Figure 1. *Cama Zotz* or “Killer Bat” sculpture found associated with Structure 20, Copán (See page 23). Photo by Reyna Flores.

**Featured in this issue:**

Papers presented at the Symposium *Maya Cosmology and Social Identity: Vistas from the Past and Present, April 29, 1995*

- **Copán: Settlement, Politics, and Ideology** - GORDON R. WILLEY, Page 5
- **Maya Ritual and Cosmology in Contemporary Zincantan** - EVON Z. VOGT, JR. Page 9
- **The Hills are Alive: Sacred Mountains in the Maya Cosmos** - DAVID STUART, Page 13
- **Sculpting the Maya Universe: A New View on Copán** - BARBARA W. FASH, Page 18
- **Unearthing an Ethos: Maya Archaeology and Maya Myth** - WILLIAM L. FASH, Page 22
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- **Rosalila, An Early Classic Maya Cosmogram from Copán** - RICARDO AGURCIA, Page 32
Letter from the Director

One of the unexpected pleasures of becoming Director of the Peabody Museum is to realize how many sterling projects come to fruition with little or no effort on the Director's part! This is especially true of the current issue of Symbols, with its assessment of major, recent developments in our understanding of the Maya. All of us are grateful to our tireless editor, Catherine Linardos for pulling together this issue.

A series of startling excavations have brought paleontology and paleoarchaeology on to the front pages of newspapers over the last few weeks. One of these, the acceptance by the archaeological establishment of a human presence in southern Chile, at Monte Verde, around 12,500 years ago significantly changes not only our notions about the earliest dates for human migration into the New World, but calls into question the possible route of migration. Professor Carole Mandryk, who contributed her expertise to both of these questions in her interview with The New York Times, produced the enclosed account at the eleventh hour and under a strict editorial deadline. We are very grateful to her.

Other recent developments in the Old World are also challenging perceived knowledge. Stone tools are now reported from the Awash Valley of Ethiopia that date to about 2.5 million years ago. This not only increases the time depth of stone tools by some quarter of a million years, it also establishes that they are present in a time period well before any known fossil has been assigned to the genus Homo.

The February 27 issue of Nature announces the discovery of complete and unambiguous throwing-spears from a brown coal mine at Schoeningen. As noted in Nature, "wooden finds like these would be sensational if only three thousand years old; finds a hundred times older are almost unimaginable." But, as Nature (and many archaeologists) have noted, this well documented discovery gives credence to other, more controversial discoveries, such as a spear tip found at Clacton, England in 1911. Just as the early dates at Monte Verde now make more credible other, less documented "pre-Clovis sites," the beautifully preserved spears in Germany lend new credibility to other, more fragmentary and poorly-dated sites elsewhere in Europe.

Finally, there is the astonishing claim that "solo man" persisted until about 75,000 years ago (or even less!) in Java. Although the dating methods here are indirect, the discoverers themselves were quite skeptical and have spent the last three years trying to challenge their own dating methods. If something like these dates hold up, it would mean that Homo erectus (although some would call these specimens "archaic Homo sapiens") coexisted in time with European Neanderthals and with Homo sapiens proper. Whatever classification solo man settles into, it would appear that three demonstrably different species of the genus Homo persisted into comparatively recent times. In the last decade we have come to accept the fact that there were many "florescences" of simultaneous hominin genera and species in the Pleistocene. Perhaps we should not be so surprised that one of these florescences persisted into the near recent period.

Irven DeVore

New Evidence for Early Human Occupation in the Americas

CAROLE A.S. MANDRYK

Carole A.S. Mandryk is Assistant Professor in the Anthropology Department and Curatorial Associate for North American Archaeology at Harvard’s Peabody Museum. Her primary research focus is paleoenvironmental reconstruction and the analysis of interrelationships between the physical environment and cultural systems. She is currently working on determining relationships between late Pleistocene and early Holocene lake levels of Tule Lake, in northern California and the proposed Pluvial Lake Modoc, as well as identifying sampling contexts with high potential for yielding Clovis age sites in the area by combining predictive site location models with historic geomorphological studies.

This February the New York Times reported on the breaking of the "Clovis barrier," an event seen as analogous to that of aviation's breaking of the sound barrier. Indeed the acceptance of Monte Verde, Chile as a legitimate site by the archaeological community truly is an amazing event in American archaeology. Determining when and how people first entered the Americas is one of the most controversial issues in American archaeology. Arguments commonly deal with the timing, route, and way of life of the earliest inhabitants, issues which cannot easily be separated.

In the first quarter of this century the initial occupation of the New World was thought to date to no longer than 3,000 years ago. That conceptual barrier was broken in 1927 with the clear demonstration at Folsom, New Mexico, of the contemporaneity of artifacts with the bones of extinct mammals. Soon after several more Folsom and somewhat earlier Clovis sites were reported in Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona.

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Kwang-Chih Chang and Sally Falk Moore Retire

Born in Peking, Kwang-chih Chang, John E. Hudson Professor of Archaeology, Emeritus, is a world-renowned expert on the Shang Dynasty, the reign that ushered in China's Bronze Age. Many of the Shang's bronze casts bear inscriptions of China's earliest writings—valuable clues about this learned dynasty.

A member of the Department of Anthropology since 1977, Chang served as the department's chair from 1981 to 1984 and as chair of the Council on East Asian Studies from 1986 to 1989. Chang has also maintained an ongoing relationship with the Academia Sinica in Taipei, Taiwan, where he recently served as vice president for academic affairs. Before bringing his expertise to Harvard, Chang taught anthropology for 18 years at Yale University, where he was a professor, department chair, and chair of the Council on East Asian Studies.

Chang's work has gained wide acclaim including the Distinguished Service Award from the Association for Anthropological Diplomacy and the Lucy Wharton Drexel Medal from the University of Pennsylvania. He was also awarded an honorary Doctor of Social Science from Hong Kong's Chinese University and has held guest professorships at Xiamen and Peking universities.

Chang has also been a member of the National Academy of Sciences and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has published over 250 articles and book reviews, many in Chinese. His works include in-depth studies of the archaeology of ancient China and an extensive survey of the Chinese Bronze Age.

Prof. Chang was the recipient of the Association for Asian Studies 1996 Award for Distinguished Contributions to Asian Studies, on April 12, 1996, in Honolulu. The following is the text of the AAS commendation:

For the past forty years Prof. K.C. Chang worked tirelessly for the promotion and development of Chinese and Southeast Asian archaeology. In the process he has demonstrated extraordinary qualities of leadership and dedication that few scholars can ever hope to attain. Prof. Chang is almost single-handedly responsible for the training of three generations of archaeology graduate students who currently hold teaching positions at leading universities in North America, Europe, Australia, and East Asia.

Prof. Chang began his academic journey at National Taiwan University in 1950 where he studied with that generation's leading archaeologist, Li Chi. In September, 1954, he arrived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to start the Harvard Ph.D. program in anthropology; he had $50 in his pocket and a single suitcase filled mostly with books. By 1960 he had become a faculty member in the Harvard department; one year later he moved to Yale where he taught until 1977. From 1977 to the present he has held the John Hudson Professorship in Archaeology at Harvard University, where he has also served as Chair of the Anthropology Department (1981-1984) and Director of Harvard's Council on East Asian Studies (1986-Continued on page 38

Sally Falk Moore, Victor S. Thomas Professor of Anthropology, Emeritus, has been a professor of anthropology at Harvard since 1981. She has also taught Anthropological Approaches to Law at Harvard Law School, served as Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (1985-1989), and as Master of Dunster House (1984-1989). She was named the Victor S. Thomas Professor in 1991.

Moore holds a B.A. from Barnard College and an L.L.B. from Columbia Law School. A lawyer since 1945, she worked in a Wall Street law firm and then at the Nuremberg Trials before returning to Columbia for her Ph.D. in anthropology.

Before joining the faculty at Harvard, Moore was a professor of anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles (1977-1981). Prior to that, she developed and chaired the department of anthropology at the University of Southern California (USC) (1963-1977). While at USC, she began her ongoing, long-term study of the Chagga people of Kilimanjaro, a project supported by the National Science Foundation and the Social Science Research Council.

Continued on page 38
Elizabeth S. Chilton has been appointed Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology. She earned a B.A. magna cum laude in 1985 from State University of New York at Albany, the M.A. from the University of Massachusetts in 1991, and the Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in 1996. Before coming to Harvard Prof. Chilton held Instructorships on Mesoamerican Prehistory and Cultural Anthropology at Skidmore College, and Human Origins at State University of New York, College at Oneonta.


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Irene Castle McLaughlin has been appointed as the inaugural Hrdy Fellow in North American Ethnology at the Peabody Museum. The fellowship was recently established by the family of Harvard-trained anthropologist Sara Hrdy to stimulate research on the North American ethnographic collections at the Peabody. Dr. McLaughlin has also been appointed Lecturer on Anthropology.

McLaughlin received her B.A. in anthropology from Indiana University (1982) and her M.A.(1985), M. Phil. (1991), and Ph.D. (1993) in Anthropology from Columbia University, where she was a President’s Fellow. In 1994, following an NEH summer fellowship in Visual Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, she accepted a joint position as Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and Curator of Native American Ethnology at the Missouri Historical Society. Prior to that appointment, McLaughlin taught at Southwestern University and Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, and held a visiting research award at the Smithsonian. She also worked for the National Park Service and for the University of North Dakota.

McLaughlin’s primary research interests are in the areas of political anthropology, visual anthropology, museology, the history of anthropology, and the role of animals in human society. Her geographic orientation is in Native North America, and her most recent fieldwork has been conducted on the northern Plains. Her dissertation, “Colonialism, Cattle, and Class: A Century of Ranching on the Fort Berthold Reservation” analyzed the political economy of reservation agriculture, focusing on the formation of social classes and their role in tribal politics. In 1986 she began a multi-faceted research project on a herd of wild horses in Theodore Roosevelt National Park, and she has continued to collect and analyze conflicting historical narratives regarding the horses. She also has long-standing interests in museology and in collecting as a cultural practice. At the Missouri Historical Society, she developed plans for an exhibit, “From Relic Hunting to Repatriation,” that will open there in the year 2000. Currently she is researching the photographic practices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs during the New Deal era.

McLaughlin will be working on a number of collections-based projects at the Peabody. She is presently assisting with the development of exhibition and publication projects to commemorate the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

McLaughlin serves on the national board of directors of the Columbia Graduate Anthropology Alumni Association and is a contributing editor to their publication, AnthroWatch. She is currently co-editing a special journal volume on reservation agriculture, to which she will contribute “Nation, Tribe, and Class: the Dynamics of Agrarian Transformation on the Fort Berthold Reservation.” Her previous publications include “Style as a Social Boundary Marker: A Plains Indian Example” in Ethnicity and Culture (Regnauld Auger, ed.), “The Politics of Agricultural Decline on the Fort Berthold Reservation” in Culture and Agriculture and “Badlands Broomtails: The Cultural History of Wild Horses in Western North Dakota” in North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains.
Settlement patterns or arrangements—the way peoples disposed themselves over the landscapes on which they lived—invariably reflect the politics and the ideology of the peoples and societies who create them. For the archaeologist, the problem is to develop reasonable and convincing arguments to explain these relationships. All of this is certainly so in Maya archaeology, where we have made some progress in settlement study but where, as yet, we have by no means a complete understanding of its political and ideational meanings.

It is fair to say that for a long time, Maya archaeologists tended to address such questions from “the top down.” That is, they began by directing their attention to the major ruins, the great centers, known for their monumental architecture and their elaborate sculptures. There could be no doubt that these centers had been the major political and religious foci of the societies which had constructed and fashioned them, and early studies of the centers were primarily concerned with their rich contents: the temples and palaces and the art and hieroglyphic inscriptions which adorned them. There were substantial successes in this research, particularly as it was pursued in conjunction with Conquest Period Spanish-Maya documentary sources which allowed insights into ancient Maya religion and ideology. Less, however, was achieved in comprehending political structure. While it was generally assumed that these centers were the seats of government, not much attention was given to the ways in which political and socio-economic authority might have been administered from them, nor to the sizes and densities of the total sustaining populations, or how they were organized.

What was said or thought about political or administrative matters, on those rare occasions when they were mentioned, was casual or highly speculative. To go back to the beginning of Maya field research, John Lloyd Stephens (1841, 1843) did use the word “cities” to refer to the big Maya centers, but he did this with no comment as to the functions of these cities, nor to their larger political settings. A half-century later, Alfred Maudslay (1889-1902) was even less committal in his terminology; he simply called the big Maya sites “ruins” and let it go at that. Désiré Charnay (1887). Maudslay’s French contemporary, did make a slight attempt to engage the issue of political functions, stating that: “Had Palenque been the capital of an empire .... the history of her people would be recorded with scenes of conquest...” Failing to find such evidences in the Palenque art, he dismissed it as a “true city,” settling for the designation “religious center,” “a place of temples and burials.”

Twentieth century archaeologists went a little further than their 19th century predecessors in talking about ancient Maya political organization. Thus, Herbert Spinden (1913) drew an analogy between Maya political units and the city-state of the Classic Greeks. Still, he retained doubts about this analogy. Did it apply to what he called “the Maya period of national greatness” (meaning the Classic Period)? Or was a much more centralized form of government in operation then, one that would properly account for the magnitude and splendor of their temples and public buildings? In drawing this analogy and in asking these questions, Spinden opened the argument that is still with us today. Did, or did not, the old Maya ever achieve the kind of political unification we associate with the term and concept “unitary state?” And did the architectural and artistic splendor achieved by the Maya really demand this kind of political context? After all, the Greek city-states did pretty well—architecturally and artistically—without it.

Sylvanus Morley was similarly of two minds about this issue. He frequently used the term “city-state”; but in The Inscriptions of Copán (1920), he refers to that site establishing Quirigua as a “colony,” a statement that would imply expanded hegemonies or larger states; and in his famous textbook, written a quarter-century later (1946), while citing the city-state analogy, he also speculates, in the manner that Spinden did, about the possibilities of larger Classic Period states, headed by places such as Tikal, Palenque, or Copán. In a similar fashion, both A. V. Kidder (1950) and Eric Thompson (1954) make refer-
ence to the Greek city-state model, but then expressed doubts that the intellectual and artistic vigor of the Maya Classic Period could have been attained under such political fragmentation.

It would not be until the 1950s and 1960s that Maya archaeologists would begin to move beyond impressionistic opinion on this question and address it more directly. Two lines of evidence prompted this: settlement pattern studies and hieroglyphic textual translations.

Let us look at settlement pattern studies. The first intensive and protracted attempts at gathering such information on a large scale were conducted in the Belize Valley in the 1950s (Willeby et al., 1965). In these settlement surveys and excavations, my colleagues and I attempted to do four things: 1) examine and describe individual households or residences; 2) count these residences and determine their numbers, arrangements, and density in a given terrain; 3) study the spatial arrangements and relationships of such residences and residence-groupings to politico-religious centers; and 4), on a larger territorial scale, plot out the arrangement and spacing of such centers to each other. Obviously, we had set ourselves a big task, and we made only a beginning. Fortunately, other Mayanists have followed us in this kind of research, both there in the Belize Valley (see Ford, 1990) and elsewhere (e.g., Haviland, 1966, 1970, at Tikal), so that currently it is fair to say that settlement pattern and settlement system investigation are a standard part of most Lowland Maya archaeological enterprises (see Ashmore, ed., 1981).

