WORKING WITH PEASANTS:
RECONSIDERING REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MAYA

by

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ABSTRACT

Claiming a post-1960 "revolution" in Maya studies, Mayanists have seemingly relegated the era between 1924 and 1960 (the culture-historical period in Americanist archaeology) to the methodological past, arguing that with the advent of the "New Archaeology" and substantial decipherment of the ancient Maya writing system, the misconceptions and misunderstandings of pre-1960's Mayanists have now been corrected.

In reconsidering representations of the Maya produced between 1924 and 1960, I investigate the origins and development of an objectivist model of the ancient Maya, the so-called "Morley-Thompson" model, that still persists despite both contradictory evidence in the archaeological record, and Mayanists' claims that the model has been abandoned. This study investigates the consequences of the intense and intimate interactions between Mayanists and Maya working together in the field. This interdependence of Mayanists and the Maya embodied the canonical model's inequitable distributions of power, and mirrored another layer of hierarchic power. I contend that Mayanists' interventions in pan-American identity formation explored the fears and desires of a U.S. middle class whose government sought to establish, then consolidate its economic and political hegemony in the hemisphere. I suggest that Mayanists' often ambiguous and even paradoxical representations, ostensibly of the ancient Maya, reflected ambivalence toward an indigenous group that appeared both extraordinarily like, and disturbingly unlike, popular conceptions of a U.S. national "character." I argue that Maya studies, beginning in 1924, developed a powerful trajectory based in ambiguous feelings of recognition, desire and fear of the American indigenous Other that was processed and articulated through Mayanists' representations.

I argue, moreover, that the conditions that contributed to Mayanists' canonical claim for an ancient Maya class hierarchy also remain in force, embedded in Mayanists' motivations for the relationships they cultivate with the contemporary Maya when they undertake the work of representing the ancient Maya.
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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mother, LaRae (Hampton) Porter, and to my grandmother, Nona (Holder) Hampton, whose stories of the joys and hazards of their own explorations of ancient ruins first piqued my interest in archaeology.
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Without doubt, the person to whom I owe the greatest debt is my husband, Bill Richards, who has steadfastly provided support (both moral and practical), understanding, motivation, and inspiration, all with unflagging humor.
PREFACE

Consider the image of the book jacket shown in Figure 1, a cover for the memoir of an archaeologist (J.E.S. Thompson) who figures prominently in this study. It is a portrait of the archaeologist himself, and of the archaeologist's preferred setting. A banner proclaiming the title (of the book, its author, and his profession) spans the upper middle part of the page, covering the area between the pyramid's base and its apex. The Maya Archaeologist stands in the doorway of the "temple," at the top of the pyramid.

In the photograph/mirror in Figure 1, I see symbolized archaeology's promise to tell its heroic story, the triumph of archaeology over its subject/adversary. This promise is kept by archaeologists when they undertake the business of re-presenting their "science" as education in the public realm. Together, the pyramid and the archaeologist can conjure up visions of heroic adventures in exotic, dangerous and mysterious lands. My own participation in these visions entails responsibility, and ambivalent feelings about being a foreigner — euil — in Maya territory, and a Mayanist.

The archaeologist and the pyramid are imbricated with one another in the practices that our discourse engenders, and each invokes the other in popular perceptions of what may be termed "The West." The metonym, pyramid, is also part of a binary pair with peasant. Mayanists in the field work with peasants, who perform the labor of uncovering and reconstructing. Working together, Mayanists and Maya learn about each other; what Mayanists "understand" about the Maya from their conversations and observations is used in their representations of the Maya, both ancient and contemporary. In conducting the research for this study, I have noted that the intimacy of such exchanges seemed to be constitutive of Mayanists' projects. Interestingly, one archaeologist recently described the Maya as having a "permeable outer ego membrane" (Tate 1992). Assessments of the Maya such as this one — actually declarations of difference — that
underlie many interpretations, are seemingly colonialist projections onto the Other. While they are allegedly of the past, they are actually of the present (Leone 1981). Perhaps our attraction to the exotica of archaeology and its promise of contact with that mysterious Other, is an artifact of our own unbounded egos, a condition of participation in archaeology, and of writing about it.

In the second half of this century we as archaeologists have been asked to re-examine our own role in these projects, and to reconfigure the theoretical and methodological frameworks within which we had operated, and the practices they engendered. These had included slipping into a role that resembled one we had hypothesized as existing in the past: a small group of ruling elites commanding large peasant labor forces for the construction projects that allegedly benefit all. This substitution was not only self-justifying, but also acted to naturalize and justify current power imbalances in which archaeology was implicated. The image of the archaeologist in Figure 1 testified to the entitlements archaeology had assumed. In the photograph, the peasants have all vanished, only the products of their labor, and the archaeologist who directed them, remain.

The pattern of micro-colonialism in archaeological fieldwork is still a widespread, albeit contested, practice. My own fieldwork followed this pattern. It entailed my being “given” a group of Maya “peasants” to direct, to whose labor I was “entitled,” according to customary practice in Mayanist archaeological fieldwork.

Working with these men was an exercise in experiencing difference, its pleasures and its frustrations: we each had only a language (Spanish) and a culture (archaeological fieldwork) not our own with which to communicate or rather, to miscommunicate. We worked together, though, laughing, frowning and sweating our way through the project and our limited attempts to understand one another. I could not tell whether either my acceptance or refusal of the supervisory role would have given offense; I confess I took the easy way out, and left the question hanging. This was the beginning of my interest in reconsidering Mayanist archaeology’s representations; the question left hanging is about the place where one Other meets anOther, the membrane of difference.
INTRODUCTION
Working With Peasants:
Reconsidering Representations of the Maya, 1924-1960

Objectivism constitutes the social world as a spectacle presented to an observer who takes up a "point of view" on the action, who stands back so as to observe it and, transferring into the object the principles of his relation to the object, conceives of it as a totality intended for cognition alone, in which all interactions are reduced to symbolic exchanges (Bourdieu 1977: 96).

Approaching their study of the Maya with the objectivism that Bourdieu has described — taking up a “point of view” on the Maya “social world as a spectacle presented to [them as] observer[s]” — two particularly influential Mayanists cast their long shadows over Maya studies between 1924 and 1960. These years, during which Sylvanus Morley and J. Eric Thompson dominated their field, coincide roughly with the culture-historical period in Americanist archaeology, and with the so-called “Carnegie era” in Maya studies.¹

I have taken as the beginning point for this study the start of an ambitious long-term archaeological excavation at Chichén Itzá. My research covers Maya studies until it experienced a localized revolution in 1960, when the publication of new material by epigraphers heralded the breakthrough in decipherment of the ancient Maya glyphic writing system that Mayanists had long awaited.² These years in Maya studies were devoted to the writing of a cultural history of the Maya; for this scholars relied on post-conquest documents and twentieth century ethnologies as important sources of analogies. Presupposing Maya cultural continuity, Mayanists initiated researches that simultaneously sought evidence for this, and interpreted evidence based on it. An element of the construct of continuity was the apparently permanent nature of the subsidiary, dependent relationship ethnologists described between an illiterate Maya peasant class and the knowledgeable, literate, non-Maya ruling class for whom they labored, as Mayanists held that a two-class, elite/peasant hierarchy had characterized ancient Maya social organization. This scenario was
remarkably similar to the “micro-colonial” set-up between foreign archaeologists, allegedly knowledgeable and literate, and the Maya, who were assumed to have lost all conscious knowledge of their ancestral culture. Complicating this atemporal class construction was another discourse that produced idealized representations of Maya character with a racialized subtext that constructed a hybrid, Mexican “alter-ego” to the Maya, associated with subversion and disruption. Americanist archaeology’s offering of essentialized representations of Maya peasants (and their Mexican “opposites”) in representations of the ancient Maya spoke to concerns in the U.S. about difference, a reminder that archaeological representations and reconstructions are not of the past, but rather construct and contest the present, and also have implications for the future (Leone 1981).

The problem I investigate involves these complex engagements of Mayanists with their work, and with their workers. Against a background of the various anxieties and desires of the age in which they were made and the hegemonic ambitions they sometimes obscured, I have set out to reconsider representations of the ancient Maya that appeared in drawings, photographs, paintings and texts from the English-language literature, both primary and secondary, and popular publications. These were grounded in ethno-archaeological discourse — that is, they were representations that had at their source a model of the ancient Maya based in large part on observations of living Maya — with a view to understanding more about the interchanges of Mayanist archaeology with American identity and colonial policy formation. Considered in the context of the intimate relationship Mayanists cultivated with contemporaneous Maya peasants, I argue that such representations reveal the extent to which these interactions, and Mayanists’ personalities and opinions, formed the model that dominated Maya studies between 1924 and 1960.

Americanist archaeology, within which Maya studies was constituted during the culture-historical period of interest, is well understood as a discourse that has grown out of imperialism and industrial capitalism, and whose representations sometimes have been vehicles for these systems’ ideological prescriptions (Hinsley 1989: 79-80). These are engaged representations; that is, “representations that are relational, local, and historically contingent” (Greenblatt 1991: 12).

Archaeology in the 1920’s and 1930’s tended to be the activity of a select few whose ability to carry out archaeological excavations depended on their ability to fund raise among institutions, corporations, and wealthy U.S. citizens (Patterson 1986). It is perhaps not surprising, then, that
the discoveries to which Mayanists and their supporters aspired tended towards the superlative: the
greatest, highest, earliest, most precious, most exact, or most important. Appealing also to
philanthropic concerns, archaeological projects allegedly brought to the region money, technology,
jobs, health care and education — that is, the trappings of the modern era. Archaeologists
simultaneously promoted (and produced representations of) allegedly authentic, indigenous
American “cultures,” and forged links between the ancient and the modern. Mayanists worked to
create a clear, American, genealogy and offered to mediate between Maya tradition and global
modernity, a project that accorded with U.S. interests in the exigencies of progress.
Concern for classification and chronological control dominated the field until approximately 1940,
when a Festschrift in honor of Mayanist Alfred Tozzer was published in celebration of his
contribution to Maya Archaeology (Hay et al. 1973 [1940]). One important paper in the Tozzer
Festschrift marked a turning point in Maya studies. Written by Clyde Kluckhohn (1973 [1940]),
an anthropologist and ethnologist who had also worked as an archaeologist, the paper was highly
critical of, in particular, the Carnegie Institution of Washington’s practices, that he critiqued as
overly historical rather than scientific, and as inadequately grounded, methodologically and
theoretically (Kluckhohn 1973 [1940]: 50). Kluckhohn’s view was that archaeology needed not be
a marginal and marginalized field, if only archaeologists would abandon their classificatory-
historical practices, attend to the theoretical underpinnings of their research, and consider their data
scientifically with a view to context and function (Kluckhohn 1973 [1940]). Kluckhohn’s
dissatisfaction was part of a sea change already occurring in Americanist archaeology, but the
publication of his paper in the Tozzer Festschrift was to have a particular and profound effect on
Maya Studies. Kluckhohn challenged Mayanists to re-examine their methodologies, their
conceptual formulations, and their aims.³

³ The next two decades between 1940 and 1960 brought increasing interest by Americanists
in cultural ecology, settlement studies, context and function – these remained adjuncts to the
primary theme of chronological ordering, and did not develop, until after 1960, into attempts at
explanation. There were significant changes in Maya Studies during these years, typified by the
undertaking of Maya settlement pattern studies by archaeologists Gordon Willey and William T.
Sanders. This branch of Maya studies contested the prevailing tendency to privilege “elite” material and structures, situate populations outside vacant “ceremonial centres” and to divide Maya social strata into a two-class, elite-peasant system. Such studies seemed to represent something new: deliberate investigations of non-elite Maya material remains, avoiding ancient urban sites entirely. Settlement specialists such as cultural ecologists combined data in the ancient record with concerns over modern Central American rainforest destruction and observations of contemporary farming practice, especially those that appeared not to be ecologically sustainable, such as “slash-and burn.” This apparent return to a kind of environmental determinism led some to conclude that environmental disaster was a causal factor in the collapse of ancient elite culture of the Maya, providing simultaneously an explanation for the end of monumental building in the Maya area and a cautionary tale for modern profligates who were seen to be destroying the twentieth century Central American forests in the same way. These new ideas claimed, and continue to claim, to offer revisions in the old model of Maya social hierarchy, with the abandonment of the idea of vacant ceremonial centres and low population levels.

In the 1950’s, the “seemingly complacent culture-historical orthodoxy” (Trigger 1989: 1) that ruled Americanist archaeology began to be challenged by other theoretical constructs, some of which were to severely rock the social sciences, as the civil and women’s rights movements would rock North American society. These pressures began to impinge on the use Mayanists had made of the relationship they had cultivated with the Maya. The dominance of historical analogy began to give way to neo-evolutionist comparison, although Mayanists continued to use both methodologies. Moreover, the civil rights movement in the U.S. demanded that encoded racist understandings be overturned; the revoking of privilege based in institutionalized racism meant that archaeological and ethnological fieldwork would have to be reconfigured. Once the project of representing the non-European Other had come under review, so too did the validity of many of the practices it had engendered. Among these practices, ethnographic analogy was largely discredited, and most of its use to date recognized as, primarily, “upstreaming.” By 1960, that which would be termed “The New Archaeology” was introduced to Americanists (Caldwell 1959; Binford 1962, 1965), heralding the end of the “culture-historical” period.
I hold that during these years from 1924-1960 Mayanists’ “engaged representations” constructed the Maya in equivocal and even paradoxical ways, and that these representations were available to be recruited in the management and support of U.S. imperialist, isolationist and pan-Americanist ideologies. Ambiguous attraction to the idealized indigene, together with fear of racial and cultural difference, produced an anxiety-ridden, complex and ambivalent set of colonialist desires. Despite claims of objectivity and ‘scientific’ accuracy, academic representations revealed a popularizing subtext that often displayed overt ambiguities, now idealizing, now dabbling in the prurient — particularly regarding sexuality and human sacrifice. The sleight-of-hand that Mayanists could perform depended on allowing slippage in categories of culture, class, race, and time. The work they did to educate others in the precepts of their model of the ancient Maya could be and were recruited to a variety of other projects.

On the other hand, academic representations that privileged desirable aspects of the Maya — some of which had a singular resonance with certain notions basic to U.S. middle-class identity — could be conscripted to help contain and circumscribe the threatening possibilities of difference, particularly if the glories of the ancient ‘high civilization” could be appropriated in the service of re-writing pan-American history and identity. I argue that the interested interventions of Mayanists — and the practices they informed and engendered — have been, in part, attempts to manage and alleviate anxieties about difference, although designed as an inclusive exercise in the construction of a new history of the West.

It is my contention that Mayanists transferred into the Maya “the principles of [their] relation to the object” (Bourdieu 1977: 96), and that the symbolic exchanges Mayanists perceived among the ancient Maya were reflections of their own exchanges with the contemporaneous Maya peasants with whom they worked in an unequal power relationship.

Arising from this research my interest developed also in the persistence beyond the 1960’s and the so-called revolution in Mayanists’ “understanding” of the ancient Maya, of the dominant two-class model of ancient Maya social organization. Given that recent critical studies have asked us to reconsider Western sources of knowledge and to reexamine assumptions that register a preoccupation with representations of the “other,” and with tropes of the primitive and of the
idealized indigene, the continuity in presuppositions about Maya continuity points to concerns about the way we as Mayanists continue to construct our mission and our audience.

In Chapter 1: Working With Peasants, I outline the main aspects of the dominant model of the ancient Maya, and introduce the two main Mayanist protagonists: Morley and Thompson. In Chapter 2: Cinderella and Her Prince I describe how Mayanists situated themselves relative to the Maya peasants with whom they worked, and explain the construction of an essentialized, feminized Maya peasant. The dominant model asserted both Maya uniqueness and cultural continuity throughout the sweep of Maya history as Mayanists envisioned it, and in Chapter 3: "Holding Together" I explain some of the recruitments of ethno-archaeology’s essentializing strategies. I discuss, in Chapter 4: Epigraphers and Scribes, constructions of Maya literacy related to an elite/peasant model of the ancient Maya. I examine some ways in which interdependent constructions of “elite” and “peasant” operated as interpretive mechanisms in Chapter 5: Peasants and Pyramids. Several constructions of the contemporaneous Maya preoccupied Mayanists, the Maya “character” as understood through two obsessions, Maya cleanliness, as I show in Chapter 6: "Remarkably Clean"; and the growing of maize, which I show in Chapter 7: Slipping Away, was related to the circumscribing of Maya sexuality. I examine in Chapter 8: Into the Well how Mayanists tried to define war and sacrifice among the ancient Maya, consistent with their pacific construction of an idealized indigene. In a final chapter, Conclusion: Mayanist Culture and Continuity, I demonstrate that some aspects of the dominant model of the “Carnegie era” persist in Mayanist discourse today.
CHAPTER 1 WORKING WITH PEASANTS

No doubt the religious cult of the time presented to the populace an august spectacle, but reserved its secret rites and sciences for the privileged few who were instructed in its mysteries. The forbidding temples seem to express the exalted aloofness of the priesthood that ruled this great city (Proskouriakoff 1963a (1946): 8).

This description of the relationship that ostensibly existed between an ancient Maya theocracy and their peasant subjects could also be read as a description of the relationship two of this century’s most influential Mayanists perceived between themselves and the Maya they studied. In 1924, Sylvanus Griswold Morley (1883-1948) and John Eric Sidney Thompson (1898-1975) were among the “privileged few” instructed in the “mysteries” of the Maya. Morley came from a well-to-do middle-class American family of academics; he was an Episcopalian, although not particularly observant. He was educated at Pennsylvania Military College (C.E. 1904) and at Harvard in archaeology (A.B. 1907; A.M. 1908). Thompson’s family were upper-class Anglo-Argentineans, and he was a devout “High-Church” Anglican. After being wounded in the trenches in World War I (he had lied about his age), he spent several years on his family’s Argentinean estancia (cattle ranch) where he became completely fluent in Spanish working as a cattle gaucho (Coe 1992: 124). He then read anthropology at Cambridge between 1922 and 1925.4

Originally, the views Morley and Thompson held on the ancient Maya were different in important respects. Before he began working with Thompson, Morley was convinced, along with other Mayanists of his day, that the ancient Maya sites they investigated were cities supported by complex social class structures.5 However, Morley eventually adopted and promoted Thompson’s view of Maya sites as virtually empty “ceremonial centers.” They also disagreed on other matters. Morley, for example thought the Maya to be polytheists, and not particularly devout. He felt rather that the peasantry complied with the sophisticated manipulations of the priestly elite in exchange for their interventions in the supernatural realm to ensure good conditions for agricultural production.
Thompson, on the other hand, came to be convinced that the Maya religion had been nearly monotheistic, that great piety was a central, constitutive part of the Maya character, indeed the overwhelming driving force in their motivations and behavior.

Morley and Thompson both agreed, however, on the central tenets of a model of the ancient Maya that dominated the period of interest. They posited an elite theocracy whose subjects were illiterate peasants/artisans that labored for, and conceded their authority to, a sophisticated, literate, ruling class. In this milieu, order was maintained as a by-product of the alleged natural propensity of the Maya character for discipline. There were, according to the model, no actual Maya cities, but rather empty (non-residential) “ceremonial centers” constructed for ritual attendance and market days. Morley and Thompson believed that the preoccupation of the elite was with intellectual esoterica such as mathematical, calendrical and astronomical calculations and the recording of time and its ritual complexes. Both scholars believed in the absolute centrality of maize to the Maya, and understood it to have been cultivated using milpa agriculture. Milpa specifically refers to the cultivation of maize by the swidden, or slash-and-burn, method of long-fallow farming. Depending on local conditions, the falling periods can be from two to three years, up to ten years (Willey 1989: 177). They believed the Maya worshipped maize as a deity, and that they created elaborate rituals and supernatural complexes surrounding it. This so-called “Morley-Thompson” model depended entirely on the notion of Maya cultural conservatism traced from contemporaneous Maya, through colonial-era documents, to the archaeological record.

Underpinning the Carnegie Institution of Washington’s research plan at Chichén Itzá was the belief that there Mayanists could bridge “…the gap between the present and the prehistoric Maya by the study of the documentary history” (Kidder 1937: 6).

January 1, 1924, under a permit granted to the Carnegie Institution of Washington by the Mexican Dirección de Antropología, Mayanists began archaeological investigations at Chichén Itzá with Morley (associated with the Institution since 1914) as the project’s director. The choice of that site had been strategic. Morley described the site as “the greatest city [of the] most brilliant civilization of the ancient Americas” and also as a locale at which favorable “labor conditions” were to be found (Morley, 1913: 63, 65). The local Maya had responded favorably to Mayanists’
courtship effort and many of them would be involved at the archaeological project as laborers and as ethnographic informants. Americanist archaeology was on the cusp of a new era, and at Chichén Itzá, the “mystery” of the Maya waited to be solved.

Two of the peculiarities of the field of Maya studies are, first, that in addition to its typical academic practices (publications in journals, scholarly books and conference presentations), it has tended to support informal networks for the dissemination of information amongst a select academic group, and second, that the most prominent scholars produced major secondary publications, aimed at both general and academic audiences. The speculative, imaginative and narrative aspects of the secondary literature such as Morley and Thompson published were read, used as references in scholarly publications, and assigned to students as required reading. Morley, a well-known popularizer, was in demand as a speaker, and often quoted in the media; he wrote numerous articles for magazines such as Life Magazine and National Geographic Magazine (Coe 1992: 126). Although Morley came under criticism for this popular writing, he also commanded considerable academic authority by virtue of his position at the Carnegie Institution of Washington. Thompson, whose popularizing tended to the publication of popular texts such as The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization (1954), defended his sometimes highly speculative conclusions as firmly grounded in scholarly interpretations and his own insider’s view of the Maya (Thompson 1954: xxv).

The Morley-Thompson collaboration began at the Chichén Itzá excavation. Both worked at a variety of other sites, and after Morley died in 1948, Thompson continued his tenure as senior Mayanist authority and as an epigrapher until about 1960. These two had made their career reputations as Mayanist epigraphers; their publications on that subject remain in the Mayanist canon. Between them, they developed a view of the ancient Maya that has come to be known as the “Morley-Thompson model” (Becker 1979). The archaeology they practiced in this period was characterized by rapid advances in field methods, scant development of theoretical models for analysis, and the integration of ethnohistorical, historical, and archaeological data (Becker 1979: 7).

In addition to the post-conquest documents that mentioned the site or described local Maya as the Spanish had understood them in the 16th century, the immense ancient Maya site intrigued
Mayanists with its possibilities for the development of a more complete view of the sweep of Maya history. The beginning encroachments of modernity into this region of Maya peasants’ villages—roads, railroads, airplanes—were among the various factors that made Chichén Itzá a logistically and economically advantageous site. Ethnologists (Carnegie Institution of Washington ethnologists Alfonso Villa Rojas and Robert Redfield, for example) were attempting to establish sufficient trust among the certain reluctant Maya, seeking to be able to live among them and conduct comprehensive observations and data collections. The peasant villagers of nearby Chan Kom and Piste were more open to overtures from foreigners (more than, for example, the allegedly “more traditional” Lacandón Maya, less suspicious and militant than some of their compatriots in Quintana Roo) and more settled into the new peaceful mode of interactions with the non-Maya Other.

These ethnologies were integral to the Chichén Itzá project. To interpret ancient remains, one method archaeologists use is comparisons with current cultural practices. Known as ethnographic analogy, practitioners suggest that this method allows the reclamation of the otherwise inaccessible past by explicitly defining a direct correspondence between activities in the present, and evidence of similar activities in the archaeological record. Since early in this century, most Mayanists have turned to ethnographic analogy as either a primary interpretive method, or as an adjunct to their archaeological analyses. The assumption underlying this practice is that the similarities scholars see between the ancient and the modern are necessarily due to unbroken historical relations between the two.

Interpretations of data are based on projections from the present, in the sense that archaeologists interpret data according to what they know about human behavior in the present, and extrapolate similar behavior in the past. The descendants of the people responsible for the remains can provide culturally specific homologies; other peoples at (what are considered) similar levels of social development and technology on the neo-evolutionary scale offer the opportunity for cross-cultural analogies; and human beings in general provide general analogies, that is, universal generalizations about human behavior. Ethno-archaeological practices that are of most concern are those that are “unable to distinguish on theoretical grounds between analogies based on convergent evolution and homologies that owe their similarity to historical relations” (Trigger 1989: 364).
Ethnographic analogy, although controversial, is nonetheless the method on which Mayanists came to rely in seeking to interpret ancient behavior. As part of the project of rendering cultural difference explainable, Mayanists deployed the notion of deep cultural continuity as one of their most significant strategies. Since their methodologies depended on contact with living Maya, however, they carefully circumscribed that connection in order to define and contain it. The substantial contact between scholars and the contemporaneous Maya living in the area under investigation consolidated a three-way relationship between Mayanists, the contemporary informant, and the ancient subject. Since the available data and the existing methodologies were insufficient to develop a comprehensive understanding of ancient ideology, social organization and practice, the search for a more complete understanding of the ancient Maya entailed supplementing (invariably idiosyncratic) remains with interpretations based on extra-archaeological sources. The intimacy with which many Mayanists engaged the Maya with whom they came into contact, meant that they formed close relationships with some of them. The illusion that they knew the inner working of minds of the particular Maya they loved beguiled them into thinking that they understood all Maya; that is, they had special insight. Thompson used the analogy of marriage to describe the relationship he felt Mayanists ought to have with the Maya:

If you are going to spend your life with a people you must develop a great feeling for them. You have to relate to them, as that terrible, modern expression goes; and I would say that for me it has been much more than “relating”: It’s been a kind of marriage bed (Collison 1978: 99).

Such a remark was typical of Thompson. Like Morley, he over-identified with the Maya, and there was often narcissistic grandiosity in the superlatives both used, which asserted their claims for the moral superiority and intellectual virtuosity of their version of the ancient Maya. However, one of the principal difficulties with the “marriage” between Mayanists and the Maya, epitomized by Morley and Thompson, was that it was consummated in a Procrustean bed, as I will show in subsequent discussions of the limited characterization of the Maya allowable within the Morley-Thompson model.

Morley, followed by Thompson as soon as he began work with him at Chichén Itzá, found evidence for a two-part “caste” system in the ethnohistorical documents written near the time of the conquest. This became the basis for their arguments for the existence, pre-conquest, of a class
hierarchy of the elite/peasant type. They believed the theocracy had a natural propensity for intellectual discipline; the Morley-Thompson model alleged that social control was exerted as a by-product of this intellectualizing. The essentialized construction of natural piety, respectfulness, and desire for orderliness in the ancient peasantry ensured their compliance with the exigencies of daily life: planting their cornfields, providing their labor for monumental constructions. The "social contract" was reinforced by the strict maintenance of the class hierarchy, and the concentration of all power/knowledge in the hands of the elite. The success of the contract was contingent upon each class fulfilling its obligations to the other. Moreover, the entire social structure was constructed around the recording of time in its passage, the prediction of seasonal and astronomical events, and a deep, mystical reverence for time itself (See Morley 1947 [1946]: 262-311; Thompson 1954: 137-144).

In the Morley-Thompson model, the monumental building and sculptural programs, the inscriptions in stone, the painted murals, polychrome pottery and jade, were the creations of the elite produced by peasant labor and handicraft. Morley was initially puzzled, though, by an apparent paradox that he framed as the existence of a civilization at the Neolithic stage of development:

Indeed in order to find a condition in the Old World comparable to the Maya cultural scratch...it is necessary to go far back in human history...to early Neolithic times—the Age of Polished Stone when man's knowledge and utensils were similarly restricted. On this primitive horizon, and on this alone, may the Maya civilization be fairly compared with the prehistoric civilizations of the Old World. And if this comparison be made, it will be found that, starting from the same cultural scratch, no Neolithic people in the Old World ever reached such heights of cultural achievement as did the ancient Maya of Central America (Morley 1947[1946]: 449).

Morley posited the intellectual virtuosity of the elite as a compensatory resource, and he saw maize as the essential ingredient in Maya cultural development. According to Morley, its everyday cultivation was the responsibility, and the preoccupation, of the peasants. Its scientifically accomplished improvement over many centuries to develop its full potential as a primary subsistence crop was held to be the accomplishment of Maya intellectuals and the essence of Maya civilization. As Morley told it:

...nature's richest gift was maize, without which the Maya could not have developed their distinctive culture, the most brilliant aboriginal civilization of the New World (Morley 1947 [1946]: 142).
Finally, if we are to grasp the real significance of the Maya story, and its essential meaning, we must realize that primarily it was one of the world’s most notable experiments in agriculture; in a word, that it was based exclusively upon and conditioned by the cultivation of maize, or Indian corn, than which nothing was of greater importance in ancient Maya life, nor indeed still is even today (Morley 1947 [1946]: viii).

With maize given such centrality, its cultivation affected all major activities and rituals:

The ancient Maya were primarily farmers and dependent on agriculture for their living, particularly agriculture as applied to the cultivation of maize. Therefore time in its various manifestations like the changing seasons, the coming and going of the rains, which were signposts of the farmer’s year, assumed an ever increasing importance. At a very remote period in Maya history...Maya priests began to notice the motions of the sun and moon and to preserve in one way or another an accurate record of their observations. Later...their observations as to the length of the year were embodied in a magnificent chronological system. This is one of the most brilliant achievements of the human mind — an achievement originally due to the corn farmer’s need to know the corresponding times of the year when he should fell, burn, plant, and harvest (Morley 1947 [1946]: 442).

Morley and Thompson both saw the ancient Maya peasant as preoccupied — indeed obsessed — with his cornfield, just as they saw the elite as obsessed with time. Both based their very similar conclusions on the their own impressions of the Maya with whom they worked, but Thompson in particular claimed intimate knowledge of the Maya mind and character through his personal and very close relationship with Jacinto Cunil, a Socotz Maya who was his excavation foreman and chief informant at San José in Belize (then British Honduras) (Thompson 1939). Thompson’s assessment of his “compadre” Cunil led him to generalize about Maya behavior, motivations and thought processes, present and past. Thompson and Cunil had a godfather relationship (Thompson to Cunil’s children), a tie that “married” the two families in terms of mutual obligations; “and by Spanish-Indian custom this makes us a close as brothers” (Thompson 1975 [1963]: 57). Thompson warmly described their association as follows:

I have known Jacinto Cunil, a Maya of Socotz, in western British Honduras, for twenty-five years, and our friendship has been cemented by godparenthood, which to the Maya is a peculiarly intimate relationship. I have come to respect him and love him, for he is kindly and upright, loyal, and the old-fashioned kind who believes in doing an honest day’s work for his wages. Jacinto’s life and character seem an epitome of the whole Maya way of life (Thompson 1954:261).

Thompson would assert this relationship and the significance of Cunil in his publications, effectively exoticizing the ancient Maya he claimed to understand:

The general character and religious devotion of the Maya in pre-Columbian times were surely the same as today, and, I believe, they largely decided the path Maya culture followed. Devoutness, discipline, and respect for authority would have facilitated the emergence of a theocracy, and as long as the priestly caste met the spiritual needs of the rank and file, there would, I believe, have been little opposition,
overt or covert, to it. The hierarchic group had a function vital in Maya society, that of intermediary between the gods and man. The priests were able to relieve, season by season, the loving anxiety with which the Maya peasant brooded over his soil and crops, and, remote in the mysterious, dark rooms of their loft temples, they gave expression to the deep mysticism with which that relationship was impregnated (emphasis mine) (Thompson 1954: 263-4).

The dedication in the volume in which these passages appeared was to Thompson’s wife Florence, to whom he had been married for the same length of time he had known Cunil. Note in the first of these passages the expressions of love and intimacy, and the attribution to Cunil of qualities that would make a good, “old-fashioned” wife. In Thompson’s 1963 memoir Maya Archaeologist he published photographs of himself and Cunil (among others) but the two “compadres” were not shown together. These portraits appeared on a plate entitled “Maya and their students,” shown in Figure 2. The “students” were presented in a casual snapshot-type image of the smiling Morleys (Frances and Sylivanus on the left) and Thompsons (Florence and Eric on the right), at (e). The rest of the plate featured a very different, anthropometric style of photograph that showed the Maya as types or specimens: (a)dancing the jarana; and a series of full-face portraits of (b) Carmen Chai and Eugenio Mai (c) Jacinto Cunil; and (d) Augustín Hob. Thompson noted about Mai and Cunil:

Other archaeologists...have employed Jacinto in positions of trust, just as my other find, Eugenio Mai, has been the standby of many archaeologists in Yucatan since I picked him up to go to Coba so many years ago...I like to claim credit for those two first-rate contributions to Maya archaeology (Thompson 1975 [1963]: 157).

Hob, however, he described as

...one of the best hunters I have ever seen...as soon as he heard or, as I am half inclined to believe, scented the game, his features, usually placid, betrayed intense excitement. He crept forward with the agility and silence of a cat until he could get a good shot... (Thompson 1975 [1963]: 183-4).

Such comments reveal Thompson’s view of the Maya as noble primitives that could be “discovered” and shaped into useful employees according to a Protestant work ethic. Despite his claims of sincere friendship, he seemed to think of his relationship to these men, rather, as their patron and benefactor. Morley has been described by his biographers as profoundly racist although charming, good-natured and genuine (Brunhouse 1971: 8-9, 21); he also professed great love and solicitude for the people he described as “my Mayas” (Brunhouse 1971: 319).
Both Morley and Thompson made qualitative assessments of the Maya as having character attributes that persisted throughout their history, most of which they found admirable. There are numerous references in both men's writings that explicitly connect these. Morley connected Maya attributes to the archeological record through ethnographic and historical analogies:

The Maya are fundamentally conservative. They have even succeeded in preserving their own language in the face of four centuries of Spanish domination...Maya dress, especially that of women, has not changed appreciably in hundreds of years. Their pottery, weaving, and cross-stitch embroidery have remained the same throughout Maya history (Morley 1947 [1946]: 32).

They are courteous and friendly, bearing out Bishop Landa's estimate of them nearly 400 years ago (Morley 1947 [1946]: 32).

Modern Maya agricultural practices are the same as they were three thousand years ago or more — a simple process of felling the forest, burning the dried trees and bush, planting, and changing the location of cornfields every few years (Morley 1947 [1946]: 128).

Thompson, on the other hand, made objective assessments of the ancient record from which he extrapolated similar character attributes as he perceived in the contemporaneous Maya:

Thus upbringing, the practice of self-restraint, co-operative work, and the inculcation of the spirit of moderation produced a tranquil Maya character which was introvert, but of a disciplined rather than an individualistic nature...the Maya character before the conquest was essentially the same...the character and outlook of the pre-Columbian Maya was little different from that of his modern descendant. That it was the same twelve centuries before is an assumption I must make. The tranquillity, the conservatism and the orderliness of Maya art of the Classic Period are, I believe, good arguments in favor of that assumption (Thompson 1953a: 37).

In his paper that contained the above passage, *The Character of the Maya* presented to the Thirtieth International Congress of Americanists in 1952, Thompson described part of the process by which he and his colleagues arrived at their conclusions:

Some years ago the late Dr. Morris Steggerda persuaded a small group of American ethnologists, archaeologists, and missionaries who had rather close contacts with Yucatec Maya to rate them on certain psychological traits (Thompson: 1953a: 36).

Morris Steggerda (a physical anthropologist working for Carnegie Institution of Washington) made a graph of those ratings (shown in Figure 3), published in his 1941 report. The results of the “Maya, Mestizos and whites” ratings confirmed Mayanists’ views (and not incidentally, those of the 16th chronicler of Maya life, Spanish Franciscan Bishop Diego de Landa, upon which document Morley and Thompson relied for much of their data for historical analogies). For the most part, the ratings Steggerda attributed to “whites” showed a particularly high rating for Maya cleanliness, high ratings for activity, talkativeness, cruelty to animals, generosity, respects
for others' rights, sociability, general intelligence, amiability, humor, industriousness and alcoholism; low ratings were given to quarrelsomeness and aggressiveness, expressed affection, and nomadic tendencies. As the graph in Figure 3 showed, however, when rating themselves, the Maya gave a much more moderate set of assessments overall; the three lines came close to converging only at the low-moderate ratings for “vanity,” “quarrelsomeness” and “importance of sex.”

Also on the basis of his assessment of Maya character, Thompson developed and maintained the conviction that Maya inscriptions could not and would not contain historical information, until around 1970, in the face of overwhelming proof to the contrary. For the same reasons, he would also not countenance the hypothesis that there was a phonetic component in Maya inscriptions, again, even when faced with evidence that gradually convinced virtually all other Mayanists.

Morley had long held out a certain hope that Maya texts would prove to contain some historical matter, and longed for even a single place name to emerge. By 1940, though, he expressed the view, adapted from Thompson’s analyses, that:

...we are now able to read perhaps as much as one third of the hieroglyphs [which] have been found to deal exclusively with the counting of time in one way or another...we can conservatively claim that they no longer conceal from us the general tenor of their meaning as being chronological, astronomical and religious records (Morley 1973 [1940]: 147).

Morley did not live to see this belief disproved, nor to witness the emergence of historical, biographical and geographic information from the subsequent decipherments and translations.

Historiographers now consider 1960 a major watershed in Maya studies, with the convergence of a range of significant changes for Mayanists, from paradigm shift in the entire discipline to specialist revelation. The move to formally consider process in a neo-evolutionary framework coincided with the publication (unrelated to these developments) of an epigraphic paper by Mayanist Tatiana Avenirovna Proskouriakoff (1909-1985) in 1960 that convincingly showed historical, dynastic information in ancient Maya texts (Proskouriakoff 1960). Proskouriakoff trained originally as an architect, but was to attain considerable renown in Maya studies as an art historian and epigrapher. Linton Satterthwaite, Jr., director of the University of Pennsylvania Museum’s excavation at Piedras Negras, engaged her to create perspective
reconstruction drawings and architectural restorations at the site between 1934 and 1938. Morley, upon seeing her drawings, hired her to make reconstruction drawings of various other sites in Central America, which eventually she published in 1946 as An Album of Maya Architecture. (The passage quoted at the outside of this chapter is from that volume, Proskouriakoff 1963a [1946].) Proskouriakoff considered her work to be that of an art historian, not an archaeologist. She relied upon the archaeologists with whom she worked, including Thompson and Morley, for data and interpretations of data. Mayanists tend to consider as her most significant contribution to Maya Studies her epigraphic decipherments that permanently changed Mayanists' understandings of their ancient subjects (Proskouriakoff 1960, 1963b, 1964). In accepting Proskouriakoff’s premises, Mayanists were compelled to reassess certain positions, consequently abandoning as their best source of information “readings” of contemporaneous Maya peasants, and turning instead to the actual writings of ancient Maya “kings.” This led to the eventual incorporation, as well, of Knorosov’s convincing evidence of phoneticism.

The influence and opinions of Morley and Thompson in the form of the Morley-Thompson model held sway within Maya studies, then, until the critical mass of evidence and the social pressures of the 1960’s together contested the model’s basic assumptions regarding Maya social and political organization, population densities, settlement patterns, agricultural technology, and the content of Maya inscriptions. The model was undermined by evidence from two archaeological streams: while the settlement pattern archaeologists offered ample evidence contradicting the emptiness of the alleged “ceremonial centers,” epigraphically minded culture historians disproved the time-worshipping model. These were the two critical supports on which the Morley-Thompson model’s wholly exoticizing structure was based, and when they collapsed, the Maya in the representations of Mayanists, became more like than unlike other “early civilizations” with historical records and cities.
CHAPTER 2  CINDERELLA AND HER PRINCE

America is the Cinderella of the continents; her elder sisters, Europe, Asia, and Africa, have monopolized nearly all the attention, and it is for this Congress to play the part of the Fairy Godmother and show what a charming and interesting young person she is.

We do not grudge for a moment the attentions showered on her elder sisters. Indeed the wonderful discoveries of the last twenty years, which have changed all our ideas about the antiquity of the human race and human culture, encourage us in the pursuit of our American investigations, for those of us who have studied the remains of ancient American civilizations on the spot, know that up to the present time the ground has merely been scratched (Maudslay 1968 (1912): xxix).

