

Evocative Identity:
Articulating Maya Cosmivision and
Continuity in the Remains of Colonial Rupture

Introduction -

Through dark vegetation passages, in wisps of mist and audible jaguar growls, Indiana Jones reaches a Mesoamerican limestone temple. There, through the foliage, a glint of sunlight on the upper platform reveals a Dark-age, extra-terrestrial relief. These images have been played and replayed in countless movie matinees, adventure/comic books, in annals of the first Western archeologists, and in the eco-tourist brochures that promise adventure in the land of the ancient lost civilization of the Maya. These fossilized images of an extinct pre-Colombian society are captured by a production video made by two anthropologists: Quetzil Casteneda and Jeff Himpele. The video, *Incidents of Travel at Chichen Itza*, is a titular parody and namesake of the John Lloyd Stephens' travelogue of a 1842 expedition to the Yucatan. Stephens' book, which became a best seller with the addition of Frederick Catherwood's lithographs, propagated a long-standing romantic colonial interest in the palatial ruins and remnants of the ancient Maya of the Yucatan. Himpele and Casteneda in their ninety-minute video, dramatize how New-Agers, the Mexican state, tourists, and 1920s archaeologists all contended to "clear the site of the antique Maya city of Chichen Itza in order to produce their own idealized and unobstructed visions of 'Maya,' while the local Maya themselves struggle" in the present to occupy the site as vendors and artisans (Casteneda and Himpele 2003). In a montage of video portraits, the video spectator is able to construct a composite of contemporary Maya people: street vendors, musicians playing mariachi music, elders in barroom seminars indoctrinating tradition, tour guides, and aerobic exercise instructors all of whom convey identity in place, or a visual representation of Giddens' s conception of modernity as "an increasing inter-connection between the two extremes of extensionality and intentionality: globalizing influences on the one hand and personal dispositions on the other" (Giddens 1991:5).

Like many cultural groups with enigmatic, colonial, and visual histories of the "long term," the Maya emanate an evocative identity. I define evocative identity here in two dimensions: 1) as a "powerful" identity that is called up to inspire and is manifested from an organic and distinctive cosmivision, and 2) the reverse of this perspective, what Western outsiders perceive when the image of Maya is invoked, couched in what Mayan anthropologist Victor Montejo terms as "fossiled images," (Montejo 2002:123) and a false-cognizance of identity that Foucault derives from colonialism which fostered a system governorship and authority that imposed Western organization to autochthonous groups, defining others and codifying them in Western "repetitions of origins" (Foucault 1972:22).

Documenting views against "unifying visions" of Mayan solidarity, anthropologists Quetzil Casteneda quotes a Mayan friend in the Yucatan who is asked to define himself in the domain of Mayan/Chiapan revolutionary solidarity.

[He protested] "We are not indigenous!"... While for some this might be easily dismissed as a false consciousness, there are in fact many in

Yucatan who reject the politics of the Zapatistas and refuse to be slotted into the “savage-slot” of the rebellious Indio. In this “other Mexico” of Yucatan the people not only have another politics, but another modality of identity (Casteneda 2004).

For those citizens who self-identify as Maya, *Quiche* Maya, Zapatista, or simply admit indigenous consanguinity, Mayans are born into different geographies and social structures, emphasize, exteriorize, and perform many disparate manifestations of habitus and individuality. It could be said there are at least as many different conceptions of what it is to be Maya as there are Mayans.

In this paper, however, I hope to continue an “articulation” of Mayan cultural continuity over the long term. By “articulation” I infer that unifying narratives are not new, and that Mayans were never a unified whole defined in both linguistic and ascription-oriented axes. It is my hope to continue a conceptual dialogue open to refinement and debate. In asserting this proposition, I would like to argue against some of the myths of Maya cultural discontinuity. One myth is that Maya knowledge of cosmological understanding was ruptured between post-classic and modern time. I would also like to take up the arguments and discourse of Paul Hamann (through Marshall Sahlins and Sidney Mintz) in developing a “cultural scheme of universal dimension,” to reassert that the ontology of Mesoamerican origination is oriented toward “original debt,” a “conceptuality of being” that differs fundamentally from the Judaio-Christian ontological framework conceived of as “original sin” (Hamman 2002:355-360). To situate my argument, I would like to bridge archaeological and ethnographic academic domains to articulate that the evocation of Maya cosmological context has remained – in part – continuous. Mayan cosmovision has remained alive through replications of its symbolism in multitudinous inscribing practices, by Catholic/Mayan religious syncretisms, codices, and in oral traditions that are retransmitted through a “fund of knowledge” that has been “selected and institutionalized by those whose function it is do so” (Hobsbawm 1988:13).

