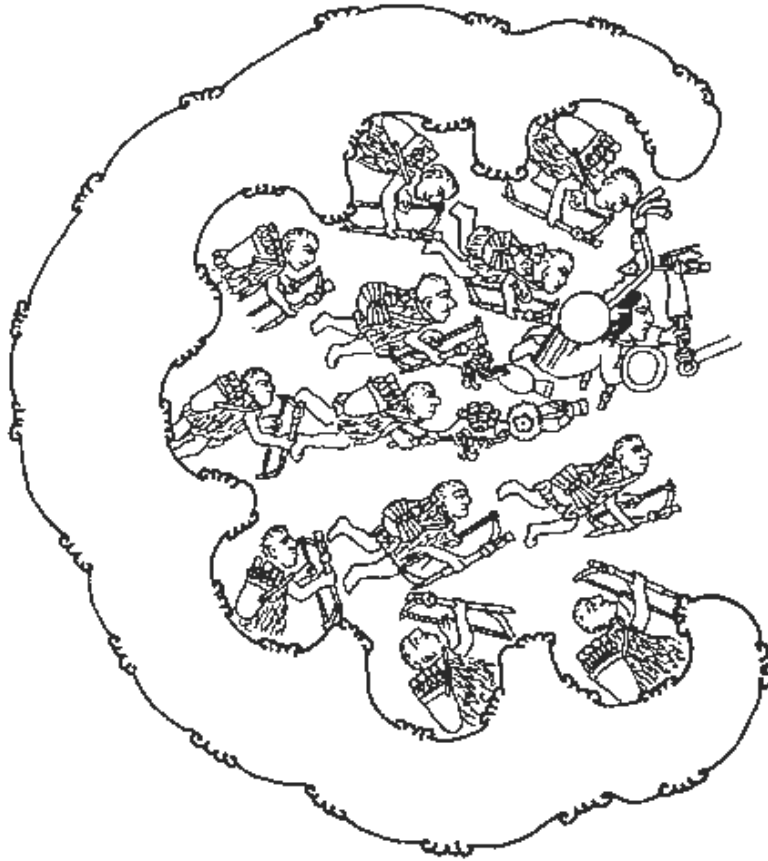


Figure 2.4. Chichimec tribes in Chicomoztoc from the Map of Cuauhtinchan No. 2. Drawn by Mario Dávila. (Aguilar, et al. 2005:82, figure 4.13). Permission to reproduce drawing courtesy Manuel Aguilar.

returned when they died (Brady and Colas 2005:150). Similarly, Bassie-Sweet (1991:32) believes “that the main sign of the emblem glyph is the name for a cave associated with the origin of the protagonist’s lineage” (Bassie-Sweet 1991:32). According to Vogt and Stuart (2005:162), evidence suggests “that a good many place names in the Classic inscriptions, including emblem glyphs or polity names, are specified as *cave names* in origin.” For instance, the Tikal emblem glyph, likely

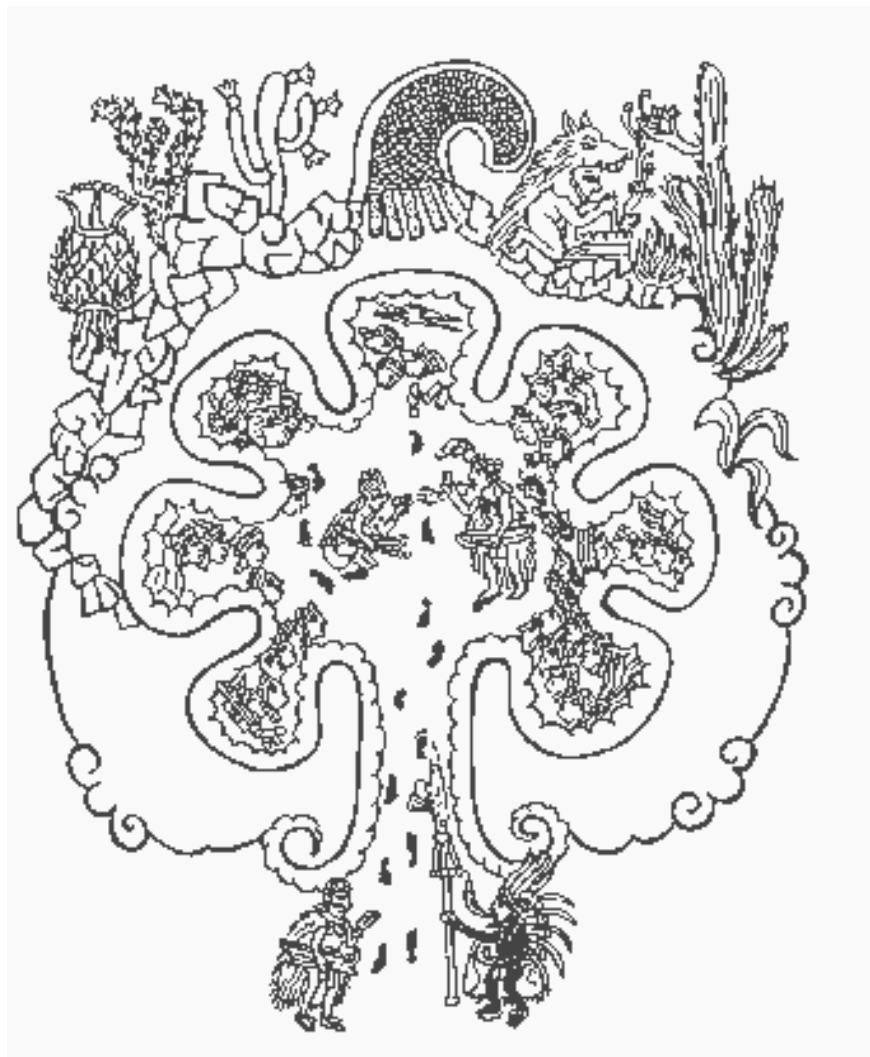


Figure 2.5. Chichimec tribes in Chicomoztoc from the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*. Drawn by Mario Dávila (Aguilar, et al. 2005:82, figure 4.13). Permission to reproduce drawing courtesy Manuel Aguilar.

read as MUT or MUTUL, appears with the CH'EEN sign, which probably has a reading of "cave," in various inscriptions, including *tan-ch'een Mutul*, "inside the

cave of Mutul” (Vogt and Stuart 2005: 160, 162-3).²⁴ Given all of the above, mountains and caves have clearly played fundamental roles in various Maya (and Mesoamerican) concepts of creation and the cosmic order, which taken with Isaac’s model demonstrates that these elements were prized for reproducing the cosmic plan at settlement sites.

The attention to natural landscape in Mesoamerican settlements has had multiple functions. For example, if a cave indicated the center of a community, the community would be associated not only with sacredness and fertility, but also power, prestige, and validity (Brady, et al. 1997:354). Indeed, García-Zambrano (1994:218) says a cave that had water in or around it was important to a new Mesoamerican settlement and that “these cavities, when ritually dedicated to the divinities, became the pulsating heart of the new town, providing the cosmogonic referents that legitimized the settlers’ right for occupying that space and for the ruler’s authority over that site.”

Mesoamericans have also modified the natural features of the landscape to reflect concepts of creation and the cosmic plan, which again follows Isaac’s model. For example, sometimes caves were manipulated to model the mythical cave of origin (García-Zambrano 1994:218). Mountains and hills were also modified. The El Duende pyramid, which is the largest complex at the ancient Maya site of Dos Pilas, was constructed on a heavily modified hill, the highest hill in the area (Brady, et al.

²⁴ The Maya term *ch’een* refers to “a hole or cavity that penetrates the earth and comprises such features as caves, grottoes, cenotes, sinkholes, springs, crevices, and rockshelters” (Brady and Rissolo 2006:487 n. 1).

1997:354, 357). Indeed, pyramids themselves are likened to mountains (Prufer and Kindon 2005: 25), as will be discussed below. Notably, a cave that contains a lake also runs below this pyramid (Brady et al. 1997:354). According to Brady, et al. (1997:354, 357), the construction of a pyramid over an actual cave or the use of a real hill for the base of a pyramid allows surface architecture to become an extension of the sacred landscape, and “locating architecture in relation to sacred landmarks also imparted the feeling that the site had unfolded in a cosmically ordained pattern.” The El Duende pyramid, with its ties to a watery cave, likely centered the site and, due to the power and prestige associated with the center cross-culturally, legitimized the site and its political leadership (Brady, et al. 1997:357). The common appropriation of the great natural caves by public and elite architecture, like the El Duende pyramid, at Dos Pilas also demonstrated “the state’s claim to direct and unequal access to the sources of supernatural power” (Brady, et al. 1997:357). Hence, Mesoamericans have modified features of the natural environment, such as caves and hill/mountains, in order to suit concepts of creation and the cosmic plan and to benefit the community, especially the elites of that community.

Mesoamericans have also constructed representations of the sacred landscape. In Mesoamerica, the relationship between the natural landscape and the built environment, in which pyramids and temples abound, is a close one. Pyramids are considered replicas of mountains (Prufer and Kindon 2005: 25). Indeed, David Stuart (1987:17ff) argues that the term *witz* (“mountain”) was used to label Maya pyramids (Brady and Ashmore 1999:133). For example, the symbols *witz tuun*, “stone

mountain,” can be found on Structure 10L-22 at Copan (Hull 2004:9). Some Nahua even state “the ancient pyramids are like sacred hills” (Sandstrom 2005: 50). A temple is considered to be “a god house on an artificial mountain in the form of a pyramid” (Pugh 2005:48), and temples and caves may have been associated with one another, given that in Yucatan in the sixteenth century the Maya term *aktun* referred to both stone buildings and caves (Brady and Colas 2005: 161). Temple doorways at the tops of temple pyramids likely represented entrances to caves (Brady, et al. 1997:354) that lead into the symbolic mountain. Further support for the idea that religious structures on top of pyramids could relate to caves is the fact that shrines on top of pyramids were kept dark similar to the darkness inside of caves (Stone 1995:36). Besides temples, symbolic caves also took the form of artificial tunnels or chambers underneath pyramids and tombs within or beneath pyramids (Brady and Ashmore 1999:134). Thus, people have created symbolic mountains and caves that took the form of pyramids, temples, tunnels/chambers, and tombs.

Artificial hill/mountains and caves have been constructed to reproduce the cosmic plan in the built environment, which again follows Isaac’s model. One example comes from Belize. Prufer and Kindon (2005) discuss an artificial cave at the primary ceremonial platform at the ancient Maya site of Muklebal Tzul. They report that water goes into this tunnel from a small spring at its rear, over an artificial waterfall, and into a basin before draining into the bedrock. They claim residents would not have been able to see the source of water, and apparently access to the water would have been limited and not used on a grand-scale by the population. They

argue the artificial well seemed to be a replication of a small water-bearing cave and that the artificial well could have served to center the site over a mythical and sacred feature, as the platform itself is a metaphor for the centering sacred hill.²⁵ They claim that while the spring alone would have had sufficient mythical and sacred qualities, the construction of the cave enhanced these qualities and the incorporation of such sacred elements increased the status of rulers and religious specialists and the prestige of ceremonial activities (Prufer and Kindon 2005: 32-40).

Another example of a constructed landscape feature related to the cosmic plan is the artificial cave under the central plaza at the site of Q'umarkaj, or Utatlan, the fifteenth-century capital of the K'iche' Maya, which models the legendary seven-chamber cave from where humans emerged (Brady and Prufer 2005b:372-3; Brady and Ashmore 1999:136). Representations of the seven-chambered origin cave have been found elsewhere in the Mesoamerican built environment, such as beneath the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan (Christenson 2001:80) and at the site of Acatzingo Viejo in Mexico, where seven artificial caves, one now missing, were built into an escarpment (Aguilar, et al. 2005:77). Aguilar, et al. (2005:79) think that the “alignment of seven caves is definitely a re-creation of the Chicomoztoc made by the

²⁵ Another possible example of a human attempt to create a watery cave comes from Teotihuacan. In the artificial cave beneath the Pyramid of the Sun at this site, which is shaped like a uterus (Aguilar, et al. 2005: 83) and is representative of the ancient origin place (Christenson 2001: 80), segments of stone drains have been found. This makes it appear as though rain was channeled into the cave from the pyramid, which would make it look as though a spring was below the cave (Aguilar, et al. 2005: 83)).

Chichimec as a reconstruction of their mythical place of origin.”²⁶ The incorporation of the origin place into the built environment possibly served to symbolically position the site at the center point of the cosmos, as the place of human creation is one element that marks this point (Aguilar, et al. 2005: 85), again benefiting elites. By incorporating man-made mountains and caves into the built environment, elites were able to garner more authority.

The elite building artificial mountains and caves reinforced social stratification, drawing the population to elite claims to natural and supernatural authority. While the ancient Maya peasantry would worship and perform rituals at topographic shrines, like caves, to ask for assistance or follow calendrical mandates, the elite performed rites at architectural mountains and caves, which allowed the elite and peasantry to relate on a symbolic level and served to strengthen elite propaganda (Stone 1995:241). To strengthen the similarities between the two groups’ rituals, elites would also make pilgrimages to important topographic shrines (Stone 1995:241).

Using information from a project carried out at the ancient Maya site of Dos Pilas, Brady, et al. (1997:357-359) suggest caves could have had an impact on the economy and trade. For example, at the site of Dos Pilas, the distribution of goods for cave ritual was apparently substantial (Brady, et al. 1997:358). Because of the range of items used in cave ritual at this site, the economic impact of cave ritual could have

²⁶ Interestingly, contemporary Tz’utujils of Santiago Atitlán say that a network of caves or passageways under their Catholic church has seven different endpoints (Christenson 2001:78-9).

been felt throughout Maya society (Brady, et al. 1997:358). Also, the deposition of jade (and perhaps other durable artifacts) in caves at Dos Pilas could have strengthened the demand for these items by removing them from the system (Brady, et al. 1997:358). Because a large number of the items were imported or made of imported materials, the role of ritual in sustaining interregional exchange systems was apparently significant (Brady et al. 1997:358).²⁷ Caves apparently played a role in the economy and trade among the ancient Maya, and perhaps they still play an economic role in the Maya area today.

Conclusion

Features of the landscape have been culturally important among Maya and other Mesoamerican groups of various regions and time periods but mountains/hills and caves have played the most important roles. This is likely due to mountains' and caves' dominance of the landscape and also, in the case of caves, to their practical function as a source of water. Mesoamericans have incorporated mountains and caves, sometimes real, modified, and/or symbolic, into their settlement sites for practical, religious, communal, and elite purposes. Cave ritual has also had an impact on the economy and trade.

²⁷ Folktales that mention "Earth Lords" who store treasure in their caves could perhaps relate to knowledge of the imported wealth items deposited in caves (Brady, et al. 1997:362). An example of such a tale is a Zinacanteco myth that recounts how a man emerged from a cave with a silver crucifix and sacks of gold coins on a mule from the Earth Owner (Vogt and Stuart 2005:165). When challenged by a *ladino* to compare wealth, the Maya's pile of gold coins grew ever larger until it beat that of the *ladino* because of the magical crucifix (Vogt and Stuart 2005:165). (In the modern era, *ladino* refers to "a non-Indian, a mestizo, or a person of European or mixed descent" (Carmack, et al. 2007:536). A *mestizo* refers to "a person of mixed white, Indian, and in many cases African descent" (Carmack, et al. 2007:537).)