Thus, in 1912, one of the most prominent Mayanists of his day, Englishman Alfred P. Maudslay (1850-1931), addressed the International Congress of Americanists in London, England. At the end of his own career, he had an heroic vision of the future role of Americanist archaeology:

However, we must remember that all forms of anthropological investigation have the same end in view, that is, the acquiring of knowledge concerning the origin, development, and history of the human race, and the task cannot be satisfactorily accomplished if we leave out of account that branch of the human race which inhabited the continent of America before the end of the fifteenth century. Especially in America we have the chance of studying human development, unaffected by the cross currents of the ancient civilizations with which we are best acquainted (Maudslay 1968 [1912]: xxix).

In endorsing Americanist archaeology as a kind of “missing link” in world history and prehistory, the Congress’ own promotional interests were well served. However, establishing an indigenous pedigree in the New World, particularly in relation to its “high civilizations,” was a project that also aligned with the economic ambitions of the U.S., its isolationism and its pan-Americanist ideologies.

In the early years of the twentieth century, the establishment of U.S. hegemony in the Americas offered solutions to some of its pressing problems: political and economic, domestic and foreign. As a consequence of its desire to ensure political stability and therefore continuing access to the region’s resources and (peasant) labor, and to protect its considerable investments and loans
in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean Basin, the U.S. frequently intervened in these areas politically, militarily, and economically (Williamson: 1992: 322-27).\textsuperscript{12}

The chronic problem in Central America and Mexico, throughout the period of interest to this study, was falling agricultural productivity as land once dedicated to subsistence was accumulated in the hands of foreign investors and given over to cash crops to meet the demand by foreign markets. Subsistence systems were they breaking down in many areas and impoverished peasants were migrating to the cities, although Mayanists continued to represent an unwritten social contract in which Maya peasants allegedly still operated as they had for millennia.

With the outbreak of World War II in Europe, tremendous diplomatic pressure was brought to bear on Latin American countries to comply with U.S. wishes; the U.S. State Department (led by Nelson Rockefeller) created a propaganda machine that the department itself later called the “greatest outpouring of propagandist material by a state ever” (Rabe 1988: 10). By February 1942, 18 of 20 had either declared war or severed relations with Axis powers; it had been made clear that post-war economic aid would depend on such declarations (Rabe 1988: 10).

Throughout these hegemonic exercises, Americanist archaeological investigations, although not paramount, remained among U.S. interests in the regions containing Maya territory. In addition to its promotion and support of academic institutions and private foundations in which Mayanists were involved, the U.S. government exploited the privileged position of its archaeologists in Latin America. Controversially, a number of prominent Mayanists were recruited and employed by the U.S. military during both world wars to use their freedom of movement and allegedly neutral status as foreign scholars to perform spying activities in the Latin American countries in which they worked and traveled.\textsuperscript{13} The advantages that archaeologists as members of a privileged class enjoyed included the ability to travel freely and be welcomed at the highest levels of Central American government and society, but were also expected to consort with various classes and to ask questions that from-any other foreigners might be deemed inappropriate and
suspicious. Archaeology was the perfect cover, as Morley noted in a report to U.S. Naval Intelligence:

...ever since taking up my work with you I have maintained at the same time my connections with the Carnegie Institution and indeed I have had to carry on numerous archaeological investigations during this period in order to better facilitate the other work (Sullivan 1989: 134).

Diplomatic relations regarding archaeological concessions enjoyed considerable stability; concessions granted in the early decades of this century to U.S. archaeologists for Maya sites in Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras weathered revolutions, economic crises, military coups and foreign (including U.S.) interventions. Maya studies was a site of convergence of interests: institutional, corporate, national; and for Mayanists themselves, professional and personal. Exploration and investigation proceeded despite — or possibly through — political and economic chaos. Although a few Mayanists did die of, for example, tropical fever and gunshot wounds (see Wauchope 1965, e.g.), archaeologists and ethnologists seemed almost immune to the dangers surrounding them as they worked. However, Mayanists were not only capitalizing on the new vision, in the popular domain, of the in archaeologist in the field as both scientific authority and as hero, but were also employing ethnological data in their projects more systematically. From the beginning of the century until about 1960, intensive field research conducted by university-trained anthropologists became the norm; by the mid 1930’s scholarly authority in anthropology rested almost entirely on the descriptions specialist scholars made in the field (Clifford 1988:24-5). The result in Maya studies was that the ethnological representations Mayanists produced of the contemporaneous Maya underpinned their archaeological model, and such representations were seemingly more responsive to current conditions than to the archaeological record.

A striking feature of ethnology is the presumption its practitioners made of entitlement to intimacy. Intimate contact between the anthropometrist or ethnographer and native subject was practiced within the context of scientific anthropology. Practitioners’ prevailing notions of race/class hierarchy that denoted civilization as adult and male, meant that they projected femininity and child-like attributes upon the “primitive.” The assumption of the anthropologist’s entitlement to intrude into private spaces was analogous to the entitlement to intimate contact that patriarchal systems posited between an adult caretaker and a child, master and slave, man and wife, and
doctor/psychoanalyst and patient. The female-gendered party was not entitled to privacy; ethnographies and anthropometric studies thus involved quasi-conjugal rights: questions, procedures and touching that were circumscribed as masculine entitlements, co-habitation, and domestic service. McClintock has recently posited a relationship between domesticity, fetishism and empire, challenging the Freudian and Lacanian theories of fetishism in favor of what she termed:

... a more varied and complex history in which class and race play as formative a role as gender... The presiding contradiction [is]...the historical dichotomy between women's paid work and women's unpaid work in the home – overdetermined by the contradictions of imperial racism and negotiated by the fetishistic iconographies of slave and master, dirt and cleanliness, rituals of recognition and cross-dressing (McClintock 1995: 138).

The source of masculinized entitlement to intimate scrutiny originates in racist and sexist theories of biology and comparative anatomy, which, fused with the new scientific propensities of anthropology, were transformed into a “gaze” analogous with the “medical gaze” that, according to Foucault, was characterized by its ability to perceive the invisible interior workings of the body (Foucault 1973 [1963]: 135-6).

Several authors of various anthropometric and ethnographic studies of the Maya, often cited by Mayanists in their constructed representations of the ancient Maya, were medical doctors whose avocation was the Maya. The transformation of archaeology into a science also made Mayanists, even those without formal training, into scientists, with the attendant prerogatives science granted to its practitioners. The human “specimens” thus examined and measured were graphed, described, photographed, and catalogued according to “scientific” principles, and the results would become part of the project’s scientific data.

The actual practices of ethnology involved tacit permission to move freely inside Maya villages and homes, to photograph, measure, and touch their bodies, observe them in worship, at meals, playing, working and bathing. Thompson had described his sense that Mayanists’ involvement with the Maya was equivalent to marriage (as I noted in Chapter 1); the practices of ethnology, physical anthropology and anthropometry were examples of such intimate contact. The Carnegie Institution of Washington’s researches associated with the archaeological excavation at Chichén Itzá included an anthropometric study by physical anthropologist Morris Steggerda,
entitled *Maya Indians of Yucatan* (1941). Examples of the graphs and photographs he used to illustrate this study (see also Figure 3) are shown in Figures 4 - 7. The pair of images in the lower half of Figure 4 are of a man named Eugenio Mai, indicating his chest girth and "cephalic index." Steggerda noted that Mai’s measurements were not far from the "average." Such photographs were typical anthropometric views used for comparisons, and to demonstrate particular physical attributes of the Maya as a "race." Archaeologists called on photographs of this type to demonstrate the visual congruence they perceived between the contemporaneous Maya and images on ancient monuments.

In the photograph at the top of Figure 4, the author was shown engaged in taking various measurements of a Maya family, about whom he noted their stature and arm length relative to his own which provided a norm against which these could be compared. These measurements were incorporated into a series of charts (three of which are shown in Figure 5) that compared "four races": "Negro, Dutch, Navajo and Maya." Such data regarding minutiae of racial difference were considered important and necessary for a "unified picture of the Yucatec Maya" (Steggerda 1941: vi). Another type of photograph Steggerda collected was the ethnological view, that is, images of Maya engaged in activities and locations that were "typically" Maya. Photographs of men engaged in activity tended to depict them at work away from home, or engaged in ritual activity, as shown in the photographs in Figure 6, "Celebration of Han Lil Col." Women and children, as shown in Figures 7, "Cleanliness among the Mayas" and 8, "Preparation of Tortillas," were seen in houses or yards, engaged in bathing, grooming, laundry, grinding corn on a metate, or weaving. Qualitatively different from the anthropometric photographic studies, the ethnological views of women were taken from within the personal boundaries of family homes, and appeared to "catch" their subjects in unguarded moments.

Trust was an issue reiterated by Mayanists wishing to study the Maya at close hand; Steggerda used an assistant, Martiniano Dzib, a longtime resident of Pisté (the village one kilometer from Chichén Itzá from which most of the archaeological laborers were hired, and at which the bulk of Steggerda’s study was conducted) to introduce him into the community.
Steggerda credited the fact that he was able to win the trust and respect of the Maya with whom he worked to Dzib, to whom he referred as “Marty” (Steggerda 1941: vi). He also noted that:

...the relationship between the town [Piste] and the Carnegie Institution is of the very best, for Dr. S.G. Morley, then director of field activities in Yucatán, maintained complete harmony with the inhabitants. Mr. Karl Ruppert, a Division archaeologist who has employed almost every one of Piste’s men, is a friend to all of them (Steggerda 1941: v).

In addition to gaining the trust of the local Maya, one of the first steps upon the arrival of archaeologists at the excavation site was, typically, the colonization of ancient Maya space. In setting up housekeeping inside ancient Maya buildings, and using them as offices and venues for entertainment, twentieth-century Mayanists were emulating their antiquarian antecedents such as Maler, after whom Mayanists named the building at Tikal in which he once lived, “Maler’s Palace” (e.g. Schele and Mathews 1998:75). Maudslay published a photograph of himself, shown in Figure 9 occupying (in 1889) an ancient Maya building at Chichén Itzá as his “office” and living quarters. Shown in Figures 10-12 are photographs of Tulane University archaeologist Frans Blom in his “office” (Figure 10), Morley posing with his sister outside their temporary “home” (Figure 11), and Thompson’s occupation (symbolized by hammock and personal effects) of a building at Uxmal (Figure 12). Published in The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization, Thompson referred to the photograph (shown here as Figure 12) in his text, stating that “The ritualistic needs of the Maya of the Classic period had called for small narrow rooms which imposed an atmosphere of secrecy” (Thompson 1954: 109). He declared that buildings in the ceremonial center were uninhabitable, and further, that “the corbeled vault was not employed for utilitarian purposes, but almost surely as an embodiment of sacrificial effort” (Thompson 1954: 164).

These photographs invited viewers, from their middle-class North American homes, to note the “gone primitive” conditions in which Mayanists lived and worked. There are elements of mockery and grandiosity in these gestures, as archaeologists appropriated space they declared had been sacred to the ancient Maya, and, somewhat facetiously, reconstituted it as profane, bourgeois and domestic. Such reconstitution was, however, ambiguous: Mayanists also replaced the absent, ancient elite and performed the symbolic action of writing in a space from which knowledge of writing had been lost. These images are, then, exquisitely and quintessentially colonial. In penetrating Maya space with their personal belonging, Mayanists proclaimed proprietary rights.
Mayanists’ intimacy with the Maya resembled patriarchal marriage in which the body of the bride is given in exchange for the protection, knowledge and status of the groom. These colonizations of Maya space served to metaphorically feminize Maya land, resources and bodies the U.S. desired and needed to fuel the revitalization of its economy.

Maudslay’s Cinderella analogy, thus, had been particularly apt regarding Mayanists’ personal and professional interests in the contemporaneous Maya. The educated and privileged foreign archaeologist would play the part of the prince, “discovering” all the hidden qualities that made the perfect “bride.” Characterizations of living Maya peasants as, for example, clean, simple, diligent, and submissive, offered up a receptive, feminized version of the primitive indigene for consideration by U.S. interests.

Such a construct was presented in an article by Morley describing the Chichén Itzá excavation, published in 1925 in *National Geographic Magazine* (Morley 1925). The journal’s large and predominantly middle class readership was apparently interested in archaeology of the Maya, and current affairs in that region. Morley’s representations of the Maya that rationalized the peasant condition as an inherent attribute, rather than a consequence of foreign imperialism, could perhaps have been reassuring. In addition, descriptions of archaeology’s advancement of knowledge and its accumulations of commodities spiced with references to ancient ritual sacrifice, served to displace problematic issues surrounding industrial capitalism and U.S. imperialism.

Morley’s article sold readers a version of archaeology and the Maya typical of *National Geographic Magazine’s* rendition of the field, “stressing exploration in remote places and the physical demands of field archaeology, overemphasizing the discovery of ‘lost’ civilizations, opulent artifacts, and bizarre social practices” (Gero and Root 1990:35).

One of the photographic illustrations in the article (Figure 13, “Past and present”) showed an anonymous henequen cutter posed beside an ancient Maya stone column. This carefully staged image was, in part, a public declaration of the “fact” that the Maya were simple peasants who provided for their own subsistence and that of others through their hired or indentured labor. Further, they were allegedly contented with their limited lot. Such a characterization of the Maya as exploitable and submissive was indeed pertinent to the success of the Chichén Itzá project, but
more importantly it spoke to the exigencies of U.S. investments requiring cheap local labor. In the Maya area these included henequen, coffee and bananas, hardwood, chicle, oil and minerals. Ideally, that labor could be extracted without protest, a hope belied by violent Maya uprisings in protest against their exploitation.

References to violence in the caption (also included in Figure 13) supplied for this photograph were covert; however, some well-informed *National Geographic Magazine* readers may have been able to connect the text’s reference to henequen either with violent Maya uprisings due to the crisis caused by U.S. manipulation of the henequen market during World War I, or with the long, bloody Yucatan Caste Wars. These armed conflicts began in 1847 when Maya henequen workers revolted against their virtual enslavement in the foreign-owned plantations. Although there were several official “ends” to these Wars, the first in 1855, the Yucatec Maya continued to rebel violently against the untenable conditions for henequen laborers throughout the rest of the century and well into the next (Reed 1964).

The Maya man shown in Figure 13 presented the ideal Other. He had been photographed in profile, one of the two choices for anthropometric photos (the other is full face). This was a view that set up the image as showing a specimen or type rather than an individual; such a view also connected him with ancient images such as the stucco sculpture from a tomb at Comalcalco (of which Morley would have been aware) shown in Figure 14. Moreover, because he was represented as a simple man with simple wants, mindless of his heritage, the way was cleared for the establishment of entitlement that alleged only Western scholars could reclaim that heritage. In his article, Morley’s text placed the man in the photograph (as seen from the viewpoint of privilege occupied by foreign archaeologists) within a narrative of progress that stressed the path from ignorance to knowledge, simplicity to complexity, and that placed agriculture as perpetually central to civilization past or present.

It was upon peasant labor, this narrative argued, that the greatness of the ancient Maya world depended; but also, as the photograph’s caption noted, of “the complicated world of today.” One needed only to change the gender of the pronouns in the photograph’s caption to slip into fairy tale: Cinderella, too had the potential (with the help of her fairy godmother) to marry her
Prince and live happily ever after. *National Geographic Magazine*’s readers could, at least subliminally, have recognized the circumstances of a “typical” Maya henequen laborer (in fact, Morley’s idealized caricature) as those of the familiar fairy-tale. The caption asserted that this Maya man was compelled to toil for “masters not wholly of his blood” (as Cinderella’s stepmother was not). This phrase circumscribed the violence and exploitation of a master/servant or master/slave relationship, and magically transformed it into submissive acquiescence. Without the assistance of modernity’s transformative magic, the text seemingly argues that he will remain in the same condition, symbolized by his “primitive” costume, outside the society to which *National Geographic Magazine* readers may have belonged or wished to belong (as surely as Cinderella’s rags kept her from the ball). Note, however, that these are *clean* rags, marking their wearer as a potential aspirant to civilization. Naked from the waist up, the chosen costume encoded “primitive,” but also ambiguous sexuality, in its skirt-like wrap: for the primitive was often a feminized and infantilized figure, pre-sexual (or asexual) yet tantalizingly, the object of (illicit) desire.21 Naked to the waist, clad only in a “kiltlike apron of striped material like pillow-ticking” (Thompson 1975 [1963]: 30) and rope sandals, this incomplete costume (shirt, hat, vest and belt were missing) consisted of the necessary markers ensure that his identity as Other may clearly be read as non-Western, primitive, traditional, allochronic (outside of historical time). Mayanists referred to the “apron,” underscoring the associations in 1925 of such a garment with servants and men of the laboring classes, but also alluding to the feminine and the domestic; these were categories with which the contemporaneous Maya peasant were often relegated in archaeologists’ models. Amid the ruins, the photograph seemed to imply that he may as well have held a glass slipper, unable (allegedly) as he was to make any use, or sense, of the now decontextualized artifact. Resting his hand on a carved stone sculpture, he could also be read as sculpture-like, and therefore almost as mute and unacquisitive as stone. With the caption’s reassurance that his “wants are few and easily filled,” the Maya man, representing two hundred thousand others like him, was situated outside of time and “progress.” The text relieved the viewer of any concerns over his happiness with his lot in life “under a foreign master,” obscuring U.S. corporate and individual “progress”: actual acquisitions of peasant land and ancient antiquities.
In a recent study investigating the presentation of archaeology in the pages of *National Geographic Magazine*, archaeologists Joan Gero and Dolores Root suggest that the magazine seemed frequently to ask in such images “Are not these innocents *with* their ruins quite ‘in ruins’ themselves?” (emphasis theirs) (Gero and Root 1990: 32). The familiar juxtaposition of local native standing amid ruins provided a human scale for the size of the feature, but also, more importantly, “for differences in the human condition” (Gero and Root 1990: 32).

References to Maya independence and love of liberty were generally situated in the past as resistance (in the form of indigenous traditionalism and conservatism) to conquest, and unendurable oppression. In the present, Maya attributes such as love of liberty were abstracted, and although many Maya were armed and organized, visual evidence of this was largely absent from the published record. One such image was a 1922 photograph only recently published in anthropologist Paul Sullivan’s ethnography of the Yucatán, *Unfinished Conversations* (Sullivan 1989). Shown in Figure 15, it featured a rare glimpse of the so-called “rebel Maya” whom the Mexican army was still hunting in 1925. The photograph (now at the Peabody Museum, Harvard University) of the *Chun Pom Guardia* was taken in 1922 at Tulum, in Quintana Roo, by Karl Ruppert, an associate of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. Such an image, while representative of certain contemporaneous Maya, was not the type published by Mayanists at this time; U.S. corporate interests, or tourists (even the armchair variety) preferred not to recognize that such Maya still existed. The publication of such a photograph, in any case, would probably have violated the magazine’s editorial policy. There was no place in Mayanists’ academic representations, either, for contemporaneous Maya who might be inclined to violence.

Sensational accounts of violence, though, that were confined safely in a distant time, could be vicariously pleasurable. Maya violence allegedly occurred only in the remote past, in the thrilling vicarious realm of fantasy in which helpless virgins were cruelly sacrificed, where the primitive exists, as anthropologist Marianna Torgovnick has noted, “within a cherished series of dichotomies: gentle, in tune with nature, paradisal, ideal — or violent, in need of control…” (Torgovnick 1990: 3).
In the same 1925 *National Geographic Magazine* article, Morley described (but did not illustrate) "a gruesome sacrificial rite":

The somber natural beauty of this deep pool, with its chalky white sides covered with clinging vines of green, the imposing temples, and other buildings associated with it, the long procession of gorgeously robed priests leading their victims to the brink, the spectacular sacrifice itself — a dramatic hurling through the air into the dark, silent water below — all combined to affect powerfully the aboriginal mind (Morley 1925: 80-2).

This evocative image was illustrated (Figure 16), however, in an account published in 1926 of the archaeological dredging of the allegedly sacrificial well at Chichén Itzá (Willard 1926). The choice of female victim for the well, who was in this image to be the "bride of Yum Chac," was not necessary based on data from the archaeological record; however, she could encode a feminized, non-threatening version of the Maya: in the illustration she has fainted, and submitted to her fate.

While the Maya were often represented as feminized, "traditional" patriarchal gender roles (often, as in the case of the Maya, a colonial artifact) were an intrinsic part of the Morley-Thompson model. The male role as the head of household and family provider was one that Mayanists assumed, and projected intact from contemporaneous observations and the assessments of conquest-era documents onto their model of ancient Maya gender relations without a critical appraisal of the 16th century Spanish overlay, nor of Maya perceptions of gender roles. The construction of the essentialized Maya peasant therefore entailed a woman at home, supporting him in his labors with her domestic work. Morley’s *National Geographic Magazine* article provided an image of such a young Maya woman in another Carnegie Institution of Washington photograph (Figure 17, "A modern Maya maiden"). Morley provided her first name, "Theresa," but no patronymic, however. This hints that she was in need of a name — in other words, she was marriageable. There was a possible double meaning in this: she might marry a henequen worker such as the one in Figure 13, or slipping into the past, she might also become the virgin "bride of Yum Chac" (Figure 16). "Theresa" was not visually connected to ancient Maya monumental architecture, a predominantly male domain, but instead stood on the threshold of her home.

Although this girl would, in both archaeological and ethnological models, be assumed to have been illiterate, the photograph’s caption refers to the Spanish word *amor* embroidered in cross-stitch on
her huipil. One of the difficulties Mayanists had with their constructions of Maya peasant illiteracy as constitutive of their status, was that the contemporaneous Maya were not always illiterate, and not always uneducated.

Recall that in the Cinderella story, the prince retained his elite identity and position when he visited her in her ashes and rags; however she could only enter his space if transformed into his social equal, richly clothed. A photograph of the “staff of the Carnegie Institution Chichén Itzá Project” (Figure 18) was one that Morley also included in the 1925 National Geographic Magazine article. It provided another glimpse of Mayanist archaeologists who retained their identity and status in the ruins of ancient Maya culture. The five staff members are shown at leisure with “The wreck of the expedition’s only phonograph, an ‘archaic’ model, [strewn on] the table in the foreground.” The text below, in the concluding paragraphs of the article, refers to the absence of “rulers, priests...[and]... those humbler folk whose unremitting toil alone made all this ... possible” (Morley 1925: 95). Carnegie staff too depended for their leisure and their luxuries on the toil of “humbler folk.” However, the phonograph (and its replacement) was a significant element of the Carnegie staff’s own elite culture at Chichén Itzá; many an evening’s entertainment featured an outdoor concert or dancing by moonlight in the ancient “Great Ballcourt.” One of Morley’s biographers, Robert Brunhouse, described such a scene:

If it were a moonlight [sic] night and he wanted to give his guests a special treat, he ordered a phonograph concert in the Ball Court. Tarsisio and the servants set up the phonograph in the north temple, where the back wall slopes forward and forms a perfect sounding board. At the opposite end of the court the servants supplied cushions and the guests sat on a raised dais among the half-ruined pillars of the south temple that extends eight feet across the end of the Court. The acoustics were amazing, for the audience could hear perfectly the strains of Sibelius, Brahms, and Beethoven (Brunhouse 1965: 216).

The Chichén Itzá social life entailed a naturalization of the relationship between the foreigners and the local Maya peasantry, as a master-servant exchange. Occasionally, there was even a Cinderella at their ball, as shown in a photograph (Figure 19) published in a 1965 biography of Morley (Brunhouse 1965). Morley and another Carnegie staff member, a junior archaeologist named John Bolles (who took the photograph), dressed up a young Maya girl in a costume they designed, an imaginary version of “ancient elite” clothing. She was to be featured in a festive pageant in 1931 that Carnegie staff members organized to entertain themselves and their
distinguished guests: a regular form of amusement that they reportedly found diverting (Brunhouse: 1971: 207-8, 214 passim.). (The two in the background of the picture are Morley and his wife dressed for evening.) However, the academic claim for continuity in Maya women’s clothing (between the modern-day peasant huipil and traje and ancient elite textile patterns) paradoxically also posited a class division between ancient elite and peasant styles of dress. The costume also asserted the ethnologist/archaeologist as authority over cultural matters. In any case, this Maya Cinderella was costumed only to dance “traditional” dances at a ball, held for the amusement of the Prince.

Leopold Stokowski, then conductor of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, was one of the high-profile visitors Morley entertained in 1931. The conductor’s hope was that by playing his orchestral recordings in the ancient Maya ballcourt, they might discover its acoustical “secrets,” to aid Stokowski in his design of an open-air concert theatre. According to the their understanding of the science of acoustics, the ballcourt theoretically should not have had the properties it did; their experiments were unsatisfactory although the entertainments were apparently a great success (Brunhouse 1965: 216).

The Cinderella myth encodes the notion that non-biological racial, ethnic or cultural markers such as clothing are transformative rather than constitutive. Part of the project of privileging race in Maya studies has involved the constant reiteration of descriptions of Maya clothing as clean and white. Mayanists were particularly interested in women’s clothing, such as the huipil, as they felt a case could be made for a tradition connecting contemporary embroidered peasant dress with elite images carved on ancient Maya monuments, on the basis of descriptions from Spanish chronicles and comparisons. In addition, the Maya could be recognized by the symbolically clean and white (equivalent to civilized) and embroidered (equivalent to elite or folk) clothing worn by women, as being capable of rising above their “primitive” situation, just as the ancient Maya had achieved civilization despite their “primitive” stage of development (see Morley’s comments on the embroidered huipil (Morley 1947 [1946]: 32) cited in Chapter 1).

In contrast, however, a print by Mexican muralist Diego Rivera (1886-1957) (Figure 20) depicted a woman in the Yucatec Maya style huipil outside domestic space: in a factory or shop. In
her white *huipil* and high heels, she was connected both to her ethnicity and to modernity, in this romanticized view of the future of the indigenous peasant in post-revolutionary Mexico. The poster at her knee declares “Viva Felipe Carrillo,” a reference to Governor Felipe Carrillo Puerto of Yucatán, an agrarian and egalitarian reformer. During Carrillo Puerto’s term, women in Yucatán regained the right to vote and to hold public office — the governor’s sister, Elvia Carrillo Puerto, won a seat in the legislature. The baby this Maya woman carries might have been one about which she had a choice, as Yucatec women were, until 1923, establishing access to birth control through their organization, the *ligas femininas*, which campaigned for temperance, against extremism, and sponsored literacy education programs. Following Felipe Carrillo’s murder, the governor’s reforms came to an abrupt end. The hard-won victories of feminists were reversed: Carrillo’s revolutionary successors as governors of Yucatán even took away the female franchise (Ruiz 1992: 363). There was not, throughout the literature on the ancient Maya between 1924 and 1960, any explication of the effect on Yucatec Maya women of the sudden rise and just as sudden abortive end to this erstwhile Mexican feminist movement. As seen in the caption to a photograph of “Theresa” (Figure 17), Mayanists regularly reported that contemporaneous Maya women performed the same domestic chores as 16th Spanish friars had described: they provided daily hot baths for their husbands (with great expenditures of time and energy, as in the Yucatán, there is little or no surface water) lest they be beaten under the Spanish colonial law that authorized this; they spent their days washing themselves and the family’s white clothing until spotless. The Mayanist assumption was that what they saw necessarily represented female subservience to men as in Western patriarchal models of gender relations, and they projected that subservient female gender role into ancient times.25 This process ignored the complication that the prevailing contemporaneous patriarchal structure was inherited in large part from Hispanic models imposed upon the Maya *in law* but more importantly, failed to perceive the possibility of Maya refusal — by men, or women, or both — of any aspect of such a model. Assumptions based on ethnohistorical documents written by Hispanic and hispanicized scholars after the conquest were, at best, problematic reconstructions, and at worst, merely validations of, and granting of antiquity to, contemporary asymmetry in gender relations.
Mayanists’ awareness, if any, of Maya feminism, or of cultural difference in perceptions of gender roles, was not noted. In the Morley-Thompson model, women were doubly Other. The clean white traje or huipil kept her “traditional” in both the wearing and the washing — that is, Mayanists read this as acceptance of a passive role of women as keepers and transmitters of tradition and conservative values, and also as an inability of the Maya to transcend biological or cultural inheritance. Maya women’s retaining these clothing styles could have been read as their refusal to partake in the West’s magical paradigm, but it is not my intention in this work to presume to speak for Maya people. It is a central premise in this study, however, that the Maya with whom Mayanists worked and whom they studied, had their own reasons for agreeing to work with Mayanists.

As the embedded meanings in Mayanists’ representations of Maya peasants included rationales for dominant ideologies of imperialism, racism, sexism, science-as-progress, and industrial capitalism, these therefore had profound implications for the Maya, who did not control representations of themselves in academic or popular venues. Although the graph shown in Figure 3 (discussed in Chapter 1) was part of a non-Maya project, it provides a glimpse of the differences between non-Maya and Maya views on the “character of the Maya.” What Mayanists’ representations included, and what they left out, reveals much about Mayanists’ mission, their audience, and the projects in which Maya studies were enmeshed.

Problematic distinctions for the North American middle class were emerging throughout the period of interest: regarding private and public space, master/servant relationships, paid and unpaid women’s work. While these were continually shifting, domestic practices and gender relations in other cultures were under scrutiny. Mayanists’ story of the Cinderella of the Continents offered a retelling of a familiar myth that, despite its changed setting and cast of characters, spoke to the anxieties of the age: how to choose who should be included as Us (not Other), if not according to the previous centuries’ criteria of race and class? Cinderella had the innate qualities that allowed her progress, that her fairy godmother recognized, but were obscured from the prince, hidden from him by rags and ashes. The similar redemption that archaeology overtly offered was for lost artifacts, ruined buildings, and forgotten histories, but its general message was one of rescue for
humanity. Archaeologists offered to assist in the acquisition of an understanding of human history by recovering the past (for those who did not remember it were doomed to repeat it [Santayana 1959 (1910)].) Archaeology's project paralleled that of the post-war West: from the rags and ashes of war, modernity would provide prosperity and comfort, at least for those who were able to take it up — to "progress". The Peasant's fate, if s/he embraced it, would be the inevitable outcome of New World evolution, the triumph of modernity.

As representations of the Maya still contain traces of these same messages, and originate now, as in 1925, with views held by members of the non-Maya academy, these representations do not lend themselves to easy dismissal as artifacts of another era. This research is motivated by a desire to understand how the artificiality of the model and the fairy-tale quality of the relationship that began at Chichén Itzá in 1924, in the absence of comprehensive decipherment, continued to imbue representations of the ancient Maya with layers of meaning rooted in the essentialized, feminized Maya peasant such as the one depicted in the photograph (Figure 13) Morley presented to National Geographic Magazine readers in 1925.
CHAPTER 3 HOLDING TOGETHER

With the breakdown of evolutionist master narratives, the relativist science of culture worked to rethink the world as a dispersed whole, composed of distinct, functioning, and interrelated cultures. It reconstituted social and moral wholeness plurally. If synecdochic ethnography argued, in effect, that "cultures" hold together, it did so in response to a pervasive modern feeling, linking the Irishman Yeats to the Nigerian Achebe, that "things fall apart" (Clifford 1988: 64).

In the aftermath of World War I, James Clifford noted (in his critical ethnography of the West, *The Predicament of Culture*) that "modern ethnography took shape in a shattered world haunted by nihilism" (Clifford 1988: 64). The legacy of hundreds of years of colonialism, the failure of science to provide an adequate master narrative of human culture, and the devastating effects of the "War to End All Wars" on Western morale, left an opening for readings of people unlike any the world had known. The offer of ethnography was to seek underlying social order in the broadest context of the world’s cultures; its representations of the Maya, whose center allegedly had held through a series of catastrophic events, presented an alter-ego for the demoralized West.

Ethno-archaeology offered material for comparison with the West’s notions of itself, by deploying “scientific” constructs of race/ethnic/cultural difference that could be recruited by various ideological projects. In addition, for the continuing support of their work, Mayanists needed to promote the public profile of the Maya, and to educate the public about archaeology’s successes. Ethno-archaeology’s essentializing strategies were therefore also put to use in archaeology’s popularizing discourse, whose aims were well served by exploiting the public’s vicarious interest in the “mysterious” Maya past (see Becker 1979). Where the available evidence outlined the contour of absence, particularly the gaps in the archaeological record, Mayanists proceeded beyond collecting and recording to re-imagine the “mysterious” Maya.
A fantasy (based in U.S. notions of philanthropy and colonial guilt) of the fruitful relationship between ethno-archaeology and the Maya was complicated by cultural and aesthetic arguments about the “primitive” and the “modern.” While there were numerous other indigenous American groups that were exotic, primitive, mysterious and fascinating, the Maya seemed to hold a special key to the U.S. imagination in the demoralized, post-World War I period. They were not only mysterious, but their mystery was about to be revealed by the power of science (see Reed 1923a, 1923b; Morley 1925).

Publicity for Mayanist archaeology coincided with the renegotiation in modern art theory of the concept of the primitive, whereby ancient Maya objects began to gain visibility, as art “treasures” (New York Times Aug. 3, 1924; March 8, 1928, e.g.). The Carnegie Institution of Washington was not a collecting institution, as were the Smithsonian Institution, the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, The Field Museum in Chicago and the Peabody Museum (also participants in Maya archaeology), but the interests of modern artists and architects raised public awareness of the Maya, Mayanists, and the institutions for which they worked. Morley, for example, gave an address at the opening of the Maya-influenced Fisher Theatre in Detroit, and apparently acted as consultant to the builder for “authentic” Maya detail for the interior (Brunhouse 1965: 318). Morley, as director of the Chichén Itzá project, regularly apprised the media of its finds. The New York Times frequently carried articles on the Maya, featuring the latest “discovery” of Mayanist archaeologists; in the mid-1920’s, several of that publication’s journalists had a keen interest in the Maya, journeyed to the Yucatán (including Chichén Itzá, to be entertained and “educated” by Morley et al.) and contributed extensive, travelogue-style articles (e.g. Reed, Alma 1923a, 1923b; Mason 1927). The Maya were “news” insofar as they were exotic and primitive, but uniquely so; the representations Mayanists produced argued exactly that. The popular attraction seemed to be that that uniqueness, the “mystery of it all [that] intrigues as much
as the spectacle" (Reed 1923a: 7) was within reach, not only of U.S. scientists, but also comfortably available to U.S. citizens:

While American science stands on the verge of discoveries which many believe will rival those of Lord Carnarvon, the devices of modern civilization are fast bringing the more famous of Yucatan's ancient cities within comparatively easy reach.

Uxmal, which means "thrice destroyed," was the first to capitulate. A month ago it fell from proud isolation to commonplace accessibility. Its doom was sealed in the orange-perfumed stillness of the Merida midnight when twenty "Yucatologists," the pioneer group to bear the newly coined appellation, boarded a luxurious Pullman car at the "Estacion [sic] Peninsular" (Reed 1923a:7).

The gendered language of discovery and of conquest calls up the feminized Maya construct that archaeologists offered in their representations, revealing hierarchies of race and gender by which Euro-Americans measured themselves in relation to the non-European Other. The pecking order thus established placed the feminized primitivism at the low end of the evolutionary scale, and civilization's ideal of masculinized modernity and scientific progress at its height. From their position of relative privilege, middle-class Euro-Americans could indulge in ethnostalgic yearnings for ethno-archaeology's readings of people unlike any other the world had known: they were to vicariously discover a paradoxical society: creators of writing but not history; violent sacrificers of human beings yet warless, and divided into two classes, one purely instinctual, the other purely cerebral. The popular fantasy was that the "ancient" and the "modern" met, tantalizingly in the Maya, and just as tantalizingly, so too did the "primitive" and the "civilized." The solution to the riddle was in the hands of U.S. scientists: "after silent centuries, progress is smoking the waiting ghosts of the Maya from their sculptured halls" (Reed 1923a: 7). Those ghosts, many hoped, held the key to "holding together" in a world fearful that "things fall apart."

Some of these paradoxical popular perceptions of the Maya were embedded in ethno-archaeology's evolutionary model. It had been built upon the precepts of scientific racism, that is, the assertion that the human race could be divided into classifications, basically subspecies, according to absolute, definable biological criteria, characterized by shared physical attributes such as physiognomy and skin color. Encoded in the practices of social scientists, it naturalized the narrative of progress and biological categories of classification, which concepts underpinned the notion of Maya cultural conservatism and continuity. The notion of the uniqueness of Maya culture, another significant element in the public's fascination, however, was supported by another
theoretical construct, a liberal departure from the nineteenth century’s mainly descriptive and classificatory aims, due to the work of German ethnologist Franz Boas (1858-1942). Boas’ influence was strongly felt in the Americas, where his students began to take up the anti-evolutionary and anti-racist debate in the first decade of the century; Americanist archeologists beginning to take a strong turn toward classifying cultures, not merely artifacts (Boas 1913: 176-79; Gamio, 1922). Support for this grew along with various nationalist interests in establishing an indigenous American origin for the high civilizations of the New World. Early twentieth century Americanists understood continuity – specifically, continuity within change – to be an intrinsic part of their work as they adopted Boas’ anti-racist notion of ethnographic culture as the basic unit of study. Bringing his opposition to cultural evolutionism to North America, Boas instead promoted the idea that individual cultures each should be described as a unique entity and understood on its own terms; he strongly opposed “racist” anthropology, and encouraged a democratic view of the concept of culture (Trigger 1989: 187).

In the canonical literature of Maya Studies as well, the trend to a concentration on “cultural” markers gradually replaced the preoccupation of earlier scholars with race. Observations by ethnologists and missionaries of the contemporaneous Maya for example from the peasant villages of Pisté and Chan Kom provided data for the blueprint of the ethno-archaeological model of the culturally conservative Maya peasant.

One of the concerns of the Chan Kom village project (Redfield and Villas 1934, Redfield 1950) was the strong correlation between peasant status and Maya ethnicity/race, within an evolutionary framework that placed the “primitive” Lacandones (isolated Maya in the Chiapas rainforest) at one end and Spanish-American civilization at the other, but also counter posed the “racially pure” Maya with the Mexican (that is, Spanish and Indian) “hybrid”. At the crux of the dilemma of ethnologists was the encounter between tradition and modernity in which hybridity theories of race dictated that the purer strains were less adaptable, and therefore more “traditional,” Alfred Marston Tozzer (1877 - 1954) was a Harvard-trained archaeologist who taught that University’s Department of Anthropology for over 50 years: Tozzer has been described as the “mentor of most of the outstanding Mayanists of the last generation and the great editor of Landa’s
Relación [Tozzer 1941]" (Coe 1992: 126). A Festschrift produced in his honor in 1940 (Hay et al.) attests to his influence (and to that of Harvard) in Maya studies in the first half of the twentieth century, with almost all the leading Mayanists of the day contributing, and most having been his students. Morley was influenced by Tozzer, just starting out as a teacher at Harvard in 1907, to undertake Maya studies; Tozzer’s last two graduate students entered Harvard in 1946 (Coe 1992: 157). His influence was profound, although he was not in complete agreement with certain students of the Maya, notably Thompson, “whose opinion he did not always respect” (Coe 1992: 158). In Tozzer’s 1907 doctoral study, designed very specifically to address the evolutionary model, important to subsequent Mayanist ethnographers, he compared ancient and Lacandón Maya, about whom he stated:

The Maya of Yucatan and the Lacandone are separated only by a slight dialectical difference. This is now about the only common ground on which to judge the people of the two localities. A comparison of the life and customs of the two sections affords a most striking example of the effect of Spanish contact upon a portion of a once homogeneous people, one part having lived in close and intimate relations with Spanish influences since the time of the Conquest, and the other entirely free from all close contact with the Spanish-Mexican element of the population (Tozzer 1907).