This essay in its short format will only gloss the surface of many points of departure possible for analyzing visual and spatial emanations of Mayan origination myths. I support a reconceptualization of the “fossilized” representation of the Maya by providing a few examples of the evocation of Maya identity by *reevaluating*: 1) historical colonial encounters to contrast Maya ontological relations of nature and humankind with comparable Judeo-Christian conceptualizations, 2) embodiment of religious values in gender and sex, 3) time and direction themselves as fundamental constructs of cosmological understanding, as *cosmograms* of sacred place, 4) psychoanalytical foundations and foundations of self-awareness that are different in the Western psychological terminology vs. the alternative Lacandon Mayan psychological equivalent of self-awareness in the animal spirit, the *onen*, a “mirror imaging” of the self as a flexible identity maintained through adulthood, 5) resistance to neoliberalism expressed through iconography by Mayans of Chiapas and Guatemala, and 6) in the transcript of the confrontations and syncretisms of Mayan worldviews with the incursion of evangelical/millenarian religious practices at the village level.

Continuity and Colonial Rupture

One of the most enduring myths promulgated against Native Latin Americans at the onset of colonial conquest is that they maintained no practicing religion. Cristobal Colombo's perception of natives, at the time, is that they are "like children," blank slates upon which civilization could be inscribed (Restall 2003:173). Ironically during the early battles of conquest, religiosity - evocated by the conqueror as Catholic religion - becomes the first and last rationalization for conquest. For Native Americans, religion becomes one of the first moral lines of defense; for both Maya and Spanish, it is the last vocalization in the breath of the dying. In this sense, cosmology, defined by Michael Herzfeld, functions as a "source of imagery and argumentation," a source that people use to justify their actions and to structure moral order (Herzfeld 2001:205).

Mathew Restall in his book, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*, using extensive ethno-historical sources, describes the primary myth of the conquest of indigenes as a myth of native desolation:

In its most extreme form, this perspective not only emphasizes depopulation and destruction, but perceives a more profound desolation amounting to a state of anomie. When a society is in a state anomie, its individuals are suffering from a sense of futility, emotional emptiness, psychological despair, and confusion over the apparent breakdown of previous systems of value and meaning (Restall 2003).

Conquerors like Cortes and Colombo were part and parcel of a larger project of Spanish Catholic "revivalism" exemplified by the Inquisition and expulsion of the Islamic people from Iberia. The long-term crusade against non-Catholic infidels, the myth of native desolation, the misunderstood and vilified practice of human sacrifice, and the myths of the native mind as a *tabula rasa* fueled Spanish missionizing waves in The New World on a broad scale. Yet even with the decimation of over eighty percent of the indigenous population due to disease - in perhaps two generations - the colonial enterprise of religious conversion was facilitated only when it coincided with native practices, patterns, and structures, otherwise it was met with tenacious resistance - and frequent revolts - that all peoples tend to display to outsiders who radically interfere in their lives.

One of the most enduring myths of Aztec and Mayan conquest is that there occurred an apotheosis of horse and conquerors - Cortes was said to embody a reincarnation of *Quetzocuatl* which confused and "awed" the natives he encountered. However, the initial "shock value" of these strange re-animations and visions wore off quickly as the intentions of the Spanish became quickly evident. Indigenous Mesoamericans never considered themselves "conquered," they in fact had no language equivalent for *conquer*, and the Spanish never mustered the resources to fully missionize or confront groups of Maya prospering in the jungle who were knowledgeable enough of their own environment - and the threat posed by the Spanish - to evade capture by soldiers. When confronted with religious hierarchy, Mayans had long since learned to "deflect" power without assimilating or escaping it, providing a means of empowerment" through subtle resistance (de Certeau 1984). In the Maya cosmology in the upheavals brought about by the creation of the universe, devastation wrought by war and disease

was but one result of ongoing violent “disjunctures through which the world was clarified, only to give birth to other moments of rupture:” time and events were cyclical (Warren 2002a:81). In the cosmology of the Quiche Maya, the first, second, and third creations take place in darkness. Still in darkness, the gods fashion Quiche from corn at the beginning of the fourth creation and the Quiche nation is formed (Watanabe (1983:724). The basic theme of Popul Vuh, a Quiche book ascribed to be a composite rendering of Mayan origination myth – according to anthropologist Robert Bruce - can be reduced to a cyclical event:

When Our Lord, the sun, sinks beyond the western
horizon, the shadows spring from their hiding places under
the rocks and the trees and the vines. Tiny beings cast great
and fearsome shadows, and the shadows speak with the voices
of the Lords of Xibalba calling “I am the way you must follow!”
The sun himself is captured by the Lords of the Underworld,
and His creatures are lost in the darkness.

The sun “runs its course” and then is created in the morning anew (Bruce 1979:355).

In 1907 Edward Tozzer wrote *A Comparative Study of the Mayas and the Lacandon*, and in an era of armchair anthropologists, speculated that from the very beginning the religious life of the Maya of the Lacandon of his day was a “survival,” not only of the former religion of “this one branch of the people,” but of all ancient Mayas as well. He goes on to describe and name the gods of the Lacandon and relate their clear similarity to the gods of the Popul Vuh. Although Tozzer liberally applies Western values to the social system of the Maya, he is one of the first anthropologists to document and analyze the connection of the religion of colonial Maya of the Yucatan with correlative invocations recited from the Quiche in the Popul Vuh, and with his own field notes and oral testimonials articulating cosmology of the Maya of Lacandon. His work is observation-oriented and common-sensical.

