Personhood in Maya Art: A theoretical perspective

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Contents:

Preface

The aim of this thesis is to sketch a culturally appropriate theory with which to discuss creative material culture (art) in the Maya area. It assesses the applicability of a theory that will be assembled using various interdisciplinary sources but, in particular, will look to philosophies and theories extracted from interviews with members of the Maya community of Santa Elena, in Yucatán, Mexico.

The documentation of thought and practices among contemporary communities in the Maya area has largely been used, in conjunction with other archaeological and ethnohistoric data, to shed light on the "lost" pre-Colombian Maya civilisation that is said to have reached its peak 1200 years ago and later been swept away by colonial administration in the 16th century (Sharer and Morley 1994, 7). The validity of connecting ethnographic data to archaeological questions has been illustrated in works such as Maya Cosmos (Freidel, Schele and Parker 1995), and other examples include Taube (1998), Fitzsimmons (2009), (Houston 2014) and McAnany and Plank (2001). More recent works have associated the historical development of the pre-conquest Maya civilisation with the ongoing political and cultural struggles of "re-emerging" Maya (Demarest 2005). The aim of this thesis is correlative, in the sense of making this study of the past relevant to the present, specifically to people in the Maya area. European and Maya theories will be used together to re-position the philosophies behind the investigation of what archaeologists and art historians call Maya "art". In this way, this past will belong to the people whose identity has been formed within the natural and material environments of the Maya area, and through the effects of cultural interactions and differences (such as the Spanish Conquest and modernity) alongside certain continuities.

European and North American art history has generated a complex and cumulative scheme with which to conceptualise the fundamentals of visual and theoretical analysis. These discussions are rich in philosophical questions that bridge the role and reception of what traditional art historians call "art" to ideas of aesthetic, religion, historical and existential development, and heritage/identity building. Chapter 1.1 introduces some stylistic devices that are central to the European art historical discussion and that are also identified in non-European ancient art, with the intention of explaining how these devices produce existential, emotional and intellectual responses (Damisch 1972 and Van Alphen 2005). Themes pulled from this art history are useful owing to the depth of an ongoing philosophical conversation that stretches back to Plato and Aristotle.

Following the discussion of the existential agency of creative material culture, and given that this thesis tackles identity and Being in the Maya area, the following part of the theoretical outline (in Chapter 1.2) explores the possibility of alternative (fluid or partible) conceptions of personhood through anthropological and philosophical literature (such as Hodder 1991, Butler 1990, DeMarrais et al 2005, Tilley et al 2008). Chapter 1.3 expands on this, to tackle the question diachronically, and looks at some of the 20th century works that deal with the effect of what Sartre terms the dialectic of "worked matter" (1960) on personhood, that is, the impact of material environment and space on the way that people deal with tangible things, commodity fetishism (Marx), or scarcity (Sartre), for example, and so the impact on social and individual identity. This chapter also highlights contemporary conceptual immersive installation artists, whose work elicits an experience of space within natural and man-made environments. These works move away from the distanced appraisal required by pre-modern art and, to some extent, de-subjectify the viewer. The later chapters that are dedicated to artistic programmes in the Maya area will draw on the interpretation of some of these devices.

Owing to an emphasis, both in ethnographic literature from the Maya area and in interviews at Santa Elena, on religion and ritual in daily life, Chapter 1.4 examines theories of religion. Specifically, the chapter will touch on "religious" community activities (rituals) that contribute to the process of both personal and public reflexivity (Durkheim 1912, Horton 1960, Ammerman 2010, Berger, Davie and Fokas 2008, 12-14). These rituals may have a social function, but they mediate the banal activities of daily life with an imaginative and individual response to the unknowable.

In this way, Chapters 1.1-1.4 unpack various aspects of European philosophy that may be relevant to Maya artistic rationality, and the existential underpinnings that are involved in the reception and use of creative material culture. While the depth of European discussion on these points provides various alternatives, it is the aim of this thesis to create a more culturally appropriate (Maya) lens. Chapter 2, therefore, divides interviews with the experts on Maya philosophy (inhabitants of Santa Elena) into theoretical themes. Certain of the interviewees are considered experts within the community (for example, interviewee E and F), while others are not. Nevertheless, in the context of this investigation, they are all experts (theorists). They will be referred to by letters, given that I have not been authorised to publish these interviews using their full names. These interviews touch on conceptions of personhood and materiality, and the implications of this for personal and community history, identity and well-being.

Chapter 2.1 is a preliminary discussion of the ethnographic literature on subjects of Being and materials throughout the Maya area (for example, Kray 2005, Lopez Austin 1996, Martínez González 2007 and Hatala 2013). This is followed by a more specific focus, and introduces Santa Elena, historically and geographically (Chapter 2.2). This sets the location for the interviews, which are divided thematically into five sub-chapters, the first of which (Chapter 2.3) centres on Being, both in ethnographic literature about the Maya (for example, Rosales Mendoza 2008, Barrera-Bassols and Toledo 2005 and Rodríguez Balam 2005) and from interviews at Santa Elena. These interviews and previous investigations point towards the potential dangers to personhood, and the fluidity of personhood, that can later inhabit non-animate (non-bodily) materials. Chapter 2.4, therefore, is dedicated to an examination of external animate forces, some of which are personalised (*aluxes* and *X'Tabay*) and others which are not (*aires/vientos malos*). This chapter will attempt to explain and interpret the nature of the forces as they are described by the people of Santa Elena, and the following chapter (2.5) links these theories to the reception, appreciation and use of personalised material culture (specifically the rituals surrounding images of Santa Elena's patron saint, San Mateo). As these chapters show, narratives from Santa Elena frequently identify positive and negative effects on personhood and materials with specific locations and actions that occurred in the past. Chapter 2.6 explores these associations, in order to reach a deeper understanding of Maya personhood and also to identify how this discourse relates to cultural heritage management. Another theme that runs through many of the theories put forward by the interviewees is that of the insurgence of para-Protestant sects within the community. Similarly, this has been the subject of much ethnographic documentation and discussion (for example, Giménez 1988, Serrano, Embriz y Fernández 2002, Joseph 2010, Ruz 2005). This is particularly interesting precisely because adherence to these new religions has, in some cases and to some extent, altered philosophical thought regarding, for example, external animate forces. Not only is this relevant to identity building in Santa Elena, but it provides a more contemporary lens through which to evaluate some of the effects of the Spanish conquest (although the means of religious conversion certainly takes different forms). Chapter 2.7 discusses these new religious sects, in particular the Jehovah's Witnesses, and how religious choice in Santa Elena has an impact on local history and theory, and generates plural personal and community identities.

Through this lens of an ongoing differentiation and plurality, which govern cultural continuity, Chapter 3 re-interprets the possible iconographic and existential rationality of Maya art. In talking about identity, and its philosophical tenets over time, it follows to focus

not only on pre-conquest artistic programmes, but on the reception of visual culture after the major break in style and content that was brought on by the conquest. In considering the importance of movement, accentuated agency and action in the reception of these programmes, Chapter 3 will be divided into two parts, the first of which will be dedicated to wall painting, on the basis that flat images painted onto architecture require particular kinetic and bodily participation. Chapter 3.1 looks at wall paintings from the three rooms at the Late Classic Structure 1, Bonampak, Chiapas. This text includes interpretations by Mayanists such as Miller (1998, 2000, 2013), Brittenham (Miller and Brittenham 2013), Houston (1997) Freidel, Schele and Parker (1993) and Cossio (2014), and weaves these discussions around the philosophies communicated by experts from Santa Elena (particularly by interviewees C and D). These wall paintings are then included in the subsequent discussion (Chapter 3.2), which centres on the wall paintings at the San Antonio de Padua convent at Izamal, Yucatán. The reception of these late 16th century murals will be analysed within their specific religio-historical context, using perspective drawn from the possible reception of the Bonampak murals, and from Chapter 2.

Chapters 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 are dedicated to an appraisal of pre- and post-conquest Maya sculptural programmes. Chapter 3.3 re-interprets the tripartite Cross Group reliefs from the three rooms of the Cross Group complex at Palenque, Chiapas through the existing literature (for example, Stuart 2012, Garza Camino 2007, Martin and Grube 2008) and, again, using combined theories from Chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 3.4 shifts the focus to another tripartite relief scheme, Lintels 24, 25 and 26 from the doorways at Structure 23 at Yaxhilán, Chiapas. Both of these sculptural contexts provide three separate engagements with one image, and so movement between each image. These chapters will, therefore, prioritise the position of the participant in this material environment. Chapter 3.5 shows how, by using the same material rationality and thoughts on the effects of fluid personhood, we might interpret the reception and use of mid-18th century *retablos* from the church of San Francisco de Asís at Yaxcaba.

Chapter 1: The Evaluation of Theories that are Applicable to the Study of Art in the Maya Area.

1.1 Understanding stylistic devices.

It is the intention of this chapter to provide the groundwork for the analysis and interpretation of a body of pre-Colombian and post-conquest artistic material culture in Southern Mexico. It has been within the European art historical tradition to apply philosophical and sociological themes and theories to the development of stylistic devices and modes of representation. As a consequence, the role and function of art are discussed within specific cultures and time periods, throughout European history. The implications of art – its production and reception – are surely obscured by the individuality of perception, and the complex nature of society, even when thinking around a modern context. The use of art as an archaeological artefact necessarily increases this problematic.

The two main perspectives in Classical art theory are materialist (Marxist) and idealist (Hegelian); which are the strongest driving forces behind art production, are they economic or autonomously creative? It is within the framework of this question that elements of form, such as the emotive rendering of action within portraiture (pathos) and the development of techniques such as naturalism and stylisation, have been interpreted, in the hope that, through these techniques, art has the potential to elucidate the character of ancient societies.

The present chapter will discuss this art historical lens, in order to later deconstruct trends in the interpretation of ancient Mesoamerican art. It has, for example, been emphasised by many scholars that Classic Maya art was produced within a complex hierarchical society, and so primarily carries religious and military messages (for example, Marcus 1974, Looper 2003, Newsome 2001, Demarest, 2005, Vargas Pacheco 2010, Vega Villalobos 2012). Recent research has also explored nuances in the iconography, which point towards alternative conceptions of personhood and the materials involved in the negotiation of power roles (for example, Stuart 2012 and Bassie-Sweet, Hopkins and Josserand 2012, Houston et al 2006). In spite of the fact that, "…even within any one religion diverse attitudes toward art are manifested by different strata, carriers and structural forms" (Tanner 2003, 50), the broad connection between material culture and

the self are as integrated into religious practice as they are in the development of stylistic devices. As such, it is unsurprising that these cultural manifestations have been correlated in art historical and archaeological analyses. However, much of the discussion surrounding art production, specifically in the Mesoamerican archaeological record, remains predominantly concerned with function and intention, as well as social implication. While this is clearly a valid emphasis for a civilisation whose public art does largely regard political themes, this thesis will shift the focus and attempt to analyse style and experience using philosophies drawn from contemporary Maya thought.

Archaeological and anthropological studies of the relationship between material culture and Being – corporeality and personhood (for example, Hodder 1991, Butler 1990, DeMarrais et al 2005, Tilley et al 2008) – certainly question the facility of understanding non-European art and provide a theoretical basis for alternative hypotheses. This investigation will argue that the material culture of ancient Mesoamerica, which archaeologists and art historians call art, requires just such a philosophical approach to its construal. It is first necessary to briefly deconstruct some of the broad analytical techniques inherent in European art historical thought, which dominate perspectives on pre-Colombian stylistic development.

Naturalism and Stylisation.

The development of naturalism and the connotations of stylisation are significant aspects of the interpretation of art, specifically within religious art, and are therefore apt for discussion. For example, the development of naturalism in Classical Greece after the archaic and geometric periods has been correlated with the development of democracy, rationality and autonomous creativity – resulting in an increasing complexity and self-consciousness in art production (Morris 1994, 93, Cook 1972, 6-7, Boardman 1996, 22-23, Tanner 2006, 25-26). The ancient Greeks developed an ethos of art appreciation that promoted rational engagement with art. They also wrote a history of art, and these writings, in turn, transformed the social functions of art in the Classical World (Tanner 2006), although this discussion does not necessarily accurately describe the development of Greek art, much of which is now lost to us (Osborne 1998, 11). Stylised medieval religious portraits were similarly abandoned in the Renaissance, in favour of more naturalistic or realistic representation, in congruence with renewed intellectual interest in antiquity, and the rise of humanism. As such, autonomous creativity and the intellectual tradition in art, in both Classical Greece and the Renaissance, are present in the make-up

of European philosophy. However, a contradictory relationship between religion and art has formed at the root of the understanding of these developments. As humanism and artistic rationalisation developed, the agency of art (in the religious context) has been progressively undermined; "…art as a carrier of magical effects is not only devalued but even suspect" (Tanner 2003, 47). A supporter of the Catholic faith, in viewing a piece of religious art, should form an attachment with the content, rather than the image itself, although the nature of expressive art may produce a psychological affinity in the recipient.

In light of the fact that European artistic rationality is linked (historically) to the development of naturalism, it is useful to outline the effects that are thought to be encouraged through naturalism, as opposed to stylisation. Artistic and architectural stylisation and symmetry have been related to social and political organisation; for example, the symmetrical structure of the Egyptian pyramids has been aligned with the political control of the Oriental despots; "symmetrical organisations facilitate the ruling of many from a single point" (Simmel 1950 in Tanner 2003, 56). This may also be reflected in religious iconography; the highly stylised images associated with the medieval Catholic Church are attributed to religious despotism. Images were restricted in style and content in order to appeal to the masses and promote ideological conservatism (Tanner 2003, 47). Post-modernists have disputed these ideas, principally on the basis that aesthetics are culturally specific. Parsons (1968) has usefully shown that social order based on force or fraud, or on individual self-interest, is hardly theoretically tenable, indicating that this perspective of the hermeneutics of art/architecture is incomplete.

As such, naturalism has been marked as a product of the emergence of the autonomous artist and of social and political rationalisation (Weber's theory of linear perspective in Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, 1958). Naturalism can, however, also be attributed to religious function. Tanner (2001) suggests that the life-like aspect of statues in ancient Greece initially fulfilled the necessities of a religion that promoted experiential engagement. It has been persuasively argued that, in ancient Greece, naturalism produced deeper religious engagement with idols (such as the Aphrodite sculpture described by Pausanias) (Tanner 2001, 262). Statues may have been developed naturalistically in order to make religious experience more intense, alongside the use of music and other emotive devices (for example, olfactory sensations): "sensory and material frameworks associated with this (Classical Greek) culture shaped practices of viewing and the sensory apprehension of statues" (Tanner 2001, 261). This hypothesis is supported by depictions in votive reliefs, in which the viewer/worshipper and the deity are shown together (unlike archaic votive reliefs, where they are almost always contextually

separated) (Berger 1970, 104, Mitropoulou 1977, 86). This is the opposite of "a contemplative aesthetic detachment" (Tanner 2001, 263) and so largely stands in contrast to the ways in which academics view and rationalise ancient or culturally distant "art" objects. Interestingly, modern artists have tried to make the viewer aware of the various ways in which we relate to an experience. Take, for example, a famous quote from Mark Rothko: "A painting is not about an experience. It is an experience."

Although a sophisticated art historical tradition has developed alongside the emergence of naturalism, it cannot be directly correlated with an escalation in the intellectualisation or rationalisation of a society. Stylistic devices can reflect religious or social purposes, but the heightened use (and style) of naturalism employed in Classic Maya public art should be warily associated with politics and power.

Linear Perspective and the Emotive Reception of Art and Aesthetic.

Similarly to the use of naturalism in sculpture, the use of linear perspective onto flat surfaces, in which the vanishing point and the viewing point are geometrically synonymous, is a pivotal artistic development in Early Modern Europe. The implications of this device within the power relationship between object and viewer have been disputed (for example, Damisch 1972, 1987, Van Alphen 2005). Many artistic and philosophical discourses treat perspectival rendering as the power to produce a realistic form, for landscape and architecture (for example, Panofsky 1975), or at least a tool to aid the creation of that form (Brunelleschi in Van Alphen 2005). However, the appraisal of linear perspective involves two constructions, that of the display itself and the necessity of the viewer to be stationary, and thus in Damisch's conception "…the viewer depends on perspectival constructions for the illusion of her or his unified subjectivity" (1972, 11). It is in this way that the power relation is inverted and the viewer is subject to the image.

It has, furthermore, been argued that it is this precise construction of space that has become the visual symbol of artistic essence (Van Alphen 2005, 1-6). The example used by Damisch (and further unpacked by Van Alphen) is that of clouds painted by Mantegna on the ceiling of the palace of the Duke of Mantua or in Antonio Allegri de Correggio's Vision of the Holy John Patmos (in Parma). Clouds, within this European context, have three distinct functional levels: symbolic/allegorical, theoretical and visual; "the cloud always functions as a kind of hinge in the relation between earth and heaven, between here and there, between a world that is obedient to its own laws and a divine space that cannot be known by any science" (Damisch 1972, 146). In both of the aforementioned

cases, the view of the clouds from below emphasises the endless and unknown space that stretches above them. Empty space here, paradoxically, is accented by form (Van Alphen 2005, 6). This raises interesting issues about the effect of stylistic devices on a viewer's conceptualisation of space and "objects". The result of this visual construction, according to Van Alphen, has an existential or philosophical impact; "If the /architecture/ came to symbolise the reach of the artist's knowledge, the /cloud/ operated as the lack in the center of that knowledge" (Krauss 1996, 335).

This existential focus in European art also arises in the formation and appreciation of aesthetic. Aesthetic judgment is one of the most common aspects of art appreciation and there are numerous descriptions of the physical impact of art and architecture. Figural beauty, furthermore, is one of the fundamental aspects of the pursuit of naturalism in sculpture. The Greek word *agalma* (that is translated as figural sculpture) means an object for the gods to take delight in. The afore-mentioned Aphrodite, described by Pausanias, was capable of producing sexual arousal in her admirers and it is arguable that beauty in art has functioned as a synecdoche (*toto pro parte*) for genitals and sexual desire (Van Alphen 2005, 14). As beauty is linked with art, and ultimately sexuality, these themes also stretch to conceptions of love. Van Alphen uses the popular narrative of the golden apple, in Classical Mythology, to describe the philosophical grounding of Western Civilisation; "the myth addresses…the issue of the essence of beauty. By choosing Aphrodite as ultimate beauty, the myth makes a statement about the nature of beauty, its relationship to desire and the judgments about both…Beauty should be understood within the tension between form and the unformed as being activated by love and sexual desire" (2005, 16). Here, artistic conventions and the way they are developed incorporate the most inscrutable aspects of social sentiment. It is unsurprising, therefore, that existential and philosophical ideas about art are so diverse, and have the tendency to be abstract.

In his deconstruction of the use of perspective for landscape, Van Alphen asks where the viewer is left after he/she has been seduced into the field both visually and bodily; "But where do we find ourselves at the end of these two different itineraries…? In both cases, at the liminal zone of the picture's surface. There is not much to see there…we end up at the ultimate horizon where earth and sky dissolve into a hazy nothingness. There is not much to see there either. What we have seen, however, at the moment that we arrive at that point, is a vision. A vision of vision" (Van Alphen 2005, 95). The viewer is thus left in contemplation of his/her relationship to the object, then to religion/death (in the case of the clouds) or love and sexuality (in the case of the beauty of

the human form) and, finally, is forced to react intellectually to the construction which has promoted these thoughts, however subconsciously.

There are also certain artistic programmes that raise the possibility of alternative intellectual and emotional responses, an example of which has been analysed by Tilley et al (2008). The premise for his approach to the rock carvings at Simrishamn in Sweden is fundamentally phenomenological. In order to engage directly with each of the images on the rocks, the viewer is forced to be in almost perpetual movement. Thus, the questions "…were not in any direct way related to the meaning of the image at all. They were concerned with what the rock and its carving were doing…: their bodily or kinaesthetic influence…" (Tilley et al 2008, 16). Many of the images were, for example, upside down. The effect of this construction broadens the questions inherent in the artistic dialogue described above. Where Van Alphen suggests that "art thinks" (2005, XVI) and that the intellectuality of art lies as much in the object as it does in the mind of the viewer, perhaps an archaeological or conceptually inclusive perspective can expand the parameters of artistic function further. The dance-like movement through space described by Tilley (2008, 17) poses questions regarding the agency contained within worked matter, and the role of this agency on the corporeality of the participant, and thus his or her existential experience. Here, it could be argued that phenomenology brings the debate closer to the ritual engagement discussed by Tanner in the case of ancient Greek ritual. It could, therefore, be argued that Neolithic Swedish rock art performs functions that are closer to this scenario. We should deduce that artistic programmes can promote introspection through alternative modes of existential sentiment to those outlined with regard to, for example, Mantegna's clouds. The ways in which visual and material culture promote existential thought in Maya societies, pre- and post-conquest, need to be examined. The specific philosophies that influence art reception and participation will be analysed through ethnographic research.

Agency and Intention in Art Production.

It has been advocated, therefore, that the specifically European intellectual or contemplative aspects of art appreciation be set aside, to a certain extent, for the purpose of the current study. It remains to appoint values to the agency that stimulates engagement and an intellectual dialectic between the creative materiality and people (in the pre-Colombian Mesoamerican context). To put reception aside briefly, the agency of the material culture under interpretation would, traditionally, be separated into two forms:

the factors deliberately communicated by the artist and Maya societal ideas transmitted unconsciously by the artist. These choices are the multifaceted result of a dialectic of visual culture and conceptions surrounding the artist. After production, the reception of the viewer/participant (who is outside of the art production system) implies the creation of his or her own illusion from the presented image (Gombrich 1999, 154). This interpretation is made partly as a product of acculturation, the process of facilitating the understanding of common cultural symbols, and partly through unique personal experience or intellectual character. "By what practices is the boundary between the intentional and the contingent marked in the material of the object itself, and what articulations of the social world are thereby implicated in the structuring of artefacts" (Brain in Tanner 2003, 138). Evidently, in any archaeological analysis the first field of artistic intention is, for the most part, occluded. Many anthropologists of art have negated the value attempt completely; "The impossibility of learning much about prehistoric artists' intentions or values, moreover, so severely limits the scope available for studying prehistoric art that it will rarely be referred to in the following chapters" (Layton 1991, 3).

In many ways, the meaning and effect of art in modernity/post-modernity is similarly hidden. Modern European art is frequently concerned with the philosophies inherent in the expression of individual subjectivity in portraiture (examples – of which there are many – include Pablo Picasso and Claude Cahun), making modern art an interesting starting point in discussions of ancient/non-European art (Renfrew 2003). One such example is Lucien Freud, whose paintings demonstrate how archaeologists can more comfortably apply the deconstruction of subjective portraiture for material, culturally investigative, studies. Freud's almost total use of oil painting adds body, and so agency that is reminiscent of corporeality (Being), to his subjects (Van Alphen 2005, 35). The effect of this sort of materiality makes his painting comparable with sculpture, on some levels. His self-portrait with cupped ear in the background (Figure 1) arguably foregrounds sound, an element of sensorial experience that cannot be, or is not, portrayed within the body of the piece. In this way, the painting "…confronts us with the idea that portrayal is necessarily a betrayal of the quality of essence because it dislocates the "essence" of subjectivity to the visual" (Van Alphen 2005, 36). Theoreticians such as Gell and Merleau-Ponty have emphasised, in non-European art, the agency inherent in the technology of art production and the response and dialectic that results from this (for example, Merleau-Ponty 1973, 138). Gell uses the Armet shield as an example, explaining that engagement with the design on this object necessarily generates terror, real emotion, in the viewer (1998, 31). Criticisms have been made of their focus on the eye, however, particularly by Tilley, who advocates, as

mentioned above, a focus on the bodily reaction to certain artistic programs such as those from the Scandinavian Neolithic (2008, 33-34). The effect of viewing this rock art implies looking up, or down, crouching, bending, turning, twisting and so on (Tilley et al 2008, 42-43). The agency of the rock itself is evident, also in the way that the image is shaped to correspond to its natural features, indicating that the viewer and artist are forced to engage with the rocks themselves, outside of the content of the images worked into them. The landscape and context (Tilley 1994, et al 2008, 2010) also have an impact upon the field of experience: "Rock art is a relational nexus of images, material qualities of rocks, and landscapes" (Tilley et al 2008, 20). It is through specific understanding of cultural values, as well as the context of the art in this data set, that agency can be discussed.

Autonomous Creativity.

The Classic Maya are one of the few historical civilisations in which artists signed their work (Miller and Martin 2004, 121), another, most notably, being Classical Greece (Osborne 1998 and 13-21). It should be noted that, in both cases, much of the "art" that was produced in these societies was not signed (Spivey 1997, 5). As has been shown, to extract an encompassing definition of the term "art" or "artist" is problematic even when dealing with civilisations that are not as temporally and culturally distant as that of the Classic Maya (nor, equally, that of ancient Greece). The development of realism and naturalism has been linked to autonomous creativity (rather than functional direction), as well as with a direct attempt to engage viewers in religious or emotional fervour (as in the case of Classical Greece). If it is even the case that these artistic techniques are linked with individual expression in pre-Colombian Mesoamerica, it would still be necessary to understand whether this expression was dictated (by, for example, a governing elite) or whether artists worked with a significant amount of personal choice. Using a culturally specific framework, this thesis will investigate the amount of agency intrinsic to an object alongside the agency that has been created in the process of its conception and construction. "The fit between the form and function, or form and intention, or form and meaning, relies on a practical sense that underlies any intentional adjustment of an artefact or technology and the "objective" demands of a task, by determining the mutual configuration of task and technique" (Brain in Tanner 2003, 138).

Image and Idea.

Within a discussion on the transmission of existential, political and social messages through artistic material culture, it is necessary to question the way we conceive of images in contrast to ideas. This subject is touched upon, to some extent, through the topics of linear perspective and material agency but the intention here is to expand our understanding of the reception of Maya art by unpacking the illusion of materiality and personhood through images.

The platonic tradition distinguishes between the *eidos* and the *eidolon*: the former being a "suprasensible reality" of "forms, types and species", and the latter providing merely a "likeness" or "semblance" of the *eidos* (Peters 1967). The tendency to view an image as the mirror of a natural form in this manner was re-established by the Reformation thinkers of 17th century England, but has been contradicted in modernity and postmodernity: "language and imagery are no longer what they promised to be for critics and philosophers of the Enlightenment – perfect, transparent media through which reality may be represented to the understanding" (Mitchell 1986, 8). They are now considered to be impenetrable enigmas, infused with complicated layered meanings derived from a multiplicity of sources (from producer to spectator, as mentioned above). An example within modernity can be illustrated by the camera obscura: its three layers of subject/object and reality/image are superimposed on each other (Mitchell 1986, 16). This has been further theorised in terms of consciousness itself and its role in existential thought. Reality could hypothetically exist without consciousness (although this has also been contested by rational philosophers such as Descartes (1644-1986) but the world of images/imagination and conceptualisation relies on consciousness and Being. Subjective man/woman is thus attributed the ability to conjure ideas and make them powerful; "how do we transform images, and the imagination that produces them into powers worthy of trust and respect?" (Mitchell 1986, 30). Perhaps the question could be extended; how do images transform our ideas, the building blocks of those values we aspire to trust? Concerning ideas relating to fetishism, Mitchell's formulation shows that, in our European understanding, idols and icons do not possess the power to create religious feeling and worship but, rather, we impose it upon them; "The reason why idols are called images lies in the fact that what was sought in them was deemed to subsist in them, and not in their shape or configuration" (Maimonides 1:22).

We associate animism and fetishism with "a stage of religious development…with a low grade of consciousness and civilization" (Haddon 1910, 91). The alternative cultural

constructions of impactful material culture have been made explicit persuasively by, for example, Layton in The Anthropology of Art (1991 and Corbey et al 2008). He separates the two over-arching components that are thought to constitute art: aesthetics and the communication of ideas through the apt use of images (1991, 4). Within this division there are then various layers of analysis (such as the distinctions made between iconography and iconology by Panofsky 1975). Of the two over-arching components, there have been some actors in the art historical discourse who have claimed that one of these constituents is more structural than the other; Aristotle asserts that "the structure distinctive of poetry…lie(s) in its ordering of ideas rather than forms" (Layton 1991, 5). The relative role of each of these aspects has fluctuated throughout the development of the art historical tradition and although postmodern artistic philosophies decreasingly support the value of aesthetic, the analysis of non-European art is still concerned with an aesthetic informed by European artistic and intellectual development. The postmodern backlash against traditional aesthetic norms is seen, for example, as an intellectual engagement with art history. However, the failure to exercise the stylistic devices inherent in the European definition of "aesthetic value" has been interpreted as primitivism and a sign of less complex intellectual and scientific structures in ancient/non-Western traditions. As European art history correlates its development with the birth of philosophy and the tenets of modern society, a decline in naturalism, perspectival form, and so on, indicates civilisation collapse or similar political and religious instability. Layton uses the example of the Kalabari of southern Nigeria to show that images have the potential to be related to ideas in alternative ways. Sculptures within this context are carved as houses for spirits and there is a pragmatic apathy towards sculpture as a visual object (Layton 1991, 7).

The relationship of the idea to the image as an object.

Layton continues his discussion into the philosophy of idea in relation to image within the context of the image as an object or piece of material culture (1991, 28-34). An example he uses is of Eskimo animal carvings in ivory: Ethnographic research by Carpenter (1960) shows that people from this culture help the animal (image) to manifest itself in the ivory; "it was always there: he (the artist) didn't create it; he released it; he helped it step forth" (Layton 1991, 32). The artistic relationship to objects is found in this process, and so the fact that the animal form carvings are then discarded and left behind as the community resettles is not considered artistically relevant, in this cultural context (Carpenter 1960, 362). Similarly, in the case of literature, European societies frequently do

not consider the object (a book) the source of the artistic beauty; “It may be that one has a copy of Ulysses on one’s table, but one couldn’t conclude from that that the novel…were simply one’s own copy…For if one lost one’s copy of Ulysses, Ulysses itself would not be lost” (Layton 1991, 28). Ulysses could not survive, however, the loss of all copies (Layton 1991, 31). This example may seem irrelevant because it concerns an art form, literature, which will not be treated within the present data set. Conceptually, however, interesting questions are raised, and here Ulysses (where Joyce references Homeric epic) is an apt example. Orally transmitted narratives, such as epics, are strongly fluid. In the case of material culture, the discussion commonly centres around variation in the reception and interpretation of audiences, which are wide-ranging owing to many factors, not the least of which, using an historical or archaeological lens, is the passage of time. In this case the art itself is perpetually transformed, by its very nature. In the context of pre-Colombian Mesoamerica, where free-standing stone stelae, as well as monuments and other pieces of material culture, are often ritually terminated (see Freidel, Schele and Parker 1990, 459 and Stross 1998, 31-40), it might be just as valid to consider material culture to contain, in some cases, values similar to those that academics have attributed, for example, to oral narratives. Here, we could posit that the destruction of a particular piece of creative material culture would not be negative, as, by definition, that material would be involved in the creative process of construction and destruction. It would be these actions themselves that would have reinforced the creative quality of the ideas surrounding art and art production. Conceptions of the containment of ideas to materials and objects should, therefore, be subject to analysis.

The Representation of Time and Space.

It is certainly also useful to consider the ways in which space and time are configured in more modern European art compared with the art of the pre-Hispanic people of Southern Mexico. Discussions concerning the use and conditions of the frame in medieval to modern art suggest that the surrounding void of an image has a significant influence on the image-sign of the body. The image-sign is “…still more evident where several figures are presented; then the intervals between them produce a rhythm of body and void and determine effects of intimacy, encroachment, and isolation, like the interval space in an actual human group” (Shapiro 1994, 12). The visual tension created by the characters in an artistic depiction would then encode social conceptions of interactive engagement and the meaning of space. An example of this is shown through the surreal

mediation of space in the medieval portraits of the holy family and the kingdom of heaven; see Figure 2 painted by Cimabue in 1280 CE. This composition of space, in part, marks the conceptual distance between the viewer and the otherworldly. The space perspective used, initially in antiquity and later developed in the Renaissance, is necessary in part as a result of the tendency to use flat lifeless material, onto which the image is imposed. This departs, for example, from the dimension provided for rock art by natural formations on the base medium (Shapiro 1994, 3). It has been suggested that this choice stems from the way European thought organises the material environment. In terms of spatial arrangement, it has been postulated, to continue to use Shapiro's theory, that Europeans live on a more horizontal than vertical plane (Shapiro 1994, 15). This could, therefore, influence the order in which artists express themselves pictorially.

An exploration of the meaning of this attempt to reproduce space and distance on a flat object is, furthermore, significant of the intellectual nature of artistic engagement, as Van Alphen (2005) asserts; "There are moments or cases in Western art…where the depiction of landscape or architecture becomes the privileged pictorial practice…I will interpret these moments as self-reflexive. The depiction of landscape or architecture is, then, not an end in itself as a representation of space, but it is the means by which the space of representation is explored, challenged and exposed" (Van Alphen 2005, 75). Attention to detail in landscape and architecture is, for the most part, notably absent from the pre-Colombian Mesoamerican relief sculptural and painting tradition, at least within the extant record. The forthcoming analysis will touch on the intellectual and emotional implications of the way space is managed, therefore, in this artistic context.

Deconstructing images on the basis of temporal perspective is also relevant. Representations of specific people captured in a moment (time-slice) are common, and in many cases represent a more extended time-slice of the indicated person. For example, "the Duke of Wellington upon the occasion of his victory at Waterloo" (Goodman 1976, 27). It is most common for portraits to be made in this vein, especially thanks to the development of naturalism. The viewer may imagine that the subject was captured in life, with the individualistic, life-like expressions increasing this perception. There are also various examples, in European art history, of a denser reference to time. David's "The Coronation of Napoleon" is one such example. Through the intense realism of the scene, which shows creases in the carpet and people who were present at the actual ceremony, the idea of immediate action is thoroughly conveyed. References to the past in connection to the present are also, arguably, made, in the figure just behind Napoleon, who has Julius Caesar's face. The future of the empire (that moves away from the past – the Roman

Empire – and the present) is alluded to by Napoleonic symbols. The artist is clearly asking the viewer to encapsulate various temporal ideas in his/her reception of the painting. The painting is not just a time-slice.

A similarly complex temporal situation is created in ancient Greek art. The development of movement in Classical art culminated in the Hellenistic taste for the representation of a moment in time that has been displaced from the climax of the narrative. The effect of this is to enhance pathos and intensity in the viewer; an example might be Laocoon (shown in Figure 3). Here the central figure twists in his struggle to escape the serpents that are on the point of devouring him. The detail of anatomy and representation of movement here elicit anticipation in the viewer, lending the sculpture a sense of ongoing action. The inception of this artistic tradition had a widespread impact on European art history and so necessarily affects our particular conception of and relationship to time. The static moment and the continuous existence are separated with respect to our sense of artistic power and rationality, particularly when we engage with images.

Through the immediacy promoted by realism, each individual is attributed to the time in which they lived and not related (in their pictorial representation) with any other existence in the past or future. Powerful ancestors who are, for propagandistic reasons, incorporated into political portraits, can be reduced to mere symbolism, usually through object association (as, for example, in portraits of Elizabeth I of England).

As briefly touched upon, portraits in the post-Renaissance European tradition are commonly defined by an attempt to communicate the individuality of the subject. The artistic portrait is not just documentation, as is the case, for example, of a photograph for functional purposes (Van Alphen 2005, 21). Modernists, or expressionists, very loosely speaking, transmit the emotion or subjectivity of the artist, as well as that of the subject, a relationship that is questioned in one of the most significant artistic programs in Western art, by Warhol, in his repetitive generic images of famous icons; “The ironic mythification leads to a disappearance of all subjectivity on both sides of the portrait: that of the portrayer and that of the portrayed” (Van Alphen 2005, 28). The individuality of the person portrayed in a portrait and the artist’s perception of that person, or scene, is accentuated by the immediacy of the action. As in the case of Warhol, the subjectivity and essence of both subject and artist are stripped by timelessness and repetition.

These are just some examples of the ways in which temporal concepts are negotiated through portraiture and images in Western art. Throughout Mesoamerican history, on the basis of alternative conceptions of how the body and personal essence

existed through time, there would certainly have been a divergent development of time in portraiture, which will be explored.

Discussion.

It is the intention of this investigation to draw some differences between the meaning of naturalism (among other stylistic devices) as it was employed by the Classic Maya and the significance and effects of stylistic devices in European sculpture. Evidently there are broader social, political and religious themes demonstrated in the development of any artistic style. These are not, however, explicit or deductive through the archaeological record, and so any attempt to reconstruct social structure with this approach could be problematic. It is just as important to attempt to reconstruct, in spite of a natural anachronistic bias of interpretation, the effect that artistic styles may have had on an audience on the basis of cultural perspectives and how the people of post-conquest Southern Mexico may have received certain European themes. I hope to show that Maya sculpture and painting was executed using sophisticated techniques, the interpretation of which falls outside of European artistic rationality. The analysis of Maya art should, however, go as deep as the analysis of works made within the European tradition.

Concerning the question of the role of the artist, it follows to attempt to deduce how the creativity of the artist, and her/his personal input into style and sentiment, might be portrayed and manifested in the consequent emotional discourse between object and spectator/participant. This is an interesting question, as it incorporates a salient discussion regarding the subjectivity of the experience of making art, and receiving it. It can also raise the issue of the extent to which the artists were involved in an artistic programme. This thesis does not preclude the possibility that pre-Colombian Maya artists were involved in centralised religious and political control. It does suggest, however, that a shift in interpretational focus might be interesting. At any rate, the role of the artist may imply a certain amount of sub-conscious communication of shared worldview. That is, the religious/existential/social sentiments inspired by Classic Maya public art may have been influenced, to some extent, by the unconscious dogma of the author of the objects. Furthermore, just as we can imagine the existential dialectic that would have developed between object and spectator, a similar dialectic may have existed throughout the production of that object. This discussion is particularly important in the study of post-conquest artistic programmes, given that Catholic ideas and images were being organised

and executed using the workmanship of artists with a very different (Mesoamerican) worldview.

What valuable interpretations can we make about how ideas and images were understood and used by the Classic Maya? In which way can we link these interpretations to artistic and creative sensibility among the contemporary Maya of Southern Mexico? It is necessary to consider that imagination and consciousness take on different roles in the interpretation of visual messages. Art historical discourse is now global and plural, but has its basis in the discussions initiated in Classical Antiquity. This has created a rich resource for reflection into the multifaceted aspects of creativity in thought and in material culture. This is the sophistication with which art in the Maya area needs to be approached and, within a culturally specific framework, some of the ideas discussed in this chapter can be applicable.

1.2 The Relationship Between Being and Material Culture.

Engagement with creative material culture is necessarily linked to the specific understanding of personhood and materiality. The fundamental experience and treatment of these values has been shown, in anthropological research, to be divergent cross-culturally. This deconstruction can be of value in an understanding of the reception of Classic Maya public art and art in post-conquest Mesoamerica. Identity has been shown to demonstrate elements of dividuality: permeability and partibility (Busby 1997, Fowler 2004, Strathern 1988, Butler 1990) (as opposed to the indivisible individuality of western conception (Corin 1998, 83)). These aspects of personhood are shown to be negotiated through material culture and social interaction. The theories have particularly interesting implications for societies that have been classified as “animistic”[1], such as that of the Maya. This text will outline how these theories have been applied to present-day societies and, in so doing, suggest how, while the concepts cannot be applied fully, their integration into material culture studies can aid an interpretation of the phenomenology of art, as it was – and may continue to be – experienced by the Maya. Personhood and materiality

[1] Using a word that is not appropriate but implied in literature (for example, Evans and Webster 2001, 217, Tiedje 2008, Sillar 2009.

will be discussed through contextual archaeology and phenomenological (existential) experience, (using the Husserl (1931) and Heidegger (1962) discourse).

The Divisibility of Self; Partibility.

The concept of partibility has been used to explain a state of personhood in which the members of a community have shifting identities; it is the sum of multiple parts that can fluidly move among them. Partibility is manifested, for the most part, in marriage and other ceremonial exchange relations, such as after death. In Melanesia, for example, people "are frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationship that compose them. The singular person can be imagined as a social microcosm" (Strathern 1988, 13-14). This theory has been used to show that masculinity and femininity have a role within each "divisible" member of the community, thus indicating that gender is culturally constructed, and is not determined biologically. The theory has been criticised for its fictionally idealised distinction between the individual unitary sex/body in Europe and dual gendered partible body in Melanesia (Butler 1990, 102). More recent theories provide broader and more flexible introspections relating to the field of experience and conceptions of self, in the field of material culture studies (for example, DeMarrais et al 2004). The question of personhood can, therefore, be useful in relation to the role of material culture. Just as parts of people can be exchanged in ceremonial activity, so can material objects, which can be part of one or more people (this has been discussed in the social relations of the 'Are'are of the Solomon Islands) (Fowler 2004, 28). Interestingly, this implies that objects are created out of persons as opposed to being in contradistinction to persons (Tilley 1999, 103). Objects are thus attributed the role of subjects; the tendency to view them as inert and dead should, therefore, in some cases be avoided. Production can be defined as a discourse in which persons and objects create each other and proceed to negotiate their existence dialectically (Tilley 1999, 103). The agency of the object is accounted for (as in post-processual archaeology) and is attributed an escalated level of social power; "Material objects form a powerful metaphorical medium through which people may reflect on their world in a way simply not possible with words alone" (Tilley 1999, 103).

Indigenous Meso and South American religions or worldviews have been classified, certainly Eurocentrically, as animistic; for example, Tiedje 2008, Sillar 2009). The discussion regarding partible persons that extend to objects is, deductively, relevant in the discussion of Mesoamerican art appreciation. The material culture produced by the Classic

Maya was projected and received within a society that, naturally, maintained a culturally distinct understanding of the conceptual building blocks of that which art historians have traditionally considered “art”. Arguably, interactive engagement may have had more weight if the object itself were imbued with a form or level of personhood. How this personhood was produced, manifested and negotiated will be the subject of this investigation. The implications with respect to the role of the artist in pre-Colombian society are one interesting perspective in the attempt to understand public art as it may have been received and experienced.

The Divisibility of Self; Permeability.

Another aspect of dividuality that can relevantly be discussed with respect to the Maya worldview is permeability. This has been investigated among Hindus in India and concerns a person’s partibility in terms of substance codes: Personal identity is transacted and manipulated through these codes (Fowler 2004, 32). “By Indian modes of thought, what goes on between actors are the same connected processes of mixing and separation that go on within actors” (Marriot 1976, 109). Personhood is thus conceived from a more natural perspective, as the human body and its surroundings are ultimately linked, with regard to substance and energy. Although this may not seem to have direct relevance to the appreciation of public art by pre-conquest to post-conquest Mesoamerican civilisations, it demonstrates an outlook on community that may correspond to some aspects of Mesoamerican social thought. The Hindu belief that substances of the body are reintegrated into the earth is reminiscent of the Mesoamerican worldview of cyclicality and reciprocal interchange between nature, gods and people. It has been suggested that permeable people in the past have sacrificed animals and offered artefacts related to this sacrifice as an exchange with the supernatural or natural world (Fowler 2004, 138). The Maya performed auto-sacrifices, such as that depicted in the Yaxchilán Lintel 24, demonstrating similar ideas of substance negotiation. If materials are linked on a fundamental level, this may indicate that subject-object boundaries were, to some extent, flexible. Furthermore, it may be conjectured that, if the substances of distinct members of the community were divisible/dividual, those substances within an individual might metaphorically represent a community. Fowler supports this principle using Foucault’s Technologies of the Self (1988), in which it is suggested that social institutions shape our bodies and that it is impossible to separate our bodies from social technologies;

"…tattooing might be directly analogous to marking the land through rock art production" (Fowler 2004, 39).

These themes, involving transubstantiation, are also evident in the negotiation of various workable materials. There are examples to demonstrate that the dichotomies that many archaeologists draw between, for example, basketry and pottery may not have been attributed to materials in temporally and culturally distant civilisations; "Things appear not as themselves but through fields of resemblances, which exist beyond the divisions archaeologists make of materials, so that the characterisation into pottery, stone, metal or basketry may not have been held by people in the past whose sensory awareness ranged across the whole of the material world in which they lived" (DeMarrais et al 2004, 38). This supports the premise that our structured differentiation of object types, as well as subject/object roles, may be Eurocentric. It also emphasises the importance of developing reception theories, on the basis that alternative world views not only affect the production but also the experience of material culture.

Discussion.

The concepts of both partible and permeable person are a theoretical tool in the understanding of human and material culture relations. Our concept of individuality can be used alongside these ideas to negotiate a possible understanding of identity in any society: personhood styles are not static and these concepts will have diverged and converged in different ways throughout history (LiPuma 1998, 57). This subject will be applied to pre-Colombian art through an analysis of stylistic devices, pre- and post-conquest, and of the creative spheres within modern Mexican communities (Santa Elena, Yucatán).

Anthropological research on the canoe of the Wala in northeast Malekula, Vanuatu, shows how artistic material culture can acquire personhood, and reflect various and layered aspects of society in its construction and lifespan. A brief summary of its social implications may be useful to highlight how the same theory of personhood may be useful, as well as in some senses ineffective, in a study of Classic Maya art. The basic symbolism of the wooden canoe is deductive: it is a material metaphor for the forest that surrounds the people of Vanuatu, and is transformed into motion (Tilley 1999, 109). The prow of the canoe is carved into the shape of a bird and is protected by roots. This represents not only land and sea (as the form is taken from a native sea bird) but also the common Melanesian thought of rootedness and journey (Tilley 1999, 112). There are rites and

magic performed in the creation of the canoe and as this process unfolds the canoe transforms from an object into a subject. (These rites involve sacrificing and the exclusion of women, reflecting an actual rite of passage) (Tilley 1999, 114). The canoe thus acquires subjective identity (just like the gendering of boys in pubescent rites of passage in the same and similar societies). The canoe is given a proper name, gendered and receives mortuary rites in the event of wreckage. An old vessel is thought to have died a natural death if left to rot in its shelter (Tilley 1999, 124). It is clear, from the style of treatment conferred upon the canoe, that it is a powerful social object (or, moreover, subject). The canoe has social agency and is not objectified. A strong social image is produced through the creation of the artistically fashioned matter, and is a theatrical representation and mirror of religion, culture and society. The personification of the canoe imbues the mirror/representation with a life force that may initiate a discourse between material culture and social behaviour.

Pre-Colombian Mesoamerican public art may not be as symbolically deducible as the wooden Wala canoe, and it would be impossible for an archaeologist to make concrete assumptions of the symbolism in an ancient context. It is not unlikely, however, that material objects of social value may have produced similarly powerful living entities. To follow Foucault, in this sense, it is not just bodies that can be part of social technologies; worked matter can perform a similar function, and become an active rather than passive mirror of society.

Phenomenological and Archaeological Studies.

Another example of art and material object that may be relevant in a discussion concerning their interaction with people might be that of the rock carvings at Hogsbyn, Scandinavia. It has been argued (Tilley 1999, 153) that the pictures only make sense to their viewers if they are read south to north. The positioning of the depictions creates an abstract representation when viewed overall and, as the viewer progresses north, the next carved rock becomes apparent, only to display substantially more detail when approached closely (Tilley 1999, 153); thus "…the encounter with each carved rock, by which one must pause to look, becomes a process of revelation" (Tilley 1999, 153). This induced processional movement arguably indicates that the place was the focus of ritual events, a consecrated space "…whose meanings would be manipulated as part of a choreography of movement" (Tilley 1999, 154). The positioning and spatial arrangement of the rock carvings creates a specific narrative. The position of the art, by the water, may have

incremented the effect of the artistic experience. If, indeed, this art was used for initiation rites, or some similar ritual, it may follow that the rocks are fundamentally markers of social timelessness, and were perceived as such by the participants of the rituals enacted by the society that created them (Tilley 1999, 154). The rituals may have had material and social effects on the people who interacted with them. The probable theatricality of the interaction with this material culture may indicate that the people involved in the rites did not regard the rocks as lifeless inanimate features of the landscape. The landscape was actively engaged with, supporting the possibility that these objects were experienced within a style of personhood that does not exist in the same way in the modern Western world.

This example is relevant to the deconstruction of archaeological conceptions of public art on the basis of the use of narrative structure, and intuitive artistic and religious experience. The religious experience that may have been governed by the reading of the Hogsbyn carvings can also be observed, arguably, in the case of the Maya. Writing on public artworks such as stelae, which are common in Mesoamerican artistic material culture, may have created a sacred temporal space that complemented the power of the carvings. Narrative structure was also employed in the positioning of a number of stelae in a group, an original format that forms an interesting perspective of Mesoamerican conceptions of time, past, present and future. Tilley's phenomenological approach to the carvings in Scandinavia has merit in terms of his appreciation of surrounding landscape; just as the surrounding lake may accentuate the influence of the Hogsbyn carvings, Mesoamerican art is very prominently linked to the natural environment. This context is also very prominent in contemporary Mesoamerican discourse, both in the case of pre-Colombian public art and in the case of the reception of post-conquest Catholic art.

Briefly discussed has been Tilley's more recent research at Simrishamn in Sweden (2008). His "phenomenologically informed kinaesthetic approach" (2008 16) raises a number of issues pertinent to the deconstruction of anthropological, archaeological and artistic terms. Just as the Vanuatu canoe is attributed subjectivity and holds a role within the community, it is Tilley's suggestion that the images carved onto the rock face at Simrishamn have a forceful relationship with the personhood of the viewers; "the images themselves were orchestrating a spatial dance, bodies were moving in relation to them…" (Tilley 2008 17). Here the author advocates the possibility that art is not, in this context, an object for contemplative detachment, nor is its effect felt solely in the visual field. Instead, as the viewer bends, twists, turns, crouches and climbs, the body is forced to respond to the carvings, not just the eye and mind. As the body responds to the images, further, contextually specific, factors accumulate in the experience. Environmental factors include

the shape and texture of the ground beneath the person's feet, and the temperature and climate. Associated, and culturally influenced, aspects such as the shoes and clothes worn by the participant also become relevant (Ingold 2000). To investigate these details in the case, for example, of the reception of Maya art, might be over-ambitious. However, the impact of these particulars should not be underestimated in an attempt to understand some of the experience of Being (in relation to art, or otherwise). The phenomenological implications of bodily experience in anthropology (expounded, for example, by Ingold 2000 and Tilley 2004) deserve close attention. For the purposes of the present discussion, it is interesting to view the relationship between the rock carvings and the body of the viewer, or participant, in terms of permeability; "Where are we to put the limit between the body and the world, since the world is flesh" (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 138). The rock carvings at Simrishamn provide the careful participant of the images with an awareness of their corporeality and how that aspect of personhood relates to the world around it.

The images carved into the rocks at Simrishamn conform to, or are influenced by, the natural formations of the material itself. The implications of this in terms of the artwork's agency have already been discussed. It is interesting to approach this aspect of art production in relation to nature and culture. It has been widely commented that the dichotomisation of these two concepts is the result of an academic (intellectual) bias created by the European Cartesian tradition (see Nettle 2009). However, the construction of artistic or functional objects out of natural materials could be seen as a domination of culture over the natural. Architectural objects are perhaps the best example of this, as they require a larger effort to overcome the hindrances presented by natural phenomena (for example, bodies of water, forest, land and so on). The spirit of this dichotomisation in Europe predates Cartesian dualities; Greek historical/literary narrative frequently emphasises man's struggle against nature (for example, Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis). It is very plausible that the community who produced the images at Simrishamn, not being participants in this cultural history, had an alternative relationship to the rocks upon which they carved. Here Tilley argues that the use of the rock surface as a guide for the images is worthy of attention, and that it is relevant to an analysis of the meaning and effect of the site (2008, 20). Furthermore, he advocates that, although a philosophical consideration of phenomenology cannot give specific answers about particular cultures, social relationships and so on, the body and its centrality to the perception of human experience is a useful point of departure. A closer attention to landscape, and material culture that is (at least partially) built in response to it, enters into this enquiry. Following theories of permeability, fluid conceptions of the material

environment call for a reformation of thoughts on the cultural manipulation of nature; worked and unworked matter can be attributed accentuated agency. In response to further questioning of anthropological constructions (Ingold 2000, Dillon 1998), Tilley argues against the classification of "primitive" worldviews such as animism, totemism, anthropomorphism and so on, since the values that constitute these worldviews are inherent, although unacknowledged, within modernity; "that is the essence of the reversibility relation; not that the tree I see sees me, but that I am visible from the standpoint of the tree as it is from mine because we are both made of the same stuff: the flesh of the world" (Dillon 1998, 170).

The relevance of the theories put forth here to Mesoamerican personhood is undeniable; the choice of location, style and composition of pre-conquest Maya architecture, to take an example, as well as the iconography, show an alternative relationship to the natural environment. Stone (1995) has shown that areas of religious power in the Maya area involved a physical process; "revelatory ekstasis in pilgrimage locations such as caves, where one rather obscure text records the couplet *il-b'i(h), il-way*, "see the road, see an aspect of the soul"" (Houston 2006, 141). This recalls the link between movement and creative response to the environment discussed by Tilley with regard to Simrishamn and is also perhaps evidence of the dividuality of personhood, in that the "soul" has aspects. Here, part of the soul can be accessed by engagement between body and the position of materials in space, that is, movement through that space and the engagement with an ever-changing material environment can affect and develop your personhood.

An object, or piece of art work, is set apart within our conception of art appreciation, by its display. Public, or socially invested, art is objectified by the people that produce it and interact with it, on the basis that display naturally sets an object outside of normal interpersonal interaction by its presence as an outstanding feature; "…display has the effect of abstracting objects from the overall flow of life, so that they can then be singled out for attention, due to their visual and other aesthetic qualities, or their connections to particular peoples and events" (DeMarrais et al 2004, 36). This process of separation, in itself, forms what we conceive of as the object (DeMarrais et al 2004, 36). Personhood attributed to (what "Western" anthropologists would term inanimate) materials may involve a different natural dialectical process. The nature and process of display thus raises interesting perspectives concerning the role and status of this type of personhood, and the role of those in its most frequent contact. It is, therefore, relevant to discuss public art on the basis of concealment, as well as display (DeMarrais et al 2004, 41).

Existentialism through conceptions of personhood.