Tylor’s demonstration of racial/ethnic continuity paralleled the impressions of Mayanists regarding the Maya “perpetual peasants” whom they saw laboring on the pyramids with little change in their appearance or condition. Morley was convinced of the cultural conservatism of the “pure Maya,” as Tozzer had endeavored to demonstrate. Following the evolutionary model, he
exactly recreated the Tylor demonstration in 1936, in a *National Geographic Magazine* article, “Yucatan, Home of the Gifted Maya.” The photograph showed a Maya man posed beside a sculpted stone figure, both shown in profile (Figure 22). The caption read, “A graven image comes to life!” Morley stated that the physical similarities between ancient imagery and contemporaneous Maya were significant, echoing Tylor’s notion that racial purity could be demonstrated through analysis and comparison of physical attributes between living people and ancient sculpture. Thompson also discussed and illustrated congruence in the physical attributes of the present-day Maya and ancient sculpture. In *The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization* he noted:

> Maya of pure blood have straight...black hair and dark brown eyes. The eyelids often show a rather pronounced fold which gives an almond shape to the eyes, also characteristic of the treatment of the eye in Maya sculpture. Many Maya have a fleshy, hooked, or rather aquiline nose, and somewhat drooping lower lip. These are the features which combined with the deformed forehead to produce the type of idealized beauty found everywhere in the art of the great period of the Central area (Thompson 1954: 30).

Thompson relied upon qualitative comparisons such as this for many of his interpretations. “Pure blood” seemed to have been a usefully ambiguous expression that alluded to racial categories without explicitly defining them; its liberal connotation of family connection was also helpful to the archaeological model, implying inheritance. Thompson separated the photographs showing his illustrative anthropometric examples (Figure 23, “Portraits of present-day Maya”) from the photographs of examples he chose from the ancient record (Figure 24, “Sculpture in the round”), leaving his readers to seek the evidence themselves and compare them to prove the “primitive-modern” connection.

Archaeologists had proven to their satisfaction that such a connection was secure. Watching the workers at the archaeological site provoked a sense of “recognition,” analogous to Tylor’s recognition of visual congruence. The process of “recognizing” behavioral congruence involved Mayanists’ imagined replay of ancient practice by first observing the actions and divining the thoughts and motivations of Maya in the present. Once collected, Mayanists fused these with descriptions from documents such as the “Bible” (Thompson’s word) of Mayanists, Bishop Diego de Landa’s *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán*.

The common people at their own expense made the houses of the lords...Beyond the house, all the people did their sowing for the lord, and cared for his fields and harvested what was necessary for him and his household; and when there was hunting
or fishing, or when it was time to get their salt, they always gave the lord his share, since these things they always did as a community... (de Landa, cited in Morley 1947 [1946]: 158).

In a moment of recognition, Mayanists saw in life what they had already “seen” in their interpretation, based on the description of de Landa four centuries previously. As Morley described the scene,

All of the tremendous building program of the ancient Maya was accomplished without the aid of a single carrying animal other than man himself. But what efficient beasts of burden the ancient Maya were! They carried on their head great carved façade-elements weighing up to 200 pounds. *I know this*, because their descendants today did precisely the same thing in the reconstruction work at Chichén Itzá (emphasis mine) (Morley 1947 [1946]: 448-9).

Such a shift between past and present, and between imagination and knowledge, was a privilege both Morley and Thompson allowed themselves on the basis of their “insider’s knowledge”: stated simply, Morley’s claim amounted to “I know this.” In his article, “Unearthing America’s Ancient History” in *National Geographic Magazine* (Morley 1931: 121) Morley included a photograph of workers at Chichén Itzá, with the caption, “Bearing his Burden the Way his Forefathers Did” (Figure 25). The text and image together telescoped the worker and his forefathers into the ethnoarchaeological construct of a perpetual peasant/artisan.

A more romanticized description of precisely the same scene was offered by U.S. economist Stuart Chase, who visited Chichén Itzá while researching his analysis of what he termed Mexico’s “machine” and “handicraft” economies, published in 1931 as *Mexico: A Study of Two Americas*. The book sought, in rural Mexico, a solution to the economic depression that was gripping that country as well as his own. Sharing a romanticized view of the indigenous primitive with the Mexican intellectual left’s conception of *indigenismo*, Chase’s publication was illustrated with a series of prints by Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. Chase, in all likelihood having been entertained and educated in the usual manner (Brunhouse 1965: 214), with site tours and descriptions by Carnegie staff, described his imaginings of the ancient Maya at work:

I find it difficult to resurrect the color and splendor of Chichen in its prime. The imagination balks or sinks into a muzzy sentimentality, spurious and stale. What registers most freshly is the picture suggested by the modern Indian excavators, wielding their bush-knives and setting stones in the restoration of the main pyramid. The brown skins, the white aprons, the bare feet, the primitive engineering, the manual precision - in a flash I see other Indians, similarly dressed, similarly deft, working here 1,200 years ago. The pomp and panoply fade before the incredible labor of clearing this writhing jungle, planting corn for untold thousands, and step by step, stone, by stone, with lever, roller and chisel, quarrying the embedded limestones,
carving whole acres of its surface, rearing these white terraces and towers to a matchless symmetry and grace.

The builders of Chichen Itzá come into focus, brown men in apron skirts, directed by master craftsmen with lined, wise faces. The rulers in their rainbow carnivals I cannot see (Chase, S. 1931: 35-36).

Fascinated as he was with manual labor as an alternative to technology, Chase’s imagination was captured by the idea of the creation of the trappings of “civilization” without machinery. The essentialized Maya peasant that archaeologists proposed was an ideal recruit for Chase’s project of promoting rural and manual over urban and technological lifeways. Chase had swallowed whole the solution Morley had found to the “paradox” of “civilization” without metal tools, the wheel, or beasts of burden (Morley 1947 [1946]: 449 cited in chapter 1).

Lacking ancient sources to illustrate their model of a peasant class, Mayanists have tended to rely on three main types of representation to convey their understanding of Maya as peasants in ancient times: textual description, photographs of contemporary Maya, and to a more limited extent, illustrative reconstructions. This last category, perhaps because it consists of so few examples, contains certain images that have been particularly enduring and, arguably, influential. Thompson’s memoir, Maya Archaeologist (1975 [1963]) included a drawing of the same scene in which he too saw the contemporaneous worker as analogous to the ancient one. The drawing, “Restoring the Temple of the Warriors” (Figure 26), was made by Jean Charlot (1898-1980), when he was staff artist at the Carnegie excavation in 1926, rooming with Thompson (Thompson 1975 [1963]: 38). Charlot gave the Maya peasant figure an aristocratic bearing similar to that which he used elsewhere to depict members of the ruling class, a romanticizing strategy often used by the muralists; his slightly orientalizing style paradoxically called up an analogy with Egyptology’s pyramid builders as slaves, however. His work at Chichén Itzá provided him the opportunity to form his impressions of the Maya and to combine these with views on modern Mexican politics and art. Charlot’s had been a wealthy, intellectual French merchant family with international connections, including Mexican ancestors on his mother’s side. He had some training at the École des Beaux Arts before moving to Mexico City in 1921 to begin a career as an artist. In Coyoacán (where Rivera also lived), Charlot studied at the Open Air Art School, where he was exposed to the then Minister of Education’s plans for the creation of a new, post-revolutionary, “Mexican”
style of art. Organized in opposition to the traditionally-oriented Academy of San Carlos, the Coyoacán school looked to principles espoused by the French Impressionists and the Barbizon Naturalists, particularly with regard to open-air painting. Charlot was philosophically disposed to favor the school's romanticized views of peasant life. His association with the Mexican muralists reflects the influence of post-revolutionary Mexican narrative drawings and murals, also tending to produce romantic views of the *Indios* (by artists such as José Orozco, Miguel Covarrubias and Diego Rivera, for example).

Two of Rivera's illustrations for Chase's book on Mexican economic relations are shown in Figures 26 and 27. His depiction of the Spanish *Conquistadores*, describes the historical origin of the canonical Spanish-Indian duality of Mexico. Ethnostalgia for an idyllic vision of the ancient Maya spoke to the affinities of the liberal *intelligentsia* in the U.S. (somewhat akin to the policy of *indigenismo* in Mexico); it was to such an audience that Chase had addressed his text. Rivera had refused the patriarchal notion of conflating domesticity, child-bearing and submission with female identity in his depiction of a Yucatec Maya woman shown in Figure 20. In the image in Figure 27, he illustrated another romanticized refusal of oppression. The bound victim in the center foreground was suffering torture; he was coded as Maya by the elongated head shape and the long, upswept hair. References to murder, rape, commerce, the church, and book-burning denoted that which had been taken from the Maya: their liberty, agency, beliefs, personhood, land, and literacy. In the background are tiny figures of Maya bearing burdens on their backs, an image of oppression liminal between the ancient and modern eras. Unlike Charlot's laborer, shown in Figure 26, these Maya were *de-constructing* monuments to be reworked as Catholic churches, and destroying "idols," to be replaced by the brandished cross. The claims of the muralists that their project offered "rescue" for the *Indio/Campesino* they romanticized actually constituted a continuing colonization, however, in that it disallowed their agency: a similar construction to that which archaeologists made of the ancient Maya peasantry. Diego Rivera and Jean Charlot were in the minority of muralists who incorporated Maya imagery in their work, having been directly exposed to it, and perhaps possessed of somewhat romanticized views of *indigenismo* that were amenable to the dominant model's pacific construct of the Maya.
Another Rivera drawing from Chase’s 1931 book (Figure 28) depicted peasant/artisans in a view that called up ethnologists’ photographs of Maya handicraft and food production (as shown, for example, in Figure 8). Rivera’s idyllic vision of pure Maya (Indios) and Mestizos cooperative in a machineless, handicraft economy, however, reiterated the Maya position at the bottom of the prevailing Mexican social hierarchy. This was a restatement of the dominant ethno-archaeological model of the ancient Maya peasantry, from which the romanticizing strategies of the indigenismo policy gained validity. The appeal of the model also meshed well with Chase’s ethnostalgic view of American rural life in the 1931 publication of Mexico: A Study of Two Americas.

A binary code of machine/handicraft, analogous to the “primitive-modern” dichotomy, spoke to ongoing U.S. concerns surrounding their own dilemma of urban-industrialized vs. rural-natural lifeways, magnified by the desperation brought to many by the Depression, increasingly ill-disposed towards the machinery of big business. Listing the “benefits” of Mexican folkways and of life in rural villages, Chase exhorted Campesinos (both indigenous and Mestizo rural peasantry) to:

"Hold to your corncribs, to your economic security. Hold to your disregard of money, of pecuniary thrift, of clocks and watches, of hustle and bustle and busy emptiness. Hold to your damned wantlessness. Hold to your handicrafts and the philosophy of your handicrafts, and watch them jealously in the face of tourists and ignorant exporters. When they debase the work of your hands, they debase you. Remember the code of the craftsmen in the great civilization from which you descend. You have their honor to keep (Chase, S. 1931: 318)."

If Maya peasants had retained the qualities that had led to the creation an idyllic, warless, and timeless civilization, as archaeologists argued they had, then in studying them, the solution to modernity’s most pressing economic and moral questions might be to hand. Perhaps more importantly, however, those pressing economic and moral issues could be addressed more immediately, given archaeologists’ arguments that the subservient position of the Maya peasant class could be rationalized as constitutive of their race/ethnicity, part of the uniqueness of the Maya themselves.

The Morley-Thompson model of the Maya, in particular, was grounded in claims of absolute difference, uniqueness and otherness. That vision built the contemporaneous Maya into
the continuity model, in a different but familiar condition: "The chief difference" Steggerda wrote about the village Pisté during the 1920's and 1930's, when the Carnegie Institution project was resident at nearby Chichén Itzá, "is that today the Maya are ruled by Indian-white crosses, largely of Spanish descent, rather than by native leaders." This opinion contained the crux of the case for continuity, that is, that the peasant allegedly continued to labor in their cornfields and provided occasional labor for hire to elite projects no matter who ruled them. With the help of ethnology, scholars created a nearly seamless representation of the peasant mode of life for over three millennia.

The Morley-Thompson model argued that the ancient Maya had allegedly accomplished a "machineless civilization," by virtue of the unique attributes of the purely Maya character. Perhaps modernity's fascination with the "primitive" extended to an adoption of their allegedly "magical thinking": by incorporating Maya history into U.S. history, the U.S. might acquire the desired special attributes of the Maya. Certainly, the U.S. needed no magic to incorporate Latin America and its increasingly landless peasants into the machinery of U.S. economic imperialism, a project for which Chase argued, and which the Morley-Thompson model helped to justify.
CHAPTER 4 EPIGRAPHERS AND SCRIBES

Of the moral effects of the monuments themselves, standing as they do in the depths of a tropical forest, silent and solemn, strange in design, excellent in sculpture, rich in ornament, different from the works of any other people, their uses and purposes, their whole history entirely unknown, with hieroglyphics explaining all, but perfectly unintelligible, I shall not pretend to convey any idea (Stephens 1988 (1841): 69).

One thing I believe, that its history is graven on its monuments. No Champollion has yet brought to them the energies of his inquiring mind. Who shall read them? (Stephens 1988 (1841): 73).

A New York lawyer turned antiquarian, John Lloyd Stephens (1805-1852) was speculating in the passage above on the meaning of the Maya monuments he encountered in his travels in Central America in 1839 and 1840. He had begun his journey only fifteen years after the extraordinary achievement of Jean-François Champollion in deciphering the Egyptian hieroglyphic writing system using the famous Rosetta Stone, found in Egypt by the Napoleonic army in 1798.

The fact that the Maya had developed a complex writing system greatly increased the appeal of Maya studies, particularly as the largely undeciphered Maya glyphs offered an attractive opportunity for up-and-coming archaeologists seeking to make their reputations as epigraphers, or even to go down in history, as many of them imagined. In the meanwhile, before decipherment, Mayanists transcribed, translated, and wrote with conviction about, the Maya writing system that they admitted they could not, for the most part, understand (see Morley 1973 [1940], 1947: 259-311; Thompson 1950, 1991 [1962]).

Exactly one hundred years after Champollion's remarkable feat of scholarship, in 1924, Morley was in search of a "Maya Rosetta Stone" at Chichén Itzá, as he had called it in his research proposal to the Carnegie Institution of Washington (Morley 1914). Since Morley and Thompson were among only a few scholars in the world who were abreast of then-current research in Mayanist epigraphy, each could undoubtedly imagine the possibility that, as a result of his intensive study, he might become the next Champollion. Their a priori assumptions about the
Maya, however, prevented them from recognizing that scholars had had in hand a Maya version of
the Rosetta Stone since 1862, when a transcribed version of de Landa’s *Relación* came to light. It
contained a Maya “alphabet” that the Bishop had attempted to compile (Brasseur de Bourbourg,
1864). In 1952, a soviet scholar, Yuri Knorosov (1922 – ) published the first of a series of papers
using de Landa’s “alphabet” (which he correctly re-interpreted as a syllabary) indicating his
evidence that Maya writing had been a partly phonetic system; he also attacked Morley’s and
Thompson’s “mystical approach to the glyphs through their notion of a cult of time” (Knorosov
decipherment as if Knorosov’s work and de Landa’s syllabary did not exist:

Most of the glyphs are still undeciphered, and, in the absence of an alphabet, progress
is slow. There is no key or Maya equivalent of the Rosetta stone, save for the little
information Bishop Landa gave us on the glyphs of the calendar (Thompson 1954:
167).

He was willing to accept the portion of de Landa’s documents that referred to the Maya calendar,
but of the Bishop’s “alphabet,” and Knorosov’s use of it, Thompson wrote as if these were non­
existent, referring instead to an “absence.” In direct response to Knorosov, Thompson responded
with extraordinary invective; he clung, until the end of his life, to his anti-phonetic (and anti-
Knorosov) position, attacking him on the basis of his nationality and supposed communist
affiliations as well as on his scholarship. He wrote:

During recent years, claims of the “first things in the world” which have emanated
from Moscow have gone from the invention of the submarine to the invention of
baseball. A little-known claim of this sort pertains to the discovery of the principles
which are the key to the decipherment of the hieroglyphic writing of the Maya of
Central America (Thompson 1953b cited in Coe 1992:152-3).

Thompson’s influence was considerable, and he attacked those of his colleagues who
acknowledged or supported Knorosov; very few were willing to gainsay him.36 Proskouriakoff
(whose breakthrough interpretation in 1960 would prove as fatal as Knorosov’s proofs to
Thompson’s other claim that the inscriptions could not be historical in nature) was among those
who found it difficult to directly oppose her mentor, Thompson, although she had read and was
very interested in Knorosov’s work (Coe 1992: 155). Thompson, however —having said “We
[archaeologists] have an affinity with Sherlock Holmes”— was not ever willing to admit that
several other Mayanist Holmeses had solved the case (Thompson 1954: 17).
How patterns of literacy had been distributed in ancient Maya populations was an important issue for Mayanists. Not directly discernible from the archaeological record, literacy from the Spanish conquest onward had been assessed as hierarchic from within the colonial class system that altered such patterns even as they were being described. The non-Maya dominant group (even as the constituency of that group changed) concentrated its own educational efforts on eradicating Maya languages, writing and belief systems. The contemporary Maya perspective on this process is exemplified by the following statements made by Maya (Kaqchikel) scholar and activist Raxche’ (Demetrio Rodríguez Guaján):

The process of assimilation in Guatemala was initiated five hundred years ago, and through it Maya culture has been persecuted by and absorbed into the dominant culture. It is motivated and practiced by violent means. It is the policy followed first by the Spanish (1524-1821), then by the Creoles (1821-1871), and today by the Ladinos (since 1871) in their relationships with the Maya (Raxche’ 1996: 78).

Mayanists, who had a vested interest in the notion of peasant illiteracy in their two-class model, tended to ignore contemporaneous Maya resistance to Ladino educational efforts, and accepted colonial-era documents that placed literacy exclusively with elites. They perceived in the contemporaneous Maya peasant subjects of their ethnologies vestiges of that colonial division, and it was the essentialized peasant of their model that was illiterate. They equated literacy with the encroachment of modernity, and illiteracy with Maya cultural conservatism. They argued, that is, that the more educated and literate, the less “Maya” they became. For the ancient Maya elite, the model held that the exact reverse was true; it equated intensive and exclusive education as denoting the epitome of uniquely Maya attributes.

The contemporary Maya they represented as receiving guidance, almost osmotically, from the modern Western world, in part through the presence of researchers as employers and teachers at projects such as Chan Kom and Chichén Itzá. The Maya, however, were neither generally illiterate, nor open to the presence of teachers that were sent according to government edicts, to attempt to set up Spanish language schools in Maya villages. These efforts were often notoriously
unsuccessful. Paulino Yama, one of ethnologist Alfonso Villa’s informants at the village of Señor, told Villa in 1932 about teachers:

First they come with flattery and kindness in order later on to manage us like children. El Maestro...when he comes here, brings us cigarettes, medicines, and other things as presents. Why does he act that way? Does he think we are girls (to be courted)? Without any doubt he is plotting something (Sullivan 1996: 130).

Villa had recorded this in his field notes, and the parenthetical comment about courtship was his insertion.

By 1935 the Maya in Quintana Roo were becoming desperate for the help they thought foreign (U.S.) archaeologists, particularly Morley, could provide for them. They wanted arms and support in their struggle with the Mexican government, which, impatient with the intransigence of the Quintana Roo villages, were sending troops in response to the civil disobedience of these Maya who refused to allow schoolteachers into their villages (Sullivan 1989). A copy of a letter written in Yucatec Maya to Morley in the mid-1930’s by a member of the Xcahal Guardia (who, like the Chun Pom Guardia, guarded a Maya shrine) is shown in Figure 29, part of an earnest correspondence with Morley in which each party was hoping to secure the cooperation of the other, for different ends. Clearly, resistance to the Mexican government’s education programs did not preclude literacy. Morley, however, was unable to read it himself, and having only a very rudimentary grasp of Spanish and no Maya, had to employ a multilingual and literate Maya translator. Morley, immersed as he was in his particular construct of Maya literacy, may not have been able to appreciate the irony of the reversal of the roles of “literate” Mayanist and “illiterate” Maya that arose in his dealings with these men.37 Morley avoided any discussion of contemporaneous Maya literacy in describing his views on its distribution in ancient times. Although they were well acquainted with the fact that many of the contemporaneous Maya with whom they had contact were bilingually literate (in Spanish and Maya) Morley and Thompson denied the possibility of literate peasants in the ancient past.

Archaeologists presupposed that the ancient Maya inscriptions were the exclusive production of the priestly elite: hence their use of the term “hieroglyphic” to describe the system. Franciscan commissary-general Fray Alonso Ponce, who was in Yucatán in 1588, made exactly that claim: “These letters and characters were understood only by the priests of the idols (who in
that language are call Ahkins) and a few principal natives” (Brinton 1890: 234-5). In The Ancient Maya, Morley cited de Landa’s descriptions of Maya writing and codices:

These people also made use of certain characters or letters, with which they wrote in their books their ancient affairs and their sciences, and with these and drawings and with certain signs in these drawings, they understood their affairs and made others understand them and taught them. We found a great number of books in these characters, and, as they contained nothing in which there was not to be seen superstition and lies of the devil, we burned them all, which they regretted to an amazing degree and caused them affliction (emphasis mine) (Morley 1947 [1946]: 295).

The auto-da-fé de Landa described was one of the most notorious examples of the deliberate destruction of the educational system and the knowledge (their “ancient affairs and sciences”) contained in Maya books. In their place the Spanish formula substituted Western notions of power and knowledge, and indeed ensured that these were concentrated in the hands of an upper class. However, in the portion of the above passage I have emphasized, de Landa’s remarks seem to hint at the possibility of more generalized Maya literacy and education in the 16th century before the Spanish conquest than the Morley-Thompson model allowed.

Projecting material from post-conquest documents written by the Spanish, Mayanists constructed ancient Maya literacy based on that which the Spanish had imposed upon the Maya they conquered. Separating out the sons of those whom they deemed headmen of the villages, the Franciscan friars set about educating these boys to be the new literate class of Hispanicized Maya (Mestizo, in the present parlance.) Concentrated efforts at re-education such as those described above, had apparently obliterated the Maya writing system early in the conquest period, as there have been no known survivals of this knowledge. It is not known how literacy was distributed in pre-conquest times, nor in ancient times; what is clear is that the difficulties with decipherment that Mayanists experienced had more to do with their presuppositions about ancient Maya literacy than the available documentary or historical evidence.

Thompson’s conviction that the class division separated the elite purview of arcane intellectual activity from the simple piety of the peasant class was directly related to his constructions of literacy, in that he alleged the “hieroglyphs” were conceived and written in an anagogical mode rather than presenting literal transcriptions of language. 39 In his text published in
1950, *Maya Hieroglyphic Writing: An Introduction*, Thompson explained that the glyphs did not express a language, but mystical esoterica:

Without a full understanding of the text one can not, for instance, tell whether the presence of a glyph of a dog refers to that animal’s role as bringer of fire to mankind or to his duty of leading the dead to the underworld. That such mystical meanings are imbedded in the glyphs is beyond doubt, but as yet we can only guess as to the association the Maya author had in mind. Clearly, our duty is to seek more of those mythological associations (Thompson 1950: 295).

Having understood the calendrical portions of the texts only, neither Morley nor Thompson entertained the notion that any but a small elite group, intensively and specially educated (as Mayanists themselves were), would have been able to be literate in Maya.\(^{40}\) Mayanists were thoroughly “numerate” (that is, they understood the ancient number system) well before 1960, but despite inflating Maya calendrics to encompass everything that (they assumed) was important to know about Maya writing, Mayanists were themselves not *literate* in the sense that the ancient Maya had been. It is entirely possible that the general ancient Maya population could have been more literate than any Mayanists had managed to be until at least the late 1970’s.

In his treatment of Maya inscriptions, Morley published charts, diagrams and explanations of what was “known” of them in 1946 (Figures 29-31). Morley’s much-imitated, elegant, and instantly readable diagram of the ancient Maya *tzolkin* and *haab* calendars is reproduced in Figure 39. Morley also described the system of numerical notation (numbers 0-19 are shown in Figure 31) and translated an Initial Series from stela E at Quirigua (Figure 32). As long as it had taken Mayanists to reach that point of understanding, an interested public could easily grasp certain aspects of the system at a glance. Yet, Mayanists insisted ancient peasant/artisans had no idea what any of the symbols they were carving meant.

One form of “proof” for this argument refers to the existence of errors found in the ancient Maya record, such as an incorrect day number; this was taken to mean that Maya artisans were merely copying, and were unaware of their mistakes. Thompson, in his imaginative description of heart sacrifices, mentioned one sacrifice victim who had made such a mistake and was, presumably, about to die for it (see Appendix A). The importance Morley attached to literacy, and the exclusivity that he claimed for it, were a very personal project for him, as the West’s
privileging of literacy had conjured up a heroic scenario for his own role in archaeology. The scholar who discovered the means to decipher Maya glyphs would be the next Champollion.\textsuperscript{41}

It is a striking feature of the Morley-Thompson model, then, that it depended in part on the notion that the peasant/artisan class had carved, drawn or painted all the “hieroglyphic” inscriptions \textit{without being able to understand any of their content}. Of these allegedly illiterate scribes, Thompson wrote in the preface to his \textit{Catalogue of Maya Hieroglyphs}, that he completed in 1960:

The painted Initial series jar from Uaxactún has errors which suggest that the artist was not copying a prepared drawing. Apart from the errors in calculation...there are several errors in details of glyphs which show the artist’s ignorance of his subject and which could hardly have appeared had this been a careful copy of a priest astronomer’s drawing (Thompson 1991 [1962]: 17).

In contrast, the unique vessel from Palenque with carved Initial Series carries a carefully prepared text with correct Initial Series and a correctly recorded entry of a base in the 819-day count. This was esoteric knowledge surely beyond the ken of a decorator of pottery, and one can only conclude that the artist was following a careful drawing supplied by his sacerdotal employer (Thompson 1991 [1962]: 17-18).

The notion of the “illiterate writer” was also featured in a set of drawings Jean Chariot made for Morley’s 1946 \textit{The Ancient Maya}, to demonstrate “the making of a Maya monument” (Figure 33). The drawings illustrated several aspects of the Morley-Thompson model, in which the priests allegedly would prepare drawings of the required inscriptions, while the peasant/artisans would haul the stones in their capacity as human “beasts of burden,” and then carve the texts — symbols of Maya enlightenment and civilization — with their Neolithic paraphernalia. The four-frame series encapsulates the paradoxical construction of the worker-artisan who cannot read what he writes, and the social contract that depended on that strictly enforced pattern of literacy distribution.

Although ancient Maya monuments displayed images of figures naked or clad in a loincloth that Charlot was able to quote, none of the Maya images depicted such figures as engaged in work. Archaeologists have variously interpreted naked or semi-naked Maya figures as laborers or members of the lower (peasant) class unless bound, in which case they were thought to have been slaves or prisoners (Morley 1947 [1946]: 176; Thompson 1954: 78, 94, 247). The underlying notion was one that equated elevated class status in proportion to possession of material goods, and lack thereof, with low status, bondage, and servitude. This assumption, communicated in Charlot’s drawings, indicated to the viewer, whether familiar or not with Maya iconography, that
the nearly naked figures were to be read as lower in status than, and therefore subservient to, the clothed figures.

The viewer was asked to recognize the superiority of one figure in each of the first three frames, whose stature, posture, and dress encoded elite status in that he costumes and postures were borrowed from ancient Maya images, as were the elongated head shapes and the facial profile. The tall, slender supervising figures wear headdresses, capes and jewelry, and strike graceful poses. In constrast, the short, squat, animalian body type of the laborers is not Maya in provenance. They appear short and stocky, use crude stone implements, and are crouching, squatting or straining at their labors. They seem vaguely Neolithic, a metaphor for Morley’s view of the “stage of civilization” (stone tools) at which the Maya had arrived. The relationship between the supervisors and the laborers is a constructed one that Mayanists projected, intact, from their own experience in reconstructing ancient buildings, into the dominant model of the Maya. Its representation here by Chariot also accords with Mexican muralists’ tendency to conflate the ancient Maya elite as depots with other, more recent examples in Mexican history, supposedly replaced by enlightenment liberal democracy, as would generate policies such as universal education (in Ladino culture and Spanish language) for Maya peasant villagers.

Such an ancient Maya despot was shown in the second frame of Chariot’s series. The iconography again was from Egyptology (another area of interest to the artist), and the implication was of forced labor through the “overseer’s” lash, for which there is no ancient Maya precedent; rather, this called upon biblical and orientalist notions that slaves built pyramids. While there exist ancient Maya scenes on murals and ceramics depicting prisoners bound with rope — and these may have been captured as slaves — there is no supporting evidence in the archaeological record for the pervasive assumption that forced labor was used to build ancient Maya structures and monuments. The appearance of the lash in this depiction of the ancient Maya, with its implications of (male) control of slaves, women, children, and animals, was overtly symbolic of colonialist and patriarchal class relationships between ruler/overseer and subject/peasant. This image recalled the forced peonage of the Maya henequen workers, whose eventual revolt against their gross
mistreatment and exploitation was the bitter and protracted conflict known as the War of the Castes that began in 1847.

In the first three drawings of Charlot’s series, the workers are performing heavy labor, and are short, squat, muscular figures, often quite simian in form. Depictions in the U.S. media of Mexican peasants as not fully human, a familiar strategy in representations of black Africans, emerged at particular times in response to crises in U.S. — Latin American relations. U.S. cartoonists occasionally portrayed Latin American republics as black males, (as well as feminine and child-like).42

There are other references in the Mayanist literature to such degenerated, simian types. Thomas Gann, who worked as a medical officer in (then) British Honduras before World War I, became fascinated by the anthropology and archaeology of the Maya as a result of his travels in the region. A sometime cohort of the Carnegie staff, Gann co-wrote a book with Thompson in 1931. He subscribed to eugenic theories of race, stating, for example, that a “Curious mixture of pure Maya and Chinese during the mid-nineteenth century...[was]... from a eugenic point of view...disastrous” (Gann 1926: 235). Only two years before Gann made this statement in his travelogue, Ancient Cities and Modern Tribes (1926), the U.S. government had passed new immigration laws, influenced by eugenics theories. Gann argued that the ruling and laboring classes were racially distinct, a belief which reconstituted the progress narrative based in scientific racism.

The worker or slave class appears to have belonged to an entirely different race from that of the ruling class...Their most prominent facial characteristics were broad, rather flat, faces, large mouths with thick lips, somewhat prominent chins, eyes not infrequently a little oblique, and nose broad, short and slightly retroussé (Gann 1926: 238).

Morley, while he did not cite Gann (as Thompson frequently did), nevertheless subscribed to a similar viewpoint, although he was more moderate in his racializing than Gann had been. In his discussion of slavery in the Ancient Maya, he noted about the images of “captive figures,” that appeared on ancient monuments:

...they may well stand for the people of a whole town or village collectively rather than represent any specific individual. Sometimes their faces are different from those of principal figures, a difference which may indicate that the lords belonged to a special hereditary class” (Morley 1947 [1946]: 176).
The monkey-like laborer/slave, in both Morley’s book (illustrated by Charlot’s image in Figure 33, above) and Gann’s description, inhabited the margins of colonial fears of racial degeneration. Such fears were still being managed in the U.S. by general practices such as segregation and laws based in eugenic theories of race at the time Morley wrote this volume. Indeed, Americanists discussed race and theories of hybridity and miscegenation throughout the period of interest (for example, see Wagley 1959).

In addition to such representational strategizing in the realm of racial fears, the depiction of laborers as animalian, as Donna Haraway has argued, are also a political strategy for ordering difference, in part to justify hierarchies power (Haraway 1989). The primate image carries considerable evolutionary ideological baggage. Haraway notes that “...the primate body, as a part of the body of nature, may be read as a map of power...” She describes primatology as “...a Western discourse...a political order that works by the negotiation of boundaries achieved through ordering difference” (Haraway 1989: 10-11). The Maya peasant represented as simian, then, allowed for the possibility of his use (as, for examples, animals are used) by his masters for the general good; I refer specifically to Mayanists’ construction of slaves, prisoners and members of the laboring class as both beasts of burden and as sacrificial victims.

Thompson also related the notions of slavery and sacrifice to literacy in one of a series of highly speculative and imaginative stories. This passage is from his tale (a larger excerpt of which is included as Appendix A) of a Maya novice priest attending a ritual sacrifice by heart excision:

The fifth man, who had revealed terror, struggled as he was brought forward, and had to be dragged to the block. Even after he had been thrown onto it, and was tightly grasped in the requisite position, he continued to try to free himself. Balam frowned beneath his mask. Such conduct was unseemly, and by such ignominy the man was disregarding the welfare of the whole community, for such a spectacle must be offensive to the god Venus. The man had already jeopardized the well-being of all by his careless carving of an error on a stela. Now he was once again upsetting the rhythm of the ritual. His struggles were soon ended, however, and his body was placed beside those already sacrificed. The whole ceremony had taken but a few minutes (Thompson 1954: 193-194).

Thompson’s story extrapolated from the literacy/illiteracy split in the Morley-Thompson model, to set out the purported danger to all Maya in any “non-Maya” behavior, such as inattention to proper duty, or refusal to accept the judgment of the allegedly wiser ruling priesthood. Ironically, the paradoxical construction of the illiterate scribe contained both the foundation of
Maya social order, and the potential to destroy it. These peasant artisans of the Morley-Thompson model, the carvers of the unreadable writing, who had no agency but were nevertheless the instruments of Maya cultural progress, and analogous to the instruments of imperial progress. Their illiteracy and ignorance were necessary constituents of social order. Mayanists’ participation in the maintenance of a contemporaneous social order (as well as in descriptions of an ancient one) entailed, in part, their in notions of literacy and education within a narrative of progress: the dominant culture’s project of assimilation through education.
CHAPTER 5 PEASANTS AND PYRAMIDS

Rockefeller Center was erected with the architectural and mechanical wisdom of the ages behind its builders; Temple IV at Tikal was erected by a people living in the stone age who had to depend exclusively upon their own architectural and mechanical knowledge and their own limited building experience. Which then was really the greater achievement? (Morley 1947 (1946): 448).

Arjun Appadurai refers to a form of representational essentializing called “metonymic freezing” in which a given part or aspect of people’s lives is used to epitomize them (Appadurai 1988: 39). Mayanists have frozen the Maya within two metonymic tropes: the Pyramid, with reference primarily to an ancient Maya elite, and the Peasant, associated with a perpetual Maya underclass. These metonyms encode ambiguity toward people that appear “mysterious,” evading containment within Western theoretical constructs. The narratives in which Mayanists employed these metonyms have roots in Romantic and Enlightenment notions of power relations within a model of the ancient past, and between the West and its constructions of the living Other, projected in real time. In the Morley-Thompson model, each of these metonyms seemed often to have been used to construct its opposite. As Morley alluded to in the passage above, Mayanists’ assessment of the ancient Maya was that they appeared to present a resolution of an apparent paradox, an achievement that modernity could not claim to have matched: the creation of the complexities of civilization (represented by the Pyramid) without having lost the simplicities of primitive, rural lifeways. The Peasant — “the primitive” — had something modernity had lost (Torgovnick 1990: passim.).

In the first chapter I noted the role that the Morley-Thompson model ascribed to the so-called “genius” of the Maya elite. A complimentary premise related Maya uniqueness in terms of their purported moral superiority. This was related to a diligence and seriousness of purpose — a “Protestant work ethic” — that was projected onto both peasants and elites. The interdependence of civilization’s controls and the control of nature; of intellectual and bodily discipline: these were
enscripted in the metonyms Pyramid and Peasant. Upon these terms, too, modernity could seize and embrace the trope of the primitive, as for example Aldous Huxley wrote about, and modernists, including the muralists, depicted.

The pyramid is a potent symbol in the West. Many millions of pieces of paper imprinted with this symbol (Figure 34) change hands every day, although the pyramid’s reception is, for the most part, subliminal. Mayanists seemingly adopted the symbol’s semantic meaning of power; moreover, they accepted a transcultural reading of the pyramid’s shape as an ideological abstraction, a diagram of the social conditions of production. They perceived at the Pyramid’s apex a minority, ruling elite, and at its base, a vast peasant class. Such readings call upon presuppositions about the pyramid in Egyptology that are bonded, as well, to that discourse’s constructions of elite literacy and control of knowledge.

The word “peasant” is also ideologically loaded. Referring originally to European small farmers, or agricultural laborers, the term has been generalized to refer to such persons anywhere. More than a straightforward construction of a connection between peasant and land, representations of peasants can refer to a complex of idealized and politicized constructions, in which the term may encode instinct, tradition, simplicity, affinity with nature, and persistence; but also backwardness, lack of sophistication and susceptibility.

Reduced to basic terms, the dominant model of the Maya amounted to a division between peasant and pyramid that correlated with a division between present and past. These divisions, as I have discussed, were based on a priori assumptions regarding the ancient Maya record as consisting of predominantly elite material remains, and of contemporaneous social conditions among the Maya as a survival of peasant culture. Within the various representations Mayanists produced of the Maya were included various justifications for the status quo of the contemporaneous Maya as peasants, for example, and of the proprietary relationship of foreigners such as archaeologists and investors (particularly those extracting resources and labor) to those Maya peasants and their land. This was a manifestation of Mayanists’ Procrustean bed: the ancient model had to be adjusted such that the contemporaneous Maya would fit into it.
The representation of the ancient elite through the metonym, Pyramid, was easily accomplished using photographs and drawing of such ancient structures. However, to produce representations of the ancient Peasant was more difficult, as there were none in the archaeological record that illustrated any type of agricultural or construction labor. As a reminder to his readers that maize in his view was all-important, Morley punctuated the final chapter of *The Ancient Maya* with a drawing of an ear of maize (Figure 35[a]). Significantly, this image is not of ancient Maya provenance or style. A diagram that Morley included in his chapter on ancient Maya agriculture (Figure 36) set up a series of associations from which he inferred that an annual astronomical alignment approximately three weeks after the spring equinox indicated a date “of ceremonial importance” signaling the beginning of the season for burning *milpa* (Morley 1947[1946]: 3). As in many of Morley and Thompson’s “proofs,” this interpretive leap was one that took place without a methodological net. Neither Morley nor Thompson explained the fact that contemporaneous Maya peasants managed to farm, and knew when to burn *milpa* without the extravagant elite complexes and the supernatural interventions of priests. Ritual activity related to *milpa* that took place in Morley and Thompson’s time the peasants undertook themselves.

Morley used several other examples that he placed in the elite ritual complex, such as the frontispiece of *The Ancient Maya* that showed the “young corn god” from Copán, in the place often reserved for a portrait of the author (Figure 37) but here the deity was purportedly the “author” of ancient Maya civilization. Building on the statements in Spanish colonial documents, Morley produced these objects associated with elite complexes related to maize, allowing them to imply *milpa*. The presence of images of maize, however, simply means that the ancient Maya grew that vegetable; none of the evidence from the archaeological record shows direct evidence of the agricultural technique used to grow it. *Milpa*, or slash-and-burn, for which there was evidence only in the colonial period, is only one possibility.

Another drawing Morley used in the same argument, after the post-conquest Madrid Codex (The Tro-Cortesianus, to Morley) (Figure 35[b]), showed a figure wearing the skin of a jaguar and using a planting stick. This planting stick figure, which Morley had placed erroneously (as had others of his time) in the post classic period, was one of the few Maya images Morley
could call upon that he believed indicated the practice of *milpa* agriculture. There is no essential connection between the planting stick and any given method of cultivation, however. Instead, they projected from their observations of contemporaneous peasants, and from their own presuppositions regarding the trope of the primitive, that an implement of this kind must be used in “primitive” ways by a “primitive” farmer.

The methodological fault lines of the Morley-Thompson model are revealed in the slippage it required between the mythological and the mundane, and between class constructions constitutive of the model. Thompson, for example, also used images from the Madrid Codex (which he described as a “divinatory almanac”) to illustrate various stages in the yearly agricultural cycle (Figure 38). He stated that the first and third figures (reading from left to right and top to bottom in Figure 38) were the rain god either planting or watering maize; the fourth and fifth were the maize god under attack from pests. He saw these as metaphorical representations in a prescriptive or cautionary narrative. However, the second of the five figures he identified not as a god, but as a human figure engaged in mundane activity: an actual hunter being bitten by a rattlesnake. He presented this figure, and the existence of Yucatec and Mopan Maya prayers regarding snakebite, as evidence for his observation that “The fear of snakes [that was] widespread” among the Maya was rooted *in the past* (Thompson 1975 [1963]: 140). Such a view seems remarkably obtuse, as a fear of snakes is widespread among human beings in general, and a fear of venomous snakes is rooted in actual physical danger. Recognizing and fearing venomous reptiles such as the fer-de-lance is and has been an essential survival mechanism at all times and in all places where they are present. Thompson’s claim connecting Maya prayer and tradition with their perceptions of snakes, placed hunters (and farmers) within the construct of the peasant as primitive, superstitious and instinctual — and therefore helpless in the natural world without guidance.

