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.