Relevant to the discussion of personhood is the existential debate concerning modes of Being and understanding. Heidegger's concept of intentionality (which refers to the empirical ego relationship to the object of the empirical world) suggests that it is "psychologically impossible to distinguish between subject and object (the world)" (Barbosa da Silva 1982, 54). Thus, understanding is a mode of Being, and Being cannot exist without the constant objectification of the material world. This is in contrast to Husserl's life-world, where understanding is a mode of existing. In this philosophy, the self is formed through experience; the conscious mind creates self through existence and relevance of the material world. Both of these theories presuppose that humankind is incapable of relating to, or understanding, an object if it is not of instrumental value to him/her. The object is a Being, only in that it reflects the nature of the human agent and, in doing so, it gains and induces understanding (Barbosa da Silva 1982, 60). According to Heidegger, people create a self by objectifying the other. Husserl takes this relationship further, to suppose that the material world, its "objects", is intrinsically part of the experience of self. The self is contingent on materiality not solely because it objectifies the other, but because materiality creates bodily and intellectual experience. This philosophy suggests that it is experience that constitutes Being. Humans, therefore, constantly remodel themselves through their interaction with objects (Hoistad 1973, 452). According to Heidegger, humans lose themselves in this process; "For men to exist as a *thing*, among other *things*, is for him to lose contact with Being" (in its authentic sense) (Barbosa da Silva 1982, 62). Although humans lose their authenticity of Being through this experience, "practical and theoretical understanding is because they presuppose a pre-understanding which is nothing else than man's fundamental way of existing, an existence which is related to existences of all Beings through man's privileged relation to Being-itself" (Barbosa da Silva 1982, 63). A person's existence, and his/her experience of personhood, relies on a relationship to the things that surround him/her. These philosophies attribute privilege and agency to people because they are not the essence of Being-itself. They have lost this essence in their objectification of the surrounding world. We can deduce that the object world, by contrast, has no agency, and does not exist, because objects do not use their conscious to objectify other objects (or people-subjects). Within this framework, objects have no subjectivity.

The implications of this theoretical standpoint for the understanding of art and religious experience in Mesoamerican society lie in an appreciation of European

perceptions of Being. As shown above, within traditional European philosophical conception, objects and people together constitute the state of Being. As a result, there is no essence of being outside the material and conscious world in combination. The body and mind of a person and the material world surrounding it are linked. While the conscious mind experiences, and so exists, by objectifying the material world, the material world lacks agency. As such, outside of the human conscious, there is no experience. Without experience, there is only Being-itself, no Being-in-itself, which is the basis for constructing personhood. If, indeed, Heidegger's philosophy can be applied to the Maya, the relationship between people and objects is based on the premise that the material world is indisputably understood, but is merely a reflection of personal and community personhood. It does experience and therefore does not exist; it has no personhood of its own. Arguably, these European philosophies have merit in terms of interpreting how, in any cultural context, social messages can be subconsciously understood and how materiality subconsciously defines the development and experience of personhood. These theories undoubtedly lend weight to the role of material culture and the natural environment in the experience of Being. This text will suggest, however, that Maya philosophy may allow for distinct forms of Being and Self. As we have seen in the anthropological discussions above, personhood can be extended to pass through materials (in the sense of permeability) or be divided between entities (partibility). These aspects of Being are outside of the relationship of the human conscious to materials in the way that is described by Heidegger and Husserl. People may be more than just affected, reflected or defined through objects; they may be countered by agents – forces of personhood.

Gender and Personhood.

The subject of partible personhood, as mentioned, has been factored into the gender debate in anthropological and archaeological discourse (see Butler 1990 and Joyce 2001). In line with the deconstruction of gendered dichotomies that have been associated with the Enlightenment (similarly, and involving, the nature/culture dualism), partibility has been presented as a means by which sexuality has been problematised (Strathern 1988). While some post-processual gender theories in archaeology propose that the body is like a "…mannequin, to be dressed and inscribed, invested with social meaning" (Gilchrist 1999, 72), there have been some interesting criticisms of this negation of the role of the body; "Archaeology has been reduced by Foucauldian notions of control, where power relations are mapped on the body as a surface which can be analyzed as a

forum for display" (Meskell 1998, 141). Here, she advocates the investigation of how experiences are formed through the body as a medium. The body should be seen as a context for the reception of culture (and the natural environment), not as a non-agent that acts as a recipient for social forces/categories (Meskell 1998). Meskell's subject is that of the *nagual*, a commonly discussed theme in the anthropology of Mesoamerica. The complex implications for perspectives of the body in the context of bodily transformations will also be discussed in the interviews at Santa Elena.

Through this lens, or perhaps in spite of it, it remains to associate the experience of corporeality (sexuality in this case) with portraiture in material culture; how is personhood negotiated between the two? A series of photographs by Cindy Sherman recreates film scenes that are not, in fact, taken from actual films. The copy that does not, in fact, have an original reflects the intellectual content of the photograph; that is, "the images suggest that there is a particular kind of femininity in the woman, whereas in fact the femininity is in the image itself, it is the image" (Williamson 1983, 102). It appears that Sherman intends to criticise the way that femininity is constructed and stereotyped in modernity (Van Alphen 2005, 28). Furthermore, the photographs deal with issues relating to how these stereotypes are perpetuated, insidiously, by the media. This process stunts the development of un-dominated, sexual identity. To continue the line of the thesis, it is very plausible to argue that the structures inherent in "Western" culture regarding concepts such as materiality and personhood are not applicable to pre-conquest Mesoamerica. Neither, perhaps, is the structure relating to the perpetuation of stereotypes through public image applicable. There is material to support the premise that there existed/exists fluidity within and between materiality and the experience of Being. This relationship necessarily has an impact upon the values inherent in the portrait of a person, whether real or in image. European portraiture searches to represent originality, through naturalism, expressionism or, in the case of Sherman, by deconstructing the stereotypes which the public has, historically, been bombarded with. Within the Mesoamerican context, it would be interesting to explore the possible values, within portraiture and art, that exist in the image and in the experience of the viewer/participant. The issue of gender roles in an archaeological context undeniably merits more thorough investigation. Here, the discussion serves to make a link between the possible partibility of identity between public art (figural representation) and the viewers and participants in figural art programmes. What was the impact of an image on the personhood of the viewer, if the material image was attributed agency or life-force?

Emotion and Intellectuality.

Throughout the discussion there has been an implication that the intellectual appraisal of art, its calm and objective contemplation, is fundamentally Eurocentric. Modern conceptual artists (notably, for example, Brian Eno, whose minimalist musical and visual works hope to generate emotion and surrender) subvert this value. It is arguable that they do so because it is such an engrained aspect of the increasingly cerebral art historical process. Conversely, it could be argued that the nature of aesthetic response is emotional, and that it is the art itself that is created within an intellectual process and thus "thinks" (Van Alphen 2005, XIV). It seems necessary to clarify that the distinction between emotion and intellectuality (rationality) is at risk of being as empty or shallow a dichotomy as that between nature or culture, or male and female. Recent theoreticians such as DeMarrais et al argue for its destruction; "Intelligent, rational thought is not always controlled and linear and emotions are not always beyond our control. The boundaries between emotions and rational thought may well be blurred. A state of intellectual inspiration is both emotional and cognitive: as ideas take a new form there is considerable excitement about seeing the world in a new way" (2005, 35). The current discussion (partible and permeable personhood) implicitly suggests an associated division, between cultured self and the body. The flexibility of these concepts can be expanded, necessarily linking the body and the experience of Being to community and to the material world; "Emotions are (often experienced individually but are always created through relations. The multiplicity of our links to others and within ourselves are hard to put into words, but are often knowable through the body and its performances. The body, of course, does not exist in a vacuum, but through links to the material world" (DeMarrais et al 2004, 36).

Discussion.

It is the intention of this thesis to support and dispute aspects of the theories that have been raised in this chapter using various examples from the extant repertoire of art in the Maya area, using some examples from the Classic period, and its development after the huge stylistic and thematic overhaul brought on by the conquest. This chapter describes the relationship between persons and their material environment and the effect of this relationship on their state of Being as it has been put forward by some European philosophers (such as Heidegger and Husserl). Arguably, personhood was and is experienced distinctly among the Maya. Ideas formulated by anthropologists (for example,

Fowler 2004 and Strathern 1988) regarding partibility and permeability (divisibility) may be partially useful in broadening theories of personhood so that we can create less Eurocentric theories when looking to non-Western societies. The deconstruction of "Western" existential values and investigation into conceptual possibilities is invariably useful, as the dichotomy between subject and object that has existed as part of a long European theoretical history may be invalid, or at least questionable, in the Mesoamerican context. For example, there may be alternative ways of experiencing the agency of the material world. Traditional European theories allow for the involvement of the "inanimate" or "object" world in the creation of self and the experience of Being. Being itself is inseparable and even contingent on the material world lived in by an individual. Being is also mediated and constructed through the engagement of the conscious with other people. Various types of evidence – ethnographic, historical and archaeological – can be used to demonstrate the divergent existential attitudes of Mesoamerican communities, although the term "animism" employed in the interpretation of this worldview is anachronistic and misleading. On the basis of fluidity of personhood, which can be transferred from one entity to another, or can inhabit multiple entities, there is no strict division between the self (subject) and the external material world (object/other). The influence of a person's surroundings should not, therefore, be restricted to purely a reflection. External entities (persons and "inanimate" bodies) might be seen to have a living agency. We might imagine that, in this living world, the possible effects on personhood could be volatile and unexpected. If this were the case, it would make for a less determined existence.

European philosophical thought has focused heavily on Being, and the experience and implications of that state. These theories imply that objects have a direct and significant influence on this state of Being. Creative material culture (art) can be said to be particularly forceful, in part because of the existential weight of the messages carried through it (as seen in Chapter 1.1). Furthermore, creative material culture has been worked for multiple (not just functional) purposes, by persons. Therefore, this particular type of worked matter can be particularly useful in thinking about the construction and reception of personhood. The construction of the self that happens as a result of the interaction between a person and creative material culture is of particular interest if the "object" in question is conceptually attributed a life force. Chapter 2 will explore the nuances of conceptions of personhood and its relationship to materials in the contemporary community of Santa Elena, Yucatán. Evidence drawn from interviews with member of this community, within the context of ethnographic literature conducted in the

Maya area, suggests that the experience of Being is more fluid than traditional “Western” conceptions. The analysis of these interviews will take advantage of the discussions examined in this chapter.

1.3 Being in the Natural and Worked Environment and the Construction of Identity.

Having already outlined theories of personhood and the possibility of accentuated agency attributable to “objects”, especially those that have been worked on by people (creatively), it is the intention here to discuss this in the context of historical development. There are many archaeological theorists who tackle this issue (for example, Sillar 2009). Sartre’s attempt to tie the existential philosophies outlined in Being and Nothingness to the economic, social and political developments of the 20th century, in his Critique of Dialectical Reason, will be used in this endeavour. Although the work is very expansive, and uses concrete historical examples, for which it has been widely critiqued (for example, McBride 1991), it is a useful material to base discussion upon. This work is principally concerned with ubiquitous material objects produced by humans, as opposed to specifically emotive art works. However, the dialectical process that is described and critiqued by Sartre in this volume can be compared to the context of Mesoamerican pre- and post-conquest society, with respect both to artistic production and historical development. Furthermore, contemporary artists have engaged with concepts of materiality and its role within the construction of identity and community. This chapter will sketch an outline for the possible significance of art as a material mediator throughout history, as the result of dialectical processes, in the Mesoamerican context.

Sartre’s Existential Marxism.

Sartre’s existentialism can be aligned, to a certain extent, with that of Heidegger in his approach to the formation of the self in response to functional objects. Sartre asserts that existence does, indeed, precede essence (1943, 29), and that there is no core human nature, as biological determinists might suggest. In this way, people form themselves in and through their actions and in the interaction between mind and matter. He distinguishes two types of Being, one that incorporates the state of humanity and another that does not: Being-in-itself and Being-for-itself (Sartre 2004, 114). Whereas a Being-in-itself cannot be

other than it is, and is fundamentally defined by that essence, a Being-for-itself is alterable and thus capable of inducing an unending array of possibilities. Humans evidently fall into the latter category, and are thus weighed down by an intrinsic freedom; in fact, there is no difference between the Being of man and being free (Kaufmann 1956, 25). This concept is expanded to include collectives of people, action influenced by Being-for-others, in which human behaviour is dictated on the basis of possible judgement by, or for the benefit of, other people. People are, in Sartre's philosophy, completely responsible for their own life, actions, death, birth and the world (Flynn 1984, 5). Sartre advocates subjectivity on this basis, hoping to free the "whole Us from its object state" by transforming it into a We-subject (Kaufman 1956, 422). This is the oppressive freedom that haunts the characters of Sartre's plays.

Consciousness, as discussed by Sartre, therefore, is devoid of Cartesian substance (Flynn 1984, 4) and forms intentionality purely on the basis of interaction with the objects (material world) surrounding it. A dualism is therefore created between the conscious and the non-conscious, the subject and the object, spontaneity and inertia, Being and nothingness, and it is in this process that the Other is created. The imagination and images created by humans are seen not as the product of mental substance but as the intended reflection of a mind that intends a specific situation: it intends the other to be "nothingness". In order to be able to imagine, the consciousness must be able to "posit the world in its synthetic totality" (Sartre 2003, 239-40). This philosophy is relevant because it is elaborated upon and then applied to a humanitarian endeavour to understand history (in the Critique). So far, it shows that although Sartre dichotomises subject and object, objects inescapably influence the actions and Being of the subject (a person). The people who produce their material environment, and live in its milieu, manipulate it into action through their consciousness and imagination.

Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason.

This leads to a discussion of the Critique of Dialectical Reason, where fuller attention is paid to the social implications of such a philosophy. Sartre emphasises the role of scarcity in human interaction, both interpersonally and with the worked environment. He claims that the natural resources needed by humans to survive are scarce and that this creates a competitive environment for humanity. This, notably, is in contrast to Marx's theory, which is that it is modes of production that cause social alienation. Sartre does not dispute the existence of the type of alienation described by Marx, but states that humans

can be free of it. The alienation he proposes, rather darkly, is suggested to be a basic human condition (McBride 1991, 130). The classic example of alienation through scarcity (and mediated by worked matter, as I shall discuss further below) is that of the Parisian bus stop (Sartre 2004, 256-268). Although a collective of people are combined by a common goal (not only that of boarding the bus but also, perhaps, the desire for an improvement in the transport system or lower bus fares), they are forced – by material conditions and social regulations – to wait in a queue even though this action may not ensure their seat. The scarcity of seats creates isolation and then alienation through competition. Sartre names this psychological alienation "seriality": the bus stop occupants form a series, which is only a group in a particular sense.

It is within this context that Sartre integrates his existential philosophies and delineates his theory of praxis and the practico-inert field. Praxis is the action of individuals on their environment. The individual is an organism, as praxis is an agent. Praxis actively creates what Sartre terms the practico-inert field (McBride 1991, 128). It is this field that creates fundamental sociality; "it is at the practico-inert level that sociality is produced in man by things as a bond of materiality which transcends and alters simple human relations" (Sartre 2004, 304). A mediating factor in the creation of social reality is therefore the inert, the worked matter. The practico-inert field is comprised of an unceasing dialectic between conscious and unconscious, and the results (counter-finalities) are potentially unforeseeable and negative. An example of this, given by Sartre, is the deforestation of China (Sartre 2004, 161-164). Individual interests were served over a long period of time by clearing the trees for agricultural land use. The long-term environmental damage caused by the deforestation, however, renders these efforts counter-productive. In this way, the individual praxis is lost and gives way to "the maleficent actions of worked matter" (Sartre 2004, 310). The acts that take place have no ascribed author, as the inert matter that is worked on does not have the freedom to be other than it is, despite its power over the individuals that work with it.

The practico-inert field can be linked thematically with Marx's criticism of capitalist economies (and commodity fetishism), where the free market dictates our socio-economic environment; the producer becomes a product of their product; "Scarcity thrusts material mediation to the fore where it becomes decisive and distortive" (Flynn 1984, 100). Sartre thus explains how history is dictated by this compulsorily reciprocal agency; "we only illuminate more clearly the synthetic bond of reciprocity…which is a singularised universal and the very basis of all human relations" (McBride 1991, 121). Despite the fundamental distinctions between people and their synthetic creations, they are forced to objectify

themselves in matter to ward off scarcity. The practico-inert domain can thus be categorised as a liberating and an alienating phenomenon (McBride 1991, 136). The dialectic constitutes a negation of the negation; there is a continuous movement of interiorised exteriority and exteriorised interiority. The active worked matter produces an anti-dialectic in response to this, in which the exteriority that the agents re-interiorise is constantly transforming (Sartre 2004, 70-88).

It is, therefore, interesting to view humans on the basis of their own materiality and their struggle to transcend the inhumanity of their matter; "the inorganic physis in its pure form for Sartre – is worked on by the praxis of human organisms, that is what makes history. However, organisms are also material. It is above all through this new emphasis of his on a very traditional notion that Sartre finally makes peace with materialism" (McBride 1991, 120). To what extent are individuals able to emancipate themselves from their surrounding material culture, in order to actively influence the course of history? How powerful is the agency of materiality (as a reflection of ourselves)? How far can it be judged that individuals are a product of their own product? Although Sartre's philosophies are in no way religious, it might be interesting to compare his philosophies with Mesoamerican religious thought and post-processual archaeological theory. In his treatment of the development of history, Sartre humanises the world, not only time and space, but the "impersonal laws of economics" (Flynn 1984, 102). It will be shown, in Chapters 2 and 3, how these processes can be compared to the Mesoamerican worldview.

Limitations of Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason.

Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason has been criticised by many social theorists on various counts. The most outstanding of these is that it is not useful in its application to concrete historical situations. Sartre's discourse involving the totalisation of society without a totaliser (through the agency of dialectical development) (Sartre 2004, 53) presents the political situation in the Soviet Union, at the time of the emergence of a complex state bureaucracy, as an example. This example seems to fall short in terms of its applicability, however: Stalin himself has been seen to embody a human totaliser (Elliot 1987, 202). We can, therefore, question to what extent Sartre's Critique has credibility when used as a tool in the understanding of specific social and political circumstances in history. However, the philosophies outlined in the work should not be discredited, as they form the basis for an understanding of existentialism and historical materialism. The complex interplay of

parallel narratives that have the potential to lead to a multiplicity of inconceivable results implied by the Critique is clearly reminiscent of much post-modern thought and may be particularly relevant in the sketch and construction of archaeological theory for that reason.

A relevant limitation of the Critique, as a theoretical tool in the context presented in this thesis, might be that Sartre's explanation of philosophy and social theory is very specific to its historical situation. Sartre was ultimately seeking to explain the injustices witnessed across Europe during and after the World Wars, and so the creation of his theory would, naturally, have been biased to this effect. The actors within his framework are subsequently seen as acting within this mindset and cultural conception; "what takes place in the sociohistorical world, in other words, takes place dialectically; equally dialectical, at least if they are to have any real value, must be both the actors' contemporaneous and the historians' retrospective comprehensions of what is taking and has taken place, and the philosophical comprehension of his entire scene that is attempted in works such as Sartre's own" (McBride 1991, 115).

The Applicability of the Critique to the Mesoamerican Context.

It follows, therefore, to attempt a discussion of how Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason, and Sartre's earlier more philosophical works, may be applicable to the case of pre-conquest Maya public art and to the role of material culture in Southern Mexico throughout the whole-scale transformations imposed during and after the Spanish conquest. The separate aesthetic convention and context, which must be accounted for in the appreciation of "non-Western" art (Renfrew 2003, 9), presents another dimension to the enquiry. The sketch that has been presented, in an attempt to deconstruct some of the more relevant European art-historical biases, will be employed to this end. Discussed in the previous sub-chapter are the theories pertaining to the possibility of versatile corporeal conventions in non-European societies. Sartre's living agency and cyclical reciprocity between people and their material environment align, to a degree, with less rigid definitions of personhood; he revives the "language of animism" (Levi-Strauss 1977).

Concretely, to address a political or historical issue in Mesoamerican archaeology, this research hopes to show that, however valid are the assertions concerning the propagandistic role of the dynastic Maya elite (Miller and Martin 2004, Looper 2003, McAnany 1995, Fitzsimmons 2009, to name very few examples), there is room for developing an understanding of Maya culture by focusing on the interplay between Maya philosophies and stylistic devices. The evidence presented by archaeologists in support of

these assertions (epigraphic, iconographic and even architectural) certainly remains undeniable. However, the interest and choice in this discussion is very possibly a product of the development of European art history and philosophy. Although now questioned by archaeologists, traditional material culture theorists have posited that religion in society begins with the premise of stratified social structures, in which powerful individuals seek to promote and legitimate their status through art, and other communicative media (such as Eliade 1968 and Alles 1988). Religious engagement may have been an important aspect of the creation and display of Maya art and architecture, as previous studies have shown (for example, Andrews 1995, Looper 2003 and Newsome 2001). Following this hypothesis, we might deduce that artists or commissioners promoted this engagement as an orchestrated programme or, perhaps more plausibly, this aspect might be seen as a subtle reflection of an ideology shared by the Maya (as laid out, for example, by Alles 1988, where he compares the Kandariya Mahadeva and the Parthenon; the Kandariya's complex system of architectural tiers and sections reflects highly stratified Indian society, while the open colonnades and equal number of columns of the Parthenon symbolise Classical Greek democracy). The negotiation of conscious and sub-conscious messaging is relevant to the question surrounding Marxist political theories: concretely, were the Maya products of their own products? In what way could Sartre's theory of scarcity and alienation be applied in this context, where, for example, material mediators engage religiously with their viewers? Sartre asserts that people objectify themselves in materiality to ward off scarcity; within a society where "subjectification" might more appropriately define the engagement with materiality, it is interesting to assess how people engage with scarcity, alienation and, ultimately, material culture. The validity of Sartre's post-war analysis in Europe is disputable, as has already been discussed, and so an attempt to apply the theory to historical development before of after the conquest is apt to be fruitless.

On the premise that historical development cannot be concretely related to the theories of materiality, material dialectics and existentialism, it remains to investigate how, on the basis of large-scale upheavals in history (such as the conquest), it might be most appropriate to relate the reconstructed rationality sketched by the thesis. As previously mentioned, the role/agency of art will not be couched in terms of political, or even religious, structures. The pre-Hispanic pieces will be discussed in terms of their potential for intellectual and emotional/corporeal experience. Post-conquest Catholic art will be discussed in relation to its context, the surrounding natural environment, among the material remains of the aforementioned pieces, and the cultural conceptions of the people

that interact with both elements of the material landscape. This thesis seeks to explore how the people of Santa Elena manipulate their environment with their imagination and otherwise, and in this way animate it and give it agency.

The subject of historical consciousness, particularly in a case such as this, where the communities and their material culture that are discussed by archaeologists still exist, becomes of particular importance. The archaeological enquiry is based on the premise that it is capable of making "a distinctive contribution towards an understanding and critique of the present" (Shanks and Tilley 1987, 172-173). Ethnography among contemporary communities (for archaeological purposes), and what has been referred to as "ethno-archaeology" (Buchli and Lucas 2001, 4), are engaged in the attempt to study modern phenomena towards a deeper understanding of the past. This might seem to relegate the role of academia, at least in this field, to an alienated form of social thought, which exists solely to be tapped by other politically and practically minded members of society. It follows to reevaluate the position and role of archaeological enquiry in the Maya area. Perhaps the area of archaeological research that is most concerned with ideas surrounding the "role" of archaeology is that of "Archaeological Heritage Management", or put in terms that are perhaps less elitist, "Public Archaeology" (Schadla-Hall 1999). It has been asserted that "…anchoring identity to material culture and places makes the mapping of our own individual or collective identities more manageable and comprehensible" (Waterton and Smith 2009, 49). The discourse assumes the instability of memory, collective or individual (Huyssen 1995, 249), and so advocates international efforts to preserve material and "intangible" culture. The UNESCO world heritage sites are evidence of this. The recent focus on intangible heritage supports more recent assertions that it is not precisely the archaeological sites themselves, but what is done at them or with them that should be considered significant (Waterton and Smith 2009, 44). It is thus this intangible side of culture that is key; "…viewers must emotionally engage with heritage, and meaningfully interact with it, for that site to 'speak to' the individual" (Waterton and Smith 2009, 49). This interaction is in turn linked to the promotion of cultural identity, and diversity is increasingly promoted as opposed to the "westernisation" of the postcolonial world (where the majority of archaeological investigations are centred). Arguably, this understanding of the role of material, immaterial culture and the past is inapplicable to certain cultures and, whether or not this is the case, heritage, like identity, should more accurately be a "verb" rather than a noun (Waterton and Smith 2009, 45).

The link between the archaeological preoccupation with preserving identity through material remains can be interestingly compared with the nature of historical development

as laid out by Sartre in the Critique. As has been explained in the above text, Sartre assesses the role of worked matter and society's dialectical relationship to it. In the example above, given by Sartre, concerning the Parisian bus stop, it is shown how people are alienated, principally from each other, through the response to scarcity that is dictated by their material environment. Again, to recapitulate briefly, people in modernity are forced to objectify themselves in materiality, and thus objects define their identity. The line promoted by the archaeological community holds some correlation with this philosophy. As has been set out, archaeologists claim that it is through active engagement with the material representations of history that identity can be positively maintained and reconstructed (where necessary). Evidently, there is a large disjuncture in the two cases; in Sartre's example it is the worked matter that holds a structuring and restrictive role that alienates (and frees) society. In the case of archaeological heritage, it is "functionally" obsolete material culture that plays a positive role in historical development. Nevertheless, there is an interesting comparison to be made; it is through modern ideas of functional architecture and material environments that Sartre's theory is built. Since it is the intention of this thesis to question the conception of materiality, specifically in relation to public art, in ancient Mesoamerica, it may also be relevant to pose a similar question in terms of the architecture of religious and artistic experience.

Without yet making very concrete and involved assumptions in this regard, we might posit that it is the introspective or emotional relationship between people and the worked matter that surrounds them that defines the role of archaeological heritage. This process could further be related to the process of engaging with art objects. The impact of clouds that negate a view of heaven in Renaissance art (Damisch 1972), as has been commented on earlier in the text, provides an intellectual comparison with the limitations of artistic practice (linear perspective). This may have a comparable effect to the experience of archaeological heritage: in searching for one's identity in the material remains of cultural history, presented incompletely by archaeologists or by incomplete museum collections, the individual is confronted with gaps in the reality, and so existential uncertainty.

It might be further argued that this reflection is, in turn, part of the archaeological enquiry, itself. Postcolonial theory (examples include Bhahba 1994, Butler 1993, and so on) suggests that we should question the construction of the other that defines academic work; "The realm of the disenfranchised, the subaltern, while usually outside the realm of discourse, is precariously near and as such it is not an unknown object of discourse but rather a non-object forming the boundaries of the social and the enfranchised" (Buchli and Lucas 2001, 12). Bhahba advocates the search and creation of cultural work and identity

in the spaces between existent bodies, rather than the articulation of national identities (1994, 219). It is these gaps between the interpreter and interpreted that are referred to by Buchli and Lucas in the explanation of their understanding of contemporary archaeology. In the attempt to distance their work from "ethno-archaeology", which uses modern material for its own end (that is, for a discussion of the past), an archaeology of the contemporary past seeks to subvert the tendency to create a distanced social object; "With the archaeology of us, any gap is constantly being contested and collapsed because we are implicated in what we do to an extent much more immediate than with any other kind of archaeology" (Buchli and Lucas 2001, 9). Notable excavations in contemporary archaeology such as the Tate Thames Dig in 1999 exemplify the perversity of the attempt to objectify the present. Excavation methods (for example, categorisation of materials and so on) can be seen, on some levels, as a way to make (temporally) distant objects familiar and controllable. When analysing contemporary artefacts these "artificial" or scientific terms have the opposite effect of alienating otherwise familiar objects (Buchli and Lucas 2001, 9). The archaeologist is thus left in a similar existential state as a spectator of Renaissance art. In locating an academic position that is tangible, and thereby negating the value of seeking biased answers to the present in history and archaeology, the archaeologist is confronted with the existential effect of a failure to control and create knowledge.

Both art and archaeology, therefore, within a "Western" conception provide an engagement with or understanding of personhood, through intellectual engagement. In order to destroy the potentially harmful implications of structuralist thought, particularly in postcolonial contexts, it is hoped that the field of archaeology can promote fluidity in the creation and discussion of cultural identity. Careless perspectives on temporally or culturally distant abstract or concrete objects are at risk of creating the "otherness" that can lead to essentialism. This risk may be increased, in part, by functional worked matter, imposed by capitalism, which alienates society, making people incapable of forming identity outside of that material environment. It is for this reason that it is perhaps through access to alternative conceptions of materiality and reflections on the self that the ties between cultural essentialism and alienation can be loosened.

There has been substantial archaeological literature that has dealt with the role of contemporary art in the discourse of reconstructing the role of archaeology (most notably, perhaps, Renfrew's "Figuring it out" 2003). The experiential side of an archaeological excavation can, indeed, be interestingly correlated with that of a conceptual art exhibition. It could very well be argued that the discipline of archaeology might have a beneficial

impact on the visions of the contemporary conceptual art world. However, for the purposes of this research, the focus will remain on the broadening perspectives that conceptual art can have on the vision of ancient art. It has already been noted that a restrictive vision of the role of art, materiality and personhood has been constructed by the European art historical tradition, and the various affiliated disciplines. Since it is the role of contemporary conceptual artists to subvert this construction and explore the ways in which material culture can be experienced, presented, participated in and intellectualised, it seems to be a viable philosophical tool for the broadening of theories relating to the archaeology of art. It is also the intention of this thesis to use data specific to Maya culture to reconstruct pre-conquest artistic rationality. This is a point to which the text will return, however. The following artists/works have been chosen for their applicability to some of the central concepts concerned in the discussion of Mesoamerican culture; these artists are: Christian Marclay, Karthik Pandian, Olafur Eliasson and Ricardo Martínez. This last artist has been chosen for another reason: he is Mexican and from the generation of post-revolutionary artists that include Diego Rivera. His work is not contemporary, although modern, and deals with indigenous identity in Mexico. There are some stylistic elements in his work, which also merit discussion. This discourse will be brief, and its intention is purely to use examples of more contemporary art that can apply to alternative artistic rationalities.

Case Studies: Olafur Eliasson.

The Danish/Icelandic conceptual artist, probably best known for his *Weather Project*, which was exhibited in the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, focuses a large part of his work on ideas relating to space, time and the natural environment (as the title of the work suggests). It is perhaps needless to say that past research in the Maya area, and on other precolonial Mesoamerican civilisations, has focused, to a large extent, on these subjects, as does the present research. An exhibition named "Your emotional future" in the PinchukArtCentre in Kiev touched on many issues in these fields, and some of these were specifically stimulating, in terms of the present research. A series of dark rooms, in which a source of water in continual flow was lit by spotlight, challenged the perception of the exhibition participants. In the darkness, the movement of the light, as the form of water continually changed, provoked the sensation of a flickering, visually violent, experience. One such room displayed several low fountains that created continually changing shapes of loosely fixed proportions. This piece is called "Model for a timeless garden". Eliasson has stated that his work hopes to deconstruct the stability of space and object in modern

"Western" society (2004, 18-25). The idea that spatial position is non-negotiable, with the effect that people suffer from a loss of responsibility in the social sphere, can to some extent be associated with Sartre's Critique. Eliasson advocates a theory of models, in which "we need to acknowledge that all spaces are steeped in political and individual intentions, power relations, and desires that function as models of engagement with the world" (2007, 18-25). Within this reconceptualisation of space and object, wherein their role is in constant flux, the interaction of society with its material environment is injected with agency. Eliasson's work shows how natural and cultural environments are in constant fluidity through their interaction with people over time. This is useful in the deconstruction of academic and philosophical structures that inhibit the understanding of cultures with different intellectual traditions. Ultimately, the development of conceptual flexibility might contribute to the archaeological heritage discourse.
(Figure 4 shows *The Weather Project*, at the Turbine Hall, London)

Christian Marclay.

Marclay works predominantly in the field of sound collage, but also in film, noise and photography. His work touches on a number of subjects that are not all specifically relevant to this field, however. There, broadly speaking, his work opens up the experiential aspects of art in that there is a focus on aural as well as visual media. It is one of his latest works, *The Clock*, which is concerned with the experience of time, which will be the subject of this discussion. *The Clock* is a twenty-four hour video installation that is constructed of fragments taken from cinema, in which times, or clocks, are the theme, or simply a fragment where the time is shown. The segments change as time moves on and the twenty-four hours are synchronised to the local time where the installation is being shown. The viewer is constantly aware of the passage of every, or most, minutes. Some of the fragments are action-packed and tense, others seem slow and hard to engage with due to the inexplicability of the narrative. Some of the film segments are very recognisable, while others are more obscure. The result of such an experience is both intellectual and emotional; chronological coherence is impossible in spite of the imposition of awareness to the passage of time. Marclay touches upon cinematic devices as well as the broader philosophical questions relating to time. The "Western" conception of time is linear, and the calculation of its passage defines the parameters of history and science. Even within this mould, time is the subject of philosophical investigation and debate. The experience of time, in pre-Colombian Mesoamerica, aside from being personally constructed, was

structured within another over-arching philosophy, cyclicality. Art works such as the one exhibited by Marclay, demonstrate how emotive the sensation of the passage of time can be and thus how intrinsic its philosophy is to culturally specific constructions of personhood.
(Figure 5 shows the audience and screen at *The Clock,* Hayward Gallery, London)

Karthik Pandian.

Pandian's recent series of large-scale installations is a two-year project based on the Cahokia Mounds near St Louis Illinois, and is a reflection of the correlations between ancient and contemporary architecture. The project has included various stages but I will only discuss one stage, which was exhibited in the Whitney Museum in New York: *Unearth*. In a darkened room stood five monolithic pillars made of stratified layers of debris, such as ceramic and shell. Certain sides of the pillars were covered with mirrorpane glass, and films of cyclical construction, destruction and preservation were projected into it. It has been commented that Pandian uses the mirrorpane to make reference to the reflective materials used in the urban environment in Chicago (which are close to the Cahokia Mounds) (Stephenson 2010). It is evident that this work is concerned with the questions surrounding archaeology, specifically perhaps, how contemporary and ancient societies create architectural philosophies (Stephenson 2010), philosophies that are constructed through the reception of the material surroundings and re-conceived through a dialectic of reception and production over time. It is the film installation that I find particularly thought-provoking in relation to research in ancient Mesoamerican material. The cyclical temporality of the film is super-imposed onto a static material culture group that displays the passive build-up of the material evidence of time. Furthermore, the movement of the video suggests movements, ritual or otherwise, that have an impact upon architecture and the material environment, and produce dialectic in historical development. Interestingly, Pandian's family is Hindu from Southern India (Tamil Nadu) but Pandian himself grew up in the United States. He has commented that his work is influenced, in part, by his interstitial cultural position and his engagement with Hindu sacred architecture. This is an example of both an emotional and an intellectual response to the material environment.
(Figure 6 shows *Unearthed* at the Whitney, Karthik Pandian).

Finally, the artist Ricardo Martínez. A contemporary of Rivera and Siqueiros, Martínez, although relatively unknown, produced monumental paintings that touch on some similar issues to those promulgated by the post-revolution Mexican muralists, namely indigenous Mexican culture and heritage. This artist's works, and their philosophical and political background, are worthy of a deeper analysis than the brief one to be given here. There is an undeniable attachment to figures that are reminiscent of pre-conquest Mexico: *Chac-Mool*, for example, *Iztaccihuatl* and women in, non-community-specific, indigenous dress. His figures are abstract in form, lending emphasis to their already-striking tone and colour. The monumentality of his figures, their roundness and abstraction, are stylistically similar to much pre-Colombian Mexican sculpture, thereby lending the forms further texture and strength. There is one aspect to his figural formation that stands out, and that is the force of the figural line in some of the paintings, compared with the almost blurred line in other works. In cases in which the line is strong, in spite of a strong background colour, the figure stands out, pushing the emphasis into this field. Where the contrary is the case, it is the background and atmosphere that draws the viewer's eye.

Martínez's work is (self-admittedly) a response to Mexican historical identity and the continuity of precolonial culture. Unlike Rivera's murals (for example, in *Civilización Huasteca*), Martínez does not attempt to recreate specific pre-Colombian activities of urban environments; nor does he make allusion to any specific community or region. Instead, as mentioned above, the subject of rural/community existence is insinuated somewhat abstractly. This is in some sense a more honest representation of the distance inherent in the emotional or intellectual response to ancient cultures and between some urban Mexicans and the culture of contemporary communities. There is an emphasis placed, however, on the strength of sentiment and thought regarding pre-Colombian Mesoamerica in Mexico. Martínez also comments on communities that show stronger continuities in terms of lifestyle and dress. Broadly, this could be interpreted as a response to the role of tangible and intangible heritage in Mexico. Pre-Colombian thought and material are strongly present and, yet, owing to temporal gaps, the widespread destruction of the conquest, and perhaps culturally specific attitudes to culture (for example, oral narratives and ritual termination of stelae), there has been a significant break in the connection to historical and cultural specifics.

In his paintings that explicitly do not delineate strongly between person and space, the agency surrounding the individual is, arguably, accentuated. Figure 7 shows a woman followed by dogs, stretching into the sky. Her hair, black like the rest of her figure, fades gently into the strong shaded blue of the background. As the white light hits the dogs running in front of her, their eyes and undersides blend into the brightly lit floor. This is interesting on the basis of specific narratives and personal communications in Santa Elena, Yucatán. Here, intangible, although directed, agency is attributed to forces external to people and animals. It seems deductive to suppose that this art work, among a society that theorises on the strength and role of external forces, would be received through this same lens.

Discussion.

Through a consciousness of European philosophies of art, personhood and the construction of existential sensibilities that develop and fix cultural conceptions, it may be possible to broaden our approach to alternative (in this case Maya) artistic rationalities. Sartre's Critique touches on aspects of material and corporeal dialectic and identity construction that are useful in understanding historical and social thought. Furthermore, the study intellectualises social processes that have been attributed, in cultural environments that are less understood, to alternative religious values. The profound effect of the natural and worked environment on the way people explore and construct their identity over time underlies "Western" philosophies. Contemporary explanations by residents of Maya communities on the nature of this material-personhood dialectic will clearly differ. These culturally appropriate theories should be applied to art and historical development in the Maya area. Conceptual and modern artists, in breaking from traditional approaches to artistic representation, can provide a creative lens with which to re-approach experiential artistic programmes (such as those found in the Maya area). The study of a foreign or ancient art may be at risk of essentialising societies and applying Eurocentric interpretations to their history but contemporary conceptual art, in its attempt to subvert art historical and philosophical structure, can, where applicable, provide ideas for a reconstruction of Maya artistic rationality.

1.4 Ritual and Religion in the Mediation of Historical Dialectics.

The previous sub-chapter discusses the role of Being and action within natural and worked space, in order to build identity and as a motivator for historical development. The focus will now turn to the role of religious action and narrative, as a personal mediator of those forces. Anthropological and sociological interpretations of art are necessarily related to religious and historical theory. It is the intention of the following discussion to unpack some of the elements of this debate that correlate with some of the main themes evident in the ethnographic record for contemporary Mesoamerican communities. Various of these themes are prominent in my analysis of the research accumulated in Santa Elena, Yucatán, and they raise pertinent questions. Perhaps the most deductive approach to an attempt to reconstruct Mesoamerican artistic rationality using ethnographic fieldwork would be to look at contemporary art production, or at least the production and use of material culture in contemporary communities (for example, Thompson 1958, Henrickson and McDonald 2009, and Castañeda 2005). However, a focus on some of the broader philosophical themes involved in religious and historical narratives and religious practice has the potential to be equally helpful. An understanding thereof can help to deconstruct the specific cultural framework and help to extract some of the nuances that also apply in the case of material engagement and personhood. This is not a practice that is common in ethno-archaeology and it is the hope of this thesis to point to the value of this kind of broader conceptual fieldwork.

Durkheim's Religious Praxis.

There are various sociological and anthropological studies devoted to the analysis of the role of religion in society (and vice versa), (Weber 1958, Mauss 1898/1902, Durkheim 1912, to name a few.) Recent ethnographic studies in the Mesoamerican area continue to focus on the link between religion and ritual and social and political mechanisms; Barbara Tedlock's Time and the Highland Maya (1992) is one such notable example. Owing to the partial philosophical affinity between Durkheim's thoughts in the Elementary Forms and that of Sartre in the Critique, the discussion here will stem from some of Durkheim's proposals. In Book Three (of the Division of Labour), Durkheim proposes that it is not the shared beliefs in religion themselves that are the foundation for a cohesive social environment: "a sense of unity and well-being based on shared belief, while it is comforting to group members, ultimately threatens the security and solidarity of

an advanced division of labour, because it leads inevitably to exclusive groupings within the larger collective" (Rawls 2005, 3). Instead, he argues that it is through social praxis (common practice) that the moral structure of a community is built and maintained. Ultimately, this discourse relates to the construction of knowledge, and therefore perceptions of reality, through action. Hume and Kant replaced the ultimate validity of realism with ideas that suggest that human perception adds something to reality that does not originally exist, and therefore knowledge cannot have an empirical relationship with reality. Durkheim extends this rationality, adding that human thought is created by the shared emotional experience of ritual practices. Knowledge, therefore, can be described as plurally negotiated, that is, it "begins with relations between persons, not with the individual" (Rawls 2005, 11).

The role of religious praxis in the creation of social sentiment and construction of knowledge, as described by Durkheim, has been critiqued. Where Durkheim emphasises the role of social life in the forces promulgated by religion, Horton, for example, argues the reverse; “Horton sees social life as the source of the models small-scale communities frequently employ in order to conceptualise the nature of the less-readily grasped forces they experience” (Layton 1991, 37). In illustration and support, he takes the example of Kuhn’s scientific paradigm; light and sound move in waves, the atom is described as being like the planetary system. It is impossible to visualise an atom, or a light wave, and so other, knowable, phenomena are used to construct otherwise ungraspable knowledge. In this way social relationships are the model for the forces of nature; “religion can be looked upon as an extension of the field of people’s social relationships beyond the confines of purely human society” (Horton 1960, 211). Horton uses the example of Christ, in the Bible, when he condemns scribes and Pharisees for employing ritual to corroborate their status; this attitude (in European philosophy) is described as the essence of irreligion (1960, 204).

The weight placed by Durkheim on action, agency and movement can be linked to Sartre’s description of praxis in response to social alienation, and also to experience focused (phenomenological) theories currently propounded in the field of archaeology and anthropology (Tilley 2012, Matsumoto 2012). It is this aspect of ritual theory that is of interest in this study. Mayanists, Inomata and Coben, for example, state that “ritual tolerates a degree of internal resistance and indifference among the participants, while requiring their external consent” (2006, 24). Through ethnographic research in a community embedded within a Mesoamerican (Yucatec Maya – Santa Elena) worldview, this investigation tries to understand to which actors agency is attributed. How can we

interpret the interplay between community ritual action and the agency of external forces? How does praxis work on or negotiate those forces? Ultimately, this will lead to a deeper understanding of the configuration of personhood and materiality in Santa Elena. It is this understanding that can broaden a culturally specific artistic rationality. This study can help to create a different lens with which to interpret art and its reception in the Maya area.

The Value of Deconstructing Religious Narrative.

Durkheim presents his focus on praxis on the basis that narratives are irrelevant to the sociological understanding of religion, since they obscure the underlying functions of religion that are created and negotiated through praxis, sounds and movements; "It is by uttering the same cry, pronouncing the same word, or performing the same gesture in regard to some object that they become and feel themselves to be in unison" (p39, Dialectics). Therefore, Durkheim's treatment of religion consciously avoids a study of narratives and the emotions associated with spirituality (Rawls 2005, 14: Durkheim 1912, Parsons 1968 and Levi-Strauss 1962). He suggests that "archaic" peoples focus their religious practices around the intrinsic moral significance and force that these morals engender (Rawls 2005, 43). His theory bases religion within the framework of a human necessity to construct this moral force, which is only more easily analysed in the "archaic" context, because the narratives are less elaborate. This elusive moral force may be a Eurocentric term that fails to be applicable to other cultural systems; it is, for this reason, untenable to suppose that we can realistically validate a theory that proposes that religion does not serve different purposes in each society. Furthermore, although the value of action with regard to a constructive engagement with materiality and identity has been explicated, it is not the intention of this research to invalidate religious and historical narratives as a tool in understanding Mesoamerican cultures. Just as ritual practice, in the Durkheimian sense, is morally constructive, the reinforcement of culturally specific conceptions such as temporality and space through oral communication, narratives, is equally influential. It is the intention of this investigation to focus its analysis on the aspects of society and thought that are considered relevant to the people with whom the research was conducted (the people who live in Santa Elena); oral communication of religious and historical thought, as well as ritual praxis, is one of the outstanding social characteristics in this community. It is in this way that the creativity of existential sensibility is generated and fed by a network of people.

Religious Dualism.

The previous discussion pertaining to the deconstruction of Cartesian dualities and re-exploring personhood has already touched upon the necessity for anthropological (and archaeological) theory to distance itself from a Eurocentric philosophical paradigm. One of the relevant personhood-related dualities is that of the distinction between the corporeal experience of Being and the problematic reality of living in society, and, therefore, the social Being; "Man is double" (Durkheim 1912, 23). While the tendency has been to associate this former aspect of personhood with nature and biological reality, and the latter with a constructed and confused moral world which draws humanity further from its origins, Durkheim has suggested that this feeling of duality is not a biological reality, but the product of religious thought; "...The real characteristic of religious phenomena is that they always suppose a bipartite division of the whole universe, known and knowable, into two classes which embrace all that exists, but which radically exclude each other" (Durkheim 1912, 56 1915, 56, 1995, 38). Rituals that metamorphose things and people into different states in this way mediate the liminality that exists between these two phenomena, the sacred and the profane (Rawls 2005, 119). Durkheim argues that the sacred is purely an artefact of social practice and that religion and nature are not more mysterious than gravity and electricity; "...it is science and not religion which has taught men that things are complex and difficult to understand" (1912, 37, 1915, 42, 1995, 25). It therefore follows that the profane is associated with the individual and the sacred with the social. Within the theoretical framework proposed in the personhood debate, an attempt is made here to reconstruct the disjuncture between the concepts individual and social, within the context of plural (and arguably more fluid) conceptions of personhood.

Briefly touched upon has been the study of “Rethinking materiality” by DeMarrais et al (2005). Here, it is proposed that “The self is processual, not static, with movement in and action on the world creating a changing set of relations between body and world” (DeMarrais et al 2004, 36). Evidently one of the aims of this theory is to integrate the role of material culture into the dialectic that constructs the “processual” self. DeMarrais et al close the duality between emotion and intellect and between the self and society; “Emotions are (often) experienced individually but are always created through relations. The multiplicity of our links to others and within ourselves are hard to put into words, but are often knowable through the body and its performances. The body, of course, does not exist in a vacuum, but through links to the material world” (DeMarrais et al 2004, 36). This

is a concept that is linked to Sartre's acceptance of a body's materiality, and so its relationship to materialism.

Arguably, a rational and spiritual response to Being, self and the world is generated through the creative response to the complex dialectic between artefacts, people and their landscape. This creative response, whether in the form of narrative or "aesthetically laden objects" (DeMarrais et al 2004, 39) may provide the self-reflexive response described in the context of Brunellesci's clouds; "the ineffable and the not-quite-graspable hint at connections between the phenomenal and cosmological worlds vital to understand but never possible really to know" (DeMarrais et al 2004, 39). In sum, Durkheim and DeMarrais et al make an interesting point when marking the social as the source of the sacred; both art, as discussed, and religion, are capable of eliciting reason and magic through the promotion of creative devices that draw individuals into a confrontation with that which a community understands, and that which it does not. In this way, a social praxis, which is constituted by various individuals through time, creates codes of behaviour and thought (a point which can also be associated with Bourdieu's habitus and hexis 1977). These codes are tangible in that they are repeated by familiar people within a community and are also necessarily full of individual variation and creative expression. It is within this interplay that the sacred and the profane, magic, reason and existential sensibility are created. The precise values of the knowable and the unknowable, logically, differ cross-culturally.

Dreams, Metaphors and Agency.

It is, therefore, relevant to turn some attention to these two examples of human creativity: narrative (written or oral) and object art, and their role in religious thought. To take an example from his interpretation of the role of narrative, Durkheim has criticised the argument that metaphor in language is the cause of (animistic) religious ideas (that are based on the existence of spirits that inhabit the natural environment), where "language…superimposes upon the material world, such as it is revealed to our senses, a new world, composed wholly of spiritual Beings which it has created out of nothing and which have been considered as the causes determining physical phenomena…" (1912, 109). Here, there might be said to exist confusion, or at least a lack of precision, between human agency and natural forces. The fact that "animistic" religions attribute agency to the landscape and objects does not, however, necessarily imply that this agency is human. It seems problematic to investigate the logical root of any religious worldview. It is

of greater interest, in this research, to locate agency and attempt to conceptualise the alternative flow of social forces and their repercussions.

Studies of Mesoamerican religion have also focused on the agency attributed to objects of (in most cases religious) art (for example, Lopez Austin 1996, Martínez González 2007). The ethno-historic (and ethnographic) record is very much concerned with the “idolatry” of indigenous communities in Mesoamerica and their unchristian relationship to their gods (through objects) (Durán c. 1581, Sahagún 1579, Landa 1566, Lizana 1633). It seems clear that this debate was fuelled by the philosophical and religious preoccupations manifest in Europe at the time of the conquest of America, and the years that followed it, those being, the reformation and counter-reformation (the discussions regarding image versus idea in Catholic thought and the rise of Protestantism).

This research will develop a sketch for the way that a contemporary Maya community in Southern Mexico (Santa Elena, Yucatán) understands these networks of agency and communicates this understanding through creative mechanisms. Metaphor and abstraction are some of the devices used in the art and narratives of Mesoamerican culture, as they are in many cultures (see Tilley 2008). They are unlikely to be the root causes of spirituality and religion, but may create a sense of fluidity of materiality and personhood, as values are shifted from one “object” to another. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison. We think of metaphors as linking ideas together; perhaps they can also help to link materials, ideas and modes of Being within an individual and within the community. The sense of a metaphor, as a non-literal comparison, can also be linked to Damisch’s clouds. There are various layers of understanding, where a metaphor can explore commonalities, and its meaning is always influenced by the receiver’s creativity and experience.

Durkheim also refuted, in his treatment of "archaic" religions, the argument that the construction of the concept of the soul is rooted in a confusion of waking and dreaming states; he states that "...if the soul is supposed to come from dreams, and this explanation is supposed to hold for all historical cultures, then in order for it to be universal it should be the only possible explanation of dreams" (Rawls 2005, 127). Considering the weight that is placed on the role and meaning that dreams have in many contemporary Mesoamerican communities, we should take their analysis into account when talking about the construction of Being. European thought restricts the analysis of dreams to psychotherapy and otherwise to esoteric practices. Arguably, an analysis of dreams involves an existential exercise in which an individual assesses his/her conceptual position through an

obscure/unknown lens. Larger cultural (and individual) worldviews are re-assembled from the images that most resonate, that is, those that are remembered, from the subconscious. As such, creative and imaginative cultural and personal styles are reinforced. A similar process to Sartre's dialectical reason emerges. Just as Sartre describes society as constructed through material environment, a dialectical process is happening in the creation of identity through dream analysis. These values are re-configured in a way that is out of the control of the individual but interpreted, discussed and rendered conceptually forceful in an active way.

Time, History and the Space of Experience.

Time/space is the subject of a large portion of the archaeological and anthropological literature dedicated to Mesoamerican communities, particularly among the Maya (a few examples, Tedlock 1982, Martin 2012, Voss 2006). Evidently, the portrayal of time and space in art, and its reception, is tempered by the way temporality and dimension are handled within a specific worldview. This worldview, which will be shown to be distinct in Mesoamerica, constitutes part of the cultural divergence that is at the core of a reconstruction of artistic rationality. Furthermore, conceptions of time dictate the nature of any historical engagement and, therefore, are particularly relevant to narratives that relate to past events and so to cultural identity (Lowenthal 1988 and, among the Maya, de Angel García 2013). The validity of dualist constructions in European philosophy can be rejected in this context. Further to the discussion of dualism on the subject of religious sentiment, is another of its uses; that is, the division of the personal and the social in existential thought. This is delineated in the treatment of temporal aporetics by Ricoeur (1984), where an attempt is made to totalise history. The experiential or phenomenological aspects of the "...time of the soul" (Osborne 1995, 47) is placed within the context of the more concrete or calculable, that is, cosmological time (Osborne 1995, 47). It has been argued that meaning is "created through the intersection of big, cosmological time versus small, personal time" (Ricoeur 1988, 243 and Gosden 1994, 136). There is a further level in the experience of temporality, that of the reconstruction of time in the form of either historical or fictional narrative (Aristotle's Physics and Kant's Critique of Pure Reason). Ricoeur divides the experience of time on this third level (the time of the philosophers and time of history/fiction). Furthermore, it has been persuasively argued that this theory ultimately supports the *de facto* association of time with history; "despite its ultimate self-understanding as a deepening of the mystery of time, Ricoeur's analysis in fact gives

philosophical sustenance to the claim for the unity of time and thereby, not merely to the possibility but to the necessity of historical totalization" (Osborne 1995, 45). The aporia of time can thus be said to be resolved as historical time is totalised by a tripartite mimesis; on the initial level the historical narrative is given structure through the context of human action. On the second, historical time is configured through a complex of narratives, which are rooted in chronology (that is, cosmic time). In the third configuration, the reader influences lived time through his or her engagement with the narrative (Ricoeur 1984). It is thus only the present that is characterised by the basic autonomy of a de-totalising "space of experience" (Osborne 1995, 53).

The totalisation of history raises another philosophical issue, that of the role of death in the experience of Being; "we need to explore the relations within the structure of historical time between these two apparently different "times" which compose it. This requires both a broadening and a deepening of our understanding of the main feature of Heidegger's analysis: the anticipation of death" (Osborne 1995, 62). Heidegger asserts that it is because of cosmological time that humans die, and so the existential experience of temporality is grounded in it (1962, 281-285). Furthermore, existential temporality and cosmological time are socially mediated because humans reproduce in communities (1962, 281-285). The bodily space of experience is, by definition, acultural and ahistorical; “What a philosophical consideration of phenomenology clearly cannot tell us about is anything with regard to particular bodies, particular places and particular landscapes, particular histories and meanings, particular cultures and social relationships” (Tilley 2012, 31). The way that experience is affected by culturally specific conceptions of cosmological time and how those are negotiated in a community can relate to how history and personhood are built.