Such emphasis on superstition and ritual was a dual strategy: it effaced social conditions of production, keeping the peasant locked within the peasant/pyramid construct, and obscured temporal difference, maintaining the peasant in an allochronic state known as “tradition.” An earlier representation of such a model, Morley’s article in the 1936 *National Geographic Magazine*
featured Herget’s painted reconstructions of ancient life at Chichén Itzá, either repeopled the “ceremonial centers” with elites, or showed decontextualized peasant figures in a forest clearing. One of these showed two loincloth-clad men planting corn with digging sticks (Figure 39). Morley referred in the caption to the stick as “their only agricultural implement.” Using the passive voice, he then described the clearing and burning of the milpa as if it had occurred without tools or agents: “trees were felled” and they “were burned.” This semantic device, in erasing the subject, acted as a signpost to the digging stick as a signifier for milpa, as both Morley and Thompson had provided illustrative “evidence” of the tool in use. The stick also stood for all the labor involved in making milpa, such that in the Herget painting, the two corn planters seemed not to be exerting themselves at all. The text asked the viewer to compare the painting of ancient Maya peasants with the photograph of a contemporaneous peasant, both shown with same the “primitive” marker: a water flask made from a gourd (Figure 40). Morley identifies the man as “the stalwart foreman of the Chichén Itzá excavation gang.” He was photographed in profile, one of the standard poses to illustrate an anthropometric specimen. In this case Morley’s text alleged that he was a “fine Maya type, with a well-shaped head.” The comparison was of a categorical relationship between the “natural” peasant activities of hunting and farming, both of which supplied the ruling priests. In the paintings, ancient farmers had no weapons, and only digging sticks; in the photographs, contemporaneous peasant farmers and hunters were shown armed only with non-threatening tools or weapons that they used for subsistence purposes: hunting game, food-gathering and brush clearing.

Another paired set, a Herget reconstruction painting and a 1925 photograph depicted the Morley-Thompson model’s elite caste. The painting was entitled “From a Frowning Gargoyled Turret Maya Astronomers Peered at the Sky,” (Figure 41) and its caption invited comparison with a photograph of a round structure known to archaeologists as the “Caracol” (Figure 42, ”Greeks of the New World”), as reconstructed. The painting’s caption further stated the building was an astronomical observatory, the nearest analogy in the contemporaneous U.S. for a round (elite) structure. This pair was based in a visual-interpretive “false syllogism”: both are hypothetical reconstructions, although the journal’s reader was asked to accept the building in the photograph as
original, and the painting as a reconstruction. Modern astronomers "took observations" from the structure, slipping into the place of the ancient Maya (alleged) priest-astronomers, to "prove" the building had been used for astronomical observations. In pairing the artist's interpretations with the photographic "evidence," and in comparing contemporaneous practice with the archaeological record, Morley supported a circular argument that, in the final analysis, was based in his, and his colleague Thompson's, claims of insider knowledge, insight and intuition.

Underlying the representations was, invariably, the invisible peasant labor quotient that allegedly created vast surpluses to fuel the machineries and build the monuments of ancient civilization, colonialism, and modernity:

The Maya peasant is devout. He was in ancient times, when, under the direction of his own priests, he reared tremendous stone pyramids and temples, the ruins of which by the thousands now lie buried in the forests from northern Yucatán to the highlands of Guatemala.

He was equally devout during the Spanish colonial period, when, under the supervision of the Franciscan fathers, he built the enormous churches and spacious monasteries with their cloistered courts, and exchanged his own pagan deities for the White man's God. Even today much of his own former religious beliefs colors his comprehension of the Church's teachings (Morley 1936: 642).

The devotion to which Morley referred was not merely to religious faith, but to religious duty and exercises. The quantity of available labor, according to the representations Morley presented here, seemed almost boundless; moreover, these Maya peasants had always been devoted to the duties imposed by their religious faith, and specifically by their spiritual masters.

The evidence lay in the size and numbers of the monuments: according to Morley's text, there were thousands of these structures, and they were tremendous, spacious and enormous.

When this article appeared, U.S. intervention in the region to protect its economic interests in Mexico and Central America had begun to be unpopular with some U.S. liberals (Rabe 1988: 11). At the time National Geographic Magazine readers were absorbing Morley's lesson about the Maya, there were also vast numbers of henequen laborers at the base of the U.S. economic pyramid. In several pages of text, Morley explained the Yucatec henequen industry such that its failure to provide economic bounty to that region lay with local inefficiency, mismanagement, the upheavals of revolutionaries, and the inability of peasants to understand the benefits of economic capitalism. There was, in the version of the story Morley wrote for National Geographic
Magazine, no fault whatsoever to be attributed to the U.S. for the economic status of the Yucatecans as peasants and menial laborers (Morley 1936: 654).

Mayanist archaeology in the 1920’s and 1930’s, which tended to be an elite activity, brought evidence of the widening economic gulf between the U.S. and the impoverished regions in which they investigated the Maya. These scholars tended to be a select few whose ability to carry out archaeological excavations depended on their ability to fund raise among institutions, corporations, and wealthy U.S. citizens; Morley, for one, exemplified such an ability (Brunhouse 1965). Appealing also to philanthropic concerns, archaeological projects allegedly brought to the region money, technology, jobs, health care and education — that is, the trappings of the modern era— along with the possibility of international recognition and status. Archaeologists promoted tourism, and foreign benignity and altruism, and simultaneously promoted (and produced representations of) allegedly authentic, indigenous American culture, and forged links between the ancient and the modern. Mayanists worked to create a clear, American, genealogy and offered to mediate between Maya tradition and global modernity, according to U.S. interests in the exigencies of progress.

At the height of the Great Depression National Geographic Magazine enlisted Morley’s aid in interpreting and presenting mediated versions of difference to its U.S. middle class audience. Representations of the Maya, it seemed, had to comply strictly with its editorial policy (“absolute accuracy”) only as regarded the present; hyperbolic and speculative material about the imagined past were permitted. The images of the Maya included documentary-style photographs and reconstructions of the ancient Maya, however, that were paired and together contained within the idealized space of truth, beauty, value, kindliness, accuracy and timeliness that reader expected to find between the two yellow covers. The Herget paintings collaborated with the photographs and text to provide, iconographically and subtextually, racialized explanations to National Geographic Magazine readers, for the results of encounters with colonialist, immigrant or imperialist “others.” Valorizing ancient Maya patrimony and modernity, in a move that resonated with the Mexican indigenismo movement, Morley assessed the present condition of the Maya as peasants, underlined the necessity (both for Latin America and the U.S.) for the maintenance of U.S.
economic interests there, provided a historical pedigree, and therefore validation, for popular U.S. discomfort with and anxiety about Central American and Mexican native populations, and offered an indigenous "brilliant cultural achievement" as an American counternarrative to European history based in the Classical and Biblical archaeology of Greece, Rome, Egypt and the Ancient Near East.

The Morley-Thompson model was quite fully developed in 1954 when Thompson published his *The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization*, the same Gibbonian title Morley had used almost forty years previously (Morley 1915). He still had quite a struggle with the practicalities of "slash-and-burn" and put forward some theories as to how this method might have worked for the ancient Maya. He chose an Old Testament analogy, alluding to the struggle to carve civilization out of the primal forest:

Maya lowland civilization...is, so far as I know, alone in having developed and reached maturity in thickly forested tropics. Arnold Toynbee had pointed out that civilization responds to challenge, but if that challenge is too great, the civilization is abortive. I cannot imagine a more formidable antagonist than those endless miles of jungle and forest, a Goliath which the Maya David faced with torch and stone axe. Worse still, this was a Goliath that could not be slain outright. Driven back, he recaptured lost ground as soon as David’s back was turned (Thompson 1954: 269).

Thompson, as Morley had, consigned the Maya to the remote past; here, he did so with the biblical reference. Having rejected a competing theory of climate change, he settled on the notion that as "heartbreaking" as the task of clearing the rainforest for cornfields was, these conditions were ideal, neither too hard nor too soft for the development of civilization (Thompson 1954: 26). This notion he borrowed from British historian and philosopher Toynbee (1889-1975), who was also fascinated by "the rise and fall of civilizations." Significantly, this Old Testament analogy also calls up biblical perspectives on labor taxation, slavery and peonage in ancient Egypt. There is also a personal note, which may have colored the fervent tone of this statement: the slashing part of slash-and burn (*milpa*) conjures up the constant struggle archaeologists had in clearing excavation sites each season. Thompson’s personal stake in this as heroic archaeologist led to his magnification of the salient points he wished to underscore. More problematic, however, was his denial of the very real struggle of a more urgent and perilous sort, the displacement of Maya from their land. Much wealthier and more powerful (non-Maya) interests had full support from national and foreign governments in their land-grabbing projects and oppressive labor practices. Reminiscing in his autobiographical *Maya*
Archeologist, Thompson referred to the typical deforestation of the vast Mahogany concessions, giving as example an area in which he traveled in 1928, the Cayo District (near Vaca, British Honduras, now Belize). This he mentioned not so much as an indictment of the exploiters of the Mahogany forest for having wreaked their destruction, but rather to point out their failure to have done so, and to take them to task for not having understood the Maya way to destroy nature. The implication seemed to be that, had Thompson been consulted as an “efficiency expert,” he might have saved U.S. stockholder their huge losses for the price of a little copal.\textsuperscript{52}

The forest was inflicting a vengeful humiliation on those collaborators in its defacement, for I fear that no member of the Mengel company had thought to ask pardon of the Maya gods of the soil for desecrating their face or had agreed to authorize the purchase of propitiatory copal, and so stockholders had dropped perhaps a million dollars because no efficiency expert in Kentucky knew of the efficacy of a little copal in keeping the friendship of the Central American forest! (Thompson 1975 [1963]: 159).

This cautionary tale was an opportunity for him to grandstand in his “gone native” mode, and he offered some evidence of the success that could be had by foreigners who practiced Maya ways of propitiating Maya gods. He was, at the time, on a treasure-hunting expedition whose “primary objective...was to obtain exhibitable material for the Field Museum [Chicago]” (Thompson 1975 [1963]: 160). As Thompson told it,

One morning one of my Maya laborers suggested that we could hardly expect rich finds unless we made an offering to the Yuumil Kaxob, the Lords of the Forest, in whose domain we were working. This seemed fair enough, so I asked one of my Maya men ...to bring back some copal. ...we burnt the copal on a leaf in honor of the Yuumil Kaxob, hoping to persuade them to be a little more friendly. My Maya boys stood around as the blue-black smoke spiraled upwards into the bluer morning sky. Less than ten minutes later we found an incense burner almost immediately under the spot where we had burned the copal. It was not a very good one, but it broke the three weeks’ run of bad luck, and for the rest of the season we had good finds (Thompson 1975 [1963]: 160-161).

Thompson’s anthropological tone maintained a balance between the ethnologists’s allegedly “neutral” reporting of events and the position of insider privilege from which the story was told. The offering was not Thompson’s own idea, but rather that of “my Maya”; their wish to propitiate the Yuumil Kaxob was “fair enough.” Thompson reaped a double reward: the votive cache that he described as a spectacular find, and a good story to include in his memoir.

The initiated insider view was one that Thompson’s and Morley’s protégé, Tatiana Proskouriakoff, employed in her architectural renderings of ancient Maya sites. The Acropolis at Piedras Negras (Figure 43) was one of Proskouriakoff’s earliest reconstruction drawings, made in
The accompanying text indicated the view, as set out in the Morley-Thompson model, that:

Each court is protected from direct approach by the surrounding buildings, and, in the spaces between them, by light masonry walls with small openings which permit the passage of one person. It was not fear of military attack, however, that motivated such exclusiveness, for many wide stairways and entrances led to all parts of the acropolis. It is better explained by a desire to screen the activities inside the courts from the view of the plaza below. The latter was open to the citizens at large, and was used, no doubt, for public ceremonies and gatherings; and access to the acropolis seems to have been the prerogative of nobles, priests, and neophytes, who performed secret rites, debated issues of state, or pored over abstruse manuscripts in the long palace buildings, safeguarded from the rude approach of the laity (Proskouriakoff 1963a [1946]: 16).

Proskouriakoff’s description, however, is of a much more forbidding and mysterious place than her drawing suggests: Thompson, too, had described such a “dark, mysterious” place in a passage quoted above (Thompson 1954: 264). Paradoxically, the peasant-artisans who were alleged to have constructed these sizable monuments, including the “secret” interior spaces, were supposedly baffled and impressed by the mysteries of the priestly rituals.

This construction was important, as it effectively served to suppress the possibility of Maya warfare. Archaeologists declared constantly, as Proskouriakoff has, above, that such Classic-era structures were clearly designed to be easily defended. In fact, in their model, it was the “rude” Maya laity against which the elites defended themselves with their building design. This consolidated the model against the possibility of war in the “war-less” classic period by accounting for the defensive design as non-military. Most of the defensive architectural design of Maya structures Morley and Thompson designated as evoking a mostly psychological effect enhanced by priestly exploitation of the alleged piety, superstition and susceptibility of the peasant artisan builders of the structures. While there are, in most excavation reports, detailed analyses of building construction technique, in the end these were attributed, using evolutionary criteria, to cultural insufficiency. Both Morley’s and Thompson’s arguments, in common with most Mayanists of the culture-historical period, overlooked the obvious attributes of the massive masonry structures topped by corbel vaults that the ancient Maya built: these amounted to fortifications of the structures. Neither thin walls nor keystone arches, although they may encode architectural virtuosity in an evolutionary frame, are particularly defensive. Taken together with their small doorways, narrow passageways, small windows and visual command of all approaches, the thick
rubble and masonry wall and massive corbel-vaulted roofs of Maya buildings were, arguably, well designed to be defended against actual, physical attack. The Morley-Thompson model, however, was itself well-defended against such a notion.

Proskouriakoff's restoration view of Temple II at Tikal (Figure 44) was an embodiment of the theatricality of the "ceremonial center" model. This image is a wide-angle, peasant’s-eye view of the pyramid — entirely bare of decoration — topped by a "temple" covered in stucco sculpture. The visual division was analogous to the class division; the peasants/ artisans who had built the structure and created its sculpture were remote from it, such that it could not be "read" by them. At their own level the walls were symbolically blank. Further, the stelae at their level in the plaza (which they had also carved) were equally inaccessible to them, as these monuments were situated atop the symbolic pyramid of elite literacy. Peasant labor, responsible for the entire monumental program, was implicit but not included in the picture frame. The model’s premise was that the enormous size of the structure stood as mute testament to the ratio of elites shown in their small numbers, to the peasants/artisans, who in their thousands came from farming their milpas to build it. A few figures appeared in elite garb, as indicated primarily by quetzal feather headdresses; the peasants watched, too, from a distant viewpoint contained in a shadowed corner of the image.

Proskouriakoff’s architectural reconstructions drawings and the *National Geographic* Magazine artist Herget’s paintings images had the same source – the Morley-Thompson model of the ancient Maya. Dramatically populated with the Maya elite and their monumental pyramids built by peasant labor, these images were mirrors for other hierarchies of wealth and power.

I noted previously that in the physical reconstructions of pyramids, that is, the physical processes of rebuilding them, archaeologists mirrored the actions of making *milpa*, both as a process of clearing trees and brush followed by renewal, and as a project requiring laboring bodies. I want now to take this premise further.

The first waves of visitors — "front-page people" (Huxley 1934: 1) to the Carnegie Institution of Washington project at Chichén Itzá began to arrive as soon as the project was underway in 1924 (Brunhouse 1971: 205, *passim*). Guests to the site were treated to concerts and formal banquets, guided tours by the director, and were witness to the process of clearing and
the regrowth of the fallow architecture. In 1930, archaeologist Alfred Vincent Kidder (1885 - 1963), Director of the Division of Historical Research at the Carnegie Institution of Washington, described the future of Chichén Itzá as archaeologists at the Institution conceived it:

...when cleared all buildings should be both understandable and beautiful...Subjective values must not be overlooked. Beauty, in detail and in mass, must be striven for.

Unintelligent restoration, no matter how accurate, destroys beauty and so robs ancient structures of their most important psychological effect. The mere fact of ruin induces realization of the inevitable and relentless erosion of time and brings the beholder to the proper frame of mind for grasping the deeper significance of what he sees (Kidder 1930: 99).

The well-heeled tourists that arrived at Chichén Itzá came to see not only ancient Maya ruins, they came to observe archaeology in action, about which ever more information had been broadcast, along with news of discoveries about the ancient Maya. Kidder’s conception of the “beauty” of the ruins, however, had a very practical aim, and was part of a long-term strategy for Carnegie Institution archaeology:

If Chichen Itza [sic] can be kept both interesting and beautiful, it will without question become a Mecca of travel, and incidentally, a most valuable asset for archaeology which, like every other science, needs its “show-windows.” Its more recondite aims the public can not, in the beginning, be expected to grasp; but public interest must be aroused and eventual public understanding must be achieved if archaeology is to go forward; for from the public comes, in the last analysis, all support for scientific endeavor (Kidder 1930: 99).

Reconstructing the monumental buildings was key to tourism. Despite the tales of antiquarian expeditions to remote and hitherto unknown sites with extraordinary marvels to be seen by the intrepid few, archaeologists knew what tourists did not: in the uncleared and unreconstructed site, the archaeological record is largely incomprehensible, and mostly invisible. They also recognized that strategic, rather than total, reconstruction, catered better to the exotic and mysterious lure of archaeology in the public realm, which amounted to archaeology promoting itself. The possibilities of tourism gathered momentum with the expansion of the U.S. economy with the New Deal, and particularly following the end of World War II, as the spending power of the middle classes, and means of dissemination and quantities of information were on the increase. These contributed to the concentration on showcasing archaeology’s products, both its treasures and its accomplishments. Local governments saw revenue possibilities in administering permits for excavation/restoration projects, paid for by wealthy foreign educational and philanthropic
organizations. As the buildings were completed, the site's attraction for tourists increased, and foreign cash would be left in the country. These reconstructions were a tangible product of archaeology, and were, indeed, becoming tourist pilgrimage sites: new ceremonial centers. They were, however, largely imaginary spaces, and in terms strictly of scientific archaeology, were not constructive but destructive. The Carnegie Institution of Washington excavation at Uaxactun was a prime example of this process, and of one category of archaeological collecting.

One of the excavation reports for Uaxactun (Smith 1950) featured numerous reconstructions by Proskouriakoff of the buildings' hypothetical aspect as they were “deconstructed” in reverse historical order. While archaeologists were excavating the building complex they designated structure AV (shown in Figure 45), Proskouriakoff made a series of “reconstruction” drawings. (Figures 46 and 47) The recording process was alleged to preserve the knowledge that was gleaned as the building complex was systematically dismantled and destroyed. The acknowledged destructiveness of archaeology was elided in the sequential discoveries and in the creativity of the production and reproduction of the reconstruction drawings. By viewing them in deconstruction sequence, or in historical sequence, the viewer could replay the history of both the original construction and the archaeological deconstruction of the buildings. Each turn of the page, each layer of the pyramid, represented the labor of many peasants. (Even if it was not originally created with peasant labor, as the dominant discourse claimed it was, there was a great deal of contemporaneous peasant labor in the excavation.) Buildings were “collected” in this way; allowing all versions of a given building to be viewed simultaneously, while all stages of the structure were damaged or destroyed in the process of uncovering and discovering.

Mayanist archaeologists of the culture-historical period, whose project was the writing of a Maya history, aligned their project with the writing of another story, the construction by the U.S. of another pyramidal structure, its own hegemony in the Americas, and its own economic power structures that divided apex from base along lines of race, class and gender. The medium of archaeology was an effective vehicle for soothing messages about that project, that naturalized its necessity, inevitability and rightness. The imaginary space of the Maya ceremonial center was one from which the peasant populations were erased so that their impoverishment and oppression was not available for viewing. Rather, it was a space in which the contemplation of the pyramid — its
beauty, symmetry and power — offered pleasure to foreign “pilgrims” collecting experiences and snapshots, perhaps of a “native” in situ. On collecting, anthropologist Virginia Dominguez has observed:

Objects are collected no longer because of their intrinsic value but as metonyms for the people who produced them. And the people who produced them are the objects of examination not because of their intrinsic value but because of their perceived contribution to our own historical trajectory. It is a certain view of ‘man’ and a certain view of ‘history’ that make this double displacement possible (Dominguez 1986: 548).

This micro-colonialism has been implicated in the basic methodological underpinnings of fieldwork. As noted in the introduction, my argument is that, in particular, it is the overlap of roles local Maya peasants were asked to play, as laborers, as anthropological informants, and as the friends of archaeologists, that deeply implicated Mayanists at a personal level. The concentration of Mayanists, for much of the work accomplished this century, has been on elite material production, while the function of the constructed peasant as the mythological milpero in Mayanists’ representations, has been to provide visual, living evidence — a movie that may be projected, intact, into the past. Viewers of these images actually practice ethnographic analogy together with the Mayanist, working together with representations of peasants to perform a mutual confirmation of the evidence. From this exchange the contemporaneous Maya were excluded.

Much of the pleasure of the imaginary encounter between the actual or armchair tourist and the Maya — an encounter orchestrated, mediated and enhanced by Mayanists — was in vicarious travel to a new destination, a symbolic space. To actually or metaphorically travel to the Maya, was to see great pyramids built by docile peasants who had vanished back to their milpas. The sites had, finally, become the empty ceremonial centers of the Morley-Thompson model: sites of intermittent touristic pilgrimage.
CHAPTER 6 "REMARKABLY CLEAN"

In spite of the scarcity of water in some places, bathing is almost a daily custom, and even considering the fact that the dress of both men and women is of white material, it is very seldom that one sees a soiled garment. The methods of cooking among the Mayas are remarkable for their cleanliness (Tozzer 1907: 27).

The genealogy of the “remarkably clean” obsession originated with the 16th century Spanish Bishop de Landa, who commented that the Maya bathed a great deal — in cold water for cleanliness and in hot water for health (Steggerda 1941: 34-5).

Mayanists discussions of the bath included a subtext of patriarchal entitlement to looking and touching, and of disciplinary violence, that originated in Spanish colonial law and practice. Thomas Gann’s 1918 study was referred to by Mayanists for several decades; it described the exercise of the medical doctor’s prerogative of entitlement to intimate contact and examination of the alien body:

Physically, though short they are robust and well proportioned...The figure in both sexes is short and broad, the long bones and extremities are small and delicate. Both men and women are, however, capable of considerable and prolonged exertion...They are extremely clean in their persons, and wash frequently...the women are very industrious...many of the younger women would be considered very good looking, measured by the most exacting standard...they are polite and hospitable, though shy with strangers. The men are silent, though not sullen...civil, obliging, and good tempered, and make excellent servants, when they can be got to work, but appear for the most part utterly lacking in ambition or in any desire to accumulate wealth...The men are very stoical in bearing pain (Gann 1918: 15-18).

Morley’s version of the cleanliness fetish was a paraphrase of de Landa, and matter-of-fact about the threat of violence. He marveled at the fervent pursuit of cleanliness despite great expenditures of energy:

Their persons and clothing are scrupulously clean, everyone bathing at least once a day and sometimes oftener. When the man of the family returns home from work in the cornfield, his wife has a hot bath ready for him; under Spanish colonial law, failure to do so gave the husband the right to beat her. None of the houses outside the towns has running water or pumps of any kind, and all water has to be carried from the nearest well or cenote, where it is raised by the old-fashioned bucket-and-ropes method, sometimes for as much as a hundred feet. Yet the Maya devotion to personal cleanliness is almost fanatical (Morley and Brainerd 1956: 31-2).
Thompson's view was somewhat more subdued:

...His sexual life is not overemphasized, but he has a strong tendency to alcoholism. He is thrifty and unusually honest. He is exceptionally clean in his person, bathing morning and night, and his wife is a neat housekeeper. Individuals vary in their desire to excel, in their religious enthusiasm, and in their attitude to change. Murderers and beggars are exceptional in the Maya community (Thompson 1954: 30).

Morris Steggerda offered the following version:

Personal cleanliness is an outstanding characteristic of the Maya, who bathe and wear clean clothes daily... It is not unusual for them to take two baths a day. The bath is not a leisurely immersion but a thorough scouring, often aided by a powder made from finely ground eggshells which have been soaked in water saturated with wood ashes, ground fine on a metate, remixed with water, and left to dehydrate in the desired shapes on a clean table. To scent the powder the women often add flowers of jasmine, rose, orange, or vanilla to the water. After the bath the women may use it in the dry form as a talcum or face powder (Steggerda 1941: 34-5).

Paraphrasing de Landa, he added:

...It is said that in ancient times the law permitted a man to beat his wife if she failed to have warm water ready for his evening bath (Steggerda 1941: 34-5).

These men all encase in their descriptions of the generally private act of bathing, a reference to the male entitlement of disciplinary violence over women counterposed to obsessive cleanliness: an overdetermined sexual metaphor.

Whence this obsession with Maya bathing practices, and the impulse (other than the purely prurient) to watch Maya women (and men) at their baths? The cleanliness fetish, particularly, was reiterated in Mayanist discourse such that it became a definitive attribute in Mayanists’ representations. Mayanists made special note of the white “aprons” worn by male laborers at the Chichén Itzá project (as elsewhere in Yucatán, Figure 48: “Work begins at Chichén Itzá”). This garment could symbolize the desirable and controllable servant. White clothing exemplified both colonial values of the importance of clean and white in the bourgeois domestic space, and the “remarkable cleanliness” of Maya peasants, an unexpected attribute of the alleged primitive. The white garment also denied work (represented by dirt, sweat). This was an embodiment of both aspects of the essentialized Maya; the peasant worked, but the elite did not. The reiterated explication of this male right in Spanish colonial law could be therapeutic, a means of vicarious expression of desire to continue patriarchal rituals of dominance and submission.

Literary critic and theorist Anne McClintock, in her discussion of domestic commodity, racism and empire, argues that fetishes of soap, and of white clothing (especially aprons), relates domesticity to “imperial progress as spectacle...consumed from a point of view of privileged
invisibility" (McClintock 1995: 214). Mayanists, likewise, delineated a privileged point of view from which they claimed scientific privilege as a neutral arena of invisibility to observe Maya domesticity. From that vantage point, they constructed representations of the Maya that seemingly reproduced the notion of the liminal role of soap in “mediating transformations of nature (dirt, waste, disorder) into culture (cleanliness, rationality and industry)” (McClintock 1995: 217).

McClintock argues that the domestic commodity is more than a symbol of progress, but is an agent of history which, abstracted from its context, enacts a civilizing process whose effects are shown as without process, without social agency, and thus are magical (1995: 220-222). McClintock tells us:

The Victorian bathroom is the innermost sanctuary of domestic hygiene and by extension the private temple of public regeneration. The sacrament of soap offers a reformation allegory whereby the purification of the domestic body becomes a metaphor for the body politic. ... The magical fetish of soap promises that the commodity can regenerate the Family of Man by washing from the skin the very stigma of racial and class degeneration (McClintock 1995: 214).

The question will be, if we accept soap as magically transformative agent, what was it that needed to be scrubbed away from the Maya?

The race/class hypothesis is plausible. The repetition of the Maya bath scene remained always as a ritual that kept Maya-ness intact, as if in the act of washing, they could scrub away any ambient Spanish-ness or Mexican-ness with which they may have come into contact. Their remarkable attention to the bath, though, is such that their cleanliness identifies them, and they embody cleanliness. Identifying the idealized, clean and chaste Maya as allied with U.S. middle class values promised a talisman against the dangers of alien encroachment and territorial penetration. The model for that danger was encoded in archaeologists’ constructions of a hypothetical the Maya-Mexican dichotomy, in which the morally superior Maya were overrun by an imperialist, violent, degenerate hybrid race of “Toltecs.”

Morley’s 1936 article in *National Geographic Magazine* described the effects on Maya culture at an alleged invasion of the Toltec/Mexican “bronzed warriors” as interpreted in another Herget painting (Figure 49, “Bronzed warriors”). In various versions of Chichén Itzá history, these Mexican invaders conquered Maya Chichén Itzá. They were pictured in the artist’s conception armed with spears, symbols of masculine penetration against which the Maya allegedly
had no defenses: in Herget’s painted reconstructions none of the Maya elite are armed except with the decorative staff of office. Note that in the paintings, as in the Morley-Thompson model, the Toltec were all male. This construction was based in part on extrapolations from colonial-era documents that referred, for example, to “lords” or “warriors,” but also encoded the masculine-feminine polarity of the Mexican-Maya construct. The painting showed, in the distance, an object of Toltec desire: the pyramid known as “El Castillo,” symbolizing all of Chichén Itzá, their conquest. In this reconstructed view, the space of the Maya “ceremonial centre” was depicted as “remarkably clean,” with the dirt, vegetation and debris of two millennia cleaned away to reveal its brilliant white limestone structure as it was purported to have been. Moreover, the presence of the so-called “Toltec” warriors, bringers of violence, lust and degeneracy was a reminder that the constrasting Maya of the Morley-Thompson model were “remarkable clean” morally, as well.

There were instances in which certain U.S. interests were motivated to trade in more negative stereotypes than Mayanists offered in relation to the Maya. For example, when the U.S. Treasury Department deliberately undermined the Mexican economy (in response to the Mexican nationalization of its oil in 1938, through which action U.S. investors suffered large losses) defenders of those oil interests indulged in blatantly racist propaganda. Stereotypes of Mexicans as lazy, degenerate, child-like and not fully human did not produce a public response particularly sympathetic (in a U.S. just emerging from the Depression) to the side of big business. However, such negative propaganda also resonated with growing fears of fascist and communist encroachments in the Americas, and the “Toltec/Mexican” binary pair served to contain and confine danger from “Mexicans” to the past. A further implication was that such an enemy was only capable of subduing the less aggressive, susceptible Maya, and not a more powerful opponent. On the other hand, Roosevelt’s response to Cárdenas’ expropriation of land held by U.S. interests, was, ultimately, “soft;” it was “tinged with a romantic sympathy for the Cárdenas land policy” and aimed to promote pan-American solidarity as a defense of democracy in the hemisphere (Pike 1995: 193-194). As I will discuss in a subsequent chapter, Guatemala’s expropriation of land held by United Fruit Company (UFCO) did not meet with such a “soft” response in an anxious, Cold War-era U.S. — which led to an entirely and tragically different U.S. response in 1954, at which
time the U.S. reverted to crude imperialism, in the guise of hemispheric protection against
communist incursions.59

The monolithic construction of a hybrid “Mexican” also responded to anxious xenophobia
as immigrants flooded into the U.S. Particularly problematic were the Mexican itinerant laborers
that crossed the U.S.-Mexican border seeking work. The stereotypical “Mexican” was dirty,
swarthy, dark, hairy, violent, lustful, superstitious, volatile and lazy - an amalgam taken from the
negative tropes both of Indians and Hispanics (see Pike: 1992). As Mayanists represented them,
however, the Maya were devout rather than superstitious, clean and clean-shaven rather than dirty
and hairy, mild and stoic rather than violent and volatile, under- rather than over-sexed, diligent
rather than indolent. Particularly at the Chichén Itzá project, the negative and threatening qualities of
the “Mexican” were extrapolated into the past, where archaeologists sought in the archaeological
record proof that the Maya-Mexican dichotomy was a historical fact. This granting of validity and
antiquity to present-day fears and anxieties thereby served to justify decisive (that is, military)
action. The revulsion Mayanists sometimes expressed for the alleged “Mexican” invaders of the
Maya, seemed to mirror the revulsion many in the U.S. felt for fascism.

The “Mexicans” called up for Thompson the Nazis:

When Mexican groups moved into Yucatán with their vastly superior military training,
organization, and even weapons, there could be little doubt of the outcome...It was a
New World precedent for Hitler’s blitzkrieg against the Polish army of 1939...
(emphasis mine) (Thompson 1954: 96).

[Describing the art of the Mexican invaders] The repetition is excessive and
monotonous; one is reminded of those Hitler youth rallies with their unending heils
and swastikas, save that the Chichén artists were not so unimaginative (emphasis

Thompson chose the most recent and resonant analogy for extreme moral degeneracy, that
would instantly call up for his U.S. (and British) readers the disgust he felt for the “Mexicans” he
was convinced had invaded the Maya. Referring in a later publication, Maya History and
Religion (1972) to Nazism again, Thompson described an Aztec goddess, Ciuacoatl, as “also a
war goddess because women in childbirth were regarded as warriors — they underwent dangers
breeding fighters for the nation — a sort of forerunner of the ideas of Hitlerism” (Thompson 1972
[1970]: 118).
The choice of this particular description for Thompson’s case against the Toltec/Mexicans was somewhat daring. After World War II, Americanists scrambled to distance themselves from the uses regimes in Nazi Germany and Japan had made of scientific racism; racialized notions of purity and moral superiority opposed to unfitness and degeneracy, had been thoroughly discredited through their associations with the genocidal machineries these countries had employed. The non-biological determinant, culture, nevertheless allowed the construct of Maya and Mexican as opposites, mapping difference according to political, cultural or linguistic boundaries, and, where these were insufficient to differentiate groups, according to “socio-geographic regions” (Fortes 1969). Comparing these modern and ancient imperialist and racist projects provided opportunities to reflect on the range of moralities that underpin encounters between races, ethnicities and cultures. The Maya-Mexican hypothesis (and Thompson’s comparison with Nazi Germany) explored extreme margins of possibilities for such encounters: from a peaceful and mutually beneficial blending of the best attributes of both parties, to the sacrifice/genocide of the weaker by the more powerful faction for the State’s ideological (allegedly) “greater good.”

Thompson’s mentor, Tozzer, had set out a complete pattern of Maya attributes, including Maya-Mexican differences in his *A Comparative Study of the Mayas and the Lacandones* (1907), also the source of the passage at the beginning of this chapter that described the Maya as “remarkable for their cleanliness”:

*The Maya race is inherently a moral one... They view with disgust the loose morals and infidelity of the Mexicans with whom they come into contact.... The Lacandones are generally truthful, honest, and mild except when exasperated, and sometimes with good reason, at the acts of their Mexican neighbors* (Tozzer 1907: 27).

These descriptions of the Maya encapsulate the Mayanist case for the unique and special constituency of “Maya-ness.” In Tozzer’s time, debates around the possibilities or impossibilities of racial mixing could be more comfortably managed with an evolutionary model, in an abstracted past, through the splitting in the archaeological record of Maya and Mexican attributes at the site of Chichén Itzá. Tozzer’s efforts to explain the Maya depended on racial criteria as the most reliable means to distinguish the Maya from the Toltec-Maya (his term). The former were the racially pure indigenous inhabitants of Chichén Itzá, and the latter the hybrid invaders who sacrificed and
enslaved them. The basic impossibility he saw of combining racially pure and hybrid groups successfully was thrown into vivid relief in his highly speculative account of Maya and “Toltec-Maya” interactions at Chichén Itzá (Tozzer 1957, published posthumously). In the context of his urging of all his Mayanist colleagues to the utmost of scientific rigor, and particularly his criticisms of Morley’s obsessive and at times hyperbolic descriptions of “his Maya”, even Tozzer’s positivist, authoritative tone nevertheless could not carry his racialized account of Maya-“Mexican” polarity (Jones, L. 1997: 282).

The splitting of diametrically opposed attributes between allegedly hybrid and pure blood must be seen primarily as a strategic construct that the U.S. deployed in its dealings with Mexico and the Central American republics. The use that archaeologists made of ethnographic and anthropometric studies privileged culture, but nevertheless sustained the idea of race as a cultural and a moral determinant. U.S. fascination with Mexico’s revolution operated together with longstanding anxieties about threats from the left in Mexico (and elsewhere); mounting fears of fascism (particularly the German presence in Guatemala) in the U.S. became almost overwhelming. Racialized conflicts over territory also permeated the history of the previous century in U.S.-Mexican relations. The possibility that Mexico might attempt to “take back” land it once held meant that the appearance of a swarthy, serape-clad revolutionary of the U.S. popular imagination was easily provoked. The development of the Maya-Mexican dichotomy that posited the Maya as inherently clean and moral, and therefore an object of morally chaste desire, was maintained despite considerable archaeological evidence that undermined that model. This points to such imperialist-racist motivations, external to archaeology, such as continually demonstrated U.S. policies in the Americas, such as the economic and territorial penetration of Maya (female) space.

In the same move, the technology of modernism penetrated the traditional symbolic space of antiquity. Science and technology represented the rational values towards which the Maya peasant was to make progress. Mayanists, from their position of privileged invisibility, observed the “special” attributes already ostensibly present (that is, in the racially pure Maya) that allowed the possibility that they might leapfrog over certain developmental steps in their “progress toward civilization.” As the bath was, by report, something a Maya woman had to prepare for the man, it
was marked out as a space symbolic of femininity and domesticity, in which categories might be placed certain of the qualities Mayanists attributed to the Maya.

Mayanists were concerned with consolidating and maintaining Maya uniqueness. Part of the case was the intellectual accomplishments apparent in the archaeological record, surpassing any other in the New World, Mayanists such as Morley and Thompson claimed. A corollary of the surpassing brilliance of these ancient elites was the general moral superiority of the Maya “character,” to which Mayanists could refer by analogy with representations in ethnographies of the contemporaneous Maya. Protecting this difference, Mayanists repeated their description of Maya as “remarkably clean,” as if the words themselves helped to scrub them, revealing their ostensibly remarkable character in the process.

Huxley, borrowing from Mayanists’ dominant model (his comparison of the eroticism of art from India with the intellectual art of the Maya to which I refer here, from Beyond the Mexique Bay (1934) is included as Appendix B), suggested that the Maya elite chose to intellectualize, particularly about death, rather than admit to any thoughts of sexual pleasure. I contend that that which Huxley attributed to the Maya can be seen rather, as a product of colonialist discourse, and reveals a possibly strategic element of Maya studies that addressed the latent, (morally) dangerous sexuality or violence of the Other, and contained these within the racialized categories of the “remarkably clean” Maya. Moreover, the Maya seemed to have achieved that which Huxley seemingly desired, that is, achieve the incorporeal intellectual plane posited by a Western intelligentsia separated from the visceral, instinctive life of the body. The challenge Huxley seemed to pose was for Western intellectuals to view death, sex, history and mathematics equally dispassionately, as (he supposed) had ancient Maya intellectuals. Ethnology seemed to suggest, attractively to Huxley, that the contemporaneous Maya had retained such detached attitudes to death and sex, as they were noted amongst Mayanists for being stoic, fatalistic, and disinterested in sex. These were defined as quintessentially Maya qualities, and were seen in the contemporaneous people as a cultural survival, although Maya intellectual virtuosity had purportedly been lost.
The affinity of Western intellectuals for the ancient Maya constituted a desire for their allegedly, purely cerebral manifestations, denoting intellectual discipline: mathematics, geometry, spatial relations, aesthetic rigour the contemplation of which was not intrinsically (that is, racially or ethnically) Maya, but rather, pertained to the business of all educated intellectuals. These were attributes that could seemingly cross boundaries of race and ethnicity, and with the intellectual meeting-of-minds that Mayanists were able to effect with the ancient Maya elite, could also cross temporal barriers. Mathematics (the basis of ancient Maya astronomy and calendrics calculations, after all, was posited by scientists as a universal language (at least, of educated elites). Mayanists marveled at one characteristic that stood out above the others: the apparent preoccupation of the ancient Maya with contemplating and recording time. While the peasant class was seemingly fixated upon daily time cycles marked by (for example) rituals of bathing, and upon the larger time cycles of the agricultural year, the elites were allegedly fixated upon an arcane notion of time. Ancient Maya intellectuals— although according to the Morley-Thompson model, they made concessions to cyclic time for the purposes of providing the peasantry with what they “needed” to secure their labor for major constructions — were constructed as having a fixation upon linear time. This construction was remarkably similar to Western notions of linear, uni-directional time, that was connected, indeed intrinsic, to so-called “modern” life.