Tozzer himself argues against the myths of the colonial rupture, translating and annotating the work of Fray Diego de Landa, a colonial priest who first documented contact of Maya ritual and religion. Tozzer, however, misjudges the ethical component of Lacandon religion: “social consciousness has very little strength outside of the family” (Tozzer 1907:56). There was a “moral substance” in Lacandon fables; they were replete with the dark journeys undertaken by those who practiced murder, incest, or dishonesty. Tozzer’s analyses were couched in prevalent ideas of the day that interpreted ancient Maya civilization in Western Utopian terms and with Cartesian rationale.

The “Essence” of Maya Ontology

Kay Warren defines “essence” as a “transcendent spirituality.” Mainstream early academic anthropology articulated such incorporeal and inoperable subjects in ethnography as “biologically determined” or as “survivals” of primordial descent. Essence, to Warren, is culturally produced and describes a transcendent binding core of values (Warren 2002a:23).

Sahlins in “The Native anthropology of Western Cosmology” reviews the

prerogatives of the early formative anthropology as project establishing an ethnography of rationality and consistency, void of ruptures or cyclical currents (Sahlins 1996:418). Schools of thought like the structural/functionalist and cultural materialist schools manifested “a kind of naïve trust in a beneficial, self-regulating social order that determined some good or utility in~ each and every customary practice” (412). According to Sahlins, the epistemology of anthropology and science extends from a Judeo-Christian model of humankind that divides a barbarous world of natural past from the rational, mental, and spiritual world of humankind (411). Humans assume a place of higher conduct, shaped in the form of a transcendent and paternal entity: nature becomes “pure materiality, without redeeming spiritual value” (Augustine Confessions quoted in Sahlins 1996:411). Sahlins provides a clear example of the Occidental “material” conception of nature when he uses an example of comparison from Jacques Gernet’s *China and the Christian Impact* (1985):

In the end, the Jesuits concluded that the Chinese were materialists, since they considered “brute matter” and Heaven to be all the same substance. The Chinese literati for their part, concluded that the Jesuits were materialists, “since they deprived the universe of its invisible forms, turning it into brute matter directed from outside and lacking the spontaneous intelligence that all creatures display.”

Reviewing Sahlins’ essay, Jacques Hamel espouses Sahlins’ work adding that anthropology in its critique of culture enables it to define how “society, nature, and the environment exist for their actors only when linked to a culture and, more broadly, to a cosmology through which it is given common meaning” (1996:419). The Judeo-Christian model underlying all narratives of progress, that saturates our popular science television programming and grade school classrooms, evolves from the Hebrew religion that is “absolutely unique in its insistence on the absolute transcendence of God: a god beyond ontological comparison to any worldly comparison” (419). Virtually all other worldly religions, archaic or otherwise, maintain some practicing understanding of animism, with its emphasis in the connectivity of nature and humankind. It is only the dogmatic belief in the letter of creation attributable to God that we dissolve connections to our intimate - relations to nature in so doing, nature becomes material, part and parcel of what drives the Occidental world: an eternal desire to fulfill the original loss from paradise; *the original sin*: “In-the-world’s richest societies, the subjective experience of lack increases in proportion to the objective output of wealth” (401). Sahlins term for “value” is-subjective, non-purposeful and non-materialist laden: a “preferential and individual value of subjective economizing” (401).

Byron Hamann explores the repercussions of Sahlins work in his essay “The Social Life of Pre-Sunrise Things” constructing the framework of his essay from the persistence - and productiveness - of original sin as a possibility for a

cultural scheme for universal dimensions. Original sin is placed at the foundations of Christian—Western social orders. I argue that indigenous Mesoamerican archaeology is part of an analogous “cultural scheme of universal dimensions,” where Sahlins focuses on Western elaborations of

“original sin,” I focus on Mesoamerican elaborations of “original destructions” and “original debt.” These concepts provide the conditions of possibility for the basic Mesoamerican understandings of time and space, human social life, and the ties linking human to natural and-supernatural worlds. In Mesoamerica location ,the supernatural forces they house, and the social identity of communities are all closely linked (Hamann 2002:3 53)

Mesoamerican cosmology translated from codices and stelae reveal in origination myths, narratives of human/god covenants and narratives of revenge for unreciprocated human selfishness: creations of the world humans occupy are destroyed and rebuilt. The successful corn harvest of the Mixtec only becomes a possibility with a reciprocative’ covenant of gods and humans:

Strong winds, drought, and rapidly growing tress prevented Humankind from growing corn. Two priestly figures concluded that a pact with the Earth and Rain was needed. they prayed and made offerings to the Earth and Sky, promising that humankind will go “no other place” but into the earth at death. Once this pact was made, men were able to sow, and crops in abundance were produced (Monaghan 1990:566).