CHAPTER THREE

MALE AND FEMALE ASSOCIATIONS OF THE LANDSCAPE

The earth, caves, mountains, and speleothems have had sexual associations. Examining the sexual associations that these elements have had and the relationships between them shows the link that has existed between the landscape and sex and the importance that certain sexual concepts have had among Maya groups.

Caves and the Female Sex

Among the Maya, the Earth is fertile, sexual, and feminine, and caves are a perfect example of this (Brady and Prufer 2005b:370). As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, among Mesoamerican groups, caves have been seen as birthplaces and could symbolize vaginas and wombs (Pugh 2005:50). “Sahagún (1969:vi, 118, 151) reports that among the Aztecs, women referred to their vaginas as ‘caves,’ indicating that children were created in human caves” (Moyes 2005b:189) and the Tzotzil and Ch’orti’ Maya use the word for cave as a comical metaphor for the vagina (Moyes 2005b:190; Metz 2009:personal communication). During the dialogue of a change-of-office ceremony for *alféreces* (one type of religious official) in Zinacantan,

“‘Cave’ is synonymous with ‘vagina’ and ‘grassland’ with ‘pubic hairs’. The musician’s request to visit the Blackman’s cave is tantamount to asking permission to cohabit with the *alférez*’s wife. In order to show the musician how to enter his cave the *alférez* would have to demonstrate how he performs sexual intercourse.²⁸ [Bricker 1973:66]

In one Ch’orti’ story “two fleas decide to seek warmth inside the “two caves” of a woman and complain to each other the next morning about the reasons for their

²⁸ The Blackman figure will be discussed in the following chapter.

miserable sleep” (Metz 2006:115). Also, “the Florentine Codex cites Mexica women who said that ‘in us is a cave, a gorge...whose only function is...to receive’ (Sahagún 1969: 118 [1969b in Heydon]), and also to give life” (Heydon 2005:22). This quote strongly suggests a relationship between a vagina or womb and a cave. Another possible connection between caves and the womb is the number nine. Nine levels exist in the Maya Lower World (Sharer and Traxler 2006:673), or Xibalba, to which caves are portals (Pugh 2005:50). The number nine is also ritually significant because it is how many months (or moons) are needed for a child to develop in their mother’s womb (Christenson 2003:195). I also feel that it is significant that the main sign of the Maya hieroglyph for “mother” is a bat’s head (Josserand 2002:150 n. 5), for bats have clear associations with caves. Mesoamerican beliefs regarding humans’ creation in and emergence from caves could be understood as a metaphor for children’s formation in and birth from their mother’s wombs. Indeed, the artificial cave beneath the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacán that represents the seven-chambered ancient origin place is shaped like a uterus (Christenson 2001:80; Aguilar, et al. 2005:83).

Depictions of female genitalia are common at Mesoamerican rock art sites (Rissolo 2005:362-363), a fact that strengthens the association between such sites and female genitalia. In a couple of Maya caves in the Yucatan Peninsula, rain god imagery has been found in association with depictions of female genitalia. For example, the cave of Pak Ch’en in Quintana Roo includes a figure that apparently has both Chaak and Tlaloc attributes, “which Taube [1992b] describes as a common Late Postclassic development in rain god imagery,” around which are no fewer than nine

distinct vulva motifs (Rissolo 2005:362, see figure 14.10).²⁹ (The significance of the number nine has been mentioned). Depictions of female genitalia can similarly be found in association with rain god imagery at the cave of Dzibichen (Rissolo 2005:362-363) in Yucatan. In Dzibichen, a staircase goes toward the back of the cave where there is a pool of water and drawings, all of which date to the Colonial period (Stone 1995:74-5). Drawing 7 at Dzibichen is likely a depiction of the Yucatecan rain god Chac (Stone 1995:77). There are five examples of “vulvas” within the schematic drawings at this cave (Stone 1995:85) and “vulvas” are found near the depiction of the rain god (see figure 4-68 in Stone 1995:76). Drawing 17 is “a ‘vulva’ drawn over a rounded protuberance in the wall [which] imparts three-dimensionality to the pubic region” (Stone 1995:78). Why was rain god imagery paired with vulva motifs at these two caves?

The pairing of depictions of rain gods with drawings of “vulvas” may relate to their similar associations. Rands (1955:343-344) reports “that water is conceptually associated with the genital area” (Rissolo 2005: 363). Among the Q’eqchi in Verapaz, “like water, the genital fluids of men and women are humorally considered ‘cold’” (Adams and Brady 2005:316). Indeed, Pak Ch’en includes a rendering of a vagina above a pool where the pathway ends marking “the spot as a watery, womblike, and fertile place--the sacred epicenter of the cave” (Rissolo 2005:363). The drawings at Dzibichen, including those of “vulvas,” are near a pool of water in the cave (Stone

²⁹ The term “vulva” is often used to refer to depictions that include a triangle with a slit (Stone 1995:53).

1995:74-75) as well. The similar associations of rain gods and female genitalia with water can perhaps explain the pairing of these two elements at these caves.³⁰

However, an Aztec myth might also provide some insight into the reason rain god imagery has been found in association with “vulva” motifs. According to Brady (1988:53),

The Tlaloque in Aztec myth carried a phallic staff called *chicahuaztli* which they pounded on the ground to produce rain (Sahagún 1969:39; Neumann 1974). As the Tlaloque reside in caves the production of rain is a result of the symbolic sexual act between the earth’s cave/womb/vagina and the phallic *chicahuaztli*.³¹ [Brady 1988:53]

The pairing of rain gods and “vulvas” in these two caves could perhaps relate to the sexual relationship between the Tlaloque with their *chicahuaztlis* and the cave/womb/vagina in this myth. For some Maya groups, caves have symbolized wombs and vaginas as well. Drawing 17 at Dzibichen mentioned above apparently strengthens the connection between the vulva and the cave itself by incorporating the

³⁰ In the codices, the goddess Chak Chel is sometimes shown as a water goddess who is often pictured with Chaak (Vail and Stone 2002:211). Brisko (1994) claims that when this goddess is shown pouring water out of a jar, it might be a symbol of women’s fertility and that in the couple of instances when water is shown coming out of her body, it shows “the rush of amniotic fluid prior to giving birth” (Vail and Stone 2002:215).

³¹ In Mesoamerica, the “production of rain is often thought to be in the hands of assistants who are generally conceived of as cave dwelling dwarfs called the Tlaloque” (Brady 1988:53). The Tlaloque are the four or five versions or transformations of the rain god Tlaloc who were assistants to Tlaloc (Smith 2003:203). The Tlaloque have been associated with the cardinal directions (Ingham 1984:384). Brady (1988:53) says that several of the drawings at the Maya cave of Naj Tunich depict dwarfs (see figure 4 Brady 1988:53) and that one of these dwarfs even carries a *chicahuaztli*.

contours of the wall into the image.³² Also, among Maya groups, rain gods and caves have been associated with the production of rain, which is similar to the Aztec myth and, as mentioned above, the rain god figure at Pak Ch'en even has Tlaloc attributes, suggesting Central Mexican influence. Thus, regular depictions of female genitalia at Mesoamerican rock art sites reinforce the association of caves with the female sex, while the pairing of rain god and "vulva" imagery at Pak Ch'en and Dzibichen could relate to a sexual relationship between the rain god and the female cave in the creation of rain.

Similarly, Bassie-Sweet (1991:84) suggests that stalagmites may have been "erected" by the Classic Maya in caves for reasons that relate to the above Aztec myth. She says "rain, which was thought to be created in caves, was produced by the symbolic sexual act between the stalagmite/penis and the cave/vagina/womb" during a Period Ending ceremony (Bassie-Sweet 1991:84, 113).³³

Interestingly, a cave symbol was used to associate the groin area of an ancient Maya male ruler engaged in penis perforation to the female reproductive organs.

According to Andrea Stone (1988:75-76), letting blood from the penis

transformed the male genitalia into a doubly potent agent of fertility, capable of shedding two life-giving fluids: semen and blood. The shedding of blood from the male sexual organ also mimics the female menstrual cycle. Through this and other ideological constructs, Maya kings appropriated female fertility symbols to strengthen the power of their political office, leaving the female, at

³² Similarly, at the cave of Naj Tunich "the only framing devices employed by the cave painters are natural wall features, so the connection between figures and topography is strengthened" (Stone 1995:136).

³³ The associations between stalagmites and penises will be discussed below.

least at the level of official consciousness, as a decidedly secondary benefactor of fertility.³⁴

While this suggests that women's role in fertility was diminished in certain respects due to penis bloodletting, the idea that male rulers were appropriating signs of female fertility to increase their power serves to highlight the value of female reproductive capabilities among the ancient Maya. The probable association of penis bloodletting with both male and female fertility during its perforation underlines the significance of androgyny in ancient Maya belief, as symbols of male and female fertility together served to augment the power of the Maya ruler.

On the Temple of the Cross Jamb Chan Bahlum is shown engaging in penis perforation (Bassie-Sweet 1991:155). What may be an umbilical cord hangs from his groin area, and at the end of the cord is a quatrefoil cave opening (Bassie-Sweet 1991:155; see fig. 52a Bassie-Sweet 1991:154).³⁵ In addition to the umbilical cord, the cave symbol ties the male groin area in this scene to female reproductive anatomy. Accordingly, an infant deity is suspended from the cave opening, and scholars can see that “the autosacrifice of the ruler is visually associated with the birth

³⁴ Interestingly, in Yucatec the word *k'iik'* means both “blood” and “semen” (Stone 1988:80). Also noteworthy is that the corn plant contains both male and female organs and “Maya rulers may have seen themselves as analogous to the corn plant, alternately able to fertilize and give birth” (Looper 2002:181). Similarly, among the modern Tz'utujil Maya of Santiago Atitlán “the penis is held to be female in that the urethra is a small vagina” (Tarn and Prechtel 1986:173). Apparently, in this same town, the clitoris is considered to be male (Tarn and Prechtel 1986:173), perhaps being likened to a penis. Classic Maya men would sometimes even wear feminine clothing during penitential rites such as bloodletting (Looper 2002:202).

³⁵ A quatrefoil (see Bassie-Sweet 1991:96 fig. 27) is a symbol that has been associated with cave entrances in Mesoamerica for a long time (Stone 1987:105), however, quatrefoils can symbolize any type of sacred aperture (Stone 1995:23).

of a deity” (Bassie-Sweet 1991:155). Indeed, in Mesoamerica, there is a common notion that deities are born within or from caves (Bassie-Sweet 1991:100), and a strong association between birth and bloodletting exists in Maya art (Stone 1988:84). The perforation of the penis by Chan Bahlum may relate to the cutting of the umbilical cord (Bassie-Sweet 1991:155), the female menstrual cycle as mentioned above, or the blood associated with childbirth. The association of the male groin area with an umbilical cord and a cave on the Temple of the Cross Jambes demonstrates the appropriation of female fertility symbols by male rulers discussed above. Interestingly,Looper (2002:195) says that the Temple of the Cross has ties to androgynous deities, the Maize God and Moon Goddess. The incorporation of the cave symbol into the Temple of the Cross Jambes demonstrates the value of female fertility and androgyny among the ancient Maya at Palenque.

The womb/vagina metaphor of caves can also be applied to the earth in general within the Maya area. The Ch’orti’ consider agricultural work and sexual reproduction analogous, a relationship that may in part relate to centuries of subsistence farming (Metz n.d.:5,7-8). According to Metz (n.d.:5),

just as men work Our Mother Earth (*Katu’ Mundo*) with their machetes and penetrating planting sticks to produce corn, including ritually depositing semen-like corn gruel (*sa’*) and sacrificial turkey blood into a hole in their fields, they dutifully ‘work’ to fertilize women to reproduce the next generation of workers.³⁶

³⁶ In Ch’orti’ symbolism, penises and machetes are linked (Metz n.d.:8), and among the Maya, semen and blood have both been considered life-giving fluids (Stone 1988:75-76).

Among the Maya, there is not a great distinction between caves and artificial pits, and this is true with respect to cave births also (Pugh 2005:50). One Tzutujil informant called holes at a shrine believed to lead to the underworld realm of the Mam “caves” (Christenson 2001:181-182), and in Kaqchikel “*jul* means ‘cave, pit, hole’” (Fischer and Hendrickson 2003: 84) and *chen* is both “cave” and “hole” among the Ch’orti’ (Metz 2009:personal communication).³⁷ Therefore, the apparent application of the womb and/or vagina metaphor to both holes in fields and caves (mentioned above) among the modern Ch’orti’ is not so surprising. Somewhat similar to the Ch’orti’, some Tz’utujils of Santiago Atitlán have likened human and plant life cycles to one another (Carlsen 1997:54).³⁸ When a child is born, *atitecos* (residents of Santiago Atitlán) may say of the child “he (or she) sprouted” (Carlsen 1997:54). Also, when either a person or maize dies, some *atitecos* believe that their life essence will be regenerated in their descendents (Carlsen 1997:54). Among the K’iche’, when a woman becomes pregnant, a ceremony, denoted as “the sowing” of the future child, is

³⁷ Maize is “the basic cereal of Mesoamerica” (Heydon 2005: 22) and “the Maya were, and are, an agricultural society based on the production of corn” (Bassie-Sweet 1996:10). Among many contemporary Maya groups, there has been the idea that maize originated below the earth’s surface (Morehart 2005:174) and was first obtained from a sacred cave with the aid of rain gods (Bassie-Sweet 1996:12). Also, in Yucatan in the mid-1800s, the Maya of the town of Xocen said that a cross, the Santissima Cruz Tun, had told their ancestors where they could find seed in a cave, which allowed for the start of the cultivation of corn (Reed 2001:148). The associations of caves with the origins of corn among Maya groups may stem from the placement of seed in a hole in the earth during the planting season from which the plant will grow with the aid of rain.

³⁸ Similarly, in the *Popol Vuh*, before traveling to Xibalba Hunahpu and Xbalanque say, “Each of us shall first plant an ear of unripe maize in the center of the house. If they dry up, this is a sign of our death...If they then sprout again, ‘They are alive,’ you will say, our grandmother and our mother” (Christenson 2003:160).

held at specific lineage shrines (Christenson 2003:60 n. 10). Thus, the relationships between human and agricultural reproduction among some modern Maya groups ties the earth to the female sex within these groups.

Another example how caves and the earth more generally may be tied to wombs relates to some Maya groups having deposited animal remains at sacred sites, such as caves and areas associated with rock formations (Brown 2005). One reason for this deposition is to appease the guardians of the animals, entities that have had a place among both Pre- and Post-Hispanic Maya belief systems, for permission to hunt and success in that endeavor (Brown 2005:137-139). Another reason is the long-standing Maya belief that “skeletal remains contain the potential for new life” (Brown 2005:137). Ties between agricultural and animal life cycles seem likely, given the “symbolic conflation of bone, seed, and regeneration” among Maya groups (Brown 2005:140). Indeed, by “planting the bones” in sacred locations in the landscape the hunter ensures that the species will be regenerated (Brown 2005:140). According to Eliade (1964:63),

in the spiritual horizon of hunters and herdsman bone represents the very source of life, both human and animal. To reduce oneself to the skeleton condition is equivalent to re-entering the womb of this primordial life, that is, to a complete renewal, a mystical rebirth.