The great theme of Maya civilization is the passage of time — the wide concept of the mystery of eternity and the narrower concept of the divisions of time into their equivalents of centuries, years, months, and days. The rhythm of time enchanted the Maya; the never ending flow of days from the eternity of the future into the eternity of the past filled them with wonder (Thompson 1954: 13).

Such a belief that the inscriptions were only concerned with time and its embellishment, and defensiveness around the notion that the inscriptions contained primarily or only references to time, seemed itself a fixation, particularly in Thompson’s case (Thompson 1954: 137-144). Mayanists’ various insistences (that the ancient Maya worshipped time, were obsessed with time, were at the mercy of time, could be destroyed by time if ritual prescriptions or sacrifices were faulty) all may be read as projections of the West’s own fixation upon time; archaeology itself is but one manifestation of this obsession. The Morley-Thompson model connected literacy intimately with time, as they viewed the inscriptions from their own limited understanding of them as calendric. Chase, inoculated with “Maya fever” at Chichén Itzá, made a reference to his sense of time as the
lash for westerners: “The clock is perhaps the most tyrannical engine ever invented. To live beyond its lash is an experience in liberty that comes to few citizens of the machine age” (Chase 1934: 130). This sense that technology necessarily entailed rigid adherence to timetables led many to long for timelessness, metonymically represented by the term mañana:

It is far more difficult and painful for a westerner to rid himself of his clock habits than of his appendix. But once the operation is over and the wound is healed, there is much to be said for...consigning unpleasant business to an endless mañana” (Chase 1934: 130).

In the U.S., the endless mañana was a fantasy space across the border in Mexico: the U.S. was where work took place (witness floods of illegal Mexican immigrants seeking employment north of their border); whereas the ambient sense of mañana south of the U.S. border produced the opposite effect, and there, work not only ceased, but away from the atmosphere in which the Protestant work ethic was in force, work could cease without consequence. I suggest, then, that Mayanists themselves were preoccupied with a type of cleaning, that is, scrubbing away at the archaeological record to reveal and reconstitute it.

For Morley’s and Thompson’s ancient Maya, timelessness was also powerlessness if literacy and time were essentially one; those who controlled time were in control. There may then be a connection of Mayanists’ constructions of time and literacy to the lash, a symbol of state power, which was also imbricated in Late Victorian preoccupations of fetishism, a liminal zone characterized by projected fears of racial degeneration and psychopathology. It called up the projected sado-masochistic and sexual overtones of the colonial encounter, the slave/master fetish, which Foucault called “one of the great conversions of the Western imagination: unreason transformed into delirium of the heart” (Foucault 1993 [1961]: 124).

I propose to extend the disciplinary subtext of the Mayanists’ bath fixation to a projection of their own sense of that “tyrannical engine” as a lash. Were they, with their own obsessive attendance at the Maya bathtub, trying to scrub away time itself? To wash away the layers of time from ancient Maya remains; yes, but perhaps also to wash away time from “their” beloved Maya, keeping them “traditional,” allochthonic, conservative; that is, away from time’s contamination.
CHAPTER 7 SLIPPING AWAY

If one looks closely he will find that everything (these Indians) did and talked about had to do with maize; in truth, they fell little short of making a god of it. And so much is the delight and gratification they got and still get out of their cornfields, that because of them they forget wife and children and every other pleasure, as if corn fields were their final goal and ultimate happiness. Chronica de la Santa Provincia Del Santissimo Nombre de Jesus de Guattemala, Cap. VII (XVI\textsuperscript{th} century Ms.) (Morley 1947 (1946): 2).\textsuperscript{60}

Morley and Thompson advanced the metonymic freezing (Appadurai 1988:39) of the Maya peasants with whom they worked to the \textit{milpa}, the long-fallow field devoted primarily to maize cultivation. They alleged that Maya were, and had been, perpetually fixated upon their \textit{milpas}, for which they found documentary evidence that supported their own perceptions in the sixteenth century description, that opens this chapter. Mayanists’ understanding of the totality of Maya culture was patterned according to the connections they perceived between Peasant and Pyramid, and Peasant and \textit{milpa}. In his synopsis of Maya religious beliefs and practices, Thompson described this alleged fixation of Maya men:

When milpa clearing time comes, the Maya slips away like any lover off to dally with his mistress. It has seemed to me that the sex instinct is somehow channeled into love and anxious brooding over the young maize as it produces its first leaves. It is a New World version of the mystic marriage of Saint Catherine, and it turns the Maya peasant into a mystic (Thompson 1972 [1970]: 287).

The peasant as lover of the land was a common 19th and early 20th century European discourse that served to essentialize and instinctualize the peasant — as well as to obscure and mystify actual systems of labor and economic relations (Ryan 1992: 79, \textit{passim.}). Ethnologists and archaeologists reframed the relationship between sexual activity and \textit{milpa} cultivation, reading the impulse to make \textit{milpa} as a substitute for love and sexual desire. In denying the connection the Maya themselves made between sexuality and milpa cultivation, they accomplished the task of circumscribing and containing Maya sexuality. Some statements, for example, about the necessity of male continence before certain rituals, contradicted the prevailing view of low Maya libido,
although this does not seem to have been the intent: Thompson, in describing a certain ceremony, noted, “...no one must return home, for if anyone had intercourse with a woman, the rains would not come. Accordingly, the men sling their hammocks...on the outskirts of the village” (Thompson 1954: 239). Thompson did not explain why, given the Maya disinterest in sex that he alleged, it would even be necessary for men and women to stay completely separate from one another to ensure male continence.

Morley described sex as “of only moderate importance in the lives of the Maya” (Morley 1947 [1946]: 33). Gann said, “Both men and women are singularly lacking in sex instinct, and this seems to have been a characteristic of the Maya from the earliest times” (Gann and Thompson cited in Steggerda, 1941: 51).

Steggerda’s 1941 anthropometric study made a paradoxical set of statements of Maya sexual conduct, marriage and family ties, noting that they “seldom [marry] based on mutual affection or love” (Steggerda, 1941: 47); “During my years in Yucatan, I have never seen a Maya man kiss a woman. Couples are considered affectionate if they carry out their respective duties faithfully” (Steggerda, 1941: 49); “According to most raters, sex plays a part of only moderate importance in the lives of the Maya” (Steggerda, 1941: 51) (see also Steggerda’s chart, in Figure 3). He summed up his sense of Maya sexual behavior with the following assessment:

I feel that the expression of the sex instinct among the Maya is somewhat hampered by their mode of life. It must be remembered that the entire family and often several relatives live and sleep together in one small room. Furthermore, the men are hardworking farmers much of whose energy is spent outdoors. When they have leisure and conditions are more favorable, their conduct changes, as will be seen by the following discussion” (Steggerda, 1941: 52-3).

The label “hard-working farmer” brings up the alleged obsession of Maya men with milpa, that turns them into mystics; the next two pages in Steggerda’s study described a series of murders and tortures attributed to jealous sexual rage. Steggerda explicitly set out the details of a woman made to eat the testicles of her lover, and drink his blood, another whose husband “put ground chile into her vulva” and then set her alight (Steggerda, 1941: 53). “Another case is reported ... in which the wife of an unfaithful man attempted to take revenge upon the other with a whole chile pepper” (Steggerda, 1941: 54). He listed stonings, fist fights, knifings, the pulling of teeth and axe murders. Then, referring to a 60 year old man who came to live with a Pisté family, and became
involved with the wife: “This the husband knew full well but said that he did not care so long as his place was kept clean and his food was served on time. Thus, he did not have to work so hard and was assured of about one peso a day” (Steggerda, 1941: 54). Immediately following were sections of the report covering unwed mothers, prostitutes and incest (Steggerda, 1941: 55-6).

There did not seem to be room in Mayanist discourse for any discussion of normal Maya sexuality. It described only these extremes: lack of libido, or perversity. The violent scenes of jealous rages Steggerda described were similar to descriptions of ritual human sacrifice (the subject of a later chapter). Placing jealousy and drunken rage as triggers for sexuality and violence was strategic. If the Maya were peaceful, and “feebly sexed,” then in their transformation through rage meant they had ceased being Maya. Steggerda had alluded to this above, noting the transformation in their sexual propensities when they left their “traditional” homes.

Pushing the case to its limits, the transmogrification of Maya sexuality became a grotesque caricature: Morley suggested that the Maya have very little sexual attraction one to another (significantly, the opposite of the stereotypical hot-blooded Latin) and he referred to agricultural damage by livestock as a greater offense than adultery. “In rare cases a husband may kill a wife’s paramour, but often he pardons her or allows her to go off with the other man. Injury to crops by livestock is a more serious matter, and the owner of the animals is obliged to pay for the damage” (Morley 1947 [1946]: 30-31). Such a denial of Maya sexual attraction to one another, the absence of jealousy, and the construct that farming in general was more important than marriage, was a common Mayanist description of Maya sexuality; in relating this story, Morley also consigned the Maya to a submissive posture in even the “serious matter” of damage to livestock; as he noted, the crop owner awaited the sense of obligation of the offending animals’ owner.

The erotic content of certain images on Maya ceramics, in Morley and Thompson’s model of the Maya, was typically subsumed in the construction of ceramics as elite goods and the transfer of sexual content to the realm of metaphor, in which all erotic activity took place among supernaturals: “At the same time, there exists in Maya thought a sexual drama: the sky is male, the earth female, and their intercourse mystically brings life to the world” (Thompson 1972 [1970]: 196).
Morley and Thompson, among others, read ritual as a container for the danger of rampant sexual desire. Ritual containers, in the Morley-Thompson model, included the yearly cycle. Despite the fact that such cycles are seasonal, and moderately predictable — it is fairly evident in Central America when the rainy season is about to begin — Mayanists represented the ancient Maya peasant as dependent on external, and entirely idiosyncratic, sources of information, without which they were helpless to make their *milpa*. Agricultural fertility rituals, for example, intricately associated by the contemporaneous Maya with male continence and the careful guarding of paraphernalia and environment from female contact, were overlaid by Mayanists with puritan ethics and other cultural misreadings. Thompson, stating that both the individual and the community were threatened by failure to observe continence before a ceremony, reflected more of colonial anxiety around native sexuality than the reality of Maya belief systems. Thompson reported:

In view of the emphasis on continence, it is worth noting that in some areas, at least, the Maya regarded sexual intercourse as sin. The Tzozil of San Pedro Chenalho...have that opinion: “No one sins until he marries.” “A man has not sinned until he has known a woman.” “With the sexual act, man’s and woman’s ch’ule [soul] leaves the body.” In Yucatec *coo* means both “madness” and “unusual sexual excitement”; *coil* (−il is merely a relationship suffix) is “adultery” (Thompson 1972 [1970]: 175).

Thompson’s failure to recognize the overlay of Spanish Catholic teaching and his own morality, and his tendency to elide changes between ancient and contemporary Maya religious practice is consistent with the fit between his own beliefs and the requirement, within his model, of a peasant as controlled in all aspects of human need (including subsistence and procreation) by non-biological forces beyond his control, and yet, “naturally” restrained and self-disciplined.

The Mayanist construction of a Maya peasant who had no libido, could not be moved to rage even when seriously provoked, and whose most serious, even mystical connection was with his cornfield, was clearly not a threat. Yet in the U. S., the idea of the peasant was also associated, ambiguously, with revolution. Its positive associations were with patriotic notions, the creation of nationhood, and the fraternal social contract as delineated by the Enlightenment; its negative associations were imbricated in xenophobia, racism, fear of economic instability, that emanated from the border region between the U. S. and Mexico. Mexico’s 1912 revolution, defined as a “peasant” revolution, helped to contain racist fears by submerging the fact that it had been, also, an indigenous revolution. Images of the savage Indian terrorizing white settlers was still very near the
surface of the popular imagination in the U.S. just after the Mexican Revolution; older U.S. citizens had living memories of the "Wild West." As historian Richard Slotkin has shown, indigenous Americans had been identified since the 1880's with socialists, communists, and labor unions, through their identity as non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants to North America. Xenophobia escalated as a result of the Russian Revolution, which led eugenicists to assist in formulating policies and laws in 1924 limiting immigration. Providing some protection from such anxiety-laden associations with the *lumpenproletariat*, the peaceful peasant spiritually connected to the land as represented by Mayanists was under such a spell of devotion to his *milpa* that he deserted even a justified and winning revolutionary cause at planting time. This recurring trope seems to date from stories that circulated at the time of the Caste Wars of 1847, a story which Gann reconstituted in 1926:

> During the War of the Castes, in 1847, the Maya Indians rose up in rebellion against the horrible cruelties perpetrated upon them by their Spanish taskmasters. Naturally brave, and vastly outnumbering their enemies, they soon possessed themselves of the greater part of Merida, the capital. With the fall of Merida complete success would have attended their arms, the entire land would have been in their hands again, and the hated oppressors driven back to the sea, as had been prophesied centuries before by one of their priests, a prophecy in the fulfillment of which there was a firm and universal belief amongst them.

> At this psychological moment, however, the first rains came on rather earlier than usual, and the army began to melt rapidly away. Every night a few hundreds would disappear to their distant villages and settlements in the bush, drawn even from the great patriotic undertaking of freeing their country, recovering their ancient land, and revenging themselves for centuries of oppression, by the lure of the *milpa* - the thought of the gentle rain falling on the cool, fertile *chacluum*, or red earth, and no one there to plant the corn and beans which meant life to the family of the coming year.

> And so the cause was lost, Merida was saved, and the yoke of the hated stranger, now probably never again to be cast off, was forged anew around the necks of the aboriginal owners of the soil.

> The Catholic priests ascribed the relief of the city to a miraculous intervention of the Saints, in answer to the frenzied prayers of the faithful for their aid in dire distress; but the Indian priests, the *chacs* and *mens*, could tell a different tale, for they knew that it was due to a millennium-old instinct of the Maya, strong and irresistible as the homing instinct of the pigeon, to turn up at the *milpa* with the first rains - an instinct stronger than patriotism, more compelling even than hatred, which is of all human emotions possibly the most powerful, for it overcame both of these, though their priests and leaders, and even the Indians themselves, strove valiantly to overcome it (Gann 1926: 132-3).

> Despite his repetition of this *milpa* mythology, Gann was mystified by the difference between his own values and those of the peasant *milperos* at his archeological dig at Lubaantun, who could not be induced to remain at the site, despite Gann's having offered what he considered a
more than adequate cash incentive. The archaeological season coincided with the local dry season in which *milpa* had to be cleared and burned and the corn planted, the serious necessity of which — providing basic subsistence — Gann dismissed as:

...communal ceremonial picnics, which no inducement on earth would induce them to forego...men will turn up, work for a few days, till they have accumulated enough for a respectable spree, then quit, leaving behind them nothing but the old excuse of the *milpa*.

As a matter of fact, any one of our Indian laborers could have earned as much in one month’s continuous work at the ruins as his *milpa* would have produced for him in the whole year; in other words, one month’s labor would have sufficed to keep him in corn, beans, rum, and idleness for the rest of the year. But the communal clearings and plantings of the *milpas*, with their attendant gossip, light desultory labor, and gorges on pork, chickens, and eggs, are more than any Indian can withstand. *The spring is in their blood, and being but feebly sexed, and almost completely lacking in sensuality, his thoughts, instead of turning to love, turn to the milpa, wither his steps turn also, charm the archaeologist never so wisely with offers of high wages and promises of bonuses for every unbroken find* (emphasis mine) (Gann 1926: 234).

Gann could not seem to make up his mind whether his workers were mystically devoted to *milpa* or to the bottle; in any case, he was chronically frustrated by the inability of U.S. dollars to buy him what he needed. The extent to which there was cultural misunderstanding is indicated by the extent to which Mayanists had to go to explain behavior stemming from values that they failed completely to understand.

Thompson cited the last sentence of Gann’s complaint, and agreed: “That last observation any archaeologist who has used Maya labor would confirm” (Thompson 1972 [1970]: 287).

Chase’s version of devotion to *milpa* suggested that the Maya were subject to certain mystical, natural imperatives:

But the cornfields...take on a sacramental dignity. For centuries these milpas have been cultivated from father to son, and their sowing and harvesting are the outstanding ceremonies of the year. It is said that no Mexican revolution can survive the harvest season. The army deserts in a unit to tend its ancestral milpas (Chase, S. 1931: 16).

In this comment, economist Chase declared his solidarity with the model Mayanists at Chichén Itzá had apparently demonstrated for him. Such attachment to the land could be construed as a safeguard against *any* threat from the violence and upheaval of revolution: the peasant wanted his own small piece of land, and needed that only. Mayanists’ propagation of this notion might soothe U.S. fears as its citizens looked southwards. They might too, have yearned ethnostalgically for such an all-powerful primal connection with a deified nature, or they may have longed to have
made a different choice between "progress" and "tradition." Chase colluded in the
dectextualizing of this constructed "traditional" peasant, in effacing the context of the alleged
actions, the pivotal role of the U.S. in the henequen industry whose massive, crushing exploitation
of Maya peasants culminated in the horrors of the Yucatán Caste Wars. His assessment meshed
with the information he had received from Mayanists at Chichén Itzá, which he then communicated
to a U.S. public filled with anxiety, in the 1930's, over domestic agricultural production, their
immediate and future economic prospects, their personal safety in the event of war, the threat they
perceived from fascism, and the potential entry of immigrants in to the U.S. in large numbers.

U.S. fascination with Mexico entailed a vision of "Two Americas:" the handicraft economic
system, associated with pre-Columbian survivals, and the machine culture associated with Europe
and the U.S. (Chase, S. 1931). In the hybridizing environment of Mexico, a racially and culturally
liminal zone in the center of a Europe — U.S. — Indian triangle, there seemed a possibility for
both machine and handicraft culture to coexist there. Some U.S. readers would have been
sentimental and nostalgic about Mexican rustic life; others were merely nervous about Mexican
aggressors. Although Chase imbibed the Morley-Thompson model during his tour, he had very
little interest in the Maya as differentiated from other indigenous and Mestizo groups in Mexico.
However, many of the qualities he attributes to the "Mexicans" are the same that archaeologists
attributed to the Maya and carefully opposed to those of the "Mexicans." Related to the post-
revolutionary project promoted by the Mexican government, known as indigenismo, Chase
conflated qualities selected from tropes of the Indios and of the Campesinos and projected these
upon the idealized notion of the indigene. The case Chase posited was for a regionally-based
economic system as ideal for both Mexico and "Middletown, U.S.A." His pro-handicraft stance
was reflective of the fears some Americans harbored of mass industrialization. Mythologies about
Maya peasant subsistence promoted Chase's view of a Mexico, colored by nostalgia for certain
features of "the early American way of life as typified in Mexico" the loss of which many in the

The U.S.'s severe economic crisis following October 29, 1929 had shaken its citizens' faith in progress based on industrialization and technology, which had spectacularly failed to
provide even the bare subsistence. Mayanists, on their part, denied the impoverishment of the contemporaneous Maya, citing calorimetric studies claiming that the Maya were able to work hard on calories U.S. dietary science suggested was considerably below subsistence; yet, these figures were inserted into the record of Maya attributes: the ability to perform hard labor on insufficient calories was projected onto the ancient peasantry (e.g. Steggerda, 1931; Redfield and Villa, 1934).

The Steggerda anthropometric and Robert Redfield ethnological documents that contributed to these conclusions studied the villages of Chan Kom and Piste, both near Chichén Itzá. Chan Kom was chosen, according to Redfield, because its contemporary residents were peasants, racially Indian, culturally Maya, mainly illiterate and defined themselves as politically and economically dependent on the towns and cities of modern literate civilization. Redfield noted that his ethnology described "...the mode of life in a peasant village" (Redfield and Villa Rojas: 1934). A crucial influence on the Chichén Itzá and Chan Kom projects was the intellectual milieu in which Redfield transferred the "melting-pot" theory into the socio-cultural context of a Maya village and its interactions with the dominant culture (Cruz 1996: 9).

Sharing its border with Mexico (and occupying territory that it took from Mexico) the U.S. takes that country as (one of) its Other(s). Fascination in the U.S. with Mexico tended to invoke a Mexican peasant/indigene rather than a Maya one, however; U.S. hegemony/hegemonic ambitions in Central America entailed popular perceptions that were not fraught with the same anxieties.

Attitudes to the indigenous peasant construction ranged between "ethnostalgia," and xenophobia. Citizens of Chase’s hypothetical Middletown, U.S.A. saw in Latin America:

“A primitive religion, a Pretorian army, a medieval church, handicraft folkways into which twentieth century mechanism is beginning to intrude, tribal organization, an educated, modernly cultivated minority — all these are found today in Mexico. The time element is the transcendent factor in the understanding of that country...continuity is the marrow of Mexican history beneath changing surface events.” Thus Gruening sets the stage. The United States obliterated the Indian and started fresh. Mexico, Peru, and to a lesser extent other Latin American countries have grafted upon stubborn and ancient cultures, which, from time to time, have flared into commanding civilizations. Continuity is indeed the marrow of Mexican history, the crystal through which alone she can be analyzed and understood (Chase, S. 1931: 35).

Clearly, there had been no obliteration of the “Indian” in the U.S. as only three years later, in 1934, John Collier (heading the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs) instituted his “new Indian Policy” in response to the need for a massive tribal reorganization. Mexico was the place the U.S.
could look for a series of social experiments in addressing the interface between indigenous
tradition and modernity, in light of growing awareness that their own indigenous people were not
“vanished” but continuous.

To address this concern, Chase had consulted with archaeologists at Chichén Itzá, and
archaeology’s ongoing need to seek popular interest and support for their work could call upon the
view from Middletown. This was an exercise in mutual back-scratching; hence the good fit of the
projected needs of Middletown with the underpinnings of the Mayanist model. The emphasis on
establishing continuity can be understood as part of a necessary strategy to consolidate that which
was “traditional” and therefore authentically Maya, from that which was modern and therefore
opposed authenticity. Modernity’s hegemony was allegedly inevitable, but ethno-archaeology
would provide further continuity by facilitating the convergence of Old World and New World
historical streams.

In his 1936 article in *National Geographic Magazine*, Morley called upon the
anthropometric, calorimetric and ethnological studies the Carnegie Institution of Washington
correlated with its archaeological investigations and cited their data on Maya peasant cultivation of
milpa: (1) the Yucatán could support a fivefold population increase (to two million) on the milpa
system, and (2) a Maya family of five could be supported on about 60 days work a year. “The first
fact easily accounts for the more numerous population which undoubtedly occupied this region in
pre-Columbian times, as compared with to-day; and the second as clearly explains how the ancient
Maya found time to build their many cities of stone” (Morley 1936: 644).

Morley’s opinion on economics and on “labor” highlighted the way in which U.S. policies
of intervention and economic exploitation informed archaeology, which had to go to great lengths
to explain contemporaneous Maya “refusal” to participate in the golden harvests of capitalism. If
labor had refused to work more than one or two days a week on the original construction of elite
monuments, how would the ancient Maya have achieved a civilized state? This question was
directed not only at laborers whose willingness to “work” is in question (that is, to be exploited by
trans-national corporations), but at labor unions in the U.S., whose demands, some feared, would
undermine the very foundations of capitalist democracy in the U.S. While machine-age anxieties
contemplated organized union workers, ethnostalgia contemplated the Maya peasant cultivating his corn. This, then was where the guarantee was needed: to keep the bodies toiling in the fields to feed trans-national corporate profits. As long as peasants stayed in their fields, Morley argued, all would be well.

The Morley-Thompson model, then, de-sexualized the Maya, and sanctified his relationship to his subsistence farming, which served to involve him in the model's central business: milpa subsistence and its mystical, ritual significance in the present, and in the past, as constitutive of ancient Maya civilization. This notion could be recruited as well for other purposes external to archaeology, in that its de-sexualized contemporaneous Maya were also non-violent, and non-threatening; their needs were few and easily satisfied, and were therefore able to coexist (even if marginally) with the needs of the industrial age. The guarantee was contained in the character of the essentialized peasant who was peaceful and diligent, devoted to the land, and perpetually unsullied in a dirty world.
CHAPTER 8 INTO THE WELL

There is no sex in the art of the Mayas; but, by way of compensation, what a lot of death! (Huxley 1934: 50).

Into this well they have had, and then had, the custom of throwing men alive, as a sacrifice to the gods in times of drought, and believed they did not die though they never saw them again. They also threw into it many other things, like precious stones and things that they prized. And so if this country had had gold, it would be this well that would have had the greater part of it, so great was the devotion which the Indians showed to it (Bishop Diego de Landa, cited in Morley 1947 (1946): 210).

Academic representations that privileged desirable aspects of the Maya could be conscripted to help contain and circumscribe the threatening possibilities of violent or sexual contact with the indigene; the glories of the ancient "high civilization" could be appropriated in the service of re-writing pan-American history and identity. Popular imagery often displayed overt ambiguities, now idealizing or glorifying, now dabbling in the prurient — particularly sexuality and human sacrifice. Representations of the essentialized Maya peasant, around which axis Maya studies revolved, spoke to a continuing theme between the two World Wars and most of the two decades following it, a problem that was a product of U.S. political and economic imperialism, represented by the body of the girl who was depicted spinning to her death in the cenote of sacrifice. She was a disposable Other, which had to be controlled, assimilated or eliminated.

Morley's November 1936 National Geographic Magazine article, "Yucatan, Home of the Gifted Maya," had increased the stakes in the popularization of the Maya. Perhaps one of this century's best-known popular images of the Maya was the Herget painting of a young Maya girl cast into the cenote (Figure 50). It was featured in the 1936 journal and recirculated in the following four decades. The terrified victim has been thrown to her death, not by the Maya, but by the Toltec warriors who had invaded and conquered the peace-loving Maya, according to Morley's explanation of the ancient history of the site. In addition to the image's overt exploitation of the trope of the primitive, it also sets up a series of dichotomies of gender, class and race. The Maya
were subjugated, thence literally disposable; they were represented in the young female body of the sacrificed virgin.

Morley stated that “young girls were flung into the pit at daybreak in times of drought or other national crises to intercede with the gods” (Morley 1936: 622). Might part of the appeal of this image have been National Geographic Magazine readers’ yearning for such a simple and economical solution to droughts and national crises of their own, at the height of the Great Depression?

The Itzá maiden wore the ubiquitous bleached-white and embroidered garment, as did her modern counterpart (see photograph in Figure 17). In an earlier version of the sacrifice scene, the white-clad girl was limp, still in the arms of her sacrificers (Figure 16); she was designated “the bride of Yum Chac.” The West’s discourse equating land it had not yet occupied as “virgin” has a double significance here. Maya “virginity” was not only to succumb to the penetration of its territory by the “Toltec” invasion; Maya lands were also a sacrificial offering to U.S. investors, in 20th century, economic imperialist exchanges. 63 Morley’s explanatory text in the accompanying article marks him as an apologist for such interests in the U.S. The death of the maiden is allowable in this colonialist discourse; it may even be the only option available for dealing with the Other, should the “virgin lands” not be relinquished. Attempts to represent a female-gendered, passive, receptive “bride of Yum Chac” were not very helpful as metaphoric moderators of public opinion in 1936. Too much was known about the struggles of the allegedly disposable Other in Central America and Mexico. The colors in this image are vivid, lush and tropical. The artist’s agitated line animates the scene: the beat of the drums and the beat of the terrified girl’s heart can be heard in the syncopatic visual rhythms. This girl, it appeared, had not agreed to be the sacrificial bride, did not faint, and thereby give in to her fate (death/rape). She has clearly struggled to escape, and her body is still in motion from the effort.

Mayanists represented the concept of Maya human sacrifice as necessary to their well-being, almost a medical procedure. For the most part (although there are a few notable exceptions) their archaeological descriptions are clinical. Thompson set out even the rituals of sacrifice as operating within a system that was intellectualized and mathematically “nice”: “The builders were
men...[some of whom] may have given their lives to the building as sacrificial victims at its
dedication. It is likely that their bones or their decapitated heads, each neatly enclosed between
pairs of pottery bowls placed lip to lip, are beneath the walls or floors of the temple...” (Thompson
1954: 8). The implication was that intellectuals, and in particular, scientists (Maya or non-Maya)
can contemplate death — and sex — clinically and dispassionately. So, too could masters arrange
for necessary death: “in front of [the slab] were the bones of six youths, who may have been
attendants slain so that they could serve their master in the next world” (Thompson 1954: 69). In
addition, the higher the level of intellectual organization, the greater control there was over
organized death, the sacrifices that archaeologists posited as social control. Thompson referred to
the archaeological evidence of sacrifice at San José: “There is a little evidence pointing to the
practice of human sacrifice, both of adults and of children, but this, so far as the evidence goes,
was on a rather limited scale, in keeping with the provincial character of the site” (Thompson 1954:
77). He related quite a different tale about sacrifice during the early part of the period of Spanish
domination, when organization of the Maya states was disintegrating due to the actions of the
Spanish friars and rulers. Thompson, quoting the “confession” of Juan Couoh, tortured out of him
by Spanish friars, took as unvarnished truth the tale of the heart excision sacrifice, which
supposedly had taken place in a church and involved the cutting of a cross on it, and placing it in
the mouth of Itzamna. Thompson called this document “a tense story of overwhelming drama, the
horror of which is enhanced by the knowledge that it took place in a building dedicated to the
worship of Him who said, ‘Whoso shall offend one of the little ones...’” (Thompson 1954: 245).
It was particularly repugnant to Thompson to contemplate the sacrifice of children, and caused in
him a rare welling-up of moral indignation against the Maya he loved. He attempted to rehabilitate
de Landa on this account; this 16th century bishop is infamous for an auto-da-fé in which he
burned an unknown number of books. Thompson reacted with moral outrage, not at de Landa (as
Mayanists in general did) for having destroyed all of the extant pre-conquest Maya written
documents, but at the Maya, for “sacrificing children.” Therefore, in his view, de Landa had no
choice.64 Discussions of violence, for Thompson, could not always be intellectualized. His
response to this report, and his construction of the Maya as extremely devout monotheists were,
even he admitted, consistent with his own religious beliefs. Descriptions such as this one, in which
the Maya were represented as out-of-control during the early Spanish colonial period and other discussions of the introduction of warfare in to the Maya area by other cultures, were consistent with Mayanists’ practice of implying violence as a non-Maya characteristic, the result of external pressures or hybridity.

At the end of World War II, when the U.S. had ascended to its new status as world leader, U.S.-Latin American economic policies were no longer high on the list of U.S. priorities. Mayanists’ representations at this time continued to soft-pedal or completely deny examples of violence among the ancient and post conquest Maya — the massive uprisings in, for example, 1542 and 1847. Maya nationalism, Maya militarism and Maya resistance, might arguably have provided examples of continuity of practice, yet Mayanists avoided connections between past and present conflict by suppressing both. (Such as converting Maya violence and war-making during the 1847 War of the Castes into milpa devotion, as noted in the previous chapter.) With their direct involvement in regional and local politics and their presence on the scene, it is not possible to construct a plausible case for Mayanists being unaware of the death and destruction taking place around them, in which the United States was directly implicated.

There had been a relative honeymoon of accommodation in U.S. policy towards Latin America that lasted until 1954, when American security and preeminence in the hemisphere was allegedly threatened by Communist incursions in the region. Dispensing with its so-called “Good Neighbor” policy, the U.S. led a coup in Guatemala, thereby protecting the United Fruit Company’s enormous interests there (Poitras 1990: 10-18). The collaboration of archaeology with these interests took place within constructs of diplomacy, scientific investigation and claims of philanthropy. Conciliation and public relations measures that UFCO had already undertaken there included the archaeological reconstruction of the Maya site at Zaculeu, an exercise not in scholarship, but in the promotion of UFCO’s entitlements, the Guatemalan government’s interest in promoting tourism and attracting foreign, particularly U.S. dollars, but primarily in obfuscating the issues surrounding the deaths in indigenous people in Guatemala during and after the coup, in spurious claims of altruism and philanthropy. A pseudo-archaeological “report” — in fact a large-format coffee-table book destined for U.S. middle-class living rooms — *The Ruins of Zaculeu,*
Guatemala (Woodbury and Trik 1953) stated on its fly leaf (Figure 51) UFCO’s “expression of social responsibility.” Photographs of UFCO’s reconstructions are shown in Figure 52, a view of one of the “reconstructed” (that is, completely rebuilt) structures and Figure 53, an aerial view of the site that was “restored to the people of Guatemala” (see text in Figure 51) by the company that had in fact displaced, dispossessed and dismantled the Mam Maya in so many ways that it is impossible to list them. It was, however, simple enough for an oligarchy backed by the U.S. government to perpetrate these acts and dismiss them. The work at Zaculeu, from 1946 to 1953, took place as the Mam died of starvation and were murdered in the interests of social control, while UFCO, the puppet government of Guatemala and the U.S. State Department collaborated in their oppression and exploitation (LaFeber 1984). The book’s publication in 1953 was a strategic public relations move that just preceded the CIA-backed coup, the motivation for which was to reestablish U.S. (and UFCO’s) hegemony in Guatemala, and reclaim the lands it required. The killing of indigenous Guatemalan peasants whose compliance was necessary for UFCO’s bottom line, continued for 40 years.

There was in the mid-fifties a growing economic decay in Central America combined with widespread political unrest. U.S. cold war economic and political hegemony that had depended throughout the fifties on dictators, private investors, and the activities of the CIA, was facing serious policy failure. Anti-U.S. demonstrations were rampant in Latin America, the U.S. had suffered a number of recessions between 1953 and 1960, and it was no longer the ascendant in a bipartite, capitalism vs. communism post-war world. Shockingly, the U.S. suddenly found itself significantly less competitive in the world market, and the cold war had taken a dramatic turn in a new global context that threatened U.S. world leadership in military, economic, and scientific realms. Latin Americans (along with Africans and Southeast Asians) were discovering in their rising nationalism a surprising amount of power that the U.S. Secretary of State called “the tyranny of the weak” (LaFeber 1983: 138-39).

In 1954, at this point in U.S.-Latin American relations, Thompson referred sardonically to the type of imagery that the artist Herget had created for National Geographic Magazine (Figure
and with which Morley was associated through the publication, in all likelihood an oblique attack on his erstwhile colleague's tendency to indulge in such popularizing hyperbole.

Spanish accounts tell of virgins being cast into the well, a detail which has caught the public imagination. *Lurid* pictures of fair damsels plunging into the pool are common. Actually, of the identifiable remains, thirteen are of men; twenty-one are children ranging in age from eighteen months to twelve years, and of these half were under six years old. Only eight are of women, seven of them over twenty-one, past the normal age of marriage (emphasis mine) (Thompson 1954: 114).

Having chastised others for their "lurid" pictures, he painted one himself with words, in emotive retellings of Maya "events" imaginatively peopled with characters drawn from his intimately "knowing" the living Maya from personal and ethnographic accounts, and the ancient Maya from his analysis of their elite products. (part of Thompson’s story of heart excision sacrifice, from this fictional section of *The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization* (1954), is included as Appendix A). The details of the ritual he took from a variety of sources, but the emotions he attributed to his fictional protagonist, a novitiate he named "Balam," and the sacrificial victims, seem to have been projections of his own ambivalent feelings. At the outset, I indicated that Thompson and Morley considered themselves initiates in the inner working of ancient Maya religious ritual, and this description of Balam’s experience is written from that viewpoint. Both he and Morley felt fully qualified not only to infer from the particular to the general, but to speak to Maya emotions and motivations, based on intuitions and perceptions gained in their many years’ intimate association with their Maya workers. The complications arising out of the time, race and class slippages were not a deterrent to these analogies. In particular, I want to point out the mention of shame, attributed to the noble who must countenance sacrifice even of those for whom he has some regard. By 1954, when this passage was published, the U.S. civil rights movement, in relation to Black American experience of political and social segregation, had already begun to attempt the de-colonizing transfer of the victim’s feeling of shame to the victimizer. The zeitgeist of guilt and shame around colonial genocides — and guilt/shame reactions to the ideological genocide of the holocaust, were accompanied by denial as well. The sacrificial victim who struggled against his fate denied the guilt and shame he should have felt at his non-submission to the state’s systems, established for the collective good by wise leaders; and yet — the Holocaust in Europe engendered a new questioning of this authoritarian morality of blind obedience. As a result, I would argue that
the struggling sacrificial victim Thompson described — whether or not he so intended — referenced the U.S. state department’s “tyranny of the weak.” The dismay of both the State Department and “Balam” in viewing the situation, was due to fear of the potential damage to elite power that might result from non-compliance with prescriptions for the state’s chosen victims. Thompson seemed unaware of the work he was doing to process such current issues; he was overtly concerned with the present’s applicability to the past, for example, to describe the way the Mexicans at the well were like the Nazis. How would Thompson or Morley have framed the CIA-backed coup in Guatemala, if they had been inclined to question contemporary violence in Central America, or to explore issues of shame, guilt and denial surrounding the sacrifice of Guatemala’s indigenous people in the interests of industrial capitalism’s “universal good”?

Violence, then was confined in archaeologists’ models almost exclusively to foreign invasion by non-Maya races and sacrifice. The “Mexicans/Toltecs” who appeared in the Herget images in *National Geographic Magazine*, and in archaeologists’ descriptions, seemed to have been a society exclusively consisting of male warriors (Figure 49). The Maya virgins that the Toltec did not sacrifice, then — or so the image seemed to suggest — would become their sexual partners. Archaeologists variously chose segregated cooperation, hybridity (and sometimes its codicil, miscegenation) and violence-induced submission to explain the co-habitation options after the Mexican invasion. These are the standard choices the colonizer faced. U.S. citizens would recognize these as respectively their own legislated segregation of the races, the “melting pot” model, and the effects of recent imperialist struggles such as the two World Wars. The distinctions between the invaders and the conquered, as noted in Morley’s accompanying text and captions, were racially marked attributes, and archaeological uses of race had important and threatening ramifications in 1936 and for many years to come.

Seeming to address this issue, the photograph with which the sacrificed maiden (Figure 50) in the 1936 *National Geographic Magazine* article was paired (Figure 54) showed a girl wearing a *huipil* (again) like that of her ancient counterpart, the standard encoding of continuity between Maya women in the past and present. Although the “modern” peasant girl shown in the photograph could not aspire to wear such gold and jade finery, the text assured the reader that she, unlike her
ancient counterpart, had no oppressive masters to fear. Perhaps such a soothing suggestion offered hope of progress in inter-racial relations to U.S. readers who heard disturbing news on that front locally and from across the Atlantic. However, this explication denied that there was any oppression in the Maya area. The henequen laborers —this girl’s family members probably cut henequen — were treated, by such a statement, as the “disposable Other”. The image of the girl, however, was not intended to represent the Maya who were frequently thrown “into a well” by the foreign investment interests looking to their bottom line on Wall Street, and the machinations of U.S. government interventions.

Despite this flagrant exoticizing of the Maya, the article also included “serious” lessons to be learned from them, such as the consequences of the “High Cost of Living”: Morley’s explanation for the abandonment of highland Maya sites at the end of the Old Empire (this term was his own designation for the period) was that the Maya had suffered thoughtless, unfettered metropolitan expansion and its eventual exhaustion of the land. Such an ecological model was a cautionary tale for the U.S., reflecting a dominant preoccupation there with its own industrial capitalist expansion.

The people were literally starved into searching for new homes. No lesser calamity than this, it would seem, could have driven a whole nation to such a drastic step as the complete abandonment of a region wherein they had expended such a tremendous effort (Morley 1925: 68).