Part of the analysis of community life in Santa Elena will draw on aspects related to temporality; the interplay between certain objects and places, action over time and the personhood of an individual. The attempt to sketch an alternative conception of the way cosmological, historical/fictional and experiential time exists is central to personhood, in that it places the body within an existential and creative context. In this way, it is central to the ongoing process of the Deleuzian self and identity building. Sartre’s historical development in the Critique of Dialectical Reason could plausibly be compared to Ricoeur’s theory of historical totalisation, although the focus in the former case is on material dialectics and the latter on historical consciousness (Osborne 1995, 54). Some of the narratives that constitute the ethnographic research of this investigation, in Chapter 2, place emphasis on materials within a temporal framework and, moreover, a spatial one.

Time and space are, as such, signifiant agents. This particular cultural reasoning will be applied to the interpretations of pre-Colombian Maya art in Chapter 3.

Religious Pluralism.

There are major problems inherent in making an analysis of community religious thought in contemporary societies due to widespread religious pluralism. This problematic might equally be applied to past societies, as there is little reason to suppose, in most cases, not to undermine the importance of the impact of globalisation in modernity, that ideologies were any more stable and less subject to intercultural influence. Anthropological research conducted in the United States of America by Ammerman shows that religious practitioners seldom confined their beliefs or actions to one divine system, nor do they always conform to the doctrines prescribed by people in positions of high social power (2010, 156). She also argues that the distinction between the sacred and the profane, or the spiritual and the real does not imply the radical boundary that Durkheim, for example, proposes; "...boundaries between ordinary and extraordinary are too porous for most people" (Ammerman 2010, 157). Perhaps, whether or not these concepts are porous comes down to the kind of existential reflection described of Damisch's clouds or the use of metaphors. The known and the unknown (as with the ordinary and the extraordinary) are linked by constant references to one another.

In light of the various styles of religious pluralism, although it is interesting to engage in religious practice intellectually, this research neither intends to define the general characteristics of religious thought in rural Maya communities, nor specifically, those in Santa Elena. Discussions related to religious pluralism, particularly from the archaeological perspective, have centred on theories of intercultural contact and assimilation of ideas and customs (Redfield 1950, Nash 1960, Emery 1970, Green 1993, Stoll 1990, Kray 2004). This reaches a deeper level in the theorisation of postcolonial religious identities, in which "...questions of religious pluralism are framed in the language of "challenges", the hidden assumptions are often found in a narrative of loss – loss of privilege, loss of authority, perhaps loss of vitality and influence" (Ammerman 2010, 155). Various questions arise if we accept this premise; for example, a shift in any society from homogeneity to choice would imply large-scale existential consequences (Berger, Davie and Fokas 2008, 12-14). The focus on coherence and singularity of worldview in indigenous religions is, as previously stated, misleading. In spite of this, it is undoubtable that the influence of so different a civilisation, at the time of the Spanish conquest, should

engender much more dynamic shifts in religious creativity; "the colonial era makes new imaginations of community possible, and it is especially in the religious domain that these new imaginations take shape" (Van der Veer 1996, 7). With this in mind, we can consider how community is created and re-recreated in Santa Elena. The influx of modern religious options alongside the palpable continuity of certain pre-conquest Maya philosophies necessarily contributes to a vibrant process of community identity building. Evidently there are elements of religious thought that are part of a precolonial worldview, and the syncretism between these elements and those born out of Catholicism and other Christian impositions since the Conquest are, to some extent, central to the investigation.

Discussion.

The position that will be taken in the approach to the information gleaned through semi-structured interviews in Santa Elena has been explicated through reference to and analysis of some major sociological/anthropological texts on ritual and religion. Within the context of religious pluralism, such as in Santa Elena, historical, religious and creative narratives and material culture are at the backbone of community meta-theory. The ritual practices and agency invested in the active negotiation of these theories is similarly being treated as a subject for discussion. Aspects pertaining to the body, materiality and the self/reflexivity are of primary significance.

In the first place, the research will be used to sketch an alternative artistic rationality for pre-Colombian public art. Creative output and personal communication in Santa Elena will be assessed within its historical and material context. In line with contemporary archaeological research objectives (Buchli and Lucas 2001), the ethnographic research in this investigation will not purely be used to shed light on the Maya communities of the past. This context that is in the reception of pre-conquest and post-conquest art and architecture, as well as the materials themselves, will help to construct an alternative artistic rationality within a Maya worldview. It is as much the aim of this investigation to contribute to an understanding of pre-Colombian Maya art, as it is to re-appropriate the discussion to the context of contemporary thought and action in the Maya area. The people of Santa Elena are the central theorists, as their thought structures will be applied to the artistic programmes in Chapter 3. In this way, this research will be relevant to the people of Santa Elena.

Chapter 2: Fieldwork: Narrowing the Focus; Philosophies of Being and Materiality in Santa Elena, Yucatán.

As shown above, in the first part of Chapter 1, this thesis is primarily a discussion of art in the Maya area. In order to form an understanding of the production and reception of this creative material culture, it is necessary to reach an understanding of the main actors in this process with a view to showing how the artists and the participants in these programmes understood the materials that were worked on to produce them. Of equal importance, this text sets out to make a theory for the experience of Being, speaking both bodily and intellectually, since this is at the root of the engagement and reception of these programmes. Sub-chapters 1.3 and 1.4 have shown how worked matter, the material environment, and the repetition of culturally specific actions and rituals create a dialectic that is cumulative and is the ongoing process of community identity. As such, to speak of Maya art, we should be speaking of contemporary Maya communities. Ethnographic research in the Maya area (and in the field of ethno-archaeology at large) has been useful in mining the present to shed light on the past. One such example of successful ethno-archaeology is evident in Boteler Mock's (1998) collection of contemporary dedication and termination rituals that shed light on the archaeological record. The people of Santa Elena, as experts in their ancestral culture, put forward their theories on aspects of personhood and materiality, and these philosophies can enrich the interpretation of art in the Maya area. Furthermore, we need to pinpoint why we engage in the study of ancient Mesoamerican societies, and this is where the ideas and contributions of the residents of Santa Elena are of particular relevance.

The ethnographic research discussed in the following chapter was conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews. That is to say, although I generally centred my questions around the philosophies discussed in Chapter 1, dialogues were predominantly led by the interviewees. The objective was to foster a creative and mutually-interactive dialogue, in which ideas could arise organically. These "interviews" were conducted with people in the village, men and women of all ages. Many of the interviewees were people who are experts in community history and healing (such as spiritual and physical healers). Others were younger members of the community, whose creative and intelligent input supplemented these interviews and provided a lens with which to think about the role and opinion of those experts. The research period was four months long (January 15, 2010 to May 15, 2010). I interviewed over fifty people, the majority of whom were from Santa Elena. Others were from nearby communities: Ticul, Kantunil and Chicxulub. Direct

reference is made to twenty-one participants in the following chapters, as their contributions were most illustrative of the themes and theories that arose. These participants are not named, because I do not have authorisation to reveal all of their identities. They are contributors and our personal communication is comparable to personal communication with people in the academic profession. I have attached letter numbers to each participant, not to insinuate that their responses are quantitative but so that the reader can follow the letters throughout the sub-chapters and, if desired, get a sense of which themes and topics were touched upon by which contributors.

2.1 Introduction to Ethnography in the Maya Area.

The preceding theoretical outline has been an attempt to explain how it may be possible to use religious and historical conceptions and narratives to elucidate community approaches to existential thought, creativity and materiality. Ethnographic research in Mexico has leaned towards recording alternative ("non-Western") cultural phenomena such as *wayjel* (Rosales Mendoza 2008, 116), dualism or balance, and evenness, *paarejoj* (Kray 2005, 340), including hot and cold (Lopez Austin 1996, 116-117, Guiteras Holmes 1965, Adams and Rubel 1967, 335, Currier 1966, McCullough and McCullough 1974, Redfield and Redfield 1940, 64-65, Kray 2005, 344-345), and studies of flexible personhood, such as the *chulel* and animate entities (Pearce 1984, Gossen 1974, Lopez Austin 1996, Martínez González 2007). Research connecting this aspect of Being with external forces in the air (Adams 1952, 34, Marshall 1986, 162) has pointed towards the harm that these imbalances can cause. In Yucatán, for example, Villa-Rojas (1987) speaks of the *kinam*, which "hot" people are said to have. It is this *kinam* that can cause *mal de ojo* (harmful effects on those who come in contact with them) (1987, 381). The implication is that imbalance (of any kind) can not only be of harm to the individual, but is also harmful to the community; "the belief in forces in the air and of heat demonstrate the necessity for balance between the cold and hot elements that constitute the human being" (own transl of Martínez González 2007, 161). A recent term for these elements of Maya thought is, therefore, "animated entities; a structured unity with the capacity of independence, under certain conditions, from the organic place to which it belongs" (Martínez González 2007, 154).

Ethnoarchaeology in the Maya area has tended to focus on artefact analysis, as a way to make connections between contemporary and pre-Hispanic production practices and social thought in the Maya area (for example, Hayden and Cannon 1984). The semi-structured interviews that took place in Santa Elena touch on broader, or more abstract, understandings of worked matter and the natural environment. The religious and material overhaul of the Spanish conquest, followed by postcolonial stress and modernity, has resulted in splintered reception systems. It is clear that it is hard to construct an understanding of pre-Colombian Mesoamerican relationships to community, natural environment, the sense of self and Being, and so to creative action and work (Hatala 2010, Little 2004, Watanabe and Fischer 2004); "…when speaking of local Maya communities it is essential to adopt a critical stance toward unbridled claims of static "traditional" knowledge or ways of life that are insulated or hermetically sealed from externally-generated influences" (Hatala 2013, 16). Any continuity that we can speak of is better defined as belonging to a reception dialectic that began with the Spanish Conquest and the introduction of Catholic European material culture, and still continues through increasing globalisation, specifically in this context, for example, as smaller religious sects, such as the Jehovah's witnesses, become involved conceptually and visually.

It has also been argued that the term "Maya" as an identity marker is inaccurate (Restall 1997). Words such as "Indian", *ladino*, *mestizo* and "indigenous" have no equivalent meaning across the Maya world (which is spread over seven nations), or even throughout Yucatán, which contains linguistic and cultural diversity (Sullivan 2000). It has also been shown that these terms are not solely ventriloquism of the subaltern; "Maya ethnicity" is neither a pre-given, substantive identity and belonging, nor is it an artificial imposition of the state. Instead, it is a mediated and arbitrated "middle" zone created through mutual, if also unequal accommodation and, often antagonised, negotiation of interest" (Castañeda 2004, 52). There are very few, if any, concrete values and the task here is to align certain themes, in an attempt to sketch a theory with a culturally specific lens.

2.2 Preliminary description of the Fieldwork Location.

The State of Yucatán.

In the southern peninsula of Mexico, the State of Yucatán borders the states of Campeche and Quintana Roo, as well as the Gulf of Mexico. As part of Lowland Mesoamerica, the area was first settled by the Preclassic Maya (1200 BCE - 250 CE) in circa 200 BCE (Hatala 2013, 16), who appear to have lived in egalitarian permanent communities and developed an agricultural economy (Peregrine and Ember 2001, 379). The peninsula is said to have flourished in around 700 CE (Hatala 2013, 16) when the Chanés, who first inhabited the southern sites of Bacalar, later moved north to found sites such as, Chichen Itza (Peregrine and Ember 2001, 353). The coastal (northern) Tutul Xiues later settled in the region and after many battles with the Cocomes and Itza (descendants of the Chanés) formed the Mayapan league. This league disintegrated in the 12th century and left the Maya civilisation in smaller areas of local control (Peregrine and Ember 2001, 357).

Yucatán was conquered approximately twenty years after the Conquest of Mexico (1521), by Francisco de Montejo, after a series of battles with the indigenous people. Mérida (now Yucatán's capital city) was built in 1542 by his son, Francisco de Montejo y León. The city was built on top of a pre-Colombian site, T'ho, and stones from T'ho's buildings were used for the churches and other colonial structures. Although the Maya overlord, Nachi Cocom, besieged the city in attempt to push the Spanish out, he was defeated, consolidating Spanish victory. The city is still referred to as T'ho, in Yucatec Maya, evidencing the continued memory of this older place in the present.

Anti-colonial tension, due to widespread and long-term repression and violence (for example, the burning of several thousand objects and codices by Diego de Landa at Mani in 1561) resulted in a rebellion in the 18th century, under Jacinto Canek. This rebellion was rapidly aborted, but established underlying tensions in the area, which would lead to the major social upheavals of the Caste War (1847-1901) (Bricker 1977 and Alexander 2004).

The Caste War began as an insurgence by the Maya of the south-east of Yucatán and the *Yucatecos* (Spanish descendants) of the north-west. There were huge losses to both sides, and although the war is said to have ended in 1901, when the Mexican army occupied the city of Chan Santa Cruz, disputes between communities that did not accept

Mexican control continued for another ten years. As such, the Caste War is fresh in the oral histories of the older generations of Maya people in Yucatán.

Santa Elena, Yucatán.

The community of Santa Elena lies in the region classified as the west side of Yucatán (Figure 8 shows a map placing Santa Elena in the context of the surrounding communities). With another, smaller, community, San Simón, it comprises one of the one hundred and six municipalities in the state. The town is at an altitude of approximately thirty-one metres and occupies a surface area of 694.90 square kilometres. Santa Elena borders Muna, in the north, Oxkutzcab, in the south, Ticul, to the east, and Halacho to the west. The state of Campeche lies to the south. There are approximately three thousand people living in Santa Elena. Figure 9 shows an aerial view of the town centre, with its prominent central church, San Mateo.

The plains have clay deposits and a rocky floor, with low tropical shrubland (Figure 10). From north-east to south-east there is a hill, of approximately one hundred metres in height. There are no overlying bodies of water but water flows underground, collecting in *cenotes*, from which fresh water can be extracted. Water pools form where the roofs of these underground lakes have collapsed. The region is classified as subhumid, with rainy summers that are interrupted by dry spells. The medium yearly temperature is approximately 25° C and the median precipitation level is approximately 70 ml. Winds blow from the south-east.

The predominant part of the region's low-lying shrubland is classified as a low deciduous forest, and there are sections to the south and to the east that are classified as medium deciduous. The predominant flora include: Ceiba trees (this tree appears in Maya origin myths, for example, the Popol Vuh, and is known as the central world tree that connects the underworld, Xibalba, with the terrestrial world and the skies, the *balché* tree (from which a sacred Maya alcoholic beverage is made), the cedar, poppy and mahogany. With regards to fauna, birds such as swallows, doves and *chachalacas* predominate, as well as lizards, snakes, raccoons and rabbits. There are various domesticated animals, including pigs, chickens and turkeys, and there is a widespread tradition of deer-hunting in the surrounding forest land (León and Montiel 2008).

The area was inhabited by the pre-Colombian Maya (circa 600 - 1000 CE) in the Classic period. The settlement was called Nohcacab, “the great place”. The settlement lies near to Uxmal, Kabah, Xcoh, Nohpat and Muchich. It is not clear when it was settled by the Spanish, but there is evidence that it was established as an *encomienda* in 1627. The imposing Catholic church, San Mateo (seen in Figure 9), was built on pre-Colombian remains in 1779 and is accessible by a high stairway. After Mexican Independence and the inclusion of Yucatán in the Republic of Mexico, Santa Elena fell under the religious and political area of Ticul. Santa Elena was burned down during the Caste War, at which point many of the Spanish, mulatto and mestizo population moved to Merida. The priest who presides at Mass in Santa Elena lives and works in Ticul, in spite of the fact that Santa Elena was declared head of its own municipality in 1918. Figure 11 shows a traditional house, although many houses like this, with earth floors, are being replaced by “Western”-style concrete houses with concrete floors.

Two hundred and thirteen German immigrants from Hamburg moved to Santa Elena in 1865-66 to initiate a farming colony under an initiative by Emperor Maximilian I. This farming colony was called the Villa Carlota. The farming colony dissolved relatively quickly but it is possible that several German families remained in Santa Elena. The restoration of San Mateo church in 1980 led to an excavation which uncovered twelve coffins containing partially mummified children (aged three to six), some of the remains of which are displayed in a small museum behind the church (Huchim Herrera 2013). It is assumed, through an analysis of their dress and privileged burial position near the altar, that these children were among the German immigrants. There is photographic evidence that people in positions of privilege (for example, those who owned and lived in the surrounding *haciendas* of Yucatán) were also buried according to these customs (Huchim Herrera 2013).

It was my aim to investigate the attitudes and theories of Maya people who lived close to and engaged with archaeological and historic sites in a non-academic or archaeological context. The decision to use Santa Elena as a base to conduct the following interviews was made thanks to Dr Josep Ligorred (2010), INAH Yucatán. He confirmed that, largely, members of the community were comfortable with researchers conducting anthropological and archaeological studies. That these interviews would not interrupt or aggravate the local population was of premium importance.

2.3 Personhood in the Maya Area.

Certain ethnographers have documented that the Maya believe in the *chulel*, which is a soul composed of thirteen parts (Whittaker and Warkentin 1965, 88-89, Pearce 1984, 159). This, in itself, could be interpreted as significant, showing that the Mesoamerican worldview holds that human essence is divided into distinct sections, as if people were made up of a sum of parts. Within this logic, one may assume that a part, being an element of the self, is thereby personalised. It has been shown that much ritual activity is concerned with the loss of one of the parts of a person's *chulel* (Pearce 1984). One of the most dangerous periods for the *chulel* is infancy, and spun cotton is tied around the wrist and ankle of a baby to secure the *chulel* until baptism, when it becomes more firmly fixed (Pearce 1984, 159). The *chulel* of a child is guarded meticulously; "Places where the child has been playing or sitting for any length of time are carefully swept, to ensure that no parts of the chulel are left behind to wander aimlessly or fall victim to the earth owner" (Pearce 1985, 159). Purportedly, among the Tzetzal of Tenejapa, "Just as a house is dedicated, a newborn child is socially confirmed in its animation by means of ritual cleansing, measuring, naming, feeding, clothing, guardianship, and transfer of animacy" (Stross 1998, 36). This may signify that it is acts of acculturation that fix a person's spiritual make-up, supporting the theory that basic human essence and biological determinism do not, and perhaps did not, exist within the Maya worldview. The loss of the *chulel* in adulthood has also been described as a potential threat and can be instigated by certain activities such as sexual intercourse, physical excitement or drunkenness (Stross 1998, 36). This theory is supported by similar finds in the ethnographic record. One such example is Gossen's study of the Chamula, in which he adds that the soul can lose one of its parts due to human activity such as "sexual intercourse, fight, excitement, pleasure, anger or an accident" (1989, 257 and Gossen 1975, 451). This is similarly attested by Watanabe (in Bricker and Gossen, 1989, 263). These actions or feelings create an imbalance, which is related not just to community and individual, but to the cosmic order; "To fall into abuses, such as to be lazy, drink too much, conduct oneself in an excessive and lustful manner, and use aphrodisiacs and hallucinogens, with the express intention of obtaining pleasure, not only damages the person involved, and their community, but also the cosmos in its totality" (own transl of Rosales Mendoza 2008, 113). The fact that alcohol may liberate the *chulel* is reminiscent of the widespread and socially sanctioned use of *aguardiente* (homemade sugar cane spirit) in Maya daily life. The widespread use of alcohol is attested in many ethnographic sources; for example, the emotive story of

Juan de Chamula related by R. Pozas, in which he is driven to irrecoverable alcoholism through his engagement with socio-religious duties. It has also been attested that the Maya use alcohol in religious ceremonies, believing that communication with the ancestors is negotiable through the offering of alcohol and "each drink consumed in the ceremony is also a drink that is consumed by the Ancestors" (Fabrega and Silver 1973, 246). Arguably, the use of alcohol (alongside other devices) could loosen the divisible parts of the Being of both spectators and religious art objects. Furthermore, it has been shown that ritual incantations are used in this transition, as is evidenced in the mortuary traditions of the Tzetzal; "The timing of lamentations, just before the body is lowered into the grave, suggests a communion, or at least communication between the soul of the deceased and the souls of those left behind, and may reference a transmission of life-force between the world of the living and the Otherworld" (Stross 1998, 37). It has been recorded that some Maya people also believe that when a person dies their *chulel* travels to the land of the dead, where it remains for a specific amount of time until it is ready to rejoin the living world and inhabit the body of another human.

Ethnographic literature on this subject implies that the self is potentially recyclable and does not belong to a particular person and that bodily fluids can and should be transferred between people and the natural environment; "It is commonly thought that blood (red) will nurture land, prevent diseases of men and/or help them to recuperate from disease" (Barrera-Bassols and Toledo 2005, 30). This may indicate that were a person's aim to achieve "individuality", as European philosophy defines it, a person would have to be capable of manipulating his or her self. It is, furthermore, implied that partibility is negotiated on a ritual basis, both in persons and in the worked matter. In the case of worked matter, materials would have to be brought to life through rituals, as well as, perhaps, through other artistic/stylistic devices. This research raises questions regarding the negotiability of self, since identity fluctuates and is subject to external forces and circumstances.

Various recent publications in the field of Maya studies have attempted an understanding of Classic Maya personhood through ethnographic and epigraphic research (Houston and Stuart 1996 and Houston and Stuart 1998). This discussion has centred around the reading of the Classic glyph, u-ba(h), which has been linked to modern Maya languages in the form bah: "…the entries from Tzotzil and Yucatec Maya define bah and its lexical derivations as aspects of appearance, a recognisable "visage," or overall mien" (Houston and Stuart 1998, 77). This research indicates that the use of u-ba(h), associated with Classic Maya figural images may be related to the Maya 'kuh and Aztec concept of

teotl, whereby a larger unity of energy constitutes a divinity that is connected to the life-force attributable to “objects” (Hvidfeldt 1958, 76-100 and Boone 1984, 44), and thus portraits; “Evidence now suggests a Maya (and probably Mesoamerican) understanding of representation that is quite similar, making use of an extendable essence shared between images and that which is portrayed” (Houston and Stuart 1998, 86).

Stephen Houston, in his most recent publication (2014), illustrates the processual nature of working matter, through human energy and agency; “Among the Maya, matter stores energy and latent potential” (Houston 2014, 5). Colouring, for example, in Maya glyphic adjectives, is expressed as “becoming red” or “becoming green/blue” (chakjal and yaxjal respectively) (Houston 2014, 9). Through this lens, in which the nature of being is impermanent, it can be shown that human skill lends personhood to active materials. In light of research conducted by Stone and Stuart on text and images wrapped around stalagmites and stelae, it has been shown that, “the more unusual skill (among the Classic Maya) is to distinguish between stones with energies and those without, and to prime the first for some special function” (Houston 2014, 91-92). Houston shows that, though it would be impossible to attempt any summary of the ways (ethnographically and archaeologically) that energy is conceived in the Maya world, past and present, “…broadly, such energies lie within human grasp, controllable by ‘magic and prayer’” (Houston 2014 79).

Following various (semi-structured and unstructured) interviews with members of the community in Santa Elena, the existence of *chulel* was not explicitly confirmed. However, there are various themes, similar to those raised in the ethnographic literature, which can be applied or compared to the sketch of Maya existential rationality. The role of alcohol, for example, as a forceful substance, is attested in a number of narratives. One such example was given in an exchange with two young women (A and B), within a larger discussion of the *viento malo* or *iik naal* (also recorded by Barrera-Bassols and Toledo 2005, 30).

On the way to a healing man (*h-men*)’s house to ask for information on the subject of thoughts surrounding the *viento malo*, the two women were asked what they perceived to be the role of the *h-men* in the community. This question was posed in the hope of understanding the sort of respect held for his profession, or the various reasons why people might go to him for help. Both women responded that the bad wind (*viento malo*) could be brought by a bird, *kuy* (perhaps an owl), if it happened to fly over your house at night. It was asserted that if there were a child in the house (children and, in particular, babies are more vulnerable) who catches the *viento malo*, it would almost surely die.

Babies, in particular, are protected in the company of drunken men and, in some cases, when a drunken man passes by the house or the land surrounding the house. The remedy for the presence or closeness of such a person to a baby is to sprinkle alcohol in the baby's face. Pregnant women are also a threat (on the basis of their volubility in the hope having a healthy child) (see also Guiteras Holmes 1965 and Stone 2011). Hungry or thirsty men, who have come from work in the *monte*, may also make a baby cry and instigate illness. Those who have a dark patch in their iris are generally feared as they may be the cause of bad health. The remedy for all of the above occurrences is affection and fresh air.

It could be argued that the passive effect of alcohol is similar in nature to the uses of alcohol attested in earlier ethnographic investigations. In this instance, however, it is not the consumer of alcohol him or herself who is affected but a person who is nearby. Conversely, it may be the case that the alcohol has loosened the structured self of the drunken person, making his Being forceful to other members of the community, whose self is still immature (children and babies). The possibility that alcohol serves as a loosening agent that can affect personhood is not made explicit through this narrative, however. From the accompanying detail relating to ill health caused by unknown external forces, what appears to be the case is that various states of elevated experience, stressful or otherwise, can be harmful to children (concur with Lopez Austin 1996, 115-122). It could be inferred, broadly, that it is an imbalance of energy that can be harmful to the stabilising personhood of the infant. It is not surprising that the precise cause of the instability varies in different accounts, nor that over time these effects are attributed to different materials. The point is that forces act upon people in delicate states, and that ritual action must be taken to rectify any damage. There might be various explanations as to why children or babies are more unstable. Perhaps the implication is that cultural conditioning fixes personhood, and that babies have yet to learn the movements and actions necessary to deflect potential harm, and so in their ignorance must be protected by others. This may be, in part, an elaborate, and very real, symbol for the role of parenting in general.

A belief in the existence of “Being” as an entity independent of the body can be evidenced from further communication in a variety of interviews. One such example concerns the attitude of many people from Santa Elena to the nearby archaeological site (Xcoh), which is not open to the public. The site consists, largely, of a temple structure, which stands on one of the highest hills in the surrounding area, and thus affords a view of Santa Elena and Ticul (the nearby, larger village). Through the floor is an entrance to a lower level that leads to a narrow airless tunnel at the base of which is a small body of water. Although young boys (interviewed) are in the habit of visiting the site, there is much

reticence on the part of a good majority of the people living in Santa Elena towards visiting it. Two main reasons for this were presented among the various interviews; one of these is the distance of the site from the village, in the *monte*. The conceptual separation of these two spaces, even though there are parts of the *monte* that are well known and used (they are farmed) is notable. The second reason for not wanting to visit the site is related to the negative (or perhaps simply powerful) energy that surrounds the place. In a discussion with a young woman (C), it became clear that it was the history of archaeological sites that inspire caution in people. It was later explained by a man in Kantunil (D), who was an expert in the medicinal and spiritual uses of local plants and had been a student of the aforementioned healer in Santa Elena (E), that the spiritual remains of so many deceased people caused strong forces that are capable of displacing a person's Being and cause physical or psychological discomfort. Another interview with a woman (A) who works at the women's aid centre, regarding the village cemetery, provided further information on this topic. According to this woman, a girl had been killed near the cemetery and had suffered from a particularly violent death (the details of which were not communicated). Sometime later a temporary train track had been laid around the village for one of the festivals, and the girl's ghost boarded the train, imposed a *viento malo* on the driver and caused a crash. It could be postulated that this belief in the existence of a life-force after death implies a looser understanding of personhood, which could shift from different physical spheres and have a concrete effect on them. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that the story couches the influence of the murdered girl in very European terms, as a ghost, it is clear that the *viento malo* is regarded as a comparable force. It is unclear from these accounts whether it is a personified entity that remains in spite of, for example, death, or if it is the life force in the form of negative energy that remains and has agency. It is possible, and seems plausible, that both conceptions exist alongside each other. If this is the case, there are interesting implications in terms of the forms of fluidity of personhood, and how it relates to artistic and religious material culture. It would appear that one of the outstanding elements of the existential philosophy of Santa Elena relates to the continued presence of the energy of people who are no longer present, or even alive. Furthermore, in corroboration of the earlier treatment of the role of alcohol, it is forceful actions or substances that can have the strongest impact on the inner Being of nearby persons. The forces that affect the people (agents) of Santa Elena are also not temporally fixed. There is a transfer of energy that does not begin and end, but is caught up in a chain. This attitude and philosophy can be associated with agriculture. Food and fuel, within an agricultural system, are negotiated cyclically and do not have marked lifespans.

The two women who participated in the interviews described had been asked to visit the *h-men* (E), a man who was famous for being able to cure spiritual diseases. The physical manifestations of these diseases could have been inflicted by negative energy, whether naturally or by the hand of a person seeking, through specified ritual or posthumously, to harm. This man is also said to be able to cure illnesses that will not dissipate in spite of medical treatment, that have no scientific or rational reason to persist (although in these cases it has also been argued that a third party, with destructive intentions, is involved). An example of this was given by one of the young women (C). The grandmother of this young woman (C) was wheelchair-bound from the age of 58, and the doctors at the hospital are unable to find a reason, or cure, for this (she is immobile to the point of being unable to lift herself out of her hammock). It was interpreted by the woman's family that the illness was caused by the parents of a friend of her son's. This son had been a soldier and had instigated a fight with a close friend of his (who was also a soldier). The son died, accidentally, during this fight, unfortunately leaving a large debt to the friend's family unpaid. The bereaved parents, who were unable to pay the sum, were blamed by the living soldier's family for the situation, and told that they would pay the price in another way. Thus, presumably, this disagreement was the cause of the woman's early incapacitation.

The *Wayjel*.

Another (well-documented) Mesoamerican phenomenon that may indicate certain aspects of conceptions of personhood, and that has been shown to be shared by the Maya, is personhood that links two entities, in which an animal and a human share a *chulel* (Magril 1988, 259, Pitarch 1996, 79, Aulie and Aulie 1998, 55, Martínez González 2007, 159). This has been documented at Zinacantán, where the people are said to believe that the identity of the *nagual* is revealed to its human counterpart in a dream; "At the birth of each Zinacanteco, the Ancestors place the chulel of the child into an animal born at the same time" (Pearce 1984, 161). The ancestors protect the *chulels* of the *naguales* in mountain corrals (this is where the *nagual* is pointed out to the dreaming human). The human (and animal) can die if the *chulel* of its counterpart is called upon by an enemy and destroyed; "A recurring characteristic in animated forces is that they are linked to external elements that allow them to regenerate and restore themselves during ordinary cycles in a human life" (own transl of Martínez González 2007, 154). There are various accounts of situations in which an animal is shot in the forest and a human in a

neighbouring settlement falls dead simultaneously (displaying marks of the same wound found on the animal) (Foster 1944, 93). This philosophy is documented among the Tzotzil Maya, who believe that the ancestral gods may punish people by setting the *chulel* of their *nagual* free (Pearce 1984, 161).

There is ethnographic documentation for the *nagual* among Maya pentecostal communities in Yucatán. *Uay chivos* (were-goats) are said to enter community territory (in goat form) and cause harm; these Beings are humans who become animals (Rodríguez Balam 2005, 165); “it seems that a shared belief by a large part of Maya towns is that, by sharing one Being – or heart, a person and that person’s double, will have the same destiny, character and personality” (Martínez González 2007, 159-160). More recent research has shown that these animals are usually wild, and create a link between a human and nature; “it can be an owl, a jaguar, a wild cat, a hummingbird or a deer and you are obliged to protect their wayjel, because your own life depends on the soul of this animal” (own transl of Rosales Mendoza 2008, 116). Here the duality of this split person is not practically the emphasis, but the concept of the *wayjel* is a linking factor, an active character that prompts a dialectic between a person and nature.

Uay animals/people were mentioned substantially in interviews with a man in Santa Elena (F) who is famous for healing physical ailments with indigenous plants, most famously, rattlesnake bites. It should be noted that he does not provide healing from unexplained sources. Although it is evident that he believes that at times this is necessary, and demonstrated a plant that can help with *mal de ojo* in babies, it is not his field of expertise. Regarding humans who have animal counterparts, no mention was made. However, the existence of people who can transform into animals was confirmed. His grandfather, a *h-men*, who fought in the Caste War of Yucatán (1847-1901), was forced to spend long periods of time away from his family. According to this interviewee (F), his grandfather would return home every eight days, disguised as a large dog. There are also cases of female *uay*-animals. The wife of another interviewee (G)'s great uncle was abandoned on the basis that she was discovered changing into an animal to steal and kill chickens while his uncle was at work.

Within a certain theoretical framework, it is arguable that the belief that animals and humans share a joint personhood further illustrates the possibility that persons exist with multiple and divisible aspects of their Being/self. People can be divided between two physical entities and are thus not bound by concrete bodily individuality. The belief in the way can also be used to demonstrate the close affinity that the Maya share with the natural (in this case faunal) world. This belief can also be associated with ideas of natural

cyclicality: of birth, death, decay and rebirth, in which all Beings are linked in fundamental substance. Although a specific link is thus made between human and animal Being, it has been asserted that the personhood of humans and objects, among Mesoamerican indigenous groups, are not necessarily attributed the same characteristics; “While all beings and objects, animate and inanimate, possess a soul, a vulnerable quality that can be lost or stolen, humans and animals alone possess a unique vital force, a spiritual quality that grows and develops during the lifetime of a human or animal, which can never be stolen from its possessor” (Pearce 1984, 162). Needless to say, this is a subject that should be further deconstructed in view of a treatment of material culture (to follow).

The particularly alternative relationship between the human and faunal world that the examples of narratives explaining *uay-chivos/perros/gatos*, and so on, touch on, rely on another understanding of personhood altogether. Significantly, this belief does not apply to all people, only to a few. It may be the case that there is an underlying symbolism in these narratives, or parables, that reveals the speakers' attitude towards pre-Colombian Maya culture. In the case of G, his asserted allegiance to the Christian faith and disparagement towards men such as E or F may have moved the bias of the story away from sympathy with the *uay*. In contrast, F’s narrative applauds the use by his grandfather of these powers, which is offset by his involvement in the Caste War (and defence of Maya culture). Personhood, from this angle, is not passive entity that is solely formed through transmitted cultural conceptions. It is actively created by the community members in Santa Elena. The ideas surrounding the *uay* in the narratives are put forward in either a positive or a negative light, which is based on a desire to affiliate, or not, with “non-Western” cultural concepts. Just as agency (in the form of ritual action) is performed in order to control personhood, people in Santa Elena manipulate the oral tradition to direct personhood both on a personal and on a social level.

On another level of interpretation, it is interesting to try to understand the psychological and philosophical implications of the existence of the *uay* characters in Mayan narrative. The interviews did not yield any descriptions of two Beings sharing one personhood; moreover, they indicate the shift from one corporeal state to another. We might be able to apply the permeability model here, in that two corporeal states are connected or transferable. Substances are not delineated and are part of one fluid network. Although the body, or appearance, changes, the underlying personhood does not. There is no allusion, in the stories, to the division of the self, in the sense of split personality traits or splintered identity. The focus is on the corporeal element. This is in contrast to the assertion of, for example, Rosales Mendoza (2008), who writes that the

connection between human and animal is a connection between society and nature. Through the permeability model, the connection remains, but through shared substances in one entity rather than shared personhood through two entities.

This could be viewed from another angle, that of metaphor and symbolism, in the same way in which we see creative expression in portraiture. In this sense, aspects of personhood are being divided and placed in contrast to one another, as an analogy for the divisible nature of Being, through a permeable world of materials. The stories may symbolise the complex relationship, seemingly ever present in religion and philosophical theory, between reality and illusion. We could recall impersonation in art, the construction of an ephemeral illusion through image, and even the self-conscious position imposed on the viewer (participant) by creative material. By shifting forms and altering the stability of an image, the spectator (in reaction to both a material form and an imagined one) is more likely to engage on a personal level with the subject.

The *uay* narratives are emotive because they raise concepts that are at the heart of a Mesoamerican mentality. The characters and the thrust of the stories can vary, and are as interchangeable as the personhood of the subjects themselves. The concepts are reinforced, and played with, and in this way they attract the imagination and critical opinion of the listener. This is, perhaps, the existential and didactic power of the *uay* narrative. Cultural identity and heritage perspectives shine through the descriptions of *uay*, as we have seen. It is perhaps unsurprising that the aspects of *uay* are so divergent, since they are actively being shifted and changed, in a way that corresponds to more fluid conceptions of personhood and identity. This research shows that in Santa Elena, the animal image of a person is not a connection with nature (Rosales Mendoza 2008), or a way of preserving balance (Kray 2005). It is a narrative that arises in the context of discussions pertaining to the engagement with a cultural identity separate from Mexican nationality. As such, it is involved in the deconstruction/reconstruction of identity.

2.4 External Animated Forces and Action in Response.

Briefly touched upon have been the philosophies that relate to the life-force attributed, by the people with whom I conducted interviews, to inanimate (non-human and non-faunal) entities. The present discussion attempts to deconstruct the implications of these ideas for the negotiation of personhood through materials. It is likely that creative

and religious stories, as well as ritual performances, can elucidate some of the deeper aspects of a specific cultural response to Being, and its relationship to worked matter. I will touch on various interviews that deal with religious and metaphysical themes.

The Structure of Forces.

Interviews concerning religious or metaphysical philosophy were particularly fruitful (perhaps predictably) with people who are an authority on spiritual and physical well-being in the community (although these sources have not been used exclusively). The first example is that of interviewee D, from Kantunil, a botanist and healer, whose views on the energy imbued in historical sites, have already been mentioned. The main thrust of the arguments that substantiate his worldview centre around the imbalance of energy. The increase in the frequency and impact of natural disasters in the lead-up to the period ending 2012, for example, has been attributed to the world (metaphorically described as a dog) shaking off fleas due to the increase in toxic waste, rubbish and so on, associated with the development of modern technology. He was asked to respond to whether he would describe the world, the natural environment, and the materials that constitute it, as having animate energy further than from a metaphorical perspective. He framed his response in another way, using stones as the example in his explanation. Stones were divided into two broad types: in the first instance, there are those that have energy because they have absorbed it from a person who has transferred it to them. This could happen, as might be logical following the earlier discussion, if that person's life-force was displaced or heightened due to various possible factors of intensity. He gave an example of how it might be possible to detect a stone with energy; when a dog circles a stone as if to sit on it but decides not to, it can be plausibly inferred that the stone has its own energy that repels the dog. The other type of stone that may have energy is one that has been under impact. As an example, he used an agate, which was precious to him. This stone contains energy, according to D, because of the impact (pressure) that is necessary to create an agate. The levels of energy in certain objects or places, therefore, are not necessarily a negative influence based on dramatic human occurrences (as described by A/B/C). However, it is evident that he believed a balance to be desirable. In response to a question relating to his relationship with the Catholic religion (he owned numerous catholic shrines), he asserted that God, and the Virgin Mary, could restore a balance of energy, if prayed to.

A similar interview with F, the elderly, and respected, doctor in Santa Elena, yielded alternative explanations of the role of energy and the impact of external forces. One such explanation, which touches on the issue, concerns a subject which is much talked about, in general, among the people in Santa Elena, and that is *mal de ojo*. It is stated in some ethnographic literature that *mal de ojo* is associated with a change in temperature (Adams 1952, 34, Marshall 1986, 162, Villa-Rojas 1987, 381, Rodríguez Balam 2005, 167, Martínez González 2007, 162). A basic description of the narratives surrounding *mal de ojo* is given in the previous sub-chapter, with regard to the effect of hungry or pregnant people looking at a baby. However, it is perhaps interesting to add the dimension explained during F's interview, because the causes and mechanism were unpacked. F stated that *mal de ojo* can be cured using the leaves of a small bush (dark green, soft and shaped like pine or fern). However, it is supposedly not the ideal remedy because the spirit of *mal de ojo* remains in the child and makes that person (unconsciously) more capable of transmitting it to another person in the future. A concrete example of this was given in the form of interviewee H, who is a friend of interviewee F and who was cured of *mal de ojo* as a child, with this leaf. He maintained that he had to be very careful in adulthood not to pass on the effects of *mal de ojo*. He said that he had once, inadvertently, killed a horse (by not being mindful enough of his power to cause harm). This style of thought, in Santa Elena, runs throughout a number of the interviews, and implies the possibility that energy is very fluid and extends beyond an individual, and even beyond a closed group of people or a community. Not only is energy capable of moving through material (corporeal or otherwise), but the repercussions of this type of energy can persist through time. There are not always either spatial or temporal boundaries.

As a result of the previous communication with D, more questions were prompted to F in the hope of a further explanation regarding how this seemingly impersonal energy could interact with material culture. An emphasis was placed on belief as part of an ability to comprehend the deeper elements of Maya meta-theory. F also provided evidence that such an energy exists in raw materials: if you hit a stone, it gives off a burnt smell, "If you can smell it, it's alive". There was no mention of this life having been transferred from a person, and so, in this case, the interview indicates that "inanimate" objects could possess force intrinsically. Again, there is an implication here that certain stones are alive and certain others are not, although the reason for this is unclear.

There are two interesting sides to this philosophy that run through both stories. In the first place, there are shifts in energy through people and through certain objects, and the force (energy) itself cannot be harnessed or controlled – action must be taken by the

persons involved in a narrative, to avoid negative consequences. This could be a metaphor for an agricultural lifestyle, in which nature provides a certain environment that cannot be manipulated, but where tools and agency on the part of the community can prevent too much irregularity. The metaphor can also be seen in a religious or ephemeral sense. Ritual action can counteract the aspects of the world that can be harmful. Here, cultural conceptions, through the oral narrative, tap into the representation of both the banal and the more spiritual. This mediation between the knowable and the unknowable promotes an existential exercise that links creative feeling to daily life. Ideas of fluid materials, and so fluid persons, are reinforced, but the more banal aspect would probably give the people in Santa Elena an opportunity to be creative in their response to their cultural philosophies.

This leads to the second point, which is the appropriation of cultural identity through response to these ideas of transferable energies (negative or otherwise). Interviewee F stated that, in order to engage with these forces at all, one had to believe in the existence of unknown and inexplicable occurrences. This sentiment is comparable to the association of negative or positive attributes to the *uay/wayjel*. By choosing to believe in the external forces, pre-Colombian or inherited cultural values are lent weight, and, in this way, are supported. It is clear that F divides community members into those who engage with the narratives and those who do not. The community thus has practical and creative power over its cultural heritage.

Ethnographic and archaeological literature regarding the association of life-force to material "objects" is plentiful. These materials are usually related to people, however. For example, some ethnographic research shows that objects associated with a deceased person are broken before being buried with him/her; "…clothes and objects associated with the dead person are placed in the grave, each somehow cut, burned or broken" (Vogt 1983, 23). This ritual termination takes place in various communities; among the Tzotzil of Zinacantán, the Huastec of San Luis Potosí and the Nahua communities of Veracruz (where the plates and *machetes* of the deceased are broken to release the *yolotl*, soul) (Stross 1998, 37). Ritual termination (and animation) are mirrored in the archaeological record, which presents innumerable examples of smashed architectural constructions and stelae, and buried valuables, such as jade or pots, with buildings and stelae (Freidel, Schueler and Cobos Palma 1998, Freidel et al 1993, McKillop 2004, 221-223). This suggests that material objects can contain a life-force that engages with the personhood of the owner, and that the personhood of the "object" is not displaced naturally at death. As mentioned, following the internal logic displayed in the interview with F in Santa Elena and

D in Kantunil, it could be hypothesised that objects can have a life force or agency, independent of interaction with humans or animals. They may also become agents as a result of large energy forces. Rituals are performed in order to maintain an energy balance between objects and the persons surrounding them. Thus, there would be two systems functioning in tandem: the energy and personhood shared between people, nature and objects is in constant negotiation on the basis of powerful forces that happen at random and are unavoidable. In contrast to this system is that of socially and religiously prescribed rituals that help to restore this balance or to avoid adverse consequences. The repetition and consolidation of these narratives is another aspect of social ritual, which reinforces the concepts of flexible personhood and force through the material environment. It has been identified as a way of endorsing historic cultural identity, even though this identity has no stable meaning (Castañeda 2004 and Sullivan 2000). As such, agency is employed in the transmission of concepts that we associate with pre-Colombian Maya thought.

External Forces and Their Effects.

Discussed in the ethnographic literature, and equally apparent in interviews conducted in Santa Elena, is the role and nature of *viento malo/aire malo* (for example, Barrera-Bassols and Toledo 2005, 30). These forces in the air have also been linked, in ethnographic literature, to personhood; “the air ik’ is a person’s ch’uylel spirit. The spirit of men is pure wind” (Whittaker and Warkentin 1965, 88-89). *Aires* or *vientos* are said to exist in areas that have a connection with the past and outside the confines of a community; “There is a cenote there that you shouldn’t go into. If you go in, you won’t come out. There are harmful winds there. They are hot and cold. Once you go in, they pull you and don’t let you out" (own transl of Rodríguez Balam 2005, 158). Soil/*lu’um* (Canul-Pech 1967) has been shown to have spiritual, as well as material, value (Quintal et al 2003 and Iroshe 2002); “The semantic and epistemological richness of the lu’um domain is also reflected by this holistic perception, in which land is inextricably linked to the material and spiritual worlds” (Barrera-Bassols and Toledo 2008, 28). As such, land, for the Maya, needs to be looked after and nourished; “Land never dies as we do; and plants, and animals are also condemned to die... Land is a spirit” (Iroshe 2002, 4). There are many examples of the rituals that take place in order to ensure that, for example, the Ch’a’ Chaak ceremony, which has been reported in at least fifteen towns (for example, Villa-Rojas 1987, Freidel et al 1993, Flores and Balam 1997, Rosales Mendoza 2008). This ceremony evokes Chaak, the water god. The *jmeno'ob* are in control of this ceremony, and

so have the charge of fomenting a connection and relationship between spiritual forces and town members; “we are made of soil, and we will return as soil after we die, and our body has been eaten by worms” (Iroshe 2002, 65-70). Also attributed in the ethnographic literature is *yuumdzil/yuumdzilo’ob*, which is a wind that transforms itself into a human who wanders in the *monte*. Its function is to lose people who are far from their village. The *yumbalam* is an animal, also like an *aire*, that sings and whistles and causes people to get lost (Rodríguez Balam 2005, 166). It is notable here that there is an association between the *vientos*, and their effect, and the distance from the town, the *monte*. A deep and interested knowledge of landscape management is also recorded among Maya communities, and so there is an amalgamated effort to deal with farming and the land; “The first offers information about nature through empirical knowledge; and the second deals will problems not covered by the first (the unknown, uncontrollable and unpredictable), through the dialogue with the supra-natural entities (gods, deities, spirits). In brief: nature, deities and humans work together in the eternal production and reproduction of life” (Barrera-Bassols and Toledo 2008, 28).

Vientos Malos.

These airs or winds have already arisen in the context of their effects on personhood. They are very much present in the minds of people of Santa Elena, dictating certain practical, spiritual and health (as has been shown) choices. It is perhaps useful to collate some of the instances of their mention, in an attempt to understand their role in the construction of religious rationality and personhood. As discussed, the harmful winds are principally said to exist in places that are far away from the community, and in particular around ancient sites (sites that are charged with the energy of ancestors from many generations, X’coh and Uxmal, for example. A woman (C) whose family of young boys (brothers) brave the abandoned archaeological sites in the area, claimed in an interview that people fear these spaces due to the fact that to go there is a decided engagement with the past, which should remain buried.

These winds can also exist where a violent act has happened (see Chapter 2a) and this energy can travel around at random, and sometime affect vulnerable people. For example, two other women who were interviewed scolded some small children who, while dancing in the main square in the wind, were cavalier about its consequences. They seemed to imply that adults were more adept at avoiding a problem with these winds. Four boys (I, J, K and L), all fifteen years old and who spend time at the abandoned

archaeological sites in defiance of the directions of their carers, described the wind as moving in spirals close to the ground, and often raising leaves. There seemed to be a small disagreement as to whether this visible spiral wind is a warning that the actual bad wind is coming, or whether it is the bad wind itself. What was certain was that it caused a severe sickness, starting with a fever and culminating in a frozen back: one of the boys stated that he had become sick in this way when he was younger. He had a fever and could not walk, and was taken by his family to be ritually cleansed and then warned to be careful of these winds in the future. F, in light of his evident knowledge of cultural theory, provided a useful explanation in this regard. He asserted that most of the winds that people feared were from the north and that they caused fevers because they upset the temperature balance in children. He agreed that it was the wind that circles close to the ground that can be mischievous, so that, in this case, the wind is animated. He gave the example of a young boy, watching a swirling wind next to a freestanding gourd. If the child is aware that the gourd might fall and is watching it, the wind will knock it over. Likewise, if you tell a child not to fall, he/she will. He touches, here, on the power of suggestion and its role in the energy imbalance caused by winds.

These various accounts of the role of winds in Santa Elena present what seems to be a slightly confused rationality. However, although it is impossible to get a consolidated idea of the nature of this phenomenon, there are common elements throughout. In line with the accounts relating to intrinsic energy in natural materials, there are winds that can affect people as passive agents, as in the case of winds that cause illness through low temperatures or association with ancient sites. Those that are produced at archaeological sites might be classified distinctly, since the energy comes from people and from worked material culture. There are also winds that have a humanised or dialectic agency, such as those that respond to the suggestion of an expectant or nervous child. There are varying types of external force, therefore, between natural energy, the presence of history, and shifting negotiable and non-negotiable agencies.

Aluxes.

Another entity that provides external force to people in Santa Elena, and is also accounted for in ethnographic literature, is that of the *alux*. *Aluxes* have been described heterogeneously in this literature, but are usually associated with ritual spaces such as archaeological sites, the *monte* or caves. One example of literature on the subject states that "… aluxes can be found in caves or underground" (own transl of Rodríguez Balam

2005, 162). Described as naked or dressed as ancient Mayan people, all men or a mix of men and women, with or without genitals, mischievous or protectors of the *milpa* and *monte* (Rodriguez Balam 2005, 163) The *aluxes* have also been described as “owners or saints that administer natural phenomena” (Barrera-Bassols and Toldeo 2008, 29). It is clear that they have never had a concrete profile, but they are another connection (like the *wajyel* or the *h-men*) between people and their actions, and nature. It is perhaps irrelevant to attempt an understanding of the historical longevity of this belief, or to analyse how significant the symbolism and narrative details are to pre-Colombian Maya thought. It is, however, interesting to try to interpret what the diverging stories about *aluxes* say about the specific creative engagement that people in Santa Elena make with the phenomena surrounding intangible forces.

Thus, rather than record the entire repertory of discussions regarding the *aluxes*, since, as mentioned, it seems impossible to reach a precise description, certain lengthier descriptions from Santa Elena will be given, as an overview of how they fit into the larger scheme of external forces. A couple who live in Ticul, but teach in the school at Santa Elena, and also work in a local restaurant and investigate the nearby sites (M and N), were the most fervent advocates for the existence of *aluxes*, claiming to have seen them many times. There is a very small and unnamed pre-Colombian Maya site near Santa Elena, which is also on the top of a hill, where M goes alone at night and sets up a tent. The area, according to his account, is one of high energy and power, which can make visitors lose their way when coming down the hill. In order to prevent this, he carries a red ribbon, which he attaches to the trees. *Aluxes* run around the camp at night. M states that they are all men, all naked and very small. He added that they could take your life if they wanted, but they do not harm him, in particular, because they know him. They are used to him, and so they watch from behind the trees.

A man (interviewee H), now living on the coast but originally from Santa Elena and the son of a man famous for being able to cure severe cases of *mal de ojo*, related his interactions with *aluxes*. Unlike M’s account, H's account of *aluxes* includes female *aluxes*. In corroboration, his account relates that *aluxes* live around ancient sites, both pre-Colombian and Spanish (one of the stories speaks of men who worked at an old hacienda and whose work was hindered for that reason). His experience with *aluxes* comes principally from time spent as a child living with his family in a pre-Colombian stone structure, a little way from the village of Santa Elena, isolated and insignificant, in his opinion, as an archaeological site. According to H, the *aluxes* are unrelated to the *viento malo*. The teenaged boys interviewed, and mentioned earlier with regard to the *viento*

malo, claimed that *aluxes* were guardians of that wind and that their actions were always a warning to a person, so that they may dodge it. H described them as creatures that represent the past and the random force (and effects) of nature. He stated that they could hurt you, by accident, because of their irrationality. An example given by H is a memory from infancy, when some *aluxes* knocked his hammock so that he fell out and nearly hit his head on the stone floor. He asserted that it was for this reason that they deserve attention, and gifts of food or tobacco, where possible. If these steps are taken, H is sure that the *aluxes* need not be feared. He gave an example of the sort of gifts given to *aluxes*: recounting the story of a man of his father's generation, from Santa Elena, who used to be the guard at Uxmal. Since this man was aware that the *aluxes* were numerous in that area, he would leave the butt of his marijuana cigarette in the evening when he left the site; sadly, this behaviour led to his dismissal. F was in agreement with H's theory, adding that the *aluxes* were guardians of houses and temples.

Although there are diverging accounts of both the role and the character of the *aluxes*, it is evident, both in existing ethnographic literature and from the research conducted, that the narratives surrounding this phenomenon form a significant force in the Maya community of Santa Elena, and, presumably, do so in surrounding areas. The differing accounts imply that the underlying cultural value of these narratives lies outside of the concrete aspects defined within them. The significance of the *aluxes* is related to the externalisation of agency, the choice to animate those external forces and humanise them, and finally the act of engaging with them in an attempt to negotiate negative experiences. Evidently, there is little discussion regarding the association of *aluxes* with historical sites and the world outside the security of home, the wild *monte*. This may reflect certain long-term values relating to the role of ancestors and the natural world. Furthermore, in line with an alternative appreciation of personhood, the easy discrepancy relating to the role and identity of these figures is a significant factor in itself.

The *X'Tabay*.

A subject much discussed in popular story-telling, used to underline several moral points, and, again, shrouded in varying particular detail, is the existence of the *X'Tabay*. She is described substantially in ethnographic literature; "a woman in indigenous Maya clothing who goes along the paths and clearings of the *monte* at dawn. According to tradition, she is the goddess of ties, cords and hunting, the X'tab of the pre-Hispanic Maya, she is generally associated with suicide by hanging" (own transl of Rodríguez Balam

2005, 164). She has various appearances (she is sometimes described as being without a head, or with only three fingers, or without complete fingers or toes (Rosales Mendoza 2008, 114), as well as associated roles, one of which is to punish intoxicated men on their way back home; the *X'Tabay* legend "reinforces determined roles, like that of the seductress…she who is neither girlfriend nor wife, but who punishes bad behaviour in terms of male adultery" (own transl of Rosales Mendoza 2008, 114). An earlier legend separated the *X'Tabay* from *Utz colel*; while the *X'Tabay* offered her good heart and body to travellers, *Utz Colel* is selfish and careless, and has green serpent-like skin (Rosales Mendoza 2008, 114). When the *X'Tabay* is buried, flowers called *Xtabentun* grow from her grave, while a foul stench emanates from the grave of *Utz Colel* (Martínez 2003). In more modern Yucatec narrative, these negative traits are associated to the *X'Tabay*; she is found near ceibas and attracts men by taking the guise of women they love, and, with her perfumes, she kills men who are found in her arms, or they escape with scratch marks on their skin or with their chests torn open by her sharp claws (Rosales 2006, 250).