In this manner, perhaps the placement of bones in places like caves, which have been associated with the womb, in hopes of regeneration relates to the reentering and rebirth from the womb. This may also partially inform findings of human remains in places like caves.

Another linking concept that has existed between caves and the female sex is flowers. In Maya art “forces of birth are conveyed by a floral metaphor” (Looper 2002:180), and flowers have been associated with the female uterus (Moyes 2005b:189) and other anatomy associated with procreation. In fact, in both Kaqchikel and Ch’orti’ the words for flower and placenta are the same (*kotz’i’j* and *nichir/nichte’*, respectively) (Brown, et al. 2006:222; Metz 2009:personal communication). The Maya of Yucatán see the *Plumeria*, a flowering tree, as a symbol for female eroticism, and Thompson (1939:138) draws attention to a secondary definition in the Motul dictionary of the word *nikte*, “which means both flower in general and the *Plumeria* in particular, as ‘unchastity, carnal vice, and naughtiness of women’” (Stone 1995:146). “Cave imagery is often paralleled with flowers” (Pugh 2005:50) and flowers are frequently found in caves, most likely as offerings (Adams and Brady 2005:319).³⁹ That caves have been associated with flowers among Maya groups, supports caves’ ties to the sexual and reproductive aspects of females.

The “cognitive association between sweatbaths and caves” that may have originated as early as the Preclassic period (Moyes 2005b:206) is another connection between caves and females. Residents of Chamula call a specific cave a steambath because it is similar in form to their steambaths (Bricker 1973:114), and in Santiago Atitlán, the Mam was said to live “in a small cave called a sweatbath, high in the wall

³⁹ At Loltun Cave (*lol-tun* means “stone flower” in Yucatec) in Yucatan some calcite concentrations in the cave even have a florid appearance (Stone 1995:56), which would perhaps be significant to the Maya in the area.

of the church” (Tarn and Prechtel 1986:184 n. 14).⁴⁰ One likely reason for the identification of sweatbaths with caves is that similar to caves, many sweatbaths are located underground (Houston 1996:142). Also, both caves and sweatbaths have been associated with flowers, female fertility, sex, birth, and earth deities associated with creation and renewal (Moyes 2005b:189-191, 205-206). Also, similar to caves, wombs and steambaths have apparently been associated with one another among Maya groups (Tarn and Prechtel 1986:178). When an Aztec woman was going to give birth she was taken to a sweatbath called the *xochicalli*, “house of flowers” and Sahagún claims that the sweatbath was a representation of an artificial cave because it was a place of birth (Moyes 2005b:189-90).⁴¹ The link between caves and sweatbaths reinforces the notion of an association between caves and females.

Another link between caves and females is that both have been associated with water in various places in the Maya area. For example, the female has been identified with water sources among the Q’eqchi’ (Adams and Brady 2005:321).

⁴⁰ The Mam is also known as Maximón (Moyes 2005b:191).

⁴¹ Some artifacts found in sweatbaths may reinforce an association between caves and sweatbaths. Artifacts found at a sweatbath on the periphery of Piedras Negras included a circular mirror and five marine shells (Moyes 2005b:193). Taube (1992a:194-7) demonstrates that mirrors were broadly equated with supernatural caves (Brady and Ashmore 1999:137). The mirror is also a symbol “of the portal to the supernatural world, out of which gods and ancestors are reborn” (Looper 2002: 193), which is similar to the function of caves. Coggins (1987) and Taube (1992a:184-187) claim mirrors are also identified with fire and hearths (Taube 1998:442), with which sweatbaths (Moyes 2005b:205) and caves have been associated. As will be discussed further later, like caves, shells may have had associations with reproduction (Ardren 2002:76), and among the modern Tz’utujil Maya, shells represent caves because they believe caves are portals to the primordial waters (Christenson 2001:83). Shells have also been found in the artificial tunnels beneath the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan (Christenson 2001:80).

Also, in Zinacantan, water holes are typically the domain of women, with the exception of when they are ritually cleaned (Adams and Brady 2005:319). In Santiago Atitlán, the deity María is called water and “the feminine prefix Ya (Ms, Miss, or Mrs.) is the same word as water” (Tarn and Prechtel 1986:174, 176). In this same town, residents think that the moon contains rain and “she slowly turns up sideways towards the rainy season until the water spills out” (Tarn and Prechtel 1986:176). Indeed, the moon has an association with rain throughout the Mesoamerican area (Bassie-Sweet 1996:80). The association of both caves and females with water underlines their associations with one another and ties them both to fertility, for a fundamental aspect of Mesoamerican belief systems is the association of water with fertility (Prufer and Kindon 2005:28)

In sum, caves and the earth have been associated with females at various locations and times within the Maya and greater Mesoamerican area. Spatial and symbolic caves and the earth demonstrate of the value that has been given female fertility and sexual reproduction with regards to things like creation, rain production, agriculture, and politics among differing Maya and Mesoamerican groups. Also, in the case of the Temple of the Cross Jamb, a symbolic cave shows that androgyny was important at least for a period of time in the politics of Palenque. The association that caves and the earth have had with females by Maya and other Mesoamerican groups helps explain their relationships with mountains.

Sexual Relationships Between Landscape Features

In Mesoamerica, caves/earth are associated with females and mountains are associated with males. Q'eqchi' and Tzotzil Maya individuals have suggested that mountains are considered to be male, while the earth is considered to be female (Brady and Prufer 2005b:369). Also, Alan R. Sandstrom (2005:53-54) suggests that among some Nahua, the sacred mountain Postectli, on which is a cave that looks like a vagina, may be a metaphorical phallus, for its peak was called the "real father" by a female shaman during a pilgrimage and from afar it looks like a penis.⁴² This demonstrates that caves and mountains at times can be seen as male and female with regards to their physical form.

The Mesoamerican hot-cold system also suggests the sexual and gender associations of mountains and caves, as well as the common complementary relationship between them. In this system, which is said to have both European and New World roots, "cold" is associated with caves and "things that are wet, cool, dark, low, weak, and feminine...water, the moon, nighttime, and the color white", while "hot" is associated with anything heated by the sun; things that are high, such as mountains; fire; daytime; liquor; masculinity; strength; aggression; power; sexual activity; social engagement of all sorts, including holding political office; and the colors red and yellow" (Stone 2005a:257-8).⁴³ Because mountains fall into the "hot"

⁴² The term shaman has been criticized due to lack of a clear definition, for instance (see Klein, et al. 2002). The author acknowledges this criticism as well but chooses to use the term in his work (Sandstrom 2005:63 n. 2). I have chosen to use this term here since it was the chosen term of the author.

⁴³ Examples of the hot-cold system can be found among Maya groups. In Chamula, locals think that "by sitting on blocks of wood and going barefoot, women are in close touch with the cold ground. The tiny chairs on which men sit raise them above

category they are opposing and complementary to caves in the “cold” category, for in Mesoamerica “order manifests itself in the balance of opposing forces” (Stone 2005a:258) (Figure 3.1).⁴⁴

In addition to their complementary relationship, mountains in combination with caves/earth could perhaps be an expression of androgyny, for when taken together they apparently have parallels with the androgynous Maize God of the ancient Maya. The Maize God (Figure 3.2 and 3.3) is considered to be a First Father, or “progenitor of the cosmos,” and thus as “male” (Looper 2002:177, 182). However, the corn deity has also been identified “as a dual gendered, ambiguously gendered, or androgynous being or as two deities, one male and one female” (Robin 2002:23).⁴⁵

the ground and the sandals they wear separate them from it and complement their masculine heat” (Eber and Rosenbaum 1993:176 n.3). The association of the “cold” with the feminine, the low, and the earth and the association of the “hot” with the masculine and height can be seen in this example. There is another example from the Maya area that may relate to the hot-cold system. In ancient Maya cosmology the Upper World had 13 levels, while the Lower World had nine (Sharer and Traxler 2006:673). The number 13 has been associated with men, while the number nine has been associated with women, which could relate to the numbers of levels in these worlds (Sharer and Traxler 2006: 673). This suggests a link between the up and the masculine and a link between the low and the feminine, which is similar to the hot-cold system. Also, caves are considered portals to the Lower World (Pugh 2005:50) and caves fall into the “cold” category just like the low and the feminine. See also Bricker 1973:117.

⁴⁴ Among Maya groups an excess of coldness or heat is linked with impaired fertility, sickness, and death (Bayles 2008:230), which is interesting since mountains, “hot,” in conjunction with caves, “cold,” have been tied to creation concepts. Another example of caves’ and mountains’ opposing nature is that in Mixtec codices directional glyphs show a cave for the south and a mountain for the north (Stone 1995:33) and these directions are polar opposites.

⁴⁵ The Maize God (and Moon Goddess) could also occupy what Looper (2002) refers to as a distinctive “third gender” status. This status encompasses both masculine and feminine traits in character and appearance (Looper 2002:174) and may be a superordinate gender category (Ashmore 2002:237). The Maize god is sometimes

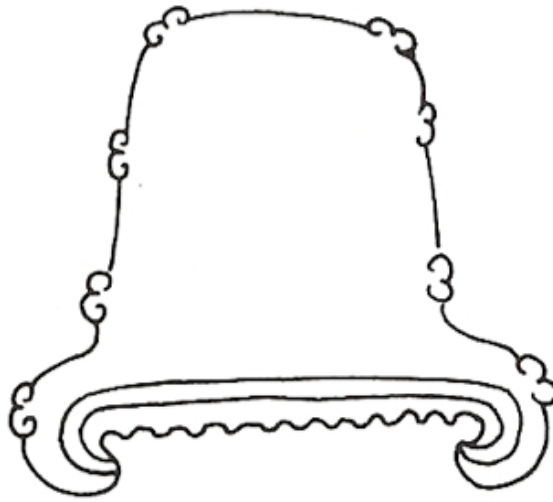


Figure 3.1. The Mixtec mountain-cave symbol is an example of the balance of opposing binaries with the mountain high and dry and the cave low and wet (Stone 2005a:257-8). Drawing from Stone 1995:28, figure 3-17, adapted from Nuttall 1975. Permission to reproduce image courtesy Andrea Stone. (Drawing also found in Stone 2005a:259, figure 10.3)

The Maize God has a male upper body (a naked chest that does not have breasts) and a female lower body consisting of “the female net skirt costume” (Robin 2002:23).

Having both a male upper body and a female lower body may relate to the androgynous corn plant itself, which has the male tassels on the upper part and the female ear and silks on the lower part of it (Robin 2002:24). The body of the Maize God could also relate to the seemingly androgynous-like nature of the world tree, which runs through the various levels of the cosmos, the upper region of the cosmos

conflated with the moon goddess and sometimes he would appear as the female consort of the sun deity among the Classic Maya (Saturno, et al. 2005:37-8). Among the Nahua the young corn plant is thought to be a brother-sister pair named Seven-Flower and Five-Flower (Sandstrom 2005:43). In myth these twins are in charge of providing the people with corn (Sandstrom 2005:47).

generally being associated with males and the lower area of the cosmos typically being associated with females. Indeed, maize plants have symbolized the world tree, such as on the Tablet of the Foliated Cross at Palenque (Christenson 2001:105), for example, and among the contemporary Tz'utujil, an ancestral maize tree, which is located at a place called Flowering Mountain Earth, the *axis mundi*, is the Father/Mother (Saturno, et al. 2005:18). The body of the Maize God could also represent a mountain with caves/earth below, with the masculine upper body of the Maize God being associated with mountains, for mountains are associated with masculinity and height, and the feminine lower body with caves/earth, given caves' and the earth's association with the low and the feminine discussed above. To be sure, there are "multiple and layered meanings inherent in Maya symbolism" (Bassie-Sweet 1996:165).

The lower body of the Maize God apparently has further ties to caves/earth. In her discussion of the lower body of the Maize God, Ardren (2002:76) mentions that there are *spondylus* bivalves on the Maize God's Xoc Monster belt. The skirt of the Maize God is representative of the earth, and the shell is symbolic of the Underworld or primordial waters (Ardren 2002:76). The bivalve is worn along with the skirt, as a representation of the rebirth and transformation of the Maize God in the Underworld,

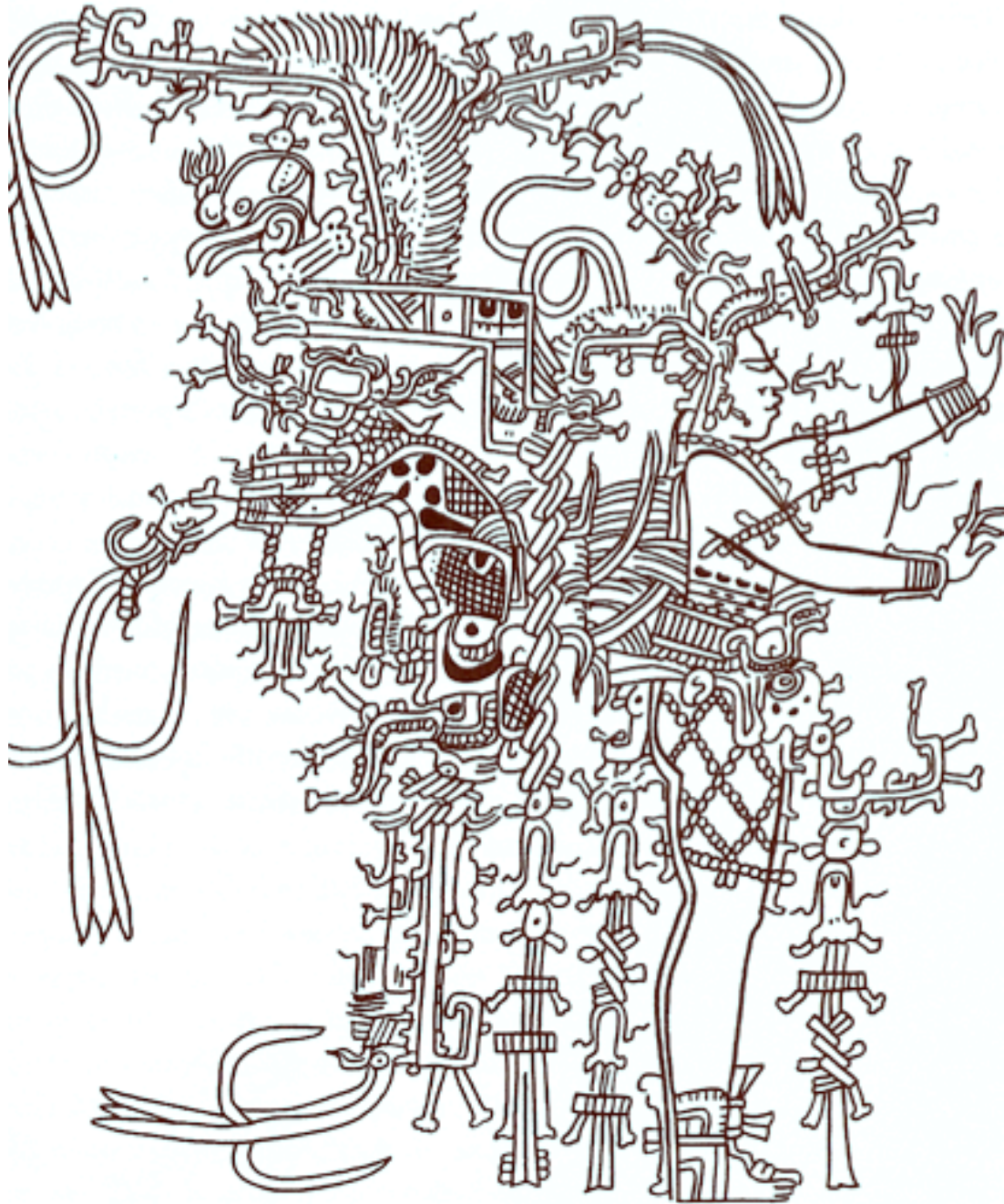


Figure 3.2. Dancing Maize God on a polychrome vase (drawing by Matthew G. Loper after photograph by Justin Kerr in Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993: pl. 35) (Looper 2002:179, figure 10.3). Permission to reproduce image courtesy Matthew G. Loper.