Morley’s words would have been resonant in the U.S. during the Great Depression when itinerant farm workers were forced to exactly the same abandonment of their homes. Throughout that economic crisis felt perhaps even more acutely among the impoverished classes in Latin America, certain ships and freighters (belonging, for example, to UFCO) had luxurious staterooms available to carry a few passengers to Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and British Honduras, offering tourist expeditions to Maya sites such as Chichén Itzá that rapidly became popular among American socialites (New York Times, February 6, 1929, 32:6). Staff at Chichén Itzá were charged by the institution that funded them to offer accommodation, entertainment and educational tours to such curious tourists, and to other visitors including diplomats, heads of state, minor government officials and corporate representatives. In the 1920’s and 1930’s, participation in such expeditions was limited to the leisured class, and only to those individuals with connections to
diplomatic, government, or corporate activities. (True “tourist” excursions designed to appeal to
the middle classes were not actively promoted until after World War II.) Advertising promised
cleanliness, safety, good roads, luxurious accommodation and meals, in steadfast denial of the
poverty and disease that were the result of and were exacerbated by foreign, particularly U.S.,
economic exploitation of the Central American republics. British philosopher and writer Aldous
Huxley opened his 1934 travelogue, *Beyond the Mexique Bay* with a send-up of such
advertising:

What jewelled prose! What images and metaphors! And the staggering gongorisms!
Shall the ship be called just ‘ship’? Perish the thought of such banality! Oh eyes, no
eyes, but fountains fraught with tears! And oh liner, no liner, but ‘yacht-like
giantess,’ but ‘gay and exquisite hostess of the world’s most front-page people’
(Huxley 1934: 1).

When tourism to the Maya area had been limited to those with the financial wherewithal and
government, academic or corporate connections sufficient to mount costly expeditions to remote
and barely accessible Maya ruins, vicarious “travel” was available to the middle class through the
press, who were enthusiastic participants in the promotion of the Maya. A particularly motivated
booster was the *New York Times*, which published numerous articles about new (or “new” to the
public) discoveries about the Maya, and followed the activities of Huxley’s “front-page people.”66
In 1924, the *New York Times* had sponsored an expedition of archaeological exploration, led by
*New York Times* journalist Gregory Mason with Herbert Spinden, then assistant curator of
Mexican archaeology and ethnology at the Peabody Museum. The newspaper published Mason’s
travelogue, *Silver Cities of the Yucatan* the following year (Mason 1925), an heroic account of
the pair’s treasure-hunting exploits, their discoveries, tribulations, and romanticizing observations.
As well, *National Geographic Magazine* included in its 1936 article on the Maya a photograph of
a portion of an ancient Maya structure from Labna, one of several buildings reproduced in full-size
facsimile at the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893. The photograph’s caption
reminded readers of the replica they might have seen at the Exposition, at a time when viewing the
actual ruins was beyond imagining for all but a few dedicated and wealthy antiquarian enthusiasts
(Figure 55). The photograph was placed at the beginning of the journal’s extended justification for
the U.S.’s implication in the profound economic exploitation of Yucatán’s henequen industry.
Morley's accompanying text situated the entire problem before the beginning of the war in Europe, in the hands of the Mexican government and the wealthy hacienderos. Morley reassuringly described the young Maya girl gazing into the well (see photograph in Figure 55) as having no "oppressive masters" to fear, unlike her ancient counterpart shown in Figure 50, a comment seemingly designed to an anxious liberal segment of U.S. citizenry of its concerns over U.S. involvement in the exploitation of Maya peasants.

Whenever the Other was perceived as a threat, however, another strategy claimed that s/he could become the disposable Other in the dominant discourse. A model of Maya peasants without agency - or even desire for agency - helped to channel sympathetic responses and to alleviate fears, the representation of which National Geographic Magazine readers saw hurtling down the well. There was still, in the late 1930's to 1950's some sympathy in the U.S. for the notion of revolution — at least, if that revolution could be viewed as akin to the nation's own fight for a middle class democracy. It was thus possible to construe a peasant revolt against the ruling elite in the Maya past as a possible explanation for the apparent "collapse" of Classic-era Maya "civilization," contesting the ecological version espoused by Morley that argued the Maya had destroyed local ecology through deforestation and soil depletion (Morley 1925: 64-65; 1936: 598-615).66 (Thompson's designation for the era Morley called "Old Empire" was the "Classic period" from roughly the fifth to the ninth centuries A.D. (Thompson 1954: 53-84). Playing down fears of unjustified revolutionaries, Thompson proposed instead a collapse of the social contract between the priestly elite and the peasantry that led to a peasant revolt, which he set in an Anglicized frame:

It is not illogical to suppose that there was a series of peasant revolts against the theocratic minority of priests, "squireons" (a term for that phenomenon of eighteenth-century English life, the squire who was also the village parson), and nobles. This may have been caused by the ever growing demands for service in construction work and in the production of food for an increasing number of nonproducers. Exotic religious developments, such as the cult of the planet Venus, adopted by the hierarchy, may have driven a wedge between the two groups, making the peasants feel that the hierarchy was no longer performing its main function, that of propitiating the gods of the soil in whom, alone, they heartily believed. I am rather dubious of physical invasion and conquest of the Central area, but there may very well have been ideological invasions, as foreign ideas on very late stelae would indicate. Whether degeneracy in art — and it is apparent in only a few cities — reflects a moral weakening in the hierarchy is a question which probably can never be answered. Huxley, I think, showed that Italian art was at its purest when morals were at a very low level. (In our age both seem to have hit bottom together!) (Thompson 1954: 87).
Thompson invoked Huxley in the above passage to support his own conviction that moral and artistic degeneracy were not necessarily linked. Although he proposed that the priestly elite had neglected the more mundane matters important to the peasant class, he argued that they did so as a consequence of their extreme intellectual and spiritual nature, and their desire to create spectacular, but incredibly (peasant) labor-intensive monuments. Thompson's notion of peasant revolt, at its heart, was to provide a launch for the trajectory of the ancient peasant class (note that he does not call it a revolution as that would have denoted an action too large, volatile and unpredictable). The peasantry would remain more or less as archaeologists "found" them at Chichén Itzá in 1924; that is, peasants willing only to farm for their own subsistence, not for others; willing to labor at construction, but resistant to more than a certain amount.

In *The Ancient Maya*, Morley stated, “The archaeological evidence also supports the interpretation that idolatry included the practice of human sacrifice...[there are] eight representations of human sacrifice known in the Maya area" (Morley 1956: 185). He included illustrations of the “documentary as well as archaeological evidence” (Figure 56, “Scenes of human sacrifice”). Morley also described the heart excision ritual with greater ethnographic detail than Thompson — but with no “luridness,” other than the reader and writer’s presumably shared interest in the description. The illustrative examples Morley gave were those of heart excision, while the thoroughly-discussed form of sacrifice by drowning in the cenote, for which there are no Maya images, relied on 16th century Spanish accounts. This was a methodological problem to which the Morley-Thompson model was frequently subject: the documentary and historical records were given much greater interpretive and analytical weight than the artifactual record; the result was a telescoping of the period of pre-European history, and an elaboration of the Post-conquest period with its historical records. This was certainly the path of least resistance; the archaeological record did not conform to the Morley-Thompson model as well as the ethnological/historical one did. This was built into the theoretical underpinnings of the methodology.

The archaeological evidence of *cenote* sacrifice, for example, was the human remains found in the *cenote*. Morley stated that there had been “about fifty human crania, and human longbones. Some of the latter were carved, perhaps to be used as trophies of war” (Morley 1947
Thompson referred to the "cenote cult" that attracted the Mexicans, but given the term "cult," and the claim that Chichén Itzá was the largest Maya center of the time and region, the alleged number of "victims" was very small. (Thompson said forty-two; Morley said about fifty.) Nevertheless, Thompson thought that it was "most plausible to suppose that the Mexicans chose Chichén Itzá as their principal city because the cenote had already given the center some renown throughout Yucatán" (Thompson 1954: 114).

The U.S. State Department's frequent military interventions in Latin America through this period staged analogous sacrificial scenarios; perceived threats such as political instability had to be identified and controlled in regions where enormous U.S. investments had to be protected. The republics were dependent on one or two crops (such as coffee, bananas, rubber), and these markets and lands were controlled almost entirely by North American investors, who also had a lock on mines, railways, ports, and banks. The intervention and protectionism of the U.S. State Department had its critics, which it was fully able to ignore:

Those of our worthy publicists to whom Wall Street is anathema have, in the debauchery of muckraking, been silly enough to insinuate that the Department of State was run by Wall Street. Any student of modern diplomacy knows that in these days of competition, capital, trade, agriculture, labor and statecraft all go hand in hand if a country is to profit (LaFeber 1984: 61).

If "a country" — the U.S. — was to profit from Latin America it had to maintain its control. Determined attempts by U.S. government agencies to frame military intervention, oppression and exploitation in that region in terms of economic exigency or defensive necessity (e.g. preventing communist or fascist encroachment in the region) performed a similar exercise to that of Mayanist framing of sacrifice and warfare in the Maya region as necessary for the public good, or possibly defensive (as when they were allegedly invaded by the Toltec/Mexicans).

Following the revelation of a series of extraordinary murals at Bonampak in 1946, Mayanists had on hand convincing evidence that their irenic model of the Maya would have to be revised. Few were convinced by these images, however, and in general the standard policy was to describe the scenes of violence and bloodshed perfunctorily, as minor scenes of raids or battles (not wars) that did not pertain to the general model of the character of the Classic-era Maya (see lines drawings reproduced in Thompson 1954, Figures 57 and 58). Dismissing the notion that the figures with weapons were makers of war, and that the dead, dismembered and bleeding figures
were victims of war, Mayanists turned to the murals as a source of information about scenes of everyday Maya life (e.g. Morley and Brainerd 1956: 57), dances and ceremonies (e.g. Thompson 1954: 72). Most references to the murals noted, in passing, the depiction of “raids” before reiterating the standard justifications for the peacefulness of Classic Maya society. The first quotation, from Thompson, is contained in the same volume as the Cauhoi “confession”:

The absence of fortifications, the fact that most classic centers are in open country, and little evidence of warfare (the Bonampak murals of fighting rather clearly show a raid, not regular warfare) argue for an assumption of prevailing peace during the Classic Period, as does the incredible building activity which apparently was carried on interruptedly throughout the period. Such evidence as there is of warfare is largely confined to the southwest of the Maya area, not too far removed from non-Maya peoples such as the Zoque and Chiapanec [i.e. Mexican], and is strongest for the last decades of the Classic Period (Thompson 1954: 79).

After Morley’s death, a revised third edition of his text was published; it included a discussion of the Bonampak murals that adhered to the still dominant model of the Maya as largely peaceful:

There are evidences of occasional raiding between centers, suggested in the Bonampak murals, by the nude fettered captives common on Maya stelae, and by the widespread Conquest-period practice of obtaining slaves for sacrifice by raiding... These suggestions of Maya turmoil do not, however, negate the picture of surprising homogeneity and comparative tranquility in the central Maya area during Classic Times (Morley and Brainerd 1956: 57-58).

In keeping with the notion of sacrifice as an intellectualized elite exercise for control and disposal of problems, Thompson used redrawn portions of the murals at Bonampak to illustrate his discussion, in The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization (1954) (Figures 57, “A raid on the enemy” and 58, “Judgment on the captives”). He referred to one figure in the mural as “a dead man in a posture worthy of Michaelangelo,” (Figure 58) which served to divert the discussion from the violent subject matter in the image, using the distancing effect of high art, another kind of intellectual exercise. Thompson by implication, may have meant to attribute to the Maya a similar strategy, with his suggestion that the designer of the mural was a Maya Michelangelo.

These irenic views intrinsic to the Morley-Thompson model of the Maya had already denied a great deal of evidence to the contrary. The claim was that when there was war in the Maya area, it was perpetrated by an aggressive construction of a Maya opposite, “Mexicans” to account for an apparently non-Maya element in the archaeological sequence at Chichén Itzá. The solution was to posit a foreign invasion to account for the difference. As shown in Chapter 6, the ideological source of the projected Maya-“Mexican” split was external to archaeology. The explication was
greatly elaborated, but it essentialized each race as opposed pairs at extreme ends of all scales of comparison.

The temptations inherent in exploring the possibilities of the Mexican/Toltec vs. Maya/Itzá polarities, together with the death/sacrifice imagery with its subtext of sexuality (that so appealed to the popular imagination) seemed to push the Morley-Thompson machine into hyperbolic, seemingly racist (and sexist) imaginings. Interpretations of the Maya between 1924 and 1960 as peaceful, time-worshipping peasants ruled by a priestly elite subscribed to the primitivist, colonialist and romantic assumptions that had motivated Huxley’s *Beyond the Mexique Bay.*

There are several ways of “splitting” the evidence that occur with regard to these models, all contained in aspects of the complex relationship that existed between the Mayanist and their object of study. These are race, class, and time divisions. The existence and maintenance of these multiple dichotomies may help to explain the endurance of certain interpretive assumptions and models for which the archaeological record did not provide sufficient support. In the foregoing discussion of human sacrifice, I argue that that discourse was a working-through of justifications, accusations, and strategies for and about the Other, and that these were based in colonialism’s ambivalent senses of both entitlement and guilt/shame. This discourse contains various possibilities for controlling this Other: elimination, assimilation or segregation.

The struggle for Mayanist scholars such as Morley and Thompson —identifying with the Maya to the considerable extent that they both did — was to control the conflicts between their own moral convictions and the evidence that their beloved Maya were not ideal, unique, or special among humans. The Morley-Thompson model had to rely on their determined constructions of an idealized version of “their Maya” as an antidote to the internal contradictions of their model, particularly because there was such a poor match between the archaeological, colonial documentary, and ethnological record, and the lofty requirements of their model.
CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION
Mayanist Culture and Continuity

(The Maya today) cling stubbornly and proudly to local traditions. ...Such conservatism in daily practice is vital to the bridges we build between the living Maya and the ruined remains left behind by their ancestors (Schele and Friedel 1990: 41-42).

Critical discussions in the social sciences regarding the "innocence" of certain presuppositions have changed our understanding of (among other things) the nature of anthropological field work (e.g. Clifford 1988). These discussions have precipitated interest in the reframing of Mayanists' methodologies, their theoretical underpinnings, and of representations of the ancient Maya. These discussions, however, have not yet dislodged the categories of Peasant and Pyramid from the Mayanist canon, in which the ancient Maya are still metonymically frozen (Appadurai 1988:39).

The elite/peasant, two-caste model has been both enduring and influential. Over the course of the twentieth century, much debate has transpired regarding what entailed the "truth" about the ancient Maya, but still, today, the presupposition remains that a peasant labor force superintended by a small group of elites was the prevailing pattern of ancient Maya social organization. In the culture-historical period, the use of ethnographic analogy by Mayanists to underwrite such a model necessarily meant that the arguably micro-colonial nature of fieldwork was implicated in these representations. While the introduction of settlement pattern studies in the 1960's was heralded as new direction for Maya studies, the elite/peasant model has nevertheless remained part of processual archaeology, and has been taken up by settlement pattern archaeologists as well, although archaeologists at one project have now proposed a Maya "middle class" (Chase and Chase 1996; Chase, A. 1992). Only a very few Mayanist scholars have examined, much less questioned, this prevailing orthodoxy (see Cohodas 1993, 1996).
The late art historian Linda Scheie was arguably the most influential single personality and scholar in Maya studies when she died. She lived and worked at the center of an intense intellectual collaboration amongst Mayanist epigraphers, archaeologists, linguists, anthropologists and art historians. Scheie created and presided over the twenty-two annual Maya Hieroglyphic Workshops at [Austin] Texas that were both touchstone and jumping-off point for Mayanist epigraphers in their quest for decipherment, a process in which she figured prominently.

In a recent and influential collaboration, *A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya*, Scheie and archaeologist David Friedel alluded to their belief that the most prized possession of Maya peasants today is their connection with their ancestral heritage (see the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter) (Scheie and Friedel 1990). Yet this heritage, presented as their reconstructed history, is largely the purview of non-Maya Mayanists. Moreover, ancient Maya material culture is still “entrusted” partly to the modern states in which it originally resided, partly to collecting institutions, archaeologists, and private collectors. The state, not coincidentally, also claims responsibility for subsistence through the regulation of land distribution: part of the Mexican and Guatemalan governments’ declared social responsibility to provide its citizens with access to the basic necessities of life.

Scheie and Friedel presented a model in *A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya* that substituted forest ecology for maize agriculture (Morley’s preoccupation) in a history of the ancient Maya incorporating their synthesis of urban and settlement pattern archaeological data, iconographic analysis and glyphic decipherments to date (Scheie and Friedel 1990). They represented not maize but the tree as the central metaphor in their model of Maya culture, in which the king enacted many rituals of power, and who when he appeared in the guise of the so-called “World Tree” became “power made material.” Scheie and Freidel’s description of the forest ecology-based religion of the ancient Maya, like its antecedent mode by Morley and Thompson, naturalized the relationship of peasants to their lands, peasants to their gods, and peasants to their rulers:

...It was natural that the Maya would choose this central metaphor for human power. Like other trees, the king was at once the ambient source of life and the material from which humans comprised a forest of sustaining human World Trees within the natural landscape of the Maya world (Scheie and Friedel 1990:90).
This representation of the king in relation to his subjects was important to Schele and Friedel's conception of an ancient Maya fraternal social contract, in which all of the community's labor is willingly subsumed to the body of the king. This contract between the King and his people resembles the one Thompson had described between Maya gods and their worshippers. Here the peasant is sustained in exchange for his service, with the dichotomy of literacy/illiteracy enforcing and reinforcing this contract. Modern epigraphers have reenacted this exclusivity, mirroring the function they posited for literacy in the past, since they control knowledge of the archaeological record and the connection between the "illiterate" living Maya and their own, allegedly lost, history.

In Schele and Friedel's model, ancient Maya peasants were not coerced, oppressed or exploited, as Morley and Thompson had represented them. Yet, in the context of cultural continuity between ancient and contemporary Maya peasants, this more "democratic" model also helps to rationalize the relationship of living Maya peasants to modern Mexican and Central American governments. The fallacy is that "knowledge" of Maya culture reconstituted by the non-Maya Mayanist academy and handed back might constitute a redressing of past colonialism, and grant the wherewithal for Maya agency. Resistance (to their bodily impoverishment, and the violence perpetrated upon them?) ostensibly should follow from this, according to Schele's last collaborative publication *The Code of Kings*, co-written with Canadian archaeologist Peter Mathews, and published in 1998. The final note in this volume was triumphant about the condition of Maya today:

For the last thirty years, millions of pilgrims from all over the world have come to the land of the Maya to witness the works of their hands and to see the roots of their civilization. Today, Maya people have joined these pilgrims, but their connections with these sacred places are more than curiosity — knowing their own past and understanding what their ancestors built has become a means of resistance against the fate of being strangers in their own land (Schele and Mathews 1998: 317).

Maya activist and scholar Demetrio Cojti Cuxil presented a less optimistic view, included in a lecture he gave at the “Forum of the Maya People and the Guatemalan Presidential Candidates,” on 12.18.17.8.18 according to the Maya calendar (Gregorian date Oct. 16, 1990). The lecture was part of an event “organized by the Seminario Permanente de Estudios Mayas (SPEM), a private entity made up of professional, student and self-taught Maya” (1996: 42). In the reworked lecture
published in a chapter of a volume edited by Mayanist anthropologists Edward Fisher and R. McKenna Brown, *Maya Cultural Activism in Guatemala* (1996), Cojti Cuxil stated:

At present, in law and in fact, the national culture is Ladino culture; Maya cultures are only rural, domestic cultures, part of Guatemalan folklore. The commercial exploitation of Maya cultures for the tourist industry demonstrates the moral cynicism of Ladino leaders, who deprecate and exterminate Maya cultures, on the one hand, while selectively utilizing and exploiting them at the political level (as symbols of Guatemalan identity) and at the commercial level (in the tourism industry), on the other (Cojti Cuxil 1996:42).

Maya have to pay an entrance fee to see the archaeological centers of their ancestors and then are treated like third-class citizens by the staff. This is further proof that the Maya are foreigners not only in their own country but also in their own homes (Cojti Cuxil 1996:43).

In this article, Cojti Cuxil outlined his own understanding of the *Ladino* colonialist position relative to the Maya in Guatemala, and outlined Maya rights, demands and requirements for "revindications" (Cojti Cuxil 1996). His stated concerns are not knowing about his own ancestors and past, but rather the dangerous and difficult struggle with the ruling *ladino* minority. Perhaps Schele and Mathews constituted the passage cited above as a direct answer to Cojti Cuxil’s statements as well as to similar position statements made by various Maya activists in recent years, and to conversations they have had with the many Maya with whom they have worked. In the same volume in which Cojti Cuxil’s paper was published, was one written by Schele with a German epigrapher colleague Nikolai Grube, that responded to an unnamed colleague’s characterization of the activities of non-Maya, Mayanist epigraphers. As Schele and Grube put it:

This essay began partially in reaction to an American scholar’s characterization of the relationship between epigraphers and the Maya as a colonial one. To use the word *colonial* evokes questions of subtle and profound import. We come from the United States, Germany, and the elite strata of Guatemalan society. By some definitions, anything we do must be colonial, in intent, if not in practice. At the same time, we perceive pressures from colleagues and the Maya community to give back something to the descendants of the people we study. Resolving the conflict between these two views cannot be done to the satisfaction of all involved (emphasis theirs) (Schele and Grube 1996:138).

The de-colonizing plan of educating the colonized and “giving back” to them that which had been taken is the subtext of this chapter, a project that is neither innocent nor neutral. The paper continued with a description of the way Schele and some of her colleagues came to be teaching contemporary Maya how to “read” ancient Maya inscriptions and iconography, and referred to their own knowing and understanding — the history that foreign Mayanists have reconstructed — that they have “given back” to the Maya. Schele’s sincerity is not in doubt: she was known not only for
her exuberant, expansive personality and very considerable intellect, but also for her warmth,  
openness and generosity. I am reminded, however, of both Morley and Thompson, also powerful  
personalities and sincere in their feelings of love and friendship for the Maya with whom they  
worked.

Maya studies still operates within a framework that relies upon public education and  
institutional, corporate and government interests in its activities. For example, in their introduction  
to the proceedings of a 1987 conference in Philadelphia entitled *New Theories on the Ancient  
Maya* (1992), the editors of a volume of published papers mentioned the contribution by U.S.  
archaeologist Christopher Jones that:

...deals with subjects of growing concern to us all: the responsibility of the  
archaeologist to the site excavated and the past culture it represents; the sometimes  
ambiguous relationship with modern governments; the role of archaeology in the  
society in which we function; and the need to reach out to students of the future. The  
example Jones cites, of the current problems facing Tikal, possible solutions, and the  
obstacles in their path, is a salutary reminder that we dare not limit our involvement to  
the period of excavation (Danien and Sharer 1992: ix).

Most of Jones’s article deals with the work of restoration, reconstruction and preservation  
that has taken place at Tikal, and other work that may yet take place. The site of Tikal was  
originally reconstructed with financing by The United Fruit Company (UFCO). Jones describes  
the concerns of archaeologists, tourists, local businesses involved in tourism, and the Technical  
Commission, which the Guatemalan government appointed in 1987 to plan the future of  
archaeological sites in that country. Jones concludes with this statement:

Guatemala has long known that it is in its national interest to protect the remains of  
Maya civilization and to promote its greatness in the eyes of the world. This  
realization was crucial to its commitment to financial cooperation with the University  
Museum in the excavation and restoration of Tikal from the 1950’s on. The interest  
is clearly both economic and political. The economic lesson was relearned in the last  
decade, when tourist revenues dried up almost completely during the fighting and  
violence. Not so obvious is the political cohesiveness that pride in a great Maya past  
can give to a nation that is radically divided (emphasis mine) (Jones, C. 1992: 245).

In one sentence, untold Maya deaths are reduced to an economic problem that can be solved with  
the archaeologist’s help, by increasing tourism. Significantly missing from Jones’ statement, and  
from his actions as a foreign archaeologist working with the Maya, is any mention of the needs and  
demands of the Maya themselves.

Contemporary internal politics in Central America and Mexico continue to be a major factor  
when considering problems of non-Maya Mayanists’ representations. In the forging of national  
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identity, indigenous heritage has often been brought to bear; such privileging of “Indian-ness” in the abstract has been, ironically, almost invariably inversely proportional to the current political status of indigenous people. Adding to the complexity of the situation are the difficulties in obtaining funding sources for archaeological research and in formulating research plans that will generate the appropriate interest for funding to ensue. Sponsorship has been provided by governments both local and abroad, domestic and international universities, museums, national and trans-national foundations and corporations, and individuals. All such sources tend to have differing agendas that are precisely aligned with neither those of archaeologists nor of the indigenous people who are, directly and indirectly, affected by the research. However, in serving both public and academic interests, Mayanist scholars also take their representations of the Maya into a public arena where they have little control over subsequent readings of those representations. That interest in public education is implicated with funding, as is clear, for example, in a 1995 call for papers for the Chacmool Conference (An Americanist archaeological conference held annually at the University of Calgary) in which student organizers unabashedly stated, “In order to remain viable, we must develop an effective strategy to contend with the financial realities of the present, and bridge the gap between research and public education.”

At about the same time this information arrived in the mailboxes of Americanist archaeologists, Maya people in Chiapas, calling themselves the Zapatistas, declared war on the Mexican government, which then (among other more overtly military and violently repressive actions) issued a warrant for the arrest of Zapatista Subcomandante Marcos on a charge of treason. One of the unofficial charges was that he was not a “real” Maya but a Mestizo, and had no right to “lead” the Maya: this represents the West’s imagined entitlement to categorize others. There are various ways that Zapatistas, “the ones without faces, the ones without voices” (Katzenberger 1995: i) subvert the dominant racist discourse in Mexico and Central America. One is by wearing masks and Western clothing, concealing all racial and cultural markers. (This may not be magic, but it is transformational.) Another Zapatista strategy is the sophisticated use of the media, which has been characteristic of the challenge the Zapatistas brought to the world’s attention January 1, 1994.
Mayanists are probably more conscious of events taking place in Central America and Mexico than members of the general public; most are extremely concerned and fearful for the Maya, and other indigenous groups in these regions. Yet, as funding and permits for archaeological work depend on the approbation and support of local governments, few archaeologists feel they can afford to risk biting the hand of the funding arm. It is important to keep in mind also, as some have noted privately, that those who utter criticisms in certain quarters could find themselves in physical danger, whereas silence provides greater assurance of safety, although even that is no guarantee. Foreign academics and journalists as well the local site workers enjoy less and less immunity from local political upheaval and violence; despite the political importance of archaeology, regionally, nationally and internationally, there is now competition for archaeological artifacts, and the competitors are armed.

A 1993 National Geographic Magazine article by U.S. archaeologist Arthur Demarest shows how archaeologists continue to reproduce ambiguous and contradictory constructions of Maya violence and social hierarchy. The article began:

In the Petexbatún rain forest of remote northern Guatemala, shaded by towering mahoganies and cedars, archaeologists and laborers were scraping more than a thousand years of dirt from a massive stone stairway inscribed with Maya hieroglyphs. Sweat soaked through their shirts and glistened on their faces... The thud of distant mortar fire was a reminder that a local band of revolutionary guerrillas was beginning one of its frequent dusk assaults on a Guatemalan Army base a few miles away. But the workers ignored these distractions. They were in the process of uncovering a clue to one of the great mysteries in archaeology... (Demarest 1993: 97).

At Demarest’s Petexbatún project he performs the same separation that Carnegie Institution archaeologists made in the early decades of this century, between “about forty” (non-Maya, mainly U.S.) archaeologists, with himself as director, and “more than a hundred” Maya laborers, amounting to separate classes at the micro-setting of the excavation camp.

The lead-in phrase (in the passage above) took the reader into National Geographic Magazine’s world of archaeology that (as I cited previously) Gero and Root described as “stressing exploration in remote places and the physical demands of field archaeology, overemphasizing the discovery of ‘lost’ civilizations, opulent artifacts, and bizarre social practices” (Gero and Root 1990:35). All of these elements are in Demarest’s article. The trip in involved “a portage at Lake Petexbatún, mules with gaunt bodies weakened by bites from vampire bats
[pulling] our provisions for five hours through dense rain forest to the camp” (Demarest 1993: 99). The “opulent artifacts” included objects from the tomb of a king, and “thousands of potsherds, jade axes, obsidian and chert blades, mirrors made of polished iron pyrite, and bone awls and needles. A pile of skulls and numerous skeletons point to human sacrifice” (Demarest 1993: 105). As for bizarre social practices (in addition to human sacrifice) the article detailed the use of: “...a stingray spine, a symbol of high office that was used for genital bloodletting — a ritual in which a Maya king would pierce his foreskin, dripping the blood on pieces of bark paper that were burned as an offering to the gods” (Demarest 1993: 104).

Demarest’s thesis in the article, entitled “The Violent Saga of a Maya Kingdom,” is part of Mayanists’ current project of redefining the ancient Maya as violent, warlike and imperialist (e.g. Houston et al. n.d.; Martin and Grube n.d.; 1995). With the grandiosity (the Indiana Jones complex?) of the archaeologist who assumes the mantle of immunity along with academic credentials and an archaeological permit, Demarest dismissed (in the text quoted above) the danger of nearby shelling: it is routine and distant, he asserted. Moreover, he described the conflict as between a “local band” of revolutionaries (whom, significantly, he did not name as contemporary Maya) and the Guatemalan army. Thus assigning the two types of organization to a hierarchy of power with his terminology, Demarest left the reader to decide the probable outcome of such a contest. However, the reference to distant mortar fire was not the topic of interest in this article; it was rather Maya warfare confined to the distant past. Demarest spoke for and about the project’s Maya workers in assigning their archaeological labor a position of greater importance in their lives than the contemporary civil war. This was the plaintive wish of previous generations of Mayanists: that they could replace the peasant’s alleged love affair with his milpa with the archaeologist’s love affair with his artifacts. It is also a variation on the mythology of Maya who abandon even a just war to return to nurture and be nurtured by the land. Mayanists such as Demarest, here, and Schele and Mathews, in the final paragraph of The Code of Kings (1998), alluded to actions on the part of the contemporary Maya that they constructed as the latest Maya “obsession” with their own ancient heritage and patrimony, reconstituted and reconstructed by those whom Maya Mayanists perceive as a monolithic non-Maya academy (Fisher and McKenna Brown 1996: 3).
Mayanists in the past had described the lure of the milpa to the Maya peasants who were employed at their excavations, bitterly and uncomprehendingly bemoaning the fact that the milpa seemed to mean more to Maya than even revolution, such that they gave up the opportunity for freedom in favor of their maize. Demarest in this 1993 article deftly substitutes (hired) archaeological work for the agricultural labor, but the photo recalls the same trope of the toiling laborer overseen by the archaeologist. The visual vocabulary of this image includes foreground and background, event and setting, inheritance and continuity, even upward progress. At first glance, the reader might perceive the accompanying photograph (Figure 59) as contesting this trope, showing the archaeologist/author himself apparently excavating an object with his young son assisting. This, however, is not the hard labor described in the caption: it is apparently child’s play. Demarest erases himself from the accompanying text, a move that seems to give the Maya (albeit limited) agency, however, the archaeologist’s is the authoritative voice both in the text and at the excavation. The photograph thus assigns the Maya worker to the more remote background. Demarest included an artist’s reconstruction of the new conception of the war-like Maya in his article; this is still the practice amongst Mayanists to illustrate that which they “know” but for which there remain no images of Maya provenance (See, for example, Fash 1991: 128).

Still National Geographic Magazine and archaeologists continue to collaborate, and acknowledge its power to captivate the popular imagination with its iconic images of the Maya as ineffably Other. As Michael Coe recently said,

I know of more than one archaeologist who was drawn to the field as a boy by reading one of Morley’s National Geographic contributions, vividly illustrated with a color rendition of a purported virgin in filmy huipil being hurled into the Sacred Cenote at Chichén Itzá (emphasis his) (Coe 1992: 126).

The publication continues to aim at an audience whose attention Mayanists understand to be captured when dramatic discoveries are made, and a public fascinated now as seven decades ago with the exotic, and still titillated by vicarious brushes with “danger.” It partially funds a number of Maya projects (as it has since the 1930’s). The ramifications of National Geographic Magazine’s imbrication with Maya studies are immense, and the dangers of interventions of any kind in the regions in which Maya archaeology is practiced are real. It is one of the institutions that
has significant power over representations of the Maya, and through which Mayanists significantly increase their own power over such representations.

Funding for Mayanists comes from a variety of public and private institutions, each with its own agenda regarding representations of the Maya. The 1994 exhibition and catalogue, *Painting the Maya Universe* was based on the research of the Maya Painted Vase Project, whose director is Ronald Bishop, a senior research scientist at the Smithsonian Institution (Reents-Budet 1994: xv). The catalogue’s acknowledgments contain an enormous list of funding and sponsoring agencies and individuals, mainly in Central America and the United States, as well as all those who provided pieces for the exhibition from their private collections. The exhibition *Painting the Maya Universe* had two purposes, according to curator and catalogue author Dorie Reents-Budet: to present Maya ceramics as among the great paintings of the world, and to justify the collection, exhibition and study of these “looted” objects collected before 1983 when the U.S. signed the UNESCO agreement, drafted in 1970, (Reents-Budet 1994: xix). Reents-Budet’s argument was that an anti-“looting” position is compatible with the belief that it is ethical to acquire looted ceramics, as long as the UNESCO agreement did not apply in the country of origin and of sale at the time the object changed hands. Notably, the application of the UNESCO criteria for the purposes of this exhibition took the U.S. signing, rather than the 1970 drafting, of the agreement as the cut-off date (Reents-Budet 1994: 308). The final chapter of the catalogue is a plea for public understanding that only archaeologists should be entitled to excavate Maya archaeological material, and that they are uniquely qualified as its protectors (Reents-Budet 1994: 309). Invoking the writing of human history as an imperative, the curator’s final statement was:

> It cannot be stressed enough that the world’s archaeological resources are rapidly being destroyed. Once destroyed, they are gone forever and we will have lost irretrievable chapters in the pageant of human history, intellect, and creativity (Reents-Budet 1994: 309).

This exhibition and its catalogue, in focusing the reader’s and viewer’s gaze on the objects as art, means to diffuse the explosive issue of looting by naturalizing the right to excavate as belonging to professional archaeologists, the right to own Maya objects as belonging to non-Maya
people. Such pieces are the object of obsessive desire for some very wealthy collectors, and in the
catalogue they were presented in lush, full color for the general public to safely covet.

Academics interpreting the objects for this exhibition focused on their constructions of an
ancient elite class. Indeed, Maya iconography makes no reference to the peasant class of which
Mayanists infer the existence. The ceramics in the exhibition are represented as high art in the
present context, and as having been exclusively elite objects in the past (Reents-Budet, 1994: 2).
The valorization of looted Maya ceramics as world patrimony, in the *Painting the Maya Universe*
exhibition and catalogue, privileges the entitlement of mainstream, non-Maya art critics, curators,
collectors and scholars to represent the Maya, as Reents-Budet stated in the catalogue (Reents-
Budet, 1994: 290-309). One aspect that appears increasingly problematic is the notion that this may
be justified, by the intent to collect the objects with the idea of harvesting the knowledge they may
contain as part of the writing of a human history, and to “give back” some of that knowledge to the
Maya, as Schele, Mathews, Grube and others have signaled their intention to do. Ancient Maya
elite objects, however, will continue, it seems, to “belong” to science, and to belong in
international law to modern politically defined nation-states, unless they already were in the hands
of collectors or institutions before such international law applied. Ultimately, the curatorial case of
this exhibition, in a variation on the theme of continuity of peasant culture, is that *at no time* are or
were non-elite Maya entitled to ownership of objects such as these.

The catalogue notes do not account for the economic context in which so-called “looting”
takes place: For example, a single object of the type prized by collectors, such as the Classic-era
ceramic shown in Figure 60, can bring the equivalent of a year’s wages for a Maya laborer when
sold on the “black market”; such a piece will likely sell at auction for a price an order of magnitude
(or more) higher. However, the public’s attention is diverted from the political and economic
exigency of those Maya who claim rights of ownership of these same objects, and who feel as
justified in supplying the trade in pre-Columbian objects for foreign art markets as archaeologists
feel justified in conducting their officially sanctioned excavations. Consider the economic, social
and political context in which both looting and legal excavation take place, however. Latin
America’s indigenous poor “… make up a significant proportion of the rural poor, [living] on the
periphery in marginal areas, and they are often landless" (Patrinos and Panagides 1994: 73). By
the definition Mayanists relied upon in the culture-historical period to develop the dominant
(Morley-Thompson) model, Maya such as these are no longer peasants; they are the disposable
Other to which I referred in Chapter 8.

Certain representations that Mayanists continually recycle help to perpetuate some of the
presuppositions that accounted for the Morley-Thompson model. One example is the series of
exoticizing drawings by Jean Charlot, (shown as Figure 33). This series was published originally
in Morley’s 1946 the Ancient Maya. Others are Tatiana Proskouriakoff’s imaginative
reconstruction drawings (shown herein as Figures 43-47), published in 1946 in An Album of
Maya Architecture. These examples —the former featuring problematic representations of a
hypothetical peasant artisan class, and the latter privileging ostensibly elite structures — are,
apparently, a permanent part of the Mayanist canon, as they continue to appear in the literature."
Both Morley’s and Proskouriakoff’s volumes have been republished in subsequent editions; The
Ancient Maya has now been re-authored and appropriated in its 1994 fifth edition, by one of
Morley’s posthumous editors, Robert Sharer. With each subsequent edition, Morley’s book
becomes less his own work, less popularizing, more comprehensive. Yet each edition has
continued to feature the same Charlot drawings, presented uncritically, and apparently, unself-
consciously on Sharer’s part. Proskouriakoff’s architectural reconstructions, on the other hand,
became the sine qua non of architectural illustrations for Mayanists, and continue still to be
reproduced in the Mayanist canon. Their persistence – arguably, permanence – in Maya literature
cannot be explained adequately by their conformance to the archaeological evidence.

Gordon Willey (a field archaeologist and a pioneer of large-scale settlement studies in the
Maya area [see Willey et al. 1965, e.g.]), referred in a 1989 critique to Mayanists’ disregard of
clear evidence for ancient Maya intensive agriculture in a settlement study conducted in the 1930’s:

Settlement research actually touched off questions about ancient Maya farming as early as the 1930’s. This was done when Ricketson made a settlement survey on the peripheries of the Uaxactun politico-religious center. His counts of residential mounds in this survey indicated a settlement and population density too great to have been sustained by long-fallow swidden farming alone. From this Ricketson went on to argue that the inhabitants of Uaxactun, and the northeast Peten in general, had probably practiced more intensive cultivation on the hillslopes and high ground of

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the region. Such intensification, in his opinion, had been annual planting, or at least short-fallow swidden farming, on these relatively fertile soils.

...Ricketson’s ideas had little influence upon Maya archaeologists at the time. His settlement survey, which was the first of its kind, was of limited scope and not followed up, and the notion of long-fallow swidden farming documented as it was by Maya history and ethnography, was not easily dislodged (emphasis mine) (Willey 1989: 78).

In this critique, however, Willey described Ricketson’s analysis (note that Willey erased co-author Edith Bates Ricketson from his discussion) of his results as “opinion,” and described the evidence of Maya history and ethnography as documentation. Willey, in fact, was siding with these “Mayan archaeologists at the time” that he claimed to criticize, by privileging the written over the artifactual evidence.

As archaeologist Elliot Abrams recently pointed out in his study of the “energetics” of ancient Maya architecture, the scale of Maya structures has been evaluated on a highly subjective basis (and one as analytically empty as the studies and calculations the Carnegie Institution of Washington carried out in the 1930’s) using terms such as “huge,” “massive” and “monumental,” from which the necessity for “labor taxation” has been inferred. Abrams argues that archaeologists have systematically overestimated the amount of such “labor taxation” that would have been required for ancient Maya construction projects (Abrams 1994: 125). Adherence to these subjective judgments continues to transmit the notion that a few elite Maya overseers supervised vast numbers of Maya workers (Abrams 1994).