To turn to Copán, settlement pattern work was begun there by me and my colleagues, Richard Leventhal and William Fash, in the 1975-1977 period, and such studies have been continued there ever since by the archaeologists who have followed us. It can now be estimated that Copán had an urban core—which consisted of the principal ceremonial center and its contingent residential zones—which covered an area of a little over 1 sq. km. Within this urban core, there was a Late Classic Period climax (ca. A.D. 750-800) population of between 7,500 and 11,000 persons (see Webster and Freter, 1990; also Webster, Sanders, and others, personal communication ca. 1992).

To enlarge our frame of reference, this urban core is located in what is known as the “Copán Pocket” of the Copán River Valley. It is the largest and southwesternmost of five “pockets” of agriculturally fertile land lying along the river. The “Copán Pocket,” in itself, measures about 7 by 1.5 km in extent. The other four “pockets” are strung out along the river course for about 26 kilometers as it flows along to the northeast. The total area extent of all of the five “pockets” combined is 62 sq. km, and Webster, Sanders, and others suggest that this area had a Late Classic climax population of between 25,000 and 27,000 persons.

So, was this the size, geographically and demographically, of a Copán polity or state, one with its “capital” in the urban zone Copán? It seems highly likely. At least let’s go along on that assumption for a bit. One thing we may note is that the population of the Copán urban core is about one-third of the total population of the entire valley polity or “statelet.” It might be interesting to see if these same proportions—of urban capital population to total territorial population—hold for other putative political units in the Maya Lowlands. Estimates suggest this to be the case for Tikal (Culbert, Kosakowsky, Fry, and Haviland, 1990), for Seibal (Tourtellot, 1990), and, maybe, for Quirigua (Ashmore, 1990).

One difficulty, however, in appraising most big centers in the Maya Lowlands from this perspective, is that it is difficult to determine the total geographical extent of the polity or “sustaining area” over which the centers or cities governed. A six kilometer radius has been set around the Tikal urban core for the territorial extent of that polity or sustaining area; but it is obvious that this is a quite arbitrary delimitation, unlike the naturally-defined river valley pockets at Copán. Furthermore, what are we talking about when we say “sustaining area” “Sustaining” in what ways? Subsistence economics? Or, perhaps, something more than that? For instance, it has been suggested (Rice and Rice, 1990) that the Tikal center at one time headed up a state that stretched from Uaxactun some 50 km south to the Peten Lakes district and contained over 400,000 people. Within such a territory, though, there were many other centers which, while not as large as the Tikal urban core, were significant cities with dynastic histories of their own.

As archaeologists confronted these complex questions surrounding polity sizes and affiliations, they turned to hieroglyphic texts and their translations for aid. What did the old Maya elite say about such matters themselves? How did one center or city relate to another? This, indeed, strikes at the heart of the “city-state” versus “unitary state” debate, and one answer is that political formations were fluid and changing through time. As an example, there is evidence that Uaxactun had an independent royal dynasty early on but that the Uaxactun polity was conquered and made a part of the Tikal-centered state after this. On the other hand, there were conquests, or at least military victories, which seem to have had no lasting effects on political structuring. A good example concerns the relationships between Copán and Quirigua. Apparently Quirigua was once a smaller and less important city than Copán, and probably under the jurisdiction of the latter. There is, however, very specific hieroglyphic textual information that the two fought a war in A.D. 737 in which the rebels at Quirigua captured and sacrificed the king of Copán. Still, in spite of this humiliating defeat, Copán, as a city and an independent political entity, did not seem to suffer unduly from these events. As its major hieroglyphic texts—including those on its famed Hieroglyphic Stairway—make clear, it was never incorporated as a dependency of Quirigua, and continued to thrive as a power in its own right (Fash, 1988; Culbert, 1988).

To generalize, I think it fair to say that while there is considerable evidence to the effect that many of the old Maya rulers were men of political ambition—kings who would have liked to preside over “unitary states” or successful empires—few, if any, of them were ever able to bring this off, at least over long periods of time.

My successor as Bowditch Professor here at Harvard, William L. Fash, Jr., and our mutual colleague, Robert J. Sharer, from the University of Pennsylvania, have laid a heavy emphasis on the need
for the “conjunctive study” of settlement patterns, hieroglyphic texts, and every other category of data available to the archaeologist in our attempts to resolve questions of ancient politics. This conjunctive approach can be carried out on a macro-pattern, or larger territorial, level, as in the examples just cited, but it also must be carried out as we try to understand the micro-patterns of politics and society, those that are to be observed within the cities themselves. Substantial investigations have been directed toward this end at Copán. In determining how Copán functioned and developed through time, it was necessary to obtain a better knowledge of the city in its earlier stages, or prior to its Late Classic Period climax. To do this, attention has been turned back to the very heart of the city itself.Recently, deep and extensive tunneling excavations have been made in the huge central Acropolis. These tunnels have revealed temples and buildings of the Early and Middle Classic Periods (A.D. 200-600) which underlie the visible Late Classic structures; and the very magnitude of these hitherto unknown interior buildings was such that it offered a corrective of our previously held view that only in Late Classic times had Copán been a great city (Fash and Sharer, 1991).

It should also be noted at this point that the nature and designs of the urban layouts of the great Lowland Maya centers has never been given enough attention, at least in comparative perspective. Do these layouts differ, and if they do, how may these differences be characterized or, perhaps, even classified. Obviously, there are size differences, and, presumably, these have something to do with relative power and political importance; but are there features which might relate to administrative as opposed to royal residential functions, to trade and marketing, or to military matters? These questions have been raised by various Maya archaeologists (Ball and Taschek, 1991; Fash and Sharer, 1991; Fash, 1994), but, as yet, we have not made much progress toward these ends.

And how about the resident populations that cluster around the great Maya centers? How uniform or how diverse are these? At Copán residences of various sizes lie just outside of the main acropolis. Some of these structures give the impression of being the households of people of position and power. Complexes of multiple patios or courtyard units are composed of steep and high sizable mounds, ones in which the labor expenditure would have far exceeded that of a small biological or even a modest-sized extended family. Their sculptural ornamentations and the goods found within the houses or compartments suggest wealth and status. As one moves farther out into the “Copán Pocket,” these “wealthier” residences become fewer. They occur, although rarely, in the other river valley “pockets.” What is their significance, and how do they relate to Copán settlement as a whole?

In attempting to sort out some of the many questions about residential settlement, we began, some years ago, classifying Copán settlement units by size and elaborateness, on a scale of 1 to 4. The Type 1 was a small patio arrangement of from two to four little platform mounds enclosing the little patio or courtyard; the Type 2 was substantially larger, usually composed of four or more mounds of greater height and general size than those of the Type 1 units; Types 3 and 4 were, successively, larger still and were characterized by not only larger and higher mounds but by better stone-masonry construction, sculptured ornamentation, and multiple patios or courtyards.

During our seasons of 1976 and 1977 (Willey, Leventhal, and Fash, 1978; Willey and Leventhal, 1979; see also Fash, 1994), we excavated a Type 3 unit, designated in our survey as CV-43. This household had—in addition to residences, kitchens, and storage facilities—one large platform, 4.00 m in height, which was the base for a three-room, masonry-walled building. Possibly it served as a residence for the leading person of the household; it may have been a temple or household shrine; or it may have had both functions. Quite appropriately, and in keeping with Maya cosmological beliefs, the room at the east end of the building had its interior...
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Maya Ritual and Cosmology in Contemporary Zinacantan

EVON Z. VOGT, JR.

Evon Z. Vogt, Jr. (University of Chicago A.B. 1941, M.A. 1946, Ph.D. 1948), is Professor Emeritus in the Department of Anthropology. He was a Professor of Social Anthropology at Harvard University from 1959 until his retirement in 1989. Prof. Vogt is the author of The Zinacantecos of Mexico: A Modern Maya Way of Life; Fieldwork among the Maya: Reflections on the Harvard Chiapas Project; and Tortillas for the Gods: A Symbolic Analysis of Zinacanteco Rituals. In 1978 he was decorated Knight Commander, Order of the Aztec Eagle, by the Republic of Mexico for his distinguished research in that country.

This paper is part of a long-range project to write a book on Maya cosmology that synthesizes data generated in archaeology and ethnology over the last few decades. My thesis is that a number of basic pan-Maya patterns in ritual and cosmology are found with some variation in all Maya cultures, both pre-Columbian and contemporary. Some of these patterns are of course pan-Mesoamerican, some even probably pan-Native American, but this makes them no less important to the Maya. In my research on Maya ritual and cosmology over the past 35 years, I have found it useful to work with three of these basic patterns and to investigate how they are manifested and played out in particular Maya cultures.

A word about the relationship of ritual to cosmology. By cosmology I mean simply a people’s conception of the architecture and functioning of the universe. By ritual I refer to the performance of rites and ceremonies that manifest and express these basic notions of the cosmos. In other words, I hypothesize that the inter-relationship between ritual and cosmology is two-way; that is, the rituals are simultaneously blueprints and mirrors, in Cliff Geertz’s terms, for the conception of the cosmos. I will talk about three basic cosmological patterns.

First, the universe is perceived to be a quincunx. According to the Oxford-English dictionary, a quincunx is an arrangement of a center and four corners with spaces or sides in between. The four corners in my view are most likely the two solstice positions of the rising sun and the two solstice positions of the setting sun. At the center is the symbol or concept of the world tree, the axis mundi.

The universe is a layered system composed of the celestial world, the visible surface of the earth, and the underworld. The world tree is conceived of as growing up through all these layers. The edges of the universe, that is, the spaces between the corners which are held up by corner gods, are associated with colors. We find at the east or rising sun the color red, symbol of life and power. (Significantly, when the Maya make maps they place east at the top.) We find the color black, symbol of death and the underworld, in the west or setting sun. What we call north and south in our language the Maya more commonly (at least today) use left and right-hand symbolism to differentiate between the two. And we have the color white on the north and the color yellow on the south. The very center of the universe, associated with the world tree, is yesh, the blue-green range in our color conceptions. It is the color of blue sky, growing maize, and jade, all things of high value to the Maya.

The second pattern I wish to discuss are ancestral gods associated with mountains and pyramids, the pyramids being modeled on the mountains. This is something I first suggested in a paper delivered at the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Paris in 1960. I think perhaps one of the most exciting findings for me was David Stuart’s discovery and publication of a glyph for wits at Copan. This glyph, if I understand it correctly, simultaneously means pyramid and mountain. It was very exhilarating for me to have some independent evidence for this idea that I had advanced over 35 years ago.

One cannot emphasize enough the importance of these ancestors to the Maya. This is all well described in a brilliant new book by Patricia McAnany entitled Living with the Ancestors. The ancestors come in male/female pairs. For example, the Tzotzil-Maya in the highlands of Chiapas call the ancestors totilne’ile tlī. This is obviously derived from the words “father and mother,” but it is best translated as “Sir Father, Madam Mother” to indicate the formality of the Maya’s relationship to their ancestors. These are obviously references to the primordial reproductive pair. Although the term is one word, it is interesting to note that one cannot say totil alone or me’il alone, but only together. Note that the tot comes before the me’, emphasizing the patrilineal emphasis of the Maya, but that both are absolutely essential for life, ritual, and the cosmos to be in good order.

These ancestral mountain gods provide the ideal model; that is, that life on the surface of the earth is at best an imperfect reflection of how the ancestors live inside the mountains and what they expect of their descendants. In the case of these mountain gods, it is clear, I think, that the Maya share conceptions with many other Native Americans. One thinks, for example, of the Hopi Katchinas who live on top of the San Francisco peaks above Flagstaff in Arizona, the mountain spirits of the Apache in the Southwest, and the emphasis on mountain gods throughout the indigenous peoples of the Andes in South America.

My third basic pattern has to do with communication with these ancestors on a spiritual level via the axis mundi or world tree. Although this communication occurs on a profoundly spiritual level, it is considered by the Maya to be

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lands, it is high terrain at about 7,000 feet and covered with pine forests. San a deep canyon. At the top of the highlands of Chiapas are a rugged San Cristobal Las Casas, known today through which the Rio Grijalva has cut from daily news about the Zapatistas.

Zinacantecos also wear on their hats. We believe this was a substitution during the colonial period for the headdresses and decorations they wore in ancient Maya times. Political meetings take place at the cabildo or town hall. And, as always on the fiesta days, there is a market.

Most of the people in Zinacantan live out in the small hamlets, including ones tucked at the edge of the mountain between a barrancas and the escarpment that descends into the lowlands.

Just a word about the two types of religious practitioners in Zinacantan. There is a cargo system with four levels. One starts as a mayordomo, then moves up to becoming an aljerez, a regidor, and an alcalde on the top level. There are ritual advisors for each of the lower levels, telling them what to do in rituals and these are called by the same terms used for the ancestral gods. Here is a photo of the mayordomos in procession (Figure 2). I want to discuss these processions because they are very interesting in terms of cosmology. It is believed that the processions are moving conceptually along the path of the sun. For this reason the senior person is always at the rear of the procession and the junior person at the front. This exactly reverses the system used for marching along the trails in everyday life when you see the senior man marching and then the various other men, followed by the women, and children. But what a ritual procession does is reverse this order as it proceeds along the conceptual path of the sun with the senior and "hottest" official closest to position of the rising sun. Even the musicians follow this rank order; of the instruments adopted from the Spaniards that are played for the mayordomos, the violin is first, followed by the harp, and finally by the guitar player, who marches in front.

In addition to the rank order in the processions, rank order is also expressed constantly every day in these rituals by the bowing and releasing behavior—a junior ritualist always bows to and is released with the back of the right hand by a senior ritualist. This is a case that always makes crystal clear what the rank order is in this society, demonstrated by this bowing and releasing behavior. The ceremonial banquet or meal takes place...
with quite a lot of high etiquette, even though they are eating with their hands as the ancient Maya might have done as well. Note something very interesting about the arrangements here (Figure 3). The table is always placed along the path of the rising sun, this being the head of the table, with the altar in the background. Note that the rank order goes right down the table here to the more junior people at the western end or setting sun of the table. Note also that no one sits at the head of the table because it is reserved for the ancestral deities. It is believed that, as ritualists are having their banquet, the ancestral deities are actually participating at the head of the table. A special bottle of liquor is put out for them as well.

I want to return to the church ceremonies for a moment to comment on one of the more interesting rituals, the counting of the necklaces of the saints. This is in some ways a very puzzling ritual for which we have a good deal of information, but not yet complete understanding. The interesting thing about it is that at stated periods these necklaces are counted in the houses of the cargoholders, and then taken to the church and placed around the neck of the saints. They look like ordinary rosaries used by Catholics, but these are most unusual rosaries because they are made of coins of various kinds. Not only that, but the coins are not called coins but are called *ualetik*, the term for month. In the counting ritual, they go through this counting procedure, and as they count these, regardless of the value of the individual coin, they count only up to 20 and start over each time. And these, as I say, are all called, the whole collection, *ualetik*, so they are counting the months!

So we have some continuity here in an ancient classic Maya pattern of some kind that we have not completely decoded but are still working on. The next level up in the cargo hierarchy are the *alfereces*. They wear magnificent red turbans, and their musicians play drums and flutes. At stated periods in the ritual, the *alfereces* dance in front of the Catholic church with peacock feathers in their hats. And, finally, at the very top of that hierarchy are the *regidores* and *alcaldes*, each group with distinctive staffs of office they carry while in procession and while praying to the sacred mountains, the homes of the ancestral gods.