Figure 3.3. Photograph K1892 © Justin Kerr. Permission to reproduce image courtesy Justin and Barbara Kerr.

a god who “represents the regenerative power of the plant world” (Ardren 2002:76). As discussed, caves have been considered portals to the Underworld or primordial waters, and shells have been associated with or represented caves in some areas of Mesoamerica (Pugh 2005:50; Christenson 2001:80, 83). The placement of the shells in the pelvic area is similar to the placement of marine shells in the pelvic area of

buried females at Yaxuna, and marine shell pendants may be indicative of reproductive power (Ardren 2002:76).⁴⁶ Like shells, caves have been associated with reproductive power by various Maya groups. Hence, the feminine lower body of the Maize God could represent caves in conjunction with the earth.

Further support for an association between the body of the Maize God and a mountain with caves/earth below is that he has parallels with Flower Mountain. In Classic Maya thought Flower Mountain “is an ancestral, paradisiacal place providing supernatural access from the watery underworld into the heavens,” which seemingly identifies this location as an *axis mundi*, and is a location that has had ties to the ascent and rebirth of the Maize God among the Maya (Saturno, et al. 2005:18, 19, 21).⁴⁷ Similar to Flower Mountain (Saturno, et al. 2005:18), the Maize God (Looper 2002:179) is associated with flowers.⁴⁸ For example, “during the dance of his resurrection, the Maize God is dressed in elaborate jewelry, much of which is marked with small bone-shaped “flower” glyphs and square-nosed serpents that are floral symbols” (Looper 2002:180) (Figure 3.2). Also, similar to Flower Mountain, the lower body of the Maize God has connections to the underworld. Of further interest is that the rendition of Flower Mountain in the North Wall murals at San Bartolo depicts

⁴⁶ The *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, a Mexican colonial period manuscript, says, “as the snail comes from its shell, so man from his mother’s womb” (Bassie-Sweet 1991:160).

⁴⁷ The concept of Flower Mountain can also be found in Central Mexico and the American Southwest (Saturno, et al. 2005:18).

⁴⁸ The Aztecs considered maize to be “gender cycling, personified alternately by female (flowering stage) and male (mature cob) deities” (Looper 2002:181). This is similar to the veneration of both male and female maize spirits among modern Maya groups (Looper 2002:181).

a cave within this mountain (Saturno, et al. 2005: 14, 18; see Saturno, et al. 2005:8, fig. 5), apparently at the bottom of it. Thus, similar to the way corn plants can represent the world tree, the body of the Maize God could represent the central mountain linked to his ascent and rebirth with caves/earth at its bottom.

Given the similarities between the body of the Maize God and a mountain with caves/earth below, perhaps these features together could have at times been an expression of androgyny among the ancient Maya. Indeed,Looper (2002) discusses some dominant axial structures found in triadic pyramid complexes being associated with androgynous beings or combined masculine and feminine genders and ancestors during the Late Classic period. Also, “in Zinacantan the Tzotzil word for ‘sacred mountain,’ *vits*, alternates with *totilme’iletik*, the expression for ancestral gods meaning ‘father-mother’” (Stone 1995:31). Thus, mountains associated with caves/earth can highlight the importance of androgyny among ancient Maya groups and even in Zinacantan today. Given all of the above, mountains and caves have expressed sexual complementarity and androgyny.

Speleothems are associated with fertility and can be sexually complementary (Brady, et al. 2005:219) as well. Indeed, “in Mesoamerica, anything that is fertile tends to be sexual” (Brady, et al. 2005:219). The sexual nature of stalagmites is demonstrated by the Maya word for stalagmite, *yach kak* (Bassie-Sweet 1991:83). *Yach* means “its penis” (Bassie-Sweet 1991:83) (Figure 3.4). Also, a forty-one-year-old Q’eqchi’ Maya from Alta Verapaz states:

Stalactites, some people call them *chi-chis* [breasts] because they come out and grow from the body of the earth, just like women’s breasts. Also, when

water drips from them to the ground they feed the earth, just like when a mother breastfeeds her baby. Stalagmites are different. Men call them *picos* [penises] because they look like a man's thing and like our things grow when we want our women. They also grow upward because they want to touch and be with the female from whom the *chi-chis* are growing. When they grow big and reach them it is like a man and a woman mating, and the two are one because now they are just one column or wall [*muro*] that touches the ceiling and the earth. [Brady, et al. 2005: 219]

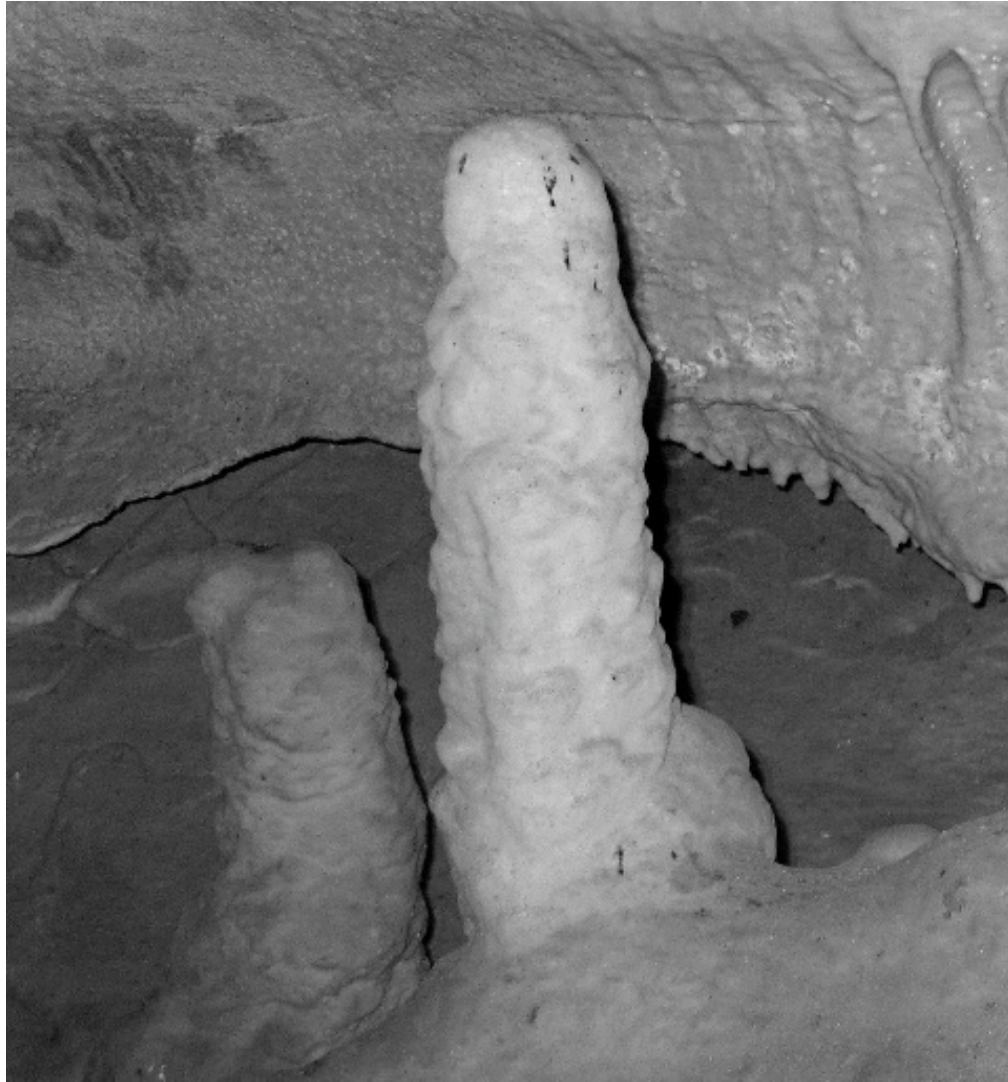


Figure 3.4. The phallic nature of many stalagmites is widely recognized. This stalagmite is in Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. Author's photo.

This shows that caves, while generally being associated with females, contain both male and female imagery, which can demonstrate sexual complementarity, among the Q'eqchi.⁴⁹

In sum, mountains and caves have demonstrated sexual complementarity among various Maya and other Mesoamerican groups. Also, based on information provided by one informant, speleothems have been sexually complementary among the contemporary Q'eqchi' Maya. Mountains in conjunction with caves/earth may have also been an expression of androgyny among the ancient Maya and the Tzotzil in modern Zinacantan. The apparent application of sexual concepts to landscape features by varying Maya groups underlines the value of these concepts among these groups. The view of the landscape as animate, which is common to Mesoamerican

⁴⁹ The associations of specific speleothems with either males or females may extend to other areas in Mesoamerica as well. A cave at Atenxoxola, Guerrero includes a sacred spring, and two stalactites that are considered to be the Virgin Mary and a small goat, the latter of which is given offerings so that it will protect the animals of the people, appear in one chamber of the cave (Heydon 2005:31). The stalactite that is considered to be the Virgin Mary has a clear association with females, but the goat stalactite may or may not be associated with females. One activity that has been associated with Maya women [and perhaps other Mesoamerican women] is the raising of small animals (Ardren 2002:70-71), which could suggest a connection between the goat stalactite and females. The Lagunita cave at Colotapec in the Guerrero mountain region includes a two-meter high stalagmite that people consider to be a statue of Saint Mark (Heydon 2005:30-1). Similarly, people in the Mixe region venerated two stalagmites in a cave thought to be Saint Peter and Saint Paul on New Year's Day in 1889 (Fitzsimmons 2005:111). That male saints are associated with stalagmites supports the notion that stalagmites can be associated with males within Mesoamerica. The above suggests that the association of stalactites with females and stalagmites with males may exist in other regions of Mesoamerica. Lagunita cave includes a stalagmite and stalactite that come together to form one column representative of Jesus Christ (Heydon 2005 31). Could Jesus' association with a column made of both stalactites and stalagmites associate him with both males and females?

groups (Brady, et al. 2005:219), may in part account for the sexual associations of the landscape.

Conclusion

Features of the landscape have sexual associations. Caves and the earth have been associated with females at different times and places in the Maya and greater Mesoamerican area. Spatial and symbolic caves demonstrate the value that has been attributed female fertility and sexual reproduction among Maya groups and underlines the importance of androgyny within ancient Maya politics.

Given their sexual associations, when taken together, mountains and caves/earth and stalagmites and stalactites can highlight the import of sexual complementarity, a concept that has existed among various Maya and Mesoamerican groups. Mountains in conjunction caves/earth may have also been associated with androgyny among the ancient Maya and the Tzotzil Maya of Zinacantan, which would underline the value of this status among multiple Maya groups. The sexual associations of landscape features may reflect the notion characteristic of Mesoamerican groups that the landscape is animate.

CHAPTER FOUR
CAVES' ASSOCIATIONS WITH SEXUAL ENTITIES
AND ACTIVITIES

In this chapter I will further discuss the links between caves and sex among Maya groups through examination of the connections they have had with certain sexual entities and how they have been scenes for sexual activities.

Caves and their Associations with Sexual Entities

According to Brady (1988:53), “the sexual connotation of caves [in Mesoamerica] is also illustrated by the fact that, in modern day Indian folklore, supernatural beings with strongly pronounced sexual attributes, sexual drives, or who deal with sexuality are closely associated with caves.” For example, the moon goddess is linked with licentiousness and sexuality among numerous indigenous groups, and the connection between her and both caves and eroticism can apparently be found throughout Mesoamerica (Brady 1988:53).

Another example of a sexual being associated with caves is the Tzotzil *H'ik'al* or Blackman, a small, black, curly haired, hypersexual being with winged feet and a six-foot long penis who lives in a cave (Brady 1988:53; Moyes 2005b:190). If a woman becomes pregnant from a Blackman, she will die as a result of “over-menstruation or multiple births of offspring that come to term in three days” (Moyes 2005b:190). The Blackman was said to once have taken a little girl from Chamula to his cave, after which she birthed a baby Blackman (Bricker 1973:57). The girl

eventually died due to a swollen belly since the phallus of the Blackman was too long (Bricker 1973:57).

Yet another instance of a sexual entity tied to caves is the Mam or Maximón of Santiago Atitlán, who is an Earth Lord who lives in a underground sweatbath and has control over the growth of crops, the formation of children in the womb, and sexual affairs and love (Moyes 2005b:191). The associations between caves and sweatbaths have been discussed in the previous chapter, and in Santiago Atitlán, the Mam was at one time said to live “in a small cave called a sweatbath, high in the wall of the church” (Tarn and Prechtel 1986:184 n. 14). Even though the Mam has been considered sterile, he has also been associated with hypersexuality (Christenson 2001:178). According to Moyes (2005b:191), “in his underworld steam bath the Mam was thought to cohabit with a harem of hypersexual women.” Some residents believe that the Mam can transform into the ideal sexual partner of either men or women, and if one gives in to his temptations they will die (Carlsen 1997:26) or give birth to stillborn babies or children with severe deformities (Christenson 2001:178). Thus, beliefs surrounding the Mam can serve to protect the norms of the community (Carlsen 1997:26).⁵⁰

In the ritual setting, the Mam symbolizes the power of death and sacrifice to transform and renew (Christenson 2001:179). During Holy Week the Mam symbolizes “a primary sexual organ whose task it is to reinseminate the world” and

⁵⁰ Some K'iche's believe that individuals who commit sexual transgressions are subjected “to the whims of the lords of various illnesses who live in the underworld and who “feed” on the lives of those who do not live in accordance with societal rules” (Christenson 2003:132).

thus prepare for the beginning of the rainy season, represented by the resurrection of the Christ figure (Carlsen 1997:152). Christenson (2001:183) reports that on Wednesday of that week, the Mam is taken to the mayor's office and while there has symbolic sex with fruit and women who form a circle in front of him.⁵¹ The Mam also supervises the symbolic death of Jesus Christ during this week, which is necessary for him to be renewed (Christenson 2001:179). Christ's resurrection is connected with the rebirth of the world and agricultural renewal (Christenson 2001:185). The Mam also takes part in the rebirth of the world by traveling ahead of Christ's coffin, which is carried around town symbolically regenerating the world, in spirit and making sure that everything is in order (Christenson 2001:186, 189). Thus, the sexual nature of the Mam further emphasizes the association of sweatbaths/caves with sex and his seemingly dual association with both life and death is reminiscent of the same duality that characterizes caves. Indeed, O'Brien (1975:173) identifies the Mam as "Lord of Dualities" (Carlsen 1997:173 n. 13).