The descriptions of the *X'Tabay* are as heterogenous in the accounts from Santa Elena as they are here. In the two accounts that will be presented for discussion, as well as in other accounts from the inhabitants of Santa Elena, it is unanimously asserted that the *X'Tabay* is encountered, for the most part, near (old) trees, caves, or water holes (*cenotes* or wells). The lengthiest account of the *X'Tabay* was given by F and related to one of his close friends, when he was a youth. He stated that at this time the village was as yet unpaved and was without electricity. The story corroborates the general consensus concerning the locations associated with *X-Tabay*, although F commented that, since he neither fought against her nor searched for her, she did not know him, and could therefore do him no harm. The man in question lived at the end of Street 20, where F still lives and went to the *cantina* to get drunk in the evening. Since, as mentioned, the road was as yet unpaved, there were trees on Street 20, leading to the outskirts of the village and the surrounding forest. According to the man's story, he saw the *X'Tabay* at the tree and leant on her shoulder and followed her down the road, out of the village. At some point, however, he realised that she was the *X'Tabay* and stabbed her in the back with a double-bladed knife that he kept in his pocket. She then disappeared and he made his way home, sobered by this chilling encounter. The man, on arriving home, told his wife what had happened and they both waited nervously until the morning, fearful that news would come of a murdered woman. However, neither husband nor wife was convinced that this was a case of a hallucination brought on by alcohol. When no news had arrived by 10am the next morning, the man went out to retrace his steps from the previous night. In the place

where he had stabbed the woman there were drops of blood, and this blood left a trail all the way into the forest, where a new cactus stood. The cactus had his double-bladed knife stuck into its back, and so had become a host for the *X'Tabay*.

An account by another man (G), who works on the roads outside of Santa Elena, related this story to his brother. This brother, having listened to many stories involving the brutality, and charm, of the *X'Tabay*, longed to see her. G asserted that the most frequent encounters with the *X'Tabay* have been with virgin boys. He waited every night consecutively, for a few weeks, in a hammock hanging from a ceiba tree near an old well. This brother did eventually see the *X'Tabay*. He was horrified and traumatized, and spent a long time recovering from the shock. As mentioned, G is a fervent Catholic who chooses to focus his thought relating to the unknown on biblical stories. He claimed that if one were to open himself up to these forces through curiosity (as his brother did), one would let in the devil. In this case, the devil takes the form of the *X'Tabay*.

One common factor in the two descriptions of the encounter with *X'Tabay* is the idea of looking for trouble by engagement, whether through hubris or fear. It is unclear what the implication of this is, but fundamentally it is arguable that supernatural or spiritual encounters with these dubious forces are sparked by human action and will. Here again, we can identify the theme of belief in these community philosophies as an indicator of possible vulnerability in their regard. It is by engaging with these forces that they become real. Otherwise, the general aspect of external forces seems to be that they can be prevented through extreme care, fear and ritual action.

Discussion.

These narrative elements evidence the depth of existential and religious thought surrounding the relationship between nature and society. These narratives are also interesting on a number of other levels, some of which are particularly striking for the purposes of the present research. The first is the personification of an external force. The influence exerted by the *X'Tabay* is felt as a human presence, and provides subjective engagement. Secondly, the *X'Tabay* is connected to the environment and to places of natural and historical significance. It could be argued that this external force, therefore, is related to the roles of time and the natural environment. While there is no control over this force, certain actions, for example not entering certain areas at night, or not becoming excessively intoxicated, can prevent harm. Finally, in denying the very existence of these forces, they cease to be a threat. Those community members who do not wish to

associate their identity with traditional story-telling or philosophy are not part of the dialectic that exists between the various agents that are attributed life-force in Santa Elena. In this way, the creativity surrounding the histories reflects the philosophical structure of the person and their place within the natural and historical context. Context is dealt with on a personal level, and demands subjective treatment. A code of social rituals and prescriptions mediates the interaction, as well as individual wisdom, balance and restraint. It has been posited that this enduring behavioural trait is outlined in the Popol Vuh; "... the adventures of the twin gods who mediate relations between gods of the upper and lower worlds provide a model of confrontation and opposition to forces that are part of a cosmic unity" (Nash 2004, 167). There is some continuity from colonial Maya culture and there is evidently plenty of pre-Colombian conceptual thought integrated into the Popol Vuh.

It seems plausible to assume that the meta-theories provided by the people of knowledge in Santa Elena, and the narratives provided by many other members of the community, constitute a shared Maya worldview regarding the way personhood is determined, individually and socially. The natural world and the power of both historical and present day society (community members) constitute forces that have an effect on personhood. This effect is dealt with through ritual action, knowledge of historical phenomena and geography, and a personal engagement with religious philosophy. The constant negotiation forms a tension that organises social, moral and religious structure, to an extent. The narratives, while displaying a broad conceptual character, provide scope for creativity through disagreement and fluidity. There is another pervasive and significant theme, in that the narratives function as a way of reinforcing interest in the specific cultural identity of Santa Elena, one that can be linked to pre-Colombian Maya culture. Of course, as always, this is not to say that there are not more nuanced and heterogenous cultural markers underlying identity and the safeguarding of "intangible heritage"[2].

[2] "Intangible heritage" is the term used by UNESCO for their 2003 Convention.

2.5 Statues and Personalised Material Culture.

The previous two sub-chapters have discussed alternative aspects of Being and external forces that can pass through, and exist within, various entities. The following text relates these theories to ethnographic research concerning statues and animated material culture and correlative practices in Santa Elena. Ethnographic research has put a large focus on "personalised" or alternative interactions with religious statues in the Maya area, as well as in other Mesoamerican communities. Evidence from post-conquest sources indicates that statues from the pre-Colombian tradition were still being "worshipped" and used despite the efforts of Catholic missionaries (such as Durán, Sahagún and Mendieta in what is now Central Mexico, and Landa, Lizana and Sánchez de Aguilar in Yucatán). Statues were discovered on altars in caves that were said to have been painted blue and sometimes covered in the blood of sacrificial victims (Landa, Relación de las cosas de Yucatán). Tozzer (1941) suggests that these representations were the icons of ancestors and were "…displayed to establish the genealogical depth of a lineage" (McAnany 1995, 27). These wooden images have been described as "the most important part of the inherited property" (Tozzer 1941, 111). Modern ethnographers record information relating to, for the most part, Catholic "icons", although these statues appear to be conceptualised and contextualised in a distinct manner from that promoted by European standards of Catholic thought and practice. The room dedicated to the *santos* (saints) at Chichicastenango is adorned with constantly burning candles and incense; the ancestors are placed alongside the saints, which has been identified as a demonstration of the conflation of indigenous and Catholic traditions (Bunzel 1959). The saints are an equally significant presence in the church at San Juan Chamula, Chiapas; "all along the outer walls, the lesser santos stretch out pleading arms" (Pearce 1984, 188). It has also been postulated that the Maya tradition of "icon worship" was a result of the intrusion of Central Mexican religious influences, with the introduction of Kukulcán into Yucatán (Pearce 1984, 29). There is, for example, ethnographic evidence for the continuance of materialised spirit worship in contemporary Central Mexican indigenous populations; the paper seed spirits that are dressed and adorned with jewellery and placed among their personal items of furniture in beautifully decorated chests (Sandstrom 1991, 244). Arguably, the type of relationship that exists between people and statues in Mesoamerican indigenous tradition may be the product of a multiplicity of religious influences. It is logical to consider that these practices may have been easily assimilated into existing tradition on the basis of an existing framework of Maya thought.

Equally, it is likely that the “idol worship” recorded in the ethnohistoric literature was a product of the fears and projections of the Spanish chroniclers “…within the context of the religious climate of the time, and the almost paranoid witch hunt on “idolatry”” (own transl of Gubler 2007, 119). The various ethnohistoric sources and circumstances have indicated how the system fostered these accounts; “First the circumstances of the confessions of 1562-1564 – Spanish assumptions of Maya guilt, the framing of questions in a way that proposes the answers, the continual threat or application of pain until confession was extracted and detailed, the correlation between Maya confessions and 15th century tales of Jewish ritual murders in Spain – all of these suggest that such a testimony may tell us more about Spanish fears than about Maya deeds” (Restall 1997, 149).

Restall also argues that the intrusion of household images in colonial Mexico represented, not only the divinity of the Catholic deity, but moreover the role of the household head, whose name the image was given (Restall 1997, 154). This assertion steers the debate away from icon worship, and opens avenues of investigation into other, more secular, aspects of pre-Colombian Mesoamerican culture. Wills found in Yucatán’s notarial archives also point towards the economic role of icons, in that they are often treated as important forms of property (along with houses and land) (Rugeley 2010, 197). One such example is that of Gregorio May (the *batab* of Uman), who was condemned to death for complicity in the Caste War, and whose icons of Christ and San Antonio were then inherited by his daughters. That the icons had this objective, as well as their spiritual power, meant that they accrued an authority independent of that of the priests. Furthermore, although the priests controlled literature, songs and some other ritual/religious objects, it was the people of Yucatán who carved the icons (Rugeley 2010, 197). This may explain the circumspection of the priests towards these icons but, more importantly, flags the importance of the role of icons for the people of Yucatán. In this way, the icons had the potential to become a symbol of a religious identity outside of the church and of economic autonomy.

Partible “Icons”.

The possibility of divisibility and partibility of personhood within Classic Maya thought has been discussed at length (a phenomenon that exists in other cases in the ethnographic record (specifically discussed, for example, in Melanesia)). The ways in which these conceptions may be manifest in engagements with ancestors can also be

illustrated from the ethnographic record in the Maya area. One example of the veneration of prominent members of society is witnessed in the interment of their bodies in places of attributed spiritual power (for example, in underground caverns and particular sites in the sacred mountains).

The burial of specific parts of the body (for example, a burial without a head or a femur), as shown by Guiteras-Holmes (1965, 298), is attested also in the archaeological record of the ancient Maya, and may demonstrate that certain parts of the body constituted separate personified entities. It has been suggested that among the modern-day Tzotzil Maya, parts of the body that have been removed (such as hair or fingernails) contain an independent Being (Guiteras-Holmes 1965, 298). It is within this context that the incorporation of the cremated remains of ancestors within the images is particularly remarkable; “The rest of the people made for their (deceased) fathers wooden statues of which the back of the head was left hollow, and they then burned a part of the body and placed its ashes there, and plugged it up; afterwards they stripped off the dead body the skin of the back of the head and stuck it over this place and they buried the rest as they were wont to do. They preserved these statues with a great deal of veneration among their idols” (Tozzer 1941, 129-31). These practices may indicate that material representations could take on specific elements of the person whom they imitated, or at least that they could assume part of that person’s soul from their cremated remains. This appears almost like an extension of portraiture, in which reality and reflection, or illusion, can share personhood. The personhood shift here, between reality and illusion, recalls the manipulation of cultural identity through belief in invisible or magical forces.

It is necessary to take into account that post-medieval Catholicism was also deeply shrouded in the culture of partible objects with supernatural significance; “in effect, in the countries of the Old World conquered and colonised by the remains of the Roman Empire, the cult of martyrs and saints had made the the first matrix of local identity” (own transl of Alberro 1999; 17), and alongside the introduction of these two cults were also the relics of the martyrs, in 1578 (Alberro 1999, 21). Arguably, the spiritual power attributable to parts of the body of a saint or martyr could demonstrate similarly alternative post-medieval catholic conceptions of the partibility of personhood. This tradition would have been received by Mesoamerican communities in colonial times within a certain lens, and the resulting philosophies are syncretistic.

It has been shown that the religious and political scenes depicted in Classic Maya public art are attributed certain naturalistic features (for example, Miller and Martin 2004 and Laughton 2012, 20). Furthermore, perhaps, that through alternative methods and conceptions, they were personalised. The personalisation of images appears (from the ethnographic record) to continue in modern Maya tradition, both in concept and in form. The saints that line the church at San Juan Chamula, which stretch out pleading arms, have been described as having staring eyes that have a "... startling, lifelike quality from faces distorted in agony" (Pearce 1984, 188). It is plainly implied here that the people build images that invoke a certain amount of pathos, in order, perhaps, to add credibility or emphasis to their power and personality. It may also be the case that the images appear to be more lifelike due to their conceptual context, that is, within a community that considers their existence a forceful part of the community. It has also been shown that certain Maya communities personalise their saints; that is, narratives surrounding the saints treat these figures as living members of the community. For example, at Zinacantán, San Lorenzo, the patron saint is said to have been found wandering in the forest, hungry and tired, with his clothing ripped. San Lorenzo proceeded to ask the villager who found him whether he would request, on his behalf, residency in Zinacantán. This request was subsequently taken to the *municipio* (town council) and granted; a church was built for him and he became patron saint (Pearce 1985, 176). This is an example of the humanisation of a saint; San Lorenzo and the villager interacted and negotiated directly. The story of San Antonio is similarly indicative of this aspect of relationships with the saints. It is said that a man named Mateo Pérez Trejo asked San Antonio to help his *milpa* prosper. After burning several candles and incense in his honour, he removed the saint to his *milpa*, concerned that he would not be able to watch it properly. The missing statue was reported and sought by the town's people, who promptly arrested Mateo Pérez. His anger at the saint, for not fulfilling his wish, in spite of having accepted the votaries, led him to seek revenge when he was let out of jail; he cut off the saint's hands (Pearce 1984, 174). This narrative is said to "...attest to the degree of personification that the santos possess in the minds and lives of the Highland Maya" (Pearce 1985, 174). It may also illustrate the argument that, within a Maya worldview, a concrete exchange can take place between supernaturals and humans (Pearce 1984, 175). Bunzel (1959, 269-74) also shows, in her investigations of the Maya belief system in Chichicastenango, that the ancestors experience all the emotions that are experienced by the living; for example, jealousy,

greed, ambition, envy and vengefulness. It can be shown that this pervades other Mesoamerican belief systems; for example, there is a manifestation of the Nahua fire spirit, Juan Flojo, who is forced to abandon Amatlán after he was criticised by his brother for his laziness (Sandstrom 1995, 249). This outlook is substantially different from the catholic belief, in which saints are blameless and contain metaphors for abstract theological concepts.

The decision, in the 17th century, to promote local saints in Mexico, may, to some extent, have been a reaction to a culturally specific desire, on the part of the indigenous population of Mexico; "…unlike the saints and martyrs of the universal Church and its administration established during the viceroyalty, who were distanced in time and space, the faithful sought to worship concrete personalities, who were well rooted in their immediate reality, and who were entirely familiar and local" (Alberro 1999, 22). The reasons for this choice were presumably multifaceted, however. For example, it is plausible that a society consisting of splintered communities with small-scale political cohesion, such as existed in Southern Mexico at the time of the conquest, might also have welcomed a more personal and balanced approach to religious figures. It has also been argued that the tendency towards this type of engagement with saints and statues did have pre-Colombian roots, but that it was a Post-classic influence from Central Mexico (Solís Robleda 2005, 75). Logically, this implies that Classic Maya conceptions of image, religious image or otherwise, were distinct from those of Central Mexico. Having said that, there is plenty of evidence to support the theory that increased subjective engagement with worked matter, in the religious context, provides relevant information not only about the impact of the Central Mexican culture and the conquest but also Maya specificities.

Statues and Saints in Santa Elena.

To be elaborated upon in a later chapter, the question of “idolatry” and “statue worship” in Santa Elena has been further complicated in recent years by the substantial conversion by residents to the Jehovah's Witness sect, among other (admittedly less popular) variants of Christianity. An interview with a young catholic woman, C, who sings in the church choir and works at the village shop, demonstrated her opinion concerning the difference between Catholics and Jehovah's Witnesses and the other Evangelical sects (specifically in relation to the veneration of images). She said that the Protestant and Jehovah's Witness opinion of Catholics was that they adored saints, whereas the Jehovah's Witness and Evangelical religious and home spaces are free of any images. C

defended the Catholic faith by saying that the images of the saints were not worshipped, but were merely venerated. This is an interesting divide, with regard to material culture. The inclusion, or not, of visual and image prompts would certainly create very different responses to religious feeling. The decision to separate the styles, on a material level, shows a sensitivity, on the part of the people of Santa Elena, to its importance. The decision to include material culture into the religious process might correlate with the decision to develop a sensitivity to the power of an “object”.

Perhaps the most prominent and popular saint image in the village is that of San Mateo, who is the patron saint of the Catholic community there. In support of a similar attribution of personalised, and supernatural, elements of religious statues to that of previously described ethnographic inquiries, there are some popular narratives concerning San Mateo. Again, according to C, the still existent statue of San Mateo, was found centuries ago, below a well that is central to the village. It is, therefore, believed that the image is either not man-made or is an archaeological artefact. The well that is referred to is in front of the village's church in the main plaza. The well is said to have been originally associated with the pre-Colombian temple structure underneath the church. This well is no longer in use. As we have seen, wells are also associated with the *X’Tabay* in many Santa Elena narratives. It was later corroborated, by interviewee H, that the image is very much loved by the older villagers because it has been known to provide aid in times that have been hard for the village. The example given was that, in times of famine, such as during the Caste War when many of the men that worked in agriculture were away, the saint would go and work the *milpas* at night, and so provide maize for the village inhabitants. Clearly, even the eldest of the inhabitants in Santa Elena has no direct memory of the Caste War, but presumably the information was passed down by previous generations. The saint, purportedly, continues to work the land efficiently, in order to feed the people of the village. In this way, he is much appreciated by the inhabitants, even today.

One of the most interesting festivities related to this patron saint in Santa Elena is the K’o che, which is specific to the village and is used in displays of Santa Elena’s cultural heritage. During visits by prominent political figures, for example, the village organises a K’o che, even though it is unrelated to a religious ceremony. It is clear that this piece of intangible cultural heritage is very much considered a community activity, and although it relates to the Catholic saint, people of all religious groups are involved in the celebration. The occasion that was witnessed took place at the beginning of February. The ritual takes place at this time every year and is related to the list of houses that will house the saint's

image. This responsibility shifts every year. A group of men run, carrying a wooden litter around the village. The goal is ultimately to take the image from the house within which it has resided for a year, to the next house on the list. The wooden litter not only contains the statue but also three girls dressed in the traditional *terna* (a white dress embroidered with coloured flowers, with garlands of flowers around their necks and gold jewellery, see Figure 12). The litter is followed by a group of men who play brass instruments alongside or behind the litter (Figure 13 shows the building of the litter). This group provides the men carrying the litter with beer while they take breaks. In Yucatec Maya, Ko means "head" and Che means "wood"; the litter is thus metaphorically the wooden head of the men carrying it. Several people, when asked why the girls accompany the image, said that the girls were a living representation of the image, although the saint is male. They add some life and sense of personal journey to the transition from one place of residence to another.

The fact that the patron saint's image was found in a place of pre-Colombian cultural importance indicates that there may be alternative rationalities both for the role of material culture, and the nature of religious figures. The statue, unlike others with less importance, is not a representation of the saint but the saint himself. At least, it imbues the religious power of the saint, and actively takes steps to ameliorate negative situations in the village (as evidenced by the narrative involving the famine aversion in the 19th century). This corresponds to the theories explicated by interviewee D, which hold that influential energy can exist within a traditionally non-animated object, or not (see previous text). This statue is particular in its ability to have agency in the village. It could sensibly be argued that there is a tendency to treat religious power as a subjective force, one that is close, culturally specific and that can be directly negotiated with. In relation to the origin of the statue, I would posit that this external and governing force comes, fundamentally, from an environmental sphere, and that it is linked to the influence of ancestors through an engagement with historical monuments and the past. The K'o che festivity reinforces some of these elements; for example, that the girls are dressed in a *terna* and are (according to interviewees) living representations of the saint who is being transported (San Mateo). In the former example, it is feasible to postulate that the people of Santa Elena relate the importance of the patron saint to a culturally specific identity within their community. In the case of the K'o che, the representatives for the saint are living people who are transported in a litter, which certainly promotes the idea of subjectivity and implies directed agency in the form of the figure of San Mateo.

The reinforcement and belief in the narratives surrounding San Mateo can also be seen as an active attempt to maintain a sense of Maya identity, specific to Santa Elena. As a Catholic saint, San Mateo is part of a more "traditional" religious affiliation in the community. There are parallels that can be drawn between the role of San Mateo and treatment of religious images in ethnographic and archaeological accounts of other Maya communities. The reception of Catholicism in Southern Mexico after the conquest has, necessarily, created a very unique relationship between communities and their religious images and statues. It is also clear that some of the new religious groups in Southern Mexico try to set themselves apart from these types of practices. An interview with a woman running the local café proved interesting in this respect. She claimed that one of her husband's lovers had used bad magic against her, and so given her the *mal de ojo*. There is more that we can say about this interview but, for the present purposes, it is interesting to note that she suffered for a long time with this illness, until she left the Catholic Church and joined the Evangelical community. She mentioned that it was through prayers that the curse was lifted but, broadly speaking, it was in embracing a new and unrelated faith that the attachment to these forces was broken. An Elder of the Jehovah's Witnesses and his wife (T and U) were asked about traditional medicine and healing, and they stated, unequivocally, that they knew nothing of this. They were very uncommunicative and claimed that nothing of the sort even existed in Santa Elena. It could be suggested that the move away from Catholicism is symbolic of, or goes alongside, a shift away from ideas and concepts that come from pre-Colombian culture and post-conquest identity in Santa Elena. Furthermore, this is evidence for very strong and objective agency within the community with regard to identity management.

Permeability in the Use of Statues.

Already discussed, to a certain extent, are the ethnohistoric records of "icon worship" that were purportedly conducted in secret by the Maya of Yucatán (Landa 1996). An example of such a discovery was made by Pedro Che, a porter at the convent of Maní in 1561; he found caves full of altars and statues covered in the blood of sacrificial deer; "…I enter the cave, to more altars and very ornate tables, and there were many idols that had recently been sprinkled with fresh deer's blood" (own transl of Lizana Book 2 Part 5 Chap 6, 180). A further example of the direct relationship between blood sacrifice and religious idols can be witnessed in the testimony of the schoolteacher Juan Conoh of Yaxcabá. He claimed that he was forced to witness the sacrifice of young boys, a sacrifice

that was intended to appease the gods and cure the illness of the Maya governor Juan Cocom (Pearce 1984, 17). Ten pre-Colombian "idols" had supposedly been placed in front of an altar, upon the leaves of a castor oil plant. A mat was placed on the floor near the statues and a large flint knife was also placed there. The heart of a sacrificed boy was eventually placed in the mouth of the largest image, that of Itzam-Na (Tozzer 1941, 118). The Lacandón also place offerings of annatto seed paint (symbolic of blood) and *tamales* (symbolic of flesh) into the mouths of animated incense burners (god pots who have faces modelled on the front) (McGee 1998, 42). Likewise, the ceremonies carried out by the Tzetzal of Tenejapa involve the smearing of symbolic blood onto rubber images, in order to animate them (Stross 1998, 33). Ostensibly, these rituals demonstrate the well-known beliefs of feeding blood and the lives of sacrificial victims to the gods, who in exchange would promote and continue the life cycle. These rituals were perhaps used for personal bargains with the otherwise ungovernable external forces. They would, perhaps, have existed alongside the public ceremonies which were conducted in pursuit of agricultural fertility, and which are attributed to many Mesoamerican communities. This evidence supports the theory that permeability can also be seen in Maya culture; substances, in this case blood, are thought be negotiated physically through ritual (at times metaphorical) juxtaposition. Not only are intangible elements of Being, and such abstract entities, thought to be transferable between concrete places (bodies) but also tangible substances, such as blood, might potentially be assimilated.

Aside from minor allusions to agricultural cyclicality, and thus permeability to a certain extent, such as the profuse use of flowers in the K'o che and in the *terna* and traditional dress, a relevant cultural aspect to discuss in this context is that of the *primicias*/*okobatan*. Much discussed in Mexico in the media, as well as in ethnographic literature (for example, Ramírez 2003, Rodríguez Balam 2005, Valverde 2000), offerings during certain agricultural phases, in times of good harvest, as much as in times of drought, are conducted throughout Yucatán. Interviews with a prominent man in Santa Elena, interviewee O, clarified the basic procedure. A spiritual leader, *h-men* (in this case interviewee E), conducts a ceremony with the *milpa* workers involving the burial of certain ritually prepared foods, which will nourish the *monte*. The women who are invited remain in the kitchen, to prepare this food. During the recitations conducted by the *h-men*, small boys are tied by the ankle to table legs and imitate the noise of frogs (Cha' Chac of Rosales Mendoza 2008). This will induce the forces associated with the land, agriculture and rain to perpetuate the cycle and thereby provide for the community.

From interviews conducted with O, it is clear that these meetings are held in private. They are not publicly announced and not all of the agricultural workers participate. This is in stark contrast to political meetings regarding agriculture. An event was organised for a politician from Mérida, for example, in which the styles, uses and direction of agriculture and the economy surrounding it were to be discussed. Needless to say, agriculture plays a very large role in the community of Santa Elena. The fact that the *primicias* are so guarded might show that they demonstrate an engagement with the private safeguarding of cultural identity. The *primicias* are not participated in by the majority of the community, but are safeguarded by the participants (to use language from the 2003 UNESCO Convention). There is also a very strong division between men and women in these rituals, and women are prohibited from participating in direct action in the *monte*. There is scope for further research here.

Discussion.

A large portion of the ethnographic literature concerning Mesoamerican communities, particularly in the Maya area, concentrates on the role and conception of religious statues or images. There is, from this literature, substantial evidence to support the existence of distinct conceptions of materiality and personhood within this cultural framework. The evidence gleaned from Santa Elena, Yucatán does not strictly support a consolidated or structured adherence to these conceptions. However, it is clear that certain narratives and rituals raise similar or related themes. It would not be implausible to deduce that past beliefs have been dissolved through a prolonged period of distinct religious and cultural influence, or by widespread cultural and religious pluralism and modernity. Conversely, it might be argued that statues and images were never concretely considered to contain inherent agency. Inscrutable forces relating to, for example, community members from the past or natural phenomena exist and are influential. These forces are not, however, attributable to worked matter in itself. They can, moreover, inhabit material culture and this agency can move or be transferred. It is possible that it is the object of certain rituals in Santa Elena to attempt a manipulation of these forces. The latter suggestion is more probable and more relevant, since there are contemporary testimonies to its effect. The dialogue concerning the animation of statues and images is divided, in the minds of various interviewees, into adherence to Catholicism or to newer religious groups. The work of healers such as E and F is associated with Catholicism, where safety from the negative forces that are treated by these practitioners is couched in the shift to

other religious groups. Religious belief is related to choice and action, providing two superimposed tiers of action in Santa Elena: ritual action against, for example, drought by making *primicias* and, above that, engagement with the belief that *primicias*, and other more “traditionally” held practices, can be of use.

2.6 Time and Space.

As the previous three sub-chapters show, there are links between the flow and effect of eternal forces and places where violent actions took place in the past. The present discussion will centre on the role of space/time in community conceptions of Being. The ethnographic discussion in the Maya area, concerning community rationality, has developed the concept of "existential sovereignties" (Watanabe 1992, 12 after Redfield). Watanabe’s research was among the Chimalteco community, in Guatemala. This phrase has been defined as “…the conjunction of place, as an ongoing here and now, with individuals committed to the emergent possibilities and conditions of that place. Together, place and people precipitate commonly held conventional premises about how to get along in that place with those people” (Watanabe 1992, 12) This theory is intended to go alongside historical and cultural considerations, but these conventions are argued to be relative to experiences and intentions, and so determine thought and action. In sum, it is argued that these sovereignties are "…rooted essentially but never exclusively in the immediacies of local sustenance and sociality" (Watanabe 1992, 12). Naturally, Watanabe’s analysis is thus extended to specific community conceptions of space, and therefore time. Space/time is the subject of much of the ethnographic work conducted in the Maya area (Tedlock 1982, Watanabe 1992, Rodriguez Balam 2005, to give a few examples). These themes certainly warrant sustained focus, which is not the aim of the present work. However, as has been shown, the analysis of artistic material culture can be framed, to some extent, within elements of this philosophical context and this constitutes a reason to examine the theme in the narratives from Santa Elena. As will be shown, the narratives do, in fact, show a heavy focus on ideas of space/time. Alternative conceptions of space and time play a fundamental role in the construction of "social" personhood, and so an understanding can elucidate the role of the meta-theories that produce the individual. Equally interesting to explore would be links between these conceptions and

corporeality, and with the appreciation of artistic and religious material culture within its environmental context.

In the case of the Chimalteco, "experientially, their community constitutes the center of the world" (Watanabe 1992, 58). Life contracts and expands throughout the day, as the sun rises and sets; during the day the normal activity of the people who work in the fields stretched to the *monte* and, as the afternoon sun lowers, life contracts back into the village, and at night the people retreat into their home to sleep (Watanabe 1992, 63). While the *monte* is generally viewed as a place where danger, or at least the unknown, may lurk, the night, as life has retreated into the beds of the people, also falls into the realm of the unknown; "the local landscape fades into a world where the strange and uncanny can prowl even the familiar streets of the town...Chimaltecos appear to associate socially empty or unfamiliar space with distance in quotidien time – that is, with the dormant period of night – regardless of actual location or relative distance from the pueblo" (Watanabe 1992, 64).

Literature regarding the maintenance of balance and the constant negotiation with external, subjective forces, both in the personal and agricultural context (for example, Terán and Rasmussen 1994 and Cervera and Méndez 2006, 328), is also applicable to this discussion. As described, certain undesirable forces are kept at bay through prescribed rituals, such as the *primicias*. Another example is the case of the *yumbalam* of the *monte*. This animal, which sings, whistles and leads astray those who are in the *monte*, is placated by the Yucatec Maya; "it is fed with the food eaten by the owners of the *monte*, the gentry" (own transl of Rodríguez Balam 2005, 166). There is an emphasis placed on the struggle between the wild, unknown and dangerous, and the ordered procedures that are implemented to combat the effects of these phenomena. These procedures are ordered temporally. Conceptually, therefore, there is a three-dimensional opposition; it is territorial/spatial, temporal and symbolic (Rodríguez Balam 2005, 167). Another distinction discussed in the ethnographic literature is the perception of cemetery spaces. There are many manifestations of social behaviour. It is said, for example, that pregnant women should not visit graveyards because their children will be born “without the strength to hold up their heads" (Rodríguez Balam 2005, 160).

As has been mentioned in earlier chapters, the people of Santa Elena appear to lend importance to conceptual distinctions between the *monte* and the village, particularly in the context of archaeological sites. The site of X’koh, according to interviewee C, is not frequented by the people of the village principally because of its distance, because it is in the *monte* and, as quoted earlier, owing to its relationship to the past. Various teenaged

boys who were interviewed asserted the regularity with which they visited the site on the basis that they were rebelling against the established local knowledge that provided cause for fear and reticence. It is evident, from this dialogue, that the conviction on the part of the community members not to visit the site is strong and widespread. Likewise, the interview with O presented further perspectives on the *monte* and the relationship of the villagers to it. Traditional hunting practices, which have almost ceased to exist in the area, but which are substantially treated in ethnographic literature, involve going into the surrounding forest at night and quietly watching and waiting for deer. This isolated activity can last for hours. There is room for further investigation where this activity is concerned, perhaps within a broader approach to conceptions of time in Yucatán; this style of hunting may determine and/or reflect culturally specific manipulations of the experience of time. Interviewee O's father, who was a regular hunter, recounted his impression of those isolated nights in the *monte*. He commented that he occasionally felt his skin crawl and the hair on the back of his neck would stand up. Sometimes he would see bright and, at that time, unnatural lights (at that point there were no main roads in the area, nor did the village have electric lighting). He also commented that this phenomenon was more common/intense on approaching the nearby archaeological sites. Interviewee O, as perhaps was the case in his father's stories, gave no possible explanation for the sensations, or the visions. His implication was clear, however, that the spatial and temporal effect of hunting in the *monte* was powerful. The *monte*, at night, is thought to be able to distort an otherwise manageable (perhaps rational) experience of time.

There are similarities here with some of the comments recorded from the ethnographic literature, that the *monte* at night provokes an unusual experience. Watanabe (1989) suggests, in line with theories proposed by Vogt (1983), that the souls of the community members in Zinacantán, are split between two forms (within the person and an animal that is protected by community ancestors. Thus, "…souls conceptually balance the categories of "culture" and "nature" in Zinacantan thought" (Vogt (1965, 1150-1160). Zinacantecos are naturalised by sharing souls with animals but these "wild" animals remain corralled (paraphrasing Watanabe 1989, 264). The Tzotzil *chulel* and *chanul* and the *Mam aanma* and *naabl* are also attested to relate to ancestry, since both communities "...consistently relate ideas of "immaterial essences" to blood and ancestry, to ancestral places, and to proper behavior" (Watanabe in Bricker and Gossen 1989, 269 - 270). These ideas recall theories of permeability in personhood and the body. However, it is significant here that the ancestors are watchful elements of the community that protect space that would otherwise be wild, since in Santa Elena the places for ancestors, the

cemetery (and the archaeological sites to some extent), are added places of tension in terms of the negotiation with space/time. It might also be too neat to assume a restricted dichotomous cultural perspective within which culture and nature, wild and domesticated and so on are opposed (as interpretations in structural anthropological theory, for example, Levi Strauss suggest). It is perhaps more plausible that the worldview is built around broader symbolic links. Sacred (agricultural) space is linked to larger intangible (unknowable) phenomena that link necessarily to religious and existential thought. Likewise, the philosophical effect of solitude at night-time is also symbolic of an individual engagement with the natural world, as perceived intellectually and by the body. Through theories of permeability, the body and its relationship to the natural world are linked to time (cyclical/agricultural time).

The inclusion, in both narratives from Santa Elena, of the role of archaeological sites demonstrates that historic architecture, as a place of large-scale human interaction over a long period of time, can affect spatio-temporal reality in Santa Elena. These monuments provide a further allusion to time; archaeological sites lie outside the village space, they are in the *monte*, and it seems that this is the field in which concepts of time and space conflate. It may also be reasonable to add that, since there is an emphasis placed on ritual action and performative religious practice and experience, the lack of movement and dialogue in the *monte*, and around these sites, at times of the day which are traditionally silent, creates a shift in balance. It is this balance and prescribed ritual action that would normally support the community. This community, as outlined by Watanabe, is constantly in the process of constructing its existential identity. In the case of Santa Elena, the space within the town correlates with Sartre's dialectical reason, a sense that worked matter, community relationships and prescribed ritual move identity forward. The unknowable, an understanding of the past to make sense of the present and future, for example, lies outside of this functional knowable dialectic. The inhabitants of Santa Elena thus have their specific existential sovereignty, and direct cultural heritage and identity, while at the same time reinforcing their specific worldview regarding central philosophical concepts.

Distinct, and perhaps more powerful, personal experiences of the *monte* were also recorded in Santa Elena. As previously mentioned, interviewee M, who makes journeys in the night to a small archaeological site in the *monte*, remarked that it was necessary to tie red ribbon to the trees along the way from the main path to the site. The site is not only outside the village but is also on a hill, overlooking the neighbouring villages. On his return to the main path, it is necessary for him to use the ribbon to find his way. The implication made by interviewee M, in his description, is that as one gets closer to the archaeological

site, the spatial dimensions of the *monte* are distorted, as is one's experience of time. Similarly, interviewee D, from Kantunil, described the effect on material objects of places where time was lost. As mentioned, when questioned on the ability of unworked material culture to have energy, he answered that there were certain environmental factors that could affect its energy levels. His first example was of the impact that an asteroid might have made on earth and the energy that would remain around the area after that. He also, however, mentioned certain spaces where the energy is concentrated, which can be for various reasons, and where the material objects are thus affected. An agate that he found in some arid land, for example, contained a large amount of energy. He added that the place where he found the stone is a place in which time, as shown on a watch, is confused. There is not only this material (magnetic) effect on the clock, but time is generally experienced in a very abstract way there. It is unclear, from his narrative, what D believes to be the explanation, religious, scientific or otherwise (although it may not be necessary to classify the knowledge), for this phenomenon. It is very clear, however, that there is a close relationship between the experiential and "material" manifestations of space and time. Both are affected by material, whether in the case of worked matter (architecture) or natural material. It might again be posited that the arid open space that D describes is perhaps, even symbolically, a place where movement and action are lacking. Without these elements, as has been elaborated upon above, the complex of dialectical influences that stimulates the social conception of the world, in which people negotiate with the environment, worked matter, and so on, cannot develop.

In the case of M's interview, the theme of the influence of ancient building and material culture is again raised. As mentioned, this implies a specific relationship between history, materiality and time. In the case of historical worked matter, there is evidently a widespread reticence to actively engage with it. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it is ill-advised to engage, without the facilitation of the community or society at large. There seems, for example, to be no reticence to visit the larger public archaeological sites during the day. Interestingly, in the case of M and his engagement with historical space and material culture, there are two layers of agency involved in the expeditions he conducts. The place and time have inherent agency, which characterises the experience. M then adds another layer of agency, by ritually securing the safety of the route (his reference to *aluxes* is presented in a previous sub-chapter). In the case of interviewee D, he makes no action in response to the impact of altered spatio-temporal experience. He uses the stones found in this zone, however, to restore balance in his home or for people who are seeking medical attention for related causes (energy imbalances).

Interviews with children corroborated the conditioned fear of the *monte*, in contrast to the safety of the village. One child, interviewee P, described her experiences at home, which was on the outskirts of the village, and therefore considered the *monte*. Her story, although rather confused, related to a death that had occurred in her family house. The spirit, or force of the dead relative's presence, continued to be felt. She commented that this experience, although manageable by the people of her household, was negative for her and was related to the fact that the house was situated in the *monte*.

The story need not be believed; it was recounted with added drama and mystery. The interview does show, however, that it may be part of popular thought that ancestors are experienced more strongly in the *monte* than they may be in the village. This sentiment is corroborated, to a certain extent, by several interviews with people concerning the village cemetery. It is located on the road that leads out of the village towards Uxmal and Mérida, and there is very little activity in the area. The cemetery itself is untidy and largely unattended; some of the sarcophagi are open, for example. During an interview with the wife of a prominent member of the community, interviewee Q, the subject of the graveyard was raised. She made a comparison with the Day of the Dead celebrations in Central Mexico, which she considered foreign and unfamiliar. The ancestors of the people in Santa Elena seem not to be a living presence in the community, invited into the household on All Souls day. Q seemed to regard visits to the cemetery as necessary obligations to the dead, who are pitied because their surroundings/position within the community are unpleasant and uncertain. The dead, in this context, inhabit a place where the past, the environment and the unknown are restricted from the living positive forces of the community members. These forces are conducted through rituals and prescribed practices. This can be interestingly compared to certain ethnographic evidence concerning the graveyar; for example, “one of the public spaces that acquires great importance at the community level is the town’s graveyard…the cemetery is always present in the minds of the living. It fulfils a social and communal function and inspires the living with a collective imagination about the dead” (own transl of Rodriguez Balam 2005, 159). There was no evidence of this in terms of the active role of people recently deceased. The cemetery is not a place of focus and is very little frequented by the village people. It does not follow, however, that there is no underlying importance of people and occurrences in the past. It is clear that the many types of external forces discussed in Santa Elena (for example, the *viento malo*, the *aluxes*, the X*’Tabay* and so on) are allusions to the past. The narratives are couched in places and ideas that relate to pre-Colombian culture in Santa Elena.

So, it is clear that there are elements of popular thought in terms of concepts of space/time in Santa Elena, that exist also among the few people from nearby communities, which are culturally specific and derive from historical events and places. To take, to some extent, Watanabe's stance regarding the "existential sovereignty" (1992) of the community, however, it may be useful to view these ideas within the context of their daily application and with the concrete necessities of social life. It is evident that the external forces discussed in the previous sub-chapters are related through the narratives within a framework that is dictated by concepts of space/time. On a very basic level, it could be argued that distances both in space and time are untrusted within the community. The areas where external forces are most powerful, where there can be no action or prevention on the part of the community, temporality and the experience of space are distorted. The fact that time is influenced by these spaces indicates that the philosophies surrounding space and time have quite a complex conceptual role in community thought. If it can be assumed that forces can be precipitated by temporal factors, such as the long-term energy fields surrounding historical sites, there are two-sided effects: space can affect the experience of time, and heightened temporality can affect the experience of space. It would seem that the inscrutable aspect of space/time as phenomena lends itself to being quantified through cultural devices, for example time-keeping and the construction of community. It also lends itself to heightened conceptualisation through community philosophy and creative thinking. It may be the case that the temporal distance of archaeological sites recalls the importance of Maya or Santa Elena heritage. Access to this cultural heritage is not straightforward, because of the disjunctures post-conquest. The warp of space and time around these zones is a metaphor for the strain of a conflict of scientific and cultural knowledge. This conflict gives rise to a certain amount of choice and flexibility. This flexibility in thought can be compared to other concepts inherent in community thought in Santa Elena.

2.7 Religious Pluralism and the Popularity of Para-Protestants.

We have seen that engagement with practices and ancestral knowledge in Santa Elena relates to choices that direct community and personal identity. One of the ways in which the people in Santa Elena (and in many politically and economically disenfranchised communities in Latin America) direct choice of culture and practice is through engagement

with insurgent, non-Catholic religious sects. Broadly speaking, although Mexico remains predominantly Catholic, there has been an insurgence of various other Christian sects: Protestant and para-Protestant; “a veritable flood of religious sects, which by definition are conflictive and anti-ecumenical, which in Mexico are principally moving into indigenous and rural areas” (own transl of Giménez 1988, 689). The success of these sects has been considerable in the south of Mexico, particularly in areas that have the most substantial indigenous communities (Serrano, Embriz y Fernández 2002, Joseph 2010, 254). From 1970 to 2002, there was a seventy percent increase in the adherence to these religions in the Maya area, with censuses showing that the greatest numbers were found in the following states, in decreasing order: Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Quintana Roo and Yucatán (Ruz 2005, 8).

There are various theories regarding the factors relevant to this social phenomenon, and they have resulted in discussions pertaining to indigenous identity and identity shifts. Ruz states that academics are agreed that the popularity of these sects is directly related to the marginalisation of indigenous communities; “such movements have shown themselves to be rather more able than the Catholic Church to respond to the new demands and needs (individual and social) of the most marginalised sectors” (own transl, 2005, 8). The popularity and conversion of these sects in certain communities has had a positive impact in some sense. For example, in areas where domestic abuse related to alcoholism is prevalent, a conversion to stricter (and perhaps, moreover, newer and more attentive) religions, has led to a decrease in complaints from women previously affected (Eber 1995, Emery 1970, 4 and 45, Goldin and Metz, 1991, Nash 1960, Redfield 1950, 95, Reina and Schwartz 1974); “The Protestant emphasis on sobriety attracts many because it stabilises households, eases the burden on household finances, and enables a sense of moral improvement” (Kray 2004, 113). It has been, conversely, argued that the social dynamism associated with these religious movements is insidious, and does not indicate individual or collective relevant transformations or doctrinal inspiration, and only has the effect of contributing, “…refreshing the religious panorama in order to not deal with the basics of an unjust or discriminatory social structure that tends to keep power in the same hands” (own transl of Gálvez Borrell 2002, 71).

The expulsion of certain Protestant sects by local caciques has been attributed to the fear of their losing power through religious manipulation (Ruz 2005, 9). Furthermore, it has been suggested that there have been clear strategies, on the part of evangelical sects, to stigmatise the Maya population who are not associated with these new doctrines (Ruz 2005, 14). More culturally specific approaches, such as that taken by Rodríguez

Balam in his documentation of the cosmovision of a Pentecostal Maya community in Yucatán, focus on how Protestantism has merely provided a new framework through which people re-affirm their identity; an identity that endures religious transformations (2005, 156). He claims to "…demonstrate the range of possibilities that individuals are exposed to in order to recreate and construe their identity and that of others, which remains in spite of their transformation" (own transl of Ruz 2005, 156). This is supported by Watanabe who, in focusing on Maya souls in both Mexico and Guatemala, hopes to reveal the tenacity of Maya ethnic identity: "I would suggest that greater appreciation of these emergent qualities of Maya souls might well clarify the tenacity of Maya ethnic identity in the face of rapid and in Guatemala, increasingly violent, social change" (1988 and here Watanabe 1989, 273-274). Various other reasons for the popularity of emergent religions in the Maya area have been put forth. For example, it has been suggested that opting out of the sponsorship of Catholic saints' *fiestas* may have been attractive to the landless or those suffering from poverty (Annis 1987, Goldin and Metz 1991, Nash 1960, Reina and Schwartz 1974, Scotchmer 1991, 394, Santana Rivas 1984, Sexton 1978, Stoll 1982, 30-36). The Protestant Church has, also, offered opportunities for leadership and participation, and so it has been argued that this would appear attractive to certain members of the community, particularly women (Nash 1960, Sexton 1978). However, it is clear that the reasons for the acceptance and popularity of new religious sects and traditions are multifaceted and specific to each community and individual, "As diverse as Maya people and Protestant traditions are, so have been the motivations for seeking out new forms of worship" (Kray 2004, 114).

Sects in Santa Elena, Yucatán

Apart from the adherents to the Catholic faith, who still constitute the majority in Santa Elena, there are two other main religious groups: Evangelical and Jehovah's Witnesses. The latter constitutes the largest alternative to Catholicism and the number of adherents continues to augment. The Jehovah's Witnesses are, therefore, the main topic of enquiry in this investigation. The sect has been associated, in many contexts, with indigenous or working (agricultural) class anti-colonialist movements. In South and Central Africa, for example, the Jehovah's Witness ideology was imported in opposition to European power in the Kitawala movement, and thus has been reinterpreted as anti-colonialist action (Greschat 1967, Hodges 1985, Hernández Castillo 2005). The forthcoming Armageddon, in which there would be a division of the worthy from the

damned, a pressing eventuality signalled by the Jehovah's Witness community worldwide, became symbolic of the end of European control (Hernández Castillo 2005).

It has, therefore, been suggested that the experience of the violent acculturation campaigns among inhabitants of the certain regions or communities in Mexico, alongside the exclusion of these groups in the modernisation of Mexico, might have had an influence on how Jehovah's Witness ideologies were accepted (Hernández Castillo 2005). The ideology may have been accepted on the basis that it was seen as a rejection of 20th century modernist philosophy and the widening process of industrialisation (Beckord 1975, 3), since many agricultural workers in Mexico have found themselves dispossessed (Hernández Castillo 2005, 110); "There will be no rich or poor and there we won't need machines, nor creditors, nor fertilisers, the land will give us everything… (taken from a testimony at Las Ceibas in Chiapas)" (own transl of Hernández Castillo 2005, 111-112).

The Jehovah's Witness faith provides, not only a new doctrine and alternative vision of the bible, but also a new community in its rejection of all other institutions worldwide, including nations and government (Hernández Castillo 2005, 110): the Witnesses consider themselves to be a new nation comprised of people from all over the world who have rejected their own nationality. "While they live within different forms of government worldwide, they consider themselves as temporary residents, foreigners, because they belong to this new nation that is supranational and they are subjects of the kingdom of God, whose laws, contained by the Bible, they must follow" (own transl of Stevenson 1967, 160). Arguably, this has a very substantial effect on the construction of both individual and community identity. In Chiapas, where these studies were conducted, the construction of the Jehovah's Witness community has provided an alternative to the political action associated with the pro-indigenous movement (the Zapatistas). As a result, it has contributed to political demobilisation (Hernández Castillo 2005, 112).

A more localised effect on community identity has been the aforementioned association of inhabitants who are still Catholic, with pejoratives surrounding an association with pre-Hispanic culture and lifestyle. This is evident in the dialogues conducted at Las Ceibas, regarding their opinion of the nearby community at San Juan Chamula: "The Chamulas live differently to us. You should see their houses! Even if they have money from the sale of coffee, you wouldn't notice because they live the same as before. The women hardly understand Spanish…they're not very civilised, that's why it's hard for them to accept the word of Jehovah" (own transl of Hernández Castillo 2005, 118). This is an interesting statement, considering that the widespread popularity of the Jehovah's Witness sect has been attributed to the worldwide application of magazines in

the language of their converts. *The Watchtower* is published in 194 languages and sermons are given in the language of the congregation (this is the case in the Maya area), which is in notable contrast to the Catholic Church, which until the 1980s would continue to give Mass in Latin. The ultimate effect of this doctrine on the sense of community identity in Las Ceibas is that the majority of people will define themselves first as Jehovah's Witnesses, then as agricultural workers, and only within certain contexts will they describe themselves as indigenous Mames (Hernández Castillo 2005, 116). The alienation from thought that is stereotypically attributed to indigenous communities can be taken a step further. Some of the social and cultural phenomena that are attributed to pre-Colombian religious beliefs are acknowledged to exist by the Jehovah's Witness Mames, but are reputed not to be able to harm them, owing to their faith; "You cannot use witchcraft against us because Jehovah protects us. Over in Comalapa, a woman began to study the Bible with us but she didn't want to continue and she became a spiritualist. One day, while talking to the spirits of x, with the naguales, they told her that they couldn't enter her house because she had Jehovah's Witness books in her room" (own transl of Hernández Castillo 2005, 115). There are various narratives such as this documented from Las Ceibas. These stories may not be entirely reliable, but this demonstrates that people in Las Ceibas consider alliance with the Jehovah's Witness sect to be an action against forces that are not mentioned in the Bible, and yet do exist.

A study carried out by Kray in Dzitnup, Yucatán, investigates how ethnic identity "emerges daily in relations to bodily experiences" (2005, 337). Kray argues that Yucatec Mayans from Dzitnup are interested in maintaining community tranquility and balance, in a variety of ways that will not be elaborated upon in this text. The ideas surrounding the maintenance of tranquility extend, naturally, to class and so ethnicity (Kray 2005, 349-350). As the Maya have become absorbed in the global economy, not only is it apparent that they are employed by, and therefore vulnerable to, Spanish speakers, but that they occupy the lowest position in the global class hierarchy (Kray 2005, 349). Kray states, therefore, that the tranquility logic is used to critique class and monetary inequalities and appropriate moral superiority; "While poverty evokes disdain in the city, in the village it is reclaimed and reinterpreted by a particular morality of wealth. Tranquility connotes composure and control of desire. Possessing wealth, in contrast, is an indication of one's inability to control one's desires within the limits of what is reasonable and fair" (Kray 2005, 349). Furthermore, Kray comments that followers of the Protestant sects are also apt not to be respected within this framework: a woman explained that "…Protestant doctrine is very critical of catholic lifestyles (especially fiestas, drinking, and dancing), and

added, “Before you know it, you’re hating your fellow man just because of your religion”; better, it seems, to get along with people than to disagree over points of doctrine” (Kray 2005, 341). This evidence could indicate that certain cultural phenomena are at the backbone of the reassertion of community identity. The cultural outlook of the people of Dzitnup interacts with factors that are imposed on a national/global level whether economic or social.

There is some, perhaps predictable, divergence then between people, even with Protestant tendencies, from Dzitnup, and the case of the Jehovah’s Witness Mames. In the case of the Jehovah’s Witness Mames in Chiapas, religious conviction appears to be the primary foundation of their identity. Contrariwise, there is reticence on the part of community members of Dzitnup, Yucatán, to be divided on points of religion, which indicates a stronger culturally embedded attitude that restrains forceful religiosity. It is arguable that the success of the Jehovah’s Witness sect in Chiapas is due, in part, to political factors. In light of the cultural, geographical and political diversity in the Maya area, it is unnecessary to make broad or over-arching assumptions of the role of Protestantism and other new religious sects. It is, however, interesting to take these investigations into account.

Jehovah’s Witnesses provide leaflets, Bibles and other literature in the language of their converts. Furthermore, they give sermons in that language and, in cases where people are largely illiterate in their mother tongue, recruit language teachers (this is reported for many non-Catholic missions in Smalley 1991, 30, Kray 2004, 98-100). This is the case in Santa Elena. A daughter of one of the main speakers at the Jehovah’s Witness ceremonies in Santa Elena was interviewed (R), and is a Maya language teacher in the village and also travels to other states on the same mission. She offers to teach anyone in the village who is interested how to read and write in Yucatec Maya, using Jehovah’s Witness literature. She and her family are actively against any of the alternative religious or healing practices that exist in the village, to the point of denying their existence. The Jehovah’s Witness community holds sermons in a well-lit new building with a concrete floor that is painted white. Apart from flowers, a podium for the speakers and chairs for the congregation, the room is empty. The congregation assembles at a specific time in the evening. They have been asked at the previous meeting to read an excerpt from the bible that is printed into leaflets with questions underneath, and to prepare answers. After the sermon and singing (all of which is conducted in Maya) take place, the question and answer session is initiated. People raise their hands and the leader of the sermon picks respondents. The congregation is very well dressed, the majority of the women in

traditional *terna*. People remain seated, quiet and attentive throughout the ceremony. This is in notable difference to the congregation in the main (Catholic) church. The priest is a man from Ticul and so is not a very well-known community figure. The congregation is scattered, people bring very young children and babies, who are allowed to run and play among the pews, and dogs are also welcome in the church. There seems to be no preoccupation with regards to dress code for a regular Sunday mass.

An interview with a young Catholic woman (C), who sings in the church choir, raised issues regarding the economic implications of an affiliation with the Jehovah's Witnesses. She commented that the reason for the care and attention paid to appearance in the Jehovah's Witness Church was related to a concern with status. She said that the Jehovah's Witness community is made up, predominantly, of the wealthier people in Santa Elena. The family of interviewee R is comparatively affluent. Interviewee C further remarked that the Jehovah's Witnesses look down on Catholics for their lower economic status, their ignorance and, lastly, because of their idolatry. C claimed that the Jehovah's Witnesses were misguided as to the nature of the relationship between the Catholics of Santa Elena and the objects in their church.