A word about the most complex ceremony we have, that of San Sebastián in the month of January. I just want to refer to a few things here. Victoria Bricker and I have recently finished a new paper on an interpretation of this ceremony in which we attempted to analyze all of the symbolic meanings in this winter ceremonial. Our current hypothesis is that it is a kind of collapsed, cultural history of Zinacantan with manifestations of very ancient deities of some kind followed by the arrival of the Spaniards with their gods and their saints. The ceremony includes two cargo-holders dressed as older and younger brother jaguars climbing a jaguar tree. Two other characters in the ceremony are called *k'uk'ulcan*. This is obviously the Tzotzil variety of *k'uk'ulcan* or the plumed serpent. They carry ears of maize in their beaks and wear small wings on their backs. They also perform as older and younger brother. Could these ritual actors be some kind of manifestation of the hero twins out of the Tzotzil version of Popul Vuh?

I want to end this part of the lecture with a few episodes from the largest and most complex Zinacanteco curing ceremony lasting 36 hours and per-

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formed by shamans. The animal spirits or coessences are kept in four large corrals inside bankial muk’ta vits, the large volcanic mountain lying east of Zinacantan Center. There they are tended by the ancestral gods. When a person does something outrageously wrong, such as fighting with relatives or mistreating maize, the ancestral god will simply let her/his animal spirit out of the corral to wander around in the wild woods. Here it might be shot by somebody and then the person will die within days. Significantly, this sacred mountain is also called oshyok’et which means” the three hearth stones.” This is a manifestation, we think, of the three hearth stones about which David Freidel and Linda Schele write a great deal in Maya Cosmos and believe they are actually mapped onto the heavens in the constellation of Orion.

When a person’s animal spirit companion is turned out of its corral, the family immediately summons a shaman who prepares bathwater made of sacred plants. The patient bathes in this water collected from the series of water holes where it is believed the ancestral gods draw their water. Then, the shaman chants a prayer over a black chicken, the same sex as the patient, and the chicken is bathed in the same bathwater.

The next stage is to make a cut in the jugular vein of the chicken to drain some of the chicken’s blood into a gourd bowl. The chicken’s jugular vein is sewn up. The blood is rubbed onto key spots on the patient: forehead, inside the elbows, and wrists. Then the patient drinks the remainder of the blood. Symbolically, an identification is being made between the patient and the chicken, later to be sacrificed to the ancestral gods in exchange for the life of the patient.

After a ritual meal, the procession sets out for the mountains, marching in rank order. The shaman is in the rear. Immediately in front of the shaman is the patient, and then two of the assistants as they set out for five mountains, four kinds of corner mountains and a fifth mountain on which the ancestral gods are believed to hold their meetings. At each shrine candles are lighted. It is believed that, as the candles burn, the ancestral god inside the mountain consumes his/her tortilla. Notice that Copal incense is offered at the same time. Here is a view of the people praying to the cross shrine, to the ancestors (Figure 4). Finally, they end up at a central shrine called kalvaryo that has nothing to do with calvary but is rather the meeting place of the ancestral gods (Figure 5). It is here, finally, that the black chicken, substituted for the life of the patient, is killed, placed on a plate and put in a small tomb for the ancestral gods.

The curing party then returns to the house of the patient. Here the bed of the patient has been decorated with 13 bundles of plants, which we think represent the 13 parts of the soul. At this point the bed is called a koral, a loan word from Spanish, meaning an enclosure or pen in Tzotzil. It is very comparable to the one that the Zinacantecos believe the animal or coessence is kept inside the mountain. It is believed that when the patient, sharing the same inner essence with the animal companion, is placed in their corral or platform bed, so too will the animal coessence be returned to its corral. This is a bit of magical ritual to persuade or round up the animal spirit and place it back in its corral where it will be cared for.

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Figure 4. Shaman (at left) prays for a patient (on right) to the Ancestral Gods who are believed to live inside mountains. Cross shrine is the means of communication with the Gods. Note incense burning (center) and bottle of liquor (front); also note similarity in shape of other sacred mountain (in background) to the pyramids in Ancient Maya sites. (Photo by Frank Cancian)
The Hills are Alive: Sacred Mountains in the Maya Cosmos

DAVID S. STUART

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It would seem natural and proper that in our consideration of ancient and modern Maya religion we would speak of the Maya cosmos or of Maya cosmology. In fact, such is the norm in our discipline. But I feel strongly that it may be more proper to speak of cosmologies in the plural, for it is true that we are studying a vast area in both time and space. Even in the Classic period, great cities such as Palenque, Copán, and Calakmul, while sharing a considerable amount of religious lore and ritual belief, nonetheless seem to have exhibited somewhat different world-views and mythical historical. For instance, the triad of gods venerated at Palenque, all important players in world-creation according to the local texts, are hardly mentioned anywhere else—they were a local set of deities that were part of a localized cosmology associated with that dynasty. Similarly, each Mesoamerican city, as a microcosm, was in some way a world unto its own. It seems only natural, therefore, that we should approach the study of Maya cosmologies with the realization that world-views may have been as richly diverse as the art and architectural styles that characterized each region and urban area. They shared fundamental commonalities that make them to us “Maya” or “Mesoamerican,” certainly, but there were local variations on an overarching religious theme. It is in this way that we see a rich convergence in cosmologies and localized social identities—they were and remain nearly inseparable issues.

Foremost in any consideration of Maya cosmology and social identity is, of course, the landscape itself. Evon Vogt has shown how central this is in present-day Zinacantan, and in today’s talk I will focus on the significance of the landscape among the ancient Maya. The land is arguably the fundamental symbol of Mesoamerican existence, and as such has shaped and continues to shape the political and social universe of the region (a cursory review of the causes leading to the recent Zapatista uprising in Chiapas should illustrate this point). The topic is impossibly large to tackle in any comprehensive way in this forum, but here I would like to at least focus on the most prominent features of the landscape—the mountains, or witsob—and how these were perceived, discussed and represented in the documents and artwork of Classic times.

We often consider Yucatan and its area to be a more-or-less flat landscape, but the Maya area itself encompasses a diverse and very mountainous terrain. If modern Maya belief is any indication, it would seem that hills and mountains have long been important in Maya religion and cosmology, reaching back into Classic times. Evon Vogt’s work in Zinacantan has certainly been one of the influential treatments of hills and their place in modern Maya ritual, and, as he has long suggested, the patterns of sacred mountain veneration seen there no doubt have their origin in the deep pre-Columbian past. The mountain-top shrines near Zinacantan and other communities in the Maya highlands are the foci of vivid ceremonial traditions that reach back into the pre-Columbian past. Many years ago, Vogt was among the first to suggest that the pyramid-temple, so ubiquitous at Mesoamerican sites, reflects a very ancient idea of the mountaintops as places of contact between the earth and the heavens, where ancestors and other deities may be readily contacted.

Such interpretations of sacred landscape and architecture are now well known and widely applied well outside the Maya area. Scholars such as Eduardo Matos Moctezoma, investigating the main temple precinct of Tenochtitlan, have made a clear connection between the Templo Mayor structure—a massive double pyramid-temple—and the sacred Coatepec, “Serpent Hill,” of Aztec myth. I think Mayanists by contrast have been somewhat slow to follow up on Vogt’s suggestion of many years ago that Maya architecture can be interpreted as a sacred landscape. In this talk I would like to try to build upon his observations by looking at sacred mountains in Classic Maya cosmology. Architecture is one obvious route of investigation, but another important set of data to bring to bear on the issue can be found in the ancient hieroglyphic texts of the Classic period. The inscriptions talk a great deal about witsob, or hills, and their place in Maya religion.

First we can take a look at the Maya glyph for wits, or “hill.” This was identified by me back in 1986 while working at Copán with Bill Fash. Copán is

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a wonderful site for epigraphic work, for we have a huge number of well-preserved texts there. Two similar passages are illustrated in Figure 1, and it was in these that I came across the tell-tale evidence for the decipherment of the wits sign. Apart from some differences in style — handwriting, you might say — these show the same sequence of signs, save for the very last part.

In the process of glyphic decipherment, we often look for parallel passages such as this. In each of these texts we seem to have a set of names or titles for specific supernatural characters or gods associated with the local mythical history of Copán, indicated by the title ajaw, "lord." The gods are named as the "such-and-such lord," each with a different variable sign or sign group before ajaw. Specific translations are mostly difficult, but they may be titles based on place names, if similar royal titles are any indication. At any rate, the glyph for the last of the three "lords" is somewhat more readable than the others. The word for "macaw", mo', is spelled with the syllables mo and o, which is in turn followed by a combination of two syllables: wi and tsi. Phonetically, this is very transparent: mo' wits ajaw; or, "Macaw Mountain Lord." Apparently the Macaw Mountain Lord referred to an important character in the mythical supernatural history of Copán, although who or what he was remains largely a mystery. Now, looking at the second text parallel to this, we find that they are talking about the same set of deities, but there is an essential difference. The sequence wi-tsi is now replaced by a single element. You can see that everything else is the same except for this one sign substitution (a substitution perhaps like the chicken in Zinacantan ritual). This is the giveaway for the decipherment of the wits "mountain" sign in Maya writing.

This case allows us to propose the decipherment of the logograph for "mountain." The sign is actually quite common in the Classic inscriptions, and Figure 2 presents some of the stylistic variations of it that we find throughout this period. The consistent and distinctive characteristics of the mountain sign include a slightly irregular outline, often with little swirls and indentations. Also inside the glyph we see the markings of the so-called cauac motif that is used in Maya iconography to mark items of stone. The wits glyph thus represents for us a kind of craggy, rocky thing — not a bad description of a mountain, when one considers it. The final illustrated example is a Late Classic version of the sign, a couple of hundred years after the other two and again from the inscriptions of Copán. The element on top is, as you may recall, the wi sign that we saw before in the syllabic spelling wi-tsi. Here this serves as a "phonetic complement," an optional sign that indicates how we are to pronounce the beginning of the word.

Figure 3 is an example of the wits glyph used in the spelling of another place name. In this case, it is the ancient name of a site that we today call Ucanal, located in the eastern half of the Peten region of northern Guatemala. It was a small but fairly important polity in Late Classic times, as it turns out, and its toponym appears in many different texts of the region. The wits sign is pretty clear in the examples illustrated, provided some variations in style, of course. In one we encounter an infixed sign read as k'an, "yellow." Also visible once more is the word for lord, ajaw, and a small maize sign above the wits, read nal, "young maize ear." Taken together these produce the title K'anwitsnal Ajaw, "Lord of the Yellow Mountain Place." This is the standard title for nobles of the Ucanal polity or kingdom, used throughout the Classic period.

One very interesting usage of wits...
appears in a Late Classic place name associated with the site of Aguateca, in the Petexbatun region of southwestern Peten. In Figure 4 *wits* is grouped with an element pronounced *k'inich*, “sun-faced,” or “has the visage of the sun.” The *wits* sign itself has two small emanations emerging from its top. This particular variation on the mountain glyph has been called the “cleft *wits*” (dare I say cracked *wits*) sign. As it happens, a cleft hill is an apt description of the topographic setting of Aguateca. The ruins are situated on top of a small mountain, through which runs an immense chasm that goes down about 80-100 feet, if I am not mistaken. It is very, very deep and very, very narrow. It is literally a “cracked mountain,” the place name they use for this site in the classic period. This provides a very neat confirmation, I think, of the *wits* decipherment.

At the famous site of Palenque, on the Tablet of the Foliated Cross, we find a beautiful iconographic representation of a *wits*, where it assumes an animate or zoomorphic quality (Figure 5). Looking at his head, we see much the same form as the *wits* hieroglyph: the curved and indented outline and the *caauac* markings, but now added onto a long-snouted visage with two large eyes. Within the eyes are hieroglyphs, the right one reading *wi-tsi-na-la*, or *witsual*, “hill place.” Presumably this is the representation of the mountain spirit that is very important in modern and ancient Maya cosmology. Sometimes you find glyphs in the eyes.

So we have, through the decipherment of the *wits* hieroglyph, identifications of a mountain spirit or entity in Maya art. It happens to be extremely common in architectural sculpture at Copan and other sites, perhaps not surprisingly. This returns us to what Vogt has presented before, namely the general identification of pyramids, of sacred architecture, as artificial mountains. Now we are able to recognize the very explicit labeling of ancient buildings as mountains. Temple 22 from Copan (Figure 6) is perhaps the best example to cite from the entire Maya region. Each of the outer four corners of the building were originally decorated with three “stacked” faces of this *wits* character, clearly identifying Temple 22 as an artificial mountain. The doorway of Temple 22 was a large, open mouth of the mountain spirit—surely a visual metaphor for a cave or the hollow mountain. This was Copan’s artificial mountain up at the very top of that site’s main acropolis, amounting to one of most stunning confirmations of Vogt’s interpretation of many Maya pyramids as artificial mountains, within which the ancestral spirits reside. One would have entered the “cave” of Temple 22 to converse with the ancestral spirits, surely in association with all sorts of different ritual activities including incense burning and bloodletting.

Caves are represented in Maya art

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local king’s inauguration and the festivities of that time. The inscription goes on to mention the death and burial of this same king. The text states, “his spirit finishes, and three days later he is buried within the Hanabwits.”

Hanabwits is recorded elsewhere as the place where dead lords reside, and it may refer either to a supernatural locale, a specific pyramid, or indeed both. Perhaps we shall never know.

Mountains are also named as important places for cosmic and calendrical renewal. The monuments from Tikal, Guatemala, make this very clear. Each stela erected to celebrate the ending of a Katun period (every twenty years or so) records a “stone binding” ritual on a different mountain, probably corresponding to one of the Twin Pyramid Groups of Tikal that were constructed on these stations of the calendar. We can not correlate the hill names with particular structures as yet, but we may do that in the future. At any rate, other monuments from the Maya area show the rituals symbolically atop hills and mountains, an excellent example being Stela 1 of Bonampak. Here the local ruler is shown performing a period-ending ritual atop the image of an animated mountain. The rite took place at that point of contact with the venerated ancestors.

An extension on this idea can be seen in the monuments of El Peru, Guatemala, a site that has been badly looted but nevertheless superbly documented through the efforts of Ian Graham. On this monument (Figure 9) you can make out quite clearly the same visage of the mountain spirit and the ruler standing, in frontal view, on top of the mountain—directly, in this case, on top of the mountain head. Perhaps the most interesting features of this hill spirit are the small people inside the eyes of the mountain. I am quite convinced from parallel imagery that one figure is always male and one figure always female. We have here, again visually represented, the idea of male/female ancestors within the mountain, corresponding to the totil me’il of Zinacanteco cosmology. These are the mother/father characters who define the ancestral spirits of that Tzotzil community. At El Peru they seem to be shown as the quintessential ancestors, living inside the mountain and peeking out from the eyes of the mountain spirit. It is quite a wonderful way of representing an idea that still lives with numerous Maya communities.

A monument from the site of Tonina, unfortunately very badly fragmented, shows a ruler sitting rather than standing on the mountain face (Figure 10). The inscription tells us “he” (the ruler) sits “on the hill” or “on the mountain.” Rather than being simply the settings for ritual, mountains become literal seats of power in the iconography of classical rulership. That is to say, they are not just showing the location where the ruler is performing this ritual. I think the fact that he is seated on the mountain—in effect, on the ancestral spirits—is actually a very vivid metaphor of his power as king.

We see this even more explicitly in a magnificent throne recovered from Piedras Negras (Figure 11)—a monument that unifies many of the concepts I have so briefly touched upon. This throne, known as Throne 1, was discovered inside a palace range structure and was presumably used by the king for certain ritual or diplomatic occasions. The back of the throne shows us exactly what we saw at the base of the stela from El Peru: the visage of the mountain spirit or wits, with gesturing figures of the mother/father ancestral pair emerging from the eyes. When the king sat on his throne, he was “backed” literally and figuratively by the ancestral spirits within the mountain.