⁵¹ While visiting Maximón in Santiago Atitlán in the summer of 2008, I asked the tour guide what the objects hanging from the ceiling of the place where he was housed were, and he responded that they were fruits.

Fruits have had sexual connotations among various modern Maya groups. Among the modern Tz'utujil Maya of Santiago Atitlán, the avocado represents both male and female sexual organs (Tarn and Prechtel 1986:173). In Chamula, residents "recognize an analogy between a banana which is being peeled and the foreskin which is 'peeled off' during an erection" (Bricker 1973:113). Among the Ch'orti', bananas have also been equated with penises (Metz 2006:115). In Zinacantan, the vegetable pear (*Sechium edule*), a fruit similar in size to an orange that "is partially furrowed like a peach or apricot," is on occasion humorously likened to women's genitalia (Bricker 1973:25 n. 8). Fruit was deposited at the entrance of the cave Paq'alib'al located outside Santiago Atitlán (Christenson 2001:84) and at a burial at the entrance of the cave Actun Nak Beh in Belize (Morehart 2005:175).

Other apparent sexual entities that have been associated with caves include various types of animals. For example, among Mesoamerican groups, jaguars have been associated with caves and sexuality (Brady 1988:51-52; Bricker 1973:57, 66-67). During dialogue of a change-of-office ceremony for the *alféreces* in Zinacantan, the *alférez* who speaks as though he is the Jaguar claims to roam through the houses of Zinacantecos at night and impregnate their wives (Bricker 1973:66-67). Also, both the Mam and God L, who similarly is characterized by lasciviousness, are patrons of underworld jaguars (Christenson 2001:186-187). According to Brady (1988:51), the connection that has existed between jaguars and caves and sexuality in modern ethnography supports Grove's (1973:134) hypothesis of an association between caves, the underworld, and procreation among the Olmec. He also says that the association of jaguars with caves in Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican iconography may in part relate to sex (Brady 1988:52). Perhaps this could also be said of this association among Post-Hispanic Mesoamerican groups.

Other animals that have been connected with caves and apparently tied to sex are toads and snakes. Throughout the Maya area toads and frogs have been associated with caves (Bassie-Sweet 1991:133), and toads have been connected with the watery underworld (Christenson 2003:156 n. 367). Toads have also been associated with "the fertility of the earth's interior as a source of renewal" (Christenson 2003:156 n. 367), and both toads and caves have been linked with birth (Bassie-Sweet 1991:256 n. 1). Among the Tzotzil, the term for fetus and "toad" is the same, and, with regards to the Maya glyphs, the most frequent verb for birth is an upended toad (or frog) head

(Bassie-Sweet 1991:256 n. 1). Bassie-Sweet suggests that these expressions could be a reflection of the cave as a birthplace (Bassie-Sweet 1991:256 n. 1). Also, as mentioned, the Ch'orti' have used the word for cave as a humorous metaphor for vagina (Metz 2009:personal communication), and in Ch'orti' stories the mouths of toads symbolize vaginas (Metz n.d.:7). Among Maya groups, snakes have also been associated with caves (Bassie-Sweet 1991:132-133, 137), and have been linked with regeneration and rebirth since they can shed their old skin to unveil new skin (Christenson 2003:61 n. 20). Among the Tzutujil of Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala "the womb is visualized as a coiled snake" (Vail and Stone 2002: 215), and serpents have been linked with male fertility (Class Notes:10/2/08) as well.

Bees have also been associated with caves in several sources such as *the Chilam Balam of Mani* (Bassie-Sweet 1991:98) and have had ties to sex among certain groups. Redfield and Villa Rojas (1934:39) note two kinds of bees that construct their residences in caves, and Tozzer and Allen (1910:300) reported that a small bee made its hives in subterranean cavities (Bassie-Sweet 1991:98). The moon goddess has been linked with honey and beehives (Bassie-Sweet 1991:100), and as discussed above this goddess has been associated with eroticism and caves (Brady 1988:53). Also, the Bacabs were the patrons of beekeeping (Bassie-Sweet 1991:171), and God N, a deity that has also been associated with eroticism, has been identified with the Bacabs (Stone 1995:143).⁵² Also possibly significant is that one thing the

⁵² God N will be discussed further below.

hypersexual Mam has had the ability to transform into is a bee (Carlsen 1997:26).⁵³ Bassie-Sweet (1991:100) mentions that honey is directly connected with birth in a modern birth ritual in which honey is burned underneath a woman's hammock while she is giving birth. Bassie-Sweet (1991:98, 102) also suggests that the T526 'cab cave' sign may represent a cave with a beehive hanging from its ceiling and is associated with things including the Bacabs, the moon goddess, and the birth theme.

The K'iche' have associated dogs with sex. Among the K'iche', *Tz'i'a*, Dog, is a metaphor for shamelessness, and according to Bunzel (1952:283), *T'si'* (*chuch'o*, dog) "symbolizes sin, especially sexual impurity" and *t'si'*, 'dog', is "the day of shameless and beastly actions (especially sexual)" (Christenson 2003:139 n. 314). Among Mesoamericans, dogs have been considered companions for humans during their journey to the underworld after death (Evans 2004:215). Thus, various animals that have been associated with caves have also been linked with sex among differing Maya groups, which furthers the association of caves with sex.

Some objects regularly found in caves have sexual associations. For example, *manos* and *metates* are frequently found in large numbers in Maya caves (Stone 1995:41). At the cave of Balankanche in Yucatan, 232 miniature *manos* and *metates* were discovered in a pile associated with Tlaloc (a rain god) effigy jars (Stone 1995:41). *Manos* and *metates* are used in the processing of maize (Stone 1995:41),

⁵³ Another thing he has been able to transform into is a flower (Carlsen 1997:26). The sexual associations of flowers have been discussed.

which suggests that they may relate to agricultural fertility in the ritual setting.⁵⁴ In the preparation of maize with these instruments in Mesoamerica

the hard, ripe kernels are boiled in a mixture of water and white lime, producing a kind of hominy (*nixtamal*) which is then ground into unleavened dough on a quern (*metate*) with a handstone (*mano*, from the Spanish *mano de piedra*), later to be fashioned into steamed *tamales* or into the flat cakes called by the Spanish term *tortillas* [Coe 2005:13].

Manos and *metates* are associated with women (Adams and Brady 2005:319), as women are in charge of the processing of maize. Also, the grinding stone is “an archetypal image of the female sexual organs” (Tarn and Prechtel 1986:177).⁵⁵

Flowers, spindle whorls, and bone needles, items associated with women, are often found in caves (Adams and Brady 2005:319).⁵⁶ Adams and Brady argue that the presence of these items in caves is related to their “gender association and the need to unite male and female in all ritual performance” (Adams and Brady 2005: 319).

The deposition of such items may relate to their associations with sex and female fertility.⁵⁷ For example, among Maya groups flowers have been associated with birth (Looper 2002:180); anatomy associated with procreation; and female

⁵⁴ Artifacts that are typically linked with domestic spheres can sometimes be found in ceremonial contexts (Morehart, et al. 2005:256).

⁵⁵ The discovery of *manos* and *metates* in association with Tlaloc imagery at Balankanche could relate to the fundamental role of rain in agriculture but could also relate to rain god imagery found in association with images of female genitalia in the Yucatan Peninsula discussed in the previous chapter, since the grinding stone has been associated with female sexual organs.

⁵⁶ Spindle whorls are tools used in the processing of fiber (Beaudry-Corbett and McCafferty 2002:54-55).

⁵⁷ However, in Santiago Atitlán “human witchcraft is sometimes connected to leaving weaving instruments in the Mam’s clothes box, a large box ‘full of pain and sickness,’ all of which then afflicts the bewitched person” (Tarn and Prechtel 1986:177).

eroticism (Stone 1995:146), as explored in chapter three. Also, Beaudry-Corbett and McCafferty (2002:52) mention that “spinning and weaving tools were incorporated as insignia of members of the earth/fertility goddess complex symbolizing their roles as patronesses of the arts, particularly the domestic arts of women.” Spinning and weaving have been associated with conception and childbirth among contemporary Maya communities (Vail and Stone 2002: 219). Indeed, “according to Sullivan (1982:14), both spinning and the thrusting movement of the batten during weaving symbolize the act of coitus” (Vail and Stone 2002:219). For example, in Tzotzil, weaving has been a metaphor for sexual intercourse (Bassie-Sweet 1991:191). Also, *atitecos* have used metaphors that associate weaving with the making of children and food (maize) (Vail and Stone 2002:219). Weaving has been seen “as a metaphor for creating and re-creating the cosmos” by Maya groups (Ashmore 2002:240) as well, and residents of Santiago Atitlán have related the tying post to the original world tree and referred to the cord that holds the loom to the post as the umbilical (Tarn and Prechtel 1986:176).⁵⁸ Given the associations of *manos* and *metates*, flowers, and spinning and weaving tools, these items apparently underline the sexual and fertile connotation that caves have carried among Maya groups of various locations and time periods.

In sum, the association of caves with beings, animals, and objects that have been linked with sex further highlights the sexual connotation of caves that has

⁵⁸ The female deity María Castelyan, who is present in many myths of Santiago Atitlán, “wove the fabric of the night sky and the mantle of the earth on her backstrap loom” (Christenson 2001:85).

existed at various times and places among groups in the Maya area. That both caves and certain entities have been associated with sex could also in part inform the relationships between these entities and caves.⁵⁹

Caves as Locations for Sexual Activities

Caves' associations with sexual activities also demonstrate the link between caves and sex. The cave of Naj Tunich, which Brady and Stone (1986) suggest was used by elites of Classic Maya society (Bassie-Sweet 1991:78), contains drawings associated with sexual activity. For example, Stone (1995) discusses Drawing 18 at the cave of Naj Tunich (Figure 4.1), which she says is a depiction of two individuals engaged in sexual intercourse (Stone 1995:143).⁶⁰ Naj Tunich paintings lack frames common in Maya art that would establish where the narrative is taking place because the figures are already in the cave setting (Stone 1995:136).⁶¹ Thus, this drawing clearly demonstrates the association of caves with sex among at least some of the Maya who used this cave.

Stone suggested in her 1985 publication, "The Moon Goddess at Naj Tunich," that the individual on the right, Individual 2, was the Maya Moon Goddess, who has associations with caves (Stone 1995:143). The Moon Goddess lives in a cave and is

⁵⁹ The connection between certain entities and caves may also account for the association of those entities with sex.

⁶⁰ Depictions of male genitalia are common in Olmec and Maya cave painting and it seems in the cave setting modesty is not as strongly adhered to as it might be in the more public setting (Stone 1995:51). It may also be noteworthy that "sexual arousal and penile erections are associated with both altered states of consciousness and sleep" (Lewis-Williams 2002:176).

⁶¹ The lack of frames in Maya cave art can also refer to the lack of order that is part of the liminal and non-normative social context that is the cave setting (Stone 1995:240).



Figure 4.1. Drawing 18 at Naj Tunich (Stone 1995: 143). Permission to reproduce this image courtesy Andrea Stone.

the patroness of the month known as *ch'en* in Yucatec (signifying “cave” or “well” in several of the Mayan languages) (Stone 1995:143). As mentioned above, the moon goddess has apparently had a widespread association with both caves and eroticism in

Mesoamerica (Brady 1988:53). It is traditional among Maya groups for men to play women in public performances, and Individual 2 in Drawing 18 does not have a particularly feminine body, lacks breasts, and wears the Naj Tunich male headwrap and perhaps a hipcloth that was worn by men (Stone 1995:145). In fact, the only feminine costume element of this individual is the queue of hair (Stone 1995:145).⁶² So it seems possible that Individual 2 may relate to a male engaged in female impersonation (Stone 1995:145). In fact, women were probably not allowed to participate in the performance depicted (Stone 1995:145), as women in particular Maya groups have not been allowed to enter sacred caves (Stone 1995:117).⁶³

Individual 1 is a God N-like character (Stone 1995:145). “God N stereotypes...an inversion of social ideals” and Taube (1989; 1988) claims this may be the reason he is associated with renewal ceremonies, like the New Year, “when the

⁶² In the codices mature Maya goddesses have hair piled on their head, while young ones have a queue of hair that goes down their back (Vail and Stone 2002:205).

⁶³ Adams and Brady (2005) say that among the Q’eqchi’ of Verapaz women are not allowed to enter caves, however, in the all-male pilgrimage groups, some males are considered female. The ritual officers are broken into pairs, one male in each pair being “female” and they then enter the cave and leave the offerings and petitions of the community.

Colonial and ethnographic sources relate that premenopausal women could not enter sacred places, like temples and caves, or attend particular religious functions because if a woman were in these places it could harm herself and others (Vail and Stone 2002:222). Women of childbearing age were thought to be potentially harmful or disruptive to communal ceremonies and rituals because they were considered to be “repositories of power” and so were excluded from them (Vail and Stone 2002:228 n. 9). In Amatenango del Valle Chiapas, women may not be able to participate in rituals because they are considered hot at particular times of the menstrual cycle “and the power this connotes would conflict with the power generated in rituals, thus causing a rupture” (Nash 2002:xi). It is noteworthy that more recently at Naj Tunich women entered the cave to make offerings and petitions during spiritual revitalization services (Adams and Brady 2005: 317).

theme of social deviance...serves as an entertaining and cathartic experience for the audience as well as an affirmation of societal values” (Stone 1995:145). Since the young individual may relate to the promiscuous Moon Goddess, together God N and the Moon Goddess display the sexual excess of their applied gender (Stone 1995:146), and this drawing might have been associated with renewal ceremonies (Stone 1995:146). Indeed, a New Year’s day may be recorded in Drawing 12, only a short distance away from Drawing 18 (Stone 1995:146).

Another depiction at Naj Tunich that could relate to sex is Drawing 20 (Figure 4.2), which is one of two scenes showing males with hands by their penises near Drawing 18 (Stone 1988:84-85). This drawing shows a nude male actor with an erect penis, which is interesting in that nude males are typically captives (Stone 1995:138). The individual may be participating in an auto-erotic act, as depictions of men engaged in ejaculation can be found in Maya art (Stone 1995:138, 140). Also, marks on the penis of this actor could be indicative of penis mutilation (Stone 1995:140). Indeed, bloodletting from the penis, may have occurred at the cave of Naj Tunich. For example, a broken ceramic penis with a “cut mark” on the glans has been found in this cave, and most depictions of penile bloodletting found in Maya art show that the blood was drawn from the glans (Stone 1995:139). Hence, Drawing 18 and Drawing 20 at Naj Tunich show that among the Classic Maya elites of the area caves had sexual connotations.