A woman who runs a ready-made food business in the village (S) gave her opinion with regard to the Jehovah's Witnesses. She said that her husband was chronically unfaithful, which had led to a number of women becoming displeased. S claimed that, out of jealousy and anger, one of these women had sought the intervention of a witch, who had, in turn, made her very ill. She said she went to every doctor in Santa Elena and even outside the village, but her health was not improving. She says she finally solved the problem with prayer at the Jehovah's Witness temple, although she is a Catholic. Broadly, this story could indicate that this woman views all the religions and their rituals to be of use, and that some are more effective in certain circumstances. Alternatively, it could be the case that choosing a new sect and ignoring Catholicism (a hybrid religious atmosphere that has been developing since the introduction of European practice into the Maya area) is an escape from forces that relate to precolonial philosophies. Syncretism has been the subject of extensive research in the Maya area, one such example being that of the Maya in Chiapas; "Celebrations for Christian saints and pre-conquest spirits and divinities are important venues for cultivating the flowery language, nichinal'kop of their ancestors...The imagery and metaphors abounding in Maya languages survive in their Spanish renditions" (Nash 2004, 167). This is in line with Hernández Castillo's account of the Mames. (The *nagual* could not enter the house because of Jehovah's Witness literature.) The geographical distance between the account from Santa Elena and that from Chiapas

shows that this piece of Jehovah's Witness propaganda may be spread by the missionaries. In this sense, attribution to the new sect falls into a desire to take an active stance in the direction of cultural identity (to create distance between Maya cultural conceptions).

Although there are attitudes by Jehovah's Witnesses and regarding Jehovah's Witnesses in Santa Elena that show some similarities to the cases described above, it is clear, for example, that the Jehovah's Witnesses alienate themselves from the other religious practices in the community, particularly those that would imply any ethnic continuity (R). This would be in contrast to certain ethnographic texts that focus on the quest for autonomy in Maya communities: (Autonomy) "…is revealed in the culturally distinct ways Maya exhibit shared Mesoamerican predispositions to think and act in relation to one another and the cosmos" (Gossen 1974 and Nash 2004, 167). Other community members, however, accept the intrusion of the sect, and value its contribution, while not becoming full participants (S and C).

The interviews conducted in Santa Elena show that, even in the case of these interstitial participants, the power of the Jehovah's Witness Church is considered to be able to counter the influence of intangible negative forces. It is accepted, among these people, (S and the interviewee at Las Ceibas) that there are people who can command certain forces, such as shifting into animal form. In spite of the distance between this discussion and the actuality of ancient Mesoamerican cultural practice, the two are associated. Conversely, as shown in the interview with R and her family, those unequivocal participants in the Jehovah's Witness congregation dissociate themselves from any spiritual creativity and its cultural background that lies outside of the Bible. The culture surrounding the Jehovah's Witness community is devoid of, for example, statues or any superfluous material culture, as explained by interviewee C. The focus on religious practice is theoretical and conceptual, relying on intellectual response to texts from the Bible. The tendency on the part of many oral narratives that relate to inscrutable forces, such as those described, is to discuss ideas and stories but not to provide concrete answers. In the case of the Jehovah's Witness gatherings, the study of the Bible, question and answer session and guidance from the person holding the sermon all offer at least a sense of the contrary.

As has been shown by Ammerman (2010) in the theoretical framework, the diversity of religious manifestations and the plurality of any engagement with inscrutable or creative concepts ultimately invalidate any attempt to define a particular community's religious identity. The popularity of the Jehovah's Witness sect in Santa Elena demonstrates a

forceful contrast with traditional thought in the village community. This traditional thought is based around shifting inscrutable forces that are at times personalised and relate strongly to material culture. The variations in the thoughts surrounding this are explicated in the previous sub-chapters. It is plausible to assume that the Jehovah's Witness religion embodies an approach that seeks to distance itself from the afore-mentioned practices and thought. In its contrast, it highlights the conceptual framework that relates to globalised Yucatán.

Chapter 3: Five Artistic Programmes from the Maya Area.

Chapter one has deconstructed some of the philosophies behind the use of stylistic devices and conception of images in the Western art historical tradition. Furthermore, the chapter discusses alternative thoughts regarding personhood and materiality, which underpin the production and reception of creative material culture and its role in historical development. In order to provide a culturally specific basis for the interpretation of artistic programmes in the Maya area, Chapter 2 has examined philosophies taken from people of Santa Elena, Yucatán, who are experts in their ancestral knowledge. These philosophies can help us to assess the applicability of the theories outlined in Chapter 1.

The next five sub-chapters are dedicated to the analysis of art in the Maya area, using these European and Maya theories explained in the previous chapters. Sub-chapters 3.1 and 3.2 look at two wall-painting programmes, the first of which is the three-room scheme painted in the Late Classic onto Structure 1 at Bonampak, Chiapas. The subsequent text (3.2) uses perspectives drawn from the study of Bonampak, alongside the theoretical frameworks, to interpret the reception of the wall paintings at the 16th century convent of San Antonio de Padua, Izamal. Chapters 3.3 and 3.4 look at relief sculptures, the Cross Group panels from Palenque, Chiapas (3.3), and Lintels 24, 25 and 26 from Structure 23 at Yaxchilán, Chiapas. The final chapter (3.5) is an examination of the possible uses and reception of the *retablos* from the post-conquest San Francisco de Asís church at Yaxcabá, Yucatán. As such, the artistic programmes in the chapter are not discussed chronologically and pre- and post-conquest wall paintings are presented together, as are pre- and post-conquest sculptural programmes. This corresponds to a deliberate choice not to treat the examples of Maya art chronologically. It is not the intention of this investigation to pinpoint continuities from the Classic to the contemporary Maya. Instead, it aims to broaden perspectives on the history of art in the Maya area, by using the philosophies outlined above.

Furthermore, although there are similarities and comparisons that can be drawn from all the programmes discussed here, I would like to highlight the more profound links that can emerge, in the case of wall painting, between flat images that have been painted onto architecture. These images can take on the agency of the architecture; for example, the images can manipulate how the space is perceived by the viewer/participant and *vice versa*. In the case of pre-conquest sculptural programmes (Chapters 3.3 and 3.4), both sets of reliefs require the entrance and exit of three doorways. This creates a discontinuous effect, in which the three images cannot be viewed as a whole. The portraits

of the characters carved into these reliefs are rendered by working at the stone to produce form, raising interesting questions about the role and agency of this "worked matter". These discussions will then be applied to the sculpted *retablos* at Yaxcabá, which may also have been viewed in a punctuated manner.

3.1 The Late Classic Wall Paintings at Bonampak, Chiapas.

The site of Bonampak in the Usumacinta region of Chiapas dates from the Early Classic (approximately 550-800 C.E). Figure 14 shows the site of Bonampak with regard to Palenque, Yaxchilán and the Yucatán Peninsula). The murals are painted on the inner walls of three rooms that sit on top of a large temple structure (called Structure 1 or Temple of the Murals). This structure contained art works apart from these murals; "The program of Bonampak was a more complex one than we usually imagine, encompassing not only the paintings, but also three carved lintels, the exterior paintings and stucco relief, as well as heavy cotton wraps that made it possible to view the paintings in stages and to drape the entire exterior lower story of the building" (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 11). Interestingly, every part of Structure 1 was decorated, and even the floor inside the three rooms was worked on to provide effect (painted black). According to current archaeological theory, the only part of the structure that was left unpainted was the top surfaces of the benches inside the rooms (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 20). The main structure itself (an acropolis) rises from a natural summit (Figure 15) and it has been suggested that this summit was the original inspiration for the building; "…at Bonampak the layout smacks of improvisation, particularly in the adaptation of the terraces to the acropolis, where aesthetic considerations seem to have yielded to topographical" (Lynch 1964, 24). More recently, Stuart has shown that this summit, probably called Usij Witz, "Vulture Hill", faces Yaxchilán, to the north-east; "To my knowledge, this is a unique instance of a entire site's ceremonial layout reflecting an orientation toward another, distant centre" (Stuart 2009, Maya Decipherment).

Text from the murals indicates that the late ruler (Yajaw Chan Muwaan II) took possession of the throne at Bonampak under the auspices of the Yaxchilán leader, Itzamnaaj B'ahlam. This is corroborated by a marriage alliance with a Yaxchilán princess (which is perhaps shown in the murals) and the fact that stelae and structures potentially indicate the work of Yaxchilán court artisans. Stuart suggests, therefore, that the

orientation of the structures at Bonampak was designed at the beginning of the 6th century, when the larger Yaxchilán began to exert its influence (Stuart 2009, Maya Decipherment). There are sufficient examples of the directed orientation of buildings in Maya centres, such as Tikal, alongside the historical information regarding the relationship between Yaxchilán and Bonampak, to lend strength to this theory.

Each room consists of a pseudo-corbelled arch (Figure 16) which is architecturally constructed in a way that is common in the Usumacinta region; a style that is still used for domestic spaces among the modern Maya (Houston 1998, 528) (see Figure 11). Each of the three rooms is approximately sixteen metres long, four metres deep and seven metres tall (Villagra 1949, 16). Figures 34, 35 and 36 show the flat images from all three rooms. The central room is slightly larger and broader in the upper sections, where lateral vaults in the outer rooms slope inwards (Miller 1998 241-242). Each room contains a bench, so that standing room is limited to a metre and a half squared in each room (Miller 1998, 242-244, Ramírez Hernández 1998, 109). This bench is also slightly higher (by ten centimetres) in the middle room. The doorways in the outer rooms are offset towards the inner walls, so that the outer corners fall more deeply into shadow (Ramírez Hernández 1998, 126). The walls and vaults are made from limestone and are coated with stucco; it is upon this stucco that the images are painted. The entrances are all on the north wall. A crypt was found under the central room, containing the remains of an adult male body, with a missing cranium replaced by a jaw and jade ear flares (excavation by Tovalín, 2010). The identity of this person is contested. There has been significant literature dedicated to iconographic interpretations of the scenes depicted on these murals, as well as their political ramifications (Miller 1986, Houston 2012, and Miller and Brittenham 2013 to mention only a few examples), and it is not the intention of this thesis to assess every aspect of these theories. We do not know how these three rooms were designed to be experienced, but the room closest to access from the principal stairway is considered the first room (Miller 1986). Each room shows evidence of extensive cord holders, which meant that the structure could have been wrapped in fabric (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 26). These cloth wrappings might have been used to govern directionality and/or to protect the paintings (Ruppert et al 1955, 14, Anderson 1985). The benches in each room are painted with red and white patterns that are common in textile.

The first room, on the south wall (Figures 17 and 18) shows the presentation of a baby to a group of standing men. On one side of the family presenting the baby is a scene showing the preparation of men getting into elaborate headdresses (presumably for the dance that takes place on the frieze below), in relaxed idiosyncratic (Lynch 1964, 25)

positions (Figure 19). On the other side, the men stand stiffly in repeated positions (Figures 18 and 20); the majority of these men are standing frontally but turning their heads to the side; "…at Bonampak every face save that of a bound captive on the bench painting of Room 2 – and perhaps the sacrificed body in Room 3 – is in profile" (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 15). The lower frieze shows the men in their headdresses, dancing (Figure 20). Others stand and play instruments, with their attention directed toward the dancers. It has been shown that, like the division of the entire program into three parts, the painting in each individual room is also divided into three. In this case, the three groups on the upper band are: on the south wall, ten visiting lords who have arrived; on the east wall, the visitors who are about to arrive; and the royal family on the inner west wall (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 20).

The second room shows a battle scene on the south, west and east walls (see Figure 21) and a victorious warrior (Yuwan Chan Muwaan), standing in a jaguar pelt over prisoners on the north wall (Figure 22); one of the defeated men lies dead, along the palace steps (Figure 23). Along the bottom register are warriors watching the final capture of the defeated, some of whom are engaged in sacrifice (see Figure 24).

The third room shows a private scene of women sitting on a bench, performing a bloodletting ritual, perhaps in celebration of the success of the war, on the upper part of the east wall (Figure 16). Along the south, west and lower east walls is a procession of dancers and musicians and members of the nobility participating in the celebration; this scene is expansive. In the lower register, a series of dancers who are elaborately dressed and adorned with feathered headdresses dance at different levels on the building stairs, while a procession of men stands at the base with instruments and banners (for example, Figure 26). The north wall shows men seated and standing frontally, turning to pay attention to each other (see Figure 25 of the upper frieze, and some musicians from the festivity elsewhere infringe on the lower section).

On the basis that the three rooms have been shown not to represent a series of related rituals as part of the same event (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 86-87), the temporal aspect of this painting program has been described in terms of a "shifting now" (Houston 1997), in which accession and kingship rituals are reenacted and reference one another over time. In light of repeated characters in Rooms One and Three, it was originally believed that these events happened at one point in history, while the battle and capture of Room Two has been shown to have taken place five years previously (Villagra 1949, 17-31, Ruppert et al 1955, 47-56). This was contested by Kubler (1969, 13), and the rooms are now likened to the lintels of Structure 23 (Figures 59, 60 and 61) at Yaxchilán, in which

text and image are disparate and dissonant (Miller and Martin 2004, 101). The participant may have been moving back in time in viewing the rooms and, as such, time is dematerialised by action (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 65). Recent studies continue to focus on the paintings as a reflection of the pivotal political environment of the actors represented in these scenes; "The murals therefore synthesise the political arena that characterised the basin of Usumacinta in the 8th century, one of the most critical periods for the region" (Cossío 2014, 196).

Early interpretations have emphasised the failure of the stylistic devices employed in Maya painting to portray realism in terms of space and form. Griever, for example, in his discussion on Maya pottery painting states that "we receive visual impressions of space in nature in seven ways: sharp outlines, intense color is closer than the same color grayed, warm colors are closer than cool colours, and texture, detail, and animation are closer than plain areas and calm effects…The remaining three are aspects of linear perspective: larger is closer than smaller, overlapping areas are closer than those which are overlapped, and lower is closer than higher" (Lynch 1964, 445). He takes this interpretation of the reception of art further, commenting that the Maya were "…concerned only with representing or symbolizing space, not creating illusions" (Lynch 1964, 445-446) and that "…of the seven ways of showing space, the Maya were certainly aware only of the last two – overlapping and lower is closer than higher" (Lynch 1964, 446).

This underlying art theory has since been criticised for its Eurocentricity as much as its un-nuanced approach. The murals have certainly been praised in terms of other stylistic devices, for example their use of metaphor (Freidel, Schele, Parker 1993, 239).

The range of hues and superimposition of coloured pigments, for example, shows considerable sophistication (Magaloni 1998 and Hurst 2009, 131). The painting of the lintels outside the structure, for instance, uses a much more restricted palette than the murals within the walls (Houston et al 2009, 88-89). The shifting styles show that murals were almost certainly accomplished by various artists, although their harmony and cohesion is thought to be due either to an overall programer or to a set of highly experienced workers, trained to produce these kinds of works (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 57). Impasto is used, as in Figure 27, to create texture, while visible brushstrokes demonstrate the directed rendering of nuances of meaning (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 53).

A figure that has been, and continues to be, used as an example of the skill of the Bonampak painters is the dead captive, slumped across the stairs in Room Two (Figure 23): "His body has a kind of lassitude and its structure consists of a line that begins at his

right foot and continues up the leg, thigh and torso to the left arm, and it has been developed with much softness and elegance; by contrast, a virtual line joins the left knee with the right shoulder and counteracts the movement of the whole body; the torso, in turn, has a special undulating quality and comes to rest at the head, which is leaning backwards on the left shoulder" Fernández 1961, 18-19). It is clear that the representation of the dead captive demonstrates elements that correspond to art historical ideals of naturalistic representation. The diagonal lines and balance recall the composition of classical Greek sculpture (see Figure 28, a metope showing a centaur and lapith from the Parthenon in Athens). It has been for this reason that the rendering of this figure has evoked higher praise and pathos in the modern viewer. Fernández states that "In its entirety, this figure alone is sufficient to describe the ancient Maya as great painters, since the technique and effects that they used so skilfully make them worthy of being considered artists of the first category" 1961, 19). Newer phenomenological theories have added that the viewers of this scene would probably be seated on the benches, looking up. The victors are painted high into the vault, so the eye rests more naturally on the captive (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 85). The emotive rendering of this and the other captives has also been linked to the possibility that war captives were forced to render their defeat in the murals (Miller 2000, Johnston 2001). Considering the level of skill and experience required to produce this kind of work, this interpretation is a little implausible.

There is also a clear emphasis, in literature, on transition and disruption in these three rooms. It is likely, considering the style of the rooms, and their placement on a pyramidal platform, that the viewing of these murals involved some participation and movement, possibly ritualised. The ritual may have required a specific order of transition, from one room to the other, although "…the architecture suggests, but does not dictate, a particular viewing order" (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 64). A variety of unifying stylistic devices are employed to create a sense of transition and flow, both within the architectural space of each individual room, and between the three rooms. One such example is the man looking back and reaching his arm out in Figure 29 from Room One. His figure is painted onto the north wall, but his right hand is extended, curling around the corner of the room, onto the west wall. This has the effect of incorporating each wall into a dynamic and continuous space. Rooms One and Three, and the north wall of Room Two, have horizontally structured divisions, that may mark different spatial or temporal locations, which we have seen may follow the tripartite screen-fold of Maya texts. These divisions made by red and white lines punctuate the scenes (as seen, for example, in Figures 16, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26 and 29). Divisions are also made using the architecture of the rooms,

where vault springs divide physical realities; the vault spring divides the earthly scene from the sky band (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 33). At times, even the figures in the paintings respond to the architecture; in Room One, a man on the far right leans left, mirroring the slope of the vault (Figure 30) (Lynch 1964, 26). The most outstanding, and possibly most impactful, example of division or halted transition is the fact that the viewer needs to enter and exit each room, in order to view the programme; "…imagery would be seen in a highly sequentialised fashion, in which viewer stepped inside, then outside, then inside again" (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 38). Temple rooms with three doorways are common in Maya architecture, as in the case of Yaxchilán Structure 23, although, as in this case, more commonly the three doorways lead to one large room (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 26). The effect of viewing the murals at Bonampak has been described from the perspective of experience; "Erupting into the bright sunlight to move from one room to the next breaks the three rooms into discrete experiential moments" (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 64). Although it is hard to reconstruct Late Classic Maya ritual or social practices, considering the auditive and kinetic dimension of the murals' content, we might conjecture that the nature of the transition between these punctuated experiences was related to the type of celebration shown in the scenes. The idea of connection and procession is also evidenced when the lines dividing segments are broken by the action. The parasols on the bottom section of the south wall in Room One break the line of the frieze, for example (Figure 29). The principal scene shows three dancers (and the attendants who help to arrange their costumes) in a final performance itself. In another scene (Figure 19), the feathers and cuffs are fitted while attendants (in another frieze below) pass up various missing elements of the costume paraphernalia that have been kept in chests. The arrangement is interesting here, since two scenes are isolated and, as mentioned, there is some sort of temporal/spatial distinction being made between most of the other divisions. In this case, however, the line is broken by the action that the two groups are in correspondence over because of the items that are being passed between the two scenes. This has been identified as a metaphor for transition (Freidel, Schele, Parker 1993, 236).

There are also examples that point to the use of liminality as a ritual tool. The dwarf drummer in the upper half of the west wall in Room Three transcends the vault spring, which had earlier served as a divide in physical reality (Figure 31). He has, therefore, been described as a liminal creature (V. Miller 1985, 143). The music, dancing and sacrifice, for example, may have implied a shift for the participant of the scene (as well as the persons represented) into a different state of personhood. The masked dancers in the water imagery may also "bridge another scene at the nearby city of Yaxchilan on the Xokolha,

Usumacinta" (Freidel, Schele, Parker 1993, 239). These three dancers are carved onto the steps of the monumental stairway on the mountainside by the river. Further aspects of the content of the three "scenes" point to an emphasis on transition: the battle standards in Room One, for example, conceptually point towards Room Two, in which the battle actually takes place (Freidel, Schele, Parker 1993, 237).

Movement around the rooms is not something that can be reconstructed. In an analysis of sculpture at Yaxchilán, Tate has shown that the victors represented in Structure 44 move from left to right, suggesting the direction of circulation for the viewers (1992, 256). Conversely, at Bonampak, the victor always appears on the left, perhaps an acknowledgement that there is no circulation possible from room to room (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 31). As shown, the benches are arranged in such a way that not many people could stand in each room; they could sit, crouch or kneel on the benches, however. The darkness of the rooms also indicates that, for the paintings to be scrutinised, viewers would have had to introduce artificial light, in some form. It has been shown, however, that there are no smudge or smoke marks on the walls, which would indicate that this was not the case (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 33).

The outlines of the figures in all three rooms are in black (Lynch 1964, 25) and the colours that are used for the paintings can also be shown to be significant and striking (Schele and Miller 1986, 148). Pigments in all three rooms were superimposed onto one another, to create a range of tones and colours in these paintings. It could, therefore, be argued that the techniques were used iconographically. An example can be seen in the ranging colours of blue over the three rooms. The artists of Room One have used Maya blue and azurite to produce a bright blue that has been likened to the brilliance of day (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 53). The darker shade of blue evident in Room Two was produced by superimposing a darker hematite red over Maya blue. The reddish tinge could denote the redness of dawn or dusk, or it may just have been used to produce a darker colour, indicating a nocturnal scene (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 53). The artists in Room Three mixed malachite and azurite into the blue ground, producing what appears to be a muted blue, perhaps a clouded sky, a colour that mirrors the display of the captives on the north wall of Room Two (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 53). Hurst divides these (Late Classic) hues into blue, aqua blue and sky blue (for the chemical breakdown, see Hurst 2009, 147 and for interpretations on yellow and red, see Houston et al 2009, 37-40 and 50-52 respectively). Considering that the preservation of this structure was due to the calcium carbonate deposit created by water, as it flooded through the weak corbel vault, we cannot reconstruct the exact differences in shade, but it is clear that the artists

strategically made distinct choices for the background of each scene. If the difference in shade was used purposefully by the artist, the use of blue in different segments of the arch, and in slightly different shades, shows, perhaps, passage of time (different times of day). The scheme in Room Two, for example, perhaps emphasises the length of the battle, through at least one day and one night. The presentation of the captives, conversely, is a static scene, where the participant's vision is directed to the central figure, the captive lying across the stairs. The onlookers stand in firm poses, in contrast to the pathos in the depiction of this figure's defeat, and it is this contrast that emphasises the immediacy of the scene. The colour scheme of the red and white lines and architecture are recurrent throughout all three rooms (as shown above). This device creates a sense of boundary juxtaposed with connection, mirroring the transition and disruption of the scenes through other stylistic devices. The permanence of the browns and reds of the architecture, for example, may indicate something more stable, during a ritual or procedure that is transitional. There is surely deep conceptual resonance to the organisation of colour.

In considering the background, it is also necessary to consider the relationship between the background and the figural representation. It has been shown, for example, that the contour lines are rendered differently in Room Three, in comparison to the other rooms. While the painters in Room One use thicker pigments and more brilliant colours with a consistent execution in line sketching, the lines in Room Three have been described as thin and watery; "In general, Room Three artists used little of the black outline paint that characterises other sections of the painting. The diminished contour line lets the paintings emphasise colour and form more than outline; they seem to stress human solidity and tangibility rather than the bone and frame detailed by the final calligraphic line" (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 56). The lack of coherence may have been unintentional, as suggested by Miller and Brittenham, who assume that the artists of Room Three were still working to understand the qualities of the paint they were using (2013, 55). However, considering the sophistication with which other stylistic choices were made, it is very plausible to assess this choice as a conceptual one. It may be interesting to take the work of Ricardo Martínez, discussed in Chapter 1.3, as a frame of comparison/contrast. This example (Figure 7) shows that where colours (or the background) are closer in tone to those used for the figures, and the line is soft, emphasis is lent to background space. We might conjecture that emphasis is being given to figures in Room Three, rather than the non-material space around them, for example. The impasto marks, as seen in Figure 27, also provide the background with a sense of materiality (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 53). It has also been

shown that the figures were drawn in calligraphic line, and that the background was added after (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 53).

It has often been stated that there is no attribution of dimension in Maya art, one such example is given by Griever (again within a discussion on pottery painting); “Given the conception of the invisible as well as the visible in three-dimensional form, the direction of development in Maya art had to be toward the solution of the problems of representing space and form. The crux of these problems lies in the concept of dimensions, a concept which the Maya lacked” (Lynch 1964, 442). It is perhaps moreover the case that dimension existed, but within an alternative conceptual form. It has been observed by Miller (1986, 110) that some of the ultimately triumphant warriors in the battle scene in Room Two have two right arms, whereas their conquered opponents have two left arms (Figure 21). It has been suggested by Palka that this depiction was intentional; “…the creators of the murals emphasised that the enemy soldiers were left-handed combatants that were inferior, lame, weak, impure and perhaps more feminine, and were destined to be beaten in battle. The double right-handed victors, however, were depicted as superior, powerful, pure, and righteous” (2002, 433). This theory could be supported using Mesopotamian and Egyptian representations of dimension and space. In these artistic traditions (see Figures 32 and 33), the most typical perspective of each object is shown in one scene, even if the view from one point is impossible. In Figure 32 from Dur Sharrukin palace in 8th century BCE Mesopotamia, boats are shown horizontally and turtles are shown vertically. In Figure 33, this garden from Nebamun’s mastaba shows a vertical perspective of the inner pool, but a horizontal perspective of the fish in the pool and the trees surrounding it (see Ziegler and Bovot 2011, 184-185). Arguably, this decision was made to correspond with the view of each object that is most common. In the case of Bonampak, the implication could be that the repetition of the right hand identifies the victors and their “common” strong actions. It is equally feasible that the repetition of the two actions performed by the same hand represents a temporal longevity in the image. This would imply the intrusion of a temporal dimension within a spatial one. It would provide a visual metaphor or a symbol for the long duration of the battle scene, in contrast with the scene on the north-east wall, the presentation of the captives. This scene, static and dramatised by the contrast between the captive stretched across the stairs and the poised nobles, gives a sense of portraying one moment, rather than a series of actions over time.

Further “dimensionality” can be experienced also in the composition of the figures in each frame. The spaces between the figures of the lords, for example, create a

repetition of shapes that is only broken in some instances, forming a realistic (idiosyncratic) yet systematised aesthetic. For example in Room One (Figure 34), the men playing instruments, such as shaking the gourd or hitting drums with antlers, create a "confusion of various activities" (Freidel, Schele, Parker 1993, 237). There are also another two men, among the drum beaters, "who carry more feathered battle standards, echoing the scene on the opposite wall" (Freidel, Schele, Parker 1993, 237). The two battle standards on each side provide a visual bracketing that gives unity to the scene, as a phrase or chiasmus. This is an example of a representation of space that uses direction (here the battle standards) in a subtle way to structure space. The use of repetition in terms of forms and figures, alongside naturalistic gestures and breaks in the order, may recall, to European art historians, the Parthenon's frieze (Figure 34). The height and proportion of all the figures is the same across the entire frieze, although elements of intense action and realism, such as the veins on a hand or the curve of a fingernail, disguise this strict scheme and accentuate a sense of realism. The focus on hands here is supported by archaeological evidence, in which bowls with offerings of human digits were found (Chase and Chase 1998, 308-9), and at El Zotz, where Stephen Houston et al found offerings of teeth and finger tips (excavation 2010 Skidmore Mesoweb). These small bowls of fingers are common in the Belize valley such as Caracol (in the Cayo district) (Grube 2015, personal communication).

Space is used to lend weight and importance, or perhaps just a shift in emotion, in these paintings. While the battle on the south, east and west walls of Room Two is spatially cramped, and loses the strict horizontal orthogonal structure of the other scenes, the victorious figure in jaguar pelt stands at a distance from the scene's spectators (Figure 22). In this way, space, too, is an iconographic phenomenon (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 21).

In terms of stylistic devices and content, these rooms have been shown to create a chiasmus, a common stylistic tool in Maya culture, which "…focuses attention on its central elements, granting them consequence and importance" (Christenson 2003, 46-47). We have seen, for example, that the central room is larger, with slightly different dimensions and a central doorway. This creates more shadows in the outer corners of the outer rooms (Ramírez Hernández 1998, 126). If we can surmise that the events in Rooms One and Three are contemporary to the reception of the murals, and that Room Two is a scene that takes place in the past, the central room is also accented temporally. Furthermore, the use of colour may indicate that the scenes in Rooms One and Three happen during the day and Room Two occurs predominantly at night time. This theory is supported by the

presence of solar deity heads in the sky band of Rooms One and Three, and nocturnal deity heads in Room Two (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 38). This chiasmus is particularly felt when we take into account the impression of the wall-painting schemes on the viewer. The overall theme of the first and third rooms is one of order and celebration. Figures are aligned relatively neatly on the orthogonal grid, dancing or playing music, among ritual action. This could be said about the north wall of Room Two, although the subject matter is (at least from a European perspective) a little more striking. The south wall, however, the first scene that any person entering the room frontally would see, displays the chaotic, desperate and overwhelming struggle of battle. On turning towards the north wall, perhaps in order to exit, the figures (as Figures 34, 35 and 36 demonstrate) are moving away from the doorway in the first and last rooms, whereas they move towards the doorway in the middle room. This gives the participant (viewer) of the scene a sense of entry, then exit, then entry. It appears that the viewer is among the dancing party, on the bottom rung of the north wall, in Room One. In Room Two, the viewer is part of the crowd witnessing the sacrifice and the captives. In the last room, the viewer is again part of the celebratory procession. This would naturally intensify the sense of procession between the three rooms, suggesting that the paintings are "activated" by the people who enter (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 39). Chiasmus is evident in the role of this participant, in that the two bracket positions are kinetic, where the central position is static. We might conjecture that the actions of the participant are dictated by the paintings, and that more movement was expected in the outer rooms. It is equally plausible that these differences were meant to be felt emotionally, and not physically.

It is useful to view the wall paintings and the participants both as actors, therefore. We have seen that architecture is used to create disjuncture in parts, and that the painting skilfully underplays the angles and materiality of architecture in other parts. Room Three (Figure 36) is interesting, in that the figures are larger, in comparison to the pyramidal steps depicted, than the figures in Room Two (Figure 35). However, the pyramidal structure in Room Three takes over an entire three walls. It has been noted that "If architecture shapes the viewing of Rooms One and Two, then in Room Three architecture is yet a greater actor" (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 129). As such, the space occupied by the architecture is in tension with the size of the actors on the stage, who are more imposing, in size as well as in costume; "Room Three's images are both too far away and too close; If Rooms One and Two insist on placing the viewer and making the viewer perform the ritual unfolding, here that viewer has no traction, no consistent point of view: The paintings demand that one come nose to nose with the walls and step away to absorb

the full effect" (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 135). It is clear that, while there are various examples of the use of chiasmus to lend weight to the experience of the second room, there are also devices that may have generated different viewing styles or movements in the last room. We have seen that the viewer is forced to come close to the paintings, and step back to appreciate the scene. However, in Rooms One and Two, the viewer needs to turn around the room to tie the temporalities of the north and south wall together. The temporal connections are already complete in Room Three, however, placing the viewer in a more external position, perhaps as an intruder (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 143).

Discussion.

In general, considering all of the stylistic elements discussed above, it is likely that the process of participating in these murals was not strictly prescribed. The viewer dives into certain phrases, at times more or less aware of the incursion of the architecture. Considering that the process of entering the three rooms forces the participant to be alternatively in an enclosed space and high on an acropolis, we can imagine that the experience is one that involves contrast and process driven by movement.

Given the way that community and religious rituals play out in contemporary Maya society (as shown in the ethnographic literature and at Santa Elena – K'o che, as an example), it is possible that there was accompanying music, or another auditive element, used during the process of engaging with these murals. This is not something that we can recreate, but, just as we can use kinaesthetic experience to understand the reception of art at Simrishamn and Hogsbyn in Scandinavia, we can also use position and experience as a way to imagine the reception of the Bonampak murals.

The pseudo-corbelled roofs of the rooms, the enclosed space and the necessity created by the scene of looking at every part of the wall, high and low, accentuates an engagement with the architecture. As shown, the architecture of the rooms, and the architecture depicted in the scenes, takes on more or less agency at different points in the process of engaging with the set of rooms. At whichever point, however, this effect would have been in distinct opposition to the sensation of leaving the room and standing on an acropolis surrounded by forest. Yaxchilán Structure 23 is an example of a similar structure, in which the architecture does not force the participant to enter and exit. That said, perhaps Bonampak Structure 1 indicates that this was the practice, and develops architecture in response to that. Anabel Ford (2011 personal communication) has shown

that the urban areas of Maya centres may not have been cleared of trees – the forest itself may have been used an agricultural area. In this case, the forest would be a place that refers to a common body of knowledge and to daily practice and subsistence. The participant in this artistic engagement would be free of the restrictions of the small room, a feeling that would necessarily be accentuated by position, on the acropolis. (We cannot know this for sure, and the cord holders that indicate textile coverings may also be an indication that textile coverings were employed all around the structure, to hide a view of the surrounding space, but we can assume the position of the structure, on the acropolis, was intentional and made to be experienced.) Instead of being in a space that represents historical events, and plays with transitions in space and time, the participant would find him/herself in the real and present and un-ephemeral. The weaving in and out of the temple rooms may superimpose, therefore, the sense of transition and shift in conceptual space. Not only would the participant be in a space of historical/ritual action inside the rooms, but the complications of viewing scenes in the darkness, on benches and standing just inside the entrance, looking up and around, would induce complex systems of movement. We may imagine that movement between the rooms was less complex, and so the kinetic aspect has less of an effect on the body, and so on the mind. It is interesting to see how this artistic program functions as a kinetic and conceptual exercise, linking enclosed room paintings that already promote liminality and shift in time/space narratives with a space that recalls daily continual action. The speed and movement induced within the rooms may also have contrasted with the sense of calm and rest experienced in the punctuations between each room.

It has been shown that it may have been the case that the scene in the central room (Two) takes place in the past. This can also be correlated with the Lintels at Yaxchilán Structure 23, in which the central Lintel takes place the furthest away in time. This, and other chiasmic tools, lend depth and poignancy to the scenes painted onto Room Two. This can be concretely linked to the conceptions surrounding space negotiation in Santa Elena. That archaeological sites are said to distort the power of external forces and winds, for example, could be compared to the feeling of entering the small mural rooms. The participant would have had no access to present time, in any of the rooms, but the scene perhaps firmly placed in historical context (Two) might have added force and agency to the space within the room. In exiting the rooms, the Maya at Bonampak (if we use Ford's analysis (2011)) would have visually engaged with the forest, but a forest which was *k'aax*, cultivated (Barrera-Bassols and Toledo 2005). It was a space of positive and daily banal action. If we accept that the participant in Room Two was a

stationary viewer, like the characters depicted on the North wall, who watch the captives, and we accept that the final scene, in Room Three, elicits the most movement, we can perhaps make a connection between action and stability/successful process. In Room Two, the Room has added agency, and the viewer is still. In Room Three, the architecture and paintings force the participant into movement, and so the agency and force are shared between the room and the participant. Furthermore, in line with interviews at Santa Elena, it could also be possible for the architectural features depicted in the Bonampak paintings to have some agency. In Santa Elena, the buildings that have agency and have social power are those related to history. There are possible interpretations, therefore. For the most part, it seems to have been the intention of the artist to minimise the presence of buildings in their representation, either because in this case the building retained no strong force or personhood, or in an attempt to allude to the position of the paintings in that architectural complex. Showing the form and influence of the building on the space and events taking place might have been considered superfluous, since the viewer is already inside the structure.

The use of line and colour are also very interesting in the Bonampak murals. Even though it has been shown that many artists worked on these rooms, in groups, we should (on the basis of the coherence between the rooms) still start from the premise that the stylistic devices employed were chosen purposefully. The fact that the background was painted last, and that the painters created visible texture using impasto, implies that the the artistic direction had chosen to lend emphasis to it. The thin, watery line in Room Three, which replaces the thick contour lines of the previous two rooms, has been attributed to lack of experience and skill. However, in this way, human solidity is accentuated. The artists may have wanted to emphasise the deep reddish blue of Room Two and the bright azurite of Room One. The figures and the background have comparable agency and force. In Room Three, in celebration of successful battle and ritual, the figures have more agency. This may have matched the amount of movement taking place in Room Three. The result of this ritual process, therefore, may have been that the people involved, both in the scenes and the viewers, gained power and agency over any forces belonging to the environment, to inanimate materials, or to the past.

3.2 Wall Painting at the Convent of San Antonio de Padua, Izamal, Yucatán.

The Franciscan convent of San Antonio at Izamal, Yucatán, finished in 1561 under Francisco de la Torre, although famously the seat of Fray Diego de Landa and Fray Bienvenida, is situated on top of a pre-Colombian site that was inhabited since the Pre-Classic (approx 1200 BCE - 250 CE) (Lincoln 1979, Quiñones Cetina 2006, Solari 2013). The remains under the present city centre are from the Classic period (250 - 650 CE) and the convent was built on a structure (Ppap Hol Chac) that lies directly opposite the largest (Kinich Kak Moo). There were four large structures around a central plaza (see Figure 37) and their directionality and organisation may have been designed with a nearby *cenote* in mind; “It clearly featured prominently in the urban design of the ceremonial centre; the physical location of this topographical element may, in fact, have determined the placement of Izamal’s most significant buildings” (Solari 2013, 34).

This site was dedicated to Itzamnaaj, a deified ancient ruler with healing properties who has been associated with the Classic God D (Schellhas 1904); Itzam, one who does *itz* (*itz* as a life substance: milk, tears, blood) (Morales 2002, 25). Landa’s accounts of the ritual activities that took place at Itzmal focus on long-distance pilgrimages and locally held quadrilateral rituals (Landa 1996). This account, in terms of the detail of pilgrimages, has been identified as an unreliable source, due to the similarity between the descriptions and Catholic peregrinations (Solari 2013, 40). Further Franciscan accounts, which will also contain a European interpretational bias, also record the act of entering historic temples to make offerings of copal incense (Lizana 1893). These ethnohistoric sources have been linked to the extensive mural cycles uncovered at Xelha, Tulum and Tancah, in which figures are shown presenting figurines, burning incense, and grinding corn and cacao (Miller 1982). It has been suggested, owing to the use of spatial/compositional devices, that these murals were used for didactic purposes.

The quadrilateral rituals (Landa 1996, 92-94) celebrated the coming of age of children aged three to twelve, and took place around a four-cornered cosmogram that has been linked to the organisation of Maya city centres (Ashmore 1992 and Mathews and Garber 2004) and counter-clockwise circumambulation (Chilam Balam de Chumayel and, for example, Watanabe 1983). Among other details of these rituals, the year bearer of Uac Mitun Ahau stands out; “After 360 days passed and the Ix year’s Uayeb began, the Cauac year bearer, Ek u Uayayeb, joined Ek U Uayayeb. Repeating the ritual prescription, the ah kinob carried this year bearer to the house of the ceremony’s sponsor, where grey reunited it with the year’s additional patron, Uac Mitun Ahau. After five days passed, Uac Mitun

Ahau was carried to the town's temple and Ek u Uayayeb took its place at the western entrance" (Solari 2013, 53). This ritual could be associated with the K'o che ritual discussed in Chapter 2. Where at Itzmal these rituals have been interpreted as a conflation of cosmic time and community space in reinforcement of identities, the K'o che ritual might, as discussed, constitute a modern reinforcement of Maya identity through a Catholic lens.

The Friars (and indigenous workers) who built the convent at Itzmal took away the upper terrace of Ppap Hol Chac, leaving a large platform that rose nearly five metres above the plaza level (Solari 2013, 132). They used some of the stones from the previous structure (Ppap Hol Chac) for the processional walkway in the atrium. A plan and photograph of the convent of Itzmal, as it stands now, is shown in Figure 38. Figure 39 shows that some of the Classic period stones that were used for the walkway contained carved images and glyphs. The cover of the processional walkway, and corner posas that attached to the chapel's western façade were not enclosed in the original building project, but were added in 1618. The superposition of this convent on top of a Classic site that was still in use for healing rituals at the time of the conquest, and the use of carved images and glyphs from the Ppap Hol Chac structure, evidences the Franciscan aims with regard to the appropriation of sacred landscape (as they are cited in ethnohistoric sources). Sources taken from the governor of Yucatán (Francisco de Solís, 1584) indicate that the Spanish were interested in moving the Maya population, who were fluidly dispersed throughout towns and the surrounding forest land, into the Hispanicised "urbs"; "The indios are people of little ability when they go from one town to another, when the friar is pressuring them to come to catechism or when the cacique is pressuring them to attend to their fields or to pay tribute to their encomendero, they excuse themselves of all of this and furthermore they go into the montes where they worship idols, a thing of which God is very much disserviced" (Francisco de Solís, 1584 in Solari 2013, 3). Although pre-Colombian sites might have been (and were within certain colonial circles) considered equally destructive to the evangelising effort, the Franciscan order viewed the urban settlements, and the sacrality they often embodied, as potential instruments in their endeavour. This use of visual (over linguistic) culture had previously been used in the Reconquista of Jewish and Muslim communities in Spain, and the theory had also been propounded by Pope Gregory in the case of the British Isles; "That the temples of the idols among the people ought not to be destroyed at all, but the idols themselves, which are inside them, should be destroyed" (Letters by Gregory in Solari 2013, 13). We might describe this campaign,

therefore, as having a focus on action/praxis (Christian rituals) in association with the built environment.

The convent contains two polychromatic fresco cycles, one that dates to the mid-16th century and another dating to the early-17th century (presumably added with the atrium arcade in 1618) (Solari 2013, 135). Wall-painting programmes in colonial convents have been associated with attempts to evangelise and educate local populations (Valadés's Allegorical Atrium); “the images certainly bridged communication gaps while the clerics learned native languages” (Donahue-Wallace 2008, 35). Although they were covered in whitewash, only uncovered in the early 1990s, and much of the painting has not been preserved, these are the best preserved church wall paintings in Yucatán. These paintings were organised to correspond to ritual performances and movement around the convent but, unfortunately, we are lacking precise descriptions in colonial documents for the specificities of ritual processions at Franciscan convents in Yucatán (Solari 2013, 144). However, following colonial documents that describe Franciscan ritual processions in Huejotzingo, Puebla, it has been postulated that the rituals may have recreated the passion of Christ (Solari 2013, 145). This theory is supported by the wall paintings in the posa chapel (Figure 40), which show the arma christi (instruments used in the passion) (Solari 2013, 138). Following this theory, the procession may have started at the cemetery on the southern side of the nave, descended and then have led up to the church. At the church altar, the participants would have collected the figure of the dead body of Christ and carried it out of the main entrance, where they would find themselves in the open air atrium. Here, it has been argued, the priests may have turned right and walked underneath the colonnade to the posa chapel to leave Christ’s body (near the instruments of the passion). They then retraced their steps and entered the *portería*, entered the cloister and walked counter-clockwise, exiting the convent again via the *portería*, to the atrium (Solaris 2013, 144-146).

There are two wall-painting schemes. The earliest dates to the the mid-16th century and the later to the early-17th century (presumably when the processional pathway and corner posas were added in 1617). The earliest is painted on the interior of the *portería*. Above the entrance, facing the atrium, is a yellow, red and blue depiction of the Virgin of Itzmal, emanating light and enclosed in a red circle (see Figure 41). Upon entering, on the north wall, is a painting of Franciscan friars set in front of trees (Figure 42). The background had been painted blue, but has been since discoloured (Solari 2013, 137). Behind these friars stands a man who has darker skin and who is wearing clothes that set him apart from the religious order. It might, therefore, be inferred that this figure represents

an indigenous inhabitant of Itzmal or the surrounding area (Solari 2013, 137). This person appears to be peeking at the actions of the friars from behind a tree. There are other figures in the scene who have darker skin are not Franciscans, such as the figure shown in Figure 43. He is perhaps holding the honey for which the area is known, or paint; the implication here may be that the scene depicts the construction or decoration of the convent (Solari 2013, 137). In one of very few treatments of the painting scheme, Solari has called this an “idyllic garden scene” (Solari 2013, 137), suggesting that the Maya and Franciscan men are in harmony with nature. The blue background is dotted with stars, and the entire landscape, from blue background to trees and stars, is repeated on the opposite (south) wall. The centre of the ceiling of the room (oddly not remarked upon in Solari’s discussion) is a large sun emanating rays. Considering that the landscape is otherwise decorated with stars, this may also be a large star. The south wall shows men with their arms raised, holding *machetes* or sticks. These men have dark red skin, and are beating figures that are lying on the ground (Figure 44). Solari has named this the “devil” mural, in reference to the violence of the scene, and to its apparent opposition to the scene on the north wall (Solari 2013, 137).

The colonnade, inside the courtyard walls of the convent at Izamal and next to the *portería*, is painted with expansive and stylised polychrome flora. The images (Figures 45, 46, 47, 48 and 49) demonstrate this: Figures 48 and 49 show the wall facing the atrium, Figures 45 and 54 the pillars on the colonnade, and Figures 46 and 47 show the ceiling that separates the colonnade from the *portería*. Although the fresco painting is by no means as well preserved as in some other Mexican churches (although it is the best preserved in colonial Yucatán), there is a predominant theme of floral motifs across the majority of the outer walls. As the figures show, the courtyard (pillared) walls are covered in repeated images of what appear to be fruit trees, right up to the ceiling. The pillars function as the trunk of the tree, while the branches fill the spaces between two pillars (Figure 45). These may be sour orange trees, which grow in abundance in the area. Looking directly up at the door lintels, there are richly coloured, although now, of course, faded, intricate and more naturalistic floral motifs (see Figures 46 and 47). The design is irregular and so requires more attention to comprehend it visually, in comparison to the repeat motifs. There are particularly stylised friezes of abstract and repeat floral motifs at the juncture between wall and ceiling in the courtyard corridor (Figure 45). This has all been attributed to a second wall-painting scheme, from the beginning of the 17th century (Solari 2013, 138). At the main entrance to the church, on the colonnade wall that faces the atrium, is a fresco of Santa Bárbara. She is shown (as she is in traditional

iconography) holding a tower in a rural hillside (Figure 50). A garden-like environment was painted to the left of this mural, much of which has now faded but which perhaps mirrored the botanical efforts of the 17h century convent workers. To the east of the old pre-Colombian building, above the plaza, was a garden. Old and new world species planted here included: prunes, avocados, pomegranates, guavas, oranges, grapes, coconuts, zapotes and bananas. Many of these plants were used by the Maya for medicinal purposes, such as the tree used for pom incense (later used by the Spanish for Christian ceremonies) (Solari 2013, 141).

Solari's interpretation is that these processions were an instruction on the value of accepting and practising the Christian faith. Upon entering the *portería*, for example, (on the way to the counter-clockwise procession around the cloiser), the "devil" figures are on the right and the idyllic scene is on the left (Solari 2013, 147). After the circumambulation of the cloister (which would have perhaps recalled pre-Colombian quadrilateral rituals), the participants of the procession would have re-entered the *portería* from the other side. Towards the end of the process around the convent, therefore, the right side of the participants would be aligned with the "idyllic" scene and the left with the "devil" scene. The importance of the right side of the body (documented by Gossen among the people at Chamula 1974), and also as shown in the fight scene in Bonampak's Room Two, is arguably a dominant and good side among the Maya. The procession may, in this way, have acted as a kinetic indoctrination or idea-building in colonial Yucatán (Solari 2013, 148). The inclusion of Santa Bárbara and the tower may also have supported this narrative. Among the various aspects of this narrative, the tower protects Santa Bárbara from her father's sword, when she confesses her Christianity. To follow Solari's interpretation, the convent, a building raised above the village on top of a sacred site, might have functioned as the material environment in which the people of Itzmal might be protected and saved. The visual markers of the history of the site (for example, the *ak'bal* glyph in Figure 39) might have created a ceremony that touched on temporal, as well as physical, transitions. As such, the processions were arguably linked to the precolonial "disorienting, kinetic experiences" that were "imbued with a liminoid sense" (Solari 2013, 153).

In order to make an interpretation that might also draw on other (better preserved) viceregal era mural cycles. One such example might be taken from the colonial Augustinian monastery in Malinalco, State of Mexico, which was executed by Indigenous artists in approximately 1571 (Donahue-Wallace 2008, 47). Wisdom and interest in plant life among pre-Colombian Mesoamerican societies has been evidenced through the varied

use of botanical gardens used for medicinal healing (Heyden 2002). This practice did not, in a broad sense, clash with the European medicinal system (which was also plant-based) (Gómez-Pompa 1993). This is of particular interest in terms of the Malinalco murals because, of the thirty-three plant species identified by Peterson (1993) and White and Zepeda (2005), thirty-one have been shown to have medicinal use (Zepeda and White 2008, 177). It is necessary to take into account that medicinal knowledge was, and continues to be, esoteric and transmitted orally (Zepeda and White 2008, 180). It has been proposed, therefore, that the indigenous painters of these murals were using these plants as visual symbols and metaphors (Reyes-Valerio 2000) to insert pre-Colombian cosmovision into the European scheme (Zepeda and White 2008, 180).

Of particular emphasis, in much of the literature devoted to these murals, is the syncretism evident in both the European and native flora and fauna (Donahue-Wallace 2008, 48). Zapote trees grow alongside grape vines, for example (Edgerton 2001, 222). It has been suggested (Edgerton 2001) that the mixed provenance of the flora and fauna depicted on the walls provides a hyperrealistic tone to the wall paintings. Whether or not this provides a contrast with the space within the courtyard depends on factors that are largely unknowable. What is certain is that there is a reminder of the knowable and natural, alongside the surreal, or ephemeral.

It has also been suggested that use of native and European flora was a conscious attempt, on the part of the scheme's Catholic designers, to recall a paradise (Peterson 2003). Peterson posits that there are overt connections between, for example, the zapote tree and the apple tree, which was also a tree of life and knowledge (Hernández 1959, 1:92). The Aztec paradise, Tlalocan, as described by Sahagún, is equated with creation mythology and Tamoanchan (Sahagún 1950-82 2:210, 212), but the celestial flora is not described in detail; Peterson draws her conclusions from the fact that the Aztec plants selected for depiction at Malinalco were prestigious ritual plants that may have been appropriate for a sky heaven (Peterson 1993, 126-127). She suggests that the friars had two motives, in choosing this iconography: "The intent of the Augustinian friars was to paint a garden scene that portrayed not only their concepts of a celestial paradise, but their fervent desire to establish a terrestrial Garden of Eden in the New World" (Peterson 1993, 137). The European plants and animals that were chosen also figure in theatrical versions of Genesis and, as such, the friars would connect the flora and fauna in the murals to Christian creation mythology. This research supports historical documents regarding the use of the convent's atrium and *portería*, the former having been used to teach, for theatre and religious celebrations, and the latter for catechisms and as a waiting

room (Peterson 1993, 124-138). Interestingly, certain animals and plants depicted in the paintings had different connotations for the Spanish and indigenous community of Malinalco; “The sinful snake in European traditions was a god in mesoamerican lore; one community’s over-sexed monkey was the other’s playful and creative inventor of the arts” (Donahue-Wallace 2008, 48). Whatever the curation of these murals, or whatever attempts were made to couch Christian ideas in Mesoamerican language, these images would have taught the people of Malinalco as much about European religion as they would have reinforced Mesoamerican thought through suggestion by images.

This recalls Solari’s suggestion that the sacred site and material environment of pre-Colombian Itzmal was appropriated by the Franciscans in order to superimpose their own sacrality (see above). Furthermore, the promise of paradise in return for conversion follows Solari’s discussion of the Itzmal convent’s *portería* (Solari 2013, 147). It has also been suggested, through historic sources, as well as owing to the design of the insignia on the walls, that the Malinalco murals were used for ritual purposes and processions (Edgerton 2001, 215-216).

There is no evidence that the wall paintings at Izamal showed syncretism in the flora and fauna but the garden cultivated in the plaza below indicates that, if the “paradise” (no longer visible on the atrium walls) were to mirror this environment, the flora would include both American and European elements. What the Figures (46 - 49) do show, however, is that there is a marked transition between the courtyard to the *portería* (and perhaps other inner rooms) that is highlighted by the styles in floral motif. The painted trees on the courtyard pillars are rendered quite naturalistically, but are also repeated (a quality associated with stylised motif). Conversely, the doorway motif uses very stylised colour and design. The juxtaposition of these two floral styles may have had a similar effect to the floral/faunal syncretism in that, as the viewer moves around the space, the paintings contrastingly emphasise ideas of ritual and natural/normal space. The almost complete lack of human figures on the walls makes these ritual processions particularly interesting. From a European perspective, it might be assumed that the painted natural environment would have provided a back-drop, or set, for ritual practice. It might be interesting, however, to consider the alternative, on the basis of the role that the natural environment would play in Maya thought. Following the interviews outlined in Chapter 2, the *monte* or natural environment around the confines of the village is a place of unknown power and the home of external forces. This is supported in other primary and secondary sources from Yucatán (Solari 2013), which clearly delineate the properties of *k’aax* land and *kool* (*milpa*); the Franciscan friars of Izamal evidently held the belief that the

uncultivated land was a place that reinforced pre-Hispanic cultural identities (López de Cogolludo, Los Tres Siglos). According to interviewee F, time and personal safety are affected in a place linked to cultural ancestry and the absence of community action. This is an interesting comparison as, although the visual prompt of the forest might suggest a natural force, the convents at Malinalco and Izamal were certainly ritual spaces. As a ritual space, the convent at Izamal would probably not have been considered far from community action or ritual, but the illusion of a natural environment suggests that the space incorporated or assimilated the properties of the *monte*. The painted forest represents something impactful and possibly related to history, external force and cultural identity, within a building that was very much part of community and action. The juxtaposition of natural illusion and stylised image may have promoted a sense of ephemeral space.

A contrast can be drawn between this scheme and that at Bonampak. The forest surrounding the acropolis may have figured into the viewing of the three rooms, and so may have created an open natural environment that was thematically distant from the murals depicted. In terms of content and aesthetic arrangement, the scenes depict people and architecture. Although there is a sky band, there is no attempt to figuratively represent features of the natural environment. The spaces within the rooms at Bonampak deliberately force the participant to take on different bodily positions. It has been shown that material structures may have been attached to the entrances, and so entry and exit procedure may have been more elaborate than the stone structures immediately suggest. The atrium and *portería* at Izamal are enclosed spaces, but the paintings hint at a natural dimension, so that the walls are not felt as worked matter. The space is also extended from the strictly profane. In this case, it is prescribed movement around a space that evokes the natural environment that is part of an ephemeral or religious engagement between participant and space, where, at Bonampak, it appears to be the opposite: the architecture and painting inside the small rooms on top of the temple provide an inclusive private and alternative visual and temporal space for the participant. In exiting a room to re-enter another, the participant may have found themselves back in a familiar space, with a view of, but distant from, a space that was used for a variety of daily, and non-ritual, tasks. One common thread could be this intellectual process, between the common and the ephemeral. Movement, at Bonampak, Malinalco and Izamal, transports the participant through these differing intellectual environments.