Many sites had their own distinctive way of presenting mountain symbolism or of discussing mountain lore in their texts. Despite the fundamental regularities of Maya art and cosmology, I would interpret such variation as indicative of localized models of cosmology in the Classic period. Ritual programs varied considerably, even though the basic role of the sacred mountain was fundamental to many of them. Enough exists out there to suggest some variation amidst the consistent patterns, but we know precious little about the specific details. At the very least, I trust we might attempt to
delve further into the study of Maya cosmologies, in the plural sense.

Taken as a whole, I believe we have ample evidence to suggest that the intimate relationship between mountains and Maya peoples has a very deep history indeed. The present-day Maya of Chiapas and Guatemala acknowledge the importance of mountains for their sustenance and religious expression, and the Classic Maya must surely have had some very similar notions. The ethnographer Richard Wilson, working among the Kekchi Maya of Guatemala, has explored the importance of the mountain as a symbol of cultural identity. He even states that mountains serve as “containers of all expressions of Kekchi collective imaginings”—something approaching the view that mountains largely define Kekchi culture. Modern Kekchi identity, Wilson demonstrates, has been profoundly shaped by colonial and recent history within Guatemala, but I would argue that despite these pliabilities the model he describes reflects a very ancient and very fundamental relationship and interplay between mountains and people, communities and political institutions, that is essentially unchanged. They may be shaped in different ways by historical circumstance, but as we see going all the way back into the classic period, and perhaps even before, the central role of mountains, living beings in their own right, was ever-present.
Sculpting the Maya Universe: A New View on Copán

BARBARA W. FASH

Barbara W. Fash is Co-Director of the Copán Mosaics Project and Research Associate at Harvard’s Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. She is directing the study of fallen sculptures from ancient Maya buildings on the Copán Acropolis and surrounding vicinity. Many of these buildings were reconstructed in the new Sculpture Museum at Copán, opened in August 1996, which she conceived of, and for which she designed and supervised all of the exhibit installments. Her publications include articles in the Journal of Field Archaeology, Ancient Mesoamerica, Archaeology Magazine and most recently in Natural History. She is currently preparing a guidebook for the new museum in Copán.

The site of Copán has been the focus of studies of Maya art since its re-discovery, because it is home to the largest body of sculptural art in the Maya area. There we’re able to analyze the development of motifs and themes over four centuries, in conjunction with the hieroglyphic record. Free-standing monuments of rulers marked important moments in ritual and history, altars embodied sacred persona and spirits, while architecture was embellished with animated imagery, all serving to illustrate a wide-spread belief system. Temples came alive with their decoration. They were not just rooms to perform rituals or store paraphernalia, they were personified representations of the living forces that inhabited the Maya world.

A Harvard anthropology student named Herbert Joseph Spinden graduated in 1906, and went on to earn his doctorate in the department in 1909. His thesis, published by the Peabody Museum, was titled A Study of Maya Art, and it remains still today a useful reference for ancient Maya architecture, sculpture and other objects. Dr. Spinden was the first Maya scholar devoted to the study of Maya art. It is remarkable how his thoughts then echo the theme of today’s symposium. He wrote:

“...The influence of a national religion upon a national art was never more unmistakable than in the case of the Maya. But, indeed, it is universally important. Religion is able to furnish the deepest and truest inspiration which the human mind is capable of receiving. ...it develops the imagination so that this in turn finds secret meanings in common things...In the case of the Maya the art might almost be termed the concrete expression of the religion,...Doubtless the art reacted strongly upon the religion which gave it birth, filling that religion with symbolism and imagery... The spreading of the religion meant a spreading of the art...the graphic representations of the art rendered the religion intelligible.”

Spinden was naturally enthralled with Copán, a site he considered to demonstrate the highest levels of Maya art. When he returned to the Peabody Museum in 1920 as the curator of Mexican archaeology and ethnology, he had already published an extensive Table Showing the Chronological Sequence of the Principal Monuments of Copán, Honduras, and was hard at work on the correlation problem of Maya dates—something he was much less successful with in the long run. However, this change in emphasis was characteristic of the times in Maya studies. After Spinden’s work was published in 1913, scholars shifted their interests to calendric and chronological studies, hieroglyphic decipherment and astronomy. Finally, some thirty-seven years later, Tatiana Proskouriakoff published a chronological and stylistic analysis of Maya sculpture, the first significant work to take iconography into consideration after this lengthy lapse of interest in the figural evidence. Fortunately, the 19th century Peabody Museum scholars’ fascination with iconographic problems prompted them to record and mould an extraordinary amount of sculpture from Maya sites. With the loss of countless monuments over the last century from natural erosion and neglect to the crisis of looting and monument destruction, these paper moulds and plaster casts are now an invaluable source for both iconographic and glyphic studies.

Proskouriakoff discovered in 1960 that the monuments at Piedras Negras recorded historical accounts of rulers’ births, accession to power, and death. Her success was due to a method of detecting iconographic regularities and then studying the glyphic texts associated with them. In the late 1960s, George Kubler, an art historian at Yale University, built upon Proskouriakoff’s revelations and reopened the area of iconographic studies for Maya art. He and his students looked for pictoral themes and contextual uniformities to aid in hieroglyphic decipherments. His book, Studies in Classic Maya Iconography, compiled an inventory of motifs, further refining Spinden’s earlier studies. The Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, developed here at Harvard by Ian Graham, has for the past thirty-some years diligently continued the recording traditions of the earlier generations. In recent years, scores of students and scholars have followed in these traditions of anthropological and art historical studies, and happily there has been no lapse of interest, only a steadily increasing one. Many might even say
there is a fervor or "Maya Craze" with us today. Yet, scholars are ever more aware of the need to examine Maya art from many different angles, the need to understand its cultural and archaeological context, and the need to conserve it for the future.

At Copán, the stone mosaic façades that once gave life to the numerous structures and courtyards at the Principal Group and smaller residential compounds throughout the kingdom, all toppled after abandonment due to the construction techniques utilized. A stone masonry wall and vaulted ceiling enclosed a mud and rubble hearth at the core of the wall. The stonework was sealed with a coat of plaster to inhibit vegetation growth and water seepage. The white plaster in turn provided a surface for colorful paint applications. While other Maya sites used lime in the hearthing fill and the mortar, the Copanecs did not, and their structures did not survive the centuries of neglect as well as their counterparts in Yucatan.

In the early part of the site's history the buildings were lavishly decorated with modelled stucco reliefs. Vibrant colors were applied to the damp lime surface, favorites being red from iron ore and cinnabar, yellow from ground earth pigments, green and blue from clays and plant dyes. Stone was used for wall construction and as armatures for the thick stucco reliefs. As time went on however, it is thought that lime became a rather expensive commodity. It appears that the Copanecs, along with the Maya region as a whole, were toppling forests for firewood and house construction at a rate that didn't allow for recovery or reforestation. Since cartloads of firewood are needed to prepare the lime in large kilns, there was far too little to go around as the year A.D. 600 neared.

About this time the Copán masons and sculptors began to change their technology. They realized they could carve the stone they had previously been using for armatures and merely white-wash it with a thin coat of lime. Not only that, the carved stone sculptures were more durable than the earlier modelled stucco varieties. They needed a white-washing every year or so, but there was not the risk of entire sections of the design cracking and falling from the façade after a major rainstorm. So, the stucco modellers had to retool or be left in the ranks of the white-washers and floor layers. Meanwhile, the stone masons were scrambling to take over the market and remake the building façades of the main temples. The Copanecs had been carving monuments and free-standing sculptures for centuries before this revelation, but with the new-found freedom to expand to the temple façades, Copán art was ignited and flourished in every aspect. Stelae and altar carvings burst from the square low relief forms of the past into fluid and voluminous shapes with multiple planes. Everyone was overtaken with a desire to refurbish buildings all over the site and adorn them with imagery celebrating this new wave of technology. The new development in sculpture and architecture was happening elsewhere in the Maya region at the same time. The Puuc region in Yucatan for example, experienced a similar course of events, although the techniques used

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there retain the characteristic style of that region. Certainly exchange was taking place between the areas, and Copanecs could easily have been mimicking and improving on methods picked up elsewhere. Importantly though, not just methods were being exchanged; remembering Spinden's words, the art was spreading in unison with religion.

In one sense, temple façades provided an enormous format for display of religious iconography. Communities and regions were able to socially identify with the whole of the Maya area that shared religious concepts reflecting their world-view. The Classic Maya cosmology was inhabited by personified forces from both the visible and invisible world. To understand the iconography that was the concrete representation of that world view and was manifested in the sculptural image, we must be able to grasp the concept of personification. Everything that one experienced was personified, or had a spiritual personality that could be visualized and represented. This enabled people to explain the world in a familiar manner, very much alive and active. Water, for instance, was not only liquid, solid or vapor, it was alive with a living force. Whatever state the water passed through, such as rain or moisture, and whatever terrain it traversed, such as mountains, rivers, springs, caves, pools and lakes, it acquired another attribute, another dimension. Anything that brought and sustained life in the world was a resource to be treasured and a spiritual force to be respected.

When we view the sculpture masterpieces, whether free-standing or composing a building façade, in many cases we are seeing personified images of natural forces that have been made to materialize in stone for people to encounter and ponder. They celebrate life and its definitive cycle of death and rebirth. We are also seeing portraits of leaders in important social, political and cosmological roles. The art sanctifies human power that was able to understand and interact with such vital natural and supernatural forces in the world. The ancient Maya envisioned that their leaders and gifted shamans could intercede with this great cycle in motion, on their behalf.

The temples at Copán and other Maya sites were enclosures that housed these all-pervasive forces. So in another sense, they were not merely four walls and a roof and some nice ornamentation, they were a personified being in their own right. This can be demonstrated on very simple buildings as well as some of the most complex examples. Maya buildings are constructed with a medial molding and a cornice molding. The moldings are not strictly ornamentation, although they succeed in breaking the space and creating shadows that enhance the floor. Rather they are in many cases actually meant to be the headband of the house. The sculpture motifs that are attached to the molding are meant to be understood as objects on the headband. Ralph Roys, a skilled ethnobotanist and ethnographer commented that “Maya wooden structures are often said to be 'bound' rather than built.” This statement holds true in the same sense for ancient stone structures that were imitations of the perishable versions that both preceded and outlived them.

In 1985 we started the Copán Mosaics Project in order to study the vast heaps of fallen sculpture from the building façades. At the same time large on-site storage facilities were constructed to permit us to bring the sculpture inside where it can be conserved for the future. This on-going research has expanded in two productive ways in recent years.

First of all, five years ago when we all had more energy, Bill, Ricardo and I sat down and planned a sculpture museum to protect the Copán monuments, which were threatened by natural and human forces alike. Today, the sculpture museum has become a reality, a new, imposing feature on the landscape. Our dream to see the Copán monuments preserved in a dry, sheltered environment, yet still accessible and able to be enjoyed by all, is now happening. Daring to upset the Copán ancestors, a new structure has been built, with funding from the Office of the President of Honduras and carried out by the Copán Association, directed by Ricardo Agurcia. The new structure aspires to recreate the Maya universe. The ground floor, exhibiting sculpture with an underworld theme, is the first level of an inverted pyramid, the second level exhibits sculpture and building façades celebrating life and the living world. The roof's center is open to the sky and is encircled by an array of celestial figures that I painted last August. All of these representations are derived from carvings on actual Copán sculpture, and they represent the Sun, Moon, Venus, and constellations. They are painted in blues and grays to blend with the clouds. The museum's centerpiece, rising from the ground floor up through the open roof, is a full scale replica of an Early Classic Maya temple, found and meticulously excavated by Ricardo at the heart of the Copán Acropolis. This buried structure was completely covered with modeled stucco ornamentation, but cannot be fully appreciated from the narrow low tunnels that are the only means of access. Here in the museum it will be free of the later buildings covering it, to be viewed in all its splendor.

One of the most exciting things about the new sculpture museum is that many of the sculptures will be presented to the public for the first time. Not only will the stone sculptures be exhibited in a traditional way, but for the first time anywhere, the actual building façades are being rebuilt in order to present the mosaic configurations as they were meant to be seen on the structures. This is not only a first for the public, this is a first for other scholars and for us as well. For years we have been playing around with photo mosaics and drawing on paper; now we are able to experience the full impact of our efforts. Often we find that reconstructions that worked in the sandbox do not work on the plane of a building...so, it continues to be a learning experience as we proceed with the reconstructions. This was precisely the case when I finished the reconstruction of Structure 33 from the ruler's residential complex. For the first time it became visually apparent to me that the moldings could be headbands binding the structure's "head."
Moldings and niches play an important role in understanding the context from which the sculpture is meant to be viewed.

On Structure 22A, the proposed Popol Nah, or council house for the city, eight figures sit within niches that metaphorically placed them at cave entrances or portals. These configurations along with hieroglyphs below them, may designate the various divisions of the valley population in relation to a sacred place name or locale.

By studying the mosaic sculpture art, we are able to assemble more information and begin to reconstruct the way in which the ancient Copanecs governed themselves, and importantly, how their cosmological perspective dictated the settlement and divisions within their polity. Other buildings had other functions, and as they are pieced back together, we piece together another part of the complex fabric of Maya society.

All well and good, some may say, but how does this relate to today? What value is there to reconstructing ancient rubble and ancient lifestyles? The answers to these questions are alive and hard at work in Central America. People of Copán and the Maya region are rediscovering an ancient heritage that has been concealed beneath these piles of fallen sculptures for centuries. Temples that had become myths for them and their children are rematerializing and attracting the attention of people all over the world. Lines of descent may have been long lost, but people as a whole are delighted to reawaken the glory of the past and their ancestors. A new sense of identity and respect for the past is being nourished.

Artisans and masons from Copán are laboring to complete the temple façades and exhibits for the museum that will give the world a new view of Copán and Maya society. Modern sculptors recreate the stucco modeling in clay for the museum centerpiece. The clay is molded in latex and cast with reinforced cement. The cast sections are hoisted into position on the building’s framework and are later sealed and then painted. Masons and workers painstakingly re-articulate sculpture mosaics onto the building façades, sometimes taking them down and repositioning them five or six times until they are as close to perfect as we can get them. Conservation and restoration technicians repair broken sculptures and prepare them for exhibit. Often fragments and missing parts of the mosaics are found much further astray than the ruins of Copán in Honduras. Museum collections have housed and protected thousands of sculptures from Copán during the past century. Now vital pieces of the puzzles are as far away as the Vatican. This brings me to the second way the Mosaic project has expanded.

The Copán Mosaic project has added another dimension to the research, that of relocating and identifying the pieces of Copán sculpture scattered throughout collections all over the world. Amazingly, sometimes the smallest fragment found in excavated context can be refitted with a larger piece that was removed without record at an earlier time. This not only restores provenience to the ensemble, it also enhances both the aesthetic value and iconographic meaning of the sculpture as a whole. It is hoped that casts of important and unique sculptures can be made and transferred to the new Copán museum exhibits to complete gaps left in the reconstructions. Then we will have revived and preserved the ancient masterpieces of the Copán people for the future.
The anthropological study of the Maya benefits from the insights of ethnographers, ethnohistorians, native accounts from the present and past, and vast and diverse archaeological research. As with any culture, the realm of cosmology, myth, and ritual constitutes one of the most fascinating aspects of Maya civilization, past and present. However, a number of controversies surround the analysis of this critical domain and prevent scholars from attaining consensus on the religious ideology that shaped Maya culture from its linguistic origins some 3,500 years ago, to its modern-day manifestations. Here I would like to share some thoughts and some recent research that may help to shed light on the nature of Classic Maya mythology, and the way that archaeological excavations can provide significant insights into the ethos of the ancient Maya.