In contemporary Highland Chiapas caves also appear to be associated with



Figure 4.2. Drawing 20 at Naj Tunich (Stone 1995:139, figure 6-16). Permission to reproduce drawing courtesy Andrea Stone.

sex. In this area, caves are thought to be sources of lightning, thunder, clouds, and rain, which mountain gods who reside in the caves control (Vogt and Stuart 2005:177). The virginal daughters of the mountain gods fluff cotton that will be turned into rain clouds by the fertilizing lightning bolt from the male rain god, Anhel

(Vogt and Stuart 2005:169, 177). This seems to suggest a sexual metaphor and thus suggests the association of caves with sex in this area.⁶⁴

The connection between sex and caves can also be seen when examining the symbolic cave setting in the colonial *Popol Vuh* creation text of the K'iche' Maya, for it is the location of sexual activity that relates to the origins of the sun and the moon.⁶⁵ The accounts in the *Popol Vuh* that relate to the origin of the sun and the moon take place in Xibalba, the Maya underworld, a place to which caves lead (Pugh 2005:50). In the *Popol Vuh*, the twins Seven Hunahpu and One Hunahpu, who has been identified as the Maize God (Sharer and Traxler 2006:741), are summoned by the Lords of Xibalba⁶⁶ who were irritated by their disrespect and ballplaying (Christenson 2003:114-5, 119-21). After failing in their trial in the House of Darkness they are eventually sacrificed (Christenson 2003:122-5).⁶⁷ Seven Hunahpu and the body of

⁶⁴ Brady (1988:53) says, "Stresser-Pean (1952) records a Huastec myth in which rain is seen as being the product of the fertilization of feminine clouds by male godlings. The clouds rush toward the mountains driven by the sexual desire of the godlings to meet with frog goddesses living in mountain caves. When they meet, the caves are scenes of orgies, dancing, and drunkenness." Mendelson (1967:407-408) proposes that this is a basic myth that was distributed over a great extent of Mesoamerica (Brady 1988:54).

⁶⁵ Among Mesoamericans, the sun and moon have been thought to have origins in caves. For example, a Q'eqchi' informant has suggested that the sun and the moon have come out of caves (Brady and Prufer 2005b:371). Also, an Aztec legend claims that a deity went in a cave to become the moon while the other one entered into a fire to turn into the sun (Stone 1995:38).

⁶⁶ Depictions of what appear to be death gods that inhabit the underworld are present in Acum cave in Yucatan (Stone 1995:66-7).

⁶⁷ In the Maya area a term used to refer to cave is "stone house" (Stone 1995:35). In the *Popol Vuh*, Xibalba includes numerous houses such as the House of Knives, House of Cold, House of Darkness, etc., which Andrea Stone (1995:35) claims each refer to a quality of caves. The House of Bats has a particularly obvious association

One Hunahpu are buried at Crushing Ballcourt, while the head of One Hunahpu was placed in a tree at Crushing Ballcourt that bore fruit soon thereafter (Christenson 2003:125-126, 128).⁶⁸ The ancient Maya considered ballcourts symbolic portals to the underworld (Dunning, et al. 1999:657). According to Bassie-Sweet (1991:187), “when the Classic ruler played ball, he was symbolically playing ball at the cave entrance of the Underworld.” This suggests that Crushing Ballcourt could simultaneously be understood as a cave. Indeed, Bassie-Sweet (1991:88) proposes that later in the story when One Hunahpu’s twin sons leave this ballcourt and go into the sky, they are coming out of the cave.

After One Hunahpu’s head was placed in the tree, a daughter of one of the Lords of Xibalba, Lady Blood, was impregnated by One Hunahpu at the ballcourt/cave with twin sons, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, when his head spit into her hand (Christenson 2003:128-30).⁶⁹ Eventually, one of the twins becomes the sun and the other, according to Tedlock (1985:46), likely becomes the full moon, and not the other phases of the moon, as contemporary Quichés see the full moon as the nighttime equivalent of the sun, which indeed reflects a twin relationship. Given that Lady Blood is impregnated with the future full moon and sun at the ballcourt/cave, sexual reproduction associated with the origins of these celestial bodies is connected to the symbolic cave setting.

with caves, as bats often reside in caves. This serves to further associate caves with Xibalba.

⁶⁸ In the corn cycle, corn “is decapitated, placed in the earth, and reborn” (Bassie-Sweet 1996:143).

⁶⁹ In Santiago Atitlán, the apparent presentation of decapitation as castration has been common theme (Tarn and Prechtel 1986:183 n. 10).

Tedlock (1985:39, 46) also identified Lady Blood as the moon, and she accounts for the remaining phases of the moon.⁷⁰ Much evidence supports this identification. For example, Lady Blood and the Moon Goddess live in similar places. As mentioned above, the Moon Goddess lives in a cave and is the patroness of the month known as *ch'en* in Yucatec (Stone 1995:143). Lady Blood also lived in a cave-like environment in the *Popol Vuh*; she resides in Xibalba. The similar residences of the Moon Goddess and Lady Blood support Lady Blood's identification with the moon.

Lady Blood's name may also associate her with the moon. For example, in Kaqchikel, *ik'* means both "moon" and "menstruation" (Brown, et al. 2006:216), the flowing of blood that generally serves as an indication of fertility and the ability to bear children among females. Also, "among the Quiché, the timing of...a woman's menstrual cycle...is governed by the moon" (Vail and Stone 2002:211). So, at least among a couple Maya groups, menstrual blood and the moon apparently have had a

⁷⁰ Among the Tojolab'al Maya when the moon is not full is it considered *ya'aw*, "unripe, tender," a term that is oftentimes applied to women and female infants (Bayles 2008:232). The term *yij*, a word that "carries the overlapping senses of strong, mature, well-formed, and ripe," is also applied to the moon and men are generally considered to be stronger and more 'ripe' than women (Bayles 2008:231-232). Perhaps, the above suggestion for the association of one of the twins and Lady Blood with different phases of the moon is not impossible, given that the full moon is apparently associated with males, while the other phases of the moon are associated with females among the Tojolab'al Maya. The Ch'orti' also use the term "unripe," or *ch'ok*, for a moon that is not yet full (Metz 2009:personal communication).

connection, which could tie Lady Blood to the moon, given her name and her fertility.⁷¹

Lady Blood's pregnancy also supports her identification with the moon. For example, the moon goddess is also associated with fertility (Sharer and Traxler 2006:743) and pregnancy, and in this account, Lady Blood is impregnated, which further substantiates the association of Lady Blood with the moon (Bassie-Sweet 1991:191). Also, the Classic Maize God and Moon Goddess have been considered a complementary pair (Looper 2002:174), which supports the identification of Lady Blood with the moon, given the sexually complementary relationship between Lady Blood and One Hunahpu in the creation of the future sun and full moon. Some Maya myths identify the moon goddess as the mother of the sun, which is similar to Lady Blood's role as the mother of the sun in the *Popol Vuh* (Bassie-Sweet 1991:191).

The connection between Lady Blood and the moon also seems verified by their triangulation with the Virgin Mary. The Virgin Mary is associated with the moon throughout the Maya area and took on the persona of the young moon goddess (Christenson 2001:131). In Yucatan, the Virgin Mary has been associated with *cenotes* and caves (Pugh 2005:58), features associated with the residences of both the Moon Goddess and Lady Blood. Also, similar to Lady Blood, the Virgin Mary was

⁷¹ According to Galinier (1990), among the Otomi, blood of deflowering and menstrual blood are talked about in terms of *khizana* (blood of the moon) (Martínez González 2002:19).

impregnated by a god without participating in actual sexual intercourse.⁷² Given all of the above, Lady Blood apparently can be identified with the moon.

Lady Blood could be associated with the earth as well. Indeed, she lived within the earth. Also, Lady Blood was impregnated by the skull of One Hunahpu, the Maize God, which in a sense could mean that she was impregnated by a seed, for in numerous highland Maya languages, seeds are referred to as small bones or skulls (Christenson 2003:129 n. 277). Also, the Maya word *bac* is used to refer to the large seed of fruiting trees and can also mean “skull” and “captive” (Freidel 1992:107-108). Impregnation by a seed seems to tie Lady Blood to the earth, for the planting of seed in the earth leads to the creation of a new plant, and is reminiscent of analogies between agricultural cycles and sexual reproduction among modern Maya groups previously mentioned.⁷³ Given the associations between wombs and caves and that the K’iche’ word for “to arise”, *yake’ik*, is also a metaphor for birth (Christenson 2003:113 n. 228), the birth of the twins from Lady Blood’s womb could foreshadow when the twins later arise as the sun and full moon from the ballcourt/cave if she represents the earth. In fact, the word used by the authors of the *Popol Vuh* to describe the birth of the twins from Lady Blood is “arose” (Christenson 2003:140). “The moon and earth are closely linked among various highland Maya groups”, which apparently also was the case in the Classic period (Vail and Stone 2002:209).

⁷²Similarities between the Virgin Mary and Lady Blood may not be surprising given that the *Popol Vuh* was written down during the colonial period when efforts to convert Maya groups to Christianity by the Spanish were underway.

⁷³ In Kaqchikel the word *naq’* may be used for both “seed” and “testicles” (Brown ,et al. 2006:234).

Goddess I of the codices may have been primarily associated with the earth while also having lunar associations (Vail and Stone 2002:210). Perhaps Lady Blood could also be associated with both the earth and the moon.

After Lady Blood becomes pregnant she flees Xibalba so that she will not be sacrificed for her suspected transgression of having sex, as desired by the Lords of Xibalba (Christenson 2003:131-4). She ascends from Xibalba through “the hole leading above the earth” (Christenson 2003:134), likely a cave portal (Bassie-Sweet 1991:88), as caves are seen as portals to the Maya underworld (Pugh 2005:50). Sex clearly has an important role in the origins of the future sun and various phases of the moon, as it is symbolic sexual intercourse at the ballcourt/cave that caused the pregnant Lady Blood to flee Xibalba. Indeed, Bassie-Sweet (1991:191) seems to suggest that Lady Blood’s pregnancy and expulsion from Xibalba represents the beginning of the waxing moon. Lady Blood’s ascension from Xibalba may be seen as a metaphor for birth, for in Mesoamerica celestial bodies are thought to be born when they emerge from the underworld at dawn (Stone 1995:38) and caves are likened to wombs.⁷⁴ The twins are eventually born in the mountains (Christenson 2003:140).

Later in the story, Hunahpu and Xbalanque travel to Xibalba, succeed in a number of feats in the underworld, and play ball against the Lords of Xibalba (Christenson 2003:160-176). The twins die in the underworld but resurrect

⁷⁴ During the Classic period in the Maya area, the hieroglyphic writing system identifies the beginning of the lunar cycle, seen in Glyph D of the Lunar Series, as the “birth” of the moon, using the “upended frog” birth expression (Stone 1987:104). As mentioned above, Bassie Sweet suggests that the toad or frog upended head birth expression could perhaps be a reflection of the cave as a birthplace (Bassie-Sweet 1991:256 n. 1).

themselves and eventually defeat the Lords of Xibalba (Christenson 2003:177-186). After adorning their uncle, Seven Hunahpu, and their father, One Hunahpu, at Crushing Ballcourt, the twins arise as the sun and moon (Christenson 2003:190-191). As previously stated, when the twins leave the ballcourt and go to the sky as the sun and the moon, they are coming out of a cave (Bassie-Sweet 1991:88), again a metaphor for birth. Thus, the symbolic cave context in the *Popol Vuh* is associated with sexual reproduction and birth that results in the origins of the sun and various phases of the moon and, therefore, suggests the association of caves with sex among the K'iche' Maya.

Other symbolic cave settings associated with sex involve serpents. Yaxchilán Lintel 25 (Figure 4.3) provides a Calendar Round date of October 23, A.D. 681, the accession date of Shield Jaguar 1, and shows an actor, identified as Shield Jaguar, emerging from a double headed serpent and a woman, Lady Xoc (his wife (Coe 2005:127 fig.74), gazing up at him (Bassie-Sweet 1991:140, 146).⁷⁵ The associated text suggests that Shield Jaguar engaged in a bloodletting event (Stone 1988:78). However, this interpretation is debated (Bassie-Sweet 1991:140). While some scholars have thought that Lady Xoc has already performed autosacrifice in this scene (Coe 2005:127 fig. 74; Bassie-Sweet 1991:140), Bassie-Sweet (1991:140-141, 147) suggests that Lady Xoc is preparing for it. Double-headed serpents are symbols of

⁷⁵ The ancient Maya had two calendars, one that contained 260 days (the almanac) and the other that had 365 days (the Haab) (Sharer and Traxler 2006:107). Every 52 years, a day named by the 260-day and 365-day calendar dates occurred again, and this 52-year cycle is referred to as the Calendar Round (Sharer and Traxler 2006:107).

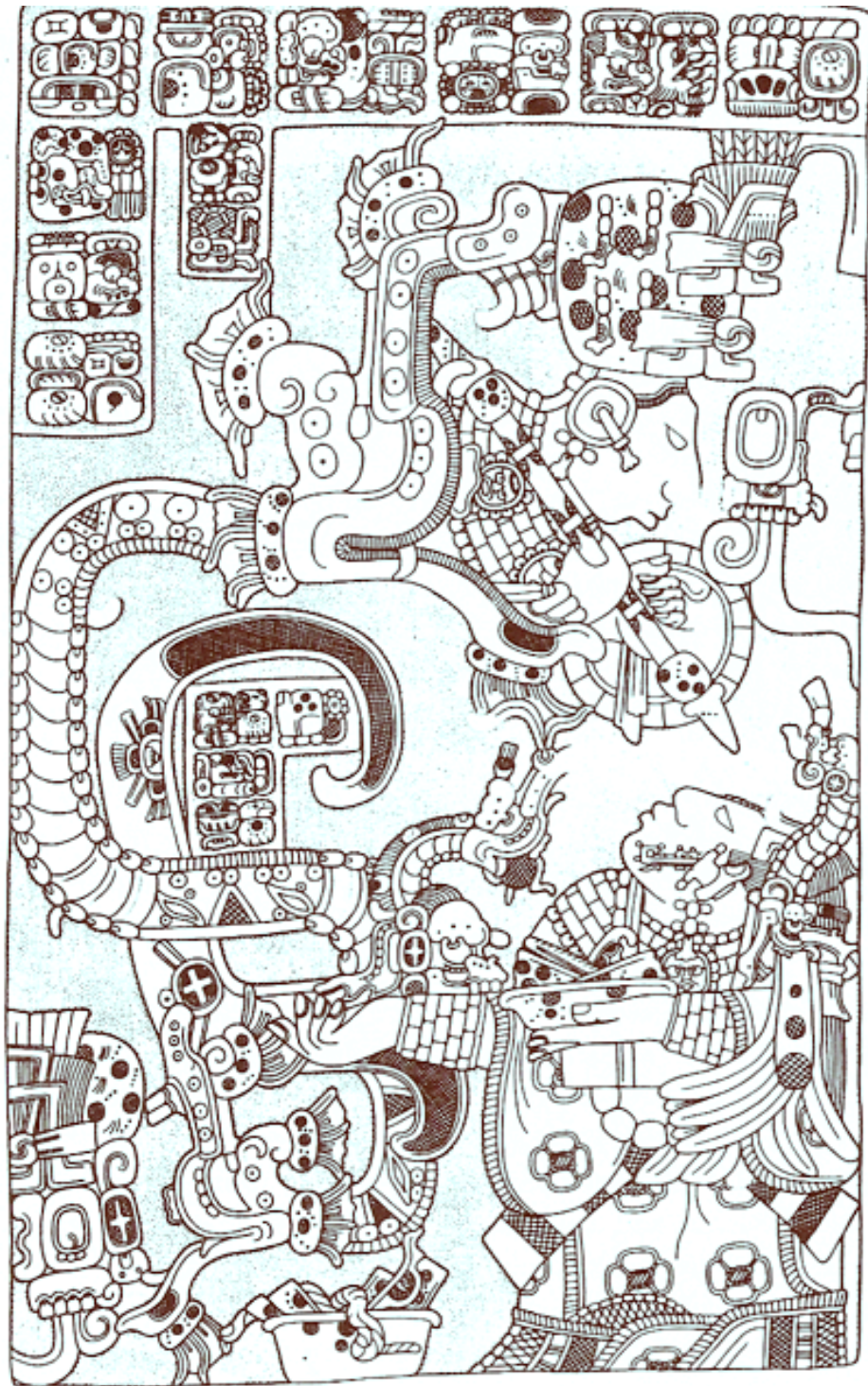


Figure 4.3. Drawing, YAX: Lnt. 25, by Ian Graham from *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, Vol. 3, Part 1, Yaxchilan, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

cave passages (Bassie-Sweet 1991:257 n. 7) and, as discussed in chapter two, mouths, including those of serpents, can represent real or artificial cave entrances in Mesoamerican art (Stone 1995:23). Hence, Lintel 25 could represent an accession ritual that takes place at a cave location in association with the coming to power of Shield Jaguar I (Bassie-Sweet 1991:146-7).