It is interesting to note the circular relationship between eating of the earth, and the earth ta-king-the human back, and that in so doing the extension to this reasoning is that earth and humans are inextricably linked in death and rebirth: this seems to be a “foundational concept to- revealing sacrificial motivation” (Monaghan 1990:563). In the Maya creation myth of Popul Vuh, all fore-parents of the hero twins, protagonists of the creation myth, “sacrifice” themselves in turn unable to outsmart the gods of the underworld.

The ceremony of human sacrifice is practiced up until the time of Spanish religious intervention, and in some- areas of the Lacandon, this practice is speculated to have existed up until the Twentieth Century. Classical Maya sacrifice is said to describe power-laden reifications of the nexus of elites and gods. Sacrifice becomes translated into modern practices, taking many different forms, bound by the same essence of hermeneutical understanding of the covenant of humans with Earth and Rain gods. In one Lacandon- sacrificial practice-a red-annatto (k’uxu)-dyed tamale is placed in a god pots as a symbolic human heart, then the tamale is shared and eaten in a ritual consummation. Tozzer describes bloodletting and ritual annatto body paint applied to men during- the ritual of these sacrificial practices, and human hearts fed into godpots in the colonial era. (A practice described by a priest, fray Diego de Landa in Tozzer’s ethnography of Lacandon 1907:63).

Practices-of sacrifice-have- been syncretized into the highland Chiapas Maya Catholics as Patron Saint Festivals. The missionized Maya of the highlands adopted a particular Catholic saint representing each village. Mayans parade their saint through the town on the saint’s birthday, gathering offerings of money, food, or artesian works to distribute as a “personal sacrifice” to the communal catholic church. These acts are understood for their meaning, significance, and symbolism, as descended and

reinterpreted practices from older Mayan cosmological invocations.

The term representing blood *k'ik'* in Classic Maya texts has recently been reinterpreted as *K'ulel*, a non-material vital energy analogous to the Chinese *Clii*, which is released from the body “through the shedding blood” during human sacrifice. *K'ik'el* blood in the language of Lacandon is part of a range of animating fluids found in animal and human blood and tree resin. The burning of copal, pitch pine resin, releases the animating- elements~ turning—the smoke into “tomales for the gods-to consume,” symbolic of the giving back to the gods the vital energies of life taken from the foods human consume.

The notion of sacrifice governs the notions of exchange and reciprocation observed in practice- in highland Chiapas and elsewhere in Mesoamerica. Exchange is not associated with market-place. Instead the marketplace is the locale of moral exchange relations, a scene of social activity; giving something for something else of value and that is related to marriage: a relationship equivalence between two groups of kin (Meskell and Joyce 2003: 141).

Reconceptualizing Gender: Embodying Maya Cosmology

Classic Mayan era representations of elites most often focus on the male's role as a political authority. Representational authority is infused in public space, in monumental architecture, on stelae that reaffirm cosmic hierarchy of gods and the close connection of rulers in a lineage of descent from- gods~ and other rulers: Stelae, lintels, and codices record the ascension of rulers in long lines of descending -order inscribed with dates to reinforce elite lineage and supremacy. Male rulers are portrayed sitting atop platforms with front facing postures and exposed bodies indicating a focus on male status and governmental orientation~ Elite~women are-included in-the ruling descent, and are represented with male elites in tandem, both are often engaging in blood letting as an equal but separate- practice. (Separate body parts are-punctured.) It is a society where the gendering of boys and girls start early, and males heirs are groomed to fill the ranks of the- centralized political- authority. Yet even in a male-focused elite society there is evidence of “gender parallelism” recorded in small-scale images and shaped into clay figurines where-the-focus shifts to- women and women's work, figurines wherein women “could claim credit for the products of their labor” (Joyce 2000:89). The refocus on women in craft production is explained in part by the: idea of “performance,” which in this sense corresponds to what Paul Connerton calls “practices of bodily incorporation,” which are more open and potentially generative of new meanings than their transcription into more permanent media, to “practices of inscription” (89). Figurines shaped by women hint at alternate performances of gender, and an alternate to an alternate “foci of women as well as men” (69-70).

The Classic Maya ordered their world through cosmological direction placing themselves and their environment into categories that allowed them to complementarity pair male/female gendering. Elites are also represented as both male and female with the right side of the body male and the left side of the body female. Male rulers portrayed themselves in mixed costume to transcend gender “recreating the primordial condition of dual gender” (Meskell and Joyce 2003: 25).

In modern Mayan societies a complete person is married and embodies this

duality. In the section of the *Popul Vul* that deals with the creation of human beings, men are created with women together. There is no Adamic first person, nor a notion of paternalistic gods creating creatures in their own image. The progenitor of humans most closely follows the narrative of an original mother - not father - who impregnates herself from a severed head and gives birth to the “Hero Twins,” clever scions who gain a tenuous foothold for the human race. In contemporary Mayan societies, ancestors are known as mother-fathers, a term of sexual indistinction (Devereaux 2000:57). Dual gender is necessary for the active role of Maya ancestors in founding lines of descent, yet it is not separated analytically as a first Mother and first Father.