But how does one uncover an ethos? We can uncover the physical remains generated by ritual practices and religious iconography, certainly, but how are we to interpret them? Clearly, archaeologists are best able to interpret past cultures by means of analogies with historically documented or living peoples descended from the archaeological culture under study. As a result, one of the most debated issues in the study of the ancient Maya has been the degree to which scholars may rely upon the accounts of the Colonial and modern periods for analyzing the beliefs and lifeways of their Precolumbian ancestors. To my way of thinking, one of the great masters of this art was the late Sir Eric Thompson, who drew upon a vast knowledge of the post-contact literature from the Maya area and the rest of Mesoamerica. Thompson was often critical of the approach of the traditional Maya field archaeologist, who often was so immersed in the minutiae of material culture that he or she was unable to conceptualize the people who generated the archaeological remains, and the ideas and the larger historical dramas that shaped their actions.

Sadly, the more Thompson delved into the ethnohistoric and ethnographic literature to interpret the ancient Maya, the more entrenched the traditional archaeological community became in the notion that this was an inherently flawed method. Earlier anthropological archaeologists had championed the use of the Direct Historical Approach, wherein historical documentation from a particular region is used to identify and interpret the remains of their prehistoric ancestors who lived in that same area. However, with the “New” or Processual Archaeology of the 1960s and 70s, this approach rapidly fell out of favor. Indeed, stalwarts of the new paradigm like Lewis Binford decried the use of historical studies in archaeology, insisting that they were of no use in building a larger theory of material culture and universal laws of human behavior. Maya archaeologists began to marshall all sorts of reasons why the modern and Colonial period Maya, and all of the historical accounts related to their beliefs and lifeways, were not valid sources for analogy in the study of their Precolumbian forebears. Too much of the population had been wiped out by European diseases, it was said; too much had been lost or changed as a result of the conversion to Christianity; Colonial economic and political policy truncated Maya society, wiping out the elite stratum that had been the guardians of esoteric lore; all of the political institutions and principles of social organization were modified to suit the needs of the Crown’s administrators; etc. It can be fairly said that today many if not most field archaeologists still subscribe to this point of view. Those of us who do find the historical sources useful need to be extraordinarily careful in explaining precisely why we believe they are valid sources of analogy for the archaeological remains that we seek to interpret (Marcus 1993).

One of the greatest controversies in this arena is the degree to which religious concepts of the present, the Colonial period, and even of the time of European contact, may be used as sources of analogy for understanding Pre-columbian religion, myth, and ritual. A particularly debated issue is the suggestion first offered by Michael Coe (1973), and subsequently followed with highly varying degrees of scholarly rigor and discipline by others, that the scenes on Classic Maya vases related parts of the myths of the Popol Vuh, the sacred book of the 16th century Quiche Maya. The Popol Vuh or Book of Counsel was a tale that was apparently originally recorded in an illustrated
Maya book or codex. The text of the story—unfortunately, without the pictures—was copied in the Quiche language using the Latin alphabet by a Quiche scribe, and subsequently copied and translated to Spanish by the devoted Dominican friar Francisco Ximenez in 1702. This account details the Quiche world-view in explicit detail, from the dawn of creation, through the myths that were central to their religion, cosmology, and ritual, to the details of their royal genealogy and political history. This is presently the best single aboriginal text to have survived for understanding the ethos of the ancient Maya, if one follows the standard definition of an ethos as “the complex of ideals, beliefs, or standards that characterizes or pervades a group, community, or people.”

The most dramatic and compelling part of the tale for all who read it—and doubtless too, for all who have told it—is the myth of the Hero Twins, the clever lads who descend to the Maya Underworld to avenge the deaths of their father and uncle at the hands of the evil Lords of Xibalba. In particular, Coe (1973) posited that there were a number of explicit depictions of the adventures of the Hero Twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, in the ceramic vessels illustrated in the Grolier catalog. Such mainstays of the Popol Vuh as the Killer Bats, the ballgame between the Hero Twins and the Lords of the Underworld, including the rabbit who substituted for the ball, the decapitated head of the father Hunahpu in the gourd tree, and the scene where Vucub Caquix, the macaw impersonator of the sun, is shot with a blowgun by Hunahpu, were all chronicled by Coe on these vessels.

Skeptics—particularly among field archaeologists—have argued early and often that this entire intellectual enterprise is flawed, since the Quiche were a highland Maya group, from the Colonial period, whose beliefs were copied over and translated by a Christian (read biased) scholar. Surely the Popol Vuh was not a valid source for trying to understand the much earlier mythology and ethos of the Classic Maya, who flourished in a lowland environment, untainted by contact with Europeans. In fact, many of my most distinguished colleagues still do subscribe to this point of view, and continue to reject Coe’s hypothesis for these theoretical reasons as well as the fact that the pieces that it was originally founded upon do not derive from scientific archaeological investigations.

Ironically, field archaeologists are now finding themselves in the position of providing the definitive proof for Coe’s innovative and controversial ideas on several key aspects of ancient Maya mythology. Some of the excavations in lowland Maya sites of both the Classic and Preclassic periods are finding works of art in well-documented archaeological context that show some of the same characters and scenes depicted in the pottery vessels that Coe published. There are ceramics and sculptures depicting the Killer Bats, the blowgun scene and subsequent removal of Hunahpu’s arm by the great macaw Vucub Caquix, other depictions of this same avian, referred to generically in the literature as the Principal Bird Deity, and still other scenes of the ballgame and other trials of the Hero Twins with the Lords of Xibalba.

As it happens, a few representations of this myth complex have been unearthed in our investigations at the Classic Maya ruins of Copán. I hasten to emphasize that in presenting and examining this material I do not mean to imply that the myths of the Classic period Cholan speakers of the Maya lowlands were identical to those of the 16th century Quiche Maya. Quite the contrary, besides looking at the similarity of these myths, we should attend our eyes and critical faculties to the differences that we can uncover between the two sets of data. The search for differences and changes as one proceeds backward in time was always a fundamental tenet of the Direct Historical Approach since its inception back in the 1930s, and is all the more imperative for scholars today. For it is precisely the differences that may one day tell us a great deal about the changes that occurred in the ancestral Maya ethos as the particulars of history, and the strategies of individual actors, transformed its content and representation through time and space.

Just as prescribed in the Direct Historical Approach, let us proceed from the known to the unknown, as we work our way back in time at Copán. From the Popol Vuh and from numerous Late Classic Chama style vessels of known provenience from the Guatemalan highlands, it is agreed that Killer Bats were an integral part of Postclassic and Classic Maya mythology. In the ruins of Copán, such a bat carved in stone was drawn by Tatiana Proskouriakoff in her famous Album of Maya Architecture, published in 1950. Eric Thompson wrote that during one of his visits to Copán in the 1930s he noted that these bats adorned Temple 20, a structure on the eastern edge of the Copán Acropolis cut that was subsequently wiped out by the Copán River. Fortunately, in the 1880s Alfred Maudslay had excavated and recorded Temple 20, and shown it to be a two-storied, quite lofty building. This in turn allowed him to identify Temple 20 as the “tower” that the first European visitor to Copán, Diego Garcia de Palacios, described as standing at the river’s edge on the Acropolis back in 1576.

When Barbara and I began the Copán Mosaics Project in 1985, we were especially intrigued by these bats (Figure 1). The death collars, death sign pendants, and snarling countenance of these creatures showed that they were depictions of the same Killer Bats depicted on the Chama vessels. Coe’s identification of the Killer Bats as the Cama Zotz, the guardians of the Bat House in the Popol Vuh, made us think long and hard about the meaning of this building. In the Popol Vuh, the Hero Twins were locked inside the Bat House for a night, as one of their many trials by the Lords of Xibalba. The boys hid inside their blowguns to escape death, but when one of them stuck his head out to see if morning had come, it was seared by one of the Killer Bats. One of the most important clues the Maya left for us was first noticed by Maudslay, whose descriptions, drawings, and photographs documented the fact that the doors of Temple 20 were

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designer to be closed from the outside, rather than from the inside. The Austrian architects Hasso Hohmann and Annegritte Vogrin, noting that this was the only building in Copán to display this pattern, concluded that Temple 20 was in fact a jail: when the doors were closed, the people inside this structure were locked in.

Further structural evidence in this archaeological detective story came in the form of the sculptures themselves. Barbara noted that the tenons or butts of the bat sculptures were on the bottom side, indicating that they were set vertically, on top of the roof of the very tall Temple 20. In looking at the ethnographic literature, she recalled a description of Lacandon Maya jails, wherein the guards were stationed on the roof of the building. The Killer Bats on Copán Temple 20 were also placed on the roof of a building that was designed to be closed from the outside. Other sculptures on this building included smoke and blood scrolls, and implements of sacrifice, providing additional support for the idea that this prominent building had a purpose in keeping with what Coe calls the “dark side” of Classic Maya culture, and the tale of the Popol Vuh. Finally, we have concluded that the doorway leading into this building was in fact the gaping toothy mouth of a huge bat face, through which all who entered must pass. Pretty dramatic stuff.

Another Copán monument that has yielded important insights into these comparisons is the ballcourt. The main court at Copán occupies the geographic center of the civic-ceremonial precinct of that ancient Maya city. It is the second largest ballcourt in Mesoamerica, and one of the most ornately decorated. The court that most visitors see is only the final example, with two earlier versions of it having been superseded and eventually buried by the Maya as the city grew. Tatiana Proskouriakoff’s stunning watercolor reconstruction of the game graces the “Encounters” exhibit on the third floor of the Peabody Museum (Figure 2). The principal decorative element is one of a huge macaw, whom we now believe represents a Classic period antecedent for Vucub Caquix, the Sun Impersonator of the Popol Vuh. Beginning in 1985, Barbara and I began to piece the stone sculpture fragments of these giant birds back together, and in the new Copán Sculpture Museum have assembled what we consider to be the definitive reconstruction.

The name Vucub Caquix means Seven Macaw in Quiche, and this is our first clue about changes. There are in fact eight macaws on both buildings of the Copán ballcourt, making a total of sixteen for the total assemblage. Even if one argues that all sixteen are virtually identical, and simply represent sixteen depictions of the same creature, there is absolutely nothing in the birds’ ornamentation or other aspects of the building’s decoration that yields a reading of “Seven.” If we go even further back in time, we find even more changes. The earlier Copán ballcourts did indeed have (even larger) macaws, but with significantly different iconography. And even further back in time, at the site of Izapa, a Protoclassic stela dating to about the time of Christ shows a huge bird being toppled from a tree by two men. Another Izapa stela shows but one of the duo, in the presence of the bird but minus one of his own arms. As Karl Taube pointed out, this must be a depiction of an earlier version of the same myth that was related in the Popol Vuh. But the bird bears nothing that looks like “seven,” and its head doesn’t even look like that of a bird. Thus, the more neutral name “Principal Bird Deity” was coined to label the bird that is depicted as a macaw at Copán in the Classic period, in many Maya lowland sites during the Early Classic and Late Preclassic periods, and in Late Preclassic Izapa. The Copán examples are clearly macaws, and may very well represent a stage in the development of this particular myth that eventually resulted in the character referred to as Seven Macaw by the Postclassic Quiche.

In looking at the earlier versions of the Copán examples we can begin to unravel how history and the strategies of individuals may have been involved...
in transforming this creature and his meaning through time. Ballcourt III was built by the 13th Copán king, known as XVIII Jog (or 18 Rabbit), a few months before his death at the hands of the Quirigua ruler known as Two-Legged Sky or Cauac Sky. Ruler 13 also refurbished the previous version of the court, known as Ballcourt IIb, by placing a new floor and carved floor markers at the beginning of his reign. When he did, he left intact a set of four stucco macaws that adorned the back sides of the substructure platforms of Ballcourt II. Fortunately for us, one of these four birds was partially preserved when Ruler 13 built Ballcourt III and the first version of Structure 26. We happened upon this stucco sculpture during the restoration of the front wall of Structure 26 and its famed Hieroglyphic Stairway back in 1987. In ensuing seasons, Richard Williamson, a Ph.D. candidate at Tulane University, and Barbara and I traced out the stratigraphic context of this bird and his immediate ancestor, yet another stucco bird that originally adorned Ballcourt I.

Ballcourt I was built by Ruler 2 of Copán, a man who has been given the (probably incorrect) nickname “Mat Head.” For those of you who closely follow Copán historiographic studies, this was the ruler who was originally and mistakenly identified as the third sovereign of the site, but whom we now realize was both the son, and the successor of the first ruler, K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ (“Sun-eyed Blue-green Quetzal Macaw”). Williamson has carefully documented the sequence of platforms, buildings, and plaza floors that tie Ballcourt I to a version of Structure 26 nicknamed “Motmot,” and to an ancestral version of the nearby Temple 11 that formed the nucleus of this most public area of pageantry and spectacle in the ruins of Copán. This stratigraphic tie-in was demonstrated and made infinitely more meaningful by Williamson’s discovery of a floor marker in front of Motmot Structure (Figure 4). On the floor marker we see a scene set in a portal to the supernatural world, where Ruler I, Yax K’uk’ Mo’ (identified both by his name glyph, and his headdress) faces Ruler II (also identified both in the text and in his headdress). The text names several objects that are critical to understanding the whole assemblage of monuments and rituals that the monument was designed—to use Barbara’s phrase—to personify.

First, K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’ is mentioned in connection with a deer sacrifice. As it turns out, directly beneath the floor marker, we found a deer skeleton, minus its head, that was burned as a food offering when the cylindrical tomb beneath it was re-sealed. Following this passage, the text states that this offering was made in connection with the dedication of a “four sky structure.” Motmot Structure, not coincidentally, was decorated with four sky bands, and the floor marker, its buried offerings, and the tomb were all on the central axis of Motmot, five meters from its central stairway. Thereafter the text speaks of “smoking” something, which David Stuart ties to references to the re-entering of tombs by the Classic Maya, and the purification of the bones of the royal ancestors through fire ceremonies and related offerings. Again, not coincidentally, many but not all of the bones of the individual in the tomb turned out to have been displaced and burned some time after the original interment. At the bottom of the displaced bones was the head of the deer whose body was burned as an offering once the tomb was resealed.

The final tie-in between the hieroglyphic text and the archaeological remains is the reference to “Four Macaws” that closes the text. The floor that the Motmot marker is set into links it not only with Motmot Structure, but with Ballcourt I. Ballcourt I, as mentioned, was decorated with four stucco macaws. This assemblage was all put together by the protagonist of the text, Ruler 2, for his own personal aggrandizement and to indelibly link himself and the other monuments he created with his father and predecessor, K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’.

This combined assemblage of text, image, architecture, and ritual behavior places the imagery of Copán’s first ballcourt in a clearer cultural and historical perspective. As such, the analysis of the imagery of this bird becomes all the more interesting and important. When we consider that the earlier, Preclassic

Figure 4. Floor marker found embedded in the stucco floor in front of the Early Classic structure "Motmot."

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versions of the Principal Bird deity associated with the Hero Twins myth found in Izapa, and on Preclassic architecture of the Maya lowlands, were not macaws, we must ask, why were the Copán versions of this bird macaws? A closer look at the imagery has proven revealing.