Solari has proposed that the reception of the *portería* paintings involved a connection between good and bad practice and so promoted the assimilation of

Catholicism (2013 ADD). Let us follow her interpretation of the procession into the atrium: through the *portería*, and in counter-clockwise directionality around the cloister, before re-entering the *portería*, in the direction of the posa chapel via the atrium. The four main material environments that contain the paintings, in relation to movements around the convent, are quite interesting.

To take the procession in order of painting schemes, the atrium walls depict a natural environment that faces out to the convent garden. This is within a cultural framework that holds non-European conceptions of materiality. Where European material sensibilities would conceptually divide real plants and animals from their representations, a culture in which worked and unworked matter can have animate qualities and art production may be intersubjective and reciprocal might not make such a division (see Chapter 2). How can we consider real and experienced space in relation to the agency of the mural space, for example? As noted, although the environment painted onto the walls at Malinalco had an ephemeral and unknown aspect, the courtyard within the cloister that these murals surrounded is filled with medicinal and edible plants. We might assume that the effect of this was to extend the natural dimensional space of the courtyard into the walls, as in Renaissance Italian painting. The arrangement of barriers and dividing lines at Malinalco, whether subtle or otherwise, also recalls, to a European audience, the linear perspective developed in Roman and, later, early Renaissance painting. The juxtaposition of stylised friezes with more landscape oriented floral arrangements at Izamal is one example of a subtler transition, whereas the wooden banister (shown in Figure 52) could be interpreted as a more obvious attempt to create differentiated spatial fields. The function of a fence, barrier or transition, emphasises the depth of space that stretches away from the viewer (see Figure 53, Lippi painting from Santo Spirito, Florence). So, in the case of the wall paintings at Malinalco, although the wooden banister may seem to be in contrast to the fluid negotiation of material values between the plant growing in the courtyard and the plants on the wall, this may not be the case. By representing a wooden barrier, it is possible that the position of the viewer, as well as the nature of worked matter, is questioned. The division between the viewer and the scene behind the fence is alluded to, in the same way that the stone wall provides a conceptual barrier. In this way, the viewer's perception of materiality, and so its role in the understanding of the self (and one's own materiality), is questioned. The transition between profane/banal and existential/spiritual spaces might remind the participant of the transition and movement in ritual procession. The symbolic function of this is conceptually linked to metamorphoses in agricultural cycles, suggested by the fertile/floral theme of the paintings. The connection to

self and the body can be explored in relation to calendrical Mesoamerican manuscripts and the impact of these cycles on personhood. Not all of the floral designs on the walls at Malinalco are shown in a naturalistic form (the friezes, as mentioned, are heavily stylised). It is reasonable to suppose that the conceptual effect of exaggerated natural forms (see Figure 52, in which the flowing acanthus leaves are particularly imposing in terms of sheer size) was one of almost dramatic fecundity. Figure 51 shows a tree, hanging in the centre of a mural, the roots of which extend as imposing fertile leaves. Flowers extend from these leaves and vines creep around the tree's trunk. On the top branches sit two birds, one of which is sucking the nectar from a flower. The leaves that are shown in the place of roots accentuate the fertility of the tree; even where the nutrients are taken up there is growth. The bird that sucks nectar from the flower may also be a synecdoche for the interdependency of the processes embedded in the natural environment. This could be an indicator that the material upon which the paintings were made, the tools used to make them, and the people participating in the appreciation are materially linked in a similar (although more abstract) sense. The connection between this tree with a bird in its branches, to the origin tree (common to many Mesoamerican communities and described at length, in previous chapters) would certainly have been apparent to the artists and the audience. Although the insignia of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary and the Augustinian emblem create an unrealistic intrusion into the natural scene depicted, the letters used to illustrate these insignia are made from intertwined vines: even symbols are attributed living/floral qualities.

Just as the role of the floral and faunal theme at Malinalco has been shown to relate to ideas of fertility and material interchange and transition, a similar point might also be made regarding the paintings at Izamal. As Figure 54 shows, the orange tree trunks are positioned on the inner side of the pillar, and the branches and fruit cover a circular space in which the arches converge. Arguably, the stone, in this way disguised, suggests that the position of materiality within metaphorical reality is alterable, as it replicates the wooden tree trunks. Were the viewer to be standing with her/his back to the courtyard walls, the trees/pillars form a spatial plane. There is a false perspective and the effect might be that of an orchard or garden. The space of the courtyard is made into an immersive experience, a recreated environment, like a theatre, in which the viewers are participants, rather than objective observers. Conversely, the pillars (Figure 54) still highlight architectural facets, such as capitals. The viewer, in this way, is intentionally reminded that the pillars are not trees. The participants' role is set between two states, as soon as they enter the atrium and walk along the colonnade walls towards the *portería*, they are pulled

between an imagined natural landscape and the built walls of the convent space. This might be compared to the drastic shift of entering, exiting and re-entering the three mural rooms at Bonampak. Ritual space is intertwined with an experience of the natural environment. The real and knowable, the space within the convent, is linked to the *monte*. In this way, the programme does not just play with the ideas of architecture (built environment) and the natural environment, it forces the participant to question her/his role within this space. Existential sensitivity, as illustrated by Damisch's clouds, is expanded to the idea of agency, and movement. The exercise is not purely intellectual, it is kinetic. Within a permeable or dividual personhood, this impression may be more easily reached and may have added another dimension to the dialectic between the body and the surrounding worked matter. It can be noted, as in the case of Malinalco, that the space within the courtyard is open to the natural environment. The fact that the courtyard at Izamal is elevated may serve to conceptually push the urban environment further away. The fact that the convent was built on top of the pre-Colombian healing site would certainly promote an engagement between the place and pre-Hispanic space and thought. This renders the statements made by Spanish settlers in Yucatán regarding the *monte* as the location of pre-Hispanic cultural agency, particularly interesting. The Spanish friars appropriated a sacred space with the aim of Catholic indoctrination but, in so doing, may have brought the *monte* into religious practices at the convent.

Another interesting aspect of the wall-painting design at Izamal relates to concepts of boundary and division, and transition between spatial zones. The stylised friezes (Figures 48 and 49) lie opposite the orange trees and the more fluid floral motifs painted onto the lintel of the chamber entrance. These different ways of painting flowers may have indicated the process of moving through the convent space. If we do assume that these wall paintings held a ritual function (or were at least the context for ritual action), perhaps this stylistic device was a metaphor for the role of the ritual itself. Tilley (1999, et al 2008) has shown how dimension can be created by rock art, which challenges European conceptions of the paramount skill of perspectival rendering. It can be shown that alternative approaches to the reception of art and material culture can have diverse influences on the construction of self (through the body as a material and in relation to a community). Both the natural environment and places of historic significance have been shown, in Santa Elena, to be capable of having de-stabilising effects. The superimposition of the convent on a pre-Colombian site, and the reconstruction of the natural environment around the courtyard, places San Antonio de Padua in both categories. The convent itself, however, could be considered a place of positive ritual action.

The extant wall paintings at the convent of San Mateo at Izamal are notably mostly without figures (this is aside from the small depiction of Santa Bárbara). The *portería*, therefore, is a significant exception. If we follow the suggestion that the Franciscan rituals centred around the Passion of Christ, and that the body of Christ was carried by the ritual participants, this might account for the choice. The room provides an entire environmental context for the viewer. The sun, painted onto the ceiling of the chamber, in the centre, is one such example. The action represented on the walls is actually at eye level, so that there is no need to sit or crouch in a prescribed way (as in the case of Bonampak) to observe and comprehend the scene. The room depicts various time-splices, in that there are action groups that create scenes that are evidently happening independently of one another. It seems more plausible, since the characters appear to be repeated, that these scenes are separated temporally, rather than spatially. The viewer is drawn into a reproduction of real space (horizontal perspective on landscape and the sun at the highest point). It is interesting to compare this room to *The Weather Project* by Olafur Eliasson (discussed in the opening chapters, Figure 4). In both cases, the artist (or artists, perhaps, in the case of Izamal) have created a microenvironment and the effect is arguably not only to transport the viewer to another space and time, but to trigger an emotional and physical comparison between the interior (false) environment and the exterior natural environment. It is also interesting to make a comparison here with Bonampak murals. Much like the wall paintings at Bonampak, the viewer moves his/her eyes and body around the room. Also, the viewer is specifically conscious of being part of the architecture of the room, since the walls create horizon boundaries. The viewer is also required to enter and exit the room, in order to reach the cloister. The participants re-enter and exit the room on the way out to the posa chapel. In this way, the room invites you to use movement as a way to engage with the space and the content of the paintings. There is no doubt that the rituals that took place at Bonampak were very different from those that were conducted by the Spanish friars at Izamal. The style and content of the art work is also very different. The interesting comparisons belong in trying to understand the way that these spaces became locations of ritual action and so habitus and hexis (Bourdieu 1977 and Foucault in Martin et al 1988). We can say that the chiasmic temporal layout of the Bonampak rooms might lend weight to an immersion in Room two in a scene from the past. In this way, the first and second entrances into the *portería* structure the counter-clockwise movement around the cloister (a movement that recalls ritual cosmograms). The choice to use wall paintings that mimic the natural environment in the open atrium outside the *portería* may have established the room as enclosed space, in the same way that this is felt at Bonampak.

The convent at Izamal is a ritual and religious space. There is no real engagement with daily or normal life, here, as there might have been at Bonampak. It is interesting to posit how that space might have been received, however, taking into account the Maya perspective on natural spaces, spaces that enclosed historical narratives, and areas of past importance (the pre-Colombian ruins beneath the convent).

3.3 Sculpture in the Maya Area; the Cross Group Reliefs at Palenque, Chiapas.

This analysis of pre-conquest relief sculpture will focus on two tripartite artistic programs from the Maya area, the panels from the Cross Group temples at Palenque, and Lintels 24, 25 and 26, found in Structure 23 at Yaxchilán. Styles and concepts that are raised in this discussion will be associated with two *retablos* from the church of San Francisco de Asís, at Yaxcabá.

Palenque is a Maya city-state that lies in the modern state of Chiapas, close to the border with the state of Tabasco. The ruins date back to approximately 226 CE and it is likely that the site was largely abandoned at the very end of the 8th century. Although Palenque is a relatively small site, in comparison to the larger complexes at, for example, Tikal or Chichen Itza, it contains some extraordinary examples of relief sculpture and architecture. This discussion will touch on certain of the most well-known reliefs, around which there has been substantial art historical, linguistic and archaeological investigation: the Cross Group tablets. The reliefs and their accompanying text concern a series of rulers at Palenque, a subject that is illustrated in dense conceptual iconography and narrative elaboration.

The Cross Group tablets shown in Figures 55, 56 and 57 are the central tablets of three temples, all of which face each other on respective pyramidal platforms. The complex was built by K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam in the late 7th century CE and were used from this time until 692 CE, when they were dedicated to the period ending 8 Ajaw 8 Wo (Martin and Grube 2008, 169). Excavations have yielded evidence that the area was in use before the structures were put in place, however; “In the course of the excavation we encountered a concentration of large incensario fragments and the partial remains of two "cajetas" (the vessels that actually contain the charcoal and incense) were documented and collected. The incensarios identified here differ from others found in association with the Cross Group structures in that the relief is lower and the appliqué elements are shallow

by comparison. It is possible that these incensarios represent an earlier developmental stage relative to the incensarios associated with the Cross Group structures" (Cuevas García and Bernal 2002).

Excavations have shed light on certain details, but researchers have also uncovered records from the hieroglyphic inscriptions on the inside of the temple walls. The three central tablets have similar layouts, two figures in profile flanking central elements. These carved images are flanked by glyph panels and the central panels are larger than those flanking them. The glyphs describe the genealogical events that have taken place since the birth of Palenque deities, through to the accession of K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam. They intertwine what traditional academics would label the mythological (creative) with the historical and the present (political) (Skidmore 2008, 2). Each of the temples is consecrated to a different god of the Palenque Triad (Skidmore 2008, 68). Inscriptions indicate that the birth of these three gods is a rebirth that relates to the Palenque royal dynasty (Houston et al 2006, 90 Garza Camino 2007, 23).

Academic discussion on the Cross Group tablets, named the Temple of the Cross, the Temple of the Sun and the Temple of the Foliated Cross, has supported various possible sequences for the reading, or experience, of the works. Berlin (1963) proposed the order TC, TFC, TS, Cohodas (1973) TS, TC, TFC and Clancy (1986), along with other more recent scholars, TC, TS, TFC. The Maya inhabitants of Palenque referred to the Temple of the Cross as Wak Chan (Six Skies) and also as the North House (Carrasco 2004). This latter name alludes to the cosmic hearthstone, the northern hearthstone, from which the maize god sprouted, in Maya history. The image, as shown in Figure 55, contains two figures on either side of a cross. The figure on the right hand side is taller than that on the left. He wears a folded cloth kilt, knotted at the front, a single-stranded beaded necklace, a tall cylinder headdress with short feathers, beaded anklets and bracelets and is barefoot (Clancy 1986, 25). He is holding an effigy, thought to be the Jester god (Stuart 2012) on top of paper-cloth wrappings (Taube 1998, 458, Stuart 2012, 135-136) and reaching out to the central cross, which represents the world tree (Freidel, Schele and Parker 1993, 71, 77-78, Garza Camino 2007, 21). The celestial bird (Principal Bird Deity) is perched on the central tree (Garza Camino 2007, 20), facing the taller figure. The other, smaller, figure is shown, also facing the tree, in a ceremonial nine-knotted costume. He is holding what has been identified as a stylised censer bowl (Stuart, Maya Decipherment). The image is bordered by a sky band, which both figures stand on. The tree in the centre grows from a large censer similar to that held by the smaller figure but containing a sun symbol (Stuart, Maya Decipherment). This censer is placed over the sky-

band, and from the viewer's perspective, the band is shielded by it. This temple is dedicated to God I.

The Temple of the Sun, called Pas-Kab' (open earth) (Carrasco 2004) contains a central tablet, Figure 56, that depicts God III in his Jaguar God of the Underworld/night sun manifestation (Skidmore 2008, 69, Stuart and Stuart 2008, 88, Garza Camino 2007 21-23). The same two figures stand in profile, towards this central element, which is placed forward in the visual field, so that two diagonal spears are set behind it. Both figures are also holding effigies on paper-cloth up to the central elements. In this case, the entire image is contained by the sky-band.

The tablet from the Temple of the Foliated Cross shows the same figures, but their position is inverted so that the taller figure stands to the left and the shorter to the right (Figure 57). Both face a tree that is sprouting maize god heads and jewels, and which grows from a water-lily (Schele and Freidel 1990 and Schele and Villela 1992). The taller figure stands on a flowering *witz* (mountain) (probably also a symbolic censer), while the shorter stands on a conch shell from which maize leaves grow, identified as the Matwil "mythological birthplace of the gods" (Skidmore 2008, Garza Camino 2007, 21) or a mythological place of tribal origins like the Aztlan of the Aztecs (Stuart and Houston 1994). There is no sky-band, and the temple is dedicated to God II.

The iconographical and glyphic analysis of these tablets is dense and widely contested. It is not the intention of this discussion to enter into the minutiae of the academic debates, but to outline the existing literature, and come to some broad conclusions as to the content of the three tablets. It is within this framework that we can apply the theory sketched in Chapter two and analyse style and content. Based on early epigraphic analysis of the Cross Group temples, Schele proposed (1976) that the taller figure in all three reliefs was Chan Bahlum II, and the smaller figure was Pakal, his father (who was dead at the time of Bahlum's accession). As such, the Cross Group tablets are identified as commemorative, in celebration of Bahlum's accession; "Pacal, now dead, offers to Chan Bahlum three emblems of rulership" (Clancy 1986, 17). The maize and "cauac monster"[3] imagery underneath the standing figures was interpreted as a metaphor for birth, re-emphasised by the glyphic text that refers to the greening of the corn seed

[3] Please note that the use in English of the term "cauac monster", by Proskouriakoff 1961 and Schele 1979, has a negative connotation of this Maya deity, making the use of this term inappropriate.

(Freidel et al 1993). An analysis by Clancy offers a contrasting explanation of the symbology on the Cross Group tablets; although she remains in agreement that the tall figure represents Chan Bahlum, she states that the smaller figure is the father of Palenque's triad of patron gods (Clancy 1986, 18). She also posits that, rather than displaying an accession scene, this is an anniversary event (Clancy 1986, 18). She focuses on equivalence as a major theme, "signified by the overt repetition of icons and composition…that transformation takes place is signalled by the use of reverse imagery between TC and TFC panels and by their contrasting details of line quality and iconography" (Clancy 1986, 24).

More recent analyses have concluded that both figures, in all three tablets, are representations of K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam (Chan Bahlum) (Skidmore 2008, Taube 1998, Martin and Grube 2008, Stuart 2012, Houston 1996). The smaller figure is described as being K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam on the date of his Okte'-ship, and the larger figure portrays him on the date of his accession (Carrasco 2004). The accession statement that is used for these various kings has been translated as, "he was seated with the headband" (Skidmore 2008, 36) and there is a consistent linking of birth days and accession days, finally resulting in what Kathryn Josserand (1991) has called the Peak Event of an inscription; that is, "the consistent linking of births to accessions in the text…changed abruptly to the tying together of two birth dates" (Skidmore 2008, 35).

The main elements that will be analysed in the following text are: the central axes upon which, in two cases, the Principal Bird Deity (Itzam-Ye) is perched, the censer on the Tablet of the Cross, the effigies of the "Jester god"[4], and, finally, the possible significance of the composition of the pieces and their relation to one another. Following Taube (1998) and Houston (1996), the main censer depicted on the tablet from the Temple of the Cross (Figure 55) represents a place of origin and birth. Censers are also symbols of the axis mundi (represented here also by the cross in the centre of the tablet). This axis mundi would connect the earth, the sky and the underworld. Taube (1998) has shown the connections between temples (homes of the gods), the censer and the hearth: in colonial Yucatec, for example, a common term for temple is *k'u na*, or, "god house" (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 423). This is supported by similar meanings that have been found in early

[4] Please note that the term Jester god will be used throughout this text, because this is the nickname used by Mayanists. The term, however, is culturally misleading, due to its basis in European thought.

colonial dictionaries of other Mayan languages (e.g., Acuña 1983: 544; Laughlin 1988: 373). Furthermore, following epigraphic investigation by Kelley (1976: 133) and Stuart (1987: 33–39), Taube shows that "in both the Post-Classic codices and Classic Maya monuments, temples are referred to as otoch or otot, a term meaning "house" in Mayan languages." Taube unpacks the cosmic house model, in which four posts stand for the trees that support the heavens (1998, 432). He states, however, that traditional Maya houses do not have a central post for the axis mundi from which the directions radiate. The middle place is a three-stone hearth, *k'oben* in Yucatec; *yoket* in Chol, Tojolabal, and Tzeltalan languages; and *xkub* in Quiche (Wauchope 1938: 119; Barrera Vásquez 1980: 406; Attinasi n.d.: 342; Lenkersdorf 1979, 1: 421; Delgaty and Sánchez 1978: 233; Laughlin 1988: 451; Acuña 1983: 241, 275). He posits, using sources from the Anales de Cuautitlan (Bierhorst 1992, 23), the Florentine Codex (Sahagún 1950–82, 6: 88–89) and Stela C at Quirigua (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993: 65–71) that the placing of this central hearth was a mythological act that may have involved male and female creative principles, clouds and water, described on Stela C as *yax* blue/green, the beginning place of all things (Taube 1998, 434). There is further iconographic, ethnohistorical and ethnographic investigation concerning three-pronged *incensarios*, three-stone hearths, three-stone bowls and large worked stone spheres, which may have functioned as symbolic hearths. "During the excavation of Tonina Structure E5-5, Becquelin and Baudez (1979–82, 1: 37) uncovered a stairway shrine containing a single sandstone ball approximately 70 cm in diameter (Fig. 4a–b). Set into the centre of the shrine chamber, the stone protruded some 15 cm above the stucco floor. The shrine façade portrays an elaborate witz monster, or zoomorphic mountain, with the interior chamber constituting its open gullet. On each side of the open mouth, a rounded tun stone is carefully delineated in stucco (Fig.4b). Together, the two flanking stucco representations and the actual stone ball represent the triangularly arranged hearth in the mouth of the zoomorphic mountain" (Taube 1998, 438). In this case, the *witz* mountain beneath K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam in the tablet from the Temple of the Foliated Cross is also a censer or origin symbol.

It can, therefore, be shown that this symbol of a hearth is linked to jade hearthstones and vegetal smoke, the mouth of the *caimán*, that passages also show to be represented by the *pib*, sweatbath (Roys 1965, 61). Significantly, sweatbaths are healing places, where placentas were buried after childbirth. The censer, sweatbath, primordial cave, jade bead and so on embody concepts that would, by European standards, be considered to be dualisms: male/female, water/fire, underworld/sky, birth/death. This is the root of the world tree (Schele 1993), or the two-headed serpent (Garza Camino 2007, 27).

There is substantial epigraphic and iconographic data to suggest that the axis shown in the tablet of the Temple of the Cross, is a world tree. The censer forms the root of this tree, its birthplace (corresponding to the connections between censer and primordial birth and beginning.) The tree is also a prominent element of the Popol Vuh, in the form of the origins of birth. Hun Hunahpú's head is placed in a calabash tree. This skull later impregnates Xquic, daughter of a Xibalba lord, by spitting into her hand. His descendent, the hunter (one of the hero twins), Hun Ajaw, shoots the bird from the top of the tree (see Blowgunner pot Figure 58), and in the Cross Group representations, upon this axis is seated the Principal Bird Deity. Schele and Grube's investigations among the contemporary Maya in Chiapas prompted an iconographical reading of the world tree on the Blowgunner pot as the milky way; "We believe the scorpion on the Blowgunner pot is Scorpius. Moreover, the Milky Way rises out of the south horizon when Scorpius is high in the sky and arches north to form the World Tree in the scene" (Schele and Villela 1992, 6). Thus, on Pakal's sarcophagus in the Temple of the Inscriptions, according to Sosa (1986) and Schele (1992), the double-headed serpent bar wrapped around the branches of the world tree is the ecliptic (Schele and Villela, 1992, 6). So too can it be shown that "the tree on the Tablet of the Cross was called the Wakah Chan…the raising of the sky and the establishment of the tree at its center. This great central axis is the Milky Way as it arches through the sky from south to north" (Schele and Villela, 1992, 6). Garza Camino (2007) argues that the cross in the Tablet of the Cross is not a world tree, as outlined by Schele (1993); "the horizontal bar of the cross is a two headed serpent with a stiff body and upper jaws flexed upwards that are formed by jade beads. Another two headed snake with a flexible body of alternating "yax" glyphs and jade beads is intertwined in the cross" (Garza Camino 2007, 27). She asserts that, since *yax* glyphs and jade beads are symbols of water and fertility, the cross represents both the axis mundi and the properties of fecundity attached to the sky (Garza Camino 2007, 27). Although the crosses in the Cross Group are generally referred to as World trees (for example, Skidmore 2008 and Stuart 2012), considering the importance of equivalence in symbology (as demonstrated by Clancy, 1986 but also evident in origin mythology cross-culturally), it seems unnecessary to point to an isolated and non-transferrable meaning of the central axes.

It is interesting to consider Stuart's analysis of the Cross Group (2012), as it involves the birds that perch on the axes, and presents a further interpretation of their identity. In "The Name of Paper" (2012), Stuart contributes to the discussion of the personage, Ux Yop Huun, who appears in the texts at the Cross Group, as well as at other sites. He links Ux Yop Huun to the word *huun*: "It is curious that a number of accessions,

the deaths of two kings, and even the building dedication – are described in terms that emphasise the role of the ceremonial bark paper headband worn by rulers, known as huun or sakhuun" (Stuart 2012, 119). This headband is fastened onto new rulers, which holds mythological importance (since Juun Ajaw's most distinctive visual marker is his headband (Stuart 2012, 125). Furthermore, "The epigraphic and visual evidence points to a royal name being a label that is in some way manifested through the headband" (Stuart 2012, 125).

In this way, Ux Yop Huun is related to depictions of the "Jester god" (identified by Schele (1974, 49, Schele and Miller 1986, 53) owing to its similarity to the hats worn by Medieval court jesters (Fields 1991, 1) (Stuart 2012, 128). Other depictions of the Jester god are in the context of paper, the material itself, as a "basic animate symbol for huun, the *amate* tree and the ritual paper made from it" (Stuart 2012, 128). Jester gods also appear on headbands, perhaps as markers of the paper material that they are made from (Stuart 2012, 131). Interestingly, the animated face on Jester gods is identical to the face of the Principal Bird Deity (Taube 1998 and Stuart 2012), and kings at early and pre-Classic sites are depicted wearing the birds as headdresses; "Perhaps the animate essence of the ficus tree relied on this old iconographic connection, a fusion of the bird and the *amate* tree as a single motif, derived from an ancient and elemental narrative of mythology" (Stuart 2012, 133). The kings depicted on Pakal's sarcophagus wear their names on their headdresses, alongside a small Jester god in profile (Kelley 1965, Schele and Mathews 1974 and Stuart 2012, 135). It seems very plausible that we can consider the Jester god more than a costume piece; it has an identity and an actual name, and personhood, taken on by the king at the time of his or her accession. In the Cross Group tablets, there are very tight conceptual connections between the Jester gods in K'inich Kan B'ahlams' hands, the birds perched on the central axes, K'inich Kan B'ahlam and the central axes. The personhood of the new king is related both to the mythological hunter, the fallen bird and to the axis mundi. Perhaps significantly, the Jester gods are being held up by K'inich Kan B'ahlam towards the central axis. They sit, or lie, in his arms, upon another material. It has also been noted, by Taube (1998) that the temple, in Maya thought, was likened to a seated person, with the temple structure on the top as the head. We can thus make links between the temple (as hearth) and censer, and K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam.

There is research demonstrating the possibility that it may be necessary to look more closely into the the identity of the bird. It has been pointed out, for example, that the Blowgunner's Vase depicts the shooting of "Seven Macaw" by the Hero Twins (Robicsek

and Hales (1982:56-57; Freidel et al. 1993:69-71; Taube 1987:4-5). However, the "Principal Bird Deity" and the "Seven Macaw" of the Popol Vuh have not been concretely linked (Zender, 2005, 8-9). As Bassie-Sweet (2002,24) and Hellmuth (1987:364-5) have shown that Bardawil (1976) conflates at least two characters in his discussion of the "Principal Bird Deity". The first of these is a bird of prey rather than a macaw.

We have, then, two separate birds that are associated with the Hero Twins. The Hero Twins shoot at least two different birds in the Popol Vuh (the laughing falcon and "Seven Macaw") but only one is said to have bitten off Junajpu's arm ("Seven Macaw"). As such, Zender surmises that the Blowgunner pot does not depict the slaying of "Seven Macaw", but the shooting of the avian avatar or messenger of God D (Zender 2005, 9). However, in the same way as the precise material of the axis can be disputed, the personhood of the birds in the Cross Group tablets is also not easily definable. This may be developed in line with deeper iconographical and epigraphical analysis, but given the importance and widespread use of metaphor and equivalence in Maya writing and art work, the allusions to mythology and material that have been set out are convincing.

Iconographical Discussion.

It remains to use the theory outlined in Chapter 2 to approach the certain iconographical elements of the Cross Group tablets, as they have been unpacked above. The role of the Jester god is as an embodiment of an animate material and fluid aspect of personhood that moves into a person's body to fulfil a role in society. It is fixed and loosened onto this body through ritual praxis. There are clear correlations between this interpretation of Classic Maya iconography and thought in Santa Elena. There is quite evidently a disparity between the context of Maya kingship and accession and community thought with regards to household ritual. However, it is not implausible that similar over-arching theories could have existed between accession rituals and household rituals in the Classic period, making the connection valid. Narratives concerning the danger of energies around archaeological sites, because they are rich in human movement and history, correspond to this fluid view of personhood. The theory put forward by interviewee H on the subject of *mal de ojo*, is also relevant. The ability for H to create an impact on a horse, from a previous assimilation of energy (*mal de ojo*), implies that this aspect of personhood is acquired, and can live inside somebody, and later be passed on. The allusions to energies that exist extra-corporeally (around areas where accidents have happened and historic sites) show that materials are hosts for these forces. The interviews with

inhabitants of Santa Elena describe how certain materials can have agency, while others do not. This may correspond to the existence of depictions of bark paper that are animate, and the fact that this is not the norm.

Generally, the people from Santa Elena do not imply that these energies are put in place ritually (except in the case of "anti-healing"). They can be taken away ritually, however, and interviewee F explains the procedures and plants needed to do so. The narrative as explained by interviewee C, who attributes the *viento malo* to the small bird (probably an owl) flying over a house at night, shows some continuity on the basis of the role and symbolism of animals. Here, the bird perched on the axis represents a key aspect of the personhood of kingship, particularly because the early depictions of head-pieces in royal portraiture are in bird form. That the direct root of the importance of birds has been lost is unsurprising. The complex system of allusions between the king, the Jester god, the bird and the principal axes might expose a metaphor for this multifaceted personal force.

If we can postulate that the animate *huun*, or the Jester god, was an external force, which had an effect on the person wearing the headband, it remains to fill in blanks regarding Classic Maya community life. It seems unlikely that it would be solely in this specific ritual that external forces would be manipulated or dealt with. The fact that K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam is holding the effigies of the Jester god upon another material indicates that there were, perhaps, ritual procedures put in place to counter the effect of animated materials. If we can say that this was an attempt at safeguarding the personhood of the actors involved in the ritual, then we can make a connection between these scenes and the daily negotiations that take place between residents of Santa Elena and the surrounding material world.

The shifting of personhood through the paper headband/Jester god in the form of an effigy recalls the K'o che ceremony, in Santa Elena, in which the statue of San Mateo is moved from one house to another. The name of the ritual "wooden head" refers to the transportation of the effigy with living assistants in a wooden litter (carried by people from beneath). We might also be able to make a connection between this "head" and the temple (the home of the gods), and so the hearth, and the censer. The re-birth of K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam on the date of his accession, and the fact that he takes on a new persona, is mirrored here, if San Mateo's transportation vehicle is conceptually linked to origin myths. Three young women accompany the statue of San Mateo, in the K'o che litter. Considering the widespread use of the number three in the Maya world, in particular in the context of hearthstones, we might be able to argue that this choice is or was strategic. The use of

floral imagery on the litter may symbolise fertility, just as the use of women, rather than men, may be significant. There are plausible connections between the cave, hearth, sweatbath, censer and the womb (as shown in the burial of the afterbirth in sweatbaths in Mexico). The censer in Classic Maya iconography, as discussed above, represents aspects of fertility and birth that are non-dual. Clancy discusses the costumes worn by K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam in the Cross Group tablets: "As depicted in the TFC, the figure is once again barefoot, but his costume has changed from soft cloth to beads. His belts made by beadwork, and his short kilt and loincloth are made by a network of beads. Attached to the belt are complex beaded pendants, front and back. The front pendant drops from the open mouth of a monstrous saurian or fish head whose lower jaw is replaced by the spondylus shell shown in profile. Clothing made from beaded netting is commonly associated with the portrayal of women (Proskouriakoff 1961, Schele 1979, 46), and Jeffrey Miller (1974, 154) has pointed out that this particular front belt pendant is also a feminine costume feature" (Clancy 1986, 25). The implication here, which correlates with the features attributable to the censer in TC, is that the transformation of K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam involves primordial elements. The cloud/water, fire/smoke, female/male and so on properties of the natural world (the censer) are equated with this man's role in the development of history in Palenque. Since San Mateo is the patron saint of Santa Elena, and is said to lend agricultural assistance magically, his role in Santa Elena's history and religion is logically an important one (just as K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam was important). The transportation of the figure of San Mateo may signify his re-birth into a new identity, within a new household. In this way, the K'o che ritual might also be used to understand the iconography of the Cross Group.

It would also be interesting to discuss the censer with regard to primacies. The Maya name for the sweatbath, the *pib*, is the name given to the subterranean hole in which the food is cooked for these agricultural fertility rituals. Interestingly, there is strict gender division in this ritual.

The importance of trees in Santa Elena is evidenced by the narratives surrounding the *X'Tabay*. This figure is said to be most easily found by ceiba trees (and caves, see above). Following the discussion of the *X'Tabay*, there is significant evidence to suggest that, for her to appear, active engagement is required. In the description from Santa Elena, it is clear that the choice to stay by the tree or the well at night prompts a vision of this woman. She is related to temptation (perhaps the incursion of the Christian figure of Eve) and arguably to fertility, appearing in the form of an attractive naked woman. It can also be

shown that the existence of external figures and forces, such as the *X'Tabay*, is attached to the belief in them. As such, this figure is linked to an engagement with culturally specific beliefs in the Maya area. The use of a tree in the Cross Group tablets, particularly alongside the other symbols of primordiality, could be a signal that K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam is approaching elements of the environment that facilitate, or are invoked in some way by, a reconnection to the past. The interwoven narrative, the subject of the dynasty of kings at Palenque, is precisely a historic and culturally/community specific theme. It is also feasible that trees, in Maya thought, are related to pre-Colombian practices, and that the *x'tabay*, as popular orally communicated story-telling, is connected (logically) with this culture.

The Use of Stylistic Device.

Considering that these tablets are clearly part of a tripartite unit, and yet are separated, it is interesting to consider the kinetic aspect of their artistic reception (Hodder 1991, Tilley et al 2008, Ingold 2000). Although current interpretations of the text in the Cross Group indicate that the order of the tablets is TC, TS, TFC, there is no way of proving their functional and ritual use and reception in Classic period Palenque. Were we to assume that this were the order of experience, we can look to the styles employed in the tablets to gain a sense of experience and process. All three tablets were placed on the walls of small sanctuaries within the temple complex. This re-emphasises the journey in and out of the temples, promoting a sense of moving closer into the centre and back out again, only to re-enter. The sensation of this process of entering and exiting would be more accentuated than at Bonampak, for example, where the wall paintings inside the three rooms are placed at close proximity and have no outer chamber. This is quite interesting considering the conceptual focus in the tablets' content regarding centrality. The unifying axis, towards which the two representations of K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam face, is repeated in the symbolism of the censers (see above).

If we accept the ideas of fluid personhood through materials, we should try to examine the relationship between the viewer and the tablet. It is a flat tablet, so presumably would be approached frontally, again, unlike the position of the viewer at Bonampak. The two figures of K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam are facing the central axes, and the viewer would do the same thing. Perhaps, considering the strength of the four cornered posts in Maya creation mythology (Taube 1998) and the four colours/directionals (Kelley 1976, 53, Hopkins and Josserand 2001), we could posit another figure, a reflection of the viewer, behind the central axes. In this way, there would be two aspects to the personhood

of the viewer, and two aspects of K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam. The sizes of the K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam figures, as well as the epigraphic and iconographic content, promote the idea of transition. Whatever the goal of rituals associated with the Cross Group Temples, the movement in and out of these inner rooms would conjure a sense of transition and change, within a defined structure.

The Tablet of the Cross is rendered in hard, straight, stylised lines (in comparison to TFC, for example). The scene happens within the sky-band, while the censer from which the axes sprout stands in front of this band. This is not the case in either of the other tablet compositions and it may indicate a focus on this object. As discussed, the censer may have embodied the primordial complementary elements involved in birth and beginning. If this were the first temple to enter, it would make sense, stylistically, to exaggerate the agency of this censer.

In the tablet of the Temple of the Sun, the relief is also rendered with hard, nearly symmetrical, and un-naturalistic lines. The entire scene is happening within the sky-band, however. We might imagine that, if this were the middle temple entered, it would be the deepest moment of engagement with the artistic program, experientially speaking. The diagonals that form this axis, alternative to those employed in the other temples, might give the impression of depth, and the very centre of an environment. The tablet on the Temple of the Foliated Cross is rendered in softer lines, with the swirl of the maize as it grows from the shell beneath the younger king's feet, one of many examples (see Figure 57). There is no sky-band in this scene and so the composition of the space gives a sense of space, the pressure is lifted. It is possible that here, as the last of these tablets that the viewer must engage with, the artist was trying to promote a sense of completion, a calm moment in which the praxis necessary to effect the transition is completed. The allusions to maize might recall the more mundane world of agricultural work and daily consumption, the result of the more heady negotiation with worldly external forces.

3.4 Lintel Reliefs 24, 25 and 26 at Yaxchilan, Chiapas.

The pre-Colombian site of Yaxchilán lies along the southern side of a horse-shoe curve of the Usumacinata river, which here borders Mexico and Guatemala, in the state of Chiapas. Inscriptions date the first sculptures to the early 6th century and it is thought that the site continued to be occupied until the mid-9th century (Benavides 2012, 55). This city

was called Pa'Chan (split sky), represented by a glyph with a split device, said to represent the entrance way, birth or rebirth, in Maya iconography (Martin, 2004, 6). According to extant structures and sculptures, Yaxchilán society flourished in the Late Classic (600-900 CE) (Martin and Grube 2008, 119). The three lintels under discussion here were produced within this period, and were placed at the doorways of the now collapsed Structure 23.

Lintels 24 and 26 depict one of the rulers of Pa'Chan, Itzamnaaj B'ahlam III (Figures 59 and 61), in power from 681 CE- 742 CE (O'Neill 2011, 250, Martin and Grube 2008, 123) and his wife, Lady K'abal Xook, celebrating the former's accession. Lintel 25 shows Lady K'abal Xook and a vision serpent (Schele and Miller 1986, 177) or centipede serpent (Fitzsimmons 2009, 137) (Figure 60). There has been some disagreement as to the precise significance of iconographical and stylistic elements of these lintels, and the present discussion is a contribution in terms of themes raised in Chapters 1 and 2. Although Schele and Miller have claimed that the lintels are designed in sequence (1986, 177), this has been contested, on the basis of "differences and discontinuities of iconography of the entire program of Structure 23" (Tate 1992, 90). I will discuss these works together, on the basis that, intentional or otherwise, they would have been received and experienced in this way.

Iconographical Interpretations.

Lintels 24 and 25 show two rituals in which the main actor is Lady K'abal Xook, although the inscriptions describe Itzamnaaj B'ahlam as the active protagonist (Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions 2007, Boot 2003). Although the inscriptions date the scenes to two separate events, the lintels' matching paraphernalia indicate that they represent two parts of the same bloodletting ritual (Schele and Freidel 1990, 478 and Houston et al 2006). Lintel 24 (Figure 59) shows Lady K'abal Xook kneeling in the bottom right hand corner of the frame, wearing a ceremonial *huipil*, and pulling a cord studded with obsidian blades (García Moll 2004) through her tongue. Blood falls from her mouth in scrolls into a bowl lined with *amate* paper that lies on the floor. Itzamnaaj B'ahlam steps forward with his right foot towards her, holding a long torch. This torch forms a diagonal through the lintel that separates these two ritual participants. In Lintel 25, Lady K'abal Xook, wearing another ceremonial *huipil*, kneels back in the bottom right hand corner of the lintel (Figure 60). In front of her, from the *amate*-lined bowl on the ground, which also contains instruments used for auto-sacrifice, a centipede serpent rises, entwined with swirling smoke. Lady K'abal Xook is holding another bowl with instruments for auto-

sacrifice. From the mouth of the serpent emerges a figure holding a spear in the right hand and a shield in the left. He/she is wearing a jaguar pelt headdress (Schele and Miller 1986, 187). Earlier interpretations have identified this figure as an ancestor, Yat Balam (Schele and Freidel 1990, 177), as though here the serpent acts as a psychoduct, a ladder that connects the dead with the living using Lady K'abal Xook's blood as a catalyst (Schele and Mathews 1974, 109, Fitzsimmons 2009, 131). It has been further argued that the figure that emerges from this serpent is not only an ancestor but Itzamnaaj B'ahlam himself, which would explain the two auto-sacrifice bowls (one being B'ahlam's); "The ruler comes from the serpent mouth just as blood does, and he is wrapped in the S-shape of his own blood. On the day of his accession, 'Shield Jaguar' expresses the definition of his new office: Upon inauguration, the king literally occupies the blood of his ancestors" (Stuart 1988, 215). This would make sense if we wanted all three lintels to contain the same two characters. More recent interpretations have favoured the incursion of figures connected to Teotihuacán. It has been argued that the figure in the snake is Lady K'abal X'ook dressed as Ixik Yohl (Lady Heart) (Zender 2006), a goddess with connections to Teotihuacán. The figure has also been identified as the Teotihuacán Storm God, Aj k'ahk'O'Chaak (Martin and Grube 2008, 125).

The crux of the action in these scenes lies in understanding the premise that a blood sacrifice is burnt and that the smoke produced in this process (marked by flowered *ik'*) re-materialises as a connection to a dual-bodied Being (Fitzsimmons 2009, 137). Stuart has noted that serpents are frequently shown as having dotted streams of blood coming from their mouths. As such, any alternative figure emerging from a serpent's mouth is a symbol or substitute for blood (1988, 212). Many interpretations have described this dual-bodied Being as a hallucination or vision of Lady K'abal Xook; according to Schele and Miller, "hallucinatory visions (are) central to Maya ritual" (1986, 46). Kerr (2007) has identified hallucinogenic datura flowers on the serpent's eyebrows, nostrils and jaw, perhaps alluding to the source of the vision. Furthermore, ethnographic accounts of sacrificial rituals, and the speech made by Blood Woman in the Popol Vuh, indicate that incantations may well have been involved in these ceremonies; "…it is difficult to imagine an elaborate Classic Maya conjuring ceremony taking place in complete silence" (Fitzsimmons 2009, 139). These visions could have been produced using various methods: fasting, the darkness of the room where the ritual is taking place (Itzamnaaj B'ahlam is holding a torch in Lintel 24), blood loss, sounds, training and hallucinogens.

It has been widely posited that the blood of the Maya kings contained sacred essence (*k'uh*) (Stuart 1984, 99-107, Stuart 1984, 158-165, Houston and Stuart 1989, 90,

Houston et al 2006, 74-78): “The Classic elite were obsessed with blood, both their own and that spilled by high-ranking captives” (Coe 1999, 223) and this is also supported in the ethnographic record (tears, sweat, blood, mother’s milk (Schlesinger 2001, 119)). Lady K’abal Xook is holding a skull at her wrist (see Figure 60), and ethnographic and archaeological studies have shown that these body parts, presumably like blood, held sacred power, for example the successive interments of kings in attempts to sanctify ritually powerful locations (Fitzsimmons 2009, 141).

The connection that is built through ritual action here is manifested through a negotiation of substances, where materiality can affect personhood. Lady K’abal Xook, or Itzaamnaaj B’ahlam’s blood, holds the connection to the vision (supporting the suggestion that the emerging person is one of these two people, or a relative). The act of burning the blood can be interpreted as a ritual praxis that allows the flexibility of substance to effect the transformation. The implication is two-fold: Blood, and other corporeal substances, contain animate force, even when divorced from the conscious self. This force, when catalysed by ritual action, here burning, creates another person. What is unclear, given present iconographical interpretations, is to what extent this other person is connected to the person(s) involved in the bloodletting. What is clear is that one substance is, at least conceptually, interchangeable with another (blood to smoke to serpent figure), and that the same force can be contained by more than one substance (the blood, the skull, Lady Xook/Itzamnaaj B’ahlam, the serpent figure). Serpents have been shown to be metaphorical umbilical cords, connecting the three cosmic planes (sky, earth, underworld) (Schele and Miller 1986, 46). This references the axis mundi, or central hearth, discussed in the Cross Group tablets. The concept of the primordial is precisely made up of various elements. In this way, it is arguable that the serpent is a symbol for material interchangeability.

The positioning of these lintels at the doorways to Structure 23 may, then, be significant. The doorway is a liminal point in the experience of the structure itself, taking the person from a raised outdoor structure to an enclosed space. It is not unlikely that Structure 23 was used for ritual purposes, possibly the ritual represented on the lintels. It has been shown that the individual compositions of these sculptures use circular forms (McAnany and Plank 2001, 116-117). That there are counter-clockwise circuits that the eye must follow around the lintel, starting in the east and moving north, west and then south (McAnany and Plank 2001, 116-117). Taking Lintel 24 as an example, the eye is drawn immediately to the figure of Lady K’abal Xook, specifically to her hand as it pulls the cord through her tongue (this is emphasised stylistically, a point to which I will return).

From here the eye is caught by the flame of Itzamnaaj B'ahlam's torch. Following the diagonal down leads to the western side of the tablet, where the eye picks up the rope and blood that are falling from Lady Xook's tongue, down to the bowl on the ground. While the other lintels follow the same counter-clockwise direction, the inscriptions on the central lintel (25) are reversed, and need to be read clockwise (McAnany and Plank 2001, 116-118). This lintel has, in this way, been compared to clockwise processional movements in the festivities for female saints at San Juan Chamula (male saint processions are conducted counter-clockwise, Gossen 1974, 41-42), and therefore female agency (McAnany and Plank 2001, 116-118).

Although this association is arguable, female agency is present in the theme of all three lintels. Lintel 24 shows the bloodletting ritual, Lintel 25 the resulting vision and the final Lintel 26 shows Lady Xook handing Itzamnaaj a battle headdress. It could be interesting to analyse these lintels on the basis of how they were experienced. If they were viewed chronologically, the central tablet would be Lintel 25, with its reversed text. At the apex of ritual movement around the structure (engagement with the sculptures), Lady Xook bends backwards into the corner of the relief, cowered by the figure that emerges in armour from the serpent. The smoke swirls around the serpent, and the hieroglyphic inscription frames the curve of the emerging figure, thereby producing a sensation of pressure inwards, from an external force. This is an emotive use of composition, because it reflects the experience of Lady Xook, herself.

Schele and and Miller have suggested that the glyphs were arranged in mirror image because only gods and divine ancestors could read the text in its correct order (Schele and Freidel 1990, 326-327): "The text is written in mirror image, as if it should be read from the other side of the stone; we believe this mirroring to be an ingenious device to signal that this activity takes place inside an architectural space" (Schele and Miller 1986, 187). Since the lintel faces down, it could be read from above, in this case. They go further to suggest that this explains the absence of Itzamnaaj B'ahlam in the lintel (this theory has been supported by Steiger 2010, 53).

There have been various studies on the importance of mirroring among the Maya (especially Loughmiller-Newman 2008, 37). Materials such as magnetite, pyrite, obsidian, mica and hematite were used to reflect light and image (Taube 1992, 169 and Scarborough 1998, 151). Studies have explored the ritual context for mirrors, and it has been suggested that owing to their ability to reflect light, they have been associated with the sun (Taube 1992, 186). They have also been likened to water, and so (as water separated Maya worlds) to movement and transition between the human and the

otherworldly (Healy and Blainey 2011, 240). Matsumoto uses mirroring in glyph texts to show that the artists involved in these programs were generally more concerned with reversing the relationship between the glyphs than making an individual mirror image for each glyph (2013, 103). She argues that the mirror image texts conveyed cultural values that enhanced transformation and transition in ritual participation; “Reversed monumental texts thus not only passively symbolised, but actively facilitated the viewer’s transformation into a ritual participant whose access to the otherworldly made the viewer something more than a mere human” (Matsumoto 2013, 117). The bowl beneath Lady Xook in Lintel 25 represents a portal to another world, and so, as the viewer engaged with the reversed text, he or she would participate in the transformation experienced by Lady Xook (Matsumoto 2013, 118-119).

Both arguments are persuasive, but it makes more sense to assume that the choice is artistic and accessible to the viewer. The mirror image might indicate a shift in position or even personhood, for the viewer; “these theories fail to adequately address the aesthetic effect that reversed inscriptions would have had on their human viewers (Matsumoto 2013, 97). Equally, the viewer might be being prompted to move into the scene, to look outwards. Entrance and exit from the three rooms was presumably a transformative ritual process, and Lintel 25, which takes place inside one of the rooms, was the height of the movement, immersion and participation. Just as the viewer might move in and out of the room in Structure 23, the artists are inviting the viewer to step through a series of conceptual barriers.

It has been shown that there is some disparity in the naturalistic rendering of Lady Xook in Lintel 24. While she has very finely detailed and naturalistic fingers, her ears are over-stylised to the point of abstraction. It has been argued that the focus on her fingers here could denote her as a “cultural predator” (Herring 2005, 115), as nails were associated with jaguar iconography and the jaguar’s supremacy within the Mesoamerican ecosystem was associated with divine kingship. Focus on hands shown at Bonampak and archaeological finger finds may also indicate that the hand relates to action or praxis. Equally, this could be interpreted as drawing the spectator’s eye to the painful climax of the ritual, making the moment come to life (Herring 2005, 122). If we use this interpretation, Lintel 24 draws the eye to a painful moment, and perhaps would elicit a feeling of tense momentary anticipation. It is a still moment, as the sacrifice is performed under the calm and forceful light of Itzamnaaj B’ahlam’s torch. The movement in Lintel 25 is palpable, however. The counter-clockwise flow of the scene as the serpent looms over Lady Xook is given increased movement. Lintel 26, by contrast, is again characterised by

stillness alongside poignancy of action (Figure 61). Itzamnaaj stands frontally but looks, in profile, at Lady Xook. She stands towards him, in profile, and hands him the jaguar headdress. Their bodies are still abstracted in parts, and their hands retain the intricacy and naturalism evident in Lintel 24. The two figures are separated by a line of glyphs, giving the moment stillness and calm. The figures look firmly at each other, in the eye, however, indicating the weight of intimacy. The circular motion of this lintel happens around the headdress: as Lady Xook holds the headdress delicately, her finger outstretched, the line follows the curve of the back of the jaguar's head and into Itzamnaaj's upturned palm. Their two hands are in similar position, separated by the object that is being handed over. The sense of intimacy is strengthened. The viewer must have felt moved from a place of overwhelmed immersion (Lintel 25) back to a state of calmer, although weighty, objectification of the scene.

Costume is another interesting aspect in these three lintels, considering the detail with which Lady Xook's *huipiles* have been carved. Figures 62, 60 and 63 clearly show detail on the three ceremonial *huipiles*. Both the *huipiles* in Lintels 24 and 26 have zigzagged diamond fields, with alternative details inside these rhomboids (Looper 2000, 23) and these diamond patterned huipiles have been shown to be common in blood-letting ceremonies (Looper 2000, 52-83). The *huipil* in Lintel 24 contains a serrated diamond, within which increasingly smaller diamonds contain a crossband. These crossbands are reminiscent of the crosses that are ubiquitous in Maya iconography. One example is shown in the discussion of the Cross Group tablets. These crosses are the axis mundi, and are conceptually and iconographically linked to the ruler (K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam). Crosses appear in the Dresden Codex, on page 59, where barbed bloodletters float in scrolls to form a cross (Stuart 1988). They are also aquatic symbols, identifiable with *yax*, the watery place of creation (Looper 2000, 24) and a portal to the world of the gods (Schlesinger 2001, 46). The use of the cross in the ethnographic record is equally strong, one such example being the research conducted by Vogt among the Maya of Zinacantán, where sacred water-holes are marked by crosses (1983, 129). It has been shown that the cross symbolises the centre of the world as far back as the Middle Formative times, among the Olmec (Stanton and Freidel 2005, 234). Among the modern *mestizos* in the Maya area, the cross certainly now also has Christian connotations, but its adoption clearly coincides with a long tradition of use.

Lady Xook's *huipil* in Lintel 25 has a more curved, floral design that matches the material wrapped around Itzamnaaj's hips. It has already been shown that flowers are linked to hallucinogenic properties, which could be a factor in the decision to represent

Lady Xook in this costume. Considering that Lintel 25 was made later than Lintel 24, it is also significant that the material in the second lintel references the scene in the earlier. As a living organism, the flower (in many cultures) symbolises fertility (Neo-Assyrian rosettes, for example, Figure 64). Following the Maya cosmogram, in which the world of the living is a turtle/crocodile, surrounded by water, the water-lily references the portal to the underworld; “The aquatic aspect of the quatrefoil is consonant with the floral identification of the motif on ancient textile renderings. The unifying concept in this array of images is birth, for the Maya conceived of the watery underworld as a matrix of fertile energy referenced by flowers” (Looper 2000, 20). The quatrefoil flower is also related to the sun, as the *k’in* sun symbol is depicted with four petals (Looper 2000, 18). There are traces of blue pigment on this *huipil* that may be the remnants of Maya blue, a colour that was made from attapulgite or palygorskite clay. Maya blue was “resistant to diluted material acids, alkalis, solvents, oxidants, reducing agents, moderate heat and biocorrosion and shows little evidence of colour deterioration even after centuries of exposure to the harsh tropical climate of southern Mesoamerica” (Arnold et al 2008, 151-152). As there was no linguistic difference between blue and green, the terms *yax* was used for both hues. (The lack of widespread use of the pigments that produce blue and green in the Early Classic might be one of the reasons for its philosophical, rather than visual connotation.) North, south, east and west were associated with colours (white, yellow, red and black, respectively). Blue/green represents the centre. The flowers alongside the colour of the *huipil* may then denote the watery boundary to the underworld, and the reproductive force of an axis mundi. Here, Lady Xook has let some of her life blood and burnt it, as a sacrifice. This death is juxtaposed with symbols of rebirth and renewal, life.

In Lintel 26, Itzamnaaj B’ahlam is wearing quilted cotton armour over the woven *mat xicilli* (Schele and Miller 1986, 211). Lady Xook wears another ceremonial *huipil* with rhomboidal pattern. Within the diamond, in this case, are abstract representations of toads/frogs. The frog glyph refers to the Maya verb “to give birth” and connections have been made between the frog and representations in the Codex Borbonicus of Tlazolteotl giving birth (Coggins 1988 and Sharer and Morley 1994). Toads are the guardians of Xibalba in Maya mythology (Tate 1992, 121) and the modern Maya associate them with caves (Morris 1985, 72), Chaak, and the bringing forth of the rainy season (Thompson 1990, 258 and Schlesinger 2001, 275) (this was confirmed in Santa Elena, at the *primacias*). It is perhaps unsurprising that toads and frogs are important to the Mayas as symbols of life-giving and fertility (Campbell 1999, 13) since some species produce thousands of eggs in just one season (Velázquez Cabrera 2003). Taking into account the

huipil designs, it is very possible that the symbols used had particular relevance to the aim of bloodletting, and the entire ritual process illustrated in these lintels. Furthermore, Lady Xook is wearing a dress with a low neck line, has a forehead lock and an elongated forehead. The accentuation of her femininity, in this way, may have been chosen consciously; "it must have contributed some crucial meaning" (Joyce 2001, 171). This would make a further connection with the frogs on her *huipil* (Stone 2011, 171). There are various ethnographic accounts (documented also in Santa Elena) concerning the innate power of female fertility (Guiteras Holmes 1965), especially during pregnancy (Stone 2011, 171). Sacrifice (which is linked to fertility) can also be iconographically linked to accentuated feminine dress in Room Two at Bonampak (where women in dresses with low neck lines watch the sacrifice of the captives) (Stone 2011, 171). A possible reading of Lintel 26, therefore, is that Lady Xook shown in extremely feminine dress is the protagonist, even though she appears to be Itzamnaaj's assistant; "The Yaxchilan scene may likewise show something beneficial happening from female contact with male-gendered objects, suggesting that the ancient Maya also believed effects arose from a fertile woman touching male equipment" (Stone 2011, 171).