Given that bloodletting and caves are associated with birth, perhaps Lady Xoc (and even Shield Jaguar) already participated in autosacrifice, which led to the beginning, or “birth,” of the new ruler’s reign, symbolized by his emergence from the cave passage. The depiction of caves in Mesoamerican public art gives authority to actors framed by the cave mouth (Brady and Ashmore 1999:127). Stone (1988:78-79) suggests that the upward gaze that individuals, such as Lady Xoc on Yaxchilan Lintel 25, engage in may indicate “submission to the overhead figure, either as a captive or sexual partner.” Stone (1988:79) proposes a possible connection between captives and women and notes that in Yucatec the word *chuk* means “to capture,” “to have sex,” or “to rape.” She suggests Yaxchilan Lintel 25 may demonstrate that “Shield Jaguar captures/fertilizes a woman/captive” (Stone 1988:80). Thus, he is demonstrating his fertility, a necessary and legitimizing quality for rulers, at the beginning of his reign and the symbolic cave setting was apparently associated with sex among the Classic Maya at Yaxchilan.

Another example of a symbolic cave associated with eroticism is a painted vase that shows God N emerging from the mouth of a serpent and grabbing the breast

of a young woman around whom the body of the snake coils (see figure 6-30, Stone 1995:143). As mentioned, the mouths of serpents can represent real or artificial cave entrances in Mesoamerican art (Stone 1995:23), and the other end of the serpent terminates with a figure whose head bears resemblance to the rear head of a double-headed serpent on Tikal Lintel 3, Temple IV (see figure 42b, Bassie-Sweet 1991:133). Thus, this vase denotes the sexual connotation of symbolic caves among the ancient Maya.

In sum, real and symbolic caves have been linked with sexual activities among Maya groups, which shows the sexual connotation caves have had in these groups.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have further explored the associations caves have had with sex at various times and places within the Maya area. Some beings, animals, and objects that have been linked with sex have also been associated with caves. This furthers the link between caves and sex and could enlighten the relationship between certain entities and caves. Also, real and symbolic caves have been associated with sexual activities in certain Maya groups, demonstrating the ties between caves and sex in these groups.

According to Brady (1988:54), the apparent sexual connotation of caves in Mesoamerican ideology “embraced both the aspect of eroticism and of fertility...In the Huastec and Aztec myths cited above [both cited within this work also], the production of rain, which we associate with fertility, was the result of an explicit or a

symbolic sexual act.” This can also be seen in the story of the rain god Anhel above. This chapter has also shown that the sexual connotation of caves has embraced the link between sex and death, which can serve to protect community norms. Of course, for Maya groups, death ultimately leads to life once again. The association of sex with both life and death reflects the dual association of caves with both life and death and could also highlight the association between sex and caves.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Throughout recorded history in the Maya area and the greater Mesoamerican region as well, landscape features have been culturally significant. Mountains/hills and caves have played the most important roles, since these features have dominated the area and caves have been sources of water. Spatial, modified, and symbolic mountains and caves have been incorporated into Mesoamerican settlement sites for utilitarian, religious, communal, and elite purposes. Cave ritual has also had an effect on the economy and trade.

Maya groups have associated features of the landscape with the male and female sexes, which may relate to the Mesoamerican concept that the landscape is animate. Caves and the earth have oftentimes been associated with females, and spatial and symbolic caves have shown the value that has been given female fertility, sexual reproduction, and androgyny by Maya groups.

Given their sexual associations, when scholars examine mountains and caves/earth together the importance that sexual complementarity and androgyny have had among Maya groups can be underlined. Also, one Q'eqchi' informant suggested that speleothems demonstrate sexual complementarity, which seems to highlight the significance of complementarity between the sexes among the Q'eqchi'.

Among Maya groups, caves have also been associated with beings, animals, and objects that have been linked with sex. These associations further demonstrate the connection between caves and sex that has existed among past and present Maya

groups and could provide further understanding of the correlation between caves and these entities. Also, caves have been linked with sexual activities at various times and places within the Maya area, again showing the sexual connotation that caves have had within this region.

The sexual connotation of caves has embraced both the link between sex and fertility/life and sex and death, which can serve to protect the norms of a community. That both caves and sex have been tied to life cycles among Maya groups may highlight their association with one another.

Given all of the above, among Maya groups, real or symbolic caves will likely have a sexual element associated with them and perhaps vice versa (even if only indirectly), and the connection between the landscape and sex can increase our understanding of Mayan worldviews.

The link between caves and sex can be applied to future research in multiple ways. For example, archeologists interested in studying sex among Maya groups may find the further exploration of caves useful in providing sexual imagery, given the rich data accumulated from caves like Naj Tunich, Pak Ch'en, and Dzibichen. Also, when interpreting artifacts found in caves, archeologists should consider the possibility of these artifacts having a sexual association.

The association of caves with sex can also be used to study the syncretism between Christian and Mayan religions. For example, the association that the Virgin Mary has had with *cenotes* and caves in Yucatan furthers her association with the Moon Goddess on a couple of levels. First, the Moon Goddess has also been

associated with caves. Second, the association of the Virgin Mary with caves and *cenotes* associates her with fertility and sex, two traits of the Moon Goddess. The association between caves and sex also suggests that while Lady Blood only participates in symbolic sexual intercourse with One Hunahpu in the *Popol Vuh*, similar to immaculate rather than carnal impregnation of the Virgin Mary, the symbolic cave setting where this act occurs underlines the sexual nature of it.

The link between caves and birth can be used to study syncretism between Jesus Christ and Mayan deities. According to the Bible, after his sacrifice, Jesus was placed in a tomb that had been carved out of rock, and a stone was rolled over the entrance to it. Jesus later departed from this tomb after his resurrection (Mark 15: 46-47- Mark 16: 1-6). A ritual that takes place during Holy Week in Santiago Atitlán has parallels to this story but is also distinctive. In the Catholic Church in Santiago Atitlán, a small hole, the “navel of the face of the earth,” is thought to be an endpoint for one of the caves or passageways beneath the church and a portal that leads to the underworld and the center point of creation (Christenson 2001:77-79). On Holy Friday during the week of Easter, a wooden cross with a sculpture of Jesus on it is put into the hole to represent “his entrance into the underworld in death” and also the way in which “the resurrected God reemerges to new life from the center point of creation” (Christenson 2001:77). Parts of the *Popol Vuh* also have parallels with this biblical account while also being distinct. In the story, the twins were resurrected in Xibalba and departed from the ballcourt/cave. Interestingly, some Maya groups associate Jesus with the sun, and one of the twins in the *Popol Vuh* turns into the sun

after his resurrection and departure from the ballcourt/cave. Thus, Maya groups could have likened the biblical story of Christ's resurrection and departure from the tomb carved out of rock to stories about Mayan deities whose rebirths were tied to the cave setting when the Spanish were trying to convert them to Christianity.

Another similar example of syncretism comes from Yucatan. The speaking cross of the Caste War of the Yucatan, Chan Santa Cruz, was born from a mahogany tree that grew by Cenote Chan Santa Cruz (Pugh 2005:51).⁷⁶ It was believed that another cross, the Santísima Cruz Tun, had fallen into a cave, traveled underground, came out of a cave, blessed a mahogany tree at the cave, and created or gave life to the small cross on that tree that would become a saint, the Saint Jesus Christ, and it could speak (Reed 2001:150).⁷⁷ The association of Christ's birth with a cave is similar to the connection between caves and the birth of Mayan deities.

Understanding the substitution of landscape terms and symbols for clear sexual language and imagery by Maya groups may also aid in future research. It could help workers open a sexual dialogue with and relate to their informants who

⁷⁶ For a detailed account of the Caste War of the Yucatan see Reed (2001).

⁷⁷ This mahogany tree was revered by the Cruzob Maya as "the Mother of the Crosses" until it was cut down in 1852 by the Mexican army (Pugh 2005:51). Indeed, this tree was thought to have given birth to many crosses (Pugh 2005: 51). The present cross was found while digging a well, and it is considered to be part of the original mahogany tree (Pugh 2005:51). Among the Maya, there is not a great distinction between caves and artificial pits, and this is true with respect to cave births also (Pugh 2005:50). Hence, it is like the present cross was born from a cave in that it came from both a tree near a *cenote* and an artificial hole, a well (Pugh 2005: 51). Similar to "the original Mother of the Crosses, the modern cross is considered to be female and is clearly an aspect of the Virgin Mary" (Pugh 2005:51), again associating the Virgin Mary with caves.

may be uncomfortable talking about sex in explicit terms.⁷⁸ This knowledge could also help reveal the sexual nature of conversations in rituals or ceremonies, as seen, for instance, in the dialogue of the change-of-office ceremony for *alféreces* in Zinacantan mentioned in chapter three in which the words for “cave” and “grassland” were synonymous to “vagina” and “pubic hairs.” This understanding could also make known the sexual side of myths where caves appear, such as the interpretation of the Aztec myth cited in chapter three that rain is created from the symbolic sexual act between the cave/womb/vagina and the phallic *chicahuaztli*. This knowledge could inform interpretations of film, literature, music, and iconography, as demonstrated by the discussion of the quatrefoil cave symbol found in the groin area of Chan Bahlum on the Temple of the Cross Jambs, for example.

Thus, caves have been places that have allowed past and present Maya groups to express themselves sexually. They have been private canvases for graphic sexual artwork. They have provided a means for Maya groups to combine traditional beliefs that include a sexual element with the stories of Christianity. Caves have created a way to discuss subjects and create imagery that would otherwise be difficult to discuss or considered inappropriate. Therefore, they provide multiple avenues for future research into the more hidden aspects of Maya lives.

⁷⁸ Being aware of other types of sexual metaphors such as those relating to fruit, spinning, weaving, and agriculture would have similar benefits.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Abigail E., and James E. Brady
2005 Ethnographic Notes on Maya Q'eqchi' Cave Rites: Implications for Archeological Interpretation. *In* *In the Maw of the Earth Monster: Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use*. James E. Brady and Keith M. Prufer, eds. Pp. 301-327. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Aguilar, Manuel, with Miguel Medina Jaen, Tim M. Tucker, and James E. Brady
2005 Constructing Mythic Space: The Significance of a Chicomoztoc Complex at Acatzingo Viejo. *In* *In the Maw of the Earth Monster: Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use*. James E. Brady and Keith M. Prufer, eds. Pp. 69-87. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Ardren, Traci
2002 Death Became Her: Images of Female Power from Yaxuna Burials. *In* *Ancient Maya Women*. Traci Ardren, ed. Pp. 68-88. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Ashmore, Wendy
2002 Encountering Maya Women. *In* *Ancient Maya Women*. Traci Ardren, ed. Pp. 229-245. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Bassie-Sweet, Karen
1991 From the Mouth of a Dark Cave: Commemorative Sculpture of the Late Classic Maya. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
1996 At the Edge of the World: Caves and Late Classic Maya World View. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Bayles, Brian
2008 Metaphors to cure by: Tojalab'al Maya midwifery and cognition. *Anthropology and Medicine* 15(3):227-238.
- Beaudry-Corbett, Marilyn, and Sharisse McCafferty
2002 Spindle Whorls: Household Specialization at Ceren. *In* *Ancient Maya Women*. Traci Ardren, ed. Pp. 52-67. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Brady, James E.
1988 The Sexual Connotation of Caves in Mesoamerican Ideology. *Mexicon* 10(3):51-55.
- Brady, James E., and Wendy Ashmore
1999 Mountains, Caves, Water: Ideational Landscapes of the Ancient Maya. *In* *Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives*. Wendy Ashmore and

Arthur Bernard Knapp, eds. Pp. 124-145. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Brady, James E., with Allan B. Cobb, Sergio Garza, Cesar Espinosa, and Robert Burnett

2005 An Analysis of Ancient Maya Breakage at Balam Na Cave, Guatemala. *In* Stone Houses and Earth Lords: Maya Religion in the Cave Context. Keith M. Prufer and James E. Brady, eds. Pp. 213-224. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.

Brady, James E., and Pierre R. Colas

2005 Nikte Mo' Scattered Fire in the Cave of K'ab Chante': Epigraphic and Archaeological Evidence for Cave Desecration in Ancient Maya Warfare. *In* Stone Houses and Earth Lords: Maya Religion in the Cave Context. Keith M. Prufer and James E. Brady, eds. Pp. 149-166. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.

Brady, James E., and Keith M. Prufer

2005a Introduction: A History of Mesoamerican Cave Interpretation. *In* In the Maw of the Earth Monster: Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use. James E. Brady and Keith M. Prufer, eds. Pp. 1-17. Austin: University of Texas Press.

2005b Maya Cave Archaeology: A New Look at Religion and Cosmology. *In* Stone Houses and Earth Lords: Maya Religion in the Cave Context. Keith M. Prufer and James E. Brady, eds. Pp. 365-379. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.

Brady, James E. and Dominique Rissolo

2006 A Reappraisal of Ancient Maya Cave Mining. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 62(4):471-490).

Brady, James E., with Ann Scott, Allan Cobb, Irma Rodas, John Fogarty, and Monica Urquizú Sánchez

1997 Glimpses of the Dark Side of the Petexbatun Project: The Petexbatun Regional Cave Survey. *Ancient Mesoamerica* 8:353-364.

Brady, James E., and Andrea Stone

1986 Naj Tunich: Entrance to the Maya Underworld. *Archeology* 39(6): 18-25.

Bricker, Victoria Reifler

1973 *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Brisko, Jo Ann Roman

1994 "Maya Goddesses: By What Name Do We Call Them?" *In* *U Mut Maya*, vol. 5. Carolyn Jones and Tom Jones, 197-206. Arcata, CA: U Mut Maya Press.