Meskill and Joyce in *Embodied Lives: Figuring Ancient Maya and Egyptian Experience* differentiate Mayan cosmology from Western cosmology as a reconsideration of ontological underpinnings - and a convergence with the work of Sahlins and Desjarlais - when they argue that materials “from Egyptian and Mayan societies, existing before and separate from the tradition that runs from Platonic to Cartesian thought, give us a potential window on other ways of framing embodiment, distinct from concepts of duality, hierarchy, and rational privilege” (2003: 17). They iterate the position of the individual as a site of structure applying Strathern’s concept of “dividual”: “the singular person can be imagined as a social microcosm” of the Mayan gendered world (18). While commonly treated as a male deity, the sex of maize supernaturals is indeterminate in Mesoamerican mythologies. Maize is both male and female, often cycling through different genders (79).

The embodiment of cosmological structures also take the form of “enhancement” of the creative powers of original myths in as “bodily incorporation” of another form of embodiment. Mayan teeth were “filed to form a T’shape when viewed from the front” creating a replica of a linguistic sign *ik*, breath (or wind) (37).

In Classic Maya lintels, reliefs demonstrate a gender that emerges through performance, marked by costume, given substance through rituals of transition over the life of the person (132)~ Yet, according to Joyce, we must allow for “the possibility that people living these realities entertained different understandings” of their place in the world than the construals made by central authorities, or “we will simply project the political claims of certain groups on reality and deliver for them a result they could never have effected in the world they actually inhabited” (200).

In Naha of the 1980s - a village of the Lacandon Maya - anthropologist R. Jon. McGee during interviews with the wife (*Koh III*) of the village elder (Chan K’in Viejo) emphatically states that making *mi/pa* is “men’s work and that women did not do it” (McGee 2002:169). Five minutes later she tells McGee a story about how much she enjoyed going to work in the *milpa* with Chan K’in Viejo when they were young. She had worked in the *milpas* for fifteen years (170). Actuality, performance, and inscription are sometimes countered by the needs and wants of Lacandon. Youth of the Lacandon use the *milpa* as a site for sexual liaison in a society where gender “role playing” allows for flexibility. In hierarchal Classic era Mayan society, gender roles are inscribed in stone, but in small contemporary villages, elders govern through persuasion and humor alike.

Conceptualizing Space, Place, Time and Direction as Maya Cosmivision

De Certeau derives an insightful evaluation of the relation of social structure and subjectivity to space when he describes “interiorization” and “exteriorization:” the acquisition and expression of personal experience through structure (de Certeau 1984:59). He redefines Bourdieu’s structuring of habitus as responses to “memory impulses and psychological, spatial, material, circumstantial, and environmental adjustments” (59). Mayan cosmology creates a dialect with dreams and unconscious motivation — a social of psychology in an Andersonian sense - which imagines and re-imagines a cosmological conception of space and place. Classic era palaces, homes, and cityscapes are built to reify cosmological order, as a spatial manifestation of this order of “civilized life.., and political legitimization” (Schele and Kappeman 2001:47-48). Arrangements of buildings, dimension, functions and utilities create for Classic Era Mayan citizens a form and memory from birth, from the original moments where a child walks through a landscape and he/she is imbued with “spatial captation” (de Certeau 1984:108-109). The child begins to be governed by conscious and unconscious sources of conduct in cosmologically charged space (Giddens 1979:191).

Cynthia Robin in her essay *Outside of Houses* provides an explanation for utility of practice approaches in interpreting social structure through human formed habitation in geography (Robin 2002:249). She creates an argument for the creation of a “geometrical/cosmological conceptual ordering of the place” of a commoner farmstead, implying that there is a suffusion Maya cosmology in the ordering of work and habitation space contrasted with a “farmer’s pragmatic ordering of their homes and fields in relation to knowledge about locality and agricultural work” (255). Mayan anthropologist John Watanabe utilizes linguistic data from Mam, a contemporary Mayan language spoken in western Guatemala, to construct a cognitive model of Mayan cosmology “in space.” Terms for the directions, verb paradigms and the demarcation of time periods reveal a conception of space and time in which directionality, motion, and time are inextricably linked to the movement of the sun. In Mam terms, direction does not exist independently of motion. Cardinal directions are defined as vectors rather than as fixed points in space. East and West become moments of reversal in the sun’s diurnal oscillations between the horizons, and up and down are the only other, non-invertible spatial directions: “time is embodied as this movement between the eastern and western horizons” (Watanabe 1983 :7 10).