The fact that the two diagonal patterns enclose the flower pattern may also be relevant. As shown, the dress in Lintel 25 retains some blue pigment. The background shows remnants of red pigment. The other two *huipiles* show remains of red pigment, while the backgrounds evidence blue pigment. If we can assume that the blue dress in Lintel 25 was predominantly blue, that the background was predominantly red, and that this was the opposite case in Lintels 24 and 26, we have another chiasmic device. The colours form a sharp contrast and so would have made a strong impression on the viewer.

Lintels 24, 25 and 26 at Yaxchilán depict three different significantly separated years; 709, 681 and 725 respectively. The temporal spaces are interwoven, although there is, arguably, linearity in the process of the ritual. Considering the Mesoamerican cyclically calculated time, it is unsurprising that conceptions of how to portray events in time were alternative to the European traditions of doing so. The decision to interweave the lintels temporally would surely have served a specific purpose. If we assume that the figure that emerges from the serpent is an ancestor, this device may have been an attempt to engage the viewer in the experience of the ritual represented; as Lady Xook re-enters the past through her trance, the viewer's thoughts are transferred to the past; present time as well as past and future become bound. To take a contemporary artistic engagement with the experience of time, Christian Marclay's *The Clock* is a 24-hour video installation in which every minute is alluded to through a series of clips from classic film (Figure 5). For the

participant, the passage of time is felt at many different paces due to changing contexts and to the changing styles of original cinematography edited by Marclay. Engagement in the passage of time, through visual reminders, is a powerful artistic tool. It would certainly have had the effect of dissociating the participant from the profane and banal, and drawing him or her into the action around the structure.

The complexity of the Maya calendar and allusions to history on stelae around the Maya world evidence the importance of recording history. O'Neill has shown that under the next king, Bird Jaguar IV, older lintels were re-installed in buildings to make connections with the past, perhaps to ancestors, or perhaps in an attempt to re-shape history: "The physical juxtapositions of lintels from different moments in time and the textual narration of a connection between rulers from different moments in time constitute parallel and complementary historiographic practices" (2011, 245). She argues that there were either religious or political reasons for doing this. Ancestor veneration has been widely evidenced in the ethnographic record, for example McAnany (1995), who states that it is fundamental for spirituality and ritual, and functions as political and economic reinforcement. Excavations by the INAH at Structure 23 have yielded carved bones naming Lady Xook, in an extravagant tomb (Tomb III), and so it is thought that the building, constructed and used during her lifetime, became her dwelling in the afterlife (García Moll 2004). O'Neil has identified this as the material curation of history and the retention of material goods, in which "histories of use accumulate in the object's materiality" (O'Neil 2009, 262-263). This can be shown to be the case not only in terms of human remains and valuable artistic material culture, but also in the case of ancestors' costumes and ornaments (Joyce 2000, 190). Taking this suggestion into account, we might imagine that Lintels 24, 25 and 26 were valued for the history they accrued, for their contact with the figures who interacted with them over time.

Discussion.

Lintels 24, 25 and 26 were made at different stages during the reign of Itzamnaaj B'ahlam, and it can persuasively be shown that pre-Colombian Maya culture had a deep interest in events and objects from the past, remembered and otherwise. Furthermore, the lintels announce the timeframe of the scenes, and the temporal aspect of the narrative is interwoven. Conversations at Santa Elena have shown that archaeological sites, areas with rich history and areas where violent events took place are considered the home of external forces that can cause negative effects. Interviews have also shown that materials,

places and people that have been influenced can be hosts to these forces. Perhaps it is significant that the lintel depicting the direct and imposing presence of an external/historical force, Lintel 25, is also the oldest scene. Perhaps by representing an event that happened in the past, the actions and materials that have accrued around that image have strengthened. Within Santa Elena philosophy, this would give the object strong force and agency. We have seen that this is supported by stylistic device, as the viewer of Lintel 25 is at his or her least subjective at that point in the process. Perhaps we could deduce that the subjectivity lost by the viewer is assimilated by the image. As the image was used over time, its power and value similarly increased. The choice to make the dates of Lintels 24 and 26 closer to the date when they were carved may indicate that these chiasmic lintels were not required to accrue as much active value.

If Tomb II was made for Lady Xook, it would not be surprising if her bones and her images were designed to share a life-force, with Structure 23 to bind her.

Archaeological and linguistic analysis has shown the importance of flowers as symbols of fertility and the life-death cycle surrounding the understanding of this concept in Mesoamerica. The K'o che, in which San Mateo is carried from one home to the next, is decorated in flowers, as are the dresses worn by the women who accompany him on the litter. It has already been suggested that the carrying of San Mateo from one home to another might be a layering of personhood, the taking up of a new identity. Flowers as symbols of the watery entrance to the underworld denote their association with liminality, and the line between death and rebirth; as San Mateo loses a place and an identity, he gains another, illustrating this line. The K'o che litter is the transitory or interstitial moment, bridging the two places of Being. This is perhaps the place that Lady Xook inhabits in Lintel 25, when she wears flowers on her *huipil*. She has let blood and in the death of that liquid, something new is born for her. It is possible that what is born is an aspect or persona. It could be an aspect of royal personhood, which she will then share with Itzamnaaj B'ahlam. This persona is probably neither male nor female, but incorporates both elements, thereby explaining terms such as Chuchajaw, mother-father, in which both powers should combine for leadership (Bassie-Sweet 2000, 2). The intimate solemnity of Lintel 26 implies this shared responsibility.

The naturalism with which Lady Xook's *huipiles* are carved may also be significant. The artists of these lintels clearly chose to show three different *huipiles*, all with designs that probably related to the rituals represented in them. It is said, in Santa Elena, that the statue of San Mateo has the ability to help village agriculture, and that it does this at night,

as is needed. The statue is more than just an empty image, in this case, and contains a persona that has an interest in community well-being. As discussed, material agency has also been shown, through interviews at Santa Elena. This agency is not tied to the material, and so is flexible. The choice, on the part of the artist, to use such intricate detail may well have created material agency. It has been suggested that the sculpture that is being created in the image is a personification of the animate qualities of rock (Miller and Martin 2004, 129). The rock itself is precious, and the viewer of the memorial watches the precious stone being transformed. If artistic creativity can spark a dialectical or inter-subjective relationship between stone relief and the artist, that might explain the integrity with which detail was employed on these lintels. Their aesthetic power might have been received through this lens. This might explain why there were three different artists used; perhaps all three lintels needed a separate injection of creative dialogue through the sculptor.

In contrast to the detail with which the *huipiles* are rendered, it has been shown that the representations of Lady Xook and Itzamnaaj B'ahlam are idealised. To compare this with uses of repetition and idealisation in European art, we might take Warhol's de-subjectified individuals (for example, Monroe) and objects (brillo pads). Here the context is, of course, very different: Warhol critiques mass production and de-sensitivity towards idealised figures. The reproduction of idealised figures in Maya art may have had a similar effect. Although we could agree that, for the most part, the bodies are de-humanised, their composition and context is very real and emotive. In Lintel 24, as Itzamnaaj B'ahlam steps towards Lady Xook, she looks up at him. The two seem not to be performing these acts in isolation of each other. They are responding to each other's presence. That these rituals would have happened in a room, in the darkness, gives the viewer a sense of voyeurism, a window into privacy. This can also be argued for Lintel 26, although the scene is ostensibly less private; the two figures stare at each other, and their hands are close, only separated by the headdress. The focus in these lintels is not on their bodies, perhaps, but their actions. We can only hypothesise about the location of subjectivity/agency, but in light of evidence to suggest that material culture was attributed substantial force, we might allow the viewer's corporeal subjectivity to enter the scenes. Ritual action, as a worldly attempt to influence external forces, makes it arguable that the engagement with these lintels involved agency, action and movement. Perhaps it is this movement that brought to life the corporeality of these scenes.

3.5 Retablos at the San Francisco de Asís Church, Yaxcabá, Yucatán.

Yaxcabá (from Yucatec Maya *yax*/green and *caba*/land) lies approximately ninety kilometres south-east of Merida and has approximately 13,909 inhabitants (2005 census). The San Francisco of Asís church was built in the mid-18th century by an unknown architect. The façade is triple towered, and goes against convention in that the central tower is taller than those flanking it (see Figure 65). As a result, the central tower is dominant, rising two floors higher than the others. These levels are decorated with balustrades, inscribed friezes and pinnacles. A barrel-vaulted nave with three *retablos* on either side leads to the main altar and *retablo*. All of these *retablos* were also finished in the mid-18th century. The size of the church is cathedral-like in its proportions, and the quality of the sculptural work on the *retablos* indicates wealth and inter-community competition in 18th century Yucatán.

Yaxcabá had been prominent in the 1761 Maya uprising led by Jacinto Canek in the nearby town of Cisteil (close to the neighbouring Sotuta) (Rugeley 2009, 7). This was perhaps due to the ongoing rivalry between the Sotuta and Yaxcabá, the inception of which dates to before the Spanish conquest, when both towns were competing for the chief seat of the Cocom Maya. Later on, this church was fortified while the town was besieged during the Caste War (in 1847) (Dumond 1997 and Rugeley 2009).

The traditional historical treatment of art from the viceregal period onwards in Mexico has focused on the assimilation of styles from Europe, mainly Spain (with some Moroccan influence), Italy, Germany and Flanders (Caso, Montenegro and Covarrubias 1940, Toussaint 1948, Baird Jr and Rudinger 1962 and Fernández 1961). This assimilation has been divided into phases that relate to the development of New Spain's colonial history. The period following Córtez's conquest in 1521 CE is characterised art historically in terms of Gothic and Medieval and Mudejar influence, since these were the most prevalent artistic styles in Spain. As a result, monastic buildings developed the "temple fortress" style, which persisted until the mid-16th century (Caso et al 1940). From the mid-16th century onwards, with the arrival of European painters in New Spain, Renaissance and Italianising styles, known as Plateresque, became popular. Plateresque ornaments include: cherub heads, plates of fruit, garlands, coffers, prismatic columns and bulbous enlargements (Baird Jr and Rudinger 1962, 33). Baroque styles were introduced at the end of the 17th century, which develop into what traditional art historians have identified as the first independent style in New Spain, Churrigueresque; "When the personality of New Spain develops completely, Baroque art assumes a particular style, to

which we designate the name ‘Mexican Churrigueresque’” (Caso et al 1940, 73). This name was taken from José Churriguera, who was not in any way involved in the artistic movement. The term Ultra-Baroque has also been employed, although this term is arguably just as misleading, implying that it was the height of Baroque style or exaggerated Baroque style (Baird Jr and Rudinger 1962, 37-39).

Although authors admit that the resident craftsmanship of art in New Spain resulted in the integration of indigenous styles (Baird Jr and Rudinger 1962, 32-33), any creative input from these cultures has been negated; “The indigenous element, which had been the inspiring driving force behind art works, becomes nothing more than a hand that executes them” (Caso et al 1940, 71). More recently, this perspective has been further elaborated, on the basis that however many stylistic differences emerged in New Spain due to indigenous craftspeople, art and architecture can never be other than another manifestation of Spanish Baroque; “…the possibility of producing autonomous, native artistic expressions did not exist in the American cities of the colonial period because of their very condition of being colonial and ruled by a system of inevitable dependence” (Gasparini, 1981, 79). As such, artistic activities are said to have radiated from the centre (colonising culture) to the periphery (colony), and the deformation of the original style led to lesser quality (Gasparini, 1981, 79). Further concessions for the differences in style in New Spain have been outlined as follows: the influence of the new natural environment, disparate cultural levels between colony and country of origin, the variety of European cultural contributions, employment of unskilled workers, the conditions of dependence of the workers, use of different materials, and provincial expression (Gasparini, 1981, 99). The weight of these factors is evidenced in the different artistic traditions in the modern state of Mexico, compared with those that developed in, for example, the modern state of Peru.

One of the more outstanding examples of the way that Christian iconography was reproduced in New Spain concerns a shift in colour and materiality. Without paintings or church interiors as teaching aids, religious images and iconography in New Spain were copied from wood engravings and monochrome book prints (Toussaint 1948). This accounts for the monochrome rendering of many convent frescoes (Caso et al 1940, 71). It is unsurprising, therefore, that many art historians have emphasised that artistic expressions were not backed by cultural influences and that artists were limited to reproduction, rather than autonomous creativity, indicating a negative divergence from the norm (or “ideal”) (Grizzard 2000, 33).

Gasparini has argued that there is little point in speaking of Mexican artistic or cultural identity as a continuous cultural thread that runs through pre-Colombian civilisations to the viceregal and now modern period (1981, 100-102). As such, he questions the validity of using a unifying theory. The modern nation state of Mexico is a 19th century conception and the only way to define the art of post-conquest New Spain is as a Spanish colony. There are now many studies that show the evident syncretism and indigenous choice in post-conquest art work (for example, Edgerton 2001). Furthermore, there have also been interpretations of New Spanish "colonial art" that consider it a constitutive part of Renaissance and early modern art history (Russo 2013). This theory is examined from the point of view of the dialectical effect of worked matter on individual and community conscious (Sartre 2003) and the conscious inclusion of stylistic devices that would be relevant to a Mesoamerican worldview. Moreover, it is clear that there are continuities in worldview from pre-Conquest civilisations, and that the art work made in post-Conquest New Spain was received within this paradigm.

One of the continuities in indigenous style that has been addressed by post-Conquest art historians is the importance and development of sculpture, principally after the adoption of the Baroque or Mexican Churrigueresque. There was a decline in painting in the middle of the 17th century, coinciding with an ascendency in the development of architecture and sculpture (Caso et al 1940, 72). Indeed, it has been noted that the indigenous influence is more manifest in sculpture than in painting, perhaps because of the importance of sculpture in pre-Colombian artistic traditions (Caso et al 1940, 71). It has, however, been shown more recently that painting was an equally important medium in pre-Colombian artistic tradition (Miller and Brittenham 2013).

The Baroque sculptural styles of the end of the 17th century had integrated the use of salomonic support (see Figure 66). These twisted helicoidal columns, used for *retablos*, can be seen in Bernini's baldachin at St Peter's and may have been inspired by Grenadine sources (Baird Jr and Rudinger 1962, 34). Interestingly, this form of column appears all over Hispanic America, unlike the estipites, which become common in viceregal Mexico (Gasparini 1981, 82). The word estipite derives from the Latin stipes, stipitis (meaning rod or beam). It has been suggested that this style of column derives its form from Michelangelo and the 16th century Mannerists (Baird Jr and Rudinger 1962, 37). It is formed by pyramidal segments supported by an inverted obelisk (such as can be seen in Classical herm bases). The squared or circular blocks that run from base to capital are sometimes decorated with ornate stucco (Caso et al 1940, 73), in many cases medallions (Baird Jr and Rudinger 1962, 37).

These columns are decorative, rather than structural. It has been widely commented that their forms demonstrate a certain degree of personification due to their geometric scheme, which recalls the human body (for example, De la Fuente 2007, 8-10). As Figure 67 shows, the capital of the pillar has been likened to the head while the *cubo* or bulbous section (De la Fuente, 2007, 9) is said to represent the chest. The thinning between the *cubo* and the upper part of the inverted pyramid could be associated with the waist and the pyramid itself might be regarded as the hips and legs; "the estipite pillar…is an element that is representative of the most extreme moments of Baroque expression in New Spain, it is in essence the expression of the human body itself (De la Fuente 2007, 10).

These estipites were used for the retablos of viceregal Mexican churches, and examples can be found in Dominican, Augustinian and Franciscan cathedrals. The word *retablo* comes from the Latin retrotabulum, and so has been defined as a shelf or structure for images placed behind an altar; "The retablo or altar scene is an assemblage of paintings, either painted directly on it or attached to it, sometimes with niches for pieces of sculpture" (Wertkin and Kogan 2004, 433). The earliest examples of *retablo* forms can be seen at Greek sites such as Miletus and Ephesus, as façades made up of portals with columns on either side (Baird Jr and Rudinger 1962, 34-37). It is in this artistic movement that New Spain is thought to have developed its autonomous personality: "…with Churrigueresque art all measure, every constructionist idea, however remote, disappears; it is just movement, rhythm, gilded reliefs and polychrome sculptures; all sense of construction is lost. It is an essentially decorative and sculptural art, that makes, of each retablo, a place of dream-like, celestial and drunken illusion" (Caso et al 1940, 73). As such, it is the architecture of the *retablos* that becomes the focal point of the altar piece, rather than the saints in each niche; "…the figures are incidental to a gorgeous convulsion of carving, gilding, and polychromy which enveloped them; the carved niches and their ornamental surrounds were more important than the saints within the niches" (Baird Jr and Rudinger 1962, 42). It has been pointed out that this "pronounced exuberance" is different in character to the more restrained and Classical forms that are manifested in South America (Gasparini 1981, 82). These *retablos*, like the Cathedral façades, were designed to lead the eyes to points of emphasis. In the case of the *retablos*, this would not be natural light, but the reflection of lanterns, torches and candles (Baird Jr and Rudinger 1962, 41).

In general, the Cathedral and church architecture and sculpture of Yucatán is more sober than that of Central Mexico (Mullen 1997 and Jaspersen 2013) and plays more with

smooth polychrome surfaces (Jaspersen 2013); speaking of the stucco work on the Cathedral in Mérida, Jaspersen says "…The majority of elements display plant and floral motifs that are intertwined with fruits" (2013). As mentioned, there are seven *retablos* in the church at Yaxcabá, and three examples can be shown in Figures 68, 69 and 70. The main *retablo* (Figure 70) is the sole gilded example, and the columns are twisted (salomonic). Here, the two recently refurbished *retablos* in Figures 68 and 69 will be discussed and, in this case, the columns are estipites. The *retablo* in Figure 68 is dedicated to the Virgin of the Candelaria, while the *retablo* in Figure 69 is dedicated to the Virgen Purísima. Both *retablos* have curved pediments, and are painted predominantly in blue, or blue and white (colours that are traditional to the Virgin). The *retablo* in Figure 69, dedicated to La Purísima, stands in front of a fresco of red and blue acanthus leaves. The *retablo* is bright blue with darker blue and light brown stucco work. There are four niches, with the Virgin in the central lower niche. This central lower niche is formed by the outer estipites of the two side niches. The pedestals and canopies that frame the top and bottom of the figures are prominent in that they are painted light brown, against a predominantly blue background. The edges of these canopies are zigzagged, the only slightly curved lines of which form a strong contrast with the mostly floral and plant motif that covers the majority of the *retablo*. Now, three manifestations of the Virgin inhabit the three lower niches.

The *retablo* dedicated to the Virgin of Candelaria is also set around a frame of fresco painting, now faded red and blue acanthus leaves. In this case there are only two niches, the lower of which now holds a statue of Saint Francis of Asís. This *retablo* is painted white, with superimposed blue and pale brown stucco work. There are two sets of estipites that frame the bottom niche, in blue and white, while the upper estipites are a little less visually prominent, in pale brown and blue. The estipite capitals have curve-lined zigzagged edges (Figure 68).

Discussion.

Of interest in these lateral *retablos*, also in terms of the name of the town, is the common use of the colour blue in them. As shown in the preceding chapters, the colour blue-green, *yax*, has significance within pre-Colombian Maya cosmology. The jade hearthstone, the watery entrance to the underworld, and the colours attached to directionality, all link this colour to creation and the connection between life and death, and so the location of birth and death. That this colour would be relevant to a figure such as

the Virgin Mary, who embodies fertility (at least in the sense of her role as mother to Jesus Christ) is, therefore, unsurprising. She is a central figure, if nothing else and is an intermediary between God and people on earth. Not only the Virgin Mary but all the saints, within the Catholic religion, which were placed in the niches, are intermediaries between heaven and earth. Since the *retablo* is a place of prayer, this façade is transformed into a doorway. Influence in the spiritual world, to which the living have no tangible access, is accessed through prayer at this location. We could compare this to the lintels at Yaxchilán, and their position at the entrance to rooms that presumably had limited accessibility. The idea of ritual action, thought, or even artistic engagement at a liminal space, may have had direct and intuitive relevance to the people who built and engage(d) with this *retablo* at Yaxcabá. This liminal space is reinforced by the colour of the *retablo*: blue denotes the water separating three planes (underworld, earth, home of ancestors). It has been shown that, at Santa Elena, there is easier access to the *X'Tabay* at places such as wells and *cenotes*. We might conjecture, therefore, that the colour blue, reminiscent of water, might be a colour that indicates liminality and ritual ease.

The K'o che ritual, in which San Mateo is transported from one place of residence to another, might be seen as a larger and more abstract version of a *retablo* such as this. Each doorway, flanked by the estipites, is another doorway, and the spaces between these niches might be viewed as liminal in themselves. It can be shown that the litter that transports these saints from one house to the next is decorated with flowers. The movement of San Mateo from one house to another might be likened to the persona accepted by the kings on Palenque and Yaxchilán relief sculpture, demonstrating flexibility of personhood. If we can apply this to the *retablos* in Figures 68-70, it is perhaps unsurprising that the *retablo* on Figure 69, for example, contains three niches, all with representations of the Virgin, even though the *retablo* is dedicated only to one aspect, La Purísima.

Water and water-lilies, in pre-Colombian Maya art, are iconographical elements associated with the watery periphery of the inhabited world. Yaxchilán Lintel 25, for example, shows a floral blue *huipil*, as Lady K'abal Xook finds herself, having made a blood sacrifice, at the climax of a ritual. Examples of this can be seen across the Maya world. Both *retablos* are decorated with heavy, dominating, floral stucco work. Although neither of the figures displays the entire altar piece in front of the *retablos*, we can intuit that flowers (whether real or imitation) were also placed on this table. Furthermore, the *retablo* is set against a decorative acanthus leaf motif, in blue and red. As we have seen, the contrasting red and blue of the paint work was common in pre-Colombian Maya

sculptural painting (Houston et al 2009, 88-89), giving the combination culturally specific weight.

The prominence of floral motif in these (and other) religious art works from the post-conquest period is, in itself perhaps, indicative of the importance of fertility symbols from the natural environment, for the people of post-conquest Mexico. These flowers may have connoted (and continue to connote) liminality and the birth of new identity to the Maya. This would explain the widespread use of flowers for ritual occasions, such as the decoration of the K'o che litter. Colourful plastic flowers are regularly superimposed onto the floral stucco work of the arch above church doorways in Yucatán, for the occasion of religious festivities. This superimposition could be regarded as an attempt to add colour and vivid decoration to the church, using the aesthetic logic of matching temporary garlands to the permanent carved garlands. The image raises interesting questions about materiality in contemporary Yucatán, however. The plastic garlands, mirrored in the stucco work, give the doorway accentuated depth. We could posit that flowers are considered markers of entranceways/exits here, paralleling their role in the K'o che ritual. The flowers on the *retablos* are also rendered in distinct materials, and are formed with a varied degree of dimensionality. Perhaps the play with materiality is a metaphor for the transition and flexible ritual engagement that might be expected to happen at the retablos.

The estipites that are used on these *retablos* also reference pre-Colombian material styles. As shown, the estipite form has been likened to the proportions of the human body, and there are various examples of art from these regions that suggest the animate qualities of stone. A memorial carving for Kan Bahlum, for example, shows a lord carving a stone with a boar's tusk. It has been suggested that the sculpture that is being created in the image is a personification of the animate qualities of rock (Miller and Martin 2004, 129). The rock itself is precious, and the viewer of the memorial watches the precious stone being transformed. The many stelae in human proportions at, for example, Tikal, Quirigua and Chichen Itza, attest to the use of similar bodily proportioned art works in the Maya area (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 15).

Another example of this, in viceregal Mexico, can be seen in the stone crosses from which the head and hands of Christ protrude. The cross has been humanised, so that from the top sprouts the head of Jesus Christ, and from the two horizontal arms, spring his hands. There are floral and vegetal designs on the arms, and diverse patterning on the trunk. There are many examples of this type of cross, some of which contain precious stones such as obsidian, at the heart. The shape of the entire sculpture mimics the entire

body of Christ and the cross at the crucifixion. It is as though the material of Christ's body and that of the cross are combined by the stone. Is the flexibility of the materiality prompted by or represented by the vegetal motifs? It is possible that the idea of agricultural permeability and substance changes through growth and decay are referenced by material unity, and by the content of the image. The importance of the cross in ancient and contemporary Maya communities has been discussed, and there are also examples in which the cross, as axis mundi, relates to a person (such as K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam in the Cross Group tablets). In this case, Jesus is the axis mundi, which may explain the significance of the piece of jade or obsidian placed at the heart of the cross. We have seen that jade (the colour blue/green) is a marker of a central place of renewal. Where obsidian was used, it is possible to make the connection between the central material and a mirror, such as the obsidian mirror buried under Structure 1 at Bonampak. The ritual significance of the mirror speaks to a dialectic connection between viewer and object, and perhaps can be linked to the Cross Group tablets, in which two representations of K'ihnich Kan B'ahlum mirror each other around the central element.

The estipites, as embodiments of nature, might, therefore, be seen as personalised. If we can make links between the estipite and the axis mundi, and perhaps the representation of the axis mundi as a world tree, it may be interesting to make links with stories surrounding the *X'Tabay* at Santa Elena. She is a gateway figure, near old trees and bodies of water. In the case of the *retablo*, this connection with a force external to oneself may denote positive ritual action. It is interesting that, in the case of estipites, their impact would have been still further increased by the context in which they were placed: "they are placed on façades and in *retablos*, and serve as a corner piece and focal point" (own transl of De la Fuente 2007, 10). Here the personified figures are distinct from the more abstract human form of the estipites. The estipites are not the figures that are used for spiritual connection at a *retablo* but, like the *X'Tabay*, they may function as gateway symbols, locations indicated for engagement with ephemeral/religious connection.

Conclusion.

This thesis has set out to discuss the applicability of philosophies from the contemporary community of Santa Elena to the art of the pre-Hispanic Maya. Chapter 1.1 examines some European interpretations of the role and reception of stylistic devices. These styles and aesthetics, which form the works art historians define as having artistic force, are judged and appreciated on the basis of how they elicit existential response, how they touch on and illustrate social and personal pain points. The creative material culture of the Maya would certainly do the same thing, using alternative cultural rationality. As such, the analysis of their use of stylistic devices should be as deep, multi-vocal and diverse as those analyses made by art historians. Chapter 1.2 explores the possibility of alternative conceptions of materiality and personhood. Manifestations of these alternative thought structures have been set out in anthropological literature and have shown that Being, as it has traditionally been discussed in European philosophy, can have plural meanings and is not necessarily isolated to the body (as individual). Chapter 1.3 links materiality and personhood, by deconstructing Sartre's philosophies on the experience of the material environment over time. These theories introduce the construction and manipulation of personal and community identity. These are topics that are touched on by contemporary conceptual artists, and so their work can contribute to the discussion of viewer experience in the art of the Maya area. The multi-directionality of identity building is explored in Chapter 1.4, where the role of religion and ritual in mediating these effects are examined; how do religious thought and action attenuate or reinforce historical development?

Chapter 2 forms a series of themes from the interviews and dialogues with the residents of Santa Elena. Discussions centring on the *wayjel/uay* showed that, unlike ethnographic sources pointing to a dual-bodied "animate entity" (Martínez González 2007, 159-160), personhood among the people of Santa Elena is not thought to be split between a person and an animal counterpart. The *wayjel/uay* narratives focus on a bodily transformation, from human to animal. This transformation, a change in material form, could be a metaphor for permeability and the negotiation of substances in nature. Ethnographic theories on these and similar systems in Mesoamerica (Magril 1988, 259, Pitarch 1996, 79, Aulie and Aulie 1998, 55) have stressed the link between people and nature through the animal counterpart (Rosales Mendoza 2008, 116). The interviews at Santa Elena (and in other ethnographic literature) evidence the heterogenous nature of

these theories and so it is probably the case that they are a metaphor for fluid personhood through transfer of substance through natural cycles.

A variety of “animate entities” are the subject of discussion in Santa Elena, most commonly, *vientos malos*, the *aluxes* and the *X’Tabay*. All three of these external forces have the potential to be harmful and only in narratives surrounding the *aluxes* are there examples of positive outcomes upon interaction. These three external forces, two of which are personalised, have links with the natural environment, which is set away from land that is cultivated and the built environment (the town of Santa Elena). The negative impact of these forces is attenuated through prescribed rituals and can be avoided by not engaging with spaces outside of community praxis. In the case of the *X’Tabay*, these forces can be avoided by not believing in her existence. Conversely, the danger of encountering these forces is heightened when in contact with historic worked matter (archaeological sites), as they are areas linked to human action through time. Natural elements that are linked to pre-conquest Maya culture, such as ceiba trees, caves and water sources, are also areas associated with these forces. Although the forces are not transformative, they can affect people’s well-being. They can also be assimilated by materials such as stones (such as the buildings at archaeological sites) and people. As such, not only is personhood directly related to these forceful animate entities, but it is also related to cultural identity and heritage. It is the historic monuments and associated places, for example, which contain the threat of fluid forces. This could, therefore, be a metaphor for the necessity of community ritual praxis and activity.

One of the results of these external forces is that they can animate material entities, such as personalised material culture. The rituals/festivities conducted at Santa Elena for the personalised statue of San Mateo use flowers, impersonation and movement to effect a transition from one place to another. The girls in a K’o che litter mimic the statue, and the flowers that decorate this litter reference fecundity and agricultural processes. These could be seen as metaphors for the transition that is taking place; a new household is assuming the responsibility of the saint. The process involves a significant amount of movement, not just by those carrying the litter but also by the people of Santa Elena, who follow the litter. As such, there is a theme of community participation, rather than spectatorship. The impersonation of frogs by the small boys in the *primicia* ceremonies brings rain. We can assume that impersonation is an effective ritual device, as is group participation. These rituals/festivities are evidence that, although there is, in some sense, reticence to

associate strongly with the historical and natural environment of the area, cultural actions that are specific to Santa Elena are popular and beneficial.

The incursion of new religious sects into Santa Elena society can be correlated to a move away from alternative belief systems. Interestingly, it is not only the belief in, and practice of, new religions but also the materials associated with this practice that can protect from harmful external forces. The focus on the power of the Jehovah's Witness Bible, as an object (Hernández Castillo 2005, 115), indicates that a broad understanding of the power of materiality (and ritual action) is characteristic even to segments of Santa Elena society that negate the existence of alternative beliefs and practices. The interviews at Santa Elena occasionally corroborate each other but can also make for contradictory conclusions, as would be expected. Alongside any conclusions we can make regarding forces through materials and time, it is notable that many of these narratives contain allusions to identity decision-making, specifically in terms of religion and culture. Through philosophies on right practice and behaviour, the people of Santa Elena construct a position on their historical and cultural character.

Chapter 3 explores the possibility that we can interpret the experience of Classic Maya artistic programmes through a lens informed by the interviews at Santa Elena, and by using contemporary conceptual art installations that are experience-based. The first of these programmes is Structure 1 from Bonampak, Yaxchilán. The use of impasto (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 53) on the blue paint that surrounds the figures, and the varying thickness in the contour lines of these figures (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 56), are examples of stylistic devices that could be associated with philosophies of external agency.

The representation of materiality, apart from the corporeal, is also notable. At times, figures transition around the four walls of each room in a fluid manner that negates the agency of the walls onto which they are painted (Freidel, Schele, Parker 1993, 236). To similar effect, figures frequently transcend the divisions that structure the narrative of each room (V. Miller 1985, 143). Furthermore, architecture does not play an imposing role in the composition of the images on the three rooms. However, the shape of the rooms and the necessity of crouching, turning or looking up (substantial movement around the enclosed space) to see the entire image (Miller and Brittenham 2013, 135), shows that the walls have a dominant position over the viewer. The movement in and out of these three rooms may have accentuated the experience of material agency, in its contrast to the open environment surrounding the structure. Here, it is the material that prescribes transition and movement, and so the bodily response to artistic experience.

It is interesting, therefore, to attempt to think about the themes/experiences within the rooms in juxtaposition to those outside the structure. Chiasmic devices, in terms of uses of time and the amount of movement required by the participant, indicate that weight can be attributed both to Room Two and Room Three. Room Two requires the viewer to experience the chaos of a battle, but the viewer is in the position of a stationary viewer, during the presentation of the captives. Following the understanding of history and temporal experiences at Santa Elena, the fact that this scene happens in the past might point to accrued agency. After another pause outside the structure, Room Three requires movement, and it is in this movement that the figures in the image celebrate their success. Alongside these heavily populated, at times historical, scenes that demand movement and a sensitivity to material agency, the participant views the surrounding built and natural landscape. Material agency creates contrasts through a kinetic experiential process, and the ephemeral and the banal may have created transitions of personhood among the viewers of these murals. The images contained symbols, perhaps such as preference of the right hand, which may have spoken of right practice and glorified the Late Maya Court. Creative choices of stylistic device, such as naturalism, metaphor and synecdoche, must have heightened the effect of these programmes on the viewer. These stylistic devices may also speak to the interplay of agencies, forces that are not contained just by the bodies represented in the images. If this is the case, then these are the choices that might illustrate the role of the unknowable and special in everyday Maya society.

The 16th century wall paintings at the convent at Izamal were used pedagogically by Franciscan missionaries in Yucatán (Landa 1566 and Lizana 1893), and the large temporal and cultural distance between this and the painting programme at Bonampak is undeniable. Working under the assumption that abstract philosophical understandings of materials and processes of personhood can be applied, some threads of reception by the viewers and participants in the Catholic rituals at this convent have been pulled out. The convent was built on top of a sacred pre-conquest site and decorated, in parts with *tromp l'oeil* scenes from a natural/forest environment. The juxtaposition of a built environment, so important to the Catholic conversion mission in Izamal, with their representation of what appears to be a magical natural space (Schellhas 1904, Solari 2013, 34), may have defined the convent as a place of ritual behaviour; a place where material agency promoted transitions of personhood. Following Franciscan processions of the Passion of Christ and the tentative route detailed in Chapter 3.2, the participants move through flora that is rendered using a variety of stylistic devices, and these images can disrupt materiality at some points, and accentuate its force at others. These changes in style may

have provided a sense of transition in themselves, perhaps a metaphor for the transitions in nature. The architecture of the convent also enhances a sense of transition, through the participants' experience of the *portería* from difference entrance points. This might make the counter-clockwise movement around the cloister (Solari 2013, 14), the central moment (marking a chiasmus). If the ritual participants of the programme at Izamal engaged with these wall paintings, and the architecture that houses them, in some similar ways to the participants at Bonampak, a missing element might be a direct view of the surrounding forest. This might explain the development of narratives among Yucatec communities that relate to the external forces at archaeological sites and the unknown landscape (*monte*).

The Cross Group relief panels from Palenque, which show the *okte'*ship of K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam (Carrasco 2004, Skidmore 2008, Taube 1998, Martin and Grube 2008, Stuart 2012, Houston 1996), contain iconography that relates to the accession/assumption of a new aspect of personhood. This transition is marked by the acceptance of the Ux Yop Huun, represented in the effigies of the "Jester god" and the Principal Bird Deity (Stuart 2012, 119). In these images, it is possible that the "Jester god" is an embodied animate material that is internalised in order to fulfil a social or political function. It is fixed into K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam through ritual action. The crosses on these panels may represent the axis mundi (Skidmore, 2008 and Stuart 2012), a centre of creation and so rebirth. As K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam is reborn into his new aspect of personhood, leadership, he may be associated with this axis mundi, which is how the paper headdress/"Jester god" correlates to the Principal Bird Deity (which sits on top of the central cross) (Stuart 2012, 125).

Taking the philosophies from Santa Elena into account, we could argue that the animate *huun* is an external force or entity, which has an effect on the person wearing the headband. In the Temple of the Cross and and Temple of the Foliated Cross, the "Jester god" is held out on top of another material. This may allude to ritual procedures that would counteract the effect of an animated/powerful material. Given that the image shows K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam assuming the Ux Yop Huun or engaging in the rituals of this transition as he approaches the central crosses, we could posit that external forces have more power in this location. If we can say that this central axis is a tree, we can make an association with Santa Elena, as the *X-Tabay* appears at locations such as trees and wells.

Iconographic elements, such as the cross, the *incensarios* and flowering conch shell, reinforce the concept of centrality and primordial beginnings (Taube 1998 and Stuart 1996). The size of the Temple of the Sun relief, and its divergence from the vertical-horizontal cross of the other two panels, alongside other devices, create a chiasmic effect

for the viewer of these three panels. This stylistic choice is a repetition of the sensation of getting closer to the centre and then moving away. The strong diagonal lines and lack of fluidity in the iconography of the Temple of the Sun may have had the effect of inducing stillness before this central relief. The Temple of the Cross is also rendered in stylised lines (in comparison to Temple of the Foliated Cross, for example). The scene happens within the sky-band, while the censer from which the axes sprout stands in front of this band. This is not the case in either of the other tablet compositions and it may indicate a focus on this object. As discussed, the censer may have embodied the primordial complementary elements involved in birth and beginning. If this was the first temple a viewer might enter, it would make sense, stylistically, to exaggerate the agency of this censer (as a metaphor for birth). The softer and more naturalistic sprouting of the cross in Temple of the Foliated Cross may be a metaphor for re-birth and movement, and so the weight on this last panel might be compared to the celebration in Room Three at Bonampak.

In terms of transferable forces through materials, the mirroring of K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam in all three relief panels and the references to the four directionals might imply that the viewer, facing the panel, would be reflected on the other side of the cross. In this way, the viewer might have participated in a transition of personhood much like K'ihnich Kan B'ahlam participates in his *okte'*ship.

Lintels 24, 25 and 26 at Structure 23, Yaxchilán, show a ritual surrounding the blood sacrifice of Lady Xook. As lintels, the participation in this programme requires movement by the viewer, in terms of entrance and exit and looking up. In this way (as in the case of both Bonampak and the cross group), the viewer is involved in a bodily experience. Various stylistic devices, such as colour, composition and mirroring are used to enhance a chiasmic effect in which Lintel 25 draws the participant deep into the action depicted in the scene (Matsumoto 2013). As in the case of the Bonampak rooms, this central lintel is dated as the earliest lintel.

It has been shown at Santa Elena that we can attribute agency to materials. Within this philosophy, the devices used to immerse the viewer in the ritual that is taking place in the three scenes might have had a transformative effect (mirroring the changes happening for Lady Xook and Itzamnaaj B'ahlam). Internal references in costume iconography (Looper 2000 and Tate 1992), within a framework of material agency, are also used to create a hyperreality of repeated concepts of re-birth and transition. External animate entities in Santa Elena are found at places with significant history and a history of human

action, and so Lintel 25, as the central Lintel, might have had accentuated power over the participant.

If we can surmise that the focus is on transition in these Lintels, perhaps the conclusion, in which Lady Xook hands a helmet to Itzamnaaj B'ahlam, was as transformative for the characters portrayed as for the participant at Structure 23. The iconography may suggest that Lady Xook's femininity/fertility is imbuing the helmet with power, and so her personhood is being transferred through an object to Itzamnaaj B'ahlam (Stone 2011). Perhaps we could say that, through the lintels and narrative, as powerful materials, the viewer might be affected and assume a new aspect of his or her personhood. Entering and exiting these rooms, as in the case of both Bonampak and the Cross Group Tablets, may have had the effect of making the participant engage deeply with the inner space and a private ritual, as well as with the open space that looked onto a more banal environment. This may have made this an existential experience, which could have provoked an intellectual, as well as emotional, response.

The colour and decoration of the *retablos* at Yaxcabá, Yucatán, may have contained references to fertility and transitions between the worldly and the otherworldly. If we assume that the use of flowers on the K'o che are used in this way, then the floral motifs in this sculpture might have been received by the visitors to this church as a symbol of transition. If we can say that the colour of the *retablos* was associated with water, then we can assume that this was an added allusion to this liminality. Interviews at Santa Elena indicated that certain external forces are more present at bodies of water. We might deduce, therefore, that these *retablos* were areas where animate entities were more flexible or fluid.

The space of agency and intellectual shifts at each *retablo* might have juxtaposed with other spaces in the church. As such, moving from one of these *retablos* to another might have produced the same effect as the programmes discussed from Classic Maya art. If this is the case, then the religious weight of these altars would have been enhanced.

This thesis has shown some possible links between the philosophies and themes drawn from thought in Santa Elena, Yucatán, and both pre- and post-conquest art in the Maya area, in the hope of contributing to an understanding of its reception and experience. These philosophies have not been drawn directly from art production, reception or management in Santa Elena, but from thoughts on material agency and personhood that certainly affect the role of creative material culture. These studies cannot be uniformly applied, but they do provide some discussion points. By focusing on the theories put

forward by people in the “Maya” area, the art historical discussion can position itself within a relevant lens.

The people of Santa Elena, who, for the sake of this investigation, have shared their considerable ancestral knowledge, continue to safeguard their cultural heritage through practices and received and transmitted knowledge. In recording this knowledge, the thesis contributes to the preservation of this specific community’s cultural heritage. Investigations in the Maya area aim to learn as much as possible about civilisations of the past. On a transcultural level, this understanding can be of use in academic theory, and can be applied to contemporary social and scientific disciplines. This thesis broadens perspectives on pre-Colombian Maya art but the investigation should not be and is not solely for the academic community. The research was conducted with members of the Maya community of Santa Elena and so it is my intention that this academic source be made to benefit this community.

Figure 1. Lucien Freud's *Interior with plant, Reflection Listening (self-portrait)*

Figure 2. Virgin in Majesty, Cimabue, *The Madonna and Child in Majesty Surrounded by Angels*

Figure 3. Laocoon group 2nd or 1st century BCE

Figure 4. The Weather Project, Olafur Eliasson. Turbine Hall, London

Figure 5. Christian Marclay's *The Clock,* (video installation)

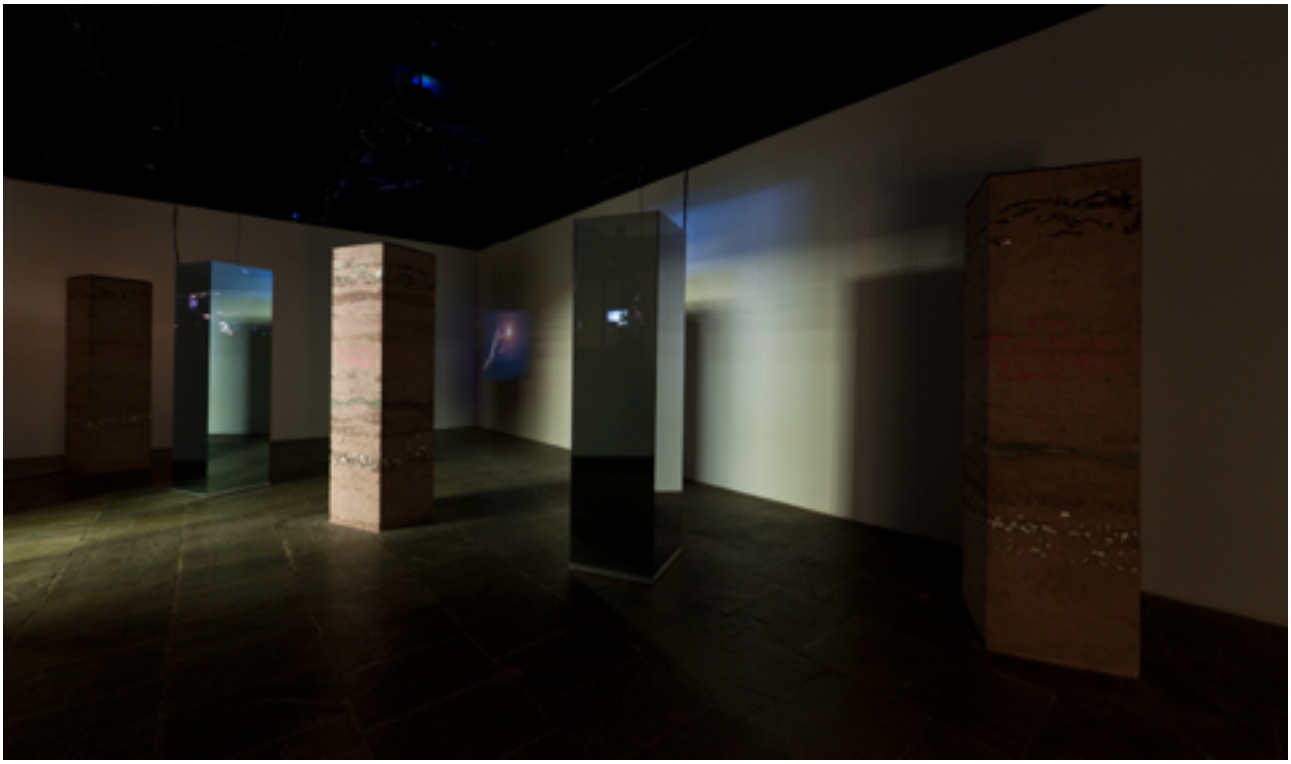

Figure 6. *Unearthed*, Karthik Pandian (installation).

Figure 7. Ricardo Martinez, La Llorona.

Figures 8 (a and b) map of Yucatan (below) and Santa Elena (above)

Figure 9. Aerial view of Santa Elena, Yucatan, showing San Mateo church and town centre.

Figure 10. Low tropical shrubland surrounding Santa Elena, Yucatan.

Figure 11. House with straw roof and earth floor in Santa Elena, Yucatan.

Figure 12. Women dressed in terna for the K'o Che festival, Santa Elena, Yucatan

Figure 13. The building of the K'o Che litter, Santa Elena, Yucatan

Figure 14. Map of archaeological sites showing Bonampak, Yaxchilan, Palenque and the Yucatan peninsula.

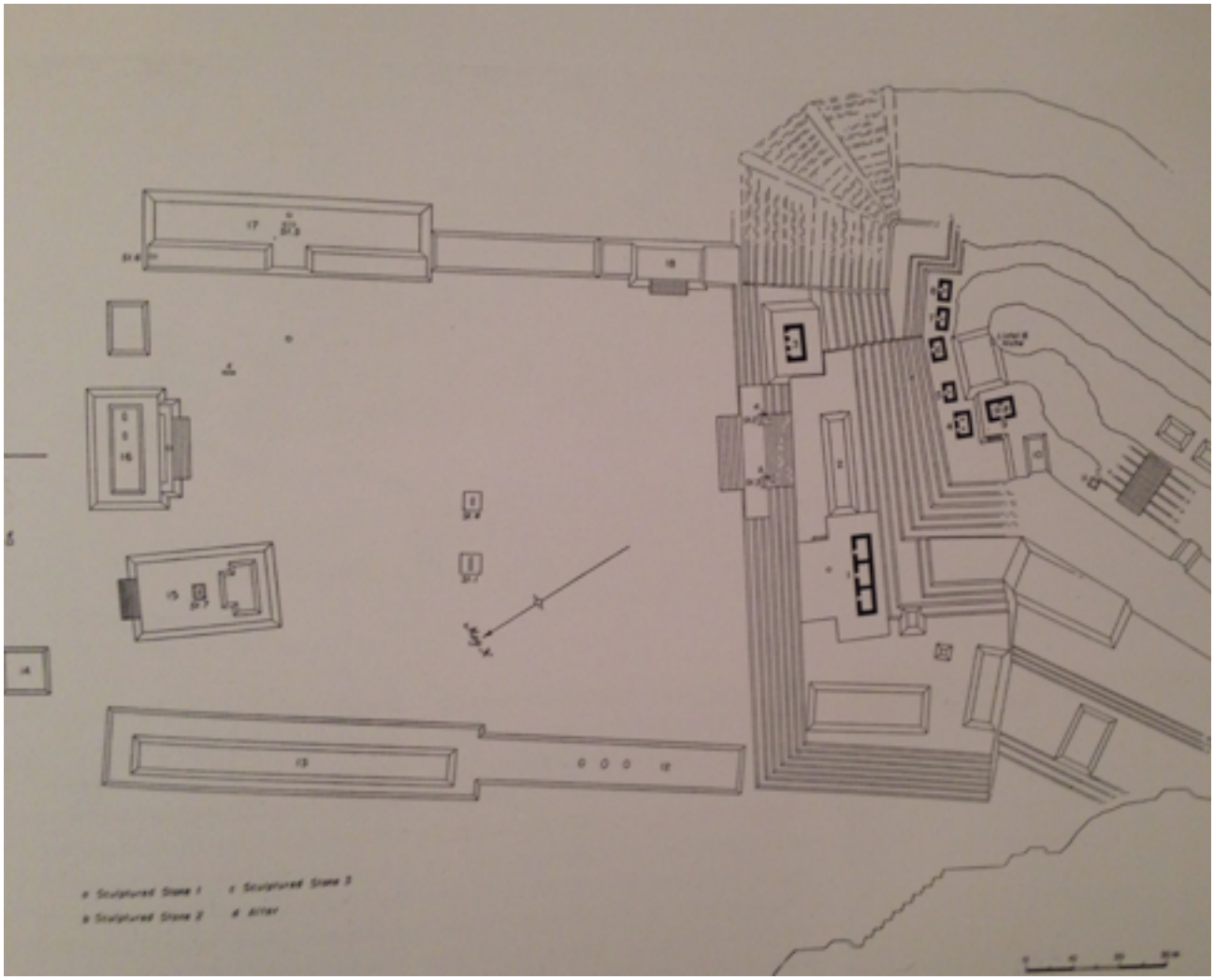

Figure 15. The layout of Bonampak, Chiapas. M Miller and C Brittenham 2013

Figure 16. Pseudo-corbelled arch of Room Three (east wall), Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 17. Presentation of a baby Room one, Bonampak, Chiapas (south wall)

Figure 18. Presentation of a baby to standing men. Room one, Bonampak, Chiapas (south wall)

Figure 19. Preparation for the dance, assistance with headdresses. Room one, Bonampak, Chiapas (north wall)

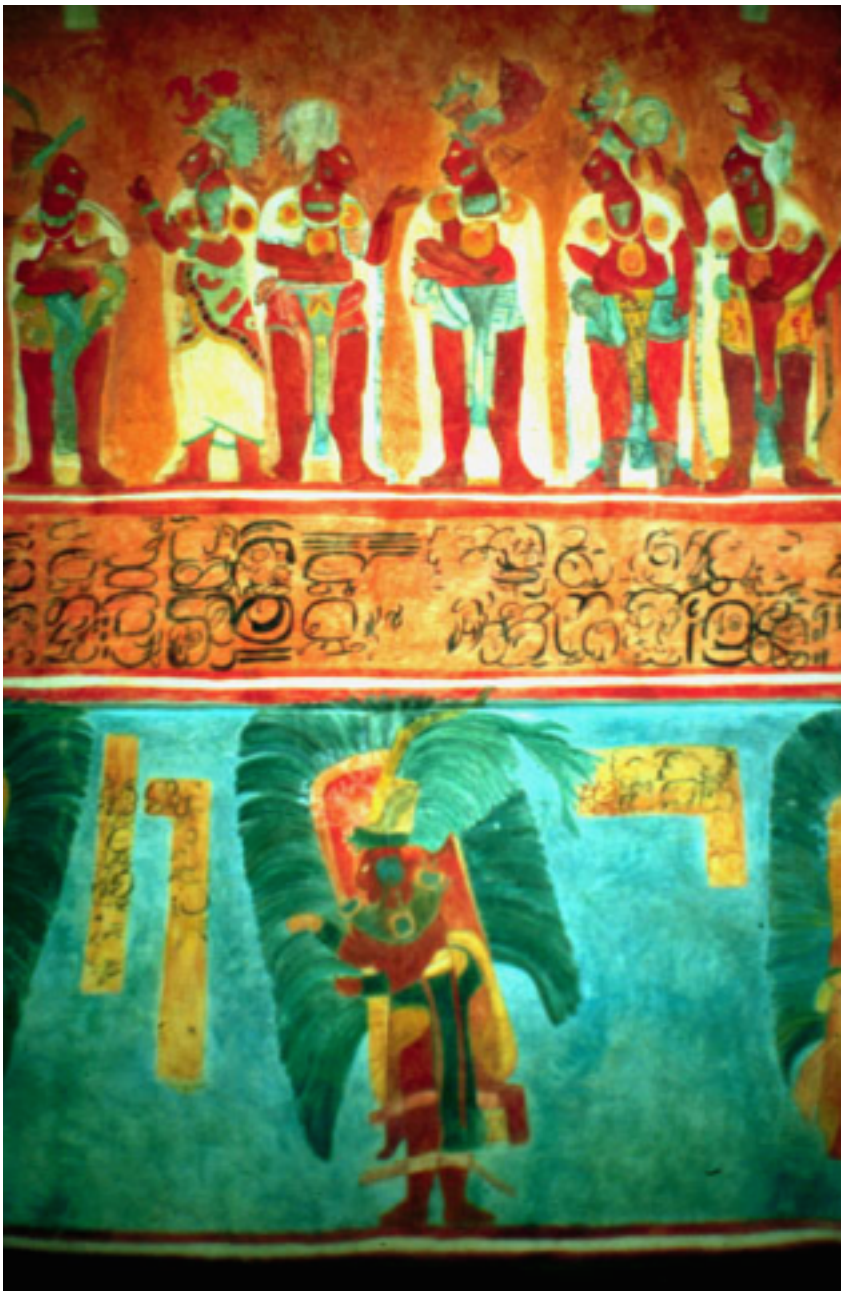

Figure 20. Dancing in Room one (south wall), Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 21. Battle scene Room two, Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 22. The Presentation of the captives. Room two (north wall) Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 23. Dying captive, Room two (north wall), Bonampak, Chiapas.