The preserved Ballcourt II bird had a macaw beak, large breast, outsretched wings, and a collar with a human head as its central pendant. Its tail went out to the sides, but its mid-section and legs were obliterated by 18 Rabbit's masons when Ballcourt III was built. The adjacent Ballcourt I bird was cut in half when Ballcourt II was built, and the unobliterated half was buried inside of the fill. The head of the other Ballcourt I bird on this eastern platform was also preserved in fill, and clearly shows the wrinkled skin and trapezoidal head that are the conventions used to depict the macaw. Fortunately, the half of the Ballcourt I bird's body that was buried in the fill retains many details of the wings, breast, mid-section, and feet (Figure 5). Most remarkable is the mid-section, which shows the severed arm of Hunahpu—labelled as "Hun" or "one" by a large circular dot—in the jaws of a beast. Like the Izapa relief, then, the Early Classic Copán version of this ancestral Maya myth speaks of a mythical hero losing his arm in his battle with an avian monster of the Underworld. While there is no visible name associated with the Izapa example, in the Copán case the large dot labels him as "1" something. By the time of the Quiche, he was "1 Ahau," and it is entirely possible that such a name was being telegraphed by this early Copán stucco depiction.

But what is the nature of this beast, with a macaw head, breast and wings, but with decidedly non-macaw serpent head feet, and a second large head sprouting from its mid-section? Upon seeing the original for the first time, Barbara and George Stuart independently noted that this second head looked remarkably like those of the Feathered Serpents on the contemporaneous temple of the same name in Teotihuacan, the great Classic period metropolis of Central Mexico. Karl Taube agreed that this was indeed a feathered serpent, clearly identified as such by the plumes that surrounded the snake's head on both the Ballcourt I and Ballcourt II versions. In Aztec and Maya Myths, Taube was perplexed by the extreme rarity of depictions of feathered serpents in the Maya area during the Classic period, as opposed to Teotihuacan, Chichén Itzá, and other Mesoamerican sites where they were quite important. Why, then, does this appear in Copán, in association with a macaw, on a ballcourt?

Again, the imagery, texts, and archaeology combined have much to say on this subject. Later depictions of Yax K'uk' Mo' on Altar Q, on its associated temple Structure 16, and on the censers found in the Late Classic royal tomb beneath the Hieroglyphic Stairway (Fash 1991), show him with goggles over the eyes, associating him with the great patron deity of Teotihuacan. David Stuart (n.d.) has shown that the inscription on the temple that surmounted the Hieroglyphic Stairway was carved in parallel columns, with one text in beautiful full-figure Maya glyphs, and the other with what David refers to as a "Teotihuacan font." This text ties Copán with a "Place of the Reeds" which Stuart believes is a reference to Teotihuacan. A final bit of intriguing evidence comes in the form of the tomb beneath the Motmot floor marker. This is the only cylindrical tomb ever discovered in several decades of investigations of Copán, where well over 500 burials have been scientifically excavated and recorded. It is decidedly not a typical Copán grave form. It is, most decidedly, the typical tomb grave for Teotihuacan, where scores of burials in tombs are placed in cylindrical graves (Cabrera Castro 1993; Serrano Sánchez 1993). Whoever was buried in the Motmot tomb was laid to rest in a Teotihuacan-style final resting place. While I do not want to suggest that this was K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo's tomb, the text and imagery of the floor marker do associate him with the rituals associated with the tomb, with the four-sky building, and with the four macaws on Ballcourt I. I should also note that the leading candidate for the tomb of Ruler 1, found by David Sedat (1996) and Robert Sharer (1996) inside the earliest temple beneath Structure 16, is a Maya-style vaulted masonry crypt placed within a building adorned with talud-
Quetzalcoatl was often paired, twin-ered serpent, who as Taube observed is immediate temptation is to tie the notably absent in the Classic Maya bear in mind Taube's observation that pent".

Some reason that I must confess I am puzzled by at the moment, Ruler 2 of Copán seems to have wanted to make a deliberate association between his father, and the bird who tore off Hunahpu's arm. He also wanted to associate the bird with the quintessential Central Mexican deity of the feathered serpent, who as Taube observed is notably absent in the Classic Maya world. Taube also noted that in Nahua, coati of Quetzalcoatl means both "serpent" and "twin." A Mayanist's immediate temptation is to tie the "twin" reference to the severed arm in the Snake's mouth. But we should also bear in mind Taube's observation that in Central Mexican mythology Quetzalcoatl was often paired, twin-like, with Tezcatlipoca. Is there some kind of metaphor here for Central Mexican mythology and gods having the upper hand over native Maya mythology and its mythical heroes? Or is it instead the case that Yax K'uk' Mo' had as his way or spiritual "co-essence" the powerful bird who later Maya peoples viewed as a vain and haughty Sun Impersonator, but whose meaning for the Classic Maya may have been somewhat different?

Whatever the answers to these unresolved questions may be, the fact is that the bird imagery was dramatically altered by Ruler 13 when he built Ballcourt III. The bird was taken off the field of play where it previously stood, with its feet on the level of the floor and its portals to the Underworld, and was instead elevated onto the façade of an elaborate pair of vaulted superstructures. Gone is the severed arm of the mythical hero; gone too is any reference to the quetzal bird, let alone to Quetzalcoatl, Teotihuacan, or so far as we know, even to K'inch Yax K'uk' Mo'. Indeed, Ruler 13's iconography shows virtually no concern with Teotihuacan or its imagery, and instead becomes a showcase of typical Classic Maya art. In the one text where the thirteenth king refers to K'inch Yax K'uk' Mo' and the 9.0.0.0.0 Maya Long Count date cited on the Motmot floor marker, he states that the first Copán ruler "grasped the Mannikin scepter"—a typical act of Maya kings—rather than having anything to do with a deer sacrifice and a Central Mexican-inspired grave. Why this disjunction? Was it because Teotihuacan had by this time been sacked, and lost not only its influence but its cachet in the Maya area? Again, we are left with more questions to ponder.

But in the aftermath of Ruler 13's beheading at the hands of his former vassal from Quirigua, the Teotihuacan imagery and connections were revived with a flourish. Warrior imagery covered the final version of the Hieroglyphic Stairway and Temple, which harks back to the ancestral ties with the great Mexican metropolis. Half a dozen other buildings go up on the Acrópolis that also carry Tlaloc imagery and depictions of the ancestral kings as warriors. The final and most elaborate statement of what can only be called a Terminal Classic cult of Teotihuacan warrior imagery is the last version of Temple 16, which carries six different genres of Tlaloc images, and portrayed Yax K'uk' Mo' with his Tlaloc goggles on Altar Q, on the exterior façade of the temple, and inside a niche in the temple's innermost sanctuary. 18 Rabbit's departure from this part of the legacy of the dynasty's legendary founder in his monument program was remedied by the subsequent kings by the creation of numerous personifications of the vitality of the founder, by virtue of his association with the powerful center of Teotihuacan.

In the meantime, what of the myths, the ancestral version of the Hero Twins and their triumph over the forces of death and darkness in the Underworld? We have only the representations of the macaws in the Ballcourt to remind us of their struggles, and to reinforce the role of the king as the vanquisher of supernatural forces. Indeed, it appears as if secular concerns outweigh supernatural ones in the imagery of the last three Copán kings (B. Fash 1992). It is almost as if the crises of the times made the last Classic kings forget the lessons of the Popol Vuh, and the ethos of the ancestors. Caught up in the daily challenges posed by an expanding population in a land of dwindling resources, rapidly-spread infectious diseases and malnutrition, tributaries breaking off their contributions and even beheading their rulers, the Copán dynasty lost its way. After the 16th and final ruler died, no one could command the authority of the ancestral kings, whose tales rang hollow, and whose lifestyle was seen as contrary to the ideals of the Maya peasantry.

These preliminary and admittedly speculative observations on the changing nature of a Maya myth, and how its representation changed through time and space, have led us to ask many new questions. This is of course the way with most archaeology, which always leads us to ask other questions of our data, and to design research to obtain additional information to address those questions. What I hope to have shown is that the archaeological record does avail us of sufficient evidence to illuminate the nature of the ancient Maya ethos, and how its content and representation may have changed to suit historical circumstances and the strategies of particular individuals.

Archaeological research need not restrict itself to "testing" the Classic period texts, Postclassic and early colonial native accounts, and ethnohistoric and ethnographic data; it can and does allow us to show their antecedents and development through time and space. We can document when certain beliefs or practices appeared in the archaeological record, and how they were modified. The transformation of the Principal Bird Deity into a Quetzal or

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The motive for my talk today is furnished by a small cave I once visited in northwestern Peten, Guatemala. Thirty years have passed since that day, so it is with considerable shame that I acknowledge my failure to describe it in print. In extenuation, I plead the operation of circumstances beyond my control—two of them. The first, which became apparent as my guide and I were entering the area, was the total absence of water in the water-holes. Our examination of the cave therefore had to be limited to two or three hours. But since the cave was small, I was able to complete what was intended to be just a preliminary record. The other blow fell about a year later when I heard that the principal feature in the cave had been wantonly destroyed by ignorant treasure seekers. So my inadequate documentation remains as the only record, and I assure you that I do intend to publish it before too long.

Before describing this cave, I will take you on a brief tour of cave activities in the Maya area, to give some idea of the uses the ancient Maya made of cave—some of which are continued by the modern Maya. Eric Thompson once listed some of them. One was obvious, the provision of water for domestic use. Others were less so: the provision of "virgin water" for religious rites; places of burial; depositories of ceremonially destroyed ceramics; places of refuge; and "art galleries" (as Thompson hesitantly called them, aware of the term's unsuitability; perhaps caves containing wall-paintings go better under the more general heading of spaces for religious rites).

Now for some examples of these categories. As regards water—and caves in general—it's well to remember that the peninsula of Yucatan and most of Peten long ago lay beneath the sea, where in the course of time it received heavy deposits of limestone. Then in geologically recent times this area rose and became dry land. The fracturing of limestone strata caused by this process allowed rainwater to percolate through them. This water, having picked up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and become acidic, gradually dissolved the limestone. The cracks grew into channels, then into underground conduits of water discharging into the sea. For this reason no rivers or streams are found in Yucatan. In Peten, the situation is less extreme: there is underground drainage, and there are great rivers, too.

When the dissolution of rock by underground streams has led to the formation of a large cavern, the roof may fall in, exposing the water to view, and providing the possibility of access down a vertical well, or pit. Locally, these features are known as cenotes, and it was the existence of these that made Yucatan habitable for the first settlers — though their descendants would in time devise methods of catching and storing rainwater in cisterns, thus permitting a denser population of the land.

The first widely reported description of a cave system in Yucatan was made by the famous travelers, Stephens and Catherwood in the early 1840s. Stephens' description and Catherwood's extraordinary lithographic image of the cave of Bolonchen are well known. To collect water, men had to descend a terrifying ladder, then crawl down a tunnel to a depth of 210 feet. Having filled their jars or gourds they then had to crawl and climb out, dragging their loads by ropes tied round their waists.

The first scientific description of a cave in the Maya area was that of Edward H. Thompson, who investigated the great caves of Loltun, Yucatan, in 1890, publishing his findings in the first volume of the Peabody Museum's Memoirs series. Among other contributions, he illustrated a stone vessel supported on a pedestal placed beneath a stalactite so that it would catch the drips. He supposed that this had been placed to provide the cave dwellers with drinking water, but we now have another explanation for it, as will be seen.

About five years later, Henry Chapman Mercer (Harvard Class of 1879), came to Yucatan. He was then a member of the Free Museum of Philadelphia, predecessor of the University Museum. He had spent ten years looking for vestiges of early man in caves in eastern North America, and had found nothing. In a final effort, he went to Yucatan, where again he was disappointed; but he left good data on cave systems in the peninsula. In one of the caves he explored, Mani, a deposit of about 8,000 sherds of the earliest pottery known in Yucatan was later discovered. This was a good...
example of a cave used for Eric Thompson’s category, “depository of ceremonially destroyed ceramics.” Vessels that had been made for a particular ceremony were smashed afterwards and left in an isolated and spiritually benign place.

Now, back to that stone basin. Ethnographic research has shown that the water caught in it was not for slaking thirst, but rather, a precious commodity for ceremonial purposes: virgin water—zuhuy ha in Maya—perhaps better described as “protected water” or “set apart water.” This was required for ceremonial use because the ancient Maya (as their descendants do today) placed tremendous importance on both the celebrant of the rite and the materials he would use being free from contamination. Dew on leaves is another approved source, but scarcely a practical one, because for many ceremonies quite large quantities of food were required for offerings to the gods, and preparation of it called for gallons of water; this, a basin like the one at Loltun could provide. We can be sure that in this year of appalling drought in Yucatan, a great number of cha-chaac, or rainmaking, ceremonies have been performed, with correspondingly great consumption of virgin water.

Another ancient use for virgin water is mentioned in the “ethnography” of Yucatan written by the 16th century Spanish bishop, Diego de Landa; he says that in New Year ceremonies the priests used to mix a small quantity of green paint in a vessel with some virgin water, and with this anoint the wooden covers of their codices. In this case, dew would do.

Concerning the use of caves for religious purposes, there is a mass of available information. We have heard this morning the theory based on linguistics that the persistence of certain elements of vocabulary in the 30-odd Maya languages suggests that the Maya had their origin in the highlands. The question then is, how did those Maya who went down to populate the plains manage their ceremonial life in the absence of mountains containing caves? The answer seems to be that masonry temples were built to substitute for hills, with narrow chambers inside resembling caves; and sometimes they were furnished with a stalactite instead of a stela.

Throughout Mesoamerica caves were important: they were regarded as entry points into the underworld—places where one could pass from one level to another, and communicate with the jaguar lord of the underworld. Important ancestral gods, to whom offerings were due, were also believed to live inside mountains.

In the central Maya lowlands, caves that have had ceremonial use are fairly common, most of them being located in the sides of small hills. I have found several: one, for instance, just south of a village called Colpeten on the road south from Flores, where about halfway up a small hill there is a dry cave with a stalactite as the central feature of a masonry shrine (footprints showed that the last pilgrim to this shrine before me had been a jaguar!). In the Yucatan peninsula, caves are more often subterranean. This year I found a small one at a known site called Ichpaatun, which featured a rock-carving in the full round of a human head at its entrance, and vestiges of wall painting inside.

An important use for caves was for rainmaking ceremonies. At the time of year when rains are due, the Tzotzil Maya of Chiapas go into the farthest recesses of caverns to burn copal incense; the resulting black clouds of smoke are supposed to attract rainclouds. The Huastec, a geographically separate group of Maya speakers, have a different version. For them, rain is the product of fertilization of feminine clouds by male godlings. The clouds rush towards the mountains with sexual urge hoping to meet with the frog goddesses who live in the caves. When they meet in the caves, scenes of sexual orgies and drunkenness follow.

There is evidence that such orgies in caves did occur in Classic times. Fifteen years ago a cave, since named Najtunich, was found in southern Peten, and in it were found well preserved paintings and abundant painted hieroglyphic texts. For a long time Maya art was considered to be completely free of explicit sexual representations; it was a great surprise, therefore, to find one scene showing a standing couple about to copulate. The woman is thought to represent the moon goddess, who was known for her legendary adultery with Venus, although the reputation for licentiousness that this gave her did nothing to prevent veneration of her as a kind of ancestral goddess, since she had been the first woman to engage in sexual intercourse. In fact, the tradition of ceremonial orgies and dances in caves may still be alive among the Maya: one droll informant not many years ago told tales of routs in a cave: “While they were dancing, their skirts came off, and they would commit adultery, they say.”