Chorti Maya gauge the beginning and end of the rainy season by observing sunrises and sunsets in relation to the solstitial positions (721). For the Chorti of eastern Guatemala, the sun is “born” at dawn, grows until noon and then “dies” in the evening leaving the night as an ambiguous period during which the sun is between death and birth. Night can thus be interpreted as a period of cosmic “gestation” (Girard 1962: 266).

Mayans incorporate and purposefully construct conceptions of their cosmology into sacred spaces. In Teotihuacan of the Maya Classic Era, a cave was constructed under the sun pyramid providing a mythological avenue to the underworld, a sacred place of primordial creation described in *Popul Vuh* as *Xibalba*. The Lacandon of Naha up until the 1980s maintained a cave shrine dedicated to *Mensabak* - god of rain, *Itsanok’us* - god of hail and lakes, and *Kanank’ax* - guardian of the forest. It is thought that these caves are portals to gods, and reaching the gods through caves is a corresponding means of this access practiced continuously for centuries. Human remains at the cave shrine of Naha

reveal a practice of flattened forehead cranial deformation common to the Prehispanic Maya inferring that the remains may be centuries old (McGee 1990:57).

There are limits to directly corresponding Classic era Mayan cosmology to that of Lacandon. Because the Lacandon have carried their knowledge through the ages as oral history, Classic period monuments have been re-traditionalized - in the Hobsbawm sense — taking on new meanings as palaces of memory and reverence. According to the elder of Naha of the 1980s Chan K'in Viejo, Palenque was the original home of the gods in the initial period of creation when the Lacandon god *Hachakyum* fashioned the earth's surface, making humans, and creating the underworld for his brother *Sukunkyum*. The Lacandon worship the geography of Palenque and Yaxchilan with their own syncretic ancestor worship unimagined by those who built and built upon the original structures. The Lacandon elder Chan K'in Viejo reimagined Palenque as a site of Lacandon creation of humans and gods, sacred-izing the space to his own village in a historical connection to geographically proximate ruins.

The Cosmological/Ontological Order

Mayan cosmology infuses many of the prophesies associated with the Lacandon dream symbols which become significant only upon examining details of the mythology - traditions and cosmology - or ritual and ceremonial practices. The conscious or subconscious associations which a person of Western culture might make with Noah's Ark, a winged helmet, a crucifix, a white dove, a chalice, or even a serpent, a lamb, or Rainbow... all these symbol-drenched images of our Occidental culture might be totally meaningless or have a completely different meaning to a Lacandon. The symbolism of the Lacandon, or Mayas in general must be interpreted upon the basis of their own cosmology, and in the repetition, emphasis and prevalence of certain kinds of symbols to the Mayan worldview.

An important factor in the framing of psychological identity was proposed by Jacques Lacan. The Mirror Stage is the formation of the intelligence of self, of self-identification when he/she "assumes an image" reinforced by his/her environment, cultural symbols, and parental signifiers (Lacan 1977:2). For the Lacandon Maya, the Mirror Stage of a child's development is marked by the ascription to the child of an *onen*, most often an animal character that the child is able to "occupy." An *onen* is inheritable and identifies a person to a family and lineage. An *onen* prevents the child from forming a unified and totalizing inscriptive identity associated with the Western Ego, a formation of self-identity that becomes uniform by other's solidifying reaffirmation of our personality. For the child, the *onen* is an alternate identity, active during dream states. The *onen* allows the child to see from a reverse perspective, as another being, but unlike *Naguals*, another Native American animal companion, humans do not morph into their animal equivalent. Rosemary Joyce writes of a similar alternative identity, put into Classic Maya terms, described as the *way*, a "spirit companion," a "co-essence" (Joyce and Meskell 2003:24). This co-essence is often portrayed in the garments of elite Mayas that are carved onto stelae and inscribed onto codices.

Lacandon often engage in a practice of Lacandon [perspective] reversals" in which they assume the role of someone else - an ethnographer for instance - taking notes and pictures, or interviewing on tape (Perera 1982:82). Mirror imaging features

prominently in Lacandon storytelling and dream interpretation, and contributes to a psychologically complex understanding of social settings. The Lacandon engage relativized perspectives, and “see as others see.” The Lacandon are patient with tourists who apply a Western gaze when looking at the Lacandon, seeing only as their self-knowledge allows them to see, rather than seeing through the “other’s” eyes.” The understanding of the reverse perspective is an ability which the Lacandon perceive in Westerners as hopelessly underdeveloped.

The Lacandon practice a form of psychotherapy. Most mornings the first words from a Lacandon upon waking describe their dreams; another Lacandon will discuss the meanings with the dreamer and hash out the connotations through comparative uses of cosmologically oriented dream symbols: dreaming of rain, for instance, foretells a time of impending sadness; dreaming with a radio playing, phonograph, or CD player foretells an encounter with a wild boar (Bruce 1979:326). (The radio is analogous to the noise of a wild boar in the forest). The end result of dream interpretation is to relieve anxiety from possible danger: Discussing a dream of dangerous encounter shields the dreamer from future danger associated with the encounter, producing a reversal (in Freudian terms) of anxiety. When I was in Lacanja Chansayab, I was relieved to know my multiple encounters with large spiders - seldom seen by the Lacandones - was a portent of good relations with the environment and the dangers of the darkened jungle in particular.