Figure 24. Captives engaged in blood-letting. Room two (north wall), Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 25. Men standing on the upper frieze of the north wall. Room three, Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 26. Musicians on the north wall of Room three, Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 27. Detail showing impasto and visible brush strokes from Room one, Bonampak, Chiapas

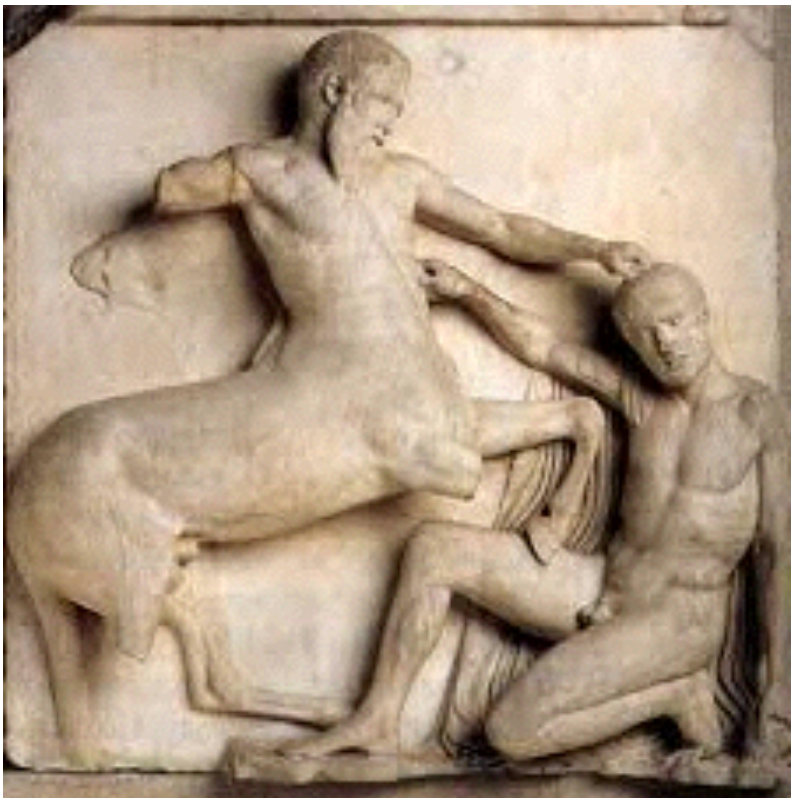

Figure 28. Centaur and Lapith. Parthenon metope, Athens.

Figure 29. Figure stretching his arm ahead of him across a corner, Room one, Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 30. Man slants with the corbelled wall on the east/west wall of Room one, Bonampak, Chiapas

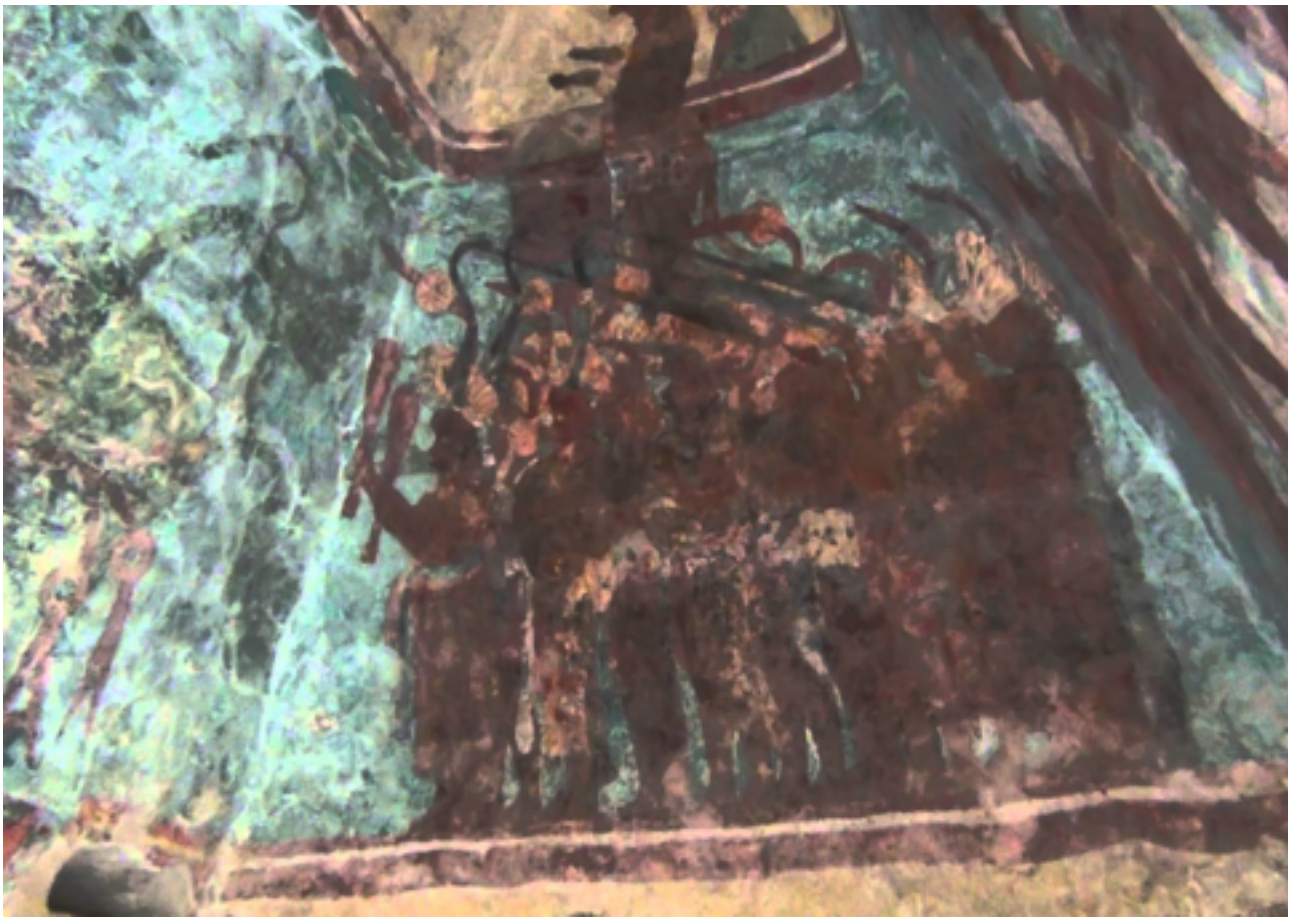

Figure 31. Dwarf drummer breaks the upper frieze and enters the sky band. Room Three (west wall). Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 32. The transportation of cedars for the Palace of Sargon II, Assyria.

Figure 33. Orchard and pool from the wall paintings of Nebamun’s tomb chapel, Egypt.

Figure 34. Room one, Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 35. Room two.
Bonampak,
Chiapas

Figure 36. Room three
Bonampak,
Chiapas

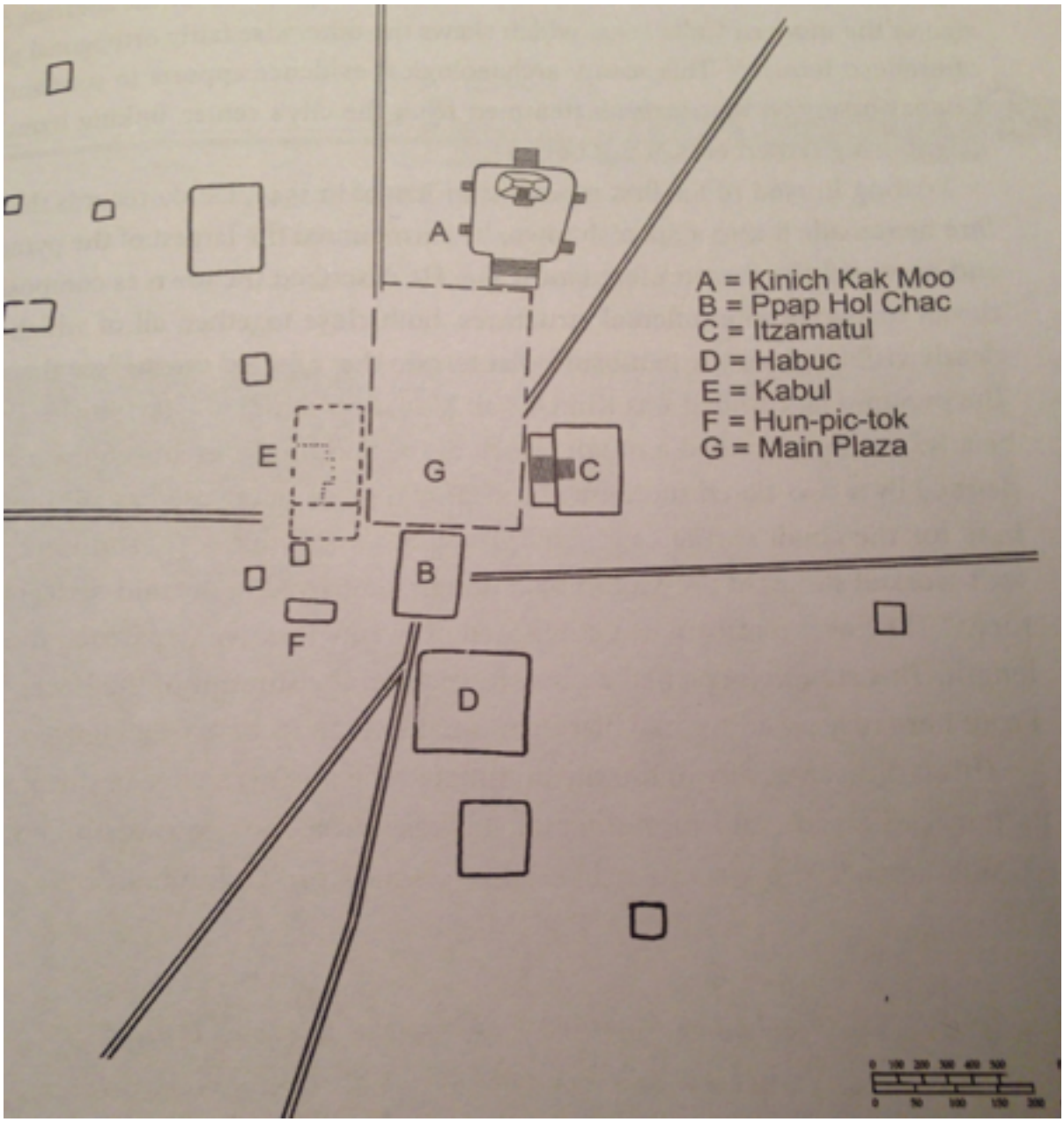

Figure 37. Layout of Pre-Colombian Itzmal, Yucatan peninsula (Solari 2013)

Figure 38. Convent San Antonio de Padua, Izamal, Yucatan.

Figure 39. ak’bal glyph in processional walkway, Izamal, Yucatan

Figure 40. Arma christi wall paintings from the posa chapel at Izamal, Yucatan

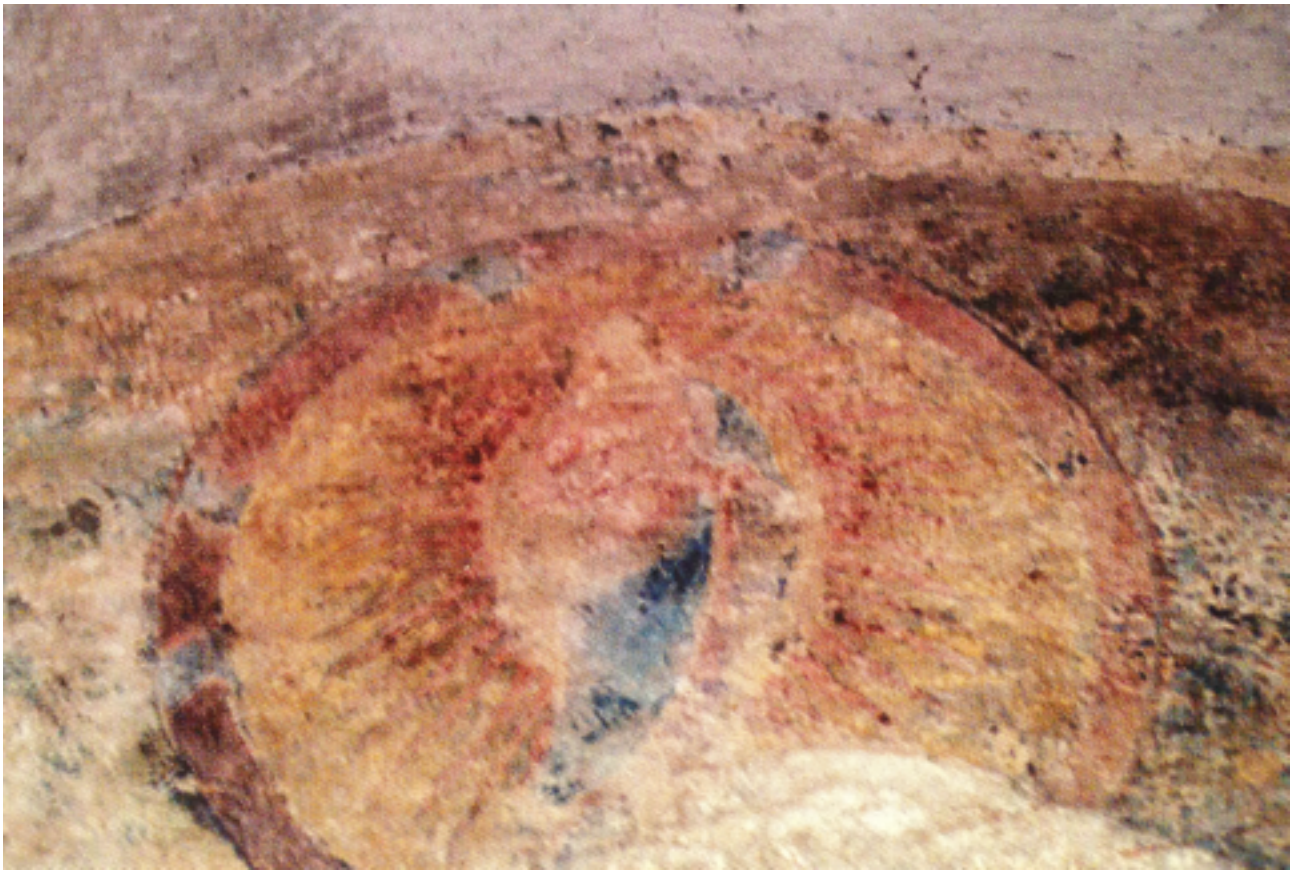

Figure 41. The Virgin of Izamal from the porteria doorway at San Antonio de Padua, Izamal, Yucatan

Figure 42. Friars painted onto porteria walls, San Antonio de Padua, Izamal, Yucatan

Figure 43. Man holding paint? honey? north wall of the porteria walls, San Antonio de Padua, Izamal, Yucatan

Figure 44. South wall of porteria walls, San Antonio de Padua, Izamal, Yucatan

Figure 45. Sour orange? trees painted in between and above the artium colonnade at San Antonio de Padua, Yucatan

Figures 46 and 47. Floral motif painted onto the he entranceway from the atrium to the porteria, San Antonio de Padua, Izamal, Yucatan

Figures 48 and 49. Stylised relief of trees painted on to the walls facing the atrium courtyard. San Antonio de Padua, Izamal, Yucatan

Figure 50. Santa Barbara fresco on the atrium walls of San Antonio de Padua, Izamal

Figures 51 and 52. Cloister walls at the monastery of Divino Salvador, Malinalco, State of Mex

Figure 53. Madonna with Child Surrounded by Angels and Saints Freidano and Saint Augustin. Filippino Lippi circa 1437. Santo Spirito sacristy, Florence

Figure 54. Painted pillars in the atrium of San Antonio de Padua. Izamal, Yucatan

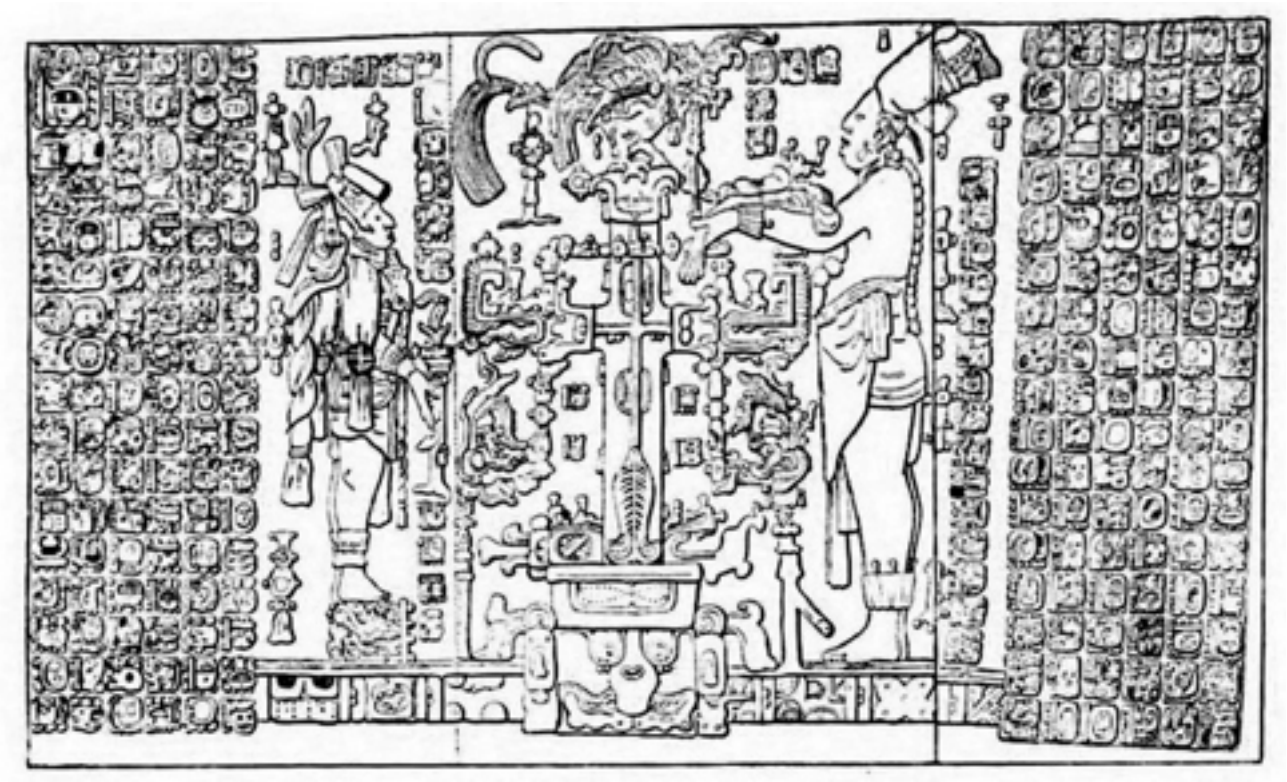

Figure 55. Relief tablet from Temple of the Cross, Palenque, Chiapas

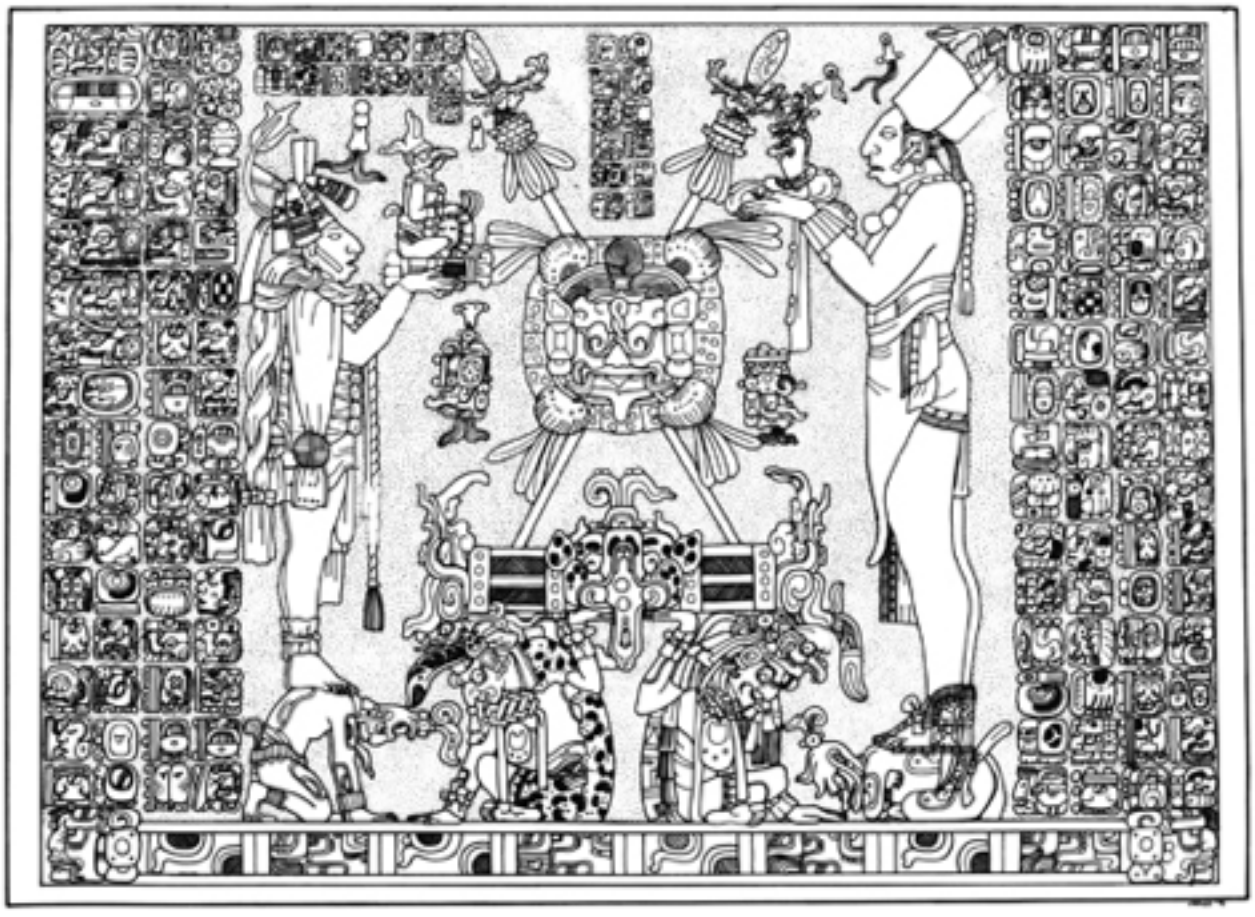

Figure 56. Relief tablet from Temple of the Sun, Palenque, Chiapas

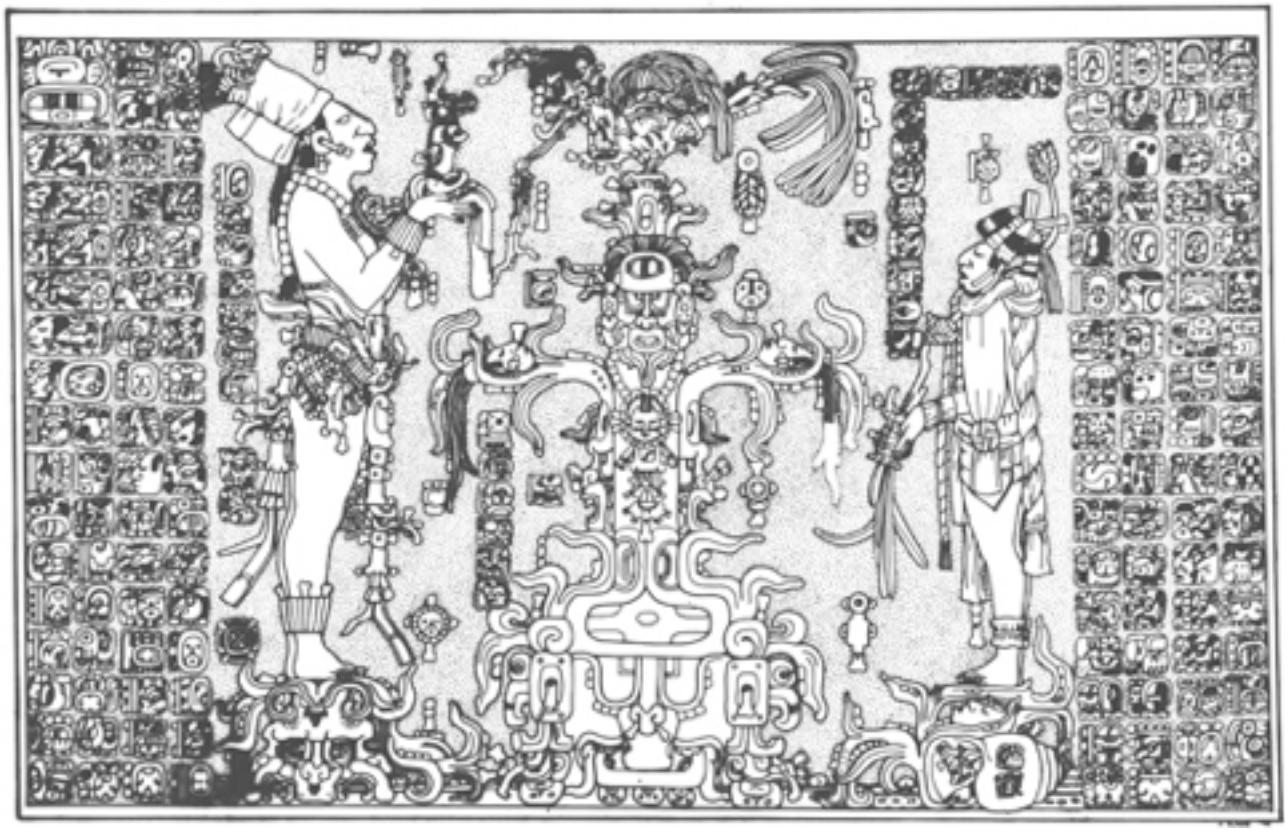

Figure 57. Relief tablet from the Temple of the Foliated Cross, Palenque, Chiapas

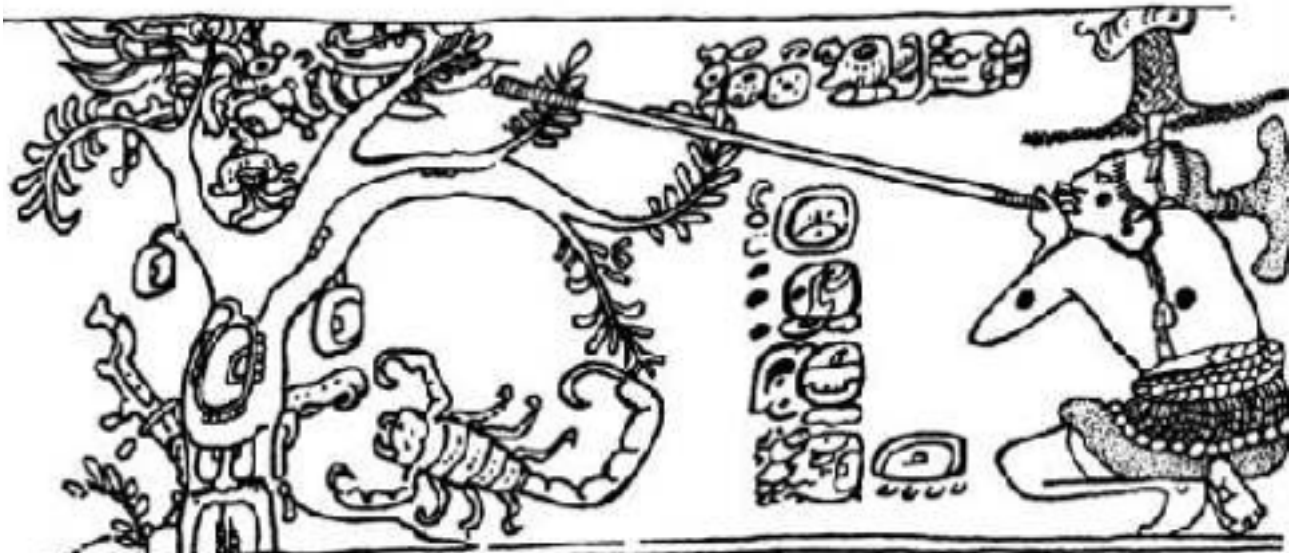

Figure 58. Blowgunner's pot showing Hunahpu shooting a bird from a tree

Figure 59. Lintel 24 from Structure 23, Yaxchilan, Chiapas

Figure 60. Lintel 25 from Structure 23, Yaxchilan, Chiapas

Figure 61. Lintel 26 from Structure 23, Yaxchilan, Chiapas

Figure 62. Black and white drawing of Lintel 24 showing the cross pattern in Lady Xook's huipil, Yaxchilan, Chiapas.

Figure 63. Detail from Lintel 26 showing frog pattern of Lady Xook's huipil, Yaxchilan, Chiapas

Figure 64. Detail of a blessing genie from Neo-assyrian palace at Dur Sharrukin.

Figure 65. Frontal view of San Francisco de Asis, Yaxcaba, Yucatan

Figure 66. Solomonic columns at the Basilica of St. Paul cloister

Figure 67. Detail of an estipite from San Francisco Javier, Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepoztlan, State of Mexico

Figure 68. Retablo for La Candelaria from San Francisco de Asis, Yaxcaba, Yucatan

Figure 69. Retablo for La Purisima from San Francisco de Asis, Yaxcaba, Yucatan

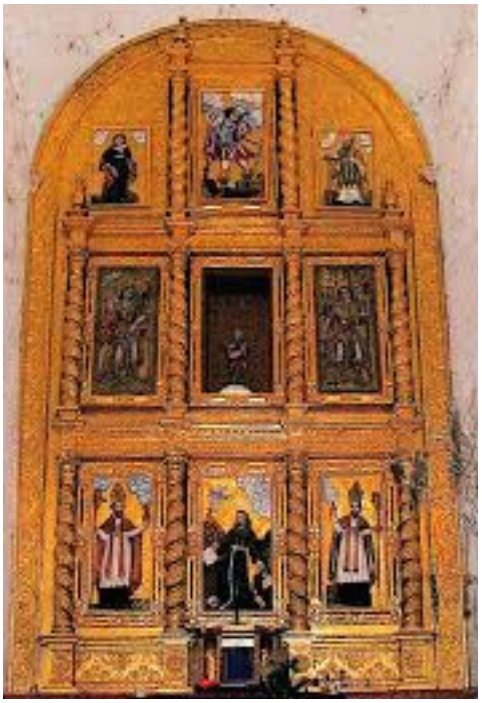

Figure 70. Gilded main retablo from San Francisco de Asis, Yaxcaba, Yucatan

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List of Figures

Figure 7. La Llorona
2004
Ricardo Martinez
Private Collection

Figures 8 (a and b). Map of Santa Elena, Yucatán

Figure 9. Aerial View of Santa Elena featuring Iglesia de San Mateo

Figure 10. Low tropical scrubland, Western Yucatán

Figure 11. House with straw roof and earth floor in Santa Elena, Yucatán.

Figure 12. Women dressed in terna for the K'o che festival, Santa Elena, Yucatán

Figure 13. The Building of the K'o che litter, Santa Elena, Yucatán

Figure 14. Map of Bonampak, Yaxchilán and Palenque and Yucatán peninsula.

Figure 15. Plan of Bonampak showing its natural summit.
Miller and Brittenham 2013

Figure 16. Pseudo-corbelled arch.
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Room Three (east wall), Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 17. Presentation of the baby
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Room one, Bonampak, Chiapas (south wall)

Figure 18. Presentation of a baby to standing men.
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Room one, Bonampak, Chiapas (south wall)

Figure 19. Preparation for the dance, assistance with headdresses.
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Room one, Bonampak, Chiapas (north wall)

Figure 20. Dancing
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Room one (south wall), Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 21. Battle Scene
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Room two, Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 22. The Presentation of the captives
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Room two (north wall) Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 23. Dying captive
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Room two (north wall), Bonampak, Chiapas.

Figure 24. Captives engaged in blood-letting.
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Room two (north wall), Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 25. Men standing
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Upper frieze of the north wall. Room three, Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 26. Musicians
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
North wall of Room three, Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 27. Detail showing impasto and visible brush strokes
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Room one, Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 28. Centaur and Lapith Metope
447-438 BCE
British Museum: London

Figure 29. Figure stretching his arm across the corner of the room
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Room one, Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 30. Man slants with the corbelled wall.
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
West wall of Room one, Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 31. Dwarf drummer breaks the upper frieze and enters the sky band.
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Room Three (west wall). Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 32. Transportation of cedars from Lebanon to Dur Sharrukin, Assyria
circa 705 BCE
unknown artist(s)
Musée du Louvre: Paris

Figure 33. Nebamun's Garden, Thebes, Egypt
Late 18th Dynasty, around 1350 BC
unknown artist(s)
British Museum: London

Figure 34. Room One layout
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 35. Room Two layout
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 36. Room Three layout
circa 790 CE
unknown artist(s)
Bonampak, Chiapas

Figure 37. Layout of Pre-Colombian Itzmal
Yucatán peninsula
(from Solari 2013)

Figure 38. Convent San Antonio de Padua
present day
Izamal, Yucatán.

Figure 39. ak'bal glyph in processional walkway
Izamal, Yucatán
(from Solari 2013)

Figure 40. Arma Christi: Wall paintings from the posa chapel
San Antonio de Padua
(built between 1553-1561)
Izamal, Yucatán

Figure 41. The Virgin of Izamal
Portería doorway at San Antonio de Padua
unknown artist(s)
(built between 1553-1561)
Izamal, Yucatán

Figure 42. Franciscan(?) Friars
Painted onto portería walls at San Antonio de Padua
unknown artist(s)
(built between 1553-1561)
Izamal, Yucatán

Figure 43. Man holding paint? honey?
Walls of portería of San Antonio de Padua
unknown artist(s)
(built between 1553-1561)
Izamal, Yucatán

Figure 44. South wall of portería
San Antonio de Padua
unknown artist(s)
(built between 1553-1561)
Izamal, Yucatán

Figure 45. Sour orange? trees
Painted in between and above the atrium colonnade at San Antonio de Padua
unknown artist(s)
(built between 1553-1561)
Izamal, Yucatán

Figures 46 and 47. Floral motif painted onto the he entranceway from the atrium to the porteria. San Antonio de Padua
unknown artist(s)
(built between 1553-1561)
Izamal, Yucatán

Figures 48 and 49. Stylised relief of trees and leaves painted on to the walls facing the atrium courtyard.
San Antonio de Padua.
unknown artist(s)
(built between 1553-1561)
Izamal, Yucatán

Figure 50. Santa Bárbara fresco on the atrium walls
San Antonio de Padua
unknown artist(s)
(built between 1553-1561)
Izamal, Yucatán

Figures 51 and 52. Cloister walls at the monastery of Divino Salvador
Building commenced c. 1540
unknown artist(s)
Malinalco, State of Mexico

Figure 53. Madonna with Child Surrounded by Angels and Saints Freidano and Saint Augustin.
c. 1437
Filippino Lippi
Santo Spirito sacristy (now at Musée du Louvre: Paris)

Figure 54. Painted pillars
San Antonio de Padua
unknown artist(s)
(built between 1553-1561)
Izamal, Yucatán

Figure 55. Relief tablet from Temple of the Cross
unknown artist(s)
Ritually used from 690 CE
Palenque, Chiapas

Figure 56. Relief tablet from Temple of the Sun
unknown artist(s)
Ritually used from 690 CE
Palenque, Chiapas

Figure 57. Relief tablet from the Temple of the Foliated Cross
unknown artist(s)
Ritually used from 690 CE
Palenque, Chiapas

Figure 58. Blowgunner’s pot. drawing by L Schele
Junajpu shooting a bird from a tree with scorpion
unknown artist(s)
Classic Period

Figure 59. Lintel 24 from Structure 23
unknown artist(s)
600-900 CE
Yaxchilán, Chiapas

Figure 60. Lintel 25 from Structure 23
unknown artist(s)
600-900 CE
Yaxchilán, Chiapas

Figure 61. Lintel 26 from Structure 23
unknown artist(s)
600-900 CE
Yaxchilán, Chiapas

Figure 62. Black and white drawing of Lintel 24 showing the cross pattern in Lady Xook's huipil
Yaxchilán, Chiapas

Figure 63. Detail from Lintel 26 showing frog pattern of Lady Xook's huipil
Yaxchilán, Chiapas

Figure 64. Rosette: Detail of a blessing genie from Neo-assyrian palace at Khorsabad, Dur Sharrukin
c 700 BCE
unknown artist(s)
Musée du Louvre: Paris

Figure 65. Frontal view of San Francisco de Asís
Yaxcaba, Yucatán

Figure 66. Solomonic columns at the Basilica of St. Paul cloister

Figure 67. Detail of an estipite from San Francisco Javier, Museo Nacional del Virreinato
Tepoztlán, State of Mexico

Figure 68. Retablo for La Candelaria from San Francisco de Asís
Yaxcaba, Yucatán

Figure 69. Retablo for La Purísima from San Francisco de Asís
Yaxcaba, Yucatán

Figure 70. Gilded retablo from San Francisco de Asís
Yaxcaba, Yucatán

Thesis Summary.

The aim of this thesis has been to sketch a culturally appropriate theory with which to discuss creative material culture (art) in the Maya area. It assesses the applicability of a theory that will be assembled using various interdisciplinary sources but, in particular, looks to philosophies and theories extracted from interviewees from the Maya community of Santa Elena, in Yucatan, Mexico.

European and North American art history has generated a complex and cumulative scheme with which to conceptualise the fundamentals of visual and theoretical analysis. These discussions are rich in philosophical questions that bridge the role and reception of what we call “art” to ideas of aesthetic, religion, historical and existential development and heritage/identity building. The theoretical framework examines some European interpretations of the role and reception of stylistic devices so that the discussion of Maya art can be as deep, multi-vocal and diverse as that within the art historical tradition.

In view of the possibility of alternative conceptions of personhood and materiality in Mesoamerica, which would affect the fundamentals of artistic engagement, the following subchapter explores these theories as they are set out in anthropological literature. This discussion shows that being, as it has traditionally been discussed in European philosophy, can have plural meanings and is not necessarily isolated to the body (as representative of an individual). The theoretical framework goes on to explore materiality and personhood, by deconstructing Sartre’s philosophies on the social experience of the material environment over time. These theories introduce the construction and manipulation of personal and community identity. Furthermore, contemporary conceptual artists, who work around these ideas, are here shown to contribute to the discussion of viewer experience in the art of the Maya area. The multi-directionality of identity building is explored, and the role of religion and ritual in mediating these effects are examined; how do religious thought and action attenuate or reinforce historical development?

The documentation of thought and practices among contemporary communities in the Maya area has largely been used, in conjunction with other archaeological and ethnohistoric data, to shed light on the “lost” pre-Colombian Maya civilisation that is said to have reached its peak 1200 years ago and later been swept away by colonial administration in the 16th century. The aim has been to make this study of the past relevant to the present, specifically to people in the Maya area. European and Maya theories have been used together to re-position the philosophies behind the investigation

of what we call Maya “art”. In this way, this past will belong to the people whose identity has been formed within the natural and material environments of the Maya area, and through the effects of cultural interactions and differences (such as the Spanish Conquest and modernity) alongside certain continuities. In this endeavour, Chapter 2 forms a series of themes from the interviews and dialogues with the residents of Santa Elena; the chapter begins with a preliminary discussion of the ethnographic literature on subjects of being and materials throughout the Maya area, followed by interviews, which are divided thematically into five subchapters. Interviews and previous investigations point toward the potential dangers to personhood, and the fluidity of personhood, that can inhabit non-animate (non-bodily) materials. These discussions centre around an examination of external animate forces, some of which are personalised (*aluxes* and *X'Tabay*) and others which are not (*aires/vientos malos*). These theories have then been linked to the reception, appreciation and use of personalised material culture (specifically the rituals surrounding images of Santa Elena's patron saint, San Mateo). As these chapters show, narratives from Santa Elena frequently identify positive and negative effects on personhood and materials with specific locations and actions that happened in the past, Furthermore, the interviews demonstrate concern for the insurgence of para-protestant sects within the community. These aspects of the ethnographic data highlight the ways in which the community members of Santa Elena direct and manage their cultural heritage and identity.

Through this lens of ongoing differentiation and plurality, which govern cultural continuity, this dissertation re-interprets the possible iconographic and existential rationality of Maya art. In talking about identity, and its philosophical tenets over time, it follows to focus not only on pre-conquest artistic programmes, but the reception of visual culture after the major break in style and content that was brought on by the conquest. Chapter 3 explores the possibility that we can interpret the experience of Classic Maya artistic programmes through a lens informed by the interviews at Santa Elena, and by using contemporary conceptual art installations that are experience based.

In considering the importance of movement, accentuated agency, and action in the reception of these programmes, Chapter 3 is divided into two parts, the first of which will be dedicated to wall-painting, on the basis that flat images painted onto architecture require particular kinetic and bodily participation. The first of these programmes is Structure 1 from Bonampak, Chiapas. The stylistic devices used here show an interplay of agencies, forces that are not contained just by the bodies represented in the images, and

these are here interpreted as choices that might illustrate the role of the unknowable in Maya society. The 16th century wall-paintings at the convent at Izamal were used pedagogically by Franciscan missionaries in Yucatan (Landa 1566 and Lizana 1893) and the large temporal and cultural distance between this and the painting programme at Bonampak is undeniable. Working under the assumption that abstract philosophical understandings of materials and processes of personhood can be applied to the wall paintings at Izamal, some threads that may have affected the reception by the viewers and participants in the Catholic rituals at this convent have been pulled through.

Chapters 3.3 - 3.5 analyse three sculptural contexts, two pre-conquest, the Cross Group panels at Palenque and Lintels 24, 25 and 26 at Yaxchilan, and one post conquest, two retablos from the church of Saint Francis of Assisi, Yaxcaba, Yucatan. The two pre-Colombian programmes both enforce three separate engagements with the three images, and so require movement between each image. As such, all three subchapters prioritise the position and transition of the participant in this material environment.

This thesis has shown some possible links between the philosophies and themes drawn from thought in Santa Elena, Yucatan, and both pre- and post-conquest art in the Maya area, in the hope of contributing to an understanding of its reception and experience. These philosophies have not been drawn directly from art production, reception or management in Santa Elena, but from thoughts on material agency and personhood that certainly affect the role of creative material culture. These studies cannot be uniformly applied, but they do provide some discussion points. By focusing on the theories put forward by people in the “Maya” area, the art historical discussion can position itself within a relevant lens.

The people of Santa Elena who, for the sake of this investigation, have shared their considerable ancestral knowledge, continue to safeguard their cultural heritage through practices and received and transmitted knowledge. In recording this knowledge, the thesis contributes to the preservation of this specific community’s cultural heritage. Investigations in the Maya area aim to learn as much as possible about civilisations of the past. On a transcultural level, this understanding can be of use in academic theory, and can be applied to contemporary social and scientific disciplines. This thesis broadens perspectives on pre-Colombian Maya art but the investigation should not be and is not solely for the academic community. The research was conducted with members of the Maya community of Santa Elena and so it is my intention that this academic source be made to benefit this community.

Nederlandse samenvatting van het proefschrift *Personhood in Maya Art: A theoretical perspective* (Persoonlijke Identiteit in de Maya Kunst: een theoretisch perspectief) van Laura A. Osorio

Dit proefschrift beoogt een cultureel toepasselijke theorie te ontwerpen waarmee creatieve materiële cultuur (kunst) uit de Maya regio kan worden besproken en geanalyseerd. Het evalueert de toepasbaarheid van deze theorie, die wordt opgebouwd met gebruik van verschillende interdisciplinaire bronnen, en in het bijzonder, filosofieën en theorieën verkregen uit interviews met leden van de Maya gemeenschap in Santa Elena, in Yucatan Mexico.

De Europese en Noord Amerikaanse kunsthistorie heeft een complex cumulatief kader gegenereerd waarmee de fundamenten van visuele en theoretische analyse kunnen worden geconceptualiseerd. Deze discussies zijn rijk aan filosofische vragen die een brug vormen tussen de rol en receptie van wat we “kunst” noemen en de ideeën over esthetiek, religie, historische en existentiële ontwikkeling, en erfgoed/identiteitsontwikkeling. Het theoretische kader onderzoekt de rol en receptie van stijlvormen, zodat het discours over Maya kunst net zo diep, meerstemmig en divers kan zijn als dat in de kunsthistorische traditie.

In het licht van de mogelijkheid van alternatieve ideeën over personhood en materialiteit in Meso-Amerika, met hun eventuele consequenties voor de fundamenten van artistiek engagement, worden deze theorieën zoals die voorkomen in de antropologische literatuur uitgediept in het volgende subhoofdstuk. Deze verhandeling laat zien dat Zijn/Wezen, zoals in Europese filosofie traditioneel wordt bedoeld, meerdere betekenissen kan hebben en niet persé beperkt is tot het lichaam (als representatie van een individu). Het theoretisch kader onderzoekt vervolgens materialiteit en *personhood* door het deconstrueren van Sartre’s filosofieën over de sociale ervaring van de materiele omgeving door de tijd heen. Deze theorieën introduceren de constructie en manipulatie van persoonlijke- en gemeenschapsidentiteit. Daarnaast worden hedendaagse conceptuele artiesten, die met deze ideeën werken, besproken als bijdrage tot de discussie van kijkerservaring in de kunst van de Maya regio. De multidirectionaliteit van identiteitsontwikkeling en de rol van religie en ritueel in het mediëren van deze effecten worden onderzocht; hoe wordt historische ontwikkeling versterkt of verzwakt door religieus gedachtengoed en praktijk.

De documentatie van het gedachtengoed en de leefwijzen van hedendaagse gemeenschappen in de Maya regio is, tezamen met andere archeologische en etno historische gegevens, grotendeels gebruikt om licht te werpen op de ‘verloren’ precolumbiaanse Maya beschaving, die naar wordt gezegd 1200 jaar geleden zijn hoogtepunt bereikte en daarna is verdwenen ten gevolge van het koloniaal bestuur in de 16^{e} eeuw. Het doel van dit proefschrift is om de kennis van het verleden relevant te maken voor het heden. Europese en Maya theorieën zijn tezamen gebruikt om de filosofieën achter het onderzoek naar wat we Maya kunst noemen te

herpositioneren. Dit verleden behoort op deze manier toe aan de mensen wiens identiteit is gevormd in de natuurlijke en materiële omgeving van de Maya regio en door de effecten van culturele interacties en verschillen (zoals de Spaanse verovering en Moderniteit) naast een bepaalde continuïteit. In dit verband is hoofdstuk 2 opgebouwd uit een serie thema's die naar voren kwamen in interviews en dialogen met de bewoners van Santa Elena. Het hoofdstuk begint met een bespreking van de etnografische literatuur over de onderwerpen zijn en materialen in de Maya regio, gevolgd door interviews die thematisch zijn onderverdeeld in vijf subhoofdstukken. Interviews en eerdere onderzoeken wijzen op de potentiele gevaren voor *personhood*, en de fluïditeit van *personhood*, die oon aanwezig kan zijn in levenloze, niet lichamelijke, materialen. Deze discussies centreren zich rond een onderzoek van externe levende krachten, waarvan sommige zijn gepersonaliseerd (*aluxes* and *X'Tabay*) en andere niet (*aires/vientos malos*). Deze theorieën worden vervolgens verbonden aan de ontvangst, de waardering en het gebruik van gepersonaliseerde materiële cultuur (specifiek de rituelen rondom afbeeldingen van Santa Elena's beschermheilige, San Mateo). Deze hoofdstukken laten zien dat verhalen uit Santa Elena regelmatig positieve en negatieve effecten identificeren voor *personhood* en materialen met specifieke locaties en handelingen die in het verleden plaats hebben gevonden. Daarnaast spreekt uit de interviews een zorg over de opkomst van para-protestantse sektes in de gemeenschap. Deze aspecten van de etnografische data onderstrepen de wijze waarop de leden van de gemeenschap van Santa Elena hun cultureel erfgoed en identiteit beheren.

Door deze lens van doorlopende differentiatie en pluraliteit, welke de culturele continuïteit bepalen, herinterpreteert deze dissertatie de mogelijke iconografische en existentiële rationaliteit van Maya kunst. Het bespreken van identiteit, en de bijbehorende filosofische leerstellingen, leidt niet alleen tot een focus op de voorkoloniale artistieke projecten, maar ook op de receptie van visuele cultuur na de grote breuk in stijl en inhoud die veroorzaakt werd door de verovering. Hoofdstuk 3 onderzoekt de mogelijkheid dat we de ervaring van klassieke Maya artistieke programma's kunnen interpreteren door de lens van de interviews in Santa Elena, en door het gebruik van hedendaagse conceptuele kunst installaties die uitgaan van ervaringen.

Hoofdstuk 3 gaat in op het belang van beweging, geaccentueerde *agency*, en actie in de receptie van deze programma's. Het, is in twee delen opgedeeld, waarvan het eerste zich richt op muurschilderingen, met als overweging dat platte afbeeldingen geschilderd op architectuur een specifieke kinetische en lichamelijke participatie vereisen. Het eerste van deze programma's is Structuur 1 van Bonampak, Chiapas. De hier gebruikte stijlmiddelen laten een samenspel van *agencies* zien, krachten die niet alleen worden gevat in de in de afbeeldingen gerepresenteerde lichamen. Deze worden hier geïnterpreteerd als keuzes die de rol van het onkenbare in de Maya samenleving kunnen illustreren. De 16^{e} eeuwse muurschilderingen in het klooster in Izamal werden pedagogisch gebruikt door Franciscaanse missionarissen in Yucatan (Landa 1566 en

Lizana 1893), en de temporele en culturele afstand tussen deze en het programma in Bonampak is onmiskenbaar.

De volgende subhoofdstukken analyseren drie sculpturale contexten, twee uit de voorkoloniale tijd (de panelen van de Groep van het Kruis in Palenque en de Lintels 24, 25 en 26 van Yaxchilan), en één van na de veroverin (twee *retablos* uit de kerk gewijd aan Franciscus van Assisi te Yaxcaba, Yucatan). De twee voorkoloniale programma's impliceren drie afzonderlijke interacties met de drie afbeeldingen, en vereisen op deze manier beweging tussen iedere afbeelding. De drie subhoofdstukken prioriteren daarom de positie en transitie van de participant in deze materiele omgeving.

Dit proefschrift toont een mogelijk verband tussen filosofieën en thema's in het denken te Santa Elena, Yucatan, en kunst uit de Maya regio van zowel voor als na de Spaanse verovering, met de hoop om bij te dragen aan het inzicht in de receptie en de ervaring daarvan.

Deze filosofieën zijn niet direct afkomstig van de productie, de receptie en het beheer van kunst in Santa Elena, maar op gedachten over *material agency* en *persoonhood* die zeker effect hebben op de rol van creatieve materiële cultuur. Deze studies kunnen niet uniform toegepast worden, maar ze identificeren punten van discussie. Door te focusen op de theorieën van de Maya bevolking zelf kan de kunsthistorische discussie een relevante invalshoek genereren.

De mensen van Santa Elena, die hun aanzienlijke voorouderlijke kennis hebben gedeeld met de onderzoekster, gaan door met het beschermen van hun cultureel erfgoed door middel van het ontvangen, praktiseren en doorgeven van die kennis. Met het vastleggen van die kennis kan dit proefschrift bijdragen aan het behoud van het culturele erfgoed van deze specifieke gemeenschap. Onderzoek in de Maya regio heeft als doel om zoveel mogelijk te leren over de beschavingen van het verleden. Op een transcultureel niveau kan dit inzicht van nut zijn voor academische theorie-vorming, en worden toegepast op hedendaagse sociale en wetenschappelijke kwesties. Dit proefschrift verbreedt het perspectief op voorkoloniale Maya kunst, maar het onderzoek is niet - en dient ook niet te zijn- louter en alleen voor de academische gemeenschap. Het onderzoek is uitgevoerd samen met leden van de Maya gemeenschap van Santa Elena en het gebruik van deze academische bron dient dan ook ten goede te komen aan die gemeenschap.

Stellingen behorende bij het proefschrift *Personhood in Maya Art: A theoretical perspective* van Laura A. Osorio

Propositions.

1. There are specific attitudes to the experience of Being and the construction of self in the Maya area, which are different from European philosophies.

2. Experts from Santa Elena show that the fluidity of life-force affects Being, with the result that materials have animate properties.

3. Due to the fact that creative material culture can elicit an existential response, understanding culturally specific conceptions of personhood and materiality among the Maya is fundamental to understanding the "art" of that area.

4. Perhaps because of the lack of information readily accessible to Western academics, the interpretation of "art" from the Maya area hasn't been as complex and cumulative as the European art historical discussion.

5. Eurocentric pre-conceptions on Being and materials can hinder a culturally appropriate assessment of Maya art.

6. An epistemology of studies of the Maya area require us to think about what the aim of these studies is; who these studies are directed towards.

7. People in the Maya area are experts in the philosophies that are fundamental to understanding production and reception of art works.

8. Turning to Maya experts not only helps in the interpretation of Maya art, but it makes academic studies in the field relevant.

9. People in Santa Elena use culturally specific narratives and philosophies to negotiate and direct community identity.

10. It is not only through ethnographic accounts of art production that we can glean useful information to apply to ancient art analysis

11. Para-Protestant sects in Southern Mexico are often associated with a distancing from ancestral beliefs and practices.

12. Considering the creativity and depth of knowledge of the people in Santa Elena, it would be interesting to conduct projects with the community that promote respect for ancestral beliefs and practices and build a space for community introspection. These spaces might raise questions concerning the uses of ancestral knowledge and ways to safeguard it.

Curriculum Vitae

Laura Osorio was born in England, in 1983, to Mexican and British parents. She attended James Allen's Girls' School in London, where she completed GCSEs and then A/AS levels in History, Latin, Spanish and Biology (2002). Following a year travelling through Latin America, during which she participated in an archaeological excavation at Copalita, Oaxaca, in 2003 she went on to obtain a Bachelor's degree in *Archaeology, Classics and Classical Art* (2007) at University College London. Despite her initial focus on the Classical World, she followed all the Mesoamerican Archaeology electives at UCL and went on to complete her Master's degree in Archaeology with the specialisation *History and Archaeology of Native American Peoples* at Universiteit Leiden (2008). She was then offered a doctoral scholarship (2008-2012) by the CONACYT, Mexico, to continue the research initiated in her MA dissertation, and remained in Leiden to join the doctoral programme, participating in seminars and conferences. In 2009, she was invited to conduct a four-month placement in the UNESCO culture sector, where she assisted in the organisation and development of the Indigenous and Minority Fellowship Programme. As part of her doctorate, she conducted two research trips to Yucatan, Mexico, the latter of which (2010) provided the ethnographic data for this thesis. Since completing a first draft or her thesis, she has been working as Creative Director and Programme Coordinator for Muse Education Group, an Anglophone museum education company, based mainly at the Musée du Louvre, Paris. She is also a part-time lecturer in Mesoamerican Art at the Paris College of Art.