Other scenes represented in this include genital bloodletting, and the offering and consumption of apparently mind-altering substances. Among the burials found here, a few are furnished with polychrome vessels and are obviously of elite personages; this is unusual in caves, for such persons generally chose to conduct their rites—and have their last ones—in expensively constructed temples.

In another interesting association, a significant number of temples have been built over caves. The Temple of the Sun at Teotihuacan is an example from outside the Maya area, and the rock-cut temple at Malinalco can be regarded as the outstanding example of the artificial or recreated cave. As for temples built over caves within the Maya area, these are especially common at Dos Pilas, an important site in Peten, and in the surrounding area. Extraordinary examples of artificial caves have been reported by Jim Brady at two sites in the Guatemalan highlands, Mixco Viejo and Utatlan. Both of these are built on mesas formed of volcanic tuff, or pumice, and in both cases tunnels were driven into them from the side. At Utatlan the entrance tunnel extends nearly 100 meters to a spot directly beneath the center of the plaza, where it forks out into seven fingers, perhaps representing Vucub-pec, the seven-chambered cave from which the Quiche Maya are supposed to have emerged.

Continued on next page
As for Thompson’s next category, burials and ossuaries, these, too, are quite common. Blom describes a cave high up in a cliff in the Grijalva River valley, where he found long-necked jars containing human ashes, which had been stuffed with rags and sealed with pine resin and wax. Really macabre remains were found near Copan by George Byron Gordon. To visit a cave some way up a gorge near Copan, he had to make an extremely perilous climb to reach its entrance. He found it had three narrow chambers; of one he wrote: “The walls are black. The air is close and foul, and altogether it is as repulsive a hole as could be found on the face of nature. The floor seemed more uneven than in either of the other chambers and gave away more to the pressure of the feet, and with a crushing sound. I soon discovered I was walking on the dust and crumbling bones of decomposed human bodies mingled with ashes and lime. This layer was about two feet deep.”

A temple at Chichen Itza often referred to as the High Priest’s Grave is in reality another example of a temple built over a natural cave, with the cave used as an ossuary. But it is unusual in being provided with access from the temple by means of a vertical shaft down to the cave, to allow for the deposition of further bones.

The next category of Thompson’s was ceremonially discarded vessels. I have mentioned that cave at Mani; at another known as Actun Balam, in Belize, an even greater number of pottery fragments, 22,000 in number, were found to have been thrown down the chimney of a cave, probably following offerings to the stalagmitic idol in the cave.

As for places of refuge, Thompson could give but one example: Mercer’s description of people taking refuge there during the War of the Castes. I can cite another possible example—only tentatively, since it is based on hearsay. On my way to look at a tremendous system of caves in the San Simon river, near the Peten-Alta Verapaz boundary, I noticed in the jungle the decaying corner-posts, hung with creepers, of several houses, and learnt that they were the remains of a clandestine village established by Kekchi Mayas during dictatorship of Jorge Ubico whose forced labor program they wanted to evade. I was further informed that when lookouts reported the approach of authorities the Kekchis would hide in those caves.

The wide mouth of that cave contains some mysterious structures for which I can suggest two uses, both of which fall outside Thompson’s categories of cave use. In the walls of the naturally formed “atrium,” roughly the shape of half a hemisphere, there were three or four natural recesses, or alcoves. In front of these, roughly semi-circular dry-laid walls had been built, forming what I took to be pens for keeping animals; but the purpose for which they had been built eluded me completely. Then I found a report that at Chan Kom, in Yucatan, shamans-priests were so careful in the preparation of offerings to the gods that they insisted on using only chaste chickens, so they kept them isolated for a certain length of time. Just possibly, then, these enclosures could have served, with nets stretched across, as special virgin chicken coops, situated conveniently near the place of ritual sacrifice in the caves.

I confess that I don’t set much store by this explanation. Now I shall offer another hardly less speculative. This was suggested by a passage in Mercer’s book: he describes a technique of hunting in which a blind is constructed, then grains of maize are sprinkled on the ground nearby. The hunter enters his hide with a blowgun, and when pigeons came to eat the grain, he shoots them. Clearly, the still air in the cave-mouth would provide ideal conditions for blowgun shooting, since, with its low muzzle velocity, the gun’s accuracy is greatly impaired by the slightest cross-wind.

In conclusion I present a brief description of the cave at La Pailita that I mentioned at the beginning. I had first heard of it from Trinidad Betancourt, the brother of doña Maria, the cook engaged by Ledyard Smith for Gordon Willey’s camp at Altar de Sacrificios, and later at Seibal. He told me of a “rey,” or king, that he had found in the vicinity of the chicle camp of La Pailita. “Rey” was the usual term employed by Peteneros for a stela, so I
La Pailita cave.

The statue was of the rain-god Chac, as the axe held against his chest in his right hand proclaimed. He was seated on a simple throne of masonry finished with stucco, and directly behind him a thick stalactite/stalagmite column gave the impression of being a pillar supporting the roof. Like the throne, the statue was constructed of masonry covered with modeled stucco, except for a headdress of limestone, in the form of a disc with a transverse slot cut into it. Evidently the whole statue had been replastered at some point. The life-size figure, with a seated height of 1.47 m, was dressed simply in a breechclout, but he was wearing a pectoral ornament and elaborate ear-spool. There were smoke smudges between his legs from burning charcoal.

All around the floor, part of which had been plastered, was strewn with broken pottery, many of the fragments being halves of entire vessels. To the left, in a darker recess, there was a deeper deposit of sherds, datable as coming from both the Early and Late Classic periods. The general condition of the cave and its contents suggested to me that no one had entered since ritual use of it ceased, perhaps a thousand years ago. The only other constructions in the cave were a boulder of rounded conical form, with a stucco mask applied to its top; this had large eye-sockets, ear-plugs, and a conical projection from the center of the forehead; and a lime-encrusted boulder on the statue's right-hand side which showed signs of being used for burning incense or other offerings. Some crudely worked stone blocks still in situ suggested that they had been set as jambs for an entrance doorway. In sum, then, this cave had clearly been used for rainmaking ceremonies, and ipso facto became also a depository of ceremonially destroyed ceramics.

There is no reason to believe that shrines of this kind were rare. What was unusual about this one was its survival undamaged long enough to be at least cursorily recorded. But only by the skin of its teeth. At the time, though, my thoughts dwelt more on regret that we had not brought with us a good shaman-priest, complete with a suitable chicken, who might have been able to conjure up a welcome thunder-storm.

La Pailita cave.

asked how tall it was. “Oh, about thirty meters...” Well, that seemed absurdly misjudged, but I hired him to take me to see it, anyway.

It was an excessively hard walk, the weather was scorching, and water had become scarce. We reached La Pailita, but then Trinidad could not find the “rey.” I sat down, dejected, and began to think, “had again!” Then at last he came back, triumphant, and I found that what we had come to see was not a temple with a stela, but a cave containing the statue of a god. Trinidad had not exaggerated, the statue was about 30 meters high; that is, 30 meters above the foot of the hill, in a small cave! My first glimpse of it, as we climbed the slope, was memorable: owing to a light coating of lichen, the stuccoed statue glowed greenish in the cave’s dark interior.
Two months ago, when Bill Fash asked me to think about participating in this symposium and speak about Rosalila, I knew exactly what I was going to say. Since then, Bill and Barbara Fash have visited, Linda Schele has visited, Karl Taube has visited, and now I have no idea what I am talking about. What has become very clear to me is that what I am going to speak about this afternoon is part of a process. Research in Copán is done as part of a team. It is gradual, takes time, and accumulates through the experience of many scholars. It is through this shared knowledge that I can say something at all about this incredible temple that I have had the privilege of discovering in the Copán Acropolis. So keep in mind that this is work in progress.

It is fairly easy to see that Temple 16 sits at the very heart of the Copán Acropolis, between the East Court and the West Court (Figure 1). This has been the focus of my research since 1989.

My contention here is that the artwork that was on the outside of Structure 16 from very early on in time was the central concern of the Maya state or polity. The center of the Acropolis was itself the center of this city-state. Whatever message they put up here was obviously of enormous concern to the ruling elite of Copán. I am not going to discuss much of the outside work on Structure 16, which Bill and Barbara have mentioned to you today. There is a great deal of warfare and sacrifice imagery on it relating to the founder who was portrayed in the central room of the temple, up on top coming out of the mouth of a vision serpent. I am going to focus on Rosalila, which sits right under Structure 16. It is actually the second building below the outer one and in the middle of one that is called Purpura, which was completely destroyed by the ancient Maya.

Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of the Acropolis. On the right hand side, we have the old river bed and then the Acropolis cut where Bob Sharer and his team have been working. Today we have a network of over two kilometers of tunnels coming off the cut in the river. As we look to the middle, we can see the profile of Structure 16. Directly below it are the remains of Purpura. Immediately underneath that, you can see where Rosalila is to be found. Rosalila has a small substructure, which is called Azul. It has a principal staircase on the west side and, like all of the buildings that we know of on this central axis of the Copán Acropolis, they are all facing west. Structure 16 also has a staircase on the west side, and Rosalila is certainly looking west.

In this section drawing, you can see the three different levels of Rosalila. It is about 13 meters tall; the substructure itself is 3 meters tall. The first story has three rooms running north to south and then one room perpendicular to those rooms, which is the south room, running east to west. The second story has a single room running north to south, and the third story has three very small chambers. Only the lower level was actually used, having access from the staircase that came up from the earlier version of the west court of the Acropolis. The two upper stories are actually the roof comb of Rosalila.

In a nutshell, Rosalila is the only complete example of Maya architecture at Copán. All the surface buildings have melted away, coming apart after the stucco covering them washed away and the trees started growing on them. As Barbara pointed out, they had no lime to keep them together, so they just fell apart. All the earlier ones that Bob Sharer and his team have found below were almost completely destroyed by the Maya themselves. So Rosalila is the first building that is completely preserved at Copán. It is also the first building in which all the iconography is still in place. I am sure you have heard Bill and Barbara talk about the thousands of fragments of sculpture that lie scattered over the site and that are like a jigsaw puzzle with no boxtop. Well, I managed to find the first boxtop for our project.

About two years ago, I excavated the staircases of Rosalila. We were fortunate enough to find a carved hieroglyphic step. The date on it is 9.6.17.3.2. It was reconstructed by Linda Schele and Nikolai Grube, and it corresponds to the year 571 A.D. That is towards the end of the reign of the tenth ruler of Copán whom we have nicknamed Moon Jaguar. This has allowed us to put a precise date on the construction of Rosalila, towards the end of the sixth century at the very end of the Early Classic Maya tradition.
Rosalila’s iconography presents us with a gigantic, complex, cosmological message (Figure 3). Starting from the bottom and moving up, we can see that on the substructure right next to the staircase is an enormous mask of Kinich Ahau, the sun god (Figure 4). His mouth is unfortunately broken; his nose is in terrible shape. He has three circles on his cheeks which seem to be diagnostic of the representations of the sun god on Rosalila along with squint eyes.

Moving up to the first level of Rosalila we can see that it goes up approximately six meters. It is the tallest part of the building. The second story is only about 3.5 meters and the third story is about that same size. The lower level has a floor plan of 18 meters by 12 meters. The shorter north/south axis is 12 meters wide. It used to have three doorways, the principal doorway on the west, another on the south and a third on the east. The one on the east side was eventually sealed by the Maya as other buildings went up around it.

The principal mask below the medial moulding is centered on the face of an old god. It has been interpreted by our iconography team as representing Itzamna, the god of creation. His eyes are in good shape, while his nose is gone. He is coming out of obscurity. He is actually coming out of the mouth of the bird of the heavens, the principal bird deity or Vucub Caqix, as he is called. Below, you can see the talons of the bird. He has serpent wings to the side. And then we see the talons of the bird. He has an elaborate headdress and other decorations on top.

The original color of the building is primarily red. Barbara Fash is doing a study in order to make a full color reproduction in the new museum at Copan. She has studied all of the masks to determine exactly what the color scheme for them was. She, as well as some others doing chemical analyses of samples of the stucco, have discovered that there are up to seven coats of colored stucco on the building. The last coat is a thick coat of white plaster, completely different from everything before. Evidently, this was applied right before the building was ceremonially buried. It seems this was part of the process of embalming the building; literally killing the color before it was put underground.

We have also noted that the color scheme of the decorated panels sometimes changed. Sometimes feathers were green; at other times they were red. This is very important for something we are going to see towards the end because, of course, red feathers tend to be identified with the macaw or mo, whereas green feathers are associated with the Quetzal or K’uk. The combination, of course, is K’uk Mo, which I believe is a reference to the founder of the Copan dynasty.

On the north side of the temple the central mask of Rosalila is fairly well preserved (Figure 5). Again, it is a sun god. That is the central element of the iconography of the building as a whole. He has shoulders; his face sits in the middle, and then his arms come out in both directions. Karl Taube has pointed out that he has no hands. His arms end up in sacrifice bundles. It seems that they are amputated. They have knots and a personified bloodletter on them. So the primary element of the central motif of Rosalila seems to be the sun god with his hands cut off and marked by symbols of sacrifice.

The sun god’s nose is badly weathered, and his mouth has a single tooth. Many of the details were plastered over and over again as the structure was given maintenance by the Maya. Barbara has pointed out that this tended to cover a lot of the details. That is why we have done some cleaning of them in certain cases. When she proceeded to clean a section of one mask’s right eye the diagnostic markings on it appeared. Another important element is the three circles on his cheek, which were not visible at first, but, after cleaning some of the outer coats of stucco, became evident. This is important because although I discovered Rosalila six years ago, this kind of information has only been coming up recently. In a way, this is part of the process I am talking about. Things do not appear immediately. We are still learning enormous amounts as we progress and carry out these detailed, micro-surgical excavations on the outside of the building itself. And then we must interpret its iconography. The process of registering the iconography has also been very slow: photography, drawing, and then the final reconstruction drawing which Barbara is working on.

When looking at the serpent wings that belong to the central mask, the main decorative element of the serpent wings is a profile view of the sun god.

continued on next page
Here also, an amazing amount of detail was covered over with later coats of stucco. You can see three circles on his cheek, a single tooth up front, a huge Roman nose, and a glyphic infix on the back part of his jaw. Also, a tassle of hair on top. This has helped us to further identify the main iconographic elements of the building as a whole.

On the upper part of the building we have its roof-comb. The central element was the main theme of David Stuart's talk this morning. It is the witz monster marking this building as a sacred mountain. Next to it are serpents whose bodies go up and undulate to form the arch of the heavens above. Unfortunately, when Figure 5 was made, we did not have the central mask of Rosalilys exposed on the third level. But it is a death mask which we are going to see a little further down.

With respect to the death mask on top, Karl Taube has recently suggested that this is actually a death-head incense burner and that the serpent bodies probably emanated as smoke coming out of it. Again, it is marking the building as a place of sacrifice, of bloodletting, and the whole ritual of burning copal and having visions. So it is marking Rosalily as a sanctuary where bloodletting rituals took place. Ancestor worship was its principal function.

Figure 6 is a floor plan of the lower level of Rosalilys. We will look at some of the ritual activities that took place inside the building. We have seen what its external iconography is telling us. Now we are going to see what archaeological investigations at the site have yielded. Primarily, we are going to look at some cache offerings that were placed inside. As you come up the main staircase of Rosalilys you are led into the west room from where you can then go into the south room, and then into the east room. Only then can you get to the most private sanctuary of the building, the central room.