At present, Maya studies still operates within a framework that includes three basic premises that have been in place for about a century: the first is that the living Maya are the direct descendants of the ancient Maya (that is, that they are racially and ethnically related); the second that the living Maya have maintained continuity of practice (that is, that they are culturally related) such that these data can be used to interpret ancient material remains; the third is the naturalization of “culture,” replacing race as the quintessential category for the comparison and differentiation of identity in anthropological and archaeological investigations. Anthropologist Diane Nelson, commenting recently on cultural rights activism among the Maya, noted that such activities:

...call into question the representational activities of anthropologists. While much ethnology has been useful for the Maya, we must acknowledge that the anthropological project often appears to be a harvesting of information [for intellectual] consumption (Nelson 1996: 290).
Significantly, there are no intimations that female leadership can be correlated in the ancient and modern record, despite the role of women as leaders among the Zapatistas, and in the Guatemalan resistance. This has been characteristic of Maya studies; despite the naming and portraiture of a number of women by the ancient Maya in sculpture and inscriptions, gender continues to be a minor consideration in Maya studies, and, as Diane Nelson has recently noted, it also remains undertheorized (Nelson 1996). Mayanist studies of Maya women and of gender have been extremely limited.83

Recent work by Maya Mayanists presents numerous challenges to the work of non-Maya Mayanists; gender issues as seen from the Maya point of view are one example. Maya scholar Irma Otzoy recently noted that both Maya men and women agree:

...Maya women are more valiant than men. This response suggests Maya women feel the strongest sense of cultural responsibility to transmit their cultural values to future generations. In any case, Maya men and women alike recognize that Maya women (and in particular Maya women with formal education) have the courage to openly defy a society that discriminates against them... In wearing Maya clothing, Maya women demonstrate their identity and impart a lesson in active cultural resistance. Maya dress also provides the world with a text to be read" (Otznoy 1996: 147).

To accept this Maya perception of gender roles would upend certain assumptions Mayanists have tended to make about gender relationships, for example, that women are submissive, rather than active, carriers and transmitters of tradition. Often colonial overlays, both in observed Maya practice and in documentary accounts of the Maya, have been uncritically assumed by Mayanists to be characteristically Maya.

Anthropologists Edward Fisher and R. McKenna Brown, in their introduction to the recent collection of papers entitled *Maya Cultural Activism in Guatemala* stated explicitly the dangers to Maya people inherent in the representational activities of non-Maya Mayanists:

The Maya have long been denied a voice in academic representations of their culture and history, and Maya scholars are resentful of the manner in which their culture and history have been appropriated by the non-Maya academy, noting that much “objective” and seemingly apolitical scholarship has had dire political consequences for the Maya people. (There can be no doubt that control over the representation of culture and history has practical implications in Guatemala; Ladino elites, for example, often cite the violence of precontact Indian culture as justifications of the brutality of contemporary countercampaigns directed against the Maya people.) The politico-scholarly agenda of Maya cultural activists is based foremost on regaining at least partial control over scholarly and popular representations of Maya people, for many of its critiques of the Guatemalan state are based on historico-cultural comparisons (Fisher and Brown 1996: 3).
The Maya throughout Central America are aware of archaeological excavations and some of the conclusions at which Mayanists arrive; some are extremely aware politically, and many have a very particular vested interest in the work of archaeologists. There is a growing group of Maya Mayanists, increasingly cited by non-Maya Mayanists writing in English, whose motivations are to gain control of Maya representation: that is to gain control of representations of themselves. Some of their work tends, deliberately, toward essentializing analyses of the kind that the non-Maya academy has begun to reject (Fisher and Brown 1996:1-3). There are no indications yet whether the two positions of Mayanists, Maya and non-Maya, will be mutually beneficial, will co-exist separately or will be mutually exclusive. Mutual misunderstanding will almost certainly be a feature of the dialogue between them.

Archaeology, in both its academic and its popular manifestations, represents a motivated mediation between past and present spaces, technologies, ideologies and aesthetics; its contributions to popular productions have implications not only for the Maya community but for archaeology itself. In an interesting twist on the pan-Americanist ideology of the early part of this century, one of the tools of political activism is the ideology of a pan-Indian identity, a self-essentializing construct that can be deployed to counteract other cultural monoliths. For example, a magazine published in the United States, Akwe:kon: A Journal of Indigenous Issues focused entirely on the Maya of Chiapas in its Summer 1994 issue. The cover of this issue of Akwe:kon was a painting by Apache artist Stephen Johnson Leyba (shown as Figure 61) that depicted a Zapatista, armed and masked, ambiguous as to ethnicity or gender. The soldier is shown against a background of ancient Maya motifs and multi-colored ears of maize; in the foreground of the picture plane are numerous rifle bullets, apparently frozen in flight. An image of the Mexican flag floats in front of the Zapatista soldier’s shirt, partially tucked behind his rifle; an outside hand, larger than that of the soldier, also grasps the weapon (s)he is holding. While the soldier in the image is surrounded by some of the identity markers non-Maya archaeologists have employed as iconically Maya (maize, stone monumental sculpture) the clothing and weaponry are self-styled markers of Zapatista political identity that deliberately avoid ethnological “culture” categories. The
editor of *Akwe:kon*, José Barreiro, noted the importance of events in Chiapas to other indigenous people in the Americas and throughout the world:

*Chiapas is Mexico*, a slogan that has become common graffiti around the Mexican capital, reflects the transcendant nature of events early this year when Indian peasants challenged business as usual in the southernmost region of North America. The issues of Chiapas are land-based and Indigenous, yet they reveal universal dynamics. Mexico — the north-south gateway of the Americas — is the moment’s barometer of the hemispheric order. Solutions, or great disaster, will result from its decision as a country. Thus, it is of general interest that a Native critique and a Native response is emerging from Chiapas, the epicenter of American Indian population in Mesoamerica. The Zapatistas are Indians and express grassroots Indian issues, which could have served to isolate them, but instead the questions and dialogue they unleashed continue to reverberate. In this sense, Chiapas is not only Mexico. Chiapas is America; it is the world (emphasis his) (Barreiro 1994: 2-4).

In a sense, such claims for the universalization of events precipitated by Maya peasants in Chiapas by other indigenous interests refuse Western anthropology’s project of describing distinct units of “ethnographic culture.” As Barreiro indicated, the Zapatistas drew the attention of indigenous nations throughout North, Central and South America who continue to watch Chiapas with intermittent interest, particularly with regard to land-claims issues and reservation status, as the issue in Chiapas, as it is throughout the Maya zone, is, primarily, about disputed entitlement to land. Significantly, the Zapatistas have also modeled some of the possibilities of sophisticated use of the media as a world stage.

The notions of “culture” can present a difficulty for Mayanists looking for confirmations of continuity, who encounter those “post-modern” Maya secure in their identification as Maya while demonstrating (Western) political, linguistic and technological expertise, and who may even physically travel outside their “culturally” inscribed boundaries. There is very little tolerance for the ambiguity involved in these “transgressions” of cultural categories among Mayanists and among *Ladinos* in Central America. The Maya themselves — perhaps because they do not subscribe to the same assumptions or the same identity categories in which others place them — are less troubled by the notion of being both “modern”, or even “post-modern” and also “Maya.” (Nelson 1996)

Anthropologist Virginia Dominguez notes that the tendency to privilege culture is potentially dangerous; she recently offered this caution:

Culture and Culturalism are with us not because they are natural, real, or universally applicable, but, rather, because we are thinking and acting in terms of them, and we are making strategic and political interventions invoking them — unfortunately, I believe, while often unaware of their ramifications.
A culturalist form of legitimation and argumentation has taken over the late twentieth century—the contemporary world’s counterpart of earlier racialist theories, evolutionist theories, civilizational theories, moral theories, class theories and naturalist theories. What it produces is a culturalization of difference that most of us now promote domestically and internationally with the same degree of conviction (and often even the fervor) of our Enlightenment or modernist predecessors from whom we otherwise seek to distance ourselves (Dominguez 1996: 74).

Cultural historian Robert Young asks us to reconsider the ease with which we presume to have moved on from racism and racialized thinking, by replacing it with “culturalism” and culturalized thinking. Further, he questions whether the old categories of cultural identity and race were in fact as essentializing as we have assumed, and whether we might have reconstructed them, in retrospect, as having been more fixed than they actually were. The problem, as Young puts it, is:

Commentators talk of ‘pseudo-scientific’ racial theory in the nineteenth century, as if the term is enough to dismiss it with ease: but what that term in fact implies is that racial theory was never simply scientific or biologistic, just as its categories were never wholly essentializing. Today is it common to claim in such matters that we have moved from biologism and scientism to the safety of culturalism, that we have created distance and surety by the very act of the critique of essentialism and the demonstration of its impossibility: but that shift has not been so absolute, for the racial was always the cultural, the essential never the unequivocal. How does that affect our own contemporary revisions of that imagined past? The interval that we assert between ourselves and the past may be much less than we assume. We may be more bound up with its categories than we like to think. Culture and race developed together, imbricated within each other: their discontinuous forms of repetition suggest, as Foucault puts it, ‘how we have been trapped in our own history’... The nightmare of the ideologies and categories of racism continue to repeat upon the living (Young 1995: 27-28).

The “culturalism,” that is, the privileging of culture, about which Young, Dominguez and others express concerns, should not be taken to be the natural, or the only, category of differentiation within which archaeological analyses of Maya objects, ideology and practice can take place. It is as well to bear in mind, as Clifford reminds us, that “identity [is] a politics rather than an inheritance” (Clifford 1992: 116). It is necessary to proceed cautiously, then, in questioning the use of “culture” as an identity category and a means of differentiation as Ladino, Mestizo and Indio categories are culturally marked; particularly as Mayan rights activists specify that they demand and are struggling for cultural rights, in addition to their territorial, political, jurisdictional, social, linguistic, educational and social demands (Cuxil 1996: 19).

I have framed this work with the understanding that Maya studies, a sub-discipline of Americanist archaeology, is productive; that it operates as a colonialist discourse; that embedded in
that discourse is encoded the racism that is invariably part of – but not reducible to – the exigencies of economic imperialism; and that the discourses of racism are imbricated with the discourses of sexuality. In noting the multiple effects of colonialism within Maya studies, however, I am aware of the colonialism that is as embedded in my tools of analysis as in the colonial discourse I inhabit and investigate.

Archaeology has embodied the progress narrative itself, and its representation of progress through representations of difference deny not only that the discipline itself is a manifestation of such difference, but that without these differences, it cannot exist. The transformation archaeology had promised was that through its mediated representations of the ancient Other, we would come to understand our present selves outside the peasant-pyramid system. It still promises this. However, it is not transformation but, as Dominguez notes, displacement that takes place, first in archaeology’s collecting, then in its writing (Dominguez 1986: 548).

The interweaving in Maya studies of scientific, historical imaginative and intuitive ways of knowing, and the oscillation between academic and popular audiences, appear to have been background elements for Mayanist interventions in American self-definition. Mayanists have offered some ways to mediate, manage, and alleviate the anxieties and ambivalences that emerge in the ongoing colonial encounter, in interactions between groups whose differences are racially and culturally marked. The persistence of such anxieties may explain, at least in part, why Mayanists “cling proudly and stubbornly” (Schele and Friedel 1990: 41) to the notion of continuity. Its appeal is the pleasurable comfort of familiarity it provides, and the satisfying sense of understanding another. It may be as well to bear in mind, however, the prior allegation of archaeology that it seeks the not-familiar as well. I argue that it may be useful to reconsider continuity with living Maya, not as a means to categorize the Maya as temporally and culturally “other”, but rather, as a constantly changing process in the present in which both Mayanists and Maya participate. It will be necessary to allow dis-continuity, and to learn to find as much satisfaction from not understanding, instead.
The Marriage Bed, Revisited:

I repeat here the comment Thompson made about the relationship between Mayanists and the Maya, referring to the many years he spent living and working with Maya peasants:

> If you are going to spend your life with a people you must develop a great feeling for them. You have to relate to them, as that terrible, modern expression goes; and I would say that for me it has been much more than “relating”; it’s been a kind of marriage bed...


The conversations during the courtship between Mayanists and the Maya were often disingenuous and mutually mystifying; they were complicated by misreadings on both sides, and the mistranslations of intermediaries. However, communication of a sort did take place.

Foreign archaeologists, for their part, had courted the Maya with efforts to establish warm relations that included offerings of gifts and expressions of love and friendship. They concealed their urgent desire for information the Maya could provide about themselves.

Maya responses to these overtures were based in their harsh political and economic circumstances. They had survived the Spanish conquest, colonial oppression, virtual slavery in the henequen fields, war and revolution. They were mostly peasants, occupying a stratum that was originally an artifact of Spanish colonial policy. Despite the alleged peace following the end of the Caste Wars and the Mexican Revolution, the Mexican army, in the mid-1920’s, was still hunting Maya “rebels,” who were inclined to respond in kind. Foreigners — .phiul — arriving in certain Maya territories might be met by armed men (Figure 15). They evaluated the strangers, who might be spies for the Mexican government. We know that Mayanists wanted information and collaboration; we do not know the intentions of the Maya that engaged in conversations with the phiul. 84

The configuration of the relationship between Mayanists and the Maya came to resemble a marriage; in the story Mayanists subsequently published of a peaceful and mutually satisfying union, they occupied an analog of the social category of “husband,” the Maya were the “wife.” Viewed as analogous to a patriarchal form of marriage, this relationship can be seen as structured according to similarly gendered polarities. The micro-coloniality of the archaeological fieldwork relationship with its ethnological subject mirrored the macro-economic coloniality of the U.S.
relative to Latin America. The entrenched sense of entitlement to extract raw archaeological data that foreign Mayanists carried with them to their excavations also mirrored the U.S.'s sense of territorial and natural resource entitlement implicit in its imperialist actions in the hemisphere. The model Mayanists constructed of the Maya was informed by the ideological messages emanating from the U.S., and the marketing of Mayanist archaeology to the public was a vehicle well-suited to the dissemination of those messages.

Received wisdom amongst Mayanists working today is that the misconceptions and misunderstandings about the ancient Maya characteristic of the culture-historical period and the Carnegie era are attributable to their having attempted to formulate “historical reconstructions ...before the decipherment of the Maya writing system” (Schele and Mathews 1997: 358 n. 12). An example of the progress of Mayanist epigraphy is the deciphered and translated text, courtesy of Linda Schele, shown in figures 66 and 67, as published by Michael Coe in Breaking the Maya Code (1992). Now, four decades after Knorosov’s phonetic breakthrough and Proskouriakoff’s historical revelations, the claim is that:

Maya scholars have participated in a revolution. The past four decades have seen the decipherment of the Maya hieroglyphic writing system and the reading of the history of one of the great civilizations of the world. This decipherment has recovered the names of kings, their families, members of their courts, and artists, artisans and builders who served them. Growing understanding of Maya imagery has combined with increasingly subtle decipherments of glyphs to give us new insights into court life, religious ideas, and the politics of the time, as well as the economies and social mechanisms that allowed Maya civilization to flourish. Excavations conducted by archaeologists not only have tested the “truth” of these histories in the ground, but have also sought to understand better the lifeways of the ancient Maya people, from the most exalted to the lowliest members of society.

As epigraphers who have participated in this revolution, we find that our personal relationship to Maya cities has changed forever. ...We now consider them not just as objects of beauty, but also as political and religious statements aimed at an audience of nobles and commoners. Maya buildings were instruments of state that registered Maya identity, religion, and history...the works of people who had names and motivations we can understand, even from our distant points of view. And the buildings and images created by these once living people become their voices, telling us something about the agendas that guided their decisions, the larger political framework that conditioned those agendas, and the understanding of the world that gave meaning to both (Schele and Mathews 1997: 13).

The romanticized, personal relationship has been transferred to the ancient Maya, now allegedly known to scholars through their buildings and inscriptions. As Schele and Mathews tell it, it was love-at-first-sight: “Peter and Linda also fell under Palenque’s spell when we first walked among its plazas and temples” (Schele and Mathews 1998: 21). Encapsulated in the passage above
are certain Mayanist claims that resonate with key elements of the Mayanist project and its dominant model of the Maya, as formerly espoused by Morley and Thompson: Mayanists have understood Maya inscriptions and written Maya history, in part as a result of Mayanists’ “personal relationship” with the object of their study. The “truth” about the ancient Maya has been established through the collaboration between archaeologists and epigraphers/iconographers. That “truth” includes the knowledge that the Maya were a two-class society of commoners (artisans and builders) who served the nobles of the kingly courts. Moreover, the buildings and images contain the essence (what Morley and Thompson would have called the “character”) of the Maya, that the truly knowledgeable can perceive. With intimate knowledge of the Maya mind, ancient motivations and thoughts live again. I have included as Appendix C an excerpt from an imaginative reconstruction of heart sacrifice at Chichén Itzá, one of several that, like Thompson, Schele and Friedel included as an aid to the reader’s better understanding of the Maya as the authors understood them to have been. One of their claims for Maya uniqueness — a common theme among Mayanists, as I have noted in earlier chapters — was included as a line I have emphasized in the excerpt in Appendix C from Schele and Friedel’s story. This story recalls the doctor-turned-archaeologist Gann’s observation more than seventy years earlier: “The men are very stoical in bearing pain,” (Gann 1918: 15-18); but accepts an interpretation of Maya belief systems that takes the allegation of Maya stoicism to an incredible extreme. The updated version of this emerged as: “There, as the sun stood high in the sky at midday, one after another they received the gentle death, so called because no one ever made a sound when his heart was cut out” (Schele and Friedel 1990: 369). Mayanists seemingly still make claims that the Maya are unique and extraordinary, not like any other human known, and sometimes, as in this case, super-human. In the foreword to the book, Schele and Friedel discussed the grounds for their imaginative recreations of Maya history:

...we can offer a history unique in the Precolombian Americas, populated with real people, replete with the drama of battle, palace intrigue, heroic tragedy and magnificent personal artistic and intellectual expression. History unlocks the humanity of the Maya in a way not possible by any other means, for it reveals not only what they did, but how they thought and felt about the nature of reality.

It is important we acknowledge this history, because only then will a true picture of the Americas emerge. The American chronicle does not begin with the landing of Columbus or the arrival of the Pilgrims, but with the lives of Maya kings in the second century B.C. We who live in this part of the world inherit a written history two
millennia old and as important to us as the history of the ancient Egyptians or the Chinese, a history equal in longevity to that of Europe or Asia.

The story we construct here is one of drama, pathos, humor, and heroics. We approach this story not as if we were examining a long-dead religion and a history of little contemporary relevance but as scholars unearthing the dynamic actions of real people. If human beings find immortality after death by the memories they leave the generations who follow them, then the Maya have been reborn through our growing awareness of the history they memorialized throughout their cities. (Scheie and Friedel 1990: 18-19)

Mayanists today have seemingly fulfilled Maudslay’s wish that Mayanists might show the world “what an interesting young person [America], The Cinderella of the Continents,” (Maudslay 1968: 1912: xxix) has indeed turned out to be. The claim of these two scholars was essentially that they and their colleagues had finally achieved the stated goals of the culture historians of the Morley-Thompson era: to (re)read and (re)write the history of the Maya, and then to write it into U.S. history. Mayanists who, like Scheie and Friedel, believe in these possibilities for their discipline and consider themselves modern-day Pilgrims, claim the Americas for the United States, just as surely as Columbus did for Spain. Audaciously, they make the claim that we can incorporate for ourselves even the memories of the ancient Maya. Scheie and Friedel’s story shows the way in which these have allegedly been reincarnated — through the practice of (re)writing history — in the bodies and minds of contemporary Mayanists. As Scheie also stated with co authors Mathews and Grube, Mayanists are now in the process of sharing these appropriated, so-called “memories” of the ancient Maya with the contemporaneous Maya (Scheie and Grube 1996; Scheie and Mathews 1998). Mayanists’ slipping into the skin of the ancient Maya elite in this way is a familiar move, one whose pedigree may be traced to Thompson and Morley, and beyond.

While some Mayanists are more outspoken than others about their enthusiasms, we seemingly all share a fascination with the Maya who are, we perhaps want to believe, so intriguingly Other, and so compellingly like ourselves. In “falling in love” with the Maya, in constructing ourselves as experts with intimate, inside knowledge, in representing the ancient Maya who we perceive as culturally contiguous with the Maya today, we participate in the project of “culturalism.” This means that Maya people with whom we as Mayanists work and sometimes live are confronted with our acts of ventriloquism, that recuperate ancient Maya voices and appropriate living Maya voices. Maya studies are more than symbolic sites in which reconstructions and
representations of the ancient Maya are enscribed, but a broad arena in which these are reenacted. If we remain in the arena, I contend that we must continue to reconsider, and re-reconsider, our representing and our representations of the Maya. Moreover, the way in which we as Mayanists continue to cultivate a relationship with the contemporaneous Maya (in which constructions of literacy remain a central component) is seemingly an artifact of the archaeology we practice, an artifact that has been preserved beyond the so-called revolutions of the “New Archaeology” and of decipherment. I suggest that the same “marriage bed” to which Thompson referred remains the central feature of our current historical reconstructions, and deserves considerable reconsideration and rethinking...
END NOTES

1 I use Bruce Trigger’s term, “culture-historical” archaeology for “the labelling of geographically and temporally restricted assemblages of prehistoric archaeological material as cultures or civilizations and their identification as the remains of ethnic groups” and the “tracing [of] ethnic identities in the archaeological record” (Trigger 1989: 162-3). Gordon Willey and Jeremy A. Sabloff (1980) describe 1914-1960 as the “chronological-historical period;” the era between two “paradigm shifts”: the “stratigraphic revolution” that took place in the first and second decades of this century, and the emergence of the “New Archaeology” (processual archaeology) around 1960. Marshall Becker (1979: 3-20) describes the “Carnegie era” as 1924-1958.


3 In addition, Kluckhohn’s critique was to spell the end of the Carnegie Institution of Washington Maya program, which eventually shut down completely in 1958 (Willey and SabloffBlack 1990: 258).


5 See Tozzer 1911; Maler 1911; Spinden 1913; Morley 1915, 1920; Gann 1918.

6 In 1913, when Morley made his research proposal to the Carnegie Institution of Washington promoting Chichén Itzá as the best site for a major (20-year) study, his own investigations of the Maya had been motivated by his consuming interest in epigraphy. Morley reinforced his proposal with an assessment of the site’s “Advantages as a Base of Operations” (1913: 61-91):

   Scientific Reasons:
   Chichen Itzá – The Political Center of Yucatán
   Chichen Itzá – The Religious Center of Yucatán
   Chichen Itzá – The Foremost City of the Maya Renaissance
   Chichen Itzá – The Key to the Correlation of Maya and Christian Chronology
   Chichen Itzá – The Connecting Link between the Maya and Nahua Civilizations
   Chichen Itzá – The most likely spot at which to find a Maya “Rosetta Stone”
   Chichen Itzá – The most notable Historic Site in the Maya Culture Area

   Practical Reasons:
   Accessibility
   Length of the Field Season
   Healthfulness
   Labor Conditions
   Field Quarters

7 Thompson’s dominance of the field effectively ended with the publication of several papers demonstrating conclusively the phoneticism as well as the historical and biographical content in ancient Maya inscriptions. These disproved the basic tenets of Thompson’s theories of the ancient Maya, and signaled the point at which the Morley-Thompson model would begin to be reconsidered. Despite overwhelming evidence and general agreement amongst his colleagues to the contrary, Thompson stubbornly clung, until almost the end of his life, to his views on the Maya character that reflected and dictated the content of their writings. Although Thompson continued writing and publishing until the 1970’s, all of his work belongs in the earlier culture-historical mode.

8 With spectacular irony, Villa, for instance, approached the Maya by deliberately misrepresenting
his purpose, often masquerading as a merchant (Sullivan 1989: 33-44).
9 Chai was a stone mason at the Chichén Itzá excavation. Mai was a labourer at the Carnegie Institution of Washington excavation at Mayapan between 1951 and 1955, eventually working his way up to foreman (Thompson 1962: 157).
10 Proskouriakoff published an art historical analysis in 1950 entitled *A Study of Classic Maya Sculpture*, the first comprehensive analysis of the subject since Spinden’s 1913 publication. In an article published in 1971, she stated:

> Critical study of art is not for the archaeologist. Aesthetic values have little bearing on immediate archaeological problems, and their elucidation in works of art has always been and should remain the function of art critics and art historians...Our responsibility ends with supplying for the critic the necessary information on chronology and cultural affiliation of works of art and in publishing them with the least possible loss of aesthetic values (1971:129; also cited in Kubler 1991: 153).

11 Particularly in mapping Tikal, a University of Pennsylvania project that began in 1956.
12 Between 1898 and 1933, the U.S. had sent troops into Panama (where they established military bases), Honduras and Mexico, occupied Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. U.S. inclinations to annex more Mexican territory, expressed often in the U.S. press before the revolution in 1910, were gradually transmuted (although only temporarily) from crude imperialism to interested intervention during the revolution and the decade following. Motivated by its own interests and hegemony in Latin America, U.S. policies vacillated between imperialism and accommodation in the early decades of the century, becoming more subtle and moving towards accommodation as imperialism became increasingly a political liability at home in the mid- to late 1920’s (Williamson: 1992; LaFeber: 1984).
13 Morley worked for U.S. Naval Intelligence beginning in 1917. His activities, and those of other Mayanists were first publicized in 1919, following Franz Boas’ letter to the American Anthropological Association outlining his objections to anthropologists violating, in his view, the scientific objectivity which was essential to anthropological scholarship. The resulting uproar in American Anthropological Association (which censured Boas and revoked his membership in the society) indicated the extent of support for such patriotic activities conflating espionage and academics. For a discussion of the Boas censure and espionage activities of Americanists, see Pinsky 1992.
14 That is, spaces that would be marked as inviolably private in interactions between white, European or Euro-American “equals”.
15 Thomas Gann and Morris Steggerda were medical doctors; Oliver Ricketson became an archaeologist after having dropped out of medical school but became a doctor *ex officio* whenever there was an illness or injury at the Carnegie Institution of Washington Uaxactun excavation he directed.
16 Steggerda described “cephalic index” as “head width divided by head length, multiplied by 100” (Steggerda 1941: 184).
17 The National United States Geographic Society had 750,000 members in 1920 and over a million in 1930 (Gero and Root 1990: 22).
18 *The National Geographic Magazine* had already published articles on Maya archaeology by Morley in 1913 and 1922. In addition to the one noted here published in 1925, Morley wrote two others for them, in 1931 and 1936.
19 While the Carnegie Institution of Washington had received its Chichén Itzá concession from the Mexican government in 1923 largely because it was a non-collecting institution, the granting of the permit had been in question following an article in which the New York Times published a revelation by E.H.Thompson, former U.S. consul to Yucatán, archaeological adventurer and owner of the Hacienda Chichen (where Carnegie’s headquarters was to be located). E.H. Thompson announced to the newspaper that numerous artifacts he had dredged from the cenote at Chichén Itzá constituted “what is conceded to be the most important find of archaeological objects ever made in the Americas,” that they had been “kept secret for ten years,” and were now “privately held in the Peabody Museum, Boston”(that is, that E. H.Thompson had smuggled them out of Mexico) (See “Great Maya Find of Relics Revealed” in *New York Times*. March 2, 1923. (3) p.1.) E.H. Thompson’s activities were no secret to archaeologists, but this was the first the
public or the government, either in the U.S. or Mexico, had heard of it. The article ended with a statement, referring to the uncertainty of Carnegie's future at the site, that "a favorable attitude by the State and Federal Governments and pledges of co-operation are said to be important factors in hastening a decision. However, Morley, arriving in Mexico City in early April, found that public outrage there was running high. He gave an interview to El Universal in an attempt to mitigate the damage that E.H. Thompson's actions had caused to the credibility and viability of U.S. institutional archaeology in Mexico ("Yucatán Fué la Cuna del Arte Maya Dice El Doctor Morley" in El Universal. April 4, 1923, p. 1). The article detailed knowledge about the Maya according to the latest research, but in a concluding paragraph, mentioned the Carnegie Institution of Washington. He described it as a purely scientific institution, making only sketches and photographs and reconstructing ruined buildings, and that the collection of artifacts for export was not in its mandate (Brunhouse 1965: 190-191).

20 Henequen fibre, also known as sisal, from the agave plant that was native to Yucatán, was a crucial product for U.S. farmers, for naval and shipping vessels, and a range of other applications requiring cordage.


22 Sullivan in his ethnography related the miscommunication that ensued when the U.S. archaeological reconnaissance expedition met these members of the Chun Pom Guardia (Maya officers who guarded a shrine of the same name). They challenged the foreigners' right to be in Maya territory, and the difference between the Maya and the non-Maya versions of those events is dramatically different (Sullivan 1989: 23-25).

23 Bryan (1987:90) listed these principles announced by Grosvenor to the Board of Trustees in 1915:

1) The first principle is absolute accuracy. Nothing must be printed which is not strictly according to fact... 2) Abundance of beautiful, instructive and artistic illustrations. 3) Everything printed in the Magazine must have permanent value. 4) All personalities and notes of a trivial nature are avoided... 5) Nothing of a partisan or controversial nature is printed. 6) Only what is of a kindly nature is printed about any country or people, everything unpleasant or unduly critical being avoided. 7) The contents of each number is planned with a view of being timely (Cited in Lutz and Collins 1993:26-7).

The principles are also reproduced in Gero and Root 1990; these authors note that: "Seven [editorial] principles were published in the magazine in 1915...reaffirmed almost verbatim...in 1936 and again in 1957, during the second half of Gilbert Hovey Grosvenor's 54 years as editor and director, and then again by his son Melville Bell Grosvenor in 1967, ten years after assuming the editorship, and yet again by his grandson, Gilbert M. Grosvenor, the Society's current president, in 1974 and in 1978. The bloodline continuity underscores the remarkable consistency of editorial policy and publication programme maintained by the magazine throughout its existence. As the principles are repeated they reiterate a journalistic honour code, insisting on the impartiality of the magazine. It is the disavowed propaganda which we...examine in seeing how archaeology is treated in its pages" (Gero and Root 1990: 25).

24 Willard's book, City of the Sacred Well, contained details of E.H.Thompson's dredging of the cenote. As Cohodas has noted, Willard published more of E.H. Thompson's material than he did himself (see also Willard 1931, 1941; Thompson, E.H. 1932), however, his illustrations are, for the most part, imaginative renderings rather than images of actual artifacts (Cohodas 1978: 14). Also, see note 18, above, regarding E.H. Thompson's controversial activities in smuggling artifacts from the well out of Mexico.


26 The interested participation of wealthy amateur scholars and antiquities collectors in the study of the Maya was a major factor in the popularization of Maya objects as collectible objets d'art, the promotion of non-archaeological excavations for the purpose of acquiring portable objects, and the funding and endowment of Mayanist research projects. One prominent example was Charles
Bowditch, a wealthy, "independent scholar" who was a voracious collector and promoter of Maya objects, published his own investigations of Maya glyphs, and eventually endowed a chair in Maya Archaeology at Harvard.

Boas is frequently held responsible for the permanent association between Americanist archaeology and anthropology. This connection was established with the founding of the *Escuela Internacional de Arqueología y Etnología* in Mexico. Designed to be a study center involving French, German, U.S. and Mexican universities, the original signing officers were Seler (the first director), Capitan, Gordon, Boas, Dixon and Chávez. Its aims were the training of archaeological investigators in the field, and the accumulation of knowledge. The School eschewed the popularization of archaeology and ethnology, and emphasized the scientific aspects of the subject. Subsequent directors were Boas, Tozzer, Engerrand and Gamio. Boas promoted stratigraphy at the School’s field excavations, which he described in a paper presented at the 1912 *International Congress of Americanists* in London. He encouraged Gamio to make stratigraphic excavations in the Valley of Mexico, which established archaeologically the chronological sequence for this area.

These assessments were made before the Chan Kom and Piste Maya had become "modern," a process anthropologist Robert Redfield had eagerly anticipated (Redfield 1934) and then described in a follow-up study to his original ethnography. These two studies were, respectively, *Chan Kom: A Maya Village* (Redfield and Villa 1934) and *Chan Kom: A Village that Chose Progress* (Redfield 1950).

The Harvard "old boys' network" operating in Maya studies has been noted elsewhere (see Black 1986). A brief perusal of the 1940 Tozzer *Festschrift* (Hay et al. 1973 (1940)) in which the academic affiliations of each contributor were included, indicates the depth of that institution’s control of the field in (at least) the first half of this century.

David Kelley and William Sanders.

Charlot was instrumental in reviving and promoting the work of José Guadalupe Posada (1852-1913), whose prints and lithographs on nineteenth century broadsheets had been largely forgotten by the 1920's (Kiehl 1990: 541). Charlot was instrumental in bringing Posada's work back to the attention of Mexican artists and reviving interest in these and other related graphic images at that point all but forgotten, once closely associated with the *Porfiriato* (the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, elected President of Mexico in 1876, who held onto power until exiled in 1911). An article he wrote about Posada was published in *Revista de Revistas* in 1925, (Charlot 1925: 25).

Posada was lionized by Charlot, and subsequently by the Mexican muralists, who promoted him to the status of "...an almost mythical personage: the first modern Mexican artist, the touchstone of 'Mexican-ness' of a generation of artists whose murals rank among the artistic monuments of this century" (Ashton 1990: 633).

Rivera had traveled to Chichén Itzá and Uxmal in 1921 with a group of artists and writers sponsored by the Mexican government and accompanied by its Minister of Education, José Vasconcelos. The trip to visit ancient Maya ruins was related to Vasconcelos' commission several months earlier of the first Mexican government-sponsored murals project (Ashton 1990: 618-20).

Anthropologist Diane Nelson uses this term in a recent article. She attributes the term to Mario Lorca (Nelson 1996: 303 n. 1).

*Mestizo*, meaning “mixed,” refers in Mexico to hybridity of (any or all of) race, ethnicity, and culture. In the Mexican social hierarchy, this group ranks below the dominant (primarily Creole) *Latino* minority.

U.S. President Van Buren (whose presidential campaign Stephens has supported) responded to his friend’s request, and appointed Stephens special envoy to the Central American Federation so that he could safely travel in the region, which was embroiled in civil war at that time (Schmidt 1988: viii).

Canadian archaeologist and epigrapher David Kelly (now Professor emeritus at the University of Calgary), was one of the few (see Kelley 1962b); another was Michael Coe (Coe and Coe 1957), currently McCurdy Professor of Anthropology at Yale University and Curator of Anthropology at the Peabody Museum. Both Kelley and Coe have made contributions to Mayanist epigraphy, and both have written historiographies of the subject (Kelley 1962a, 1962b, 1976; Coe 1992). Coe’s wife, Sophie Coe, translated one of Knorosov’s papers, which was published in
American Antiquity, (Knorosov 1958b), which Michael Coe relates as having been an action that
galled Thompson, “ensuring a wide audience among Mayanists and linguists for those subversive
views from behind the Iron Curtain” (Coe 1992: 156).

37 Paul Sullivan recently investigated the exchanges Morley initiated in 1934 between himself and
officers the Xcahal Guardia. Morley was apparently unaware that his offers of sincere friendship
and love were being translated into sexual and romantic Maya terms: the language of courtship,
rather than of friendship. Sullivan leaves open the question of the translator’s intentions and
motivations, but suggests that the “rhetoric of courtship” between the parties may have acted to
mitigate the estrangement they felt as a result of their mutual fears and ignorance (Sullivan 1989:
106-130).

38 The term, meaning “sacred writing,” was apparently coined in the 4th century C.E. by the Greek
scholar Horapollon; his books were reprinted in the 16th century in Italy (Coe 1992: 16).

39 “...Webster defines anagogy as the ‘interpretation of a word, passage, or text (as of Scripture or
poetry) that finds beyond the literal, allegorical, and moral senses a fourth and ultimate spiritual
and mystical sense’ ” (Coe 1992: 141).

40 How difficult is Maya to read? Admittedly it is a complex process, but substantial decipherment
has taken place, over the past decades. The late Linda Schele conducted week-long workshops at
the Maya Hieroglyphic Meetings in Austin each year that gave participants a significant start toward
becoming “literate” (in the sense that can be used in this case) in only seven days. Conference
attendees typically have very little difficulty understanding the basics of Maya calendrics in the
three-day “short course.”

41 Many prominent Mayanists at this time had originally been interested in Egyptology and
lionized Champollion as a man of extraordinary intellect, even genius. Interestingly, Mayanists
today still compare the Maya writing system and its decipherment with the Egyptian system, and
Champollion’s achievement in breaking it (See Marcus: 1992: xix; Coe: 1992: 37, passim).

42 Fears about Mexico were expressed in political cartoons in the 1920’s that, for example,
depicted a feminized Latin America as an attractive object to “Uncle Sam”, or represented Mexico
as a swarthy serape- and sombrero-clad barefoot figure, or as black. Some examples were:
Cargill’s “The Sky Pilot Performs a Wedding” (South Bend Tribune, 1928); Doyle’s “Uncle
Sam: It’s the Wind, Rustling the Palms” (Philadelphia Record, 1927); Thiele’s “Not as Bad as
Painted” (Culver Citizen, 1928); Talburt’s “Lost Something, Didn’t You, Frank?” (Washington
News, 1926); Darling’s “Another Popular (?) Uprising in Mexico” (Des Moines Register, 1929)
(Johnson 1980).

43 Huxley wrote a passage about the art of the Maya in Beyond the Mexique Bay(1934: 48-50).
An excerpt is included as Appendix B.

44 There was evidence available to Mayanists in the late 1930’s that suggested a different model for
the practice of ancient Maya agriculture (Cooke 1931, Ricketson and Ricketson 1937); they chose,
however, to disregard these findings.

45 The Madrid Codex has now been convincingly shown to be post-Conquest through dating of its
paper; received wisdom at the time Morley was writing placed it in the Maya postclassic (Cohodas
1998, pers. comm.).

46 The most poisonous viper in the Americas, Trigonocephalus lanceolatus.

47 Venomous snakes indigenous to the Maya region are known as either “one-stage” or “two-
stage” snakes. The latter refers to the second stage of seeking a medical remedy after having been
bitten. The former indicates that, having been bitten by such a snake, there is no “second stage.”
“Depending on your beliefs, you either don’t have a prayer, or prayer is your only option.”
(Agurcia 1990 pers. comm.)

48 The prevailing economic asymmetry between the U.S. and its Latin American neighbours had
continued to grow, despite the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act of 1934 which gave the U.S.
president power to reduce tariffs up to 50% in exchange for equivalent concessions (Rabe 1988: 8).

49 Among frequent Classical and Old-World references, Morley and Thompson both chose to refer
obliquely to Gibbon’s The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776-1783).

50 Arnold Joseph Toynbee, between 1925 and 1955, was director of studies at the Royal Institute

51 Thompson’s Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization was published in 1954, the year the U.S. staged a CIA-backed a coup in Guatemala to protect the vast land holdings of United Fruit Company (UFCO) that the Guatemalan government had attempted to expropriate.

52 The fragrant translucent white resin of the copal tree (Vateria Indica).

53 Morley reproduced this drawing in The Ancient Maya in 1946; Thompson used it as the cover of his 1954 book The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization. Both published numerous other Proskouriakoff drawings in their various publications.

54 Morley argued the Maya elite had not evolved to the stage of civilization at which they might have conceived of the “true arch.” He termed the corbel vault and stone-and masonry architecture “primitive” (Morley 1946: 10); he considered the proto-type for corbel vaults to have been thatched roofs, over which they were an evolutionary advance. Thompson alluded to the exigencies of Maya religious beliefs and superstitions having required the corbel vault (rather than a thatched roof) to produce small, dark rooms Thompson believed they preferred for ceremonial chambers. His evolutionary scale followed the analogy of wooden-roofed Norman cathedrals in England replaced by Gothic stone vaults (Thompson 1954: 164).

55 Brunhouse, in his biography of Morley, noted a string of diplomats, heads of state, journalists, scholars, artists, and socialites that visited the site and were entertained at Carnegie Institution of Washington expense (Brunhouse 1971).

56 Kidder was a Harvard-trained archaeologist who acted as Director of Historical Research from 1926, until the Division was closed down in 1958. Historical Research was an administrative division whose humanistic studies consisted of United States history, the history of Greek thought and United States history (Kubler 1991: 188).

57 The archaeological record is by definition preserved until it is located and excavated, when the context in which an object is found (and occasionally, the object itself) is destroyed. While archaeologists generally try to minimize the damage they do to ancient contexts in the process of excavation, we acknowledge that it is an inherently destructive process. The argument now, as it was in the culture-historical period, is that the process of archaeological investigation is a positive one of gaining data and therefore knowledge, a process in which scholars are carefully trained to make meticulous records, thereby “preserving” an object in a photograph, drawing or map. Further, they select only certain portions of the archaeological record to excavate, leaving other areas for future archaeologists, who presumably will have greater knowledge and analytical techniques at their disposal. Reconstructed buildings are not preserved, but have been irrevocably damaged in the process of excavation and reconstitution. There is no direct benefit to archaeology in the reconstruction of a building, but the indirect benefits are considerable. Ancient structures are never rebuilt “as they were,” but are restored in an approximate version to increase the appeal of a given site as a tourist destination.