Cosmological Evocation and Essentialism

For most of the history of Mexico, indigenes have been marginalized by discourses of racial difference and inferiority - yet another form of essentialism - and this virulent form of essentialism in Latin America reminds us that essentialism can be coercively imposed by the state (Warren 2002a:8). In the early decades of the twentieth century, the institutionalizing of Mexican revolutionary outlooks lead to a codification of a new paradigm countering the negative effects of racism and justifying revolutionary outcomes by cultivating a new respect for the country’s indigenous roots. *Indigenismo* began with a critique of racism, pointing to the value of preconquest cultures, and ended with unilineal assumptions equating progress with acculturation to European ways. It was hoped that a project undertaken by progressive intellectuals to bringing conformity to indigenes would put them on the same playing field with *meztizos* and allow for greater economic welfare for all.

The iconography of Mayan Neoliberalism in Mexico according to Charles Hale - an anthropologist research Guatemala - 1) governs according to a logic of globalized capital, 2) grants rights to some but ignores the needs of others 3) creates built-in limits of indigenous empowerment, 4) and nudges any radical post-revolutionary Mayan back inside the line dividing the state authorized from the prohibited (Hale 2004:30). Foucault refers to these similar principles of state hegemony in his chapter of Discipline and Punish, “The Means of Correct Training.” To Foucault, the punishment on the individual to “reduce gaps” in social differentiation, “normalizing people” by a “perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant” (Foucault 1972:145) The institution “compares, differentiates, heirarchizes, homogenizes, and excludes,” premises or rather the result of neoliberalism (145) Global economics bring new influences and power relationships to the Mayan villages. These new power relationships with the Mexican

state, NGOs, and transnational corporations are “more anonymous and more functional. . . exercised by surveillance rather than ceremonies, by observation rather than commemorative accounts” (193). Applying Foucault to the deconstruction of the “genealogy of knowledge” to the project of *Indigenismo* opens up a discursive field fleshing out false unities, connections, and themes enmeshed in epistemologies of progress and enlightenment, and talks against historical constructions that are unqualified, put into acceptance, and given pure “spontaneous value” (22).

In the 1930s Mexico the project of post-revolutionary neoliberalism was put on hold as Mexican political leadership took a socialist turn and instigated sweeping land reforms guaranteeing Mayans ejidal, or communal lands. These reforms were withdrawn in the 1980s when land was privatized. In Chiapas, the passing and implementation of NAFTA, the privatization of indigenous ejidos, and the history of programs of forced acculturation fueled the Zapatista uprising whose moral premise was based upon the effects of 1) deterritorialization — the pressure to migrate away from traditional lands for wage work 2) fragmentation due to the commoditization of traditional social exchanges, and 3) “deculturation,” or the loss of the symbolic and material references points to cultural identity (Nash 2001:25). The Zapatista moral premise underscored a threat to a Mayan vision, to a way of life characteristic of a social system structured by a unique cosmology, and spanning centuries. In Guatemala under-representation of indigenes in majority districts and corrupt polling policies led to the stirring of revolutionary currents. The massacre of 100 peasants in the town of Panzós of Q’eqchi’ Maya by Guatemalan was countered by indigenous revolution in the northwest portion of Guatemala. Rebellion was met with brutal counterinsurgency tactics from 1983-85 leading to the death of over a hundred thousand Mayans.

A group of foreign academics, writers, Mayan artists and intellectuals have gathered in the wake of rebellion to push through legislative reform and counter what they perceive as a “political amnesia,” an arrested history in which political participation of Mayans is minimized by the painful results of war time atrocities (Montejo 2002: 126 and McGranahan nd:4). The majority of Mayan people have never engaged openly in rebellion and many reject the politics of Zapatistas and the tactics of insurgency. Yet nearly all Mayans sympathize with the cause of their Mayan brothers and sisters in their quest for self-affirmation, and support the declarations of the proponents for a Pan-Mayan movement. Trying to discern and articulate the articles of Pan-Mayan unity are anthropologists like Kay Warren and Mayan anthropologist Victor Montejo who argue for a discourse of identity based on a unification across historical cleavages of linguistic, cultural, and economic differences to bridging enduring commonalities - common ethnic roots and historical pasts. They articulate common histories of suffering and experiences that bind people together (Montejo 2002:128) They argue for defining Mayan “essences” rather than invoking discourses of primordial ethnogeneses emphasizing racial difference and inferiority.