Figures 7, 8, and 9 have some of the offerings that were found in the west room of Rosalila. They were actually in the passageway between the west room and the south room. The cache consisted primarily of nine eccentric flints (Figure 7). There were many other objects involved. We have baby shark vertebrae, jaguar claws, remains of textiles, stingray spines, very small pieces of jade, spondylus shell and many other things. All of these objects were obviously involved in a very important bloodletting ritual that was held as the eccentrics were deposited inside the building right before it was buried. I think the reason it was placed in this passageway between the two rooms is because structurally that was the one part of the building where they could do it without fear of slumping or settling, which would have caused problems to the construction that went up above it.

The Figure 7A eccentric happens to be the largest one we have ever found, 52 centimeters from top to bottom. The main personage is in profile. Like most of them, he has what seems to be a celt coming out of his forehead indicating that he probably represents a dead ancestor. We suspect that the cache represents the royal lineage of Copán, the dead kings. The little squiggle at the bottom of Figure 7A, as David Stuart has suggested, might reflect the fact that this is a serpent.

Figure 7B is another of the eccentrics that comes from Rosalila. This one, of course, has three personages. This one in particular reminds me of the ceiba tree: straight trunk, leaves, and main branches coming out. It would not surprise me if a ceiba identity were involved and if these staffs were used in ceremonies that related to the speaking of the dead, (the ceiba tree being that entity that joins the Underworld with the world of the living and the heavens). Also one of them actually has what seems to be a Quetzal carved on the upper part of the eccentric. One of them actually has a little bit of the twine that was used to tie it to a wooden staff of some sort. Some of these still have the textiles used to wrap them in a bundle left on them. The blue color and the green color of the textile still remains.

Figure 8 has some of the offerings that come from the central room and were found in small holes about 30 centimeters in diameter dug into the floor of the central room. There were three of them in a line. The offerings inside were ocean shells and beautifully carved jade pectorals. We also found some stingray spines and a lot of cinnabar scattered on top of the shells and inside of them.

On a bench in the back of the central room many offerings were left in situ by the Maya. Most are incense burners. All of them had the remains of charcoal.

Figure 3A. Reconstruction of Rosalila's façades.
at their bases. We suppose that it was probably copal incense that was being burned. These were left in place as rooms were filled and, in the process, were almost completely destroyed. We are currently restoring them. One sat on top of a jaguar pedestal base (Figure 9). There was a lot of smoking going on here as Rosalila was buried. This is important, I am convinced, because all these rituals were carried on primarily, as Linda Schele and others have suggested, for speaking to the ancestors, calling the ancestors back from the world of the dead, and communicating with them in the sacred mountain.

This, again, is very much in tune with what you have heard from the other speakers today.

On the north side of Rosalila we have a figure coming out of a niche (Figure 10). I have noticed a number of interesting features about him. One is that he has a red turban. All of the kings in the king’s list of Copán on Altar Q are wearing turbans. The other portraits of the kings that Bill Fash found in the tomb of Structure 26 were also wearing red turbans. Over the mouth is a mouthpiece, a knotted bundle, again probably reflecting auto-sacrifice or bloodletting sacrifices that call forth the dead ancestors. Immediately to the left of him is the amputated hand of the sun god. Again, probably blood sacrifice relating to the calling forth of the ancestors from the world of the dead.

Rosalila was actually on top of an earlier version of the Acrópolis that had an East and West Court. I focused my excavations last year and most of this year on tracing the outlines of the other buildings in the East and West Courts of the Acrópolis. In early December 1994 I traced a courtyard directly to the west of Rosalila and found a large staircase that goes down from my research area into that of Bob Sharer and his University of Pennsylvania team. This allowed me to tie in my sequence of excavations of the whole upper part of Structure 16 to his. This has allowed us to see that the cen-
tral funerary chamber of the Margarita structure, which has been widely reported by Sharer and his team. It is located right in the central axis of Structure 16 and Rosalila. In other words, that is where the dead ancestors were from the very beginning.

On the sides of this staircase, in December 1994, I discovered some stucco panels (Figure 11). These are very interesting because in the upper part there is a celestial band which ends in the head of a bird with a curved-down beak. He has a hand over his mandible, and directly below that we begin to see a series of scrolls that belong to another creature. This was put into better context by Bob Sharer’s and David Stuart’s work this season. Directly below this whole sequence they have one of the most incredible art works I have ever seen for the Maya, which is the Margarita panel.

The iconography is repeated identically on this substructure as it is on the one that I have uncovered much further up on top. What this points out very clearly is how the motifs that I am getting up on top have ancestors directly underneath that seem to be identical in content.

Margarita’s central panel seems to be, basically, the name of the founder of the Copán dynasty: the heads of two birds intertwine, with their necks wrapped one around the other. On the right is a red macaw, while on the left is a Quetzal with a green head and a different beak. So you have a Quetzal and a macaw, and above the two of them there is yax glyph. This is a full body representation of the name of the founder of the Copán dynasty, Yax K’uk’ Mo.

Directly below this in our sequence (directly below Margarita) is Yehnal, an earlier substructure, on the same central axis of Copán. Here again we can see that the iconography that we have on Rosalila comes from these earlier time periods. Here is Kinich Ahau, the sun mask. In this example his nose is still in perfect condition. Just an incredibly beautiful mask that was not exposed until this year, although it had already been detected as much as two years ago. We did not proceed because of concern for the conservation of these masks, but in the past few months we have gone ahead and cleared them off.

In essence, then, the cosmological message found in Rosalila comes from the very earliest times, from the foundation of the Copán Acropolis. We have looked at buildings that relate to the first and second rulers of Copán, and find that as far down the line as the tenth ruler this message is repeated and conserved. What is important is, as Barbara pointed out, that we are bringing this iconography forth in time. We are bringing Rosalila and our work into today’s present world and into the hands of the contemporary people of Honduras.

Therefore, I have to talk about the Copán Museum. The Sculpture Museum is—as the architecture defines it—a voyage into the past. You have the vision serpent’s mouth at the entrance, from where you go and meet your ancestors inside. Not only is it symbolic of the journey, it is symbolic of our work. This is really something that we have made a giant effort to do: to bring the archaeology of Copán into the context of modern Honduras.
Afterwards, in the Late Classic Period, many such outlying centers may have broken away from the “mother” center or city, declaring their independence by erecting monuments to their own rulers.

Another reason for proceeding with caution in relying on the hieroglyphic texts to sort out politics, involves disagreements on interpretations of the texts. This is not so much a dispute over their literal translation, but of the meanings of what has been written. Conquests of one city by another are always phrased as the defeat and capture—and often sacrifice—of one lord by another. Does this always mean territorial incorporation, a step in state- or empire-building? Sometimes, judging from supplementary lines of evidence, it would appear so; but in other instances such incorporation of the losing city and its territory by the winner may not have taken place. Then there are questions of a “linear” versus a “cyclical” history. Can the hieroglyphic texts be taken as a literal, linear history of events through time—of battles, conquests, and the rise and fall of states? Or is the history more of the legendary sort?

In closing, let me say that I see the future of Maya archaeology very optimistically. We are now in the strong position of being able to play the “etic” knowledge of settlement against the “emic” statements of the hieroglyphic texts. Obviously, there will be many arguments ahead; yet I cannot see how this convergence of research lines will not give us a better and truer picture of what went on in the Maya past than the more limited approaches of any single line of evidence. We see the benefits of this convergence or conjunction already in the research that has gone on at Copán. From all angles, all perspectives, I think archaeologists know more about Copán—its buildings, its great art and iconography, its hieroglyphic texts, its extraordinary tombs, its ceramics and other artifacts, and its total settlement—than we know about any other Maya site, perhaps any other archaeological site in Mesoamerica.

Obviously, there is much, much more to know. But, from my perspective, the future looks bright, and I can only say that I envy you, my younger colleagues, who will be here to participate in, and to enjoy the revelations that are to come.
The Archaeology of Ancient China, now in its fourth edition with an expanded, completely revised edition currently in progress. This book, more than any other, has been responsible for introducing Chinese evidence to a world community of archaeologists and historians. It is, without doubt, one of the central texts of modern East Asian studies.

Prof. Chang is universally celebrated as a caring, concerned, and demanding teacher who supports his students at every step in their careers. Throughout his life he has led by example, both in his exceptionally high standards of scholarship and in the conduct of his life.

The Association for Asian Studies hereby confers upon Prof. K.C. Chang its highest scholastic honor: The Award for Distinguished Contributions to Asian Studies. The President and Officers of this Association join with everyone present at today’s ceremony in publicly recognizing Prof. Chang as one of our most eminent and accomplished members.

From 1965 to 1967, Moore was involved in the production of a 60-part television series on social anthropology. The programs were aired in Los Angeles.

Moore has been an honorary research fellow at University College in London, a visiting professor at Yale University, and research associate at the University of Dar es Salaam. She has received a number of awards including a Guggenheim (1995-1996), USC’s Dart Award for innovative teaching (1971), and Columbia University’s Ansley Prize (1957). She is also a fellow of the National Academy of Arts and Sciences.


She has been on the editorial advisory boards of several journals and has held governing positions on the Social Science Research Council, and in the American Ethnological Society, and is currently the president of the Association of Africanist Anthropologists in the American Anthropological Association.

It was the Plains location of these earliest documented sites that first brought the focus to bear on the ice-free corridor area as a possible migration route, as opposed to the coastal or interior British Columbia routes. An ice-free corridor, stretching across the Bering Strait to Alaska, up the Yukon valley, across into the Mackenzie valley, and down the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains was believed to have been formed during the Late Wisconsinan deglaciation along the retreating borders of the ice sheets, an event then calculated to have been some 20,000 to 15,000 years ago. As this interpretation and chronology did not conflict with the estimated date of 15,000 - 12,000 years for Folsom sites in the Great Plains, it was readily accepted by archaeologists who were interested in tracing the route by which the carriers of the Folsom culture had entered North America. A corridor through the ice would “explain” the patterning of Paleolithic sites on the plains.

By the 1960s when several Clovis sites had been radiometrically dated to between 11,500 and 11,000 years ago consensus was that the carriers of Clovis culture were the first inhabitants of the New World and that they had arrived in this continent on foot via the corridor route through the Canadian ice sheets.

continued on next page
Interestingly, during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the existence of the ice-free corridor was widely assumed to be fact in spite of accumulating geological evidence to the contrary. It had become a "myth," that one believed in, as Kent Fladmark put it, "running through the minds of many archaeologists, like a highway beckoning Paleoindians south from Beringia." It was partly the strength of this myth that led other likely migration routes—particularly the coastal one—to be less than seriously considered.

Over the last 50 years dozens of possible "pre-Clovis" sites have been reported from both North and South America, yet none have been accepted as valid until now. Why? Although some would argue too strong an establishment resistance to the possibility of any pre-12,000 year occupations, all sites discovered previous to Monte Verde have been shown to inadequately demonstrate either accurate dating, geological context, or human agency in the formation of the presumed cultural artifacts. Monte Verde's excavators have satisfied all these criteria and established a human presence in southern Chile around 12,500 years ago. Tom Dillehay of the University of Kentucky, the excavator of Monte Verde, has uncovered remarkably well-preserved artifactual remains at the site including logs and planks staked in place to form living structures, abundant vegetable food remains, Mastodon bones and the imprint of a human foot along with lithic artifacts.

The settlement at Monte Verde actually pushes human presence in the New World farther back than the 1000 years implied by the actual dates as time must be allowed for travel from Beringia to southern South America, a distance of more than 10,000 kilometers. What is especially interesting to me is that the ice-free corridor route through the Canadian ice sheets was not available during the millennia when the Monte Verdean ancestors would necessarily have been traveling south from Beringia. My own research on the ice-free corridor reconstructed the environment of a region of the corridor and tested the region's viability as an human environment through the analysis of interrelationships between the physical environment and social and biological factors. The Laurentide and Cordilleran ice sheets coalesced for a brief span between approximately 21,000 and 19,000 years ago. However even after ice retreat and stagnation, it was several millennia before the environment was able to support a viable human population. Calculations of harvestable primary production, prey biomass, and optimum yield available to humans indicate levels were below the minimal nutritional needs of a socially viable population in the linearly constricted environment of the corridor between 18,000 and 13,000 years ago, but were increasingly abundant after 12,000 years ago.

If the corridor was unavailable as a migration route between 21,000 and 13,000 to 12,000 years ago, it implies that archaeological sites south of the borders of the ice sheets dating to that time are either 1) evidence of migrations that occurred prior to the establishment of the barrier, 2) more recent than their excavators believe, 3) non-archaeological, 4) remains left by people who arrived in the New World via some other route, e.g. the coastal or interior B.C. routes.

While as mentioned many previously discredited early sites usually turned out to be either number 2 or 3 above, the reality of Monte Verde forces us to consider the other implications and related possibilities, i.e. pre 21,000 year migrations or migrations via other routes. There is some evidence that the bulk of the Cordilleran ice sheet amassed after 20,000 B.P., and that extensive areas of both the coast and interior British Columbia would have been accessible prior to this time. Furthermore the Cordilleran ice retreat began earlier than the Laurentide, ca. 16,000 in southeastern Alaska. Thus possible windows for coastal migration appear to be open prior to 20,000 and then ca. 16,000 to 14,000 years ago. The oldest accepted western Beringian sites are no older than 20,000 years ago. If human groups were living on the south Beringian coast ca. 25,000 to 22,000 years ago (which we as of yet lack evidence for), they theoretically could have moved east and then south along the coast prior to the deterioration in the environment and growth of ice sheets. Several theories regarding genetics, language histories and disease patterns of North America natives do suggest such a time frame.

However, again we are faced with the question of if people have been in the New World that long, where is the evidence of this long occupation? While absence of evidence never equates evidence of absence, I prefer the other possibility—that of a post 16,000 B.P. climatic amelioration making coastal migration around the south coast of Beringia and down the west coast a much more viable possibility. The Ushki sites on the Kamchatka Peninsula dating to ca. 14,000 years ago where bifacially flaked projectile points and bones of bison, reindeer and salmon have been found may represent part of such an ancestral population.

In the end, this new archaeological data may be again telling us more about what we don't know about the initial peopling of the New World than what we do know. The complexities and ambiguities of the issue are sure to occupy archaeologists for generations.

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RAINMAKERS
FROM THE GODS:
HOPI KATSINAM

Exhibit at the Tozzer Library,
21 Divinity Avenue,
Cambridge
Through Spring 1998
Chilton, from page 4


Vogt, from page 38

Figure 6. Zinacanteco house. (Photo by Frank Cancian).

Maybury-Lewis wins Brazil’s Grand Cross

David Maybury-Lewis, professor of anthropology, was recently awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of the Scientific Merit as a tribute from the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil. The award is Brazil’s highest academic distinction and was given in recognition of Maybury-Lewis’ outstanding contributions to the development of Brazilian social science. Maybury-Lewis’ work has focused on the indigenous peoples of the Americas, particularly Brazil. He has chronicled their lives and supported their struggles especially through Cultural Survival Inc., an organization that he and his wife, Pia, founded and which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

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even Quetzalcoatl Macaw in A.D. 433, and its subsequent change to a macaw devoid of Quetzal and Teotihuacan aspects in A.D. 738 are but one example of this pattern. The much greater challenge for us will be to interpret the vast array of deities and episodes related in Classic period imagery and texts for which there is presently no known counterpart in the Popol Vuh, the Books of Chilam Balam, or any other more recent source. Here, lacking the considerable advantages of the Direct Historical Approach, we will need to rely on the conjunction of the archaeological, epigraphic, and iconographic data themselves to shed new light on an old ethos.