- Brown, Linda A.
2005 Planting the Bones: Hunting Ceremonialism at Contemporary and Nineteenth-Century Shrines in the Guatemalan Highlands. *Latin American Antiquity* 16(2): 131-146.
- Brown, R. McKenna, with Judith M. Maxwell and Walter E. Little
2006 ¿La utz awach? Introduction to Kaqchikel Maya Language. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bunzel, Ruth
1952 Chichicastenango: A Guatemalan Village. American Ethnological Society Publication no. 22. Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin.
- Burgoa, Francisco de
1934 Palestra historical. *Publicaciones del Archivo General de la Nación*, 24. Mexico City: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación.
- Burkitt, Miles
1956 *The Old Stone Age*. New York: New York University Press.
- Carlsen, Robert S.
1997 *The War for the Heart and Soul of a Highland Maya Town*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Carmack, Robert M., with Janine L. Gasco and Gary H. Gossen, eds.
2007 [1996] *The Legacy of Mesoamerica: History and Culture of a Native American Civilization*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Christenson, Allen J.
2001 *Art and Society in a Highland Maya Community: The Altarpiece of Santiago Atitlán*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
2003 *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Coe, Michael D.
2005 [1966, 1980, 1984, 1987, 1993, 1999] *The Maya*. 7th ed. New York: Thames and Hudson.
- Coggins, Clemency
1987 *New Fire at Chichen Itza*. In *Memorias del primer coloquio internacional de Mayistas*. Pp. 427-484. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, D.F.
- Diehl, Richard A.
2004 *The Olmecs: America's First Civilization*. London: Thames and Hudson.

- Dunning, Nicholas, with Vernon Scarborough, Fred Valdez, Jr, Sheryl Luzzadder-Beach, Timothy Beach, and John G. Jones
 1999 Temple Mountains, sacred lakes, and fertile fields: ancient Maya landscapes in northwestern Belize. *Antiquity* 73:650-660.
- Eber, Christine, and Brenda Rosenbaum
 1993 "That we may serve beneath your hands and feet": Women Weavers in Highland Chiapas, Mexico. *In* *Crafts in the World Market: The Impact of Global Exchange on Middle American Artisans*. June Nash, ed. Pp. 155-179. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Eliade, Mircea
 2004 [1951 (in French), 1964, 1972, 1991] *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Evans, Susan Toby
 2004 *Ancient Mexico and Central America: Archeology and Culture History*. Thames and Hudson, London.
- Falcón, Maricela Ayala
 2002 Lady K'awil, Goddess O, and Maya Warfare. *In* *Ancient Maya Women*. Traci Ardren, ed. Pp. 105-113. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Fischer, Edward F., and Carol Hendrickson
 2003 *Tecpán Guatemala: A Modern Maya Town in Global and Local Context*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Fitzsimmons, Janet
 2005 Pre-Hispanic Rain Ceremonies in Blade Cave, Sierra Mazateca, Oaxaca, Mexico. *In* *In the Maw of the Earth Monster: Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use*. James E. Brady and Keith M. Prufer, eds. Pp. 91-116. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Freidel, David A.
 1992 Children of the First Father's Skull: Terminal Classic Warfare in the Northern Maya Lowlands and the Transformation of Kingship and Elite Hierarchies. *In* *Mesoamerican Elites: An Archeological Assessment*. Diane Z. Chase and Arlen F. Chase, eds. Pp. 99-117. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Freidel, David A., with Linda Schele and Joy Parker
 1993 *Maya cosmos: three thousand years on the shaman's path*. 1st ed. NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc.

- Galinier, Jaques
1990 *La mitad del mundo. Cuerpo cosmos en los rituales otomíes*. Mexico: UNAM, CEMCA, INI.
- García-Zambrano, Ángel J.
1994 Early Colonial Evidence of Pre-Columbian Rituals of Foundation. *In Seventh Palenque Round Table*, 1989. M.G. Robertson and V. Fields, eds. Pp. 217-227. San Francisco, CA: Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute.
- Grove, David C.
1973 Olmec Altars and Myth. *Archeaology* 26(2):128-135.
- Guiteras Holmes, C.
1947 Clanes y sistema de parantesco de Cancuc (México). *Acta Americana* 5:1-17.
- Headrick, Annabeth
2007 *The Teotihuacan Trinity: The Sociopolitical Structure of an Ancient Mesoamerican City*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Heydon, Doris
2005 Rites of Passage and Other Ceremonies in Caves. *In In the Maw of the Earth Monster: Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use*. James E. Brady and Keith M. Prufer, eds. Pp. 21-34. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Houston, Stephen D.
1996 Symbolic Sweatbaths of the Maya: Architectural Meaning in the Cross Group at Palenque, Mexico. *Latin American Antiquity* 7(2):132-151.
- Hull, Kerry
2004 Tradition and History in Ch'orti' Oral Narratives: The Story of the Cave of Copan. *Latin American Indian literatures journal* 20(1):1-17.
- Ingham, John M.
1984 Human Sacrifice at Tenochtitlan. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26(3):379-400.
- Isaac, Erich
1962 The Act and the Covenant: The Impact of Religion on the Landscape. *Landscape* 11(2):12-17.
- Josserand, J. Kathryn
2002 Women in Classic Maya Hieroglyphic Texts. *In Ancient Maya Women*. Traci Ardren, ed. Pp. 114-151. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

- Klein, Cecilia F., with Eulogio Guzmán, Elisa C. Mandell, and Maya Stanfield-Mazzi
2002 The Role of Shamanism in Mesoamerican Art: A Reassessment. *Current Anthropology* 43(3):383-419.
- Lewis-Williams, David
2002 *The Mind in the Cave*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Looper, Matthew G.
2002 Women-Men (and Men-Women): Classic Maya Rulers and the Third Gender. *In Ancient Maya Women*. Traci Ardren, ed. Pp. 171-202. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Manca, María Cristina
1995 De las cuevas hasta el cielo pasando a través de los colores de las enfermedades. *In Anuario IEI V*. M.E. Fernández-Galán Rodríguez et al. Pp. 223-259. San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Mexico: Instituto de Estudios Indígena, Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas.
- Martínez González, Roberto
2002 La cueva del río San Jerónimo: análisis e interpretación de su arte rupestre. *Cuicuilco* 9(25):1-30.
- Mendelson, E. Michael
1967 Ritual and Mythology. *In Handbook of Middle American Indians*, Vol. 6: Social Anthropology, Pp. 392-415. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Metz, Brent E.
2006 Ch'orti'-Maya Survival in Eastern Guatemala: Indigeneity in Transition. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
N.d. Ch'orti' Maya Masculinity at the Crossroads. Unpublished.
- Miller, Mary Ellen
1999 *Maya Art and Architecture*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Moragas Segura, Natalia
1998 Cuevas ceremoniales en Teotihuacan durante el período clásico. *Boletín americanista* 38(48):179-195.
- Morehart, Christopher T.
2005 Plants and Caves in Ancient Maya Society. *In Stone Houses and Earth Lords: Maya Religion in the Cave Context*. Keith M. Prufer and James E. Brady, eds. Pp. 167-185. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.
- Morehart, Christopher T., with David L. Lentz, and Keith M. Prufer

2005 Wood of the Gods: The Ritual Use of Pine (*Pinus* spp.) by the Ancient Lowland Maya. *Latin American Antiquity* 16(3):255-274.

Moyes, Holly

2005a Cluster Concentrations, Boundary Markers, and Ritual Pathways: A GIS Analysis of Artifact Cluster Patterns at Actun Tunichil Muknal, Belize. *In* *In the Maw of the Earth Monster: Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use*. James E. Brady and Keith M. Prufer, eds. Pp. 269-300. Austin: University of Texas Press.

2005b The Sweathbath in the Cave: A Modified Passage in Chechem Ha Cave, Belize. *In* *Stones Houses and Earth Lords: Maya Religion in the Cave Context*. Keith M. Prufer and James E. Brady, eds. Pp. 187-211. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.

Nash, June C.

2002 Preface. *In* *Ancient Maya Women*. Traci Ardren, ed. Pp. ix-xiv. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

Neumann, Frank J.

1974 The Rattle-Stick of Xipe Totec: A Shamanistic Element in Pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican Religion. *Anales del XLI Congreso Internacional de Americanistas*, Vol. 2:243-251. México.

O'Brien, Linda

1975 Songs of the Face of the Earth: Ancestor Songs of the Tzutujil Maya of Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala. Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles.

Prufer, Keith M.

2005 Shamans, Caves, and the Roles of Ritual Specialists in Maya Society. *In* *In the Maw of the Earth Monster: Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use*. James E. Brady and Keith M. Prufer, eds. Pp. 186-222. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Prufer, Keith M., and James E. Brady

2005 Introduction: Religion and Role of Caves in Lowland Maya Archaeology. *In* *Stone Houses and Earth Lords: Maya Religion in the Cave Context*. Keith M. Prufer and James E. Brady, eds. Pp. 1-22. U of Colorado P, Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.

Prufer, Keith M., and Andrew Kindon

2005 Replicating Sacred Landscape: The Chen at Muklebal Tzul. *In* *Stone Houses and Earth Lords: Maya Religion in the Cave Context*. Keith M. Prufer and James E. Brady, eds. Pp. 25-46. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.

Pugh, Timothy W.

- 2005 Caves and Artificial Caves in Late Postclassic Maya Ceremonial Groups. *In* Stone Houses and Earth Lords: Maya Religion in the Cave Context. Keith M. Prufer and James E. Brady, eds. Pp. 47-69. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.
- Rands, Robert L.
1955 Some Manifestations of Water in Mesoamerican Art. *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* 157:265-393.
- Redfield, Robert and Alfonso Villa Rojas
1934 Chan Kom. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution.
- Reed, Nelson A.
2001 The Caste War of Yucatán. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Rissolo, Dominique
2005 Beneath the Yalahau: Emerging Patterns of Ancient Maya Ritual Cave Use from Northern Quintana Roo, Mexico. *In* In the Maw of the Earth Monster: Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use. James E. Brady and Keith M. Prufer, eds. Pp. 342-372. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Robin, Cynthia
2002 Gender and Maya Farming: Chan Nóohol, Belize. *In* Ancient Maya Women. Traci Ardren, ed. Pp. 12-30. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Romey, Kristin M.
2004 Diving the Maya Underworld. *Archaeology* 57(3):16-23.
- Sahagún, Fray Bernardino de
1969 Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain. Book 6. C. E. Dibble and A. J. O. Anderson, trans. Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research and University of Utah Press.
- Sandstrom, Alan R.
2005 The Cave-Pyramid Complex among the Contemporary Nahua of Northern Veracruz. *In* In the Maw of the Earth Monster: Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use. James E. Brady and Keith M. Prufer, eds. Pp. 35-68. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Saturno, William A., with Karl A. Taube, and David Stuart
2005 The Murals of San Bartolo, El Petén, Guatemala, Part 1: The North Wall. *Ancient America*, 7. Barnardsville, N.C.: Center for Ancient American Studies.

- Sharer, Robert J., and Loa P. Traxler
 2006 [1946, 1947, 1956, 1983, 1994] *The Ancient Maya*. 6th ed. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Sheseña, Alejandro
 2007 ¿Glifo Maya para “Siete Cuevas”? *Indiana* 24:361-399.
- Smith, Michael E.
 2003 [1996] *The Aztecs*. 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Stone, Andrea J.
 1987 Rock Art: Cave Painting in the Maya area. *Latin American Indian literatures journal*. 3(1):95-108.
 1988 Sacrifice and Sexuality: Some Structural Relationships in Classic Maya Art. *In The Role of Gender in Pre-Columbian Art and Architecture*. Virginia E. Miller, ed. Pp. 75-103. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America.
 1995 Images from the Underworld: Naj Tunich and the Tradition of Maya Cave Painting. Austin: University of Texas Press.
 2005a A Cognitive Approach to Artifact Distribution in Caves of the Maya Area. *In In the Maw of the Earth Monster: Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use*. James E. Brady and Keith M. Prufer, eds. Pp. 249-268. Austin: University of Texas Press.
 2005b Scribes and Caves in the Maya Lowlands. *In Stone Houses and Earth Lords: Maya Religion in the Cave Context*. Keith M. Prufer and James E. Brady, eds. Pp. 135-147. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado.
- Stresser-Pean, Guy
 1952 Montagnes Calcaires et Sources Vauclusiennes Dans la Religion des Indians Huastèques de la Région de Tampico. *Revue de L’Histoire des Religiones* 141:84-90.
- Stuart, David
 1987 Ten Phonetic Syllables. *Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing*, 14. Washington, D.C.: Center for Maya Research.
- Sullivan, Thelma D.
 1982 Tlazoteotl-Ixcuina: The Great Spinner and Weaver. *In The Art and Iconography of Late Post-Classic Central Mexico*. Elizabeth Boone, ed. Pp. 7-35. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks.
- Tarn, Nathaniel, and Martin Prechtel
 1986 Constant Inconstancy: The Feminine Principle in Atiteco Mythology. *In Symbol Meaning Beyond the Closed Community: Essays in Mesoamerican Ideas*. Gary H. Gossen, ed. Pp. 173-184. *Studies on Culture and Society* Vol. 1. Albany: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies.

Taube, Karl

- 1988 The Ancient Yucatec New Year Festival: The Liminal Period in Maya Ritual and Cosmology. Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University.
- 1989 Ritual Humor in Classic Maya Religion. *In* Word and Image in Maya Culture: explorations in language, writing, and representation. William F. Hanks and Don Stephen Rice, eds. Pp. 351-382. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- 1992a The iconography of mirrors at Teotihuacan. *In* Art, Ideology, and the City of Teotihuacan. J.C. Berlo, ed. Pp. 169-204. Washington, D.C. Dumbarton Oaks.
- 1992b The Major Gods of Ancient Yucatan. *Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology*, No. 32. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks.
- 1998 The Jade Hearth: Centrality, Rulership, and the Classic Maya Temple. *In* Function and Meaning in Classic Maya Architecture. Stephen D. Houston, ed. Pp. 427-478. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks.

Tedlock, Dennis

- 1985 Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life and the Glories of Gods and Kings. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Thompson, J. Eric S.

- 1939 The Moon Goddess in Middle America with Notes on Related Deities. CIW Pub. 509, Contribution 29. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington.
- 1959 The Role of Caves in Maya Culture. *Mitteilungen aus dem Museum fur Volkerkunde im Hamburg* 25:122-129.
- 1975 Introduction. *In* The Hill-Caves of Yucatan: A Search for Evidence of Man's Antiquity in the Caverns of Central America. By H.C. Mercer. Pp. vii-xliv. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Tozzer, Alfred and G. Allen

- 1910 Animal figures in the Maya codices. *Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology*, Harvard University, Vol. 4(3). Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum.

Vail, Gabrielle, and Andrea Stone

- 2002 Representations of Women in Postclassic and Colonial Maya Literature and Art. *In* Ancient Maya Women. Traci Ardren, ed. Pp. 203-228. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

Veni, George

- 1995 The Geologic Context of Maya Cave Painting. *In* Images from the Underworld: Naj Tunich and the Tradition of Maya Cave Painting. Andrea J. Stone. Pp. 243-252. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Villa Rojas, Alfonso

1947 Kinship and Nagualism in a Tzeltal Community, Southeastern Mexico.
American Anthropologist 49 (4.1):578-587.

Vogt, Evon Z., and David Stuart

2005 Some Notes on Ritual Caves among the Ancient and Modern Maya. *In* *Maw of the Earth Monster: Mesoamerican Ritual Cave Use*. James E. Brady and Keith M. Prufer, eds. Pp. 155-185. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Williams, Walter L.

1986 *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*.
Boston: Beacon Press.