Maya Revitalism in Guatemala and Chiapas in post-revolutionary times has created pathways for indigenous women’s groups to mobilize: part of the Zapatista decree of January 1, 1994 was a charter of declaration articulating pathways toward women’s equality. The charter includes the 1) right of political participation 2) to hold leadership posts within the political system 3) to a life free of sexual and domestic violence 4) to decide how many children they want to have 5) to a fair wage 6) to choose

a spouse 7) to an education 8) and to quality health services. Although many indigenous women are not aware of the detailed contents of the charter, its mere existence has become a symbol of the possibility of a fairer way of life for women, and a reassertion of the integral nature of women's roles in a holistic Mayan evocation of cosmological balance and being.

The Pan-Maya revivalist movement maintains no standard of homogenizing authenticity, rather, their focus is on the authenticators themselves, people of knowledge like Chan K'in Viejo of the Lacandon whose oral transmission of Lacandon tradition have filled volumes of ethnographic production (Warren 2002a: 11) For Mayan that have faced extreme pressures to assimilate toward national urban culture, an important rhetorical move has centered on "renewal" — that is, on the "assertion of a common past which has been suppressed and fragmented by European colonialism...uniting past with present as a political force" (11). In practice, this includes the evocation of Mayan cosmology flourishing in arts, crafts, literature and print materials; embodied, for instance, in patterns and symbols on the hand-woven blouses of Guatemalan and Chiapas women.

In the post-revolution Central America evangelism has continued its spread. The land under whole communities is bought up and Mayans are compelled toward conversion into evangelical churches and schools. Michael Herzfeld claims this cosmological reconstruction is a dangerous shift because the "cosmology of predestination acts like an instrument of personal agency: "it can be used as a post hoc justification for action" (Herzfeld 2001:215). Tension in communities cleaved by competing church ideologies and practices has led to violence. Violence has occurred between protestant-controlled communities and catholic-based communities. In 1997 the massacre in the small village of Acteal in Chiapas of forty worshipping men, women, and children by protestant paramilitaries seemed to frame the real the continued possibility for over-zealous and destructive millenarianism. Currently there is recuperation in the zones of previous rebellion. A tenuous peace is surveilled by the Mexican military. Evangelists, conservative journalists and Guatemalan/Mexican elites argue that Mayan revivalism is only one more reinvention of tradition, but they fail to consider the long-term contexts in which their supposed inventions take place (Hamann 2002:267)

Conclusion

In conclusion, I don't want to argue that Mayans exist or should exist outside of historical time. Mayans are pluricultural, and though post-revolutionary legislation for indigenous rights has failed more often than it has passed into law, the rupture or revolution in Mexico and Guatemala has greatly expanded worldwide concern for the preservation of the Mayan worldview. Still, for many the pathway leading to autonomy is covered in blood: every Mayan in Guatemala over the age of twenty knows someone who died supporting the evocation of Maya language~ thought, and representation. Veena Das draws an analogy of the wounds of memory to wounds of the body. Wounds of the body remain "obstacles to forgetting," reminding those still living of the importance of preserving a continuity of values in the face of rupture (Das 1995:179). Moments of terror under military control seem "almost hostile to the continuity of time," yet Mayan time has always been cyclical; Mayans remain responsive to change and renewal (200).

It is now an era of *Indio Permitido* in Guatemala and Chiapas, an era in which a certain amount of political reform has occurred, but an era where more radical ideas of indigenous autonomy are kept out of discussion. The failure of indigenous legislative reforms in Mexico in 2000, and 1999 in Guatemala in the face of rearticulation and reemphasis of Mayan cosmovision is more an indication of how pluricultural the Mayan regions are, and how difficult articulating unities are across naturalized political borders and in 31 separate Mayan languages. Trying too hard to pass absolutist decrees, the Mayans of the far left have backed off their demands for total autonomy. Yet, with the expansion of the linguistic knowledge of ancient and modern Maya, Mayan cosmovision—however emphasized by the imagers—is discernable as a strategy and as an organic structuring principle articulating Mayan worldviews act against what Herzfeld describes as the “universal logic of Globalization by exposing.. historically narrow and culturally parochial bas[es] by hearing other voices” (Herzfeld 2001:14)

In the Lacandon children now play games based on cartoon characters they watch rather than memorizing the traditional knowledge of the elders. In any society without writing, if the youngest generation does not learn the accumulated wisdom of their elders, then that knowledge is irrevocably lost within one generation (McGee 2002:46). The demise of traditional religious practice in Naha is based on the reliance of harvests and agriculture and the Lacandones are increasingly dependent on tourism that de-emphasizes traditional practices and knowledge. Curing ceremonies are being replaced with Western medicine; schooling and secular views are replacing mythic worldviews (McGee 2002:151). Since the death of Chan K'in Viejo in Naha, the younger men and women of Naha' are willing to abandon their gods and traditions and their moral values and to accept progress and missionization (Bruce 1979: 354).

Yet there *is* continuity. While I was in Lacanja Chansayab in the Lacandon forest in April of 2004, I found forty-year-old Miguel Chan K'ayum peering at alone, mature giant ceiba tree, the *axis mundi* of Lacandon Maya Cosmology. And Miguel began to tell me why the village had spared the ceiba and about its place in their world.

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