60 Thompson’s version read: “Everything they did and said so concerned maize that they almost regarded it as a god. The enchantment and rapture with which they look upon their milpas is such that on their account they forget children, wife, and any other pleasure, as though the milpas were their final purpose in life and source of their felicity” (Thompson 1954: 234).

61 Redfield, in his preface, described Chan Kom’s situation as follows:

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A large part of the population of Yucatan dwells in such villages. These villages are small communities of illiterate agriculturalists, carrying on a homogeneous culture transmitted by oral tradition... The peasant is a rustic, and he knows it. ....There are many mixed bloods in the [general] population, whereas the peasant village is almost entirely Indian

...In the northwest where henequen is grown, are large estates and big landowners; here dwell most of the population; here are the railways, the newspapers and the
books. As one goes east and south from Merida, in the extreme northwest corner, the center of political and social influence, the population grows scantier, the railways and the towns come to an end, the villages become fewer and the proportion of Indian blood and custom increases. The gradients of population, economic development and Spanish-American civilization run southeastward, diminishing, until the outermost hinterland is reached...inhabited by a few thousand Indians whose customs are much like those of the villages of Yucatan, but who maintain a tribal organization largely apart from and unfriendly to modern government control. In fact, these Indians are not quite peasant villagers, as are most of the people of Yucatan, but tend to fall into the category of primitive tribesmen. Two extractive industries, chicle and logwood, bring these forest Indians into limited contact with the economy of the wider world.

62Early in the century, science had been brought to bear in the interpretation and analysis of milpa agriculture practiced by contemporaneous Maya peasants to raise their subsistence crops of maize. Relying on data from milpa experiments at Chichén Itzá in the 1910's and 1920's, and citing a study by Benedict and Steggerda (1936) on the Maya diet, both Thompson and Morley arrived at a set of conclusions that was filled with internal contradictions. The Maya peasant, they noted, seemed remarkable in his ability to subsist on a highly unbalanced, inadequate, and monotonous diet consisting of 75 to 85 per cent maize, so deficient in protein and calories (only 2,565 daily compared to the United States average of 3,500) that an American labourer could not, theoretically exist on it. Yet he not only subsisted, he was “inherently active, energetic and hardworking.” The subsistence provided by milpa cultivation of maize, further calculations projected, allowed both the conscripted labour of the peasant class in ancient times, and those peasants living in Yucatan 1936, the “freedom” from subsistence agricultural chores in the milpa for all but 60 days a year (Morley 1947 [1946]: 25).

63A discussion of the gendering of territory is in McClintock’s 1995.

64For a discussion that re-examines the interactions of these events in Yucatan from both sides, see Clendinnen 1987.

65In February, 1929, the New York Times noted that a group (one of many that Morley entertained at Chichén Itzá including Mrs. G.E. Vincent, the wife of the president of the Rockefeller Foundation, was to sail to Yucatan to see Maya ruins, conduct medical research (a doctor was part of the entourage) and “seek ideas for a play.”

66Thompson refuted the ecological collapse by noting that Quirigua was one of the earliest cities abandoned, although the Motagua valley was enriched by periodic flooding. He also dismissed as untenable his late colleague Morley’s theory that the clearing of forests had resulted in the growth of untillable (for the Maya) savannas.

67Numerous critics have taken Carnegie Mayanists to task, notably Kluckhohn, 1940.

68Thompson used the terms “Mexicans” rather than Morley’s “Toltecs” to refer to any foreign element, other than Zapotec, he perceived in the Maya record.

69LaFeber attributed the statement to State Department officer Francis Huntington-Wilson.

70It was not until 1986 that Mayanists revised their model of the Maya as peacable. Mayanists turned with vengeance to the evidence of Maya warfare, that had hitherto been ignored, after 1986. See Miller 1986; Schele and Miller 1986.

71For a discussion of the Maya-Mexican polarity at Chichén Itzá see Jones 1997. The explanation for stylistic difference that were incomprehensible according to the prevailing presuppositions about the Maya was to attribute such differences to a foreign invasion of Toltec/Mexicans. Contestations of the dating of certain structures at Chichén Itzá were published in 1962 (Kubler) and 1978 (Cohodas) but their premises were not accepted in protection of the notion of Maya/Mexican splitting; only very recently have these studies been re-assessed with the abandonment of the Toltec invasion model for Chichén Itzá. See Schele and Matthews, 1998: 357 n.12

72See Cohodas 1996, for example.

73See, for example, Demarest and Houston 1990; Fash 1991; Friedel, Schele and Parker 1993; McAnany 1995, Sanders 1986-present; Schele and Friedel 1990; Schele and Miller 1986; Sharer 1994; Willey 1975-1990 (and others).
Microeconomic studies that relate ethnicity to economic disadvantage are now contesting the prevailing macroeconomic bias of government by showing the direct correlation of poverty and indigenousness in Latin America. In Chiapas in 1991, 45% of corn was grown on milpas of ten acres or less, providing bare subsistence or less. (Note that this is the same milpa system that earlier in the century archaeologists used in their positivist constructions of peasants supporting an elite population with surplus.) Land pressure from agribusiness projects and government intervention in the market has meant a dramatic drop in the amount of corn produced in Mexico, while demand continues to rise. Mexico is now a net importer of corn; almost all of it comes from the U.S. “According to Subcomandante Marcos, the detonator for the uprising (on January 1, 1994, timed to coincide with the enactment of NAFTA) was the government’s decision to amend Article 27 of the Mexican constitution” (Harvey 1994: 22). Seen in the context of the redistribution of land under the ejido system after the Mexican revolution, the restructuring of that system, the effective repeal of Article 27 of the Mexican constitution, and the dismantling of other government agricultural support programs, it is clear the Maya fear that the conditions that existed prior to the revolution will recur, is well founded: specifically, that land will again be concentrated in the hands of the wealthy (Wollock 1994). These are among the issues that the Zapatistas have demanded that the government reconsider; and remain some of the political issues about which Mayanists tend to be silent.

Call for Papers, University of Calgary, 1993 Chac Mool Conference.

Some scholars have noted interesting correlations between American political crises and interpretations of the ancient Maya, see Wilks, e.g.

University of Calgary archaeologist Peter Matthews, and others, were in the news last year, during and after their capture and confinements by an armed contingent that disputed their right to conduct archaeology.

Recent National Geographic articles about the Maya include: Agurcia and Fash 1991; Stuart 1992; Demarest 1993; (.....etc.)

According to Lutz and Collins, “The Magazine Research Institute puts the 1989 audience at 30.2 million, while the National Geographic Society estimates that there are 37 million readers worldwide.” Other significant statistics that Lutz and Collins cite about National Geographic readership (in-home) include: 55% of readers are male; 96% are white (as compared with 86% of the general [U.S.] population; median age is 42; 33% are college graduates (18% is the [U.S.] national average; 65% have household incomes of $30,000 or over; 25% have professional or managerial positions; 30% are upper or upper-middle class. (Lutz and Collins 1993: 221-222).

The National Geographic Society began to sponsor expeditions to the Maya area by the late 1930's. The Society participated in several joint archaeological expeditions to the Maya area in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution; in 1940 its inside cover began to carry a paragraph under the banner headline “Organized for ‘The Increase and Diffusion of Geographic Knowledge’

In Mexico, The Society and the Smithsonian Institution, January 16, 1939, discovered the oldest work of man in the Americas for which we have a date. This slab of stone is engraved in Mayan characters with a date which means November 4, 291. B.C. It antedates by 200 years anything heretofore dated in America, and reveals a great center of early American culture, previously unknown (The National Geographic Magazine. Vol. 78 No. 3 September, 1940, inside front cover.)


In the first and second editions, Morley noted:

The French artist, Jean Charlot, has very kindly made for this book four original drawings illustrating the four principal steps in making a Maya stela as he conceives the process to have been: (1) quarrying the shaft, (2) transporting it, (3) erecting it, and (4) sculpturing it (1946, 1947: 362).

In the completely rewritten 1994 (fifth) edition, however, author Sharer omitted the proviso and stated only:
Drawings by the French artist Jean Charlot illustrate the principal steps in making a Maya stela: quarrying the shaft, transporting it, erecting and carving it (Sharer 1994: 643).

83 See, however, Joyce 1995; Proskouriakoff 1961; Ruscheinsky 1994.
84 See Paul Sullivan. Unfinished Conversations: Maya and Foreigners Between Two Wars. Alfred A. Knopf, New York: 1989 for a discussion that foregrounds the Maya side of the "conversations" between the Maya and Mayanists.
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_____. 1924. “Basketball Bets were Mayan Mania.” August 3, II (1):2.


FIGURE REFERENCES

Fig. 1 Thompson 1975 [1963]: cover
Fig. 2 Thompson 1975 [1963]: Pl. 6
Fig. 3 Steggerda 1941: Fig. 10
Fig. 4 Steggerda 1941: Pl. 23
Fig. 5 Steggerda 1941: Fig. 5
Fig. 6 Steggerda 1941: Pl. 14
Fig. 7 Steggerda 1941: Pl. 15
Fig. 8 Steggerda 1941: Pl. 26
Fig. 9 Coe 1992: p. 87
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Fig. 11 Brunhouse 1971: following p. 150
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Fig. 20 Chase 1931: frontispiece
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Fig. 29 Sullivan 1989: p. 52
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Fig. 33 Morley 1947 [1946]: Pl. 64 and Pl. 65
Fig. 34 U.S. currency, detail of $1 note
Fig. 35 Morley 1947 [1946]: p. 455
Fig. 36 Morley 1947 [1946]: p. 145
Fig. 37 Morley 1947 [1946]: frontispiece
Fig. 38 Thompson 1975 [1963]: p. 140
Fig. 39 Morley 1936: p. 631
Fig. 40 Morley 1936: p. 601
Fig. 41 Morley 1936: p. 626
Fig. 42 Morley 1936: p. 610
Fig. 43 Proskouriakoff 1963 [1946]: p. 17
Fig. 44 Proskouriakoff 1963 [1946]: p. 9
Fig. 45 Smith 1950: Figure 38
Fig. 46 Proskouriakoff 1963 [1946]: pp. 115-121
Fig. 47 Proskouriakoff 1963 [1946]: pp. 123-129
Fig. 48 Brunhouse 1971: following p. 150
Fig. 49 Morley 1936: p. 624
Fig. 50 Morley 1936: p. 623
Fig. 51 Woodbury and Trik 1953: fly leaf
Fig. 52 Woodbury and Trik 1953: Pl. 1
Fig. 53 Woodbury and Trik 1953: Pl. 5
Fig. 54 Morley 1936: p. 614
Fig. 55 Morley 1936: p. 634
Fig. 56 Morley 1947 [1946]: facing p. 225
Fig. 57 Thompson 1954: p. 78
Fig. 58 Thompson 1954: p. 83
Fig. 59 Demarest 1993: p. 96
Fig. 60 Reents-Budet 1994: p. 314
Fig. 61 Akwe:kon 1994: cover
Fig. 62 Coe 1992: 266
Fig. 63 Coe 1992: 267
Figure 1: Cover of *Maya Archaeologist*
(after Thompson 1975 [1963]).
Figure 2: "Maya and Their Students"
(after Thompson 1975: [1963]:

Plate vi.—Maya and Their Students. a: Dancing the jarana. b: Carmen Chai and Eugenio Mai. c: Jacinto Cunil. d: Agustín Hob. e: The Morleys (Morley’s sombrero smaller than usual) and the honey-mooners, Chichen Itza, 1930.
Figure 3: "Ratings of Maya Indians by Whites, Mestizos and Maya"  
(after Steggerda 1941)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Talkativeness</th>
<th>Cleanliness</th>
<th>Self-love and vanity</th>
<th>Thriftiness</th>
<th>Cruelty to horses</th>
<th>Cruelty to other animals</th>
<th>Generosity</th>
<th>Honesty in trade</th>
<th>Respect for rights of others</th>
<th>Quarrelsomeness</th>
<th>Aggressiveness</th>
<th>Sociability</th>
<th>Importance of sex</th>
<th>Expressed affection</th>
<th>General intelligence</th>
<th>Amiability</th>
<th>Importance of humor</th>
<th>Importance of religion</th>
<th>Industriousness</th>
<th>Nomadic tendencies</th>
<th>Alcoholism</th>
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<td>WHITES</td>
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Fig. 10. Rating of Maya Indians by Whites, Mestizos and Maya. Each point represents the combined opinion of the various raters. The intensity of the character rated increases from 0 - 100.
Figure 4: Eugenio Maya and "the author taking measurements"
(after Steggerda 1941)

ANTHROPOMETRY IN YUCATAN

Plate 23

a. The author taking measurements on a Maya Indian family. Martiniano Dzib is recording. Compare the statures with that of the author who is five feet eight inches tall. Note also the short upper arms and long forearms of these people.

b, c. Eugenio May in 1931. His relative chest girth is 56.50 and cephalic index 84.75, not far from the Maya average for these indices.
Figure 5: "Increments of Head Length for Females of Four Races" (after Steggerda 1941)
Figure 6: "Celebration of Han Lil Col, the Meal of the Milpa"

(after Steggerda 1941)

\[ d, e. \] Maya priest blessing the food.

\[ f. \] Eating the blessed food. Among the Maya spoons or forks are seldom used.
a. Maya women wash clothes nearly every day. Their washtub is a hollowed log. Gregoria Pat, Piste, 1937.

b. Fernanda Tec, wife of Martiniano Dzib of Piste, hanging out clothes. The rope is partly untwisted and the clothes pushed through, thus eliminating clothespins.

c. Fernanda Tec bathing her daughter, Conchita. These baths are generally taken indoors or behind the house.

Figure 7: "Cleanliness among the Maya" (after Steggerda 1941)
Figure 8: "Preparation of Tortillas"

(after Steggerda 1941)

a. Pouring dry corn from the henequen bag, called sabucan, into an iron kettle. This is the first step in the process of making Maya bread - tortilla (Sp.), uah (Maya).

b. Grinding the corn by hand on a stone metate. The finer the corn is ground the better is the quality of the tortilla.

c. Shaping the tortilla. The bowl on the table contains the masa from which the tortilla is made. It is baked on a metal sheet over an open fire, then kept warm in the gourd. Fernanda Tec, 1933.

d. Nine or ten freshly made tortillas, ready for eating.
Figure 9: "Alfred P. Maudslay in his Room at Chichén Itzá, 1889"
(after Coe 1992)
Figure 10: "Franz Blom at Uxmal"
(after Wauchope 1965)
Figure 11: "Morley and his sister Elinor"
(after Brunhouse 1971)

Morley and his sister Elinor used this part of Las Monjas at Chichén Itzá for their sleeping quarters in March, 1923. Courtesy Mrs. Elinor Vail.
Figure 12: "Interior of a room of the "nunnery," Uxmal, about A.D. 900" (after Thompson 1954)
Two hundred thousand Maya toil for foreign masters to-day in the henequen fields of Yucatan, all memory of their former magnificence gone as completely as if it had never been. Their wants are few and easily filled: simple food—tortillas, black beans, squash, chile—and tobacco; cotton stuff to make the shirts and pantaloons for himself and his son and for the huipils of his wife and daughter; anisette by way of a celebration on feast days, and he is as happy as he can be under masters not wholly of his own blood. But, with such a glorious past, it would seem as though his future might be made of even greater promise than this. With proper educational facilities, with fair agricultural opportunities, with intelligent help over the rough places in the road, he must travel from his own simple past to the complicated world of to-day, and there is every reason to expect that he may again fashion for himself a destiny worthy of his splendid ancestry.
Figure 14: Stucco from tomb at Comalcalco

(after Wauchope 1965)
Figure 15: "Morley and the Chun Pom Guard at Tulum, 1922"
(after Sullivan 1989)

Morley and the Chun Pom Guard at Tulum, 1922.
Morley is standing toward the front, wearing a pith helmet and tie.
Figure 16: "...the bride of Yum Chac hurtles out over the well"
(after Willard 1926)

“A last forward swing and the bride of Yum Chac hurtles far out over the well.”
The descendants of the Indians who built the great cities of Yucatan in the tenth to fifteenth centuries A.D. still live and labor on the henequen plantations of the same region, the men working in the fields, the women at their household tasks. No cleaner people live than the Maya of Yucatan. It is safe to say that every Maya bathes at least once a day. It is said that the old Spanish law gave every man the right to beat his wife if she did not have a tub of hot water ready for his bath when he came in from work. The young girl in the picture, Theresa, is the daughter of the native foreman at Chichen Itzá. She wears the typical dress of the Maya woman, the huipil, a sleeveless garment beautifully embroidered in old-fashioned cross-stitch around the neck and the bottom, and a lace-edged underskirt. Slippers, a colored scarf, and a bow of ribbon for the hair complete the costume. Theresa has embroidered the Spanish word for love, “amor,” on her huipil.
Figure 18: "Staff of the Carnegie Institution Chichén Itzá Project"
(after Morley 1925)

Morley and John Bolles designed the costumes for a Maya fiesta at Chichén Itzá, 1931. In this picture, the Morleys are in the background. Courtesy John Bolles.
Figure 20: Diego Rivera: Woman in *huipil* (after Chase: 1931)
Figure 21: "Head of Ramses II" and "Sheik's Son"
(after Tylor 1889 [1881])

Fig. 19. — (a) Head of Rameses II., Ancient Egypt.  (b) Sheikh's son, Modern Egypt.  (After Hartmann.)
Figure 22: "A Graven Image Comes to Life!"
(after Morley 1936)

Posed beside a hollowed stone fire pot or incense burner on the Caracol (opposite plate), this modern Maya in profile shows that his race has retained the strong aquiline nose, drooping eyelids, and rounded head that old sculptures depict.
Figure 23: "Portraits of Present-Day Maya"
(after Thompson 1954)

a: Tzotzil, Chiapas. (Photograph by Giles G. Healey.)  
b: Lacandón man. (Photograph by Giles G. Healey.)  
c: Chol. (Courtesy Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University.)  
d: Yucatec woman.
Figure 24: "Sculpture in the Round"
(after Thompson 1954)

a: Stucco head, Palenque. Classic type of beauty, about A.D. 700. (Courtesy Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico.)
b: Grotesque head, Copán, about A.D. 800.
c: Façade ornament, Uxmal. Tattooed head in snake's jaws, about A.D. 900.
Figure 25: “Bearing his Burden the Way his Forefathers Did”
(after Morley 1931)

BEARING HIS BURDEN THE WAY HIS FOREFATHERS DID

Material for repair work on the summit is going up on the top of an Indian’s head just as in ancient times.
Figure 26: "Restoring the Temple of the Warriors" (after Thompson 1975 [1963])

Fig. 5.—Restoring the Temple of the Warriors, Chichen Itza. Maya laborer climbs the stairs with snout of long-nosed rain god to be reset in the façade from which it had fallen. Drawing by Jean Charlot, staff artist at the time.
Figure 27: Diego Rivera: Conquistadors
(after Chase 1931)
Figure 28: Diego Rivera: *Handicraft*
(after Chase 1931)
Figure 29. "Officers' letter to Morley, June 5, 1936" (after Sullivan 1989)
Figure 30: Morley's calendar wheels
(after Morley 1947 [1946])

Fig. 20.—Diagram showing the enmeshing of the 365-day calendar year (B) with the 260-day sacred year (A).
Figure 31: Maya numbers 0-19

(after Morley 1947 [1946])

Fig. 23.—Glyphs for the numbers 0 and I to XIX inclusive, in bar-and-dot notation, the Maya “Roman Notation”: (a) zero; (b) I; (c) II; (d) III; (e) IV; (f) V; (g) VI; (h) VII; (i) VIII; (j) IX; (k) X; (l) XI; (m) XII; (n) XIII; (o) XIV; (p) XV; (q) XVI; (r) XVII; (s) XVIII; (t) XIX.
Figure 32: Initial Series
(after Morley 1947 [1946])

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Series Introducing-Glyph</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grotesque head in center is the only variable element of this sign. This is the name-glyph of the deity who is patron of the month (here Cumhu) in which the Initial Series terminal date falls.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Series</th>
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<td>9 baktuns</td>
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<td>(0 x 20 days)</td>
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<td>= 0 days</td>
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<tr>
<th>0 kins</th>
<th>13 Ahau (day reached by counting forward above total of days from starting point of Maya Era)</th>
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<tr>
<td>(0 x 1 day)</td>
<td>= 0 days</td>
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<tr>
<th>Glyph G9</th>
<th>Glyph F</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name-glyph of the deity who is patron of the Ninth Day in the nine-day series (The Nine Gods of the Lower World)</td>
<td>Meaning unknown</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glyphs E and D</th>
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<tr>
<td>Glyphs denoting the moon age of the Initial Series terminal date, here &quot;new lunar half-year period, moon&quot;</td>
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<th>Glyph X3</th>
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<td>Meaning unknown</td>
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<th>Glyph B</th>
<th>Glyph C</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning unknown</td>
<td>Glyph denoting position of current lunar month in terminal date, here the 2d position</td>
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<tr>
<th>Glyph A9</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current lunar month, here 29 days in length. Last glyph of the Supplementary Series.</td>
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</table>

18 Cumhu (month reached by counting forward above total of days from starting point of Maya Era). Last glyph of the Initial Series.

Fig. 25.—Examples of an Initial and a Supplementary Series: east side of Stela E, Quirigua, Department of Izabal, Guatemala.
Figure 33: Jean Charlot: "Steps in Making a Maya Monument"
(after Morley 1947 [1946])
Figure 34: Detail of U.S. one dollar note
Figure 35: [a] Morley's corn; [b] "Planting corn with the planting stick" (after 1947 [1946])
Figure 36: Copan: the "sundial"

(after 1947 [1946])

Fig. 4.—The "sundial" composed of Stelae 10 and 12, Copan, Honduras.
Figure 37: "The Young Corn God"
(after Morley 1947 [1946])

THE YOUNG CORN-GOD, COPAN, HONDURAS
Figure 38: "Scenes From Hieroglyphic Codex Madrid"
(After Thompson 1975 [1963])

Fig. 12.—Scenes from Hieroglyphic Codex Madrid. Left to right: the rain god sowing; rattlesnake biting hunter's foot; the rain god pouring water on the young maize plants; birds attacking the maize god (i.e., eating the seed); cutworms eating the maize god. From divinatory almanacs for farming and hunting.
ANCIENT MAYA, LIKE THEIR MODERN DESCENDANTS, WERE CORN FARMERS

Their only agricultural implement was the planting stick, a pointed pole about five feet long. Forest trees were felled and allowed to dry out under the fierce suns of March and April. Then they were burned and the corn was planted. Ripened ears were bent over and left to dry on the stalks until December or January. One of the planters drinks from a gourd water bottle, without which even today no Maya goes out to plant corn or to hunt (Plate III).
A MAYA HUNTER TRAVELS LIGHT

When the stalwart foreman of the Chichen Itzá excavation gang goes shooting in the bush, he needs only shotgun, water gourd, food bag made of henequen, and a broad-bladed machete imported from Connecticut. He is a fine Maya type, with well-shaped head.
FROM A FROWNING GARGOYLED TURRET MAYA ASTRONOMERS PEERED AT THE SKY

In mathematics and astronomy the Maya surpassed the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians. This round tower, the Caracol at Chichen Itzá, was the most important astronomical observatory in all Yucatán. Narrow openings through the thick walls to the circle of windows near the top formed "lines of sight," or lensless telescopes. Through these, observers watched the heavenly bodies which enabled them to fix the date (Color Plate XII).
Figure 42: “Greeks of the New World”
(after Morley 1936)
Figure 43: Tatiana Proskouriakoff: Acropolis at Piedras Negras
(after Proskouriakoff 1963 [1946])
Figure 44: Tatiana Proskouriakoff: Temple II, Tikal

(after Proskouriakoff 1963 [1946])
Figure 45: Proskouriakoff: Uaxactun, Structure AV under excavation (after Smith 1950)

Fig. 38—STRUCTURE A-V

a: General view of south side. b: General view of west side.
Figure 46: Proskouriakoff: Uaxactun, Structure AV: “stages 1-4”
(after Smith 1950)
Figure 47: Proskouriakoff: Uaxactun, Structure AV: “stages 5-8”
(after Smith 1950)
Figure 48: "Work begins at Chichén Itzá"
(after Brunhouse 1971)
Figure 49: "Bronzed Warriors"
(after Morley 1936)
A HUMAN SACRIFICE IS HURLED INTO THE SACRED WELL.

Young girls were flung into the pit at daybreak in times of drought or other national crises to intercede with the gods in behalf of the Itza tribe. If they survived the 80-foot plunge, they were hauled out at noon and questioned as to what the gods had in store. If the maiden failed to reappear, it was considered an evil omen; rocks were thrown into the well, and onlookers lied with loud lamentations. The sinister place is a natural hole in the limestone, 180 feet across (Plate XVI).
The United Fruit Company expresses its social responsibility in Middle America through a number of programs in the field of public service. Included among these are the financing of agricultural schools, diversified crops, reforestation, and agricultural experimental projects. The Company also contributes to the better understanding between the Americas through dissemination of knowledge concerning this fruitful area.

The restoration of the ancient Maya city of Zaculeu in Guatemala is an outstanding example of United Fruit Company's research to help unearth and reveal to Middle America the great heritage of that region. The Company, with the approval of the Government of Guatemala, began work in February, 1946 on this one-time capital of the Mam Maya Kingdom of the pre-Columbian era. Upon completion, the site was restored to the people of Guatemala to become a national monument.
Figure 52: Ruins of Zaculeu, reconstructed building
(after Woodbury and Trik 1953)
Figure 53: Ruins of Zaculeu, aerial view of site
(after Woodbury and Trik 1953)
Figure 54: “The well of sacrifice holds no terrors “
(after Morley 1936)

A few centuries ago this girl might have been among the beauties cast from the stone platform, right, into the forbidding green water (Plate XVII). The round stone supported the dredging equipment of an American archeologist, who retrieved skeletons and sacrificial treasure from the well.
VISITORS TO THE CHICAGO FAIR OF 1893 SAW A FACSIMILE OF THIS PORTAL

These arcades are not uncommon in the ruined cities of north-central Yucatán, examples having been found at Uxmal, Kabah, Chichen Itzá, and Tulum, as well as here at Labna. They seem to have served as ceremonial entrances or gateways to sacred enclosures.
Figure 56: "Scenes of human sacrifice"
(after Morley 1947: [1946])

Plate 28.—Scenes of Human Sacrifice as Represented on the Monuments, Codices, and Wall-Paintings
(a) Stela 11, Piedras Negras, Peten, Guatemala; (b) Stela 14, Piedras Negras; (c) Codex Dresdensis; (d) Codex Tro-Cortesianus; (e) Temple of the Jaguars, Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico; (f) Temple of the Warriors, Chichen Itza.
Figure 57: "A raid on the enemy"
(after Thompson 1954)

Fig. 6.—A raid on the enemy. Part of a mural at Bonampak (about A.D. 775), with scene showing the head chief and his assistants leading a raid against a neighboring village. The head chief, with jaguar tunic and stabbing spear, has taken a captive (grasping by the hair symbolizes capture). Note flexible shield and grotesque headdresses. Lower part of design damaged. (After Antonio Tejeda and Agustin Villagra.)
Figure 58: "Judgment on the captives"
(after Thompson 1954)

Fig. 7.—Judgment on the captives. Part of a mural at Bonampak, a sequel to the raid (Fig. 6). A captive in fear before the head chief, a dead man in a posture worthy of Michelangelo below, and captives from whose fingers blood drips. The head chief is decked in jade and wears the same jaguar tunic as in the previous scene. (After Antonio Tejeda and Agustín Villagra.)
Figure 59: "In the Petexbatún rainforest"
(after Demarest 1993)
Figure 60: Ceramic plate, Nakbé Region
(after Reents-Budet 1994)
Figure 61: Stephen Johnson Leyba: "Chiapas, Mexico"
(after Akwe:kon 1994)
Figure 62: Stela 3, Piedras Negras: “reading and translation”
(after Coe 1992)

STELA 3, PIEDRAS NEGRAS

Reading in Choi Maya and Translation
courtesy Linda Schele

Synopsis

On 9.12.2.0.16 5 Cib 14 Yaxkin (7 July 674), Lady Katun Ahau was born in a place called Man, believed to lie between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan. When only twelve years old, on 9.12.14.10.16 1 Cib 14 Yaxkin, she was married (“adorned”) to the heir apparent to the Piedras Negras throne, Yo’ Acnal, who succeeded to the rulership 44 days later. When she was 33, on 9.13.16.4.6 4 Cimi 14 Uo (22 March 708), Lady Katun Ahau gave birth to a daughter, Lady Kin Ahau, in the Turtle lineage of Piedras Negras. Three years after this, Lady Katun Ahau, a powerful queen throughout her life, celebrated a ceremony called “grasping the staff”, on 9.13.19.13.1 11 Imix 14 Yax. The current katun ended, as the text notes, 99 days later on 9.14.0.0.0 6 Ahau 13 Muan (5 December 711). In the scene below, the queen and the 3 year old Lady Kin Ahau are shown seated on a throne.

A1 tzic yaxkin
The count is in Yaxkin.

A2 lachcham katun
12 katuns.

A3 mi unic
0 uinals.

A4 ho chibin
5 Cib.

A5 ch’a hun
[7th Lord of the Night]

A6 uac kal huliy
[It was] 27 days after [the moon] arrived.

A7 uinic bolon
[with] 29 days.

B1 bolon pih
9 baktuns.

B2 cha tun
2 tuns.

B3 uac luhum kin
16 king.

B4 nah
Nah [7th Lord of the Night]

B5 cha tzuc (?) u
Two moons are worn out.

B6 ux sac uitz ku
Three White Mountain God [name of the lunation].

B7 chanlahum yaxkin
14 Yaxkin.

B8 sihi
She was born.

B9 na katun ahau
Lady Katun Ahau.

B10 nana man ahau
Matron from Man.

C1 mi, luhum uinicchi
0 kins, 10 uinals.

C2 iual ut hun chibin
It came to pass [on] 1 Cib

C3 na katun ahau
Lady Katun Ahau.

C4 na man ahau, yichnal
Matron of Man, in the company of

C5 hun katun, iual ut
1 katun. It came to pass

C6 chan chamal
[on] 4 Cimi

C7 chanlahum iCAT
14 Uo

C8 sihi
She was born.

C9 na hun tan ac
She, the Cherished One of the Turtle [lineage].

C10 na kin ahau
Lady Kin Ahau.

D1 lachcham tuni
12 tuns.

D2 chanlahum uni, nauah
14 Kankin, she was adorned.

D3 na katun ahau
Lady Katun Ahau.

D4 luhum, buluch uinicchi,
hun tuni
10 kins, 11 uinals, 1 tun.

D5 hun katun, iual ut
1 katun. It came to pass

D6 sihi
She was born.

D7 na kin ahau
Lady Kin Ahau.

E1 holuhum, uaxac
unicchi, ux tuni
15 kins, 8 uinals, 3 tuns.

E2 buluch imix
[on] 11 Imix

E3 u ch’amua lom
she grasped the staff,

E4 na katun ahau
Lady Katun Ahau,

E5 hun katun lati
1 katun after

E6 acnal
Acnal.

E7 iual ut
It came to pass

E8 uklum yaxkin
14 Yax

E9 u ch’amua lom
she grasped the staff,

E10 u chanlahum katun
its 14th katun.
Figure 63: Stela 3, Piedras Negras, drawing
(after Coe 1992)

68 Stela 3, Piedras Negras: an example of a complete text, its reading, and its translation.
APPENDIX A

“Balam” is one of several novitiate priests in Thompson’s story in *The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization*, from which this section is excerpted. Thompson denoted him as a noble by virtue of his affiliation with elite rituals of blood letting, his ability to “tell time” (that is, to read) and as the son of a slave-owner.

Thompson justified his storytelling as an antidote for “the frequent failure of the nonprofessional to get a coherent impression of a past civilization. Because of the nature of much of the material he handles, the excavator is deeply interested in minutiae. Scarcely perceptible changes in the shapes of everyday cooking pots are often of considerable value in establishing relationships in time and space; the constituents of pottery temper or the manner of drilling holes in stone or shell can be highly significant. Consequently, archaeologists often infer from the particular to the general, and we are apt to fill our reports with detail to support our generalizations. We ape Crivelli in a different medium” (Thompson 1954: 4).

As the priests issued from the temple at the conclusion of their prayers, attendants brought forward one of the foreigners and placed him on the sacrificial stone. Two junior priests, called Chacs, held his feet; two, his hands. Assistant priests held smoking copal censers and sprinkled *balche* as the high priest, with the long flint knife in his hand — “the hand of God,” the Maya called it — advanced toward the victim, for in a ceremony of such importance, only he could perform the sacrifice. Balam felt himself swept by a wave of emotion, in which impulses of elation, pity, and sadism were strangely mingled. The Olmec, his arms and legs curving down from the small of his back resting on the sacrificial stone, was between Balam and the sun, now low in the afternoon sky. His shadow on the stuccoed floor lay like the arc of a grotesque bow at Balam’s feet.

The high priest, bending over the victim, struck a savage blow at the base of the left ribs. At the moment of impact the body gave a last convulsive jerk. The high priest wrenched out the heart and raised it above his head, facing toward the setting sun. His clothing was stained deep red and more blood spattered his face. A second time the heart was raised to the west, the direction of the god of Venus, who would soon be visible if the world were to be spared. A great shout arose form the congregation
squatting in the court below as the priest walked to the edge of the platform, showing
the heart to those assembled there.

The body was placed to one side as the second victim was brought forward and
similarly dispatched, and then the third. The former slave of Balam’s father was the
fourth victim. Balam felt a certain shame that this simple, harmless youth should die. It
was considered an honor to contribute a victim, but it would have been easier to bear
had the man been sullen or had he shown bravado; this eager faith was upsetting,
Balam averted his gaze, watching instead two flies that hovered around the gaping
wound in the stomach of one dead man. He did not look to the front again until the
shout of the crowd told him it was all over.

The fifth man, who had revealed terror, struggled as he was brought forward, and
had to be dragged to the block. Even after he had been thrown onto it, and was tightly
grasped in the requisite position, he continued to try to free himself. Balam frowned
beneath his mask. Such conduct was unseemly, and by such ignominy the man was
disregarding the welfare of the whole community, for such a spectacle must be
offensive to the god Venus. The man had already jeopardized the well-being of all by
his careless carving of an error on a stela. Now he was once again upsetting the rhythm
of the ritual. His struggles were soon ended, however, and his body was placed beside
those already sacrificed. The whole ceremony had taken but a few minutes.

APPENDIX B

Huxley described his impressions of Maya art after having visited the ancient Maya ruins known as Copán and Quiriguá during a 1933 cruise to Central America, that he described in his travelogue, Beyond the Mexique Bay.

Of all this treacly and ectoplasmic sensuality there is, in Maya art, not the slightest trace. The female form, as we have seen, never appears, and the male body, when it is shown divested of its hieratic ornaments, is always uncompromisingly male and never takes on those hermaphroditic attributes which distinguish gods and saviours in Indian art. The nearest approach to the Indian spirit is to be found in the few statues in the round which survived among the ruins of Copan. One of these — a beautiful head and torso of the maize god — may be studied in the British Museum. It is a wonderfully graceful and delicate piece of work: but its delicacy has none of the equivocal, epicene quality of Indian elegance, and its grace is wholly without lasciviousness. [...]

In such buildings as the Jambulinga temple at Patadkal...the Indians perfected a kind of organic architecture, whose forms are not of an abstract solid geometry but of living tissue. Many of these temples are, in their own way, extraordinarily beautiful: but their way is an oppressive way: they give you a suffocating sense of animal heat, and their stone flesh seems as though turgid and pulsating with blood. Maya decoration is luxuriant like a tropical forest; but it is a forest in which one can breathe freely of an air that is actually exhilarating. The life of the swarming ornaments — and they are all vehemently alive — is a life of the mind, of the imagination liberated from the obsessive warmth and heaviness of material bodies. Straight lines and angles, surfaces that are flat and perpendicular to one another — all the abstractions of pure geometry appear among the rich exuberance of the Mayas symbolic decoration. [...] their head-dresses are sometimes pure geometrical abstractions;... sometimes, best of all, they are representations
of the feather tiaras of men of rank...These... feather fireworks are decorations that are at once gracefully naturalistic and as austerely abstract in their formal arrangement as the most mathematical of cubist designs.

Among the most extravagant of the Mayas' ornamental combinations are the hieroglyphs...however rich and strange, this extravagance is always rigidly contained by, and completely fills, its appointed square. The mise en page is almost always impeccable. These fantastic and wildly grotesque symbols are subject to the severest intellectual discipline.

As for Maya architecture — its style is all that is most un-Indian, most abstractly inorganic. An affair of pyramids, of flat walls divided up into rectangular panels, of wide and regular flights of steps, it is an embodiment of man's most distinctively human, his most anti-natural imaginings.

Indian artists, then, like to use their skill to express sensuality, through plastic symbols, to render the emotion accompanying the immediate contact of flesh with living flesh in terms of pictorial, sculptural and even architectural forms. The Mayas, on the contrary, did not like to use their artistic skill in this way. Their decorative forms have no direct quality of sensuality, and they almost never made direct representations of erotic scenes of what I may call erotically significant persons. There is no sex in the art of the Mayas, but by compensation, what a lot of death!

APPENDIX C

Schele and Friedel created a character to whom they referred only as “the boy.” As was Thompson’s novitiate, “Balam,” this character was a teenager of noble birth, identified as such through references to his father, a “lord of the council.”

...The dance of death progressed, parry and thrust, the groans of surprise at a sudden wound. Some Itzá would join their ancestors today if they were not alert.

In the midst of this melee, the boy saw his father squaring off against his highest ranking prisoner, both armed with stabbing spears. The two men closed vigorously, but the boy’s father was in better condition and soon had his prisoner down on the plaza with a spear under his chin. There was a pause. Suddenly the father raised up his enemy and gave him back his spear. He gazed into his face and then turned his back to him as he would to a sibling and trusted battle companion. The decision he offered his enemy was to die taking his captor with him. Such a death, however, would be a humiliating act of cowardice.

Better by far to live as a younger sibling, a prince of the hated Itzá and their city of the new creation. The captive grasped his spear tightly and, for a moment, the boy thought his father’s time had come. But then the captive’s fingers slowly relaxed, his eyes dropped, and he fell into line behind his captor as the group moved off toward the council house.

The boy felt a flush of pride. Not all of the lords would have taken such a chance, but he knew his father held his position in the high council by means of his courage as well as his wisdom.

The boy’s battle party moved forward to the steps of the Temple of the Warriors, the council house of the Itzá nation. The ambassadors from distant allied cities in the western mountains were arrayed along the front of the halls with their piles of sumptuous gifts. Dressed in long skirts, the dreadful shamans of the city moved among them, muttering incantations against treachery. The lords of the council gathered on the steps with their highest-born prisoners, announcing the names of those who had joined the nation and
those who had chosen to go to the Otherworld today. Those who chose death were honored with ritual celebration before being led through the lower hall and up the steps to the stone of sacrifice. *There, as the sun stood high in the sky at midday, one after another they received the gentle death, so called because no one ever made a sound when his heart was cut out.* The Great Vision Serpent rose in the clouds of incense surrounding their lifeless bodies.

The sacrifices continued through the afternoon, and the warriors, engaged in their games on the plaza, clustered like angry bees around a hive until the sun sank in bloody splendor. The boy amused himself with the games and wondered if he would ever get to sacrifice in the Great Ballcourt when it was finished by the master builders and masons of the defeated hill cities. Mostly, however, his thoughts were with his father, sitting in the council house plotting the future of the city. Now that there was peace in the land, the Itzá could look out to the world beyond and the challenges it would bring.